

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Address: Grove House, Leighton Park School, Shinfield Road

Application No: 220890/FUL

Applicant: Leighton Park School

Proposal: Convert the existing Grove House into a Sixth Form Centre following demolition of extensions

Extended Target Decision Date: 18/08/22

Case Officer: Connie Davis

1.Site Description and Surrounding Area:

Leighton Park School is an educational site (use class F1(a)) located approximately 2 miles to the south east of the centre of Reading. It is bounded by the A327 to the west, Elm Road to the south and Pepper Lane to the east and north. The site comprises a number of school buildings and leisure facilities associated with its current use as an independent educational facility. The western boundary to the School site is characterised by a mature belt of woodland planting punctuated by existing access points - the woodland is covered by a Group Tree Preservation Order.

The building, subject to this application, is Grove House (education facility). It is a two / three storey building completed by Alfred Waterhouse. Since its original construction, single and two storey extensions have been added to the building, likely in the 1960s, although no formal planning history for these can be traced.

2. The Proposal

The proposals include the removal of the existing single storey extensions and two storey extension to the rear of the building which will result in a reduction of floor area and to restore the original building. Internal alterations are proposed (although these do not require planning permission), and the making good of the host building following the demolition. As part of this, a new glazed entrance is proposed, with two balconies/terraces.



Photograph of the existing building



3D drawing of the proposed Grove House, following works proposed

3. Consultation

Internal Consultation

Ecology - No objection subject to condition

Natural Environment - No objection, subject to conditions

External Consultation

A site notice was displayed between 27th June 2022 - 18th July 2022.

No representations have been received.

4. Plans and Documents Considered

The Council, in reaching its recommendation, has taken into consideration the following plans & documents:

Building Inspection Report (Protected Species) - February 2022

Received 28th July 2022

Bat Survey Addendum Report - 20 May 2022

Received 24th July 2022

‘BS5837 Tree Constraints, Tree Impacts and Tree Protection Method Statement for school house re-development’ document from J Unwin Forestry Consultancy Ltd dated (second stage) 9 August 2022, with associated Tree Retention and Protection Plan drawing LPTRP-AUG22

Received 10th August 2022

- 1381-P006 (A) - Existing - South Elevations
- 1381-P007 (A) - Existing - North Elevations
- 1381-P008 (A) - Existing - East and West Elevations
- 1381-P002 (A) - Existing Site Plan
- 1381-P003 (A) - Existing Ground Floor
- 1381-P004 (A) - Existing First Floor
- 1381-P005 (A) - Existing Second Floor
- 1381-P001 (A) - Site Location Plan

Photographs

1381-P014 (A) - Proposed Site Plan
1381-P016 (A) - Proposed South & North Elevation
1381-P017 (A) - Proposed East & West Elevation
1381-P018 (A) - Façade Details
1381-P019 (A) - Materials
1381-P020 (A) - Proposed New Entrance
1381-P021 (A) - Proposed 3D Aerial Views
1381-P022 (A) - Proposed 3D Aerial Views
1381-P023 (A) - Proposed South Elevation Sketch
1381-P024 (A) - Proposed North Elevation Sketch
1381-P025 (A) - Proposed East Elevation Sketch
1381-P026 (A) - Proposed West Elevation Sketch
1381-P011 (A) - Proposed Ground Floor
1381-P012 (A) - Proposed First Floor
1381-P013 (A) - Proposed Second Floor
1381-P027 (A) - Topographical Survey
1381-P028 (A) - Existing and Proposed Basement
1381-P015 (A) - Proposed GA Section AA
Grove House: Design and Access Statement - June 2022
Application Form
CIL Form

Received 20th June 2022

5. Relevant Planning History

None.

6. Equality Act 2010:

In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. However, there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular 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 development.

7. Relevant Planning Guidance

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan for Reading relevant to the application site comprises the Reading Local Plan (2019).

The ‘*National Planning Policy framework*’ (‘NPPF’) 2021 states clearly that its content is to be a material consideration in the determination of applications. The ‘NPPF’ states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Development Framework (LDF) (Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) according to their degree of consistency with the ‘NPPF’ (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the ‘NPPF’, the greater the weight that may be given). Accordingly, the ‘NPPF’ and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

8. Relevant Policies

The application has been assessed against the following policies:

National

National Planning Policy Framework (2021);
National Planning Policy Guidance;

Local - Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC5 Waste Minimisation and Storage
CC7 Design and the public realm
CC8 Safeguarding Amenity
TR3 Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
TR5 Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
EN12 Biodiversity and the Green Network
EN14 Trees, Hedges and Woodland
OU1 New and Existing Community Facilities

9. Appraisal

- a) Principle of Development
- b) Design and Impact on the Street Scene
- c) Impact on Neighbouring Amenity
- d) The Natural Environment

a) Principle of Development

Adequate teaching facilities would be retained on the large school grounds in line with Policy OU1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019). As such, the loss of 273 sqm of education floor space would not be resisted in principle. Often, demolition can take place subject to demolition prior approval being granted by a Local Planning Authority. However, prior approval can only be applied for should the whole of a building be demolished; in this case only part of a building is to be demolished. Instead, the demolition of part of a building is considered a structural alteration, as per Section 55 of the Town and Country Planning Act (1990) for which planning permission is required.

b) Design and Impact on the street scene

Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan states that All 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

Whilst the application site is not Listed, it demonstrates architectural merit through its brickwork, gables and fenestration. The proposed extensions that are to be demolished are not original and detract from the character and design of the host building by virtue of their design (flat roof) and out of keeping materials. The extensions resulted in the host building looking more unbalanced, with the extensions obscuring original features like windows. In design terms, the removal of these modern additions is a substantial improvement. The proposal does not seek to replace these with sympathetic extensions, hence the proposal resulting in a decrease in floor space. Rather, materials and finishes

are proposed to match the host building, as outlined on the materials schedule, leading to an overall quality design and finish. Two balconies/ terraces are proposed at first floor level on the southern elevation with a new glazed entrance. These are considered to suitably complement the architectural detailing of the host building.

Overall the proposed removal of the modern extensions is welcomed. This, coupled with a high-quality finish to the existing elevations, following the removal of the extensions, would lead to a scheme, which officers can support in terms of Policy CC7 of the Local Plan.

c) Impact on neighbouring amenity

The school is located on large grounds, not in close proximity to residential development. As such, the proposal would not have an adverse impact on nearby residential development and so would be acceptable in relation to Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

d) The Natural Environment

Policy EN12 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”*

Policy EN14 states that *“Individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected 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”*

Ecology

The Bat Emergence report (Soltys Brewster Ecology, May 2022) provides the results of a single dusk emergence survey and concludes that the risk of the works adversely affecting roosting bats is minimal.

The ‘Preliminary Bat Survey’ report (Soltys Brewster Ecology, February 2022) noted that the buildings had been used by birds (a dead swift was found within the main house) and the report states that use of the building by nesting birds (Grove House) *‘could not be ruled out on the basis of the current survey’* As such, a condition will be applied stating all works are to be carried out outside of the bird nesting season in accordance with Policy EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Trees

The site (whole School) is subject to TPO 27/07 which includes a number of trees in the vicinity of Grove House.

An arboricultural statement was submitted to demonstrate the impact the proposal would have on trees on site. Whilst the arboricultural documents demonstrate that the principle of the development has been proven to be acceptable, there are a number of ‘if’ situations in the report which is not ideal as it leaves the contractors able to carry out certain operations without specific details - a final AMS should be specific and this will be secured via condition. Further details on the proposed landscaping, including a small portion of green

roof, will also be secured via condition in line with Policy EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Sustainability

As the application proposes the demolition of the existing modern extension (with the proposal making good the facades of existing building following the demolition), rather than building substantial new built form, it is not considered that imposing sustainability requirements (policies CC2, CC3 and CC5 of the Local Plan) would be justified in this instance.

Conclusion

The proposal is considered acceptable for the reasons outlined in the report.

Recommendation: GRANT subject to the following conditions:

- 1) Time Limit
- 2) Approved Plans
- 3) Materials as specified
- 4) AMS to be submitted
- 5) [Pre-commencement] Landscaping
- 6) [Pre-commencement] All works are to be carried out outside of the bird-nesting season (March - August inclusive) or if this is not practicable, a suitably qualified ecologist will survey the buildings prior within 48 hours of demolition and advise whether nesting birds are present. If active nests are recorded, works that may disturb an active nest shall not proceed until the nest is no longer occupied.

Reason: To ensure that wildlife is not adversely affected by the development in line with Policy EN12 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

Informatives

- 1) Terms
- 2) Building Control
- 3) Complaints about construction
- 4) Encroachment
- 5) Pre-commencement conditions
- 6) Positive and Proactive