

DELEGATED FUL PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Park

App Ref: PL/25/0275

Address: 18-20 Wokingham Road, Reading, RG6 1JQ

Proposal: Change of use of ground floor from Shop (E use class) to Non-residential educational facility (F1 use class)

Case Officer: Louise Coveney-Fuller

Applicant: Mr Hamza Ashraf

Decision date: 21/04/2025

APPLICATION SITE

The site is currently vacant, the ground floor of the building was formerly occupied by Berkshire Cycles followed by Berkshire Emporium – a second-hand furniture shop. The 1st floor is currently dilapidated and utilised for storage

The site forms part of the Zone 2 Primary Core Area.

PROPOSAL

A change of use from Class E (shop) to F1(a) (Learning and non-residential institution), to allow for an educational facility operated by 'Study Plus', a private tutoring academy that is based at 361-363 Oxford Road.

RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

No application site history is relevant.

Officer Note: Planning Application reference PL/18/0713 at 361-363 Oxford is directly relevant to this proposal as it was granted permission and forms part of Study Plus which is a private tutoring academy providing both one-to-one and small concentrated group tuition, which are already based along the Oxford Road.

REPRESENTATION

A site notice was displayed for the duration of the consultation period.

At the time of writing this report no letters of representation have been received.

CONSULTATIONS

Environmental Protection- No objection.

Highways- This application is for a change of use of the retail unit to F1 (non-residential institution) to allow for an educational facility operated by Study Plus. Study Plus is a private tutoring academy providing both one-to-one and small concentrated group tuition.

This site is situated on A329 Wokingham Road, which is a busy public transport route between the central Reading and the west. Frequent bus services serve the site every 7-8 minutes Mon-Fri and Saturday daytimes and every 15-20 minutes evenings & Sundays.

The Planning Statements asserts that a maximum of 30 pupils and 4 staff would occupy the premises at any one time, during the opening hours of 10am to 8pm. In accordance with the adopted Parking SPD, the development would be required to provide a maximum parking standard

of 1 space 2FTE teaching staff and 1 space per 30 students. Conditions have been added to the decision notice to ensure this remains the case. The Planning Statement asserts that two on-site parking bays are available for staff use, while the parking area to the rear of the building shall be utilized to facilitate pupil drop off and collection. The parking area accessed from Eastern Avenue is also used by the adjacent properties (18-26 Wokingham Road).

Wokingham Road and the surrounding road network all have parking restrictions preventing on-street parking, therefore, any increase in parking demand could not be accommodated on street. Staff and pupils would need to travel to the site by sustainable modes as there is no on-site parking available for student use.

Three 'sheffield stands' are proposed adjacent to the rear entrance of the building, providing cycle storage for pupils arriving by bicycle. In principle, this is acceptable but the cycle stands should be provided under a covered shelter which is covered by condition.

In view of the above, there are no transport objections to the proposed change of use.

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 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.

LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

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'. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (as amended)
National Planning Practice Guidance 2014 onwards

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction
CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change
CC5: Waste Minimisation and Storage
CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
CC7: Design and the Public Realm
CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
CC9: Securing Infrastructure
CR2: Design in Central Reading
EM1: Provision of Employment
EN15: Air Quality
H2: Density and Mix
H5: Standards for New Housing
H10: Private and Communal Outdoor Space
TR1: Achieving the Transport Strategy
TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

SPG/SPD

PLANNING CONSIDERATIONS

The main issue is the principle of the change of use in terms of the impact on the transport impacts these are considered to be, acceptable on the basis of Transport advice, as set out above.

Class F1 covers a broad range of uses, including places of worship for example. It is considered that other uses in F1 may result in quite different impacts in terms of traffic, parking and noise and a condition limiting the permitted use to Non-residential educational facility (F1 use class) only is recommended

CONCLUSION

The proposed development is recommended for approval for the reasons set out above.

RECOMMENDATION

GRANT Planning Permission subject to conditions as outlined within the officer report.