

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Church Ward

App Ref: PL/25/0201 Full planning permission

Address: 9 NORTHCOURT AVENUE, READING, RG2 7HE

Proposal: Removal of some planting to existing car park to allow for the reconfiguration of 2 existing car parking spaces and installation of 1 new additional disabled car parking space.

Applicant: Lorraine Watkinson

Received date: 07/02/2025

Target Decision date: 21/05/2025 (EXT)

Case Officer: Huimin Chen

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is the University of Reading Medical Practice and University Dental Centre. The Health Centre and Dental Surgery is a two-storey building with various single-storey and first-floor extensions. The site is accessed from Northcourt Avenue with on-site parking provision for 21 cars to the front of the Health Centre. The surrounding area is primarily residential in character, and the northern, southern and eastern boundaries of the site are bordered by residential properties. The eastern boundary of the site forms the boundary with the rear garden of properties in Sinfield Road. On the opposite side of Northcourt Avenue, to the west, there are residential flats and university buildings.



Fig 1 & 2: View from the south of the site, taken 23/04/2025; Extract from the location plan submitted

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The planning permission is seeking the removal of some planting in the existing car park to allow for the reconfiguration of 2 existing car parking spaces and the installation of 1 new additional disabled car parking space in front of the Health Centre.

Plans considered:

- Application Form
- Drawing No. 240164 – 30 - 101 – Proposed Plan – Ground Surface
- Drawing No. 240164 – 30 - 100 – Proposed Plan
- Drawing No. 240164 – 20 - 001 – Existing Site Plan
- Drawing No. 240164 – 20 - 100 – Proposed Site Plan
- Drawing No. 240164 – 10 - 001 – Location Plan
- Design and Access Statement
Received 7th February 2025.

Existing (L) and proposed (R) plans:



Relevant Planning History:

- PL/95/0761 - First floor extension for consultation rooms, and metal fire escape. Approved 14/06/1995.
- PL/98/0921 - Single storey side extension to University Health Centre to form additional office accommodation. Approved 28/01/1999.
- PL/03/0689 - Addition of lift for disabled access to first floor of existing Health Centre. Approved 12/08/2003.
- PL/05/0367 - Single storey side extension to provide two additional dental surgeries and increased waiting area (re-submission of planning application 04/01428). Approved 15/08/2005.
- PL/05/0543 - Two storey and single storey side extension to provide two additional dental surgeries, increased waiting area with consultant accommodation over. Approved 02/03/2005.
- PL/13/0252 - Alterations to existing off street car parking facility including an additional 16 spaces. Approved 20/03/2013.

3. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

- Transport Development Control – No objection.
- Ecology Consultations – No objections.
- Planning Natural Environment (Trees) – No objection.
- One site notice was displayed near the application site on 23rd April 2025. The 21-day consultation period ended on 14th May 2025. No letter of representation has been received.



Fig 3: Site notice photo

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.

4. 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 (NPPF)

National Planning Policy Guidance

Reading Borough Council Local Plan (2019)

Policy CC7 – Design and the Public Realm

Policy TR5 – Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

Policy EN12 – Biodiversity and the Green Network

Policy EN14 – Trees, Hedges and Woodlands

Local Plan Update

The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan are considered still up to date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. A submission draft of the Local Plan was submitted on 9th May 2025.

Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become “out of date” when they are five years old. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example.

Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the determination of this planning application and are not considered to be ‘out of date’.

5. APPRAISAL

Impact on Transport

Policy TR5 states that development should provide car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport.

This application is for the reconfiguration of two parking spaces and the installation of an additional disabled car parking space. The total number of parking spaces would remain unchanged, as the new disabled parking space would be incorporated without reducing the current provision. The transport consultee has confirmed that there are no transport objections to the proposed reconfiguration of the existing car park, as all changes take place within the site boundary and there is no reduction in car parking provision. Therefore, the proposal is considered to comply with policy TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Impact on Visual Amenity

Policy CC7 requires 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. Policy EN14 requires that individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance, and Reading's vegetation cover will be extended.

The removal of some existing planting to facilitate the proposed car parking arrangement would be visible from the street; however, it is considered a minimal change and would not have a significant detrimental impact on the streetscene since the change would be within the car park area and close to the building; the front boundary would not change. Additionally, the vehicle access and hard standing would be tarmac, matching the existing. The Natural Environmental officer also has no objections to this proposal.

Impact on BNG

Policy EN12 states that on all sites, development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and geodiversity, and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible.

The ecology consultee confirms that these areas of vegetation are not priority habitats, and as the total area of the vegetation to be removed is less than 25m², the application would not be subject to Biodiversity Net Gain. It is unlikely that protected species would be adversely affected by the proposals, and as such, there are no objections to this application on ecological grounds.

However, there is a small risk that birds may nest in this vegetation, and an informative is included in the decision notice. Furthermore, the council's records indicate the presence of a bat roost within the existing building. While the proposals do not include details of any new lighting, it should be noted that lighting can have an adverse effect on bats. A condition would therefore be added to the decision notice to ensure that no new external lighting is installed.

6. CONCLUSION

The proposed development has been assessed as set out above and is considered to be acceptable on that basis, subject to the following conditions.

7. RECOMMENDATION

Grant

Approve with Conditions

Time limits

Approved plans

Materials (As specified)

No new exterior lighting