

Spencers Wood Primary School

Design Rationale

February 2025

This is a supplementary document to the planning application to provide additional design rationale for the scheme.

1. Ambition

The ambition and aims of the project can be summarised as follows:

- A coherent site wide proposal which is sensitive to the existing surrounding arrangement.
- A high-quality design which responds to the specific needs of the building users
- A high-quality building design integrated within the site and its immediate context.
- A sustainable approach to design, construction and environmental servicing.
- A building and a site which are both welcoming, safe and secure, and inviting to the community while protective of the pupils.
- Good organisation of space in plan and section, easily legible and accessible.
- Internal spaces that are well proportioned with surfaces and materials that are robust, fit for purpose and meet the needs of the curriculum.
- Provision of a flexible design which allows for short-term changes and for long-term expansion or contraction.
- Excellent environmental conditions throughout, including optimum levels of light.
- Well-designed external spaces offering a variety of different settings for learning and amenity.
- A simple palette of attractive materials, detailed carefully to be durable and easily maintained, and to age gracefully.
- A project which can be delivered to programme and within budget.

2. Background

The Spencers Wood and Shinfield settlements consist of a mixture of detached, semi-detached, three storey apartment blocks which are predominantly finished in red brick with dark grey detailing brick, cream/white render and a mixture of red and grey roof tiling.



View looking west from the school site along Fulbrook Avenue

The settlements are low density with individual plots spaced apart with defensible space at ground level which is landscaped or used for off-street car parking. Secondary roads are block paved with wide tarmac pavements often finishing in hammerhead cul-de-sacs.

The somewhat utilitarian appearance of the housing is broken up with occasional bay windows, dormer windows, string coursing, Juliette balconies and gable end chimneys.

3. Civic Presence

In designing a new school, creating a civic presence is important. The school will be a focus for the local community and a point of orientation. Approaching from the west along Fulbrook Avenue (as this is the primary direction of travel), the proposed building is designed to be comparable in scale to the three storey apartment blocks and to form a point of visual interest as the road widens out when it reaches the Bay Crescent Playground.

The school is thus the termination of the village settlement and being set back within the site, provides a vista to the open space beyond to Shinfield in the east. The route straight on is a bus and cycle lane with no vehicular access to Bolton Drive.

Fulbrook Avenue swings round to the left to meet Hyde End Lane which is a very narrow country road, heading one-way north. The school site is separated from this by mature trees, vegetation and a dedicated tarmac footpath.

4. Visual Distinction

The mass of the school has been designed to reflect function; with three distinct blocks joined together.

The hall block is separated from the entrance block and the two-storey classroom block. This allows the building form to be easily 'read' by pupils, parents, staff and visitors. The hall is mostly solid onto the visitor car park, the entrance block is approached via a big canopy, has top light providing natural light deep into the plan, and is visually permeable, with views all the way through the building to the playground at the rear.



Design development stage aerial view showing the school's massing and relationship to its site and context

The classroom block has long horizontal 'ribbon' windows at first floor with lots of doors and windows at ground level, opening out from classrooms under a continuous canopy.

5. Materiality

Brick has been chosen as the predominant cladding material in order to create a sense of permanence, durability, quality and texture. It also reflects its setting. Brick is used extensively on school buildings in southern England, both in urban and rural environments. It is often seen as a signifier of quality.

The proposed cream multi brick with a medium grey mortar will create a planar surface which is forgiving in tone, will appear warm in both shade and sunlight and can be easily returned into window reveals to provide shadow and depth. It will also be a complementary and harmonious backdrop for the other cladding materials.



Proposed Planning Stage CGI looking across the early years playground.

Window frames, cills, architectural metalwork, copings and canopy steelwork will be a satin finish gold/bronze colour, such as RAL 7002. The consistency of these finishes will work well with the multi brick finish.

The entrance canopy, plant room/refuse store, ribbon infill areas will be a brown vertical laminate panel.

There will be small sections of grey render around the plant enclosure and building recesses.

Whilst much of the landscape around the building will be hard, the school's boundary will be planted to soften the appearance of this and the fencing. It will also provide a visual and acoustic screen.



Proposed Planning Stage CGI looking to the hall and entrance block from the visitor's car park.

6. Local Precedents

The materiality of the Spencers Wood primary school design follows some of the aspects of other local primary schools. For example;

Shinfield Infant and Nursery School

The school has civic presence and consists of a number of different architectural forms. It is faced in brick with decorative detailing around original windows. Appearance is aided because of the original Victorian school house.



Lambs Lane Primary School

Has an interesting eaves line with several large dormers. Grey brick used extensively (in contrast to the local housing which is predominantly red) with a red dressing brick and brown/red clay roof tiling).

