



Planning Department  
Coventry City Council  
PO Box 15  
Council House  
Coventry  
CV1 5RR

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Full Planning Application for the change of use of units 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 & 8, Rowan House, Westwood business Park, Coventry, CV4 8LE from offices (Use Class B1) to Training Centre (Use Class D1)**

The purpose of this letter is to set out the background to the planning application and relevant planning policy that will be applicable to the consideration of the change of use application.

The Purpose and Background

The submitted planning application seeks approval to convert units 1, 2, 3, 4, 7 & 8 of Rowan House from B1 office use to D1 training facility. No external alterations are proposed as part of the development.

The units subject to this application have been vacant and marketed for between 6 months and over 5 years. It is therefore vitally important the property is brought back in to use to create jobs and make use of a vacant Council Asset.

The proposed occupier of the premises is Trade Skills 4U. The company back is as follows;

*“Established in 2005 Trade Skills 4U have since become the premier electrical trainer in the UK. Every year for the last 5 years more people passed our range of C&G electrical courses with us than any other electrical training provider. We provide cutting edge training from our state of the art facilities based at London Gatwick Airport, Birchwood Park Warrington and Central London.*

*We are specialists at delivering electrical courses and renewable energy courses, it's all we do! We push forward the electrical training industry like no other comparable company. Trade Skills 4U remembers you're our customer and we ensure you have the best chance of gaining electrical qualification success. We have the widest choice of electrical courses in the UK and that's why we are the perfect choice for electricians and new entrants looking for electrician training.”*

The company offer practical and classroom training for those wishing to become an electrical profession including a specialisation in MOD resettlement course for former servicemen and women to gain electrical qualifications on their movement from military life to civilian life. The company specialise in ongoing training for electrical professionals to expand and refresh their knowledge and qualifications.

The business therefore provides primary jobs employing people within the centre but also TradeSkills4U supports the wider electrical professional community in the area and will provide secondary jobs within the sector, by virtue of an improved and diversified workforce locally.

**a: 9 York Place, Leeds LS1 2DS t: 0113 243 6116**

a: 7th Floor, The Balance, Pinfold Street, Sheffield, S1 2GU t: 0114 354 0220

a: Alder House, Willow Tree Park, Booths Lane, Lymm, Cheshire, WA13 0GH t: 0845 604 4665

w: [www.idplanning.co.uk](http://www.idplanning.co.uk)

Trade Skills 4U operate numerous centres throughout the UK and is a clean industry closely aligned with office park locations, the company has chosen Rowan House as an ideal location to expand its business into the Midlands and provide a new regional training centre.

### National Planning Policy

The Second National Planning Policy Framework (“NPPF2”) was published in July 2018 and replaces the majority of all previous national guidance. The introduction to the document confirms it should be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications.

Paragraph 7 of the NPPF2 confirms the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. It advises at paragraph 8 that:

**“Achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways (so that opportunities can be taken to secure net gains across each of the different objectives):**

**an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;**

**a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and**

**an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.”**

The proposed development would clearly fulfil the three roles set out above. The proposed training centre would contribute to the local economy by supporting existing local businesses in Coventry through training and skills development and also through the provision of direct job creation at the centre. The proposed development would bring a vacant Council Asset back into active use and would not require the development of any new land which would have some environmental impact. The proposal provides social gains by providing employment opportunities in a sustainable location with a specialisation in the resettlement of ex-servicemen and women.

At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 11 confirms in relation to decision-taking, this means:

**“For decision-taking this means:**

- c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or**

- d) **where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:**
  - i. **the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or**
  - ii. **any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.”**

In this instance, the proposed development comprises an employment use within an existing area of employment provision. Given the proposal would bring an empty Council asset back into active use whilst creating and supporting further employment opportunity, the proposal meets the objectives of the NPPF2 and in accordance with paragraph 11 of the NPPF2, planning permission should be granted.

Paragraphs 80 to 84 of the NPPF2 relate to building a strong economy. Paragraph 80 confirms decisions **“should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt”**. This is of particular relevance to this change of use application which seeks to make effective use of a long-standing vacant council asset and supports the investment of a British business into the area.

Paragraph 81 of the NPPF2 is of particular relevance to this proposal, it states:

**“Planning policies should... be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices... and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.”**

Given some units within Rowan House have been vacant for up to 5 years it is clear that the property in its current form is not viable or attractive to office-based businesses. Therefore, the application should be supported in accordance with a “rapid response to changes in economic circumstances” by which there is clearly demand for training such as that provided by TradeSkills4U.

The proposal clearly meets the requirements of chapter 6 of the NPPF. The proposed change of use would bring a long-term vacant unit back into active use and would have a positive impact on the vitality and vibrancy of the business park. The proposal also constitutes sustainable economic growth that will support a British Business in expanding and opening a new regional centre in the Coventry area supporting employment opportunity locally. For those reasons, the proposals should be supported.

#### Local Planning Policy

The Development Plan consists of the adopted Core Strategy (2018) and a number of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD's), only the 'Coventry Connected SPD' is deemed to be directly relevant to this proposal.

Policy JE1 sets out the overall economy and employment strategy for Coventry. The development would be in accordance with this policy given that both direct and secondary jobs would be supported by TradeSkills4U as a result of their expansion into Coventry. Policy JE7 details accessibility requirements to employment opportunities, particularly for residents of the most deprived areas. The development is in a highly sustainable location with a regular bus service, paragraph 1d requires “the provision of training opportunities to assist residents in accessing employment opportunities” this facility would act as a catalyst for this requirement for the entire Coventry Area.

Appendix 5 of the Core Strategy sets out the council's parking standards for new development. There is no specific calculation regarding D1- Training Centre use, 'education establishment' standard of 1 space per 2 FTE has been used for comparison. The parking provision exceeds these standards but given the clientele of the centre it is expected parking for clientele will be required. Dedicated parking provision can be seen within the submitted parking plan and totals 69 spaces, these spaces are secured through the lease of the premises and are solely for the use of Tradeskills4U employees/customers.

### Conclusions

The proposed change of use is considered appropriate and acceptable, particularly in this location. The proposal is in accordance with national and local policy and there is a need to bring back a long-term vacant unit to use. The proposal would benefit the wider Coventry area by providing both direct employment and training and benefits to the wider workforce. The proposed change of use does not propose any external alterations to the property and the nature of the use is one that regularly sits side by side with traditional office uses. The proposal has an appropriate amount of parking for the expected use.

The proposal is therefore acceptable and should be approved in accordance with both local and national policy.

I look forward to receiving validation of the application in due course and, should any issues arise in the meantime, please contact myself and I shall advise accordingly.

Yours Sincerely

Joe Flanagan MPLAN  
Planner