HOWARD
CIVIL ENGINEERING

PROJECT CASE STUDY:
Joseph Norton Academy, Huddersfield

PRINCIPAL CONTRACTOR:
Howard Civil Engineering

CLIENT: **Wates Group**

PROJECT VALUE: **£3m**

BACKGROUND

Joseph Norton Academy is a purpose-built special educational needs school being delivered through a partnership between Kirklees Council and Wellspring Academy Trust. The new facility will provide 132 specialist places for children and young people with Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) for Social, Emotional and Mental Health (SEMH) needs, more than doubling capacity from the academy's existing site in Scissett.

The new school is being constructed on the former Deighton Centre site, selected for its central location within the borough. This development significantly reduces travel distances for pupils and families while supporting Kirklees Council's commitment to inclusive, sustainable education provision.

Howard Civil Engineering (HCE) were appointed by Wates Group, the main contractor, to deliver key enabling and below-ground works essential to the success of this highly sensitive educational development.

SCOPE OF WORK

Retaining Walls & Tanking Solutions

A critical element of HCE's involvement was the installation of a new retaining wall system, including specialist tanking solutions to create a continuous watertight barrier. These works protect below-ground structures from water ingress and ensure long-term durability and performance of the school's foundations.

Geotechnical Engineering & Ground Stability

HCE delivered geotechnical engineering solutions to ensure ground stability across the site. This work underpins the entire development, providing confidence in foundation performance while managing variable ground conditions associated with the site's previous use.

Attenuation Tanks & Drainage Infrastructure

As part of the wider civil engineering package, HCE installed two attenuation tanks to manage surface water effectively and support the project's sustainable drainage strategy. These works were delivered concurrently with foundations and access roads to maintain programme efficiency

Foundations & Access Roads

The scope also includes pad foundations and construction of new access roads, forming the permanent infrastructure required to support construction traffic and the long-term operation of the academy.

Outdoor Amenities

HCE carried out complex external works to support the development of the school's outdoor space:

- Farms and Gardens area which consist of an array of hard landscaping, chicken coops, goat farm, rabbit runs, pig farm, and polytunnel planting areas.
- Several Multi Use Games Area Pitches with Polymeric surfaces.
- A woodchip bark foot route through woodland.
- Various permeable paving, surfacing and gravel areas throughout the external areas.
- A man-made pond area with a wood bridge to create a natural woodland themed area.

PROJECT CHALLENGES

The programme requires multiple critical activities to be delivered concurrently from the outset, including retaining walls, attenuation tanks, pad foundations and road construction. This level of interface demands careful planning and close coordination with Wates Group and other trades on site.

Key challenges include:

- Sequencing retaining wall construction to allow timely follow-on trades
- Managing water ingress risks during below-ground works
- Maintaining productivity while working within a live, multi-trade environment

HCE addressed these challenges through proactive planning, early engagement with the project team and disciplined programme management, ensuring works remain aligned with the overall construction schedule.

QUALITY, ENVIRONMENTAL AND SAFETY CONSIDERATIONS

As with every project carried out by HCE, quality and safety were paramount. HCE maintain exceptionally high standards across all works, supported by rigorous inspection, testing and assurance processes.

Safety is embedded through:

- Clear segregation of plant and pedestrian routes
- Controlled excavation zones around retaining walls and tanks
- Daily briefings and task-specific risk assessments

Environmental considerations are equally integral. The attenuation tanks and tanking systems form part of a broader strategy to manage water responsibly, protect structures and reduce long-term maintenance requirements."

OUTCOME

Howard Civil Engineering's works are fundamental to enabling the successful delivery of Joseph Norton Academy. Through early milestones such as the completion of retaining wall foundations and the coordinated delivery of multiple workstreams, HCE are helping maintain momentum on this important education project.

The structured, safety-led and technically robust approach ensures:

- Below-ground works are delivered to programme
- Follow-on trades can progress without delay
- The academy benefits from durable, future-proof infrastructure

The quality of HCE's delivery was highlighted by Wates Group:

"I'd like to extend my thanks to Howards Civil Engineering for their performance at Joseph Norton. The overall quality of the finish is to a high standard. All of this was navigated during challenging weather conditions on-site. A particular highlight was the proactive approach taken by Howards' engineer and project manager in the early stages—reviewing the design, raising queries, and helping to refine details before works began. This collaborative attitude made a real difference to the smooth delivery of the works on site."

- Matthew Armstrong, Project Manager at Wates Construction

Upon completion, Joseph Norton Academy will provide a modern, inclusive learning environment for children and young people across Kirklees. Through technical expertise, collaborative working and a commitment to quality, Howard Civil Engineering continues to demonstrate its capability as a trusted delivery partner on complex educational schemes.