

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward:

App Ref: PL/26/0304 Full planning permission

Address: HAMILTON ACADEMY, 40 CHRISTCHURCH ROAD, READING, RG2 7AY

Proposal: Site alterations including new hard and soft landscaping and electric gates, with the erection of an outbuilding and a yurt with associated works (part retrospective)

Applicant: John Seaber

Received date: 06/03/2026

Target Decision date: 12/10/2026 (EOT agreed)

Case Officer: Catrin Davies

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application site is a three storey detached redundant school building on Christchurch Road. The site was used as a school until it closed in 2022. The building has single storey extensions projecting at the side and rear. The property is not a listed building, nor does it fall within a conservation area. The front of the site is opposite The Mount Conservation Area and the rear of the site backs onto Cintra Park. The surrounding area is predominantly residential.

The application site gained consent in 2023 for the following “Demolition of existing single storey rear extension, steps, and ramps. Recladding and upgrade of existing single storey building. Upgrade to all hard and soft landscaping with new MUGA enclosure at the rear of the site” under planning reference PL/23/1025. The application commenced but was not built in accordance with approved plans and this application intends to regularise the breaches.

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The application site gained consent in 2023 for the following “Demolition of existing single storey rear extension, steps, and ramps. Recladding and upgrade of existing single storey building. Upgrade to all hard and soft landscaping with new MUGA enclosure at the rear of the site” under planning reference PL/23/1025. The application commenced but was not built in accordance with approved plans and this application intends to regularise the breaches.

The application seeks planning permission for site alterations including new hard and soft landscaping and the installations of electric gates along the front boundary. The electric gates have already been installed and are retrospective.

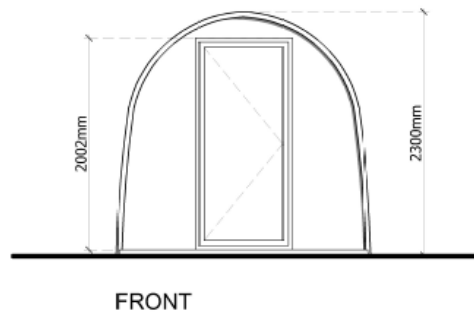
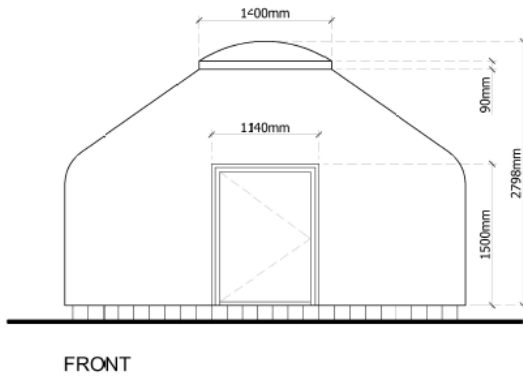


Approved PL/23/1025



Proposed

The proposal results in layout changes with the removal of the school allotments and tree planting/soft landscaping and the introduction of play/gym equipment and electronic gates a fence along the front boundary as well and the erection of a yurt and outbuilding (pod). These structure will be used as additional teaching facilities for outdoor learning.



Proposed yurt and outbuilding



Proposed (existing) elevations of gates

3. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

RBC Highways

No objection subject to condition

RBC Trees

No objection subject to a condition

Public consultation

A site notice was displayed at the application site as well as advertised on the Council's website and no letters of representation were received.



Planning History:

PL/23/1025- Demolition of existing single storey rear extension, steps, and ramps. Recladding and upgrade of existing single storey building. Upgrade to all hard and soft landscaping with new MUGA enclosure at the rear of the site. Granted subject to conditions.

Plans and documents:

0020 P05 PROPOSED SITE PLAN received 2/10/26

ARBORICULTURAL METHOD STATEMENT prepared by Broad Oak Tree Consultants Limited received 21/9/26

062_0023_P01_ProposedPlan&ElevationsYurt received 30 Jun 2026

23-062_0024_P01_ProposedPlan&ElevationsPod received 30 Jun 2026

L6615 Groveside School Landscape Proposal V8 LANDSCAPE SPECIFICATION & MANAGEMENT PLAN L6615 received 30 Jun 2026

23-062 GRO MHA XX XX DR A 0022 P01- Street scene received 19 Mar 2026

Design and Access Statement 23-062 received 6 Mar 2026

Location Plan received 6 Mar 2026

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

National Planning Practice Guidance

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

CC2: SUSTAINABLE DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION

CC3: ADAPTATION TO CLIMATE CHANGE

CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM
CC9: SECURING INFRASTRUCTURE
EN12: BIODIVERSITY AND THE GREEN NETWORK
EN14: TREES, HEDGES AND WOODLAND
TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS
TR4: CYCLE ROUTES AND FACILITIES
TR5: CAR AND CYCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING
CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY

SPD
Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)
Sustainable Design and Construction (2019)

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 use

The current use of the building is a school and the alterations would improve the facilities. The proposed development would be in accordance with Policy OU1, which supports proposals for new, extended or improved community facilities. The principle of the proposed development would, therefore, be acceptable subject to meeting other policy requirements, as set out below.

Design, Appearance and Effect on the Conservation Area

Policy CC7 the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) requires development to be of a high design quality that respects and responds positively to the character and appearance of the surrounding area, including its layout, landscape, density, scale, architectural detailing and materials. Policy EN1 seeks to protect and enhance heritage assets and their settings, whilst Policies EN3 and EN6 require development affecting conservation areas to preserve or enhance their special interest, character and appearance.

The proposal would retain the existing school building and overall site layout. The external appearance of the development would be broadly consistent with that approved under planning permission 231025/FUL. The proposal includes the addition of a yurt and a pod within the site. These structures are modest in scale, lightweight in appearance and clearly subordinate to the main school building. Ancillary structures of this nature are commonly associated with educational settings and are not considered incongruous within the context of the site.

The proposed yurt would be located to the rear of the site and would have a limited visual presence due to its modest scale and siting. Similarly, the proposed pod would be small in scale and subordinate to the principal building. Both structures would sit comfortably within the grounds of the school and would not result in harm to the character or appearance of the site or surrounding area.

Given the limited nature of the proposed additions, the development would preserve the setting of The Mount Conservation Area and would not adversely affect nearby heritage assets. The scale, layout and design of the proposal are considered appropriate to the character of the site and its surroundings.

The proposal is therefore considered to accord with Policies CC7, EN1, EN3 and EN6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Neighbouring Amenity

Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) seeks to ensure that development safeguards the amenities of existing and future occupiers. Policy EN16 seeks to ensure that development does not result in unacceptable impacts on the environment or sensitive receptors through pollution, including noise disturbance.

The proposed development is not considered to give rise to any significant adverse impacts on neighbouring amenity. The proposal does not involve any enlargement of the existing school building or an increase in its footprint. The proposed yurt and pod are modest in scale and would be located within the existing school grounds, benefiting from meaningful separation distances to neighbouring residential properties. In addition, existing boundary treatments and mature landscaping would provide effective screening. As such, the proposed structures are not considered to result in any unacceptable overlooking, loss of privacy, loss of light or overbearing impacts.

With regard to noise and disturbance, the proposal includes additional learning spaces in the form of the yurt and pod, together with the provision of an outdoor play/gym area on land previously approved as allotments. Whilst the use of this area differs from that previously approved, both the allotment area and the proposed outdoor facilities are intended to serve pupils attending the school. As such, any activity associated with these facilities would be intrinsically linked to the operation of the school and would be comparable in nature to that already approved under planning permission PL/23/1025.

The proposed yurt and pod are limited in size and are intended to provide ancillary educational accommodation rather than significant increases in capacity. Accordingly, their use is not anticipated to generate levels of activity or noise beyond those reasonably associated with the operation of a school. Furthermore, no floodlighting are proposed and the facilities would operate only during school hours, between 08:30 and 16:30, which further limits the potential for disturbance.

Taking these factors into account, it is considered that the proposal would not result in unacceptable impacts on the amenities of neighbouring occupiers and would accord with Policies CC8 and EN16 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Highways Considerations

Policies TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway related matters), TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy) and TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging) seek to address access, traffic, highway and parking relates matters relating to development.

In terms of the proposed electric gate the school will operate an 'open gate' procedure during morning drop-off and afternoon collection periods. Both gates will remain open at these times to allow vehicles to pull safely off the highway, ensuring the footway remains unobstructed. Pupils will be dropped off and collected under the supervision of school staff. During the school day, outside of peak drop-off and collection times, the gates will remain closed. However, the gates are set back sufficiently from the highway to allow delivery vehicles and visitors to pull off the road, minimising any obstruction to traffic or pedestrians. The proposals also include a new 7 x 11 foot metal shed adjacent to the car park, a small external 'pod' in the rear garden and a Yurt structure in the rear garden. Typically, the introduction of gates along a classified road is not supported as gates prevent the free flow of traffic to and from the classified road and can cause severe delays. However, given that gates have historically been located

along the front boundary, Highways do not object to the replacement electric gates. The gates are set back to allow a vehicle to pull off the highway and wait for the gates to be opened.

The amount of parking spaces would accord with the Parking Standards SPD and all the servicing and delivery arrangements for the proposed development would be similar to that of the former school via the existing in/out arrangement. The proposed development would result in a reduction in 5 trips in the AM peak and 5 trips in the school peak when compared to the former school. The amount of cycle spaces proposed is considered acceptable.

RBC Highways have been consulted and raised no objections.

Overall, therefore, the proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of Transport matters and accords with policies TR1, TR3, and TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019).

Landscape and Trees

Policy EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) seeks to protect existing trees and ensure that development does not adversely affect trees which contribute to the character and environmental quality of an area. Similarly, Policy DP3.2(c) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026) requires development to incorporate and connect to high-quality green infrastructure, including maintaining and enhancing tree cover, whilst Policy N2.1(d) seeks the conservation and enhancement of existing natural features, including trees and hedgerows, and the use of appropriate landscaping to integrate development into its surroundings.

The application seeks retrospective permission for landscape alterations and associated works, together with revisions to the approved landscaping scheme. The application has been supported by revised landscape plans and a Landscape Specification and Management Plan, which have been reviewed by the Council's Tree Officer.

The revised landscaping proposals include amendments to both hard and soft landscaping throughout the site. Whilst there is a reduction in tree planting in certain areas compared to the previously approved scheme, this is offset elsewhere within the site and the overall landscaping strategy continues to provide a meaningful level of planting.

In respect of the proposed yurt and pod, these structures are located within, or in close proximity to, the root protection areas of existing trees. An Arboricultural Method Statement has been submitted which details the measures required during installation to ensure that root systems are protected and that no adverse impacts occur to retained trees. Subject to compliance with these measures, it is not considered that the development would result in harm to existing trees.

The Tree Officer has also requested clarification regarding the location of root barriers associated with certain tree species and confirmation of mulched areas around newly planted trees. These matters can be appropriately addressed through planning conditions requiring implementation in accordance with the approved landscaping and arboricultural details.

Natural Environment Officers have reviewed the proposals and raise no objection subject to the recommended conditions. It is therefore considered that the proposed landscaping strategy, together with the tree protection measures secured through condition, would protect existing trees, provide appropriate replacement and additional planting, and contribute positively to the appearance and environmental quality of the site.

Accordingly, the proposal is considered to accord with Policy EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) and Policies DP3.2(c) and N2.1(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework (2026).

Time Limit for Implementation

Other Matters

It is noted that part of the development has already been carried out and is therefore retrospective in nature. However, elements of the proposal, including certain structures and landscaping works, remain unimplemented. As such, it is considered reasonable and necessary to impose a condition requiring the outstanding elements of the development to be carried out within a specified period. This will ensure that the approved development is completed in a timely manner and provide certainty regarding the implementation of those aspects of the proposal that have not yet been undertaken. Accordingly, a condition relating to the time limit for implementation is recommended.

6. CONCLUSION

The proposed development is considered acceptable having regard to its design, impact on neighbouring amenity, landscaping and tree protection measures. Subject to the recommended conditions, the proposal complies with the relevant policies of the Development Plan and would not result in any unacceptable impacts. Accordingly, it is recommended that planning permission be granted.