

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Tilehurst Ward

App Ref: PL/25/0577 Full planning permission

Address: Goldilocks Day Nursery, 77 and 77A School Road , Reading, RG31 5AT

Proposal: Retrospective change of use from part-residential, part-pre-school/day nursery to pre-school/day nursery (class E(f)) for up to 90 children at any one time, and associated works.

Applicant: Mr & Mrs Francis

Received date: 14 April 2025

Target Decision date: 17 October 2025 (agreed extension of time)

Case Officer: Anthony Scholes

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site contains two detached buildings (formally in residential use) on the southern side of School Road/Corwen Road Tilehurst, with vehicle access from Walnut Way. The site is located within the Tilehurst District Centre. The site abuts residential properties to the south, a dentist to the north east, and is bound by highways to the north and east.

The site is not a listed building, not within a conservation area.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The proposed development seeks permission for the retrospective, change of use of a part-dwelling, part-nursery building a 77A School Road, to accommodate a total of 90 children at any one time.

The following plans and document were submitted

Document Reference	Date Received
9439 PL-05.02 Proposed Roof Plan 77A	5 September 2025
9439 PL-04.03 Proposed Elevations 77	5 September 2025
9439 PL-05.01 Proposed Plans 77A	5 September 2025
9439 PL-05.03 Proposed Elevations 77A	5 September 2025
9439 PL-04.01 Proposed Plans 77	5 September 2025
9439 PL-04.02 Proposed Roof Plan 77	5 September 2025
Waste Storage Plan	20 May 2025
Sustainability Statement	16 May 2025
Existing Floor Plans - 77 School Road	14 May 2025
Existing Roof Plan - 77A School Road	12 May 2025
Existing Roof Plan - 77A School Road	12 May 2025
Existing Elevations - 77A School Road	12 May 2025
Existing Elevations - 77 School Road	12 May 2025
Location Plan	12 May 2025
Existing Roof Plan - 77 School Road	12 May 2025
Existing Floor Plans - 77A School Road	12 May 2025
Site Plan	12 May 2025
Planning Statement	22 April 2025
9439 PL-02 Site Plan	14 April 2025
9439 PL-05.1 Existing Plans 77A	14 April 2025
9439 PL-01 Location Plan	14 April 2025

9439 PL-04.01 Existing Plans 77	14 April 2025
CIL form	14 April 2025
Application Form	14 April 2025
R02 Travel Plan - CS - 2025-03-11	14 April 2025
R01 Transport Statement - CS - 2025-03-21	14 April 2025

3. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

- Transport Development Control – No objections.
- RBC Environmental Protection – No objections.
- RBC Childcare Team Manager (formally Brighter Futures for Children) – No objections.

A site notice was displayed; letters were also sent to adjoining and nearby properties.

One letter of representation has been received, and is summarised as follows:

Concerns are raised about misleading claims regarding transport and parking. Concerns raised that staff avoid nursery car park, inaccurate parking survey data, and unrealistic reliance on the Tilehurst Triangle car park.

4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

77 School Road

90/0671/FD - Conversion of existing house and extension to provide day nursery. Approved 01 November 1990.

92/0207/FD - Increase in the number of children at day nursery from 30 to 60. Erection of ancillary toilets to new classroom, and car park enlargement. Approved 5 May 1992.

77A School Road

98/0547/FD - Proposed conversion of existing bungalow into a childrens activity centre and after school play club with residential flat. Approved 21 October 1998.

5. EQUALITY ACT

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.

6. 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 and Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework 2024
National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CC2: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

CC3: ADAPTION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

CC4: WASTE MINIMISATION AND STORAGE

CC5: ACCESSIBILITY AND THE INTENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT

CC6: ACCESSIBILITY AND THE INTENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT

CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM

CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY

CC9: SECURING INFRASTRUCTURE

EN12: BIODIVERSITY AND THE GREEN NETWORK

EN15: AIR QUALITY

EN16: POLLUTION AND WATER RESOURCES

EN17: NOISE GENERATING EQUIPMENT

H7: PROTECTING THE EXISTING HOUSING STOCK

TR1: ACHIEVING THE TRANSPORT STRATEGY

TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS

TR4: CYCLE ROUTES AND FACILITIES

TR5: CAR AND CYCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING

RL1; NETWORK AND HEIRARCHY OF CENTRES

RG3: VITALITY AND VIABILITY OF SMALLER CENTRES

OU1: NEW AND EXISTING COMMUNITY FACILITIES

SPG/SPD

Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)

Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)

Other documents

Reading Borough Council (Brighter Futures for Children) – Accessibility Strategy (Education)

Local Plan Partial Update (May 2025)

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 consultation version of the draft update of the Local Plan was published on 6th November 2024.

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 these applications listed above 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’.

The Local Plan Partial Update was submitted to the Secretary of State on 9th May 2025. Submission marks the beginning of a process of public examination led by an independent Inspector. Due to the stage of examination, the draft Local Plan can be afforded limited weight.

7. APPRAISAL

Principle of development

Loss of residential unit

Policy H7 (protecting the existing housing stock) seeks to resist the loss of residential accommodation unless there are exceptional circumstances. The supporting text of the policy states that *“there may be exceptional circumstances where a loss of a limited amount of general residential would help to meet other key identified needs ... this should be clearly demonstrated as part of any planning application.”* It is noted that the dwelling has been not in use for ~8 years (as reported by the Applicant). It is not demonstrated that this loss would be lawful, and the lawful use of the site is therefore considered to be a dwelling house at first floor above the childcare. Therefore, the proposal would conflict with Policy H7 in terms of the loss of a dwellinghouse.

The Applicant's supporting documents seek to demonstrate that the loss of the residential unit would be acceptable due to the potential safety risks to children attending the day care. It is considered that this could be managed, and likely was from the time the dwelling was given permission circa 1998. This loss would weigh against the proposal as will be discussed further below.

Provision of childcare places

Policy OU1 (new and existing community facilities) states that proposals for new, extended or improved community facilities will be acceptable particularly where this will involve co-location of facilities on a single site. Proposals for on-site intensification of important facilities, such as schools and healthcare uses, will be supported, subject to other policies in the plan. New community facilities should be located where there is a choice of means of travel (including walking and cycling), and in existing centres where possible. A childcare is considered to fall under 'education and training facilities (at all levels)' as outlined within paragraph 4.7.2 of the RBLP.

The Applicant has not detailed the need for childcare in Reading. However, the LPA considers that there is a need for additional childcare in Reading, as shown in the Reading Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2022-2023. It is noted that it is a key priority for the local authority to increase the supply of childcare spaces to ensure that the market can respond to the growth in demand.

Centres policies

Policy RL1, and RL3 seek to ensure appropriate developments occur within centres. The site is located within a centre (as detailed above), though is not an 'active frontage' within centres. A nursery is considered a 'centre use' under RBLP. The expansion of a day nursery within a centre is considered to comply with policies RL1 and RL3.

Conclusion

The provision of an expanded centre use within a district centre, as well as the provision of childcare places within Reading, where there is a clear identified need for places (as well as compliance with policy OU1) is considered, on balance to outweigh the limited loss of residential

use in this instance. As such, the proposal would be acceptable subject to all other material considerations addressed below.

Amenity Considerations

Policy CC8 states that development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties in terms of noise and disturbance.

The Applicant has stated that the operator has run the premises with a “*108 child roll for 27 years without any known problems and is now seeking a lower figure of 90 children.*” It is not clear that the existing lawful use of the premises would allow for 108 children. The latest planning approval for 77 School road (92/0207/FD) limited the premises to 58 children (. The approval for 77A School Road (reference 98/0547/FD), did not indicate the total number of children proposed. Though, it is noted that an RBC Transport Development Control response made comments on the basis of 50 children. No conditions appear to have limited the capacity of the day nursery within the 1998 planning permission.

The proposed change of use of the dwelling at first floor of 77A School Road is retrospectively sought permission in order to facilitate a total of 90 children places within the site. The use appears to have been in situ for some time, with a planning permission granted in the 1990's for both buildings. It is likely that the proposal represents an actual reduction in children compared to the situation. Though there is a lack of clarity as to what the base level should be. Notwithstanding, the Applicant has provided an acoustic assessment to accompany the proposal. The acoustic assessment does not consider noise from the external play areas during operational house.

RBC's Environmental Health Officer has provided advice that, as the use already has permission, and as the use is not being intensified, an objection to the noise from the outdoor play area whilst being a concern, cannot be justified.

It is considered necessary to secure conditions which limit the hours of operation to 7:30am to 6pm; and ensure outdoor play only occurs between 8:00am and 6pm. This would be to protect local residents from disturbance that may occur.

Transport

Policies TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway related matters), TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy) and TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging) seek to address access, traffic, highway and parking relates matters relating to development.

The site includes 12 existing parking spaces accessed from Walnut Way. Staff do not have any parking access to the site. The submitted parking survey demonstrates a maximum peak occupancy of 50% of spaces (drop-off/pickup). The existing parking provision is adequate to meet the demand for drop off and collection periods.

Other Matters

Design Considerations

Policy CC7 and CC8 seek to ensure development is of a high quality which does not result in harmful impacts upon amenity of residents. The proposal does not include any external alterations to the buildings, or external areas (including carparking).

To the Walnut Way frontage, the site contains 12 no. parking spaces within an area of hardstanding. There is limited space around the existing carpark that could accommodate

additional landscaping. The continued use of the Walnut Way frontage for carparking is acknowledged, and no additional space is reasonably available for additional soft landscaping in this area.

By virtue of the no works, other than internal works that do not require planning permission, the proposal is suitable with regard to design.

Accessibility

Policy CC7 also seeks to ensure that developments address the needs of all in society, including providing equity of access for disabled persons. The proposed development would include additional first floor day nursery space above ground floor all other site arrangements would remain unchanged. The Brighter Futures for Children (BFfC) (BFfC is now 'Directorate of Children's Services under Reading Borough Council) accessibility strategy (education) (2024-2025) seeks to address the parts of the Equality Act 2010 relating to children and young people with disability and their access to facilities, including nurseries, schools, and early years settings that receive funding from the Council.

The day nursery is subject to the mandatory Department of Education (DoE) 'early years foundation stage statutory framework'. Which, among other things includes provisions that reasonable adjustments must be made for children with disabilities or special educational needs (SEN), as well as providing information to parents and carers about how facilities support children with special educational needs. The DoE and Department of Health (DoH) also provide the 'Special educational needs and disability code of practice: 0 to 25 years, provides principles which local government must have regard to. Similarly, the operator would be subject to workplace equality regimes that provide for reasonable adjustments for staff. In this regard, it would be the case that the operator would be subject to other regulatory regimes to cover accessibility issues in this case. In this instance, it would be reasonable to rely on the provisions of those other regulatory regimes to ensure appropriate consideration for those with special educational needs, and a condition would not be necessary in this instance. In summary, given the above, Policy CC7 is complied with.

Landscaping

Policy EN14 of the RBLP requires trees, hedges and woodlands to be protected from damage. The application site contains a significant number of mature trees. These are clustered within a 14m area between the building and the edge of the footpath (within highways land). This area is used as outdoor play for pupils. This area also contains a small bicycle store. No details have been provided of the bicycle store.

The landscaping contributes to the character and appearance of the area positively. No works are proposed within the areas of trees that would be likely to result in need to prune, or protect roots from works. The proposal would not impact existing trees, nor would it include any works to improve the appearance of the carparking area to Walnut Way. Whilst the latter would represent an opportunity for improvement, it is not considered reasonable to insist on any changes at this time. As such, the proposal would be considered acceptable with regard to policy EN14 of the RBLP.

Cycle parking

As above, the site contains a small existing bicycle storage area for use by staff and parents/pupils. No details have been provided of the bicycle store at present. Policy TR5 of the RBLP seeks to ensure car and cycle parking is appropriate for developments. In order to ensure

that this remains suitable for purpose and provides a minimum of 7 covered and secure cycle parking spaces. It is considered that further details should be secured by condition and provided within 6 months of this decision.

Bin storage

The proposed plans indicate an area for bin storage. A condition is included for the submission and approval of details for an enclosed bin store which is vermin proof.

Off-site staff parking

It is noted that RBC Transport Development Control have not objected to the proposal. The lack of on-site staff parking is not uncommon for nurseries. Given the site has good local walking connectivity and is provided with a range of private parking options that could be utilised it is considered acceptable to not provide staff parking. As outlined above it is not reasonably required, or necessary for off-site parking to be provided.

Sustainability

The proposed development is retrospective, and does not include any current development works. Given the minor works associated with the change of use of from residential, it is not considered reasonable to secure BREEAM requirements retrospectively and therefore in this instance complies with the energy and sustainability policies and the SPD.

8. 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.

9. RECOMMENDATION

Approve, subject to conditions.

Recommended Conditions:

- Cycle Parking (to be approved)
- Approved Plans
- Hours of Use (compliance)
- Capacity restricted (compliance)
- Use Restriction
- Vehicle Parking (as specified)

Informatives:

- Terms and Conditions
- Complaints about Construction
- Positive and Proactive