

**Alteration of existing building to provide 2 dwellings and  
construction of a terrace of 3 dwellings**

**At**

**The Grove School, School Lane, Dorchester, Dorset**

Design and Access Statement

April 2019

Ref: 16068 AGP





Design and Access Statements are written to help explain the design thinking behind a proposal and how the development will provide a suitable legacy for future occupants and observers. They also need to demonstrate a consideration of the wider implications in the context of the relationship with the proposal in its surroundings and with planning policy.

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Ellis Belk Associates Ltd on behalf of East Boro Housing Trust, a registered social landlord, to accompany a Planning and Listed Building Application for a development at the former Grove School, School Lane, Dorchester. The development will provide:

**A total of 5 affordable dwellings to be let at a social rent for those with learning and limited physical disabilities.**

The housing will be divided across the site with 2 No. one bedroom houses being provided in the conversion of the existing Grade II Listed original School Hall and 3 No. one bedroom, plus carer sleep over room, single storey dwellings being provided in a newly constructed terrace at the rear of the site.

There will be two carer sleep-over bedrooms provided at first floor level in the converted building over a resident's communal lounge.

A total of 6 parking spaces are to be provided on site.





The current buildings are set to the southern half of a triangular site with vehicular and pedestrian access via the south boundary entrance off School Lane. The building sits on a generally level site within the curtilage while the lie of the land to the east and west of the site boundaries slopes downhill from south to north.

The playground and yard area to the northern portion of the site are at a lower level than that of the building and has a slope from east to west.

The existing building comprises a principal former school and school hall with cross wing hall and lobby attached to the north end. Both structures are of single storey form with stucco render facades beneath pitched slate covered roofs.

Attached to the southern end of the principal hall is a single storey addition with rendered walls beneath a flat roof. Attached to the west end of the north cross wing and the west side of the principal hall are further single storey flat roofed extensions.



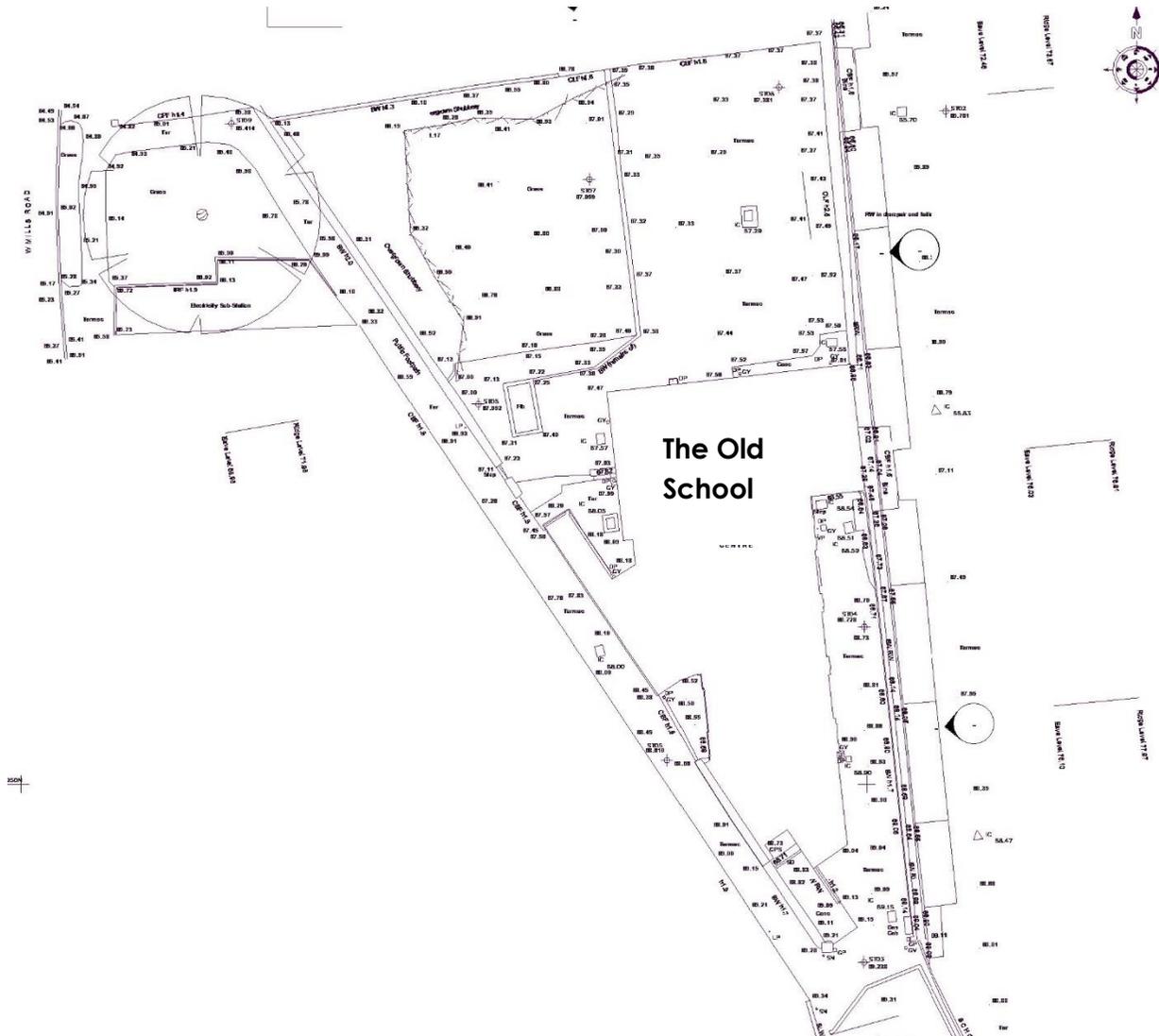
There is very little architectural precedent of note close to the site to steer the design of the proposed new terrace. The built form in the immediate vicinity is typified by 1960's and 1970's buildings consisting of substantial medium height blocks of flats to the east along The Grove, as shown in the top photograph on the left, and detached bungalows from the same period along West Mills Road as shown in the bottom photograph.



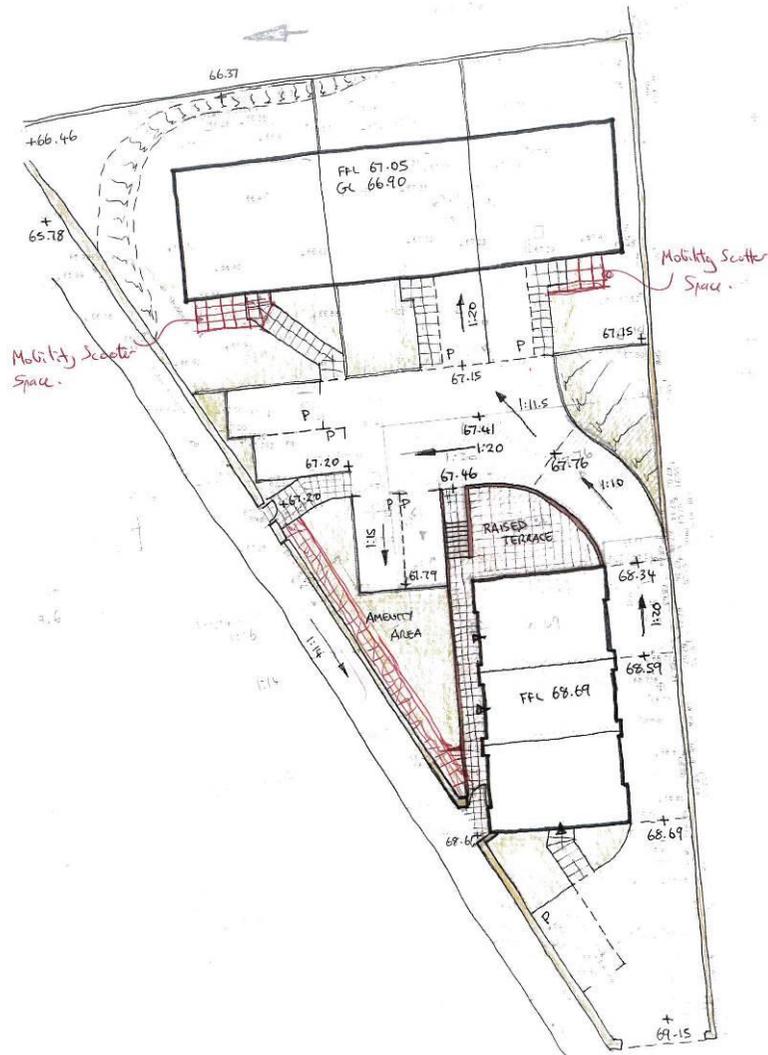
The original School Hall element of the structure provides the only building of architectural quality and it is from this that the lead has been taken for the design of the new terrace.



The photographs above show the current building from the entrance at the southern end of the site and part of the detail of the principal School Hall section of the building. This section has a simple rectangular plan, double storey height structure with a dual pitch roof finished with natural slate. There is a pediment gable to each end with a blind oculus to the southern gable. The side elevations are divided into three bays with a simple plain plinth band and cornice to each. There are plain pilasters between the bays with depressed panel details and simple Doric capitals.



- Triangular site with the only access to the public highway being at the narrow southern end of the site.
- The site falls from south to north but at a lesser degree than the surrounding road and footpath.
- Private road to the east serving the flats on Grove Road is at a lower level than the site. Resident parking alongside the full length of eastern boundary.
- Public footpath to the west of the site leading from School Lane to West Mills Road.
- Public Car Park to the front of the site in School Lane.
- The Old School Building is Grade II Listed.
- The site falls within the Dorchester Conservation Area.



- There is the opportunity to remove the poor quality later additions to the original School Hall and to re-purpose it for residential use but mainly retaining its C19<sup>th</sup> external appearance.
- The playground and yard area to the north of the site is relatively level and is suitable for the construction of additional dwellings.
- The edge of town centre location makes the site suitable for housing for those that are unable to drive due to learning or physical disabilities.
- The opportunity can be taken to lift the architectural quality of the area by the design of the new dwellings reflecting that of the school hall.
- The new dwellings can be contained within the walled boundaries of the site and give a sense of security and community.

Planning policy, both nationally and locally, through the District Council, provides a framework which makes it clear that developments which are inappropriate in their context should be refused. It is therefore fundamental that any proposal can demonstrate that it has emerged from an assessment of the sites characteristics, surrounding landscape and buildings and an appreciation of planning policy as a scheme that encompasses good design that responds to local character and history.

The West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Local Plan 2015 defines the planning policy for the area. In chapter 2 Environment and climate change the strategic approach for the plan states *“High priority will be given to protecting and enhancing the area’s heritage assets – including its Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas, and other features with local historic or cultural associations, particularly where they contribute to the area’s local distinctiveness.....Development should be of high quality design to help achieve sustainable, safe and inclusive communities, enhancing quality of life for residents and visitors, and designed in keeping with or to positively contribute towards the local identity of the area.”*

The Grove School is a Grade II Listed Building and falls within a Conservation Area, the boundary of which follows the southern, western and northern boundaries of the site. The Local Plan at paragraph 2.3.3 advises *“Wherever possible, the councils’ strategy is to ensure that historic buildings and other heritage assets that make a positive contribution to local character are put to an appropriate and viable use that is consistent with their conservation”*. At 2.3.4 the plan advises *“ Development that makes a positive contribution to, or better reveals the significance of the heritage asset, will be encouraged. One of the strategic objectives of the local plan is to protect and enhance the outstanding built environment and the local distinctiveness of places within the area”*.





At 2.3.16 the plan advises “ A listed building can be harmed through inappropriate development. Even minor alterations and extensions or development within its setting, can potentially adversely affect the significance of a listed building. The original plan form, roof, walls and openings as well as interior and exterior features should be retained”.

The resultant policy from section 2.3 of Chapter 2 is;

#### **ENV4. HERITAGE ASSETS**

- i) The impact of development on a designated or non-designated heritage asset and its setting must be thoroughly assessed against the significance of the asset. Development should conserve and where appropriate enhance the significance.
- ii) Applications affecting the significance of a heritage asset or its setting will be required to provide sufficient information to demonstrate how the proposals would positively contribute to the asset’s conservation.
- iii) A thorough understanding of the significance of the asset and other appropriate evidence including conservation area character appraisals and management plans should be used to inform development proposals including potential conservation and enhancement measures.
- iv) Any harm to the significance of a designated or non-designated heritage asset must be justified. Applications will be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal; if it has been demonstrated that all reasonable efforts have been made to sustain the existing use, find new uses, or mitigate the extent of the harm to the significance of the asset, and; if the works proposed are the optimum required to secure the sustainable use of the asset.

- v) The desirability of putting heritage assets to an appropriate and viable use that is consistent with their conservation will be taken into account.
- vi) Where harm can be justified, appropriate provision will be required to capture and record features, followed by analysis and where appropriate making findings publicly available.

Chapter 5 of the Local Plan refers to Housing. The strategic approach advises that “ Although the total projected need for affordable housing is not expected to be met in the plan period, opportunities will be taken to secure affordable homes to meet local needs”.

Paragraph 5.5.1 comments that “ The County Council is moving away from the development of traditional and sometimes institutional models of accommodation and care (e.g. traditional residential care homes), towards the development of more flexible models of accommodation and support that offer vulnerable adults increased opportunities for maintaining independence, choice and control over their lives. Increasingly, support and care is being delivered at home or through ‘Extra Care’ supported accommodation services”.



**EAST BORO**  
HOUSING • CARE • SUPPORT

Exhibition of Proposed Planning Application

## Supported Housing Scheme

for Adults with a Learning/Physical Disability at the Old School, School Lane, Dorchester

The Old School, School Lane, Dorchester  
Monday 3rd April 2017, 4pm to 7pm

The proposal is to develop the site to provide 3 new disability adapted bungalows and 2 further one bedroom houses and communal lounge in the existing Old School/Arts Centre Building.

The houses and bungalows will be owned by East Boro Housing Trust who will manage and maintain the scheme. East Boro provides housing for the sheltered elderly and people with learning disabilities and has supported 60 schemes throughout Dorset.

They will be let to people who have a learning/physical disability need supported living and who will benefit from the town centre.

Come to the exhibition and tell us what you think of the scheme.

tel: 01202 883503 info@ebht.org.uk www.ebht.org.uk

**EAST BORO**  
HOUSING • CARE • SUPPORT

East Boro Housing Trust, Faulkner House, 31 West Street, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 1JS

tel: 01202 883 503 info@ebht.org.uk www.ebht.org.uk

Alterations of existing building to provide two dwellings and construction of a terrace of three dwellings. The existing building will have the rear and single storey extension removed and be returned to its original character.

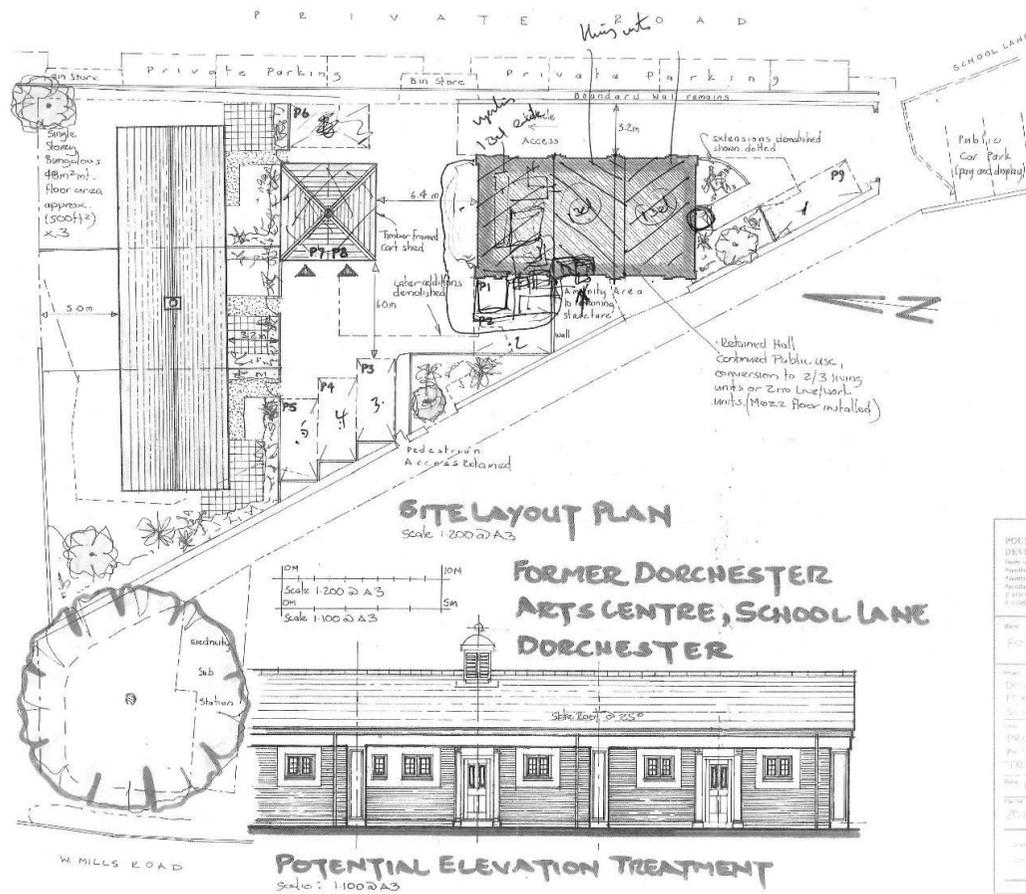
View the proposed plans prior to their submission to West Dorset District Council as a planning application in March 2017 (estimated date). After their submission, you can comment at [www.dorsetforyou.com/planning/west-dorset](http://www.dorsetforyou.com/planning/west-dorset)

If you are unable to come along to the exhibition you can view details about the proposed scheme on our website [www.ebht.org.uk/news/PlanningDorchester](http://www.ebht.org.uk/news/PlanningDorchester)

A public exhibition was hosted by East Boro Housing Trust at the former Grove School on Monday the 3<sup>rd</sup> April 2017. A leaflet was prepared (shown opposite) to advertise the event and was hand delivered to around 180 properties neighbouring the application site. The purpose of the exhibition was to gauge public opinion about the proposed development and its use for social housing.

The applicant reports that around 20 people visited the event and were talked through the proposals by East Boro Housing Trust staff who were in attendance. The general consensus of opinion was that *"the proposal was a good use of the space, providing homes for people who need it. They liked the design and layout of the site"*.

One comment that was made was about the possibility of the lights from vehicles manoeuvring in the parking area shining into the windows of the flats directly opposite in Grove Court. We have overcome this possibility by adding hedge and shrub planting behind the boundary railings as indicated on the submitted drawings.



Initial discussions were held between the Duchy of Cornwall, the previous owners of the site, and Planning Officers Andrew Martin and Mark Clitherow on 17<sup>th</sup> June 2016 to establish the principal for developing the northern section of the site and the effect any such development would have on the heritage asset.

The Duchy had prepared the sketch design shown opposite and subject to minor revisions this received favourable comment from the Officers.

A further pre-application meeting was held on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2017 with Mark Clitherow to discuss the proposal that now forms the subject of this application. His overall opinion, subject to the minor revisions listed below, is that the proposal raises no concerns from a planning point of view.

The revisions suggested and incorporated into the submitted scheme are;

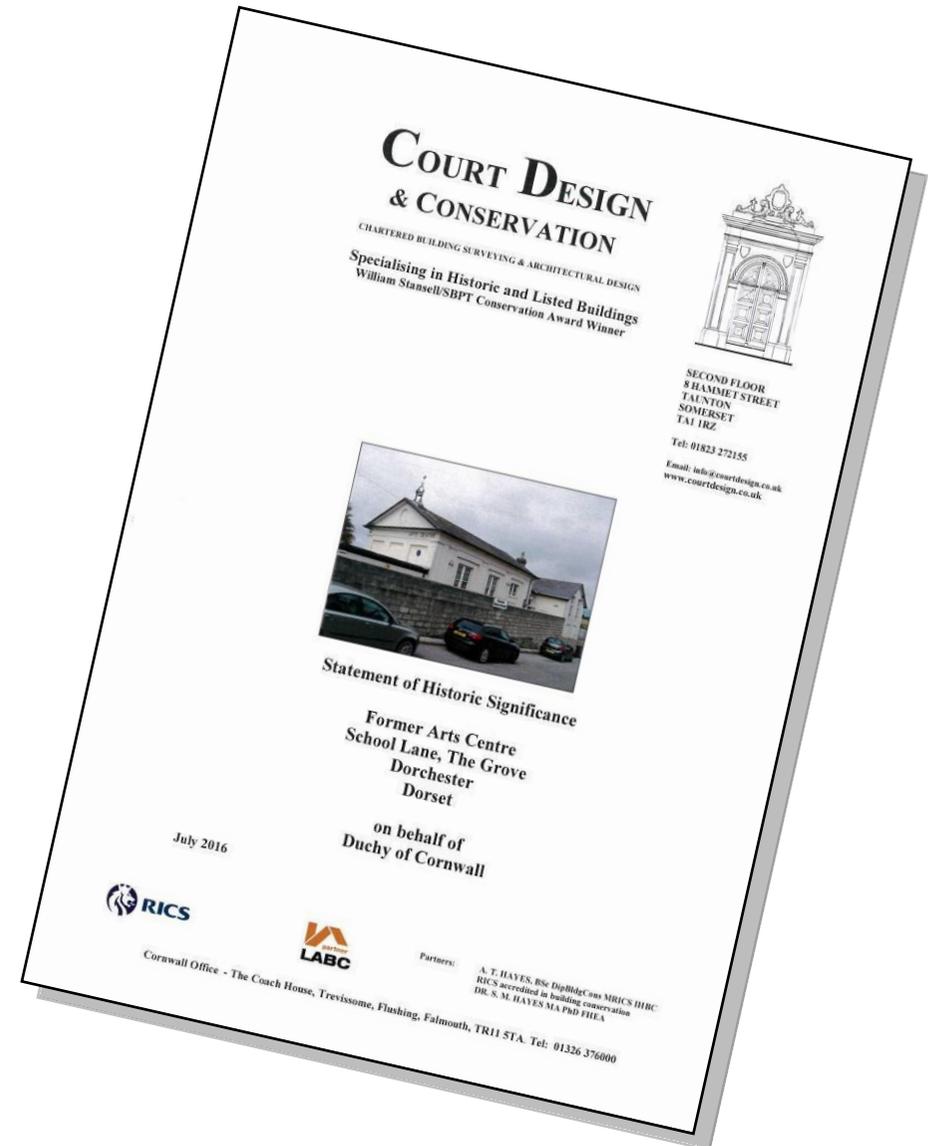
- Replace brick piers in new eastern boundary wall with wrought iron style posts to reflect age of original buildings.
- Reconsider surface treatment of the drive and parking areas by incorporating inclusive details in the tarmacadam surface.
- Form lightwells at first floor level in the conversion of the school hall to avoid construction of the floor directly up against the windows.

A Statement of Historic Significance has been prepared by Court Design & Conservation and the report has been submitted as an accompanying document to the application.

Essentially the Statement considers that the original early C19th school hall is of the highest historical value, particularly with regard to its restrained classical design and its links with the prominent local parish rector, Henry Moule, and his associations with the improvement of sanitation within Dorchester and the wider area. It is interesting to note that the listed building description dating from 1950 describes only this principal hall and not the late C19th cross wing or any other structures on the site.

In commenting on the design proposals, the author states; The Duchy of Cornwall proposal considers the demolition and removal of all the flat roofed structures and the cross wing and link in order to clear the site for the construction of new residential accommodation on the former school yard and play area. The removal of the cross wing enables improved vehicular access to the rest of the site currently blocked by the structure adjoining the east boundary wall. The principal of removing the lower status structures is non-contentious and will enhance the setting of the original building.

The proposed new bungalow terrace is low set and there is sufficient distance between the heritage asset and the proposal to avoid compromising the setting. We are of the opinion that the proposals are seen as a positive enhancement to restore the former, original school room to its early C19th first phase and the proposed new dwellings and landscaping will also enhance the setting of the listed building.





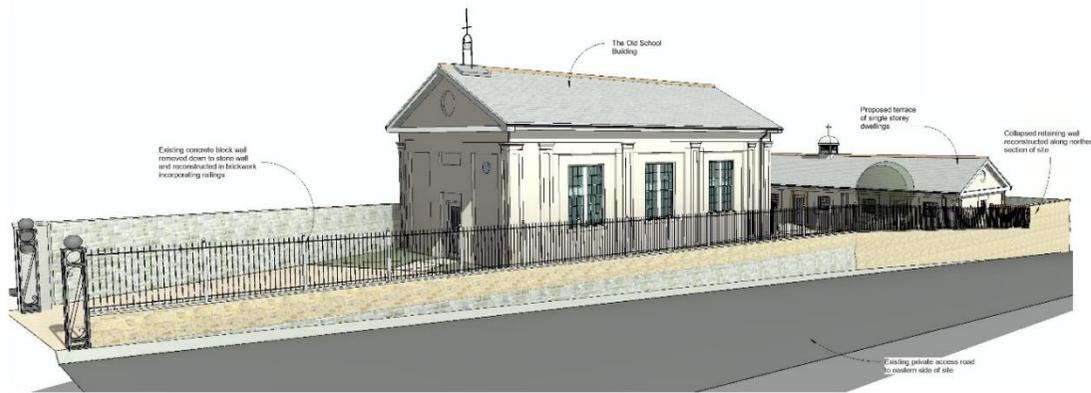
East Boro Housing Trust were approached by the previous land owners, the Duchy of Cornwall, following successful collaboration on similar schemes at Poundbury. East Boro Housing Trust is a Registered Social Landlord providing affordable homes for the elderly and those with learning and physical disabilities. The site the subject of this application is considered to be suitable for such a development as it is self-contained and in a town centre location with good access to the facilities and amenities of Dorchester.

As can be understood from the previous pages of this document the existing vacant building was once a school. The entire building is listed but it is the principal school hall that is of most significance. The proposal will see the demolition of all the later additions to the school and its return to a simple rectangular shaped building. The demolition of the additions will allow for vehicular access along the east of the building to the rear, northern portion, of the site. This was once the playground area. It sits at a slightly higher level than the surrounding ground but lower than the school hall and is bounded on the north and west sides by substantial stone walls.

It is intended that the principal hall building will be sympathetically refurbished by reinstating the pediment gable detail to the northern elevation and the pilaster and column details where these are currently obscured by the later additions. Consideration has been given to leaving an impression of where these later additions have been attached to the structure but on balance the return of the school hall to its original design is thought to be more appropriate. The double storey height timber sliding sash window to the east elevation will also be reinstated. Whilst the open-plan interior of the principal hall is important it is devoid of any historic features and in order to bring some life back to the building it is proposed that it be divided internally into two 2 storey dwellings and a communal room for the use of the occupiers of the development.



3D View From Footway to West



3D View From South West

The tenants these dwellings are provided for have learning difficulties and some may have limited mobility issues. They are able to live independently but on occasions may require 24-hour care to be available on site. For this reason, it is proposed that above the communal room there will be two carers bedrooms and a bathroom for their use.

The first-floor spaces will either be in the form of an open mezzanine to the rooms below or will share the existing double height windows. No new windows are proposed and the existing, where not being altered to accommodate doors, will remain.

In our opinion the alterations and refurbishment of this building meets the aspirations of the historic buildings and heritage asset policies of the Local Plan as referred to at pages 9 & 10 of this document.

To the northern portion of the site it is proposed to construct a terrace of three single storey one bedroom dwellings for the same tenant group. There will be a carer sleep over room provided in each for occasional use should the tenant require overnight support. Access to this part of the site can only be gained from the existing vehicular entrance to the south off School Lane. The road to the east is private and gives access to the adjoining blocks of flats. There is resident parking all along the side of the old school site. To the west there is public footpath access and this will be utilised in the proposed scheme.

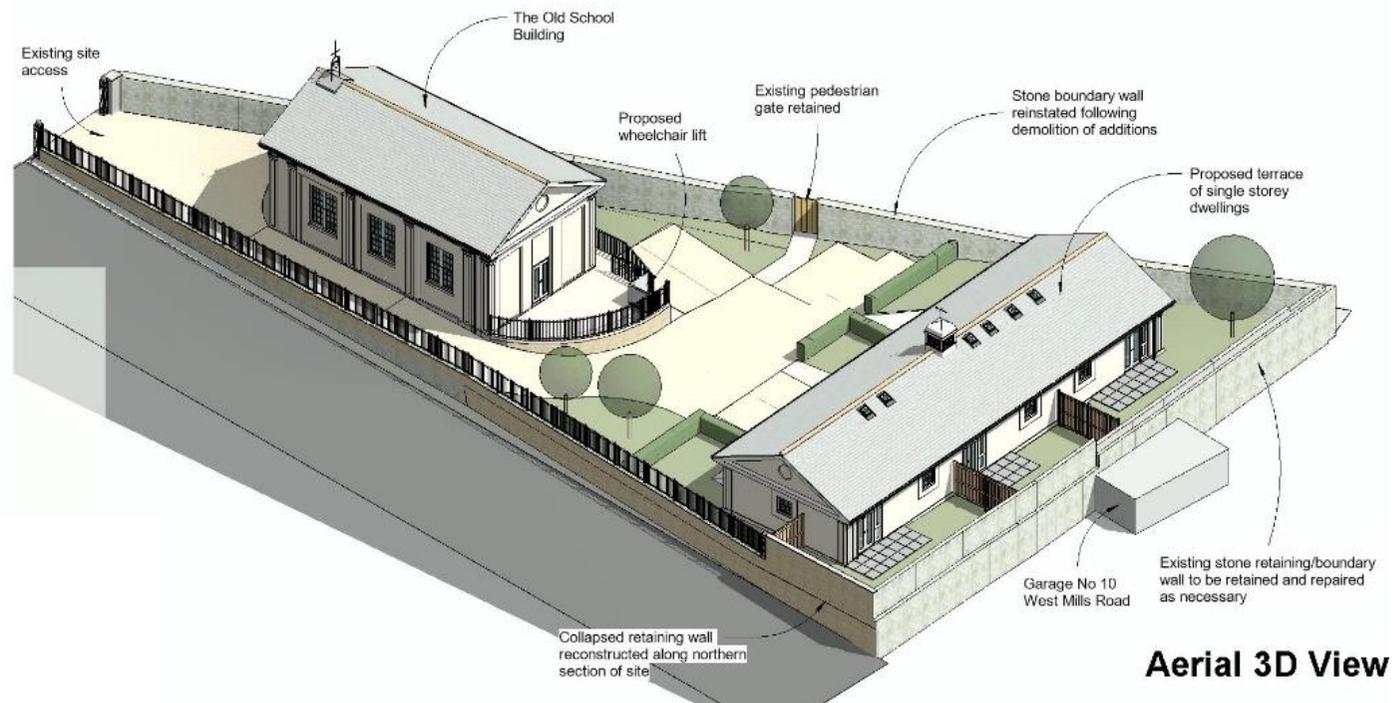
The proposal for the terrace of dwellings was presented pre-application to the council's officers by the Duchy and subject to a few alterations the design is considered acceptable. The terrace is simple on plan but does reflect the design of the original school hall by incorporating pediment gables and pilaster features to the principal elevations. Timber door cases are also proposed. The design represents a more traditional almshouse form of architecture and in our opinion positively enhances the setting of the listed building.

The levels of the site do present a challenge for safe access to the car parking spaces but as can be seen from the proposal drawings this can be achieved. A terrace will be provided to the north of the communal room and this will have the dual function of providing an outside space for the residents shared amenity but also to protect the principal hall from being undermined by reducing the ground levels that surround it.

Access to one of the dwellings in the conversion and the communal room will be via a raised walkway on the western side of the building accessed from the public footway and from car park level via a platform lift in the terrace. Access to the other dwelling in the conversion will be via the reinstated front entrance door.

In our opinion the provision of this additional affordable housing satisfies the aspirations within chapter 5 of the Local Plan as referred to at page 10 of this document.

Private garden space is proposed to the new terrace of dwellings and a shared amenity area is to be provided for the two units in the conversion.





## ACCESS

The established use for the site is that of an Arts Centre and this was preceded by use as a school. There is a single point of vehicular and pedestrian access from the public highway to the south of the site off School Lane and a further pedestrian access from the public footpath to the west of the site.

The current and previous activities created an influx of vehicular movements at particular times of day and this will have led to congestion on School Lane, interference with the public pay and display car park area and inadvertent use of the private road serving the adjacent flats.

The proposal will substantially reduce vehicular movements to and from the site. Because of the learning and/or physical disabilities of the tenants that the new dwellings are proposed for they are unlikely to be able to drive. The parking spaces provided on site will be mainly for the use of care workers and other visitors. The proposal therefore provides the following;

- A single point of vehicular access at the south of the site off the highway to a self-contained parking court at the rear.
- Six car parking spaces for the five dwellings. Because of the tenant group it is likely that most residents will be unable to drive and the spaces will be used principally by visitors such as carers and health workers.
- Each dwelling will have level access to the front door.

- The pedestrian gate in the western boundary wall is to be retained and the footpath can be used for pedestrian access to the converted building.
- Each of the terraced dwellings will have rear access to their private gardens.
- A platform lift is provided in the terrace area to the north of the converted building to aid access from the lower to the higher level.

The proposed scheme was considered by Dorset County Councils Transport Development Management prior to submission of the application and in an e-mail dated 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2017 Ian Madgwick, Transport Development Liaison Engineer, stated ‘...that the County Highway Authority has no objections to the scheme...’.

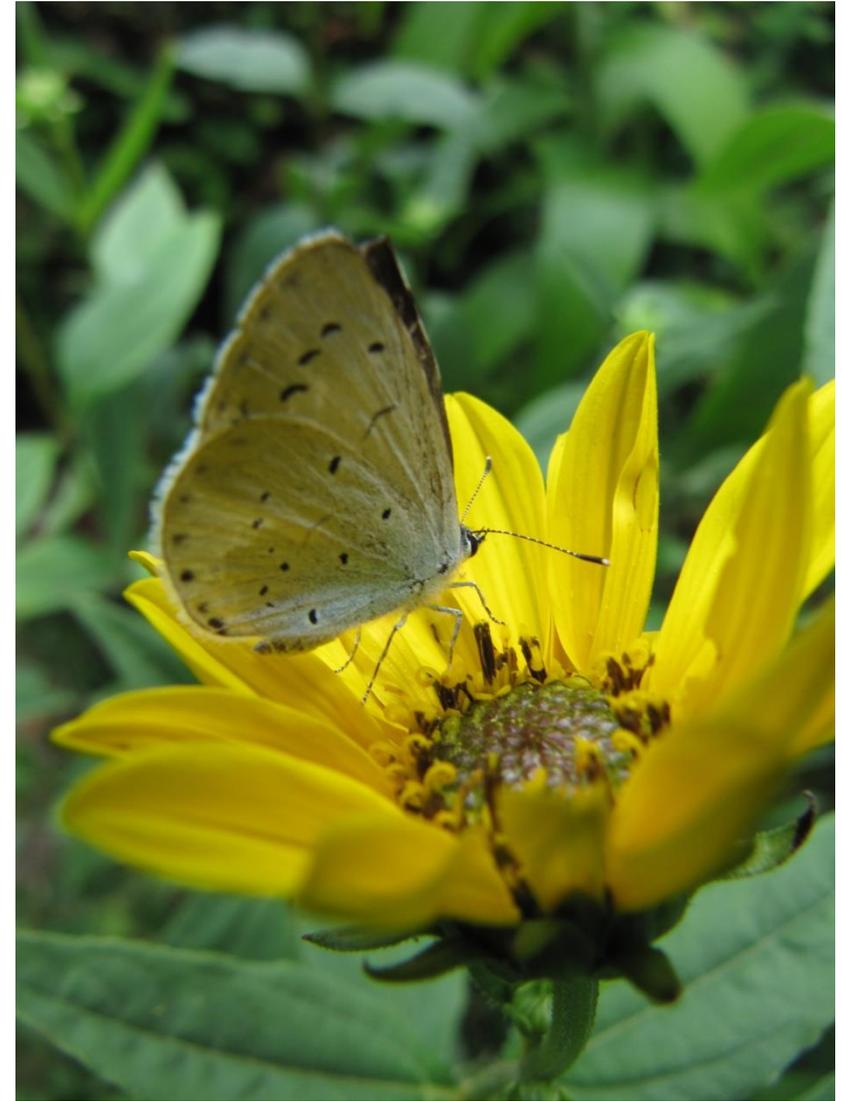
## REFUSE COLLECTION

- The Local Authority collects general waste and recyclable waste from Dorchester on a rotating weekly basis.
- Each property will be provided with two wheelie bins, one for recyclable waste and one for general waste. In addition to these there will be a green box for the recycling of glass and a brown bin for the recycling of food waste.
- For the new plots the bins will be stored in the rear gardens on hardstanding's. For the conversion, a small bin storage area will be provided. On collection day, the bins will be wheeled to the roadside by the residents or care staff.

A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Bat Survey of the site and buildings was undertaken by Darwin Ecology Ltd. in February 2017. This has resulted in a Biodiversity Mitigation Plan being formulated for the site. Both the appraisal report and Mitigation Plan are provided as part of the supporting documents to the application.

There are no trees of any significance on or in close proximity to the site. There is some overgrown ornamental planting along the western boundary that will be removed.

The enhancement recommendations contained within the report and mitigation plan will be incorporated into the detailed design of the development.





The proposed development will provide 5 affordable dwellings let at a social rent for those with a learning and/or physical disability.

In designing the proposal particular regard has been given to its context relative to the neighbouring built-up area, the effect on the setting of the heritage asset of the original School Hall and the conservation area.

It is considered that the proposals will positively contribute to the delivery of a range of accommodation ideally suited to providing for local housing need within a pleasing residential environment that will sit comfortably with the character and appearance of this part of Dorchester.

**Andrew Palmer MRICS C.BuildE FCABE**

**Appendix A (to accompany Planning Application for Listed Building Consent for Alterations, Extension or Demolition of a Listed Building, Submitted 2019).**

As stated on page 2 of this document there are 2 units comprising of 1 bedroom houses being provided in the conversion of the existing Grade II Listed original School Hall. There is also a resident's communal lounge with carer sleep-over bedrooms provided at first floor level in the original proposal.

The client has since realised that the communal lounge and WC at ground floor would no longer be necessary as the properties would be let to tenants who would still require a certain level of assistive care, they would not require the level of care that would be available through the use of the Communal Room.

It was decided that an additional 1 bedroom unit could be incorporated into the design with a separate, self contained carer bedroom with WC and shower at ground floor, which would be used for occasional use.

**David Proctor**  
**BIM & Architectural Technologist**  
**Ellis Belk Associates**