

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Abbey Ward

App Ref: PL/26/0590 Listed building consent (Alt/Ext)

Address: 161 OXFORD ROAD, READING

Proposal: Replacement signage

Applicant: MR ALI KAMRAN

Received date: 01/05/2026

Target Decision date: 26/06/2026

Case Officer: Marcelina Rejwerska

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The applications site comprises a two-storey (with basement) mid-terrace property on the south side of Oxford Road. The site comprises a dentist surgery and has various existing signage on the front façade. The existing large sign on the front façade appears to have been in place since 2020 and is unauthorised, and not immune from enforcement action. The application site is located within the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area and is part of the Reading Central Area. The property is part of a group Grade II listing, and the listing entry reads as follows:

Terrace of 11 houses, built during the 1820s, converted to various uses during the C20 including shops and offices, now flats.

MATERIALS AND PLANS: the terrace is of red brick in Flemish bond with stucco dressings, a slate roof covering and iron railings. Two and three storeys plus basements.

EXTERIORS: the terrace consists of three distinct groups representing three different build phases. The easternmost group (149-161) is a terrace of seven houses of two storeys plus basements, under a pitched roof. The central group (163 and 165) is a symmetrical pair of houses of three storeys plus basements under a hipped roof. The westernmost group (167 and 169) is a pair of houses of two storeys plus basement under a pitched roof.

149-161 Oxford Road: the eastern group (149-161) are of a standard design although some have been altered through later interventions, most notably 155 and 157, where shopfronts have been installed at street level, infilling the basement area and merging the basement and raised ground floor. Each building is two bays wide with a cornice parapet unifying the group, and two courses of grey-blue bricks in header bond immediately above the flat arches of the basement windows running across the terrace, broken by the shopfronts at 155 and 157. Aside from 155 and 157, each house has a raised ground floor with steep steps with matching iron handrails leading to a front door within a round-arched recess in the eastern bay, and a window under a gauged brickwork flat arch in the western bay. All front doors are recent replacements apart from at 153 and 157, which have six-panelled doors...The window in the western bay of 149-153 is a six-over-six sash, while 159 has an eight-over-eight sash and 161 has a uPVC casement...On the first floor of each house, including at 155 and 157, there are two windows under gauged brickwork flat arches. They are glazing bar sash windows at 149-159 and uPVC casements at 161. At basement level, there is a single window in the western bay looking into a front area. All are uPVC casements apart from at 153 and 159, where they are renewed sashes.

The above is an extract of the listing entry.



Application site as seen from Oxford Road. Image taken from Google Maps.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Listed building consent is sought for replacement of unauthorised signage on the front façade of the building. The existing signage is not immune from enforcement action.



2.1. Information submitted:

Planning and Design Statement

Heritage Statement

Location Plan

Block Plan

230601-1 Site Plan

23601-2 Existing and Proposed Elevations

Signage Details

Received 1 May 2026

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- PL/23/1857 - Proposed replacement of unauthorised UPVC windows with timber frame sliding sash windows. Application permitted.
- PL/23/0937 - Illuminated signage mounted on front elevation. Application withdrawn.
- PL/23/0462 - New illuminated signage. Application withdrawn.
- PL/02/1180 - Change of use of first/second floor flat to dental surgery. Application permitted.
- PL/95/0746 - Change of use of first/second floor flat to dental surgery. Application permitted.
- PL/93/0171 - Demolition of double garage and small outhouse, construction of ramp from car parking to rear entrance with handrail for pedestrian access Construction of new rear pedestrian entry, closure of existing rear pedestrian entry. Application permitted.
- PL/93/0421 - 2 storey rear extension, ramp for disabled person access, rear entrance to flat. Application permitted.
- PL/92/0598 - Change of use of basement and ground floor from commercial use to Dental Surgery, new rear entrance and ramp. Application permitted.
- PL/93/0422 - Two storey rear extension to form enlarged reception area and office for dental practice, ramp for disabled persons access and repositioning of entrance to flat. Application permitted.
- PL/91/0084 - Change of use of the first and second floor from residential to office use (B1 or A2). Erection of a rear extension with four flats on the frontage to Goldsmid Rd with parking facilities. Application withdrawn.
- PL/91/0522 - Construction of a two storey rear extension in brick and slate vertical sliding sash windows refurbished dormer and rear porch and rear first floor landing window. Application permitted.
- PL/91/0085 - Construction of a two storey rear extension in brick and slate vertical sliding sash windows refurbished dormer and rear porch and rear first floor landing window. Application withdrawn.
- PL/91/0521 - Change of use of first and second floor from residential use to office use (B1 or A2 use) at 161 Oxford Rd. Erection of rear extension, with 4 flats on Goldsmid Rd frontage and parking. Application permitted.
- PL/91/0882 - Construction of a two storey rear extension in brick and slate vertical sliding sash windows refurbished dormer and rear porch and rear first floor landing window. Application permitted.

4. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

- RBC Conservation Officer – Objection.
- RBC Planning Enforcement – There is no open case.
- Conservation Area Advisory Committee – No comments received.

A site notice was erected at the front of the site in the public interest. No letters of representation were received.

5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Section 16(2) and 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).

National Policy and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

National Planning Practice Guidance (2014 onwards)

Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking (Historic England, 2015)

Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning: 3 (2nd Edition) The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England, 2017)

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

CC7: Design and the Public Realm

EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas

EN6: New Development in a Historic Context

OU4: Advertisements

Other relevant documentation

Design Guide to Shopfronts SPD 2022

Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area Appraisal 2020

Local Plan Update

The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan are considered still up to date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. A consultation version of the draft updated version of the Local Plan was published on 6th November 2024.

Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become "out of date" when they are five years old. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.

Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to these applications listed above is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the determination of this planning application and are not considered to be 'out of date'.

6. APPRAISAL

Policy EN1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan states *"All proposals will be expected to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets and their settings, the historic character and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. Proposals should seek to avoid harm in the first instance."*

Policy EN3 states *"Development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Positive consideration will be given to proposals which take opportunities to enhance the character of conservation areas."*

Paragraph 213 of the NPPF (2024) states *“Any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.”*

The Russell Street/Castle Hill Conservation Area Appraisal identifies the negative characteristics of the area, including *“garish, illuminated and irregularly sized retail signage that destroy a sense of harmony along the retail corridor...”*

The proposed signage due to its scale and siting would be an unsympathetic, incongruous and dominant addition that would disrupt the rhythm of the terrace and its character, and the character of the wider conservation area. The positioning of the signage is highly prominent from the public realm and would fail to enhance or conserve the setting of the listed terrace and other nearby designated heritage assets. The proposal would result in less than substantial harm without any heritage or public benefits identified. As the existing large signage is unauthorised and not immune from enforcement action, it does not form a material consideration in this assessment.

7. CONCLUSION

The proposal results in less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage asset, with no heritage or public benefits identified to outweigh this harm, contrary to Policies EN1, EN3, EN6 and OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and Paragraphs 213 and 215 of the NPPF.

8. RECOMMENDATION

REFUSE LISTED BUILDING CONSENT

Due to the following reasons:

1. The proposed signage due to its scale and siting would be an unsympathetic, incongruous and dominant addition that would disrupt the rhythm of the terrace and its character, and the character of the wider conservation area. The proposal results in less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage asset, with no heritage or public benefits identified to outweigh this harm, contrary to Policies EN1, EN3, EN6 and OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and Paragraphs 213 and 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2024).