

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Target Date: 10/08/21

Application No: 210983/FUL

Extended: 13/4/22

Address: The Wren School, 61-63 Bath Road

Proposal: Erection of timber framed eco-classroom

Case Officer: Tom Hughes

Site Description and Surrounding Area

The application site comprises The Wren School, located between Bath Road and Southcote Lane. Several trees subject to an Area TPO are located to the Bath Road frontage and western site boundary.

Proposal

The proposal is for the erection of an eco-classroom on land to the north of the sports hall. Following concerns raised during the course of the application, the proposed location of the eco-classroom was shifted away from tree canopies and outside of their root protection areas.

Plans Considered

The agent supplied a series of plans and documents during the course of the application. After the location of the eco-classroom was moved, the final plans and documents for consideration are as follows:

Received 15/06/21

Design & Access Statement

Drawing No: A1351(01)AP001 Rev. A - Site Location

Drawing No: A1351(02)AP001 Rev. B - Proposed Floor and Roof Plans

Tree Report ref: PRI22779tr by ACD Environmental, dated 17/02/20

Drawing No: PRI22779-01 - Tree Location Plan

Received 24/02/22

Drawing No: A1351(02)AP001 Rev. C - Proposed Site Plan

Drawing No: A1351(02)AP002 Rev. A - Proposed North and South Sections

Drawing No: A1351(02)AP003 Rev. A - Proposed East and West Sections

Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Method Statement by Rob Longley Tree Consultancy

Amended AIA & TPP

Tree Survey Sheet 1

Tree Survey Sheet 2

Tree Condition Plot

Relevant Planning History

201816/PRE - Erection of outdoor eco-classroom - Observations sent 18/05/21

Consultation Responses

Neighbouring owners at 61a Bath Road were consulted by letter. A site notice was displayed. No letters of representation were received.

Reading Borough Natural Environment

Raised various concerns with regard to the quality and accuracy of the arboricultural information supplied with the application. Raised objections to the siting of the classroom under existing canopies and within root protection areas. Sought various amendments and clarifications.

Further to the revised location the following comments were provided:

The AMS has not been fully amended to reflect the revised position and refers to elements in 11.1 such as no-dig path in and excavations within the RPA; the latter not clearly shown btw. I assume neither of these elements are required as they are not addressed in the text of shown on what I assume is the TPP. There is nothing called a 'tree protection plan' and the AMS has no date or revision ref on it. As such I can only assume that we need to secure tree protection measures via L6 will but L9 would be prudent given the lack of clarity. Also one Informative:

L6 TREE PROTECTION MEASURES (AS SPECIFIED)

The erection of fencing for the protection of any retained tree or trees shall be undertaken in accordance with the specifications in Arboricultural Impact Assessment & Method Statement from Rob Longley Tree Consultancy ref RL/07112101 and associated 'Tree condition arb impact assessment plan' received on 24 Feb 2022 before any equipment, machinery or materials are brought on to the site. Such protection as required by the above condition shall be retained throughout the entire period of construction and until all equipment, machinery and surplus materials have been removed from the site. No materials, soil, rubbish or vehicles shall be deposited or stored in any area fenced in accordance with this condition and no fires shall be lit, and no raising or lowering of ground levels shall take place within this area. No drains, pits, ditches or trenches shall be dug in or run across the area protected by the fencing, at any time before, during and after the development of the site, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

L9 HAND EXCAVATION

During all construction works on site, including the provision of services, hand excavation shall be undertaken through the root areas of all trees shown to be retained on the approved drawings and all roots which exceed 25mm in diameter shall be left undisturbed. The roots of any trees to be retained, which exceed 25mm in diameter and which are exposed during such excavations, shall be protected immediately in accordance with the relevant recommendations of appropriate British Standards or other recognised Codes of Good Practice.

I15 Advice about TPO.d trees and trees in Conservation Areas

You are advised that no tree works are approved by virtue of this consent. Any works to trees subject to a Tree Preservation Order will require submission of a tree works application.

Reading Borough Ecology

Gave advice about the green roof. Raised no objections to the proposal.

Reading Borough Transport Development Control

Raised no objections to the proposal.

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.

Relevant Planning Policy and Guidance

The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Planning Policy Framework

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

Policy CC1 - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Policy CC2 - Sustainable Design and Construction

Policy CC3 - Adaption to Climate Change

Policy CC5 - Waste Minimisation and Storage

Policy CC6 - Accessibility and the Intensity of Development

Policy CC7 - Design and the Public Realm

Policy CC8 - Safeguarding Amenity

Policy EN2 - Areas of Archaeological Significance

Policy EN12 - Biodiversity and the Green Network

Policy EN14 - Trees, Hedges and Woodland

Policy TR3 - Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

Appraisal

The principal of the development is acceptable, enabling the school to enhance their educational offer, and meeting sustainability objectives set out in the Local Plan. There would be no change to existing pupil numbers as a result of the classroom and no significant hindrance to the existing functioning of the school site.

The only area of contention with the original proposal was the siting of the eco-classroom under canopies and within root protection areas of protected trees. The original proposal required the removal and/or pruning of several of these trees. There followed much discussion with the agent, in seeking improved and amended arboricultural information to address concerns raised. Finally, the agent supplied a set of amended plans relocating the classroom outside of the canopies/root protection areas of the affected trees. As a result, the final proposal requires no loss of trees or pruning, with appropriate tree protection measures as set out in the submitted documents.

The eco-classroom would be of timber construction, of an appropriate scale in the context of the school site. No harm would be caused to the character and appearance of the area as a result of the proposals, nor would harm be caused to neighbouring amenities.

Conclusion

The proposal has been assessed and found to be acceptable as it accords with the identified policy and guidance.

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT

Standard conditions plus as recommended above.