

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Park Ward

App Ref: PL/26/0114 Full planning permission

Address: 7 EASTERN AVENUE, READING, RG1 5RU

Proposal: Proposed Change of Use of C3 (Dwellinghouses) to C2 (Residential care home)

Applicant: Mr Abdul Ghafoor

Received date: 29/01/2026

Target Decision date: 10/07/2026 (Agreed EOT)

Case Officer: Catrin Davies

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site relates to a two storey semi-detached dwelling located on the eastern side of Eastern Avenue. The existing dwelling is a 5 bedroom dwelling with a modest rear garden. There is hardstanding to the front used for parking, with a trees located along the front boundary. The street is predominantly residential in nature.

The site is located within the South Park Conservation Area.

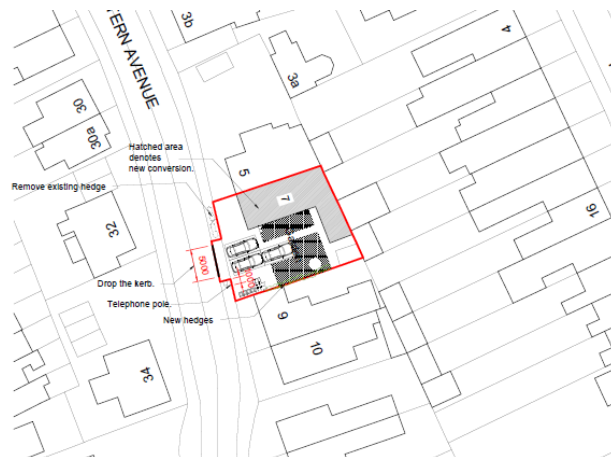


Figure 1: Location Plan

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The application proposes the use of the property as a children's home within Use Class C2, accommodating up to three children (approximately aged 5–16) with a maximum of three staff on site at any one time (the exact number of full time equivalent staff has not been sufficiently detailed). The home would operate as a long-term residential setting, providing stable and consistent care.

The operation is intended to function similarly to a typical family household, with children living together as a single residential group and the property serving as their primary home, usually for periods exceeding one year. Staffing would be managed through shift rotations (typically 12-hour shifts), including a sleep-in arrangement to minimise night-time activity and avoid late-night or early-morning staff movements.

Day-to-day activities would be domestic in nature, including shared meals, school attendance, and routine household tasks, with no commercial use, public visitors, or external signage. No physical alterations to the property are proposed.

Plans and documents:

Statement 7 Eastern Avenue received 7th July 2026
Landscape Plan received 6/7/26
P1712-01 Rev B received 10 June 2026 (amended)
NJC-001 Visibility splays and parking received 22 May 2026
Design and access statement received 30th March 2026
Heritage statement received 12th February 2026
P1712 -03 existing plans received 12th February 2026
P1712 -04 proposed plans received 12th February 2026

3. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

Transport Development Control

Please note that the existing vehicle crossing will need to be reinstated and realigned with the footway as this will no longer be required. As illustrated in plan SK 1712-06A.

C2 CONSTRUCTION METHOD STATEMENT (TO BE SUBMITTED)
DC1 VEHICLE PARKING (AS SPECIFIED)
DC3 VEHICULAR ACCESS (AS SPECIFIED)
DC5 CYCLE PARKING (AS SPECIFIED)
DC8 REFUSE AND RECYCLING (AS SPECIFIED)
DC10 ACCESS CLOSURE WITH REINSTATEMENT
DC15 VISIBILITY SPLAYS (AS SPECIFIED)
DC20 PARKING PERMITS 1
DC21 PARKING PERMITS 2
IF3 Highways
I29 Access construction

Environment Protection

Due to the small scale nature of the proposed care home, and the age of the children, I don't have any concerns or comments.

Heritage

No concern subject to a condition securing additional information regarding materials.

Public Consultation

A site notice was displayed at the application site as well as in the press. The application was also available to view on the council website and no letters of representations were received.



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'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).

Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the LPA to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

Accordingly, the latest NPPF and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024)
National Planning Policy Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 policies:
CC1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CC6 Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
CC7 Design and the Public Realm
CC8 Safeguarding Amenity
H6 Accommodation for Vulnerable People
H7 Protecting the Existing Housing Stock
TR5 Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging
OU1 New and Existing Community Facilities
EN1 Protection and enhancement of the historic environment
EN3: Enhancement of conservation areas
EN4: Locally important heritage assets
EN6: New development in a historic context

Supplementary Planning Documents and other guidance
SPD: Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)

Other
South Park Conservation Area Appraisal (2008)

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 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’.

5. 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.

6. APPRAISAL

Principle of the development

The lawful use of the site is considered to be a family dwelling therefore the proposal involves a loss of a single family dwelling to another use. Particular emphasis against the loss of family-sized dwellings is provided within Policy H7.

The applicant’s planning statement sets out the increasing need for care-based residential facilities. The Local Planning Authority also acknowledges the rationale for using a family dwelling to create a more domestic and ‘homely’ environment for occupants. This approach reflects a shift away from large, institutional-style buildings towards smaller-scale, integrated settings.

Providing care within a family home enables residents to experience a living arrangement similar to a traditional household, helping to support independence and everyday life skills. Furthermore, the location within an established residential area, with access to local services such as schools within walking distance, is considered to be appropriate and beneficial to the needs of future occupants.

The Local Plan contains policies to protect the existing dwelling stock (H7), provide accommodation for vulnerable groups (H6) and to protect or improve community facilities (OU1). A large family dwelling will be lost, it is considered that in this instance. It is important to note that policy H7 states loss of family dwellings will not be acceptable “unless there are exceptional circumstances” the applicant has provided supporting information stated the need for this type of service. In addition, the proposal would provide accommodation for vulnerable groups and provide a needed community facility which would outweigh the loss of the family dwelling. The proposal will also provide employment through the various support

staff required, which is a further benefit of the proposals. The proposal complies with policy H7, H11 and OU1 of the Reading Local Plan.

Design consideration and heritage

Policy CC7 aims to preserve or enhance the character of the area in which a development is in terms of layout, landscape, density, scale, height, massing, architectural detail and materials.

Policy EN3 states “The special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced. Development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness”

Policy EN6 requires “New development will make a contribution to the historic character of the area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities and considering how heritage considerations can influence the design of new development.

Whilst no alterations are proposed to the building, the application involves substantial changes to the front and side curtilage, including the creation of three off-street parking spaces, cycle storage, refuse storage and associated boundary treatments. Collectively, these features would result in a frontage dominated by parked vehicles and servicing infrastructure, creating a visually cluttered and incongruous appearance that would fail to positively contribute to the character of the street scene, the parking would also encroach into the retained garden area, reducing the useable garden space, and space around the building.

The South Park Conservation Area Appraisal identifies as a key characteristic of the Conservation Area the presence of “spacious plots with mature trees and well stocked gardens” (paragraph 6.1). It further notes that “many fairly substantial properties in commensurately large grounds” contribute positively to the character and appearance of the area (paragraph 5.2). The proposal would reduce the ‘greenness’ of the site, notably the frontage with the loss or significant reduction of the existing hedge and this is unaided through the introduction of further areas of hardstanding and the prominent siting of cycle and refuse storage within the front garden. In addition, the intrusion of the parking areas into the area of side garden would further harm the appearance of the site, and main building through the discordant arrangement of fencing. It is noted that no details of the fencing to the side have been provided. The abrupt change in direction of fencing, of an unclear appearance, is not considered within the context of the Conservation Area.

It is noted that the existing frontage is provided almost entirely as gravel, and appears to be used as carparking. It is noted however, that there is no dropped kerb serving the majority of the frontage, and therefore, vehicles accessing the site other than over the dropped kerb would be undertaking unauthorised manoeuvres. In general, it cannot be taken that an unauthorised existing situation (i.e. unlawful vehicle movements) can be considered to justify a poor proposal. The proposal would therefore create an overly urbanised and vehicle-dominated frontage that would appear at odds with the established pattern of spacious, landscaped plots that characterise the Conservation Area. In this regard, the Appraisal identifies frontage parking as a feature that has a negative impact on the historic character and appearance of the Conservation Area (paragraph 6.1). The proposed development would similarly diminish the visual contribution made by the front garden and introduce an appearance of clutter and enclosure that would be harmful to the character and appearance of the area.

The site is not considered to make a particularly strong positive contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area at present, Though, this is through the deliberate neglect and poor quality of fencing and hardstanding additions to the property. A well maintained and presented property could otherwise make a good contribution towards the conservation area. Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires special attention to be paid to the desirability of preserving or

enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. The proposal would neither preserve nor enhance that character. Insufficient landscaping or other enhancement measures are proposed to offset the visual harm arising from the extent of hardstanding, parking provision and associated storage facilities.

For these reasons, the proposal would result in a cramped, cluttered and overly dominant form of development that would fail to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the South Park Conservation Area. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies CC7, EN3 and EN6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan, the South Park Conservation Area Appraisal, and Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Impact on neighbour amenity

Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan requires that “Development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties, in terms of:

- Privacy and overlooking;
- Access to sunlight and daylight;
- Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development;
- Harm to outlook ...”

Additionally, policy EN16 states that “development will only be permitted where it would not be damaging to the environment and sensitive receptors through land, noise or light pollution.”

The proposed children’s home is considered to operate in a manner comparable to a traditional family household. The property would accommodate a small number of children (up to three) living together as a single residential group, with the dwelling serving as their primary home on a largely long-term basis. Staffing levels would be low, with no more than three staff members present at any one time, operating on a shift basis with extended hours and sleep-in arrangements. This approach minimises staff movements, particularly during unsocial hours, thereby reducing potential disturbance.

Daily activities would be domestic in nature, including shared meals, school attendance, and routine household tasks. There would be no commercial activities, no public visitors or drop-in use, and no external signage or institutional features. As such, the overall level of activity, comings and goings, noise generation, and general disturbance would be comparable to that of a typical family dwelling.

There are no external changes proposed as such window relationship and distances to boundaries remain unchanged.

A condition will be included to control the number of children at the site, this is to ensure that the proposal operates as a manner comparable to a traditional family set up and increase could potentially impact neighbouring amenities.

In light of the above, it is considered that the proposal would not result in unacceptable impacts on neighbouring amenity and would comply with the requirements of Policies CC8 and EN16 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Highways Considerations

Policy TR3 states, “In determining proposals involving a new or altered access onto the transport network, improvement works to the transport network, the creation of new transport infrastructure or the generation of additional trips on the transport network, consideration will be given to the effect on safety, congestion and the environment”.

Policy TR5 requires that the 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. The site is within close walking distance of multiple bus routes, including an ultra high frequency bus route (no.17 bus route).

It is noted that the Council's adopted parking standards does not include consideration of a C2 – Children's home. The nearest, as considered by RBC Transport, is a nursing home. The standards for which are that 0.5 spaces are provided per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) staff, and 1 per 4 residents. The applicant has not confirmed the level of FTE staff members, and states a maximum of three on site at anyone time, with one staff member sleeping overnight. It is therefore likely that the FTE staff would be less than 3. As a children's home, there would be no requirement for parking for the children. The proposal seeks 3 parking spaces on the basis of a maximum of 3 staff on site at anyone one time. Including 1 staff sleeping overnight.

The development would require 1.5 parking spaces for the assumed 3 FTE staff (albeit likely less), and as such the maximum level of parking would be two spaces. The provision of three parking spaces is in excess of the adopted standards and as such the proposal would be overparked. Therefore, the overprovision of parking would fail to provide encourage sustainable transport options for staff and would, in tandem with the harm of this overprovision of the appearance of the conservation area, would be unacceptable. The proposal would erode rational transport choices, and discourage modal shift in a highly accessible location.

The proposed plans demonstrate acceptable visibility splays; however, achieving these would necessitate the removal of the tree within the front garden.

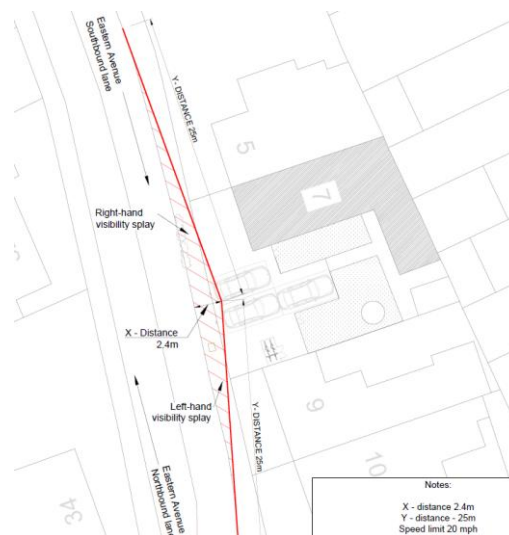


Figure 2: Visibility Splays

RBC Highways have been consulted and raised no objection subject to several conditions.

Trees/biodiversity

Policy EN14 states "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 quality of waterside vegetation will be maintained or enhanced", with policy EN12 stating "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 proposed development will result in the loss of a tree; however, this is considered acceptable in this instance as their removal is necessary to achieve the required visibility splays in the interests of highway safety. Notwithstanding this, the scheme incorporates mitigation and enhancement measures to ensure compliance with the above policies, including replacement planting and biodiversity improvements. These measures will be secured by condition. Any approval would require replacement of 2 no. trees to compensate for this loss.

Subject to the imposition of this condition, the proposal is considered to comply with Policies EN12 and EN14.

7. CONCLUSION

The proposed change of use would make effective use of the existing dwelling and the principle of the development is considered acceptable. However, the associated alterations to the front curtilage, including the provision of three off-street parking spaces, cycle storage, refuse storage and associated hardstanding, would result in a site, and frontage that is dominated by parked vehicles and servicing infrastructure. The cumulative effect of these works would create a cramped, cluttered and overly urbanised appearance that would be out of keeping with the established character of the area.

The proposal would erode the landscaped quality of the site and would fail to reflect the spacious plots and verdant setting identified as key characteristics of the South Park Conservation Area. Consequently, the development would cause a modest degree of less than substantial harm to the significance of the Conservation Area and would neither preserve nor enhance its character or appearance.

The proposal is considered contrary to Policies CC7, EN3 and EN6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan, the South Park Conservation Area Appraisal, Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and the relevant provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework. Accordingly, the application is recommended for refusal

8. RECOMMENDATION

Refuse planning permission.