

COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 2nd February 2022

Ward: Tilehurst

App No.: 211399

Address: The Avenue School, The Avenue Centre, Conwy Close, Tilehurst

Proposal: Redevelopment of school playing field to erect a mixed used educational centre to include special needs school, community uses and ancillary educational staff offices and conference facilities for the Reading Education Centre, incorporating new access road, parking and highway works with associated landscaping and re-provision of public open space without complying with condition 5 of planning permission 06/00253/REG3 (060436)

Applicant: Reading Borough Council

Deadline: 24/11/2021 - extended to 4/2/2022

RECOMMENDATION:

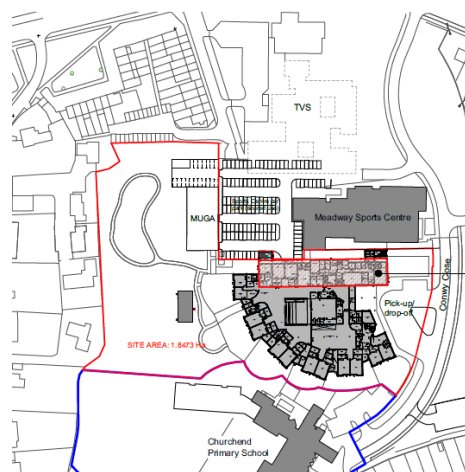
Recommendation - Grant decision as varied

Conditions as on the original permission with relevant updates to approved plans condition 3 and condition 5 amended to:

The building and associated land shall be used as a school and training facility with community use of facilities only and for no other purpose (including any other purpose in the same Use Class of the Schedule to the Town & Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987, or in any provision equivalent to that Class in any statutory instrument revoking or re-enacting that Order with or without modification).

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application site is The Avenue School Academy, which caters for students with special educational needs (SEN). Adjacent is Churchend Primary School to the south and The Meadway Sports Centre and Thames Valley School to the north. To the east of Conwy Close is recently completed residential development. The Council own the site.



Site Location Plan

2. PROPOSAL

2.1 Permission is sought to amend the plans as approved for application 06/00253/REG3 (060436) and to alter condition 5 of that permission to carry out internal alterations of the former office areas to replace now vacant children services offices with additional teaching rooms.

2.2 Condition 5 currently says:

The building and associated land shall be used as a school, and for childrens' services with related offices and training facility with community use of facilities only and for no other purpose (including any other purpose in the same Use Class of the Schedule to the Town & Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987.

The proposed new condition deletes the text highlighted as shown above.

2.3 The proposal involves new internal layouts but no changes to the external appearance. Plans of the existing and proposed layout of the building with occupancy data have been provided (also see appended plans):

E05074_A_SK0119_Space Allocation Diagram - Existing

- 175 pupils
- 175 school staff
- 150 education dept. staff
- TOTAL = 500

E05074_A_SK0120_Space Allocation Diagram - Proposed

- 235 pupils
- 252 school staff
- TOTAL = 487
- Community Use (out of hours)

2.3 The applicant confirms that the existing community use of the site will continue with the school building open for community use up to 8pm during the week and is also open at weekends. The pool is hired out after school until 6pm and all day on Saturday and Sunday. The sports hall and The Square are hired out to community groups and a local Church on weekday evenings. All associated parking is in the school car park as the barriers are lifted after school hours.

2.4 The applicant also explains that the school has reached an agreement with Meadway Sports Centre to be able to use their parking area during school times and that there are no current plans to expand the car parking areas serving the school. The school is also in the process of updating their School Travel Plan to reflect the current proposals and to take into account the additional pupils and staff on site and the reduced occupancy of the building by other staff.

2.5 Community Infrastructure levy (CIL):
In relation to the community infrastructure levy, the applicant has duly completed a CIL liability form with the submission and the development will not be liable.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 The original planning permission for the school development on the site dates from 2006 when application 06/00253/REG3 was granted permission for the redevelopment of a school playing field to erect a mixed used educational centre to include special needs school, community uses and ancillary educational staff offices and conference facilities for the Reading Education Centre, incorporating new access road, parking and highway works with associated landscaping and re-provision of public open space.

11/01262/REG3 proposed internal refurbishment works including changes to the first floor layout. Application granted.

12/01387/REG3 (Civica Ref: 120519) - To create 11 additional parking spaces, with associated landscaping. Permitted 09/11/2012.

150833/NMA - Non material amendment to planning permission 12/01387. Agreed 16/09/2015.

162331 - Installation of a temporary demountable modular double classroom unit and associated external works. Permitted March 2017.

4. CONSULTATIONS

4.1 Statutory

None required

4.2 Non-statutory

Transport Development Management

The proposed use as an expanding school requires an additional 77 car parking spaces when assessed against our Parking SPD and the application only provides for 50 additional spaces, generated by leasing the leisure centre parking and tweaks to the parking layout. I would stress that the Travel Plan only stipulates 45 spaces and there is no mention of realigning the leisure centre car park or providing the additional 5 spaces within it. The application also provides no drawings illustrating these increases in overall parking provision. Based on the information provided the proposal would result in a shortfall of 32 spaces (77-45), I cannot take the other 5 spaces into account because they have not been illustrated as part of any detailed submission to date.

The current use is allocated with the provision of 45 spaces, which is for between the hours of 08.00 - 16.00 and for a use of up to 3 hours at a time. The issue I have is that based on our parking standards the current use only requires a provision of 32 spaces and therefore the 45 spaces allocated would be in excess of what is required.

The Travel Plan that has been submitted indicates that 74% of staff drive a car to work which equates to a provision of 57 spaces being required a shortfall of 12 spaces based on the information provided to date stipulating that 45 spaces will be provided.

I do appreciate that the actual use may have had a far greater demand, but an updated Travel Plan and Car Park Management Plan is required to

demonstrate how visitors are to be encouraged to reduce car use and how the school will manage the available car park spaces.

Officer note - the applicant has confirmed that these documents will be provided in time to be considered at your meeting.

4.3 Public

Site notices were displayed - no public comments received.

5. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE

- 5.1 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).
- 5.2 The development plan for this Local Planning Authority is the Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019). The relevant policies are:
- CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
 - CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
 - CC7: Design & the Public Realm
 - CC8: Safeguarding Amenity
 - 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

6. APPRAISAL

- 6.1 The main issues arising from the proposed changes are:
- a) Principle of proposed increase in school use
 - b) Impact on character of the surrounding area
 - c) Impact on amenities of adjoining occupiers
 - d) Highways and transport issues
 - e) S106 and Equalities Act
- a) Principle of use/location
- 6.2 The principle of using the site for a mix of educational/office and community uses was established with the granting of the original 2006 planning application. The upper floor office space was previously used by education administrative staff, as touch down spaces for other staff and for training but these uses have ceased.
- 6.3 Officers have considered if there have been any material changes in circumstances relevant to this proposed new use of the upper floors since the original application was considered and decided. At that time the adjacent site was also the subject of an outline application for residential development of 58 dwellings, which was approved in June 2006 as part of a comprehensive redevelopment of the site with the Avenue School. A different residential scheme has now been built but officers are satisfied that the combination of uses adjacent to the site is as was first envisaged when the education centre was first approved. The area remains a mix of

educational, leisure and residential uses and therefore the additional educational use on this established site in this urban area is found to be acceptable and in accordance with Policies CC1 and CC6.

b) Impact on character of the surrounding area

6.4 The design, scale and external appearance of the building is not proposed to be changed. The proposed new use of the upper floors when compared to how they were previously used would not have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the site or locality, which is predominantly in educational/community use. There is no conflict with Policy CC7 or OU1.

c) Impact on amenities of adjoining occupiers

6.5 Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) states that development should not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties in terms of privacy and overlooking, access to sunlight and daylight, visual dominance and overbearing, noise and disturbance, artificial lighting, crime and safety etc. Officers are satisfied that the proposed use of the existing rooms for education purposes as proposed would not have a detrimental impact on neighbours.

d) Highways and transport Issues

6.6 Transport officers have sought clarification on parking availability. Confirmation of the agreement for the school to use vacant parking spaces at the sports centre during the school times has been provided. However, an updated Car Park Management Plan and a School Travel Plan have also been requested to enable officers to confirm that concerns can be met and that the proposal complies with Policies TR3 & TR5.

e) S73 Decisions / S106 / Equalities Act

6.7 When issuing a decision notice for an application applied for under Section 73 the outcome is the granting of a new planning permission. The Local Planning Authority should consider the proposed change against the current adopted development plan and may amend conditions or add new ones if relevant to the change sought. In this case officers recommend that condition 3 (approved plans) is also amended to include the new internal layout plan provided. The remaining conditions (there are 24 in total) have either been met or remain relevant and the decision notice, if the recommendation to grant is approved, will clarify this.

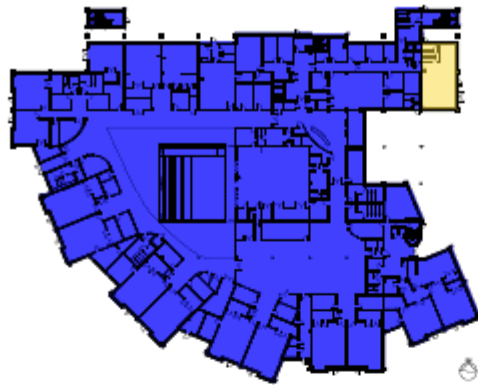
6.8 Sometimes when S73 applications are made shortly after the original permission was granted any S106 agreement needs to be reviewed and varied too so as to refer to the new planning permission. In this case officers are satisfied that the obligations of the S106 legal agreement completed in 2006 have either been met or are no longer necessary to make the application acceptable in planning terms.

6.9 Equalities Act. When determining an application for planning permission the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this 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 proposed development, which is in fact intended to improve education facilities for some of the protected groups

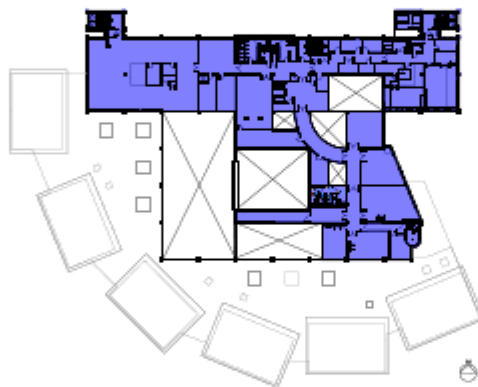
7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The principal of increasing the educational use of the site by expanding teaching space to the now vacated upper floors has been considered in the context of the original planning permission, the current Reading Borough Local Plan 2019 and supplementary planning documents and the material changes to circumstances around the site with new residential development to the east and educational development to the north and south of the site. It has been concluded that what is proposed is acceptable and therefore the recommendation is to Grant the variation as requested.

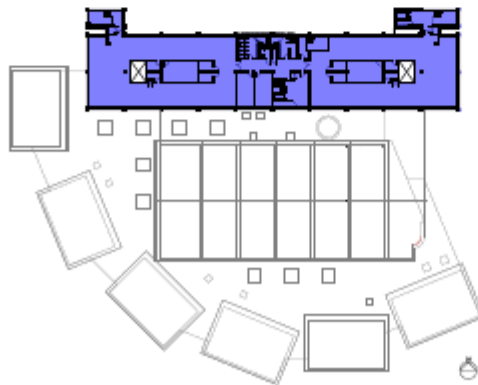
Case Officer: Ms Claire Ringwood



Proposed Ground Floor Areas



Proposed First Floor Areas



Proposed Second Floor Areas

Note:

- Visiting health professionals have use of office facilities
- Some spaces have out of hour and weekend use by various clubs.

- The Avenue Special School Use PAN - 235
- Community Use

Proposed FTE Staff No. - 252.2

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Harrogate County Council

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PROJECT NAME
EDS074 The Avenue Special School

DRAWN BY
Space Allocation Diagram Proposed

SCALE
 1:2000@A4
 DRAWN: RPS HD
 CHECKED: [blank]
 PROJECT: EDS074-HCC-ZZ-00-SK-A-0120 P1 00

Proposed Layout