



equilibrium

A R C H I T E C T S

Design and Access Statement

**Proposed SEN Hub adjacent to Edgar Wood Academy,
Heywood Old Road, Middleton.**

Rev B

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1.0 - Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Equilibrium Architects Ltd on behalf of Rochdale Council to support a detailed planning application for a new 64 place Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) school on vacant land off Heywood Old Road, Middleton.

The statement explains the evolution of the design from initial site assessment and feasibility proposal, through pre-application submission, to final, RIBA Stage 3 design which is submitted for detailed planning approval by Rochdale Council.

This D&A Statement explains how Rochdale Council, as client and planning authority, Redwood school as end user, as well as Design Officer feedback from the pre application submission, has helped to shape the scheme into a fully developed RIBA stage 3 design proposal.

This design and access statement is to be read alongside the Planning Statement prepared by Paul Butler Associates, which seeks to justify the development of a vacant site set within a Green Space Corridor designation, including how all of the various design disciplines and supporting studies have helped shape the proposed SEND school - to create a high-quality learning environment for neurodivergent children within the Rochdale Borough and thereby reduce the reliance on out-of-borough placements which are costly and unsustainable.

2.0 - Site Context and Analysis

2.1 – Site Location and Context

The development site comprises approximately 8 acres of vacant land adjacent Edgar Wood Academy and located off Heywood Old Road, Middleton. The proposed SEND site is just over 6 miles from the centre of Rochdale and just under 3 miles from Heywood town centre. The site is bounded to the northwest and northeast by houses (including a new housing development off Langley Lane), with Edgar Wood Academy and sports field to the southwest and Bowlee Recreation Park located to the southeast.

2.2 – Site Analysis

The site comprises open grassland which is currently used for grazing horses. The land has a gentle, upward slope from Heywood Old Road up to Langley Lane, with houses located on the upper site boundary and along Wrigley Fold. Access to the site is via a narrow strip of land, which is bounded on the left-hand side by Whittle Brook and Heywood Old Road, with sports field to Edgar Wood Academy on the right-hand

side. The Edgar Wood Academy building is a dominant feature within the immediate site area, which restricts the southwest facing views, creating an enclosed, inward-looking site, with limited views of adjacent areas, including Heywood Old Road, and across a new housing development at the junction of Heywood Old Road and Langley Lane.

Upon entering the narrow site access, the feeling is of an area of grassland which opens out and gently slopes upwards (from Whittle Brook), with houses located on the upper boundary (to Wrigley Fold) and which form a dominant feature silhouetted against the northeastern skyline.

The site analysis drawing below shows the shape and orientation of the site, point of access (from Heywood Old Road) and along the side of Whittle Brook), the sun path and the site's relationship to the Edgar Wood Academy and to the houses on the upper boundary, along Wrigley Fold.

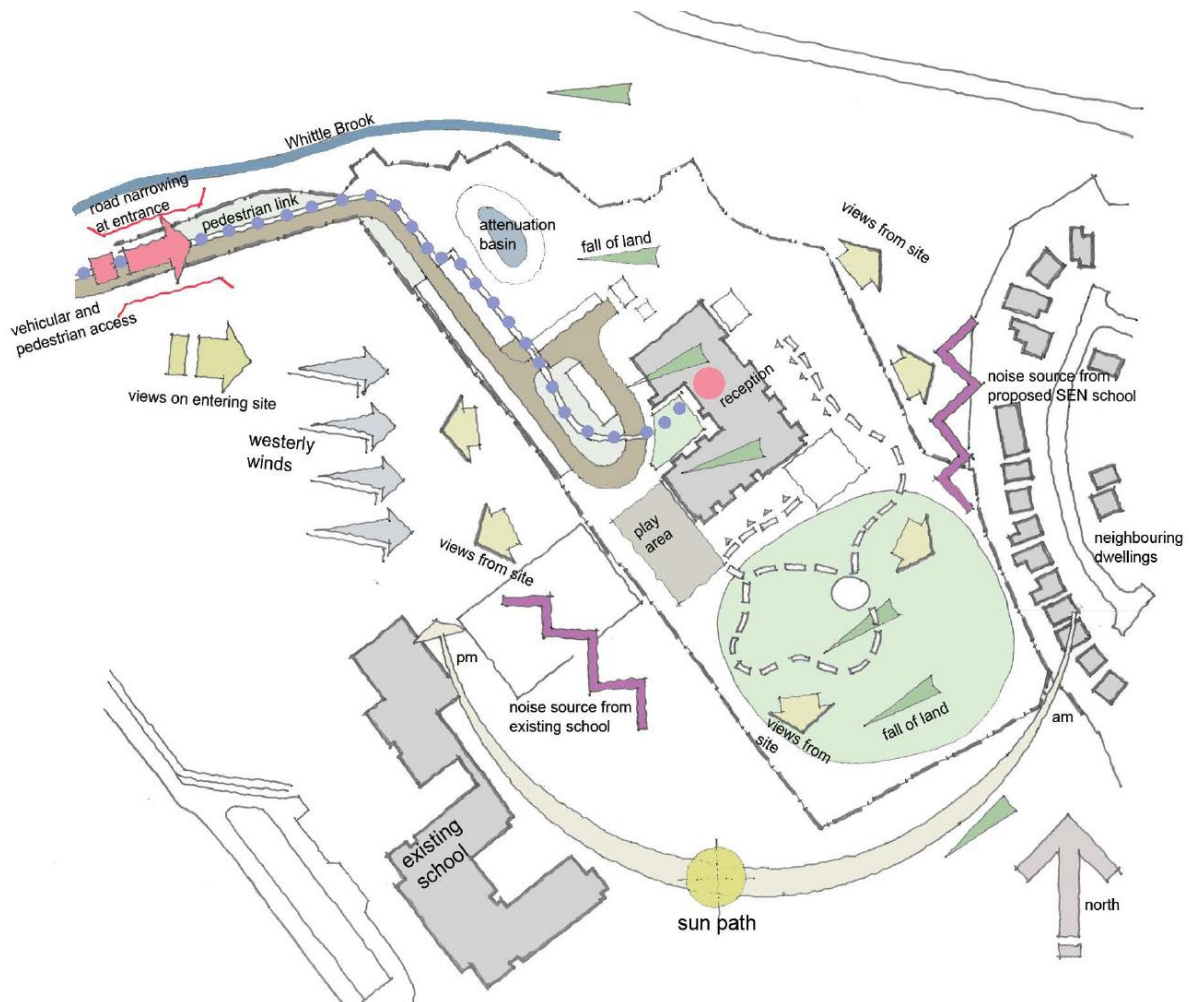


Fig 1. Site Analysis and Context Diagram

2.3 – Site Constraints

The site lies within a designated Green Space Corridor and is classified as Protected Open Land. The site itself lies to the south of Birch Village Conservation Area, with the Edgar Wood Academy located to the southwest. The site is not within Green Belt. The site boundaries comprise metal security fencing to the boundary to the Edgar Wood site, with hedgerows and fencing to the other sides of the site. There are trees evident on the site (including a small, wooded area to the northeast) with Whittle Brook forming a physical barrier to the northwest boundary of the site.

2.4 – Site Opportunities

The narrow site access leading from the Edgar Wood Academy entrance creates a somewhat, restricted view into the main site area, which helps retain a level of privacy for the SEND school. The access road and footpath will be restricted through use of a simple barrier to minimise anti-social behaviour when the school is closed. At the end of the narrow, site access the site immediately opens out, creating a sense of expansion, and where the proposed school building and external activity areas to be located higher up the site, creating the feeling that the building is important as a place for pupils to study and learn and to develop their life skills. The car parking area, road gyratory and dropping off / picking up point will be clearly laid out ahead and beyond the site's main security gates restricting access to the school for pupils, staff and official visitors. The school entrance courtyard and building are to be located on an elevated plateau, with the surrounding site area rising to the small woodland and rear gardens to the houses on Wrigley Fold, creating a backdrop to the school building in the foreground.

The existing security fence and buildings to the Edgar Wood Academy creates a strong visual boundary to the front of the SEND site, with the grassed areas and gently sloping, soft landscaping and nature trail being developed for pupils to 'let off steam' and rebalance themselves if they become anxious or overloaded. The elevated views from the school and across the site and beyond the sports field to the Edgar Wood Academy, should provide visual relief from the site and help to create a sense of expansiveness from this somewhat inward-looking site.



Fig 2. Existing Site Photographs

3.0 - Initial Commission / Pre Application Submission

Equilibrium Architects were commissioned by Rochdale Council in June 2024 to develop feasibility proposals for a 64 pupil SEND Hub on the land adjacent Edgar Wood Academy site and where the initial scheme proposals were to be developed around an outline briefing statement provided by the Council and based on Building Bulletin104 principles.

Following an outline assessment of the development site area and review of possible building arrangements on the sloping site (including possible use of a 2-storey plan arrangement to minimise the footprint area on a sloping site), an initial single storey, feasibility layout was developed with classrooms wrapped around a central courtyard,

with the main school entrance facing onto the car park and drop off point for pupils, staff and visitors.

The diagram below shows how the main components of the outline brief (access road, car parking and drop off point, external play areas and building) could be arranged on the site and how they related to each other. The feasibility layout represented our initial design idea for the SEND hub at the proposed Redwood site.



Fig 3. Pre Application Site Layout

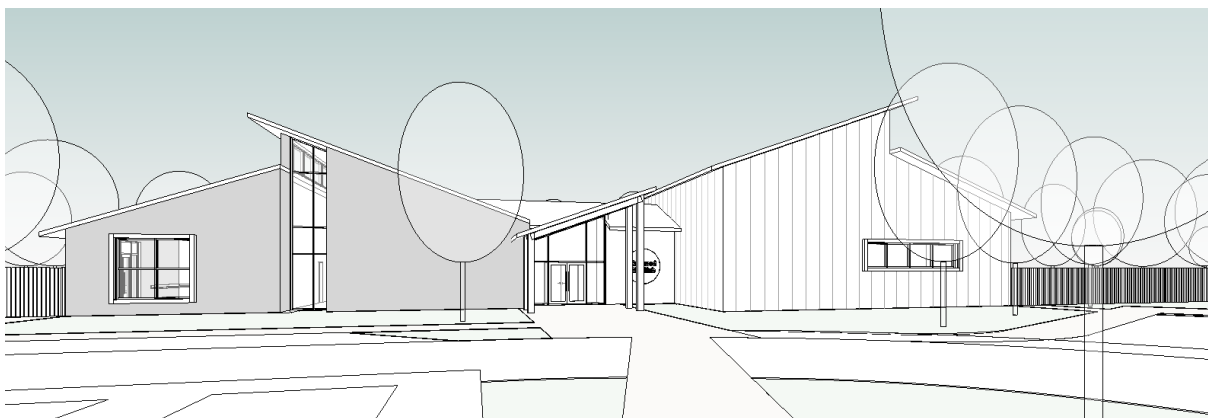


Fig 4. Conceptual Front Elevation (Pre Application)

The initial feasibility proposals were costed to confirm viability of the project and then submitted as a Pre Application to Rochdale Council on 20th December 2024 to gauge the likely outcome of a planning application and Pre Application feedback was received on 29th May 2025 (Ref PREAPP/00146/24).

It was acknowledged within the Pre Application feedback that the proposed SEND School represented a much-needed form of public infrastructure and where a detailed planning application for the site should, in principle, be supported by the Council. The existing, open, grassland site currently has no recent planning history, nor does it include any Public Rights of Way. The site is on the edge of the adjacent Birch Village Conservation Area.

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT FOR PROPOSED SEND HUB ON LAND OFF HEYWOOD RD.
MIDDLETON. FOR ROCHDALE L.A. EQUILIBRIUM ARCHITECTS LTD JULY 2026

including all relevant supporting information, that the development of the site would need to be justified against the site's designation within a Green Space Corridor and as Protected Open Land which afford the land significant protection, as if it were in Greenbelt, and where a satisfactory case for Very Special Circumstances would need to be made if a planning application was to be approved.

The feedback also confirmed that a planning application for the proposed SEND School would also need to be considered against the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), as well as the relevant Development Plan policies – including Places for Everyone (PfE) Joint Development Plan, Rochdale's adopted Core Strategy (CS), and saved Unitary Development Plan (UDP).

The pre application feedback also provided details of the required supporting studies and reports that would be required to validate and address each of the relevant planning considerations before planning approval could be granted.

For a detailed review of the pre application feedback, including the opinions of all the relevant consultees, refer to Paul Butler Associates' detailed Planning Statement.

The main consultation feedback relating to the design of the proposed school building and site, was provided by Rochdale Council's Design Officer who recommended that the scheme should:

- *Demonstrate high-quality design* – through exploration of how the site's potential (with its interesting topography and natural landscape) can be enhanced through the integration of the building with the surrounding landscape – to achieve a much stronger design solution for the SEND school.
- *Be more innovative and create better architecture* – through the development of healthy and inclusive environments for users of the scheme.
- *Create a stronger relationship with the landscape* – to directly benefit the interaction of pupils with nature through the use of dedicated outdoor learning spaces, sensory gardens and accessible natural play areas.
- *Improve the entrance experience* – to create a welcoming and accessible arrival experience for learners at the start of their school days.
- *Provide car park screening* – to minimise the visual and noise impact of the car parking and drop off areas on the learning spaces, through use of physical barriers / landscaped spaces and space separation.
- *Improve building orientation and internal / external space relationships* – through opening the building out to the landscape, to minimise barrier between inside and outside spaces.
- *Refinement of materials and fenestration* – through use of a more interesting and varied range of materials, including assessment of areas of glazing to maximise extent of natural daylight to internal learning spaces, while avoiding overheating in the summer months

- *Enhanced outdoor learning provision* – through close interaction of indoor and external learning spaces, to encourage learning, create healthy and inclusive environments.
- *Improved internal spatial quality* – by creating views and linkages with external spaces and the wider surrounding areas.

The above feedback was carefully considered, with design changes to address each of the points raised, firmly integrated into the revised design proposals for the proposed SEND School at this site.

5.0 - Engagement with the School

5.1 – Brief Analysis

Following assessment feedback of the initial feasibility proposals by Rochdale Council, and taking onboard the Pre Application feedback from the Design Officer's comment, a critical review of the briefing requirements was undertaken with the end users at Redwood School and where it was clear that a structured approach to development of the project brief was required to both define the spatial and qualitative requirements of the project, and to allow development of a high level of design detail, so that the project proposals could be assessed with certainty, confirming both the cost and programming viability for the project at an early stage and in parallel with the developing brief and scheme proposals which were starting to take shape.

What was clear from the early discussions with the client and end user of the scheme, was that a number of the worthwhile ideas piloted within the initial feasibility proposals should be developed further within the emerging brief and as part of the initial design ideas for the new SEND hub. For example, the sensory courtyard included within the initial feasibility scheme was considered a worthwhile feature and which could be used as a reception space, to allow the pupils to calm themselves down in preparation for a learning day at school. The double height hall space was also considered a valuable point of reference when approaching the school and especially at the start of term time and on open days, when large numbers of learners and parents may be visiting the school for the first time. The use of home zones (as a safe and familiar environment / anchor points for autistic learners), as well as way - finder features within the building and site layout, were also considered important elements that were first piloted within initial feasibility scheme and should be integrated into the evolving brief and concept proposals.

The diagram below expresses how we saw the main components of the brief relating to both the site and to each other, as an initial design idea for the SEND hub at the proposed Redwood site.

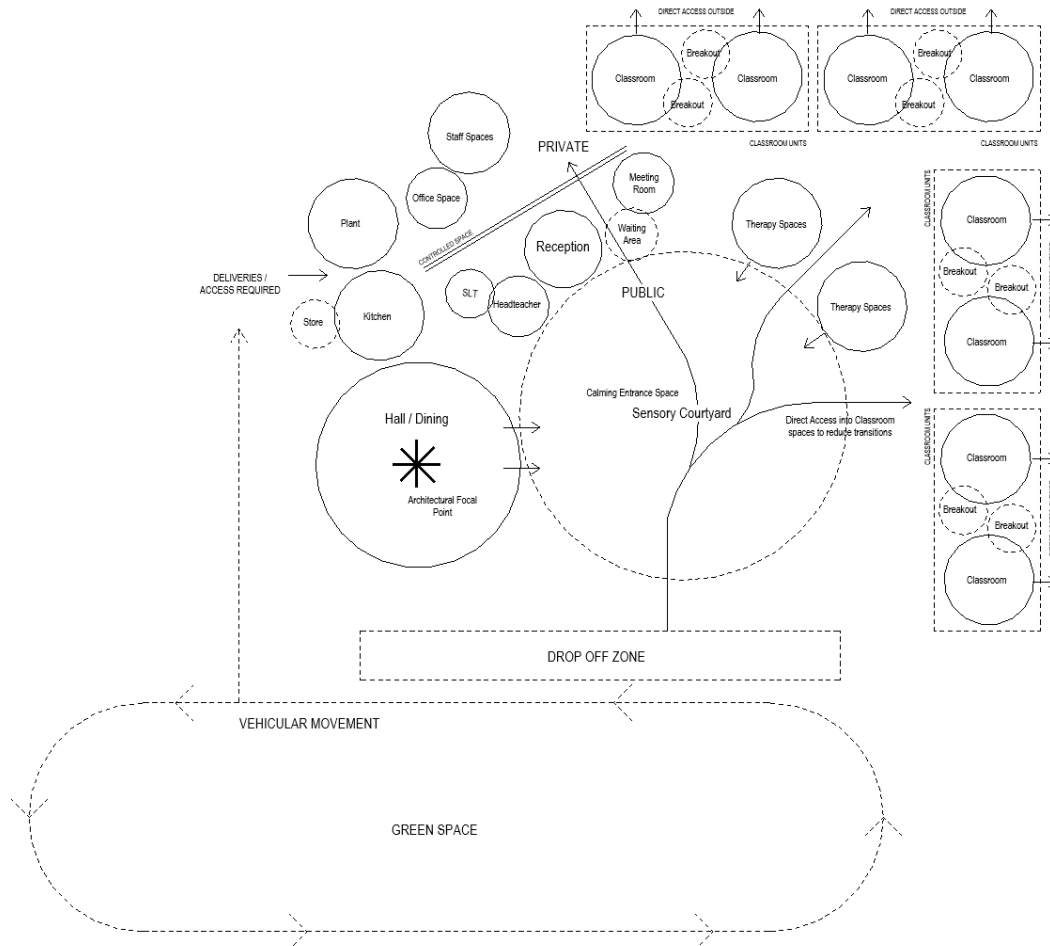


Fig 5. Conceptual Diagram following Briefing Analysis

5.2 – Brief Concept

While the practical and physical requirements / constraints of the project were seen as fundamental drivers in the development of the brief for the SEND hub, it was clear at a very early stage, that the main elements of the brief had already started to become embedded within our design for the building - the inclusion of a sensory courtyard as a reception / calming / point of entry into the school, the use of the hall space as a reference point, as well as the way-finder features and use of homes zones as good examples of our early thinking. It was also clear that the successful delivery of the project was going to require an element of off-site manufacture, which could run in parallel with the significant ground works which were required to physically make the

site work as a setting for a SEND School, thereby reducing the overall construction programme to achieve a target completion date of autumn 2027.

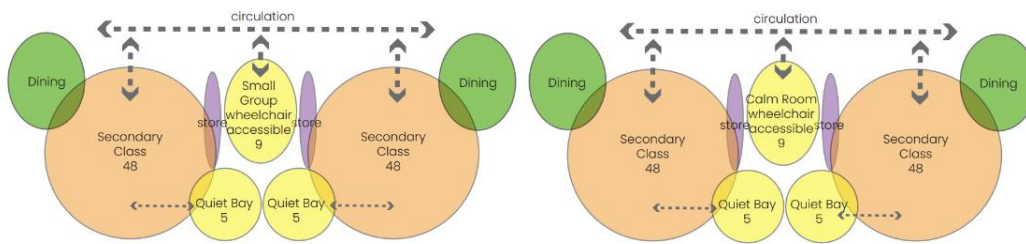


Fig 6. Typical Home Zone Cluster Diagrams

Cost constraints had also become a significant consideration for the scheme, (the initial cost plan proving to be inadequate for the proposed building works), and it became clear that the developing proposals needed to ensure that they were both in accordance with DfE requirements for a SEND school, and also that they were deliverable within the budget and time constraints specified by the Council.

To develop an early cost / viability plan for the proposed school a DfE based schedule of accommodation (SoA) tool was used to both develop and accurately define the area requirements for each of the required spaces within the SEND hub and based around the use of home zones for both KS3 and KS4 learners.

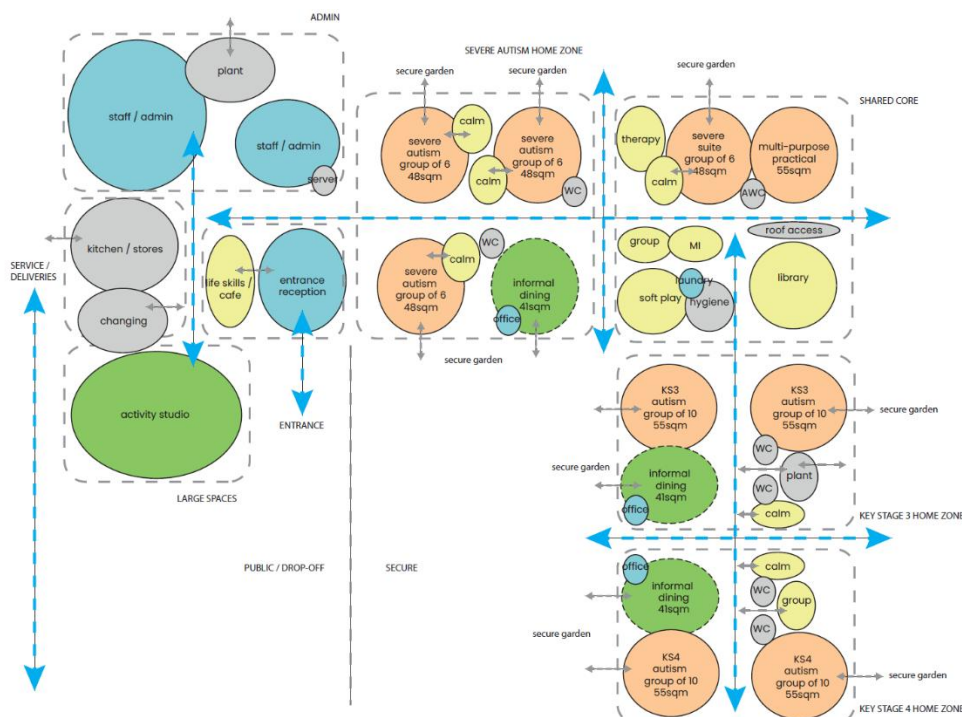


Fig. 7 Proposed Room Adjacencies

Following a review and reassessment of the learning requirements of the 60 pupils to be located at the Redwood SEND Hub (the majority of learners to be located at the proposed school having severe autism), it was agreed that as a starting point the accommodation should seek to include: a separate severe autism zone comprising 3 classes of 6 learners, (including calm rooms off the classroom), a shared core with multi-purpose practical and severe suites (again including calm rooms located off classrooms), a KS3 home zone (for autism and comprising 2 classes of 10), and finally a KS4 home zone (autism) comprising 2 classes of 10 – both including calm rooms off circulation areas as above.

It was agreed with the end users that this mix of home zones could provide the flexibility of use of a 'severe suite' and where this could be located with the general autism classes accommodating groups of up to 12 learners – thereby acting as an overflow / relief valve principle, given that groups of up to 12 pupils for autism would be considered to be too large within a SEND setting.

The structured (DfE / SoA) approach adopted for the development of the concept brief offered the clear benefit that the developing scheme was in alignment with the DfE guidelines (even where DfE approval was not required by the Council), and where a tight control of floor areas (and corresponding costs) became an important driver for the initial designs for the Redwood SEND hub.

The early decision to incorporate off-site / modular methods of construction provided an opportunity to develop the scheme proposals around a clearly defined, modular grid. The gridded, design discipline created both constraints, as well as opportunities for the developing scheme – noting that there was some concern amongst the design team that the building should avoid looking too 'modular' if possible. An early scheme layout below shows how a modular gridded design can look too 'rigid' in its planning.



Fig. 8 Layout Configurations Using SOA Tool

5.3 - Scheme Development

The initial scheme proposals were further developed with project leads / end users from Redwood School, who offered both positive and constructive feedback and guidance on the refinement of the plan layout, including a focus on the importance of appropriate room adjacencies, and where a simple plan arrangement, with clear circulation routes, helped shape the plan arrangement for the school building, as well as arrangement of the wider site area.

The plan arrangement below represents an early proposal to create a modular based, building plan with the accommodation wrapped around a central courtyard, which was designed as a reception / decision space in its own right and where learners could be directed towards their own home zone entry point at the start of a new day of learning. The activity hall is the first part of the building that you encounter when arriving at school, with a small café / life skills area located adjacent the staff and visitor reception area. The staff areas are located in the quietest part of the school (remote from the home zones) and site – with views over the woodland area to the rear. Direct access is provided to the staff / admin / school support areas to the rear of the building, with access to the home zones / learning areas being via a primary circulation route that links the other parts of the school to the main entrance area. The schematic plan below shows a more developed scheme arrangement for the SEND hub.

for the school building, as well as arrangement of the wider site area.



Fig. 9 Developed Draft Floor Plan

plan below shows a more developed scheme arrangement for the SEND hub.

6.0 - Arrangement of the Site and Design Background

6.1 – Site Arrangement

The reasonably narrow, sloping, rectangular site essentially dictates the location and arrangement of the school on the site. There is only one possible access route into the site, and which is via a new spur leading from the existing entrance to the Edgar Wood Academy and from Heywood Old Road.

It was clear from the end user meetings and from the Design Officer feedback that the arrangement of the site should allow for a:

- Secure, but welcoming environment, including a gated access

- Clear and legible circulation route (from the entrance to the school), providing safe pedestrian routes
- Clear zoning of the different elements of the site
- Sensory appropriate design to the landscaping
- Appropriate boundary treatments – for security and noise purposes
- Step free / fully Part M compliant access routes around the site
- Landscape-led design for the soft and hard ground / surface finishes
- Extensive native planting and habitat creation
- Appropriate external lighting

The arrangement of the main site area was primarily dictated by the entry point, leading from the existing, narrow access route, with the drop off point, car parking and road gyratory located at the front of the site and as you approach the school building. The school is positioned in the middle of the site (to avoid an excessive access road length and to locate the school building as close to the site entrance as possible to assist those pupils and parents / carers who may be arriving on foot. Car parking areas should be screened from view from the main school building as far as possible and are therefore, located remote from the courtyard area and home zones.

The access arrangements include 2 points of security – firstly a barrier across the narrow access road (to provide an initial level of security to the SEND site access) and where this followed a point raised during the community consultation meeting, around the prevention of anti-social use of this access road / narrow piece of land during evenings and weekends, including nuisance to the occupants of the adjacent houses along Heywood Old Road. A further security gate is provided across the footpath and road within the school site area – creating the main level of control of visitors and pupils and before reaching the car parking and drop off area as you approach the school building. Staff parking is located along both sides of the access road, with minibus parking located adjacent the gyratory turning facility.

A large proportion of pupils arriving at the school will be by taxi or minibus. The gyratory road arrangement will allow queuing of vehicles during busy drop off and pick up times, without the need to reverse or undertake complicated manoeuvres which can create risks and hazards at these busy times for pupils and staff arriving at the school on foot. An additional point of security is also provided for pupils directly in front of the school building and via a low-level fence and gates positioned at the front of the courtyard area – from which pupils can access their own point of entry to their particular home zone. Each home zone entry point around the courtyard is highlighted using coloured wall panels located adjacent the access door, including feature canopies over entrances to provide a level of protection from rain during winter months.

The proposed school building is located within the centre of the main site area, with the access road following the general uphill gradient of the land leading to a level plateau, where you arrive at the school courtyard, with the MUGA pitch and the landscape / activity areas and nature trail rising further upwards towards the nearby housing on Wrigley Fold.

The school accommodation provides enclosure on 3 sides of the reception courtyard, with the main activity space located to the front and left of the space and as a principal element within the overall mass of the school building when arriving at the school. The building and courtyard orientation has been adjusted from the initial pre application scheme, to face directly west and towards the gyratory / drop off point, with views across the open sports pitches to the Edgar Wood Academy possible. The courtyard will benefit from passive solar gain all year round, as well as improved daylighting into the Home Zones located around the open landscaped courtyard area. The landscaped, courtyard is a secure space, being bounded by a 1.5m high perimeter fence and includes footpaths to each pupil entrance and seating areas, high quality ground materials and feature planting – to make this a special external space for pupils, staff and visitors within the school complex.

Staff parking and service vehicle access (for stationary, equipment and daily meal deliveries) is located along the left-hand side of the school building, with the MUGA pitch and activity landscaping, including sensory trail, opening up towards the upper section of the site and to the right of the building. The external site areas remote from the school building will follow the general upward sloping topography of the site, with some localised levelling for play areas and the nature trail. A feature pond area / swale is to be created near to the site entrance – to create an additional biodiversity and will be used to provide a level of attenuation for surface water run-off from the site, with the outfall from the waterbody discharging into Whittle Brook.

6.2 – Movement Around the Site

The pedestrian footpath and roadways arrangement leading from the initial point of entry into the site (from the Edgar Wood Academy junction) will provide easy and unhindered access around the site, for those arriving on foot and via vehicles, and up to the main entrance courtyard of the school. The location of the car parking areas and drop of point near to the main site access minimises the extent of hard road surfaces, from a cost, as well a visual and environmental point of view – with vehicles limited to the lower section of the site and away from external play / activity areas.

The design of the roads and footpaths, including choice of materials has been carefully considered to fully accord with Approved Document M (Access to and Use of Buildings) principles – so that access is possible for all modes of movement all the way around the site, including the nature trail, and where road and footpath gradients

have been designed to accommodate wheelchairs as far as is practical given the existing topography of the site.

The design of the footpaths and road network within the site has been carefully considered following the guidance provided by the Council's Design Officer, including specialist highways input from highways consultant (SCP) which has led to:

- A clear and legible approach to the school
- Secure access control via the inner security gates and courtyard enclosure
- A reformed and better designed internal road and footpath layout
- Improved turning geometry and drop off point for vehicles
- Pedestrian and vehicular separation where possible
- Inclusion of an appropriate number of Car Spaces (65), provision of EV Charging points, appropriate minibus parking spaces (12) and secure cycle spaces (32)

The sensory / orientation courtyard will provide the primary access route into the building – either via the main entrance (for staff and visitors) or via individual home zone entrances for learners. Access to external activity / break out areas will be directly from the home zones – allowing learners can take time to unwind and calm themselves down if they need space to do so during classroom sessions. The MUGA pitch is accessible from each home zone external areas, or via the main corridor access link at the far end of the building. The sensory / woodland path can also be accessed directly from the home zones, or primary access route via the external paths strategically located around the site. Perimeter fencing located around each of the home zone external areas will help define allocated activity areas and will keep learners safe and contained during school days. Access control will be incorporated into the arrangement of all access points, including external gates and entry / exit doors to the school building.

The use of distinctive and easily distinguishable elements and features / use of distinctive surface materials both within the building exterior and within the landscape design, including the use of Wayfinder signage, will assist pupils and visitors in locating the different areas of the building and in navigating the site.

7.0 - Architectural Design Proposals / Design Response to Feedback

7.1 – Internal Arrangement

The RIBA Stage 2 layout proposals that had been developed following the initial briefing work undertaken with the end users at Redwood School and had been costed to confirm viability of the project, were used as a basis for the development of the RIBA Stage 3 design.

From the detailed meetings held with the end users, including the feedback from the Rochdale's Design Officer, it was clear that some broad design principles should be adopted within the review of the Stage 2 proposals and prior to the development of a finalised design layout including:

- Clear zoning of the building was going to be key to a successful design layout
- Predictable circulation routes around the school and to each specific area, including clear wayfinding and use of natural daylight was key
- The use of local widening at nodes on circulation routes to provide interest and spaces for conversation and respite are valuable elements on corridors and help to reduce institutional character of the building
- Provide direct access to outdoor spaces from each of the home zones
- Design and detail the internal spaces in a way that reduces sensory stress
- Provide a secure reception area that includes clear visitor management and administrative oversight
- Use of a landscaped courtyard area as a calming / reception / decision space for pupils, including clear wayfinding to each home zone and school entrances

The use of home zones piloted within the RIBA Stage 2 proposals had already been accepted as an established element within the design of the school and as the most appropriate way forward in creation of self-contained learning spaces – including areas for teaching and learning, areas for dining, break-out and calming spaces – all directly connected to external covered areas which can be used for outdoor learning and for 'letting off steam' if a pupil becomes over-anxious.

The use of individual entrance points from the courtyard to each Home Zones for the KS3 and KS4 learners was already embedded within the design - where pupils are encouraged to become self-sufficient and learn to manage their own daily routines. Individual calming rooms attached to each classroom were an essential part of the classroom design within each home zone.

Therapy and soft play spaces, medical rooms, WCs and dedicated stores are located around each of the home zones within the teaching / learning part of the school – linked by a central circulation route / corridor, which can be isolated through the use of controllable doors across corridors to retain pupils within their own home zone.

The left-hand section of the floor plan includes the area for staff, including support areas and welfare facilities – located away from the home zones for staff respite and where views are possible into the nearby woodland area. The small life skills café area provides pupils with opportunities to learn useful, everyday skills, including preparing simple food and drinks for other learners, staff and visitors. The small, open - plan preparation area allows a level of independence for pupils, while being supervised by staff within the entrance / reception space.

The Activity studio is the most prominent geometric form within the design and is the first building element that you see when approaching the school. It is purposely located near to the entrance of the school and where it is intended that the space can be used for a variety of activities, including games, trampolining and small assemblies. The flexible space also has the potential to be used for community-based activities and for open days – housing displays, training activities and presentations where large numbers of people need to be accommodated.

A small kitchen has been included for the preparation and plating of food and drinks for delivery to each home zone within heated trolleys. The kitchen is located adjacent a suitable loading area for deliveries, with suitable storage area for dry goods and heated trolleys.

Several plant rooms are located around the school to provide the necessary servicing requirements for the school, including heating, lighting, potable water and electricity. There is an external plant space provided to the rear of the school to house the heat pump units to heat the school building.

The incorporation of the reception courtyard, as a space for pupils to collect their thoughts and prepare themselves for a learning day at school was considered a fundamental element of the design for the SEND school.

The need to adopt a SEND-first design approach, including development of all of the relevant details for each of the key areas within the school, led to the detailed development of a number of different floor plan iterations – which were further refined leading to a final plan layout which was costed to confirm project viability.

There was also a need to ensure that offsite methods of construction (a modular building design), could be incorporated into the building layout, to allow construction of the building modules to be started directly after planning approval was granted. In conjunction with end users and a specialist FF&E consultant, further refinement of scheme was undertaken to finalise the floor plan layout, including floor area assessments – not only to ensure that the design aligns with the DfE guidance for SEND schools, but also to provide Rochdale Council with assurance that the scheme was deliverable within the existing budget. A finalised Schedule of Areas and Gross Internal Floor Area were then signed off by the Council which gave the green light for tendering of the modular element of the building to several suitable modular providers.

7.2 – Building Form

The building has been designed for pupils with complex autism and as such it is to be SEND-led, which will help to reduce sensory stress, through the clear use of simple forms which are easy to understand.

The form of the building has been kept as simple as possible, including linear elevations, with punched door and window openings and projecting, mono pitched canopies - providing weather protection over, and highlighting the various entrances to the school.

The stand-out element within the elevational design of the school is the geometrical form of the activity / hall space, which is incorporated as a Wayfinder feature, for visitors and pupils to locate the entrance courtyard and main school entrance. The straightforward, external form of the building (wrapped around the landscaped, entrance courtyard), also provides an indication of the plan arrangement of the building, which itself was designed to be simple in format and easy to understand.

The desire to avoid a 'modular' / temporary looking building was considered important from an early stage in the design process and where the design endeavoured to avoid the simple 'box' appearance that is familiar to current DfE school design which is often basic and bland in appearance. The need to avoid a non-contextual prefabricated 'block' was very much on our minds when we were designing the new SEND school and which is very much the design appearance of the adjacent Edgar Wood Academy building – being a dominant feature when viewed from the proposed site.

The sloping topography of the site, with strong rooflines to the houses silhouetted on the skyline to the east of the site, suggested the development of a building with a distinctive roof format. The addition of a sloping roof to a modular constructed building is not easy to achieve and adds considerable cost to the project and where the money could be used more productively elsewhere within the scheme.

We wanted to create a building with clearly visible, way-finder features as you approached the school and incorporated small, pitched roofed canopy features over the home zone and main entrances located around the courtyard, which gave the scheme a very welcoming appearance and also reflected the prominent roof slopes to the nearby houses to the east and northwest of the site. The covered external areas attached to each of the home zones, also include a sloping mono pitched roof as a further acknowledgement of the roofs of the nearby houses.

The feedback provided by the Design Officer referred to the architectural design within the pre application submission, as 'dated' and that the scheme was reminiscent of the design of an outskirt business park. It is hoped that the simple elevational format of the proposed school, including a variety of punched window openings within the design of the building's fenestration, including the incorporation of the strong, geometrical form of the activity space within the elevational composition, wrapped around the sensory courtyard, demonstrates a clear commitment to a higher quality of architectural design for the proposed SEND school on this site.

7.3 – Material Approach

Materially the design appearance of the building is driven by aesthetic, environmental and functional concerns, where external wall finishes have been carefully selected to not only provide a high level of robustness (given the use of the building as a working school), but also to provide a high level of weather resistance - given its location within a semi exposed, wooded area. A variety of materials have also been chosen to differentiate the different parts of the school building – the lightweight, vertical standing seam, metallic cladding panels of the activity hall, contrasting sharply with the textured, horizontal brickwork and composite clad elevations to the courtyard elevations and to the rest of the school building. Furthermore, the large expanse of glazing within the hall space also contrasts with the small, deeply punched openings within the other elevations around the building. The narrow, vertical seams provide a further level of detail when the hall is approached from the car park / drop off zone.

The small scale, brickwork cladding to the home zone elevations, help to create a small scale / domestic feel for the learners as they approach the building. The use of pastel coloured, smooth cladding panels adjacent each home zone entrance helps identify each pupil's allocated entry point at the start of each school day. The proposed, smooth, interlocking tiles to the roofs to the projecting entrance canopies should also help to reinforce the domestic scale and appearance of the building.

The use of a high fabric specification performance building envelope will assist in the conservation of fuel and energy and supports Rochdale Council's approach to achieving Net zero emissions within the next 10 – 15 years.

The wall and roof cladding materials indicated below show the range of colours and textures used to face the building to provide variety and layers of visual interest as you approach the building

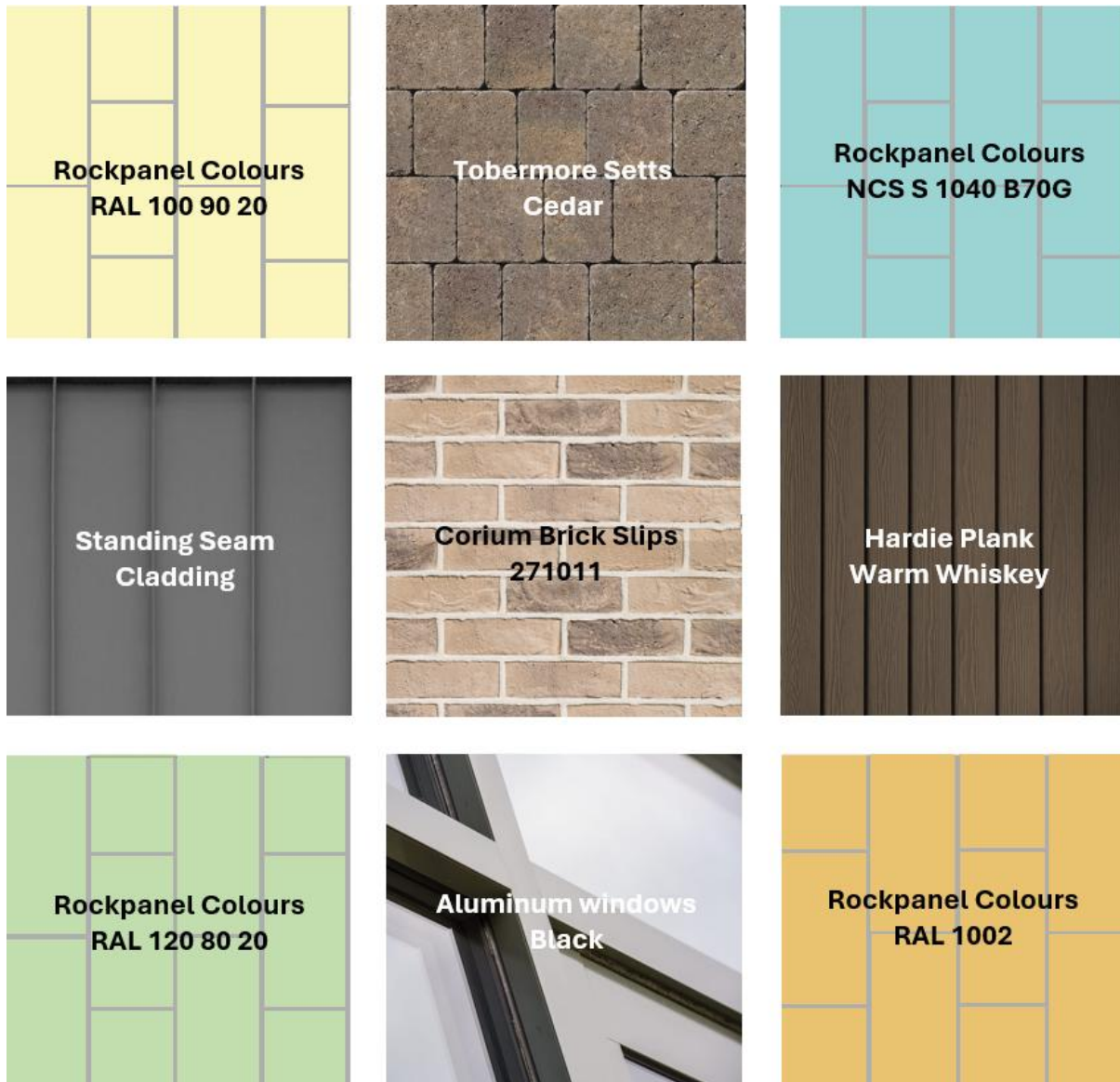


Fig 10. Proposed Materials Pallet

8.0 - Key Design Studies Supporting the Design

8.1 – Carbon and Energy Usage

The feedback and thinking regarding Carbon and Energy usage was integrated into the MEP design for the SEND school.

The design of the proposed school at this site has taken in account Greater Manchester's ambitious target to be carbon neutral by 2038. The Future Homes Standard - for all new development to operationally achieve net-zero - has informed the design of the school building. A detailed energy study was undertaken which confirmed that the design proposals for the building fabric, heating and ventilation

systems, achieved the energy requirements of both the relevant PfE policies, as well as the GMCA Guidance in respect of energy usage.

The extent of glazing – to provide adequate levels of natural daylighting to all the learning spaces - has been carefully assessed and assessment has also been undertaken to confirm that overheating of internal spaces (through the full extent of window area and through solar gain) will not occur. The detailed assessments by the MEP Engineers confirm that both requirements are satisfied.

8.2 - Highway Safety and Access

Careful consideration of the design of the highways, especially around safety and access was a key consideration in the design of the road and landscaping as you approach the SEND School, and where any likely traffic impact and transport modelling, including a comprehensive review of site accessibility by all sustainable modes of transport, was considered and integrated into the design of the vehicular and pedestrian accessways to the SEND school.



Fig 11. Proposed Site Layout

8.3 - Residential Amenity

The design of the proposed SEND School has been developed to ensure that the proposals do not adversely affect the amenity of nearby residents (of the houses along Wrigley Fold) through visual intrusion, overbearing impact, overshadowing or loss of privacy. The external sports / play facilities, including the MUGA pitch, as well as the nature trail, have the potential to increase noise levels. A noise impact assessment was undertaken on the site (see noise report prepared by Miller Goodall) to establish existing sound levels and where and assessment has confirmed that no adverse noise issues are anticipated following the development of the site for a SEND school.

The location of the school building within the middle of the site and at a much lower level than the adjacent houses (along Wrigley Fold) means that noise levels arising from school activities (including external sports) means that the design of the boundary treatments and the need for possible screening as a barrier to noise was not required as part of the design proposals, and where security alone was identified as a factor within the design of the soft landscaping along all of the site boundaries.



Fig 12. Proposed Site Section through Wrigley Fold

Careful consideration of external lighting (including any required flood lighting to external sports / social areas), was also carefully considered through a lighting assessment (prepared by Miller Goodall) – to ensure that the proposals do not have any adverse impact on nearby residential properties, including the new houses currently being constructed on the other side of Whittle Brook. No adverse lighting impact was identified through the study.

8.4 - Community Consultation

The feedback from the Community Consultation event provided valuable insights for the location of a SEND hub at this site and where the suggestions raised have been addressed through the design of the scheme. The need to avoid possible anti-social behaviour (within the narrow site access and for the houses adjacent Whittle Brook), was a key consideration for several local residents and where an additional access barrier has been provided to prevent access to this part of the site when the school is closed. Overall, the proposed SEND facilities were welcomed by all the attendees of the consultation event.

8.5 - Landscaping, Ecology and Biodiversity

The landscape design has focussed on creating planted areas which provide sensory and visual interest to the external areas, and which also help define circulation routes and provide spaces for seating opportunities to stop and spend time chatting.

The carefully designed, landscaped courtyard area, with clear pathways to each home zone entrance which are identified using different colours, and carefully selected planting should help provide a reassuring and welcoming feature for the learners accessing the school setting at the start of the school day. The planting around the external areas of the school site have been specified to provide colour, interest, variety and where Biodiversity, with native species planting and an ecological SuDS design for the swale / pond has been undertaken. On completion of the proposed school – the site should be ecologically richer than it currently is.



Fig 13. Proposed Floor Plan



Fig 9. Proposed Elevations



Fig 9. Proposed 3D Images