

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Redlands Ward

App Ref: PL/26/0444 Full planning permission

Address: 3 - 5, Craven Road, Reading, RG1 5LE

Proposal: Erection of ancillary outbuilding and other minor associated works.

Applicant: -

Received date: 31/03/2026

Target Decision date: 08/07/2026

Case Officer: Catrin Davies

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is situated on the east side of Craven Road, located close to the roundabout junction of Craven Road and Erleigh Road, to the south-east of Reading Town Centre and opposite the Royal Berkshire Hospital.

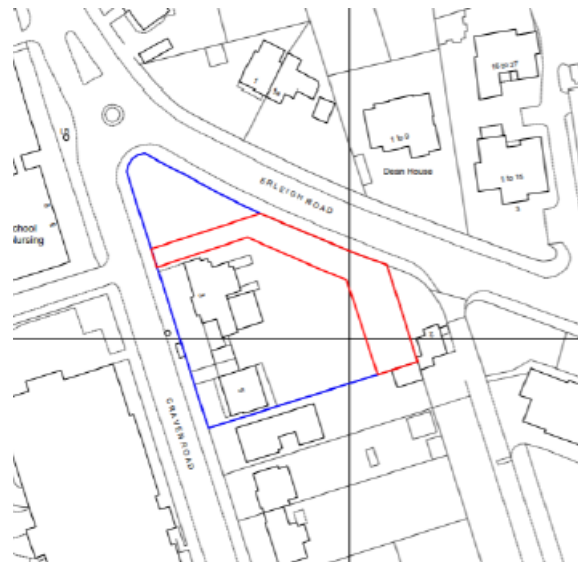
The application relates to an area of hardstanding located to the rear of the existing nursery at 3–5 Craven Road. The wider site comprises an established children's nursery, external play areas and associated parking facilities. Vehicular and pedestrian access to the site is taken from Craven Road. The nursery is principally accommodated within Nos. 3–5 Craven Road, including the two-storey Victorian property at No. 3, which is a locally listed building included on Reading Borough Council's Local List in 2015. The main nursery building lies outside the application site boundary and no alterations are proposed to it as part of this application.

Listing Description:

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.

Parking associated with the nursery is located to the north of the main building and is accessed from Craven Road. This area is used by staff and for parent drop-off and pick-up activities. The site provides a total of 27 parking spaces, comprising 25 spaces within the main car park and a further 2 spaces within a separate driveway accessed from Craven Road.

The nursery has operated from the site since 2022, when N Family Club took over the premises. The nursery currently accommodates up to 135 children and employs 34 staff members. The overall operational hours of the nursery are between 07:00 and 19:00 Monday to Friday.



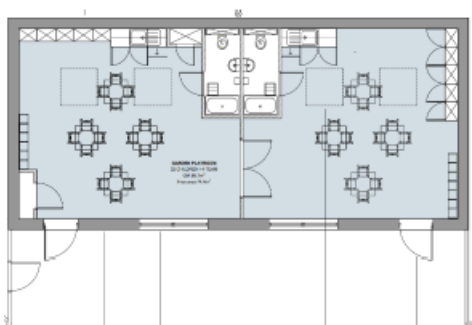
Location Plan

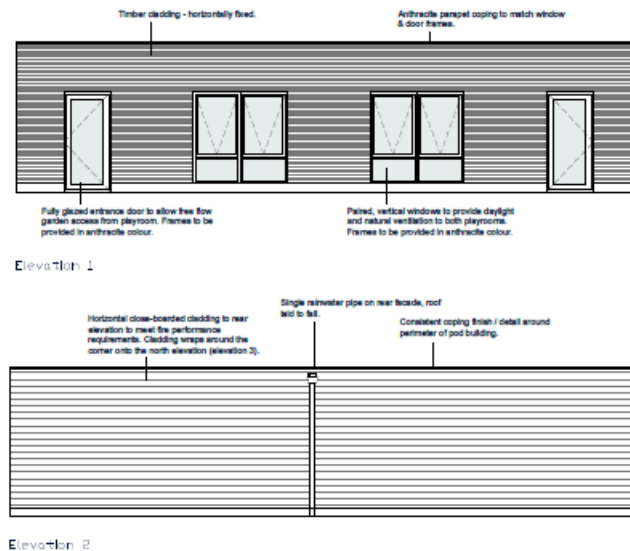
2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The application seeks planning permission for the erection of a single-storey pod classroom within an area of existing hardstanding to the rear of the nursery site. The proposed structure would provide additional ancillary childcare accommodation associated with the established nursery use and would comprise a timber-clad building with a flat roof, incorporating areas of glazing and rooflights to provide natural light and visual connectivity with the outdoor play space.

The proposed pod would accommodate up to 32 additional children and require four additional members of staff. As a result, the overall capacity of the nursery would increase from 135 children and 34 staff to 167 children and 38 staff. The proposed classroom would typically operate between 08:00 and 18:00 on weekdays, within the existing operational hours of the nursery, which are between 07:00 and 19:00 Monday to Friday.

No changes are proposed to the existing access arrangements or parking provision. The site currently benefits from 27 parking spaces, comprising 25 spaces within the main car park and a further 2 spaces within a separate driveway. Existing cycle parking provision for eight bicycles and buggy storage would be retained. The proposal also includes two additional cycle parking spaces to serve the four additional members of staff. The development would be sited on an underused parcel of land to the rear and does not result in the loss of parking spaces or outdoor play space.





Proposed Plans

A Lawful Development Certificate was granted under application 220332 for a Class E use, specifically a medical or health services use falling within Use Class E(e).

In 2022, N Family Club took occupation of the premises and commenced use of the site as a children's nursery. A children's nursery falls within Use Class E(f) (creche, day nursery or day centre). As both uses fall within the same use class, the change from Class E(e) to Class E(f) did not constitute development requiring planning permission and was therefore able to occur without the need for a planning application.

Whilst planning permission was not required for the change between the two Class E uses, separate applications were subsequently submitted and approved in relation to operational development and signage associated with the occupation of the site as a nursery. The principle of the nursery use itself was therefore not considered through those applications, which related solely to the physical works and advertisements associated with the operation of the nursery. For the avoidance of doubt the current application is solely for an outbuilding that would be ancillary to the existing lawful use of the site. The intensification of a use within a Use Class is not a material change of use. Accordingly, the acceptability of the nursery use itself does not form part of the assessment or determination of this application.

Plans and documents submitted

Transport Statement N01-AC-Transport Statement (260513) dated 13th May 2026 received 14th May 2026

GARDEN POD - SUSTAINABILITY STATEMENT May 2026 received 14th May 2026

CRR001-PL003 P2 Proposed site plan received 13th May 2026

Noise report prepared by ACA acoustic 260501-R001A dated 13th May 2026 received 13th May 2026

CRR001-PL001-P2-BLOCK PLAN received 13th May 2026

CRR001-PL000-P2-SITE LOCATION PLAN received 13th May 2026

CRR001-PL100-PROPOSED GA FLOOR PLAN received 31 March 2026

CRR001-PL101-PROPOSED ROOF PLAN received 31 March 2026

Garden Pod Planning Statement received 31 March 2026

Design Statement received 31 March 2026

Planning history

230654/FUL - Removal of timber extension to rear of no.3 Craven Road and replacement extension including 2no. roof lights. Removal of lean-to extension to rear of no.3 Craven Road and construction of 2no. external stores. Removal of existing rooflight to no. 3 Craven Road and repair of slate roof to match existing. Removal of escape stair to rear of no.5 Craven Road. Minor alterations to roof and new double doors to link building. Landscaping to rear garden, including cycle and buggy stores. Granted.

230019/ADV - 2 no. non-illuminated metal display board signs (Signs B and E). 2no. externally illuminated metal display board signs (Signs A and D). 1no. internally illuminated projecting sign (Sign C). Permitted

221114/FUL Removal of timber extension to rear of no.3 Craven Road and replacement with brick extension. Removal of lean-to extension to rear of no.3 Craven Road and construction of external storage area. Removal of escape stair to rear of no.5 Craven Road. Revised fenestration to link building. (Amended Description). Approved

220332/CLE - Certificate of Lawfulness for Existing use as Class E(e) facility for the provision of medical or health services. Permitted

171954/FUL - Demolition of existing buildings and redevelopment to form 25 Retirement Living units (C3 use) for older persons with communal facilities, parking and associated landscaping. Refused

160355/FUL - Erection of a part 4 storey/part 3 storey building to accommodate 39 Retirement Living units (C3 use) for older persons with communal facilities, parking and associated landscaping following the demolition of existing buildings. Withdrawn

041338/FUL - Temporary relocation of existing portable building from Battle Hospital and extension to house Dingley Childrens Development Centre. Permitted

3. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

Environmental Protection

No objection

RBC Highways

No objection subject to condition

Public Consultation

A site notice was displayed at the application site as well as the council website and no letters of representation 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'. 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 2014 onwards

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction

CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change

CC4: Waste Minimisation and Storage

CC7: Design and the Public Realm

CC8: Safeguarding Amenity

CC9: Securing Infrastructure

EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

EN4: Locally Important Heritage Assets

EN6: New Development in a Historic Context

EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network

EN17: Noise Generating Equipment

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

OU1: New and Existing Community Facilities

ER1: Sites for Development in East Reading

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.

5. APPRAISAL

Principle of the development- Provision of childcare places

Policy OU1 (New and Existing Community Facilities) of the Reading Borough Local Plan states that proposals for new, extended or improved community facilities will be acceptable, particularly where this involves the co-location of facilities on a single site. The policy further supports the on-site intensification of important facilities, such as education uses, subject to compliance with other policies in the plan. It also requires that such facilities are located in accessible locations, where there is a choice of means of travel, including walking and cycling. Childcare provision is considered to fall within 'education and training facilities (at all levels)', as outlined in paragraph 4.7.2 of the Local Plan.

There is clear policy support at both national and local level for childcare provision. Paragraph 100 of the NPPF emphasises the importance of ensuring a sufficient choice of early years places to meet the needs of existing and new communities and requires local planning authorities to take a proactive and positive approach. It affords great weight to the need to create, expand or alter early years facilities through decision-making.

At a local level, the Reading Childcare Sufficiency Assessment (2024–2025) identifies a need for an additional 212 childcare places to meet increased demand associated with the full rollout of entitlements from September 2025, with demand expected to rise further beyond this. The Assessment also highlights growing demand from working families, including increased uptake of childcare provision at earlier stages, indicating a continued and evolving need for childcare spaces across the Borough.

In this context, the proposal seeks to expand an existing nursery facility through the provision of additional ancillary floorspace, enabling an increase in capacity within an established and accessible location. The development represents an intensification of an existing community use on a single site and would contribute towards meeting identified childcare needs within the area.

Accordingly, the principle of providing a structure to support the extending and enhancing childcare provision at the site is supported by Policy OU1, the NPPF and the evidence set out in the Childcare Sufficiency Assessment. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable in principle, subject to compliance with other relevant policies of the development plan.

The site benefits from a lawful existing use as a nursery. The change of use from a medical use to a nursery falls within the scope of Class E of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) and did not require planning permission. Whilst planning applications have previously been approved in relation to operational development and signage associated with the occupation of the site as a nursery, those permissions did not establish the principle of the nursery use itself, which was already lawful and capable of operating without the need for planning permission. No evidence has been submitted to suggest that the current use is unlawful and the Local Planning Authority has no basis on which to conclude otherwise. Accordingly, this application has been assessed solely as a proposal for operational development in the form of an ancillary outbuilding serving the existing lawful use of the site. Matters relating to the principle of the nursery use, pupil numbers, hours of operation, or the intensity of the existing use are not relevant considerations in the determination of this application, as there are currently no planning controls restricting these aspects of the lawful Class E use. The acceptability of the nursery use itself therefore does not form part of the assessment of this proposal, except insofar as its existing lawful operation provides the context within which the development is to be considered.

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 EN1 of the Reading Borough Local Plan states that; “Historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced. This will include:

- (...)
- Other features with local or national significance, such as sites and features of archaeological importance, and assets on the Local List.

Policy EN4 of the Reading Borough Local Plan directly addresses development concerning Locally Listed heritage assets, stating that; “Development proposals that affect locally important heritage assets will demonstrate that development conserves architectural, archaeological or historical significance which may include the appearance, character and setting of the asset.

The proposed development comprises a single-storey pod structure located to the rear of the site within the existing nursery grounds. The host site includes a locally listed building at No. 3 Craven Road; however, this building falls outside of the application site boundary and no works are proposed to it as part of this application. The local listing of No. 3 relates primarily to its architectural and decorative features, rather than its wider setting.

In design terms, the proposed pod has been considered in relation to its scale, height and massing. As a modest, single-storey structure, it would be visually subordinate to the main nursery buildings and would be set at a significant distance (in excess of 30 metres) from the locally listed building. Given this separation and its siting to the rear of the plot, the structure would not compete with or detract from the significance of the heritage asset.

The proposed use of timber cladding and a simple, contemporary form would result in a lightweight and recessive appearance, which responds to the garden setting and avoids visual dominance within the site. The structure would be read as a subordinate addition within the wider nursery grounds and would not draw attention away from the main building. Whilst not forming part of the planning application, it is noted that the applicant intends to install timber fencing around the pod classroom of a similar design and appearance to existing fencing within the nursery grounds. This would provide a cohesive appearance and would integrate appropriately with the established character of the site.

Furthermore, due to its location within the rear of the site, the pod would have limited visibility from public vantage points and would not interrupt or harm key views of the locally listed building. As such, the proposal would preserve the setting and significance of the heritage asset.

Accordingly, the proposal is considered to respect the character of the area and conserve the significance of the locally listed building, in compliance with Policies CC7 and EN6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Neighbouring Amenities

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;
- Noise and disturbance;
- Artificial lighting;
- Vibration;
- Dust and fumes;
- Smell;
- Crime and safety; or
- Wind....”

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 development comprises a single-storey pod building located to the rear of the site. It is positioned within the existing nursery grounds and is enclosed by established boundary treatments, including walls and fencing. The building has been designed with windows and doors facing into the site, thereby limiting opportunities for overlooking towards neighbouring residential properties. On this basis, the proposal is not considered to give rise to material impacts in terms of privacy.

Given the single-storey scale, siting, and the presence of boundary screening, the development is not considered to give rise to significant adverse impacts in terms of visual dominance, overbearing effects, or loss of outlook. Similarly, due to its scale and position within the site, no unacceptable impacts are anticipated in terms of daylight, sunlight or overshadowing to neighbouring occupiers.

In respect of noise and disturbance, a Noise Impact Assessment has been submitted in support of the application. The report concludes that the use of the proposed pod classroom would result in a low level of noise impact and would not be detrimental to the amenity of nearby residential occupiers. This conclusion is consistent with national guidance, and the Council’s Environmental Protection team has been consulted and has raised no objection to the proposal.

The submitted Noise Impact Assessment concludes that the proposed development would give rise to a low level of noise impact and would not result in unacceptable harm to nearby residents. Given that the outbuilding would remain ancillary to the existing lawful use of the site, and there is no evidence to suggest that its use would result in impacts materially greater than those associated with the existing operation, it is not considered necessary or reasonable to impose restrictions on the hours of use of the building on the basis that the use of the site is unrestricted within Class E. There is no evidence to suggest that the building would be inherently noisy, or increase noise levels above those which might be expected from the existing use. Any noise or disturbance issues that may arise in the future can be addressed through separate Environmental Protection legislation where appropriate. Accordingly, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of its impact on neighbouring amenity and complies with Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and Paragraph 135 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

On this basis, the proposal is considered to comply with the requirements of Policies CC8 and EN16 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

Highway 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 application site is located to the south of the junction of Craven Road and Erleigh Road, in close proximity to the Royal Berkshire Hospital. Vehicular access is taken from Craven Road, serving an existing car park to the north of the nursery providing 25 parking spaces, alongside a further two spaces accessed via a separate driveway. The nursery currently accommodates up to 135 children and employs 34 staff.

The Highway Authority advises that as the proposed development would increase the capacity of the nursery by 32 children and require an additional four members of staff. This would result in a total of 167 children and 38 staff. No changes are proposed to the existing access arrangements or parking provision.

In accordance with the Council's Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD, the site falls within Zone 2. For nursery uses with flexible drop-off and pick-up patterns, the standards allow for a maximum of one parking space per three full-time equivalent staff members, together with one drop-off space per 10 children. Based on the proposed level of staff and children, a total of 29 parking spaces would be required.

The existing provision of 27 spaces therefore falls slightly below the maximum standard. However, this shortfall is not considered significant given the highly sustainable location of the site, which benefits from good accessibility to surrounding residential areas and public transport, enabling access by walking and cycling. In addition, the staggered nature of drop-off and pick-up times associated with nursery uses reduces peak demand for parking and limits pressure on the local highway network. In any case there is no change of use proposed and the intensification of use within the existing Use Class is not a material change of use.

As such, the proposal is not considered likely to result in unacceptable impacts on highway safety or parking stress, and is therefore considered to comply with Policies TR3 and TR5 in this regard.

The proposed development includes additional cycle parking. Given that the application relates solely to the operational development and not the nursery use itself, it is not considered necessary or reasonable to require further details regarding the quantity or specification of cycle parking as requested by the Highways Officer. To ensure that the development is implemented as assessed, a condition is recommended requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with the approved plans, including the provision of the cycle parking shown. Subject to this, the proposal is considered acceptable.

Trees/biodiversity/ sustainability

Policy CC2 of the Reading Borough Local Plan requires development to address climate change through sustainable construction methods and energy efficiency measures. Policies EN12 and EN14 seek to ensure no net loss of biodiversity and the protection of existing trees and vegetation, whilst encouraging opportunities for enhancement.

The applicant has submitted a Sustainability Statement which outlines the incorporation of sustainable design principles within the proposed development. The scheme has been designed to accord with the energy hierarchy, incorporating measures to improve energy efficiency and thermal performance, including high-quality insulation, glazing, and passive design measures such as natural ventilation and solar shading to mitigate overheating.

In terms of climate resilience, the proposal includes the use of permeable surfacing and sustainable drainage measures to minimise surface water runoff, alongside measures to ensure the building is resilient to changing weather conditions. The development is located on an existing area of hardstanding and would not result in the loss of soft landscaping.

With regard to biodiversity, whilst the development falls below the threshold for mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain, the proposal includes measures to enhance ecological value within the site. These include the introduction of bird boxes, insect habitats and additional planting, which would provide a modest net gain in biodiversity in accordance with Policy EN12.

In relation to trees and vegetation, no arboricultural information has been submitted to demonstrate the relationship between the proposed pod and nearby trees. Given the presence of trees within approximately 15 metres of the proposed building, there is potential for construction activities to impact upon tree roots and the wider rooting environment. In order to ensure that existing trees and vegetation are adequately protected, a condition will be imposed requiring the submission of an Arboricultural Impact Assessment and Tree Protection Plan, together with the implementation of any approved protection measures prior to and during construction. Subject to this condition, the proposal is considered capable of being undertaken without unacceptable harm to existing trees or vegetation and would comply with Policy EN14.

Overall, the proposal demonstrates a suitable level of consideration towards sustainability, biodiversity and tree protection, and is therefore considered to comply with Policies CC2, EN12 and EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan. A condition will be included to secure these measures.

6. CONCLUSION

The development is considered acceptable in terms of appearance and with no harmful impacts on residential amenities. The development has been assessed against the policies within the Reading Local Plan the policies of the NPPF, guidance in the PPG, and other material considerations including third party representations. It has been concluded that the development would not result in any harm that would justify refusal in the public interest. The decision has been taken in compliance with the requirement of the NPPF to foster the delivery of sustainable development in a positive and proactive manner

7. RECOMMENDATION

Grant subject to conditions

1. Time Limit

The development hereby permitted shall begin no later than three years from the date of this planning permission.

REASON: To comply with Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended).

2. Approved Plans

The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in strict accordance with the following approved drawings:

CRR001-PL003 P2 Proposed Site Plan received 13 May 2026

CRR001-PL001 P2 Block Plan received 13 May 2026
CRR001-PL000 P2 Site Location Plan received 13 May 2026
CRR001-PL100 Proposed GA Floor Plan received 31 March 2026
CRR001-PL101 Proposed Roof Plan received 31 March 2026

REASON: For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning, in accordance with Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and Paragraph 56 of the NPPF. [assets.pub...ice.gov.uk]

3. Materials

The development hereby permitted shall be constructed entirely of the materials specified within the approved Design Statement received 31 March 2026.

REASON: To ensure a high-quality development that responds positively to local character, in accordance with Policy CC7 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and Paragraphs 135 and 139 of the NPPF.

4. Construction Method Statement

No development shall commence, including any demolition works, until a site-specific Construction Method Statement has been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The Statement shall provide for:

- a) Space on site where vehicles of site operatives and visitors can be parked with details of how site operatives and visitors will be required to make use of the parking area provided;
- b) Location on site for storage of plant and materials used in constructing the development;
- c) The erection and maintenance (including removal of any graffiti or fly posters) of security hoarding around the site;
- d) Identification of any footpath closures or road closures needed during construction;
- e) Required wheel washing facilities on site;
- f) A scheme for recycling waste resulting from the construction works.

The measures within the approved Statement shall be adhered to throughout the demolition and construction period unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

REASON: To protect neighbouring amenity and highway safety during construction, in accordance with Policies CC8 and TR3 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and Paragraphs 115 and 135 of the NPPF.

5. Sustainability and Biodiversity Measures

The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in accordance with the sustainability and biodiversity measures set out within the document entitled "Garden Pod – Sustainability Statement" (May 2026) received 14 May 2026, unless otherwise agreed in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The approved measures shall be implemented prior to the first use of the development and shall be retained thereafter.

REASON: To secure biodiversity enhancements and sustainable development, in accordance with Policies CC2, EN12 and EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and Paragraphs 187 and 193 of the NPPF.

6. No development shall commence on site (including demolition or preparatory works) until an Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan in accordance with the relevant recommendations of appropriate British Standards or other recognised Codes of Good Practice for all existing trees that are not shown as being removed on the approved drawings, both within and adjacent

to the site, has been submitted to and been approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the approved Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan.

Reason: In order to ensure that appropriate protection is given to trees of amenity value within and adjacent to the site in accordance with Policy EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.