

10 January 2024



Reading
Borough Council
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Title	PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT
Ward	Thames
Planning Application Reference:	231494
Site Address:	Thameside Primary School, Harley Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8DB
Proposed Development	Retrospective retention of existing demountable 1 storey modular classrooms and temporary permission to further retain the modular unit for 5 years and minor associated works.
Applicant:	Reading Borough Council – Property Management
Report author	Nicola Taplin
Deadline:	20 December 2023
Recommendations	Grant planning permission, subject to conditions as follows:
Conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Temporary Buildings (Reinstatement)2. Approved Plans
Informatives	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Terms2. Building Control3. Complaints about construction4. Encroachment5. Positive and Proactive - Approval

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report explains the proposal submitted by Reading Borough Council for the retrospective application to retain the existing demountable 1 storey modular classrooms and temporary permission to further retain the modular unit for 5 years and minor associated works. The proposal seeks permission to continue the use of this building for a further five years. The continued use of the unit as proposed is acceptable and there are minimal concerns raised in terms of amenity impacts arising from the proposal.

2. Introduction and site description

- 2.1. The application is referred to Committee owing to it being for works to Council owned (Regulation 3) property.
- 2.2. The application site is bounded by Harley Road to the north, industrial units adjacent to Wolsey Road to the west and a modern residential development to the south and east,

Elliot's Way. The existing modular unit is set away from boundary towards the east of the site.

- 2.3. The single modular unit was granted temporary planning permission (Application No: 140851) on 24 July 2014 for two years. The double classroom is currently in use by SEN (Special Educational Needs) pupils. The school has been struggling with increasingly demanding cohorts of SEN pupils who need additional accommodation to the mainstream classrooms. The Council as the Local Education Authority has a statutory duty to provide places for SEND.

- 2.4. Site location plan:



3. The proposal

- 3.1. The proposal is retrospective to retain the modular unit at the site since the previous permission lapsed in 2016. The application would retain the unit for an additional 5 years (until 2028).
- 3.2. The submitted planning statement identifies the need to retain the modular unit to provide classroom space for SEND students from January 2024.
- 3.3. Submitted plans and documentation:
- 3.3.1. Design, Access and Supporting Statement, received 18 October 2023
 - 3.3.2. Location Plan, received 18 October 2023
 - 3.3.3. Proposed Block Plan, received 18 October 2023
 - 3.3.4. M13/03 B 01 Proposed Elevations, received 18 October 2023
 - 3.3.5. E02347-F-04 Proposed plan received 18 October 2023
 - 3.3.6. Floor Risk Assessment dated 27.5.2014 – PBA
 - 3.3.7. Sewer Flooding Report - SFH/SFH Standard/2014_2673022

4. Planning history

- 4.1 140851/REG3 - Temporary modular building for 2 classrooms, removal and repositioning of existing canopies and external landscaping – Temporary planning permission 23.7.2014
- 130778/REG3 - Provision of four new storage sheds. Withdrawn 11/03/2014.

11/01688/REG3 (Civica Ref: 111653) - Erection of new canopy to main entrance and retrospective erection of canopy over front play area. Withdrawn 09/02/2012.

12/01595/REG3 (Civica Ref: 120712) - Erection of new canopy to main entrance. Withdrawn 05/12/2012.

5. Consultations

RBC Natural Environment – The original landscaping condition does not appear to have been discharged. Officers should consider whether it is reasonable to impose a condition.

RBC Transport Strategy – No objection subject to confirmation that there will not be an increase in the number of pupils

RBC Environmental Protection - No comments to make.

Environment Agency – Advises the LPA to apply their Standing Advice.

5.1. Public:

The following neighbouring properties were consulted by letter dated 31.10.23

Flat 21, Bristow Court, Harley Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8DA

Flat 9, Bristow Court, Harley Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8DA

Flat 24, Bristow Court, Harley Road, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 8DA

25 Elliots Way, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 8BW

43 Elliots Way, Caversham, Reading, Berkshire, RG4 8BW

19 Wolsey Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8BY

13 Wolsey Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8BY

16 Wolsey Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8BY

14 Wolsey Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8BY

21 Wolsey Road, Caversham, Reading, RG4 8BY

A Site notice was displayed at the site on 25 October 2023.

No letters of representation received.

6. Legal context

6.1. 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) - 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).

6.2. 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).

6.3. Accordingly, the latest NPPF and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

Policies:

CC1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

CC7 Design and the Public Realm

CC8 Safeguarding Amenity

EN14 Trees, Hedges and Woodland

EN18 Flooding and Drainage

OU1 New and Existing Community Facilities

7. Appraisal

7.1. The main considerations are:

- I. Land use principles
- II. Amenity impacts
- III. Flood Impact
- IV. Traffic generation and parking
- V. Landscaping

Land use principles

- 7.2. The proposed works seek to continue use of the double classroom unit for SEND pupils, from January 2024 for a period of 5 years. The applicant advises that the school has been struggling with increasingly demanding cohorts of SEN pupils who need additional accommodation to the mainstream classrooms. The Council has a statutory duty to provide places for SEND.
- 7.3. The modular unit was erected in 2014. The area on which the modular unit sits was part of an area of playing field which was essentially lost through the granting of planning permission 140851.
- 7.4. As such, the retention of the modular unit is not considered to unreasonably reduce the amount of playing field space at the site since this was lost through the implementation of planning permission 140851 and therefore is considered to comply with Sports England Playing Fields Policy (Policy Exception 3), which reads "*The proposed development affects only land incapable of forming, or forming part of, a playing pitch, and does not result in the loss of or inability to make use of any playing pitch (including the maintenance of adequate safety margins), a reduction in the size of the playing areas of any playing pitch or the loss of any other sporting/ancillary facilities on the site.*"

Amenity impacts

- 7.5. The nearest residential property to the modular classroom is 20 Elliots Way whose side boundary is a minimum of 2.5m away from the modular classroom. Officers consider that there is no undue harm resulting from the continued temporary use of the building in terms of noise and disturbance. Risk of harm to the nearby properties in Elliots Way from the appearance and siting of the modular unit nor from factors associated with its use, such as noise.
- 7.5. The proposal is therefore considered to comply with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Flood Impacts

- 7.6. Thameside Primary School is located within Flood Zone 2 and the Environment Agency advised that their Flood Risk Standing Advice should be followed. Educational uses are classified as more vulnerable uses in the NPPF. The application site is located within Flood Zone 2, which satisfies the requirements of the NPPF Sequential Test. The applicant has submitted a Flood Risk Assessment which is supported by relevant plans and drawings. The applicant has demonstrated that the floor level of the development is set higher than ground floor levels which meet the standards set out in the Environment Agency's flood risk standing advice and are therefore acceptable.

Traffic generation and parking

- 7.7. The proposal does not increase the number of pupils attending the school and does not therefore create a requirement for additional car parking or cycle storage.

Landscaping

- 7.8. Condition 9 of the original planning permission ref: stated:

The approved development shall not begin until a landscaping scheme, with timetable, and an Arboricultural Methods Statement have been submitted and approved by the local planning authority. The landscaping scheme and the approved methods shall thereafter be implemented and timetable and methods adhered to.

Reason: in the interests of the appearance of the site.

Core Strategy Policy CS7

- 7.9 The condition was not discharged and a site visit has confirmed that landscaping works have not been carried out. Officers have considered the landscaped setting of the existing modular building which includes a number of shrubs to the north of the building and planting along the permitter boundary of the site along Elliots Way. Officers consider that the modular building assimilates satisfactorily within its setting and it would be unreasonable to impose a landscaping condition to retain the building for a further temporary period of five years. Following the expiry of the 5 year period there is a requirement under the provisions of condition 1 for the modular building to be removed and the land restored to its former condition.

8. Equality implications

- 8.1. Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to—
- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 - foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.
- 8.2. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues, and priorities in relation to this particular application.

9. Conclusion & planning balance

- 9.1 As with all applications considered by the Local Planning Authority, the application is required to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, as per Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 9.2 Any harmful impacts of the proposed development are required to be weighed against the benefits in the context of national and local planning policies, as detailed in the appraisal above. Having gone through this process officers consider that the proposal is acceptable in terms of use, design, flooding, landscaping and the impact on the surrounding residential area.
- 9.3 It is considered that officers have applied a suitable planning balance when reaching this conclusion. As such, this application is recommended for Planning Permission to be granted subject to the recommended conditions.

Plans & Appendices

Block Plan



Photos taken during site visit:



Google Streetview image:

