

School House
New Entrance Foyer
Design & Access Statement
For: The Board of Governors, Shrewsbury School

Revision *: December 2023



ArrolArchitects
Architects | Surveyors | Planning & Conservation Consultants

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Introduction

School House is a Grade II Listed Building (Official listing included in Appendix A) and is situated adjacent to the Main School Building on the north-east corner of the Site. It was one of the first purpose made boarding houses constructed after the move from the town centre in 1882. It is an impressive building arranged over 3/4 storeys with an attic range and basement on the north side, in a Victorian “Queen Anne” style to the designs of Sir Arthur Blomfield, who also designed the embellishments to the Main School Building and the Chapel adjacent; there are several 20thC additions, mainly to the rear of the building. Around the same time three other boarding houses were constructed, Riggs Hall, Churchill Hall and Mosers Hall to the designs of William White.

School House occupies a prominent position, although it is the side (west elevation and west wing) that are immediately apparent when viewed from the School grounds. Its orientation has the same characteristic as Mosers, Riggs and Churchills Hall in that the main principal elevation, containing the House Masters quarters, does not face onto the site –presumably for reasons of privacy. This means that the main access for pupils into these houses is through a secondary elevation.

In order to give an identify to the primary entrance to pupils (and visitors alike), this has been addressed at Mosers and Churchills by simply adding a timber frame porch. With Riggs, the new extension has created a symmetrical frontage facing Alington Hall with a clearly identifiable central entrance.

With School House the pupil and visitor entrance is located in a modern extension to the one side of the much altered extension to the west wing of the main building and is tucked away around a corner and not easily located.

The Brief

The brief for the project is to provide an entrance from the Site, for pupils and visitors, that is clearly visible and identifiable, while at the same time providing a foyer to create a less confused and constricted access to the accommodation and a small gathering space that could also be used for exhibitions, the display of art works etc.

Feasibility Study and Pre-application Advice

A feasibility study was carried out in 2023 in order to review the options for the location for the new Entrance Foyer, one being between the front and central range and the west wing adjacent to the stairwell and the bay window to the Main Hall, the other being located next to the later extension to the west wing facing the Chapel adjacent to the main school building. Various options were identified within these two locations.

The School and Governors preferred the rotunda in option one and this was submitted for pre-application advice. The advice from both Conservation and Planning Officers was positive and the application and the advice received is contained within Appendix B.

The Design

Option 1

Siting of the new entrance in this position has many advantages as follows:

1. A generous amount of space in order to create a decent size foyer.
2. Potential space for exhibitions and display.
3. Opportunity to increase the size of the Assembly Hall.
4. Potential to link into both the Main Hall and the circulation zone in the west wing.
5. Clearly visible when approaching down Central and also when approaching from the west.

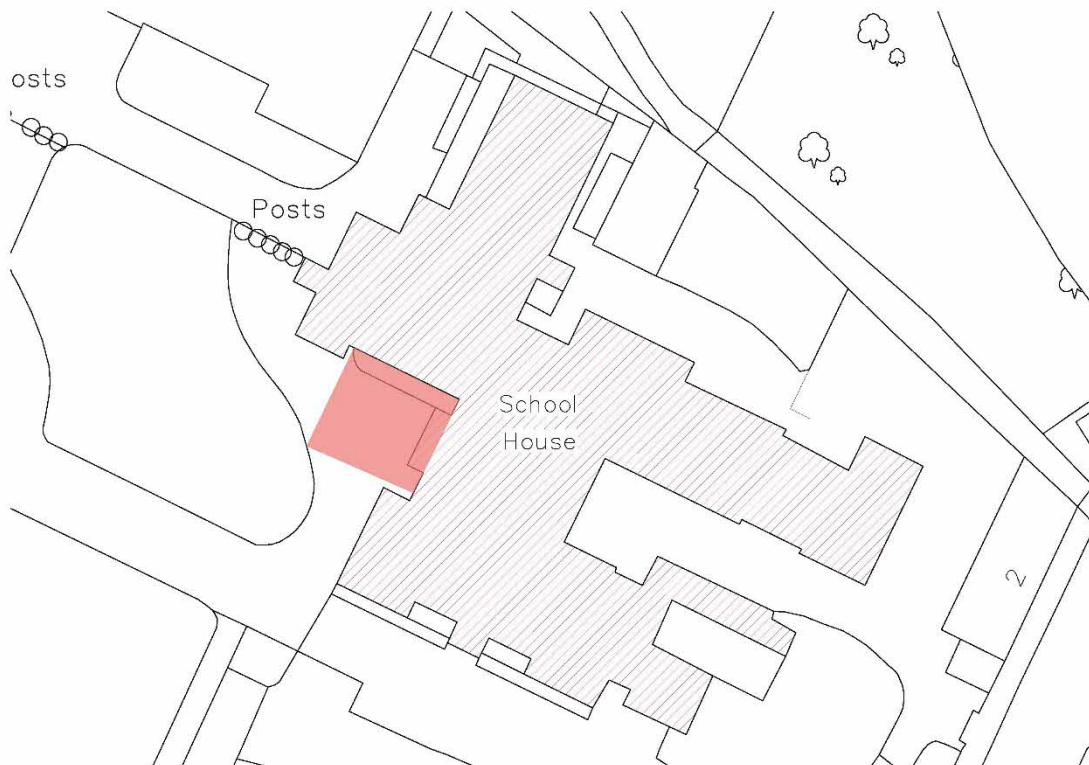


Fig 1. Location of Option One

Principles behind the design

The main principles are that the proposal sits comfortably between the west wing and the central range and does not compete with the existing architecture so that the form of the main building remains dominant. The form should read as a separate element from the main building and also be sympathetic and subservient, at the same time having its own distinct architectural language. It needs to create a focal point easily identifying it as the Main School House entrance from a distance and to comply with the requirements of the brief.

As this is the largest boarding house on the site the current assembly hall is too small and this option gives the opportunity to expand its capacity into the foyer.

The construction will be simple in its nature due to budget and programme constraints. A simple landscaping is provided within its immediate environs, establishing logical pedestrian routes. The option clearly presents itself to the 'drum' and Darwin's statue and a path will be established diagonally across the lawn. Trees in the vicinity will be retained within the landscaping scheme.

With regard to the design, we propose a cylindrical form which creates an articulated link between the two main forms of School House. The architectural form is simple but distinct and creates a strong focal point. The glazed entrance would be clearly identifiable within the façade.

Light into the interior would be provided by clerestory lights to the building perimeter and via a central circular lantern light. This would mean that the maximum amount of wall space could be provided internally for exhibitions and art displays etc.

The raised circular lantern light not only reinforces the entrance as a focal point but also emphasises the entrance from a distance creating a simple but elegant architectural form. Sections of glazing are proposed where the external walls abut the main building so that there is a minimal interface between

the two forms in order that the foyer is perceived as separate, with a very minimal connection with the historic fabric, a design principle that is well established as an interface between 'old and new'.



The elevational treatment is very simple and is purposefully conceived to be minimal and as inobtrusive as possible so as not to compete or clash with the materiality of the existing building but still remain distinct. A 'living wall' is proposed where cassettes of evergreen plants are hung on the exterior wall and various alpines such as Hebe, Ceanothus and Japonica, variegated ivy and Clematis etc. giving the appearance of an ivy clad wall. The living wall would be fed by a permanent irrigation system.



The fenestration would be very slim powder coated aluminium double glazed units, again manufactured off-site and rapidly assembled. The roof covering for the circular lantern light would be standing seam zinc which also has a short installation time and is recyclable. The remainder of the roof would be a single-ply membrane.

We propose a very simple glazed screen to separate the foyer from the main hall which can fit neatly between the engaged pilasters either side of the bay window opening (see photo's 1 & 2).

This will allow two spaces to be opened up into one for functions and assemblies.



Photo 1



Photo 2

It is proposed to have underfloor heating in the foyer.

We believe that this design provides a strong simple architectural solution which is subservient to the main building and encourages biodiversity.

Heritage Impact Statement

The proposal is essentially separate, distinct and subservient to the main house whilst providing a positive contribution to the setting of the historic asset. Connections to the main building are of a very 'light touch' by way of glazed structures.

There is some loss of historic fabric as the bay window of the main hall will need to be dismantled to provide access to the main building (see photo 3). It is judged that this is a later addition to the original build (the 'terracotta' elements are in fact concrete) and the detailing, particularly of the roof cornice is particularly clumsy in comparison to the delicacy of the Queen Anne revival of the main building.



Photo 3.

Part of the proposals is to remove the unsightly metal fire escape from the basement adjacent (see photo 3).

The full Heritage Impact Assessment is contained within Appendix C

Ecology

As mentioned before the building is essentially a stand-alone element and it has been judged that the proposals will not impact on any potential bat roosting or hibernating opportunities.

The 'living wall' will present opportunities for biodiversity.



Disabled Access

Due to the constraints of the Listed Building disabled access is not possible to the upper floors, however the new entrance way will provide level access to the ground floor areas of the building and also a disabled accessible WC will be made available for visitors.

National and Local Planning Policy

The proposals have been developed in accordance with all National and Local Planning Policies under Section 38 (6 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004) in particular the following policies have been taken into account:

- National Planning Policy Framework –a local development framework core strategy.
- Supplementary Planning Document
- Core Strategy Policy CS8 with Policy CS6 (scale and design / heritage).

Conclusion

We believe the proposal is a strong architectural form without competing with the architecture of School House and also provides dual access to the accommodation and the Assembly Hall for pupils, staff and visitors alike. School House is the largest boarding house on site, a new foyer in this area provides a much needed space in order to expand the size of the Assembly Hall and also be able to hold exhibitions etc.