



Design, Access and Heritage Statement

**Highdown School
Surley Row
Emmer Green
Reading
RG4 8LX**

Fire Improvement Works

**Prepared on behalf of
GLF Schools
c/o The Beacon School
Picquets Way
Banstead
SM7 1AG**

**Job No: 36612
Date: October 2026**

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Authorised for Issue: 

Craig Woodley (Oct 9, 2026 15:01:12 GMT+1)

For and on behalf of Baily Garner LLP

Oct 9, 2026

Version	Issue Date	Reason for Issue
1.0	July 2026	Accompany Listed Building Consent Application
2.0	September 2026	Updated following site visit with conservation officer
3.0	October 2026	Updated following additional requests by conservation officer

Design, Access and Heritage Statement

Highdown School – Fire Improvement Works

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Design, Access and Heritage Statement

Highdown School – Fire Improvement Works

1.0 Introduction

1.1 General

1.1.1 This Design, Access and Heritage Statement has been prepared by Baily Garner LLP on behalf of the GLF Schools. It supports the Listed Building consent application for fire safety improvement works to the Manor House (Formerly Caversham Grove), Music Classroom and Stable Block at Highdown School, Grade II Listed Buildings (entries 1157071, 115067 and 1321894 respectively).

1.1.2 The proposed works include:

- Replacement of internal fire doors to the Stable Block
- Installation of new fire alarm system to the Stable Block, Music Classroom and Manor House.

1.1.3 This statement has been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) (England) Order 2010 and its 2013 amendments. It also follows guidance from *Design and Access Statements: How to Write, Read and Use Them* (CABE, 2006).

2.0 Understanding the Context

2.1 Site Description

2.1.1 Highdown School is a secondary school and sixth form located in Emmer Green, Reading. The site comprises a mix of historic Listed Buildings and later educational structures set within landscaped grounds.

2.2 Heritage Significance

2.2.1 Manor House (Caversham Grove) The Main Building is a well-preserved example of late Victorian educational architecture. Key heritage features include:

- Red brick façade
- Timber sash windows
- Decorative stonework
- Symmetrical layout and formal entrance

3.0 Design Considerations

3.1 Description of the Proposal

3.1.1 The proposed fire safety improvement works include replacement of existing internal doors to Stable Block only, with new timber fire-rated doors. The installation of new fire alarm system to each block, with white cables to mirror colour of ceiling finishes. All existing cornices and decorative features will remain as existing and not disturbed as part of the works.

3.1.2 Fire alarm cabling will be fixed to the wall below cornices, and no fixings will be made to cornices or ornate decorations.

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Highdown School – Fire Improvement Works

3.2 Existing Use

- 3.2.1 The site remains in use as a secondary school for pupils aged 11-18. No change of use is proposed.

3.3 Layout

- 3.3.1 No changes are proposed to the existing site layout.

3.4 Scale

- 3.4.1 The proposed works do not alter the scale of the building.

3.5 Appearance

- 3.5.1 Careful consideration has been given to the visual impact of the proposed changes:
- Internal doors to the Stable Block will be replaced with a timber fire rated doorset, the existing doors are not original and do not contribute to the historical significance of the building, as seen in the appended photos, therefore these will differ in appearance to the existing, with a vision panel and oak veneer proposed.
 - Where cabling is to be present for the new fire alarm system in each of blocks, this will be encased in a white trunking to reduce contrast against the existing ceiling finishes present. We do not feel that this has a significant impact to the Stable Block or Music Room, however we note the presence of ornate cornicing to the Manor House block, in this instance, we would also like to confirm that these will remain as existing and will not be removed or altered as part of the works.
 - Where possible are we looking to obscure cabling from view above existing timber teams and behind cornices and other detailing.

4.0 Access

- 4.1.1 The proposed works do not alter existing access arrangements to or within the site. There are no changes to pedestrian or vehicular access, nor to the internal layout or circulation of the buildings.
- 4.1.2 All works are internal and will be undertaken in a manner that maintains safe access for pupils, staff, and visitors. The proposals will improve fire safety provisions without affecting the usability of the buildings or their accessibility.

5.0 Heritage Impact

- 5.1.1 Highdown School includes a number of Grade II Listed Buildings centred on the former Manor House (Caversham Grove), together with the associated Stable Block and Music Classroom.
- 5.1.2 The Manor House is of architectural and historic interest as a former country residence, later adapted for educational use. It retains key characteristics of its period, including traditional brick construction, sash windows, and internal decorative features such as cornicing.
- 5.1.3 The Stable Block contributes to the significance of the site as a historic ancillary structure, reflecting the functional arrangement of the original estate. While it retains elements of historic form, some internal features are later alterations and are of limited heritage value.

Design, Access and Heritage Statement

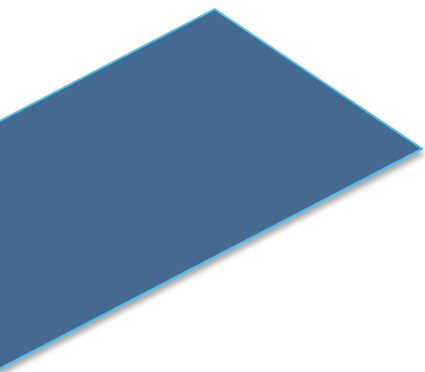
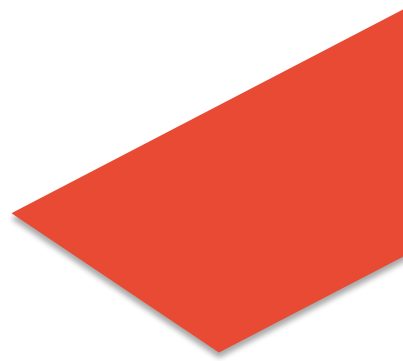
Highdown School – Fire Improvement Works

- 5.1.4 The significance of the listed buildings is also derived from their group relationship and setting within the wider school site, which allows their historic form and hierarchy to be understood.
- 5.1.5 Overall, the heritage value of the site lies in its architectural character, historic development, and continued use as an educational facility, which supports its ongoing conservation.
- 5.1.6 Within the listed areas of the building, cable routes have been carefully designed to minimise the visual impact of the proposed works and reduce intervention to historic fabric. In lieu of containment systems, cables are proposed to be fixed directly to wall and ceiling surfaces using minimal and discreet fixings positioned above and below historic architectural features. Cables will be routed within room corners and, where necessary, will pass over cornices in the least visually intrusive manner possible. Under no circumstances will fixings be installed into the cornicing or other decorative historic features.
- 5.1.7 Cables will be white to match the cornicing and ceilings throughout the Manor House to reduce the visual appearance of cabling. The cabling will be 1.5mm in diameter further reducing the visual appearance. All fixings will be to the flat wall and ceiling surfaces and will not disturb the ornate decorative features.
- 5.1.8 The proposed approach seeks to provide a sympathetic and largely reversible installation while maintaining the functionality of the fire alarm system. The proposal is for the use of white fire cabling where this would further reduce the visual impact of the installation.
- 5.1.9 Alternative measures have been investigated to conceal the cabling within walls. Whilst this would reduce the visual impact of cabling, this would require significant intrusive works into the existing heritage fabric and would not be reversible. It is considered that the initial proposal to surface mount cabling would be the least harmful option available.
- 5.1.10 Investigation was held to determine if the number of detectors could be reduced as well as if these could be located on walls which have fewer ornate decorative features. The proposed routes show the minimum number of detectors with their location determined by zonings required by regulation and compliance with the fire strategy. Therefore, the proposal demonstrates the least harmful option available.

6.0 Summary

- 6.1.1 Works proposed to the buildings are categorised as Fire Improvement Works, essential for the continued safe operation of the school, whilst bringing inline with modern standards of fire safety expected of a school building.
- 6.1.2 Internally this includes the replacement of the existing internal doors with new timber fire doors and the installation of new fire alarm system, including white 1.5mm cabling to minimise the visual appearance of any cabling.
- 6.1.3 Works have been carefully designed to ensure minimal impact on the building's historic fabric and appearance; should any queries arise, we welcome the opportunity to discuss the proposals further with the planning team.
- 6.1.4 Alternative methods have been investigated but would require more disruption to the historic fabric of the building.

APPENDIX A PHOTOGRAPHS





Existing Ceiling



Indicative cable
route.
Cable to be white
1.5mm fire cable.

Existing detector to
be replaced.



Existing Ceiling



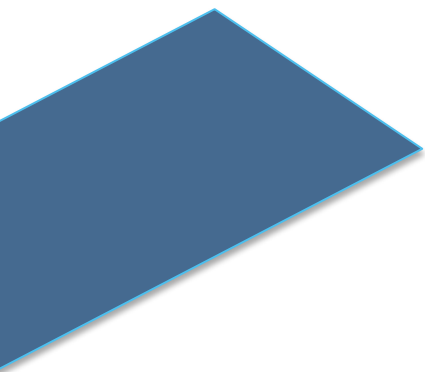
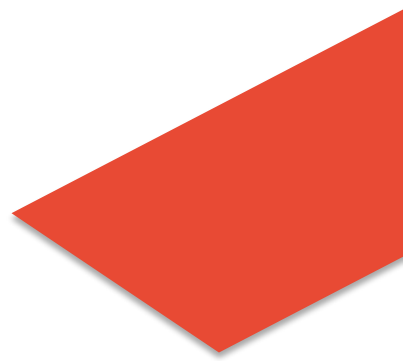
Indicative cable
route.
Cable to be white
1.5mm fire cable.

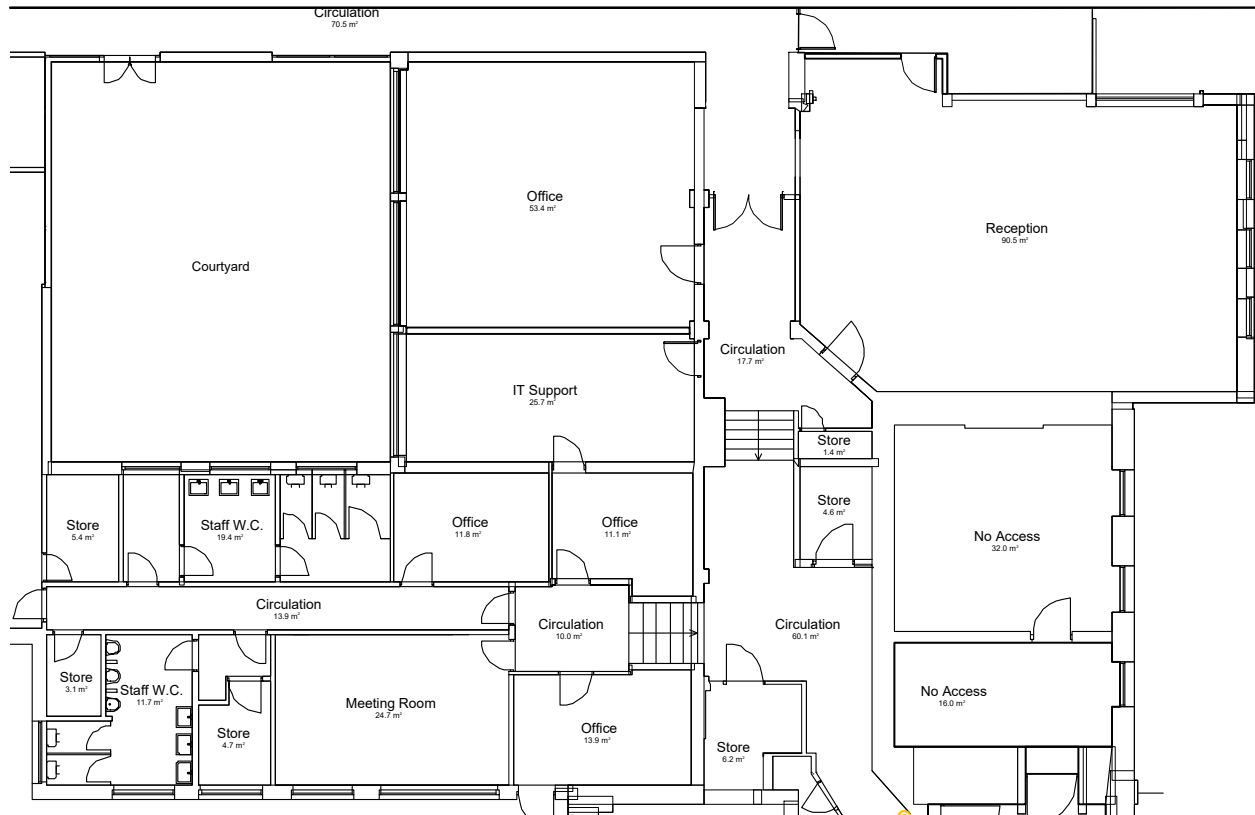
Existing detector to
be replaced.

Example detector
unit installed
elsewhere in
school.

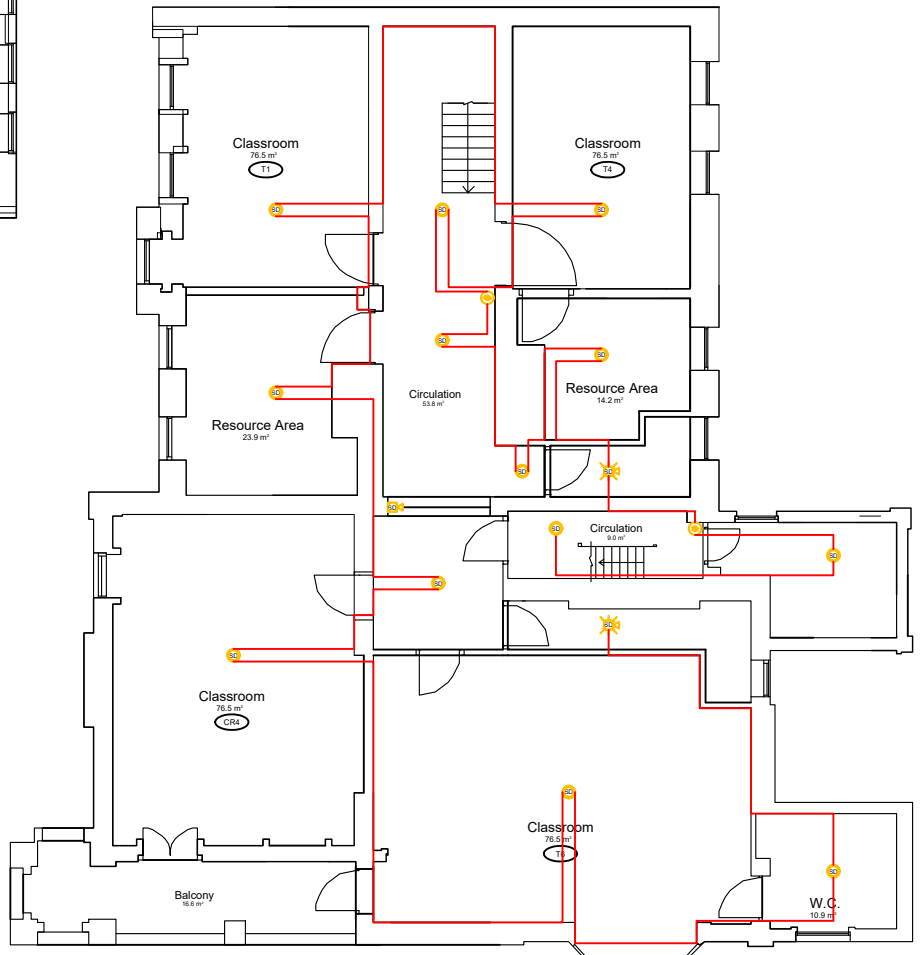


APPENDIX B DRAWINGS





Manor House (GF)



Manor House (FF)

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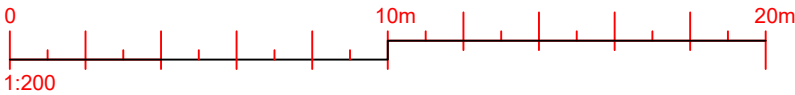
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Highdown Secondary School and Sixth Form

Manor House

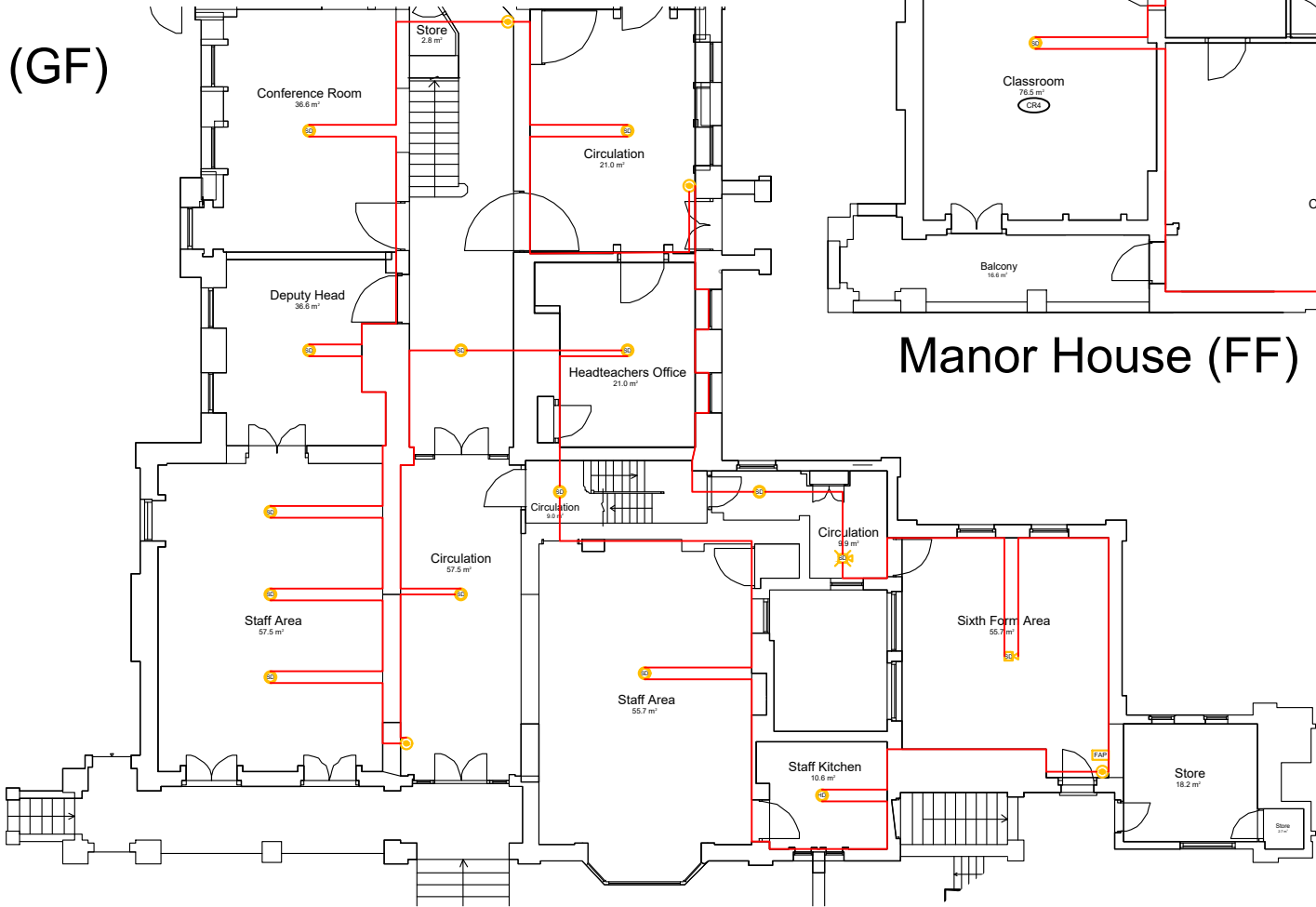


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PROJECT ADDRESS 69 Surley Row Emmer Green, Reading RG4 8LX		DRAWING TITLE Manor House					
		SUITABILITY CODE Measured Survey					
SCALE 1:200	DRAWN OT	APPROVED SF	APPROVED SF	DATE 08/2025			
PROJ NO 36192	AUTHOR BGR	VOLUME A1	LEVEL XX	DOCTYP DR	ROLE AT	DRW NO 005	REV NO M 01

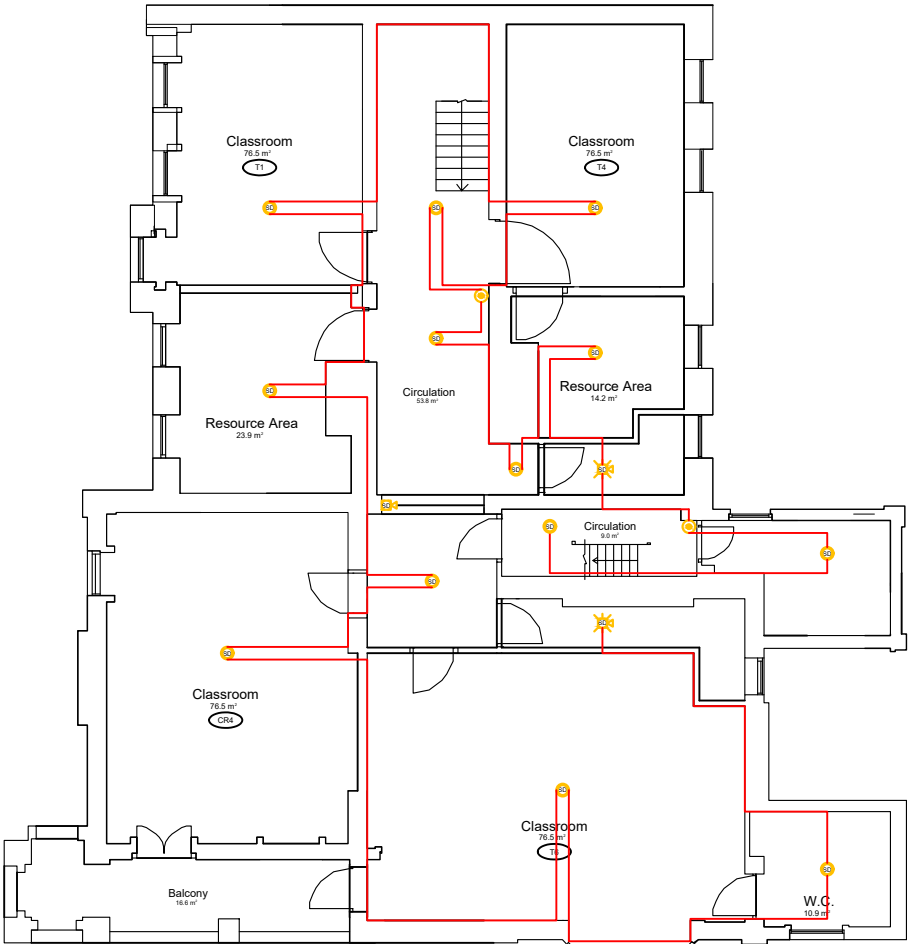


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Manor House (GF)

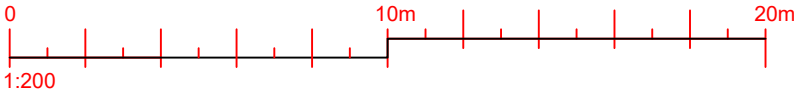


Manor House (FF)



Highdown Secondary School and Sixth Form

Manor House - Cable Routes



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Fire Systems	
	Fire Alarm Panel
	Fire Alarm Repeater Panel
	Input / Output Devices (Interface)
	Remote Indicator
	Smoke Detector D = Domestic, Mains Powered Battery
	Heat Detector D = Domestic, Mains Powered
	Carbon Monoxide Detector D = Domestic, Mains Powered
	Ceiling Void Smoke Detector
	Smoke Detector With Sounder Base & Flashing Beacon
	Heat Detector With Sounder Base & Flashing Beacon
	Carbon Monoxide Sounder D = Domestic, Mains Powered
	Combined Smoke Detector With Integral Sounder Base D = Domestic, Mains Powered
	Combined Heat Detector With Integral Sounder Base D = Domestic, Mains Powered
	Combined Carbon Monoxide Detector With Integral Sounder Base D = Domestic, Mains Powered
	Combined Smoke Detector With Integral Sounder & Strobe Light LED D = Domestic, Mains Powered
	Combined Heat Detector With Integral Sounder & Strobe Light LED D = Domestic, Mains Powered
	Fire Alarms Sounder (Electronic)
	Fire Alarms Hooter
	Fire Alarms Sounder With Strobe
	Fire Alarms Multisensor With Sounder
	Flashing Xenon Beacon
	Smoke Detector With Flashing Xenon Beacon Base. (HD For Heat)
	Fire Alarms Bell
	Magnetic Door Hold Open
	Manual Break Glass Call Point (Red)
	Beam Detector (Receiver)
	Beam Detector (Transmitter)
	Automatic Opening Vent System Panel

CLIENT NAME GLF Schools		PROJECT NAME Highdown School Fire Systems	
PROJECT ADDRESS 69 Surley Row Emmer Green, Reading RG4 8LX		DRAWING TITLE Manor House Cable Routes	
		SUITABILITY CODE Planning	
SCALE 1:200	DRAWN OT	APPROVED SF	DATE 10/20/26
PROJ NO 36612	AUTHOR BGR	VOLUME A1	LEVEL XX
		DOCTYP DR	ROLE AT
		DRAW NO 001	REV NO 01



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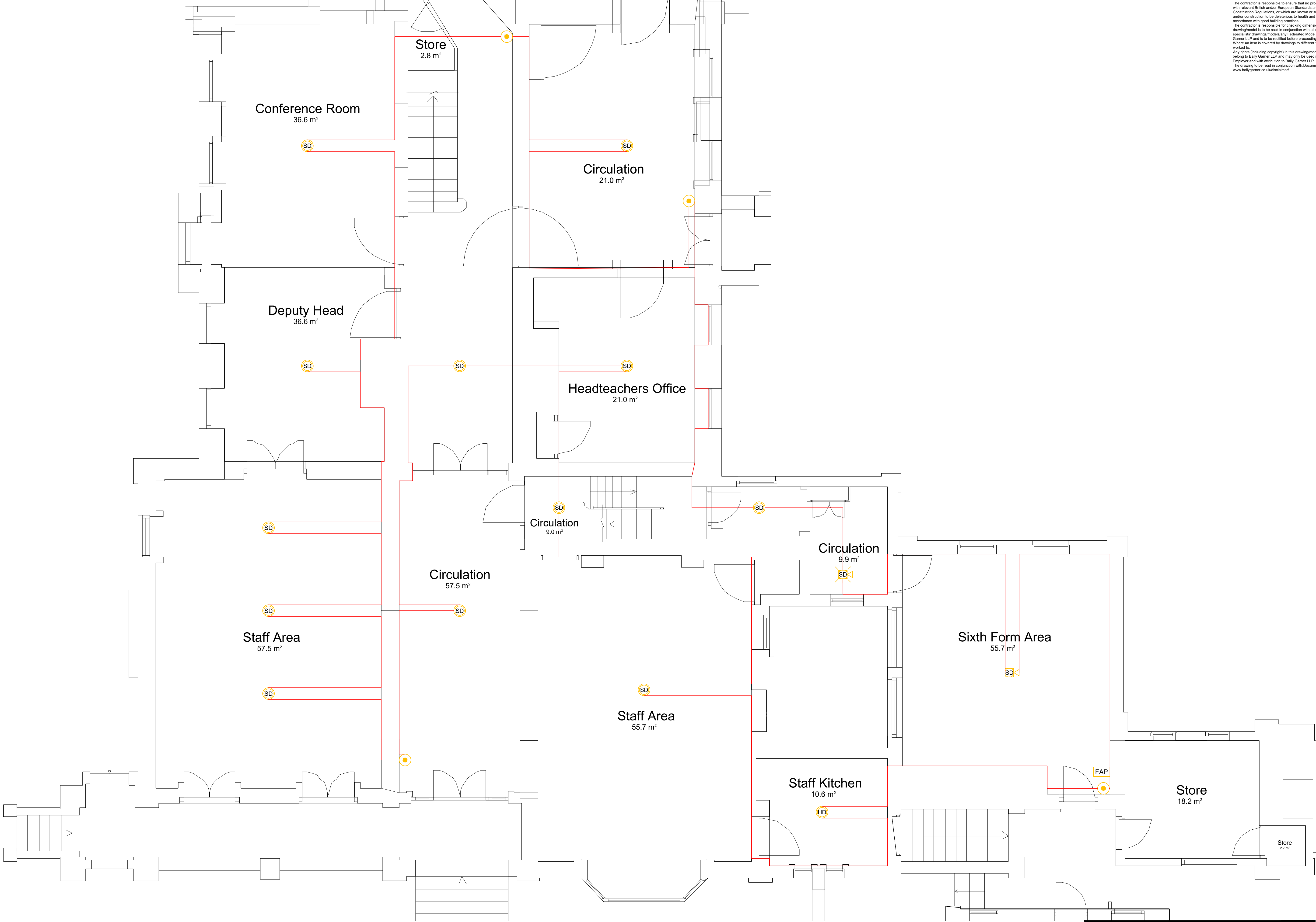
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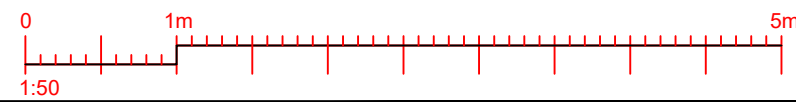
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Highdown Secondary School and Sixth Form

Ground Floor



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PROJECT ADDRESS 69 Surley Row, Emmer Green, Reading, RG4 8LX				TITLE Manor House Fire Systems Planning			
SCALE 1:50				DATE 10/2026			
PROJ NO	AUTH	VOLUME	LEVEL	DOCTYP	ROLE	DRW NO	REV/STAT
36612	BGR	A1	GF	DR	AT	002	P 01



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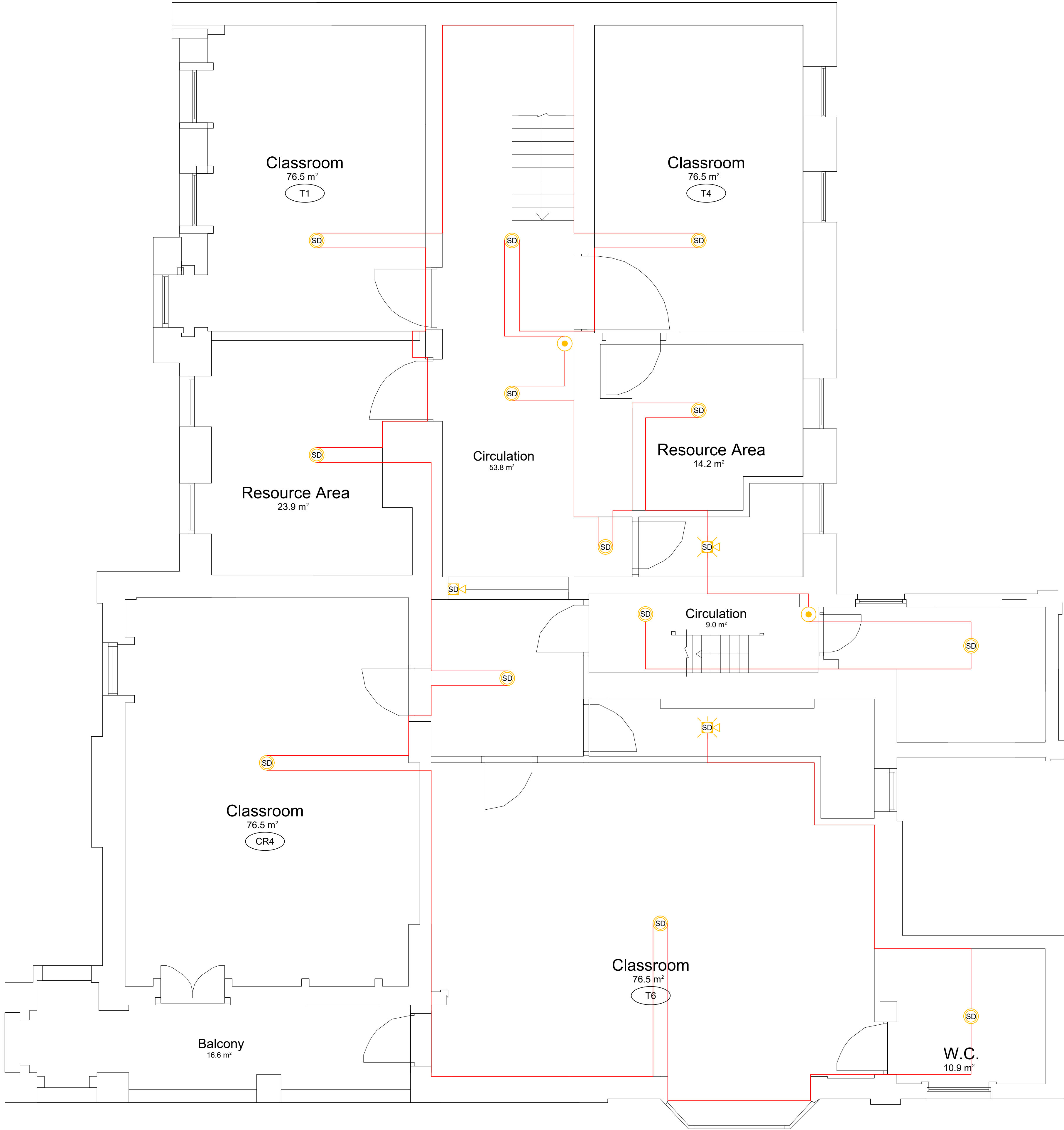
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Highdown Secondary School and Sixth Form

First Floor



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PROJECT ADDRESS 69 Surley Row, Emmer Green, Reading, RG4 8LX				TITLE Manor House Fire Systems Planning			
SCALE 1:50				DATE 10/2026			
PROJNO	AUTHOR	VOLUME	LEVEL	DOCTYP	ROLE	DRWNO	REV/STAT
36612	BGR	A1	FF	DR	AT	003	P 01



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