

Delegated Application Report

Target Date: 15/07/2019

Extended Target Date: 19/07/2019

Application No: 190812/FUL

Address: 14 Arkwright Road, Reading

Proposal: Change of use from B1 offices to D1 school for 1289 square metres for a temporary period of two years

Case Officer: James Overall

Site Description and Surrounding Area

The application site is located on the western side of the Basingstoke Road, along a road which branches off the southern side of Cradock Road. The application site consists of one unit, which is situated in the south-western corner of Arkwright Road.

The Quad comprises four adjoining buildings in a courtyard. There are two three-storey and two two-storey buildings with car parking provision of 67 spaces. The total floor space of the site is 1,666m² of office floor space.

The site has been vacant and not let for approximately 10 years and is owned by an adjoining business at 11 Arkwright Road.

Proposal

The proposed development involves the change of use of the existing property from an existing B1 use to become D2 with an element of B1 retained. The existing property has prior approval for C3 use class over the whole site; however this has not commenced.

The proposed school is needed to replace a school closure at Stokes Poges whilst alternative permanent new facilities go through the planning process.

The proposed school is required for the academic year 2019/2020, for 86 pupils and 18 staff, but with a future proof period for a second year if required for 78 pupils.

Plans and Documents Submitted

The plans submitted alongside the application, which have been considered, are:

Plan Type	Description	Drawing No.	Date Received
Location Plan		N/A	20 May-19
Site Layout Plan	Existing	G05 Rev B	20 May-19
Site Layout Plan	Proposed (shows turning circle for minibuses, play space and security fencing)	G05 Rev B	20 May-19
Floor Plans	Shows Proposed Use Class of Zones	04A Rev A	20 May-19

Relevant Planning History

Ref. No.	Description	Outcome
970329	Three B1 (a/b) business units and B1 (c) business units with associated parking.	Application Permitted on 4 Jun-98
990553	Installation of an illuminated sign at front of building	Application Permitted on 7 Dec-00
991071	Installation of non-illuminated company logo at front of building	Application Withdrawn on 12 Oct-00
081432	Installation of 2 satellite dishes (In addition to existing 2 satellite dishes)	Application Permitted on 14 Jan-09
100633	Installation of an aerial and pole	Application Permitted on 31 Mar-10
110824	Use of units 1-4 as use class B1 (no restrictions)	Application Permitted on 23 Dec-11
180654	Change of use of office building from Class B1(a) (offices) to C3 (dwelling houses) to comprise 37 dwelling units. Prior Notification under Class O, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015.	Prior Approval Notification (Approval) on 13 Jun-18

Consultation Responses:

Development Control Transport

The Transport department was consulted on 18 June 2019.
No response was received.

Environmental Protection

The Environmental Protection department was consulted on 18 June 2019.
On 15 July 2019, their response was *“The Environmental Protection & Nuisance Team have no objections to the proposed change of use”*.

Neighbours

Five letters of representation have been received from surrounding properties. These have all supported the application on the basis that the application site is vacant, and the two year school use will be welcomed and not detrimental to them.

Relevant Planning Policy and 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. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.

National

- National Planning Guidance
- National Planning Policy Framework

Reading Borough LDF Core Strategy (Adopted January 2008, altered 2015)

- CS1: Sustainable Construction and Design
- CS3: Social Inclusion and Diversity
- CS7: Design and the Public Realm
- CS10: Location of Employment Development
- CS11: Use of Employment Land for Alternative Uses
- CS12: Maintaining a Variety of Premises
- CS22: Transport Assessments
- CS23: Sustainable Travel and Travel Plans
- CS24: Car/Cycle Parking
- CS25: Scale and Location of Retail, Leisure and Culture Development
- CS31: Additional and Existing Community Facilities
- CS34: Pollution and Water Resources

Reading Borough LDF Sites and Detailed Policies Document (2012, altered 2015)

- SD1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- DM4: Safeguarding Amenity
- DM12: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
- SA12: Core Employment Areas

Supplementary Planning Guidance/Documents

- Parking Standards and Design SPD (2010)
- Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2011)

Appraisal

The main issues are considered to be:

- (i) Principle of development
- (ii) Transport
- (iii) Impact on appearance and character of the area
- (iv) Impact on neighbouring units
- (v) Other matters

(i) Principle of development

In accordance with Policy CS11 of the Core Strategy, there is a general presumption against the loss of employment land within designated Core Employment Areas (CEA). Policy CS12 of the Core Strategy (2008) seeks to retain a variety of premises. The site is within a defined CEA in Policy SA12e: North of Basingstoke Road, of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document. Policy SA12 states that these areas will be the main location for industrial and warehouse uses (Core Strategy CS10) and there is a general presumption against the loss of employment land in these areas (Core Strategy CS11). Paragraph 15.2.6 of Policy SA12 also highlights that *“Where policies in this document and the Core Strategy refer to the need to maintain the overall supply of employment land (e.g. CS11), in addition to offices, industry and storage and distribution (use classes B1, B2 and B8), it includes any use that can only reasonably be accommodated on industrial land, which may include some ‘sui generis’ uses”*.

Application 180654 permitted the change of use from B1 to C3, which means the principle of the loss of the employment use has already been considered as acceptable. The property has been vacant for many years (ca 10) and the principle of an alternative use for a temporary period should be looked upon favourably as it will bring some activity to the area. The proposal would not involve any extensions or significant internal changes and as a temporary permission would enable the property to be reverted back to its existing use. Further to this, one of the expanding neighbouring businesses will utilise a proportion of the property for office space, which is looked upon favourably.

(ii) Transport

The application site has a considerable amount of existing parking (67 spaces), and this will be reduced to 40 spaces.

The school will utilise a fleet of seven minibuses for pupil travel to the site. These minibuses will be used for the transportation of 86 pupils, and will be reduce travel trips for those pupils around Reading and the Wallingford area.

Minibuses and teachers' cars will create reduced traffic generation compared to full B1 use of the site and as such will not adversely impact on the highway network.

The school will primarily generate traffic only 8.15 to 8.45 and 15.00 to 15.30 and not have journeys throughout the day, which offices may generate with visitors.

The retained B1 use, will generate some additional traffic, although this will likely be minimal, as the intended use for this element of the proposal is overspill for a neighbouring business.

The Transport Department was consulted on the application, however no response was received. It is unlikely that there would be any transport objections subject to suitable conditions and informatives. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with relevant policies CS23, CS24, and DM12.

(iii) Impact on appearance and character of the area

There are no external alterations proposed to the building, although some fencing is proposed to be erected. Details of the fencing has not been provided, and therefore a condition is recommended for this to be submitted to and agreed in writing by Reading Borough Council before the property can be occupied for class D1 purposes. With this condition, it is considered that the change of use would not be detrimental to the appearance of the existing building and character of the area.

(v) Impact on neighbouring units

The unit is located within an industrial estate and the use of the unit as a school is unlikely to have any impact on the nearest residential units, which lie to the south of Portman Road.

Further to this, a number of letters of representation have been received from businesses operating within the neighbouring properties, which support the application.

The closest residential properties are to the east of the site, along the Basingstoke Road, however there are numerous other units in closer proximity to these than the application site. It is not anticipated that there would be any further detrimental impact upon the amenity of these residential properties as a result of this application.

The proposal is therefore considered to be in accordance with policy DM4 (Safeguarding Amenity) of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document. There have been no objections from occupiers of the adjacent industrial or nearby residential units.

(vi) Other matters

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.

CIL

The proposed development does not attract a CIL charge as it is a change of use of floorspace with no additional floorspace proposed.

Conclusion

On balance, with the retention of some B1 use, and the future operation of a long-term vacant site, it is considered that a D1 use to host a school would not be detrimental to the area, which is designated as employment land. A condition limiting the use to a temporary period of 2 years will enable the employment land to become properly utilised again in the future, when a more appropriate tenant is potentially available. As such with the temporary use condition of 2 years and other conditions and informatives, the proposed scheme is recommended for approval.

Recommendation

Grant planning permission subject to conditions and informatives