

9491 – Design & Access Statement

Proposed two storey education building

Wolfdale School

Desford Lane

Ratby

LE6 0LE



RIBA 
Chartered Practice

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Company Biography

HSSP Architects Ltd was established in 1966 and is a professional Company which has always prided itself on its quality service and client relationship. Based in Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire we work throughout the East Midlands and UK

Issue Record

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The format and content of this statement has been based upon the guidance supplied by CABE in their publication “Design and access statements - How to write, read and use them”

0.0 Executive Summary

This request for detailed planning approval relates to the site of Woldale School, Desford Lane, Ratby.

The proposal is for a new two storey education building, which will be situated in replacement of the four mobile classrooms formerly on the site.

The building seeks to provide a high-quality, permanent base for Woldale School, who already have an established educational use on the site.

Access to the site will remain as existing.

This document and associated drawings are accompanied by the following consultants' reports:

- Tree survey, by AT2 Trees (March 2026).
- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal, by Croft Ecology (July 2026).



1.0 Introduction

1.1 Brief and aspirations

Wolfdale School approached HSSP for a design for a two-storey educational building, to replace the existing mobile classrooms on their site in Ratby.

The proposal seeks to provide a high-quality building, which will enable existing staff and students to have access to better quality teaching spaces for years to come.

The site is owned by Wolfdale School, and the proposals will not affect the operational setup of the site or existing access arrangements.

The scheme seeks to cater for the existing students and staff already using the site, but in a more appealing built environment.



View from playing field, showing external sensory garden and play equipment

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Brief and aspirations

Wolfdale School is an Independent Specialist School in Leicestershire. Their provision is for young people (aged 7-16) with an Education Care and Health Plan and those with diagnosis' including Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), Attention-Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder, Anxiety, and Social Emotional Mental Health.

Wolfdale School have an established site at Ratby and are currently operating from an existing single storey building and four mobile classrooms.

Wolfdale are seeking to upgrade this existing site accommodation through provision of a new two storey facility, to provide a higher-quality built environment for both pupils and staff, to better support students and meet their range of needs.

In February 2026 the UK Government published its SEND Reform consultation publication, which was subsequently updated in April 2026. Although the reform focuses on mainstream education, the proposals recognise that inclusion cannot be achieved through teaching and specialist services alone; the architectural environment must also be capable of responding to the differing needs of pupils.

The existing building together with the mobile classrooms are supporting a sufficient number of pupils but there is a lack of ancillary accommodation and support space to enable these students to flourish. Furthermore, the mobile classrooms on site are subject to a temporary approval, which was applied for to allow Wolfdale to determine their requirements for a permanent building.

The additional ancillary accommodation Wolfdale require is:

- Student breakout, 1:1 support and intervention rooms
- Sensory rooms
- Therapy room
- Staff room, including space for lesson planning and marking
- Reception / lobby area (to allow the two buildings to cater for different ages; much like a primary & secondary school setup)
- First aid and wet room
- Storage including for exam papers
- Parent meeting room
- Disabled toilet



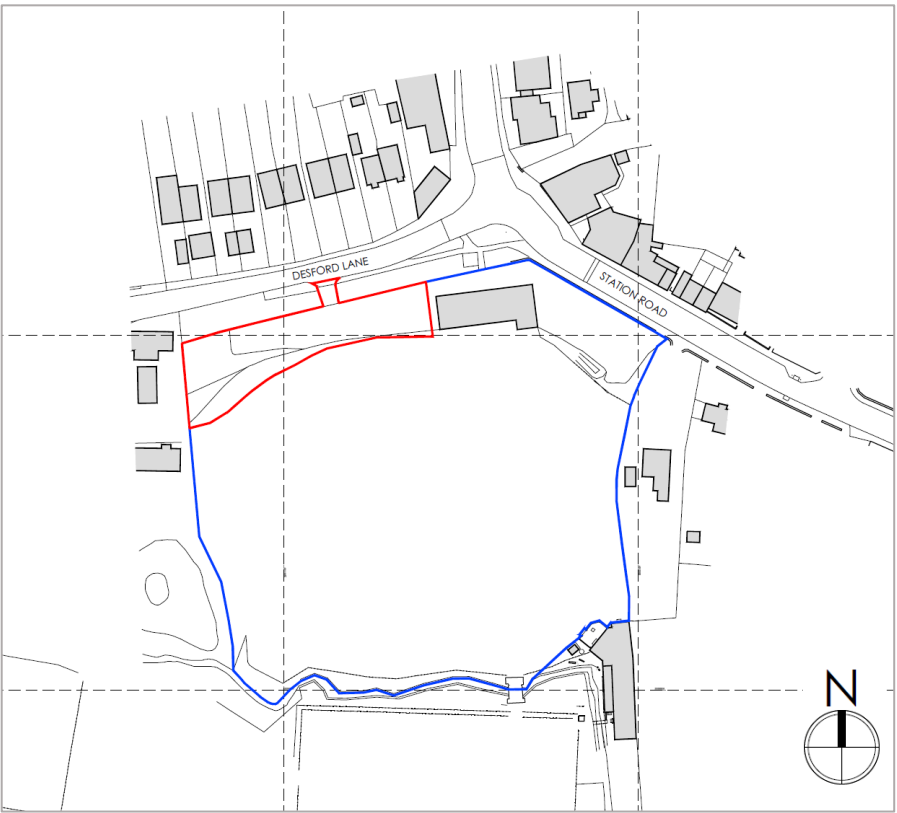
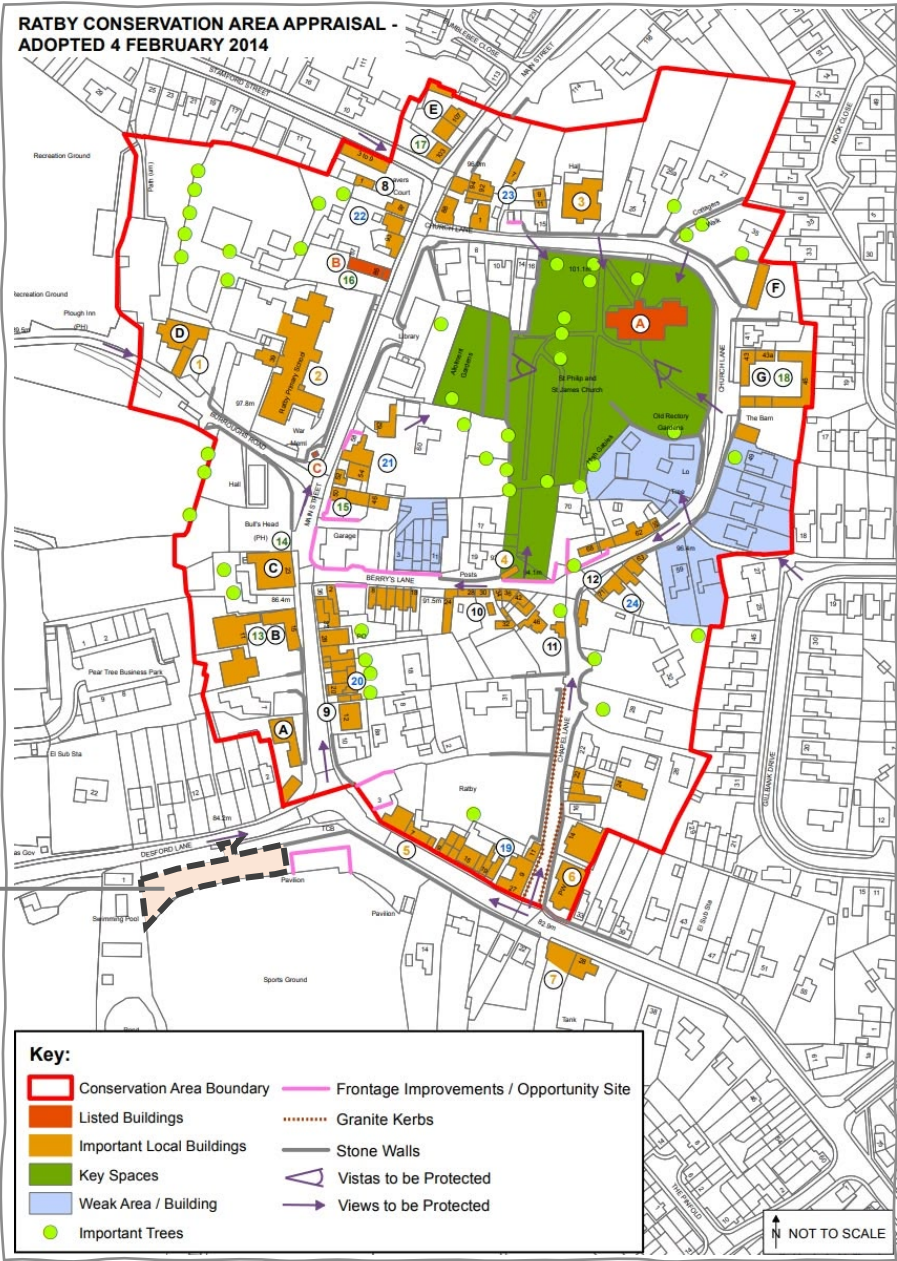
2.0 Site Assessment

2.1 Site location



The site is located at Wolfdale's existing site on Desford Lane, Ratby. The site sits outside of the village conservation area.

Site location



Site location plan, NTS



2.0 Site Assessment

2.1 Site location

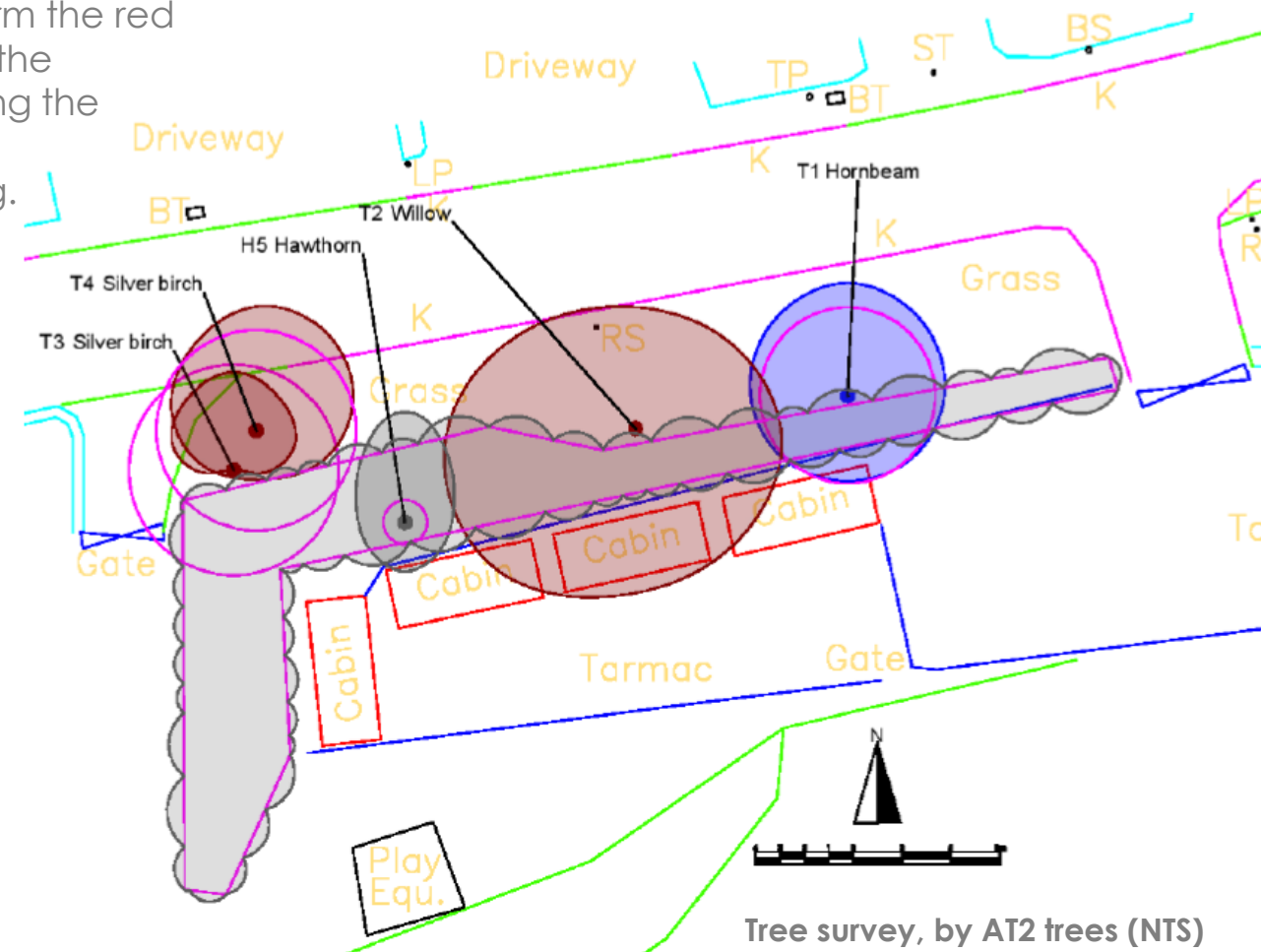
The adjacent site location plan shows the extent of the boundaries.



2.0 Site Assessment

2.2 Site description

- The site has a slope upwards from south to north of approximately 1.4m.
- The site currently has four mobile classrooms, which Wolfdale have been operating from. They are situated on an area of hardstanding to the north of the playing field.
- Along the northern boundary are trees and vegetation, which have been surveyed by AT2 Trees. AT2 identified the willow tree (T2) as being dead and in need of being removed.
- There are existing gates and fencing which form the red line boundary of the proposals, allowing the playing field to remain as existing.



Existing site photos

3.0 Planning Policy

3.1 National planning policy framework

The proposal complies to the relevant parts of the NPPF (August 2026 publication) as follows:

Regarding section 16 – Promoting healthy communities:

Policy HC4

- The development allows for improved community facilities

HC4: “Proposals for new and improved community facilities, public service infrastructure and development providing public health benefits

1. Substantial weight should be given to the benefits where: a. New or improved public service infrastructure or community facilities would be provided...”

Policy HC7:

- The development does not result in any loss of existing open space or playing field, as the boundary to the cricket pitch is unaffected

HC7: “Development affecting existing recreational land and facilities

1. Development proposals should not result in the loss of existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, other formal and informal play space and allotments...”

Regarding Policies L1–L3 – Effective use of land:

The design of the two-storey building seeks to:

- reduce the building footprint
- retain more usable external space
- allow greater provision of outdoor learning/play
- retain existing trees or landscape features
- reduce the amount of land that needs to be developed, and
- create a compact and efficient building.

L1: “1. To support the effective and efficient use of land the development plan should, at the most appropriate level:

a. Identify ways of accommodating as much as possible of the identified need for development in the area on previously developed land, including by: ii. Allocating sites of all sizes which have the potential for redevelopment to secure a more effective use, such as through the reuse of service yards, lock-ups, car parks and other transport infrastructure which are no longer required, the reuse or intensification of underutilised retail and business sites, and estate regeneration schemes...”

Regarding section 14 – Achieving well-designed places:

The design responds to the surrounding context through its form, scale, massing, fenestration and material choices. This is detailed in part 6.6 of this Design and Access Statement.

DP3: “1. Development proposals should respond to their context (the history, character and features of their site and its setting), so that they integrate with and enhance their surroundings; such as through the arrangement of development plots and buildings, the use of materials and architectural features, and the restoration, reuse and integration of heritage assets. This should not preclude innovation or change where appropriate, especially where an increased scale or density of development is justified in accordance with policies L2 and L3.

3.0 Planning Policy

3.2 Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council SPD: Rural Needs

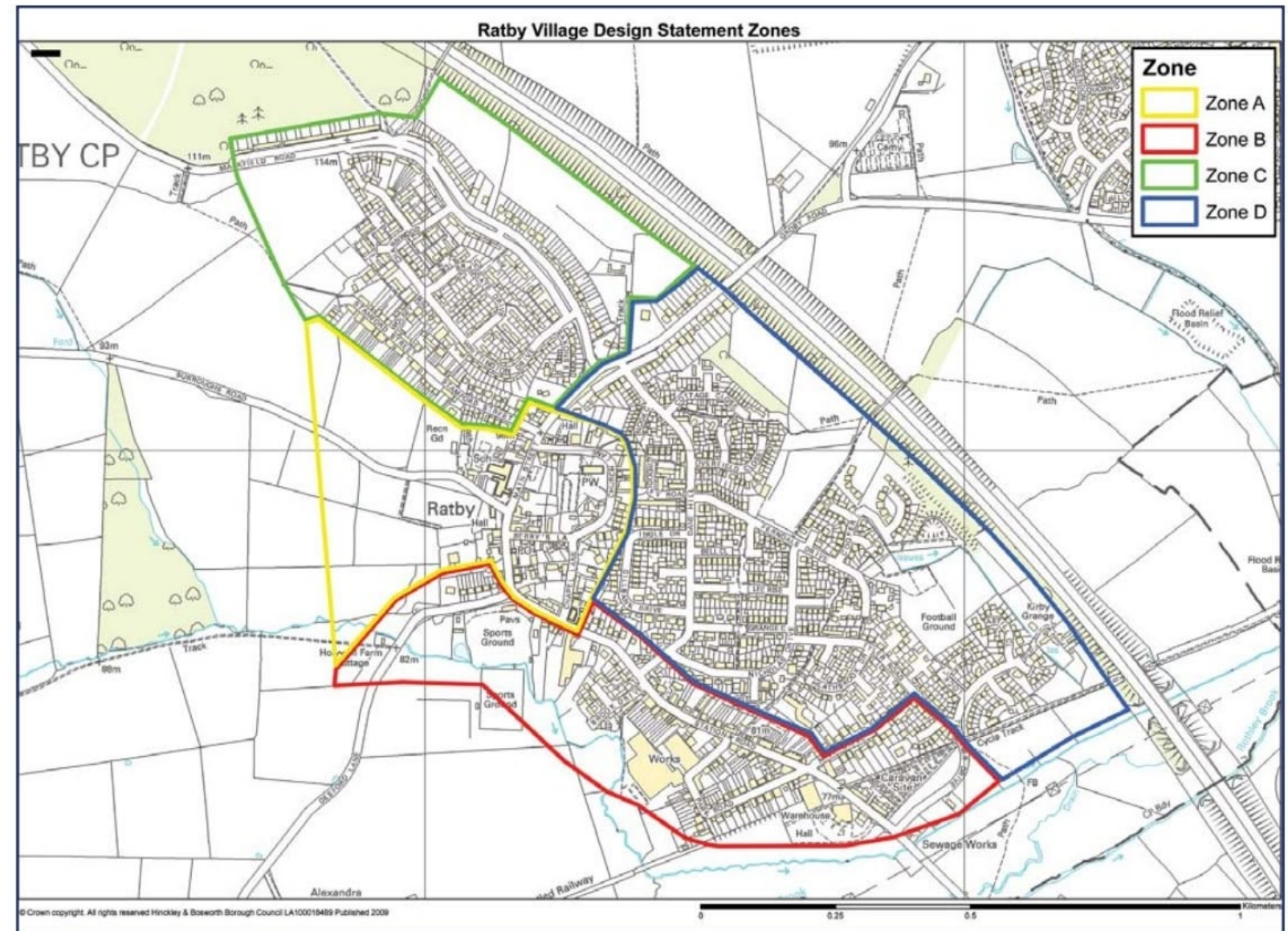
- Not applicable.

3.3 Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council SPD: Ratby Village Design Statement

- The application site falls into Zone B of the Ratby Village Design Statement Zones.
- Inspiration has been taken from both Zones A and B in terms of the elevational design.

3.4 Application site planning history

- A retrospective full planning permission for the change of use of the cricket pavilion into educational use was granted on 1 June 2026 (24/00980/FUL).
- An application for four temporary mobile classrooms for educational use, play area, 2.1m high fencing and gates was permitted in 2022 (21/00691/FUL).



Map taken from the Ratby Village Design Statement (page 11)

4.0 Consultation

4.1 Design guidance

- Not applicable at this stage.

4.2 Professional consultation, outline application, & pre-application advice

- No previous consultation or advice has been sought for this proposal.

5.0 Design Concept

5.1 Opportunities and constraints

Opportunities

- Established site access and use as education facility.
- Attractive naturalistic surrounding site suitable for an SEN facility.

Constraints

- A small area of hardstanding to build on, limiting school intake to that which is already being catered for.

5.2 Client brief

- Develop a scheme for a two-storey building which will enable teaching support / ancillary accommodation to be better distributed across the two buildings (the proposed new building and the existing single storey building to the east).
- Maintain existing access.
- Maintain school playing field.



5.0 Design Concept

5.3 Proposed design strategy

- Maximise access to the external landscape.
- Design an efficient layout which maximises support space, of which the school is currently limited.
- Design a high quality and contextual building which is in keeping with the surrounding context.

6.0 Proposed Design

6.1 Use

- Existing use F1 - Learning and non-residential institutions

Proposed use F1 - Learning and non-residential institutions

The use of the site is not affected by the proposals.

6.2 Amount

- The proposal consists of a two- storey education facility, catering for existing users within classroom and breakout environments. The building's Gross Internal Area is 413 sq.m.

6.0 Proposed Design

6.3 Layout / Site Plan

Access from Desford Lane will remain as existing as a taxi drop-off for pupils. (As Wolfdale is a specialist school, pupils come via taxi rather than school buses).

The building will be located on the existing hardstanding, in place of the former temporary cabins.

A small sensory garden has been designed for use during the school day, when pupils may need some time away from the classroom environment to decompress. The garden works with the natural slope of the site and provides different spaces for reflection and socialising.

The cricket pitch remains in ownership by Wolfdale and will remain as the main external space for break times (this is unaffected by the proposals and as such is outside of the application area).

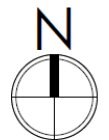
There is a 33.5m distance between the building and properties on the opposite side of Desford Lane - well over the recommended 22m minimum - ensuring no overlooking to the existing houses.

6.4 Scale

The building is two storey, with an eaves height of 5.3m and a ridge height of 10.2m.



Proposed Site Plan, NTS



6.0 Proposed Design

6.5 Floor plans



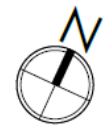
As noted, Woldale cater for students aged 7 to 16, so the replacement building provides a dedicated reception/lobby space which allows students to be separated by age group (between this building and the existing educational building on site), similar to a typical primary and secondary school setup.

Students are taught in small classes of 8 pupils. This provides a higher level of support than is generally available in mainstream education. Classrooms have access to small breakout and intervention rooms, allowing for focused work or downtime away from the classroom.

On the ground floor, the classrooms have direct access outside. Woldale have expressed that some students such as those with ADHD significantly benefit from direct access outdoors, and classes will be arranged/split accordingly to best support those enrolled.

One of the biggest advantages of operating from the Ratby site is the outdoor space available for students. Access to outdoor space allows students to maintain healthy, active lifestyles, as well as fostering social skills and improving mental wellbeing through access to fresh air, and the proposal maintains this access to the playing field.

6.5 Floor plans



On the first floor there are two further classrooms, an intervention room, therapy room, and another 1:1 room.

There is also a staff room (with space for staff to work on lesson plans, marking and other tasks), a separate staff office, kitchen and dining room.

6.0 Proposed Design

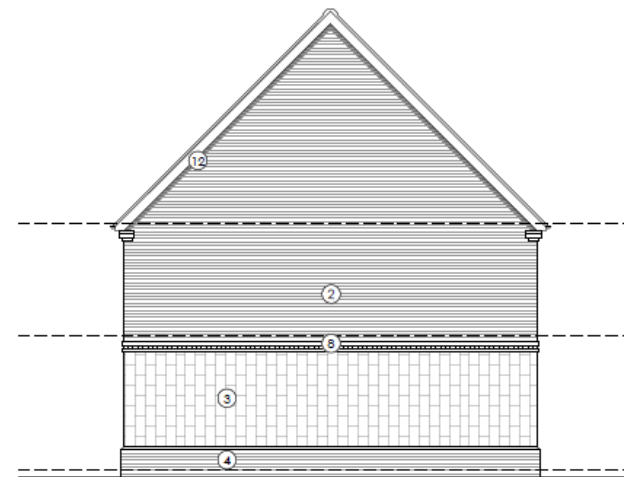
6.6 Elevations & Appearance

The building has been designed to be in keeping with the surrounding context, in terms of its proportions and materiality:

- The fenestration is inspired by the surrounding houses; and designed to reflect a row of four traditional terraced houses, as shown on the next page.
- The pitched roof is more in keeping with the area than a flat roof.
- The use of brick fits in with the surrounding context, which is predominantly brick, and the choice of the buff colour distinguishes the building as a different typology from the residential properties.
- The brick plinth draws from the brick plinths and stone walling in the surrounding area.
- The use of green cladding and canopy, in conjunction with the warm buff brick, provides a balanced and calming aesthetic. The colour green is proven to support those with autism, as it is a neutral and naturalistic colour.
- The design also incorporates brick header details, string courses and dentil detailing, which all contribute to a high-quality design which is sensitive to the older properties in the area.



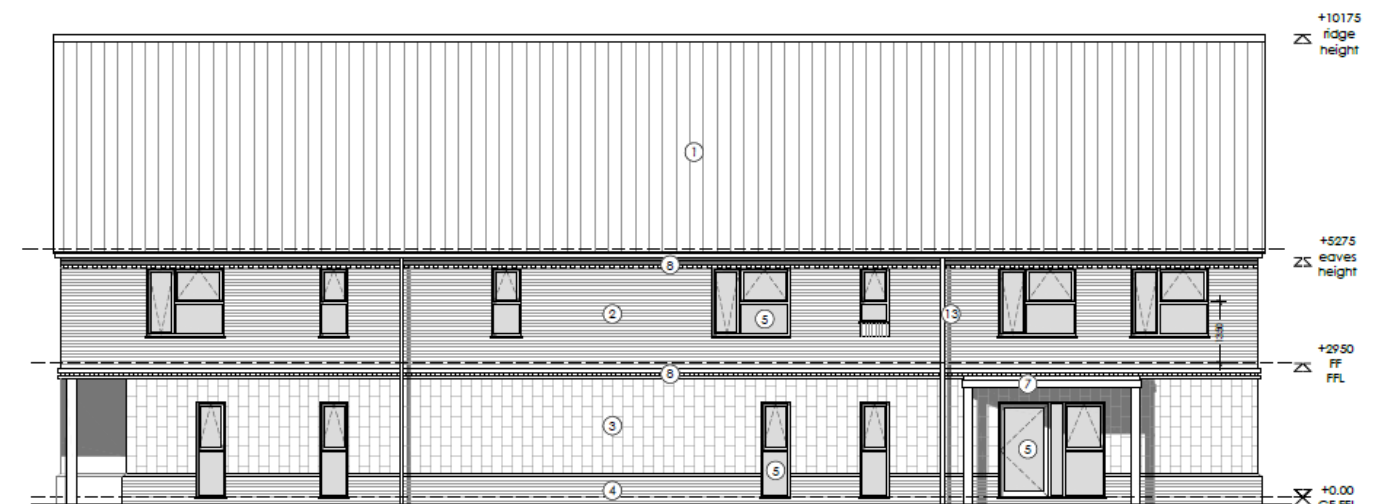
Proposed East Elevation



Proposed West Elevation



Proposed South Elevation



Proposed North Elevation

Proposed Elevations, NTS

6.0 Proposed Design

6.6 Elevations & Appearance



Approach to Reception

6.0 Proposed Design

6.6 Elevations & Appearance



View from Desford Lane

6.0 Proposed Design

6.6 Elevations & Appearance



View from playing field, showing external sensory garden and play equipment

6.0 Proposed Design

6.6 Elevations & Appearance



View from sensory garden, showing the external canopy and picnic area

6.0 Proposed Design

6.6 Elevations & Appearance



View of the external covered area with external seating

6.0 Proposed Design

6.6 Elevations & Appearance



View of the sensory garden looking back towards the south elevation

6.0 Proposed Design



Brick base as found on surrounding properties, and reflecting existing stone walling in the surrounding area.



6.0 Proposed Design

6.6 Elevations & Appearance

3 Low-Arousal Colours

Autism Design Principles for Schools

The Importance of Colour

Colour plays an important role in the creation of a low-arousal environment, as we are constantly reacting to it in both the natural world and our built environment.

Proxemics and spatial comfort levels are influenced by colour. GA Architects, in collaboration with the Design Research Centre (DRC) at Kingston University London, conducted research into the development of an autism-friendly colour palette for schools and residential environments. Their report concluded that autistic pupils preferred colours that were subtle (those that have grey undertones) with a preference for colours in the blue/green hue range. This included muted colours for material finishes for walls, floors and soft furnishings, as this helped reduce overstimulation and hypersensitivity by creating a more comfortable environment in which to work.

The use of strong primary colours and bold patterns is not recommended. In particular, the colours red and yellow should be avoided as they can impact on autistic pupils' sensory experience of a space, often being perceived as fluorescent and high-energy colours.



The colour palette is taken from guidance by the Autism Education Trust, whose publication 'Autism Design Principles for Schools' explains how 'low-arousal colours' are best for preventing overstimulation and providing neutral, calming environments. The olive green cladding and buff brick support this suggested colour palette.

As the external spaces are intended to be used throughout the school day, it's important that the outside of the building is designed as sensitively as the interiors will be.

6.0 Proposed Design

6.7 Landscaping

The external area has been designed to create small pockets of space to provide students with a choice of environment, supporting diverse needs and preferences.

On the upper level is a picnic area, and seating underneath the canopy. The canopy screens the south-facing elements, both internal and external.

There are steps and a resin slope down to the lower level, which will be designed as a sensory garden with a range of different plants, attracting different insects and providing a range of smells, colours and textures for pupils to benefit from.

At break times the gates onto the cricket pitch will be opened – the proposals do not impact on the existing cricket pitch.

BNG is not required for this application due to the small site area (< 0.2 hectares, as per the new BNG regulations in August 2026), but the soft landscaping will help promote biodiversity across the site.

The trees and vegetation were surveyed by AT2 Trees, who recommended that T2 should be removed because it's dead and in very poor condition. Croft Ecology also visited site and agreed that the tree is not a priority habitat. This application therefore requests removal of the tree, which is on third party land, subject to approval by highways.



7.0 Access

7.1 Site access

- Access to the site will remain as existing; it is unaffected by the proposals.

7.2 Building access

- Level thresholds will be provided throughout the building, by raising the external paving to form a gentle slope in accordance with Approved Document M.
- Students arrive on-site via taxi and an unloading area will be demarcated to allow people, including those using wheelchairs or other mobility aids, to unload and enter the building safely and in close proximity.