

PLANNING STATEMENT

**116 PETERSFIELD AVENUE
HAROLD WOOD
ROMFORD
RM3 9PH**

Date of Statement: SEPT 2025
Job Ref: 6334/DB



INTRODUCTION

This Planning Statement has been prepared in support of an application seeking change of use of the premises at 116 Petersfield Avenue, Harold Wood, Romford, RM3 9PH from Use Class Sui Generis to Use Class F1 (Learning and Non-Residential Institutions).

The application submission follows a previous application P0806.25 which was refused on 3rd September 2025.

The proposal is to establish a Guided Learning and Educational Centre providing supplementary and extra-curricular learning opportunities for children aged 5-16 years. The centre will operate predominantly outside school hours, providing a safe, structured, and accessible learning environment for the local community.

SITE & CONTEXT

The application site at 116 Petersfield Avenue, Harold Wood, Romford, RM3 9PH is situated within a secondary parade of shops serving the local residential community. The parade accommodates a range of small-scale commercial and service uses, making it an appropriate and established location for local facilities that meet day-to-day community needs.

The property itself is a multi-storey building with main access on the ground floor from Petersfield Avenue but secondary access on the lower ground floor, providing convenient off-street parking facilities. The proposal will mostly utilise the lower ground floor rear access for pick-up and drop-off, ensuring minimal impact on the main street frontage and surrounding residential environment.

The site is highly sustainable, benefitting from close proximity to a significant concentration of family dwellings, schools, and local amenities. Being part of an active neighbourhood parade and within easy walking reach for local residents, the site is ideally placed to accommodate a small-scale community use such as the proposed Guided Learning and Educational Centre.

PROPOSED USE & OPERATION

Operational Details and Management Arrangements

The operation of the centre:

- **Classrooms & Capacity:** The centre comprises **two classrooms**, each hosting **up to 8 students per 1-hour session**, resulting in a maximum of **16 students per hour**.
- **Staffing:** The centre will employ **3 full-time and 2 part-time staff**, ensuring appropriate supervision ratios and smooth operation.
- **Session Management:** Lessons will be staggered by $\frac{1}{2}$ hour to avoid simultaneous arrivals and departures, reducing peak-time congestion.
- **Pick-up/Drop-off Management:** The **lower ground floor rear access** will be used exclusively for drop-offs and pick-ups, with staff supervising the arrival and departure of students. Parents will be encouraged to park in the **on-site parking spaces** or arrive on foot where possible. Signage and guidance will be provided to ensure safe and orderly access.

These measures will ensure that the centre operates efficiently while minimising disturbance to neighbouring residents and businesses.

Hours of Operation

- **Weekdays:** 15:00-20:00 (after school until evening)
- **Saturdays:** 09:00-17:00
- **Sundays & Bank Holidays:** 10:00-16:00

These hours are comparable to other uses in the area and avoid early morning activity that could disturb nearby residents. The staggered sessions and limited class sizes further minimise potential noise during operating hours.

Footfall, Traffic, and Impact on Residents/Businesses

- The centre is designed to accommodate **small class sizes**, and most students live locally and will **walk or cycle** to the centre given the convenient, residential surroundings.
- **Maximum vehicle movements** during peak times are estimated at 4-6 cars, significantly lower than the expected footfall from a larger commercial use.
- Staggered lesson start and end times reduce simultaneous pick-up/drop-off congestion.
- Staff will monitor the premises to ensure **neighbours are not affected by noise or loitering**, and students will use the **rear access away from the main street**.

Noise and Amenity Mitigation

To safeguard the amenity of surrounding residents:

- Classrooms will be **soundproofed** using acoustic panels to prevent sound transmission to upper residential units.
- Staff will supervise entrances/exits and ensure minimal noise in communal areas.
- Deliveries and waste collections will occur during standard working hours to avoid disruption.

EVIDENCE OF NEED

Rising Demand for Tutoring and Extra-Curricular Learning

- Private tutoring is increasingly mainstream: 25% of UK students receive private tuition, rising to 40% in London.
- Post-pandemic, demand is high: 74.3% of tutors report demand is higher or stable.
- The UK tutoring market is substantial—valued at around £7 billion, with online tuition accounting for nearly half of sessions.
- Tutoring serves beyond exam prep: 75% of sessions focus on building confidence and mastery in core subjects.

Together, this underscores a strong local and national appetite for structured, accessible supplementary education—especially given trusted private centres are increasingly favoured over home tutoring for convenience, affordability, and supportive environments.

Local Educational Pressures and Population Growth

- Havering's children's services were rated Inadequate by Ofsted in early 2024, largely driven by acute demand pressures: the under-18 population in Havering rose from 50,827 in 2011 to 58,550 in 2021 and is projected to reach 61,350 by 2031.
- This growing population—coupled with increased needs, including for children with special educational needs—has stretched council resources and delayed statutory support.
- Many local schools are also under fiscal strain: in 2022-23, 15 schools in Havering ended the year with budget deficits—up from nine the previous year.

These trends reinforce the importance of non-statutory, community-based educational support that alleviates pressure on mainstream provision and helps families access timely support.

Mixed Ofsted Performance in Havering Schools

- Havering ranks among the lowest-performing London boroughs regarding Ofsted outcomes: 29.6% of inspected schools were rated Inadequate or Requires Improvement, and this rises to 43% for secondary schools.
- However, Havering also has schools with Good or Outstanding ratings—26 such schools were recently commended by the Mayor.

This mixed landscape highlights a need for supplementary learning that can uplift students irrespective of school performance and support those who may benefit from tailored guidance.

PLANNING CONSIDERATION

Policy Alignment & Community Benefit

- The proposal aligns with national and local aims to expand access to educational and community facilities in sustainable locations.
- It directly supports families seeking structured, affordable learning opportunities beyond standard school hours, reinforcing community resilience and academic success.

Scale, Impact & Accessibility

- The centre's modest size with two classrooms with up to 16 students per hour (but staggered times)—ensures minimal noise, traffic, or disruption.
- Use of the rear entrance for drop-off, combined with ample parking and predominance of pedestrian access, keeps transportation impacts low.
- Operating outside core school hours ensures complementarity, not competition, with existing provision.

Demonstrable Positive Outcomes

- The centre offers a stable and supportive environment for students seeking extra help, potentially improving exam readiness, confidence, and social development.
- It assists working parents by providing safe, educational supervision in the evenings and weekends.
- It rectifies affordability barriers often highlighted in surveys—many parents wish for tutoring but cannot afford it

Comparison with Existing Use (Sui Generis - Dog Grooming, Ref: P0638.17)

- Previous dog grooming use operated:
 - Monday-Friday: 08:30-18:00
 - Saturday: 08:30-17:00
 - Closed Sundays/Bank Holidays
- The proposed educational centre:
 - Operates outside core daytime hours (after school/evening), reducing conflict with surrounding businesses.
 - Student and staff numbers are modest and predictable, whereas the previous use had variable customer visits.
- **Noise and disturbance:** Learning activities are quieter than dog grooming operations (no barking or mechanical equipment), and acoustic mitigation measures can be installed if required.

CONCLUSION

For these reasons, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted to allow the change of use of 116 Petersfield Avenue, Harold Wood, Romford, RM3 9PH from Use Class Sui Generis to Use Class F1 (Learning and Non-Residential Institutions).

The proposed change of use to Class F1 will establish a much-needed Guided Learning and Educational Centre that:

- Meets a demonstrable community demand for accessible, structured tutoring that supports children in achieving their full academic potential;
- Alleviates strain on local education and social services at a time when Havering's school-age population continues to grow and mainstream provision faces resource pressures;
- Fits sustainably within the existing site context, located within a secondary shopping parade, well served by public transport, and designed to minimise environmental and traffic impacts through small class sizes, use of rear access, and availability of off-street parking;
- Serves a clear public benefit, particularly for families with working parents who require safe, supervised educational provision during evenings and weekends, and for children who benefit from targeted extra-curricular support.

In addition, the proposal will make a positive contribution to the local economy through the employment of 2 full-time staff and up to 3 part-time staff, while ensuring the continued active use of a premises within an established neighbourhood parade, thereby reinforcing its vitality and community role.

The application is therefore considered fully in accordance with national and local planning policy objectives that encourage sustainable development, promote educational opportunities, and strengthen community well-being.

Accordingly, it is both reasonable and appropriate in planning terms that planning permission is granted for the proposed change of use.