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Planning Statement

59 Gloucester Road, Reading, RG30 2TH

MAY 2026

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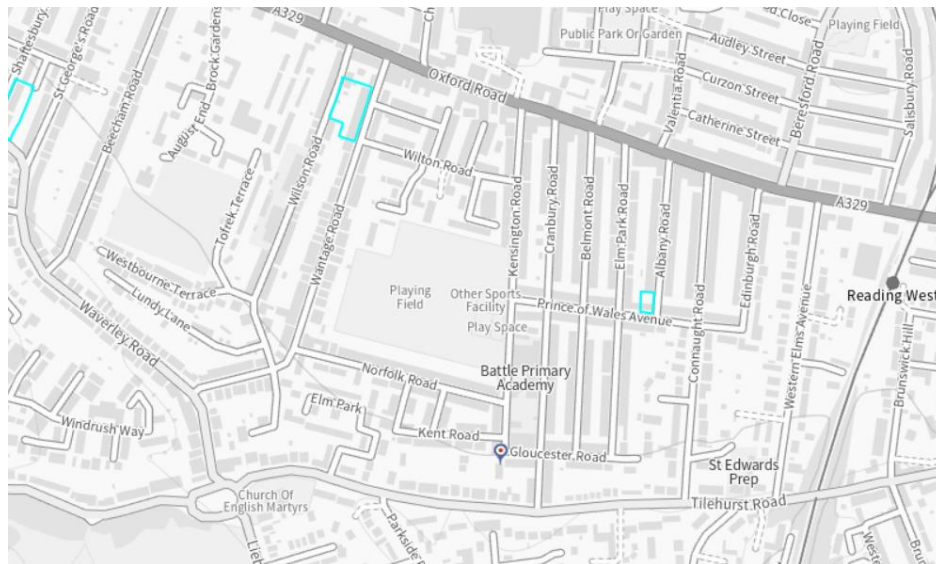
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I INTRODUCTION

- I.1 This Prior Approval application relates to the whole building known as '59 Gloucester Road', Reading, and is made on behalf of our client, Daniella Reynard. The proposal seeks conversion from Class E to Class F1 a), Under Schedule 2, Part 3, Class T of the Town & Country Planning (General Permitted Development etc.) (England) (Amendment) Order 2021.
- I.2 This statement will describe the site and surroundings and assess the proposed change of use under the parameters set out in Class T, namely transport impacts, noise, and contamination impacts.
- I.3 It is concluded that the proposed change of use would be Permitted Development.

2 SITE & SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The building is located on the southwest side of Gloucester Road, is bound to the east by a row of terraces, and to the south by rear gardens of the properties on Tilehurst Road. The site is accessed off Gloucester Road and is positioned at the bend in the road.
- 2.2 An entrance hall leads to a store and w/c before leading into the main reception room space which is open plan and dual aspect. Details of the existing layout are shown on the enclosed plan.
- 2.3 Given its former use as a photographic studio, and, prior to this as a community hall, the layout of the building benefits from generous floor to ceiling heights, and many windows on all elevations providing ample levels of natural light.
- 2.4 The building itself is well built and of sound construction.
- 2.5 The building is not listed, and there are no statutory listed buildings nearby. The site does not lie within a conservation area.
- 2.6 There are no Article 4 Directions affecting the site or the surrounding area.



Constraints map showing Article 4 Directions in the area

- 2.7 In terms of accessibility to transport and services, the building lies 1.5km from the city centre, and approximately 900m from the major transport hub, Reading West Railway Station.

- 2.8 The key frontage and 'smaller centre' identified in the Reading Local Plan is located 500m to the north along Oxford Road (referred to in Local Plan Policy RL3).
- 2.9 The Local Plan spatial strategy states one of its key elements is to protect and enhance the identified network of district and local centres in the borough, ensuring services are provided close to people's homes and provide a heart to Reading's various communities. The Local Plan Policy RL3 reiterates how this spatial strategy and the designation of local centres seeks to reduce the need for travel to the centre of Reading or elsewhere, and that it is vital to ensure a range of services are available in each of the centres.

Planning History

- 2.10 The full planning history for the site is recorded on the Council's website, and the most recent permissions and consents are listed below.
- Planning permission was granted reference 21/0588/FUL for 'Erection of 2 new dwellings' 10/06/2021

The report to this decision confirms that the most recent use of the existing building is as a photographic studio (Class E).

3 PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 3.1 The existing building is a Class E (g) office, and this application seeks prior approval under Class T of Schedule 2, Part 3 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015, to change this use to Class F1(a) – a state funded school for learning and non-residential institutions for the provision of education.
- 3.2 The applicant plans to rent the building out to a not-for-profit Community Interest Company Forest School with the main source of funding being Government state funding, including the holiday activities and food (HAF) programme which provides healthy meals, enriching activities and free childcare places for children from low-income families. Funding will also come from National Lottery Community Grants, Tesco's Community Grants and from local groups such as Little Robins, a Forest School group for 0–5 year olds who meet locally within Reading, from Crowdfunding, from voluntary contributions and donations, and from work with Reading Borough Council.
- 3.3 The area of floorspace that is subject of this application is shown on the accompanying plans and totals approximately 70.2 m². For the avoidance of doubt, it is the entirety of the existing building including the storage and w/c rooms which would be converted into Class F1(a) – a state funded school for learning and non-residential institutions for the provision of education.
- 3.4 The site is anticipated to run sessions between 9am – 3pm, on weekdays catering for c.16-25 children, and c.15 accompanying parents, supported by up to 3 staff/volunteers. There will be occasional use of the building on some evenings and weekends for adult workshops, parties and fitness classes. This will be ancillary to the primary school use of the site.
- 3.5 No external changes are proposed and this application relates solely to the change of use from offices to a Class F1(a) state funded school for learning and non-residential institutions for the provision of education.

4 PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT

4.1 Class T confirms that the following is permitted development:

‘Development consisting of a change of use of a building and any land within its curtilage from a use falling within one of the following provisions of the Use Classes Order—

(a) Class C1 (hotels) of Schedule 1;

(b) Class C2 (residential institutions) of Schedule 1;

(c) Class C2A (secure residential institutions) of Schedule 1; or

(d) Class E (commercial, business or service) of Schedule 2,

to use as a state-funded school falling within Class F.1(a) of Schedule 2 to that Order.

4.2 The existing building is lawfully within Class E office use and was last used for a photographic studio under the Class E purpose, as confirmed in the officer’s delegated report to planning application reference PL/21/0588.

4.3 As such, this application seeks the change of use under the provisions of Class T of Schedule 2, Part 3 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015 from the existing use Class E (commercial, business or service), to the use class F. 1 (a) (state funded school).

Eligibility Restrictions

4.4 The restrictions under Paragraph T1 will be considered in turn below:

Development is not permitted by Class T if:

(b) the site is, or forms part of, a military explosives storage area;

(c) the site is, or forms part of, a safety hazard area; or

(d) the building is a listed building or a scheduled monument.

4.5 **Matters for Prior Approval**

Paragraph T.2 sets out that the application must be made to the LPA for a determination as to whether the application to change the use of the building under prior approval meets the following conditions:

(a) the site is to be used as a state-funded school falling within Class F.1(a) of Schedule 2 to the Use Classes Order and for no other purpose, except to the extent that the other purpose is ancillary to the primary use of the site as such a state-funded school;]

(b) before beginning the development, the developer must apply to the local planning authority for a determination as to whether the prior approval of the local planning authority will be required as to—

(i) transport and highways impacts of the development;

(ii) noise impacts of the development; and

(iii) contamination risks on the site,

and the provisions of paragraph W (prior approval) of this Part apply in relation to that application.

(2) Subject to sub-paragraph (3), development under Class T must begin within a period of 3 years starting with the prior approval date.

(3) Where, in relation to a particular development under Class T, planning permission is granted on an application in respect of associated operational development before the end of the period referred to in sub-paragraph (2), then development under Class T must begin within the period of 3 years starting with the date that planning permission is granted.

(4) For the purposes of sub-paragraph (3), “associated operational development” means building or other operations in relation to the same building or land which are reasonably necessary to use the building or land for the use proposed under Class T.

4.6 These matters for the proposal will be considered in turn below.

(a) the use of the site

4.7 As demonstrated on the existing layout drawing and, in this application, the site will be laid out and used as a Forest school which will receive state funding, and therefore falls within Class F.1 (a) of Schedule 2 to the Use Classes Order.

4.8 As mentioned, there will be occasional use of the building on some evenings and weekends for adult workshops, parties and fitness classes. This will be ancillary to the primary school use of the site in accordance with condition T.2 (1) (a).

4.9 The proposal therefore complies.

(b) (i) Transport and Highways Impacts

4.10 The site is well situated relative to a comprehensive range of local services and facilities, including schools, healthcare provision, retail destinations and major public transport interchanges, all within a comfortable walking or cycling distance.

4.11 The development proposals do not propose any new vehicular access, and the existing pedestrian frontage on Gloucester Road would continue to serve as the sole means of arrival and departure for users of the proposed facility. The proposals therefore do not alter the operation of the public highway and no associated off-site highway works are sought.

4.12 The proposed use would be car free and the applicant's, consultants, RGP Transport Planning have prepared a highway safety review which supports the use.

4.13 The site is anticipated to run sessions between 9am – 3pm, on weekdays catering for c.16-25 children, and c.15 accompanying parents, supported by up to 3 staff/volunteers. It can therefore be expected that the facility would generate 8 two-way vehicle trips per day, which represents a decrease compared to the existing photographic studio use.

4.14 The Department for Transport's (DfT) Connectivity Tool Lite has been used to provide an objective assessment of the site's accessibility. The site achieves an overall 'Very High' score for connectivity.

4.15 The site benefits from an exceptionally walkable local environment. The 2km walking catchment from the site illustrated in the submitted Transport Statement, encompasses a substantial proportion of the West Reading residential area, including the districts of Norcot, Dee Park, and the western approaches to Reading town centre. The breadth of the residential catchment that is realistically accessible on foot strongly supports the proposed car-free approach to the facility's operation.

4.16 Further, it is commonly accepted that cycling can replace motorised transport for journeys of up to 5 kilometres. The site is located within the area of Reading that records the second highest level of cycle usage in the Borough as confirmed in the Reading Transport Strategy

2036. To actively encourage and facilitate travel by cycle, the proposed facility will provide three covered and secure Sheffield-style stands adjacent to the site entrance, capable of accommodating up to six bicycles.

- 4.17 The site benefits from an outstanding level of accessibility by sustainable modes of transport, which comprehensively supports the proposed car-free operation of the facility.
- 4.18 Taken together, these credentials demonstrate that the site is exceptionally well served by sustainable modes of transport and that the proposed car-free approach to the facility's operation is both appropriate and achievable.
- 4.19 In terms of car parking, the majority of bays within the locality are subject to permit holder / 2-hour restrictions, although four unrestricted bays are available on Tilehurst Road a short walk from the site. It is considered that this would be sufficient to accommodate any parking requirements associated with the site's operation without the need for parking permits to be obtained.
- 4.20 In summary, the public transport, cycling, and walking accessibility scores provide robust, nationally benchmarked evidence of the site's suitability for a car-free educational use. Further, it is not considered that the relative trip generation impacts of the proposed development would be significant so as to give rise to any adverse highways impact.

(b) (ii) noise impacts

- 4.21 The application site lies in close proximity to the city centre, and within 500m of the 'smaller centre' identified in the Reading Local Plan, where there are a number of commercial services. The Cranbury College is located immediately opposite the site on the other side of Gloucester Road, Delwood Community Hospital is located within 500m southwest of the site, and the Battle Primary Academy is located 150m north of the site along Kensington Road.
- 4.22 Further, there are leisure uses including serviced accommodation to the east along Gloucester Road, and a nursery to the southeast along Cranbury Road, both of which are located within residential properties.
- 4.23 The area therefore has a suburban feel given the mix of uses and that it is not primarily residential.

- 4.24 No new plant or external equipment would be installed on site as a result of the change of use and the hours of use would be such that it would not give rise to any undue impacts on residential amenity of neighbours adjacent to the site.
- 4.25 Therefore and in summary, the impacts of the proposed development in terms of noise and hours of use would be acceptable given the characteristics of the area.

(b) (iii) Contamination risks

- 4.26 There are no contamination risks on site and this is confirmed in the officer delegated report to the planning application reference 21/0588/FUL.
- 4.27 Further, the proposal is for a change of use only and there will be no groundworks as part of the development.
- 4.28 As such, the proposal would not have any harmful impacts in terms of contaminated land.

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 This application is for a change of use of the building at No 59 Gloucester Road from offices to use class F.1 (a) state funded school for learning and non-residential institutions for the provision of education.
- 5.2 The change of use would comply with the restrictions set out in Class T of Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) (England) Order 2015.
- 5.3 It is therefore concluded that the proposed change of use from a Class E (g) Office Use to a Class F.1 (a) state funded school would be Permitted Development.