

# Proposed Primary School & Childcare Facility, Glyncoed

## Design and Access Statement



July 2021

Blaenau-Gwent County Borough Council • Community Services

Floor 1 • Municipal Offices • Civic Centre • Ebbw Vale • NP23 6XB

Ysgolion yr 21ain Ganrif  
21st Century Schools



Blaenau Gwent

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## 1. Introduction

This Planning Application relates to the erection of a new build 360 place Primary School and Childcare Facility in Glyncoed.

### 1.1. Background

**Glyncoed Primary School** was built in 1936 and is the only category D school building in terms of condition within Blaenau Gwent. **The school has an overall suitability rating of C**, with a high proportion - approximately 50% of the school's facilities, **both teaching and non-teaching spaces considered to be a D**, a proportion of which are unusable and/or not fit for purpose.

The school currently has significant backlog **maintenance requirement in the region of £1.1m**. There are both structural and redecoration issues and requirements associated with the building. Over the last 3-4 years in particular, building issues have required **intensive investment of physical and financial resources in order to manage**, as opposed to resolve, the substantial issues associated with the ageing building. For example:

- the roof requires full replacement;
- 40% of the windows require replacement;
- the boiler room is subject to flooding, which cannot be resolved without large scale investment;
- a large proportion of the building has water ingress which requires continual management;
- the infant block has asbestos ceilings in each classroom;
- the outside play area requires full replacement; and,
- a number of classrooms have been programmed for repair, refurbishment and complete remodelling.

The school is in a **poor state of disrepair, with very little flexibility and the delivery of teaching and learning** is constrained by both the environment and facilities. A considerable proportion of resource and ancillary spaces cannot be used due to **deterioration**, along with health and safety concerns. The building is not fully accessible with a number of areas that are not compliant with Approved Document M, that do not facilitate provision in line with the Equalities Act 2010.

A new leadership team have recently been appointed who are proactive and keen to establish improved links with the community, along with secondary, further and higher education institutions and employers, to enhance to the

provision of science, technology, engineering and maths in line with Tech Valleys Programme in Blaenau Gwent.

The Council aim to create a **Community Hub**, which can also be utilised by the school and other schools throughout the school estate, services, organisations, business and the wider community for training, teaching, learning, transition and projects.

Glyncoed Primary School is projected to have sufficiency issues between 2021 and 2025. The surplus as at September 2019 was 2%, with the January 2020 projections in development. The realisation of new housing developments proposed and within implementation under the LDP, could see further sufficiency issues; therefore, the new facility will require an internal area which secures sufficiency of places within the school to meet demand in the medium to long-term.



*Image 1: Typical classroom teaching, Glyncoed Primary School*

#### **Glyncoed Full Day Care:**

The Blaenau Gwent Wellbeing Plan 2018 – 2023 acknowledges that 'early childhood is a critical stage in life that can determine much of a person's future well-being' and one of its priorities is that **everyone has the best start in life**.

Excellent quality childcare provision contributes to this and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council places a high priority on the availability of sufficient high-quality childcare places for its citizens as it benefits children, parents and the wider community.

The vision for childcare in Blaenau Gwent is that;

- It is of the highest quality in terms of environment with an indoors and outdoors that offers the best potential for opportunities for all types of play.
- The environment is warm, welcoming and nurturing
- The child is at the heart of everything
- Children make good progress in desirable learning outcomes from pre-school age.
- It has staff who are well qualified, well trained, committed to continued professional development and who actively enjoy working with children
- Children of all ages attending have lots of opportunity for learning through play, language acquisition, developing healthy habits and enhancing well-being
- It embraces the most up-to-date evidence-based practice.

The development of the full day care centre at Glyncoed in Ebbw Vale will offer the children attending a modern, well-equipped facility that encourages the highest quality childcare practice.

These proposals will lead to the provision of a high quality, sustainable, efficient and cost-effective educational facility and ultimately the achievement of improved educational standards and outcomes for pupils.

It is anticipated that these developments would provide an opportunity for a significant boost to education provision in Glyncoed and in turn have a positive effect on the socio-economic situation within the immediate area and wider context of Blaenau Gwent.



*Image 2: Example of outdoor play for the Childcare*

## 1.2. Scope of Application

This application establishes the development principles for the appearance and materials of the build, the site, especially in defining vehicle and pedestrian access, highways improvements, flood risk, ecology strategy, and approximate location and scale of building.

The development of this site as part of the authority's wider Education Transformation Strategy will support and promote the continued development and regeneration of the Borough providing a 21st century learning environment for school pupils. The purpose of this Design & Access Statement is to demonstrate how the design process has evolved through the analysis of the site, concept development and evolution of a design solution.

A Design and Access Statement is a mandatory requirement to accompany major planning applications. This document is based on the guidance for Design and Access Statements contained in appendix 1 of TAN 12 as well as the CABE publication entitled 'Design and Access Statements: How to write, read and use them'. As the basis of a Planning Application, this document presents the principles for use, access and location, and guidance for the Major Development application.

## 2. Context

### 2.1. Background to Education and Childcare Provisions

The School Project is a part of the 21st Century Schools Band B Programme, with the aim of achieving and contributing to the overall investment objects for Blaenau Gwent:

#### Investment Objective 1:

to raise standards and achievement in line with localised targets at Foundation Phase, KS2, KS3 and KS4; and secure improved transition into post 16 learning - improved standards of education and associated delivery, along with improved facilities which enable increased opportunities for transition between educational stages and provision.

#### Investment Objective 2:

to create a sustainable model for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century school estate in consideration of both capital and revenue investment, along with the condition and suitability of buildings – address condition D and C buildings throughout the school estate, decreasing backlog maintenance costs, improving suitability and use; as a consequence, creating sustainable school estate.

#### Investment Objective 3:

to establish effective management and provision of school places, by having the right schools of the right size in the right place—developing schools with the flexibility to support a reduction in surplus places, whilst also creating sufficiency of places in the medium to long-term, aligned to live birth and trend-based projection data. Facilitating improved opportunities and facilities which support co-location of integrated services; enhancing the delivery of education, training and supporting effective community engagement activities via a hub-based approach.

#### Investment Objective 4:

to implement the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schools Programme in-line with local, regional and national school organisation policy; ensuring a synergy between progression, development and implementation – the proposals would support the implementation of key strategic and policy developments in relation to curriculum delivery, wellbeing, the environment, digital competency, and supporting ALN reform.

#### Investment Objective 5:

meeting the needs of vulnerable learners – the proposals will address current and projected needs of pupils presenting with ALN from both a learning and recreational/ play perspective. Additionally, the proposal will increase provision for vulnerable pupils and families who require on-going support in order to ensure consistent attendance and improved standards of learning and attainment.

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council seeks to use the former Glyncoed Comprehensive site to develop a 360-place new build primary school and childcare facility.

The new school will be a direct replacement of the existing primary school located further down Badminton Grove. The Council will initiate the closure of this school once the relocation has been completed.

The new school upon its opening (2023), will form part of the Glyncoed Learning Community. The aim of the learning community is to facilitate a continuum of learning, effective phase-to-phase transition, improved standards of education and achievement (Precedents shown in images 3 and 4)

Blaenau Gwent’s Strategic Outline Programme priority aims are as follows:

- Raising standards, particularly at KS4;
- Improving suitability and condition of the school estate;
- Programme deliverability-match-funding and affordability;
- Sustainability and reducing revenue costs; and,
- Increasing Welsh medium learning opportunities.

Blaenau Gwent School Organisation Policy (2015) sets out the vision of the Council in terms of school organisation proposals, which is:

*To improve pupil attainment, achievement and wellbeing through the transformation of schools and learning environments to meet modern 21st Century School expectations. Our vision to secure and sustain the delivery of high-quality education for all pupils across the age range from 3-16 is underpinned by two objectives:*

- to be the best performing Local Authority within the family of Local Authorities (Caerphilly, RCT, Merthyr Tydfil and Neath Port Talbot) by 2017/2018; and,
- to exceed the Welsh average for all key indicators by 2018’.

The Policy also outlines key considerations in line with assessing and informing the need for change. The project has received Full Business Case approval from Welsh Government and is monitored via the 21st Century Schools Programme Board.

For the Childcare, The Blaenau Gwent Wellbeing Plan 2018 – 2023 acknowledges that ‘early childhood is a critical stage in life that can determine much of a person’s future well-being’ and one of its priorities is that everyone has the best start in life.

Excellent quality childcare provision contributes to this and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council places a high priority on the availability of sufficient high quality childcare places for its citizens as it benefits children, parents and the wider community.



Image 3: Abertillery Primary School



Image 4: Six Bells Primary School

### 2.2. Development Brief

A new **360 place 3 to 11 Primary School** incorporating a **40 place nursery** and a **separate Full Day Care setting** (for up to 52 children 0-3 years). The design will require flexibility within the existing footprint, should future demand for pupil places warrant it.

The building should be flexible in its use and allow different styles of teaching and learning, in line with the curriculum for Wales guidance. Also, be able to cope with changing demands and needs of pupils with additional learning needs special. The design and construction process should look to create a structure that is highly efficient, with low running costs in terms of energy usage and maintenance.

The use of local labour, building materials, products and suppliers should be utilised in the construction and long-term maintenance of the school wherever possible in order to help build a strong local economy.

The projects must deliver an **"Excellent"** rating under the BREEAM assessment methodology. The project must satisfy a minimum standard for recycled content, requiring at least 15% of the total value of materials used to be derived from recycled and reused content in the products and materials selected.

The overall aim of the project is to ensure that pupils leave school with clear progression routes available to them, facilitated by an effective learning environment that promotes high standards of achievement.

The design aims for the project are as follows:

- to achieve a parity between Glyncoed Primary School and other new build primary schools throughout Blaenau Gwent;
- flexible internal learning environments which are easily adapted to facilitate active, investigative and exploratory learning;
- school provision that is fully accessible and caters for pupils with wide ranging ability levels;
- internal space which links directly to external spaces to maximise outdoor learning and play potential;
- a school large enough to accommodate current and future needs of pupils.

The school should:

- Be Innovative and flexible to change
- Affordable and deliverable in line with the project spend profile

- Provide a safe and healthy environment for staff, pupils and parents/ users
- Provide a low maintenance and robust environment
- Be sustainable and built to function as low energy use and maintenance
- Be integral to developing a sense of the place and incorporating its surroundings
- The building should be fit for purpose and built to last, but also raise the aspiration levels of everyone using the building.

Projects such as this must fully recognise the views of stakeholder groups which represent the whole community. Community and school requirements should be identified through the stakeholder process and via the client during the detailed design and build phase.

**Glyncoed Full Day Care Centre** will be at the heart of the community and will offer children exciting opportunities to learn, develop and play in preparation for their transition to primary school and in accessing high quality wraparound/out of school provision for older children. By accessing community resources regularly and inviting partners into the setting to offer enhanced and enriched experiences the children attending will develop a strong sense of place and community.

Working with parents, carers and the local community the new Day Care centre will provide the setting to help children fulfil their hopes, aspirations and dreams. The new Childcare will be designed to enrich their interest, encouraging enjoyment whilst learning through play.

The aim is to build, facilitate and sustain positive relationships with the children, their parents, extended family and the local community, and to provide a strong link with the new Primary school.

The building should:

- Be Innovative and flexible to change.
- Affordable and deliverable in line with the project spend profile
- Provide a safe and healthy environment for staff, pupils and parents/ users
- Provide a low maintenance and robust environment
- Be sustainable and built to function as low energy use and maintenance
- Be integral to developing a sense of the place and incorporating its surroundings, and to be sympathetic to the new primary school
- The building should be fit for purpose and built to last, but also raise the aspiration levels of everyone using the building.

- Provide a clear linkage to the Primary School.

In order to achieve the Authority's aims and objectives, the design of the new school and childcare development must provide an attractive and sustainable environment conducive to learning, which allows both buildings to raise attainment and achievement levels; and must be developed in a manner which represents a sensitive response to the character of the landscape of the site.

### 2.3. Site Appraisal

The site was formerly used as Glyncoed Secondary School, which was demolished in 2012 once the school migrated to new Ebbw Fawr Learning Community Secondary Phase on the Works site. (Image 5)

The demolished site has now been levelled, and is generally flat and primed for re-development (Image 6)

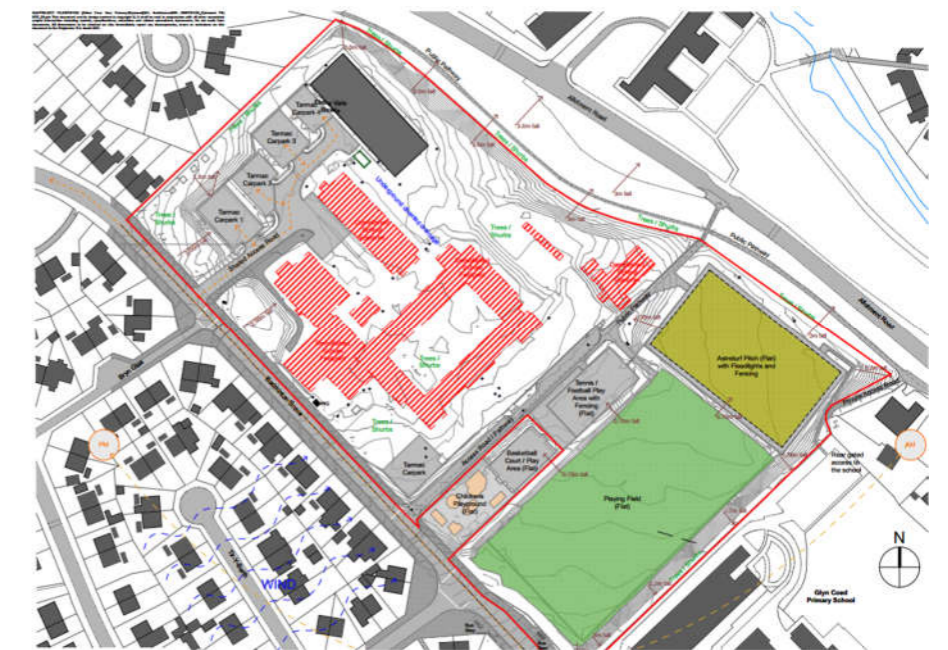


Image 5: Existing Site Constraints Plan



Image 6: Photograph of the site, taken February 2020

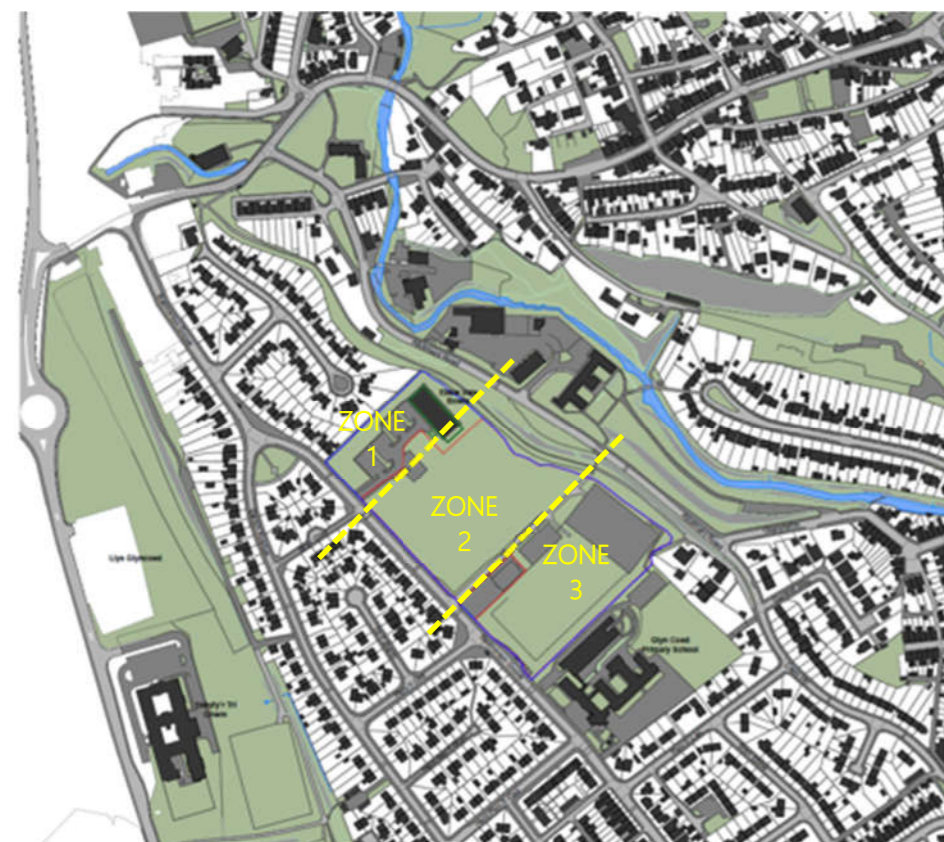


Image 7: Site Zoning Plan

The overall site owned by Blaenau-Gwent CBC comprises three zones (Image 7),

**Zone 1:** Bowls Club, Access Road and Allocated Parking (Leasehold agreement of 25years)

**Zone 2:** Former Glyncoed Comprehensive School Site – Now the Development Site.

**Zone 3:** Derelict Community Astro-turf and Grass Play Pitches, tarmac court and Play Ground.

There are gradients surrounding the site. The east area is on a lower plateau with Allotment Road having a potential drop-off area. Steps run upwards to the site connecting to central access lane which splits the development site and the playing pitches.

This lane is not a Public Right of Way but is commonly used for parents taking their children to the existing Glyncoed Primary School and the general public walking their dogs or taking a shortcut from Beaufort into Glyncoed.

Access to the site is from Badminton Grove which intersects with the A4047 to the North and Beaufort Road to the South. There is an existing parking facility on the site which is being used by the Bowls Club, so an agreement needs to be made with the key stakeholders to determine if any areas can be shared.

Badminton Grove grades from north to south by a number of meters, and the approach to the development site has to be from either of the two existing access points and in some places needs to allow for some ground releveling to achieve adequate level access to the proposed buildings.

The majority of the residential settlements are located directly across Badminton Grove and further North, East and South. Allowing the developments to be the heart of the community.

Along the west side of Badminton Grove is a number of semi-detached dwellings all following the traditional arrangements and positions from the highway boundary.

The overall site ownership by Blaenau-Gwent County Borough Council is 3.97 hectares and this includes the Bowls Club and associated car parking (under a 25 years' tenancy agreement), a derelict playground, playing courts, astro-turf and large grass pitch

The overall development site area defined by the red line boundary is 1.67 hectares.

Although subject to a number of difficult constraints **Zone 2** site represents the largest usable area on a level plateau within the Authority's ownership, which is and allows for a smooth transition between the old and new school. There are no other suitable alternative sites for the school in the Glyncoed area.

Despite the difficulties, the site possesses many qualities which make it an ideal location for a school. It is only 200m away from the current school and benefits from excellent views to the South down the valley, surrounding a local community, which provides perfect opportunities for pupils to develop and progress.

Appendix E contains several site photographs indexed to the indicative layout.

Although constrained by several features around the site, and limited in area, the location and outlook are excellent, and offers excellent opportunities to develop.

A Ground Investigation Report has carried out (attached in Appendix D). This report also contains the Coal Mining Risk Assessment (CMRA) and Radon Report due to the site location and relevant risks.

A further soil test is being undertaken in April 2021 to establish the extent of concealed structures / foundations from the demolition and any ACMs present in the ground. The results from this report will determine the extent of enabling works required to ensure the site is safe and ready for the actual development.

## 3. Design

### 3.1. Site Design Review

The development site located within the heart of the Glyncoed Community and with this the development presents an opportunity to begin the process of re-establishing a strong sense of identity and place for the Primary School and Childcare Facility (Image 8).

The primary objectives for the design of the site are as follows:

- Compliance with Building Bulletin 99: Building Framework for Primary School Projects.
- Create a high quality and contemporary educational facility
- Create a Sustainable Environment.
- Create buildings of high architectural excellence which enhances the surroundings and sense of place.
- Create buildings which are sympathetic to a sensitive streetscape and site context,
- Create a safe and secure environment.
- Design to limit the impact that the new development has on the site and the surroundings.

In order to achieve the design objectives described a design of the highest architectural excellence, a number of design principles will need to be adopted, namely:

- Maximum of two-storey development – to match the height of the Bowls Club.
- A bold and contemporary form of architecture.
- Orientation to determine large and well-proportioned windows to enhance natural light into the internal spaces.
- A high quality but limited palette of external materials.
- Crisp and simple external façade detailing.
- Robust and sustainable materials, finishes and detailing.
- A calm, sober form of architecture to enhance the surroundings and context.

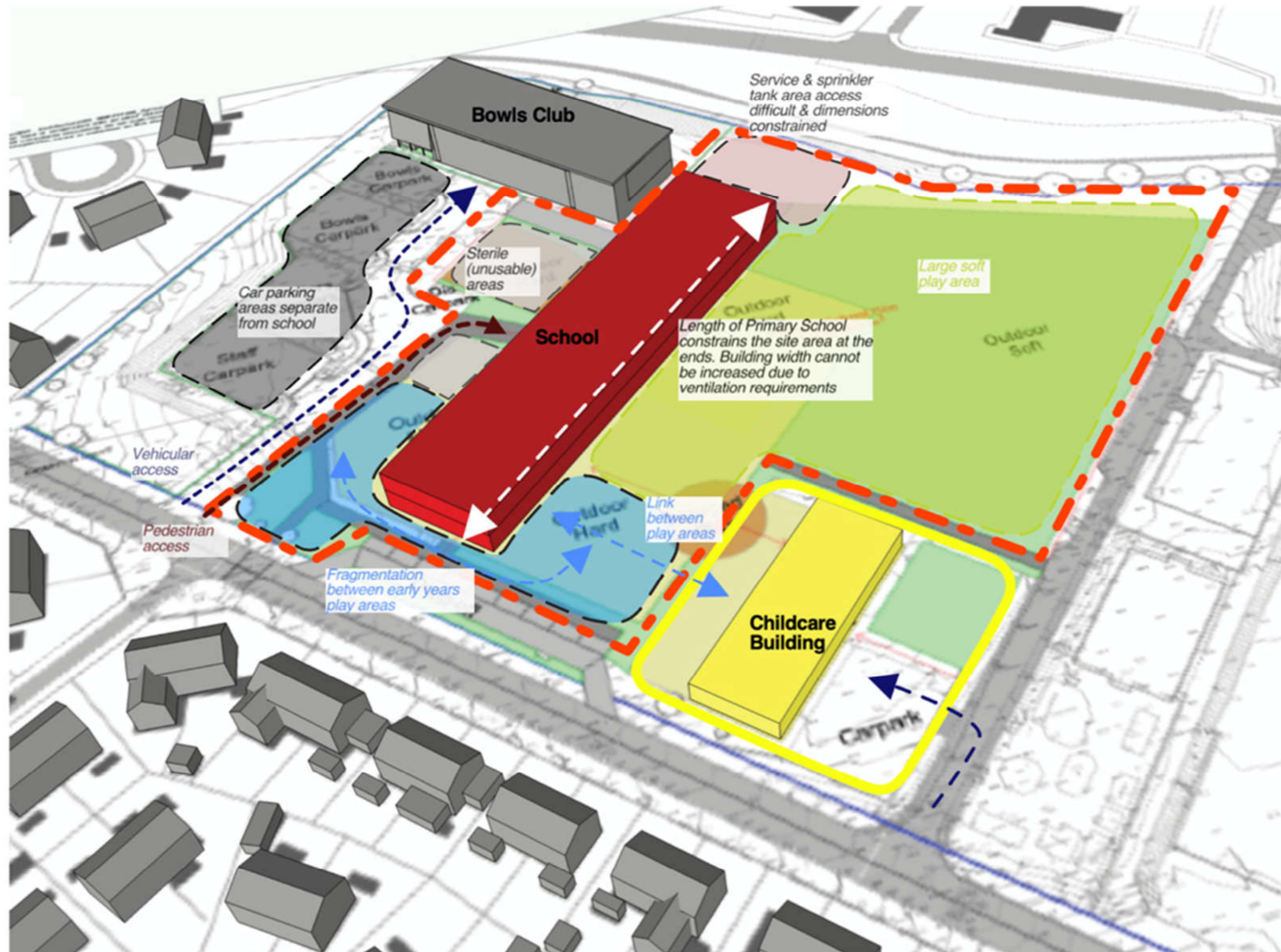
An exercise has been undertaken to assess and analyse a number of site development concepts, to determine their potentials and their compliance with Building Bulletin 99. In conclusion of this exercise 8 site concepts were derived. They are as follows:



Image 8 Aerial Photograph of the Site



# Site Layout 1



## Site Area Analysis

BB99 total site area 360 place school = 13,520m<sup>2</sup>  
 BB99 net site area 360 place school = 9,700m<sup>2</sup>  
 Off-site Pitch = 7,560m<sup>2</sup>  
 MUGA included in hard play area = 800m<sup>2</sup>  
 Habitat included in soft play area = 600m<sup>2</sup>



Exclusions: Childcare Building & Site, Off-site Car Parks Drop-off Facility

## Advantages

- A large outdoor soft play area
- Separate site and car parking for the Childcare Facility. Required as School and Childcare are to be delivered / funded separately
- A large outdoor soft play area

## Disadvantages

- Internal layout does not meet functional requirement of direct external access from classrooms for Foundation & years 1-3
- Access to rear service yard problematic
- Access to rear service yard impractical
- Insufficient parking provision
- Area is below BB99 recommendations
- Insufficient parking
- Early years & Childcare play areas effectively broken into 2 separate areas
- Weak relationship between school & childcare buildings

The vehicular drop-off facility is one which has been successfully employed on previous projects as a means of minimising excessive vehicular traffic for early years education and childcare facilities. It has the advantages of being an effective, affordable, safe and space-efficient means of accommodating parental drop-off facilities which minimises obstructions caused by on-street parking.

The main parking areas are existing and are proposed for retention in all iterations of the layout. It is not possible to extend this towards the street because the the gradient down from the road effectively prohibits it.

## Site Layout 2



### Site Area Analysis

BB99 total site area 360 place school = 13,520m<sup>2</sup>  
 BB99 net site area 360 place school = 9,700m<sup>2</sup>

Off-site Pitch = 7,560m<sup>2</sup>  
 MUGA included in hard play area = 800m<sup>2</sup>  
 Habitat included in soft play area = 600m<sup>2</sup>



Exclusions: Childcare Building & Site, Off-site Car Parks, Drop-off Facility

### Advantages

- A large outdoor soft play area
- Separate site and car parking for the Childcare Facility. Required as School & Childcare are to be delivered & funded separately
- Internal arrangement meets requirements of brief for direct external access from classrooms for Foundation & years 1-3
- Single storey facing road minimises visual volume of building - less obtrusive
- Formal courtyard relationship between school & childcare buildings
- Internal layout does not

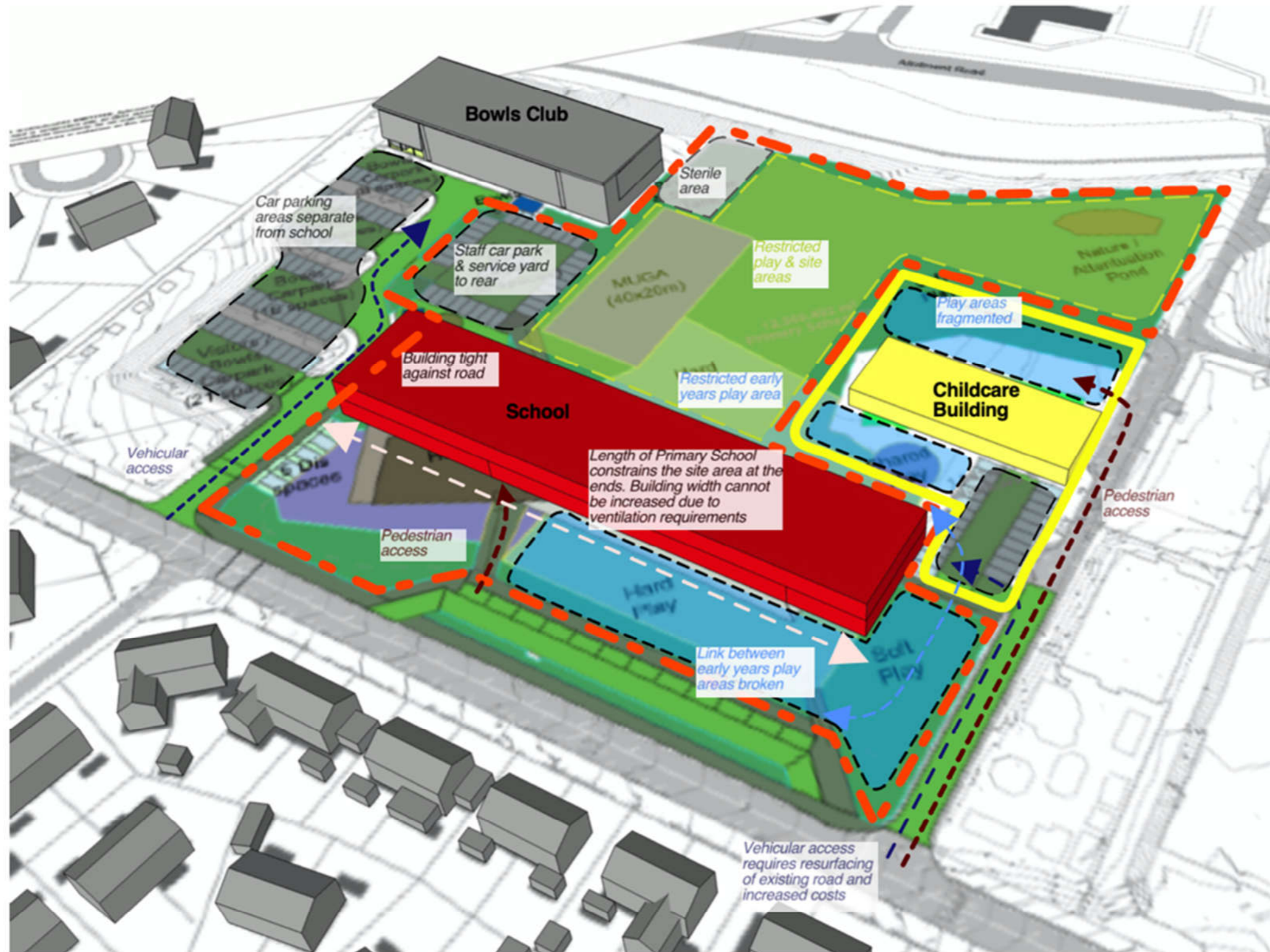
### Disadvantages

- Rear service yard inaccessible
- Insufficient parking provision
- Area is below BB99 recommendations
- Insufficient parking
- Early years play area effectively broken into 2 separate areas
- Insufficient play area for childcare, and fragmented into 2 areas
- Insufficient space between school & bowls club

The vehicular drop-off facility is one which has been successfully employed on previous projects as a means of minimising excessive vehicular traffic for early years education and childcare facilities. It has the advantages of being an effective, affordable, safe and space-efficient means of accommodating parental drop-off facilities which minimises obstructions caused by on-street parking.

The main parking areas are existing and are proposed for retention in all iterations of the layout. It is not possible to extend this towards the street because the the gradient down from the road effectively prohibits it.

## Site Layout 3



### Site Area Analysis

BB99 total site area 360 place school = 13,520m<sup>2</sup>  
 BB99 net site area 360 place school = 9,700m<sup>2</sup>  
 Off-site Pitch = 7,560m<sup>2</sup>  
 MUGA included in hard play area = 800m<sup>2</sup>  
 Habitat included in soft play area = 600m<sup>2</sup>



Exclusions: Childcare Building & Site, Off-site Car Parks, Drop-off Facility

### Advantages

- Separate site and car parking for the Childcare Facility. Required as School & Childcare are to be delivered & funded separately
- Adequate parking facilities
- Building orientation matches street and is set back from road to minimise physical bulk
- Adequate/surplus parking provision

### Disadvantages

- Internal layout does not meet functional requirement of direct external access from classrooms for Foundation & years 1-3
- Moving sprinkler tanks away from building creates significant sterile area with difficult access
- Early years play area fragmented and restricted, Childcare play area fragmented
- Insufficient parking provision
- Area is below BB99 recommendations
- Insufficient parking
- Single monolithic mass is visually bulky
- Soft play area restricted
- Existing access road needs to be resurfaced and incorporated into scheme

The vehicular drop-off facility is one which has been successfully employed on previous projects as a means of minimising excessive vehicular traffic for early years education and childcare facilities. It has the advantages of being an effective, affordable, safe and space-efficient means of accommodating parental drop-off facilities which minimises obstructions caused by on-street parking.

The main parking areas are existing and are proposed for retention in all iterations of the layout. It is not possible to extend this towards the street because the the gradient down from the road effectively prohibits it.