

# Heritage Statement



NEW CLASSROOM AND RECONFIGURATION WORKS

AT

RIVENHALL C of E PRIMARY SCHOOL  
CHURCH ROAD  
RIVENHALL  
WITHAM  
CM8 3PQ

Rivenhall is a small rural village near Witham in Essex and is approximately 1 mile from the main Roman road from Colchester to London. The school is located to the north of the village along Church Road. Rivenhall is not within a conservation area however there are a number of listed buildings in the village.

### **Rivenhall C of E Primary School House – Grade II Listed Building**

The schoolhouse was first listed in February 1973. The listing covers the two adjoining mid-19th century flint and stone buildings which sit to the west and south of the site and can be seen from Church Road. The first of the two adjoining buildings, orientating west, is a single storey school building with gothic windows and arches and gabled ends with stone copings and corbels to the north and south elevations and a slate roof. A belfry sits atop the south gabled end and below is a small tiled roof gabled extension. The west elevation has a projecting gabled porch with a gothic arch stone doorway. The north elevation contains gothic windows with stone casements and both gabled ends contain a trefoil tracery window.

The second of the listed buildings sits perpendicular to the first, orientating south. The building is two storey with a tiled roof and contains moulded stone copings and corbels to the gabled ends to the east and west. The south elevation has a gothic arch doorway and a large protruding chimney stack and dormer window.

### **Church of St Mary and All Saints – Grade I Listed Building**

To the north of the school is the Anglo-Saxon Church of St Mary and All Saints. The church was first listed in March 1950. The church was originally built in timber in the 10th century and later rebuilt in stone in late 10th century to early 11th century and the west tower and nave were rebuilt again in the early 18th century. The east end of the church, within the church curtilage and beyond, is the underlying Roman villa complex, listed as a Scheduled Monument.

### **Roman villa – Scheduled Monument**

The Roman villa site is located to the east and north of the school buildings and church. The school's playing field sits within the area of the schedule monument, as does the east of the neighbouring church. The site was first listed in October 1981. The monument comprises of at least four major Roman buildings and a variety of associated structures and features. These are all located below the surface of the ground, with the only trace of monument visible being the building platform on which the east side of the church stands.

Other listed buildings in Rivenhall include Rivenhall Farm Cottages, Gatehouse Cottages and Rivenhall Hall all of which are Grade II listed.

**Comments from Laura Johnson from Historic Environment team regarding the first proposal of the extension submitted as a pre-application in 26th of January 2021**

Dear Sir / Madam,

RE: Rivenhall Church Of England Primary School, Church Road, Rivenhall, Essex, CM8 3PQ

This pre-application consultation concerns a proposed classroom extension to the existing school, including internal modifications to the existing school building.

As discussed during the virtual meeting for this pre-application consultation, the proposed location of an extension to the building, at the front of the building and attached to the original fabric of the school, would not be considered acceptable from a built heritage perspective. The proposed extension would obscure architectural features which contribute to the significance of the building, such as the gothic windows on the gable end, and distort the appearance of the building in a negative manner. The original school buildings as described in the list description are at present distinct, prominent and legible despite the later rear additions to the building. If built, the original sections of the school would lose their prominence, diminishing the special interest of the nineteenth century sections of the building.

The site is very constrained, the school building is Grade II listed (list entry number: 1122612), and located immediately adjacent to a Grade I listed church (list entry number: 1169594) and scheduled ancient monument (ID: 1013831). For this reason, the potential to expand the school is limited and alternative options were discussed at length as part of the meeting. Due to the proximity of the scheduled ancient monument, which partially includes the school playing field, I highly recommend Historic England are consulted by the applicant, who will be able to offer guidance from an archaeological perspective. Having spoken to my colleague Teresa OConnor, who provides archaeological advice to Braintree District Council, I understand that it is highly likely a watching brief and/or trial trenching would be required for any ground works, due to the high sensitivity and archaeological value of the school's site, as well as scheduled monument consent.

Expanding the school to the rear or south would be subject to a number of factors, access, ownership and archaeological, however I strongly recommend that these avenues are explored. Any extension to the front of the existing building line (to the west) will be harmful to the building, however, a rationalisation of the existing courtyards and classrooms may provide the space required, likewise an independent classroom, to the rear of the site in the existing playground may provide a solution. There are sections of the school that at present do not enhance the listing, such as the toilet and kitchen area to the rear - a rebuild and slight enlargement of these sections could be supported subject to detail and design. The roof plan of the building is incredibly complex as the school has grown in a piecemeal fashion, therefore losing the courtyards as proposed is largely uncontentious, yet a more holistic approach could prove more sympathetic to the building. The use of the building is nevertheless, limiting, thus I appreciate that a wholesale redevelopment may be unfeasible. The creation of a masterplan for the site would be of benefit, projecting the school's needs and implementing phases of works which minimise term time interruptions; an expansion of the hall was mentioned as part of the meeting and any design for a classroom extension could incorporate this need. The height of the original school building is low, meaning any true two storey extension would be extremely challenging, yet subject to land levels, archaeological constraints etc, digging down may allow for additional building height. The hall block to the rear is one and half storeys, therefore utilising attic space in any extension, as per the school house and hall, should provide design inspiration of how to create an addition which is in keeping and does not detract from the form of the host building.

To conclude, if put forward as part of an application for listed building consent, I feel the proposals would cause a medium to high level of less than substantial harm, and the public benefit would not outweigh this harm, although this is at the discretion of the local authority. A far better solution could be achieved, minimising the harm to the building and setting of the church, and for this reason I suggest the applicant engages the local authority in a further pre-application consultation, once a revised scheme has been devised.