



Finchampstead Baptist Centre (FBC)

**Gorst Road North
Finchampstead
Wokingham
RG40 4ES**

Design and Access Statement (DAS)

Ref: 432.MP. 30.6.26 DAS v 1.0

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1. Introduction and Overview

This Design and Access Statement (DAS), has been prepared by OPUS Architecture and Design on behalf of the Applicant, the Finchampstead Baptist Centre (FBC). This DAS forms part of the full planning application for this provision of additional onsite parking at the Centre.



Plate 1: Aerial Overview

The Finchampstead Baptist Centre (FBC) is a vibrant multi-purpose community hub located in the Parish of Finchampstead. It was built in **2009-10**, with the first service held on March 7, 2010. The purpose-built community facility replaced a previous centre in the area that was destroyed by a fire in 2008.

The FBC Centre is owned, built, and managed by **Finchampstead Baptist Church**, which is officially registered with the Charity Commission for England and Wales under **Charity Number 1133789**. Because the church operates as a charitable company limited by guarantee, it manages the community centre as part of its core mission to provide social welfare, recreation, and community facilities to the residents of Finchampstead and Wokingham.

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2. Site Description and Surrounding Area

2.1 Finchampstead

The area immediately surrounding the FBC Centre on **Gorse Ride North in Finchampstead** is a vibrant, family-friendly mix of suburban residential housing, extensive outdoor recreational spaces, and nearby woodlands.

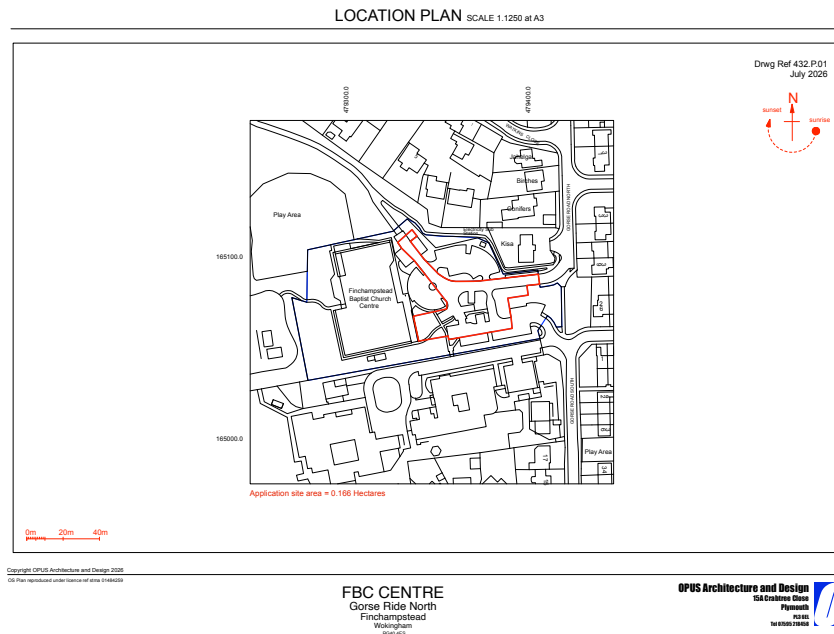


Plate 2: Location Plan

2.2 Outdoor Recreation and FBC Park

Directly behind the centre is a highly popular, large community green space and adventure park managed in partnership with the Wokingham Borough Council:

- **The Playground:** A fully enclosed, extensive play area built on a slight slope featuring wooden bridges, tunnels, a zip line, climbing frames, a trampoline, and multiple slides.

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- **Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA):** Located right next to the park, this facility includes a 185-metre flat circuit track specifically marked out for walking, running, scooters, and balance bikes. It also features basketball hoops, mini-football pitches, and outdoor table tennis tables.
- **Woodland Walk & Trails:** A scenic woodland area borders the sports fields. Local walking paths connect the grounds directly through to the nearby California Country Park.

2.3 The Residential Neighbourhood

The FBC Centre sits at the heart of a well-established community hub that is undergoing a major modern transformation:

- **Gorse Ride Estate Regeneration:** The surrounding neighbourhood is the focus of a massive, multi-phase estate regeneration project led by Wokingham Borough Council and Wates.
- **Modern Design:** Older 1970s structures are being replaced with energy-efficient, eco-friendly social rent and shared-ownership homes centered around a new village green and pocket parks.
- **Local Services:** The area is highly accessible with free on-site parking at the centre and an adjacent Thames Valley Police local base.

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3. Existing usage, Buildings and Parking Pressure

The Centre houses a public library, a children's centre, and the local Parish Council offices. The centre also features a fully accessible cafe and hosts community and spiritual services.

Specific amenities and services offered include:

- **Community Support:** Hosts a weekly food share program (Share Wokingham) on Tuesday mornings and offers ad-hoc basic needs support.
- **Family & Children:** Offers a local Children's Centre providing baby play, breastfeeding support, and "Lighthouse" stay-and-play groups for under 5s.
- **Sports & Wellbeing:** Facilities include a sports hall for activities like badminton, Pilates, short mat bowls, and circuits.
- **Groups & Socials:** Weekly art groups, a "Friendship Table" in the cafe, and monthly peer support groups for bereavement and domestic abuse.
- **Faith Gatherings:** Weekly Sunday morning church services are held at the centre.
- **Library Services:** A branch of the Wokingham Library operates from the building.
- **Venue Hire:** Multiple spaces including a main hall, the California Suite, and other rooms are available to book for events, meetings, and parties.

Drivers of the Parking Pressure

The parking strain is a direct consequence of how successfully the building integrates various community services into one singular location:

- **The "All-In-One" Hub Effect:** On any given weekday morning, visitors using the FBC Cafe, the Finchampstead Library, and the multi-use sports hall compete for the exact same pool of parking spaces.
- **Destination Play Area:** Because the adjacent FBC play area and MUGA (Multi-Use Games Area) are considered premier adventure parks in Wokingham, families travel from outside the immediate parish to use them, adding heavy daytime vehicle volume.
- **Base for Nature Walkers:** Many visitors utilize the FBC car park as a free, convenient staging ground to leave their cars and embark on the popular woodland trails leading toward California Country Park.
- **Peak Event Spikes:** Large-scale community gatherings, support groups, and Sunday church services regularly cause the car park to reach maximum capacity, leading to heavy overspill onto nearby residential streets like Whittle Close and Gorse Ride South.

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Recognition and Local Action

This issue is a formally recognized infrastructure constraint within the community. The Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan explicitly targets working with Wokingham Borough Council to identify and secure "**additional parking**" for the **Finchampstead Baptist Church Centre** to alleviate the local road congestion.

Furthermore, community groups and event organizers explicitly issue public advisories warning visitors that the car park is often full, formally asking attendees to **allow extra travel time to locate legal street parking** on the surrounding estate.

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4.0 Design Strategy

Upon being approached by the FBC we visited the site and carried out a Feasibility study to assess the current parking situation and to advise on potential options to increase the on-site parking provision.

We approached this exercise to which assessed where, and how might be accommodated on the site, with minimum impact upon the existing layout and landscaping. Each area of the areas identified were assessed on the following criteria:

- How many spaces might be created?
- What impact would they have on the existing access road and internal circulation
- Would they have any impact upon the 'functioning' of the Centre
- What impact would there be on the existing landscaping
- What are costs associated with each area and

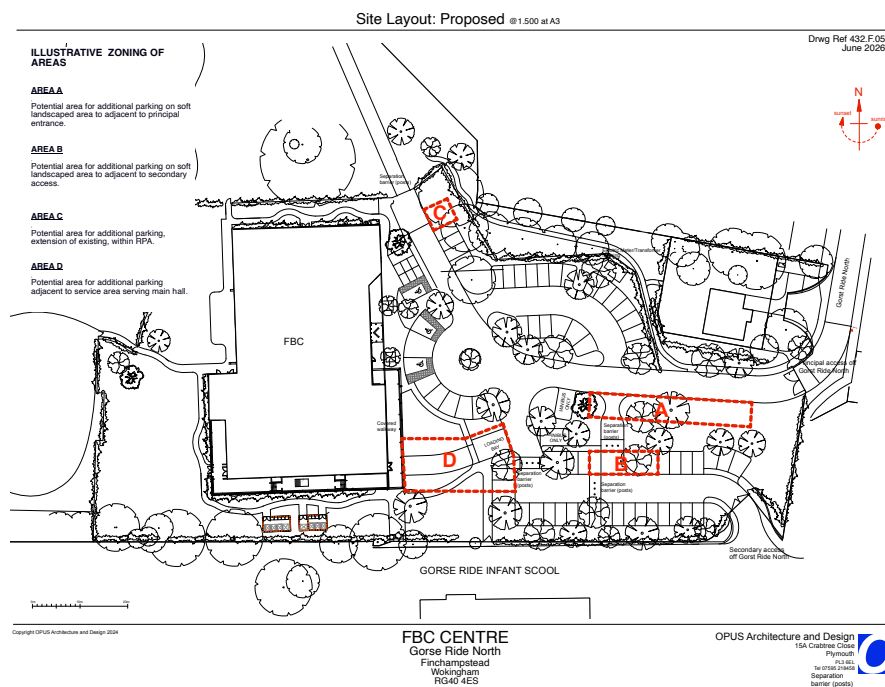


Plate 3: Additional parking areas identified following Feasibility Study

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Foul and Surface Water Drainage

There will be no new foul drainage associated with the proposed works.

The increase in surface water run-off from the additional hardstanding will be limited and mitigated using a permeable membrane and gravel surface to match the existing finish. The proposed spaces are in areas with existing surface water drainage provision, (refer to the Topographic survey) and the limited areas of additional hard standing will be directed into the existing system. The car spaces will be constructed using a permeable system.

Gravel car parks provide a solid, stabilised and free-draining surface suitable for cars, vans, trucks, coaches and lorries. Gravel is often specified for use as the permeable paving surface for car parks, with the open structure of gravel providing a free draining surface which allows rainwater to permeate through to the sub-base. The use of a porous plastic paving grid is commonly used to create a retained gravel surface. The cellular structure of the plastic grids retain the gravel by creating an interlock, limiting the amount of gravel that can be displaced by vehicle tyres. With the correct construction and drainage systems, a porous gravel car park can be part of a SuDS system through natural infiltration of the rainwater into the sub-base, or through an attenuation system.

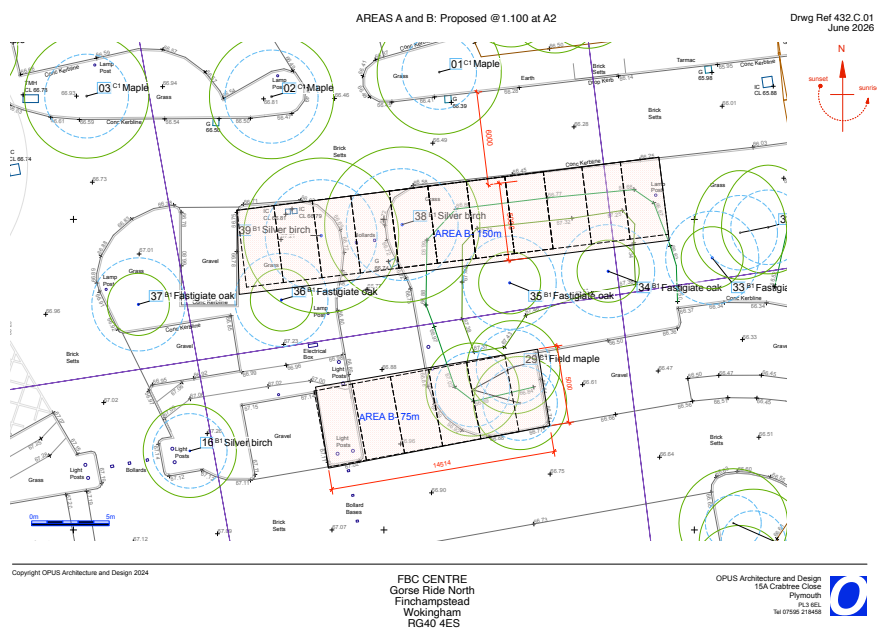


Plate 4: Areas A and B

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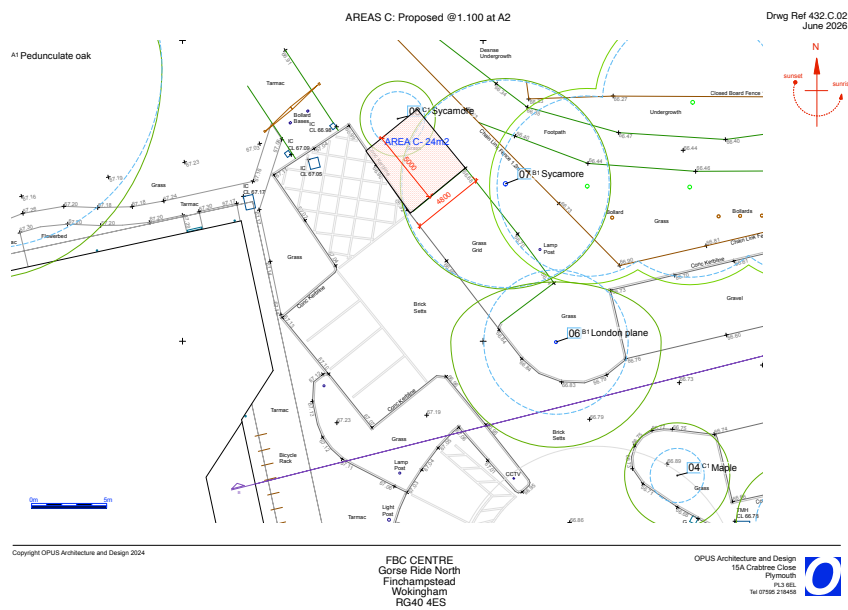


Plate 5: Area C

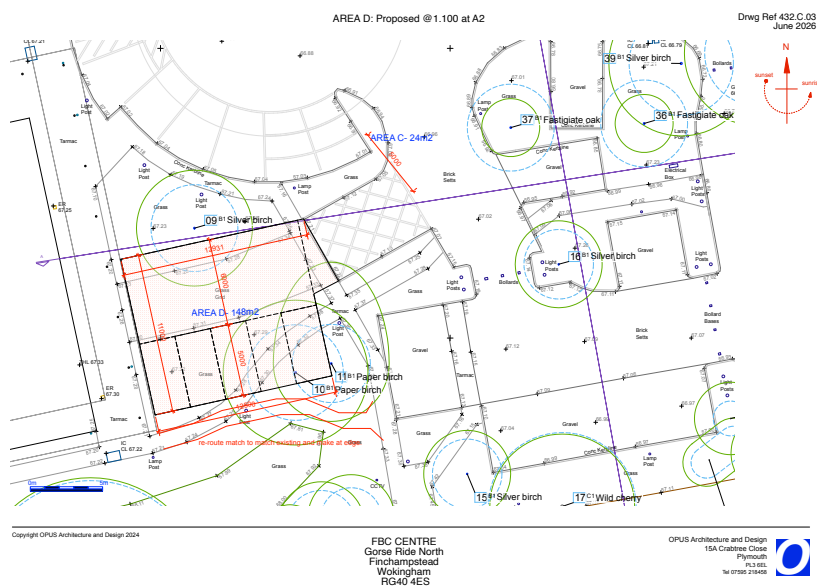


Plate 6: Area D

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Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG)

The redline area is 0.16 hectares and falls outside of the BNG criteria.

Landscaping and Ecology

The areas of the proposed works are laid to lawn with no other herbaceous, ground cover or hedge planting. Several small/medium trees will need to be removed. None of these trees are protected and were planted at the time of the new build development, and are not 'mature'. We have spoken with an arboriculturist who has suggested that it would not be economically viable to relocate these within the plot. However, we are proposing to replace these trees, on a one for one basis with the plot, with additional mixed hedging with the addition of modest ecology wildlife additions. These are described in the landscaping and Planting Strategy.

Car Parking

The proposed works will provide 23no additional onsite parking spaces, with no loss of service vehicle or already designated coach/mini-bus parking. All Disabled spaces will also be retained.

Proposed new spaces:

- Area A- 11 spaces
- Area B- 5 spaces
- Area C-2 spaces
- Area D- 5 spaces

Total of 23no new car parking spaces .

EV Charging Points and additional Cycle parking Charging points

It is a long-term goal to provide some EV charging places (circa 4 or 5no), and additional Cycle parking, however this does not form part of this application.

5. Summary and Conclusion

In summary, this proposal to expand the on-site car parking provision at the FBC Centre delivers a vital infrastructure upgrade to a highly successful community asset.

- The FBC Centre plays a pivotal role in the social, physical, and mental well-being of Wokingham Borough residents, operating concurrently as a place of worship, a sports facility, a regional destination playground, and a vital community hub.
- However, its exceptional popularity has outpaced its current infrastructure. By optimizing the existing site footprint to provide additional parking spaces, this application directly aligns with the strategic objectives of the Finchampstead Neighbourhood Development Plan to improve parish infrastructure.
- The proposed layout ensures that local parking demand can be absorbed entirely within the site boundary, removing hazardous overspill congestion from surrounding roads, improving pedestrian safety, and securing the long-term operational sustainability of the centre.

Crucially, the expansion is achieved through sensitive design that protects the integrity of the adjoining FBC Park, preserves local mature woodland trees, and ensures zero loss of recreational amenity space. Where some small/medium trees will require removal these will be replaced, along with new native hedging.

The applicant respectfully requests that planning permission be granted for this sustainable, community-backed development, which unlocks the full potential of a cherished local asset and delivers immediate safety and infrastructure benefits to the residents of Finchampstead.