

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT CULTURE & SPORT
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 27th June 2018

ITEM NO. 7

Ward: Abbey

App No: 180410/ADV

Address: Reading Train Station

Proposals: Double sided LED digital smart screen

Target decision date: 17th May 2018 Extension of time date: 29th June 2018

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT Advertisement Consent subject to conditions

Conditions to include:

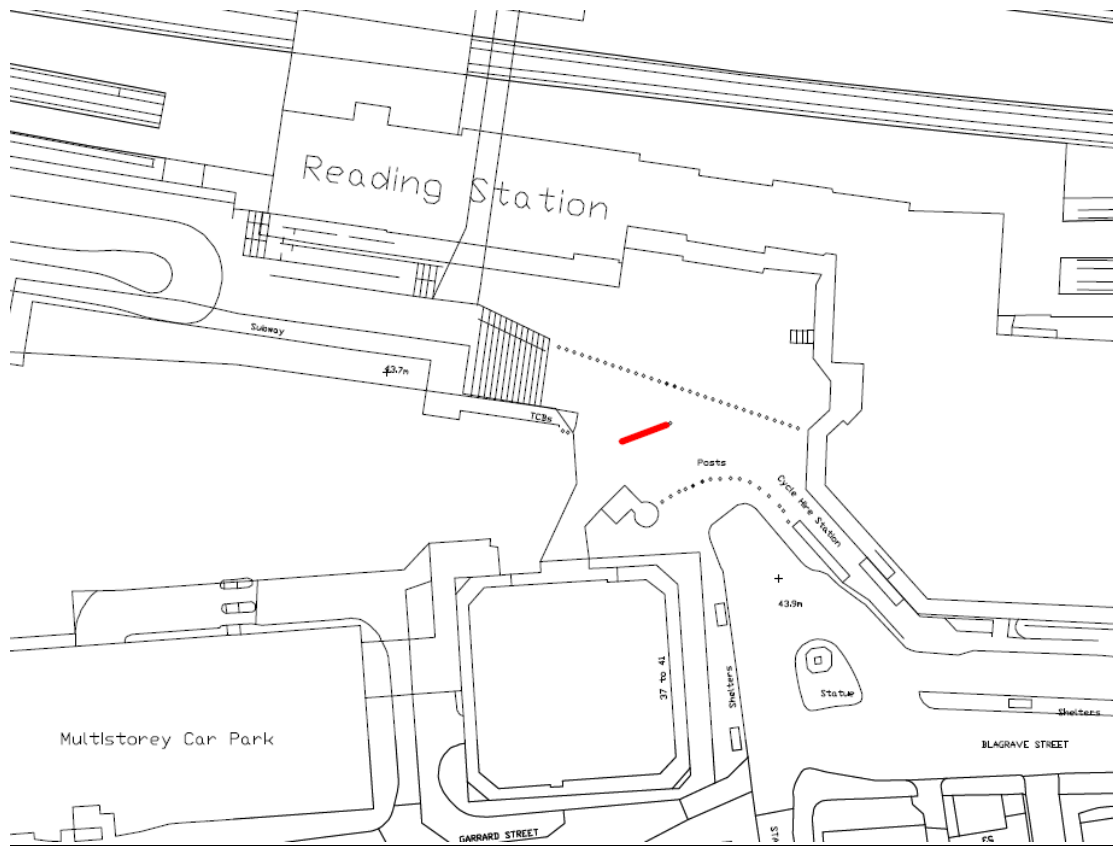
1. In accordance with approved plans
2. Time Limit - grant of 5 years advertisement consent only
3. Standard Advertisement Conditions
4. Construction Method Statement
5. Hours of operation - 0600 to 2400 hours only
6. Luminance not to exceed 500 cdm² during the evening (1700 to 2400 hours)

Informatives to include:

1. Terms and Conditions
2. Positive and Proactive

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This application for advertisement consent relates to land to the south of Reading Train Station adjacent to the main entrance to the station building. The train station building continues to the east, to the west there are a series of steps leading down to Station Hill whilst to the south there is Thames Tower, a recently refurbished 15 storey commercial building. To the north-east of the site and to the east of the modern main station entrance is the Three Guineas Public House which is a grade II listed building.
- 1.2 The site is located within the Reading Central Area and Central Core as defined by the Reading Central Area Action Plan (2009).
- 1.3 Reading Borough Council is the landowner of the application site but is not the applicant.



Location Plan

2. PROPOSAL & BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The application seeks advertisement consent for a double sided LED smart screen to be located in the pedestrian zone to the south of the southern station entrance.
- 2.2 The proposed screen would 8m in width and 4m in height and would be set upon a 2.4m high supporting stand with a 0.3m frame. Altogether the structure would have a total height of 7m, width of 8.6m and would be 0.4m in depth.
- 2.3 It is proposed that the LED screen would display static and motion image advertisements which would be in place for 10 seconds at a time before merging into a new image at a speed of around 1.8 seconds. The screen is proposed to operate between 0600 and 2400 hours daily.
- 2.4 The luminance of the screen would adapt depending on the time of day and light conditions to make the display visible. The screen would operate at low luminance (approximately 500 cdm²) during evenings and night times and approximately 5000 cdm² during bright sunny days.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 None relevant to this advertisement application.

4. CONSULTATIONS

4.1 RBC Transport - No objection, subject to a condition to control the screen's luminance during evening/night time.

4.2 RBC Environmental Protection - No objection.

4.3 RBC Emergency Planning - No objection following submission of additional information concerning impact on views from CCTV cameras.

4.4 RBC Abbey Quarter Team - Concern that the screen would block directional and interpretational signage in the station pedestrian zone regarding the Abbey Quarter and its impact on the setting of the Grade II listed Three Guineas PH.

4.5 National Rail - No objection following submission of additional information concerning emergency vehicle access and impact on CCTV cameras.

4.6 British Transport Police - No objection subject that concerns regarding impact on RBC CCTV and impact of the construction compound upon emergency vehicle access can be addressed.

4.7 RBC Conservation Consultant - Object, the proposal would harm the significance of the Grade II listed Three Guineas PH and fail to preserve its setting.

4.8 Conservation Area Advisory Committee - Object, the proposal will detract from the setting of the Grade II listed heritage assets around the station. The public benefit of the screen would not outweigh the harm to the heritage assets.

4.6 Public consultation:

Two site notices were displayed at the application site. Six letters of objection have been received raising the following issues:

- Harm to the visual amenity of the street-scene and public realm by reason of screens scale, height, clutter and location
- Block views to and from the station
- Block views of the ground floor signage of Thames Tower
- Harm to the setting of the grade II listed Three Guineas PH building and statue of King Edward VII
- Detract from the function and legibility of the public realm area to the south of the station

5. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 5.1 The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007 apply.
- 5.2 Section 16(2) 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.
- 5.3 National Planning Policy Framework
Part 7: Requiring Good Design
Part 12: Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment
- 5.4 National Planning Practice Guidance
Advertisements
- 5.5 Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2008)
(altered 2015)
CS7: Design and the Public Realm
CS33: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
- 5.6 Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012) (Altered 2015)
DM12: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
DM22: Advertisements
- 5.7 Reading Central Area Action Plan (adopted 2009)
RC5: Design in the Centre
RC14: Public Realm
- 5.8 Reading Station Area Framework (2010)
- 5.9 Station Hill South Planning and Urban Design Brief (2007)

6. APPRAISAL - Application for Advertisement Consent

- (i) Legal context
 - 6.1 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.
 - 6.2 Factors relevant to public safety include highway safety and whether the advert would hinder security or surveillance devices, including speed cameras.

(ii) Main Issues

6.3 Therefore the main issues are:

- a) The effect upon visual amenity, the public realm and heritage assets
- b) The effect upon public safety

a) The effect upon visual amenity, the public realm and heritage assets

6.4 Policy DM22 (Advertisements) states that advertisements will respect the building or structure on which they are located and/or their surroundings and setting in terms of size, location, design, materials, colour, noise, lettering, amount and type of text, illumination and luminance. It also specifies that the cumulative impact of adverts will be taken into account, and a proliferation of advertisements that detrimentally affects visual or aural amenity will not be acceptable.

6.5 Policy CS7 (Design) seeks that all development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading within which it is located. Proposals should also make a positive contribution to urban design objectives including, character, quality of public realm, ease of movement and permeability, legibility, adaptability and diversity. In addition the policy states that developments will be assessed to ensure that they respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm; create safe and accessible environments and are visually attractive as a result of good high quality built forms and spaces.

6.6 Policy CS33 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) seeks that all development proposals should preserve or enhance the historic character of heritage assets.

6.7 Policy RC5 (Design in the Centre) seeks that development should provide appropriate relationships between buildings and spaces and movement within the central area, appropriate public spaces and public realm including squares and open spaces, and utilise high quality architectural details and materials. It also indicates that any development associated within public realm should contribute to the diversity of the central area, be capable of adaptation over time and be designed to enhance community safety.

6.8 Policy RC14 (Public Realm) states that new development will need to make a positive contribution towards the quality of the public realm including imaginative uses of open space and public realm.

6.9 In terms of adopted policies directly related to development of the station area Policy RC1d (Station & Interchange) states that the listed station building should be retained and its setting enhanced and areas of open

space will be provided at the northern and southern entrances to the station. The Reading Station Area Framework and the Station Hill South Planning and Urban Design Brief seek that the area adjacent to the station entrance should be a high quality multi-functional public space - 'new town squares'.

- 6.10 The proposed screen structure would be located centrally within the public realm area to the south of the train station entrance. The proposed plan shows the screen with a slight north-west orientation addressing people exiting the main station building to the north, people arriving at the top of the stairs which connect to Station Hill to the west and people approaching the station from the south from Station Road and Blagrave Street.
- 6.11 The area of public realm to the south of the station where the structure would be located contains some street furniture, which aside from a number of lamp posts, is low level including a row of safety bollards and some benches.
- 6.12 The screen and its stand by its nature is contemporary in its design and appearance and would be in keeping with the modern station building to the north. The updated façade of Thames Tower also now appears as a more contemporary elevation bordering the station public realm area.
- 6.13 Whilst the screen is larger in scale than the existing street-furniture the pedestrian area itself is not insignificant in size. Located relatively centrally within this area, surrounded by two storey buildings together with Thames Tower at fifteen storeys to the south, and set against the modern Station building, it is considered the screen would not unduly detract from the spaciousness of this area, quality of the public realm or frontages of surrounding buildings.
- 6.14 The screen would represent a modern addition to the public realm area to the south of the station, an area where the contrast between old and new buildings is already present. As a freestanding structure located centrally within the large pedestrian area it is considered that the proposal would contribute to the visual interest of the public realm and would not be detrimental to the permeability, accessibility, adaptability or legibility of this area.
- 6.15 Concern has been raised regarding the impact of the screen upon the setting of the Grade II listed Three Guineas Public House to the north of the station pedestrian area and also the statue of King Edward VII on the small roundabout on Station Approach to the south. Officers acknowledge that the screen would be a sizeable structure within the station public realm area. However, it is noted that the siting of the screen is to the south west of centre of this area. This assists in the screen being viewed, when looking north towards the station, against the back drop of the modern station building rather than directly or primarily against the backdrop of the listed public house. There is also a significant separation between the screen and

the public house (28m). In the context of the spaciousness of the square and the scale of the surrounding large buildings, officers consider that the proposal will not adversely impact upon the setting of the listed building. Moving the structure westwards, away from the listed building, has been explored. However, the area under the west of the square comprises voids and it would be impractical to anchor the structure within this area.

- 6.16 The details submitted as part of the application also indicate that the luminance of the screen would be controlled via sensors which automatically adjust depending upon prevailing natural light conditions whilst ensuring the luminance levels reduce during evenings which would assist in minimising light spillage that might have an impact on the heritage assets, particularly during the evenings. The screen is proposed to operate between 0600 and 2400 only. This could be controlled by way of a suitably worded condition to ensure the screen is turned off outside of these hours.
- 6.17 Sited over 40m from the Grade II listed statue of King Edward VII it is not considered that the screen would adversely impact upon the setting of the statue. Again due to the screens siting, key views of the statue from the station would be retained, with the screen predominantly viewed against the backdrop of the north east corner of Thames Tower.
- 6.18 A condition is recommended to grant advertisement consent for a 5 year period. This is in accordance with Regulation 14 (7) of the Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007 and would allow the Local Planning Authority to review the impact of the advertisement scheme after this period.

b) The effect upon public safety

- 6.19 The relevant considerations for this application with regard to public safety are highway safety and crime prevention, including whether granting consent could block the view of CCTV cameras, or whether illumination from an advertisement would cause glare on such cameras.
- 6.20 Policy DM22 (Advertisements) states that advertisements will not have detrimental impact on public safety. It also specifies that the cumulative impact of adverts will be taken into account.
- 6.21 Policy CS7 (Design) seeks that all development should create safe and accessible environments.
- 6.22 Policy DM12 (Highway Matters) states that development will only be permitted where it is not detrimental to highway safety.
- 6.23 Policy CS20 (Reading Transport Strategy) seeks to promote transport safety.
- 6.24 The proposal has been reviewed by RBC Transport Officers who have advised that as the screen would be located within a pedestrian area and is not

located on a major transport corridor, it is considered that the proposed advertisement would not unduly distract highways users and give rise to safety issues. This is subject to a condition to ensure that the screen does not exceed 500 cd/m² during the evening (from 1700 to 2400 hours) when the screen illumination is likely to be more prominent from longer distance views.

- 6.25 The base of the screen would also be elevated 2.4m from ground level which would not impede pedestrian and cycle movements within the station public realm area.
- 6.26 RBC Emergency Planning, National Rail and British Transport Police originally objected to the application based upon concerns regarding impact upon CCTV (blocking sightlines and glare) and emergency vehicle access to the station.
- 6.27 Further to these objections, and following a meeting with the applicant, additional material was submitted which includes more detailed information on the specification of the screen and how this can be managed remotely to reduce luminance and avoid glare. Details of vehicular access were also provided indicating that the screen would not obstruct the existing route via the dropped kerb from Station Approach and the two pairs of lowering bollards.
- 6.28 Following the submission of the additional information the concerns raised by RBC Emergency Planning, National Rail and British Transport Police are considered to have been largely overcome.
- 6.29 With regard to CCTV impact further review of existing cameras has been undertaken by RBC Emergency Planning. They have advised the screen would have only a minimal impact upon the view from one existing CCTV camera which is not classed as essential. The information regarding ability to remotely control the brightness of the screen is considered to address concerns regarding glare to the existing CCTV.
- 6.30 Although RBC Emergency Planning now raises no objection it has been requested that the developer undertakes to provide a new or replacement camera should the glare from the screen prove to be a problem for existing cameras. The developer has agreed to this if needed in the future. As this is a matter that would be more appropriately addressed by the Council, as landowner of the site, by making it a requirement of the lease. Officers advise that it is not necessary to use a planning condition to secure this commitment.
- 6.31 In terms of emergency vehicle access, it has been demonstrated that the existing route would not be affected by the proposed screen. British Transport Police remain concerned that the Construction Compound for when the screen is installed should not impinge on emergency vehicle routes. Details of Construction Methodology have been provided as part of

the application information but it is reasonable to require a more detailed construction method statement to be submitted and agreed with the Local Planning Authority by way of a suitably worded condition, prior to the commencement of any works. This would include a requirement to provide an assessment of the impact of the construction compound upon emergency vehicle routes.

- 6.32 Whilst land ownership is not usually a planning consideration, it is relevant to note that the land to which this application relates is controlled by the Council and as such there is an additional level of control of the signage and the applicant would also be required to sign up to the Council's advertising and sponsorship policy.

7 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 When assessed for impact on amenity, the setting of listed buildings and public safety officers are satisfied that, subject to recommended conditions, the proposal complies with national and local policy.

Recommendation

GRANT advertisement consent for the reasons given above

Case Officer: Matt Burns

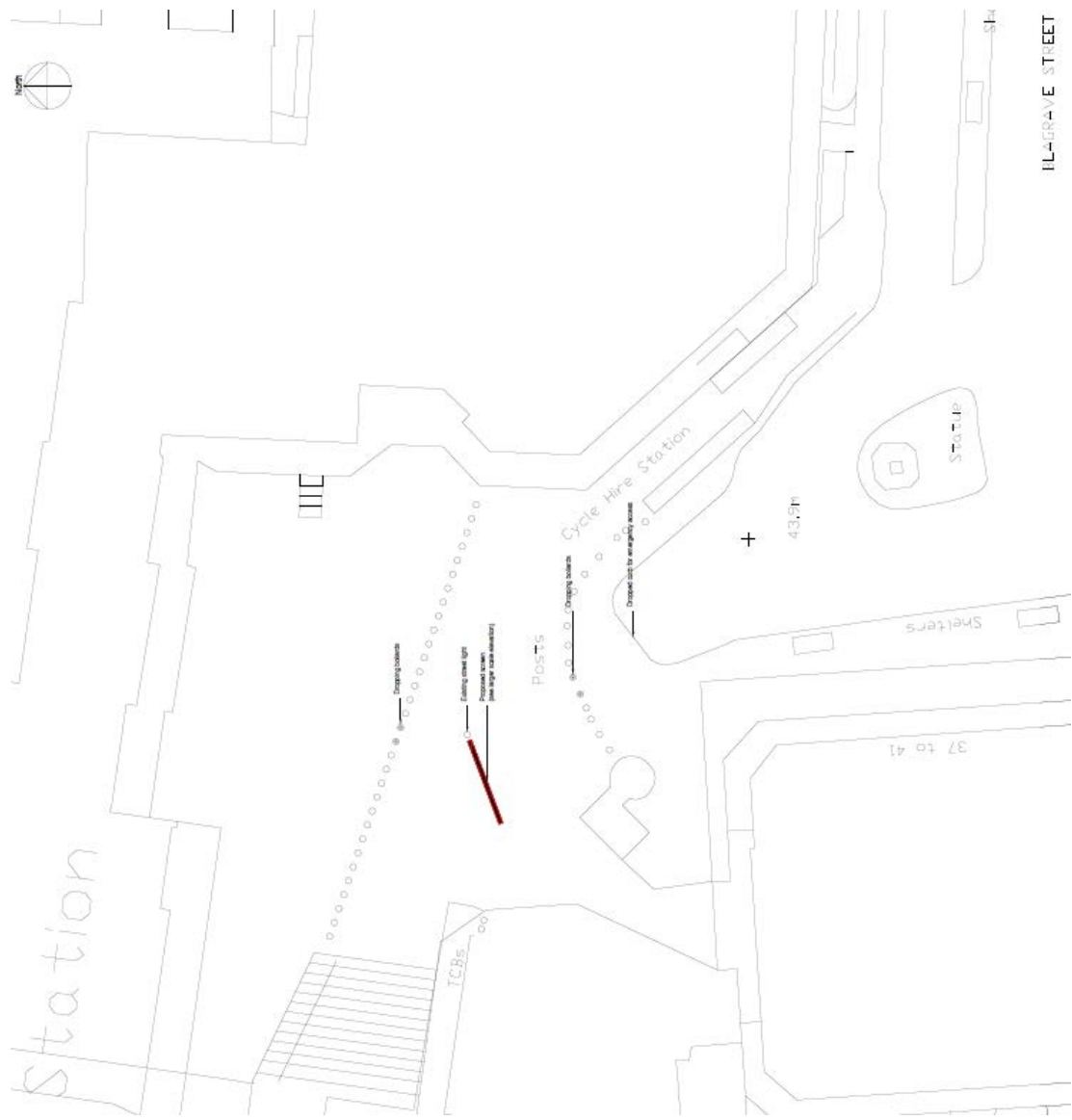
Plans and Documents Considered:

Drawing no. L01.B - Location Plan, Block Plan and Elevations dated March 18
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 25th April 2018

Orion Heritage Statement dated March 2018
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 22nd March 2018

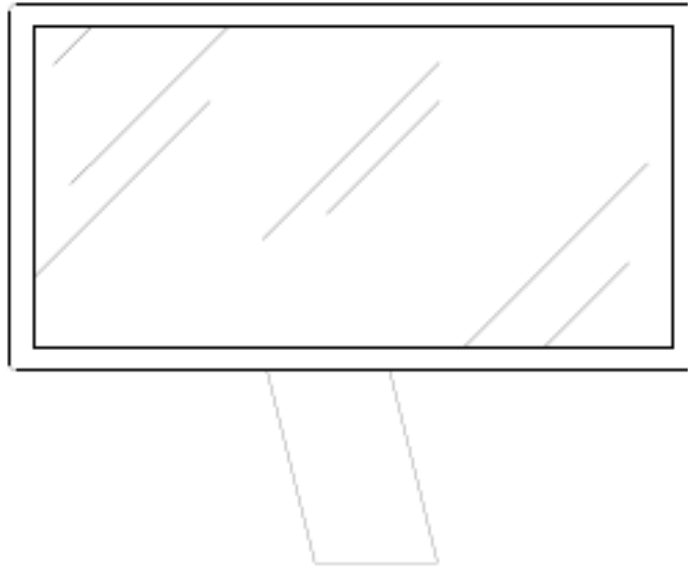
'ECE Planning' Planning Statement dated March 2018
SIS Digital Reading Lights Maxx Media Ltd Structural Information
Maxx Media Ltd Visuals
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 7th March 2018

UNILED - Brightness Settings and Management Letter
SIS Digital Method of Construction Proposal
'ECE Planning' letter ref. RH/Let/P1489 dated 25th April 2018
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 25th April 2018



Proposed Site Plan

Location Plan 1:1250



8000mm x 4000mm digital screen
Front elevation 1:50



8000mm x 4000mm digital screen
Side elevation 1:50

Proposed Elevations



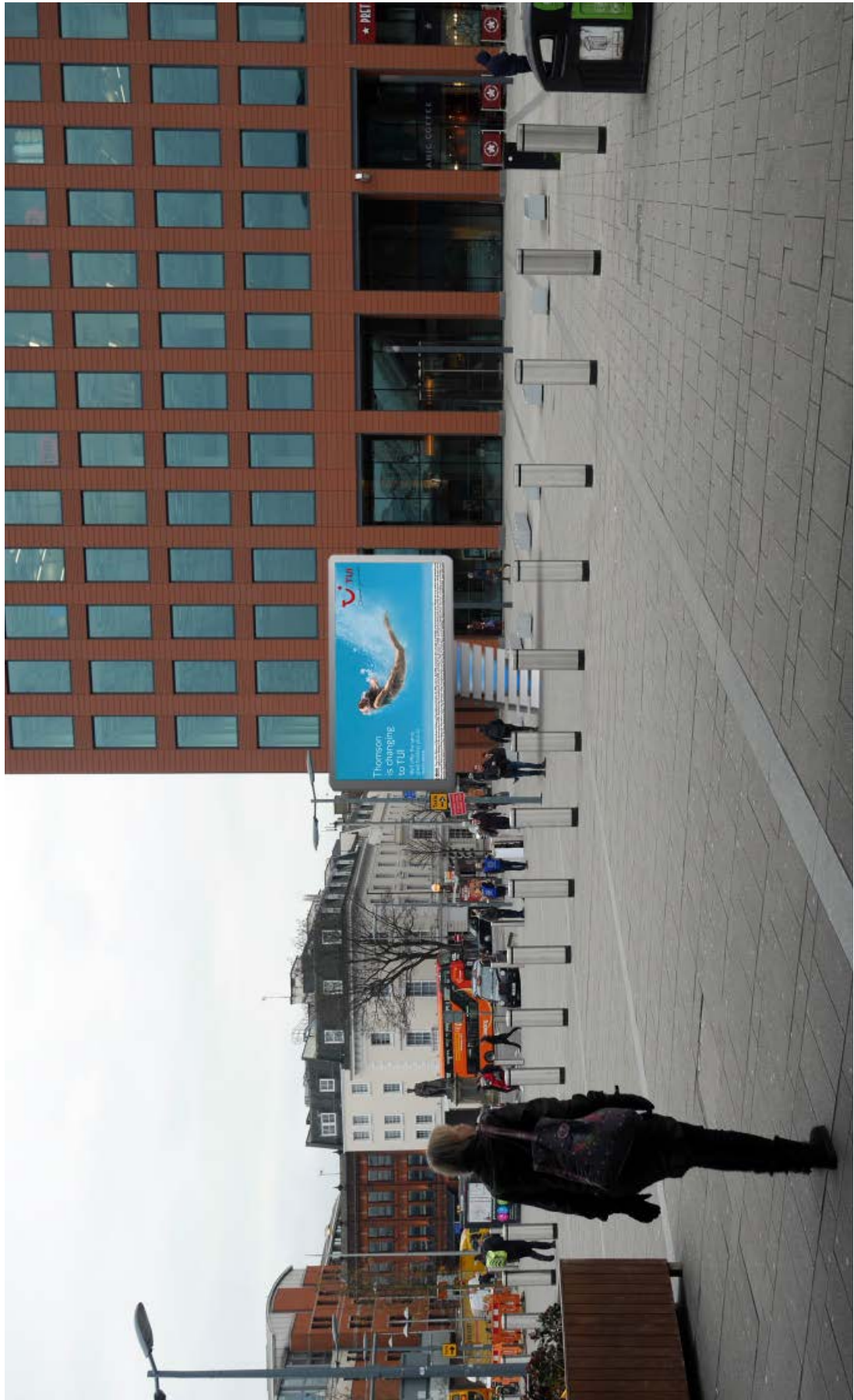
Proposed visual - view north from Station Approach 1



Proposed visual - View north from Station Approach 2



Proposed Visual - View West from Old Station Building



Proposed Visual - View South from Modern Station Building