

Design and Access Statement.

External works associated with the provision of a modular classroom.

Fair Oak Infants School

Botley Rd, Fair Oak, Eastleigh SO50 7AN

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Design & Access Statement

1. Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by the Hampshire County Council Property Services Landscape Team in support of a Regulation 3 planning application at Fair Oak Infants School.

The application relates to external works associated with a modular classroom unit that will be removed, adapted to meet Specialist Base (SB) requirements, and then reinstated on site. The unit will provide a double-classroom SB unit for up to nine Autism Spectrum Condition pupils from April 2027 onwards.

Planning permission is sought specifically for:

- New minimal dig hard surfacing to the rear of the modular classroom to form a play area, with landscape and biodiversity enhancements to a strip of land adjacent to Botley Road.

2. Site Context and Existing Conditions

Fair Oak Infant School is a well-established community infant school located on Botley Road in Fair Oak, Eastleigh, serving children aged 4 to 7 years. The school occupies a substantial educational campus within the heart of the village and forms part of a wider educational setting alongside Fair Oak Junior School. The site comprises a range of teaching, administrative and outdoor learning facilities set within landscaped grounds, providing an accessible and welcoming environment for pupils, staff and visitors. The school plays an important role within the local community and is characterised by its strong educational focus, generous external play areas and integration with the surrounding residential neighbourhood.

Key characteristics include:

- An established secondary school campus with good access and circulation;
- Existing car parking in close proximity to the proposed modular location;
- Opportunities for landscape and ecological enhancements.

No designated ecological, archaeological or heritage assets are directly affected by the proposed works.

The proposed works are located on an area of ancillary modified grassland and are not considered to affect the quantity or quality of playing pitches or otherwise adversely affect their use.

Three existing trees are situated close to the site boundary with potential to be affected by the proposed works. These comprise two ash trees within the site boundary and one large oak tree, outside but in close proximity to the northeast corner of the site boundary.

A number of services run on a north-south orientation along the eastern boundary of the site and service cabinets are present above ground. It is deemed likely that historic trenching operations associated with the service provision will have affected the root spread of the adjacent oak tree.

3. The Proposal

3.1 Hard Surfacing Works

The proposal encompasses:

- A hard-surfaced play area to the rear of the modular building, comprised of rubber crumb and artificial grass.

The total area of additional hard surfacing proposed to support the provision of the play area associated with the modular building is 219m².

3.2 Tree removal

No trees will be removed as part of the proposals.

3.3 Soft works

An area of existing modified grassland adjacent to Botley Road will be enhanced with low groundcover, wildflower planting and features which increase its habitat value. Existing hedge remnants will be retained on site.

4. Design Considerations

4.1 Layout

The layout ensures safe and legible pedestrian movement within the play area itself and between the modular building and play area.

4.2 Appearance and Materials

Materials will align with Hampshire County Council school standards, including EPDM rubber crumb surfacing and artificial grass.

Additional and replacement fencing has been chosen to provide safety, security, and privacy whilst providing visual coherence with the existing school fencing.

4.3 Landscaping and Green Infrastructure

All trees and hedge remnants within the site are retained as part of the proposals.

The proposal includes the retention of and new planting to a strip of land adjacent to Botley Road. The retention of the strip provides a number of benefits:

- The strip will be enclosed with bowtop fencing akin to the existing school fencing, preserving a significant area of the Root Protection Area (RPA) of the adjacent oak tree with a low impact treatment.
- The new planting will enhance the biodiversity potential of the site with low groundcover planting and boundary reinforcement hedge planting.
- Habitat features within the fenced strip will also be provided i.e. ground nesting bee sand banks, deadwood piles and bee posts, allowing safe and controlled pupil engagement with wildlife attracted to the habitat features.
- The proposed planting acts as a buffer between the play area and Botley Road and will provide visual benefits to both pupils and passersby.
- Access to the existing service runs is preserved and future maintenance or repairs are possible without disrupting the play area surface.

5. Access Statement

5.1 Pedestrian Access

The proposals provide an accessible surface suitable for all school users, including in inclement weather. Where differences in threshold levels occur, ramps of a suitable gradient will be provided.

5.3 Inclusive Access

The scheme supports inclusive access consistent with the Equality Act 2010 and the recommendations of Building Regs Part M.

6. Environmental and Sustainability Considerations

6.1 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The application site extends to less than 0.2 hectares within the red line boundary. Consequently, the proposed development falls within the exemption from the statutory Biodiversity Net Gain requirements for developments of 0.2 hectares or below, as set out in Government guidance on exempt developments under Schedule 7A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended). No priority habitat is affected by the proposal and, accordingly, the development is exempt from the mandatory requirement to achieve a 10% Biodiversity Net Gain and the submission of a Biodiversity Gain Plan is not required.

The proposal has nevertheless been developed with due regard to biodiversity considerations and retains existing site features where practicable. The proposal also seeks to enhance the ecological value of a strip of existing modified grassland within the site.

7. Arboriculture

7.1 Site visit

A site visit and arboricultural inspection were undertaken by a Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI) to assess the existing tree stock and identify any constraints relevant to the proposed development. The inspection considered health, structural condition and landscape value of trees likely to be affected by the works, and any potential hazards. The proposed development will be designed and constructed in accordance with the recommendations of BS5837:2012 Trees in Relation to Design, Demolition and Construction – Recommendations.

The site inspection identified three trees situated close to the site boundary that may be affected by the proposed works. These comprise two ash trees (*Fraxinus excelsior*), within the site boundary and one oak tree (*Quercus robur*), outside but in close proximity to the site boundary. All trees were found to be in reasonable physiological and structural condition at the time of inspection, with no defects considered significant enough to preclude retention.

An Arboricultural Impact Assessment Plan accompanying the application shows the location of the trees identified (P15178-HCC-ZZ-DR-L-7004 AIA PLAN).

A number of buried services are present on the eastern boundary and it is deemed likely that historic trenching operations will have affected the root spread of the adjacent oak tree.

A remnant of a former beech hedgerow is present within the northern boundary of the site. A mixed native species hedge growing through the chainlink boundary fence lies outside the site on the eastern boundary adjacent to Botley Road.

The trees present on site are not subject to Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) or located within a Conservation Area.

7.2 Tree schedule

Ref	Species	Approx. Size	Condition	Stem Dia. (DBH)	BS5837 Category	Retention
T1	Ash	Medium, forked at approx. 1.4m	Reasonable condition. Moderate amenity value.	40cm	B2	Retain
T2	Ash	Small	Reasonable condition. Young tree with future landscape contribution.	20cm	C2	Retain

T3	Oak	Large mature specimen	Good to reasonable condition. Significant landscape value.	90cm	A2	Retain
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7.3 Impact assessment

T1 – Medium Ash

The proposed play area surface lies within the vicinity of T1. Protection of the (RPA) will be required throughout construction. The surfacing proposed within the RPA will utilise a no-dig construction methodology supported by a cellular confinement base to avoid root severance, localised disturbance and compaction.

The tree will be protected during future use of the play area with a fenced enclosure.

Impact Assessment: Low to Moderate.

T2 – Small Ash

Provided the tree is protected during construction activities, no significant direct impacts are anticipated. The surfacing proposed within the RPA will utilise a no-dig construction methodology to avoid root severance and soil compaction. The tree will be protected during future use of the play area with a fenced enclosure.

Impact Assessment: Negligible to Low.

T3 – Large Oak

The mature Oak located outside the north-eastern corner of the site is the highest value tree adjacent to the site and represents a significant landscape feature. There are a number of utility services running within a strip of land along the eastern boundary, past excavations for which are likely to have affected the root spread of the tree. An access path to the service boxes within the strip will be formed with no dig gravel filled matrix paving. The strip will be fenced off from the play area to afford ongoing protection to the tree RPA area and enhanced with low groundcover planting. Surfacing proposed within the RPA will utilise a no-dig construction methodology to avoid root severance and soil compaction and prioritise no excavation, level changes, storage of materials or vehicle movements within the RPA.

Impact Assessment: Low, subject to protection measures.

8. Drainage

Surface water drainage will adopt SuDS principles with permeable construction and/or local attenuation where practicable to avoid increasing runoff risk. Impermeable surfaces if required will drain to surrounding soft areas, facilitating infiltration.

9. Construction Management

Construction activities will be managed to minimise disruption to school operations, with deliveries scheduled outside peak school hours where possible, and will adopt best-practice controls for noise, dust, and separation of school functions from the construction area.

10. Conclusion

The proposed hard surfacing to the play area will support the refurbishment and continued use of the modular classroom unit, incorporating improvements to accessibility and user safety.

Although the application site falls below the statutory BNG threshold and is therefore exempt from the mandatory BNG requirements, the proposed development provides an opportunity to enhance an area of modified grassland of limited ecological value. The resulting improvements to the school environment are expected to provide both biodiversity and pupil wellbeing benefits, representing a positive enhancement to the site.

The works are of modest scale and align with Hampshire County Council's design, education and sustainability objectives.