

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT: Gad's Hill School— Re-
tention of the Hewlett Pavilion and ancillary buildings on a
permanent basis with associated external alterations

Version 1 20/08/2025



Wainscott Bypass

Historic view

Hewlett Pavilion

Gads Hill Place

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Gad's Hill School is an independent day school educating girls and boys aged 3-16 years in the Lower and Upper Schools. The school is set in the grounds of Gad's Hill Place, the former home of Charles Dickens, which is Grade I Listed, in the village of Higham.

- Originally a school for girls, the school became fully co-educational in September 2001.
- As it grew, the school tried to purchase neighbouring property Dingley Dell in 2002 in the hope of converting it into classrooms which were urgently needed for the summer of 2003. The school was frustrated by highways objections and a requirement that the school make several highway improvements, the cost of which made the project untenable.
- Temporary Planning Permission was obtained for the Hewlett Pavillion which was built to the south of what was Dickens' kitchen garden to provide the much-needed classrooms in lieu of Dingley Dell. The pavilion was completed in 2004.
- In 2010 the school obtained planning permission for a new Junior Block and Senior Block, and listed building consent for converting Gad's Hill Place into a Dickens Visitor Centre.
- The Junior Block was completed in late 2013/2014 at a cost of £7.9m. The high cost of the build, coupled with the Credit Crunch, put the school under immense financial strain.
- The planning approved Senior Block, which was meant to provide permanent accommodation for the classrooms replacing the Hewlett Pavilion, and to release Gad's Hill Place for a Dickens Visitor Centre, is too much of a financial risk and was never built. The last estimate for the cost of the Senior Block was £5.6m excluding fees, contingency & VAT (November 2022 estimate)
- Under new leadership since 2018, the school commissioned Clay Architecture in 2021 to develop an alternative phased masterplan for the Senior School, now renamed Upper School. The plan is for a phased development of classroom blocks that would a) free up the historic house to be leased to a charity established to run the building as a heritage and educational resource celebrating the life and work of Charles Dickens and b) replace the Hewlett Pavilion with a new building.
- This masterplan was the subject of a lengthy pre-planning application with Gravesham Borough Council, pre-

consultation with Historic England, and an initial Expression of Interest with the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

There are several reasons for this application :

- The planning approved Upper School (planning reference 20070188) meant to replace the pavilion is not financially viable and too much of a risk for the school to undertake.
- Temporary permission to keep the pavilion for a further period of 3 years (reference 20160271) expired on 20th July 2019.
- The school remains unable to replace the building, which currently houses classrooms that cater for specialist GCSE subjects essential for its Upper School.
- The expired temporary permission of the Hewlett Pavilion puts the school at risk of an enforcement notice—for which the school has been seeking a permanent solution since 2019.
- During high-level pre-planning consultation meetings with the Council in which the school presented its alternative phased masterplan, the Council responded that in its current form, the plan for the replacement of the Hewlett Pavilion with a permanent structure would take too long to complete. This is due to the estimated time needed to raise funding for the build. The school was advised to simplify the masterplan and reduce the time required for resolving the expired temporary permission.
- Although the building finishes are tired and the roof is past its useful life, the Hewlett Pavilion remains structurally sound.
- Historic England's principal objection to the 20200385 application to keep the pavilion on a permanent basis was the degree of less than significant harm it caused to the historic house, by impacting the setting and the historic views from the house which Dickens referred to in his letter.

Having explored the alternatives (see the options appraisal on pages 8 & 9), retaining and refurbishing the Hewlett Pavilion is the school's preferred and most viable option for simplifying the masterplan.

This proposal includes the following:

- **Heritage Statement and Impact Assessment**
- **Landscape and Visual Appraisal and Green Belt Assessment**

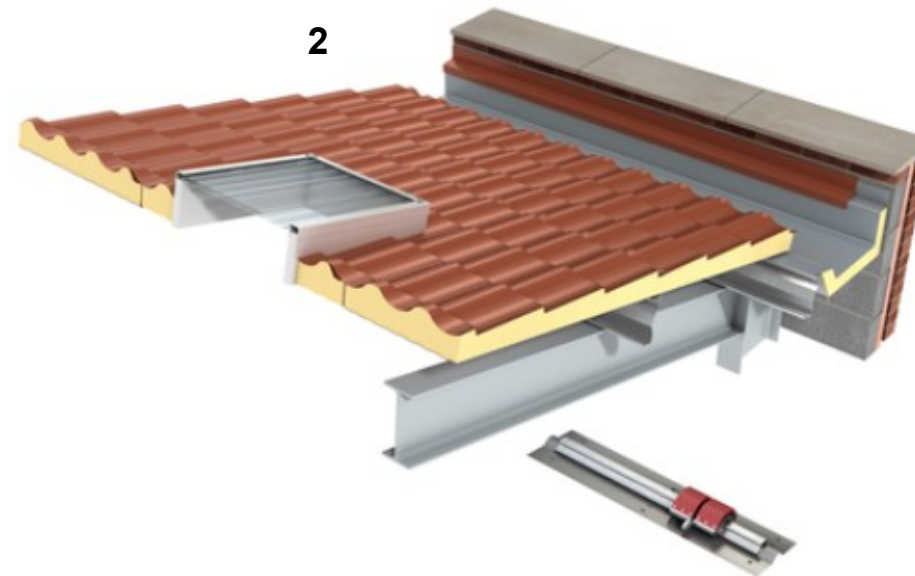
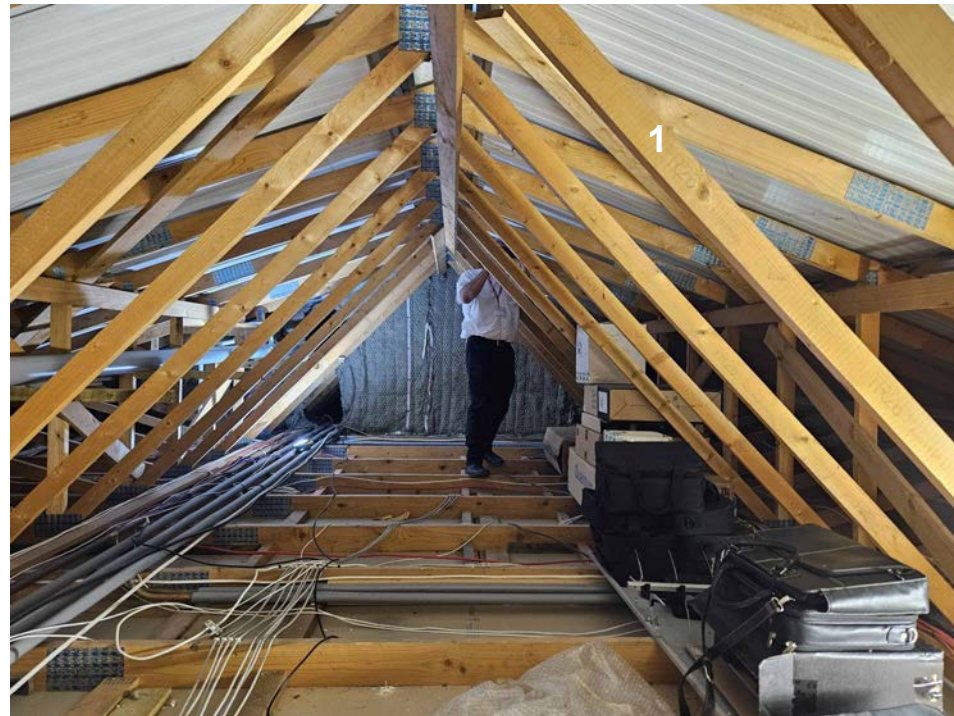
- **Planning Statement (including planning history and public benefits)**
- **Case for the Retention of the Pavilion Building**

This design and access statement will cover the following:

- A design proposal to refurbish, reclad and reroof the Hewlett Pavilion to renew the building and reduce its harm on the setting, historic views and significance
- An options appraisal and an appraisal of the heritage and environmental benefits of this proposal.

In addition:

- In parallel with this application, the school has submitted a listed building application for carrying out structural investigations on the grade II listed house (20250370). This is in preparation for much-needed structural repairs as advised by the structural engineer.
- A summary of the findings of the structural investigation are included in the Appendix; the results of the structural investigation add to the case for retaining the pavilion because a) there are few alternatives for relocating the classrooms should the pavilion need to be removed and b) the option proposed for retaining the pavilion has the heritage benefit of diverting the least funds and therefore is the option least likely to impact or delay the ongoing programme of critical repair and conservation work to the house.
- In pre-planning consultation, Historic England's position was that repairs to the Grade I Listed house should take priority over resolving the pavilion issue.



In its current form, by virtue of its size and proximity to the Grade I Listed house, the dominant red of its roof covering, and the dominant black of its timber cladding, the pavilion detracts from the views of the Medway valley and causes a degree of less than substantial harm to the house.

The potential of using green roofs was first discussed for a proposed new replacement building for the pavilion during pre-planning consultation on an alternative phased masterplan for the school, PRE2023077 (Option 1 on page 8).

During the pre-consultation, Gravesham Borough Council's conservation officer responded to the outline designs:

Is there a way of adopting the green roof design concept of the New Nursery with the specific aim of creating an invisible building when viewed specifically from Gads Hill Place? Would it be preferable to adopt the location of the existing unauthorised Pavilion with a green roof building?

Substituting a green roof for the existing red tile effect roof of the Hewlett Pavilion would have the same positive effect of making the building more 'invisible' as adopting a green roof on a new building, at a fraction of the cost of a new building to the school.

We therefore looked at the feasibility of replacing the existing pavilion roof with a green roof.

Clay Architecture and ABP Engineers carried out a site investigation on the Hewlett Pavilion on the 26th of June 2025.

- Although the finishes for the pavilion are generally very tired, the building is still structurally sound.
- The pavilion has a timber truss roof (1) which has a composite roofing panel (2, 3) fixed to it. The panel is, or is very similar to <https://www.pirsltd.co.uk/product/ks1000rt/> which comes in all-in-one insulated metre wide panels with a simulated red tile top sheet.
- These panels have a 25-year life span for thermal and structural performance, and a 40-year lifespan for the external coating. The pavilion was completed in 2004, which means that the roof panels are close to the end of their useful thermal and structural life. When we inspected the eaves, the panels were exposed to the elements and were not in good condition (4).
- If the building were to be retained and have its life prolonged, the roof would need to be replaced anyway.



The site investigation found that it is feasible to replace the existing roof of the pavilion with a green roof.

This would involve the following:

- Remove the existing lightweight composite roofing panels.
- Strengthen the roof structure to take a heavier roof by doubling the number of trusses.
- Install a sedum roof system onto the timber trusses: this will include a timber deck, a warm (insulated) bituminous or EPDM flat roof, and a sedum roof laid on top.
- The new roof will improve the thermal efficiency of the pavilion.
- A Sedum mix will need to be selected and confirmed.
- The above works would include renewing or redirecting the electric cabling within the roof void in order to enable the new roof trusses to be installed.
- The 2 fire compartment breaks within the roof void are past their useful life and should be renewed.



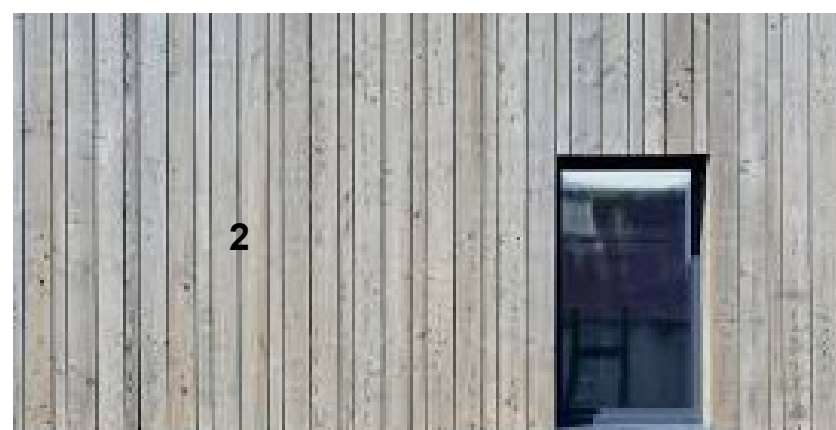


- The black shiplap timber cladding is quite dominant and causes less than substantial harm to the significance of the historic house. The cladding is also looking very tired and needs renewal (2).

We propose to:

- Replace the black shiplap timber cladding with vertical board-on-board timber cladding in a natural finish (2); insulation will be upgraded to current standards to improve the thermal efficiency of the building.
- The boards will be fire-retardant timber to Euroclass B-s1, d0.
- The natural finish timber boards to the side and rear will gradually oxidize and turn silver-grey, which is a more recessive and subordinate colour and tone than the existing black.
- The boards to the front elevation can be treated to slow down the oxidation process and retain the rich tones of freshly cut timber (3)
- Vertical board-on-board timber cladding will add a finer grain of texture to the pavilion compared to the more monolithic black shiplap boards, this will help to break up the visual mass of the wall.
- Boards will be planed so as not to splinter to the touch.
- Timber specie to be confirmed.

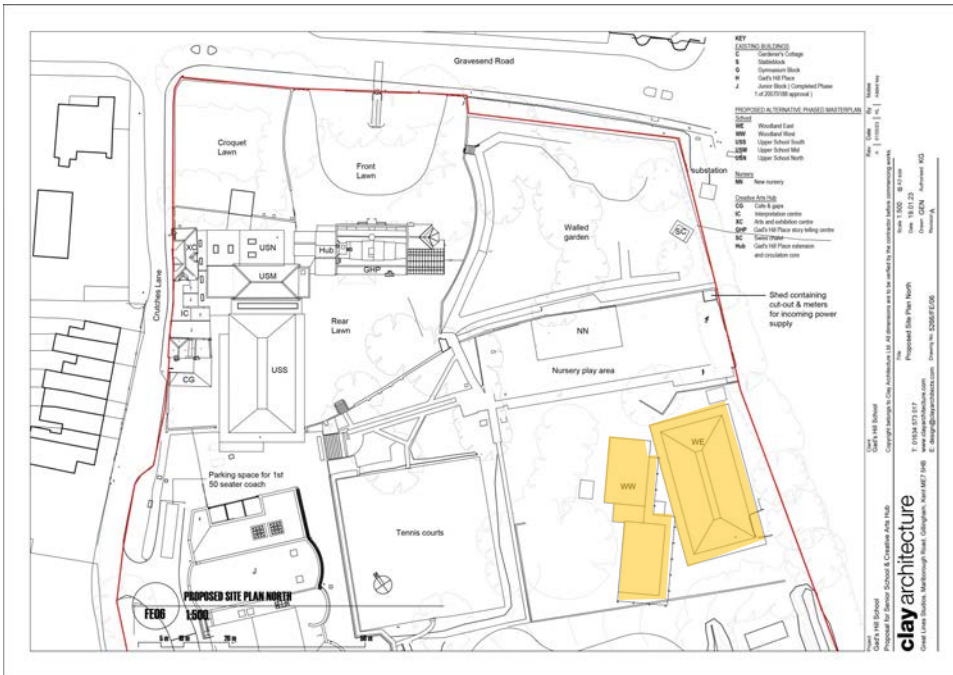
The impact of these proposals on the significance of the Grade I Listed house is detailed in the Heritage Statement.



Options Appraisal

and Heritage and Environmental Benefits of the proposal (Option 4)

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Option 2: Phased masterplan for replacement pavilion building

Please refer to the separate report on the public benefits of this proposal. Here, we outline the options appraisal carried out on the Hewlett Pavilion, and examine in greater detail the Heritage and Environmental benefits of the submitted proposal (Option 4 in the options appraisal).

The heritage asset: Gad’s Hill Place

This application must be understood in the context of the entire school site. Hewlett Pavilion is one of several buildings that make up the school. The functions of the school buildings are interlinked and need to be considered together.

As proud custodians of Charles Dickens’ legacy at Gad’s Hill Place, Gad’s Hill School are actively taking steps to preserve and enhance this legacy.

- The school recently completed the faithful reconstruction and restoration of the cupola to the house, which had deteriorated over the years and was in a very poor condition.
- The cupola is the first of several items forming part of a Listed Building Consent for essential repairs to the house and its setting (20230281) to be completed. Other critical items on the list include the roofs and ceilings of the house.
- A detailed condition survey on the house carried out in 2022 and completed in 2023 found its historic floors, landings and stair to be in a poor condition due to heavy use. It is thought that a number of floors were not built to withstand the recommended loading for classrooms, 3.0kN/m².
- Based on their findings in the condition survey, ABP Engineers advised that there are likely to be significant implications to the integrity of the existing building were it to be continued for use as a school building beyond 5 years from the date of the survey.
- In pre-consultation, Gravesham Borough Council (PRE20230077) and Historic England (PA01198299) recommended that a structural investigation be carried out on the floors, landings and stair of the house to assess its structure.
- The structural investigation was completed this summer as part of a Listed Building Application (20250370).
- Based on a recommended imposed load of 3.0KN/m², of the 8 rooms being investigated, 4 rooms and the central stair were found to be inadequate, 3 rooms (including 1 office) and 2 stair landings were found to be inadequate but can be improved, 1 room and the

- ground floor landing were found to be adequate (**please refer to the summary in the appendix**).
- As a result of the survey, it is recommended:
 - That the central stair be closed off and stop being used by the school
 - That the existing 1930s stair be extended to the second floor as the new primary means of escape
 - That the floors to the 2 rooms and 2 landings which can be improved are improved
 - That the 4 rooms that are inadequate are downgraded to be only used by small groups
 - This severely limits the school’s options for relocating classrooms in the Hewlett Pavilion.**

Options Appraisal

4 options have been explored for the Hewlett Pavilion:

- Option 1: Remove the pavilion and relocate the classrooms elsewhere on the school site**
- The results of the structural investigation on the house mean that it is physically impossible to relocate classrooms from the pavilion elsewhere within the school buildings— there are not enough spare classrooms suitable for conversion.
 - Even if it were physically possible to relocate classrooms from the pavilion to the house, the specialist requirements of the classrooms in the pavilion are likely to cause harm to the significance of the house and make this unlikely.
 - The loss of the pavilion will therefore have a significant impact on the school (see the Case for the Retention of the Pavilion)
 - Option 1 is not viable.
- Option 2: Replace the pavilion with a new building located away from the house**
- This was the proposal put forward in the alternative phased masterplan pre-consulted in PRE2023077.
 - Taking into consideration the existing site layout and large number of mature trees, there are not many options for where a new

replacement building of this size can be sited— the outline proposal positioned it downslope from the existing pavilion, further away from the house, screened from the house by the mature trees.

- Historic England commented that, though this was an improvement on the existing situation, it is likely that the new building would still ‘cause some harm to significance’.
- The new building was estimated to cost £3m excluding fees, contingency & VAT, of which approximately £2.1m was for classrooms replacing the Hewlett Pavilion (April 2024 estimate)
- Because of how long it would take the school to raise funding for structural repairs to the house *and* for the new replacement building— both of which are priorities-- the cost of this option was prohibitive because it would lead to the prolongation of the expired temporary permission which is unacceptable to Gravesham Borough Council’s planning department.
- Option 2 is not viable due to cost and prolongation.

Option 3: Dismantle the pavilion, move it away from the house, and re-assemble the pavilion in the new location to reduce its impact

- Because the pavilion was originally designed as a temporary building to be assembled as a kit of parts, we looked at the option of dividing the structure back into parts which could be moved downslope to the location identified for Option 2.
- Because of the length of the pavilion, it would need to be divided into 2 buildings to fit the space available.
- Drawings submitted as part of the original planning application for the pavilion show the primary steels supporting the raised floor structure running from the back to the front of the pavilion.
- In theory, this means than the building can be divided across from back to front without too much weakening of the structure, making it feasible to then lift and move the parts to a new location for reassembly.
- Clay Architecture and ABP Engineers carried out a site investigation on the pavilion on the 26th of June 2025. This revealed that the primary steels supporting the raised floor actually run along the length of the building, rather than across it.
- This means that new steels would need to be introduced to strengthen the floor before the original primary steels can be cut,

and before the building can be divided, lifted and moved.

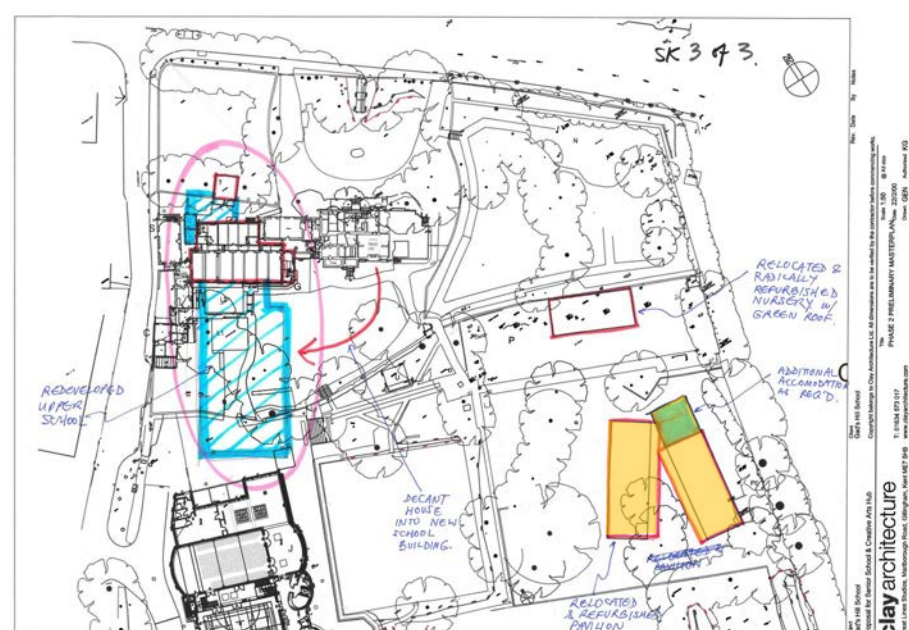
- This adds a level of complexity which increases the time, cost and risk of relocating the pavilion.
- Add to this the need to relocate all the service connections, including the IT server and fibre optic cable, and it would be challenging to execute this in the space of a summer break.
- Temporary classrooms would therefore need to be rented as an additional precaution during the building works, adding to the project cost.
- Historic England’s comments on Option 2 would apply equally to Option 3.
- Although more economic than Option 2, Option 3 is prohibitive by virtue of its technical complexity and disruption to the activities of the school.

Option 4: Retain the pavilion, replace the roof and cladding to reduce its visual impact and harm on significance

- This is the option being submitted for planning approval.
- **Option 4 is technically feasible**
- **Option 4 will cost significantly less than Option 2 or Option 3**
- **Arguably, after refurbishment, Option 4 will have an impact on significance no worse than Option 2 or Option 3.**

Heritage Benefits

- **The school is faced with a situation in which 2 buildings critical to the running of the school are in urgent need of attention at the same time— structural or other building repairs in the case of Gad’s Hill Place, and an expired temporary permission in the case of the Hewlett Pavilion.**
- The total cost for repairs and remedial work to the house relating to the condition survey was estimated at £1.7m excluding fees, contingency & VAT(March 2023 estimate). Please note that structural repairs are but a portion of this, not the total budget.
- The school has already spent £50K on the cupola.
- **Any funds spent on sorting out the pavilion will divert funds away from urgent repairs to the house.**



Option 3: sketches for dismantling and moving the pavilion away from the house

- As demonstrated above, the cost of Option 2 for the Hewlett Pavilion was deemed prohibitive because it led to prolongation which was unacceptable to Gravesham Borough Council's planning department.

The heritage benefit of Option 4 is that, of all the options available to the school, it will divert the least funds and therefore is the option least likely to impact or delay the ongoing programme of repair and conservation work on the Grade I Listed house being undertaken by the school.

Environmental benefit

- The project involves the refurbishment of an existing building and will extend its useful life.
- **The proposal will retain much of the existing building's embodied carbon. Therefore, taken as a whole, the development's carbon footprint will be significantly less than that for a new build of equivalent size.**
- The reroofing and recladding works will be designed in compliance with Building Regulations Approved Document Part L2 Conservation of fuel and power in buildings other than dwellings, the requirements for which have increased since 2004. **The thermal performance and conservation of fuel and power of the completed development will be a significant improvement on the existing.**
- **The green roof** which replaces the existing metal roof will:
 - **Help reduce CO2** through direct carbon sequestration by plants and indirectly by reducing energy consumption for heating and cooling, which in turn lowers CO2 emissions
 - **Significantly reduce surface runoff** by absorbing and retaining rainwater, which helps mitigate flooding and manage stormwater effectively
 - **Improve biodiversity** by providing habitat for invertebrates

The proposal will have more of an environmental benefit than either the existing building or any potential replacement of the existing building.

Sustainable design principles

- The project involves the refurbishment of an existing building and will extend its useful life.
- The proposal will retain the existing building's embodied carbon. Therefore, taken as a whole, the development's carbon footprint will be significantly less than that for a new build of equivalent size.
- The reroofing and recladding works will be designed in compliance with Building Regulations Approved Document Part L2 Conservation of fuel and power in buildings other than dwellings.
- The thermal performance and conservation of fuel and power of the completed development will be a significant improvement on the existing.

Education or new resident/occupier information pack

- Not applicable

Energy and carbon reduction methods

- Improved insulation of the roof and external walls

Biodiversity net gain, protected species

- The project does not involve new buildings or the removal of habitat, therefore no change to existing
- The sedum roof will create some improvement in biodiversity.

Water efficiency and recycling

- No change to existing.

Waste reduction

- No hazardous materials will be specified for the project.
- Resource efficiency: the building is of a modest scale and utilises standard construction materials that are widely available, which the contractor can order in the quantities required, to minimise construction waste.

Sustainable transport methods

- No change to existing

Appendix: Summary of the site investigation on Gad’s Hill Place

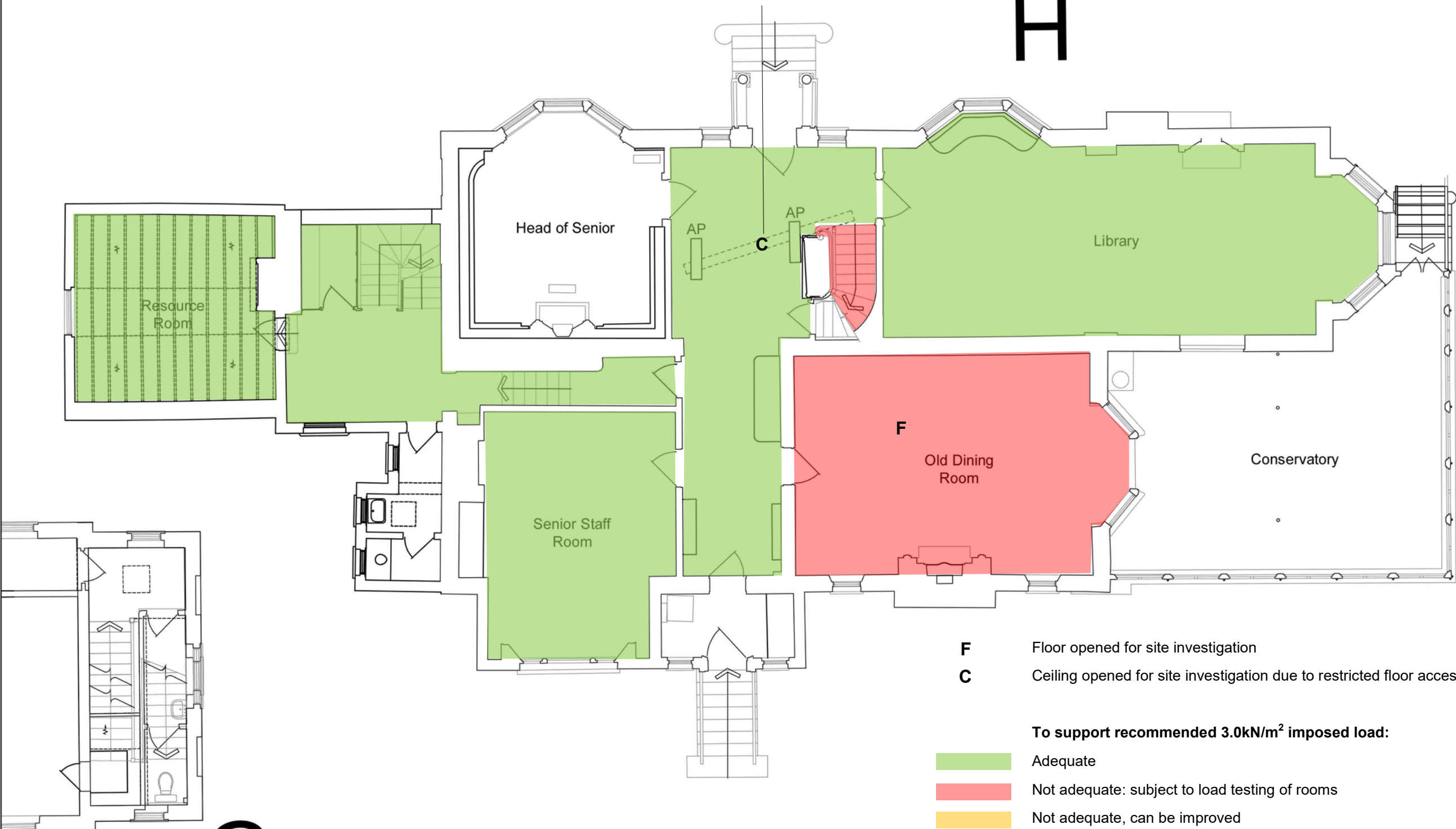
Note:

AP: Acrow props and temporary boards to support floor/landing

Acrow props installed circa 2004 to be removed after improvement

Structural investigation 2025: summary

50 X 100 slot cut in the ceiling to view floor joists, next to where ceiling had already been removed and temporary RSJ had been packed out to the underside of the floor joists circa 2004



F Floor opened for site investigation
C Ceiling opened for site investigation due to restricted floor access above

To support recommended 3.0kN/m² imposed load:

- Adequate
- Not adequate: subject to load testing of rooms
- Not adequate, can be improved

GAD'S HILL PLACE (H) EXISTING GROUND FLOOR PLAN

FE41 1:100

0 1 2 3 4 5m



Rev. Date By Notes
A 13.02.23 SW Added note

Scale 1:100 @ A3 size
Date 03/03/23
Drawn GEN
Authorised KG
Revision A

Title
Gad's Hill Place (H)
Existing Ground Floor Plan
Drawing No. 5266/FE/41

Client
Gad's Hill School
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Project
Gad's Hill School
Proposal for Senior School & Creative Arts Hub
Great Lines Studios, Marlborough Road, Gillingham, Kent ME7 5HB
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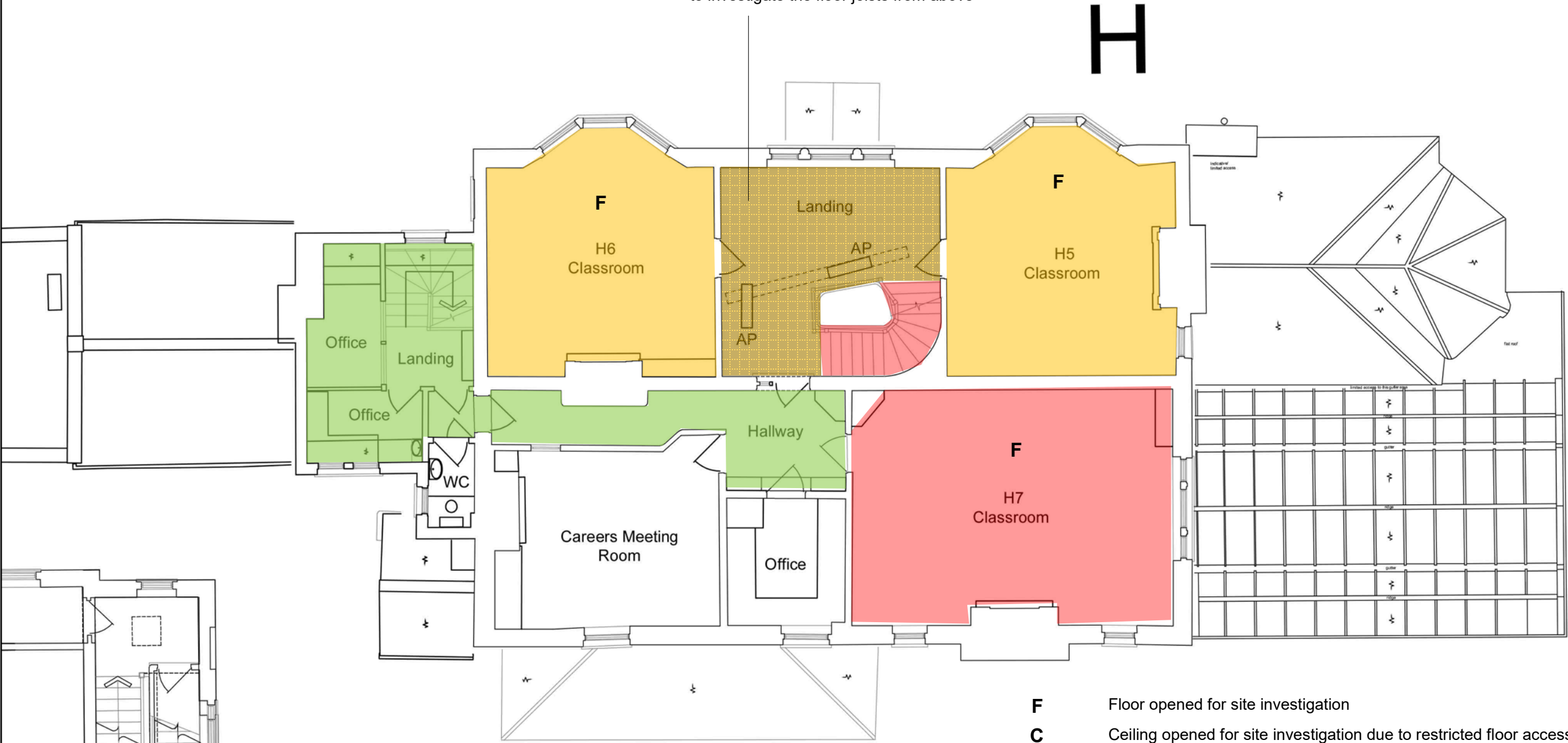
Note:

AP: Acrow props and temporary boards to support floor/landing

Acrow props installed circa 2004 to be removed after improvement

Structural investigation 2025: summary

Decorative marquetry floor discovered underneath the carpets, this prevented access to investigate the floor joists from above



F Floor opened for site investigation
C Ceiling opened for site investigation due to restricted floor access above

To support recommended 3.0kN/m² imposed load:

- Adequate
- Not adequate: subject to load testing of rooms
- Not adequate, can be improved

FE42

GAD'S HILL PLACE (H) EXISTING 1ST FLOOR PLAN

1:100

0 1 2 3 4 5m



Rev. A
Date 13.02.23
By SW
Notes Added note

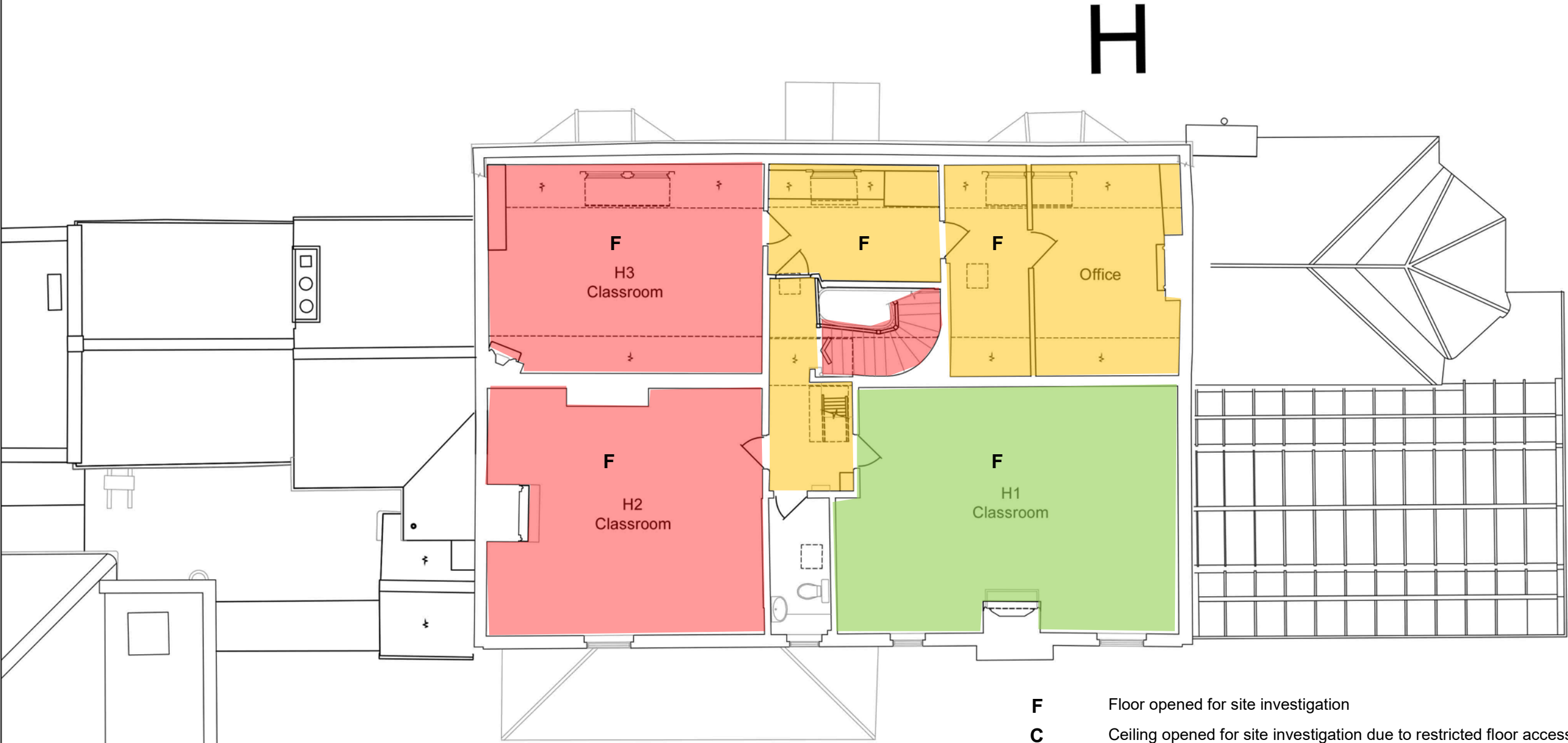
Client Gad's Hill School
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Project Gad's Hill School
Proposal for Senior School & Creative Arts Hub

Scale 1:100 @ A3 size
Date 03/03/23
Drawn GEN
Authorised KG
Revision A
Title Gad's Hill Place (H)
Existing First Floor Plan
Drawing No. 5266/FE/42
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Structural investigation 2025: summary



F Floor opened for site investigation
C Ceiling opened for site investigation due to restricted floor access above

To support recommended 3.0kN/m² imposed load:

- Adequate
- Not adequate: subject to load testing of rooms
- Not adequate, can be improved

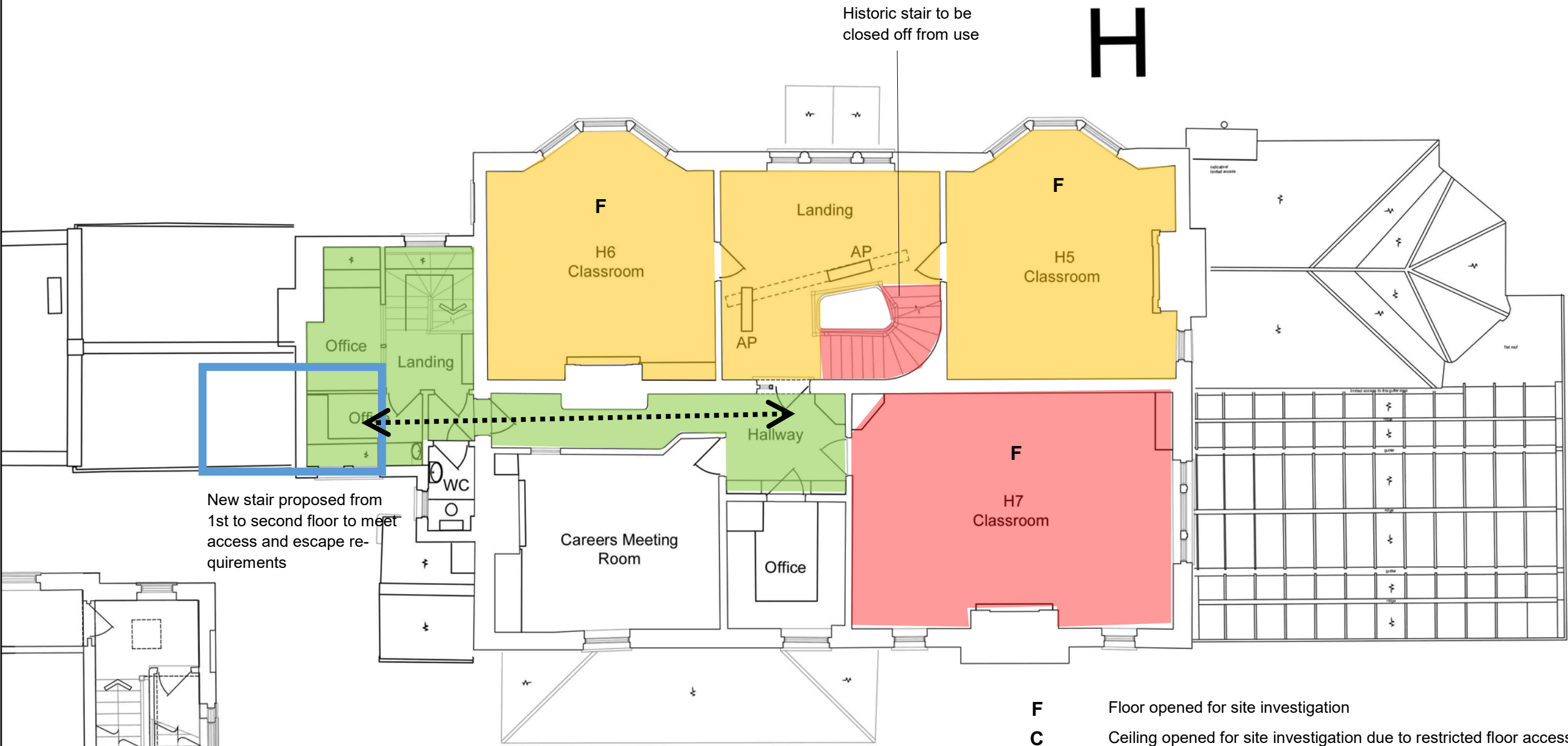
GAD'S HILL PLACE (H) EXISTING 2ND FLOOR PLAN
FE43 1:100
0 1 2 3 4 5m

Note:

AP: Acrow props and temporary boards to support floor/landing

Acrow props installed circa 2004 to be removed after improvement

Means of escape analysis



Rev. A 13.02.23

By SW

Notes

Added note

Client: Gad's Hill School

Project: Gad's Hill School

Proposal for Senior School & Creative Arts Hub

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Scale 1:100 @ A3 size

Date 03/03/23

Drawn GEN

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Revision A

Title: Gad's Hill Place (H) Existing First Floor Plan

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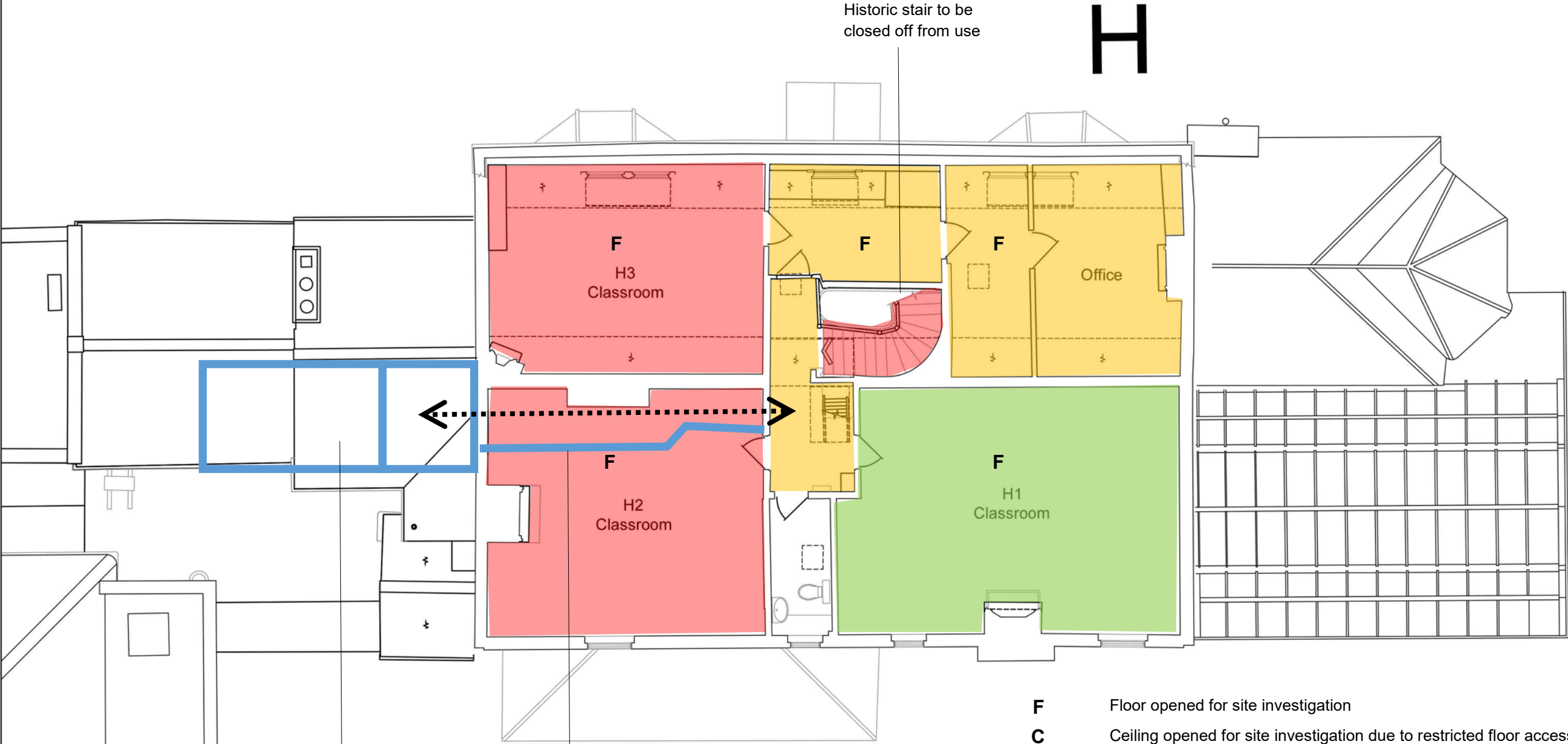
Drawing No. 5266/FE/42

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Version 1 / August 2025 / 16

Means of escape analysis



New stair and landing proposed from 1st to second floor to meet access and escape requirements

Form corridor and strengthen the floor locally

- F Floor opened for site investigation
- C Ceiling opened for site investigation due to restricted floor access above

To support recommended 3.0kN/m² imposed load:

- Adequate
- Not adequate: subject to load testing of rooms
- Not adequate, can be improved

FE43

GAD'S HILL PLACE (H) EXISTING 2ND FLOOR PLAN

1:100

0

1

2

3

4

5m

Project
Gad's Hill School

Client
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Date

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Notes





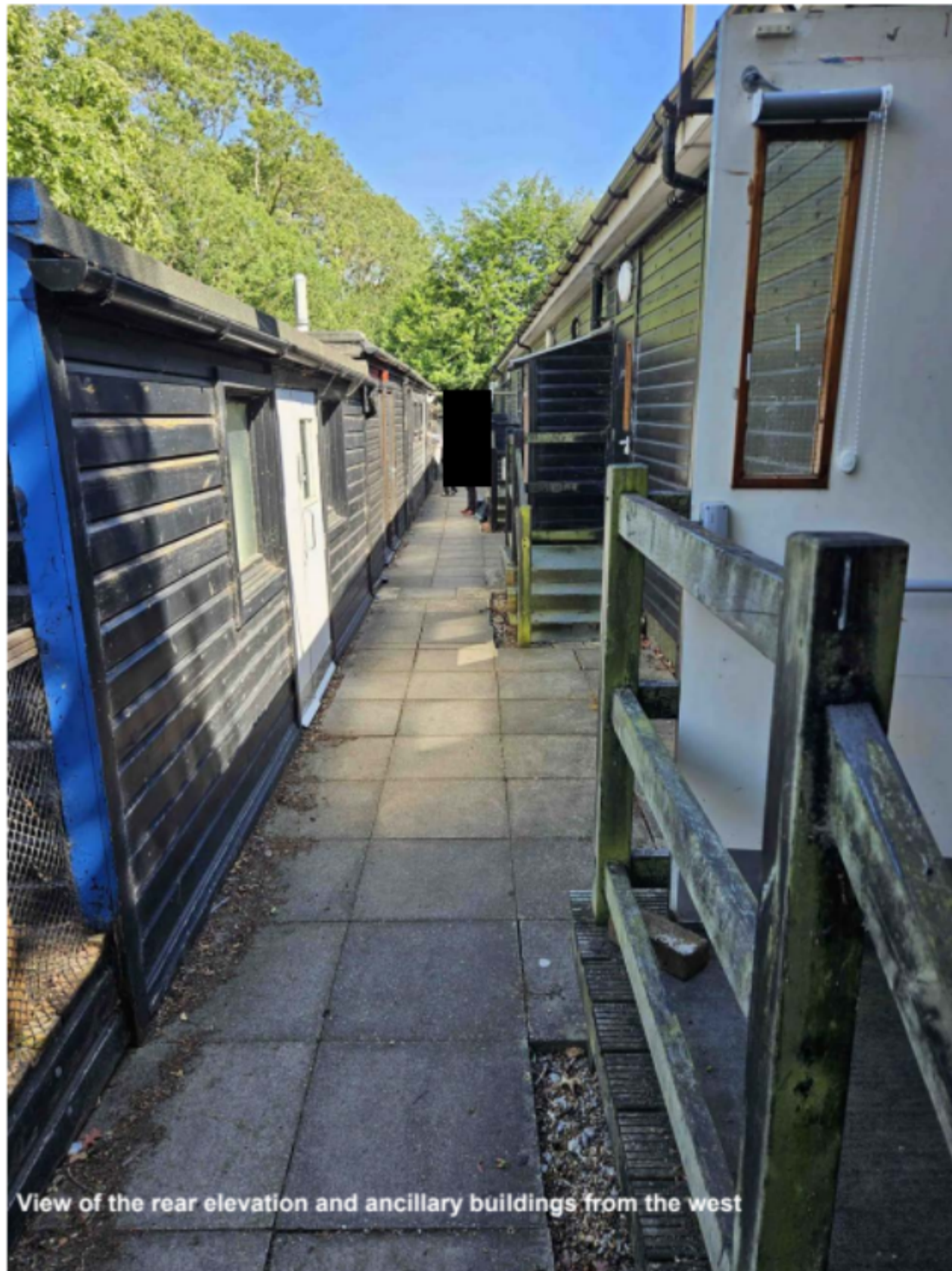
View of the Hewlett Pavilion from the south– east



View of the front elevation from the west



View of the rear elevation and ancillary buildings from the west



View of the rear elevation and ancillary buildings from the west



View of the rear elevation and ancillary buildings from the east