



MH Architects Ltd
for Acorn Education and Care Ltd



Design and Access Statement

**The Phoenix School
40 Christchurch Road
Reading
RG2 7AY**

July 2023

MH Architects
Ground Floor
Bicentennial Building
Southern Gate
Chichester
West Sussex
PO19 8EZ

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This design and access statement has been prepared by MH Architects on behalf of Acorn Education and Care Ltd. in support of a full planning application for alterations to the former Phoenix College at 40 Christchurch Road, Reading, RG2 7AY.

1.2 The primary external changes include the full cladding of an existing classroom block and new building, both to the rear of the property.

1.3 Landscaping and hard surfaces will be upgraded across the whole site.

2.0 Site and Surrounding Area

2.1 The application site comprises a rectangular shaped parcel of land, which was used as a school until it closed in 2022.



2.2 The property consists of one main three-storey building with several single storey extensions and outbuildings to the west and south of the main school.

2.3 Vehicle access, parking and some minor landscaping occupies the front of the property. A Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA), play apparatus and grass play areas are located at the back of the property, in the south.

2.4 The site is level, with existing pedestrian and vehicular access present from Christchurch

Design and Access Statement

The Phoenix School, Reading

Road. A locked gate at the rear of the property boundary provides access to Cintra Park to the south.

2.5 The east and west boundaries are shared with residential dwellings. Residential properties also comprise the northern frontage on the other side of Christchurch Road.



Existing Site Photos



Existing Site Photos

3.0 Use and Proposed Changes

3.1 This application seeks planning permission to provide modifications to a former school site to allow a new school to be opened in a more appropriate environment.

3.2 The primary change consists of the erection of a new single storey extension to rear, which will contain a new kitchen serving the school hall. The footprint of this new extension will be half the size of the existing outbuilding and almost fully within the foundations zone. The existing building is proposed to be demolished under planning reference PP-12324579v1.

3.3 A block of pre-fabricated classrooms will be modified to form a new 'Teaching Pavilion', with a new division of classrooms and ancillary spaces. The whole block will be reclad, with new windows and doors on the inward facing elevation.

3.4 The fenestrations and external finishes will be updated across the whole site.

3.5 New planting, access ramps and integrated seating will create an enhanced route adjacent to the Teaching Pavilion and connecting to the newly enclosed MUGA at the rear of the site.

3.6 The front of the building will be updated with parking spaces, a one-way driveway for student drop-offs, and enhanced landscaping. The side access to the rear will be updated to allow for cycle storage and further parking behind the new kitchen.

3.7 Internal modifications throughout the main building will provide enhanced washroom and shower facilities; intervention, therapy and immersive rooms; further classrooms; and staff areas.

4.0 Layout

4.1 The general layout will remain the same across all floors. The exception will be modified Teaching Pavilion to the rear.

4.2 The Reception and Entrance area will be enlarged to be more welcoming. Admin and ancillary spaces will occupy the majority of the main building ground floor.

4.3 The new kitchen building will adjoin the multi-purpose hall.

4.4 Two classrooms will occupy the first floor, with intervention, therapy and immersion rooms.

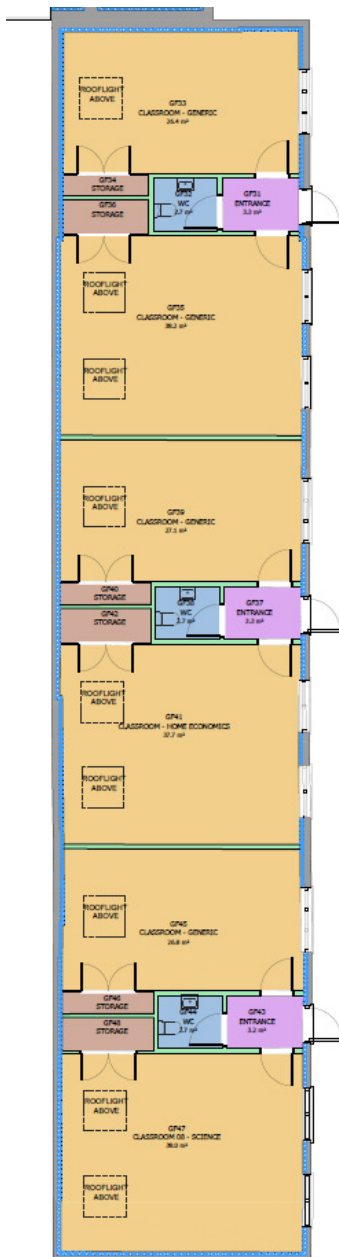
4.5 The new Teaching Pavilion will now comprise six classrooms and be fully re-clad.



Ground Floor Plan

Design and Access Statement

The Phoenix School, Reading



Ground Floor Teaching Pavilion



First Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan

- New Walls Proposed
- Extra Insulation to External Walls
- Classroom
- Ancillary pupil space- Intervention/ Therapy
- Admin/ storage
- Plant/ MEP
- Dining
- Circulation
- Toilets/ Showers

5.0 Landscaping

5.1 Landscaping to the rear and front will be modified to allow appropriate access for both students and vehicles.

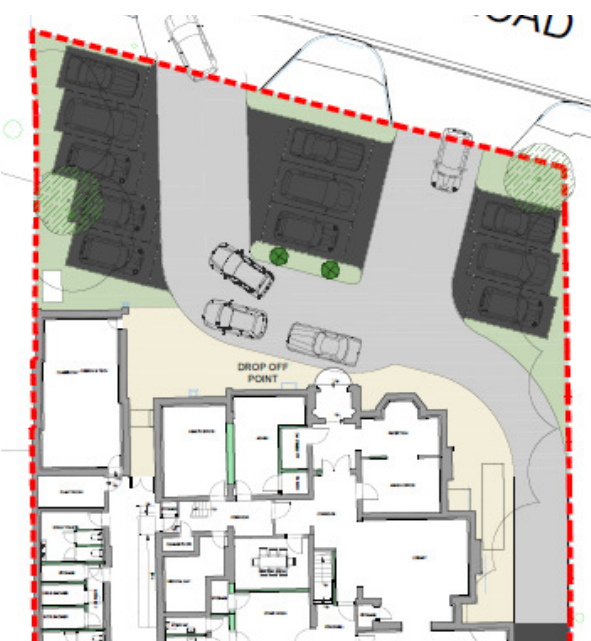
5.2 Vehicle access will be maintained in a horseshoe driveway at the front, with new parking spaces and full resurfacing.

5.3 The rear of the building will be updated with new planting, access ramps and integrated seating to create an enhanced route adjacent to the Teaching Pavilion.

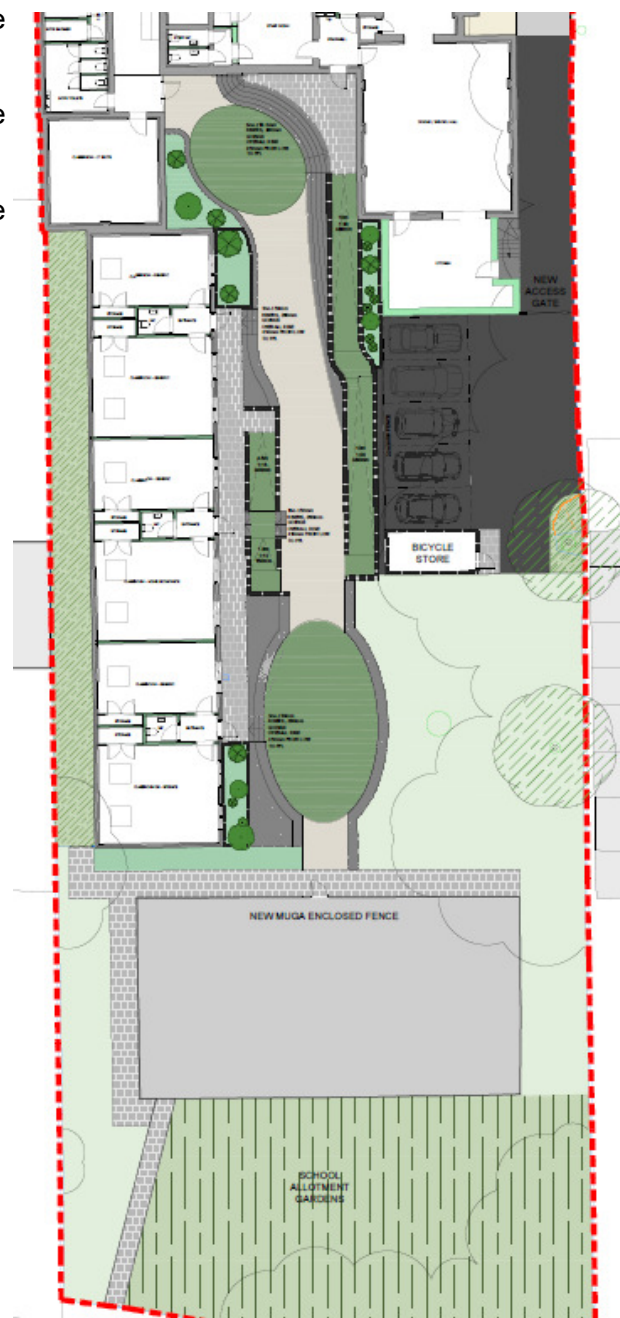
5.4 The existing MUGA will have a new fence enclosure installed.

5.5 An informal grass play area will occupy the area south of rear parking.

5.6 Behind the MUGA is a large area that could be used as an allotment garden.



Front Landscaping



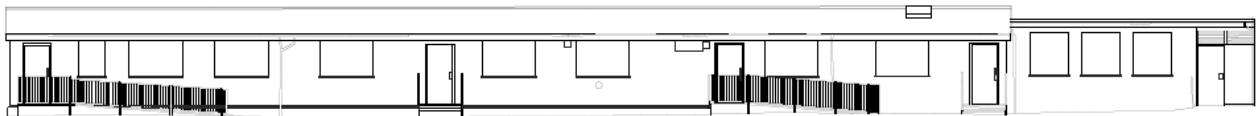
Rear Landscaping

6.0 Appearance

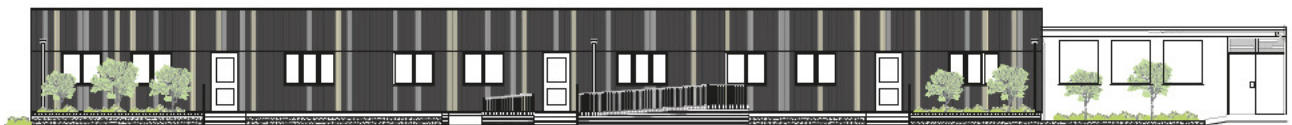
6.1 Across the majority of the site, the proposed changes consist of refreshing the tired and worn appearance.

6.2 The new kitchen building and re-clad Teaching Pavilion will be enhanced with slatted composite cladding.

6.3 The cladding of the new kitchen will continue to wrap around the rear parking and cycle store enclosure.



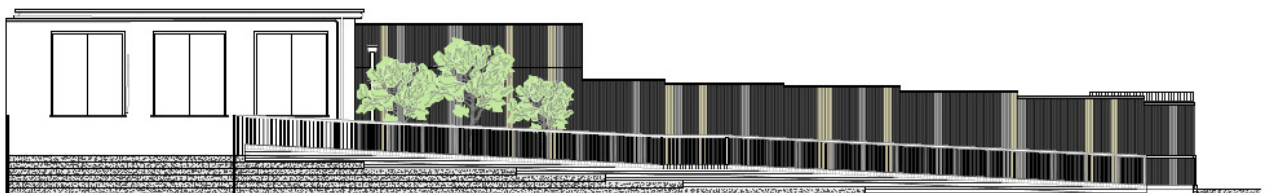
Existing Teaching Pavilion



Proposed Teaching Pavilion



Existing Hall and Classroom Block



Proposed Hall and Kitchen

7.0 Access

- 7.1 The existing building is unlikely to be fully compliant with Approved Document M.
- 7.2 The ambition for the internal alterations is to increase the accessibility of the ground floor.
- 7.3 Enlarged door openings, internally and externally, will be provided across all entrances to the school, with ramped access from the rear of the building and to the Teaching Pavilion.
- 7.4 An new internal ramp will provide access from the secondary front access under the existing lean-to.
- 7.5 The majority of teaching spaces are accessible on the ground floor.
- 7.5 A new accessible WC will be provided on the ground floor.

8.0 Conclusion

- 8.1 We believe that the proposed modifications are entirely appropriate for modernisation of the existing school building. The new elements, fenestration updates and landscape enhancements will allow the school to operate for a long period of time. All the alterations will respect the surrounding premises.
- 8.2 The works proposed are wholly appropriate to the building and context, and we therefore humbly ask that the Borough Council approve the application.