

**Planning Applications Report**

**Planning Committee  
5<sup>th</sup> January 2023**

**Bolton  
Council**

Bolton Council has approved a Guide to Good Practice for Members and Officers Involved in the Planning Process. Appendix 1 of the Guide sets down guidance on what should be included in Officer Reports to Committee on planning applications. This Report is written in accordance with that guidance. Copies of the Guide to Good Practice are available at [www.bolton.gov.uk](http://www.bolton.gov.uk)

Bolton Council also has a Statement of Community Involvement. As part of this statement, neighbour notification letters will have been sent to all owners and occupiers whose premises adjoin the site of these applications. In residential areas, or in areas where there are dwellings in the vicinity of these sites, letters will also have been sent to all owners and occupiers of residential land or premises, which directly overlook a proposed development. Copies of the Statement of Community Involvement are available at [www.bolton.gov.uk](http://www.bolton.gov.uk)

The plans in the report are for location only and are not to scale. The application site will generally be in the centre of the plan edged with a bold line.

The following abbreviations are used within this report: -

CS	The adopted Core Strategy 2011
AP	The adopted Allocations Plan 2014
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NPPG	National Planning Policy Guidance
PCPN	A Bolton Council Planning Control Policy Note
PPG	Department of Communities and Local Government Planning Policy Guidance Note
MPG	Department of Communities and Local Government Minerals Planning Guidance Note
SPG	Bolton Council Supplementary Planning Guidance
SPD	Bolton Council Supplementary Planning Document
PPS	Department of Communities and Local Government Planning Policy Statement
TPO	Tree Preservation Order
EA	Environment Agency
SBI	Site of Biological Importance
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
GMEU	The Greater Manchester Ecology Unit

The background documents for this Report are the respective planning application documents which can be found at:-

[www.bolton.gov.uk/planapps](http://www.bolton.gov.uk/planapps)

# Application Number 13683/22

Directorate of Place  
Development Management Section

Town Hall, Bolton, Lancashire, BL1 1RU  
Telephone (01204) 333 333



**Bolton**  
**Council**

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Date of Meeting: 5 January 2023

Application Reference: 13683/22

**Type Of Application**  
**Registration Date**  
**Decision Due Date**  
**Responsible Officer**  
**Authorising Officer**

**Full Planning Permission**  
**9 August 2022**  
**20 September 2022**  
**Mubeen Patel**

**Location**

**BLACKROD PRIMARY SCHOOL MANCHESTER ROAD**  
**BLACKROD BOLTON BL6 5SY**

**Proposal**

**SITING OF A MODULAR BUILDING**

**Ward**

**Horwich And Blackrod**

**Applicant:** Mr S Hutchinson

**Agent:** No Agent for application

## **OFFICER'S REPORT**

**Recommendation:** Approve subject to conditions

### **Executive summary**

- \* This application is before Members as it is a Council proposal.
- \* No letters of objection or support have been received.
- \* The application is for the erection of a detached modular building to the rear of the main school.
- \* For the reasons discussed within this report, officers consider that the proposed development would be inappropriate development within the Green Belt, however Very Special Circumstances have been submitted which are considered to outweigh this harm. The proposal is not considered to harm the character and appearance of the surrounding area, it would not unduly harm the amenity of any neighbouring residents or parking arrangements within the site.
- \* Members are recommended to approve this application.

### **Proposal**

1. Permission is sought for the erection of a timber modular classroom building that would be single storey in height, measuring 7 metres by 4 metres (28 sq. metres). The building would consist of double glazed windows with toughened glass, insulated floor/walls/ceiling and double glazed secure locking door. The building would be positioned approximately 20 metres to the rear of the main school building.
2. The proposed additional space for the school would relieve pressure in the main building by providing space for breakfast/evening snacks, and activities such as reading, arts/crafts, drawing/painting and board games.
3. The building would provide heating, lighting and power. Toilet provision would be retained in the main school building.

### **Site Characteristics**

4. The application site relates to an existing primary school located on the eastern side of the B5408 Manchester Road, Blackrod. The existing red brick building measures approximately 57 metres by 15 metres and is two storey with pitched/hipped slate roofs. The school site is partially surrounded by mature trees on the perimeter.

5. There is a large grassed playing field at the rear/north east and tarmac play area to the rear of the school building (the extension to the play area was approved under application 00985/17). At the rear/east of the application site is open land. Blackrod Youth Centre lies to the north. Wilkinson Farm faces the application site. Approximately 75 metres north east of the application site are dwellings on Meadow Way which back onto the school grounds.
6. The whole of the school site is within the Green Belt.

### **Policy**

7. Core Strategy: CG3 The Built Environment; CG4 Compatible Uses; P5 Transport and Accessibility; S1 Safe Bolton; OA1 Horwich and Blackrod.

Allocations Plan Policies: CG7AP Green Belt.

Blackrod Neighbourhood Plan: Policy DES1 Design Principles

SPD General Design Principles

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

### **Analysis**

8. Section 38 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications to be determined in accordance with policies in the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Applications which are not in accordance with Development Plan policies should be refused unless material considerations justify granting permission. Similarly, proposals which accord with Development Plan policies should be approved unless there are material considerations which would justify a refusal of permission. It is therefore necessary to decide whether this proposal is in accordance with the Development Plan and then take account of other material considerations.
9. The main impacts of the proposal are:
  - \* Principle of Development/Impact on the Green Belt
  - \* Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area
  - \* Impact on Playing Fields
  - \* Impact on Residential Amenity
  - \* Access, and Impact on Highway Safety and Parking
  - \* Impact on Land Contamination

### **Principle of Development/Impact on the Green Belt**

10. Paragraphs 147 and 148 of the National Planning Policy Framework, when read together, state that all development in the Green Belt is inappropriate unless it is either development falling within one or more of the categories set out in Paragraph 149 or is the construction of a new building or buildings that falls within one of the exceptions referred to in Paragraph 150.
11. Under these policies and Policy CG7AP of the Allocations Plan, it is established that most development in the Green Belt is considered to be inappropriate and should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Furthermore, it is established in the NPPF that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt and 'very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt, by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.
12. There are some listed exceptions to the type of development in the Green Belt classed as inappropriate, but this does not include the development of detached buildings as part of a school, nor would this development be a replacement of the existing school extension/building where it would be in the same use and not materially larger than the building it replaces.

13. Given the above, the proposed development of a detached modular building at the site is considered as inappropriate development in the Green Belt. It is therefore clear that unless very special circumstances have been demonstrated then the application would result in inappropriate development in the Green Belt and which should be refused. The key issue is therefore whether or not very special circumstances have been demonstrated in this instance.

*Very Special Circumstances*

11. In considering this proposal and the submission of very special circumstances, there are four key issues to consider which are:
1. The need for the development;
  2. The availability of non-Green Belt locations;
  3. The suitability of the proposed site; and
  4. The harm to the Green Belt from the development

*The need for the development*

12. In response to this first point, the applicant states that the school runs a pre and after school club called 'All-Stars' with a membership of 180 students. In addition, the school recently benefitted from a significant extension and refurbishment to accommodate intake to 315 pupil attendees with potential to expand to 339. As such, the benefits to parents/carers by the pre and after school (All Stars) provision is such that the membership and use is increasing. However, currently, this is restricted due to available space within the main building where the priority is with curricular and extra-curricular activities.
13. Given the above, it is considered that the new modular building would support the existing practices of the school in providing a fit for purpose, flexible, and modern facility which can respond to changing needs and demand of the school. In addition, the services and the benefits this can deliver would be a benefit locally.

*The availability of non-Green Belt locations; and the suitability of the proposed site.*

14. The whole of the school site is located within the Green Belt. The proposed application building is in relation to the demand of the existing school operations. As such, it is by default and satisfactorily demonstrated that the Blackrod Primary School site provides the only practical and viable option that is reasonable and suitable for the development where it is reliant on the main school building and its operations.
15. In light of the above, the planning department is satisfied that the site represents an appropriate location for this facility given the community/children it is seeking to serve.

*The harm to the Green Belt from the development.*

16. It is acknowledged that the proposed building would be a relatively small addition. It would be subordinate in its overall footprint and scale when compared to the existing school building, although detached. However, other matters must also be considered, such as the siting of the development and its impact on the openness of the Green Belt, and the impact of the development of the functioning of the Green Belt.
17. It should be noted that the proposal constitutes an extension of the existing school facilities within an established school site. In this instance, the further development of this site in itself would result in a loss of some openness given the siting and scale of the extension / new building.
18. However, the proposed construction of the modular building would be contained within the existing open grounds of the school, with no expansion of any physical boundaries required to accommodate the space requirements. In order to minimise the impact of the development on the functioning and openness of the Green Belt, the built development proposed has been sited adjacent to existing hardstanding as is practicable. In addition, the size of the building including its height has been kept to a minimum. That building would also be set back from the road behind the main school building, minimising its overall impact. The flat roof design of the building

would also aid in reducing the impact of the development on the openness and function of the Green Belt, and the character and appearance of the wider landscape beyond.

#### *Principle Conclusion*

19. Overall, the need for the development is acknowledged and accepted as set out in the submitted documentation having considered this in the context of local policy and the NPPF. The development is inappropriate development for the purposes of Green Belt consideration and is, therefore, by definition harmful. Nevertheless, the considerations summarised above are sufficient collectively to constitute very special circumstances capable of outweighing harm, in this particular case.
20. Furthermore, the particular siting and design of the proposal has been carefully considered to help mitigate and minimise the impact of the development on the functioning and openness of the Green Belt. The proposed position represents the option which strikes the best balance between minimising intrusion into the Green Belt and providing sufficient facilities to enable the school to deliver its afterschool requirements and operate successfully in accordance with the mentioned local and national planning policy and guidance.

#### Impact on the Character and Appearance of the Area

21. Policy CG3 of the Core Strategy states that the Council will conserve and enhance local distinctiveness ensuring development has regard to the overall built character and landscape quality of the area and will require development to be compatible with the surrounding area, in terms of scale, massing, grain, form, architecture, street enclosure, local materials and landscape treatment.
22. Policy OA1 states that the council will conserve and enhance the character of the existing physical environment.
23. Paragraph 130 of the NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that development is sympathetic to local character, the built environment and landscape setting, while not preventing appropriate innovation or change (such as increased density).
24. In common with the majority of schools, the site has an institutional appearance with gates, fencing, buildings and areas of hardstanding. Although the building would not be wholly consistent with the character of the original school due to its modular timber construction, such structures are common within school grounds and therefore would not appear as incongruous within its context. In addition, the proposed redwood colour of the modular panels is consistent to some degree with the red brickwork of the main school building.
25. As with all modular buildings proposed at schools in the borough, Officers are minded to only grant a temporary permission for the building, to enable the school to find a more permanent solution in the future. At the time of writing this report it had not been agreed between Officers and the applicant as to how long this temporary permission should be. This will be reported to Members directly at the Committee meeting, within the Schedule of Supplementary Information.
26. There would also be no impact to trees or landscaping features as the building would be sited away from the school boundary where the peripheral landscaping would remain, along with existing boundary treatment and main school building which would assist with screening the structure from surrounding properties and streets.
27. Given this, it is considered the proposal is acceptable and adheres to Policies CG3 and OA1 of the Core Strategy and the NPPF.

#### Impact on the Playing Fields

28. Policy CG1.3 of the Core Strategy states that the Council will safeguard and enhance parks, gardens, allotments, civic spaces, cemeteries and playing fields and improve the quality and multi-functional benefits of these assets. Paragraph 97 of the NPPF states that existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on.

29. The application proposes the erection of a single storey modular building on the playing field adjacent to hardstanding. Although the position is marked on land that is classed as a playing field, it is a narrow corner of the site and has not been marked out as sports pitches because it is incapable of holding a pitch. Sport England have been consulted and have raised no objections.
30. The proposals would therefore accord with Policy CG1.3 of the Core Strategy.

#### Impact on Residential Amenity

31. Policy CG4 of the Core Strategy relates to new development and seeks to ensure that future occupiers and neighbours are provided with a satisfactory level of amenity in terms of space, sunlight, daylight, privacy, aspect, and layout. The NPPF seeks to ensure that developments create places that are safe, inclusive, and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.
32. The nearest residential properties from the proposed modular classroom building are sited over 75 metres away to the north east along Meadow Way. Given the scale, distance and proposed use (would not increase the number of students) to the nearest properties, it is not considered there would be any harm to amenity. No objections have been raised by the Council's Pollution Control section.
33. The proposal would therefore accord with Policy CG4 of the Core Strategy and the NPPF.

#### Access, and Impact on Highway Safety and Parking

34. Policy P5 seeks to ensure that new development takes into account accessibility, pedestrian prioritisation, public transport, servicing, parking and the transport needs of people with disabilities. Policy S1 seeks to promote road safety. The Council has also adopted the Accessibility, Transport and Road Safety SPD.
35. The proposed ancillary school building would not alter the existing access or parking arrangements at the site. In addition, there would be no increase in pupil admissions. Highways Engineers have raised no objections.
36. It is therefore considered that the proposed development would comply with policies P5 and S1.2 of the Core Strategy and the NPPF.

#### Land Contamination

37. Core Strategy policy CG4.1 seeks to ensure that new development proposals affected by contamination and / or ground stability must include an assessment of the issues and potential risks. Development will only be permitted where the land is, or is made, suitable for the proposed use.
38. Due to the proposed building being a modular prefabricated structure, no foundations would be required, therefore the proposal would have no impact on land contamination or land stability.

#### Conclusion

39. It is concluded that the principle of development at the site would be acceptable as it is considered that the very special circumstances put forward by the applicant outweigh the harm to the Green Belt by way of inappropriateness. The design and layout of the building is considered acceptable within this school site for a temporary building. Furthermore, the proposal would have no significant impact on residential amenity or highways safety.
40. Members are therefore recommended to grant a temporary approval for the proposed modular building.



## **Representation and Consultation Annex**

### **Representations**

**Letters:-** None received

**Blackrod Town Council:-** Councillors noted that as this building involves the safety of children and appears to be of a wooden construction, they would like to suggest that the application contains a fire statement - *Officer Response – A 'Fire Statement' is not a requirement for this type of planning application, the issue of fire safety would be dealt with under Building Regulations.*

### **Consultations**

Advice was sought from the following consultees:

Environmental Health: No Objections  
Highways Engineering: No Objections  
Sport England: No Objections

### **Planning History**

02549/17 - Discharge of condition 06 on approval 01660/17 (accommodation for swifts).

01660/17- Erection of two storey extension and link corridor to provide 6no additional classrooms, WCs and ancillary spaces together with hard landscaping and refurbishment of existing building – approved.

00985/17 - Alterations to front window to form new doorway, creation of play area to front including fencing, together with an extension to rear play area - approved with conditions July 2017.

68962/04 - Formation of 20 metre x 40 metre sand paddock together with erection of 1.2 metre high post and rail boundary fence – approved.

**Recommendation: Approve subject to conditions**

### **Recommended Conditions and/or Reasons**

Subject to the following conditions, which have been imposed for the reasons stated:-

- 1 This permission shall be for a temporary period expiring on **[date to be reported to Members at the Committee meeting]** when the modular building hereby approved shall be fully removed.

Reason

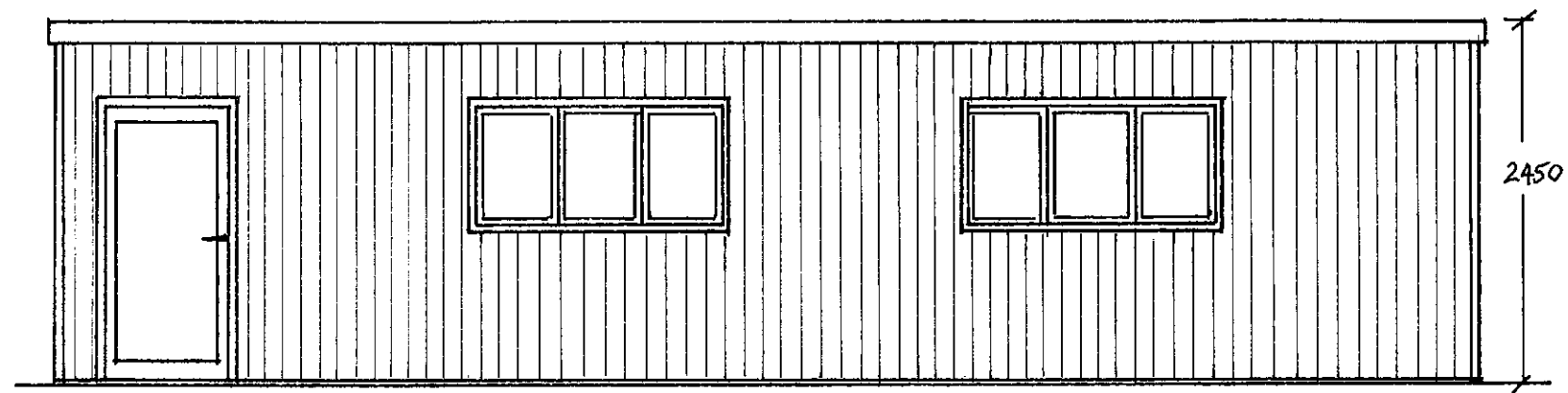
The proposed building is only a temporary structure, and in the interests of amenity over a period of time, compliant with policies CG3 and OA1 of Bolton's Core Strategy.

- 2 The development hereby permitted shall be carried out in complete accordance with the following approved plans and details:

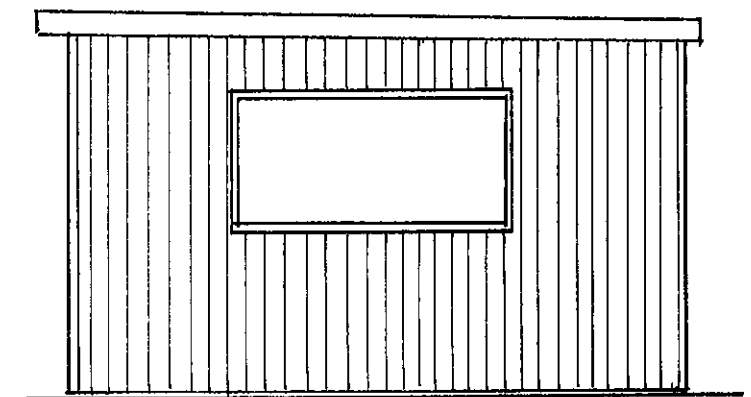
- Site Location Plan
- Site Plan
- Elevation Plan DRAW/1
- Floor Plan DRAW No 2

Reason

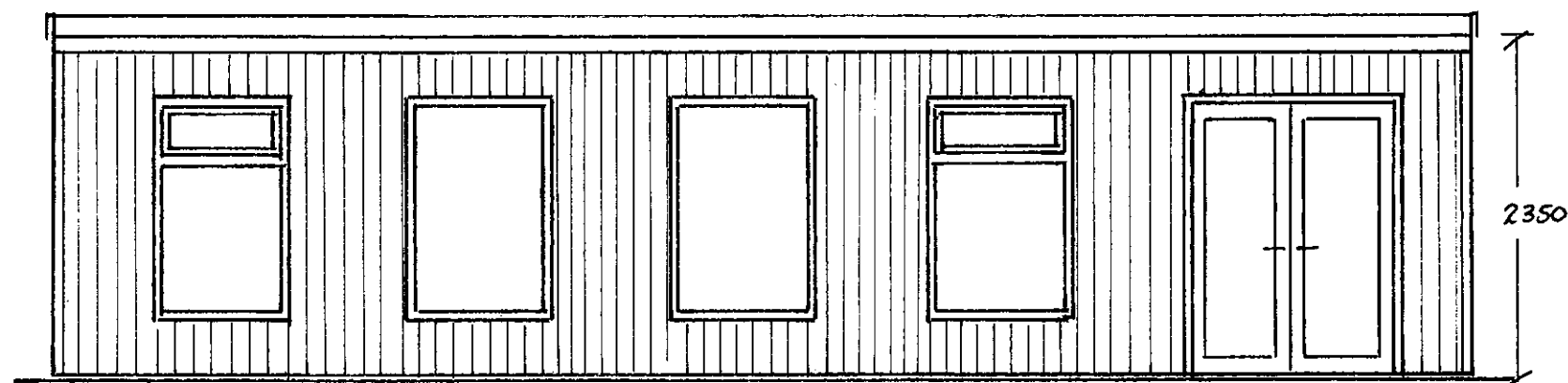
For the avoidance of doubt and in the interests of proper planning.



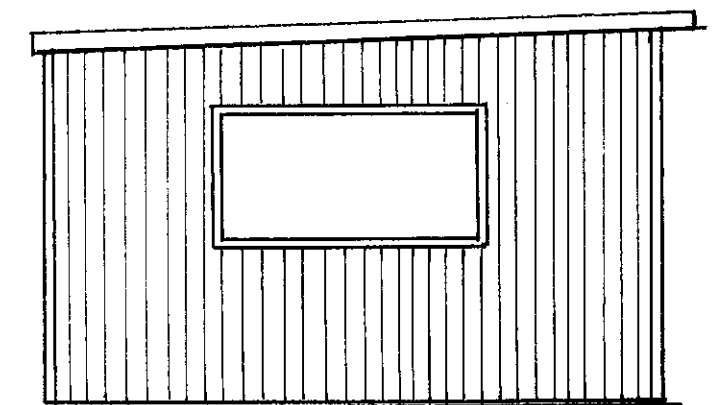
FRONT ELEVATION



RIGHT HAND SIDE ELEVATION



REAR ELEVATION



LEFT HAND SIDE ELEVATION

BROWNS GARDEN BUILDINGS

CLASSROOM

BLACKROD PRIMARY SCHOOL

SCALE 1:50 @ A3

JULY 2022

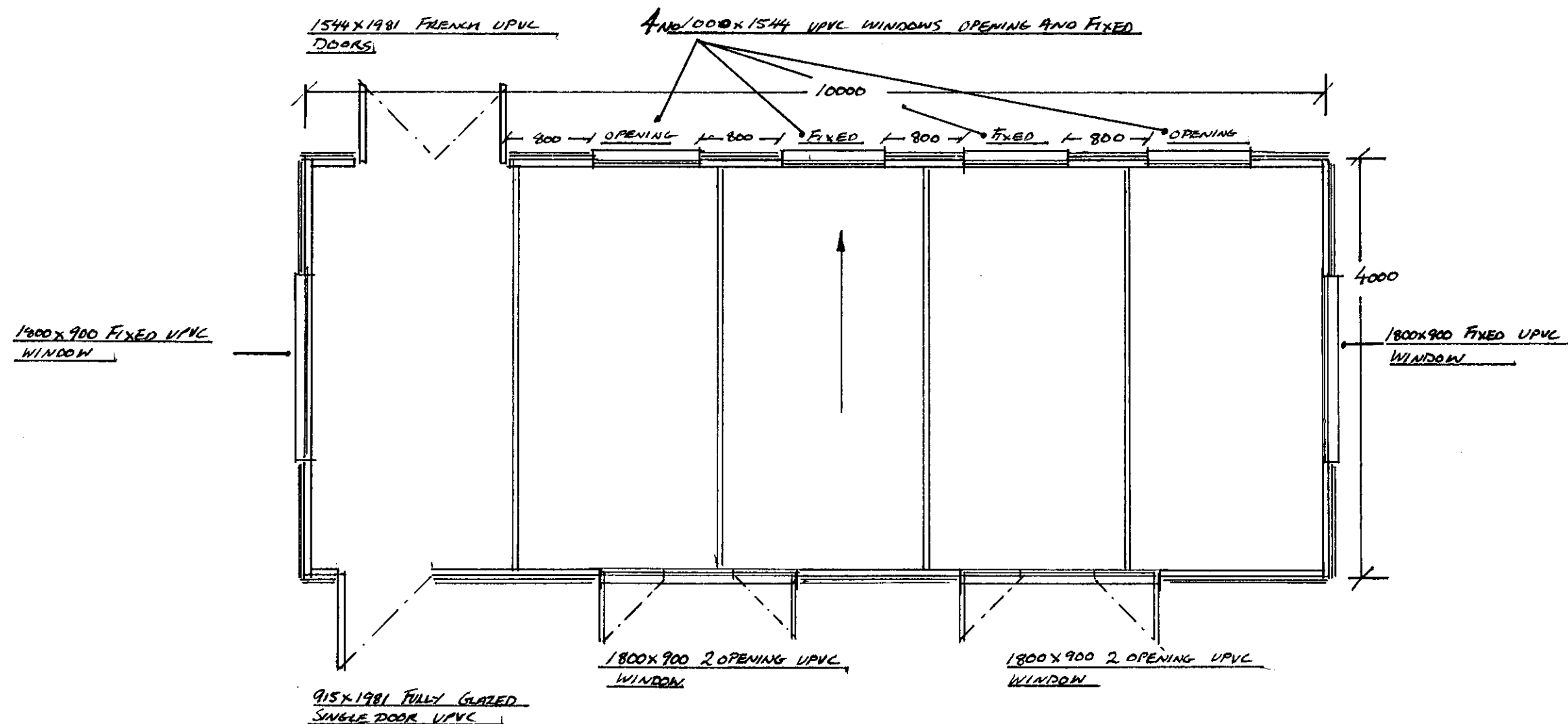
DRAW / 1

GENERAL SPECIFICATION (SEE QUOTATION FOR DETAIL)

100x50 TREATED TIMBER FRAME, 12.5mm AIR GAP  
VAPOUR BARRIER, 150x25 VERTICAL CLADDING (COLOUR TO  
BE AGREED). KNIFE INSULATION TO THE WALLS AND  
CLAD INTERNALLY WITH SMOOTH FACED MDF BOARD.

EPDM ROOF, INSULATED.

FOR ELEVATIONS SEE DRAW 1.



PLAN SCALE 1:50 @ A3

BROWNS GARDEN BUILDINGS

CLASSROOM

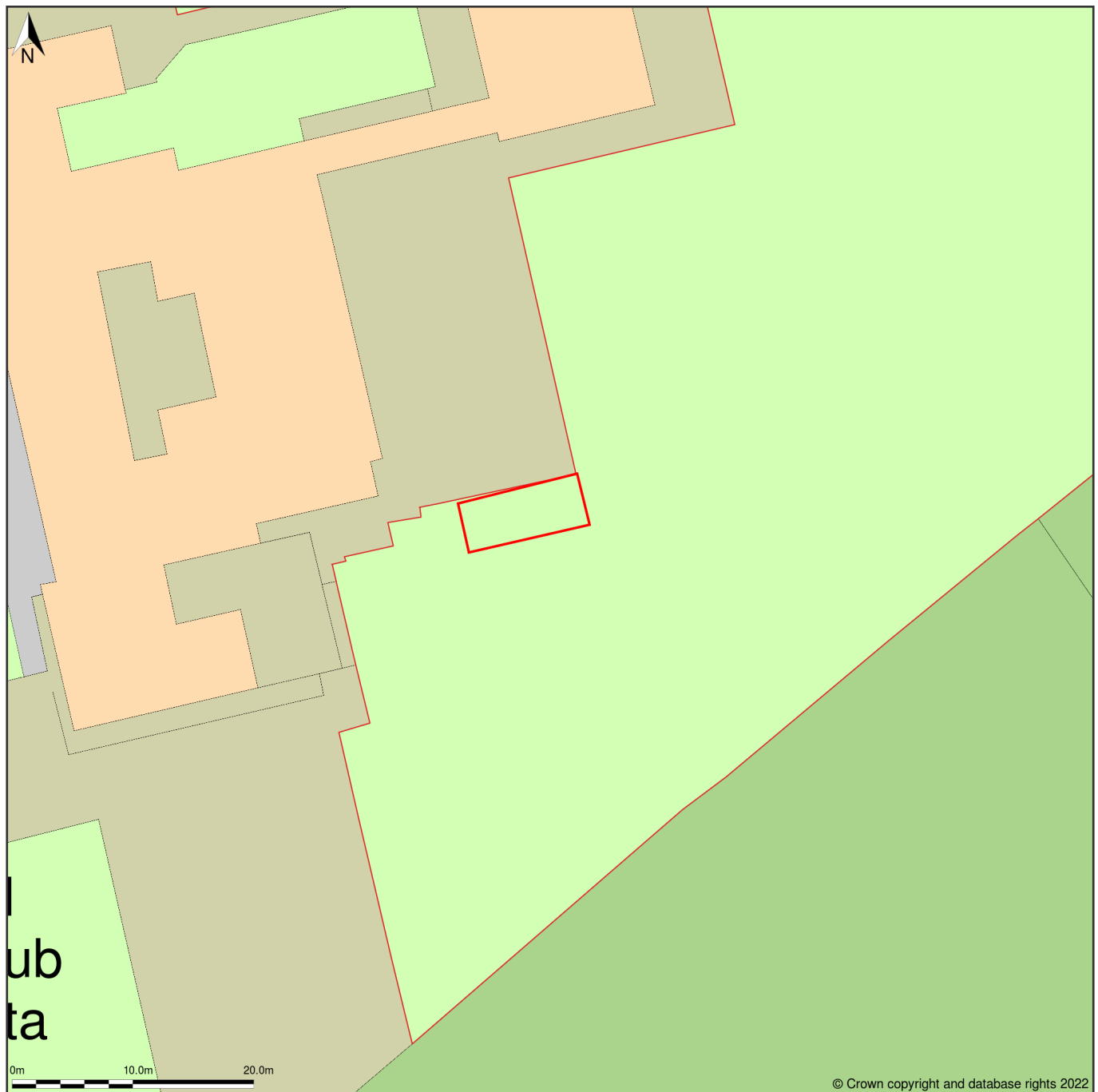
BLACKROD PRIMARY SCHOOL

SCALE 1:50 @ A3

JULY 2022

DRAW NO 2

Blackrod Primary School, location of proposed build



Block Plan shows area bounded by: 362243.5, 409858.94 362333.5, 409948.94 (at a scale of 1:500), OSGridRef: SD6228 990. The representation of a road, track or path is no evidence of a right of way. The representation of features as lines is no evidence of a property boundary.

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