

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Coley Ward

App Ref: PL/26/1102 Consent to display an advertisement

Address: HELENA HOUSE, 1 BROWNLOW ROAD, READING

Proposal: Advertisement Consent for new signage

Applicant: Mr Jaden Taylor

Received date: 17/08/2026

Target Decision date: 12/10/2026

Case Officer: Catrin Davies

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

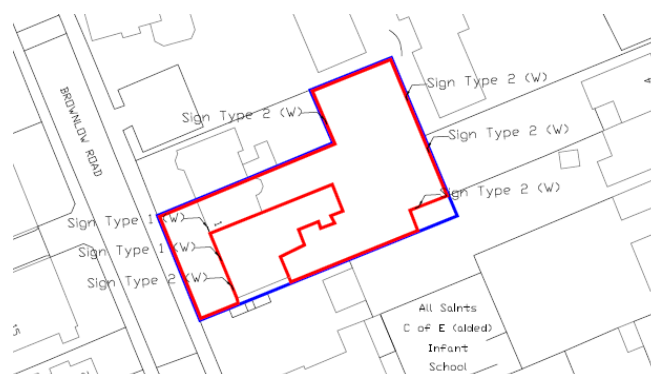
The site is currently a car park with 25 parking bays used in connection with Helena House with a residential building containing several flats. The car park is accessed from Brownlow Road. There is parking at the front and at the rear of Helena House.



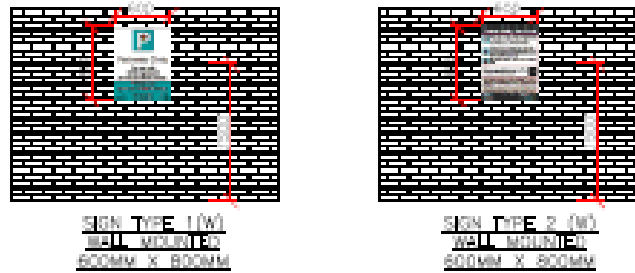
The application site is located within the Downshire Square Conservation Area and immediately adjacent to the Grade II listed Church of All Saints and the Grade II listed All Saints Infants School and Playground Railings. The wider area is predominantly residential.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The application seeks advertisement consent for the erection of adverts. These would be located at the front of the site and at the rear. The application form states that there would be 8 signs in total. The site plan indicates that there would be 7 signs, the location of which is illustrated below:



There are two types 1 and 2 which are illustrated below:



The purpose of the advert is to notify users of the car parking management system.

Plans and documents submitted:

c-32755-001 - location plan received 17 Aug 2026

c-32755-002 - site plan received 17 Aug 2026

c-32755-003 - signage plan received 17 Aug 2026

c-32755-004 - signage details received 17 Aug 2026

Design and Access Statement received 17 Aug 2026

e-0000-001 - wall mounted signage installation details received 17 Aug 2026

tyton 1c camera details received 17 Aug 2026

Planning History:

PL/16/1420: Change of use from Sui Generis House in Multiple Occupation (HMO) to a mixed use comprising 4 x C1 serviced apartments and 9 x C3 residential flats, including partial demolition of existing building, provision of access, parking and soft landscaping. Approved 14/12/2016

3. CONSULTATIONS

Heritage Comments

Objection

The proposed signage, due to its location and number/scale, would result in harm to the appearance of the conservation area and settings of listed buildings adjacent to the site. Discussed further below.

Transport Comments

There are no transport objections to this application. The proposed signage is non-illuminated so no conditions are required regarding illumination levels. Discussed further below.

Public consultation

A site notice was displayed at the application site and no neighbour letters of representation were received.

Equality Act 2010:

In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application. Therefore in terms of the key equalities

protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

4. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

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 Appendix 2).

Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 also requires the Council to pay **special attention** to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character and appearance of designated Conservation Areas.

Section 66 of the Act also requires that **special regard** be given to the desirability of preserving listed buildings, their settings or any features of special architectural or historic interest which they possess.

Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 requires the Local Planning Authority to exercise its powers under these regulations in the interests of amenity and public safety taking into account the provisions of the development plan, so far as they are material; and any other relevant factors. Regulation 3 states that factors relevant to amenity include the general characteristics of the locality, including the presence of any feature of historic, architectural, cultural, or similar interest.

Factors relevant to public safety include highway safety and whether the advert would hinder security or surveillance devices, including speed cameras.

National Planning Policy Framework (2026)

DM3: Determining development proposals

S3: Presumption in favour of sustainable development

DP3: Key principles for well-designed places

P3: Living conditions and pollution

National Planning Practice Guidance (2014 onwards)

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY

EN1: PROTECTION AND ENHANCEMENT IN THE HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT

EN3: ENHANCEMENT OF CONSERVATION AREAS

EN6: NEW DEVELOPMENT IN A HISTORIC CONTEXT

OU4: ADVERTISEMENTS

TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY RELATED – MATTERS

The

Other documents

Downshire Square Conservation Appraisal 2009

Reading Borough Local Plan Partial Update Submission Draft (2025) (LPPU)

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. The submission draft of the Local Plan Partial Update was submitted on 9th May 2025 and examined earlier this year. At the time of writing, the examination-in-public of the partial update to the local plan is in the process of taking place. Stage 1 hearings were held virtually on 11th and 12th November 2025. Stage 2 hearings took place in February 2026.

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 this application listed above is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remain very similar in the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the appraisal below and are not considered to be ‘out of date’.

5. APPRAISAL

Advertisements may only be controlled with regard to two material considerations:

- **Amenity** – The effect of advertisement(s) on the appearance of buildings or the immediate vicinity of where they are displayed, including the character and appearance of the conservation area, the setting of Listed Buildings, and impact on non-designated heritage assets such as locally listed buildings.
- **Public safety** – Matters having a bearing on the safe use and operation of any form of traffic or transport, including the safety of pedestrians, or distraction of drivers or confusion with traffic signs.

Policies HE4, HE5, HE6 and HE9 of the NPPF 2026 require heritage assets to be conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance and seek to ensure that development preserves the character, appearance and significance of conservation areas and listed buildings.

At a local level, Policies EN1, EN3 and EN6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan seek to protect and enhance heritage assets, preserve the character and appearance of conservation areas and ensure development responds positively to its historic context. Policy OU4 specifically requires advertisements to respect the building on which they are located and their surroundings, and states that advertisements within conservation areas should respect or enhance the character and appearance of the area and its heritage significance.

The Downshire Square Conservation Area Appraisal is also a material consideration and identifies the contribution made by the area’s historic buildings, boundary treatments, mature landscaping and relatively uncluttered streetscene to its special character and appearance.

Amenity

Visual Amenity and Heritage Impact

The application site is located within the Downshire Square Conservation Area and immediately adjacent to the Grade II listed Church of All Saints and the Grade II listed All Saints Infants School and Playground Railings.

With regard to the Downshire Square Appraisal, the site is within the Character Area 1 - Central core of Brownlow Road and Downshire Square with All Saints Church and adjoining Infants School. The area's special character comes from its mix of Victorian and later architectural styles within a planned street layout of large, tree-lined plots. Its historic appeal is strengthened by the survival of boundary walls, railings and mature trees, including prominent avenues along Downshire Square. Together, these features create a strong sense of unity, with All Saints Church and All Saints School forming the focal point of the area.

The historic buildings of the application site have undergone very little alteration, and as such, although the buildings within the application site are not listed, given their scale, historic and architectural features (design and appearance) highly contribute to the conservation area and the streetscape.



View of the application site from Brownlow Road



Application site and listed buildings of All Saints School and All Saints Church

In accordance with the statutory duty set out in Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the conservation area is required, along with regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of listed buildings.

The proposal seeks the installation of a substantial number of signs across the site, including on the principal elevations of the buildings, boundary walls and within the car park itself. Whilst the individual signs are relatively modest in scale, the assessment of advertisements must consider their cumulative impact.

The character of this part of the conservation area is derived from its historic buildings, traditional boundary treatments, mature landscaping and relatively uncluttered streetscene. The Downshire Square Conservation Area Appraisal specifically identifies modern signage and street furniture as having the potential to detract from the character and appearance of the area. Existing levels of signage within Brownlow Road are limited, and the streetscene is not characterised by extensive commercial advertising or parking management infrastructure.

The cumulative impact of the numerous signs would create unnecessary visual clutter that would detract from the architectural detailing and historic character of the host buildings and frontage. The signs would also be readily visible within the streetscene and in views experienced alongside the adjacent listed church and school buildings, resulting in harm to their setting. The signs would appear as unattractive features that would not preserve or enhance the character or appearance of the conservation area. The signs would relate to use of the private car park, resulting in private benefits to the advertisers and operators of the site and are not considered to be matters that weight in favour of the proposals in respect of the historic environment matters, and there be no public benefits.

The proposed advertisements, by reason of their excessive number, siting and unsympathetic design, would appear as unattractive features that would result in an undesirable proliferation of signage and visual clutter within the Downshire Square Conservation Area and the setting of the nearby listed buildings. The advertisements would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area and would harm the setting and significance of the designated heritage assets. As such, the proposed advertisements would result in harm to the visual amenity, character and appearance of the area, contrary to Policies CC7, EN1, EN3, EN6 and OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019, the Downshire Square Conservation Area Appraisal, s.72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 and Policies HE4 and HE6 of the NPPF 2026.

Public and Highway Safety

The proposed signs would be located on existing buildings and walls and would not have any detrimental impact on any neighbouring property. The signs would not be illuminated and as such there would be no light spill, glare or disturbance to any neighbouring property.

As above, the proposed signs would not be illuminated and as such are not considered likely to distract motorists, pedestrians or cyclists nor would they impede visibility at accesses or along the public highway.

No objections have been raised by the Highway Authority, and the proposals are not considered to prejudice public safety or road users. In accordance with Policy TR3.

6. CONCLUSION

Whilst the proposal would not result in harm to public safety or neighbouring amenity, the excessive number, siting and unsympathetic design of the proposed advertisements would result in an undesirable

proliferation of signage and visual clutter within the Conservation Area and the setting of nearby listed buildings. Accordingly, the proposal is contrary to Policies EN1, EN3, EN6 and OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and is therefore recommended for refusal.