



alma-nac

PRESS ENQUIRIES

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PRESS RELEASE

HERNE HILL SCHOOL NURSERY, SOUTH LONDON

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alma-nac has revealed designs for a repurposed Victorian townhouse in Herne Hill, south London, providing a flexible nursery which will be operated by local independent pre-school, Herne Hill School.

Herne Hill School acquired the four-storey, Victorian end-of-terrace house near the main school to create a nursery site dedicated to its youngest kindergarten children (2+). The refurbishment opens up the cellular arrangement of the existing house, creating a much more flexible arrangement. The building comprises classrooms, art room, sleeping space, staff room and kitchen, offices and event space. Phase two will see the construction of a purpose-built outbuilding for larger group activities, with the new annexe's long façade opening up onto a new play garden, creating provision for outdoor learning.

The client's imperatives were to maintain the warm Victorian character of the building and create comfortable and bright spaces with maximum flexibility. Guided by this, alma-nac has adapted the existing house – last occupied by a business – to enliven the building while creating a blank canvas for teachers and children to express themselves. It will reveal the qualities of the original architecture, while modernising the building to create a safer and more secure space for children. Balancing re-use and replacement, the original Victorian stair and exterior decoration have been carefully refurbished, with new energy-efficient windows and external doors that retain the house's original look. Large folding walls take the place of old partitions, allowing classes to easily be combined or separated, and different activities to take place simultaneously.

The original main entrance has been retained, and now benefits from an adjacent buggy park. A secondary side entrance has been created, leading directly into the garden. The refurbishment opens up the threshold to the garden and creates clear sight lines from the main entrance on the ground floor. It also incorporates new underfloor heating and grey water recovery systems. The ground floor includes two classrooms, an art room, disabled toilet, locker room and kitchen. There are a further two classroom spaces on the first floor, children's toilets and the head teacher's office. The second floor houses a multi-use space, storage, additional kitchen and copier room. The basement is reserved for plant and storage.

The refurbishment of the house preserves the historical street pattern while ensuring the provision of a valuable amenity which supports the local community. By adapting the structurally-sound building rather than building anew, the school and its architects have demonstrated their commitment to designing economically and sustainably, acting as positive role models for the school's students.



Phase one is expected to reach practical completion by summer 2020. Phase two will see the demolition of a derelict garage and the creation of a new outbuilding that will provide a multi-purpose space opening onto a dedicated provision for outdoor learning.

NOTES TO EDITORS

Name of project	Herne Hill School Nursery
Address:	99 Herne Hill, London SE24 9LY
Site area	792m ²
GIA	460m ² : Phase 1: 370m ² , Phase 2: 90m ²
Client	Herne Hill School
Architect	alma-nac
Project Architect	Chris Bryant, Roz Peebles
Construction phase	August 2019 – June 2020
Completion	Phase 1: June 2020, Phase 2: 2021
Building Contractor	MS Building and Maintenance Services
Structural Engineer	Constant SSD - Tom Ashton/Brian Constant
Photography	© alma-nac

alma-nac is a London-based studio founded in 2010 by Chris Bryant, Caspar Rodgers and Tristan Wigfall. The practice believes in designing with first principles, creating designs which have wit and bring joy as well as harnessing the input of end users through participatory design processes. The three directors have a shared interest in exploring how design can take an unlikely starting point – such as an awkward site or unusually small space – and turn it into something worthwhile.

In the retrofit sector, Paxton House, the transformation of a concrete office block in Croydon into a 43- unit housing scheme for Joseph Homes, won Best Housing Project under £5m in the AJ Retrofit Awards 2018 and a First Time Buyers Award 2019. The Photography Workshop, a 600m² workspace retrofit, was a finalist in the AJ Small Projects Awards 2019.

House-within-a-House is the practice's repurposing of a 1950s London house, extending and recladding the property, incorporating existing building materials which would have otherwise ended up in landfill. alma-nac is currently organising workshops with school pupils local to Dulwich to repurpose the Dulwich Pavilion Colour Palace into planters for their school playgrounds.

In 2018 the practice guest-edited the internationally published Architectural Design magazine; the issue, New Modes: Redefining Practice, explored new modes of practice emerging in the architectural profession, challenging conventional notions of the architect.

www.alma-nac.com



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