

UPDATE REPORT

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 13th November 2019

ITEM NO. 8

Page:

Ward: Abbey

Application No.: 191632/ADV

Address: Various Locations within Reading Town Centre

Proposal: Retention of existing non-illuminated direction, place identification, other feature signs and interpretation panels within public pedestrian areas in Reading town centre and the Abbey Quarter on a permanent basis. Additional directional signage on a permanent basis.

Application target decision date: 3rd December 2019

Recommendation:

As per the main report

1. Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) response

1.1 Further to section 4.3 of the main report, on 12th November 2019, the Conservation Area Advisory Committee (CAAC) has provided comments on the application. CAAC were generally supportive of the proposal, however raised several points for consideration:

- 1) CAAC considers that the existing Abbey Quarter sign (AC1) at Reading station is marred by the large digital advertising screen and so therefore should be repositioned.
- 2) Concern that within the Town Hall Square, old information boards with out of date maps are still in place cluttering up the square, potentially conflicting with the new signs and detracting from their appearance.
- 3) Concern that rubbish bags along Broad Street congregate around lampposts and therefore detract from the appearance of the signs and devalue the experience of the customers using them.
- 4) Considers that this application should take into account the need for and timing of removal of surplus signage in the town centre in order to avoid an over-cluttering of advertising.

1.2 In response to the above, officers consider that there is adequate spacing between the existing Abbey Quarter sign (AC1) and the large digital advertising screen. A distance of around 30m separates the two. It is considered that the Abbey Quarter sign is still visible for pedestrians around the station despite the large advertising screen if standing in close proximity (which is required due to its smaller size). The applicant also stated that a revised location would begin to disrupt the path of signage around the town centre to the Abbey Quarter. Furthermore, applications for advertisement consent can only consider as to whether the sign is acceptable in terms of amenity and public safety. Sign AC1 is considered to be acceptable in both of these regards.

- 1.3 Concern has been raised that out of date advertisements are located within the Town Hall Square and will conflict with the Abbey Quarter signage in this area. The removal of any outdated advertisements cannot be controlled under this application. Officers recommend that this matter could be separately raised with the appropriate department within the Council.
- 1.3 With regards to rubbish bags being left along Broad Street from commercial units and in turn blocking visibility of signage, rubbish bags should only be left in these locations for a short period of time before collection and thus any conflict with signage should be minimal. Again, this matter cannot be controlled under this advertisement consent application.
- 1.4 The views of the Conservation Area Advisory Committee have been acknowledged, but it is considered by officers that the proposed locations of the signs are appropriate for the reasons given above and outlined in the main report. They are not considered to conflict with amenity and public safety policies which advertisement consent can only be assessed under.
- 2.0 **Comments from ‘Terry’s Reading Walkabout’**
- 2.1 Comments were also received from Terry’s Reading Walkabout on 13th November 2019 listing some potential suggestions for improvements to the existing Abbey Quarter signage located around the town centre. The main issues raised were that signs are not always clear and numbered which makes following the route difficult and some signs should be re-located to avoid them being subject to bird deposits.
- 2.2 This application can only assess the positions of the signs proposed in relation to amenity and public safety, as opposed to how well the signs actually inform/ direct members of the public to the Abbey Quarter. This is a separate matter to be considered by the applicant, and the comments raised have been passed on accordingly. Should some signs want to be repositioned following on from these comments then a separate advertisement consent application will need to be made.

Case Officer: Connie Davis