

Princes Mead School



Proposed Nursery Expansion: Landscape and Visual Appraisal March 2024

Site location

The school are proposing to extend the Coach House to provide additional internal space for the existing Nursery facility and reconfigure external space. This report has been produced by terra firma to provide a short and proportionate landscape and visual appraisal to accompany the planning application.

The Coach House is situated to the northeast of the school buildings. It faces to the south onto a courtyard area between it and the extension to the main building, completed in 2020.



Looking north-west from roof of the main building towards the Coach House



Looking west across courtyard; Coach House to the right



Line of box headed hornbeam trees demarking the position of the former East wing



Looking north-east along the main driveway towards the Coach House (photograph taken pre-2020 extension)



North façade of the Coach House

Landscape Character

Princes Mead School is positioned in a clearly defined area with well-defined boundaries. To the north the school estate is contained by a woodland that runs along the entirety of the school's northern boundary, with agricultural land beyond. To the east the school drive curves from the access off the B3047, through wooded areas past a few larger residential properties that share the drive access. Beyond this to the east a dense tree line runs north from the B3047 containing the wider school setting.

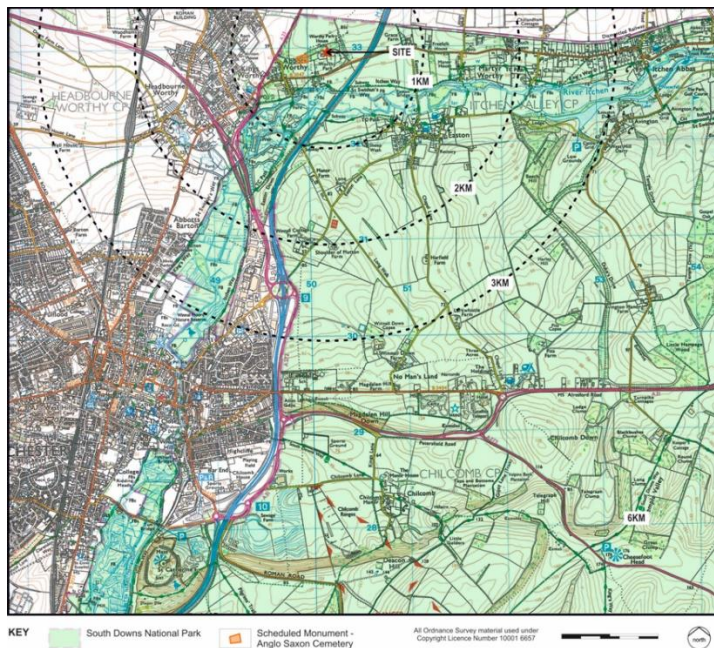
To the south the school estate is bounded by the B3047 where the estate is clearly defined by a hedge lined boundary.

The M3 lies to the south-east of the school and the village of Kings Worthy lies to the south-west of the School.



School and setting

The school estate lies with the South Downs National Park.



The school consists of a group of buildings centrally dominated by the Grade 2* listed building, with smaller ancillary building around it. The drive opens out into a gravelled forecourt with some used for parking; other parking is provided in the woodland car park.

The majority of the wider school estate lies to the south of the built form with regraded land forming grass sports pitches, tennis courts and beyond this wider parkland with mature trees. A permissive path runs across the wider field to the school, but there are no public rights of way across the school estate.

The School lies on rising ground to the north of the River Itchen valley floor, which lies at approximately 40m AOD, gradually rising towards highpoints between 83m and 104m AOD to the north of the site at a distance of between 1-2km.



Looking east across western sports pitches



Looking east from permissive path towards built form



Southern boundary of school estate from B3047



Main Building (photo taken prior to 2020 extension)

The Coach House

The Grade 2 listed building is orientated to face to the south; this arises from the former use of the area it overlooks as a stable yard. The north façade of the building has a 'rear elevation' appearance, however it is the first built form seen on arriving at the school.

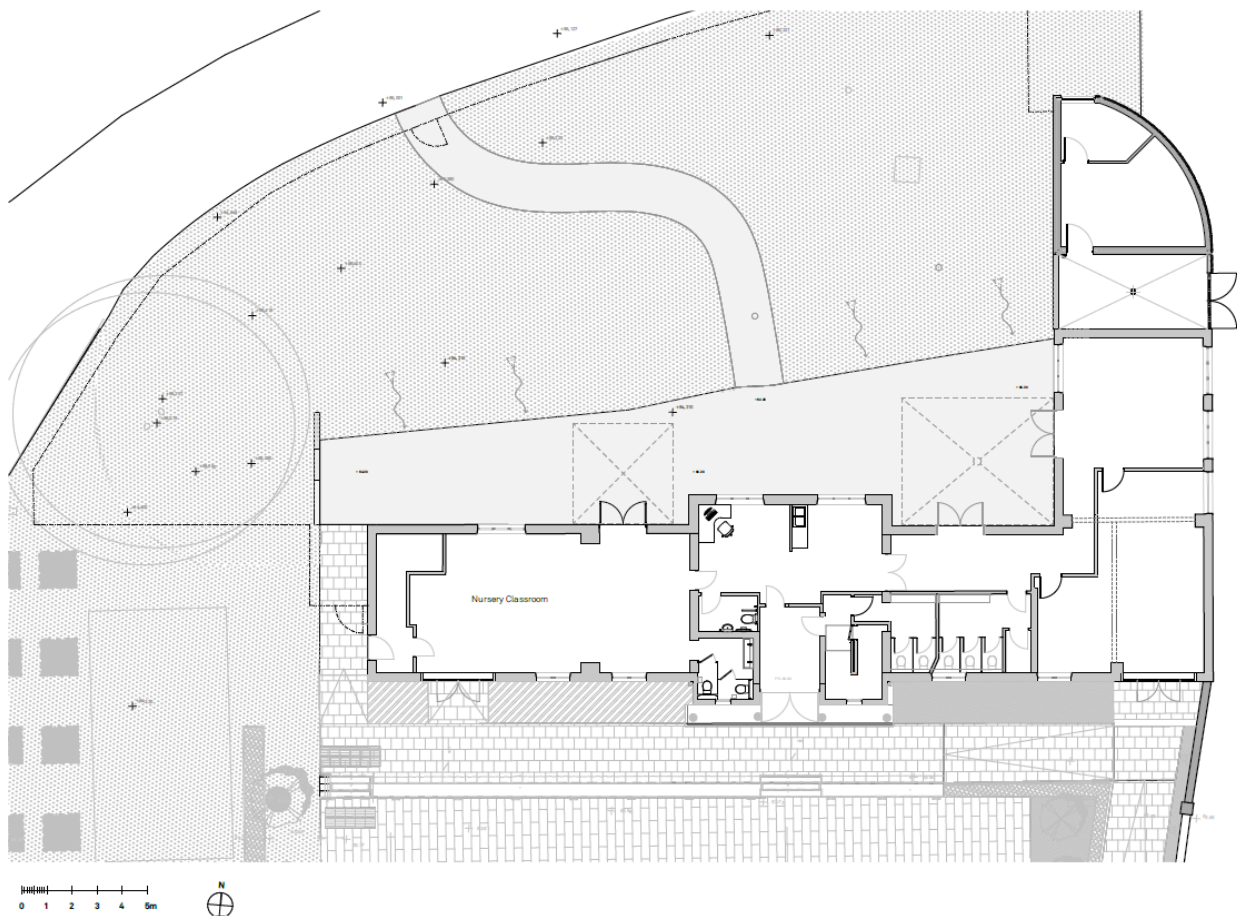


Frontage of building – southern façade



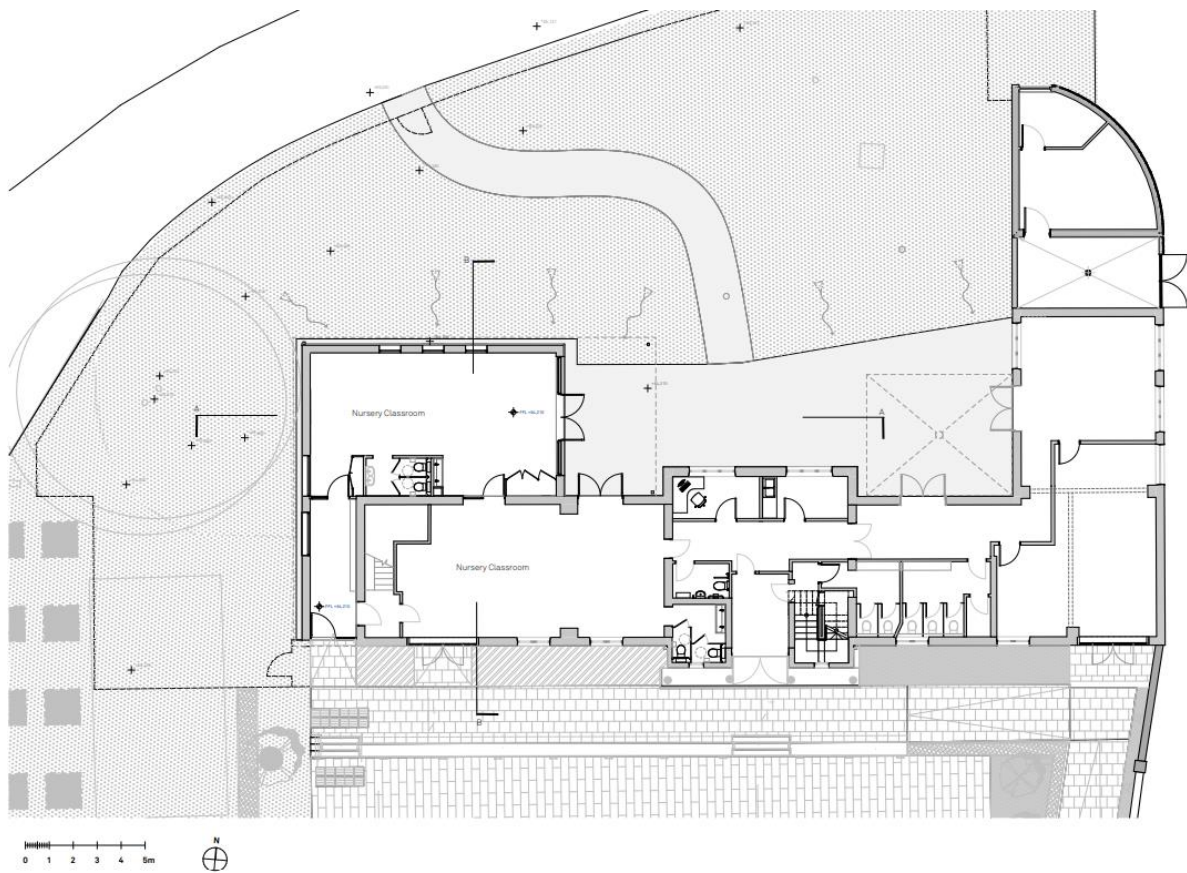
Rear elevation – northern façade

Existing site plan



Proposals

The proposals are for a small single storey extension, expanding the Coach House footprint to the northwest corner, with access through the existing building.



Landscape character

The overall character of the school estate is one of a designed and partially formal landscape with a clearly educational use and a strongly defined and mostly vegetated surrounding.

The school estate has a clearly defined zone running east – west where the built form is positioned. The southern edge of this line is aligned with the southern edge of the woodland to the west.



The nature of the proposals, a facility for educational purposes, is keeping with the nature of the context of the School site and it is not unreasonable to expect this type of development in the built form zone.

The proposals for the nursery expansion fall into this zone of built form and do not give rise to any landscape impact on the character of the wider open zone of the estate to the south, or on the character of the wider woodland area to the north.

The expansion proposals have been carefully designed to be in keeping with the existing appearance and scale of the listed Coach House. Details of the proposals are shown on the architectural drawings.

Summary of changes to landscape character

The site itself is of a high sensitivity due to location in the National Park and role as setting to listed buildings.

The expansion does not detract from the character of wider National Park setting, due to nature of the development and its position in a zone of built form already used for educational facilities.

The proposals do not detract from the character of the listed main building, with the position being separated from the building by distance and the presence of the intervening mature beech tree and line of box headed trees.

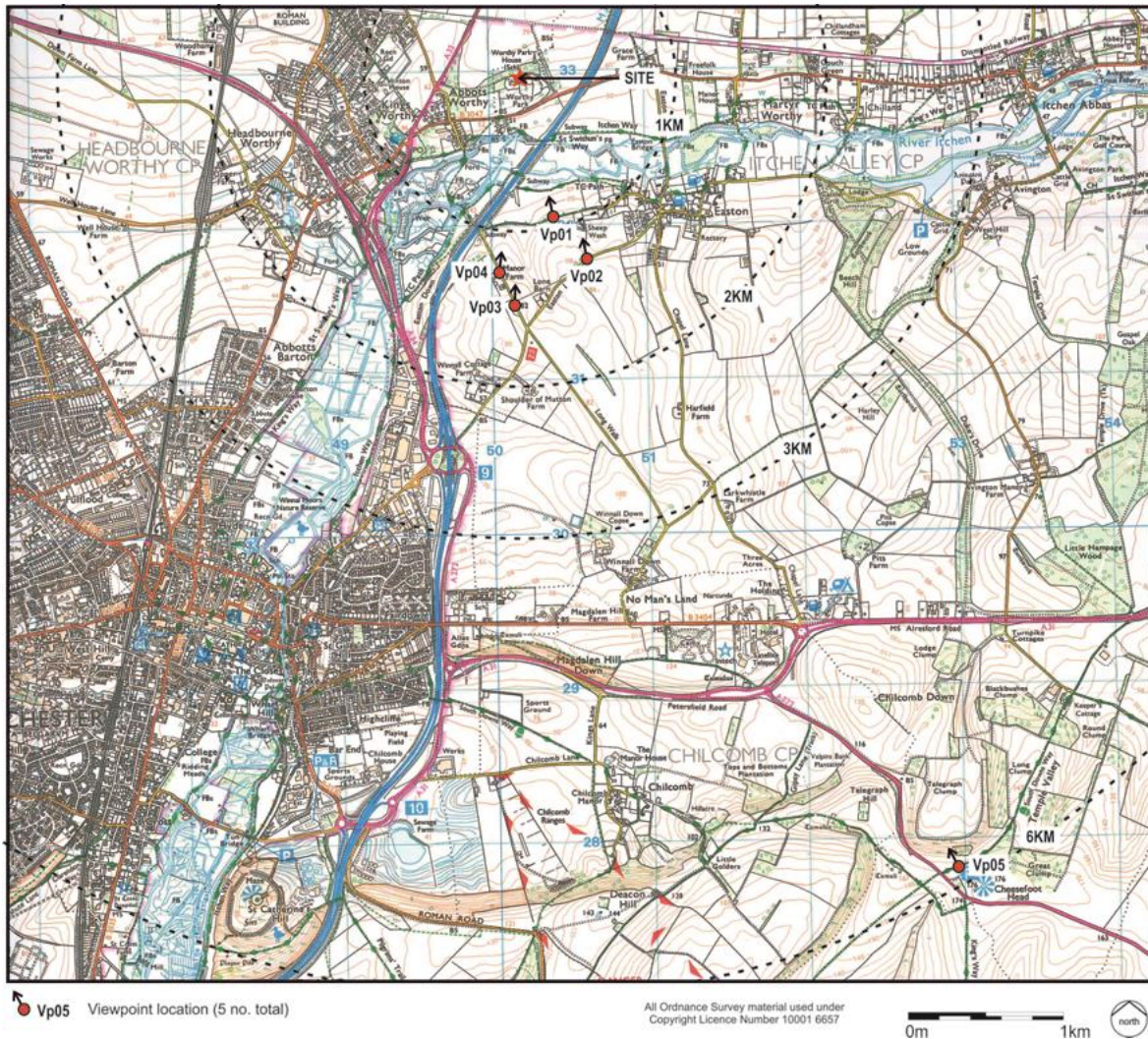
They also do not detract from the character of the Coach House having been designed to be in keeping with and enhance the rear elevation of the existing building, which also gives rise to improvements to the character of the overall school setting.

Visual amenity

The potential for public views is limited. Public rights of way in the proximity of the school include the Itchen Way, Kings Way and St Swithun's Way which all run along the river valley floor, as well as a footpath further south. There is a permissive path that runs across the wider parkland to the school from the corner of the western boundary adjacent to the B3047. The B3047, which has no footway, runs to the immediate south of the school estate and there are a few minor roads on the other side of the Itchen Valley.

In previous landscape and visual appraisal work various representative viewpoints were agreed with the planning authority and are shown on the diagram below. These include a view from the South Downs Way at Cheesefoot Head at a considerable distance from the site of 6km.

The context for the new proposals has not altered in any meaningful way and so these views are considered as being still appropriate and are considered in this report.



The expansion proposals lie on the northwest corner of the Coach House and this location is screened from public views by features within the school estate. These include the extensive woodland belts, hedge line on the school's southern boundary and the existing built form.



The following photographs show the representative viewpoints already identified (with same references), as well as views from the B3047 and the permissive path with commentary on the visibility of the proposals in each.

Viewpoint 1: looking north from lower ground on footpath running west from Easton looking across agricultural land.

No view of the proposals is anticipated.

Whilst the upper sections of the listed main building are visible, however the expansion proposals are screened from view due to intervening vegetation in the foreground, as well as vegetation and built form on the school site. It is anticipated that there will not be seasonal differences in the view due to vegetation density.



Viewpoint 1 (photo taken in 2017)

Viewpoint 2: looking north from higher ground on Easton Lane to southwest of Easton village.

No view of the proposals is anticipated.

Again, whilst the upper sections of the listed main building are visible, however the expansion proposals are screened from view due to intervening vegetation in the foreground and vegetation and built form on the school site. It is anticipated that there will not be seasonal differences in the view due to vegetation density.



Viewpoint 2 (photo taken in 2017)

Viewpoint 3: looking north from crossroads of Easton Lane and Long Walk to southwest of Easton village.

No view of the proposals is anticipated.

The listed main building and the school sports pitches are visible, however the expansion proposals are screened from view due to vegetation and built form on the school site. It is anticipated that there will not be seasonal differences in the view due to vegetation density.



Viewpoint 3 (photo taken in 2017)

Viewpoint 4: looking north from Long Walk to southwest of Easton village.

No view of the proposals is anticipated.

The listed main building and the school sports pitches are visible, however the expansion proposals are screened from view due to vegetation and built form on the school site. It is anticipated that there will not be seasonal differences in the view due to vegetation density.



Viewpoint 4 (photo taken in 2017)

Viewpoint 5: looking northwest from viewpoint at Cheesefoot Head.

No view of the proposals is anticipated.

The listed main building is just perceptible in the view, however the considerable distance prevents any discernible detail of the existing building. The expansion proposals are screened from view due to vegetation and built form on the school site. It is anticipated that there will not be seasonal differences in the view due to vegetation density.



Viewpoint 5 (photo taken in 2017)

View from permissive path: looking north-east across school estate.

No view of the proposals is anticipated.

The western school sports pitches are visible, however the expansion proposals are screened from view due to vegetation on the school site. It is anticipated that there will not be seasonal differences in the view due to vegetation density.



View from permissive path (photo taken in 2018)

View from B3047: looking through hedge line.

No view of the proposals is anticipated.

The listed main building and the school sports pitches are visible, however the expansion proposals are screened from view due to vegetation and built form on the school site. It is anticipated that there will not be seasonal differences in the view due to vegetation density.



View from B3047 through hedge line (photo 2023)

Summary of changes to visual amenity

Given the screening provided by both features on and off the school estate, the expansion proposals will not be visible and will not give rise to any changes in visual amenity from public viewpoints.