

Planning Statement

14 Arkwright Road, Reading,
RG2 0LS

Prepared For
OneSchool Global UK

3302
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bell cornwell

Town and Country Planning Consultants

Unit 2, Meridian Office Park,
Osbon Way, Hook, Hampshire, RG27 9HY

01256 766 673 | hello@bell-cornwell.co.uk | bell-cornwell.co.uk



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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by Bell Cornwell on behalf of OneSchool Global UK (“the Applicant”). This application is being submitted to Reading Borough Council (“the Council”) in respect of the following:

Continued change of use from E(g)(i) offices to F1(a) school for 1289 square metres for a further temporary period of three years, to accommodate up to 125 pupils (“the proposed development”).

At 14 Arkwright Road, Reading, RG2 0LU (“the site”).

- 1.2 Accompanying this planning statement, we submit the following:

- Planning Application Forms and Ownership Certificates
- CIL Additional Information Form
- Existing Plans
- Existing Block Plan
- Location Plan

THE SITE AND ITS SURROUNDINGS

- 1.3 The site comprises one unit, with 1289 square metres and is sat within a plot approximately of 0.3ha area.
- 1.4 The site is located on the western side of Basingstoke Road, which branches off the southern side of Cradock Road. The site is in a predominantly commercial/ industrial area. The site is located in a Core Employment Area EM2e (north of Basingstoke Road).
- 1.5 The site is in flood zone one and is at low risk of surface water flooding.

PLANNING HISTORY

- 1.6 The following planning history is of relevance to this application:



- PL/19/0812 – Change of use from B1 offices to D1 school for 1289 square metres for a temporary period of two years. Approved 19/07/2019.
- PL/21/0736 – Continued change of use from B1 offices to D1 school for 1289 square metres for a further temporary period of three years. Approved 01/09/2021.

- 1.7 Within the officer report for planning permission PL/21/0736, the officer accepted that there were extenuating circumstances for why a further three-year temporary period is required and that the school would continue to operate as it has done (since 2019). There was equally no objection on transport grounds, with the pupil's being brought to the school by minibus. The proposal was also considered to be acceptable in terms of impact on neighbouring units.

THE PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- 1.8 The applicant is seeking to build out a new school within West Berkshire. To allow for this to be progressed, a further three years is required for using the lawful use E(g)(i) to be used as F1(a).
- 1.9 It is acknowledged that the Planning Practice Guidance (“PPG”) sets out that *“it will rarely be justifiable to grant a second temporary permission (except in case where changing circumstances provide a clear rationale, such as **temporary classrooms and other school facilities**. There is no presumption that a temporary grant of planning permission will then be granted permanently.”* (paragraph ID 21a-014-20140306) (added emphasis).
- 1.10 OneSchool Global has 27 campuses across England, Ireland, Scotland and Wales and has over 9,000 students, 175 campuses and 2,000 staff. In the UK, they offer an innovate learning and teaching programme to over 3,500 students from Year 3 through to Year 13 in partnership with more than 50 staff.
- 1.11 OneSchool Global commenced its operation in the UK as a Focus Learning Trust. The Trust was established as a registered charity in 2003 for the advancement of education and providing leadership and support to its network of independent schools.



- 1.12 There are currently 104 students at this campus, with the building being capable of accommodating up to 125 students.
- 1.13 At the time of the submitted of the 2019 permission (ref. 190812), planning permission was expected to be granted for Chequers End Equestrian Centre in Cadmore End (Buckinghamshire Council ref. 24/05229/FUL). However, as confirmed in the 2021 temporary permission for the site (ref. PL/1/0736), the planning application was refused, and the applicant was the subject of long delays with Buckinghamshire Council. Chequers End Equestrian Centre is no longer available to the applicant and now benefits from planning permission for housing. As such, this left the applicant with the task of finding another site which provides facilities for all students rather than a separate junior and senior school. Part of the requirement is to provide sports facilities (internal and external) which this site does not have space for (nor typically do urban areas have) and as such the search has been led to the periphery of the urban area but as close as feasibly possible. A suitable location meeting the applicant's needs has been found at St Gabriels Convent, Cold Ash, West Berkshire.
- 1.14 Pre-application meetings took place with West Berkshire Council in 2023 to discuss the principle of redeveloping the site and again in November 2024 on a variation of the scheme. West Berkshire Council confirmed no objection to the principle of development at this point. A planning application was submitted in August 2025 (ref. 25/01899/FULMAJ), and the school has been designed to accommodate approximately 120 pupils of primary and secondary school age and approximately 28 staff members.
- 1.15 The application was due to be taken to the April 2026 planning committee however, the Council's drainage officer objected to the application in early May 2026 on technical matters, and in combination with a recently designated Tree Preservation Order (on a tree which suffers from girdling tree roots) and concerns of the impact on a non-designated heritage asset, the case officer has subsequently concluded that the benefits of the scheme do not outweigh the identified harm, and has recommended the application for refusal. The applicant does not consider that the balancing exercise



has been undertaken correctly by West Berkshire Council. If West Berkshire proceeds with refusing the application, the decision will be appealed. An appeal is likely to take at least a year for a decision and, if approved, there will likely be pre-commencement conditions to clear before work can start on the development. The build out of the development would then take at least another year. This application therefore applies for a further temporary period of three years to reach the outcome of the application.

- 1.16 There are clear exceptional circumstances presented here in line with the PPG: there are 104 students at this campus that require a suitable school place. The previously intended location for a school was not supported by Buckinghamshire Council and as such the applicant is in the process of obtaining the relevant permissions to facilitate the delivery of a purpose-built school. If Chequers End Equestrian Centre had obtained planning permission for a school, this site would no longer have been required. However, the situation has changed, and the applicant is under constraints to deliver an appropriate school. Again, once St Gabriels in West Berkshire has obtained the relevant permissions, it can then be built out and this site will no longer be required to function as a school, returning to its lawful use. This application would grant a further temporary permission to facilitate classrooms in a temporary school, in line with the exceptional circumstances set out in the PPG.



2 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT AND MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 2.1 Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 require that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 2.2 The relevant parts of the development plan, against which the application is to be assessed is the Reading Borough Local Plan (adopted 2019).

MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Supplementary Planning Guidance

- Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011)

National Planning Policy Framework

- 2.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (“NPPF”) is also a material consideration. Specifically, paragraph 100 states that it is important that a sufficient choice of early years, school and post-16 places are available. Paragraph 128 supports making more effective use of sites that provide community services such as schools, provided this maintains or improves the quality-of-service provision and access to open space.



3 KEY ISSUES FOR DETERMINATION

- 3.1 The NPPF sets out the underling principle of the presumption in favour of sustainable development. This is carried forward into policy CC1 of the Local Plan which stakes a positive approach to considering development proposals that reflect the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the NPPF.

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT

- 3.2 The site is designated as a Core Employment Area, as per policy EM2.
- 3.3 Policy EM3 of the Local Plan states that within the core employment areas, the overall level of employment land should be maintained. The policy goes on to state:

“Where, in exceptional circumstances, it can be demonstrated that a site in a Core Employment Area has no long-term prospect of employment use, a related alternative commercial use or a use which complements the employment use of the area may be considered that would not result in a significant reduction in jobs.”

- 3.4 The proposed development does not comply with policy EM3 in that the site will be continuing to be in temporary use class F1(a). The continuation of the site in F1(a) use does continue to bring employment benefits with the retention of jobs in the area (28 full time members of staff) and its associated impact on the area. However, once the temporary use has ceased, the site will revert back to its lawful use and bring about economic benefits.

DESIGN

- 3.5 Policy CC7 states 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. The site is currently in temporary use as a school and therefore no further design changes are required. As set out above, after the end of the temporary permission, the building will be restored to E(g)(i) use and as such there will be no impact on the design/ character of the area.



AMENITY

- 3.6 Policy CC8 is focused on safeguarding amenity for residential properties. Policy EN16 supports proposals being permitted where it would not be damaging to the environment and sensitive receptors through land, noise or light pollution. There are no residential properties in the vicinity of the site and the neighbouring properties are in commercial use. As set out previously, students travel to the site via a minibus service, and the hours of operation are limited to a typical school day. The school is not open on weekends nor during school holidays. There has been no impact on nearby properties' amenity and it is not proposed to operate any differently under this proposal. The proposed development accords with policy CC8.

HIGHWAYS

- 3.7 Policy TR3 sets out for proposals that generate additional trips on the transport network, consideration must be given to the effect on safety, congestion and the environment. TR5 requires development proposals to provide car parking and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of locations within the Borough to sustainable transport facilities, particularly public transport. The site is identified as being in Zone 2 in the Council's Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD (2011). This requires a minimum parking provision of one parking space per two full time members of staff. There are 40 parking spaces available for staff parking and 28 members of staff. The site also benefits from being in close proximity to the nearby bus stop, on Long Barn Lane, equivalent to a seven-minute walk. This provides frequent services to and from Reading town centre which can be utilised by staff. Whilst the site does not provide one parking space per two members of staff, the site has the benefit of public transport and car sharing, providing a range of travel options for staff.
- 3.8 Students are dropped off to school and picked up from school via a minibus service. There is a designated turning circle area for minibuses to ensure that they egress the site in a forward gear.



- 3.9 Whilst the arrival of students and staff will be during the morning peak hour of travel, the return journey will take place in the afternoon, in advance of the evening peak hour of travel.
- 3.10 The site also benefits from being in close proximity to the nearby bus stop, on Long Barn Lane, equivalent of a seven-minute walk. This provides frequent services to and from Reading town centre which can be utilised by staff.
- 3.11 The previous applications have been supported by the highway officer, and there have been no issues operationally during this time. Equally, the school is shut on weekends and during holiday periods. Once the use of the building reverts back to the former business use, which is likely to have a greater impact on the highway network than the temporary use.
- 3.12 The proposal is compliant with policies TR3 and TR5.

COMMUNITY FACILITIES

- 3.13 Policy OU1 of the Local Plan supports proposals for new, extended or improved community facilities. Whilst this proposal seeks a further temporary extension for a period of three years, it will then revert to class E(g)(i). The policy is clear that it supports educational facilities and as set out in this statement, this proposal is required to be extended due to the applicant seeking to build a new school in West Berkshire. The proposed temporary use is compliant with policy OU1.



4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.2 The proposal seeks temporary planning permission for the change of use from E(g)(i) to F1(a) for a further period of three years. This is because the applicant is looking to build a new school in West Berkshire which the students at this school will then move to.
- 4.3 Operationally, the site will run as it does currently, utilised in normal school day hours, and closed on weekends and school holidays. There is existing parking space for cars (by staff) and students are transported by minibus. The proposal will not result in any harm on neighbouring properties or the highway network and will revert to its former E(g)(i) use following the permission expiring.