

Shalsheles, 4 Middleton Road, Manchester, Greater Manchester, M8 5DS

Planning, Design and Access Statement

Proposal: Retrospective Application for the Retention of the Existing Portacabins and their associated Air-Conditioner Units and Security Cabin. Temporary Permission of 3 years.

August 2023



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Introduction

This Planning, design and access statement is intended to support a retrospective planning application for the Retention of the Existing Portacabins and their associated Air-Conditioner Units and Security Cabin at Shalshelles Further Education College, 4 Middleton Road, Crumpsall, Manchester.

This document provides a detailed description of the existing development at this site and should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

- Drawings Pack produced by Norton Mayfield Architects
- Noise Exposure Report produced by Amber Acoustics
- Arboriculture Report Tree Survey produced by ROAVR Group
- Heritage Statement produced by Vic Fletcher, RIBA Heritage Consultant, of Equilibrium Architects
- Street View Photo Montage showing the views into the site from the surrounding streets.

Background

The site has been occupied as Shalshelles Further Education College since planning permission was granted for the conversion of the property from a Doctors Surgery (Class E(e)) into a non-residential educational college (Class F1(a)) for teenage girls between the age of 16 and 18. Planning permission was granted on 27th September 2021 (Application Reference: 131022/FO/2021). Shalshelles Further Education College was established in 2016 and provides A levels, level 3 qualifications and vocational courses for 50-60 students between the ages of 16 and 18.

Whilst it was originally anticipated that the existing premises at 4 Middleton Road would be sufficient for the college's requirements, it soon became clear that additional space was required to provide for the wide range of classes they now offer. As a result, the college has installed several portacabins on site to provide additional space for the classes they provide. The college was not originally aware that planning permission was required for the installation of these portacabins and due to a formal complaint from a neighbouring resident, the presence of the portacabins has been brought to the attention of the Enforcement Office at Manchester City Council.

To avoid enforcement action, the applicant has agreed with representatives from Manchester City Council that the college will apply for retrospective planning permission (temporary permission for 3 years) for the retention of the portacabins on site, whilst the opportunity for the extension of the existing building or alternatively for the erection of an additional building on site to provide for their additional space requirements. The principle for further development at this site has already been established by a historical planning application (App Ref: 116157/FO/2017) which included the erection of two 2 storey detached properties following the demolition of the existing bungalow to the rear of the site. The applicant was approved but never implemented.

Site and Surrounding Area

The application site, formerly known as Roselands, occupies a corner plot close to the junction of Leicester Road, Cheetham Hill Road, Middleton Road and Bury Old Road. The site is located on a large plot of land at the corner of Middleton Road and Bennett Road within the Crumpsall Area Conservation Area. The site sits directly adjacent to the BT Exchange Building and offices to the south, with Bennett Road along its northern boundary and Middleton Road along its Western 'front' boundary.



Google aerial view picture showing location of application site along Middleton Road.

The application site is an irregular rectangular shape approximately 1712sqm in size and comprises two buildings of differing ages. The main building on site, built circa 1890's, is a three storey town house building of a traditional Victorian style common for the period. The property is not listed nor locally listed. The second smaller bungalow building is tucked away to the rear of the site is a smaller more

modern annexe building built circa 1980's. The main building is occupied as classrooms and offices. The annexe building is occupied as a school kitchen and dining room/mess room for the students.

The main building is located on the southwestern side of the site facing Middleton Road. The single storey building at the rear is located in the southeastern corner of the site and faces Bennett Road. The site is broadly level to the East with a gentle slope to the west towards Middleton Road.

The site features several mature trees, some of which have TPO status, thick foliage, greenery and planting along its northern and western site boundaries. There are a few major trees on the site but the vast amount of vegetation is mainly fruit or garden species of light growth. The existing trees, hedges and foliage almost completely shield the site from the street views along both Bennett Road and Middleton Road.

There are two access points to the site. A vehicular/pedestrian access point from Bennett Road and a pedestrian access point from Middleton Road. The vehicular access into the site opens to a concreted area designated for parking and site deliveries.

The property lies within the Crumpsall Lane Conservation Area which contains many large detached and semi-detached Victorian dwellings, reflecting the area's historical links to a once affluent domicile for business. Also noticeable are a large amount of modern residential retirement homes interspersed amongst the original properties.

Middleton Road and Bennett Road comprise a mixture of both detached and semi – detached buildings with off-road parking provided within each individual site. The existing properties along both roads are of two- or three-storey dwellings with brick or rendered walls and tiled roofs.

Planning History

- (App Ref: 116157/FO/2017) Full Planning Application for the *'Change of use of 'Roselands' from Class D1 (non-residential institution) to Class C2 (residential care facility) with associated two storey rear extensions, and erection of two 2 storey detached properties (residential care, and ancillary offices use) following the demolition of the existing bungalow to the rear of the site.'* Application Approved. Decision Date: 16-November-2017. This permission was never implemented.

- (App Ref: 131022/FO/2021) Full Planning Application for the '*Change of use of former doctors' surgery Class E(e) to educational college Class F1(a) (Local Community and Learning)*.' Approved.
Decision Date: 27-September-2021.

Planning Policy Context

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's planning policies for England with a strong emphasis being on presumption in favour of sustainable development.

In Chapter 2, the NPPF identifies that there are three overarching objectives to sustainable development: Economic, Social and Environment objectives).

Paragraph 8 of the framework sets out the three overarching objectives for achieving sustainable development in the planning system, these include:

- Economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy
- Social objective – to support strong vibrant and healthy communities
- Environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment

The proposal at this site falls under the Social Objective for achieving sustainable development. The expansion of the college facilities will contribute towards the strong, vibrant and health communities both now and in the future, providing accessible further education facilities to the local community.

Chapter 8 of the NPPF discusses Promoting healthy and safe communities

Paragraph 95 of the Framework states "It is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:

- a) give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and
- b) work with school promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted."

Similarly, Paragraph 96. states “To ensure faster delivery of other public service infrastructure such as further education colleges, hospitals and criminal justice accommodation, local planning authorities should also work proactively and positively with promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to plan for required facilities and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.”

Chapter 11 of the NPPF Making Effective Use of Land

Paragraph 123 states “Local planning authorities should also take a positive approach to applications for alternative uses of land which is currently developed but not allocated for a specific purpose in plans, where this would help to meet identified development needs. In particular, they should support proposals to....

b) make more effective use of sites that provide community services such as schools and hospitals, provided this maintains or improves the quality-of-service provision and access to open space.”

The development at this site, whilst not the preferred development choice, does make effective use of the site to provide a much needed further education facility for local communities.

Principle of Development

The applicant is running an educational facility, providing a direct service to its students (and their parents) and a communal service to the wider community. The college is training the generations of the future with the knowledge and skills they will need to pursue careers and contribute to society. The college has existing pupils as well as an additional number of pupils which have already enrolled for the upcoming academic year. This puts the college in a difficult position as they cannot provide for these students without the space afforded by the additional portacabins which have been installed on site.

The college strives to achieve excellence and seeks to provide a wide range of courses to its students. Whilst it was originally anticipated that the existing premises at 4 Middleton Road would be sufficient for their purposes, it soon became clear that additional space was required to provide for the wide range of classes they now offer. The college have for this reason installed a number of portacabin units to accommodate the wide range of classes they provide and provide additional space/facilities for the pupils.

The applicant is thus seeking planning permission for the retention of the portacabins for a limited three period, whilst they pursue a larger development proposal for the erection of an additional two/three

storey building on site to create more space and eliminate the need for the portacabin units. It should be noted that there was a historically approved planning application [App Ref: 116157/FO/2017] for the erection of two additional 2 storey buildings on site in connection with an application for its conversion to a residential care facility. On the basis of this approval, the college anticipate a good chance of success at achieving a similar scale of development to serve the school. It will, however, take some time to take this through from design to planning to completion, and a solution is therefore required to allow the college to continue functioning in the meanwhile.

It is clear from the relevant paragraphs quoted in the NPPF that Local Planning Authorities should give great weight to the need for expansion of existing schools and colleges to make efficient use of their sites. The principle of this application is to allow for the temporary expansion of the college by way of the existing portacabin units, making efficient use of the site, whilst more long-term development plans for the site are in the process of being mapped out.

The applicant is eager to ensure that the portacabin units will not have any adverse impact on the character or significance of the conservation area. It should however be noted that the portacabins on the northern side of the site are hardly visible from the street scene with no noticeable impact on the street views or surrounding area.



View looking southward into the site from Bennett Road



View looking west into the site from Middleton Road

There are various options to further mitigate visual impacts. This may include additional planting, improved boundary treatments or as often used on portacabins in sensitive sites, the use of ‘wrapping’ where the portacabin units are coated in external sheeting which helps to camouflage the units into their surrounding environment. These can be printed with any pattern to ensure maximum effect and can ensure that the portacabins will blend more naturally into their surroundings. This is discussed in more detail later in the report.



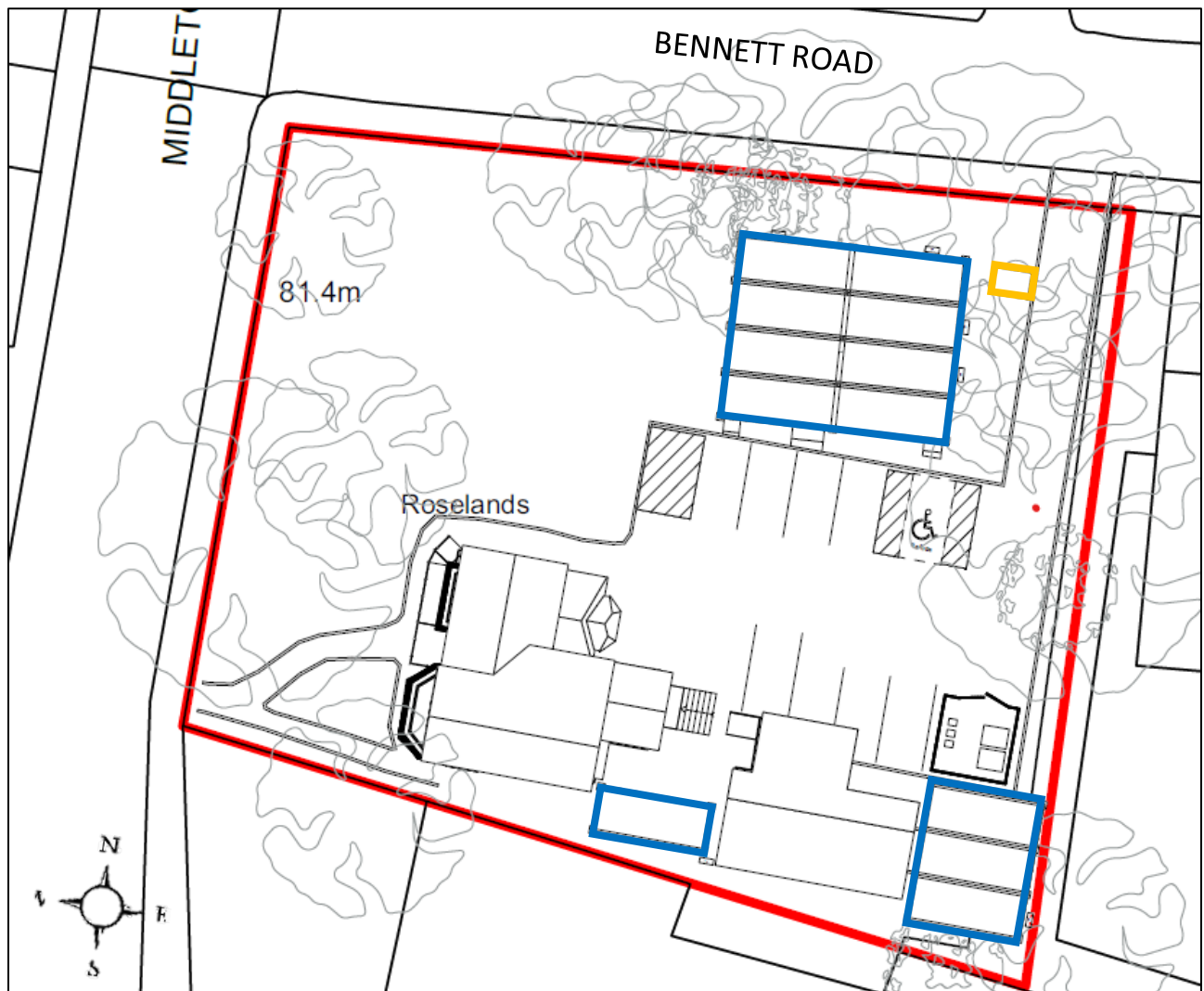
Example of portacabin unit wrapped in woodland blending external wrapping.

Proposal Description

The proposal in this case is for the retention of what has already been installed on site. We provide a summary of the 'development' which has taken place on site below. This is limited to the installation of a several portacabins units, a security guard cabin and air conditioning units as detailed below.

Portacabins

The college has installed a total of 12no. portacabins as shown on the block plan below which illustrates the position and location of the portacabin units. A security guards shelter has also been installed adjacent to the vehicle/pedestrian entrance point from Bennett Road. The portacabins are outlined on the block plan in blue. The security guards shelter is outlined in yellow.



Block Plan showing location of the existing portacabin units and security guard box adjacent to vehicle entrance point from Bennett Road.

A group of 8 connected portacabin units have been installed as one large classroom/assembly hall area on the northern side of the site adjacent to the site boundary with Bennett Road. These portacabins appear as one large portacabin unit, the bulk of which is not noticeable from the street side. Given the position of the portacabin units on the northern side of the site away from the primary buildings, the spacious and open nature of the site will be retained and will not detract from the character and appearance of the main buildings.



Group of 8 connected portacabin units utilised as a large lecture room and assembly hall. View from the car parking area inside the site looking at the front of the units.



Alternative view of the existing portacabin units from the end of the vehicle entrance road



Alternative view of the existing portacabin units from inside the site looking westwards. This view is not visible from the street scene

An additional 3no conjoined portacabins have been installed in the southwestern corner of the site. These portacabins have been installed as an extension to the existing bungalow building to provide additional space within the dining room/mess room for the pupils. The units have been connected to the annexe building via a lean to structure. These units have are mostly concealed behind the newly installed bin storage unit as shown in the picture below. As a result, these units are also hardly visible from the street scene along Bennett Road.



Portacabin units installed as an extension to the annexe building within the southwestern corner of the site.



Lean to structure connecting the three units to the annexe dining room building.

An additional standalone portacabin has been installed in between the two existing buildings, adjacent to the southern boundary of the site. This unit is utilised as an additional staff room and toilet for teachers and staff members. The unit is almost entirely hidden from view along the Middleton Road frontage by the imposing 3 storey building directly in front of/adjacent to it as shown in the pictures below.



Standalone Portacabin unit installed between the two primary buildings adjacent to the southern site boundary.



View looking into the site from the pedestrian point along Middleton Road. The entrance door to the single portacabin unit is only just visible from this view point.

Security Cabin

Finally, 1no. small security cabin has been installed on the southern side of the site, adjacent to the site's vehicle/pedestrian entrance point along Bennett Road. The college, being a Jewish establishment, benefits from a government grant to have a full-time security guard on site. The security guard is stationed in this cabin. Whilst, the security cabin is quite visible from the street scene, the applicant intends on submitting a planning application for a new entrance gate at this entrance which will conceal the in conspicuity of the security cabin. Moreover, the importance, need for and benefit of this unit at this establishment should outweigh any perceived harm on the surrounding conservation area.



Security Guard Cabin/Shelter as viewed from Bennett Road.

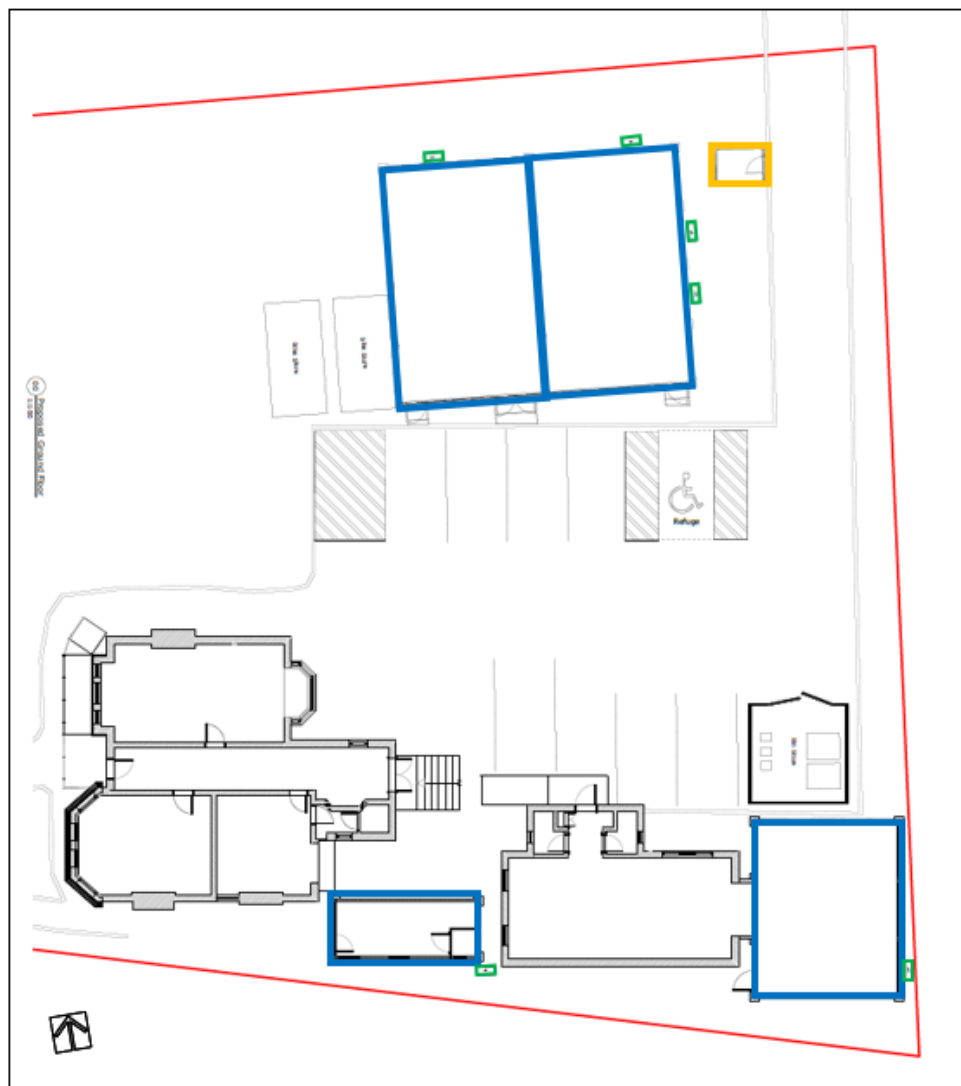


Security Guard Cabin/Shelter as viewed from inside the site, at the top of the vehicle entrance access road

Air Conditioning Units

The college have also installed 6no. air-conditioner units to service the portacabins units. These units control the thermal comfort of the portacabin units throughout the year. The location of the air conditioning units is outlined in green on the excerpted ground floor plan below. The air conditioning units have been installed in directly adjacent to the external walls of the portacabin units as shown on the site plan below. The units are concealed by the existing trees and foliage and are not visible from outside the site, or even from inside the site without going out of your way to locate them.

The applicants have commissioned a noise impact assessment to assess the noise impact of the condenser units attached to the air conditioning units the neighbouring premises. Please see the Noise Impact Assessment produced by Amber Acoustics attached.



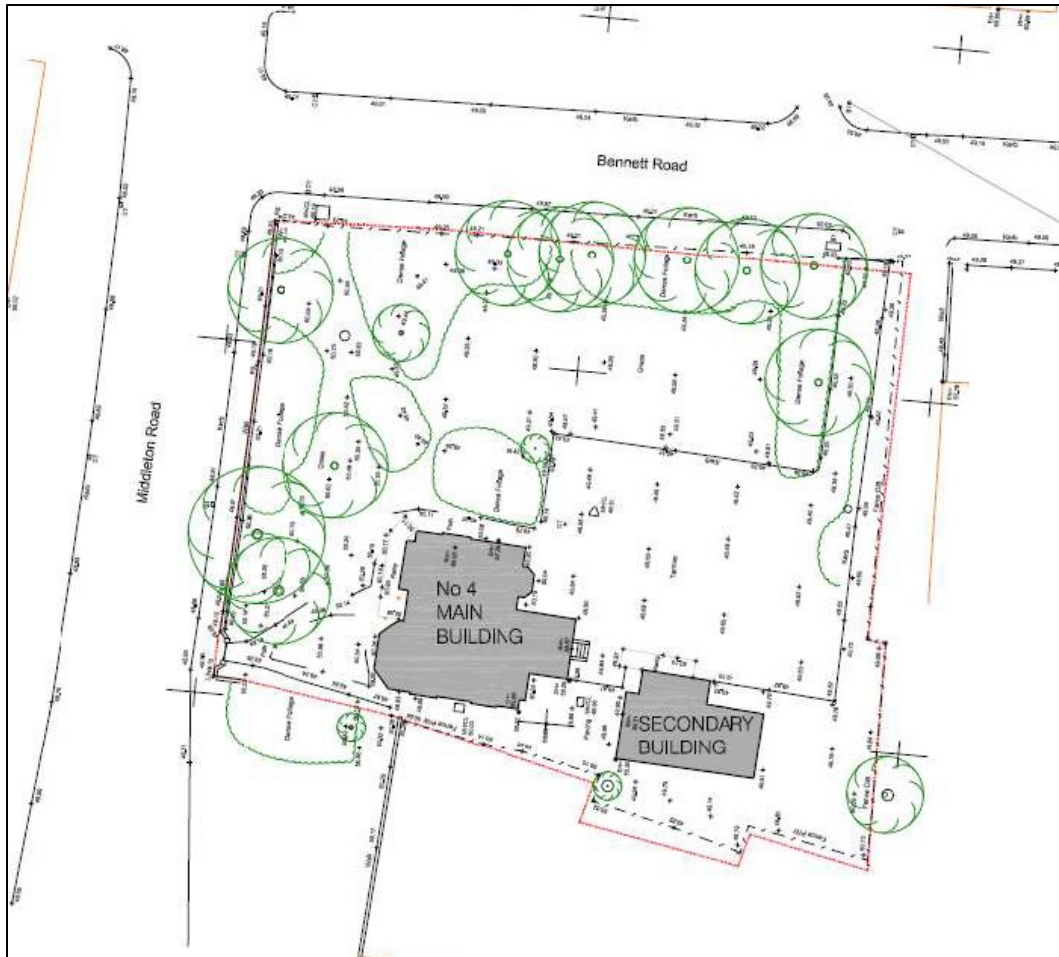
Excerpt of Proposed Ground Floor Plan showing the location of the existing air conditioning condenser units installed adjacent to the portacabins.

Impact Assessment

The site comprises a large plot of land which, prior to the installation of the portacabins was sparsely developed with mostly lawned areas and vacant land surrounding the two buildings on site. The original developed footprint area of the site comprised less than 25% of the site can be seen on the site plan below showing the developed footprint of the site prior to the installation of the portacabins. The scale of development gave the site a spacious and open feeling with a clear potential for further development. Given the spacious and lightly developed nature of the site, the installation of the portacabins has not resulted in the site feeling overcrowded or over-developed; and there is still an adequate amount of undeveloped outdoor space and lawned areas for the students to spend time on, during free time. Moreover, the larger set of 8 portacabin units has been positioned away from the existing primary buildings on site retaining the sense of space and openness afforded by the large plot. The distance retained between the larger set of 8 portacabin units from the main building also ensures that these units are perceived in isolation from the primary building and do not detract from its prominence, appearance and architectural features.

The smaller set of three portacabin units attached to the bungalow building and the stand alone portacabin are hidden away along the southern edge of the site and given their size and position, do not add to the bulk and scale of the existing buildings in a noticeable way. Nor do they detract from the character and appearance of the existing buildings. The standalone portacabin unit, sited between the two primary buildings, is only just visible from outside the site and is entirely subordinate to the prominent 3 storey town house building at the front of the site.

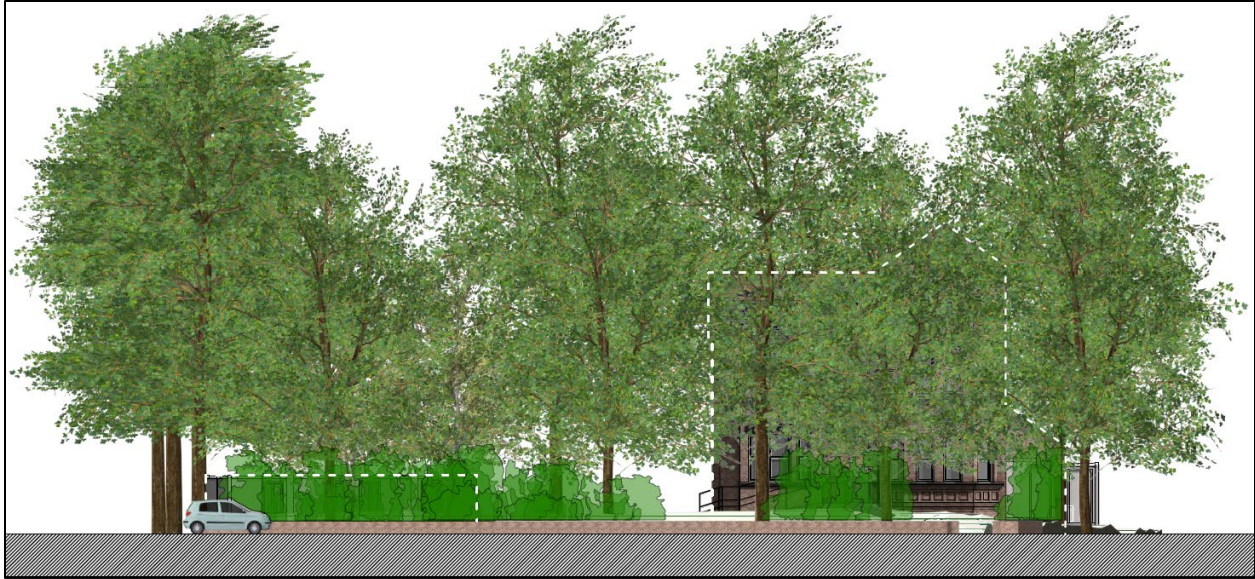
The set of three portacabin units is tucked away in the southwestern corner of the site and is mostly obscured behind the newly installed bin storage facility. In any case, the secondary bungalow building housing the college dining room/mess room has been identified as being of modern construction with no features of conservation value and a neutral contribution to the conservation area. The portacabins units extension do not detract from this building in any meaningful way.



Original existing site plan prior to the installation of the portacabin units.

In terms of the impact on the surrounding built environment and the Conservation area, this is best understood visually by way of a site visit, or in absence of this, photographic imagery demonstrating how screened and concealed the portacabin units are from the surrounding street scenes. We have prepared a document titled '4 Middleton Road – Street View Photo Montage.pdf.' which provides a number of photographs of the application site as viewed from the street scenes of both Middleton Road and Bennett Road. Please see attached. Please also see the attached proposed north and west street elevations produced by Norton Mayfield Architects which similarly demonstrates the inconspicuous appearance of the portacabin units from the surrounding street scene.

From the photos and the proposed street scene elevations, it is clear that the dense foliage, hedges and mature trees surrounding the site on both the Middleton Road and Bennett Road elevations provide ample screening, almost completely concealing the portacabins from view.



Western Street Elevation. Middleton Road Elevation

In light of our assessment and detailed study of the impact of the portacabin units on the existing site, built environment and the surrounding area, we conclude that the retention of portacabins will not have any adverse impact on the surrounding built environment or character of the wider conservation area. Moreover, the applicants are only seeking a temporary permission for the retention of the portacabins for three years whilst they pursue a larger formal proposal for further development to provide additional functional classrooms and education facilities on site. The temporary nature of these portacabins should also be considered in reaching a decision on this application.

Whilst not considered necessary, as an additional proposed measure to ensure the discreetness of the portacabin units, the applicant has confirmed their willingness to install more planting and/or wrapping for the portacabins, to further camouflage the portacabins within their environment, should the council think this is necessary.

In terms of the perceived impact of the portacabin units on the Crumpsall Lane Conservation Area, a designated heritage asset, the NPPF States that any impact on Heritage Assets should be assessed as either 'Substantial Harm' or 'Less than Substantial Harm', taking into account the relative significance of the heritage asset affected and its contribution to the significance of the Conservation Area as a whole.

As discussed within our assessment above, the porta cabin units will have less than substantial harm on the Conservation Area. Even so, as detailed within the NPPF, this harm needs to be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The public benefits of the installed portacabins are self-evident. The units provide the college with the much-needed additional space it requires to provide the students

with a broad curriculum of subjects to choose from and helps to ensure the smooth running of the facility. As an educational institution, the college provides a communal service supporting and encouraging the higher education of young people to the benefit of local communities and society as a whole.

Whilst it is noted that the security guards cabin is visible and noticeable from the street scene, Shalshelles is a Jewish institution and the presence of the security cabin with a full time security guard is therefore essential to secure and maintain a safe and secure environment for staff and pupils, preventing unauthorized access, deter potential security threats and respond effectively to potential threats or emergencies. It serves as a proactive measure to ensure the well-being of everyone associated with the school.

The Home Office recognises the threats faced by Jewish and religious colleges and institutions and takes the safety of Jewish schools, colleges and other institutions very seriously. In March of this year £14 million in funding was committed to ensuring the safety and security of Jewish schools, colleges and synagogues up and down the country. This funding is intended to enable institutions to employ commercial security guards at Jewish communal premises throughout Britain. The government grant specifies that Jewish schools are the priority recipients for this funding. The need for the security guard's cabin is obvious and significantly outweighs any perceived harm on the Bennett Road street scene and wider Conservation Area.

Heritage Statement

For a more in depth heritage impact assessment of the installed portacabin units on the surrounding built environment and the wider Crumpsall Lane Conservation Area, please see the attached Conservation Statement produced by Vic Fletcher, RIBA Heritage Consultant, of Equilibrium Architects.

The heritage statement provides a brief description of the history and significance of the Crumpsall Lane Conservation Area, identifies the site's contribution to the conservation area and assesses the impact of the portacabins on the existing site and the wider conservation area. The report concludes that the introduction of the portacabins presents a de minimis impact on the conservation area and recommends approval for the retrospective application from a heritage perspective.

Plant and Noise

As detailed above, the college have installed several air conditioning units to service the portacabin units providing temperature regulation and thermal control to the units throughout the year. By their very nature portacabins are intended for use as temporary structures. Since these cabins are not permanent and do not normally have built-in insulation, air conditioning becomes crucial for maintaining a habitable environment during their intended use.

Given that the condenser units are noise generating, the applicants have commissioned a Noise Impact Assessment to survey the noise generated by these units and its impact on neighbouring premises.

Please see the attached noise exposure report, produced by Amber Acoustics. The report concludes that the condenser units have a low noise impact given the existing background noise from frequent road traffic including HGV's from the nearby Middleton Road.

Arboricultural Impact

During a site visit with the Enforcement Officer, a representative from Manchester City Council's Ecology department was present and raised concerns about the risks to the protected trees along the sites northern boundary resulting from the larger set of 8 conjoined portacabin units. In response to these concerns, the applicant has engaged the services of ROAVR Environmental Group to conduct a Tree Survey to identify the risk presented to the TPO's by the portacabin units and suggest methods that can be taken to future proof the trees on site and ensure that the tree will be able to coexist harmoniously with the portacabin units/modular classrooms. Please see the attached arboriculture report, produced by ROAVR Group.

The report identifies that the modular classrooms/portacabin units have been installed using a Jackpad system utilizing Jackpad 400 support blocks which support the vertical load of the units and disperse it through its base. Given the Jackpad system installation method, the report states that *"it is highly unlikely that modular classrooms have caused any damage to the Root Protection Areas of Tress T8 to T27 (the trees along the northern boundary of the site)."* The report also adds that the use of the Jackpad System is ideal in that that the modular classrooms sit a few inches above ground level and allow air and water to continue to flow under the portacabin units and through the ground into the root systems of Trees T8 to T27 and the overall impact of the units is considered to be low. The report all

includes a number of recommendations to ensure that the portacabin units will not have any long term impact on the nearby TPO's and can continue to coexist.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this application seeks retrospective planning permission for the existing portacabin units and their associated plant which have been installed on site. The existing modular buildings/portacabin units are vital to allow for the continued smooth running of the college. The college is seeking a temporary permission for a duration of 3 years allowing them to continue functioning whilst they pursue the development of a more permanent structure or extension at the site to provide the space they require. The existing units offer a temporary practical and immediate solution that allows the college to fulfil its commitment to deliver high-quality educational services and a wide range of courses for its students.

The principle of development accords with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) objectives of promoting strong communities and supporting education facilities for existing and new communities.

The external assessments have conclusively shown that the portacabin units have a minimal and non-significant impact on the surrounding natural and built environment as well as on the Conservation Area. The portacabins are discreetly positioned and mostly concealed by dense foliage and trees, with little visual impact on the site's surroundings.

In summary, the retention of the existing portacabins is essential to support the college's provision of educational services and will have minimal adverse impact on the surrounding area and the wider conservation area. The applicant seeks temporary permission for the portacabins' retention while working on a more comprehensive development proposal to meet the college's long term needs. Overall, this proposal aligns with the NPPF and Local Plan objectives and demonstrates the college's commitment to providing valuable education services to the local community in a responsible and legitimate manner.

We trust that you will find this proposal acceptable and grant approval for this as submitted. Should you require any information, please do not hesitate to contact me at info@eatownplanning.co.uk or 0330 221 0449.

EA Town Planning Ltd