



“Planning Potential worked with us to achieve the permission we needed. They did an exceptional job for us. Their application and follow up emails to all the relevant departments were all extremely well-written, persuasive and accurate. I am convinced that their personable but professional approach was a major factor in us getting the permission we needed.”

It was a huge shock to our client when they were advised by Richmond’s planning enforcement team that they had been operating their nursery business without the necessary planning consents and that if an application was unsuccessful they would potentially be facing closure. The nursery had been operating for four and a half years without issue and blissfully unaware that their business was in fact unauthorised.

Quick to Act

Not knowing where to turn, our client sought advice and Planning Potential was recommended to help resolve the matter. Having reviewed the position, we immediately contacted the enforcement team to advise that we would be handling the matter on the nursery’s behalf. We then arranged a site meeting to fully understand the context of the site, how the nursery operated and what the nursery’s relationship was like with local residents in order to develop a strategy for the planning application.

Developing a Persuasive Case

The key messages for the planning justification were as follows:

- The nursery had been operating for over four years and there had been no complaints.
- The nursery was rated 'excellent' by Ofsted.
- Policies on the protection of residential use provided flexibility where there was an identified need for a community use – Council reports showed that there was a need for Early Years care and the fact that the nursery was operating at full capacity demonstrated that there was a real local need.
- A survey of the mode of travel for both staff and parents showed that vehicle trips to the nursery were low.
- Our client was happy to accept conditions on capacity, opening hours and reversion of the property back to residential use when the nursery ceased trading to help allay any concerns.

Careful Consultation

We helped our client to carefully consult with neighbours and to generate local support, by preparing a letter to immediate neighbours and identifying which other residents the Council were likely to consult so that our client could approach them too. We also encouraged our client to write to ward councillors to seek their support.

One Step Ahead

Upon validation of the application, we made early contact with the planning officer to build a good relationship, and a positive site meeting followed. We kept a close eye on the Council's website for comments and mapped the respondents so that we could see how close they lived to the nursery. By the end of the consultation period, the hard work with neighbours and local councillors paid off and the application received 9 letters of support, including a strong letter of support from a local councillor, 2 observations and only 2 objections. Whilst two residents had decided to object, it was clear that they had no issues with the existing nursery and were simply concerned that the nursery may expand in the future. We prepared a robust response to help allay concerns and to assist the planning officer in arriving at a positive recommendation.

By week six of the application process Planning Policy and Highways had not provided their comments. We therefore took matters into our own hands and approached the relevant officers directly, pushing for a response whilst also taking the opportunity to remind them of the key facts of the case. Their 'no objection' responses quickly followed, enabling the planning officer to reach a positive recommendation and getting us back on track for a decision within the 8-week deadline.

Negotiation and Positive Outcome

We spent time discussing the wording of conditions with officers, making clear that we must approve the final list of conditions prior to the decision notice being finalised. Following negotiations, we secured all of the conditions our client had asked for and the planning permission was issued on the 8-week deadline.

We were delighted to secure consent for our client – for the benefit of the children and to the relief of the parents!

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