

## **Design and Access Statement – SEND Playground at Thameside Primary School, RG4 8DB**

04/03/2025

This application relates to upgrade works to an existing disused play area on the South-East boundary of the Thameside Primary School grounds located at Thameside School, Harley Rd, Caversham, Reading RG4 8DB, to a SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) appropriate play area including: demolition of existing soft and hard landscaping and play equipment, new hard landscaping works, installation of new SEND appropriate play equipment and Multi-Use Games Area, and installation of new 3m security fencing with a new single access gate inside the school grounds to connect to the existing 3m high boundary fence to enclose the play area.

### **Pre-application:**

Pre-application advice was sought in May 2024 (ref no. 240463), followed by a site visit on the 6<sup>th</sup> June 2024. This application considers the pre-app advice with regards to the documents submitted as part of this application, to include responses to policies identified & recommended at pre-app stage, as well as the RBC validation requirements and other relevant local and national policies.

### **Site information:**

The site is located in a quiet residential area.

The Thameside Primary School grounds where the proposed site is located include school buildings dating back to approximately 1910, as well as a large volume of a mixture of hard and soft landscaped outdoor space. The grounds are bounded by security fencing and hedges of varying heights (ranging from 2.5-3m), which are to be retained.

The proposed playground area was the site of a former purpose-built timber playground which has since been part-removed and fenced off for health and safety reasons.

The proposed play area covers a GEA of 85m<sup>2</sup>.

## **Site Photos:**



**Photo 1:** Existing play area looking towards Elliot's Way and T6. All existing fencing retained, including 3m high boundary anti-climb security fencing.



**Photo 2:** Existing play area looking towards Cardinal Close, T1, and T5 within hard landscaped area behind 1.6m high brick wall. All existing fencing retained.



Photos 3 & 4: Bick and metal fencing on tarmac area around T5 to the west boundary of the proposed SEND area.



Photo 5: View of SEND area from Elliot's Way.

**Planning History:** None of relevance.

**Relevant Planning Policy:**

The pre-application advice identified the following relevant policies:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
- National Planning Policy Guidance
- Reading Borough Council Local Plan (2019)
  - **Policy CC7 – Design and the Public Realm**
    - *Policy CC7 requires that all development be of a high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located.*
    - Advice from the pre-application relating to Policy CC7 highlighted that “suitable fencing should be chosen which is less visually dominant and less harmful to the character of the area”. The fencing proposed is security anti-climb fencing to match the existing fence in colour and height (3m). This responds to safety concerns from the school around SEND children’s history of climbing fences lower than 3m. The pre-application advice also concluded that the officers involved “consider the proposal would not be harmful to the school building or the neighbouring streetscene in terms of design and character”.
  - **Policy CC8 – Safeguarding Amenity**
    - *Policy CC8 states that development will not cause a detrimental impact to the living environment of existing residential properties, in terms of privacy and overlooking, access to sunlight and daylight, visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development and harm to outlook.*
    - Due to the proximity of the site to a residential area, during the pre-application phase, Environmental Protection was consulted. The officers confirmed that “there is no need to conduct any noise survey or noise mitigation in light of this application due to the existence of a playground adjacent to the residential property.” The scheme is not proposing any floodlighting, and opening hours are proposed to be during school opening hours.
  - **Policy EN14 – Trees, Hedges and Woodland, Tree Strategy (March 2021)**
    - *Policy EN14 states individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal where they*

*are of importance, and Reading's vegetation cover will be extended.*

- The pre-application advice identified that a Tree Survey and AIA were necessary for the proposed scheme which includes the removal of 1 no. Tree. The Arboricultural Impact Assessment submitted as part of this application has identified that none of the trees in close proximity to the proposal are listed in the TPO Directory as protected by a Tree Preservation Order. The site additionally is not within a Conservation Area. The proposed play area design requires the removal of one small tree (T1) which sits in the middle of the site, and which the assessment identifies as a “category ‘B’, ‘Trees of moderate quality’” tree, which “will have only a minor loss of amenity locally and no negative impact on the wider landscape character”. Due to the constraints of the site and the security requirements of a SEND playground, specifically concerning play safety and climbing, it has not been considered a suitable site for additional tree planting.
- The Tree Survey and AIA additionally identified the Root Protection Areas of the remaining 5 trees in close proximity to the site (T2-6). The RPAs of 3 no. Trees T2, T3 and T5 are within the site boundary, and will be affected by the proposed play equipment positioning. The play equipment has been carefully located to adhere to SEND standards of safe distances with regards to spacing and arrangement. Additionally, the 3m high fence proposed to surround the site for safety reasons will encroach onto the RPAs of T2, T3 and T5. Approximately 7no. fence post footings with associated foundations will be required to be located within the RPA of trees T2-5. Additionally, 1 no. Play equipment structure (bird's nest swing) will require 4 no. Post footings, 2 of which are to be located on the boundary of the assumed RPA of T2, T3 & T5, and 2 of which only within the boundary of the RPA of T5. The footings are anticipated to have 900mm maximum approximate diameter and 900mm maximum approximate depth. The RPA of T5 is currently interrupted by an existing 1.6m high brick wall bounding the site (west of the proposed footings, and in closer proximity to the tree, going up to approx 2.3m to the southern site boundary), the foundations of which would minimise any impact that the proposed footings of the play equipment will create on T5's roots. Additionally, T4 and T5 are located within tree pits in an existing tarmac area. The Tree Survey and AIA outline additionally appropriate mitigation measures for significantly reducing

disturbance to tree roots including an area for tree protection barrier to be included in the proposed works during construction.

- Foundation details will be defined during detailed design and construction stages to minimise impact on the RPA, and an Arboricultural Method Statement will be required prior to construction. The proposed ground surfacing is a permeable system, and ground protection will be implemented as per the reports during construction. This will be installed using a “no dig” method. Additionally, the equipment and fence posts will *“be supported on appropriate hand-dug, or screwpile foundations”* as outlined in the reports.
- The report concludes that it is not anticipated that there will be *“any long-term negative impacts upon the retained trees provided that the required tree protection measures are implemented.”*

○ **Policy EN18 – Flooding and Drainage**

- *Policy EN18 states it is the responsibility of those planning development to fully assess flood risk, propose measures to mitigate it and demonstrate that any residual risks can be safely managed. Flood resistance and resilience measures should not be used to justify development in inappropriate locations.*
- The pre-application identified that *“the school is located within flood zone 2 and has a medium probability of flooding from the nearby river Thames located 150 meters away.”* Following the pre-application advice, a Flood Risk Assessment has been carried out and submitted as part of this application. The FRA has concluded that there is low probability of the specific area of the site occupied by the proposed playground flooding from the adjacent river, due to the elevation of the playground area in relation to its surrounding context. The report notes that the specific part of the site where the proposal sits is at the *“lowest risk and would be considered as Flood Zone 1”*. Additionally, the report identifies that the type of proposed use is acceptable within Flood Zone 2, defined as *“Water-compatible development”*. The total footprint of the proposed structures is *“negligible and will have no impacts on existing flow routes or on floodplain storage capacity”*. The report additionally identifies that the proposed permeable ground surface will have *“no impact on surface water runoff”*.

Further **Validation Requirements** relating to policies considered as part of this application, including the **Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (Adopted 2019)**:

- **Air Quality Assessment relating to Policy EN15 – Air Quality**
  - The proposed development sits within the Reading AQMA, close to the north boundary. The proposal is for external play equipment in an existing play area bounded by trees and hedges on a quiet part of the site away from busy roads.
- **Landscape principles:**
  - No soft landscaping is proposed. Hard landscaping is detailed within the submitted plans.
- **Sustainability Statement:**
  - The proposal includes prefabricated SEND appropriate play equipment consisting of different materials. The majority of the play equipment consists of durable timber elements which will be sustainably sourced and FSC certified. The ground is proposed to be permeable wet-pour surface on MOT Type 1, designed for safe play. A review of the wet-pour material will take place during detailed design stage, in order to assess the viability of maximising the recycled content percentage of the material to prolong material lifespan while at the same time reducing the environmental impact of the proposed material.