



Green light for Sky Vale: Planning Potential guides Five Rivers through the planning process to secure the essential approvals required to deliver a new specialist school.

Five Rivers provides high-quality environments for pupils with a range of needs, and establishing Sky Vale School required clear long-term strategic thinking. From the outset, we developed a phased route through the planning system that de-risked the process, ensuring each consent supported the next and giving the client certainty throughout.

Rather than pursuing a potentially contentious Change of Use application, Planning Potential leveraged the Prior Approval route under Class T Permitted Development rights. This enabled the change of use from Class C1 (hotel) to Class F1(a) (state-funded day school). This route secured the principle swiftly and efficiently while avoiding the risk of significant resistance. Working closely with the Local Planning Authority, we addressed technical matters early, and successfully secured Prior Approval with a Section 106 unilateral agreement.

With the principle established, we sought permission to convert two former self-catering outbuildings into additional teaching accommodation, plus a new pod classroom. Crucially, this application was positioned not as a standalone proposal, but as a logical and complementary extension of the already approved school use. Planning Potential coordinated the submission with a clear, robust planning narrative that demonstrated policy compliance, operational need, and design sensitivity. This approval was secured through delegated powers within the statutory eight-week determination period.

Throughout both phases, proactive engagement with the Local Planning Authority was central to maintaining momentum and success. By sequencing the applications to reflect both immediate operational requirements and the wider ambitions, Planning Potential delivered a strategy that reduced risk, avoided delay, and unlocked delivery.

We are pleased to have delivered a clear and confident planning strategy so that Five Rivers were able to proceed with certainty, bringing forward a vital specialist education facility that will make a lasting difference to young people across the Bristol area.

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