

Design & Access Statement

Proposed Alterations to the former
Northwood Police Station (listed Grade II)
to provide a Children's Nursery
2 Murray Road, Northwood, HA6 2YN

November 2023



23 Beacon Hill, London N7 9LY
www.architectspractice.com
0207 607 3333



THE ARCHITECTS PRACTICE

Summary

Site Address:

2 Murray Road, Northwood, HA6 2YN

Applicant:

Azaf Investment Ltd
12 Wolsey Road, Northwood
Middlesex HA6 2HW

Architect:

The Architects Practice
23 Beacon Hill, London N7 9LY
T. 020 7607 3333
Contact: Simon Foxell

Heritage Consultant:

Manorwood
Suite 114, 26 The Hornet
Chichester, West Sussex PO19 7BB
T. 01243 201102
Contact: Ben Kirk

Transport Consultant:

Nick Culhane, Highway Consultant
Highland House Mayflower Close, Chandlers Ford,
Eastleigh, Hampshire, SO53 4AR
T. 07787 530717
Contact: Nick Culhane

Project Description:

Alterations to an abandoned former Police Station to be used as a pre-school children's nursery (Class E9(f)). The proposals retain and repair the existing building and its setting in Northwood, while adding a new lightweight entrance structure at the rear to allow its continued use.

Proposed works include: a new entrance, bike, buggy and bin storage, a lift enclosure at the rear and garden amenity play areas at the front. The non-original plant room will be demolished and the electricity station reduced in size. Parking will remain at the back of the building. Internally the existing space will be converted to provide four separate learning zones for children from aged 6 months to five years old along with ancillary support spaces.



Fig. 1: Location Plan – Ordnance Survey

Site & Context

The site is a 1.5-hectare plot on at the junction of Murray and Maxwell Roads, a short distance from Northwood town centre and underground station. It is within the Northwood Conservation Area in the London Borough of Hillingdon.

The site marks the transition between the commercial buildings of the town centre to the residential streets to the southwest. Immediately across Murray Road is the car park to the Waitrose supermarket on Green Lane, across Maxwell Road to the west is the campus of Northwood College.

Vehicle access to the site is from the west on Murray Road and there are pedestrian entrances to the building on both Murray and Maxwell Roads. Access to public transport is good (PTAL score of 3) with both the Metropolitan Line trains at the Northwood underground station and bus stops on Maxwell Road and Green Lane all being less than 5 minutes walk from the site.

The site is lined along both road frontages by a series of mature and previously pollarded London Planes at approximately 5.5m intervals. These are predominantly planted within the site but several are in the adjacent pavement. Around the tree trunks is a deep Rhododendron hedge running along the back of the pavement behind a low timber fence that is probably contemporary with the Police Station building.

Police Station building

The building on the site is a Grade II Listed, purpose-built police station designed by the architect John Dixon Butler in 1910 for the Metropolitan Police. Opened in 1911 it was closed in 2019 and has remained empty ever since. For detailed information see the accompanying Heritage Statement prepared by Manorwood.

The building is three storeys high and is in Arts and Crafts style with a mixture of red brickwork, ashlar and black and white half-timbering. The pitched roofs are clad in a red plain tile with a range of gables and hips. It has 7 tall brickwork chimney stacks. Much of the exterior of the building is true to its original design but it has been altered over the years, including by the addition of windows and a basic brick plant room at the rear. There is a significant difference between the quality of the two carefully composed roadside elevations and the utilitarian aspect of the semi-courtyard at the rear.



Photo 2: Aerial view

Planning Context

The former Police Station sits within both the Northwood Conservation Area (black line) and the designated Town Centre area (in blue) of Northwood. See extract of LB Hillingdon's LPP2 Proposals Map below.

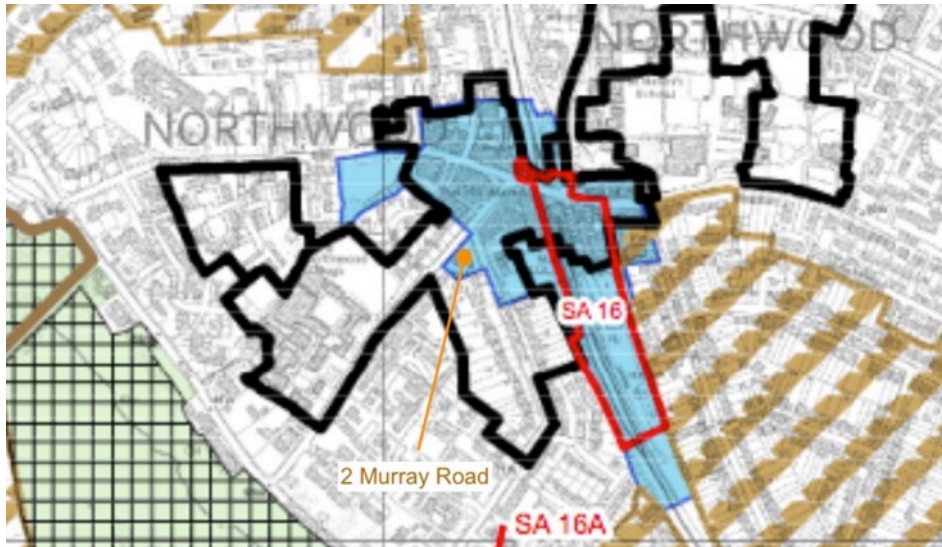


Fig. 3: Extract from LB Hillingdon Adopted Proposals Map

Planning History

The existing building predates the 1948 Town and Country Planning Act

A planning and listed building application (46639/APP/2022/56) was submitted in January 2022 for change of use and adaptation of the building to a Place of Worship and Community Centre. The application was refused in March 2023 as a result of “posing ‘less than substantial harm’ to the significance of the designated heritage asset”, while it was “not considered to provide deliverable public benefits sufficient to outweigh the harm caused”.

The current proposals have been designed to protect and enhance the heritage asset while providing significant public benefit to the area.



Photo 4: View across Murray and Maxwell Roads junction

Geology

The British Geological Survey map shows that the site is based on the clay, silt and sand soil of the London Clay Formation. Properties built on clay are particularly at risk of being affected by subsidence in long, dry summers as trees and shrubs suck moisture from the soil.

Flood risk

The site is in flood zone 1 an area with a low probability of flooding

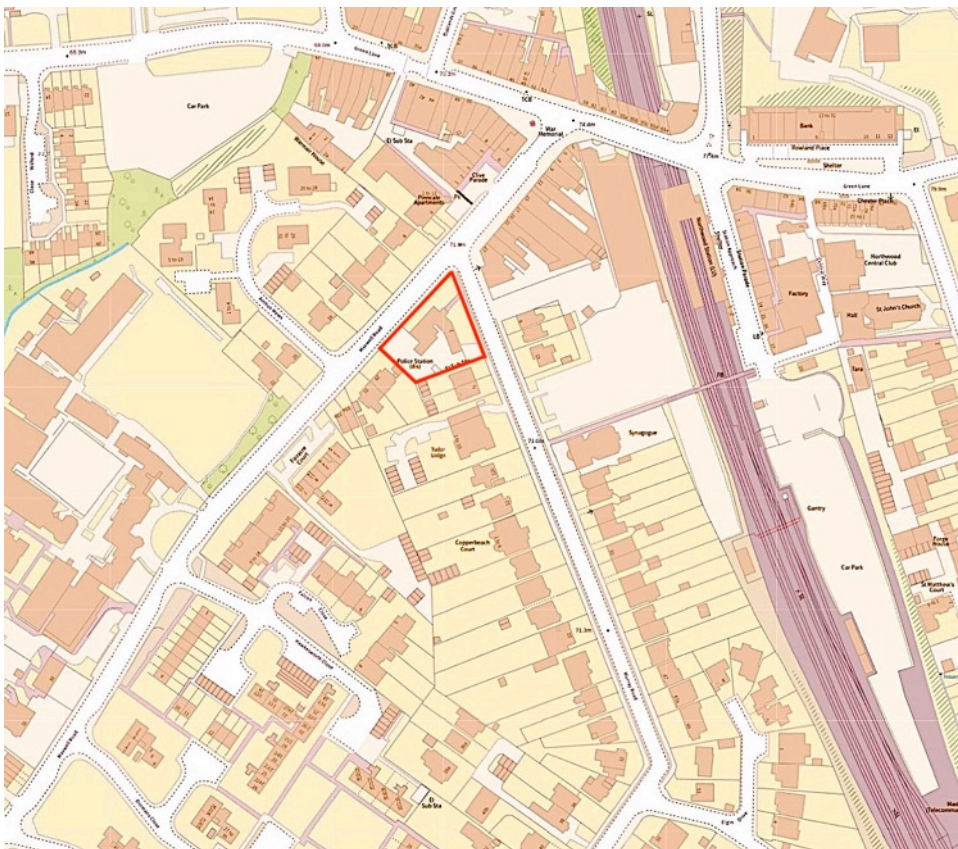


Fig. 5: Flood map – Environment Agency



Fig. 6: Geological map – Bedrock - BGS

The site

The site was created when Major Frank Murray Maxwell laid out this part of the new suburb of Northwood in the 1890s, creating both Murray and Maxwell Roads. Formerly fields and part of the Eastbury Estate, the Northwood Police Station is the first building on the site, built in 1910-11.

The building sits towards the set back in the trapezoidal plot addressing the two road frontages along which there are grassed areas. The rear of the site is asphalted with parking for around 15 vehicles, including marked out spaces for 8. There is also a service yard and a fenced-off electrical substation.

The front of the site is surrounded by a low timber picket fence backed by deep Rhododendron bushes with gates leading to the Murray Road and Maxwell Road entrances. A pair of close-boarded high timber gates on the building line gives access from the Murray Road vehicle entrance to the back of the site. The rear of the site is surrounded by a high close-boarded timber fence that is in need of repair or replacement.

The front entrance from Murray Road is approached by a long modern brickwork ramp with relatively crude metal tubular balustrades to either side. This will have been added in the latter part of the Twentieth Century. To the right of this ramp just inside the perimeter fence is the former location of the police call post. The call post is currently in storage and it is proposed to have it restored and repositioned on site (see below) where it cannot be mistaken for a working means to contact the police or an indication that the building is still in use as a police station.



Photo 7: Front of Police Station 2010 © Chris Williams



Photo 8: Aerial view

Existing Building

Accommodation

The ex-police station includes rooms, bathrooms/showers, separate toilets, kitchens

- circa 27 rooms
- circa 7 bathrooms/showrooms
- circa 2 kitchens

The building has a total approximate area of 543.2 sq m Gross Internal Area (GIA)

Construction

The main walls are of solid red brickwork in an Old English style formation, with mock Tudor timber planks on the first floor of the rear and right-hand elevations. The roof is of a steep combination of pitched/hipped styles with tiles, with gabled pitched dormers, one slightly jettied with a polygonal bay window with stone surrounds on the ground floor. Tall brick chimney stacks are included with stone dressing. The original windows and doors remain in their original opening. Floors are solid construction with a range of finishes.

Building condition

Externally:

The property is considered to be reasonably sound based on the inspection view externally, with no significant structural or foundation defect. Our internal inspection of the property, revealed no evidence of any significant distortion or cracking to indicate any major defects in the internal wall and floor constructions.

Internally:

Internal partition walls are of solid masonry construction in the main. The wall surfaces are generally vertical covered with plaster and finished with paint. The walls in the wet areas such as the kitchen and bathroom or shower rooms have a tile finish. The tiles are in reasonable condition, although they appear dated. A number of defects are evident such as significant cracking, dampness, and flaking/peeling of paintwork.

A vertical crack is evident in the second floor hallway, extending from the ceiling. The crack appears historic but should be opened to ensure that progressive movement is not present. Condition rating 3. The defect is serious and/or needs to be repaired, replaced or investigated urgently.

(Excerpts from Building Survey prepared by Gladstone Matheson 15/9/2023)



Photo 9: Rear service yard to building



Photo 10: Internal ground floor room on Maxwell Road frontage

Potential uses

Although it would be ideal for heritage reasons for the building to continue in use as a police station it no longer meets the requirements of contemporary police practice and it is only surprising that they persevered with it as late as 2019. Now empty for over 4 years and beginning to deteriorate at pace, it is important that another use is found for it that maintains the urban and heritage character of the building and gives it a new lease of life.

Since the previous planning refusal in March 2023 another viable and beneficial use for the building has been sought and a range of options appraised. It is now proposed to refurbish the building for use as a children's day nursery – a much-required provision, as noted in Hillingdon's Local Plan (see below).

Nursery usage allows the existing fabric of the building, including its original room divisions, to be maintained and for the historical building to be rescued from its present desuetude and carefully repaired and maintained for the long term. To achieve this it is recommended to add a new reception and circulation space in the space between the wings at the rear of the existing building. This space will include ramps and a lift shaft to accommodate the level changes in the building without damaging its historic fabric and setting.

A nursery could accommodate a maximum of 120 children, aged from 6 months to 5 years old, together with 24 nursery and administration staff at any one time. It would operate a 5-day week, excluding bank holidays, with opening hours from 7.30am to 6.30pm and staggered arrival and departure times.

Proposed Use – Class E(f)

The existing building is assumed to have a Sui Generis Use Class, although it could also be considered to be in Class E(c)(iii) under 'Other appropriate services in a commercial, business or service locality'.

Use as a children's day nursery falls under Use Class E(f)

The proposed extension and alterations to the building will require planning permission and listed building consent and these are also the subject of this detailed planning application.



Photo 11: Front ramp and entrance to Former Police



Photo 12: Rear of building from Southwest

Nursery Usage

Children's day nursery places are urgently needed across the country to meet the Government's policy for increasing provision for early years education to assist with critical child development and to encourage higher levels of employment. To support this English local authorities are under a duty to secure sufficient childcare for working parents and from September 2025, working parents will be able to claim 30 hours of free childcare a week, over 38 weeks of the year, all the way through from nine months up to their child starting school.

"Every child deserves the best possible start in life and the support that enables them to fulfil their potential. Children develop quickly in the early years and a child's experiences between birth and age five have a major impact on their future life chances."

Statutory framework for the early years foundation stage
Department for Education – July 2023

Hillingdon's Local Plan recognises the imperative for providing early year's places in Clause 7.11 of its adopted Local Plan (January 2020):

"birth rate increases are the major driver of demand, other changes (e.g. migration into the Borough) increase demand for places across all year groups (including nursery). In addition, local authorities now have a duty to secure early years provision for the least advantaged two year olds."

Day nurseries are inspected and regulated by Ofsted against Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) requirements published by the Department of Education. These standards are demanding and cover issues including curricula, staffing, assessments, space standards, accessibility, health and safety and nutrition. The EYFS requirements form the main design drivers for any nursery conversion.

North Harrow and Ministeps nurseries

The principal applicant is the founding member of both The North Harrow Nursery in Harrow (<http://www.northharrownursery.co.uk>) and Ministeps Nursery in Northwood Hills (www.ministepsnursery.co.uk). The applicants are well experienced and understand the importance of providing the highest quality of childcare, education and facilities. They intend to apply their experience in quality provision to the premises at Murray Road.



Photo 13: North Harrow Nursery



Photo 14: Ministeps Nursery, Northwood Hills

It is proposed to maintain the existing setting of the building along the two road frontages and to enter the nursery from the back of the building, into a new single storey structure between the two wings of the existing building. This arrangement maintains same vehicle access from Murray Road although it will be supplemented by a dedicated pedestrian walkway and gate. Another pedestrian-only gate is also proposed on Maxwell Road.

To facilitate vehicle movements it will be necessary to reposition and modernise the existing and outmoded electricity sub-station in the car park. A bin store will also be located in the corner of the car park.

Children's safety

In order to assure the safety and security of the children in the nursery, while allowing them access to outside garden spaces, a secure line will be established around the main building and the external spaces along Maxwell and Murray Roads (see diagram to the right). It will be possible to exit from these spaces in the event of an emergency and staff supervision, but the only means of entering the building will be through the Reception area.

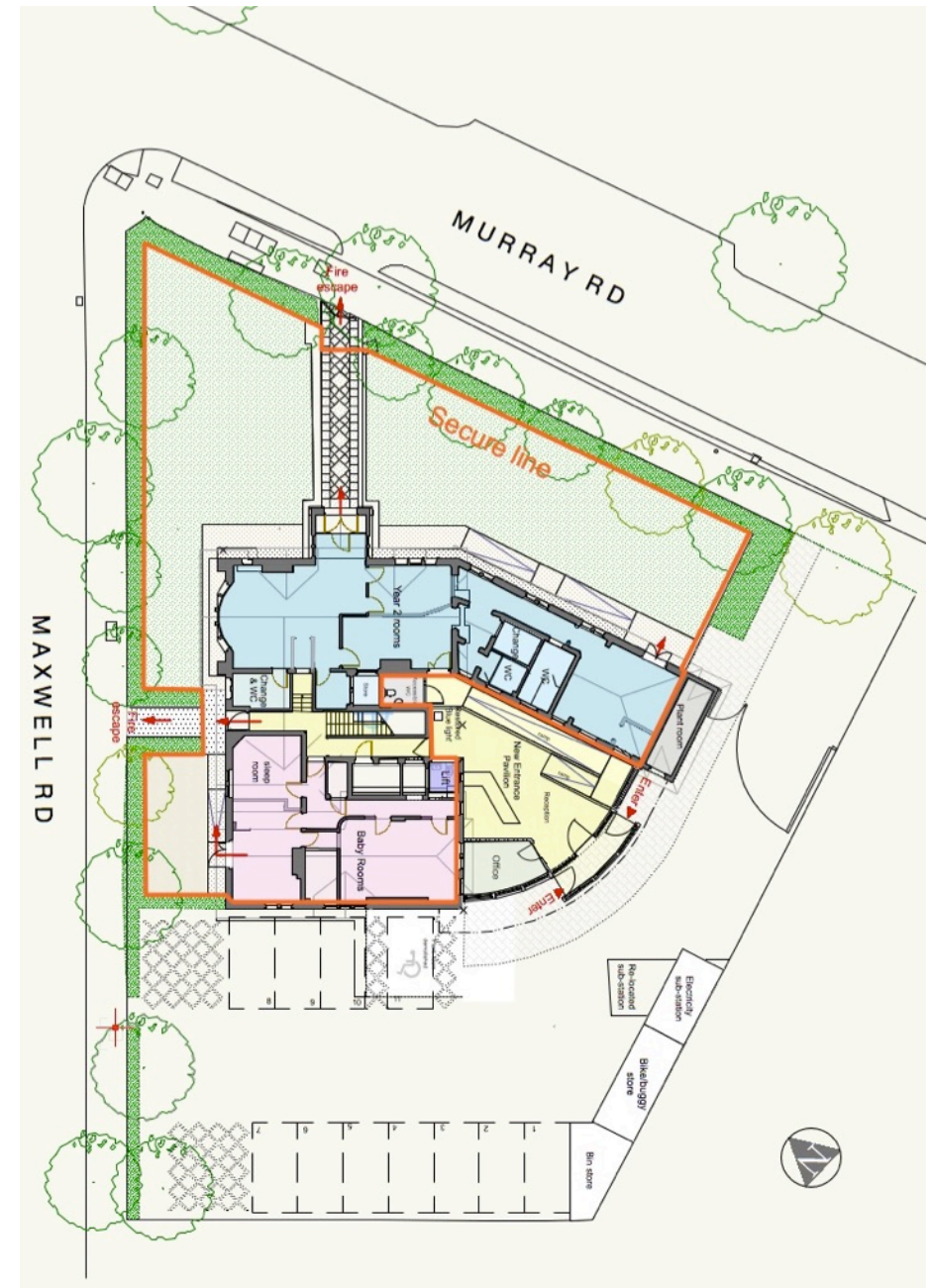


Fig. 16: Proposed site plan with secure line

Building proposals

It is intended to restore the layout of the existing building as far as possible to its original state, including removing internal partition walls where they have been added over the years and, in particular, the brick box plant room attached to the rear of the building. For a nursery use this approach raises a number of hurdles, not least the need for a reasonable size greeting and orientation space and secure learning and play environments for each group of children. In addition the building itself, arranged over many different levels, presents challenges for step free access and ease of use.

This has led to the proposal to create a new reception extension in the service yard between the wings of the building at the rear of the site. This is currently a neglected area of the site in need of attention. The new reception area will provide space for welcoming parents, carers and children as well as an office, passenger lift, accessible WC and, critically, a ramp leading up to the first split level floor in the original building.

The rooms in the former police station can then be maintained in their original configuration, if repurposed as spaces for children. It is possible to organise, through minimal interventions, the rooms on the ground and first floors into four age-specific, learning zones. The second floor will be use for staff, catering and management functions.

This approach will allow the various significant features in the building to be maintained and displayed. These include the front porch, cells (including their high level reinforced windows and slop hatches), staircase and some wall and floor finishes.

Windows and doors will be retained and refurbished as far as possible – see separate schedule, although additional external doors are proposed to allow safe access from learning rooms to outside spaces. Where required these will modify and enlarge existing openings, including non-original windows in a style to match the existing.

The building will be extensively repaired and restored and extraneous additions, including external soil pipes and internal surface wiring, removed and concealed.

It is also proposed to restore the police call post and police lamp in the reception space, where they can be best appreciated and help to introduce children to the history of the building, without causing public confusion



Fig. 17: Proposed Floor plans

Access

Access considerations are central to all nursery designs and have especially informed the proposals for the conversion of the former Northwood Police Station. Step free access will be possible to all parts of the building, except the Meeting room and the Pre-school learning room, and it will be possible to manage access requirements both of these.

Vehicle access

Access for vehicles is, as at present, from Murray Road through a set of double gates, which will be kept open during nursery opening hours and closed in the evenings and over weekends.

There will be 8 spaces for the use of parents and carers dropping off and collecting children with a maximum 10 minute dwelling time. A further 2 spaces will be reserved for staff use. Staff will not be generally provided with parking. In addition a disabled space will be available.

A secure bike and buggy shed will also be provided with approximately 20 spaces.

Access will also be provided for regular collection of waste, including sanitary waste.

Further detail on highways and traffic planning are provided in the separate Highways Consultant report

Pedestrian access

A new separate paved path and gate will be created along the side of the vehicle route and separated from it by bollards positioned at regular intervals. This will lead directly to the new nursery entrance.

An additional pedestrian entrance, again with a night and weekend gate, will be created in on the Maxwell Road side of the site, saving the need for many visitors to walk right round the site to gain access or egress.



Figs. 18 & 19: Proposed model views

Internal access

The new reception area will be the same level as the lower part of the ground floor and give access directly to it through an existing doorway. The existing external rear steps will be replaced by a 1:12 ramp leading to the upper level of the ground floor.

The existing internal stairs will be retained, refurbished and re-used with an additional pair of child and adult height handrails fixed to the external walls of the stairwells.

In addition a new wheelchair-capable passenger lift will be added to the rear of the building in a new and distinct dark timber clad shaft. This will give key-controlled access to the first and second floors from reception.

All thresholds in the building will be level and spaces will be accessible from the front of the building.

Good colour contrast will be maintained between elements; walls, floor, doors handles, switches etc. Spaces will be well lit.

A disabled WC will be provided in the entrance and reception area that will be accessible to all users. Toilets in children's areas will be of appropriate dimensions. Changing areas will also be provided in the younger age areas

Access to outdoor spaces

In addition to the existing doors in the Murray and Maxwell road elevations of the building two new doors will be created by lowering the cills of existing windows. These will lead onto ramps that will give access to front gardens and ultimately places of safety in the event of an emergency.

Security

Security is an important part of running a children's nursery.

The building will be protected by CCTV cameras and an intruder alarm connected to a 24-hour monitoring station linked to the Fire Brigade and Police. Entrances and windows, where accessible, will be made secure.

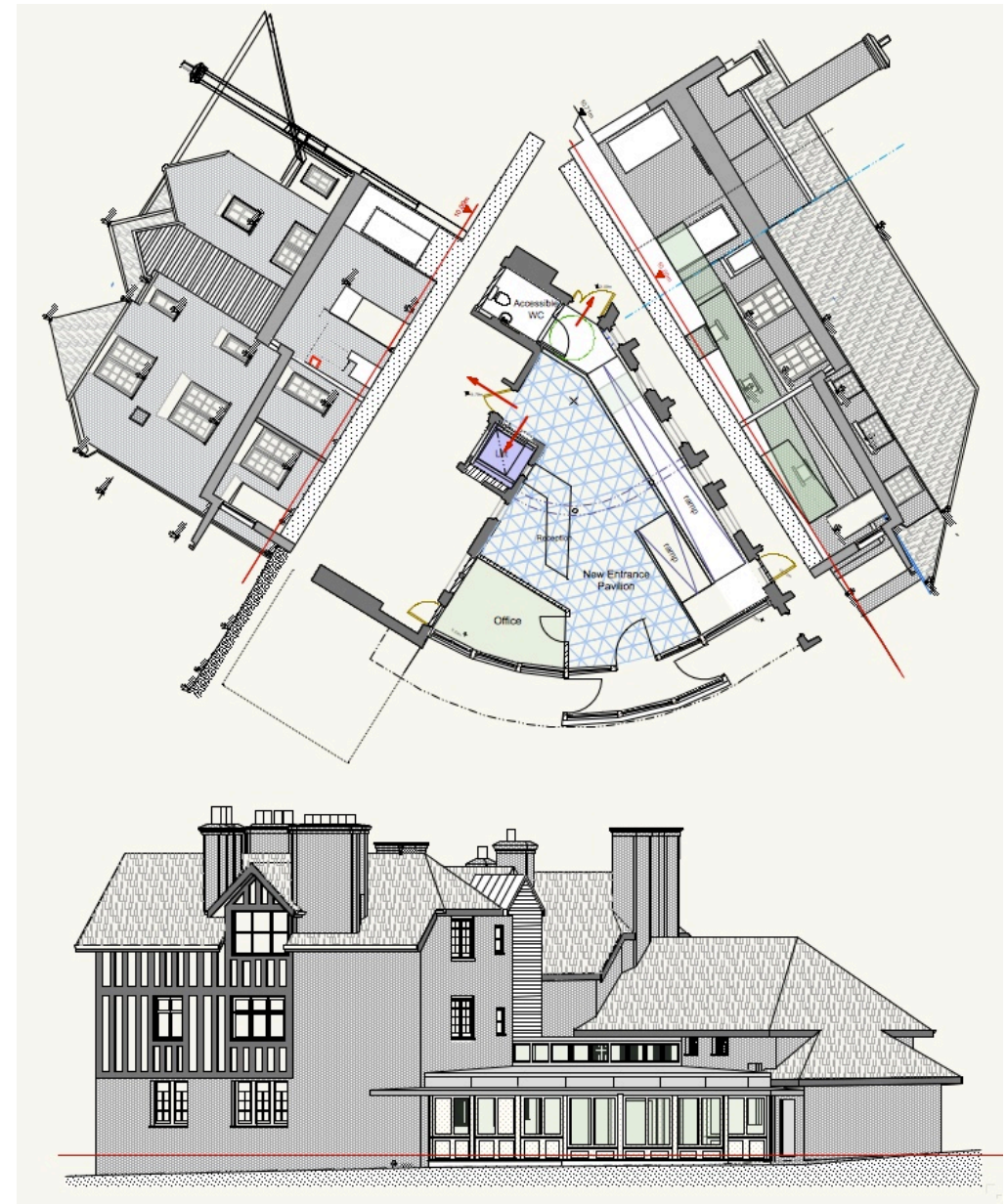


Fig. 20: Proposed Reception extension: Plans and Elevations

Sustainability

In addition to external improvements other works to the buildings will upgrade the energy performance of the building. Such measures will include sealing of draught gaps, fitting secondary glazing, additional insulation, energy efficient lighting and the replacement of the existing boiler with an air source heat pump.

It is proposed to fit a new mechanical heat recovery ventilation (MVHR) system to the building with equipment located in the roof space and on the existing service platform at the centre of the roof. The roof spaces and many existing redundant chimney flues will be used to locate the ducts in addition to three service risers located in storage areas of the building.

New materials will be sourced to match the existing fabric and to be non-toxic and to ensure long-term durability and sustainability.



Fig. 21: Proposed elevations

The Architects Practice

The Architects Practice is an architectural practice based in North London that specialises in educational projects from Early Years settings to Secondary Schools. It also has long-term experience of listed buildings and built environment sustainability.

Over the last twenty years the Practice has carried out numerous school and nursery projects in Hillingdon and across northwest London.

Educational projects in Hillingdon include:

- Field End Infants School (Locally listed)
- Coteford Infants School
- Whitehall Junior School
- Whiteheath Infant and Nursery School
- West Drayton Primary School

Recent nursery projects include:

- Bright Little Stars, Barnet
- Bright Little Stars, Stratford
- Kids Kingdom, Aylesbury
- Shelford Day Nursery, Cambs

Recent listed building projects include:

- Highbury New Park, London N5
- Clarendon Road, London W11
- Thornhill Square, N1
- Casa de Piro, Malta

Simon Foxell RIBA
The Architects Practice
23 Beacon Hill, London N7 9LY
www.architectspractice.com
November 2023



Photos 22 & 23: West Drayton Primary School and BLS Barnet



Photo 24: Whiteheath Infant & Nursery School



Fig. 25: Model view of proposed building