

PLANNING STATEMENT

In support of a planning application

For the use of No 77 Leigh Road

as a school

(for pupils with special needs)



Aerial Photo showing No 77 Leigh Road (courtesy of Google maps)

**BJC Planning
The Gallery
3 South Street
Titchfield
Hampshire
PO14 4DL**

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PLANS

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|------------------------------|--|
| E/246/2923.12.07.Loc | Site Location Plan |
| E/246/2923.12.07.Site | Site Plan |
| FW 1 | Proposed Floor Plans (approx. 1:100@A4) |

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 Sales details showing the previous use of No 77 (incl 75)**

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is submitted in support a planning application for the change of use of No 77 Leigh Road as a school providing for pupils with special educational needs. This will be operated by Fair Ways Community Benefit Society and as a satellite teaching facility to an existing school at Totton (Glade School). Fair Ways operates as a charity providing a wide range of services to the public, with most of these focusing upon the welfare of children in need of special educational housing or emotional support. This includes providing care homes and schools.
- 1.2 Fair Ways have acquired the lease of both Nos 75 and 77 leigh Road, and in April 2024 were granted planning permission to use No 75, as a centre to provide support to young people (aged 3-19) in need of support and counselling. This service is referred to as 'The Hub' and comprises a multi-disciplinary team of clinicians and associated professionals supporting the healthy development, wellbeing and relationships of children and young people within Fair Ways services. The service will open soon.
- 1.3 At the time that planning permission was granted it was proposed that No 77 would be used as an Outreach Centre, providing similar support to a wider age range including families. Planning permission was not required for the use of No 77 due to an established use as offices, and to the use proposed sitting within the same use class (Class F).
- 1.4 Fair Ways have now reviewed the need for its services and believes the building at No 77 will be more appropriately used as an education centre, and more specifically as an extension to a current school site at Totton (Glade School). As the proposal would be different to the previous office use, and is not within Use Class E, it is considered that planning permission is required.
- 1.5 The use proposed will not require any external changes to the building, but will involve some internal changes to subdivide and re-purpose some rooms. More details are provided on the subsequent pages of this Statement.

2.0 The Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 Nos 75 and 77 Leigh Road are a pair of Victorian buildings, originally built as houses but used more recently as commercial buildings. These are two storeys in height with a traditional bay fronted design. They are situated almost opposite 'The Point' with a youth centre to the west and The Masonic Centre to the east, on the opposite side of Cranbury Road.



Figure 1 - the location of No 75 and No 77 in relation to its neighbours
(courtesy of Google Maps)

- 2.2 No 75 is situated on the corner of Leigh Road and Cranbury Road, and has a side pedestrian access onto Cranbury Road, and a separate access for vehicles into a small car parking area at the rear. This has space for approximately 4-5 cars.
- 2.3 The land behind No 77 Leigh Road is surfaced and used as a car park (5-6 cars), with access from a 'service road (linking Cranbury Road to Chamberlayne Road).
- 2.4 At the front, both properties have a front garden facing onto Leigh Road. Both gardens are screened from the road by a boundary hedge just less than 2m in height. For No 77 this hedge extends only part way across the frontage, with the western part enclosed only by a low brick wall. It currently has a pedestrian access to Leigh Road.



Photo 1 – the existing hedge in front of Nos 75 and 77 Leigh Road

2.5 Leigh Road continues eastwards to the main retail streets of Eastleigh Town Centre (a two-minute walk), and the open area of the park (and bus station) even closer.

3.0 Planning History

3.1 In April 2024 Fair Ways was granted planning permission to use No 75 (next door) as a centre to provide support to young people, and the removal of a pre-existing planning condition that limited its use to a rehabilitation clinic (ref X/23/96635).

3.2 In September 2024 details were approved for a new fence and hedge on the road frontage to No 77 ref DC/24/97975, so as to make the frontage more secure.

3.3 No planning history exists for No 77 Leigh Road, but it is understood that the building has been used as offices for a long time and that there is no condition limiting the use of the building to a specific activity. As the permitted use of No 77 appears to be within Class E, and the use described at the time of the application ref X/23/96635 was also within Class E, the use then proposed (as an outreach centre for families) did not need planning permission.

4.0 The Development now Proposed

- 4.1 Following a review of services Fair Ways is in the process of adapting No 75 Leigh Road as a hub for assessing and providing support to young people, but now wishes to use No 77 as an education facility/school.
- 4.2 Fair Ways currently operate a school for children with special needs from a site in Totton (Glade School), but is limited in the number of pupils that can be educated at that site by the limitations of the site itself and buildings available. Consequently, the school is looking for additional buildings to enable the charity to broaden the teaching available to more pupils. No 77 has been identified as a suitable venue.
- 4.3 It is proposed that the school will be staffed by a team of eight staff, who will be based at the site, made-up of a combination of qualified teachers and other support staff. These will typically arrive on site between 8:30 and 9:00 am and depart between 1600 and 1700. Most teaching will be done on site, but there will be occasions when teachers leave the site with pupils to undertake studies elsewhere.
- 4.4. It is intended that the school will be attended by up to seven pupils a day, who will normally attend between 9:15 and 15.15 each day. Most lessons will involve pupils being educated 1:1 with a member of staff, although this may be increased to allow for small groups on occasions.
- 4.5 The school will be registered for pupils between the ages of 11 and 19, but the majority of pupils attending are likely to be aged 14-19.
- 4.6 There is no need for any external changes to the building, but internally several of the rooms will be divided so as to provide a larger number of smaller teaching areas. The likely changes are shown in Figure 1 below.

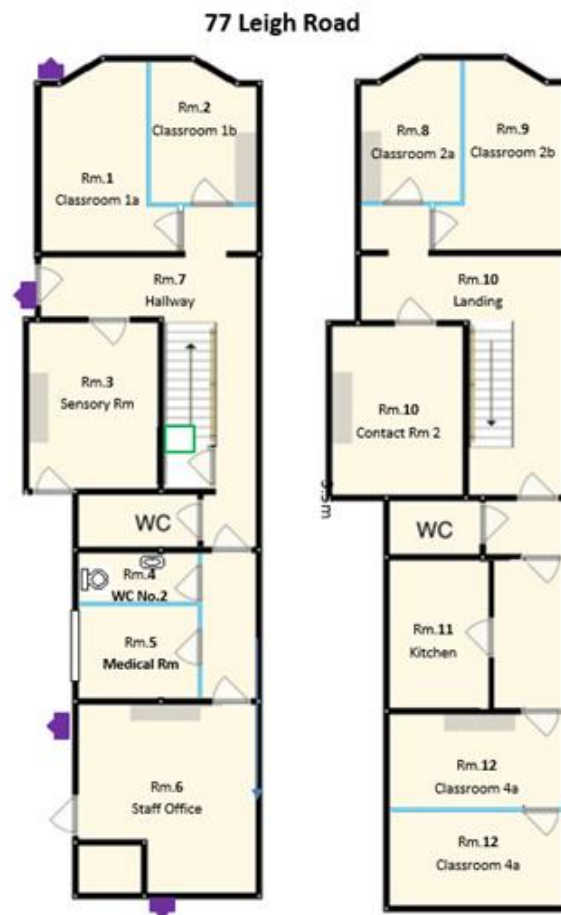


Figure 2 – Plan showing likely internal layout.

- 4.7 Due to the small numbers and teaching ratios, there will be no specific communal facilities at the site but pupils will have access to a small kitchen area (with a breakfast bar) at lunch times, and may also be able to meet in small groups within one of the teaching spaces. Pupils will have access to the small enclosed front garden area when conditions allow.
- 4.8 The teaching facilities on site will be operated in conjunction with the facilities at The Glade School, meaning that there will be no need for a core admin team or senior leadership team to be based on site in Leigh Road. The rooms at Leigh Road will therefore focus on providing additional teaching areas allowing for more pupils to be educated, and potentially the choice of a more accessible location for some pupils. However, other members of staff based at Glade School will visit the site on occasions.

Transport

- 4.9 Most staff are likely to drive to the site, especially if they are likely to need to transport a student off site during the day, but the site's central location does mean that some may take advantage of public transport. Five or six parking spaces are available behind the building. Additional parking is available within the town centre if needed. Pupils will also typically travel by car (parental transport or taxi), but the location of the site on the edge of the Town Centre does mean that some of the older students may also be able to use public transport.
- 4.10 Whilst the proposed school will not be limited to Eastleigh residents, it does mean that the specialist education services being provided will be available and potentially easier to access for Eastleigh residents (subject to eligibility) than needing to travel out of the borough to Totton or elsewhere.

5.0 Planning Policy

5.1 The Eastleigh Local Plan (2022) sets out its vision strategic aims for the borough which include, as an objective:-

viii. Enabling healthier lifestyles/wellbeing - Facilitate better physical and mental health and wellbeing by improving the places people live, work, learn and play, meeting the challenge of the ageing population, and promoting cultural and physical activity;

5.2 This objective is addressed in part by strategic policy S1:

Strategic policy S1, Delivering sustainable development

1. To be sustainable, new development in the Borough should:

- a. meet community needs without compromising the identity of the Borough or its individual settlements, or the ability of future generations to meet their own needs;
- b. enhance social equality by ensuring equal and easy access to a range of community facilities and services and by promoting the development of employment, education and skills training opportunities;

5.3 Table 1 in chapter 4 of the Plan identifies Eastleigh as the main town centre and service centre within the borough, and the most sustainable location for community -facilities.

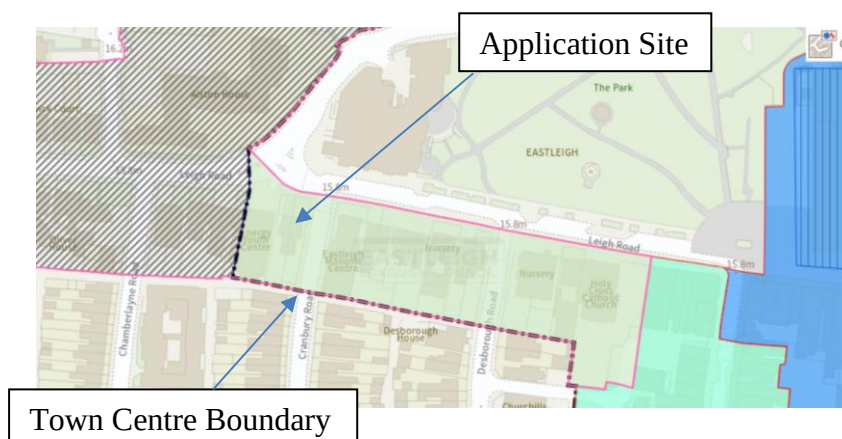


Figure 2 – Extract from Local Plan Proposals Map

- 5.4 The site is identified on the proposals Map as within the Town Centre Boundary, and more specifically as within the Urban Renaissance Quarter. As such the site is subject to Policies E3 and E4 (1d)

Policy E3, Eastleigh Town Centre

1. The Borough Council will support the regeneration of Eastleigh Town Centre as defined on the policies map. This will include:

a. strengthening the retail circuit through seeking:

i. development that strengthens the function of the town centre retail anchor to the north of Leigh Road; and

ii. the redevelopment of the block east of Upper Market Street, where a range of town centre uses will be acceptable including retail, financial and professional services, public sector services, cafes/restaurants, public houses, hotels, leisure uses, non-residential institutions such as galleries and exhibition halls on the ground and lower floors, with residential uses, including student accommodation, acceptable on upper floors

- 5.5 Policy E4 (1d) is more specific to the site and advises:-

Policy E4, Urban Renaissance Quarter, Eastleigh

1. Within the urban renaissance quarter as shown on the policies map, the Borough Council will encourage well-designed, people-intensive development that raises the quality of the main approaches to Eastleigh town centre, subject to the site specific policies and criteria set out below. Retail development will not be permitted except in the leisure and cultural zone on Leigh Road (see part d below).

d. Leisure and cultural zone, Leigh Road

The Borough Council will seek to strengthen the relationship between the Recreation Ground, The Point and the southern side of Leigh Road as defined on the policies map, by permitting the redevelopment and change of use of premises in this area for restaurants, cafes, community uses, cultural uses and retailing, provided that:

i. the design of any new buildings or external alterations is of high quality; and

ii. the new use is complementary to the cultural or recreational activities that are established at The Point or Recreation Ground.

National Guidance in the NPPF

- 5.16 It is to be noted that in addition to the support for education provided by the policies above **Paragraph 99** of the NPPF (December 2023) provides a specific requirement in relation to education, **recognising the importance of a sufficient choice of school places being available**, and requiring Local Planning Authorities to “ **take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education**”. Local Planning Authorities are required, specifically, “**a) to give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and b) work with school promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.**” Hence the guidance provides strong support for educational provision and requires LPAs to give weight to the need for the expansion or alteration of schools.

6.0 Planning Appraisal

-The use of No 77

- 6.1 The recent use of No 77 has been as offices (Use Class E), with staff working on site and likely with a limited number of visitors during the day. The proposed use would be within use class F1, but would be similar in many ways to an office use, with the staff arriving and departing at similar times (to an office) and with pupils attending to benefit from the services offered.
- 6.2 This use is also in line with the strategic policies and objectives of the local plan, within which Policy S1 seeks to provide easy access to community facilities and services, and to promote education opportunities, Policy E3 supporting public sector services, and Policy E4 branding Leigh Road as a leisure and cultural zone and supporting new community uses.
- 6.3 The proximity to the site to the town centre makes it a suitable location for the provision of services which need to be available to a wide sector of the resident population, and especially to young people. The site is accessible by public transport both for staff and for pupils/parents, with the bus station less than a 3 minute walk (300m) and the train station just over a 4 minute walk (400-450m). The focus on providing an education for young people is highly compatible with the adjacent use of the youth centre and with many of the activities provided at the Point.
- 6.4 Overall the use proposed should be a benefit to the town centre and compatible with existing activities within the Renaissance Quarter. Whilst the new facility is unlikely to organise any formal 'games' the park opposite the site will be an attractive area for staff and students to relax. Equally both staff and students may access other facilities within the town centre.
- 6.5 The proposed new education facility is also supported by government policy as set out in para 99 of the NPPF.

- 6.6 In a broader sense, the NPPF seeks to encourage sustainable development, with specific advice relating to planning to meet the diverse needs of the area as well as the needs of the community, and whilst protecting areas that may be most vulnerable or valued. It outlines three broad headings for doing this which are described as the social, environmental and economic objectives.
- 6.7 The provision of school facilities is entirely in accord with the **social objective**, of continuing to provide an education to young people, meeting a recognised need for these school places, and more general support for health, social and cultural wellbeing. In meeting this need it will not only assist the young people themselves, but also the emotional needs of family members (concerned for their child) and potentially avoid many of the social problems that might otherwise arise if these needs are not addressed at an early stage in a child's development. Meeting these needs here, will be more effective than trying to meet the same needs of these pupils if left within the mainstream education system.
- 6.8 It would also accord with the **environmental objective**, by providing a new facility within the town centre where it is accessible to a wide range of people and by various means of transport.
- 6.9 Finally, the provision of a new education facility on this site, as a satellite to the existing would accord with the **economic objectives** of the NPPF, by providing a new educational facility without the additional costs of all the management and administrative cost of a completely new school. It will also provide employment for typically 8 staff within the town centre, who are likely to support retail and other facilities within the town.
- 6.10 The development proposed meets all three considerations for sustainable development.
- 6.11 Whilst the school facilities will operate independently from 'The Hub' at No 75, some of the services offered at The Hub may also be offered and available to pupils of the school if appropriate.

- 6.12 Overall the use proposed accords with the planning policies and aims for the area, will provide a needed educational facility, close to the town centre, and in a location surrounded by other community type uses. Hence the proposal merits support both as a use that is acceptable in principle, and for which the location is well suited. It is hoped that the Local Planning Authority will give its full support to the application.