



PLANNING BY DESIGN

FROM CONCEPT TO COMPLETION

**Erection of Kohinbo Dhee Temple, including museum
and education provisions at 401 Old Whitley Wood
Ln, Reading RG2 8QA**

Planning Statement

Constructed by Planning By Design on behalf of Tamu Pye Lhu Sangh

1 Introduction

1.1 The Site

Planning By Design (The agent) has been instructed to act on behalf of Tamu Pye Lhu Sangh (UK Registration 1161779) (the applicant) to submit a Planning Application to Wokingham Borough Council (Local Planning Authority) for Erection of Temple, including museum and education provisions (the proposal) at 401 Old Whitley Wood Ln, Reading RG2 8QA (the site).

In support of this application, the following Planning Statement has been constructed to demonstrate the suitability of this site for this proposal and evaluate its accordance with national and local planning policy along with supplementary design guidance.

This document should be read in conjunction with the accompanying Transport Statement.

1.2 The Site

The site is 401 Old Whitley Wood Ln, Reading RG2 8QA. The site is currently a community centre. The site is accessed at the end of Old Whitley Wood Lane, a two-way residential road.

The site is situated within Whitley Wood, a suburb approximately 4km south of the centre of Reading. The site is not subject to any planning designations and is within a settlement boundary.

The Site Location Plan is provided in Figure 1.

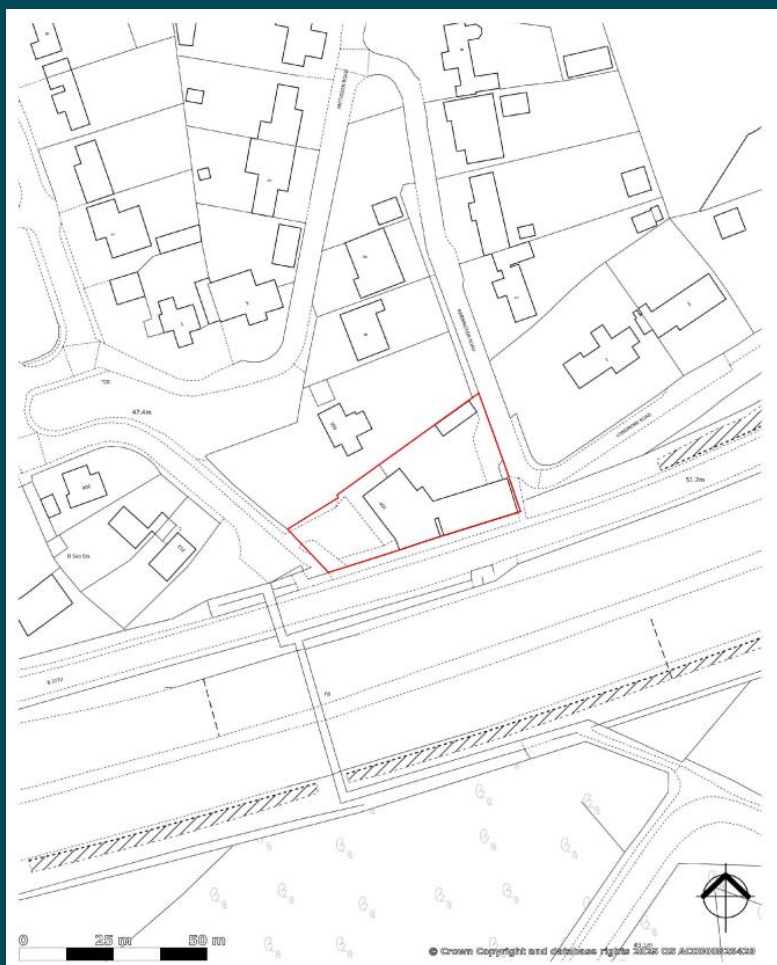


Figure 1: Site Location Plan

1.3 Planning History

The planning history of the site is provided in Table 1 below.

| Ref. | Application | Decision |
|-------------|--|----------|
| F/2010/2541 | Proposal Proposed single storey extension to form classroom and covered way, single storey modular building, 2.4 metre high fence including trellis along part of east and west boundaries. (retrospective). | Approve |
| F/2010/1516 | Proposed extension to existing school accommodation to provide additional classroom, SEN room, sick room and school hall/gymnasium. Amendment to F/2009/0874. | Approve |
| F/2009/0874 | Proposal Proposed ground floor side extension to existing school to provide additional classrooms, school hall/gymnasium and perimeter fencing. | Refused |
| F/2007/3011 | Proposed alterations to existing school accommodation including single storey infill to serve as entrance foyer, access ramp/steps and velux windows. | Approve |

Table 1: Planning History

2 The Proposal

The proposed development of a Temple / Museum / Education Centre for the Gurkha community and Gurung religion. The community centre and outbuildings currently on site will remain, and a new temple will be constructed in the northeast corner of the site.

It is understood the current use is F2(b) - Halls or meeting places for the principal use of the local community. The proposed use is a combination of F2(b) and F1(f) – Public worship or religious instruction (or in connection with such use). Both uses would have fell under the previous Use Class D1.

The Site Plan is provided in Figure 2. As shown, the proposal is for the site to consist of the following:

- The existing community centre, with internal changes to accommodate the proposed use, but no structural works or changes;
- The new temple;
- Six parking spaces, comprising one bus space, four long-stay car parking spaces and one short-stay parking space;
- The playground/outdoor area as maintained.

There is a clear identified demand for this development, with a growing Gurkha population locally, and a lack of existing provision.

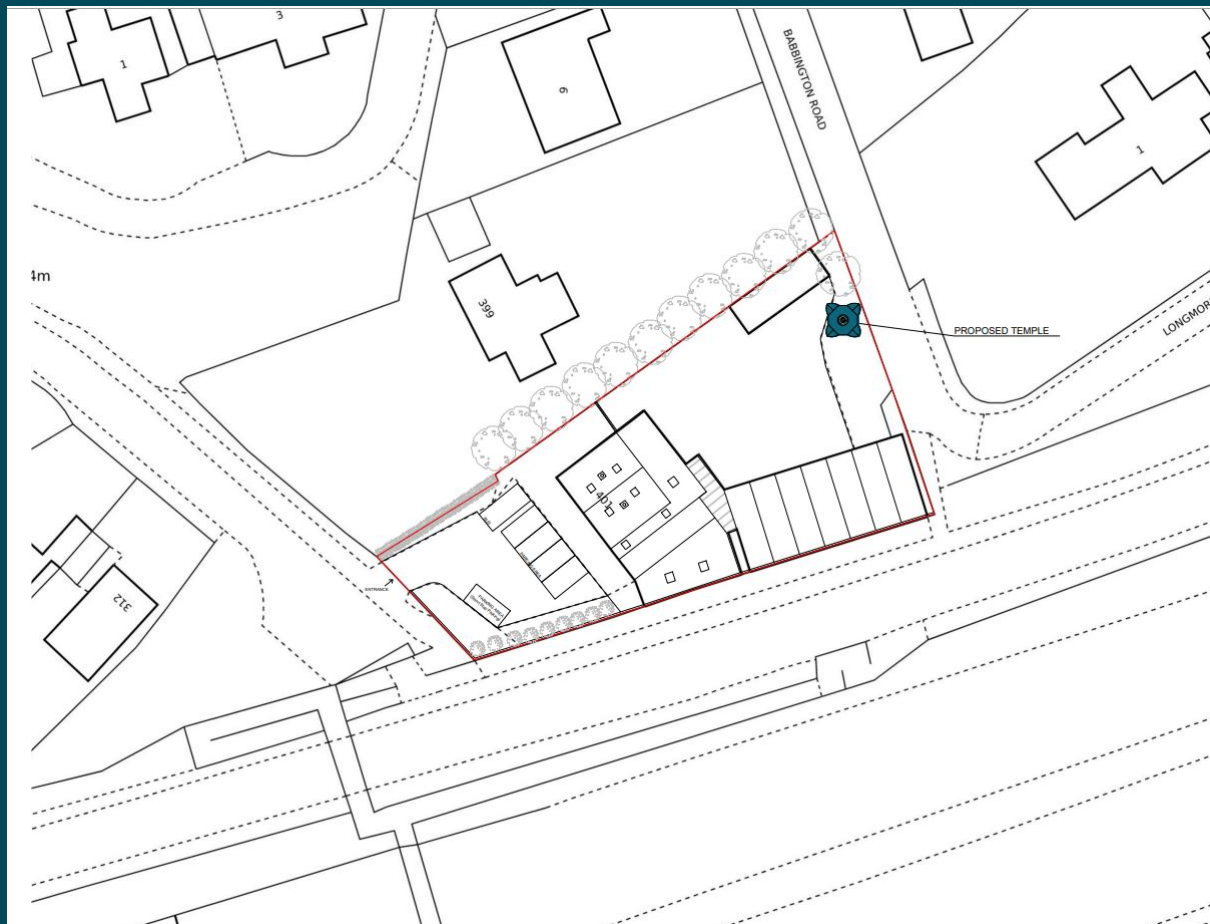


Figure 2: Site Plan

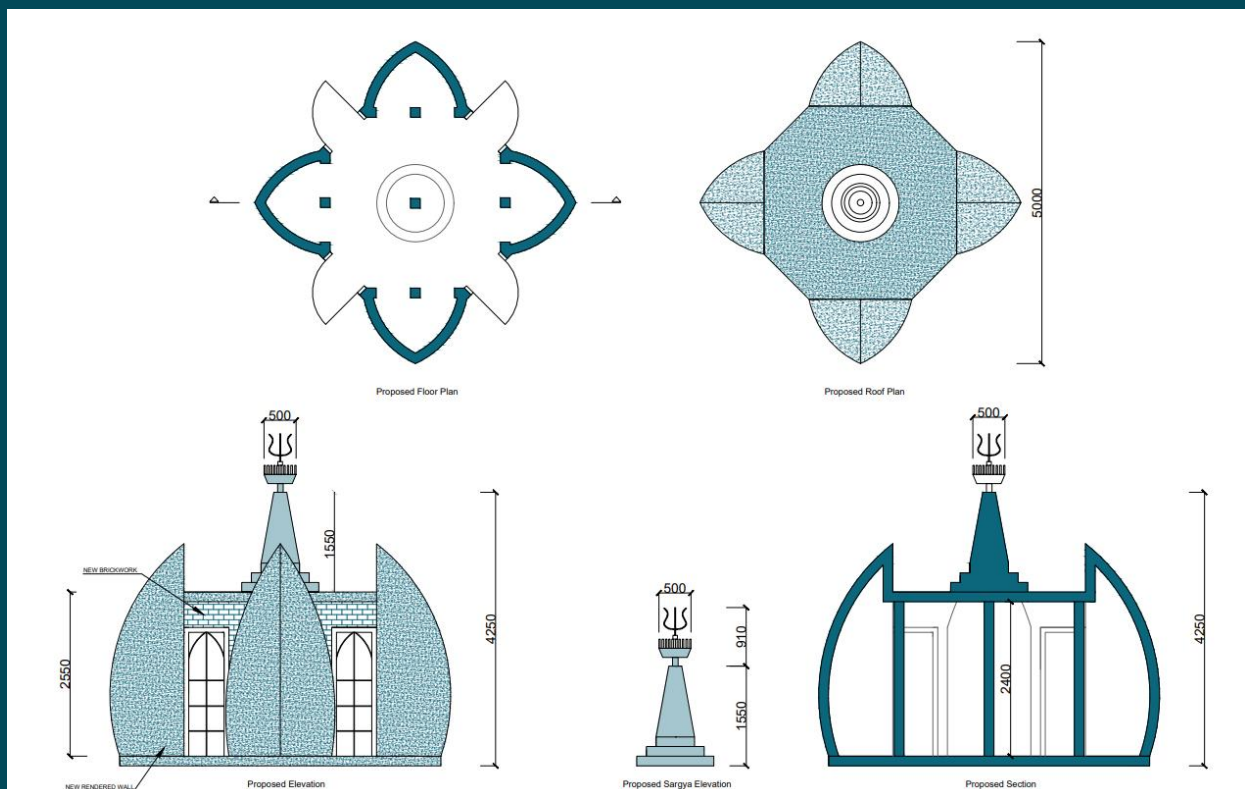


Figure 3: Proposed Temple Plans

3 Planning Policy

3.1 Introduction

This section will outline the important policy considerations.

3.2 National Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2024

National planning guidance, a key material consideration in planning decisions, is primarily outlined in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF advises that, when determining applications, local planning authorities should promptly approve proposals for sustainable development that align with an up-to-date development plan.

One of its core principles is the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out in Paragraph 11. Local planning authorities are directed to support development proposals that contribute to economic, social, and environmental objectives, provided they accord with an up-to-date development plan.

Section 6 – Building a strong, competitive economy

Paragraph 85 states:

Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential.

Paragraph 87 states:

Planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for:

- a) clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries; and for new, expanded or upgraded facilities and infrastructure that are needed to support the growth of these industries (including data centres and grid connections);*
- b) storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations that allow for the efficient and reliable handling of goods, especially where this is needed to support the supply chain, transport innovation and decarbonisation; and*
- c) the expansion or modernisation of other industries of local, regional or national importance to support economic growth and resilience.*

Section 8 – Promoting healthy and safe communities

Paragraph 98 states:

To provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:

- a) *plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;*
- b) *take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community;*
- c) *guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs;*
- d) *ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise, and are retained for the benefit of the community; and*
- e) *ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic uses and community facilities and services.*

3.3 Local Policy

Wokingham Borough Plan (2010)

Policy CP2 - Inclusive communities

To ensure that new development contributes to the provision of sustainable and inclusive communities (including the provision of community facilities) to meet long term needs, planning permission will be granted for proposals that address the requirements of:

- a) *An ageing population, particularly in terms of housing, health and wellbeing;*
- b) *Children, young people and families, including the co-ordination of services to meet their needs;*
- c) *People with special needs, including those with a physical, sensory or learning disability or problems accessing services; and*
- d) *The specific identified needs of minority groups in the borough, including Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople and black and minority ethnic groups. Proposals for gypsies, travellers and travelling showpeople (including allocations in other Development Plan Documents) will demonstrate that:*
 - i. *The site is located either within or close to the development limits of a settlement in policy CP9 in order to maximise the possibilities for social inclusion and sustainable patterns of living; and*
 - ii. *The proposed site is not disproportionate to the scale of the existing settlement whether singly or cumulatively with any existing sites in the area.*

Policy CP3 - General Principles for development

Planning permission will be granted for proposals that:

- a) *Are of an appropriate scale of activity, mass, layout, built form, height, materials and character to the area together with a high quality of design without detriment to the amenities of adjoining land users including open spaces or occupiers and their quality of life;*
- b) *Provide a functional, accessible, safe, secure and adaptable scheme;*
- c) *Have no detrimental impact upon important ecological, heritage, landscape (including river valleys) or geological features or water courses.*
- d) *Maintain or enhance the ability of the site to support fauna and flora including protected species;*

- e) *Use the full potential of the site and contribute to the support for suitable complementary facilities and uses;*
- f) *Contribute to a sense of place in the buildings and spaces themselves and in the way they integrate with their surroundings (especially existing dwellings) including the use of appropriate landscaping;*
- g) *Provide for a framework of open space in secure community use achieving at least 4.65 ha/1,000 population provision together with recreational/sporting facilities in addition to private amenity space;*
- h) *Contribute towards the provision of an appropriate sustainable network of community facilities;*
- i) *Do not lead to a net loss of dwellings and other residential accommodation or land; and*
- j) *Do not lead to a loss of community or recreational facilities/land or infrastructure unless suitable alternative provision is available.*

Development proposals will be required to demonstrate how they have responded to the above criteria through the submission of Design and Access Statements, clear and informative plans, elevations and streetscenes and where required Masterplans, Development Briefs, Concept Statements and Design Codes.

Policy CP4 - Infrastructure Requirements

Planning permission will not be granted unless appropriate arrangements for the improvement or provision of infrastructure, services, community and other facilities required for the development taking account of the cumulative impact of schemes are agreed. Arrangements for provision or improvement to the required standard will be secured by planning obligations or condition if appropriate.

Wokingham Borough Development Plan (2014)

Policy CC01 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

1. *Planning applications that accord with the policies in the Development Plan for Wokingham Borough will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.*
2. *Where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise – taking into account whether:*
 - a. *Any adverse impacts of planning permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) taken as a whole; or*
 - b. *Specific policies in the National Planning Policy Framework indicate that development should be restricted.*

4 Policy Alignment

4.1 Introduction

This section demonstrates how the proposal aligns with the above identified policies.

Transport considerations are outlined separately in the accompanying Transport Statement.

4.2 Principle of Development

The principle of development is supported by both national and local planning policy. Paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024) establishes a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which applies unless adverse impacts significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. The proposed Temple / Museum / Education Centre represents a continuation and modest expansion of an established community use, falling within Use Classes F2(b) and F1(f). The current use of the site as a community centre ensures that the introduction of religious, educational and cultural facilities is compatible with its planning history and its established role within the community.

Local Policy CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010) requires that development is of an appropriate scale, form and character, without detriment to neighbouring amenities. The proposal involves the retention of the existing community centre with only internal modifications, and the addition of a purpose-built temple in the car park. This represents a scale of development that is proportionate to the site and consistent with the area's existing character as a residential suburb with community facilities. There is therefore clear compliance with the principle of development as articulated in both national and local policy.

In addition, Policy CP4 (Infrastructure Requirements) states that planning permission will not be granted unless appropriate arrangements for the improvement or provision of infrastructure, services, and community facilities required for the development have been secured. In this case, the proposal will utilise existing infrastructure and community facilities, with no requirement for additional off-site works or mitigation. The site already benefits from suitable access, utilities, and established community use. The modest scale of the new building and the limited intensification of use mean that existing local services, including highways and utilities, can adequately accommodate the development.

The proposal therefore fully accords with Policy CP4, as it will neither generate a requirement for new infrastructure nor place any undue demand on existing facilities. Instead, it represents an enhancement of an existing community asset, consistent with sustainable development principles and the efficient use of established infrastructure.

Approval has been granted elsewhere for similar developments. In 2023, an application for the change of use of a property to a dwelling and a place of worship was approved (ref. 231300). Therefore, a precedent for approving developments of this type is set where it complies with policy elsewhere.

4.3 Economic Considerations

Section 6 of the NPPF emphasises the importance of supporting economic growth and productivity. Whilst the proposal is not commercial in the traditional sense, it will generate indirect economic benefits for the local area. The centre will attract visitors from within Wokingham Borough and the

wider Reading area, creating demand for local services such as shops, cafes, and transport links. Moreover, the construction phase will generate employment for contractors and suppliers.

4.4 Environmental Considerations

Policy CP3 requires development to have no detrimental impact on ecological or landscape features. The proposal is limited to the redevelopment of previously developed land within the site's curtilage, ensuring no encroachment into undeveloped or sensitive areas. Existing outdoor space, including the playground, will be retained. The modest scale of the new building will avoid harm to visual amenity or the character of the area.

4.5 Social Considerations

Policy CP2 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy (2010) seeks to ensure that new development contributes to the creation of sustainable and inclusive communities. It highlights the importance of meeting the cultural and social needs of all groups within the Borough, including minority and faith communities.

The proposed Temple, Museum and Education Centre will directly meet these aims by providing a dedicated space for the Gurkha and Gurung community, enhancing opportunities for social inclusion, cultural expression and community cohesion. The development will also provide educational and cultural resources accessible to the wider public, supporting the Borough's objective of fostering understanding between different communities.

The proposal will therefore make a positive contribution towards the delivery of inclusive community infrastructure and aligns strongly with the social objectives of both the NPPF and Policy CP2.

4.6 Design

Good design is a central requirement of the NPPF and is embedded in Policy CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy. The proposed temple has been designed to complement the existing community centre, providing a distinctive yet sympathetic addition to the site. The scale and form of the building are appropriate to the suburban context, avoiding any adverse impacts on residential amenity.

Attention has been given to accessibility, with provision for both car and bus parking, including short-stay facilities, ensuring that the centre is inclusive and welcoming. Landscaping will be maintained to provide a sense of place and soften the transition between the site and surrounding residential areas. The proposal is therefore compliant with the principles of high-quality, functional, and accessible design.

4.7 Conclusion and Planning Balance

In applying the planning balance, it is necessary to weigh the benefits of the proposed Temple / Museum / Education Centre against any potential adverse impacts. The development will deliver substantial social benefits through the provision of a dedicated cultural, religious and educational facility for the Gurkha and Gurung community, in line with Paragraph 98 of the NPPF and Policy CP3 of the Wokingham Borough Core Strategy. These benefits extend beyond the immediate community, fostering inclusion, cultural awareness, and opportunities for education and engagement within the wider Borough.

Accordingly, the planning balance falls strongly in favour of granting permission.

5 Summary and Conclusion

5.1 Summary

This Planning Statement has been prepared by Planning by Design on behalf of Vijay Gurung to support a planning application to Wokingham Borough Council for the Erection of Temple, including museum and education provisions at 401 Old Whitley Wood Lane, Reading.

- The proposal represents the efficient use of an established community site, retaining the existing centre and introducing a purpose-built temple to strengthen its role as a hub for cultural, religious and educational activity, consistent with the sustainable development objectives of the NPPF and local policy.
- The scheme delivers clear social benefits by providing a dedicated space for worship, learning and cultural engagement for the Gurkha and Gurung community, while also remaining accessible to the wider public, in accordance with national and local priorities for inclusive community infrastructure.
- Economic benefits arise both during construction and through ongoing use, as visitors and activities generate support for local services, aligning with the NPPF's emphasis on fostering economic growth and resilience.
- Environmental impacts are modest, with the development confined to previously used land, the retention of outdoor space, and the incorporation of appropriate parking and landscaping, thereby ensuring compatibility with surrounding residential character and the requirements of Policy CP3.

5.2 Conclusion

This report has demonstrated that the proposal aligns with national and local planning policies and therefore deem it to be acceptable.