

27 March 2024

Title	PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT
Ward	Whitley
Planning Application Reference:	240226
Site Address:	Whitley Wood Modular Building, 29-35 Lexington Grove, RG2 8UG
Proposed Development	Erection of Temporary Modular Community Centre for a period of 3 years.
Applicant:	Reading Borough Council – Property Management
Report author	Nathalie Weekes
Deadline:	16 April 2024
Recommendations	Subject to no substantive material concerns being raised from the consultation process which closes on 3 April 2024 delegate to the Assistant Director of Planning, Transport and Public Protection Services to Grant temporary (3 years) planning permission, subject to conditions as follows:
Conditions	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Temporary Buildings2. Approved Plans3. Materials as specified4. Parking including 3 disabled bays provided5. Cycle store to be provided6. Hours of use restriction7. Amplified sound restriction9. Noise assessment for associated plant10. Remediation of noise if needed.11. Noise Management Plan to be followed12. Landscaping to be agreed, provided and maintained
Informatives	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Terms2. Building Control3. No bonfires4. Premises licence may be required5. Positive and Proactive

1. Executive summary

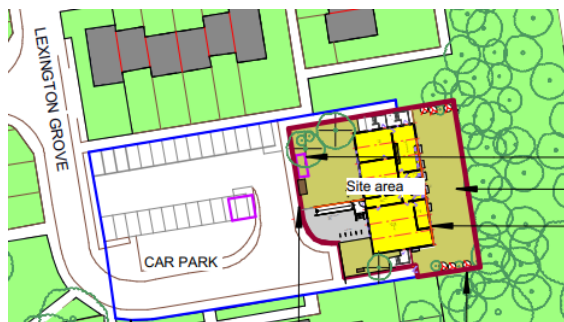
- 1.1 This application seeks ‘retrospective’ permission for a single storey temporary modular building, landscaping and associated works. The temporary building is to provide a community support hub for a 3 year period, whilst a permanent replacement is under consideration. The proposed temporary development is recommended to be approved.

2. Introduction and site description

- 2.1. The application is referred to Committee owing to it being for works on Council owned (Regulation 3) land.
- 2.2. The site is on brownfield land which was once is residential use. The earlier flats were demolished within the past 10 years due to structural reasons. It lies on the very south eastern corner of the Whitley Wood estate next to a car park area, close to the M4 to the south. The site has residential uses to the south, west and north with a thick hedge/tree belt between the site and Whitley Wood Road to the east. There are also a few trees on the western boundary.



Current aerial view



Proposed temporary building and amenity area to the rear



Current hoardings around site showing proposed modular structure

- 2.3. The existing Whitley Wood Community Centre situated to the east of Swallowfield Drive and south of Copenhagen Close has reached the end of its design life and needs to be replaced by the spring of 2024. The locally accessible, temporary replacement proposed at Lexington Grove, can be reached in approximately 6 minutes by foot or 2 minutes by car from the previous community centre location.

3. The proposal

- 3.1. The proposal is part-retrospective in order to provide a community space comprising communal room, store room, meeting and office areas, a kitchen, toilets and amenity area. The application seeks permission to retain the unit for a temporary period of up to 3 years from the date of permission. Amended plans to incorporate the entrance slope and other minor changes will be provided in a PAC update.
- 3.2. The modular unit measures approximately 20.1m in length, 12.05m in depth and 3.6m in height. The walls are proposed to be a green colour cladding, with grey felt roof and UPVC windows.
- 3.3. The applicant explains that retaining community facilities in Whitley Wood is essential to support a wide-ranging group of users. The use would fall under Class F2 Local community.

- 3.4. Proposed works comply with the latest building regulations and incorporate Part M requirements to ensure equal accessible and adaptable access for all users of the Community Centre.
- 3.5. Waste services are proposed to be collected via the main entrance to the site and no changes are proposed to existing waste collection arrangements for Lexington Grove.
- 3.6. Submitted plans and documentation – all received 20 February 2024:
 - Supporting Statement,
 - Design and Access strategy
 - Location Plan,
 - Preliminary ecology appraisal, January 2024
 - E05428_A2701 Rev P2 Existing site location plan
 - E05428_A2702 Rev P2 Proposed location plan.
 - E05428_A2703 Rev P2 Proposed block plan.
 - E05428_A2706 Rev P1 Proposed GA plan.
 - E05428_A2707 Rev P1 Proposed Roof plan
 - E05428_A2704 Rev P1 Proposed elevation

4. Planning history/Building control

- 4.1 101609/REG3 – Erection of Portakabin and new lobby to entrance of community centre and relocation of existing storage container. Whitley Wood Community Centre, Swallowfield Drive. Permitted 18/11/2010
- 210270 - 28-35 Lexington Grove Demolition - notice issued 12/03/2021

5. Consultations

- 5.1. Non-statutory:

RBC Natural Environment – No objections subject to a landscaping condition and assurance that trees on site will be protected. No storage or equipment store should be placed within tree root zones.

RBC Transport – No objections subject to a condition for the requirement of 3 disabled parking bays to be provided and marked out and for secure cycle parking to be provided for visitors to the community centre.

RBC Environmental Protection – No objections, subject to conditions to overcome concerns relating to potential noise and disturbance regarding opening hours, amplified music, lighting, plant, noise remediations scheme and noise management plan due to the close proximity of neighbouring residents.

- 5.2. Public:

Site notices were displayed at the site on 13/03/2024.

The recommendation above seeks, subject to no substantive objections being raised by the end of the consultation period on 3 April 2024, delegated authority to grant. No letters of representation have been received at the time of writing this report, but an update will be provided should any be 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’. The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2023
National Planning Guidance 2014 onwards

Reading Borough Local Plan 2019

CC1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
CC7 Design and the Public Realm
CC8 Safeguarding Amenity
OU1 New and Existing Community Facilities
RL1 Network and Hierarchy of Centres

7. Appraisal

- 7.1. The main considerations are:
- I. Land use principles
 - II. Amenity impacts
 - III. Traffic generation and parking
 - IV. Trees, Ecology and Biodiversity

Land use principles

- 7.2. The previous use as residential has ceased some time ago with the demolition of the previous flats. However, subject to meeting policy requirements for new homes and air quality and traffic noise concerns, it is likely that new residential development (Class C3) would be favourably considered as a continuation of the previous use.
- 7.3. The current proposal seeks permission for a temporary change in use of the land for a 3 year period from C3 residential to F2 Local Community. The applicant has provided satisfactory justification to support the principle for the temporary community use in this location to serve the local residential community.
- 7.4. The land is a brownfield site on which there has been previous development and the proposed temporary modular unit is considered to be acceptable in land use terms as it does not unreasonably reduce any existing community open space, is sited in an accessible location and could be reinstated to provide residential accommodation in future, once a more permanent community centre is established. The rest of this report looks at other relevant material considerations.

Amenity impacts

- 7.5. The location of the temporary community centre is within a residential area. The nearest residential property to the modular unit is 10 metres away (refer to location plan above). Officers consider that neighbour amenity can be protected by requirements for; a noise assessment of heat pump, hours of use controlled, amplified sound controlled, landscaping and boundary treatments to be provided and a management plan to control noise arising from for the use of the community centre. Together, these measures should minimise harm resulting from the temporary use of the building.
- 7.6. With these controls the proposal is considered to comply with Policy CC8 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.

Traffic generation and parking

- 7.7 The proposal does not require additional car parking to be provided as it is located next to a public car park, however 3 disabled parking spaces, drop kerb and tactile paving pedestrian access from the car park to the site and cycle storage provision is required and a condition to provide these elements is recommended.

Trees, Ecology and Biodiversity

- 7.8 Additional information have been requested regarding the protection of trees on site. A condition is recommended for landscaping around the Community Centre to improve its appearance within the public realm and increase biodiversity at the site. The RBC Tree officer has offered to meet with the local community to assist in tree planting and landscaping plans for the site.

Equality implications

- 7.9. 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.
- 7.10. 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.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 The need for the continuation of community facilities in this area has been demonstrated and justifies the temporary community centre while a permanent solution is created. Any potential detrimental impact of noise or disturbance arising from a 3 year temporary use of the site as a community centre can be mitigated by additional measures required by planning conditions. When considered in the context of national and local planning policies, as detailed in the appraisal above, officers consider that the proposal is acceptable. Therefore this application is recommended for approval subject to the recommended conditions.

Plans

Block Plan



Elevations

