

Design and Access Statement

Site: The Old Grammar School, Broadway, Letchworth Garden City, SG6 3NX

Planning Application Ref: 24/01812/FP

Applicant: Miss Beatrice Pryor (Emil Dale School of Performing Arts Ltd)

1. Introduction

This Design and Access Statement supports the retrospective planning application for the resurfacing of the front access path and installation of two modest signage structures (lawn structure and curved rendered walls) at the entrance to (formerly) The Old Grammar School, Letchworth. The works have been designed to respect the historic character of the site while improving its accessibility and legibility.

2. Design Rationale

The primary objectives of the development were:

- To **enhance the accessibility and safety** of the front approach to the building.
- To create a **clear and coherent entrance point** for visitors.
- To ensure that all alterations were **sympathetic to the building's character** and the surrounding Conservation Area.

Materials and Form

The walls are constructed of **breeze block rendered with plaster**, and the pathway is resurfaced using **paving stones**. These materials were chosen to complement the tones and proportions of the original Grammar School building while maintaining durability and ease of maintenance.

The design incorporates **traditional proportions and symmetry**, avoiding visual clutter. The signage is minimal and intended to be **reversible**, ensuring no lasting impact on the building or site.

3. Access

The reconfiguration of the path includes:

- A smoother, more navigable surface suitable for **wheelchairs and pushchairs**.
- A direct and clearly defined route to the main entrance.

- Subtle changes to gradients to **improve ease of use and safety**, especially for individuals with mobility needs.

The previous surface was uneven and informal, presenting both aesthetic and access issues. The new arrangement **formalises the entrance** while maintaining open pedestrian access from the public pavement.

4. Context and Heritage Sensitivity

The site lies within the **Letchworth Conservation Area**, and the works have been designed to minimise visual impact:

- The form, scale and colour of the structures are **in keeping with the historic setting**.
- The signage structures are **modest and non-intrusive**, aligning with the Garden City ethos of sensitive and well-proportioned design.

This approach is consistent with the **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)**, which encourages thoughtful additions that preserve heritage significance.

5. Conclusion

This development represents a **low-impact, thoughtful enhancement** to a civic heritage site. It improves accessibility, clarifies entrance routes, and is wholly reversible. The design respects the architectural language of the Old Grammar School and the wider Conservation Area, offering minor public benefits without material harm to heritage assets.