

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 28 April 2021

Ward: Abbey

App No.: 210094

App Type: ADV

Address: Former Cooper Reading BMW, Kings Meadow Road, Reading

Proposal: Signage to North, South and West Elevations.

Applicant: Watkin Jones Group

Deadline: 16 March 2021

RECOMMENDATIONS

Grant Advertisement Consent, subject to conditions and informatives:

Conditions to include:

- 1) A1- The Standard Advertisement Conditions
- 2) AP1 - Approved plans implemented
- 3) No part of any approved sign shall be illuminated

Informatives to include:

- 1) Terms and Conditions

1. INTRODUCTION/BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The application site is located to the north eastern edge of the town centre and is bounded by Kings Meadow Road to the north, the Bristol-Paddington railway line to the south, Vastern Road (including the roundabout) to the west and offices at Napier Court to the east. The immediate area includes residential properties at Kingfisher Place to the north, the Grade II listed Kings Meadow Baths (now Thames Lido), the multi-storey car park serving the railway station and a number of large office buildings.
- 1.2 Planning permission was granted in November 2017 for demolition of the existing car dealership buildings and the erection of a Build-to-Rent development comprising a part 12 storey, part 23 storey building containing 315 flats. Construction of this development is now nearing completion.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 Advertisement Consent is sought for one illuminated sign to the west elevation (facing the roundabout) and one illuminated sign to the north elevation (towards the Environment Agency building on Kings Meadow Road) both to be located above the main entrance door at the north west corner of the building. These signs measure 0.6m top-to-bottom and 7.8m in width. A further two non-illuminated signs are proposed facing the railway to the south elevation. These signs measure 0.8m by 7.8m.

Each sign is made up of individual metal lettering reading 'Thames Quarter' and finished in white. The illuminated signage is proposed to be halo-illuminated with an opaque (metal) front face to the letters and a gap to the

rear allowing LED lighting contained within the body of the letter to provide a glowing effect around each letter.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 **162166/FUL** Full planning permission **granted** on 23 November 2017 for *“Erection of a part 12 storey, part 23 storey building comprising 315 apartments in a mix of studio, one-bedroom, two-bedroom and 3-bedroom units; residents' lounges, tech-hub, dining room, and cinema room, various rooftop outdoor amenity spaces, concierge/reception with coffee meeting area, residents' storage facilities, postroom, ancillary back-of-house facilities, 315 secure cycle parking spaces, 49 car parking spaces, landscaping, and associated works. Demolition of existing multi-storey car park.”*
- 3.2 **182196/FUL** Full planning permission **refused** on 25 April 2019 for: *Erection of a part 13-storey, part 23 storey building comprising 338 apartments in a mix of studio, one-bedroom, two-bedroom and three-bedroom units, residents' lounges, tech-hub, dining room, and cinema room, various rooftop outdoor amenity spaces, concierge/reception with coffee meeting area, gym, residents' storage facilities, postroom, ancillary back-of-house facilities, 338 secure cycle parking spaces, car parking spaces, landscaping, and associated works (revision to planning permission 162166 dated 23/11/2017) (Part Retrospective).*
- 3.3 **200914/NMA** - Non-Material Amendment to permitted application 162166 - **Agreed** on 4 November 2020 for *“Installation of external facade feature lighting to the tower element of the building comprising low level uplighters to the north elevation and west elevation and high level light band to level 22 (amended description).”*

4. CONSULTATIONS

4.1 Network Rail

No objection received.

4.2 RBC Transport Development Control (Highways Authority)

“The applicant has confirmed that the two signs to the building entrance (Sign 1 & Sign 2), are back lit and the letters have no illumination in their own right creating a halo glow of light to each individual letter at night. This application does not include the high level strip lighting shown on the submitted plans.

There are no transport objections to the proposed signage subject to the conditions below controlling the illumination levels.

AD1 ADVERT LUMINANCE

The maximum luminance from the illuminated fascia signs hereby consented shall not exceed 600 cd/m².

REASON: *To protect the visual amenity and avoid excessive glare that could lead to a danger to highway users in accordance with Policy CC7 and OU4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.”*

4.3 Environmental Protection:

“EP have concerns about the illuminated signage and how bright it will be in terms of the impact on amenity of surrounding residents. EP have already received complaints about the lighting installed on the building. At what level will the illuminated signage be? Will it be lit up all night? What is the purpose of the illumination?”

(i) Public/ local consultation and comments received

4.4 99 letters of objection and 2 letters of support have been received in response to public consultation.

4.5 The majority of these raise concerns over the obtrusiveness of the blue strip light that has been installed at the top of the tower following its approval under Non-material Amendment application 200919/NMA. To clarify, this application for Advertisement Consent does **not** relate to façade or strip lighting. However the concerns raised do serve to highlight the sensitivities surrounding illumination of the building in general and are therefore of some relevance when determining this application.

4.6 A number of local groups have commented on behalf of their members as follows:

4.7 CADRA

“Caversham & District Residents Association (CADRA) objects strongly to the blue strip lights around the top of this building. They are intensely bright, are visible across Reading, are a totally unnecessary, over-bright source of light pollution and are an unsustainable waste of energy.

CADRA further objects to the uplighting of the building for the same reasons as our objection to the blue strip lights.”

4.8 Caversham GLOBE:

“Caversham Globe objects to the bright blue Vaya strip lighting which has been installed around the top of this new tower block on the former BMW site.

It is causing totally unnecessary light pollution which is visible over a very wide area of Greater Reading including Caversham, Emmer Green and areas beyond.

It can even be seen from parts of the Chiltern Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in South Oxfordshire and as such it is affecting the setting of the AONB.

This harsh blue strip lighting around the top of the tower block appears to have been installed and switched on without planning permission.

We also object to the proposed Graze uplighting of the building facade which will further add unnecessary light pollution and waste energy.

Reading has declared a Climate Emergency and this unnecessary lighting is a complete waste of energy.

We have no comment on the proposed signage which also forms part of this application.”

5. LEGAL CONTEXT

- 5.2 Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that the Local Planning Authority shall have ‘special regard’ to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
- 5.2 Regulation 3 of The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) (England) Regulations 2007 (as amended) requires that local planning authorities control the display of advertisements in the interests of amenity and public safety, taking into account the provisions of the development plan, in so far as they are material, and any other relevant factors.
- 5.4 Accordingly, the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

National Planning Policy and Guidance

National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

EN7cd - Kings Meadow and Coal Woodland

EN16 - Pollution and Water Resources

OU4 - Advertisements

6. APPRAISAL

- 6.1 In accordance with the Regulations above, the key issues to consider are amenity and public safety.

i) Amenity

- 6.2 The host building is large and prominently located. It also sits within a sensitive area of transition between the heavily-urban character around the railway station and the relatively undeveloped green spaces along the Thames at Kings Meadow and beyond. Kings Meadow is designated as Local Green Space which Policy EN7cd seeks to protect from development (including insensitive adjacent development). The Grade II listed Kings Meadow Baths (Thames Lido) building sits within this context.
- 6.3 It is relevant that although application 162166 was approved in respect of the 12 and 23 storey building, a subsequent application 182196 for a 13 and 23 storey building was refused due to concerns over the increased height and massing of the additional storey proposed.
- 6.4 It is also relevant that negotiations during the course of Non-material Amendment application **200914/NMA** led to the extent of the façade lighting being reduced from the whole north and west façade to the tower only.
- 6.5 This Planning history suggests that the current building is at the limits of what might reasonably be deemed acceptable in terms of its height, massing and visual prominence.
- 6.6 The size of the proposed signage is considered to be in proportion to the large host building and is considered to be acceptable on that basis. The simple form of the lettering and the understated white finish are also considered acceptable.

- 6.7 However, it is considered that the proposed illumination of the signage would represent a tipping point in the overall illumination of the building, which currently includes façade uplighters and strip lights to the tower and the light emitted from each window when lit from inside. Cumulatively the illumination from the signage would exceed what is considered reasonable for a residential building (the residential use does not warrant directional signage or advertising in the same way that commercial premises might).
- 6.8 This excessive illumination would be visually obtrusive in its own right both within the Vastern Road street scene, and also from Kings Meadow Road, including the visually sensitive open space. It would also serve to further emphasise the prominence and scale of the host building, where this is already at the limits of acceptability. For these reasons it is considered that illuminated signage would harm visual amenity, contrary to Development Plan Policy OU4-Advertisements which is material in this instance.
- 6.9 The question is therefore whether any condition could be imposed to allow this otherwise unacceptable proposal to be approved. The harm identified is solely related to the illumination of the signs. Removing the illumination removes the harm. A condition requiring the signs shall not be illuminated is therefore considered to be reasonable and necessary.
- ii) **Public Safety**
- 6.10 The Highway Authority does not object to the signage subject to limits on the level of illumination. The condition referred to above would address this.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The proposed signage is acceptable in terms of amenity and public safety subject to a condition requiring that shall not be illuminated.

Case Officer: Steve Vigar

Submitted Details

151638 - STL - 20X01 Pr9 North Elevation dated 4 March 2021 received 4 March 2021

151638 - STL - 20X02 Pr10 South Elevation dated 4 March 2021 received 4 March 2021

151638 - STL - 20X04 Pr8 West Elevation dated 4 March 2021 received 4 March 2021

4219 External Signage Entrance Signage dated 19 August 2020 received 19 January 2021

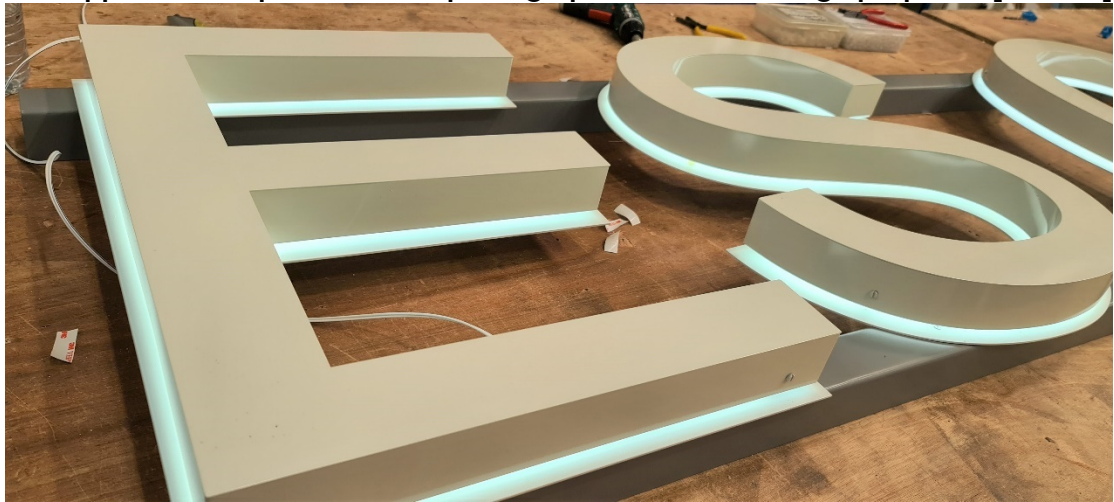
4219 External Signage Entrance Signage dated 19 August 2020 received 19 January 2021

APPENDIX 1: Submitted Details

EXAMPLE SIGNAGE provided by applicant - (different lettering) [BELOW]



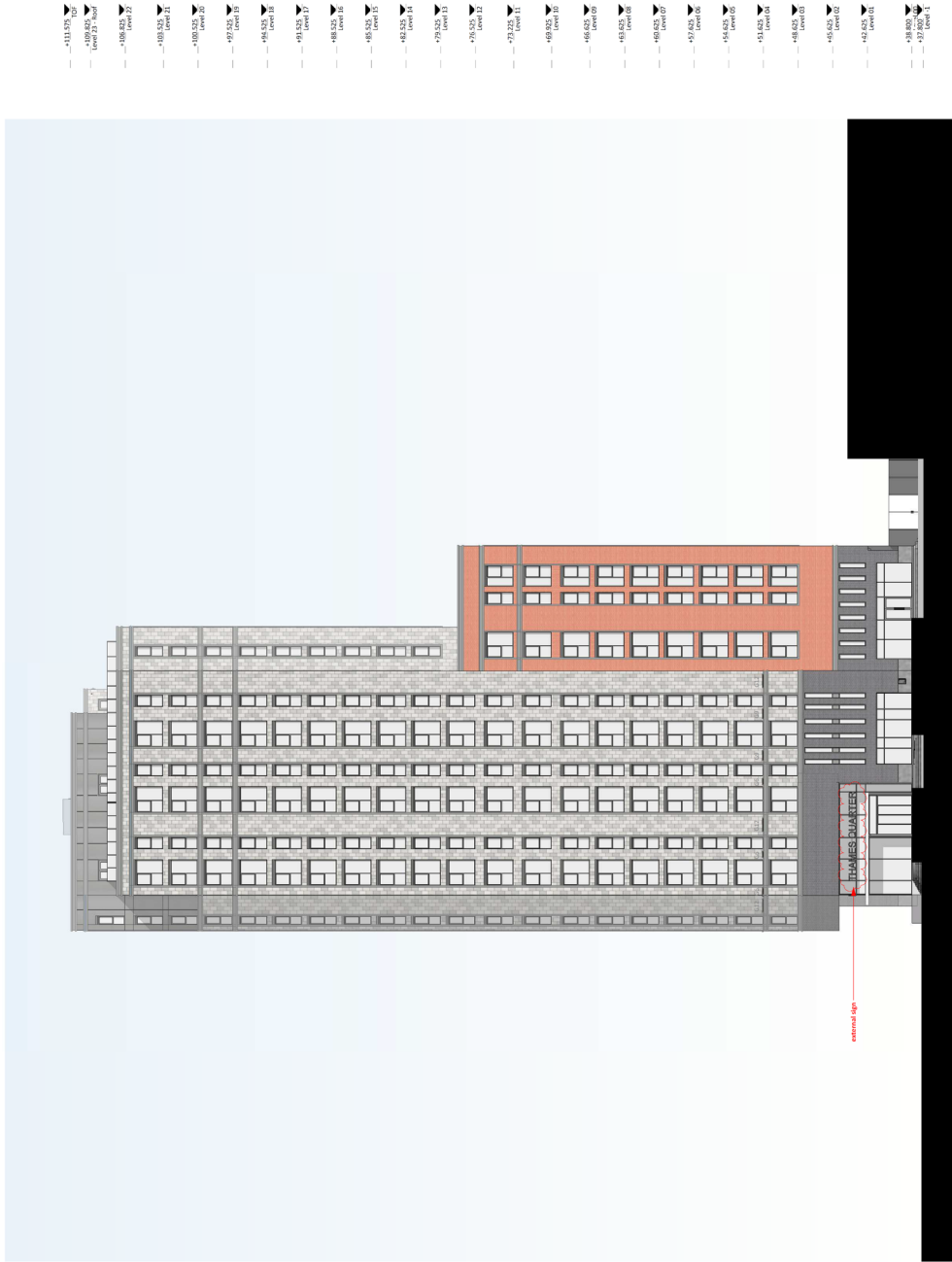
The Applicant has provided this photograph of the actual sign proposed [BELOW]



The Applicant submitted this photograph of light levels being measured [BELOW]



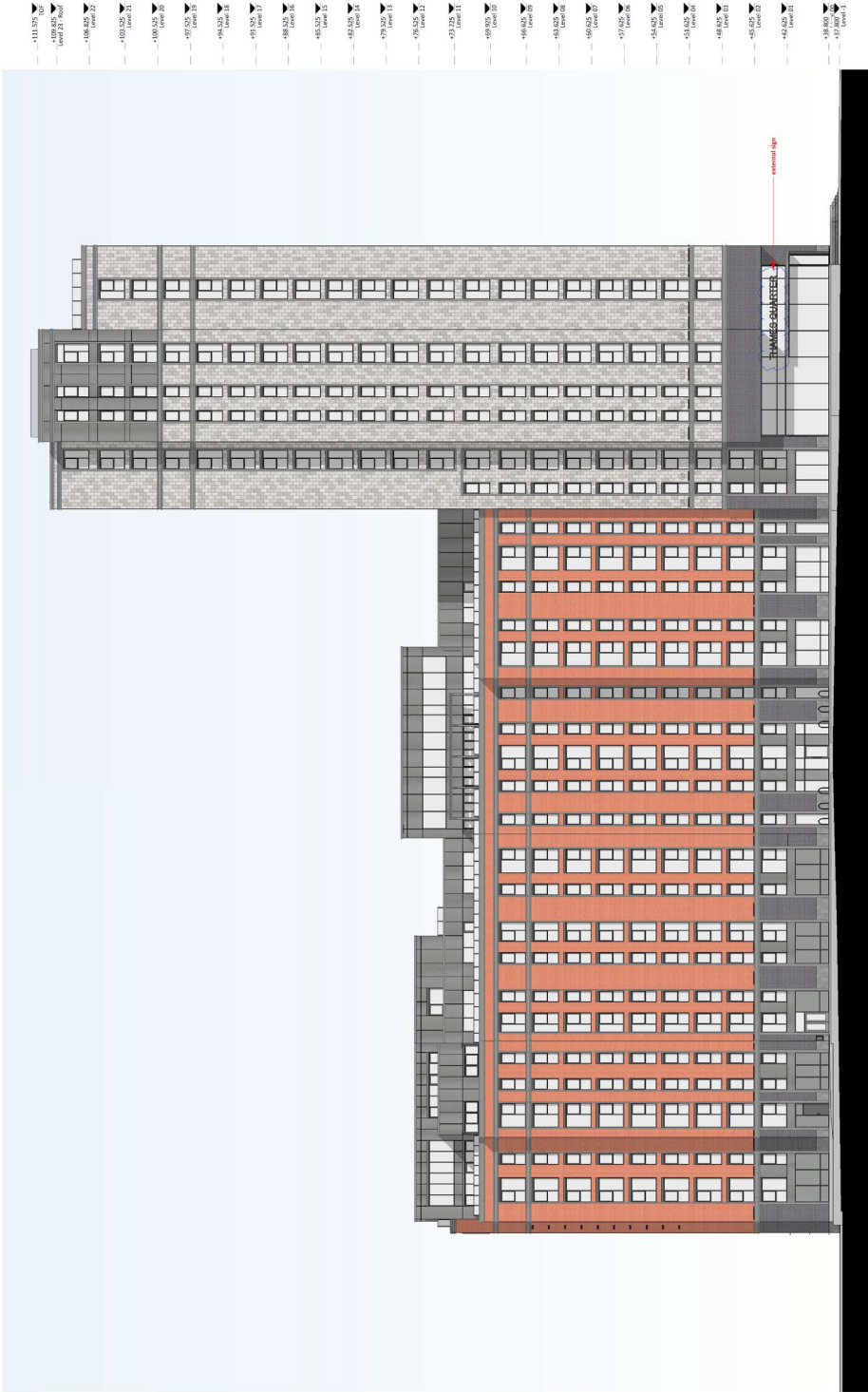
Proposed West Elevation (facing Vastern Rd roundabout)



① West Elevation - NMA
1:200



Proposed South Elevation (facing railway)



Proposed North Elevation (facing Kings Meadow Road)

1 North Elevation - NMA
1:200

Built up Aluminium Letters @ 800mm high - 30mm deep
Powder Coated STD RAL
Fixed with half brackets to Aluminium Panel on building

800mm
10000mm
THAMES QUARTER



visual graphic solutions
branding business

Dwg: 4219 - External Signage

Date: 19/08/20

@ sales@vgsonline.co.uk.

 www.vgsonline.co.uk

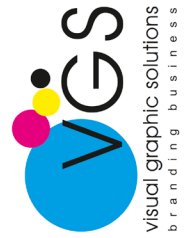
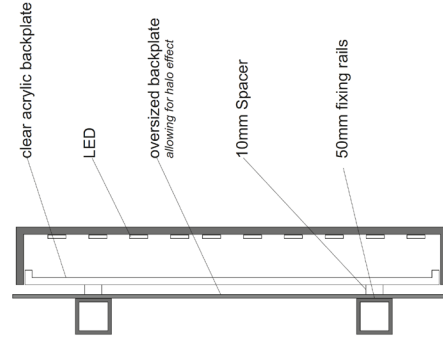
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THE COLOURS SHOWN ON THIS DRAWING ARE AN APPROXIMATION

Signage Detail - South Elevation to Railway

Entrance Signage

4219 - Watkin Jones - Thames Quarter

Built up Aluminium Letters @ 600mm high - 80mm deep
Powder Coated **STD RAL**
LED Halo Illuminated onto powder coated backplate
Fixed onto 50mm x 50mm powder coated rails



Dwg: 4219 - External Signage

Date: 19/08/20

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 www.vgsonline.co.uk

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Signage Detail - Entrance Signage