

Addendum to Trinity Digital Screen Panel Report:
Apps refs 12/03408/ADV & 12/03409/FU

The Conservation Officer has raised concerns regarding the proposed architectural composition of the corner, the screen and its impact on the neighbouring conservation area and listed buildings. Each concern is addressed in turn below:

1. The splay is without precedent on Albion St and would change the street pattern:

This site sits on the south-western corner of a crossroads at a point where the conservation area boundary is located. The traditional buildings to the east of Albion St sit on regular right angled corners within the conservation area whereas the larger and more modern buildings to the west occupy an irregular corner arrangement as the junction of Bond St and Albion St is not right-angled. This gives the 2 sides of the street distinctly different characteristics and is clearly a point where the traditional built form meets more contemporary development.

The Next retail unit on the north-western corner already has a double height splay to the ground and first floors in front of which is located a single granite clad column which supports a glazed corner box feature with a projecting eaves line which outlines the extent of the corner. Similarly, the Trinity proposal would also include a splay but this runs further up the building and would sit beneath the projecting part of the ribbon feature and saw-tooth cladding detail which both follow the angle of the corner. The ribbon provides the dominant element of the composition which both defines the corner and helps to reduce the perceived height of the building to a level closer to that of the buildings within the conservation area.

City Exchange house forms the backdrop to this corner and this is notable for its proliferation of glazed 45 degree angled corners which run for the full height of the building. In addition, the new glazed build-outs into Albion St, close to the proposed screen location, also contain a 45 degree glazed splay end. Splays are therefore a feature of this building, as is the use of the ribbon device to turn the major street corners. This can be seen at both the western and primarily eastern ends of the Boar Lane elevation where the ribbon also oversails the splayed glazing and stone elevations beneath. These corners all exhibit characteristics of the same unifying architectural language which will, ultimately, tie the whole building together.

The trinity splay and ribbon would therefore relate well to the modern building to the north as well as appearing to reduce the scale of the development to be closer to that of the conservation area to the east. Rather than appearing as an alien element, the Trinity proposal would therefore help to tie this crossroads together by responding to all of its neighbours.

As set out in the main Trinity report, Members have already considered this issue at pre-application stage and concluded that a splay in this location was acceptable in principle.

2. The proposed splay appears wider than the ground floor bays making the composition look top heavy:

The splay does not sit squarely above the ground floor bay because there is no bay immediately beneath it. This is because the Boots entrance is being cut back by one bay to allow greater public realm area and a more gradual grading of the street levels. This exposes the structural columns which are to be reclad. The upper level glazing is fully contained by the ribbon feature which forms a separate and distinct piece of the elevation. This will be visually supported by the columns beneath following the same principle as the Next unit opposite. The computer generated images produced to support the application show this clearly and these will be presented to Members at Panel.

As the ground floor is being cut back by one bay the fact that the building immediately above this is proposed to be cut back as well, means that the upper floors will actually have a better relationship with the ground floor. Therefore, rather than over-dominating it or appearing to be top heavy, it will actually improve the architectural composition, with the ribbon feature creating the top, the splay the middle and the cutback retail frontage and columns, the base with the advantage of creating a greater amount of public realm in front of what is likely to become a busy entrance to the Trinity scheme.

3. The screen with the splay, would harm the character and appearance of the conservation area and unduly dominate the setting of the listed building on the opposite corner of the street junction:

The proposal is for a new form of advertising which would attract attention due to its reliance on moving images. However, this area is clearly commercial in character, where both retail signage and window displays predominate. This creates a lively and vibrant street scene with an undoubtedly retail character. The screen has been designed to be well integrated within a substantial and entirely glazed background containing a food offer and this will appear animated for a considerable period of the day and well into the evening. It is this view which would present itself to the Conservation Area and listed buildings contained therein. It is considered that, when viewed within the context of this background activity, a screen is entirely appropriate in the setting of a major commercial centre.

An important element in the character of the Leeds City Centre Conservation Area is Leeds' historic street pattern, which consists of a grid of long north-south and east-west routes and these give rise to long distance views. The site location, and the positioning of the screen on a splay at the side of a street, rather than perpendicular to the end of the street, would reduce its impact due to the oblique angle from which it would be viewed and is therefore not considered to detract from the important long distant views

within the conservation area. This is the case for the longest view of the screen which is from Commercial St and even then, the distance from which it can be seen is restricted due to the subtle bend in the road which means that the screen cannot be seen from the intersection with Briggate to the east.

Due to the topography of the street, which slopes upwards to the north, and the presence of existing buildings, views of the screen along Albion Street would become increasingly partial and obscured the further north it is viewed from.

For the above reasons it is considered that the proposal would preserve the character of the adjoining conservation area and the setting of the nearby listed buildings.

Conclusion:

English Heritage and CABE advice is that when assessing impacts and the potential harm of large screens on the historic environment, the relationship to the wider historic and townscape context should be taken into account. Whilst there are listed buildings and a conservation area adjacent this site, this location is part of a vibrant commercial centre characterised by an array of commercial signage and activity both at ground and upper floor levels. In this context and for the above design reasons, it is considered that the proposal would preserve the character of the conservation area and listed buildings and would be acceptable.