



PLANNING BY DESIGN

FROM CONCEPT TO COMPLETION

Planning, Design and Access Statement

**Proposed demolition of existing outbuilding and
erection of a new outbuilding in its place to be used
as a classroom**

**Pine Rivers Nursery, 5 Western Elms Avenue, Reading
RG30 2AL**

Prepared by Planning by Design

On behalf of Pine Rivers Kindergarten Ltd

Application

Planning By Design (Agent) has been instructed to act on behalf of Pine Rivers Kindergarten Ltd (Applicant) to prepare and submit a planning application to Reading Borough Council (Local Planning Authority) for a proposed demolition of an existing outbuilding and erection of a new outbuilding in its place to be used as a classroom (the proposal) at Pine Rivers Nursery, 5 Western Elms Avenue, Reading RG30 2AL (the site).

In support of this application, the following Planning, Design and Access Statement has been constructed to demonstrate the suitability of this site for this proposal and evaluate its accordance with national and local planning policy along with supplementary design guidance.

Site Location

The application site is part of a nursery located on the eastern side of Western Elms Avenue in Reading. The site at present consists of a semi-detached property with gardens, a play-area and a deteriorating outbuilding in the rear garden, operating as a day nursery. The proposed location of the new outbuilding will be in the place of the existing smaller outbuilding.

The surrounding area is predominantly residential in character with dwellings located to the north, east and west of the application site. The Nursery leases the entire site and also has an active relationship with the adjacent community gardens.

The Proposal

The proposed development is the erection of a new single-storey outbuilding in the place of the existing outbuilding. The Applicant would like to replace the existing outbuilding that was permitted for office/storage with a new outbuilding that is for a new classroom. The current outbuilding has deteriorated and they would therefore like to replace it with a new one.

The proposed outbuilding will not be used independently or severed from the nursery and will not be used as a separate and unconnected site, as it will have a functional link to the site. Internally, it will be wholly accessible to all people, including those with disabilities, it will have no.1 bathroom/toilet, a sleep/playroom area and multi-purpose classroom space. The external dimensions of the outbuilding will be 9600mm (width) by 5600mm (depth) and it will have a dual-pitched roof that will be 2260mm in height at the eaves and 2950mm at the ridge.

In terms of materials, it will be timber cladding finished, with timber framed (double-glazed) windows and doors. These will facilitate the introduction of natural light and ventilation into the development. The proposal also includes the introduction of four new native trees, bird and hedgehog boxes/houses to improve biodiversity at the site.

Further information about the design can be found within the accompanying architectural drawings.

Planning History

There have been seven applications submitted at the site between 1994-2005. The applications of relevance include:

- 050103 – Change of use to a day nursery with overnight facilities – Granted 27/09/2005
- 050945 – Erection of timber outbuilding for office/storage accommodation – Granted 09/09/2005

Planning Designations

The following planning policy and guidance documents are recognised as material considerations for the assessment of this application.

National Planning Policy Framework (2023 – NPPF)

- Section 2: Achieving sustainable development
- Sections 9: Promoting sustainable transport
- Section 12: Achieving well-designed and beautiful places
- Section 15: Conserving and enhancing the natural environment

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

- Policy CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- Policy CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
- Policy CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
- Policy CC7: Design and the Public Realm
- Policy CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
- Policy EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network
- Policy EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland
- Policy TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy
- Policy TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
- Policy TR4: Cycle Routes and Facilities
- Policy TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

Supplementary Planning Documents

- Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)
- Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019)

Planning Assessment

The following section will evaluate the proposals in accordance with the NPPF and relevant policies and supplementary design guidance of the Council to demonstrate why the proposal should be considered acceptable in principle and in strict accordance with the Council's development criteria.

The main considerations for this application are its potential visual, amenity, highway and biodiversity impacts on the site and the surrounding area.

Principle of Development

We consider the principle of development should be accepted by the Council as the usage will be in accordance with the wider childcare and education use at the site.

There is precedent that the Council allows outbuildings at the site i.e. the timber outbuilding currently on site that was permitted in 2005. This proposal is a replacement building for education use, which accords with the existing use of the land, and will be ancillary to the main nursery building. Therefore, we consider the principle of development should be accepted by the Council.

Design

The proposal is in keeping with planning policies, as it is attractive, well designed and complimentary to the character of the site and wider area. The proposed outbuilding will be of a modest design and the pitched roof would be in line with the roof character of the existing surrounding buildings, including the existing outbuilding. Consideration has been given to the scale, massing, density, and siting of the outbuilding; which would be subordinate in scale compared to the main building on the site, and it would be viewed in conjunction with the other built forms at the site. The proposal also benefits from its location at the rear of the property, and therefore will not impact the street scene.

The proposed materials are also appropriate, sustainable, and they will not erode the character of the application site. The use of materials and design style is also consistent with the existing outbuilding's style. It is therefore not considered that it would be a detrimental addition to the site or wider area in terms of visual appearance as it would be an attractive, subordinate addition to the site, which would not be overly dominant.

The outbuilding is not considered to represent an unacceptable form of development in this regard. The scale and design of the proposal are considered acceptable and would not conflict with the NPPF and CC7 of the Local Plan.

Amenity

Whilst there are neighbouring properties to the proposed site, their amenity is unlikely to be impacted significantly, by virtue of their sensible siting, usage and design. It will be located upon the footprint of the existing outbuilding and screened from neighbouring occupiers by appropriately sized boundary fencing and tall trees. Fenestration is limited and appropriate and will not result in overlooking concerns. The proposed mass and density of the outbuilding would also be unlikely to restrict light or privacy, and as discussed, the scale of the outbuilding will also be subservient to the other buildings at the site in height, mass and footprint, and therefore will not dominate the character of or overdevelop the site, as ample green garden land will remain.

The trees around the perimeter of the site provide some level of acoustic screening. The outbuilding facility will also be used under adult supervision for small groups of children at any given time and will therefore create no further noise disruption to neighbouring occupiers than the existing associated nursery, with a play area and gardens currently enjoyed by children, thus there will be no new noise concerns created by the outbuilding.

As such, noise, overbearing, overlooking, and overshadowing are not expected to be a significant concern for this development. The proposed development will therefore cause no further impact to neighbouring amenity than the existing development at the site.

The proposed nature of use of the structure can also be considered wholly suitable to the wider nursery usage, and residential area. Additionally, the new development will improve amenity, by providing an instrumental facility to the site, and it will allow the Applicant to maximise the use of the site. The proposal is thereby in accordance with policies of the local policy CC8 and NPPF.

Parking and Highways

The Highway Agency will unlikely raise any objections to the proposal as the present car parking provision is sufficient to support the proposal. The proposed outbuilding, which is small scale will not result in any significant harm to the existing parking arrangements for the established nursery usage. The Applicant confirmed there will be fewer children overall following this proposed development and the majority of families all live locally and, therefore tend to walk, bus or cycle to the site, the nursery is also near West Reading Train Station, where some parents use train services. The nursery serves families with more than one child in the setting, and some car-share. There are also two-hour parking spaces available on the opposite side of the road which can be used for drop off, parents also do staggered drop off and collection between 8am-10am and 4pm-6pm. It is also of note that due to the nature of the site's usage, parents do not stay parked for long periods, but simply a few minutes to drop off or pick up their children, limiting longer-term parking.

The site benefits from seven spaces that will only be available to staff and visitors. At present the nursery only uses three spaces consistently, as some staff walk or bike to work, so, the extra four spaces are available for visitors. The spaces will not be available for school pick-ups / drop offs.

The proposal is therefore within a sustainable location and is unlikely to create any new parking concerns or disrupt the smooth operation of local highways and can be considered in line with NPPF Section 9, Reading policies CC6, TR1, TR3, TR4 and TR5 and Reading Parking Standards SPD.

Biodiversity Net Gain

The proposed outbuilding will exceed 25m², therefore the Applicant has carried out the necessary BNG assessment, which concluded:

"The proposed replacement of a dilapidated timber storage outbuilding with a new slightly larger replacement wooden outbuilding at Pine Rivers Nursery, 5 Western Elms Avenue,

Reading will result in the loss of 5m² of existing vegetated garden, including a mature pear tree, and 18m² of unvegetated, unsealed surface.

- The impact of the proposed development on any designated sites, priority habitats or protected species in the site's vicinity is considered to be negligible.*
- The biodiversity baseline has been calculated as 0.1002 habitat units.*
- The Nursery owns the entire site and also has an active relationship with the adjacent community gardens.*
- The loss from the development of the larger outbuilding will be mitigated by the introduction of 4no. New native trees.*
- The resultant post-development value will be 0.1116 units which equates to an 11.30% gain*
- The 4no. native trees will either be planted in the garden itself or, given the existing relationship between the Nursery and the Trustees, within the adjacent community garden. It has been demonstrated that the proposed works are sufficient to achieve in excess of the required 10% net gain. Notwithstanding this, additional measures to enhance biodiversity across the site may involve:*
 - Provision of bird boxes,*
 - Installation of hedgehog houses and other hibernacula in less trafficked areas,*
 - Replacement of non-indigenous shrubs with native trees and shrubs to offer structural diversity across the garden area."*

The Applicant proposes planting the four native trees within the adjacent community garden as an offer of improve wider community facilities, as it could prove difficult to find an appropriate location on site for the proposed trees. The brd and hedgehog boxes/houses have been proposed and included in the supporting planning drawings.

Given the above, the proposal can be considered to comply with biodiversity requirements, and will in fact result in improved biodiversity at the site, in line with NPPF Section 15 and local policies EN12 and EN14.

Planning Balance

The proposal accords with the policies of the Local Development Plan and will positively contribute to all three development objectives outlined in the NPPF.

- Socially, the proposal will provide a much-needed new classroom facility at the nursery site.
- Environmentally, the proposal will not lead to any visual disruption, nor will it result in any impact on residential amenity. The proposal considers the importance of a well-designed place that would not significantly affect the character of the area in a negative way and will lead to improved biodiversity at the site. Existing parking can also accommodate the development in line with the status quo and it therefore will not impinge on the existing surrounding uses.
- Economically, the proposal will help stimulate economic activity at a local level as local fitters and suppliers will be sought following planning approval.

On balance and based on current policy the harm caused is not significant enough to warrant a refusal in this instance.

Conclusion

The proposal will deliver significant social and economic benefits while not resulting in any detrimental harm to the area's surrounding environment. It will also be well designed and provide a socially sustainable educational use.

We kindly request that the Council supports this application in accordance with the Local Plan and NPPF.