

Delegated Application Report

Ward: Southcote

Extended Target Date: 24/09/2021

Address: Stoneham Court

Application No: 210953/FUL

Proposal: Proposed installation of an exterior structure (18mx8m) for use as rehearsal space.

Case Officer: Nathalie Weekes

Introduction and Proposal

The proposal relates to the lower car park of a detached building occupied by Berkshire Maestros providing musical education. An alternative car park is used for visitors at the site and the lower car park has been being used during Covid for practices in the open air. The site is located next to Prospect school which has existing canopies granted permission under application 06/00742/REG3 at the Planning Applications Committee for use as a sheltered drop off for disabled students and as an external picnic/recreation area. The application site is surrounded by vegetation and trees, with the nearest residential houses over 60m away. The site is not in a flood risk area or conservation area.

The proposal involves the erection of one external open shelter on the site (18mx8m) totalling 144sqm, to provide a sheltered rehearsal area. The shelter would be a steel frame with aluminium gutters and polycarbonate glazing panels.

During changes to teaching practices, lessons have been conducted outside due to limits and restrictions placed on the playing of instruments inside buildings. The proposal seeks a covered area to protect the students as the weather turns more inclement to continue provision of musical education to provide space for music bubbles of 15 students to rehearse face to face in a Covid-19 free environment after school and during the day at weekends. The main use is for orchestral music and choirs. Music requiring amplifiers or live bands are generally held inside the Berkshire Maestros Stoneham Court building.

The development would result in the loss of 8 car park spaces however the car park has been closed and not utilised and the space used during lockdown. A car parking survey ascertained that only 1 or 2 cars use remaining parking spaces provided. A greater increase is not expected due to additional parking at Prospect school if required.

Due to unforeseen circumstances a site visit cannot be undertaken however the applicant provided photographs of the site.



Plans Submitted

The applicant supplied the following plans and documents:

Photos

CIL

As received 10 June 2021

Location plan

Proposed plan

Shelter specifications:

BRKM-001A Issue A

BRKM-002A Issue A

BRKM-002B Issue A

BRKM-003 Issue A

BRKM-004 Issue A

HM Land Registry title deeds

Satellite photo of existing site

As received 16 June 2021

Noise and risk assessment

BM Parking survey, September 2021

As received 14 September 2021

Relevant Planning History

Pre-application advice was sought before the planning application was submitted.

Summary of Consultations

Neighbour Consultations:

The following addresses were notified:

20 Haywood Way
21 Haywood Way
22 Haywood Way
23 Haywood Way
64a Cockney Hill
64b Cockney Hill
72 Cockney Hill
Prospect School

A site notice was sent to the agent and was displayed at the site on 8 July 2021 for a 21 day notice period. No letters of representation have been received.

Environmental Health

No objections subject to informative. The Environmental Health Manger provided verbal feedback and advised that the submitted risk assessment covering issues such as disturbance of neighbours, number of students/instruments, a model indication of hours of use and likelihood of adhoc events and transport issues is reasonable. The applicant is advised that notwithstanding if planning permission is granted, legal legislation has to be followed. Any permission to grant a structure could then curb any provision of use, if complaints are received in respect of noise.

Transport

No objections subject to an informative. Additional information was provided by the applicant

Communications with the applicant

Additional information was submitted in response to noise and parking queries and to demonstrate that any impact on the neighbouring vicinity had been considered.

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

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with policies in the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'

Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019)

CC1: (Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development)
CC2: (Sustainable Design and Construction)
CC7: (Design and the Public Realm)
CC8: (Safeguarding amenity)
EN12: (Biodiversity and the green network)
EN16: (Pollution and water resources)
TR3: (Access, Traffic and highway related matters)
TR5: (Car and cycle parking and electric vehicle charging)

SPG/SPD

Revised Parking standards and design (2011)

Assessment

Principle of Development

In principle there are no objections to a proposal for a planning application to provide a permanent structure/shelter that could allow music practice outside whatever the weather, in a COVID safe environment for all.

The principle of development is supported subject to compliance with any other relevant policy within the Local Plan.

The main issues in the consideration of this proposal are the impact on local residential amenity and the impact of the design on the character of the area.

Neighbouring Amenity

Policy CC8: Safeguarding Amenity of the Reading Local Plan states that “development will only be acceptable where it will not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of neighbouring residents in terms of privacy and overlooking, access to sunlight and daylight and visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development”. 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 land, noise or light pollution”.

The structure would be located a significant distance away from nearby housing and publicly accessible areas. A risk assessment has been conducted for the proposed usage. An informative is recommended stating that the applicant is advised that notwithstanding if planning permission is granted, legal legislation has to be followed. Any permission to grant a structure could then curb any provision of use, if complaints are received in respect of noise.

Design & Character

Policy CC7 in Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 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”. There is no objection to the design of the proposed shelter structure.

The proposed shelter is required to provide a practice area for the students. In terms of design, the proposed shelter is considered appropriate as it is single storey with a maximum height of 3.8m. Impact onto neighbouring properties would be minimised due to the separation distances and the placing of the shelter next to existing buildings, rather than closer to neighbouring properties. It is considered that the proposed shelter would not be overbearing or result in any significant overlooking onto any neighbouring properties. It is not considered harmful to visual amenity due to its unobtrusive location.

It is therefore considered that the single storey shelter structures will not be obtrusive in the Berkshire Maestros school environment and will not impact on residential amenity or character of the area, as they will be compatible with the existing music school development and they will be sufficiently separated and screened from the site boundary.

Transport

There are no transport issues to this application subject to an informative. Adequate parking provision has been demonstrated and the proposed development is on an area of car park that been previously used for music practice during Covid-19 restrictions, without causing a lack of provision. No additional teachers or pupils are proposed therefore the level of traffic will not change from the existing.

Environmental Health

There are no objections subject to an informative on the potential impact of noise as a result of the development.

Other issues

Building Control:

The proposal will require building regulation approval in relation to structural design.

RECOMMENDATION:

The development is not considered harmful to the character or appearance of the site or its surroundings and does not have a detrimental impact on the original building or neighbouring properties. Subject to relevant condition to require the shelter is used as ancillary use and informatives concerning noise levels and parking, the proposed development is considered to be in accordance with the Policies set out within the Local Development Plan, and as such planning permission is recommended for approval.

Grant Planning Permission