

# **Bushey Meads School**

## **Retrospective Application for 2no Modular Classroom Units**

### **Design, Access & Heritage Statement**



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## 1.0 Introduction

This Design and Access Statement provides details for the retrospective planning application for 2no modular classroom units at Bushey Meads School, Coldharbour Ln, Bushey, WD23 4PA.

The application responds to correspondence received by the applicant on 4 April 2024 from Hertsmere Borough Councils Planning Enforcement Officer citing an alleged breach of planning control where development has been undertaken without the benefit of planning permission.

The applicant recognises the opportunity offered by the Council to regularise the matter via submission of this application.

## 2.0 Assessment

### 2.1 Site Location

Bushey Meads School, part of the Bushey Meads St James Academy Trust is an academy secondary school with approximately 1250 students on roll.

The site covers approximately 7Ha and sits to the east of Bushey, surrounded by residential properties, and bordered by Coldharbour Lane and Meadow Wood School to the south, and Little Bushey Lane to the east which links to the A41 and the M1.

The primary vehicle and pedestrian access is via Coldharbour Lane, with a shared highway entrance with Meadow Wood School.

The site contains a variety of single and two-storey buildings that have evolved and been adapted since the school's establishment in the late 1950s. The last development on the site was the extension of the block nearest the main school entrance to form a SRP Unit under 22/0258/FUL.



Red outline denotes classroom locations pre-installation.

The 2no modular single storey classroom units create **353.2m<sup>2</sup> of additional gross internal floor area.**

The locations of the classroom units have been sited to utilise levelled areas to aid access to the spaces, and to assist with their installation; both sites being adjacent to the perimeter access road.

The classroom units are within the curtilage of the existing site and provide the specialist teaching spaces within a low-impact development.

**This application proposes no change to site access (vehicle or pedestrian), car parking numbers, servicing areas or boundary treatments.**



Classroom Unit M1 & M2



Classroom Unit M3 & M4

## 2.2 Site Photographs Classroom Unit M1 & M2



## 2.2 Site Photographs Classroom Unit M3 & M4



## 2.3 Planning Policy

The school site is identified as being “open space, sport and recreation facilities” under Policy LF3 of the Hertsmere Local Plan Policies Map 2022-2038. To the north and east of the site Green Belt land which extends to the M1.

The site is not within a Conservation Area and there are no Listed Buildings within the boundary, or in close proximity that would be affected by any development.

Review of the Planning Officers report for the previous approved application on the site 16/0560/FUL and 22/0258/FUL, assessed the works as being within Green Belt, but it was considered that the extent of development was acceptable under then current policies for small appropriate additions, with limited impact on visual amenity, to meet the need for additional school spaces.

We consider that these proposals meet the same criteria as that previously approved, and with recognition that the site is no longer designated as being Green Belt, the development creates less impact.



Bushey Meads School (extract from policy Map 2022-2038)

## 2.4 Planning History

Hertsmere Borough Council and Hertfordshire County Council Planning Searches lists 21no applications on the site since 1975 relating to the expansion and adaption of the buildings to accommodate increasing student numbers.

The last relevant approved application (referred to above) for the extensions and alterations to form the SRP Unit in 2022 on the site under application 22/0258/FUL.

## 3.0 The Proposal

### 3.1 Reason for Development

Refer to full statement from Bushey Meads School in section 8.0.

### 3.2 Amount/Scale

The proposed development seeks to expand the existing learning provision on the school site via the two modular units.

The gross internal area for each unit is **176.6m<sup>2</sup>** as a single storey volume, totalling **353.2m<sup>2</sup> of additional gross internal floor area.**

### 3.3 Location and Site Considerations

The individual units have been positioned on ground with no existing use for ease of access via the perimeter access road, and to avoid disruption to the school during their installation and subsequent fit-out.



### 3.4 Appearance

The modular buildings are self-finished and consist of,

- Plastisol coated insulated wall panels colour “Albatross”
- Black uPVC windows
- Dark grey solid panel aluminium doors
- Non-bituminous flat roof membrane
- “Merlin grey” fascia boards and rainwater goods
- Black Plastisol perimeter “skirt” to mask foundation pads.

### 3.5 Landscaping & Trees

No trees or hedges were removed as part of the installation.

The modular buildings are sited on concrete slab foundations to level the units to existing ground level. PCC paving slabs with metal railings have been provided to aid access into the buildings.

## **4.0 Access Statement**

### 4.1 Pedestrian Access

The proposal does not affect pedestrian routes through the site.

Entrances will provide level access into the building via ramped and stepped timber structures.



Identical material finish to both modular units.  
Colours are complimentary to the surrounding buildings.

## **4.2 Vehicular Access**

Primary access to the site from Coldharbour Lane is unaffected by the proposal.

The car park access and delivery vehicle strategy are retained and unaffected.

## **5.0 Heritage Statement**

### **5.1 Context**

The site is not located within a Conservation Area and does not contain any Listed buildings within its curtilage.

### **5.2 Proximity to Assets**

The nearest Listed Building is to the north-east known as Tylers Farm House (Grade II) approx. 370m. There is no direct line of sight to the property from the proposal areas.

## **6.0 Ecology**

The proposals were sited on an area of mown amenity grassland and former partially stoned access track.

Review of the information commissioned by the school for previous applications (Ahern Ecology, July 2014) stated within the discussion and recommendations that the site's habitats in general had low ecological value. On this basis, and with recognition that the footprint areas were "sterile" it is considered that the proposals will have minimal impact on the ecology of the site.

## **7.0 Conclusion**

It is hoped that this statement demonstrates that these modest additions to the existing site provide the much needed facilities to support specialist teaching and learning within the school, with minimal impact to the character of the site.

## **8.0 Bushey Meads School Justification Statement**

The two temporary classroom units were originally procured as part of the Specialist Resource Provision project at Bushey Meads School. To facilitate the £1.4 million SRP project on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council, aimed to serve the increasing need of students with special educational needs across the local area and indeed the county, four classrooms at the school had to decamp into the units during the extensive building works.

During the build period, the needs of the school significantly changed. The school took on a bulge class in Year 7, numbers of students with Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) many of them with severe and acute needs increased dramatically by over 30%. Challenges faced by most schools, post Covid, become more acute – notably mental health and anxiety-based school avoidance and sporadic or poor attendance and lack of engagement in learning.

Historically Bushey Meads School has always had the highest number of students with EHCPs across the county – currently 120 students with EHCPs and 300 students on the wider SEN register with an increasingly wide range of need. In recent years we have experienced an increase of over 65% in this demographic. Many of these students require complex exam considerations and separate spaces to facilitate their needs during KS3, GCSE and Post 16 examinations. The temporary classroom units which had to be purchased in some haste earlier this year will help to meet this growing and urgent need.

From September 2024 Hertfordshire County Council have asked us to take on an additional increased cohort for the specialist places in the SRP, creating a greater need for learning support facilities beyond the SRP (for those more mainstream SEN students.)

To address the challenge of low attendance rates the school has worked hard to create many varied and engaging alternative curriculum provisions including gardening projects, wildlife sustainability programmes, bike repair and maintenance workshops, recycled timber construction classes, hair and beauty and creative makeup sessions and a full range of alternative courses offered under the AQA Curriculum specifications – aimed at meeting a wide range of needs and interests for many of our more disaffected and vulnerable students. Through the extensive use of the temporary units we have seen major benefits in school with many of these students. These include improved attendance and engagement and much more positive health and wellbeing. In addition, many of the alternative projects have made significant improvements to the habitat within and around the school.

A number of Hertsmere Borough and County Councillors and Officers, including the Director of Inclusion and Skills (Hero Slinn) have visited the school to see first-hand the positive use of the two temporary classroom units and the significant impact brought about on children's lives. In addition, the students themselves, staff, Governors and Trustees, parents and carers and indeed our closest neighbours have been very supportive of the new developments and, as far as I am aware, we have not received any complaints about the new modular buildings.

**Jeremy Turner. Executive Principal Bushey Meads School. CEO Bushey St James Trust**