

Planning Statement

March 2018

Property name	The Heights Primary School
Property address	82 Gosbrook Rd Caversham Reading RG48BH
Proposed Works	Provision of a modular classroom unit to allow the school to grow to its current capacity of 2 forms of entry New Classroom Block The construction of a two storey six classroom block with pupil WC's, offices, storage and plant room. Associated hard and soft landscaping Annexation of area of adjacent park Fenced off area for informal play by school

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1.0 Existing Buildings and Site

1.1 Site and Site Access

The application site comprises 0.17 hectares of land and has been in use as a school (Class D1) since September 2014. The site is located off the north side of the Gosbrook Road behind residential flats, bounded by a number of mature trees. The north of the site is bounded by a school playing field owned by Reading Borough Council but leased to the Diocese for use by St Annes Catholic School. The west of the site is bounded by a recreation ground with a pedestrian footpath which runs along the schools boundary.

The site has good accessibility by public transport. There are east and west bound bus stops on the Gosbrook Road served by 5 bus routes within 50m of the sites entrance.

The footpath running along the school's western boundary, within the recreation ground, connects with a main pedestrian route through Christchurch Meadows and over the new pedestrian bridge to the mainline railway station and town centre.

The footpath which diagonally bisects the recreation ground connects with another footpath leading to superstore parking in central Caversham. For further details please refer to the transport statement in **Appendix E**

1.2 Community Use

The school runs a breakfast and after school club for pupils at the school from 7.30am – 8.45am in the morning and from 3.30 to 6.00pm in the evenings.

1.3 Site Boundary

A 1.5m high chain link fence runs along the majority of the site boundary and is in a mixed state of repair. A brick wall separates part of the school site from the adjacent Westfield Rd Playground.

There is a vehicular gate adjacent to the existing modular block connecting to the access road serving the residential flats off the Gosbrook Road. This vehicular gate is for deliveries and emergencies only, not general use.

1.4 Landscape Features

The site is gently sloping and has a good number of trees both along the boundary and within the site itself. A number of these trees are mature specimens and two trees to the north of the school site are covered by Tree Preservation Orders. These have been re-surveyed for this application and form part of the tree protection plan included in **Appendix D**.

1.5 Existing Building Design

A 2 storey modular building currently sits on the site (the subject of previous planning application ref 140940) which has been used as temporary accommodation by the school since 2014. Originally single storey, a further floor was added to the building in 2015 (subject of a further planning application ref 151283)

2.0 Design Proposals

Please refer to the design proposals described in the planning drawings contained within **Appendix A**.

2.1 Space Needs Analysis / Education Case

The Free Schools initiative, introduced by the government, is a state funded programme that enables the provision of schools in response to demand from local people in order to improve education for their community. The Education and Skills Funding Agency (ESFA) is supporting this initiative by working with local authorities and communities to establish both site and building solutions. The EFSA is part funding the proposals that form this application.

The Heights Primary School was formed as a free school in 2012 in response to a public consultation exercise held by Reading Borough Council ; ‘Lets Talk Education’ seeking solutions to an identified oversubscription of Primary School places in North Reading.

While the school waits for ESFA to secure a permanent site, Reading Borough Council in conjunction with the school’s Academy Trust and the ESFA agreed to establish an alternative temporary site for the school in order to allow it to commence operation. A parcel of land adjacent off the Gosbrook Road in Caversham was identified and developed in 2014 as a temporary school site using modular classroom accommodation.

The Heights Primary School is now established as a 2 Form Entry (FE) primary school for children aged from 4 – 11 years on its temporary site off Gosbrook Road, Caversham.

The on-going analysis of pupil forecasting data has identified the need to accommodate the continued growth of the school in line with an already established demand of 50 places per year for the next 2 years.

The Council has a statutory duty to ensure that the 50 pupil places per annum provided by the Heights Primary School can continue to be accommodated within Reading Schools. The Council does not have the capacity to provide these pupil places in other local schools. Similarly the ESFA have been unable to secure an alternative private site to house the additional places for the two year period.

Reading Borough Council, the Heights Primary School Academy Trust and the EFSA have therefore confirmed a brief requirement for an additional 100 pupil places to be provided at the temporary site in Caversham over the next 2 years. This will allow the school to continue to grow from the bottom up (Reception year to year 6.) to eventually reach its full capacity as a 350 place 2 Form Entry Primary School.

A 6 classroom modular block will provide sufficient accommodation for 75 pupils in Key-Stage 2 (years 4 & 5), freeing up space in the existing block for the new Reception year intake. The new accommodation will also provide a studio room, group rooms, break out spaces and office accommodation.

2.2 Proposed Site Strategy

The location of the new classroom block was driven by the following considerations:

- Minimising impact upon St Annes School Playing field.
- Avoiding Root Protection Area on Ash Trees covered by Tree Protection Orders

External Space

The impact on external space has also been considered. Currently the Heights Primary has an arrangement with the neighbouring St Annes Primary to use part of their playing field for informal play at lunch times and break times. Increased pupil numbers at the Heights School would put undue pressure on this resource so a need to generate additional outside play space was established. The proposals seek to temporarily annex part of the adjacent Westfield Park recreation ground for use by the Heights Pupils. The area marked on the proposed plans (see **Appendix A**) denotes a line of 1.2m high timber or steel railings which will segregate the new play area from the general public use of the park during school hours. When the temporary school moves to another site, these railings will be removed and the grass area fully reinstated to its current condition.

It should be noted that The Heights will continue to make use of St Annes school playing field but that this use will now be restricted to Key Stage 1 pupil only (years R, 1 &2)

The Heights School will also continue to make use of the Christchurch Meadows playing fields for sport and outdoor education.

2.3 Context and Scale

The new buildings are limited to 2 storey height to match the existing unit. Both units are lower in height when compared with the multi storey residential blocks adjacent to the sites eastern boundary.

2.4 Proposed Building Form and Layout

The classroom block is composed of 3 classrooms on the ground floor and 3 on the first floor and is rectangular in form. There is a central stair core with a main entrance accessed via an external ramp.

2.5 Changes to the Existing School

There are no changes to the existing accommodation planned as part of this development.

2.6 Materials

External building envelope materials are as follows:

- Horizontal steel composite panels (Tata Trimapanel) – colour albatross grey)
- Single Ply Roof membrane : colour black
- White PVC Windows with powder coated aluminium flashings (also white)
- External Doors – powder coated aluminium : colour white
- Rainwater goods – black PVC

2.7 Proposed Landscaping and External Works

- Hard landscaping to provide pedestrian approach to new block and footpath link to existing block – macadam with timber edging.
- Fencing works to annex a portion of the adjacent recreation ground
- Removal of three trees and scrub along boundary to facilitate location of unit.
- Minimal soft landscaping.

Tree removal and protection -

Three trees require removal in order to facilitate the siting of the unit. These are category B & C specimens and have been assessed as being of insignificant value. A number of saplings and shrubs are also required to be removed as part of the works. The two trees which are covered by a TPO have a root protection zone and will be protected during the construction. Please refer to Section 6.1 below and also the Arboriculture Impact Assessment Report in **Appendix D**

Site levels and general accessibility details -

The site slopes slightly but the overall site is within a flood risk zone. Although providing temporary accommodation, a flood risk assessment has been carried out both for the previous application and for the new application. The finished floor level of the new block is to match that of the existing unit already on site which has been set 300mm above the calculated 1 in 100 year flood risk level. Due to the increase in height above ground level, a level access approach will be provided via a wheelchair accessible ramp as per the main entrance to the existing school block.

2.8School Boundary Treatment

A new steel weldmesh fence (powder coated green) will be erected along the revised northern boundary, separating the site from the St Annes school playing field. This will replace the existing chain link fence which is to be removed as part of the works. A gate will be provided to allow access onto the St Annes Playing field . A new gateway will be formed in the brick wall which separates St Annes Playing field from the Westfield Rd playground. The other site boundaries will remain as existing.

3.0 Planning Policy and Consultations

3.1 Planning Policy Guidance and Other Relevant Guidance

National Planning Policy Framework (2012)

Reading Borough Council’s Core Strategy (January 2008, updated January 2015)

Policy CS1	Sustainable Construction and Design
Policy CS4	Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
Policy CS5	Inclusive Access
Policy CS6	Settlement Boundary
Policy CS7	Design and the Public Realm
Policy CS9	Infrastructure, Services, Resources and Amenities
Policy CS22	Transport Assessments
Policy CS23	Sustainable Travel and Travel Plans
Policy CS24	Car/ Cycle Parking
Policy CS31	Additional and Existing Community Facilities
Policy CS35	Flooding
Policy CS36	Biodiversity and Geology

Reading Borough Councils Sites and Detailed Policies Document (Oct 2012, updated Jan 2015)

Policy SD1	Sustainable Construction and Design
Policy DM1	Accessibility and the Intensity of Development
Policy DM3	Inclusive Access
Policy DM4	Settlement Boundary
Policy DM12	Design and the Public Realm
Policy DM18	Infrastructure, Services, Resources and Amenities
Policy DM19	Transport Assessments
Policy SPD	Sustainable Design and Construction (2011)
Policy SPD	Revised Parking (2011)
Policy CS31	Planning Obligations under Section 106 (2015)
Policy CS35	Tree Strategy for Reading (2010)

3.2 Pre-Application Advice

Meetings have been held with Reading Borough Council's Planning Officer, Parks Department and Highways. Key recommendations regarding siting of unit and boundary treatment have been taken into account within the planning documents presented.

Archaeology

The Borough's archaeologist has reviewed the application and confirmed that they have no specific requirements re investigations, watching briefs etc; 'Although there is some archaeological potential within the broader area, given the small scale of the proposals and impacts on the site from previous developments, there would be no archaeological requirements for the proposals as described.' Berkshire Archaeology.

Ecology

The Boroughs Ecology team have been briefed with respect to the forthcoming application.

Highways

Discussions have been held with the Highways Department with respect to the application in general but also specific requirements for the content of both Transport Assessment and School Travel Plan updates.

Parks Department

A number of meetings have been held with RBC Parks department including a site visit to advise on the annexation of the recreation ground which forms part of this application. Advice also references requirements for reinstatement following school's move to a permanent site.

Section 77

The proposal requires a land disposal of school playing field used by St Annes primary school. The Education Skills Funding Agency have confirmed that this will be issued under a general consent.

Sport England Consultation -

Pre application information has been sent to Sport England.

3.3 Consultation

Design Development Consultations February - March 2018

Regular meetings have been held between Reading Borough Council's School Services Manager, The Heights Primary School senior management team, representatives from Heights Primary Academy Trust and Governing Body, Education Skills Funding Agency and the developer / designer Reds10.

In addition to these meetings, pre application discussions have also been held with the following:

Berkshire Archaeology
Hampshire County Council Access Team
Hampshire County Council Fire Review Group

Reading Borough Council have also consulted with both St Anne's Catholic Primary School, St Annes Church and the Diocese with oversight for both of these institutions. All the above parties have expressed support for the proposals.

4.0 Construction Strategy

4.1 Project Phasing

The project is to be delivered in one phase.

4.2 Construction access and ground protection

Construction access to install the units will be via a temporary trackway laid down across the St Annes playing field. The intention is to limit the deliveries across 2 days to minimise disruption to local residents and the school. The trackway will then be removed, any damage sustained to the playing field repaired. An additional temporary access for small deliveries (van sized) will be formed through the Eastern boundary from Gosbrook Road. For more details, please refer to the Contractors Construction Management Plan in **Appendix K**.

4.3 Temporary Accommodation

The whole school site is designated as temporary accommodation. The existing planning approval is due to expire on 31st August.2018; this application seeks an extension of that existing approval for an additional 2 years plus approval for the proposed works for the same period. When the school moves to its permanent site, arrangements for the dismantling of buildings and reinstatement of playing fields and recreation ground will be put into place by Reading Borough Council.

4.4 Ground Contamination

A soil investigation survey was undertaken in February 2018 to ascertain ground conditions for foundation design and to assess potential for ground contamination. Of the 5 sample pits dug, one came back with positive readings for both lead particles and asbestos tiles. As a result of these findings, an additional 5 pits were dug within a 5m radius and some of these have also tested positively for presence of asbestos. The final report is yet to be published but interim conclusions suggest a localised area of historic builders rubble in the vicinity of the proposed building footprint. An approved asbestos inspector will therefore be required to be present during the excavation of the foundations in case further asbestos containing materials are un-earthed. In the case of such materials being found, these will be disposed of off site using an approved asbestos removal contractor. The remaining area of potential contaminated ground outside the line of building footprint will be encapsulated on site using an approved method but essentially a membrane followed by crushed material and macadam.

5.0 Transport

5.01

The site is located within a highly accessible and sustainable location. It is very well located to take full advantage of existing local facilities and amenities.

5.02

Personal Injury Accident (PIA) data demonstrates that there are no road safety issues within the vicinity of the site that would be exacerbated as a result of the proposed development.

5.03

Given that the school is temporarily located outside of its catchment area, Caversham Heights, the school runs flexible drop off / pick up times as well as Breakfast and After School Clubs to help parents. This results in the trips generated by the site being spread over a longer period than typical, rather than being concentrated over a short period of time if the school had a fixed start and end time. The site will continue to be accessed by vehicle from the private access road off Gosbrook Road, which also serves the flats known as Elizabeth House. The school access is only used by service vehicles and staff / pupils with accessible needs being dropped off via prior agreement.

5.04

A trip generation assessment has been undertaken for the additional 100 pupils and 7.5 FTE staff, based on the current modal split for the school. 62% of additional pupils will have siblings already at the school, therefore it is reasonably assumed that only 38% of car trips associated with the proposed development will be new to the network. The assessment demonstrates that no significant impacts are expected to occur on the local transport networks and given the quality of the existing pedestrian, cycling and public transport provision in the locality it is expected that the additional trips can be readily accommodated.

5.05

The transport assessment concludes that the impact of the temporary proposed development would not have a severe residual impact on the local highway or transport networks or highway safety in accordance with the requirements of the NPPF and impacts would be short term, lasting for the duration of the temporary planning permission. Furthermore, the development will provide a safe means of access to the site. For further details please refer to the full Transport Assessment in **Appendix E**

5.1 Highways and Emergency Access

Vehicle access and emergency access to the school will remain unaffected. During construction contractor vehicles will make use of the existing vehicular access road. The delivery of the main units will be across the St Annes playing field from South View Avenue and these lorry movements will be co-ordinated by the contractor with a banksman present at all times. For more details, please refer to the Contractors Construction Management Plan in **Appendix K**.

5.2 Travel Plan

A Travel Plan has been implemented by the school and this has been updated to reflect the additional proposed development and improvements the school has made in this area in the intervening time period. The plan forms an update of that previously agreed and encourages pupils and staff to travel to the temporary site by sustainable modes thereby helping to minimise the traffic generation of the school.

It should also be noted that through its active implementation of the existing Travel Plan, the school has recently achieved a **ModalShift STARS bronze award**, being the first and currently the only school in Reading to achieve this national award.
. Please refer to **Appendix F**

6.0 Biodiversity and Environmental Protection

6.1 Tree Protection

Please refer to **Appendix D** for tree protection plans and Arboriculture Report.

6.2 Ecology

An ecological appraisal report has been completed for this project and can be found in **Appendix C**. An extended Phase 1 Ecological Survey was also conducted as part of the previous application in 2014 to assess the development site for protected habitats and species. This has been reviewed and updated following another site survey conducted in February 2018. The site predominantly consists of buildings, hardstanding, amenity grassland and species poor hedgerows and trees. The mature ash tree (TN15) was identified as having potential roost features for bats.

The reports recommendations include advice for clearance works associated with protection for bird nesting and bats. There are no works planned to the protected ash tree and the design and construction will follow guidance for tree protection as described in **Appendix D**.

The report recommends the inclusion of tree and shrub planting to form part of the application to encourage small areas for habitat to replace those lost as a result of the proposals. A detailed planting plan will be submitted prior to works commencing on site.

7.0 Building Services

Electric and mains water supplies are to be taken from the existing school. The electrical supply is to be upgraded to provide further capacity. Foul Drainage is to be removed via a pumped system linking to the schools existing foul system which then links via gravity-fed connection to the mains sewer running under Gosbrook Road. Surface water drainage will be removed via a soak-away; to be located 5m away from the new building underneath new porous macadam play surface.

8.0 Access Statement

Hampshire County Council Property Services have undertaken a consultation with Hampshire County Council Technical Services Department and Access Team to ensure that the proposals promote accessibility in line with policies CS4, 5, DM1 & DM3. The proposal includes:

- level access to new building
- accessible toilet
- appropriate colour contrast to aid the visually impaired.

The design and access statement is included in **Appendix B**.

9.0 Acoustic Statement

Additional validation surveys undertaken in February 2018 show that the survey data collected in 2014 for the original planning application is still considered representative of the existing noise environment. The report concludes that 'noise should not be a material concern with respect to the determination of planning permission for this (application.)'

For the detailed report, please refer to **Appendix L**.

10.0 External Lighting

Emergency lighting will be designed to BS5266 to provide safe access and emergency escape routes during hours of darkness. External lighting is to be limited to wall mounted bulkheads or canopy down-lights. This lighting will be carefully designed to prevent light pollution and nuisance to residential properties. All external light fittings will be fitted with a photocell and time clock to restrict hours of use.

Appendix A - Proposals

Drawings:

- E03620 -A-PL-1000-Site Location Plan
- E03620 -A-PL-1010-Existing Site Plan
- E03620 -A-PL-1010 SE- Existing Site Plan (Sport England)
- E03620 -A-PL-1020-Proposed Site Plan
- E03620 -A-PL-1010 SE- Proposed Site Plan (Sport England)
- 5249-001 General Overview Rev F (General Arrangement Plans and Elevations)
- 2009-RH-SSP-A.Site Set Up dwg
- 18108-501-B Proposed Site Drainage

Appendix B – Design & Access Statement

Appendix C – Ecology Report

Appendix D - Arboriculture Impact Assessment and Tree Protection

Appendix E – Transport Statement

Appendix F – School Travel Plan

Appendix G – Air Quality Report

Appendix H – Acoustic Report

Appendix J – Flood Risk Assessment and Report

Appendix K - Construction Management Plan

Appendix L – Acoustics Site Suitability Assessment