

THE CAVENDISH SCHOOL

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217_PLANNING APPLICATION AND CONSERVATION AREA CONSENT

HERITAGE AND DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

May 2025



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- - - - - Site boundary
- — — — — Proposed canopy positions

Location Plan



3D View looking north



3D View looking west

1 EXISTING BUILDING AND HERITAGE CONTEXT

1.01 ADDRESS

The Cavendish School, 31 Inverness St, London NW1 7HB

1.02 LOCATION AND SITE HERITAGE

Cavendish School is located at 31 Inverness Street, London NW1 7HB, within the London Borough of Camden. The school is situated in the Camden Town Conservation Area, occupying a prominent position on the south side of Inverness Street and the west side of Arlington Road. It sits within a compact urban block bounded by Arlington Road to the east and Gloucester Crescent to the north. The site centres around the historic mid-nineteenth century buildings of the former St Mark's Parochial School and also includes a modern single-storey block, converted former gas board offices, outdoor play areas, and a staff parking area located on the site of a former gas depot. The main pedestrian entrance for staff, pupils, and visitors is accessed from Inverness Street, which also serves vehicular access to the parking area. The eastern frontage along Arlington Road is marked by the distinctive St Mark's Gatehouse and the adjacent converted office building.

A series of courtyards surrounded by the school buildings and high garden walls provide playspaces and entrance areas for the children. The games pitch is surrounded by high garden walls to the south, west and east and the tall gym and music building to the north. The courtyard playground is surrounded by the tall gym building to the south and the dining hall to the north, which conceals it from surrounding neighbours.

The school benefits from excellent transport links, located approximately 0.11 miles from Camden Town Underground Station on the Northern Line, with additional connections available via nearby bus routes along Camden High Street and Kentish Town Road.

1.03 APPLICATION SITE

The application site proposal is within playground courtyard and next to the games pitch, in front of the gym building and lunch hall (North/South/ East/ West) Elevations.

1.04 HISTORY & USE

The Cavendish School is an independent, non-selective preparatory school catering for girls between 3 and 11 years. Established in 1875 and originally located in Cavendish Square, central London, from which it takes its name. The school relocated to its current site in 1970, at which point it became a charitable trust.

See site photos of existing spaces overleaf.



View north of gym and music block



View west towards early years playground gate



view north east towards Arlington Road entrance

1 EXISTING BUILDING AND CONTEXT



View north east towards lunch hall entrance and gatehouse



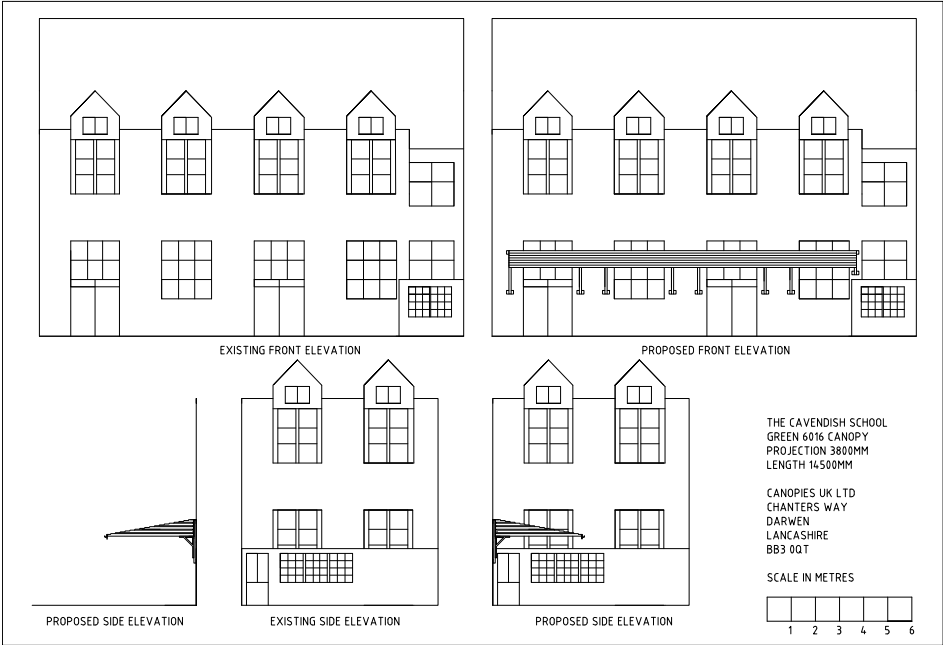
View west along lunch hall canopy



view north of lunch hall entrance and canopy



Photograph of Early Years canopy



Approved elevations of Early Years canopy



Early years canopy, just visible from Gloucester Crescent rear windows

2015/2355/P Canopy granted permission retrospectively for the Early Years playground

1 EXISTING BUILDING AND CONTEXT

1.05 PLANNING HISTORY

A number of consents have been granted on the site to align with the needs of the school, including a canopy in the early years playground (2015/2355/P):

1 Planning consent was granted on 8th October 1990 under reference 9003170 for 'the erection of a single storey extension to provide school offices'. This consent was not subject to any conditions other than the standard time limit for implementation.

2 Planning consent was granted on 17th May 1991 under reference 9003478 for the 'erection of a single storey rear extension and three storey extension to provide additional classrooms and storage and sanitary accommodation'. This consent was subject to a condition requiring the use of matching external materials.

3. Planning consent was granted on 16th December 1992 under reference 9201137 in respect of the British Gas Depot on Arlington Street for the 'change of use of part of the site from a gas depot to educational use'.

4. Planning consent was granted on 30th September 1994 under reference 9400964 for 'the temporary change of use of office accommodation (Class B1) to provide additional school space (Class D1) in the two storey building fronting Arlington Road'. This consent was granted for a limited period until 30th September 1999.

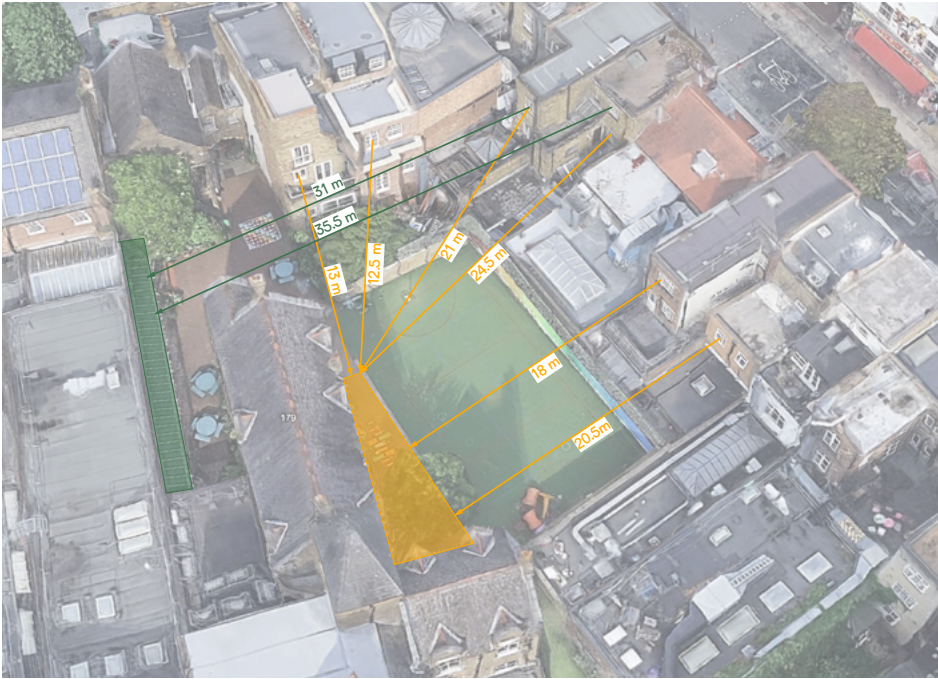
5. Planning consent was granted on 25th April 2000 under reference PEX0000029 for 'the erection of a single storey infill extension on site of existing storage sheds in eastern corner of the site plus alterations to main building windows to form doors, for educational use'.

6. Planning consent was granted on 3rd July 2003 under reference PEX0300205/P for 'alterations to the vehicular and pedestrian arrangement and erection of a single storey extension to incorporate offices for administration including the demolition of external stores and lean-to'.

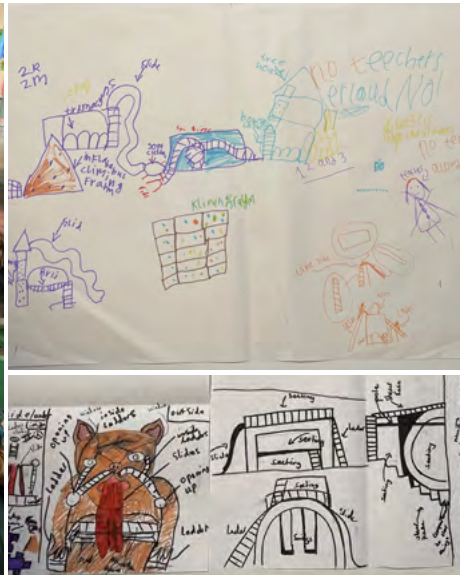
7. Planning consent was granted on 12 March 2015 under reference 2014/3117/P for the 'erection of part 1 part 3 storey building comprising assembly hall, classrooms, and roof plant; alterations to existing boundary treatment and associated hard and soft landscaping.'

8. Planning consent for granted on 7 July 2015 under reference 2015/2355/P for 'Erection of canopy to rear elevation (retrospective)' in the Early Years playground.

We note that this canopy is bulkier and far closer to residential neighbours than the current proposal. We also feel it is much less sympathetic to the buildings' heritage.



Distances to neighbouring windows



Workshop with pupils



Consultation board in reception area

1 EXISTING BUILDING AND CONTEXT

1.06 NEIGHBOURS

The site is bordered by commercial buildings on Inverness Street and Arlington Road, and to residential dwellings at Gloucester Crescent. However the position of the canopies is set back far from the edges of the site on the far side of the games court. The proposal is not visible from neighbours on Gloucester Crescent. It is visible to the rear upper floors on Parkway which consists of a mixture of commercial and residential units but it is more than 18m away from these windows and set at least a storey down, much lower than the surrounding walls of the site. A small number of upper windows on Arlington Road provide an oblique view of the canopies. The proposal will have no material impact on neighbouring properties except to partially obscure the entrance to the gym building, affording greater privacy to the girls.

1.07 SCHOOL CONSULTATION

Several consultations have been conducted with pupils, staff and parents within the school:

1. Two sets of workshops with pupil representatives from every year group
2. Large boards within the school reception area with anonymous post-it notes for comments from all members of the school community
3. Several announcements within the school email newsletter with requests for feedback from parents.
4. In-person discussions with key members of staff conducted by the architects, the head teacher and the bursar.

There is great support for additional play provision within the school, especially for years 1-6, as currently they have almost no access to play equipment except for the games court and regularly try to enter the Early Years playground which they need to be separated from for safety reasons.



Main canopy - long view



Main canopy - view from underneath



Lunch hall canopy - with climbing frame under

2 DESIGN PROPOSAL

2.0 DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The approach has two components:

1. A new canopy to provide shelter from sun and rain next to the sports pitch to provide shade from the sun in the summer and shelter for outdoor play during rainy spells. The lightweight canopy is constructed using highly sustainable UK-sourced materials. Three Portland stone and douglas fir columns threaded with stainless steel rebar are weighed down with Portland stone rocks that also provide seating and climbing objects for the children while obviating the need for foundations. These support a timber structure that spans onto the building with invisible joist hangers - these three points are the only moments where the canopy touches the building. The canopy is proposed as a sandwich of twin-wall polycarbonate roof with 100x200 douglas fir structure and a delicate laser cut douglas fir marine plywood lattice below to provide solar shading, in the manner of a tree canopy.

2. Modification of the existing glass canopy system that forms a shelter for children queuing for the dinner hall. The canopy would be replaced with a polycarbonate twinwall system at a higher level, enabling a net play structure to be suspended beneath. The new column system will use the existing foundations and column spacing. The old glass canopy is the only item to be demolished. It has no heritage significance and was installed circa 2008.

Neither canopy will increase the number of children using the playground, they will just provide cover from the weather. There will therefore be no increase in noise or activity levels in the playground as a result of these canopies.

2.1 USE

The client wishes to upgrade the courtyard. At the moment, it offers hardly any opportunities for play and retreat. The new climbing frames (the climbing tunnel and the monkey bars) are designed to provide opportunities for physical exercise. New relaxation spaces provide opportunities to switch off and read. Planting areas are increased throughout the playgrounds.

2.1.1 Main Canopy: In the summer months, this area of the school playground is exposed to high heat due to the direct sunlight and radiation from the play surface. On rainy days the children have break in the gym rather than outside. The new canopy will provide protection from the sun. On rainy days, it will also ensure that the pupils can still play outside. The existing tree will be retained. The new canopy is open on all sides and provides 56m² of shelter.

2.1.2 Lunch Hall Canopy and Climbing Tunnel: The existing canopy will be replaced with a stone/timber structure which holds a mesh playtunnel. The play tunnel along the façade creates many different climbing and play options in the limited space of the courtyard. The new structure also offers protection from the sun and rain. The new canopy reuses the foundations and column spacings of the original canopy. There will be no additional covered space created.

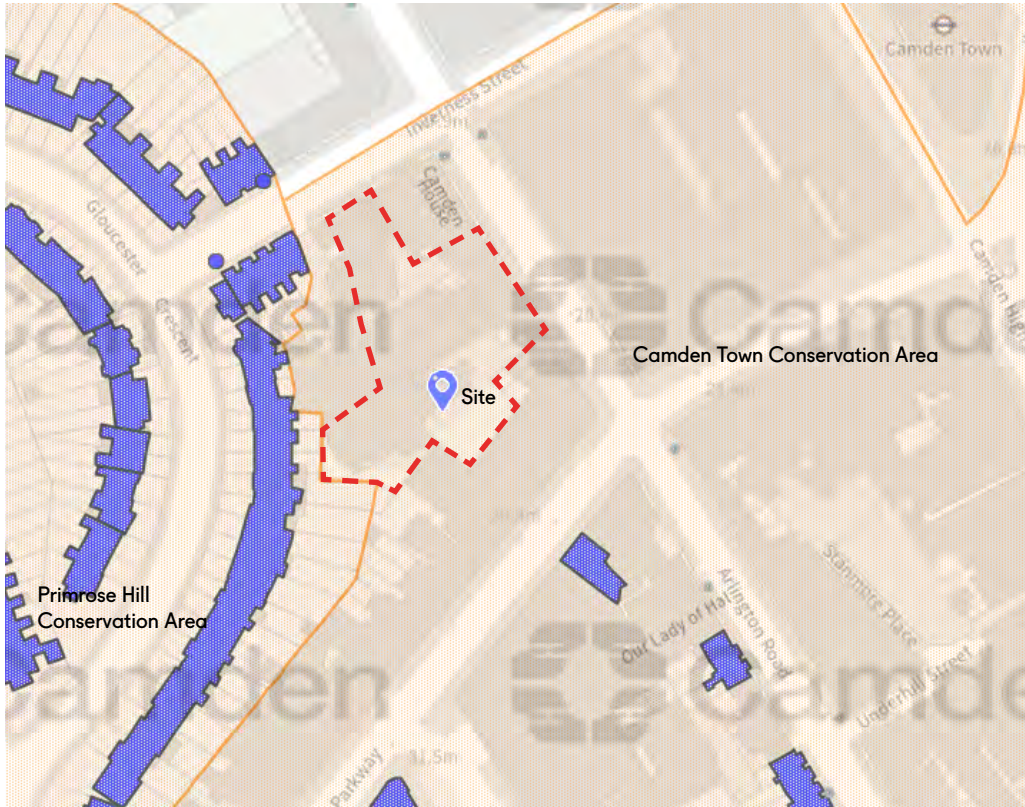
2.1.3 Moveable Hammock: Space to read and relax.

2.1.4 Oasis and Monkey bars, Logs, a new tree and plants in the central area: The green oasis in the centre invites pupils to climb and thereby promotes physical development. By creating shade it also contributes to a better climate.

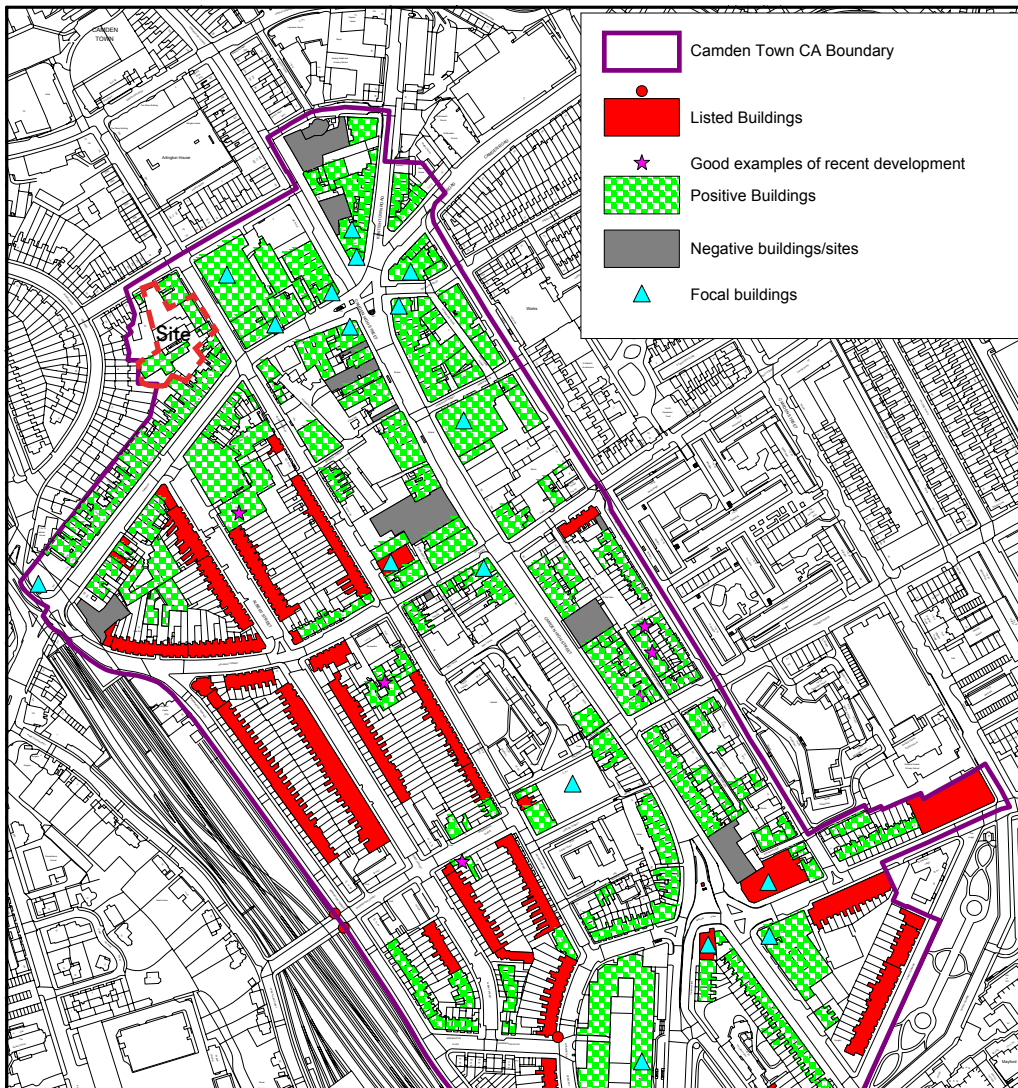
2.1.5 New benches: Existing brick planters will be upgraded with round timber seats which provide additional seats to rest.

2.1.6 Compost and Veg patch: To promote versatile learning and enable pupils to gain a better understanding of nature.

2.1.7 Ceramic Artwork: is developed by ceramic artist, Charlotte Moore, together with the pupils to celebrate The Cavendish School's 150th Anniversary.



Conservation areas and listed buildings (Camden open data)



Camden Town Conservation Area Appraisal Map

2 DESIGN PROPOSAL

2.2 HERITAGE STATEMENT

2.2.0 The Cavendish School is not a listed building but is located within the Camden Town Conservation Area, making it an 'undesigned heritage asset'. There are examples of Positive Buildings on the Arlington Road edge. It lies adjacent to the Primrose Hill Conservation area with Grade II Listed buildings along Gloucester Crescent, however none of these buildings are within sight of the proposals, which are screened from the Gloucester Crescent houses by the existing three storey school buildings. The proposals are not visible from anywhere within the public realm within the Camden Town Conservation area and therefore will not impact any of the Conservation Areas.

2.2.1 History of the site

The original foundation of two church schools, housed within one building, dates as far back as 1818. Arlington Road, then known as Grove Street, was to be the main approach to the school. A Boy's School was opened on the site on 30th April 1855 (now the housing the Early Years setting), followed by the opening of a Girl's School on 14th January 1856. The schools were under the trusteeship of St. Mark's Church, Albert Road, NW1 – the first parish school in Camden. It was built between 1851 – 1853 and consecrated on St. Mark's Day, 25th April, 1853. On 30th March 1861, the lease was conveyed to the Vicar and Churchwardens of St. Mark's Church. The land to the east of the schools, now used as a playground and netball court, continued to be rented on an annual basis. The schools were re-named St. Mark's National Schools on 8th February 1872, following the Education Act of 1870. An Infants School building was added to the east of the original school building after 1870, it appears on a map for the first time in 1894. This now houses the music rooms and gym. A transfer of several streets, including Arlington Road, into the parish of St Michael's, Camden, circa 1900, led to trusteeships of the schools being handed over to the Vicar and Trustees on 3rd May 1906, and them being re-named St. Michael's.

Responsibility for the schools was transferred to the Ministry of Education in 1961, and then to the London Diocesan [Anglican] Board of Education on 16th October, 1968. When St. Michael's School was re-located to a new building in Camden Street in 1969, the Diocesan Board were granted planning consent to redevelop the site for residential use. However, when approached to sell the site for continued use as a Christian school, they accepted the offer even though it was lower than the commercial value of the land. Consequently, on 2nd November, 1970, the land and school buildings, which comprised the main school building, gatehouse, and outside toilet block on the southwest side of the building, were sold to the Cavendish School Education Trust.

In 1993, the site occupied by the Gas Board on the western boundary of the school was sold to the Cavendish School; situated on a backland site between the school and Camden House, the approach was via Inverness Street. The refurbishment of the main Gas Board premises created substantial additional space, and also improved the building services. The Gas Board car park was also a benefit, for the first time providing vehicular access to the school for staff and visitors.

The refurbished accommodation, re-named the St. Luke's block, was ready for use by September 1994. The school buildings were designated St Michael's [main block], St Luke's [main Gas Board building on Inverness Street], and St Mark's [gatehouse on Arlington Road]. In January 1995, a link hallway was created in the former Gas Board boiler house providing direct access to the new St Luke's block.

In 2004 the new single storey administration block was built linking the Victorian St Michael's building with the St Luke's Gas Board building.

Circa 2008 a glass, metal and timber canopy, with structure painted white, was erected outside the lunch hall to create a route from the reception to the lunch hall that is protected from the rain.

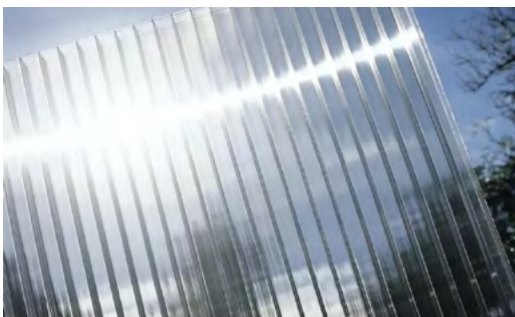
In 2016 St Mary's Hall was built and a new entrance building erected on the site of the old car park in the north part of the site, providing a main entrance from Inverness Street. The building comprises a main entrance and foyer, assembly hall and four classrooms, with direct access from Inverness Street to the reception area within the St. Luke's block

2.2.2 Main Canopy: The canopy does not require any demolition and does not require foundations so the ground can be left intact. It only touches the St Michael's building in three places, where joists are secured to the existing brick walls. It therefore has no permanent impact on the historic structures of the site and is entirely removable. The canopy will partially obscure the entrances to the gym and music block in the old Infants School building from the upper windows along Parkway, affording greater privacy to the girls.

2.2.3 Lunch hall Canopy: The existing canopy was built against the dining hall in around 2008 with thick white painted timber cladding around metal poles on foundations sunk into the ground. This canopy has no historical merit and will be demolished to make way for a much slimmer and more elegant structure which will reuse the existing column spacing and foundations. Therefore the new structure will have minimal permanent impact on the historic structures. The ugly IT cables, which run along the brick wall above the existing canopy will be encased in simple white panel screens so that they are not accessible to the pupils which will greatly improve this facade. This canopy is not visible to any neighbours save for oblique views from upper windows on Arlington Road and is partially visible at a distance of over 30m from two upper windows on Parkway.



Laser cut douglas fir plywood pattern to main canopy roof



Material palette (clockwise from upper left):
Portland Roach stone; Douglas fir plywood; twinwall polycarbonate; douglas fir beam

2 DESIGN PROPOSAL

2.3 LAYOUTS

Refer to all submitted plans, sections and elevations.

2.3.1 CANOPY

Refer to: 217_A_04-01_-PROPOSED PLAN CANOPY

Supported by three columns and three beams fixed to the existing building. The roof steps back by 500 mm along all facades to enable window cleaning and allow light to fall into rooms. Latticework laser cut from marine grade douglas fir plywood is fixed to the beams from underneath to provide shading and will create a delicate shadow pattern of leaves on the floor and wall. Twinwall polycarbonate sheets with a standard aluminium glazing bar system will be installed above the joists which will provide rain protection. Portland Roach rocks form the foundation of the columns which avoid deep foundations and act as seating/climbing elements at the same time. The columns will have a Portland Roach stone base up to 700 mm and will be douglas fir timber above. This stone datum will be carried throughout both schemes to provide protection to timber elements from the wet floor.

2.3.2 CLIMBING STRUCTURE

Refer to: 217_A_03_01_-PROPOSED PLAN AND ELEVATION-CLIMBING NET

The existing canopy will be raised and will shelter a mesh tunnel underneath. The tunnel can be accessed at two points with climbing/playing elements within. A long metal slide will offer a quick way out. The columns and roof follow the same design principles as the main canopy: the douglas fir timber columns will have a Portland Roach base with a continuous datum. The first steps of the stair will also be stone up to the same datum to protect the base from rain building up on the floor. Twinwall polycarbonate sheets for the roof will allow the structure to be used on rainy days. A denser mesh to the base of the tunnel obscures the view from directly below.

2.4 MATERIALITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

Refer to: 204-A-03_01-C1 (front facade) and 204-A-03_03-C1 (rear facade).

A simple material palette of douglas fir, Portland Roach stone, polycarbonate twinwall roofing and natural rope mesh is used throughout. The materials are all sourced within the UK and are highly sustainable and cost efficient, with a robust, long life and from renewable sources. They have been chosen for their strong natural patterning and geological interest to enable conversations with the pupils about their origins and properties. Metal components are minimised due to their high embodied energy.

2.5 LANDSCAPING

The new landscape design for the courtyard integrates the needs of the school sensitively into the existing space. The natural materials used for the new canopies are used for benches and planters. Round shapes of the bedding, planters and benches will soften the existing hard corners and make for a safer play environment.

Abundant planting is introduced to the play areas to reduce surface water run off, reduce overheating in summer and provide a highly sensory environment for play that can be enjoyed by all pupils. The planting will continue the existing planting scheme of native species.

2.6 ACCESS

There is no change to the access through the playgrounds from the existing condition. Currently all the courtyards are at level access. Care has been taken to provide a range of play equipment and experiences that can also be enjoyed by less able-bodied pupils, including steps up the climbing frame (rather than a ladder), a wide hammock and planting and growing areas.



3 SUMMARY

The above proposals will enhance the educational provision with no harm to residential and visual amenity and with no adverse impacts to the school gym building and will enhance the dining hall, resulting in an overall benefit to heritage assets. A previous retrospective application for a canopy in the Early Years playground was approved in 2015 which was far closer to neighbouring residential gardens and much bulkier in appearance.

The proposals therefore comply with the development plan and with national policy and local guidance.

The applicant would like to install the structures in August 2025 and looks forward to discussing the application with officers so that an early and favourable determination can be made in time for the new school year at the start of September.