

THOMAS  THOMAS

CHARTERED BUILDING SURVEYORS

Design & Access Statement

Burfield Academy

January 2024

Prepared for
STEP Academy Trust
Gonville Road
Thornton Heath
Surrey
CR7 6DL

Studio 2.1.02
The Leather Market
11-13 Weston Street
London SE1 3ER



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1 Design & Access Statement

1.1 Client Name and Address

STEP Academy Trust
Gonville Road
Thornton Heath
Surrey
CR7 6DL

1.2 Property Address

Burfield Academy
Oaklands Way
East Sussex
Hailsham
BN27 2NW

1.3 Brief Description

This design and access statement is in support of an application to amend condition 2 of application ref WD/3252/CC granted on 2nd April 2015, to remove all obligations concerning an on-site parking provision for drop-off and pick-up (the “kiss and drop”) at Burfield Academy.

As the academy has grown towards capacity (Burfield grew incrementally by one year group each academic year) concerns were identified about the suitability and safety of the ‘Kiss and Drop’. These were numerous, but key concerns related to:

- the risk to pedestrians (including children) of being struck by vehicles;
- the risk of vehicles colliding
- the risk to Burfield staff, pupils and visitors, as well as local residents, as a result of congestion on local roads limiting emergency vehicle access.

There were further concerns around the practicalities of implementing the Kiss and Drop in the way outlined within the Transport Plan (submitted as ESCC/LSAT’s original planning applications), which included both increased health and safety risks, safeguarding risks and a requirement for members of schools staff to police areas of the highway.

In 2022, STEP Academy Trust therefore commissioned a review of the ‘Kiss and Drop’ layout and procedures (as included in the original Transport Statement- approved as part of the planning process) by an independent Health and Safety consultant.

Their report has been submitted with this planning application, however in summary their concerns mirrored those of STEP Academy Trust and they recommended that:

“The systems included within the travel plan do not in practice offer a safe solution for the drop off and collection of primary aged children. Even with modification of the school site, access via the highway is regularly encumbered by parked vehicles, creating a bottleneck at the school gate, which puts cars, pupils and residents at risk.

With this in mind there are no safe options for a safe on-site drop-off and collection process and STEP Academy Trust should work with East Sussex County Council to formally restrict access to the school premises, encouraging parents to park in surrounding residential roads.”

Having previously restricted access to the Kiss and Drop during COVID in order to ensure STEP Academy Trust could operate an effective one-way pedestrian system, STEP Academy Trust therefore took the decision that it needed to remain closed whilst we consulted with ESCC planning and highways to find a solution.

Having collaborated with ESCC to consider alternatives such as school zig-zags and double red lines, neither of which were deemed to be a suitable or effective means of addressing the issue, STEP Academy Trust are now left with no choice but to progress the recommendations from the health and safety report and request that the planning conditions concerning the kiss and drop are removed.

This report should be read in conjunction with the full plans application and the drawings attached:

- 6063- (pl) 003 h – Proposed Site Plan
- 6063 (pl) 001 b - site location
- WN Travel Plan assessment for Burfield Academy

1.4 Vehicle Approach

The site is located within a residential area of Hailsham which fronts onto Oaklands Way. Access to the school is via the on-site “kiss and drop” system. The car parking spaces on site are reserved for staff and permitted visitors.

1.5 Pedestrian Access

Pedestrian access is via a concrete paved public footpath on Oaklands Way to the school's main entrance. Oaklands Way is a relatively quiet residential road, with the nearby A295 being a busier road.

1.6 Appraisal

Local community

Given the nature and location of the proposed amendment, it is deemed necessary to notify the neighbours and residents of any works via the usual planning notice and consultation.

STEP Academy Trust appreciate this is a hugely contentious issue. STEP Academy Trust know that residents were highly opposed to the school being built and that planning was initially refused on the grounds of the impact of traffic on the local neighbourhood. Indeed, this was only subsequently granted because of the amendments and conditions which STEP Academy Trust are now seeking to remove. In effect STEP Academy Trust are therefore seeking to overturn the refusal of the original planning application and it is appreciated that is a significant request for the planning authority.

However, our paramount concern is for the safety and welfare of the children who are placed under our care when attending our school site and we cannot in good consciousness implement a system which we know re- introduces significant risks to their safety.

Equally, we acknowledge that it is not fair for the school to continue to operate in breach of the planning conditions indefinitely and we must therefore seek permission to ratify the current arrangements.

We therefore hope that planners will take a pragmatic view of our request, based on the merits of our proposal here and now and not on the history or legacy which we know surrounds this issue.

1.7 Design

The application seeks remove any conditions which link to the Kiss and Drop and seeks permission to instead limit vehicle access to the site, instead implementing the 'traditional school drop off model' utilizing local roads.

THOMAS & THOMAS

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