

Response Note to Environmental Health Officer – 1017 Oxford Road – AGM 2023 027

Planning Reference: 230485

This Note is a direct response to the comments received from the Environmental Health Officer, as part of their consultation comments, which were received on the 23rd of May 2023. Within their response, they state:

“Please can the applicant provide some information on how the garden will be used as part of the proposed change of use, and how noise from use of the garden will be managed.”

The Applicant has provided the following comments:

Once the building had ceased operational use as a Bed & Breakfast in 2015, the property was used as a large ‘House of Multiple Occupancy’ (albeit without formal planning permission). Although a subsequent investigation was held by the Planning Enforcement team in 2016, no further action was taken as it was determined that the use of the property, as a large HMO, is likely to be no more intense than its authorised use as a hotel. However, no formal change of use application was made thereafter.

The building was granted an HMO Licence by Reading Council to be occupied by 24 adults – who were often placed specifically by Reading Borough Council. These residents were predominately homeless adults who suffered from sustained drug and alcohol addiction. The noise they caused (amongst other issues) was therefore often protracted and significant.

The proposed development, as part of this current application, is to turn the property into a respite care centre for children with a diagnosis of a learning difficulty.

It is therefore considered that this change of use application offers the opportunity for the previously existing situation to be dramatically improved. Firstly, the number of occupants staying overnight is reduced notably to 8 children. This is a marked reduction from the 24 adults previously allowed. Secondly, many of the children that we take in are non-verbal, with some confined to wheelchairs and thus their ability to access all parts of the garden will be restricted.

It is important to note (and stress) that the proposed development is for a respite care facility – this is a dynamic environment where children in our occupation have varying lengths of stay. For example, for some this stay could be only for their tea, or to do some homework after school, and of course (in some cases) to stay over and provide a period of respite to their parents / carers. It is therefore believed that children will rarely be out in the garden.

At all times (whether they be inside or outside), the children will be accompanied and looked after by at least one adult; in some instances (and dependant on the child) this may increase to two adults. This is in-line with official guidelines and codes of practice and must be strictly adhered to. Should any child be outside, their dedicated carer(s) will act as the necessary supervisor. Any excessive noise will be dealt with immediately and in the rare event that a child is deemed to be unreasonably loud, it would be appropriate for them to be taken inside. However, and to stress again, due to the fact that many children in our occupation are non-verbal this issue is not deemed to be relevant.

Internally, Ofsted (the governing body) stipulate that no children’s home is allowed to have single glazing as part of the facility. We have therefore embarked on a programme that has seen all the windows replaced with double glazing and this suitably confines any noise. Furthermore, we propose to use Amtico throughout the main reception rooms, as well as the hallways - this would have a noise reducing effect also.