

Heritage Statement

**St Hilda's CE Primary School, Whittaker Lane, Prestwich
Replacement Garden Room and Replacement Canopy**

1. Introduction

This Heritage Statement supports the proposed improvement works at St Hilda's CE Primary School. The project involves replacing a small, glazed timber shelter with a composite-clad garden room and replacing a deteriorated timber canopy with a freestanding, powder-coated galvanised steel structure. 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.

2. Site and Building Description

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 structures affected by this application, the glazed timber shelter and timber canopy, are modern, utilitarian, and unrelated to that significance.

3. Existing Structures

The proposals relate solely to the early years playground area, which is separated from the main school playground by a high masonry wall. The existing glazed timber shelter is small,

basic in design, and of no heritage interest. The adjoining timber canopy, with its polycarbonate roof, is similarly utilitarian and is in poor physical condition. Neither structure contributes positively to the school's architectural, historic, or communal character.

4. Proposed Works

Replacement Garden Room

The existing glazed timber shelter will be removed and replaced with a modest composite clad garden room. The new structure will increase the external footprint from approximately 15m² to 21m² and will be insulated, heated, and fully compliant with Building Regulations. It is intended to provide a year-round learning environment for SEND pupils, small teaching groups and role play. The structure will remain completely detached from all historic buildings.

Replacement Canopy

The deteriorated timber canopy will be removed and replaced with a powder-coated galvanised steel canopy with a modern polycarbonate roofing system. The new canopy will increase in size from 29m² to 52m². The new canopy will offer improved durability, better weather protection over a larger outdoor play area and safer covered access to the reception and year 1 classrooms. Like the garden room, it is entirely separate from the historic buildings and is fully reversible.

5. Heritage Impact Assessment

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 two modern, low-quality structures located within the playground, 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 effect of the new structures is minimal. They are modest in scale, contemporary in appearance but recessive in character. The removal of the existing structures and their replacement with more coherent and durable alternatives offers a slight improvement to the appearance of the playground, although this enhancement does not materially alter the heritage value of the site. Key views of the historic school, as well as its spatial and functional relationships, remain wholly unaffected.

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.

6. Educational Need

St Hilda's has a higher-than-average number of pupils with SEND and requires additional, appropriately designed small-group learning spaces. The glazed shed is thermally poor and cannot be used year-round. Constructing new accommodation as an extension to the Victorian building would be physically impractical due to level changes, steps, and ramps, and would risk harmful interventions into fabric of heritage value. A freestanding structure is therefore the least intrusive and most appropriate means of meeting the school's educational requirements.

7. Mitigation

No mitigation is necessary as the proposals cause no harm to heritage significance and do not affect any historic fabric or setting. Both structures are freestanding and reversible, ensuring full compatibility with good conservation practice.

8. 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 any adverse effect on the non-designated heritage asset. The proposals are neutral to slightly beneficial 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.