

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Park Ward

App Ref: PL/26/0943 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: 15/07/2026

Target Decision date: 09/09/2026

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.

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.

3. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

Highways

Previous Application for this site - PL/26/0114 – REFUSED

The site is Zone 2, Primary Core Area, of the Revised Parking Standards and Reading Design SPD. This zone directly surrounds the Central Core and extends to walking distances of 2 kilometres from the centre of Reading. This zone is well served by public transport, with buses continuing either into or out of the Central Core Area via this zone.

This application for the change of use of an existing dwellinghouse (Class C3) to a Class C2 residential institution, to operate as a children's home. There is no specific C2 classification for a children's care home facility, therefore C2 nursing home requirements have been applied to assess this application. In accordance with the adopted Parking Standards and Design SPD, a C2 development would be required to provide parking provision of 1 parking space per FTE staff and 1 per 4 residents; given that this is a children's facility parking spaces for residents would not be appropriate.

The applicant has stated that the property would accommodate up to three children, with care provided by a maximum of 3 staff on site at any one time. As previously stated in comments provided for application PL/26/0114, 3 parking spaces would be required for staff.

Policy TR5 states that 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. Local parking standards are set out in the RBC, Revised Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) which takes into account the accessibility of the site.

This application proposes to only provide 2 off street parking spaces as shown below in the submitted block plan P1712 - 02, this provision is below the current adopted standards.

Given there are parking restrictions in place in the form of the Council's residential parking permit scheme, 2 parking spaces can be accepted in this instance; however the area at the front of the site has been left as a reinforced grassed area that could be used by more than 2 cars and therefore an acceptable layout should be submitted and approved by the Highway Authority or the area should be landscaped to remove the opportunity for vehicles to park in an unacceptable arrangement. It should be noted that in the delegated report for the previous application it was stated the proposal would create an overly urbanised and vehicle dominated frontage to mitigate this we would need a parking layout that shows 2 parking spaces with appropriate landscaping to ensure that no further vehicles could access the area. Plans will need to show the full extent of the proposed vehicle access and identify the existing dropped kerb that will need to be realigned and reinstated with the footway. A license will be required to undertake all works on the public highway.

Given that there is a permit parking bay located at the front of the site, the applicant may need to consider having access protection markers across the access.

The development would not be able to apply for any residential or visitor parking permits. This will be covered by the application of the appropriate conditions and informatives.

In accordance with the Council's Parking Standards and Design SPD, cycle storage for C2 use should be provided at a ratio of 1 per 3 staff secure cycle storage spaces. Cycle storage has been illustrated on plans at the front of the site for 2 cycles which is deemed acceptable.

Bin storage should not be located further than 15m from the access point of the site to avoid the stationing of service vehicles on the carriageway for excessive periods and should comply with Manual for Streets and British Standard 5906: 2005 for Waste Management in Buildings to avoid the stationing of service vehicles on the carriageway for excessive periods. Plans indicate that the bin storage area is located at the front of the site, therefore enabling kerb side collection as per other units in the street. The council's refuse and recycling team should be contacted to ensure that the correct type and number of bins are provided.

Revised plans are required to address the comments above so that the application can be fully determined.

Heritage

Regarding the application above I have no objection as I am happy with the submitted Landscape Statement (which is Design, Access and Heritage Statement) and Landscape Detailed Drawing. I find the proposed design and materials not detracting from the significance of the South Park Conservation Area and preserves its character and appearance. I have just one question I cannot see that, what is the height of the proposed brick walls to the front? If they are in line with the adjacent building's front walls (at No.5) that is acceptable. If the agent confirms this it would be great. I suggest no conditions.

Public Consultation

A site notice was displayed at the application and no letters of representation were received.

Plans and documents submitted:

P1712-01 Location Plan.pdf received 15 Jul 2026
Planning statement received 15 Jul 2026
P1712-03 Existing Plans Elevations received 15 Jul 2026
Operational management plan received 15 Jul 2026
P1712-04 Proposed Plans Elevations received 15 Jul 2026
Parking management plan received 15 Jul 2026
Visibility plan NJC-001 Eastern Avenue received 15 Jul 2026
P1712-02 Block plan received 15 Jul 2026
Landscape Statement received 15 Jul 2026
Landscape detailed drawing received 15 Jul 2026
Visibility plan NJC-001 Eastern Avenue received 15 Jul 2026
P1712-01 Rev A Block plan received 8/9/26
Landscape plan received 8/9/26
P1712-01 Rev A location Plan received 8/9/26

Planning History:

PL/26/0114- Proposed Change of Use of C3 (Dwellinghouses) to C2 (Residential care home). Refused for the following reason:

The proposed development, by reason of the creation of three off-street parking spaces, together with associated cycle and refuse storage, fencing within the front curtilage, and the reduction of outdoor space associated with the use, would result in a visually intrusive, vehicle-dominated and cluttered frontage that would erode the landscaped and spacious character of the site, and reduces the useable outdoor space resulting in a poor quality of outdoor space. The proposal would fail to make a positive contribution toward the South Park Conservation Area, and diminish the contribution made by the front garden to the character and appearance of the South Park Conservation Area and would fail to preserve or enhance its significance. The proposal is therefore contrary to Policies CC7, EN3, EN6, and H10 of the Reading Borough Local Plan, the South Park Conservation Area Appraisal (2008) (paragraphs 5.2 and 6.1), Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, and paragraphs 135(c), 212 and 215 of the National Planning Policy Framework.

The proposed development, by way of its overprovision of car parking, would erode rational transport choices, and discourage modal shift in a highly accessible location contrary to policies TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy) and TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging) of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019, and the Reading Transport Strategy 2040 (2024) and paragraph 117 of the NPPF (December 2024, as amended).

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 2026)
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'.

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.

5. 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 and Heritage

Policy CC7 seeks to preserve or enhance the character of an area having regard to matters including layout, landscaping, density, scale and appearance.

Policy EN3 states that the special interest, character and appearance of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced, and that development proposals must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

Policy EN6 requires development to contribute positively to the historic character of an area by respecting and enhancing its architectural and visual qualities.

The previous application (PL/26/0114) was refused due to concerns that the extent and arrangement of parking, together with the siting of cycle and refuse storage and associated boundary treatments, resulted in a cluttered and vehicle-dominated frontage that failed to preserve or enhance the character and appearance of the South Park Conservation Area.

The current proposal has been significantly amended and is materially different from the previously refused scheme. Most notably, the number of parking spaces has been reduced from three to two. The revised parking arrangement allows vehicles to park side-by-side within the site rather than in a tandem formation, creating a more orderly and functional layout. As a consequence, the previously irregular boundary treatment required to accommodate the parking arrangement is no longer necessary. The proposed fencing now follows a more logical and consistent alignment which sits more comfortably within the site and reduces visual intrusion.

The introduction of additional boundary planting and soft landscaping provides greater screening of parked vehicles when viewed from the public realm and assists in softening the overall appearance of the frontage. Whilst the submitted landscaping plan does not include a planting schedule or specification detailing the proposed species, planting density or size at planting, these details can be secured by condition to ensure an appropriate landscaping scheme is provided and maintained. Furthermore, the cycle and refuse storage, previously located within the front curtilage, have been relocated to the rear garden. This significantly reduces the amount of servicing infrastructure visible from the street, resulting in a less cluttered appearance and allowing the front garden to retain a more landscaped character.

Whilst the proposal would still include off-street parking within the front curtilage, the reduced extent of hardstanding, improved landscaping strategy, revised boundary treatment and relocation of ancillary storage areas collectively result in a development that is more sympathetic to the character and appearance of the site and its surroundings. The amended scheme preserves greater openness within the frontage and reduces the prominence of vehicles within the street scene.

Having regard to the South Park Conservation Area Appraisal, the proposal is considered to better reflect the established character of the area through the retention and enhancement of soft landscaping and the provision of a more coherent site layout. The amendments have overcome the concerns that led to the refusal of application PL/26/0114, and it is considered that the proposal would preserve the character and appearance of the South Park Conservation Area.

Accordingly, the proposal complies with Policies CC7, EN3 and EN6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan, the objectives of the South Park Conservation Area Appraisal, and the statutory duty under 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 of the Reading Borough Local Plan states that consideration will be given to the effect of development on safety, congestion and the environment.

Policy TR5 requires development to provide car and cycle parking that is appropriate to the accessibility of the location and its access to sustainable transport options. The site is located within Zone 2 of the Council's Revised Parking Standards and Design SPD and is within reasonable walking distance of a range of services and public transport connections, including frequent bus services.

Paragraph 121 of the NPPF (2026) states that development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds where there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.

The previous application (PL/26/0114) proposed three off-street parking spaces and was considered by officers to represent an overprovision of parking for the proposed use, resulting in an unnecessarily vehicle-dominated frontage that contributed to the design and heritage concerns identified within the refusal. The current application has reduced the parking provision to two spaces, thereby addressing the previous concerns regarding overprovision and reducing the visual dominance of parked vehicles within the frontage.

It is acknowledged that the Highway Officer has advised that three parking spaces would accord with the Council's adopted standards based on the information submitted regarding staffing levels. However, in the assessment of the previous application, officers concluded that two spaces would be sufficient for the scale and nature of the proposed use. The proposal would operate as a small children's home accommodating up to three children and would function in a manner broadly comparable to a family dwelling, with a limited number of carers present at any one time. In this context, it is considered that the provision of two parking spaces represents an appropriate balance between meeting operational requirements and minimising the visual impact of parking within the Conservation Area.

The submitted plans demonstrate that acceptable visibility splays can be achieved from the site access. Subject to a condition requiring any boundary treatment, hedge or landscaping within the visibility splays to be maintained at a height not exceeding 0.6 metres, it is considered that the proposal would not prejudice highway safety. As such, there is no evidence that the development would result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety and the proposal would not conflict with Paragraph 121 of the NPPF (2026).

The Highway Officer has requested additional details regarding the parking layout and landscaping of the frontage to ensure that no additional informal parking can take place. Officers consider that these matters can be secured through a condition. Similarly, any works required to alter, realign or reinstate the dropped kerb would be undertaken under the appropriate Highway Licence and do not form part of the planning merits of the application. It is also noted that no highway objection was raised to the access arrangements under the previous application.

In relation to cycle and refuse storage, these facilities have been relocated to the rear garden. Given the limited scale of the proposed children's home and its operation in a manner similar to a family household, the proposed arrangements are considered acceptable and would not give rise to highway or servicing concerns.

Subject to conditions, the proposal is therefore considered to comply with Policies TR3 and TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan and the relevant provisions of the NPPF (2026).

Trees and Biodiversity

Policy EN14 states that individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance, whilst Policy EN12 requires that development should not result in a net loss of biodiversity and should provide a net gain for biodiversity wherever possible.

The proposal would result in the reduction of a section of the existing frontage vegetation to facilitate the access and parking arrangements. Whilst this would result in the loss of some existing soft landscaping, the extent of removal is limited and is not considered to involve vegetation of such significance that would warrant refusal of the application.

In assessing the proposal, regard has been had to the wider landscaping strategy for the site. The scheme includes the introduction of new soft landscaping and planting within the frontage which will assist in softening the appearance of the development, enhancing the verdant character of the site and providing biodiversity benefits. These measures are considered to offset the limited loss of existing vegetation and would ensure the site retains a landscaped appearance within the street scene.

Taking these factors into account, the proposal is not considered to result in a significant loss of biodiversity and, subject to the implementation and maintenance of the proposed landscaping, is considered to comply with Policies EN12 and EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

6. CONCLUSION

The proposed change of use has been carefully assessed against the relevant policies of the Development Plan, the South Park Conservation Area Appraisal and the National Planning Policy Framework (2026). The scheme has been amended significantly from that previously refused under application PL/26/0114, with the reduction in parking provision from three spaces to two, the relocation of cycle and refuse storage to the rear of the property, the introduction of additional landscaping, and a more coherent boundary treatment.

These amendments are considered to have overcome the previous concerns relating to the character and appearance of the South Park Conservation Area, reducing the visual prominence of vehicles and associated infrastructure and resulting in a development that better reflects the established character of the area. Furthermore, subject to conditions, the proposal is not considered to give rise to any unacceptable highway safety impacts, neighbouring amenity concerns or other material planning harm.

The proposal is therefore considered to accord with policies with the local plan, the South Park Conservation Area Appraisal, the provisions of the NPPF (2026), and the statutory duty contained within Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

Accordingly, it is recommended that planning permission be granted subject to the conditions.