

DESIGN & HERITAGE STATEMENT – Rev A.

Chandler's Ford Library

Creation of First Floor Refuge Areas – Background & Proposals



**Chandler's Ford Library, Oakmount Road, Chandler's Ford, Eastleigh, SO53 2LH
P15042 – November 2025**

Contents

- 1.0 Introduction
- 2.0 History
- 3.0 Background
- 4.0 Context
- 5.0 Impact of Proposals

13.11.25	Jess Benson	
22.04.26	Jess Benson	Rev. A

Prepared by:
Corporate Estates, HCC Property Services,
The Castle, Winchester, SO23 8UD

1.0 Introduction

Chandler's Ford Library is owned by Hampshire County Council and in use as a public library, open 6 days a week.

Historic England Listing Entry for Chandler's Ford Library reads as follows:

Heritage Category: Listed Building

Grade: II

List Entry Number: 1425140

Date First Listed: 30-April-2015

List Entry Name: Chandler's Ford Library

Statutory Address: Chandler's Ford Library, Oakmount Road, Chandler's Ford, Eastleigh, SO53 2LH

Public Library, 1981-2 by County Architect. Colin Stansfield Smith, project Architect Barry Bryant, engineers Anthony Hunt and Associates, interiors by Terry Rigs, mural by Graham Crowley; opened May 1983.

Reason for Designation

Chandler's Ford Library, 1981-2 by County Architect, Colin Stansfield Smith is Listed as Grade II for the following principal reasons;

- **Architectural interest:** in the spatial qualities evident in its horseshoe plan, a brick drum at the rear and fully-glazed concave front wall, beneath an expansive tile roof supported internally on striking timber tree-like shafts.
- **Internal plan:** a colourful, airy, full-height space, defined by the shafts and a lightweight mezzanine, set forward from the rear wall.
- **Planning interest:** the focal point of the new, enlarged community at Chandlers Ford, and a catalyst for future development, the library was intentionally set back from the street frontages, inviting approach from all angles.
- **Design interest:** a showpiece of the celebrated County Council Architect's Department, led by Colin Stansfield Smith, which is known particularly for its school buildings.
- **Art work:** Four Seasons by Graham Crowley, mounted on the rear wall, commissioned by the local authority at the outset to enhance public experience of the library.

This document has been prepared to provide some background information to accompany a pre-application submission in relation to Listed Building Consent to form a new refuge area on the first floor of Chandler's Ford Library. This will allow safe access, and evacuation, to the first floor for wheelchair users ensuring that the building and facilities provided within are safely accessible to all.

2.0 History

Chandler's Ford Library was designed and built in 1981-2 by the County Architect, Colin Stansfield Smith, with project architect Barry Bryant and engineers Anthony Hunt and Associates; it opened in May 1983. It was built at a cost of £356,000. It was the showpiece of the Hampshire County Council Architect's Department, which was noted for its inventive and successful school buildings.

Built to serve the growing commuter town of Chandlers Ford, the library was set back from both the Winchester Road and Oakmount Road, placing it within the heart of the community rather than on the street frontage. The architect Ted Cullinan, reviewing the building in 1983, considered that it was very cleverly placed since 'It allows people to perceive and approach the library from both roads and to pass it on the way from one to another' (Architect's Journal, 1983, 37). He observed that it was always intended 'as the first vital part of an as yet incomplete environment' (AJ, op cit, 39); it stands at the head of a short shopping mall which was constructed subsequently. It was well received on completion, both in the architectural press and by the public, becoming eleventh busiest in the county.

The interiors were designed by Terry Riggs - bright colours, set against white painted walls, were applied to different fixtures within the building - and included a mural by the artist Graham Crowley. Cullinan perceived the building as four, ordered layers, read from the outside to the back wall, that reinforced his interpretation of it as an alcove off the main route. First came the layer of glass between inside and out, then the main space, defined by tree-like posts supporting the roof. Thirdly, the detached table [mezzanine] supports the upper quieter part of the library creating a secondary space on two levels, and finally comes the top-lit back wall which has Crowley's 'flighty, detached, harmonious, coloured plastic, abstract mural on it.' (AJ, op cit, 37).

The library was refurbished in 2012/13; the central stairs were reconfigured to accommodate a lift, the original colour coded Remploy Lundia shelving was replaced with moveable units. Benches have been re-covered in blue, replacing the original red scheme which survives in the staff area.

Sir Colin Stansfield Smith (1932-2013, knighted in 1993) led a reaction in the county architect's department against system-building and standardisation, introducing one-off steel frames and expansive roofs, and creating a large body of important work done in-house or by private architects. More consistent was the planning of the schools, many of which featured large top-lit atria. The library follows this form, while also acknowledging the common post-war plan of a mezzanine housing the books, leaving the entrance area more freely planned for exhibitions and events, or simply for comfortable chairs. Leading engineers Edmund Happold and Anthony Hunt worked on Chandler's Ford library as well as many of the Hampshire schools.

Graham Crowley (b.1950) trained at St Martin's School of Art, London and the Royal College of Art, where he continued as a visiting lecturer. He has exhibited extensively in Britain and has contributed to wide-ranging publications. At the time the library was built he was Artist in Residence at Oxford University, a year which concluded in May 1983 with a one-man exhibition, Home Comforts, at the Museum of Modern Art, Oxford. Other public commissions included Ticket on the Move, his first major public art commission, at the Pitt and Scott building, London (1981) and The Birds at the Brompton Hospital, London (1982).

The library holds an archive of photographs of the building, recording its original layout, fixtures and fittings.

3.0 Background

In 2012/2013 the central stairs of the library were reconfigured to accommodate a lift to allow wheelchair and less able users of the building, access to the mezzanine floor. Unfortunately, the lift installed is not an evacuation lift and cannot be used in the event of a fire. Likewise, the central staircase surrounding the lift is open plan and is not fire protected and therefore cannot be designated a safe evacuation route from the first floor. There is currently no safe evacuation plan for wheelchair users from the mezzanine floor and as such, wheelchair users are currently prohibited from accessing the mezzanine floor. There

are library resources housed on the first floor and to enable wheelchair users the same access and experience as other users, a safe evacuation plan from the mezzanine floor needs to be provided.

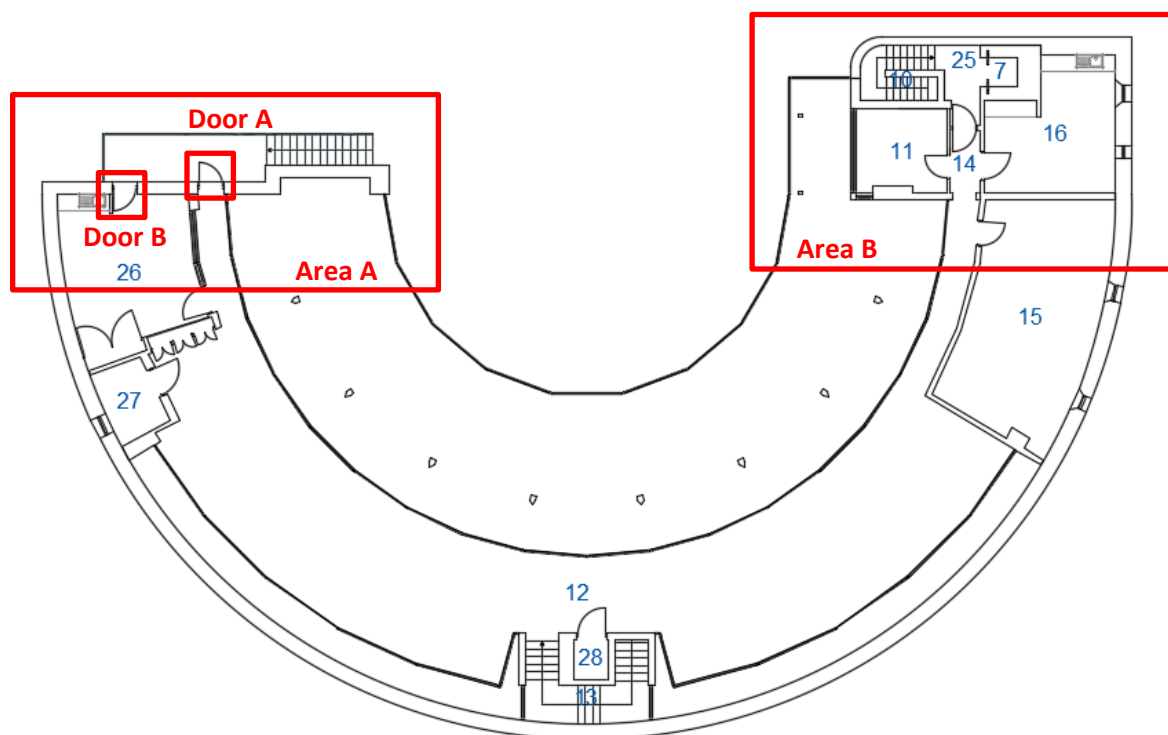


Fig 1. Existing First Floor Layout – Chandler's Ford Library

4.0 Context

Alteration to fireproof the central staircase has been discounted as a solution, due to the visual impact this would have on the library which would drastically change the current openness and aesthetics of the main library space. Due to travel distances, it is required to provide 2no. safe evacuation routes, 1no. at either end of the mezzanine floor level.

To the southwest (Area A on *Fig 1.*), there is an existing external fire escape staircase with an external landing of sufficient size to accommodate a refuge area in this location. Removal of an existing partition with gate (*Fig 5.*) on the landing and upgrades to existing external doors will be required. Both external doors existing onto the landing will be required to be upgraded to FD30s doors to ensure they offer the required fire protection in terms of integrity and insulation as they are within 1.8m of the proposed refuge area. Due to the frame dimensions available within timber fire doors, the aperture size of the vision panels within these doors will need to be adjusted to ensure the required certification can be obtained with the new fire doors. The vision panel within Door A (*Fig 1, 6 & 7.*) will need to be reduced slightly but it is proposed to maintain one large singular vision panel with clear glazing to replicate the existing as close as possible which achieving the necessary fire certification.

The door to room 26 (Door B – *Fig 1.*) currently has an openable window within the door itself (*see Fig 8, 9 & 10.*) which will need to be removed in the replacement door in order to ensure the required fire protection. This door is adjacent to Door A yet the style of the two doors is not coherent (*see Fig 11.*). It is proposed to change the vision panel within Door B to one singular large vision panel to match the adjacent door (Door A – *Fig 1.*) but with obscured glass for privacy within the meeting room.

The replacement of the external meeting room door (Door B - *see Fig. 8, 9 & 10.*) will remove the only openable window to this meeting room. As a result, mechanical ventilation will need to be incorporated into the meeting room (room 26) as there is none existing within this room, although there is mechanical ventilation within the main library space. On review of the main library ventilation system, our mechanical engineer has advised it is not recommended to connect into this system as it does not appear to be

pulling in external air but rather re-circulating heated air within the library. Therefore, the simplest solution to ventilate a small room is to add in a 150mm x 150mm mechanical extract fan through the external wall above the external door position (see. *Fig 11.*). It is proposed that the external grille would be brick coloured to blend in with the surrounding brickwork as much as possible.

We will also need to include an air intake vent into the room which is to be introduced through the internal dividing wall between the meeting room and main library area. It is proposed that this would be at high level above the glazed screening (see *Fig 2.*). The size and style of grille is to be determined but would be coloured white to blend in with the internal wall finishes.



Fig 2. Proposed air intake vent through internal wall above glazed screen.

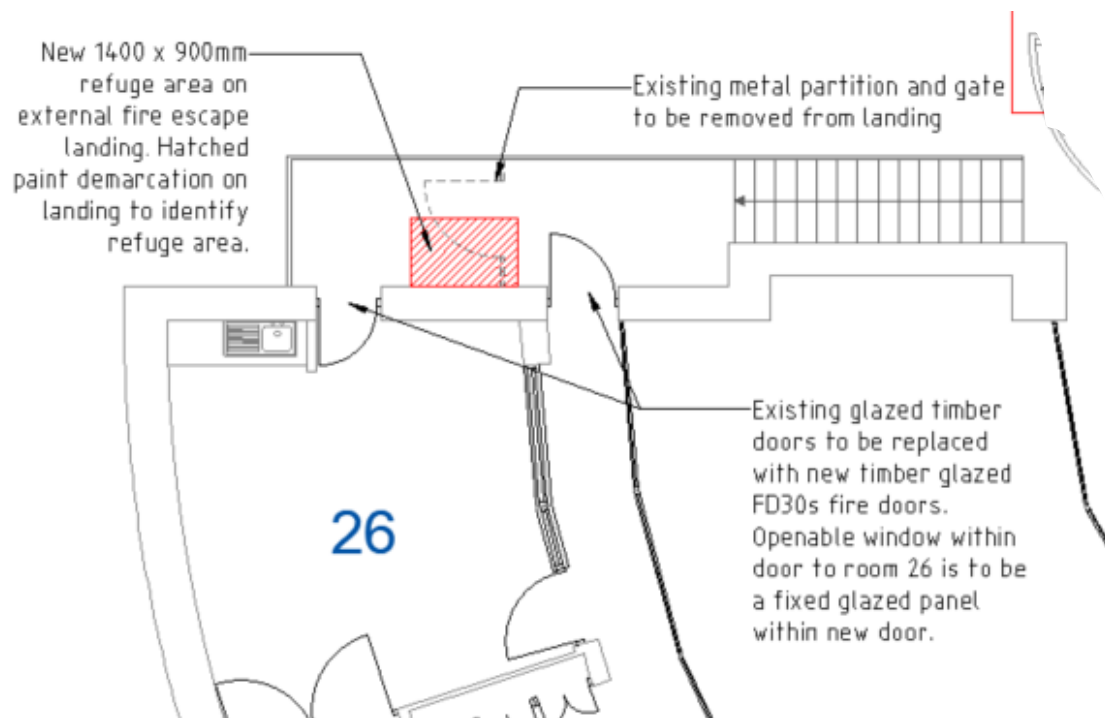


Fig 3. Proposed alterations to Area A

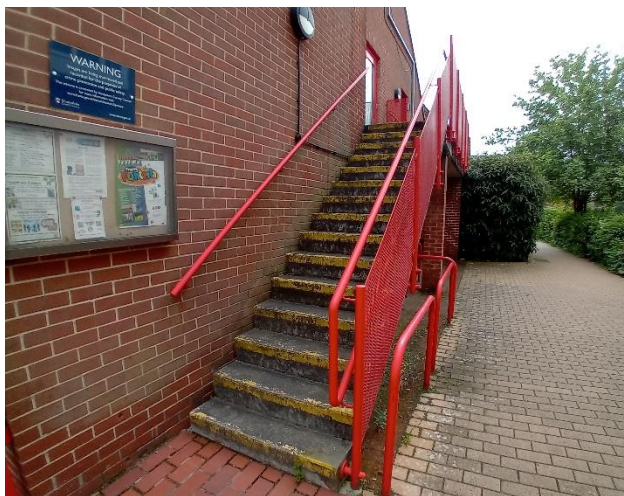


Fig 4. Existing external fire escape stairs



Fig 5. Existing landing at top of external fire escape stairs showing partition with open gate.



Fig 6. Internal view of existing fire escape door to external stairs



Fig 7. External view of existing fire escape door to external stairs.



Fig 8. Existing external door to meeting room 26, with openable window



Fig 9. Meeting room door, external

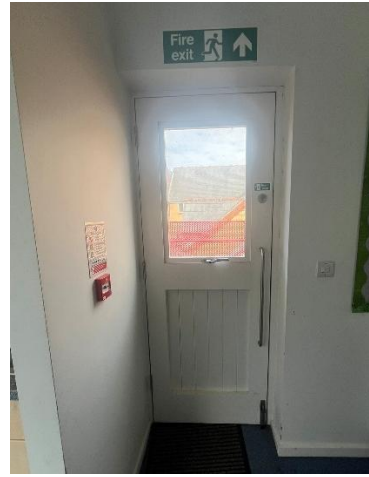


Fig 10. Meeting room door, internal



Fig 11. View of first floor external doors from ground floor level, showing proposed position of new extract grille.

To the northeast (Area B on Fig 1.), there is an internal staircase, currently used by staff only and a back of house lift. There is insufficient space within the existing first floor corridor 25 to accommodate a refuge area.

It is proposed, that with some alterations to the layout within the staff area (the staff area includes rooms 11, 14, 16, 7, 10 and 25), a refuge area can be created off the existing corridor by taking a little space from the manager's office (room 11) and relocating an existing corridor fire door as shown in Fig 12. below.

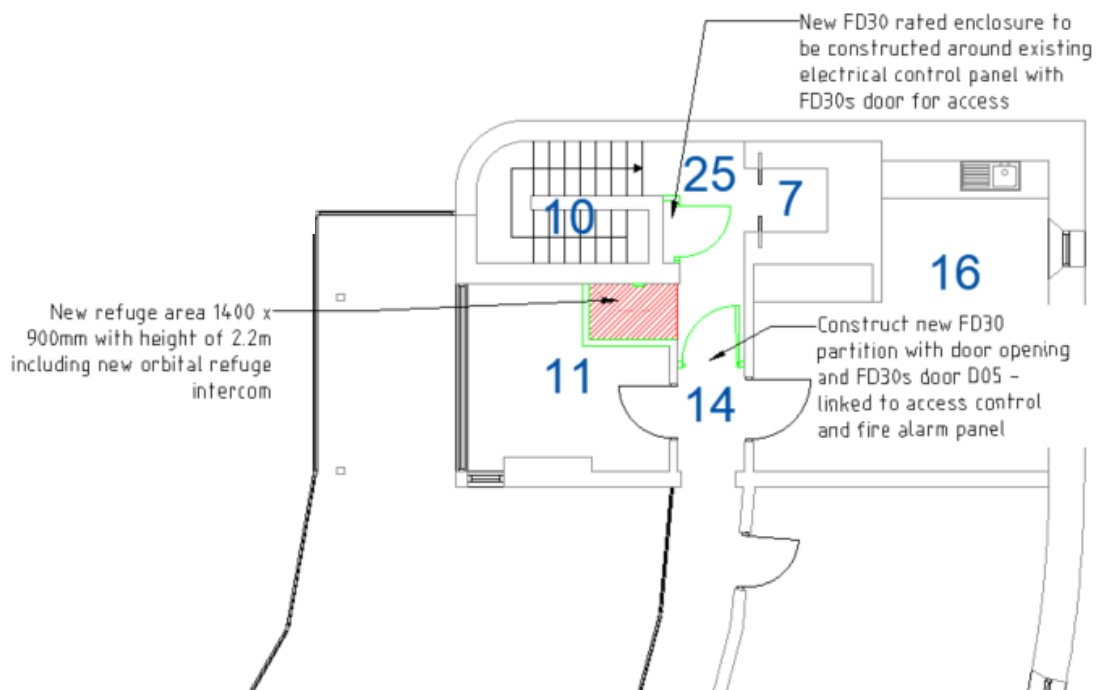


Fig 12. Proposed alterations to Area B

The proposed alterations will involve the slight relocation of an existing fire door position (see Fig. 13) between corridors 14 and 25 to enable sufficient access into a new refuge area to be formed within the manager's office (room 11). The alterations will require relocation of an existing radiator within the manager's office. The ceiling within the manager's office is vaulted and it is proposed to form a new flat ceiling over the refuge area which will reduce the impact of the changes visible through the glazing from the ground floor below (see Fig 15-17.). In addition, within the refuge a new refuge call point will be installed.



Fig 13. Existing fire door within corridor 14



Fig 14. Original control panel within designated escape route.



Fig 15, 16 & 17. View of manager's office, room 11 (where refuge will be formed) from ground floor (main library area).

A concern has also been raised with regard to the fire risk due to the location of the original control panel (see Fig 14.) within the protected escape route at the northeast side of the building. This control panel still controls the main lighting within the library and therefore, fire protection around this panel is needed.

The proposed solution for the enclosure around the electrical control panel is to construct a 30-minute fire protected stud wall with FD30s fire door for access. The finish of the new stud wall will be decorated plaster with a plain paint finished door to match the style of the other internal doors within the building.

5.0 Impact of Proposals

5.1 Impact on Historic Fabric

There will be minor impact to the historic fabric of the building, wherever possible changes to the existing fabric are being kept to a minimum and are within areas which will have the least visual impact from the main library areas / externally.

To Area B (*Fig 1.*), the external door replacements and removal of the dividing panel on the external platform will be the biggest changes. This area is not hugely visible from the ground floor externally due to the presence of the balustrade (see *Fig 11.*). In addition, replacement of these two doors will allow us to match the style of the to one another as they are currently differing styles. It is intended to replicate the singular large vision panel within Door A (*Fig 1.*) however the aperture size will have to be slightly reduced for fire door certification. The red colour of the existing doors will be colour matched for the new doors to ensure they are in keeping with the character of the building.

Externally there will also be the addition of a small ventilation grille, 150mm x 150mm in size, which is required in order to provide mechanical ventilation into meeting room 26. The external grille will be brick coloured to blend in with the external wall as much as possible, and will be located above the external meeting room door as indicated in *Fig. 11*. Internally the 150mm x 150mm extract fan will be visible above the external door, which will be coloured white to match the decoration of the wall behind, and a new air intake grille will be required above the glazing into the main library area (*Fig 2.*). The internal vents will be high level and will be coloured white to minimise the visual impact.

Within Area A (*Fig 1.*), building fabric alterations will be contained within back of house areas. Works include the construction of new internal partitions and breaking out openings into the new refuge area which will alter the original first floor plan layout. The visual impact of the changes will be most apparent from within room 11 and corridor 25, it is not expected that sight lines from the ground floor into room 11, will be such that the new refuge area will be visible from the ground floor.

Therefore, the impact on the historic fabric of these proposals is considered to be **Medium**.

5.2 Impact of Setting of Heritage Asset

This is a positive adaptation to ensure the building and facilities remain accessible to all visitors, including those with accessibility issues. It is a light touch on a relatively modern building, whilst ensuring the building remains safely accessible to all.

Therefore, the impact on the setting of the heritage asset is considered to be **Low**.

5.3 Overall Impact on Significance

The proposed adaptations to this building, constructed in 1981, are relatively minor and to seek to improve accessibility to the building and facilities within, ensuring that all members of the public have access to the same facilities. At present, wheelchair users are restricted from the mezzanine floor level which houses some of the library resources and meeting room facilities.

Overall, therefore, the impact on significance of these proposals is considered to be **Low**.

5.4 Justification and Mitigation

The Equality Act 2010 requires that public buildings are accessible to all by ensuring that people with disabilities have an equal opportunity to enter and use them as easily as anyone else. There is no evacuation lift within the building which means that escape from the first floor is via stairs only. As

wheelchair users require assistance to evacuate by means of stairs, there needs to be suitable protected spaces (refuges) in which they can await assistance without inhibiting the escape of other users of the building. Until such time that refuge spaces can be provided on the first floor, access to this area is prohibited to wheelchair users.

The current restricted access means that wheelchair users require assistance should they wish to view any of the resources held on the first floor. This does not provide independent access for wheelchair users and means they are not able to use the facilities as easily / in the same manner as other users.

In addition, wheelchair users are prevented from attending any meetings held within the first-floor meeting rooms. The library does not have any meeting rooms on the ground floor so there are no accessible meeting rooms within the building. This does not provide equality to all users.

The provision of refuge areas on the first floor will enable wheelchair users' safe access to the first-floor facilities, in the knowledge that in the unlikely event of an evacuation being required, there are sufficient and suitable means of escape from the building, ensuring everyone's safety.

The proposed solution will have minimal impact on the overall aesthetic impact of the library as the alterations will be, in the main, located within the back of house staff area and will not be visible from the main library area. The proposals will not have significant effect on any of the buildings' reasons for designation as detailed within the property Listing but will greatly enhance the visitor experience for wheelchair users whilst ensuring their safety.

Heritage Benefits

The safety features being proposed will ensure that the building can continue to be operated safely, providing a sustainable use for the enjoyment of all members of the wider community including those with accessibility issues. As a publicly accessible building / facility it is important that all users have the same opportunities to use and access the same areas and facilities of the building.

The alterations being proposed will maintain the heritage of the building and provide safe access to all public areas of the library for the enjoyment of all members of the wider community, including those with accessibility issues.