

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 30 March 2022

Ward: Abbey

App No.: 220294

Address: Bedford Road, Reading, RG1 7EU

Proposal: Installation of Interpretation Board on temporary hoarding on boundary to former Central Swimming Pool site facing the Bedford Road.

Applicant: Reading Borough Council Corporate Property Services

Deadline: 26/04/2022

RECOMMENDATION:

Grant

Conditions

Approved plans

3 years to implement

Materials as proposed

Standard advertisement conditions

Informatives

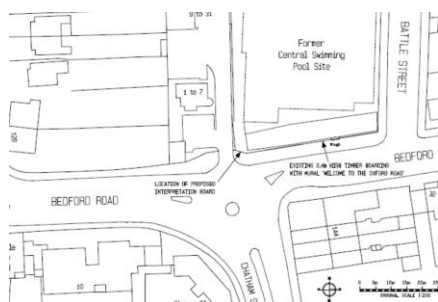
Terms and conditions

Positive & Proactive

Section 59 Highways Act advice

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site is just outside the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area on the existing timber hoarding erected on the site boundary of the former Central Swimming Pool facing Bedford Road, Reading, RG1 7EU.
- 1.2 The application is to be determined by Planning Applications Committee as the applicant is Reading Borough Council.



Site Location Plan



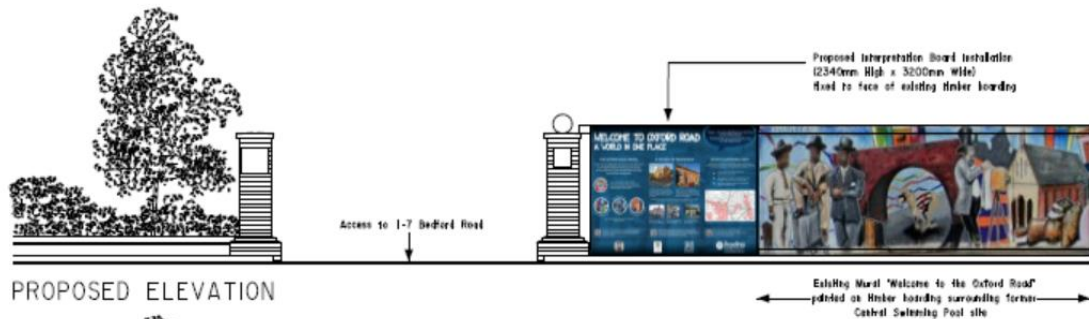
Site photo



Aerial View

2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1 The proposal is for an Interpretation Board which will be printed onto three 3mm thick ACM (Aluminium Composite Material) Di-bond panels, to be secured to the existing timber hoarding using suitable fixings to be located on existing hoardings. It would measure 3.20m wide and 2.34m high.



- 2.2 Submitted Plans and Documentation:
ECD/22/002/01 Elevations viewed from Bedford Road
ECD/22/002/02 Site plan
ECD/22/002/03 Side elevations from access to 1-7 Bedford Road
Location Plan
Block Plan
Planning Statement, 17 February 2022
- 2.3 The Planning Statement explains that in connection with the High Street Heritage Action Programme running in parts of the town centre, including this town centre end of Oxford Road the Council was awarded £9,231 from Historic England to initiate a cultural pilot project in the area.
- 2.4 The purpose of the proposed Interpretation Board is to provide details of the existing graffiti mural painted on the Bedford Road hoarding and also the other Artwork Installations, which were produced as part of the Oxford Road High Street Heritage Action Zone. The installation will be on display for at least until the end of the Oxford Road HSHAZ project, which would be March 2024.”
- 2.5 The application site is on the boundary of the former Central Swimming Pool site. The pool has been demolished and the site is to be redeveloped for residential use.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

None relevant to this application.

4. CONSULTATIONS

Statutory: A site notice was displayed on site.

Non-statutory:

Conservation and Urban Design Officer: No response received at the time of writing this report.

Valuations: No response received at the time of writing this report.

Transport: No response received at the time of writing this report.

Public

Neighbouring properties were notified by letter. No objections have been received at the time of writing this report.

5. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 5.1 The Town and Country Planning (Control of Advertisements) Regulations 2007 apply.
- 5.2 The development plan for this Local Planning Authority is the Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019). The relevant policies are:
 - CC7: Design and the Public Realm
 - CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
 - EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
 - EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas
 - TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
 - OU4: Advertisements

6. APPRAISAL

(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 The main issues are considered to be:
 - a) The effect upon visual amenity and the public realm.
 - b) The effect upon public safety.

a) The effect upon visual amenity and the public realm

- 6.4 The nature of the proposal is one of a clearly defined advertisement scheme to provide information and direction to members of the public regarding the local High Street Heritage Action Zone and other artwork installations. As such the proposed signage would not be comparable to, or open the way for, similar levels of signage outside of such a defined advertisement scheme. Whilst land ownership is not usually a planning consideration, it is relevant to note that the land and structures to which this application relates are controlled by the Council and as such there is an additional level of control of signage.

- 6.5 Policy OU4 of the Reading Local Plan (2019) 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, and will not have detrimental impact on public safety.
- 6.6 The principle of providing the Interpretation board in the selected location has been considered in the context of the site forming part of the public realm and as discussed further below raises no policy concerns and so the structures are therefore acceptable in principle. The site is 80 metres away from the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area and therefore not considered to detract from the conservation area.
- 6.7 The Interpretation board would complement the existing graffiti mural and the appearance would brighten up the corner of the hoarding, providing an interesting and eye catching explanation of other artwork initiatives and located in a position where it would be seen by many members of the public, which is the objective of the scheme. The proposed location on existing hoarding would replace a temporary car park sign to the Battle Street Car park on a plain white background and would be a benefit to the character and appearance of the area. The Interpretation board, being provided on an existing functional structure, makes it an object of interest and fun so would also contribute to the vitality of this area.

b) The effect upon public safety

- 6.8 The siting of the proposed advertisement has been considered by the case officer and is being reviewed by transport development control officers. None of the proposed advertisements or associated structures results in any detrimental impact on sight lines and would ensure sufficient footway is retained for pedestrians. The proposals do not seek to introduce additional illumination and are not considered to represent a distraction to road users.
- 6.9 When assessed for their impact on amenity and public safety, the proposed signage is found to be acceptable and complies with national and local policy.

Impact on neighbours

- 6.10 Officers are satisfied that given the distance from closest residents or occupiers the Interpretation board will not lead to any harm to amenities. Therefore, there is no breach of Policy CC8.

Highway matters

- 6.11 No transport or highways related concerns have been raised, the sign will be flush against the hoarding, should not cause a distraction to drivers and it will not be illuminated. However, an informative is recommended to advise on the need to consider the Highways Act when works are being carried out to install the works to ensure pedestrians and road users are not obstructed and any damage caused is repaired.

Equalities Impact

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

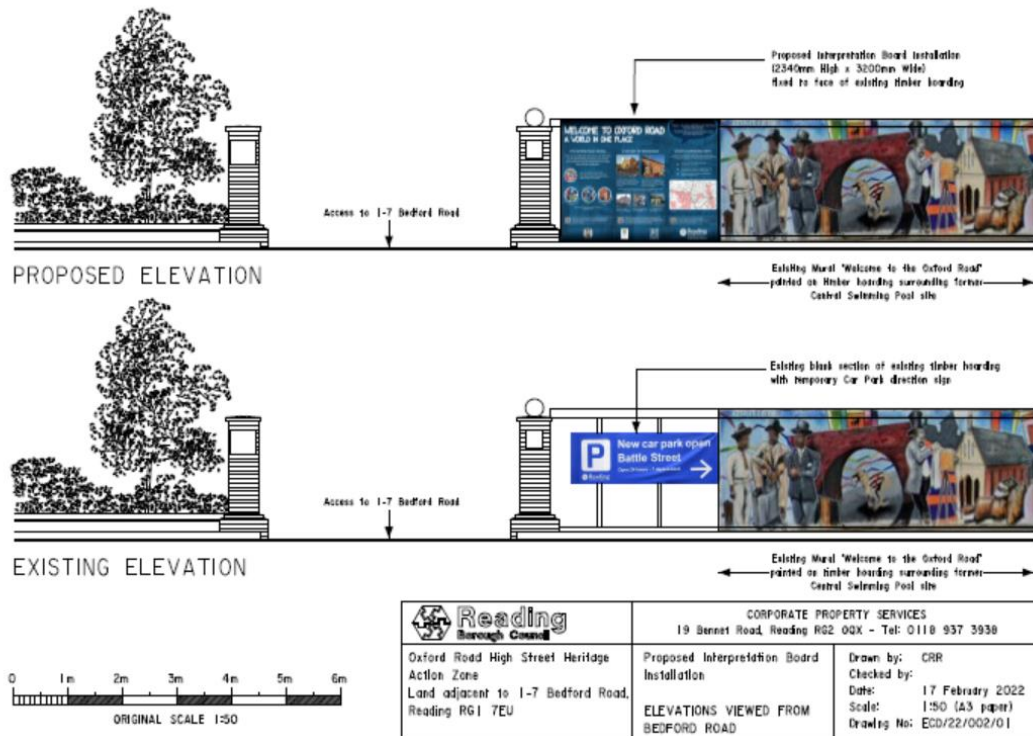
characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the proposed development.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 Overall the conclusion is that the proposed works would not harm or detract from the character of the public realm. The Interpretation board will not be visible from the Conservation area or have any detrimental impact on any historic features or other elements of the historic environment. It would be an improvement in that respect to the public realm and would make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. The proposal is therefore compatible with the aims of Policy OU4, TR3, CC7, EN1 and EN3. It is also clearly relevant that the project is supported by Historic England as part of the local High Street Heritage Action Zone. This proposal has been carefully considered in the context of national and local policy and is recommended to be approved.

Case Officer: Nathalie Weekes

Proposed Plan



Final design Interpretation board

WELCOME TO OXFORD ROAD A WORLD IN ONE PLACE

THE OXFORD ROAD MURAL

This mural celebrates the history and diversity of the Oxford Road community and shows local people from past and present amongst Oxford Road landmarks.

Arnon Lowe (also known as Arnon) painted 'Welcome to Oxford Road' in 2021. Arnon developed the idea with local people, including passers-by who suggested details as he was painting.

What words can you see?

How many different foods can you spot?

How many different jobs can you spot?

Take a selfie with your favourite part of the mural. #HSZAG 8927AGS

A HISTORY OF BEGINNINGS

In 1800 this area was open fields on the edge of town. As Reading's population grew, developers built large family homes along Oxford Road, creating a popular new suburb.

In the 1860s the railway came. The speedy connection to London and the west kickstarted a new industrial era. Factory workers needed homes on terrace streets either side of Oxford Road.

Newcomers have been settling here ever since. Every generation makes a mark with new shops, restaurants, businesses and places of worship.

Jewish families are among the earliest in Reading. Synagogues and houses arrived in the 19th century.

Young people from Ireland and the West Indies came looking for work in the 1930s and 1950s.

More recently Oxford Road has welcomed people from the Middle East and Europe.

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW?

Oxford Road, along with St Mary's Bulbs/Castle Street and Market Place/London Street, is one of more than 60 Heritage Action Zone projects across England. It's funded by Historic England and Reading Borough Council. We are:

- Consulting with local people to find out what improvements they want to see
- Restoring historic buildings and shop fronts to improve our surroundings and preserve them for the future
- Commissioning artworks, like the mural, to share the stories of these historic areas.

Find out more about other artworks. Scan the QR code with your smartphone camera or visit www.reading.gov.uk/readinghighstreet-cultural-programme

During 2020 Reading Museum, the University of Reading and other partners collected local people's memories of Oxford Road. To explore their stories scan the QR code with your smartphone camera or visit www.readingmuseum.org.uk/oxford-road-stories

Find out more about the Heritage Action Zones by scanning the QR code with your smartphone camera or visit www.reading.gov.uk/hazs