

Design and Access and Heritage Statement for Proposed New Fencing to St Hilda's CE Primary School, Whittaker Lane, Prestwich, Bury, M25 1HA

Introduction

This Heritage Statement supports the proposed new fencing works at St Hilda's CE Primary School.

As St Hilda's is included on the draft Local List, it is considered a non-designated heritage asset under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and the proposals therefore require a proportionate assessment of their impact on its significance. The school is not within a Conservation Area.

Heritage

St Hilda's is a one-form-entry primary school set within a residential area, enclosed by railings and masonry boundary walls. The site comprises the original 1879 school building, later additions, and associated play and external teaching spaces.

The original 1879 building stands on the corner of Whittaker Lane and Ogden Street and includes early year classrooms up to year 4, the hall and the kitchen. A later detached building at the southern end of the site accommodates the main entrance, staff facilities, and the year 5 & 6 classrooms. Additional single-storey lean-to extensions have been constructed over recent decades to support the school's growth.

Architecturally, the historic core retains the defining features of a Victorian parish school, including red/orange brickwork, pitched slate roofs, simple Gothic detailing, and a small chancel at the east end. These features reflect both its educational origins and its long standing ecclesiastical links. Despite recent additions, the Victorian building remains clearly legible and continues to express its historic function as a parish-associated school.

The school's significance lies principally in its well-preserved Victorian architecture, its contribution to Prestwich's educational development, and its ongoing communal role. Its visual character, historic fabric, and long continuity of public use give it local heritage value. The boundary features affected by this application are modern, utilitarian, and unrelated to that significance.

Proposals

The existing railings to the site are to be removed, as their low height (1500mm to Ogden Street, 1800mm to Park Street) allows them to be climbed easily, from the inside by pupils, and externally by trespassers. This has occurred on multiple occasions within the last year, leading to concerns about

pupil escape, and the risk of vandalism, theft, or arson. These railings are dated, have no historic value, and are not in good condition.

The existing boundary wall between the upper playground and Ogden Street is adjacent to an access ramp. This means that although the wall appears inaccessible from the exterior, it is possible that with the increased internal height, the wall can be climbed.

It is therefore proposed that all railings to Ogden Street and Park Street are replaced with new 2400mm weld mesh fencing with 200 x 50mm apertures, in RAL 5016 (Sky Blue). The increased height, along with the smaller gaps, will prevent climbing of the fencing from either side. Gates will match the 2400mm height, and will be installed to all existing locations. The blue colour is in line with the school colours used throughout the site.

Additional 800mm fencing will be installed above the existing brick wall to Ogden Street, to prevent escape. The existing brick on edge coping will be removed and replaced with a new stone coping to match the existing. This will improve the heritage appearance of the brick wall.

The fencing is proposed to be 2400mm, this is in line with the Technical Manual from the Department of Education's Design Standards, which recommends perimeter fencing to be a minimum of 1800mm high. The school requires a higher fence given their specific needs.

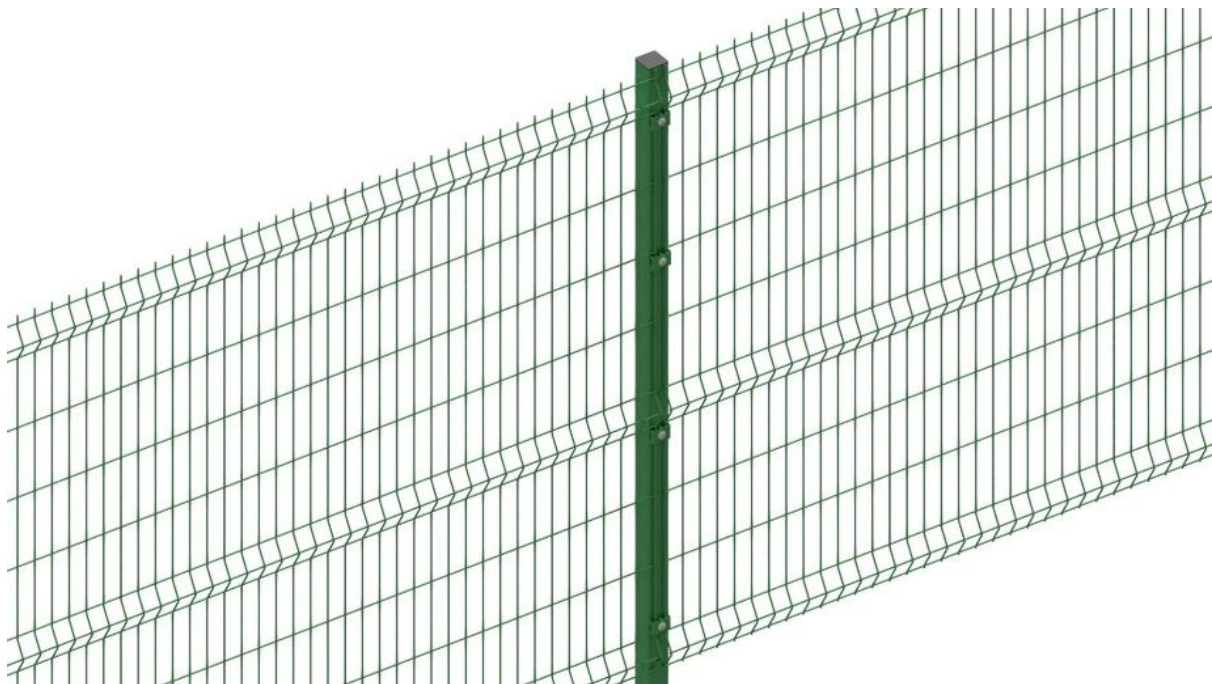


Image of example 2.4m high weld mesh fence type – to be in RAL 5016 to match school colours.

Impact

The impact of the proposals has been assessed in relation to the school's significance, the characteristics of the existing structures, and the extent to which the replacements may affect the setting of the historic building.

As the works concern only modern railings, there is no physical impact on the historic fabric of any kind. The proposals do not alter rooflines, elevations, openings, or materials associated with the original building and the Victorian school remains fully legible and intact.

Visually, the impact of the new railings is minimal. Although taller than the existing provision and contemporary in appearance, they are recessive in character, and the blue colour ties in with the existing school colours. The removal of the existing railings and their replacement with more durable alternatives offers a slight improvement to the appearance of the school, although this enhancement does not materially alter the heritage value of the site. In accordance with the NPPF approach to non-designated heritage assets, the proposed works are proportionate and avoid harm. They do not affect any element that contributes to significance and do not interrupt the historic character or form of the Victorian building. The proposed fencing is all reversible, ensuring full compatibility with good conservation practice.

Educational Need

St Hilda's has a higher-than-average number of pupils with SEND and requires appropriate security. The existing railings are insufficient, and are contributing to the risk that pupils will be able to escape the playground. Due to the changing levels across the site, and subsequent access improvements, the low height of the fencing means it can be easily climbed from the internal side.

The SEND requirements mean that physical prevention of climbing is as important as playground management.

Planning History and Policy

There are several recent planning applications for the site.

72528 – Replacement of existing external canopy; Replacement of existing glazed timber shelter with new garden room – Approved Fri 23 Jan 2026

57434 – Two no. single storey side extensions – Approved Tue 20 May 2014

55269 – Relocation of main entrance formed on Ogden Street ; alterations to perimeter fencing and installation of pedestrian barriers to the highway – Approved Tue 14 Aug 2012

The proposals are in line with the NPPF, as they have been considered to reduce the visual impact of the new intervention.

Conclusion

The proposed works to St Hilda's CE Primary School are limited in extent, confined to an area that does not contribute to heritage significance, and involve only the replacement of low quality modern structures. The historic Victorian buildings remain entirely untouched and continue to express their architectural, historic, and communal value without interruption.

The scheme delivers functional and educational benefits, particularly for SEND provision, while avoiding adverse effect on the non-designated heritage asset. The proposals are neutral to in heritage terms, fully in accordance with the NPPF's requirement for proportionate assessment and the

avoidance of unjustified harm. The development is therefore acceptable and supportable from a heritage perspective.

The proposed works are required for the safety of the pupils. Care has been taken in the design to ensure that the effect on the appearance of the building is minimal, but the security of the site must take precedence.

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14th July 2026