

DELEGATED APPLICATION REPORT

Ward: Redlands Ward

App Ref: PL/26/0704 Full planning permission

Address: 22 FATHERSON ROAD, READING, RG1 4PL

Proposal: An increase in childcare spaces from 37 to 50 children

Applicant: Park Day Nursery (Reading) Ltd

Received date: 28 May 2026

Target Decision date: 18 September 2026

Case Officers: Anthony Scholes/Richard Eatough

1. SITE DESCRIPTION

The application property is a 2.5-storey plus basement, semi-detached Victorian town house, which was originally converted to a children's day nursery in the late 1970s and is currently in operation as 'Wigwam Day Nursery'. The other half of the semi pair, No. 20, appears to have been subdivided at some point, with the lower ground floor as a separate flat and the upper floors in flats or possibly HMO use (not surveyed/confirmed).

To the rear of the nursery is an L-shaped garden incorporating a children's play area. The Eldon Square Conservation Area is located approximately 30m from the rear of the building. The site is within the AQMA (sandwiched between Kings Road and London Road). Fatherson Road runs north-south between the two and is generally characterised by smaller terraced properties, Victorian on the west side, 1980s/90s on the east. A recent new detached dwelling has been constructed on the site to the immediate south (whose new address is 24 Fatherson Road).

2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The applicant seeks planning permission to increase the number of childcare spaces at from 37 to 50.

Plans and documents considered:

Location Plan

Application Form

CIL Form

The 'LCP', External Activity Assessment (issue 2), dated 18 May 2026

The 'Motion', Travel Plan for Wigwam Day Nursery, dated 30 April 2026

The 'Motion', Transport Statement for Wigwam Day Nursery, dated 30 April 2026

The 'Cameron Jones Planning', Planning Statement, dated May 2026

As received by the Local Planning Authority 28 May 2026

Drawing No: DTS27032682EBMB – Basement, dated March 2026

As received by the Local Planning Authority 26 August 2026

Drawing No: DTS08032682EAMB – Outbuilding, dated March 2026

As received by the Local Planning Authority 26 August 2026

'Legal Note' from Planet Law received 8 September 2026.

The Legal Note's status is not stated, but it is considered to have the effect of a Legal Opinion. It was submitted in response to the issue that the case officer had become aware of the existence of the outbuilding and questioned its lawfulness. There are two unauthorised elements on the site – the outbuilding and 4x a/c units. Both will be discussed in the Appraisal below.

The Planning Statement says the application has been submitted under s73 (a variation) but as the limit on children numbers is in the original description of development, relevant Case Law indicates that this is not possible, and consequently this has been considered as an application for Full planning permission.

This is a Minor-level planning application which falls within Schedule 1 of The Town and Country Planning (Discharge of Local Planning Authority Functions) (England) Regulations 2026. It is not an own-interest application and is therefore this level/type of application is to be delegated to officers in all cases.

3. CONSULTATIONS

The following were consulted:

RBC Transport Development Control Officer – No objections.

This application seeks consent to increase the maximum number of children attending the nursery from 37 to 50. There will be no change in the number of staff or to the opening hours. The proposal does not involve any physical extension to the building, alterations to the site layout, or changes to the existing operating hours. The application relates solely to an increase in operational capacity.

Reading Borough Council's Revised Parking Standards and Design Supplementary Planning Document sets out parking standards for new development, which vary depending on the location of the site. The application site is located within Zone 2, where the standards for nurseries with flexible pick-up and drop-off times allow for a maximum provision of one parking space per three full-time equivalent members of staff, together with one drop-off space per 10 pupils.

There is no parking associated with site. Fatherson Road and the surrounding road network are located within an area designated as a Residents Parking Permit Zone. Non-permit holders may be allowed to park for up to 2 hours between the hours of 8am and 6pm. At all other times, the bays are reserved for permit holders only.

A travel survey has been undertaken to determine the mode of transport used to travel to the nursery. The travel survey shows that 52% walk to the nursery, with smaller proportions travelling by car (37%), bicycle (6%) or bus (5%). Therefore, the uplift in the maximum number of children attending the nursery will result in 5 additional trips in the peak drop off and collection periods.

A car parking survey of Fatherson Road was undertaken on the Tuesday 14th April 2026 between 8:00am and 9:00am and between 5:00pm and 6:00pm during both peak periods, when drop offs and collections peak. The parking survey demonstrates that adequate parking capacity exists on Fatherson Road during both peak drop-off and collection periods. Occupancy within the unrestricted parking bays peaked at 81%, leaving three spaces available, while permit bays consistently retained spare capacity. The survey therefore indicates that the surrounding highway network is capable of accommodating existing parking demand without experiencing significant parking stress.

As parking capacity was not fully utilised at any point during the surveys, the results indicate that there is sufficient on-street parking available to accommodate existing and proposed demand. The recorded level of parking stress is therefore considered acceptable and it is not anticipated that drop-off and collection activities would result in a severe impact on highway safety or the operation of the local highway network.

Follow-up response August 2026 – cycle parking is missing and 6x staff spaces are required.

RBC Environmental Protection Officer – No objections. No complaints have been received in relation to the subject property. However, advises that given the high levels of noise already experienced from the rear garden (as identified in the applicant's own noise survey), there should be a limit on the number

of children outside at any one time. Also raised concerns with the 4x a/c units and asked to see the noise rating of this equipment.

RBC Planning Enforcement – No planning enforcement records exist relating to the use of the premises as a nursery. One old case (2011), related to an unauthorised advertisement. THE RBC PE Team has been closely involved in the framing of the recommended planning conditions (discussion in Appraisal below) to ensure they are carefully worded and enforceable.

RBC Early Years Service – Letter of support received, highlighted high demand for childcare places in Reading.

Two site notices were placed on Fatherson Road, one in front of the application site, and one near London Road to the south. One letter of support was received.

4. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

76/353 – Change of Use from domestic dwelling to Childrens Day Nursery. Conditional consent granted on 25 June 1976. Appears to be the first permission related to 22 Fatherson Road, which was implemented to create the existing use.

PL/98/0475 (FUL) (98/00195/FUL) - Two childrens day nursery buildings. Refused 9 June 1998

PL/08/0473 (ADV) (08/00278/ADV) – Non-illuminated business sign. Consent Given 4 June 2008. Implemented, although this approved sign was removed circa. 2022, replaced with 2 no. signs which are in situ (no advertisement consent appears to exist for the current signage-informative required).

PL/08/0701 (FUL) (08/00714/FUL) - Relocation of kitchen [from basement to second floor] enabling increase in childcare spaces from 29 to 37, and addition of front and rear skylights to roof and replaced windows throughout. Approved 17 September 2008. Implemented.

PL/09/0460 (FUL) (09/00025/FUL) - Extension of opening hours for private children's day nursery - 7am - 7pm Mondays to Fridays. Records unavailable to confirm status of this application, although status is 'closed' which indicates that the application was possibly never validated.

PL/09/1490 (FUL) (09/01896/FUL) - Triangular Sail Shade in the back garden of the Nursery. Records unavailable to confirm status of this application, although status is 'closed' which indicates that the application was possibly never validated.

PL/11/0834 (FUL) (11/01793/FUL) - Retrospective application for 12 Canadian black solar panels on the roof. Approved 20 March 2012. Implemented (ie. retained as retrospective).

PL/12/1082 (FUL) (12/00672/FUL) - Erection of a garden room for the nursery use in the neighbouring property's back garden (no.20). Refused 9 November 2012.

PL/12/1405 (ADV) (12/01481/ADV) - 3 double-sided signboards to front of property. Records unavailable to confirm status. *Note: File photographs show that this was a retrospective application. It is presumed that this application was not approved (there are documents on the file, but no decision notice).*

5. EQUALITY ACT

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. See commentary below on equality of access to the development.

6. 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 (August 2026)

The relevant parts of the updated NPPF 2026 are as follows:

DM3: Determining development proposals – requires LPAs to be positive and proactive and other good practice requirements
DM4: Emerging development plan proposals – giving relevant weight to emerging policies
DM6: Use of planning conditions and obligations - sets out the rules for planning conditions
DM7: Relationship with other regulatory regimes – essentially, do not duplicate
DM8: Unauthorised development and enforcement – includes that, “...if it is concluded based on evidence that the unauthorised development was intentional, that fact should be given substantial weight in considering whether to grant planning permission”.
TR3: Locating development in sustainable locations – should limit the need to travel, especially by private car
TR6: Assessing transport impacts – suitable supporting information is required
P3: Living conditions and pollution
R3: Locating development in sustainable locations

National Planning Practice Guidance (2014 onwards)

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

CC1: PRESUMPTION IN FAVOUR OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
CC6: ACCESSIBILITY AND THE INTENSITY OF DEVELOPMENT
CC7: DESIGN AND THE PUBLIC REALM
CC8: SAFEGUARDING AMENITY
EN15: AIR QUALITY
EN16: POLLUTION AND WATER RESOURCES
EN17: NOISE GENERATING EQUIPMENT
TR1: ACHIEVING THE TRANSPORT STRATEGY
TR3: ACCESS, TRAFFIC AND HIGHWAY-RELATED MATTERS
TR5: CAR AND CYCLE PARKING AND ELECTRIC VEHICLE CHARGING
OU1: NEW AND EXISTING COMMUNITY FACILITIES

SPDs

Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)

Other

Reading Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2022-2023

Local Plan Partial 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 pre-submission draft was submitted to the Secretary of State on 9 May 2025 and is currently at examination.

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 this application 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 appraisal below and are not considered to be ‘out of date’. The LPPU is currently expected to be adopted in January 2027.

7. APPRAISAL

Introduction

The applicant intends to increase the number of childcare spaces from 37 to 50, a net increase of 13 spaces. Under most circumstances the increase in childcare spaces would not necessarily require planning permission, however the occupancy has been limited by condition as part of approval PL/08/07001. As such, some form of permission for this increase would be required.

Need and policy support for nursery provision

Policy OU1 states that ‘Proposals for new, extended or improved community facilities will be acceptable, particularly where this will involve co-location of facilities on a single site’, subject to other policies in the plan, the expansion of an existing community use would be considered acceptable within its own site. It should however be remembered that day nurseries do not perfectly fit into the definition of ‘community facilities’ and they are not mentioned in Policy OU1. Although they offer a similar role as schools, childcare in this instance, is by a private commercial operator.

There is a need for additional childcare in Reading as shown in the Reading Childcare Sufficiency Assessment 2022-2023. The applicant contacted the Early Years Service and the application is supported by the RBC Early Years and Childcare Team, as a key priority for the local authority is to increase the supply of childcare in Reading to ensure that the market can respond to the growth in demand.

The provision of additional childcare spaces within the site would be a benefit which would assist in meeting an unmet need within the Borough, and a such weighs in favour of the application. The nursery has been operating on site for many years and supplies suitable job opportunities.

Amenity Considerations

Policy CC8 seeks to ensure that development does not result in a detrimental impact upon the living environment of existing residential properties, including through noise and disturbance. The site operates in a dense urban environment.

The current proposal seeks permission to increase the maximum number of children attending the nursery from 37 to 50 at any one time. The submitted information confirms that this increase would be accommodated within the existing built form and operational site area, with no extensions or additional external play space proposed (as part of this application). Whilst not expressly referred to within the supporting statement, it is noted that an ancillary building has been constructed on the site since the most recent planning permission regulating occupancy levels. The building appears to have been completed several years prior to the submission of the current application and, given its age, is considered likely to benefit from immunity from planning enforcement action. The acceptability of that structure in design and visual terms does not form part of the assessment of the current application. It is not clear whether the additional internal accommodation provided by this building will assist in facilitating the proposed increase in nursery numbers, the operator says not, the EY Team does not know. This is therefore an area of control in terms of the wider garden area, see discussion below.

The site has operated as a nursery for a considerable period, with planning permission first granted in 1976 for the conversion of the semi-detached dwelling to a day nursery use. As such, neighbouring occupiers have long experienced activity associated with children arriving, departing and using the site throughout the day. The proposal does not seek to alter the established use of the site, extend opening hours, introduce new external equipment, or otherwise fundamentally change the nature of the operations currently experienced by nearby residents. Existing operating hours would remain between 07:30 and 18:00hrs and therefore no additional disturbance would occur during more sensitive evening or night-time periods. Including that no recorded planning enforcement complaints, or environmental health complaints (re: noise) have been received in relation to the site operation. The hours of use considering within the report are necessary to be secured by condition, as there is no evidence to demonstrate noise impacts are acceptable outside of these hours.

In assessing the potential implications of the increased occupancy, the applicant has provided an acoustic assessment to support the application. The report acknowledges that outdoor play activity is the dominant source of noise when the nursery garden is in use and assesses the likely impact arising from the proposed increase in child numbers. The assessment confirms that external play areas are only used by groups of children with accompanying staff and are not intended to accommodate the entire nursery population at one time. Based on existing operating practices, the report estimates that an increase from 37 to 50 children would result in a noise increase of approximately 1dB(A). It concludes that such an increase would be imperceptible to most listeners and would fall within the "low impact" category when assessed against the methodology contained within BS4142:2014. The report therefore concludes that the proposed increase in occupancy would not negatively impact neighbouring residents.

Whilst it is accepted that the proposal would inevitably result in a modest increase in activity associated with children, staff movements and parent drop-off and collection, the increase is considered likely to be relatively limited in scale when viewed in the context of an established nursery use operating from the site. Whilst it is accepted that the proposal would inevitably result in a modest increase in activity associated with children, staff movements and parent drop-off and collection, the increase is relatively limited in scale when viewed in the context of an established nursery use operating from the site. Furthermore, the proposed maximum occupancy of 50 children is considered appropriate as the applicant has confirmed that nursery staffing levels, internal accommodation and outdoor play arrangements are capable of accommodating this number without any alteration to the established operating practices of the site. As such, a very small increase in overall noise from the site would weight slightly against the proposal.

Given the above, it is considered that there is able to be support in principle for the use being applied for, as the use has been operating for many years, as has been expanded since around 2008. The question then is to what extent controls are necessary in order to maintain residential amenity at the 50 child level. Although this is a tight urban environment, those likely to be most acutely affected by any increase in intensity are those neighbours north and south, the residential properties at 24 and 20 Fatherson Road.

The following conditions have been considered necessary, for the following reasons:

Hours of operation:

In terms of operating hours, in the current operation (controlled by the 2008 permission), hours were not controlled, possibly because hours were not controlled on the original 1976 permission. However, the nursery appears to be currently operating from 0730-1800, Monday to Friday (only), according to their website and the applicant's planning statement. There appears to be no issues with the hours operating and no complaints received. On this issue, the officer view is that these hours are suitable and can continue as has been taking place to date, but do need to be specifically controlled as such.

Maximum number of children/inspection of the register with notice/inspection of the register after one year:

It is considered that the number of children needs to be controlled/capped at a maximum of 50, as has been applied for. This condition would match that set out in the description of development and is in a standard format and clear, so would be reasonable and enforceable.

Planning Enforcement has also advised that the LPA should include a condition for the LPA to be able to ask to see the daily register, on demand. This will allow quick monitoring of the operation of the site, if it becomes clear that the capped limits may have been breached. In effect it explains how the condition above shall be monitored. This provides clarity to all. Further, a regular (annual) requirement to provide the register will ensure that there is no 'creep' upwards in numbers. The applicant has signalled their agreement to this and has shared how the attendance software works with the case officer on the site visit.

Maximum number of staff (13):

As well as controlling the number of children, it is also considered necessary to control the number of staff on site at any one time. Whilst there are going to be set numbers of staff to child ratios, these are already controlled by other regimes, ie. Ofsted and NPPF Policy DM7 advises not to duplicate. However, the number of staff themselves will add to the intensity of use and comings and goings at the site, so again it is reasonable for that level (as applied for) to be controlled via condition.

No other use within Class E:

Controlling the use to be Class E(f) only is considered to be necessary, as alternative Class E uses could be a range of activities which may not be suitable and have not been considered.

No more than 29 children plus 7 staff in the rear garden:

No more than 29 children plus 7 staff shall be present within the rear garden area of the site at any time. There is a need to restrict activity in the outdoor play area. This is in fact a very modest garden in a tight urban environment. The EP Team essentially advises that this aspect of the development should not be any more intensive than the current level, given already high noise levels attributable to the outside activity of children, as identified in the applicant's noise survey.

Travel plan and Travel Plan annual review:

Day nurseries are listed as a Centre Use in the RBLP at para. 4.6.16. The application site is not in the town centre, it is just outside, but nonetheless, considered to be well-located to allow a choice of means of travel, as encouraged by RBLP Policy CC6.

Policies CC6, TR3 and TR5 of the Reading Borough Local Plan collectively seek to ensure that development is located and designed to promote sustainable transport choices, provide safe and suitable access arrangements, does not adversely affect the operation or safety of the highway network, and incorporates appropriate parking provision having regard to the accessibility of the site. There is no objection to the application on transport grounds as the site is considered to be sustainable/ suitable and the transport supporting information has confirmed that the proposed increase in child numbers can be accommodated, providing that sustainable transport behaviour is undertaken. For instance, the traffic survey indicates that there is capacity with the parking zone for the slight increase in drop-offs and pick-ups which are envisaged.

On the basis of the submitted travel plan, the existing use and the increase in use can be controlled suitably, but that ongoing control is required..

Aircon units to only be used in conjunction with hours of operation:

There are 4x air conditioning units on the rear of the building. It seems that these units do not have planning permission, although they may have been there for some years.



Whilst these cause no design issues, they do make noise. The EP Team has been considering whether there is a need to ask the applicant to revise their noise survey, which did not appear to take the noise of the units into account. The noise rating level of this equipment has been requested of the applicant and supplied. The overall EP conclusion is that the noise of the children is much more of an issue. Given that the a/c units are only considered to be needed when the nursery is in operation and to control background noise level 'creep', it is considered to be a proportionate response in the circumstances to have the hours of operation of the units matching the opening times of the nursery.

The above are all 'restrictive'-type conditions which do not need to be set with the agreement of the applicant, however, the majority of these controls have been shared in detail with the applicant, who is in agreement with them.

Other issues and conditions considered but not required:

Restricting servicing and delivery times – considered but discounted. The transport statement advises that deliveries occur outside of nursery drop-off and collection times, this is considered to be logical and not necessary to control via condition.

Cycle parking – considered but discounted. Although there is a technical requirement via SPD and Policy TR5, in reality cycles are wheeled through the side lean-to and into the rear garden where they

are reasonably secure. Any formal provision of parking would just reduce the rear amenity space so on balance, the requirement for cycle parking should not apply in this instance.

Servicing and waste management – there are bins in the front of the property and the RBC Contract Waste service is used. No significant increase in intensity is likely, so no response is considered necessary.

Energy – the building already has solar panels and given the current building's use, no further requirements are considered necessary.

Landscaping and ecology - the frontal garden area is unaffected. The rear garden area is modest (circa. 100 sqm) and would continue to be in intensive use for children. It is considered that there are no realistic opportunities/requirements for landscaping or ecological enhancements as a result of the proposal, and none are considered to be required.

Wall insulation between the semi-detached properties has been considered. This would be appropriate for a new use, but it has not been needed thus far and it is not considered that the increase would produce a difference.

EN15 Air Quality - where a development would introduce sensitive uses (such as residential, schools and nurseries, hospitals, care facilities) into, or intensify such uses within, an Air Quality Management Area, detrimental effects on that use will be mitigated. Mitigation measures should be detailed in any planning application. If there are significant detrimental effects that cannot be mitigated, the application should be refused. Whilst the proposal is for an intensification of the number of children within the AQMA, the EP Team advises that given the location equidistant between the two main roads, the intervening buildings and the general increases in local air quality in the AQMA in recent years, there are no EHO concerns.

Heritage – The a/c units are noted and are not an attractive feature. These may be separately controllable. Their continued presence is harmful, at a low level, to the character of this grand, Victorian property (a Non-Designated Heritage Asset) and has a negative impact of views into the nearby conservation area. However, both impacts are considered to be low.

Accessibility for all: the premises, located over multiple floors of a Victorian building, are not going to be accessible to all people. This is an existing situation and it is not considered appropriate to require improvements on the basis of the proposal, considering the situation of the current operation/capacity of the site.

8. CONCLUSION

The proposal seeks planning permission to increase the maximum number of children attending the existing nursery from 37 to 50. This increase is sought to an existing nursery, within a tight urban environment, therefore, the opportunity for 37 children plus staff is already considered to be an intensive use of this site, a townhouse with a modest rear garden and no parking, in this edge-of-centre location. However, there are certainly advantages to the site. The use appears to be operating suitably at the current scale. Transport operations appear to be acceptable. This all indicates that subject to very careful additional controls, as discussed and recommended, the relatively modest expansion of children is considered to be acceptable, on the basis that the LPA is approaching the proposal positively and proactively, and has no current indications of harm at the existing level. The conditions indicated have been carefully considered in order to protect, in the main, harm to neighbour amenity which may otherwise occur due to noise, disturbance and traffic generation/comings and goings.

The provision of additional childcare places would assist in meeting an identified need within the Borough and is supported by the Council's Early Years Team. This benefit weighs in favour of the proposal.

The increase in occupancy would be accommodated within the existing site and built form, with no extension to the nursery building, no increase in opening hours and no fundamental change to the nature of the use. Whilst a small increase in activity and associated noise is envisaged, on balance, the proposal is not considered to result in unacceptable harm to the living conditions of neighbouring occupiers and is therefore compliant with Policy CC8.

In transport terms, the site occupies an accessible and sustainable location with strong walking, cycling and public transport links. The submitted evidence demonstrates that the increase in occupancy would result in only a limited increase in vehicle movements and that sufficient parking capacity exists within the surrounding highway network. The Council's Transport Development Control Officer raises no objection, and subject to the implementation and monitoring of the submitted Travel Plan, the proposal is considered to accord with Policies TR1, TR3 and TR5.

Taking all relevant material considerations into account, the proposal would deliver a social benefit through the provision of additional childcare places without giving rise to unacceptable impacts on residential amenity (subject to the various conditions recommended), highway safety or the operation of the transport network. On balance, the proposed increase is considered to be supportable, but only if there are conditions to ensure that these are able to be closely monitored/enforceable, to maintain residential amenity.

Accordingly, the application is recommended for approval, subject to the conditions set out below.

9. RECOMMENDATION

GRANT planning permission, subject to conditions.