

Proposed Learning Centre
at The Quad, 14 Arkwright Road, Reading RG2 0LU

Transport Statement

Submitted on behalf of OneSchool Global UK

By Ealing Educational Resources Trust

Town and Country Planning Act 1990

Planning Application for temporary permission to use part of the Quad, Arkwright Road, Reading RG2 0LU as a school [use class D1]

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INTRODUCTION

1. Planning consent is sought for a temporary change of use from office use [B1] to an educational use [D1] at part of The Quad, Arkwright Road, Reading RG2 0LU. A school is proposed on part of the site for a period of not more than two years, hopefully much less. If this application is approved, the site will revert to its former use [B1] when the school vacates.
2. This Transport Statement (TS) has been produced to set out the transport implications of the proposed temporary change of use, taking into account relevant national and local planning policy guidance. It is submitted with the current planning application as a supporting document. It describes the application site and the proposed development. It also describes the local area, and the surrounding highway network; and also indicates that the proposed change of use would have no adverse impact on the highway network.

BACKGROUND

3. The applicant is Ealing Educational Resources Trust, a charity which provides and maintains premises for OneSchool Global UK within the wider Reading/Wallingford area. OneSchool is the largest independent school in the world with almost 10,000 students in about 130 campuses across numerous countries. It caters mainly [though not exclusively] for children of the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church.
4. For many years secondary age Brethren students from this area have been taught at a school premises in Stoke Poges near Slough. This property has become unsuitable for continued use for several reasons: as a Victorian building it needs major services refurbishment; as a listed building it cannot be reconfigured to suit modern teaching styles, including self-directed learning; and all the students in west London areas whose attendance made the location central and viable have moved away. For the remaining students coming from Reading and Wallingford areas, it is therefore not in the right place nor viable.
5. Whilst the Trustees were searching for a new location, the Department for Education's property arm put pressure on them to sell to allow enlargement of the adjacent Khalsa School. The buildings were sold to DfEd in December 2017 with a two-year leaseback. OneSchool is therefore obliged to vacate the premises by December 2019.
6. After an exhaustive search, the Trustees agreed terms for purchase of an equestrian centre in Cadmore End, near Stokenchurch in July 2018. [This location was chosen to allow combining with students now taught in Dunstable, Bedfordshire, at another campus which needs replacing.] A planning application was prepared and submitted in October 2018.

7. The Trustees hoped for consent early in 2019, allowing enough time for alterations, some new-build and school set-up before opening the school at Cadmore End in September 2019 or January 2020. Various factors have caused delay, however, and it is likely to be late June before consent is granted.
8. This leaves insufficient time to have the campus operational by the time OneSchool must vacate Stoke Poges. The Trustees are therefore pleased to have accepted an offer from the owner of the Quad to loan space until the new campus at Cadmore End is ready to move into.

THE SURROUNDINGS OF THE SITE

9. The area to the east of the site is largely residential. To the north and south the surrounding area is predominantly commercial, whilst to the west the A33 runs north to south providing a key route between the M4 motorway and Reading centre.
10. Arkwright Road is a two-way single carriageway cul-de-sac, approximately 6.4m wide and about 130m in length. It is subject to a 30mph speed limit and has street lighting along its entire length. There are pavements of varying width on each side. The one on the eastern side is dedicated to pedestrians for the full length of the road, but the one on the western side is shared with frontage accesses and is sometimes obstructed by on-pavement parking. At the southern end, adjacent to the site, the road terminates in a turning circle of approximately 20m diameter.
11. On the eastern side of the carriageway there are single yellow lines restricting parking between 8.00 and 18.30, Monday to Saturday. This Traffic Regulation Order extends to include the turning circle at the southern end of Arkwright Road.
12. The various business activities along Arkwright Road result in a high demand for on-street parking, with evidence of on-footway parking. Whilst it is recognised this occurs, it is an existing issue and enforcement of the existing TROs would practically address this non-compliant parking behaviour. The proposed scheme will not exacerbate this, as ample off-street parking will be provided [as detailed below].
13. Arkwright Road is a turning off Cradock Road which is a two-way single carriageway road of approximately 6.5m width, subject to a 30mph speed limit. It runs east to west, meeting Basingstoke Road to the east and connects to roads within Tunbridge Jones Industrial Park to the west. There are pavements of about 1.5m on both sides, separated from the road by 1m grassed verges. There is street lighting along its entire length.
14. Basingstoke Road (B3031) is a two-way single carriageway of varying width. At its junction with Cradock Road it is about 8m wide. In this area, Basingstoke Road is subject to a 30mph speed limit and runs on a north–south alignment. Northwards, it provides a route towards Reading centre, and southwards it connects to Junction 11 of the M4 Motorway. There are footways on both sides of Basingstoke Road, as well as a pedestrian crossing to the north of the junction with Cradock Road.

15.To summarise, Arkwright Road is a cul-de-sac lying within Reading's prime commercial area centred along the Basingstoke Road and the A33 Relief Road. It consists mainly of small factory units, probably built in the 1950s or 1960s, with a variety of commercial uses. [However, The Quad was constructed more recently, probably around 2000. The adjacent property at no. 12 was built about 2008.] There is a turning circle at the far end of the road, just in front of the Quad.

ACCESSIBILITY OF THE SITE

16.Although, for the use applied for, they will not be greatly used, there are extensive facilities for walking, cycling and public transport available within the vicinity of the site. Because of safeguarding requirements, students will always reach and leave the site by mini-bus [as described in detail below]. The accessibility of the site to key services and facilities has therefore been assessed for teachers and visitors to the site, outlining a range of local services, employment locations, primary health, education and leisure facilities, reachable by sustainable modes of travel.

17.There is an extensive network of footways in the local area, including along Arkwright Road and Cradock Road, providing connections to the key facilities in the local area and to the bus stops on Basingstoke Road.

18.There are local and national cycle routes within the vicinity of the site, including the South Reading – R10 cycle route, and National Cycle Routes 4 and 23.

19.The nearest bus stops to the site are located on Basingstoke Road, approximately 450m from the site, with frequent services operating from these stops into central Reading to the north, and to Fleet and other towns in the south, providing a high level of accessibility.

20.Of particular importance in connection with this application is the fact that there is a range of leisure and sport facilities within easy reach of the site. This includes:

Barn Lane Recreation Ground 500m away

Waterloo Meadows 1.3km

PureGym Reading 950m

Academy Sport 1.7km

Cintra Park 1.2km

THE SITE

21.The site is currently allocated for B1 office use and has 4 connected units. Excluding common parts, the current office layout provides 1,666 m² of floorspace, split over three floors. The site currently has a total of 67 off-road parking spaces, with access to the car park for both vehicles and pedestrians taken directly from Arkwright Road.

22.Under previous tenants the site was used to provide HGV parking. The access and site are therefore able to accommodate large HGVs. This was confirmed by swept path analysis done by I-Transport LLP in relation to application 180654.

23. Units 1 and 2 are three-storey and units 3 and 4 are two-storey. The building offers flexible accommodation and excluding common parts extends to 1,666 m² in total.
24. The units for which consent is sought for temporary change of use to D1 secondary school are the whole of the first and second floors and units 3 and 4 ground floor, , totalling about 1,289 m². Units 1 and 2 ground floor space will remain available for letting by the landlord as offices, totalling about 377 m².

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

25. At a national level, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that development proposals should provide satisfactory access for all users; be accessible and sustainable; and ensure that off-site traffic impacts are not severe, with any significant effects to be mitigated.
26. The NPPF encourages travel by sustainable means which minimise emissions. One sustainable mode is public transport. The OneSchool mini-bus system fully complies with the spirit of this objective. The official mpg figure for the Mercedes Sprinter vehicle used for transporting the students is 32.1 mpg for urban/motorway journeys. For a typical OneSchool journey with 12 students on board, this is equivalent to 385 student-miles per gallon! As a private bus service, it is surely at least equivalent to low emission standard.
27. In terms of local policy, this TS takes account of published guidance from Reading Borough Council, specifically its 'Revised Parking Standards and Design: Supplementary Planning Document' [October 2011], in relation to parking standards relevant to the proposed development.
28. For the purposes of the RBC Zonal Scheme described in the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD, the site falls within zone 2. This implies that it is accessible by public transport. Under the parking standards set out in that SPD, the requirements for zone 2 are:
- i. For B1 office and research – 1 space per 100m² of floorspace; and
 - ii. For D1 secondary education – 1 space per 2 FTE staff.
29. Minimum cycle parking standards for residential developments are outlined in the Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD. The cycle parking requirements are
- i for B1 office and research – 1 stand per 200 m²
 - ii for D1 secondary education – 10% of staff and student count

THE PROPOSALS

30. Drawings submitted with the planning application provide details of the application site, location, and the proposed development including proposed site layout, car parking, and vehicular access.

31. The new temporary school is intended to be for children between the ages of eleven and eighteen. In 2019-20 school year there would be eighty-six students, and approximately eighteen staff members including teachers, teaching assistants, administrative staff and others.
32. The applicants realistically expect that the school will need to operate from this address for only the 2019-20 academic year, but they are requesting permission for two years as a backstop should the progress be slower than expected. In that event, student numbers for the 2020-21 academic year would be about seventy-eight, and staff numbers would be expected to remain at 18.
33. Staff would initially be those teaching at the Trust's discontinuing site at Stoke Poges. Car parking would be provided on site for staff and visitors, although the school would encourage and incentivise car-sharing and sustainable travel [see below].
34. The students would be brought to school by mini-bus from their respective areas. Only in exceptional circumstances [if not attending for the full day, such as for a medical appointment] might a student be taken to school by car. There would be seven minibuses bringing in children at the start of the school day at approximately 08.15 to 08.40 Hours. School begins at 08.45 Hours. Parking provision would be available on site for the mini-buses. Students would remain on site all day until the end of the school day at 15.00 Hours. After 15.00, students would board the mini-buses and leave the site over a fifteen to thirty-minute period.
35. The proposals involve very little alteration of the buildings from the current open-plan office layout, since this exactly suits OneSchool's championing of self-directed learning. No change to the existing access is proposed in connection with the use as a school. Not all the existing car parking areas would be needed for parking and part would be fenced off for an outside play area. There will also be indoor play areas.
36. Reading Borough Council's Revised Parking Standards and Design: SPD' sets out normal requirements for provision of cycle racks to promote cycling to school, having local school situations in mind. Since the present proposal involves longer distances and is based on alternative sustainable travel arrangements as set out below, it is suggested that there is no need for a 10% provision in this case. However, it is proposed to provide a cycle rack for 8 bicycles, both to cater for the remaining B1 space within the building, and to encourage cycling on any occasions when students from Three Mile Cross may not be able to travel by mini-bus.

STUDENT TRAVEL

37. Members of the Plymouth Brethren Christian Church live in communities clustered around their local meeting halls. It is convenient and easy for parents to take their children to the meeting halls [which are all in the ownership of the church] to gather for their journey to school by the OneSchool mini-bus service. This is how they travel to Stoke Poges at present, and all that will change is the destination.

38. OneSchool has a fleet of luxury 12-seater air-conditioned mini-buses, and journeys are comfortable and enjoyable. Because most students come from the same church group, it is possible to predict student numbers quite precisely for several years ahead. The number of mini-buses from each starting point is the number of students divided by 12 and rounded up. Mini-buses therefore always travel full or nearly full.
39. To have a sufficient number of students at each campus for an economic and educationally-challenging learning experience, on a global basis, wherever geographically possible, students from a cluster of conurbations combine at a central campus location.
40. In each conurbation, students are dropped at the local meeting hall by their parents and driven from there to the campus in a 12-seater mini-bus driven by a volunteer. This represents a highly sustainable means of transport consistent with the definition of sustainable transport modes given in the NPPF.



41. Three mini-buses and a car will bring 38 students from Three Mile Cross, a distance of about 2 miles; at present those buses travel all of 26 miles to Stoke Poges. Four mini-buses with 48 students will travel from Wallingford area, a distance of about 20 miles, compared with travelling at present about 37 miles each way to Stoke Poges.

STAFF AND VISITOR TRAVEL

42. Most of the staff live around the Stoke Poges area, although some have already moved to the Wycombe area to be close to the eventual school site. A number already car-share to travel to and from Stoke Poges.
43. Staff have been looking forward to the move to modern premises in Cadmore End, and most are disappointed to have to travel to Reading during the interim period. To reward their loyalty, Trustees are intending to provide support and assistance, which will include paying for shared travel. For the eighteen staff required to teach and run

the school, it is anticipated that there will thus be about 12 cars arriving and leaving each day, 24 movements per day.

44. There will be a staff kitchenette on site, as there is at Stoke Poges. At Stoke Poges, staff very rarely leave site during their lunch break. If any did need to leave, there are food outlets within easy walking distance as shown above.
45. In addition to this, based on experience at Stoke Poges, deliveries and visitors to site [including trustees] would account on average for up to 10 vehicles, 20 movements per day. But these vehicles would be only temporarily on site and would not require an all-day parking space.

IMPACT ON TRAFFIC GENERATION

46. As the application site is currently consented for B1 Office use, the traffic impact of the proposals will be identified by comparing the potential traffic generation of the existing site if the offices were fully let, with the proposed future educational trip generation. With 67 marked spaces, there is clearly potential for at least 134 trips per day, without allowing for any office staff leaving and returning during their lunch break; nor for deliveries. This is 670 vehicle movements each week [assuming no weekend working], most of which would occur during morning and afternoon peak travel times.
47. As shown above, for the school use, the predicted student vehicle movements amount to arrival and departure of 7 mini-buses and a car, with an additional return trip to a sports venue once per week, totalling 96 vehicle movements per week. In addition, arrival and departure of staff and visitors, will amount to up to 220 movements per week. The weekly total of some 316 movements will of course occur only during term time: some 37 weeks in the year,
48. The morning arrivals will coincide with peak time traffic, but afternoon departures will largely be over before the rush hour.
49. The level of traffic associated with the proposed educational use is therefore much less than the traffic that is likely to be generated by the office use when fully let. The proposals would be likely to result in a reduction in trips to just under half the office level during term time, and virtually no traffic at all during holiday periods. It can be concluded therefore that the scheme proposals will have a net positive impact on the local highway network.
50. In terms of parking spaces needed, 4 spaces would be reserved for potential future occupants of the remaining B1 office space to meet the RBC standard.

SUSTAINABILITY

51. In summary, the proposed use is a sustainably accessible proposal. Given the use of mini-buses to transport children, and the intention to promote car-sharing amongst staff members, the site would be sustainable.

52. Further, the site is very accessible by cycling and walking, and by public transport with buses at peak times every 8 minutes on the Basingstoke Road. Any staff members coming to site by bicycle would be able to shower and change in the staff area where shower facilities would be available. Cycle racks would be provided on site.
53. Other than the arrival and departure of students and staff, there will be hardly any traffic to site – a weekly visit for stationary delivery, waste collection, &c. Unlike a business which deals in goods, the school is a purveyor of knowledge, and that is delivered by fibre-optic cable with zero emissions!

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

54. This Transport Statement is in support of a full planning application for temporary change of use to a school in part of an existing office building, The Quad, Arkwright Road, Reading RG2 0LU.
55. There are currently 67 parking spaces provided within the site. The existing parking provision will reduce temporarily by erection of a temporary fence to 40 spaces, allowing use as play space of the other spaces. As shown above only 34 parking spaces at most would be needed. The proposed retained parking provision therefore exceeds the standards outlined by Reading Borough Council's Revised Parking Standards and Design: SPD'. Proposed cycle provision will also be compliant with the standards set out in this SPD.
56. The forecast traffic generation has been determined to be much lower than for office use, reducing the impact of the site on the surrounding network during network peak periods. Therefore, the traffic impact of the proposed development will be positive and beneficial to the operation of the surrounding highway network.
57. It is therefore concluded that the development proposals accord with the principles set out in the NPPF and that there are no transport-related reasons why planning permission should not be granted. The NPPF states that planning applications should not be refused on transport grounds unless there would be severe residual cumulative impacts. There appears to be every reason therefore, in highways terms, for the development to be approved.