

PLANNING, DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

Hambrook School – Play Equipment & Landscaping Works

1. BACKGROUND TO PLANNING APPLICATION

Introduction

1.1 The application for full planning permission is submitted on behalf of Outcomes First Group Ltd, the registered owners of Hambrook School, Marle Place, 171 Leylands Road, Burgess Hill RH15 8HZ.

1.2 The Applicant provides support to students and adults with complex special educational needs and disabilities such as autism, SEMH needs and physical challenges.

Application Site

1.3 The site is 0.62ha and comprises a recently opened (August 2023) private independent day special school for young people aged 5–18 years with autism and complex learning needs.

1.4 The site contains a main building, a northern building, and a boiler house/workshop set within landscaped grounds including mature trees and hardstanding car park.

1.5 The site is well defined by surrounding development on all sides:

- North: brick wall to Leylands Road
- East: curtilages of houses on Highlands Drive
- South: Marle Place Park
- West: public footpath (70BH) and residential gardens

Development Proposal

1.6 The proposal seeks full planning permission for:

- Installation of new play equipment and small timber summer house

The Applicant considers that the provision of good-quality playtime is essential for a child's overall development, while recognising that this can be a sensory overload for children with autism or other complex learning needs. Such children may struggle with social interaction, communication and imagination, which can affect their ability to form friendships and

engage in play with peers. It is therefore important that they enjoy play within an environment in which they feel safe, secure and supported.

1.7 The rear play area, located to the south of the main school building, will retain the grassed space for sporting activities and provide a series of new play elements including Monkey Bars, Rope Walk, Stepping Logs, Nest Swing, Tone Up Zone, gym equipment (such as Double Slalom Skier, Health Walker, Sky Stepper and Arm & Pedal Bike), a ground-level trampoline and a timber-framed summer house funded via the School Green Grant.

2. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

Under section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The Development Plan comprises the Mid Sussex District Plan 2014–2031 and the Burgess Hill Neighbourhood Plan 2015–2031.

The statement sets out applicable planning policies from:

- Mid Sussex District Plan
- Burgess Hill Neighbourhood Plan
- NPPF
- Secured by Design (where relevant to layout and safety)

Mid Sussex District Plan

The Local Plan was adopted on 28 March 2018.

The policies map indicates the Application Site is:

- Wholly within the Built-Up Area of Burgess Hill (Policy DP6).
- Wholly within the St John's Conservation Area (Policy DP35).

Policy DP6 supports development within towns containing a comprehensive range of services and good public transport accessibility.

Policy DP35 requires development to conserve or enhance the special character and appearance of the conservation area, including its open spaces, gardens and landscaping, and to protect views into and out of it.

Other relevant policies include:

- **DP22:** Rights of Way and recreational routes
- **DP25:** Community facilities (including educational facilities)

- **DP26:** Character and design, including privacy, outlook and noise
- **DP29:** Noise-sensitive development and requirements for insulation
- **DP34:** Protection of non-listed heritage assets
- **DP35:** Conservation Area requirements
- **DP37:** Protection of trees, woodland and hedgerows

Burgess Hill Neighbourhood Plan

The site falls partly within a Protected Area of Townscape Value (PATV – Policy H3), which requires preservation and enhancement of the area’s character, including spaciousness, building heights, size, site coverage, building lines, trees and landscaping.

Policy S3 supports improvements to community facilities, specifically referencing school premises.

Policy H1 seeks to protect and enhance heritage assets and Conservation Areas.

The site is designated as a Building of Merit (No. 11 – Marle Place, Leylands Road)

3. PLANNING MATTERS

Principle of Development

3.1 The proposal supports an established educational use within the built-up area of Burgess Hill and complies with policy requirements for community facilities.

Effect on Heritage Assets

3.2 Heritage Assessment accompanies the application and concludes the proposal conserves the character of the St John’s Conservation Area and the locally listed building.

Effect on Neighbouring Amenity

3.3 The proposal does not harm neighbours’ amenity in terms of privacy, daylight, noise or general disturbance. Play equipment use is supervised, limited to school hours and term time only.

Effect on Visual Amenity

3.4 Views into the site are limited due to existing buildings, walls, trees and private boundaries. Existing trees (covered by TPO) are retained and unaffected.

4. DESIGN MATTERS

Land Use

4.1 The site remains in educational use.

Amount

4.2 No change to building footprint; only external play and garden enhancements.

Layout

4.3 Existing building layout unchanged; play equipment located in rear garden.

Scale

4.4 Play equipment is modest in height and domestic in scale.

Appearance

4.5 The school buildings remain unaltered externally. Play equipment design details are provided in the submitted plans.

Landscaping

4.6 Landscaping integrates new play equipment with grassed areas, soft planting and a sensory garden.

5. ACCESS MATTERS

Vehicular & Pedestrian Access

5.1 No changes to existing access arrangements.

Public Transport

5.2 The site is accessible by local bus services.

Cycling

5.3 No designated cycle store is proposed; informal secure storage is available if required.

Parking

5.4 Existing car parking (88 spaces) remains unchanged.

6. PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

Reference: (APP/D830/W/24/3355413) – DM/25/1985

6.1 Pre-application discussions were held with Rachel Richardson, the planning officer who provided professional guidance on the earlier submission involving the play area proposals. As part of those discussions, no specific objections or concerns were raised in relation to this aspect of the scheme, and the advice confirmed that the principle of enhancing outdoor play provision for pupils was acceptable. This earlier positive steer has informed the current application and provides reassurance that the approach aligns with the local authority's expectations for development of this type.

7. CONCLUSIONS

The proposal provides modest but meaningful improvements to the school's outdoor play environment, supporting pupils with autism and complex learning needs without altering the building footprint or harming the character of the St John's Conservation Area or the locally listed building. Neighbouring amenity, access, parking and transport arrangements remain unaffected, and the works comply with the relevant policies of the Mid Sussex District Plan and Burgess Hill Neighbourhood Plan.

Importantly, pre-application advice from Planning Officer who reviewed the earlier iteration of the play area proposals. No specific objections or concerns were raised regarding this element of the scheme, and the pre-application discussion provided a positive steer that such improvements to outdoor play provision for SEN pupils were acceptable in principle.

Overall, the proposal delivers clear educational benefits with no adverse impacts, and the Applicant respectfully considers that planning permission should be granted.