

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Extended Target Date: 24 January 2022

Application No: 211643/FUL

Address: 168b Whitley Wood Road

Proposal: Change of use from E to F1 for tutoring children.

Case Officer: Nathalie Weekes

Site Description and Surrounding Area

The application site is a building to the north of Whitley Wood Road, close to the junction with Northumberland Avenue. The site is located within Whitley Wood Local Centre and forms part of an identified Key Frontage. The parade includes the Co-op supermarket. The application relates to a ground floor building, vacant commercial premises formerly in use as a hair salon.

Forward of the building is located an area of hardstanding, used informally for vehicle parking. The surrounding area is comprised of a mix of commercial and residential uses.



Unit 168b forms the side unit, attached to 168 Whitley Wood Road



Proposal

The proposal is for the change of use from a hair salon (Class E) to a business tutoring children (Class F1). There are no extensions to the building proposed to facilitate the change of use. The proposed use of the premises is for tutoring 11+ and other school children as well as providing free tutoring to underprivileged children. A maximum of 20 students would be tutored at once. Opening hours from 07:00 to 22:00 are proposed. No industrial or commercial processed or machinery would be required.

To avoid the crowding at the entrance, the following steps for the smooth running of tuition classes are proposed:

- No classes have been planned before 5pm on weekdays (Monday to Friday). At present the classes are only planned for weekends (Saturday and Sunday only).
- Most parents use public transport only.

- Parents also use car-share to help themselves save time and not get delayed due to the traffic problems.
- There will be 30-minute gap for the students to leave the class and next batch to join the class so that all students will not arrive at same time.
- Students will be encouraged join the classes on zoom (online classes) where possible which is also preferred by some parents as it will help them save time commuting - which will result in classes having fewer kids.
- A strict notice will be displayed and parents informed that there is no parking/stopping available near the tuition center and parents need to leave the car at least 100 meters away in nearby roads (near the Geoffrey Field Junior School as the school is closed on Weekends).
- Cycle storage will be provided in a spare room for storage so we can make provisions by installing racks/storage but also there are some cycle storage spaces outside by the Co op.

A certificate of ownership B form was completed, stating the owner of the premises has been informed.

Plans Considered

The applicant supplied the following, received 4/10/21:

Location plan and block plan

Location and site plan

Proposed plan

Land registry title deeds

Relevant Planning History

020261/FUL - Alteration to shopfront to provide new external door entrance to 168b Whitley Wood Road - Permitted 04/03/03

Consultation Responses

Neighbouring owners and occupiers at 166, 168 and 191 Whitley Wood Road were consulted by letter. A site notice was displayed at the site on 12 November 2021. No letters of representation were received.

Environmental Protection

The environmental health team had no objections to the proposal.

Transport Development Control

This application is for the change of use from class to F1 for tutoring children. It appears the unit has previously been used as a Barbers shop. The unit itself is located within a small parade of shops and is approximately 61sqm.

The site is located in Zone 3, Secondary Core Area, of the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD. There are no adopted parking standards for this specific use, therefore, an

application of this type is likely to be considered on its own merits considering local circumstances including access to public transport provisions and the availability of parking and on-street regulations.

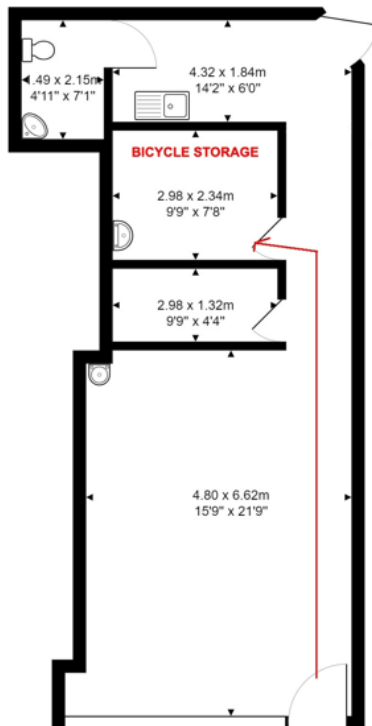
The applicant has provided the following information;

- No classes have been planned before 5pm on weekdays (Monday to Friday). At present the classes are only planned for weekends (Saturday and Sunday only).
- Most parents use public transport only.
- We noticed that the parents also use car-share to help themselves save time and not get delayed due to the traffic problems.
- There will be 30-minute gap for the students to leave the class and next batch to join the class so that all students will not arrive at same time.
- Students will be encouraged join the classes on zoom (online classes) where possible which is also preferred by some parents as it will help them save time commuting - which will result in classes having fewer kids.
- We will inform and display a strict notice that there is no parking/stopping available near the tuition centre and parents need to leave the car at least 100 meters away in near by roads (near the Geoffrey Field Junior School as the school is closed on Weekends).
- Cycle storage will be provided in a spare room for storage so we can make provisions by installing racks/storage but also there are some cycle storage spaces outside by the Co op.

As stated above, there are no adopted parking standards for this specific use although it is noted that typically no on-site parking provision is requested for students within education use. However, it is essential that sheltered cycle storage is available for students within the site. Whilst the applicant has indicated that some cycle storage spaces are located outside by the Co-op, these cycle stands are not covered and are only suitable for short stay trips. In view of this, cycle storage must be provided within the site and further details should be submitted.

A cycle storage plan was submitted on 19/01/22.

168b Whitley Wood Road



Total Area: 61.0 m² ... 657 ft²

All measurements are approximate and for display purposes only

Conditions & Informatives

Cycle storage as specified

No building hereby permitted shall be occupied until the bicycle parking facility for that dwelling/building has been provided in accordance with the plans hereby approved. The facility shall be kept available for bicycle parking at all times thereafter.

REASON: To encourage travel by sustainable alternatives to driving a motorcar in accordance with Policy TR1 and TR5 of the Reading Local Plan 2019.

IF3 Highways

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

CC7: Design and the Public Realm

CC8: Safeguarding Amenity

RL1: Network and Hierarchy of Centres

RL3: Vitality and Viability of Smaller Centres

TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters

TR5 Car and Cycle parking and electric vehicle charging

SPD

Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)

Appraisal

Principle of development

168b Whitley Wood Road is located within Whitley Wood Local Centre and forms part of an identified Key Frontage. Policy RL3: Vitality and Viability of Smaller Centres of the Reading Local plan states that within local centres, development will be permitted provided that:

- There would be no more than three consecutive units which are not in A1 retail use; and
- The proportion of the total length of the Key Frontage within the centre that is in A1 retail use would exceed 60%

Policy RL3 also states that within district, major local and local centres, development will be permitted provided that:

- There would be no net loss of 'centre uses' for 'non-centre' uses at the ground floor except in exceptional circumstances

An assessment of the Local Centre Key Frontage has been undertaken. The Key Frontage contains seven units, five of which fall within an A1 use with one A2 use. The proposed change of use does not therefore create more than three consecutive units not in A1 use and does not exceed the 60% limit. In Policy RL3, the list of appropriate proposed 'Centre uses' includes:

- Non-residential institutions such as healthcare, schools, nurseries and churches (D1 uses)

The proposed change of use is considered to provide an appropriate type of 'centre use' in accordance with Policy RL3 as the D1 Use Class became an F1 Use Class from 1 September 2020 due to changes in the Use Classes Order.

Subject to other policy considerations as below, the principle of the change of use is acceptable.

Residential amenity

Policy CC8 seeks to ensure that new development will not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties in terms of noise or disturbance. There are residential dwellings in close proximity to the application site and the nature of the proposed use means that there is potential for noise to arise from the use of the premises, at the beginning and end of tutoring sessions.

The applicant has provided measures to limit any disturbance on neighbour amenity.

The location of the premises is in the vicinity of other commercial shops on a key frontage, in this instance the proposed usage is not considered to cause a significant increase in noise or disturbance. It is advised that notwithstanding if planning permission is granted, the use will need to comply with other relevant environmental health legislation. Any permission to grant a change of use could then curb any provision of use, if complaints are received in respect of noise.

Transport

The site is located within Zone 3, Secondary Core Area of the Council's Parking Standards and Design SPD. This zone is within 400m walking distance of a high frequency bus service.

The site is located within Whitley Wood Local Centre and forms part of an identified Key Frontage. The Key Frontage contains seven units including a Co-op supermarket, a betting shop, cafe and a pharmacy. Policy RL3 seeks to protect and enhance the network of district and local centres across the Borough. These centres ensure that services are provided close to people's homes and provide a heart to Reading's various communities. The policy seeks a diverse range of services within each centre, with a strong retail element maintained.

The introduction of an F1 use to the local centre is considered to diversify its appeal.

It is expected that a significant proportion of the patrons to any of the existing units live within a short walk of the local centre. The local centre is also well served by high frequency bus routes. It is anticipated that a significant proportion of the future patrons of the proposed use already frequent the other facilities in the local centre. The proposed change of use is not therefore considered to substantially alter the number of trips and parking demand generated. Tutoring is proposed to commence after 5pm midweek and at weekends when local traffic is quieter, with gaps between the sessions provided.

A lack of provision of cycle storage has been highlighted, which can be dealt with by condition, Cycle parking as specified.

On balance, it is considered that the proposal would not have a material detrimental impact on the functioning of the transport network in accordance with Policy TR3 of the Reading Local Plan.

Conclusion

The applicant has confirmed that cycle storage for 2 bikes will be provided within the premises.

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

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT