

Planning Statement

Reading Scouts and Guides HQ

April 2023

Turley

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Client

Reading Scout and Guide Headquarters Joint Management Committee

Our reference

REAS3005

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1. Introduction

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Turley on behalf of our client, Reading Scouts and Guides, in support of a full planning application for the demolition of existing buildings and structures and replacement with a new 500 sq.m. building fit for purposed at Reading Scouts and Guides Headquarters, 163 Northcourt Avenue, Reading, RG2 7HG.

1.2 The proposed description of development is as follows:

“Demolition of the existing structure on site, and the erection of a two storey 500 sq.m (Use Class F2) building with associated parking and landscaping”.

1.3 The material supporting the application comprises the following, which should be read in conjunction with this Planning Statement.

Plan / Document	Reference
Application Forms	
CIL Forms	
Planning Statement	Prepared by Turley
Site Location Plan	Prepared by Cooper Baillie
Proposed Site Plan	Prepared by Cooper Baillie
Proposed Plans, Elevations, Sections and Streetscenes	Prepared by Cooper Baillie
Existing Plans and Elevations	Prepared by Cooper Baillie
Design and Access Statement	Prepared by Cooper Baillie
3D Visual	Prepared by Cooper Baillie
Existing Plans	Prepared by Cooper Baillie
Topographical Survey	Prepared by Trigon
Air Quality Statement	Prepared by Abbey Consultants
Transport Statement	Prepared by ALP
Engineering Strategy	Prepared by ALP
Drainage Construction Details	Prepared by ALP
Kerb and Materials Construction Details	Prepared by ALP
Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy	Prepared by ALP
Arboricultural Impact Assessment/Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan	Prepared by ACD

Interim Ecological Impact Assessment	Prepared by ACD
UKHab Habitat Types Condition Sheet	Prepared by ACD
Biodiversity Net Gain Metric	Prepared by ACD
Archaeological Desk-based Assessment	Prepared by Thames Valley Archaeological Services

1.4 This Planning Statement is structured as follow:

Section 2 of this Statement summarises the site location and its context, and details some of the key constraints

Section 3 provides further details of the preapplication engagement with Reading Borough Council

Section 4 details the proposed development

Section 5 details the relevant development plan and national policy and guidance context

Section 6 provides a summary of the key material considerations

Section 7 provides a conclusion

2. The Site and Context

The Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 The site comprises a number of existing single storey buildings which are collectively used as the headquarters for the Reading Scouts and Guides, Northcourt Avenue.
- 2.2 The site is located approximately 3 miles to the south of Reading town centre, and approximately 1 mile south of the University of Reading, the site is approximately 0.147ha in size.
- 2.3 The site is located on the east side of Northcourt Avenue, close to the junction with Cressingham Road which leads onto the A327 Shinfield Road.
- 2.4 Immediately north of the site is the Premier Northcourt News convenience shop, and south of the site is Reading Bedding on Cressingham Road.
- 2.5 To the east, the site shares its rear boundary with adjacent residential properties along Shinfield Road. To the east of the site, across Northcourt Avenue road are further residential properties.
- 2.6 Northcourt Avenue is predominately residential in character, with a strong mix of semi-detached, semidetached terraced, and detached housing. A large proportion of the dwellings in the area consists of 2- storey residential housing, with a few 3-storey properties in the close vicinity. However, the road is more mixed use at the junction with Cressingham Road where the site is located. Here, the character of the locality is mixed use with several commercial/retail uses within the immediate area. These include Avenue Food and Wine, Northcourt Garage, Reading Bedding, and Premier Northcourt News Convenience Store.

Site Context

- 2.7 Reading Scouts and Guides Headquarters have been provided with an exciting opportunity to redevelop 163 Northcourt Avenue, having successfully passed the criteria check with a bid to the Youth Investment Fund, and their application now passing to the “interview” stage.
- 2.8 The opportunity would create a space which is flexible to accommodate their requirements, but also offer wider community benefits. As a charity, the concept has been subject to much debate internally (requirements, facilities, outreach, location) and it was concluded that their ‘home’ is Northcourt Avenue and there is a definite ‘need’ for the continuation of this facility in the area, being one identified as having a high percentage of disadvantaged youth.
- 2.9 The existing building serving the Scouts and Guides Headquarters has reached the end of its life, with maintenance costs to keep the building in useable condition becoming increasingly more expensive given the age of the building and the rise in material costs in recent months. Instead of the traditional fundraising that the charity would have to undertake to raise the funds to redevelop the site normally, which would take an

extortionate amount of time to provide the use of the building for the advantage of the youth in the area, the Youth Investment Fund provides an opportunity to obtain funds in a period where time is of the essence.

- 2.10 The Reading Scouts and Guides Headquarters site was purchased in 1951 from the British Legion. At the time, the site consisted of an existing hut with adjoining Nissen Hut. The existing hut was erected by the Grosvenor Club with new hard tennis court in 1924/25. In 1959 a planning application was made to demolish the Nissen Hut and replace this with a permanent built structure linking to the small hall. This was completed by 1963, and the uniform supplies moved into the new hall where it has remained since and ran by volunteers. At the same time the tennis courts were grassed over for tent pitching, and in 2002 the site saw the front boarding renewed, new windows to the small hall and floor renewal to the large hall.
- 2.11 On a permanent basis, the headquarters are now home to the 9th Reading Brownies, 9th Reading Guides and 52nd Reading Beavers, Cubs and Scouts. The 9th Reading Brownies have been in existence for over 60 years, meeting at the headquarters for much of that time, and the 9th Reading Guides were registered in 1919 and moved to the headquarters in 1962 where they have been based since. The 52nd Reading Scout group have been in existence since 1925 and have become one of the most successful in the Reading Central district catering for all sections of the Scout Association from ages 6 to 18. The headquarter building has seen many worthwhile improvements in the last few years, particularly the grassed area and campfire, enabling the youngsters to full appreciate the aims that Scouting subscribe to. Alongside, this the indoor space has provided valuable use for indoor activities as well. At the moment, the headquarters, within reason, are available 24/7 365 days a year for use. The uniform supplies are open Tuesdays 7pm – 8.30pm, Wednesdays 4pm – 5pm and Saturdays 10am – 12 midday and 2.30pm – 5pm.
- 2.12 The structures on site are now dated, and maintenance costs are becoming increasingly more expensive given the age of the buildings. The Friday Guides usage has tailed off as the facilities are increasingly not meeting their needs – they have confirmed that they want to come back; and the improvements proposed would meet those needs. In addition to this, the current situation means that a lack of new users are unable to be accommodated due to the limited and sometimes inappropriate facilities; and the current upkeep. Most recently a junior judo club approached the headquarters however the inability to accommodate the requirements of the club meant that an opportunity was missed to widen the use of the building for the advantage of the youth in the area.
- 2.13 In addition, Reading Scouts and Guides Headquarters sits within the Church ward within Reading. Reading has, within a small geographic area, some of the most affluent and the most deprived neighbourhoods in the whole of the Thames Valley. According to the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019, Reading as a whole is ranked the 141st (rank of average score) most deprived out of 317 local authorities in the country, compared with 142nd most deprived in 2015. There are 5 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in Reading within the most deprived 10% nationally, compared with 2 in 2015. 2 of the identified LSOAs in 2019 are located within the Church ward. The proposed redevelopment of the headquarters would offer wider community benefits which will

enable the destination to have a broader age range and use reach to benefit the wider community in an area with high levels of deprivation.

- 2.14 The proposal is supported by the NPPF which emphasises (para 93) the importance attached by the Government to provide the social, recreational, and cultural facilities and services the community needs, that planning policies and decisions should: a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments; b) take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community.

Statutory Designations

- 2.15 A review of Reading Borough Council's adopted policy map identifies the following below constraints within or in close proximity to the site:
- The eastern region of the site is situated within an Air Quality Management Area (Policy EN15);
 - An existing or proposed Green Link policy is situated towards the south of the site along Cressingham Road (Policy EN12);
 - A designated cycle route runs parallel to the western boundary of the site along Northcourt Avenue (Policy TR4);
 - An area of Identified Biodiversity Interest is positioned 75m to the west of the site (Policy EN12);
 - A Major Landscape Feature (East Reading Wooded Ridgeline) is position 75m to the west of the site (Policy EN13);
 - A Classified Highway Network runs parallel to the east and south of the site on Cressingham Road and Shinfield Road (Policy TR3).
- 2.16 In addition, the site is not within a Conservation Area and there are no heritage assets within or in close proximity.
- 2.17 The site is within Flood Zone 1 and has a low risk of flooding.
- 2.18 A number of TPO trees are identified within the Council's Tree Preservation Order Directory along Northcourt Avenue, however there are no protected trees on site.

Planning History

- 2.19 A review of the Council's planning register does not identify any relevant planning permissions for the site.

Statement of Community Involvement

- 2.20 The applicant has identified a number of neighbours early on in the process that would be close enough to the site to potentially be affected by the proposed development. These include:
- 6, 8, 8a, and 12 Cressingham Road
 - 14 Cressingham Road (Reading Bedding)
 - 82 Northcourt Avenue
 - 159 Northcourt Avenue (Premier Store); and
 - Northcourt Garage
- 2.21 Given the size of the redevelopment for the existing use on site, it is considered that the application has undertaken a comprehensive strategy for consultation with the local community. This engagement has enable the project team to build and understanding of the local context and raise awareness of the proposals.
- 2.22 In using a more traditional method of consultation (face to face), the applicant has taken an inclusive and accessible approach to consultation which has allowed those to provide initial feedback on the proposal.
- 2.23 It is therefore considered that the engagement undertaken with the local community has been meaningful and effective.

3. Pre-Application Engagement with Reading Borough Council

- 3.1 A Pre-Application Advice Request was issued to Reading Borough Council on 27th February 2023. The submitted Pre-application request described the site and its context, set out the development proposal and summarised the planning policies which were considered relevant to the scheme. The pre-application request was also supported by a suite of documents including: Preapplication cover letter prepared by Turley, Topo Survey, and Proposed plans (ref. CB_01_316_SHHQ_01).
- 3.2 The preapplication was subsequently validated on the 22nd March 2023 and revised drawings were submitted to Reading Borough Council for consideration (ref. CB_01_316_SHHQ_01 rev A)
- 3.3 Formal written advice was issued by the case officer, Joel Grist, on 17th April 2023. Within the written advice it was noted that the principle of development was acceptable in line with Policy OU1.
- 3.4 The preapplication advice also outlined several recommendations to be considered as part of the proposal. The table below summarises these comments and explains how the final application submission has sought to positively respond to and address these issues.

Pre-Application Comments	Applicant Response
The proposed building would appear to be similar in height to neighbouring development however it would be useful to submit a proposed street scene plan as part of a full application to assess the height of the proposed development in the context of the surrounding area.	Proposed street scenes have been submitted with the application to demonstrate the height of the proposed building in the context of its surrounding.
The proposed building includes skylights in both side roof slopes which appear to be positioned above 2m head height on the first floor however it would be useful to submit a proposed section with a full application to confirm this in order to ensure there is no harmful overlooking, perceived overlooking or loss of privacy to neighbouring residential dwellings.	Submitted with this application as proposed sections which demonstrate that the rooflights would be located above 2m head height to prevent any overlooking or loss of privacy on surrounding neighbours. XXXX
The enhanced boundary treatment along the southern boundary appears likely to screen any harmful views towards the neighbouring dwellings along Cressingham Road or their gardens, however details of this planting should be confirmed in the	To support the submission of this application, tree/landscaping treatment has been submitted.

tree and landscaping/boundary treatment information submitted with the application.

It is noted that the proposed building includes a kitchen area therefore details should be submitted outlining whether hot food preparation will take place alongside any flue/ventilation plant that would subsequently be required.	Use of the kitchen would be at most used for small Scout/Guide groups to cook something there. This would be minimal use of the kitchens that would not require any flue/plant to be installed.
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The EHO also noted that the application should include details of how smoke will be prevented from impacting nearby neighbours which could include details of how often the fire pit would be used and what fuel would be used to minimise smoke.	The Planning Statement addresses smoke concerns and sets out the frequency of use alongside fuel type.
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in line with the requirements of Policy EN15, a full planning application will need to be accompanied by an assessment of potential air quality impacts resulting from the fire pit in the rear external area.	Submitted with this application is an Air Quality Statement prepared by ACCON.
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The full planning application should also include details of any proposed external artificial lighting including their positioning, lux levels and how they will be controlled to avoid harmful light spill into neighbouring dwellings.	At present there is a single 100w floodlight to the rear of the building, which is infrequently used. External lighting is proposed for security lighting for the building however this would be controlled by a PIR sensor and therefore would only be activated by movement and would not be used for a long period of time. In addition, there is sufficient distance between the building and neighbouring dwellings that the intermittent light would not present an adverse impact on neighbouring amenity.
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3.5 As demonstrated above, the comments received by the Council have been considered and incorporated into this planning application submission.

4. The Proposed Development

4.1 The description of development, as indicated on the application form, is as follows:

“Demolition of the existing structure on site, and the erection of a two storey 500 sq.m fit for purpose building with associated parking and landscaping.”

4.2 The proposed new building comprises the following elements:

- 220 sq.m in additional floorspace
- 122sq.m main hall
- 55sq.m small hall
- Office/Reception
- Kitchen area (ground floor) and kitchenette (first floor)
- 55 sq.m Uniform and ancillaries supply area with changing rooms
- 2 additional meeting rooms
- Office area as existing
- 2 seating/breakout areas
- Storage areas (increase in 23 sq.m plus eaves storage)
- Lift
- 6 cycle stands for 12 bicycles
- Visitor parking
- Retention of existing side vehicular access

4.3 At present, the indoor storage capacity for the site is extremely limited. This has meant that the majority of kit has had to be stored outside in the rear garden within containers. The result of having to do so has seen kit and equipment (such as tents) damaged as a result of damp, alongside a higher security risk of the kit being stolen, which has seen further increasing costs for the charity.

4.4 In increasing the floorspace within the building this has meant that the kit currently outside can be brought inside and better accommodate and store equipment and facilities. As a result, this also makes use of the eaves that would otherwise be an inefficient use of habitable space and removes the need for storage containers within the garden that have an adverse impact on the appearance of the area.

- 4.5 Additional details in relation to, and in support of, the description of the proposed development can be found within the Design and Access Statement, prepared by CooperBaille, which also accompanies the application submission.

Uniform and Ancillaries Supplies

- 4.6 The area used to provide these to Reading Scouts and Guides would be brought to the front of the building and would benefit from an improved user experience with larger changing rooms. Its size would increase in footprint to 55sq.m with 5sq.m of storage to the rear for overstock.
- 4.7 The area is an integral use for the site, with Scouts and Guides from the Reading area and further afield being able to source items for their Scout/Guide experience. Not only this, but the uniform and ancillaries' supplies will help in ensuring that costs for the charity are covered so that they can continue to provide the youth of the area to come and enjoy as part of the Scout Association.
- 4.8 The area would have its own separate access from Northcourt Avenue, however an internal access door into the main hall area is also provided for those that require use of both areas. It currently is and would remain run by volunteers.

5. Planning Policy Context

5.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states that:

“Regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.”

5.2 The site is under the jurisdiction of Reading Borough Council and the relevant Development Plan at the time of submission of the planning application consists of the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019).

5.3 Other material considerations include the following:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)
- Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)
- Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)

The Development Plan

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

5.4 The following policies that are of relevance to the consideration of this development are set out below:

5.5 **Policy CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development** states that a positive approach will be taken towards development proposals that reflect the strategy.

5.6 **Policy CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction** sets out that minor non-residential development are required to meet the most up to date BREEAM ‘very good’ standard as a minimum.

5.7 **Policy CC3: Adaption to Climate Change** states that all development will demonstrate how they have been designed to incorporate measures to adapt to climate change. Such measures will include orientation of buildings, resilience to climate change, use of trees and planting for shading, and drainage systems to minimise the impact of surface water runoff.

5.8 **Policy CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage** states that development should demonstrate measures to minimise the generation of waste and promote sustainable approached to waste management.

5.9 **Policy CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development** advises that the scale and density of development will be related to its level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport to a range of services and facilities, with the densest and largest scale development taking place in the most accessible locations.

- 5.10 **Policy CC7: Design and the Public Realm** - states that development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form, including layout – urban structure and urban grain; landscape; density and mix; scale – height and massing; and architectural detail and materials will be assessed to ensure that the development proposed makes a positive contribution.
- 5.11 **Policy CC8: Safeguarding Amenity** sets out a range of amenity matters that would need to be addressed through a planning application to ensure that the living environment for existing and new residential properties is acceptable.
- 5.12 **Policy EN2: Areas of Archaeological Significance** states that applicants should identify and evaluate sites of archaeological significance by consulting the Historic Environment Record. This will require an assessment of the archaeological impacts of development proposals to be submitted before the planning application is determined. Planning permission will not be granted in cases where the assessment of the archaeological impacts is inadequate.
- 5.13 **Policy EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network** states that on all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity, and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible.
- 5.14 **Policy EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodlands** seeks to protect trees within the borough from damage or removal where they are of importance, and Reading's vegetation cover will be extended. New development shall make provision for tree retention and planting within the application site, particularly on the street frontage, or off-site in appropriate situations, to improve the level of tree coverage within the Borough.
- 5.15 **Policy EN15: Air Quality** seeks to ensure that development within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) that would detrimentally affect air quality will not be permitted unless the effect is mitigated.
- 5.16 **Policy EN18: Flooding and Drainage** states that development will be directed to areas at lowest risk of flooding in the first instance. Smaller schemes are encouraged to incorporate SuDS where possible.
- 5.17 **Policy TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy** states that proposed development should contribute appropriately to meeting the objectives of the most up-to-date Local Transport Plan or any successor document.
- 5.18 **Policy TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway Related Matters** states that in determining proposals involving a new or altered access onto the transport network, improvement works to the transport network, the creation of new transport infrastructure or the generation of additional trips on the transport network, consideration will be given to the effect on safety, congestion and the environment.
- 5.19 **Policy TR4: Cycle Routes and Facilities** seeks to ensure that development will make full use of opportunities to improve access for cyclists to, from and within the development and to integrate cycling through the provision of new facilities.

- 5.20 Policy TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and EV Charging** seeks to ensure that development provides car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of the locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport.
- 5.21 Policy OU1: New and Existing Community Facilities** states that proposals for new, extended or improved community facilities will be acceptable, particularly where this will involve co-location of facilities on a single site. Proposals for on-site intensification of important facilities, such as schools and healthcare uses, will be supported, subject to other policies in the plan. On site intensification of some facilities may result in some loss of open areas. This may be acceptable where the impact on open areas is minimised and the area has no specific use, or where that use can satisfactorily be accommodated elsewhere on the site, subject to other policies in the plan. New community facilities should be located where there is a choice of means of travel (including walking and cycling), and in existing centres where possible.

Material Considerations

National Planning Policy Framework (2021)

- 5.22** The revised National Planning Policy Framework (the 'NPPF') was published in July 2021. The Framework covers a range of issues to promote sustainable growth and protect the environment. The following paragraphs of the NPPF are considered of particular relevance to the determination of this application.
- 5.23 Paragraph 7** of the Framework sets out that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development.
- 5.24 Paragraph 8** of the Framework establishes that there are three overarching objectives to achieving sustainable development: an economic, social and environmental objective.
- 5.25 Paragraph 10** states that at the heart of the framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development.
- 5.26 Paragraph 11** sets out that, for decision taking, this means:
- *“approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or*
 - *where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out of date, granting permission unless:*
 - *i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or*

- *ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole”*

- 5.27 **Paragraph 47** states that planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible, and within statutory timescales unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing.
- 5.28 **Paragraph 92** sets out that planning policies and decision should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction, are safe and accessible, and enable and support healthy lifestyles.
- 5.29 **Paragraph 93** of the Framework states that to provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs planning policies and decision should (a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments; and (c) guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community’s ability to meet its day-to-day needs;

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

- 5.30 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) was launched by DCLG on 6 March 2014 as a web-based resource to bring together planning practice guidance for England in an accessible and usable way.
- 5.31 The PPG sets out guidance on a wide range of topics and due regard has been paid to these as appropriate in the development of the proposals.

Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)

- 5.32 The SPD sets out the guidance on the levels of parking required as part of new developments.

Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)

- 5.33 This document aims to promote high standards of Sustainable Design and Construction, in order to guide policies, set out in the Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy.

Emerging Local Plan Review

- 5.34 A review of the Local Plan was undertaken in March 2023, with 45 of the 90 policies identified as in need of updating.
- 5.35 Public consultation (Reg. 18) on this Local Plan review is due to be held in late 2023. This is expected to be a high-level route map for the Local Plan review before detailed policies are drafted subject to consultation in autumn 2024 (Reg. 19).

5.36 At this stage, the Local Plan Review holds no weight.

6. Planning Assessment

- 6.1 The following Section of this Statement provides consideration of the application proposals against the identified planning policy context and takes account of material considerations. Matters concerning the principle of development are considered, before the assessment moves to evaluate detailed and technical matters.

Principle of Development

- 6.2 The principle of development largely relates to Policy OU1: New and Existing Community Facilities, which states:

“Proposals for new, extended or improved community facilities will be acceptable, particularly where this will involve co-location of facilities on a single site. Proposals for on-site intensification of important facilities, such as schools and healthcare uses, will be supported, subject to other policies in the plan. Proposals for additional development for further and higher education will only be acceptable where it can be demonstrated that it would not lead to a material increase in the need for student accommodation, or that it will be supported by an appropriate increase in existing or planned student accommodation.

On-site intensification of some facilities, particularly schools, may result in some loss of open areas. This may be acceptable where the impact on open areas is minimised, and the area has no specific use, or where that use can satisfactorily be accommodated elsewhere on the site, subject to other policies in the plan. The above does not include loss of sports pitches and playing fields, which should only be developed where:

- a) an assessment clearly shows the area to be surplus to requirements; or*
- b) the loss would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or*
- c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the needs for which clearly outweigh the loss.*

New community facilities should be located where there is a choice of means of travel (including walking and cycling), and in existing centres where possible.

Where a proposal for a new school meets a clear need, and it would otherwise accord with national and local policy, it will be acceptable on sites identified for residential or other development.

Proposals involving the redevelopment of existing community facilities for non-community uses will not be permitted, unless it can be clearly demonstrated that there is no longer a need to retain that facility.”

- 6.3 The proposed development would improve an already existing community facility and would provide an opportunity to widen the use of the building for increased community use, particularly for the advantage of the youth in the area.
- 6.4 In addition, the existing Scout and Guides use would continue, alongside the Little Owls Preschool that would provide a co-location facilities on a single site. The opportunity to

also provide community space for other community groups would increase the site's co-location status.

- 6.5 The proposed increase in building footprint on site would result in a level of onsite intensification, however this would not result in a loss of open area as set out in policy OU1. It is recognised that proposals for onsite intensification will be supported, subject to other policies in this plan. Supporting documents, alongside the remainder of the planning assessment section of this statement, submitted with this application demonstrate that the proposal would not result in an intensification of the site that would have an adverse impact on the surrounding area or conflict with other policies within the development plan relevant to the proposal.
- 6.6 In redeveloping the site this would allow for the accommodation of groups associated with the Scouts which currently cannot use the facility as a result of the poor quality of the building. Therefore, whilst the increase would be considered as intensification, the rebuild would allow for all of the Scout groups to be accommodated efficiently and effectively.
- 6.7 As such, it is considered that the proposal is in accordance with policy OU1 and is acceptable in principle.

Design

- 6.8 Policy CC7: Design and the Public Realm sets out that development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form, including layout – urban structure and urban grain; landscape; density and mix; scale – height and massing; and architectural detail and materials will be assessed to ensure that the development proposed makes a positive contribution to character, continuity and enclosure, public realm, ease of movement, legibility, adaptability and diversity.
- 6.9 The proposed external materials would largely consist of stretcher bond masonry brickwork, with horizontal composite cladding with matching trim to windows and 2-part profile to corners. Mock tudor boarding is also proposed. Window and door frames would be UPVC, with Aluminium bifold doors to the rear elevation. Fascia and soffits would be UPVC.
- 6.10 The proposed building would have a pitched roof and would increase in height to 2 storeys. There are a variety of roof types along Northcourt Avenue, with dwellings predominately 2- 2.5 storeys in height, that the proposed building would not appear out of character within the street scene.
- 6.11 In addition, the use of cladding and brickwork is a common feature along Northcourt Avenue and therefore the appearance of the building is considered to complement the existing palette within the area and would have an adverse impact on the street scene, or the character of the area. Submitted with the application are proposed street scenes that demonstrate the materials within the area and that the proposed materials would be similar in appearance.

- 6.12 It is considered that the proposed development would be in accordance with policy CC7.
- 6.13 Policy CC8: Safeguarding Amenity sets out a range of amenity matters that would need to be addressed through a planning application to ensure that the living environment for existing and new residential properties is acceptable.
- 6.14 The new purpose fit building would be rectangular in size with a pitched roof. The building would be approximately 26.5 metres in depth and 16.0 metres in width. The building would increase in height to two storeys with an eave's height of approximately 4.60 metres and a maximum height of approximately 9.30 metres.
- 6.15 The increase to two storeys would provide the Headquarters with much needed dry secure storage and additional smaller rooms suitable for Scout and Guide use, where smaller break out groups may be required. At present, the storage is inefficient and means that equipment currently having to be stored outside is subject to damage through damp. There would also be an opportunity for other youth organisations and community groups in the area to be able to use the facility. The ability to provide groups within the community an area to use would not only provide a social benefit but would also help with covering costs for the Headquarters and ensuring that the Scouts and Guides can remain at their current home.
- 6.16 The building would predominately use roof lights to provide light into the main hall spaces, and first floor area. Given that the roof is pitched it is not considered that these windows would create a loss of privacy to neighbouring dwellings. As detailed in the submitted application materials, head height would not cause an overlooking issue.
- 6.17 Three windows would be located on the front elevation at first floor, however these would look out into the public domain and therefore would not create an overlooking issue. The road serving Northcourt Avenue also provides a suitable separation distance from dwellings adjacent to the front elevation. There are a number of windows at ground floor on both side elevations, however the ground levels raise towards dwellings to the south side elevation and therefore it is not considered that these would create an overlooking issue. Similarly, there are no windows at ground floor on the dwelling/shop to the north and therefore the windows on this side elevation would not create an overlooking issue either. In addition, suitable boundary treatment is also in place that would further prevent any overlooking from occurring at ground floor.
- 6.18 To the south, the building would be located approx. 5m from the Reading Bedding buildings and approx. 17.9m from the neighbouring residential dwellings and therefore it is not considered that an overbearing or overshadowing impact would be created. The neighbouring dwelling to the rear of the site would remain an appropriate distance away as well. The proposed building would be approx. 1.1m from the boundary with Premier Convenience Store to the north.
- 6.19 As a result, it is considered that the proposed development would be in accordance with policy CC7 and CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Transport and Access

- 6.20** Policy TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway Related Matters states that proposals involving a new or altered access onto the transport network consideration will be given to the effect on safety, congestion and the environment. Policy TR4: Cycle Routes and Facilities seeks to ensure that development makes full use of opportunities for improved cycle facilities. Policy TR5 Car and Cycle Parking and EV Charging seeks to ensure that car and cycle parking provided is appropriate to the accessibility of the location in the borough.
- 6.21 Northcourt Avenue is accessed by Cressingham Road, which leads onto the Shinfield Road – both of which are identified as part of the Classified Highway Network. In addition, a designated cycle route runs parallel to the western boundary of the site along Northcourt Avenue as identified on the Policies Map.
- 6.22 The site is also within close proximity to a number of bus stops and various bus services, with the closest stop approximately a 2-minute walk away along Cressingham Road. Further bus stops are located along Shinfield road, with the closest approximately a 3-minute walk with buses in both directions towards and away from Reading Town Centre. For those that would be required to use private car as a method of getting to the Headquarters, the site is well located close to Shinfield Road via Cressingham Road.
- 6.23 The site is therefore considered to be well connected to encourage more sustainable methods of transport options for travel to and from the site.
- 6.24 The introduction of the 6 cycle stands for 12 bicycles to the front of the site would encourage users to use the designated cycle route to reach the site and would provide a safe and secure space to leave their bike upon arrival. The introduction of 6 cycle stands would increase the site's existing provision to 12 spaces where there are currently no designated cycle spaces to store bicycles. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would accord with policy TR4 and TR5.
- 6.25 To incorporate the cycle spaces to the front of the site, vehicle parking for the site is now proposed as perpendicular to the building allowing easier manoeuvring at the front of the site. The revised parking layout would reduce the conflict that currently occurs between the entrance of the building and the parallel parking that occurs.
- 6.26 A large number of driveways along Northcourt Avenue currently benefit from the same layout as that proposed, and the speed limit is 30mph for slow movement along the road. Therefore, it is not considered that vehicles leaving the site in a reverse gear would have an unacceptable impact on highway safety. In addition, the kerb is currently dropped in places to the frontage, however this would need to be extended to accommodate the new parking layout.
- 6.27 The Transport Assessment (TA) submitted with this application goes into further detail and the proposed mitigation measures to reduce the impact on the highway network. This concludes that there would be no adverse impact on the highway network as a result of the proposed layout. The TA also sets out existing trip rates along Northcourt Avenue and the proposed trip rates taking into consideration the potential increase of visitors to the site that would not result in a detrimental impact on the surrounding road network.

- 6.28 As such, the proposed layout is considered to accord with policies TR3, TR4 and TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Air Quality/Noise Pollution

- 6.29 Policy EN15: Air Quality seeks to ensure that development within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) that would detrimentally affect air quality will not be permitted unless the effect is mitigated.
- 6.30 The eastern portion of the site is located within an AQMA zone, during the preapplication process the environmental health officer (EHO) concluded that an air quality statement should be provided. Submitted in support of this application is an air quality statement prepared by ACCOM.
- 6.31 The EHO raised concerns regarding the fire pit in the rear garden and its effect on the AQMA. Dry wood is currently used within the fire pit, with the below table setting out the existing usage of the fire pit:

Group	Frequency	Time
Scouts	Twice per term	1900-2100
Explorers	Twice per term	1900-2100
Cubs	Once per term	1900-2100
Beavers	Once per term	1800-1900
Bonfire Night	Once a year	1800-2000
Guides	Twice a year	1800-2000

- 6.32 Given that campfires are a traditional part of Scouting and Guiding, and the use is already in existence, the impact on the AQMA would not be a new one. The frequency and times of usage of the fire pit could be sufficiently controlled through the use of planning condition to ensure that there would not be an adverse impact on the AQMA or the amenity of surrounding neighbours.
- 6.33 The submitted air quality statement concludes that the proposed usage, and potential increased frequency, would not have a detrimental impact on the AQMA. It is therefore considered that the development would be in accordance with policy EN15 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).
- 6.34 Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) states that development will only be permitted where it would not be damaging to the environment and sensitive receptors through noise pollution. Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) goes on to state that in terms of noise and disturbance, this will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties.
- 6.35 Noise from plant material serving the kitchen areas would not be an issue for consideration as there is no plant proposed.

- 6.36 Use of the building and the garden at present does not typically go past 9pm. This would remain the same for the Scout and Guide usage, with the opportunity for other community groups to utilise the building space and garden within the proposed new building. Given the residential nature of the surrounding area, it is recognised that usage of the building should not run late into the evening. Therefore, to ensure that neighbouring occupiers are not adversely impacted, usage of the outdoor space could be controlled through planning condition.
- 6.37 In controlling the times of usage this would ensure that neighbouring occupiers are not adversely impacted, and it is considered that the proposal would accord with policies EN16 and CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Flooding and Drainage

- 6.38 Policy EN18: Flooding and Drainage states that development will be directed to areas at lowest risk of flooding in the first instance. Smaller schemes are encouraged to incorporate SuDS where possible.
- 6.39 Submitted in support of the application is a Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy, prepared by Abley Letchford Partnership. This concluded that:
- the site is located within Flood Zone 1, the lowest category of flood risk;
 - the site has a very low risk of surface water flooding;
 - there are no records of groundwater flooding at the site. The topography of the site was reviewed, and it is considered that the majority of the site is unlikely to be at risk of flooding from groundwater sources;
 - given the lack of historic sewer flooding at the site, the site is considered to be at low risk of flooding from sewers;
 - since the site is entirely in Flood Zone 1 and at “Very Low” risk of surface water flooding, it is considered that based on the guidance in the NPPF the sequential test does not need to be applied;
 - due to the “Low-Very Low” risk of flooding it is recommended that surrounding ground levels are appropriately contoured to direct surface water away from the proposed building and the neighbouring developments;
 - any increase in surface water run-off will be managed using SuDS source control techniques as well as attenuation features to provide storage in extreme storm events, which is in accordance with the recommendations of CIRIA C753; and
 - all surface water drainage systems will be designed infiltrate to the ground and to provide attenuation for all storm events up to and including the 1 in 100 year storm event (1% AEP) including allowance for a 40% increase in rainfall intensities as a result of climate change.

- 6.40 As such, it is considered that the proposed development complies with national and local planning policy with respect to flood risk. The risk of flooding is adequately managed, and the offsite flood risk is not increased.

Ecology and Biodiversity

- 6.41 Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and the Green Network) states that on all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible.

- 6.42 In support of this application, is an Interim Ecological Impact Assessment prepared by ACD Environmental. This concluded the following:

- The Application Site has low potential to support a bat roost beneath the wooden cladding of Building 1. In line with published guidance, one emergence survey is scheduled for May – August 2023 to accurately assess the potential impact on bats. Results will be provided in an updated version of this report which will detail any mitigation and compensation measures as necessary.
- Common species of nesting bird may be present. Vegetation to be removed will be cleared in the winter months where possible, however where this is not possible, it will be subject to nesting bird checks by an ecologist prior to works being undertaken.
- The Schedule 9 invasive plant species variegated yellow archangel was identified onsite and must be cleared. Advice from an invasive species specialist is recommended.
- The proposed mitigation includes measures to ensure compliance with the legislation relating to protected species and invasive non-native plant species.

- 6.43 As part of the Interim Ecological Impact Assessment, the Biodiversity Metric 3.1 has been completed. The results of the Biodiversity Metric indicate that development of the Application Site will lead to a 23.3% net gain with respect to habitats and 0% with respect to hedgerows. This is predominantly due to enhancement measures to improve the grassland quality and planting of new trees.

- 6.44 There is therefore a significant contribution to the overall biodiversity value of the Application Site coming forward, and the proposed development would deliver net biodiversity gains. It is therefore considered that the application would comply with policy EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Arboriculture

- 6.45 Policy EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodlands seeks to protect trees within the borough from damage or removal where they are of importance. New development shall make provision for tree retention and planting within the application site, particularly on the street frontage, or off-site in appropriate situations, to improve the level of tree coverage within the Borough.

- 6.46 Submitted in support of this application is an Arboricultural Impact Assessment prepared by ACD Environmental. This concludes that All the 'A' and 'B' category trees are to be retained and protected throughout the development. Where proposed new hard surfaces encroach into the RPA of trees highlighted for retention, sensitive surface construction are proposed.
- 6.47 The proposed development would retain all of the existing trees and hedges on site, in accordance with policy EN14. Trees closest to the proposed building have been surveyed as category C – trees of low quality with an estimated remaining life expectancy of at least 10 years on your trees with a stem diameter below 150mm.
- 6.48 The relationship between the buildings and retained trees is sustainable and does not result in any situations which may result in unreasonable pressure to prune requests from future occupants.
- 6.49 As such, it is considered that the proposed development is in accordance with policy EN14.
- 6.50 Additional planting is also proposed, as seen on the submitted plans, to the western boundary. To the front of the site, planting is also proposed that would provide an attractive area of green amenity to the street frontage in accordance with policy EN14. The addition of new planting will also improve the biodiversity opportunities for the site as well.

Archaeology

- 6.51 In accordance with Policy EN2 (Areas of Archaeological Significance), an Archaeological Desk-based Assessment prepared by Thames Valley Archaeological Services is submitted in support of the application.
- 6.52 The site lies on the plateau margins of the archaeologically rich Kennet Valley overlooking the Foudry Brook. Several archaeological investigations of this topographic location have taken place to lead to the suggestion that it was preferentially settle in Bronze Age, Iron Age and Roman times.
- 6.53 The site has been largely developed since the 1930s but occupied by lightweight structures and it is likely that any below ground archaeology may have been little disturbed.
- 6.54 It is anticipated that it will be necessary to provide further information about the potential site from field observations in order to draw up a scheme to mitigate the impact of development on any below ground archaeological deposits if necessary. Such a scheme could be implemented by a suitably worded condition applied to any consent granted.
- 6.55 It is therefore considered that subject to suitably worded conditions, the proposed development would accord with policy EN2 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

7. Summary and Conclusions

Summary

- 7.1 Reading Scouts and Guides Headquarters have been provided with an exciting opportunity to bring forward the redevelopment of the existing building at Northcourt Avenue for a new purpose-built building which is fit for purpose and energy efficient, having successfully passed the criteria check with a bid to the Youth Investment Fund, and their application now passing to the “interview” stage. Instead of the traditional fundraising that the charity would have to undertake to raise the funds to redevelop the site normally, which would take an extortionate amount of time to provide the use of the building for the advantage of the youth in the area, the Youth Investment Fund provides an opportunity to obtain funds in a period where time is of the essence.
- 7.2 The existing building serving the Scouts and Guides Headquarters has reached the end of its life, with maintenance costs to keep the building in useable condition becoming increasingly more expensive given the age of the building and the rise in material costs in recent months. In addition, the current structure is unable to accommodate the requirements of prospectus clubs and community groups, providing a missed opportunity to aid with running costs for the charity.
- 7.3 The opportunity would create spaces which are flexible to accommodate their requirements but could also offer wider community benefits which will enable the destination to have a broader age range and use reach to benefit the wider community in an area with high levels of deprivation.
- 7.4 In accordance with policy OU1: New and Existing Community Facilities is acceptable in principle, and the supporting statements submitted with this application demonstrate that the increased usage on site would not have a detrimental impact on the site or the surrounding area, and the development would accord with the rest of the relevant local plan policies.

Conclusions

- 7.5 This Planning Statement has been prepared to support and inform the full planning application for the redevelopment of the Scouts and Guides Headquarters to provide a fit for purpose building for the Scout and Guides and wider community.
- 7.6 The proposed development is as follows:

“Demolition of the existing structure on site, and the erection of a two storey 500 sq.m (Use Class F2) building with associated parking and landscaping.”
- 7.7 It is considered that the proposed works will result in a high-quality community building, which is appropriate in its residential setting and will positively contribute towards the local community’s wellbeing.
- 7.8 Overall, it is considered the proposal fully complies with the policies contained in the Development Plan and National Planning Policy Framework. Based on all of the above

and the accompanying plans submitted in support of this application, we request that RBC approve this full planning application.