

GARDEN 'POD' CLASSROOM N FAMILY CLUB READING 3-5 CRAVEN ROAD

DOCUMENT CONTROL

Project Title	N Family Club Reading – Garden ‘Pod’ Classroom
Client Name	N Family Holdings Ltd (trading as N Family Club)
Site Address	3-5 Craven Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5LE
Report Title	Planning, Heritage, Design and Access Statement
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SECTION 1 | INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning and Heritage Statement has been prepared by Firstplan on behalf of N Family Holdings Ltd (trading as 'N Family Club') in support of a planning application at 3-5 Craven Road, Reading, Berkshire RG1 5LE for the following development:

“Erection of ancillary outbuilding and other minor associated works.”

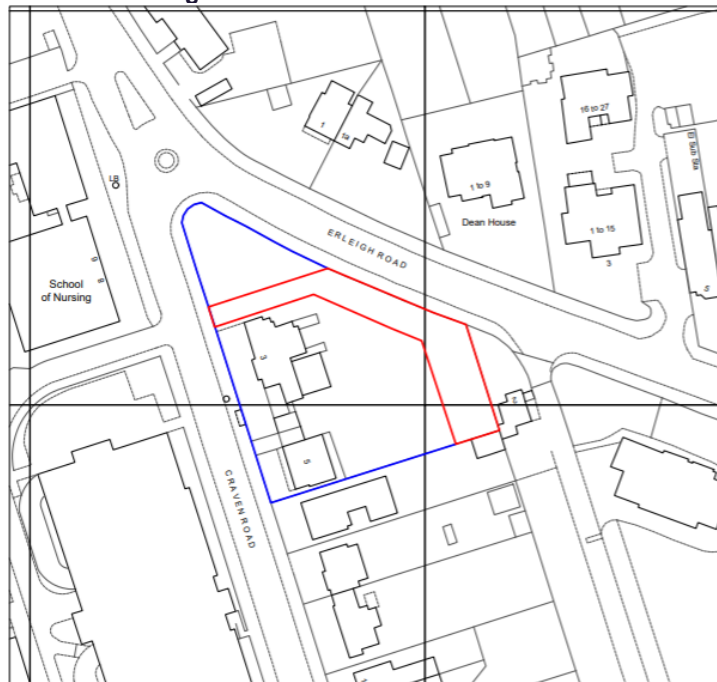
- 1.2 The proposals will allow for the addition of a new 'garden pod' outbuilding for use as ancillary floorspace for the nursery, providing 32 much-needed childcare spaces for the local community. The works seek to enhance the high-quality learning environment and childcare provision that is already offered at the site.
- 1.3 The proposals relate to an area of existing hardstanding to the rear of the site only, with the majority of the wider nursery site falling outside the development 'red line' site. The proposals do not include any physical changes to the main nursery buildings.
- 1.4 This Statement demonstrates the acceptability of the scheme in relation to the principle of development, design, and heritage matters, residential amenity, transport and trees, landscape and ecology. The proposals have been carefully designed to enhance the functionality and appearance of this underutilised area of the site. Furthermore, the proposals will deliver clear social and economic benefits via the creation of much-needed childcare places and additional new jobs.
- 1.5 This Statement is to be read alongside the architectural drawings and Design Statement prepared by N Family Club. The submission is also supported by the following documents which are designed to assist in Reading Borough Council's assessment of the application:
- Completed Planning Application Forms;
 - Completed CIL Form 1;
 - Architectural Drawings prepared by N Family Club; and
 - Design Statement prepared by N Family Club.
- 1.6 This Statement is structured as follows:
- **Section 2** sets out the relevant background information, including a description of the site and relevant planning history;
 - **Section 3** provides a description of the application proposals;
 - **Section 4** outlines the national and local planning policies relevant to the application;
 - **Section 5** assesses the proposed works in the context of the planning policy;
 - **Section 6** includes the Design, Access, and Sustainability Statement; and
 - **Section 7** presents the conclusions.

SECTION 2 | BACKGROUND INFORMATION

a) Application Site Description and Background

- 2.1 The application site comprises an area of hardstanding to the rear of the existing nursery site at 3-5 Craven Road. The wider site comprises an existing children's nursery within the main buildings to Craven Road, with an associated external playspace and parking areas. Vehicular and pedestrian access is available from Craven Road. The site and its immediate surroundings are shown in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Extract of Site Location Plan



- 2.2 The main nursery building covers nos. 3-5 Craven Road, with the two-storey Victorian house at no.3 being locally listed. The building was added to Reading Borough Council's local list in 2015 (ref. LL5) and is described as follows:

"The building makes use of brickwork which although Victorian is distinctively from the Berkshire area due to use of clays found in the area, possibly at local kilns from areas such as Tilehurst. The Gothic building retains exuberant polychromatic brickwork and stone dressings and an ogee turret roof at the rear angle. The building retains virtuoso yellow stock brickwork forming the plinth, dentillated string course, quoins and levelling courses and forming the chimney stack. The decorative fretted timberwork at the gables is particularly impressive. Dressed stone around the windows heads and cills with keystones shows particular quality. The building is associated with a number of large villas along Craven Road, and the historic Berkshire Hospital building."

- 2.3 It is noted the main building does not fall within the development site 'red line' area, and there would be no works proposed to the building itself.
- 2.4 In terms of the surrounding uses, the nearby area is mixed use in nature. Directly west is the Royal Berkshire Hospital, and to the east is Reading Grammar School. To the north, on the opposite side of Erleigh Road and to the south are residential properties.

- 2.5 In terms of planning designations, the wider site forms an allocated development site ("ER1b"), however no.3 Craven Road is subject to an Article 4 Direction preventing its demolition. The site is not statutorily listed, nor is it located within a conservation area. The site falls just outside the Air Quality Management Area, with the online policies map showing the boundary intersecting the site to the north. The site is located within Flood Zone 1, and area at low risk of flooding. There are no tree preservation orders on site.
- 2.6 The application site has been in nursery use since 2022, when N Family Club took on the site, with applications approved relating to physical works across the wider site, which facilitated the nursery use. This included works to the locally listed building itself, which were considered entirely acceptable. Prior to this, it was in longstanding use as a medical and healthcare facility.

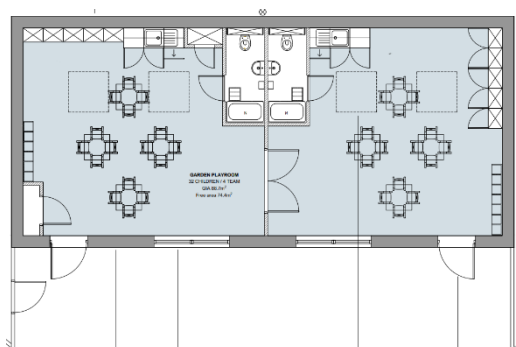
b) N Family Club

- 2.7 Founded in 2017, N Family Club was established to revolutionise early years care in the UK by combining high-quality education with creatively imagined, inspiring environments. Since then, the group has grown to over 50 nursery settings, primarily across the Southeast, and is setting a benchmark for exceptional childcare. N's commitment to education is reflected in the quality of N settings, with several nurseries having achieved Ofsted 'Outstanding' status.
- 2.8 The group places great value on its Educators, recognising their vital role in shaping the next generation. Staff are supported with opportunities for training and development, as well as extensive benefits to nurture professional growth and wellbeing.
- 2.9 As a certified B Corporation, N Family Club is committed to sustainability and social responsibility. The group prioritises the adaptive reuse of existing buildings over new construction to minimise environmental impact and integrates ethical practices across procurement and operations. This extends to food production, with fresh, seasonal meals prepared daily by in-house chefs.
- 2.10 A strong emphasis is placed on setting design, with exceptional internal and external environments that enhance the learning experience. A large proportion of N Family Club nurseries are located in heritage buildings, including ten Listed Buildings and fifteen locally listed buildings, plus many more properties within conservation areas. 's Design Team takes a bespoke and site-specific approach for each setting, to ensure they optimise their sites and are providing the highest quality of design.

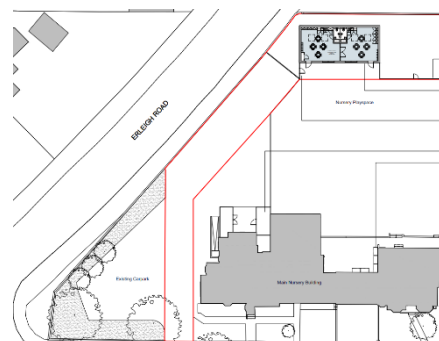
SECTION 3 | APPLICATION PROPOSALS

- 3.1 The application proposes the erection of a garden ‘pod’ classroom which will offer enhanced ancillary childcare accommodation for 32 children (plus 4 staff members), allowing N Family Club to meet their ongoing demand for spaces. The proposals seek to repurpose an underutilised area of hardstanding to the rear of the site, which currently serves no operational function for the nursery. The pod will significantly enhance the appearance and function of this area of the garden. Full details of the proposed design development and concept are outlined within the submitted Design Statement by N Family Club
- 3.2 The proposed pod will comprise a single-storey flat roof, timber structure that incorporates a simple, yet considered design. This will complement both the surrounding nursery garden and the wider site, including the locally listed building. The proposed timber clad finish mirrors existing natural materials within the garden, ensuring the structure is visually lightweight and recessive, and coherent with the wider setting. The horizontal board finish offers a tactile, high-quality and child-safe exterior.
- 3.3 The pod includes glazing to its principal elevation and rooflights to provide natural light and ventilation to the playrooms within. This will also offer a visual and physical connection to the garden area, offering free flow access between the two. Factors such as neighbouring amenity and overheating have also been taken into account (as discussed further at Sections 5 and 6).
- 3.4 The extracts of the proposals provided at Figure 2 below demonstrate the siting, footprint, and overall scale of the proposed pod. Consideration has been paid to ensuring the pod is subservient in form and function to the main nursery building (which is in-part locally listed), in addition to minimising impact on appearance and function of the existing garden and wider site. The proposed sections demonstrate that the overall height of the outbuilding and silhouette are proportionate, ensuring it is not overbearing, and is overall appropriate in the context of this large site.

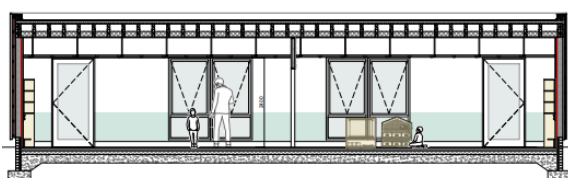
Figure 2. Extracts of Proposals



Proposed Floor Plan



Proposed Site Plan



Proposed Section



Proposed Elevation

- 3.5 The extracts of the building's front elevation and additional detail on materiality within the Design Statement further demonstrate the high quality of the proposals.

- 3.6 There will be no change to the location, layouts or overall size of the existing waste storage, cycle and scooter stores which are considered to offer sufficient capacity to accommodate the needs of the nursery. There is already ample space for service vehicles to enter into the site and manoeuvre, which is to remain unchanged.
- 3.7 The proposals include minor amendments to the existing fencing to the rear of the nursery playspace, to unify the site and prevent unsupervised access to the rear of the garden pod, which will only be accessible for maintenance.
- 3.8 As discussed further at Section 5, the pod will be placed on an area of existing hardstanding, with no change proposed to, or impact on, on any existing landscaping or trees within or adjacent to the site.

SECTION 4 | LEGISLATION AND POLICY SUMMARY

4.1 The legislative and policy documents relevant to the application proposals comprise the following:

National Planning Policy

- National Planning Policy Framework (updated December 2024)
- National Planning Practice Guidance (Online Planning Resource)

Local Planning Policy and Guidance

4.2 The Statutory Development Framework for the site is comprised of the following Reading Borough Council policy documents:

- Reading Borough Local Plan (Adopted November 2019)
- Local Plan Interactive Policies Map

4.3 The key policies and guidance from the above documents, in addition to relevant Supplementary Planning Guidance, are summarised accordingly below.

a) The Town and Country Planning Act (1990)

4.4 Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 requires that planning applications are determined in accordance with the Development Plan, unless material considerations are at play that indicate otherwise.

b) National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

4.5 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) contains policy guidance for development across England and details how such policies should be applied.

4.6 **Paragraph 7** sets out that the inherent purpose of the planning system is to contribute to sustainable development which is defined as meeting the needs of the present without compromising that of future generations. Sustainable development within the planning system entails a three-pronged approach of economic, social and environmental objectives. Indeed, **Paragraph 10** confirms that at the core of the NPPF is the “presumption in favour of sustainable development”. For decision making, this translates as approving proposals that comply with an up-to-date development plan without delay.

4.7 **Paragraph 39** states that Local Planning Authorities are to approach decisions on proposed developments in a positive and creative way; decision makers at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible. **Paragraph 48** further stipulates that applications are determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.8 **Paragraph 100** states that it is important that a sufficient choice of early years places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive, and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement. They should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter early years facilities through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications.

4.9 **Paragraph 116** confirms that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or severe cumulative impacts on the road network.

- 4.10 **Paragraph 131** stresses the importance of good design in achieving sustainable development as it aids in the creation of better places in which to live and work whilst also helping to make development acceptable to communities.
- 4.11 **Paragraph 216** states that the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining an application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgment will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.

c) Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

- 4.12 **Policy CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development** ensures that a positive approach to considering development proposals will be taken that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF. It further ensures that the Council will work proactively with applicants to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible.
- 4.13 **Policy CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction** sets out that proposals including the construction of new buildings will be acceptable where the design of buildings and site layouts use energy, water, materials and other natural resources appropriately, efficiently, and with care and take account of the effects of climate change.
- 4.14 **Policy CC7: Design and the Public Realm** requires all development to be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The components of development form including layout; landscape; scale, height and massing; and architectural detail and materials (amongst other things) will be assessed to ensure that proposals make a positive contribution to the following urban design objectives: character; continuity and enclosure; ease of movement and permeability; legibility; adaptability; and diversity.

Developments will also be assessed to ensure that they:

- *“Respond positively to their local context and create or reinforce local character and distinctiveness, including protecting and enhancing the historic environment of the Borough and providing value to the public realm;*
 - *Create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion;*
 - *Address the needs of all in society and are accessible, usable and easy to understand by them, including providing suitable access to, into and within, its facilities, for all potential users, including disabled people, so that they can use them safely and easily;*
 - *Are visually attractive as a result of good high quality built forms and spaces, the inclusion of public art and appropriate materials and landscaping.”*
- 4.15 **Policy CC8: Safeguarding Amenity** seeks for development to not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties, in terms of privacy and overlooking; access to sunlight and daylight; visual dominance and overbearing effects of development; harm to outlook; noise and disturbance; artificial lighting; and dust and fumes (amongst other things).
- 4.16 **Policy EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment** expects proposals to protect and where possible enhance the significance of heritage assets (including features with local significance) and their settings, the historic character, and local distinctiveness of the area in which they are located. Proposals should

seek to avoid harm in the first instance; where applications have the potential to affect the significant features of heritage assets should be justified by a Heritage Statement.

4.17 **Policy EN4: Locally Important Heritage Assets** requires development proposals that affect locally important heritage assets to demonstrate that development conserves architectural, archaeological, or historic significance including the appearance, character, and setting of the asset.

4.18 **Policy EN6: New Development in a Historic Context** expects development to make a contribution to the historic character of an area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities. In the determination of planning applications, the following factors will be taken into consideration:

“a. The positive contribution of the development to the existing historic townscape (scale, height, mass, proportion, plot size, street form, materials, significant vistas and views, and open space);

b. Sensitivity to historic context;

c. Reflection of borough-wide major heritage themes that contribute to local distinctiveness (e.g. patterned brickwork or former worker terraced housing);

d. Whether development promotes and/or improves access to previously undiscovered or neglected historic significance.”

4.19 **Policy EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network** seeks to ensure development does not result in a net loss of biodiversity or geodiversity.

4.20 **Policy EN14: Trees, Hedges, and Woodland** seeks to ensure that trees, hedges and woodlands are protected from damage or removal. It expects new development to make provision for tree retention within the application site.

4.21 **Policy OU1: New and Existing Community Facilities** supports proposals for on-site intensification of important facilities, as well as proposals for new, extended, or improved community facilities. It sets out that on-site intensification of some facilities may result in some loss of open areas and this may be acceptable where the impact on open areas is minimised, and the area has no specific use.

d) Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019)

4.22 This additional guidance provides additional detail on sustainability policies set out in the Reading Local Plan. This includes measures to enhance energy efficiency, including natural day lighting, ventilation and insulation.

SECTION 5 | PLANNING ASSESSMENT

5.1 This section of the Statement demonstrates the acceptability of the application proposals in the context of the relevant planning policy and guidance outlined at Section 4. The principal planning considerations in this case are as follows:

- a. Principle of the Development
- b. Design and Heritage Considerations
- c. Impact on Surrounding Amenity
- d. Highways and Transport Considerations
- e. Ecology, Trees, and Landscaping
- f. Other considerations

5.2 These points are addressed in turn below.

a) Principle of Development

5.3 This application seeks the provision of ancillary floorspace to support the existing nursery use at the site under Class E(f) of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020. As a result, planning permission is not required or sought for the use of the building.

5.4 The building can therefore be occupied and operated as a children's nursery without the need for planning permission. Permission is only sought for the physical works proposed, with no changes proposed to the overall operating parameters of the nursery.

5.5 As detailed above, the proposals comprise the erection of a freestanding single-storey garden 'pod' classroom to the rear of the site. The locally listed building (no. 3 Craven Rd) falls outside the development 'red line' area, and no works are proposed to it or to the wider site (as discussed further below). The proposed site for the pod in its current form offers no operational benefit to the nursery, with the proposals seeking to make more efficient and effective use of this area of the site. The proposals will provide a high-quality addition which will improve the appearance and operation of the site overall, as supported by Local Plan Policy OU1.

5.6 The importance of high-quality childcare and sufficient supply is recognised by the Government within the NPPF. Paragraph 100 sets out that *"it is important that a sufficient choice of early years places"* is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. It goes on to state that local planning authorities should take a *"proactive, positive and collaborative approach"* to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in provision. It affords *"great weight"* to the need to *"create, expand or alter early years facilities"*. Further to this, Local Plan Policy OU1 supports proposals for on-site intensification, including proposals for extended, or improved community facilities.

5.7 This is further supported by Government publications regarding the expansion of childcare funding in 2024 and 2025. Indeed, the Department for Education research briefing 'Expanding government-funded childcare in England' (June 2025) estimated around 70,000 new childcare places and 35,000 additional staff (headcount) would be required by autumn 2025 (compared to a December 2023 baseline) to meet the additional demand created by the expansion.

5.8 The nursery is currently 93% occupied and has a waiting list of 26 children. The nursery is therefore notably over-subscribed, and this application seeks to accommodate this demand. The facility is exceptionally well regarded within the local community. It provides a highly sought-after 'wraparound' cover, which is most beneficial for working parents all year-round, enabling parents to return to work. The nursery has seen a

significant increase in demand since the rollout of expanded funding in 2024 and 2025, and is seeking to expand by 32 spaces to continue to meet this demand without turning away local families.

- 5.9 The Reading Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (2024-25) (“CSA”) set out the need for an additional 212 places to meet the increased demand of the full roll out of entitlements in September 2025, with demand expected to continue to increase beyond this. The CSA states that both waiting lists (particularly for children aged 2-4 years) and vacancies are reported across all provider types, suggesting that while there is general availability across the borough, parents may be waiting for a place with their preferred provider. It also noted a *“a consistent increase of working families accessing their entitlement to childcare in Reading earlier.”* which could indicate more parents will be looking for childcare for younger children as time goes on.
- 5.10 Accordingly, the principle of expanding and enhancing the existing childcare provision at the site is strongly supported across the development plan, and within the Reading Childcare Sufficiency Assessment, alongside wider Government initiatives. It is clear there is a strong demand and push for the expansion of early years places at the national level through the NPPF, which affords *“great weight”* to the need to *“create, expand or alter early years facilities”*. Accessible childcare is crucial for the development of children and for parents and guardians who want to return to work, increase their hours, or even enter the labour market for the first time. As evidenced above, the proposals seek to increase the supply within an established setting, which is supported by policy at the national and local level.
- 5.11 Overall, the works proposed seek to optimise the use of this area within the existing nursery site to offer additional childcare places at this in-demand childcare setting. The proposals will enhance the function of this essential, purpose-built community facility, and provide new local job opportunities in a highly sustainably location, in line with national and local policies. The principle of development is therefore considered to be acceptable.

b) Design and Heritage Considerations

- 5.12 A proportionate heritage assessment has been undertaken with regard to the heritage values as defined in Historic England Conservation Principles (2008), together with guidance within the NPPF and NPPG. In accordance with the NPPF, the assessment is proportionate to the importance of the identified heritage assets and is sufficient to determine the impact of the proposals, given their nature and scale.
- 5.13 Reading Borough Council Policies EN1 and EN4 relate to locally important heritage assets, and require that development proposals conserve their architectural, archaeological, or historic significance including their appearance, character, and setting. The locally important heritage asset relevant to the proposals is part of the main nursery building, no.3 Craven Road, which is locally listed and therefore forms a non-designated heritage asset. Policy EN6 requires proposals to respect and enhance the architectural and visual qualities of historic settings.
- 5.14 The local list description for no.3 Craven Road focusses on the architectural and decorative features of the building itself, and does not refer to the wider setting. It is noted this falls outside the application ‘red line’ area, and therefore there would be no alteration to any of these architectural features, or the appearance or character of the locally listed building as a result of the proposals.
- 5.15 The proposed structure has been carefully considered in terms of its scale, height and massing, and would be comfortably accommodated within the site, given its large plot. The scale of the host buildings and depth of the rear garden area ensure the garden pod structure remains visually and physically subservient to the locally listed building, particularly given the ample physical separation (some 30+ metres) between the two. While the pod would be visible in views from the main nursery building, it will not be visible, or obscure or harm any public views. It will therefore result in no detrimental impact to the setting of the locally listed building, ensuring its appearance and character is conserved.

- 5.16 Indeed, the proposals are considered to offer a positive contribution to the wider site and its setting by providing a carefully considered scheme of high design quality, that significantly improves the appearance and quality of the site as a whole. The proposed design is visually interesting with high quality materiality which will provide a simple and uncluttered appearance, as detailed in full within the accompanying Design Statement. The pod finishes incorporate a natural material palette, including timber to provide a soft and lightweight, yet tactile, aesthetic, which responds well to the existing rear garden area. The proposed works incorporate high-quality design and durable materials, creating a safe and accessible environment for all nursery users. These works will enable the creation of a safe, attractive and functional new classroom for the nursery, and will improve the site's overall appearance.
- 5.17 The proposals offer a flexible layout which could be used as two separate rooms, or one larger space as needed, to accommodate fluctuations in demand between the nursery age groups and operational need over time. The proposals also provide longevity, both in terms of the materials chosen, and strengthening the viability of the nursery business as a whole. The proposals seek to make more efficient and effective use of this underused area of the nursery site.
- 5.18 The existing external stores for bins, buggies and scooters/bikes provided at the site are considered to remain wholly sufficient, providing accessible, secure and safe storage for nursery users. These will not require any change as a result of the proposals, and as such, lie outside the application site 'red line'.
- 5.19 As such, given the location, setting and size of the pod, the proposals are considered to preserve the character, appearance and setting of the locally listed building, including its visual and architectural quality. The proposals will incorporate high-quality design and materials, and offer a safe, secure and accessible environment for all nursery users. As such, the proposals are considered to be in full accordance with Reading Policies EN1, EN4 and EN6, and CC7.

c) Impact on Surrounding Amenity

- 5.20 In terms of neighbouring amenity, there would be no change in the character or operation of the wider nursery site, which will continue as existing.
- 5.21 The proposed pod building is discreetly located to the rear of the site and is a single storey building with windows facing into the existing nursery site only, ensuring no issues in terms of overlooking or privacy for neighbouring sites. The surrounding area to the rear of the site is screened with existing boundary walls and fencing to all sides, with the proposals fully contained within the site's boundaries. Accordingly, there are not considered to be any harmful impacts in terms of visual dominance, overbearingness, daylight/sunlight or overshadowing. The proposal will further not result in any harmful impacts in terms of outlook; noise and disturbance; artificial lighting; and dust and fumes at the site.
- 5.22 The pod would be used in conjunction with the lawful use of the host nursery building, and this is considered to be wholly compatible with the immediate location. The proposals are fully contained within the site's boundaries and, as such, will avoid any nuisance or impact on surrounding amenity. The proposals are therefore considered to be in accordance with Policy CC8.

d) Highways and Transport Considerations

- 5.23 There is ample existing parking provision on site, with no change to the existing operation or layout proposed. There are also existing purpose-built buggy and cycle/scooter stores for children, alongside staff and parent cycle parking spaces, provided on site, which are considered to be wholly sufficient to accommodate the additional 32 children and 4 team members on site. Given there is adequate provision in place already, there are not considered to be any harmful transport impacts or concerns regarding highway safety arising from the

proposals, in line with NPPF Paragraph 116. Furthermore, the existing facilities on site continue to encourage use of sustainable transport opportunities.

- 5.24 The existing dedicated waste store has been retained and is entirely sufficient. All delivery and servicing activity can be accommodated on site with scheduling seeking to avoid vehicles arriving during peak periods. The level of delivery and servicing activity for the site is low, with refuse collected up to three times a week and deliveries anticipated to take place two or three times a week.
- 5.25 In the light of the above, it is clear that the proposed additional nursery spaces created by the new pod will not result in significant increased traffic generation, congestion, local parking issues or negative impacts on road safety. The existing cycle, buggy and scooter parking provided within the site is wholly sufficient to accommodate requirements of staff, children and parents, and would not have a material effect on the operation of the wider road network. The proposals are therefore considered to be in accordance with national and local planning policy and should be considered acceptable in this regard.

e) Ecology, Trees, and Landscaping

- 5.26 NPPF Paragraph 187 seeks to protect and enhance valued landscapes and sites of biodiversity in a manner commensurate with their statutory status. The application site does not include any designated priority habitats or protected areas.
- 5.27 The application site is laid entirely to hardstanding, with no habitats of significant ecological value present within the site. It is confirmed that, as under 25m² of habitat is affected by the proposals, the application is subject to the 'de minimis' exemption from Biodiversity Net Gain requirements. The proposals would have no impact on existing trees and landscaping within or neighbouring the site.
- 5.28 In light of this, the proposals are in full accordance with local and national policy, including Reading Policies EN12 and EN14.

f) Other considerations

- 5.29 The site is within Flood Zone 1 and has a low risk of flooding. There is no anticipated change to the flood risk on or around the site or surface water flooding, as the proposed pod will sit on an existing area of hardstanding.

SECTION 6 | DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT INCL. SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT

6.1 This Design, Access and Sustainability Statement is prepared in accordance with guidance set out within the NPPG (Online, 2024) and is proportionate to the complexity and nature of the application.

a) Use

6.2 There is no change to the use of the site proposed as part of this application. The proposed outbuilding provides additional ancillary childcare space in association with N Family Club's occupation of the site as a children's nursery under Class E(f) use.

b) Scale and Amount

6.3 The proposals comprise the erection of a new 'garden pod' outbuilding within an underutilised area of hardstanding at the rear of the site, to provide ancillary childcare space. The size, scale, and siting of the development would be entirely acceptable in respect to its location, and given the size of the site as a whole. The proposals would make efficient use of this large plot to enhance the nursery setting. There is no increase in the amount of development on site, which will continue to be occupied in its entirety by N Family Club as a nursery.

c) Layout and Appearance

6.4 The proposals seek to make better use of the rear of the site, which currently comprises an area of low visual quality which is laid to hardstanding. The proposals will not result in any change to the layout of the site as a whole. The outbuilding has been carefully designed to ensure it meets the operational needs of the nursery. The proposals will not detract from the character or significance of the locally listed building.

d) Landscaping

6.5 There are no landscaping works proposed as part of this application. There are no trees or vegetation within the red line area.

e) Access

6.6 The existing pedestrian and vehicular access arrangements will remain in place at the site. The pod will be designed to be accessible for all nursery users.

f) Energy and Sustainability

6.7 The existing state of the zone to the rear of the garden area where the outbuilding is proposed currently comprises gravel hardstanding, which is of low aesthetic quality. The proposed outbuilding will be of modern construction, with high thermal performance. The building will be made of natural and durable materials and will include measures to minimise heat loss and solar gain, which are to be incorporated into the fabric of the design. It will also feature windows, skylights, and a glazed door offering natural light and ventilation. Full details are outlined in the submitted design statement.

SECTION 7 | CONCLUSIONS

7.1 This Planning, Heritage, Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of a planning application at 3-5 Craven Road, Reading for the following development:

“Erection of ancillary outbuilding and other minor associated works.”

7.2 The development will provide for a high-quality childcare facility at this site, securing additional spaces to meet local demand. The proposals will further enhance this existing community use and will provide new childcare places and new full-time equivalent local job opportunities. This Statement draws the following conclusions:

- The principle of the works is acceptable as the enhancement of community uses is supported across the development plan, at both national and local levels;
- The proposed pod is of high quality design and appearance, which has been sensitively designed. It will be safe and accessible for all users, meeting the day-to-day operational needs of the nursery. The proposals will not impact upon the character or appearance of the locally listed building, or its setting;
- The proposals will allow for the development of this underutilised and low quality area to the rear of the site, bringing it into an active use in line with the wider site;
- The proposals will not negatively harm the amenity of surrounding residential properties; and
- The existing bicycle, scooter and buggy parking, and waste storage provided on site is wholly sufficient, and there will be no harmful impact on traffic generation or highway or pedestrian safety.

7.3 In light of the above, the application proposals are consistent with relevant policy and guidance at local and national level. It is therefore respectfully requested that planning consent is granted without delay.

