dpp PLANNING

SCHOOLS

PLANNING EXCELLENCE & COMMITTED COLLABORATION

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A MESSAGE FROM OUR HEAD OF SCHOOLS

School projects are often assumed to progress smoothly through the planning process. In reality, they can present a unique set of challenges. Issues such as the intensification of existing sites, loss of playing fields, development beyond settlement boundaries, and operational considerations such as traffic and access can all attract significant scrutiny.

While communities recognise the value that schools bring, local concerns can sometimes generate strong opposition, and event a single well-informed objection can result in delays if not addressed effectively.

DPP has a strong track record of securing planning permissions for school developments across the UK. We have successfully delivered approvals for complex schemes facing significant technical and community challenges, often within demanding programme timescales. Our team understands the needs of schools, the expectations of planning authorities and local communities, and the pressures faced by those responsible for delivering modern educational facilities.

Front Page Image: Cranbourne Secondary School, Basingstoke
Image Credit: Bond Bryan



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dpp PLANNING

BEST PRACTICE PLANNING

The delivery of new school places and the renewal of aging education estates has never been more important, particularly in response to increasing pupil demand and the challenges presented by issues such as RAAC. However, navigating the planning system can often be complex, with matters including the loss of playing fields, traffic impacts, residential amenity considerations and Green Belt constraints frequently presenting significant challenges to delivery.

DPP has established itself as a leading specialist in education planning, securing planning permission for 156 school projects across the UK over the past decade and achieving a 99% success rate, significantly exceeding the national average. Our experience spans primary, secondary, and SEND education facilities, including projects delivered through both modern methods of construction and traditional build approaches. We have also played a key role in delivering innovative educational developments, including Net Zero Carbon in Operation schools and pioneering modular education facilities.

Our success is founded on a collaborative, hands-on approach that combines strategic planning expertise with a deep understanding of the education sector. Working for the Department for Education, local authorities, academy trusts, colleges and contractors, we provide continuity throughout the project lifecycle, often remaining involved from initial feasibility through to completion. We see ourselves not simply as consultants, but as trusted partners, taking pride in helping clients overcome complex planning challenges and deliver high-quality educational environments that meet the needs of future generations.

Image: Reach Academy Hanworth Park, Hounslow, London
Image Credit: Jestico + Whiles



THORNHILL ACADEMY, SUNDERLAND

CLIENT: WILLMOTT DIXON CONSTRUCTION (ON BEHALF OF THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION)
LPA: SUNDERLAND CITY COUNCIL

Designed by Space Architects on behalf of Willmott Dixon and the Department for Education, this project involves the demolition of the existing school buildings and the construction of a new state-of-the-art three-storey teaching block and swimming pool facility. The development also includes the refurbishment of the existing Sports Hall, enhancements to outdoor sports provision, and the creation of a new sports pitch.

DPP successfully led the planning process from initial application preparation through to determination, working closely with the project team, local planning authority, and statutory consultees. A key challenge involved overcoming an objection from the Environment Agency due to part of the site being located within Flood Zone 3. Following successful resolution of these issues, planning permission was granted in August 2026.

Image Credit: Space Architects





TRINITY FIELDS, YSTRAD MYNACH

CLIENT: WILLMOTT DIXON (ON BEHALF OF CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL)
LPA: CAERPHILLY COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

DPP was appointed by Willmott Dixon, on behalf of Caerphilly County Borough Council, to lead the planning application process for a significant expansion of Trinity Fields School and Resource Centre in Ystrad Mynach. The project comprised a two-storey extension and new entrance facilities, providing additional classrooms, specialist intervention spaces, a soft playroom, and enhanced outdoor play areas to accommodate up to 80 additional pupils with Additional Learning Needs (ALN). The development also included the relocation of the school's memorial garden and allotment areas.

Jointly funded by Caerphilly County Borough Council and the Welsh Government through the Sustainable Communities for Learning Programme, the new wing was designed to integrate seamlessly with the existing school and support the growing demand for specialist education provision across the county borough. DPP also acted on the subsequent Phase 2 application, which secured the replacement of the existing school's roof as part of the wider redevelopment programme.

Throughout the planning process, DPP provided strategic planning advice and worked closely with the local planning authority and key stakeholders to efficiently address all matters arising. This collaborative approach resulted in planning permission being granted unanimously by Planning Committee in July 2023, just 10 weeks after submission. DPP subsequently managed the discharge of planning conditions, helping to facilitate the successful opening of the new facilities in May 2025.

Image Credit: Rio Architects

WEST COVENTRY ACADEMY

CLIENT: BOWMER + KIRKLAND (ON BEHALF OF THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION)
LPA: COVENTRY CITY COUNCIL

Designed by Stride Treglown, the £38.4 million redevelopment of West Coventry Academy forms part of the Government's School Rebuilding Programme and represents a major investment in the future of education provision in Coventry. The scheme delivers a comprehensive transformation of the academy, including new teaching facilities, a state-of-the-art sports hall, enhanced outdoor sports provision, a new main entrance, and improvements to parking and coach drop-off facilities.

Working alongside contractor Bowmer + Kirkland and the wider project team, DPP led the planning process from pre-application engagement through to determination. Extensive consultation was undertaken with Coventry City Council, local stakeholders and neighbouring residents, with design refinements incorporated to address community feedback.

Through proactive collaboration with the local planning authority and project team, planning permission was secured within the 13-week statutory determination period and without pre-commencement planning conditions, enabling construction to commence without delay. The redeveloped academy officially opened in September 2023.

Image Credit: Stride Treglown





SMITHDON HIGH SCHOOL, HUNTSTANTON

CLIENT: BOWMER + KIRKLAND (ON BEHALF OF THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION)
LPA: KINGS LYNN AND WEST NORFOLK BOROUGH COUNCIL

DPP secured planning permission and listed building consent for a programme of conservation and enhancement works at the Grade II listed Smithdon High School in Hunstanton, West Norfolk, on behalf of Bowmer + Kirkland and the Department for Education. Designed by renowned architects Alison and Peter Smithson, the school is recognised as one of the most significant examples of New Brutalist architecture in the UK, celebrated for its pioneering steel and glass design.

Working closely with a multidisciplinary consultant team led by Bowmer + Kirkland, including Jestico + Whiles, Purcell and Arup, DPP guided the project through a complex planning and heritage process. The approved scheme delivers sensitive repairs and conservation measures that improve the building's usability, accessibility and energy performance while safeguarding its architectural significance for future generations.

Through comprehensive pre-application engagement with the Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk, Historic England, the Twentieth Century Society, Sport England and other key stakeholders, DPP successfully secured planning permission and listed building consent within the statutory determination period, helping to ensure the long-term future of this nationally important heritage asset and learning environment.

Image Credit: Jestico + Whiles

HIGHAMS PARK, WALTHAM FOREST

CLIENT: BOWMER + KIRKLAND (ON BEHALF OF THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION)
LPA: LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST

DPP led the planning process on behalf of Bowmer + Kirkland and the Department for Education for the comprehensive redevelopment of Highams Park School in the London Borough of Waltham Forest.

The project involves the replacement of a number of ageing school buildings with a new three-storey teaching facility, providing modern classrooms and specialist learning spaces, together with a dining hall, main hall, dance studio, support facilities and significantly enhanced outdoor learning, recreation and sports provision, including a new Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA). The redevelopment forms part of the Department for Education's School Rebuilding Programme and delivers a modern, accessible and net-zero carbon learning environment for future generations.

Working closely with Bowmer + Kirkland, Jestico + Whiles Architects, the local authority and key stakeholders, DPP managed the planning process from feasibility stage through to approval. This included extensive pre-application engagement, community consultation, and coordination of two Design Review Panel sessions that helped refine the scheme's design, landscaping and accessibility credentials.

DPP successfully secured delegated planning approval in June 2024, enabling the delivery of a transformational investment in the school's future. In addition to providing high-quality educational facilities, the scheme delivers enhanced sports provision, significant biodiversity improvements, extensive landscaping and increased accessibility across the campus. The project is currently under construction

Image Credit: Jestico + Whiles





COCKBURN LAURENCE CALVERT ACADEMY, LEEDS

CLIENT: ELLIOT GROUP/ ALGECO (ON BEHALF OF THE DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION)
LPA: LEEDS CITY COUNCIL

DPP secured planning permission on behalf of Algeco and the Department for Education for Cockburn Laurence Calvert Academy, a new 9FE secondary school in Middleton, Leeds. Opened in September 2024, the academy will ultimately accommodate up to 1,050 pupils, replacing a temporary school facility and delivering much-needed secondary school places for the local community.

Working closely with the project team and Leeds City Council, DPP led the planning process from pre-application stage through to determination. This included extensive engagement with planning officers, a presentation to the Leeds Plans Panel, and a targeted programme of community consultation to address local concerns relating to the proposed site access arrangements.

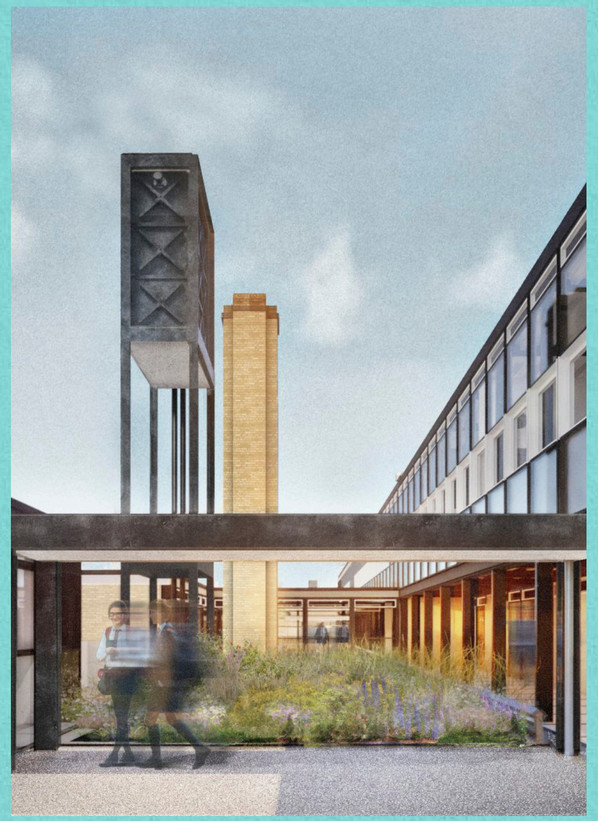
DPP successfully navigated a number of complex planning policy matters, including the redevelopment of land allocated as open green space, securing a delegated approval and avoiding the need for determination at Planning Committee. The approved development provides modern, high-quality educational facilities and represents a significant investment in the future of education provision within this growing area of Leeds.

Image Credit: Algeco & DLA Architecture

OUR SERVICES



APPRAISALS & FEASIBILITY STUDIES



PRE APPLICATION ENGAGEMENT



PLANNING APPLICATIONS

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