

Status: Public

Design and Access Statement Townley Primary School

Cambridgeshire County Council

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Document History

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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 Opening Statement

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared on behalf of Cambridgeshire County Council in support of a detailed planning application for a new KS2 classroom and internal remodelling work at Townley Primary School and Pre-School.

Site Address is:

Townley School and Pre-School

Crown Rd,

Wisbech,

PE14 9NA

1.2 Project Overview

Christchurch is a village in the Fenland District of Cambridgeshire. Situated 4 miles east of March and 10 miles north of Ely.

Interested parties have been involved throughout a detailed consultation process with the client, school staff other consultees providing feedback during the design process.

The scheme proposes to provide a new purpose-built classroom for the existing KS2 class, who will relocate from an existing classroom. This will enable the pre-school and reception class to relocate from a temporary classroom and into the vacated classroom within the main school, which will be modified to suit.

There is no proposed change to the school's pupil numbers.

1.3 Project Brief

Townley School is currently a 0.5 FE school with a capacity of 105 school places, with a 15-place nursery. The school currently caters for children between ages 2 and 11 years, covering nursery, reception stage and year groups 1 to 6.

To provide the required permanent facilities, the proposal is to build a single classroom and associated toilets to the north-east corner of the school building, as a purpose build space for Years 5 and 6, who will move into the new classroom from their existing classroom on the south side of the school.

The vacated room will be converted into the Pre-School and Reception class, including the addition of age-appropriate toilets together with a small extension to the south-west corner of the school which will provide a small kitchen, KS1 toilets and a pre-school/reception store.

Upon completion of the extension works all pupils will be accommodated in permanent facilities within the main school building. At that stage the temporary classroom to the south of the main school will be removed from site, including all associated ramps and steps. The area vacated will become an outdoor play area for the pre-school and reception class.

The proposal is to undertake some external works to increase the hard play area, to ensure the school can retain a netball court marked on the playground.

This work is required to be complete before the start of the new school year in September 2024.

1.4 Document overview

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared to suit CABE guidance, and in accordance with:

- Article 4 of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) Order 2013;
- Article 4c of the Town and County Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 as amended
- Articles 62(5) and 327A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

This Statement should be read in conjunction with the Planning Statement, completed forms, certificates and other detailed technical reports and drawings submitted in support of the application.

2.0 Design components

2.1 Site Analyses and Evaluation

2.1.1 Site location

Townley School and Preschool is located within the village of Christchurch, which is a village in the Fenland district of Cambridgeshire, with a recorded population of 833 in the 2011 census. The village is located 10 miles north of Ely and 7 miles south-east of March. The neighbouring village of Welney and the towns of March, Whittlesey and Downham Market are shown on Figure 1.

The village is effectively a 'ribbon' development with two roads running through the village, and is mainly residential with new developments slowly infilling empty plots. There are very few businesses and services in the village and no shops or amenities. The village is served by one pub, the Dun Cow, which is tied to Elgood's Brewery of Wisbech. The second pub closed and is now converted to residential accommodation.

Roads run to the north-west and south-west of the village and are both B roads. The nearest 'A' road, the A1101, runs from Welney to Upwell, which runs in a north/south direction to the east of Christchurch.

The village sits within the fenland landscape. The fenland landscape is characterised by a high-water table which has allowed for the degradation of vegetation into a rich peat. The fenland was draining in the 16c through a network of drainage ditches allowing water to reach the sea faster. This meant that as the soil moisture levels change, the ground shifts.

Christchurch village sits on the ancient Ampthill Clay Formation with ancient tidal flat deposits of clay and silt.

2.1.2 Site Context & History

Christchurch village derives its name from the ecclesiastical community. Its population has remained relatively static at about 800 souls.

The Townley School was opened in July 1932 in the present buildings. Since that time there have been many modifications to the premises to provide an up-to-date environment for the educational needs of the time. The school enjoys an extensive site with hard surface areas, a large playing field, a trim trail, swimming pool and an environmental area. In 2017 the Pre-School became part of the school as a Nursery class run with the reception children, under the direction of a teacher. The school caters for the village of Christchurch and the hamlets of Euximoor and Tipps End. There are also several children from Norfolk.

2.1.3 Project Site

Townley Primary School is located to the northern side of the village on Crown Road, which branches off the primary road. The site is surrounded by residential properties to the north-west and south-east boundaries. The south-west boundary backs onto a single domestic property and paddock. The north-east boundary fronts onto the road. The school building is set back 15m from the road on a site of approximately 460 m².

The school consists of the main school building with 3 classrooms, the main hall and Reception. There is a dining hall and kitchen linked by covered walkway which replaced the old HORSIA building. There is a hard standing to the north with disused swimming pool and a wild area to the south.

The school is orientated north-east to south-west, with the front entrance and main hall located to the north-east against the road. The dining hall is at the back. The proposed extension is located to the north of the site and will extend the front elevation and be visible from Crown Road. Therefore, the aim is to be in-keeping and complement the existing school.

The front of the school, where the reception and the hall is located, faces north-east.



Figure 1- Christchurch Village relationship to surrounding settlements. Courtesy of Google Earth



Figure 2- Christchurch Village and the school site. Courtesy of Google Earth

2.1.4 Site Ownership

The proposed extension at Townley Primary School is within the existing site extents, as a result no changes are proposed to the site boundary. The overall site is owned by Cambridgeshire County Council.

The adjacent development, now Brimstone Close, has gifted a small portion of the land to the school. This was gifted with a gravel covering and is being used as additional parking.

2.2 Site security

There is the appropriate wire mesh fence to the front of the school against the road. The north-west boundary has a mixture of domestic fencing, including inadequate post and rail fencing, to which the school has pinned plastic barrier fencing. At the south-west boundary at the end of the playing field the hedgerow has wide planting, allowing free access onto the adjacent agricultural paddock. Along the south-east boundary is a byway to a private property which doubles as access to the carpark. Along the site edge is a new development however the secure line sits inside this. There is weld mesh around the carpark and a mid-height hit and miss timber fence alongside the access road, adjacent the existing temporary classroom.

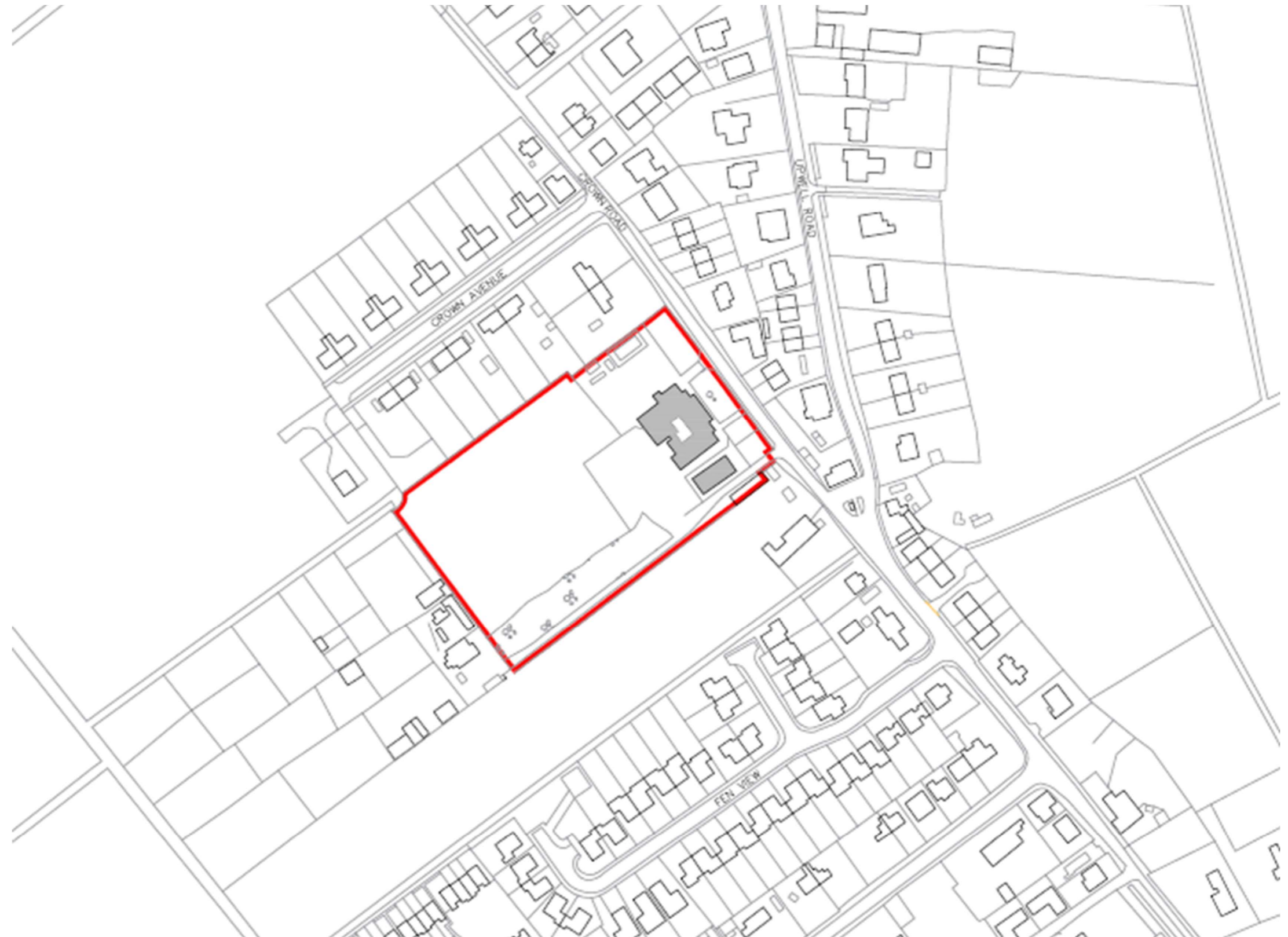


Figure 3 - Chrstrchurch Village and the school site – Red line boundary

2.2.1 Site Local Character

The village is rural, allowing for low density spread. There have been a number of post war developments in the area which have been a series of single road developments, rather than large estates. This has helped to integrate this newer housing into the structure of the village.

According to the 'History of Christchurch' website there were only four shops open in the village in 1972, a general store, combined blacksmiths and garage, cycle shop and the post office. The garage and blacksmith were closed over a decade later, the post moved into the general store and the cycle store closed. The post office was closed permanently after an armed robbery in 2008 and was replaced by a mobile post service starting in 2009. The parish church closed in 2022 due to the need for repair. The memorial hall and social centre, which was located near the church, was demolished sometime after 2013. The building was superseded by the Christchurch Community Centre built by the recreation ground and skatepark.

Townley Primary School does not fall within a conservation area, however, there are three locally registered grade two listed entries. The old post office which is adjacent to the site, the Church and the war memorial.

The village is a traditional English Village with pitched roof and a collection of façade materials. The lack of local stones and abundance of clay and peat to burn as fuel lead to buff brick, red brick and render prevailing, with plain tile and pane tile gable roofs. There is no high street or village green with local housing types consisting of a mix of bungalows, detached and semi-detached dwellings.



Figure 4 - Christchurch Village building use composition and key structures

2.2.2 Existing Wider Context



Own photographs and images courtesy of google maps.

2.2.3 Site Photographs



Own photographs taken from site visit.

2.3 Proposed Extension

The project proposes two extensions, a small infill to the west of the site to provide new facilities for the pre-school and reception provision and a larger one to the north, providing a replacement classroom with associated WC's and cloakroom areas. In addition, extensive internal alterations to the existing KS2 classroom will be undertaken to provide the required ancillary spaces required for the pre-school and reception class.

Consequently, upon completion of the proposed works there won't be a net gain of classroom however the temporary facilities will become permanent.

2.3.1 KS2 Extension

A single-storey classroom extension to the northern side of the school building is to provide the KS2 class with purpose-built accommodation. The classroom sits alongside the main hall, adjoining the existing caretaker's cupboard, WCs and hygiene room. The existing WCs will be converted into a class store and the circulation extended. The exit door will replicate the existing strategy, which has a powered assisted opening and level access. The extension is parallel to the road therefore has an elevation which is prominent to the front of the school. It was therefore important to consider its appearance and bearing on the existing school façade. As the road is on the north-eastern side there was also opportunity to employ large windows to maximise the north light. The large windows and high eaves line will allow for a high ceiling in the classroom allowing for greater light penetration and a less oppressive space.

Internally, an electric cupboard was introduced as the existing provision in the caretaker's cupboards had no space to accommodate an extension. The cloaks would be in the corridor and utilise of the existing lockers.

The unisex WCs resulted from discussions with the school, who raised challenges around perceived privacy for students and anxiety about smells and sounds, even in the gendered WCs. Following a suggestion for full height, floor to ceiling cubicles which fully enclosed the students. This then led to removing the doors to allow for better visibility into the WCs and developed into a single WC facility.

The KS2 extension is proposed to provide the following accommodation;

- A new KS2 classroom;
- New unisex WCs,
- Circulation to a new external door, with an electrical cupboard and locker alcove off.

The architectural form is simple, to reduce the number of junctions reducing the need for complex structure and promoting better air-tightness.

2.3.2 Rear Extension

The rear extension will wrap around the existing WCs to the rear of the school and infill the recess between the early years and the KS1 classrooms. The construction will be a simple cavity wall with the adjacent flat roof being extended over the new extension.

The extension provides a new boys WC which will be arranged with full height floor to ceiling cubicles which has the potential to be used as a unisex WC in the future. The other space is the kitchenette, which is accessed from the early years classroom.

A small extension to the early years room and circulation space to provide

- New kitchenette;
- Replacement boys WC facilities;

- Extension of circulation towards dining hall with new external doors.

2.3.3 Internal Alterations

There are Internal alterations to the previous ICT suite and KS2 classroom to provide an early years facility. Structural work will be required to open out the two spaces further by enlarging the partition opening. A new self-contained pupil WC will be constructed in the space to facilitate early independence.

Alongside the WCs is a changing area and combined wet area, serving the classroom. The area also includes a space for a washing machine to serve the early years classroom.

A new lining will be constructed on the party wall between the early years classroom and head teachers office to enhance privacy.

The existing boys WC will be converted to a store, infilling the existing opening and forming a new one into the early years classroom.

- Removal and replacement of the existing folding partition within an enlarged structural opening;
- New WCs and changing area
- Existing boys WC converted into a classroom store
- Existing screens and external windows and internal doors to be blocked up.

Upon completion of the extension works the temporary classroom to the south of the main school building will be removed from site, including all associated ramps and steps.

2.4 Amount of development

Two extensions are proposed as noted in 2.2 above. Internal remodelling works throughout the school are also noted in 2.2. These are shown in blue and yellow respectively in figure 5.

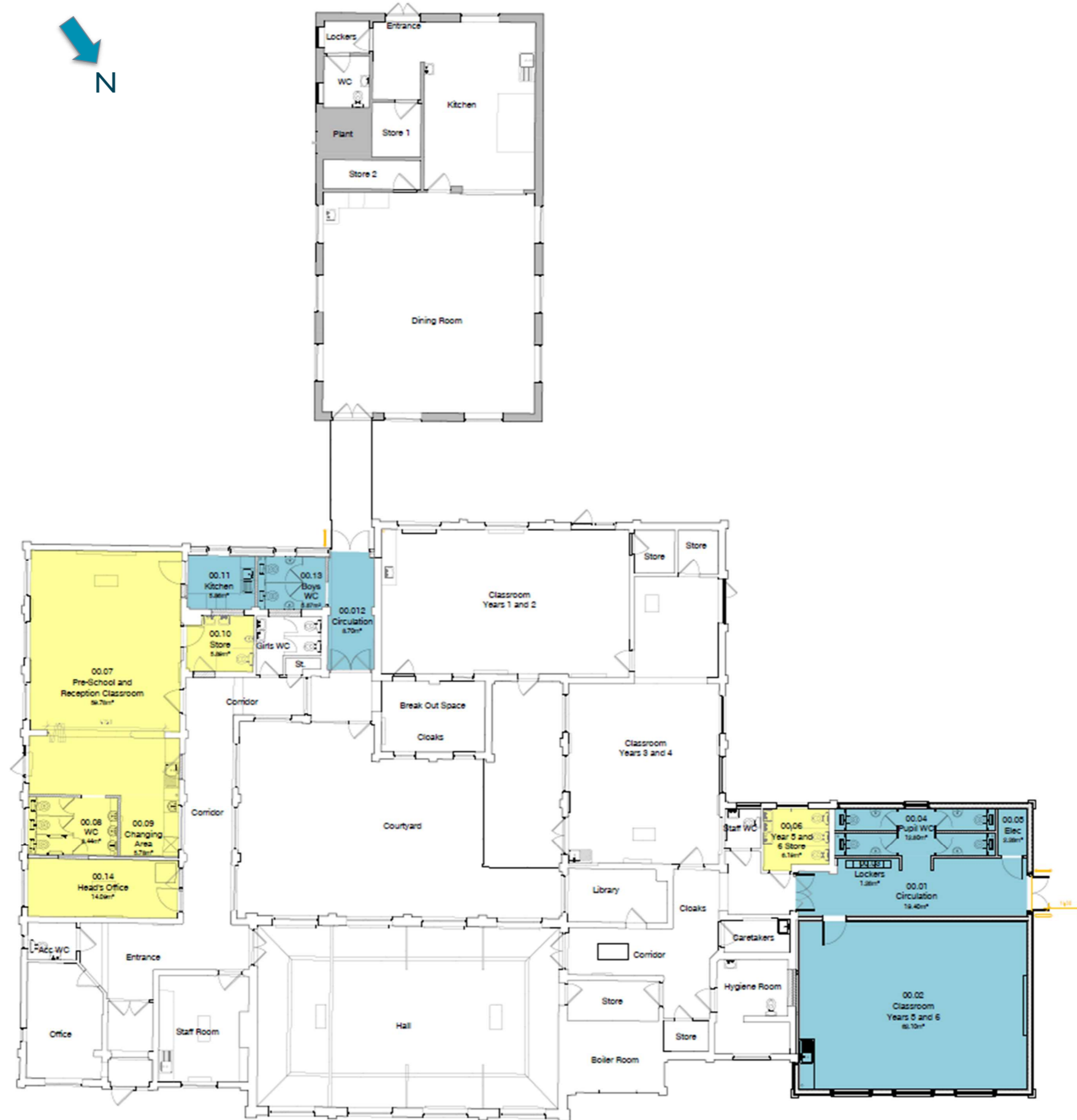


Figure 5 - Proposed Ground floor Plan

2.5 Layout

The proposed building positioning seeks to form a logical continuation to the existing arrangement, therefore an infill extension to the rear and continuation of the exit corridor to the new extension. The rear extension wraps around the existing accommodation bringing it in line with the adjacent classrooms. The new extension seeks to extend the corridor allowing for a classroom to one side and the accompanying WCs and cloakroom to the other, with the aim to not affect the general flow of the space, and will maintain connectivity to the main school building.

The extension plan form remains relatively compact and square, reducing the number of necessary junctions. It contains the north facing classroom, with windows overlooking the green boundary to the road, unisex WCs and an electrical cupboard with the circulation opening out onto the hard standing. Internal alterations will provide a store to the new classroom.

The internal modifications together with the rear extension around the previous KS2 classroom provide baby changing area, dedicated pupil WCs, kitchenette and store. The displaced boys WC makes up the other part of the rear extension and is accessed from an extension to the corridor.

The existing canopy to the dining hall will be reduced to suit the infill.

2.6 Scale

The proposed classroom extension is of single-storey construction to match the adjacent school building with corresponding ground floor levels. The largest space is the 62 m² classroom space which is taller to align through with the hall and matches the hipped roof and high eaves line.

The accompanying accommodation has a flat roof which is higher than the adjacent to allow for simpler interfacing and rainwater management.

The rear extension has a flat roof which will tie into the existing, therefore its level is to match the adjacent construction. The infill construction will be flanked on both sides by the taller classrooms.

2.7 Renewables and Sustainability

The design incorporates the following:

- Siting, design, layout and orientation to minimise impact on the existing site;
- Where required, high efficiency plant and equipment to minimise carbon emissions;
- The use of renewable and recycled products and materials;
- Waste reduction measures both in construction and in use.

Whilst official BREEAM accreditation will not be sought, the project team have undertaken to self-assess the scheme against BREEAM principles and achieve a standard of 'Very Good'.

The building fabric will achieve 'U' value ratings in excess of current building regulations standards.

2.8 Landscape & Biodiversity

There are minimal changes proposed externally comprising the relocation of storage sheds, an extension to the hard standing and a new secure line fence where the existing relocatable is to be removed.

The landscape proposal will provide new hard standing to ensure a full size netball court can still be marked.

2.9 Appearance

As noted previously, the school was originally built in 1932. There have been several extensions, including the construction and subsequent replacement of the HORSA building, providing kitchen and dining facilities. The extensions which have been added have been sympathetic to the original school character. The only exception is the stand-alone dining hall and kitchen,

which is hidden behind the school building and is a simple redbrick façade with a gable roof.

Discussion with the School sought to match the form and appearance of the extension with the existing school building. This limited material palette also reflects the wider village context as well as the current school. The external wall construction consists of red facing brick piers with render panels between. The classrooms and hall have high, hipped, plain tile roofs and tall, fenestrated glazing. The adjoining accommodation has a flat roof and follows the render panel and brick pier arrangement.

After developing and reviewing a series of 3D models, the hipped roof form fitted most comfortably with the existing, particularly as the extension is visible from the road. The roof profile takes cues from the adjacent hall, with the eaves line aligned through to the new hipped roof over the classroom. The WC area to the rear of the classroom is covered with a flat roof, to correspond to that of the existing school adjacent.

The extension to the rear will be a simple red facing brick panel. The exposed area is small enough to not make the brickwork extensive and will reflect the red brick of the dining hall opposite. The roof line will match the adjacent existing construction to assist with rainwater runoff.

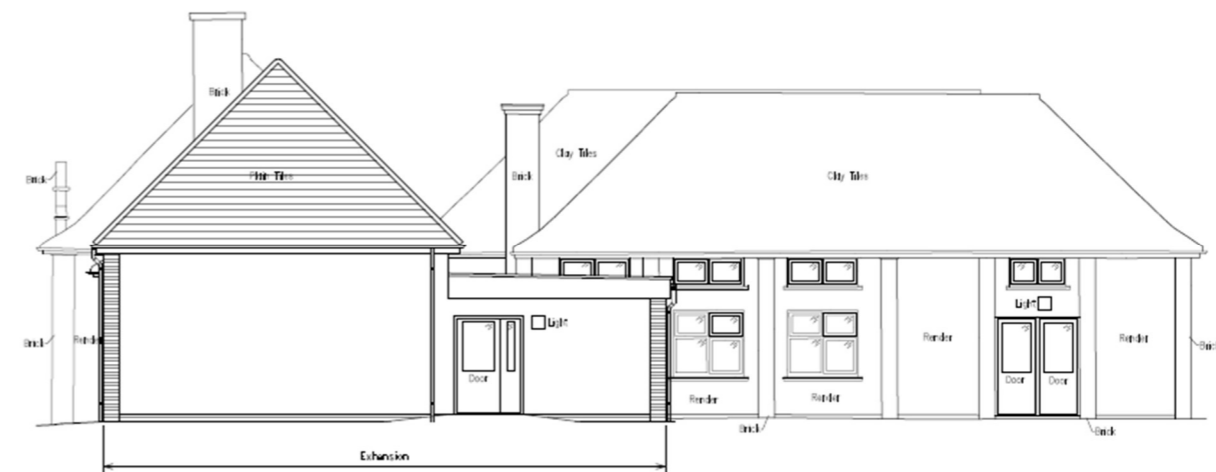


Figure 6 - Proposed elevation, view from North West

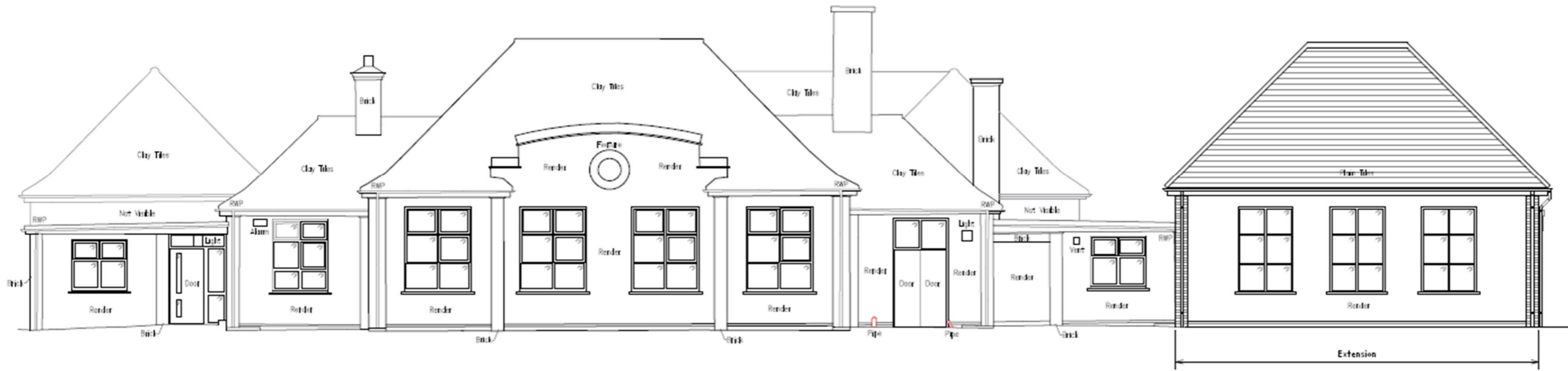


Figure 7 - Proposed elevation, view from north east

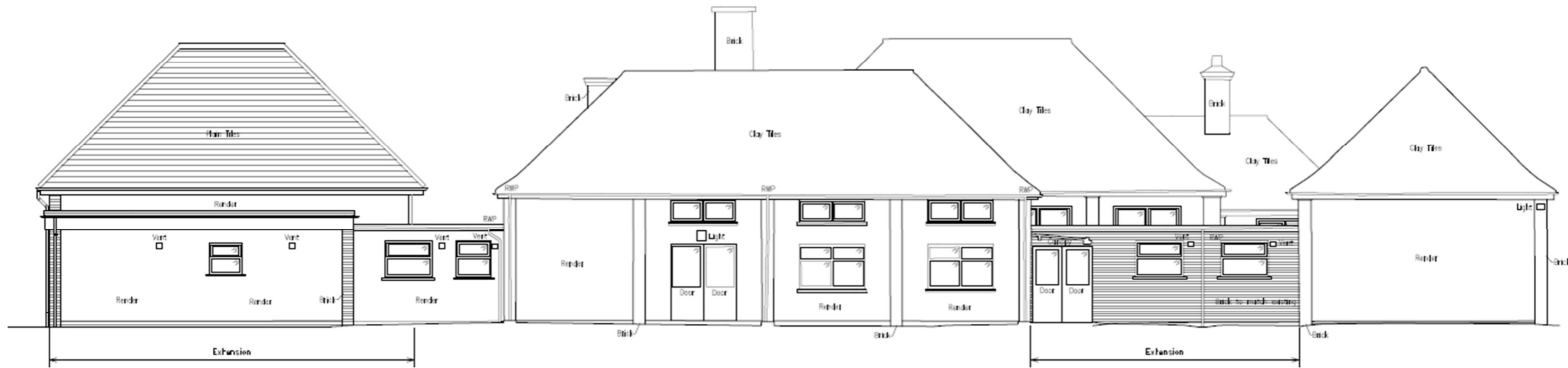


Figure 8 - Proposed elevation, view from south west

2.10 Vehicle and Transport Links

With the site located centrally to the village, it is easily accessible to those in the village. The road is narrow with a pavement only the school side, therefore parking or parent drop off reduces the road to a single carriage way. There are extensive "School Keep Clear" markings along the road outside the school. The transport consultants however found that Crown Road and Upwell road were lightly trafficked, although the school drop-off and pick-up necessitates parents parking on Crown Road and Upwell Road. The existing arrangements appear to operate effectively, with no delay to traffic on the highway network.

Vehicle entry to parking areas is to the eastern side of the site, which is closest to Upwell Road. The proposal doesn't make changes to the existing car park or vehicular access arrangement.

The parking is formal with lined markings. Additional informal parking located on the access is due to land granted by the adjacent developer. There is sufficient staff parking to allow the roadway to remain clear outside of pick up and drop off times.

The transport survey shows that 27 pupils walk, 2 cycle, 33 arrive in a single car, 26 through car share and 12 in taxis.

The field is accessed via the carpark and with another vehicle access onto the hard standing via Crown Road. The village is not accessible by public transport with no public busses. There are minibus taxis to collect children outside of the village.

2.11 Inclusive access

The works are to comply with Part M of the Building Regulations and ensure inclusive access in and around the building.

Specifically, the alteration and extension works provide the following:

- Level access approach to all principle entrances;
- Wheelchair accessible doors where appropriate;

- Doors fitted with closers of a type that require no more than the maximum permitted opening force;
- Doors containing vision panels to provide visibility from 500mm to 1500mm minimum above floor level;
- Accessible toilet facilities;
- Signage planned and designed to current 'best practice', with reference to the 'Sign Design Guide' (2000) and DRC (2004) 'Good Signs'.

Lighting, finishes and colour schemes are to follow 'best practice' with particular reference to the needs to those with visual impairment.

The proposals have been discussed with Cambridgeshire County Council's Accessibility Advisor, who reviewed the proposals and made no comments.

3.0 Local Authority Involvement

The scheme proposals have been developed in close consultation with the Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC) client team throughout the design process.

A Regulation 3 planning application will be submitted to CCC.

No pre-application advice was sought, as the project meets all the requirements for permitted development except for the maximum permitted height. The decision was made to protect the visual character of the construction with its adjacent context rather than reduce the height of the ridge, leading to the requirement for a formal application.

Cambridgeshire Fire Safety Advisor Barbara Noack reviewed the proposals and confirmed that the proposal “appeared fine”. The only query was to confirm that the existing fire alarm system was to be extended and asked to be informed once this has happened, to be able to arrange a visit.

Local Authority Building Control will be completing both the pre-construction plan check and site inspections to ensure building regulations compliance.

3.1 Consultees

Consultees were broadly supportive of the proposals and only Zurich, the building insurers, sought amendments.

Zurich Insurance requested the sole use of non-combustible insulation. This has led to the main extension being proposed as a timber frame construction with mineral wool insulation.

Consultation with the Historic Environment Team confirmed that no archaeology investigations will be required.

As there is no change to the pupil numbers, there is no increase in traffic. A transport statement was commissioned which found minor deficiencies to the pedestrian network, such as tactile paving and noted general repairs required, but in general no significant issues were identified.

Cambs Constabulary were concerned over the security at the site boundary however conceded that it wasn't included in the current project scope. They went on to provide their recommendations which have been considered during the design.

4.0 Proposed Building Summery

4.1 Use

Developing upon briefing requirements for replacement of existing facilities for the school, the use of the proposed new extension is educational. Therefore, this does not amend or add any new building uses to the site, however it does allow the school to offer optimal teaching environments.

4.2 Amount

The proposal is for a single storey space, providing an overall gross internal area of 122m² (gross external area: 133m² approximately). The amount of provision has been determined as the scheme scope is to provide permanent replacements for existing temporary facilities highlighted by an initial school viability study. These spatial requirements have subsequently been assessed and arranged to provide the school with an efficient layout to satisfy operational requirements.

4.3 Layout

The proposed building positioning seeks to form a logical continuation to the existing arrangement, therefore an infill extension to the rear and continuation of the exit corridor to the new extension. The rear extension wraps around the existing accommodation, brining it in line with the adjacent classrooms. The new extension seeks to extend the corridor, allowing for a classroom to one side and the accompanying WCs and cloakroom to the other, with the aim to not affect the general flow of the space and to maintain the connectivity to the main school building.

The extension plan form is remains relatively compact and square, reducing the number of necessary junctions. It contains the classroom, unisex WCs and an electrical cupboard. Internal alterations will provide a store to the new classroom.

The internal modifications, together with the rear extension around the previous KS2 classroom, provide a changing area, dedicated pupil WCs, kitchenette and store. The displaced boys WC makes up the other part of the rear extension and is accessed from an extension to the corridor.

The building entrance is highlighted by a canopy and opens up into the existing playground area, unifying the school site as a whole.

4.4 Scale

In both extensions, the proposed accommodation is to be located over a single storey (ground floor). The ridge height of the proposed new classroom is proposed to be 7.7m above ground level. The flat roofs are to the rear extension and KS2 extension are 2.75m and 3.16m respectively.

4.5 Landscape & Biodiversity

There are minimal proposals. The relocation of groundskeepers' sheds, extension to the hard standing and new secure line fence where the existing relocatable has been removed.

The landscape proposal will provide new hard standing to ensure a full size netball court can still be marked.

4.6 Appearance

The simple form of the proposed single storey element enables the block to be visually defined by dividing the elevational treatment into its two main elements: the hipped roof classroom and the flat roof ancillary spaces. This provides the opportunity for different material arrangements to further highlight the height of the block, as well as fenestrations.

As detailed in Section 4.7, a limited palette of high-quality materials is proposed for the new construction at Townley

Primary School. The high-quality materials are low maintenance, robust and respond to the local vernacular and sensitive environment providing the school with an easily maintainable building for years to come.

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