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The Ridgeway - Design & Access Statement

September 2026

475_REF_820_RevP3

Revision: P3

THE RIDGEWAY DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

REVISION SHEET

REPORT TITLE: THE RIDGEWAY - DESIGN AND ACCESS
STATEMENT
REPORT NUMBER: 475_REF_820_RevP3

This report has been prepared for the sole benefit, use and information of **Reading Borough Council (RBC)** to support a planning application to Reading Borough Council.

This report, together with supplementary reports accompanying it, relates to the present design and may be subject to changes as the project progresses.

REVISION	DATE	STATUS	PURPOSE	PREPARED BY	CHECKED BY
P1	24/08/2026	FOR INFORMATION	FOR REVIEW	GP	GP
P2	28/08/2026	FOR INFORMATION	FOR PLANNING	GP	GP
P3	22/09/2026	FOR INFORMATION	FOR PLANNING	GP	GP

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01 INTRODUCTION

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KEY PROJECT INFORMATION

Ayre Chamberlain Gaunt have been commissioned as part of a multi-disciplinary team to prepare a planning application for works to facilitate the delivery of a Special Educational Needs school at The Ridgeway Primary School as part of a growing demand for SEND places across the borough. The planning application is for car park extension with reconfigured internal vehicular circulation, landscaping and play equipment, outdoor play space and boundary treatment.

This document puts forward proposals for the creation of SEND provision on the following site:

The Ridgeway Primary School
Hillbrow, Reading, RG2 8JD

The works that form part of this planning application will facilitate the delivery of a new 72 place SEND primary school. As part of the re-organisation of the site, the existing 3FE primary school (630 pupils), which is currently underutilised, will be reduced in capacity to a 2FE primary school (420 pupils). The existing Nursery provision is retained and relocated in Block C (two-storey building). Other site users (Thames Valley School) will be removed to free up space for reuse, enabling the delivery of a new SEND school.

The existing surplus accommodation is proposed to be refurbished and supplemented with new single storey extensions to ensure the SEND pupils are provided with appropriate facilities. These extensions do not form part of this planning application and are being considered separately through a Lawful Development Certificate.

The following items form part of this planning application:

- External landscaping works.
- New fencing.
- Re-configuration of internal vehicle circulation and extension of existing car parking provision to meet the needs of both Schools.

As part of the project, a Lawful Development Certificate Application has been submitted for the erection of two single-storey new build extensions and the upgrading of the future SEND School main entrance facade.

A series of stakeholder workshops to develop the brief have been undertaken following which a set of option studies were presented to the client (Reading Borough Council) as well as the future end users (the current Ridgeway Mainstream School and the new SEND School). The preferred option was developed into detailed proposals by the project team benefitting from client input throughout the concept and design development stages.

A public consultation event was held at The Ridgeway Primary School to give an opportunity to staff, parents and the wider public to give feedback which was incorporated in the proposals.

CURRENT CAPACITY:	630-PLACE MAINSTREAM PRIMARY (3FE) 26-PLACE MAINSTREAM NURSERY (AM)
PROPOSED CAPACITY:	420-PLACE MAINSTREAM PRIMARY (2FE) 26-PLACE MAINSTREAM NURSERY (AM & PM) 72-PLACE SEN PRIMARY
REFURBISHMENT AREA:	1595sqm (Building A basement + ground floor)
NEW BUILD AREA:	348sqm (separate Lawful Development Certificate submitted)

PROJECT TEAM

CLIENT	READING BOROUGH COUNCIL
LEAD CONSULTANT	AYRE CHAMBERLAIN GAUNT ARCHITECTS
ARCHITECT	AYRE CHAMBERLAIN GAUNT ARCHITECTS
PRINCIPAL DESIGNER	AYRE CHAMBERLAIN GAUNT ARCHITECTS
PLANNING CONSULTANT	SHRIMPLIN PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT LTD
PROJECT MANAGER	WARD WILLIAMS ASSOCIATES
COST CONSULTANT	WARD WILLIAMS ASSOCIATES
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS	TERRAFIRMA CONSULTANCY
STRUCTURAL & CIVILS ENGINEER	MARBAS GROUP LIMITED
MEP ENGINEER	RCDC
FIRE CONSULTANT	RLB
TRANSPORT CONSULTANT	SCOTT WHITE AND HOOKINS
ACOUSTIC CONSULTANT	SOUND ADVICE LTD
ARCHAEOLOGY CONSULTANT	THAMES VALLEY ARCHAEOLOGICAL SERVICES
ECOLOGY CONSULTANT	JOHN WENMAN ECOLOGY
ACCESS & INCLUSION CONSULTANT	JANE SIMPSON ACCESS
BUILDABILITY CONSULTANT	ROSEWOOD CONSTRUCTION SERVICES

KEY DRIVERS



DESIGNING FOR DIVERSE NEEDS

Creating learning environments that are tailored to the needs of both schools. This means providing high-quality, inclusive spaces that support a broad range of learners, while ensuring each school has accommodation that is appropriate, effective, and welcoming.



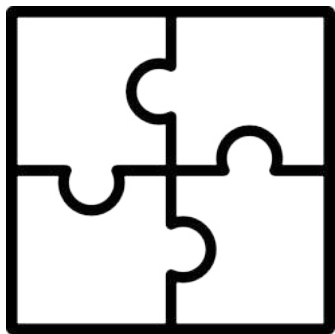
MAKING BEST USE OF EXISTING BUILDINGS

Thoughtfully re-configuring the existing school estate to create two well-functioning educational settings on one site. By adapting and improving existing buildings, the proposals make efficient use of available space while delivering long-term value and purpose.



CREATING SOCIAL VALUE

Supporting more children and families through a broader offer of educational provision. Alongside creating a new SEND school, the project will also invest in the mainstream school environment, helping the site continue to serve as an important community asset with benefits for the wider area.



MINIMISING DISRUPTION

Ensuring that the day-to-day life of the existing school is carefully considered throughout design and delivery. The proposals will be developed with a strong focus on safe access, clear phasing, and maintaining a positive learning environment during the transition.



DELIVERING AT THE RIGHT TIME

Delivering the project in line with the need for school places in the 2027 and 2028 school years. A clear and carefully coordinated programme will help ensure both schools are ready to support pupils at the right time.



A TRULY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Creating a site that is sustainable in educational, social, and environmental terms. By reusing and improving existing buildings, investing in long-term school infrastructure, and planning for future needs, the project aims to deliver lasting value for both schools and their communities.

02

THE SITE

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THE SITE

This document puts forward proposals for the creation of SEND provision on the following site:

The Ridgeway Primary School
Hillbrow, Reading, RG2 8JD

The site is located in a suburban area to the south of Reading, within the Whitley district. Access to the school is provided via Hillbrow and Willow Gardens, with the main entrance situated on the eastern boundary of the site. The school comprises a series of single and two-storey buildings of varying ages, grouped primarily towards the central and eastern portions of the site. Outdoor play areas, a sports field, and landscaped green spaces are primarily located to the west and south of the main school buildings with smaller play areas located centrally in the form of a courtyard and to the east of the main building.

The northern and eastern boundaries adjoin established residential properties, contributing to a predominantly residential setting. To the west and south, the site is bordered by additional green spaces which form part of the Cowsey Woodlands.

KEY

Site Ownership Boundary

Site Application Boundary

- 01
- Aerial view of The Ridgeway Primary School showing indicative site boundary (image taken 6th July 2022).
- 02
- Thames Valley School Key Stage 1 Playground
- 03
- Early Years Playground
- 04
- Playground - looking north towards small Hall
- 05
- Playground - looking north towards path to Willow Gardens
- 06
- Playground - looking south towards small Hall



01 Aerial view of The Ridgeway Primary and Nursery School and its immediate context. Source: Google Earth.

EXTERNAL PHOTOGRAPHS



02 Thames Valley School Key Stage 1 Playground
03 Early Years Playground
04 Playground - looking north towards small Hall
05 Playground - looking north towards path to Willow Gardens
06 Playground - looking south towards small Hall
07 Building C - west facade

SITE ANALYSIS

- 01** Secure boundary intercom and access control to three entry points.
- 02** Access only suitable for single lane traffic.
- 03** Vehicular access around east boundary constrained by Thames Valley School (TVS) building.
- 04** Area occupied by Thames Valley School (TVS).
- 05** The synthetic turf pitch is a real asset for the school.
- 06** Playing field slopes affecting utility for sports.
- 07** Habitat area is being used as forest school area.
- 08** Area to the north of Block B is currently underutilised.
- 09** Pinch point challenging for vehicular movements and limits visibility/ability for pedestrians to pass safely.



03 METHODOLOGY

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METHODOLOGY

Whilst the planning application is for works to facilitate the new SEN school, for completeness, we have considered how the retained primary school and SEN school meet the area guidance set out by the Department for Education.

Given the split nature of the project, both the Building Bulletin 103 (BB103) 'Area Guidelines for Mainstream Schools' and the Building Bulletin 104 (BB104) 'Area Guidelines for SEND and Alternative Provisions' were used in developing the proposals.

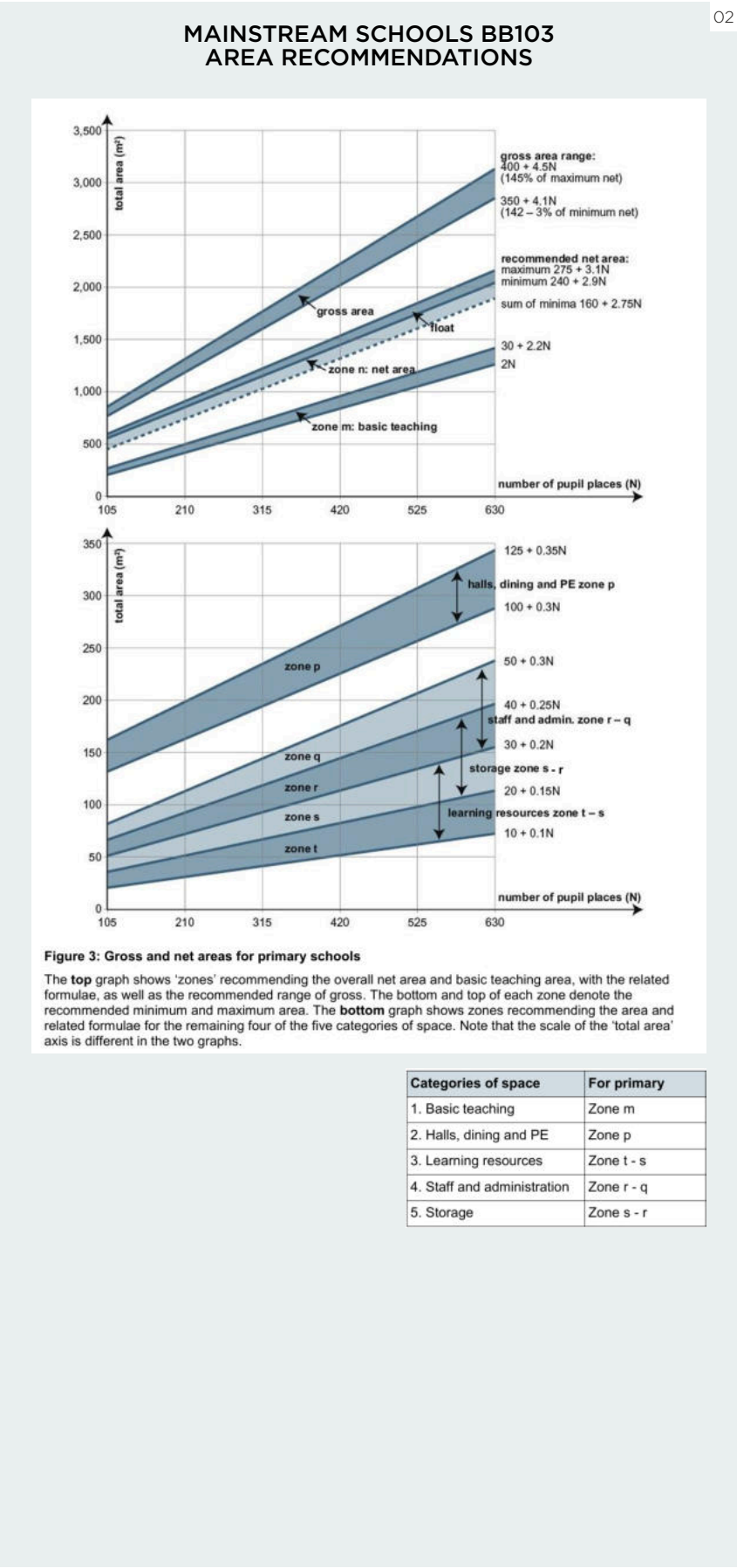
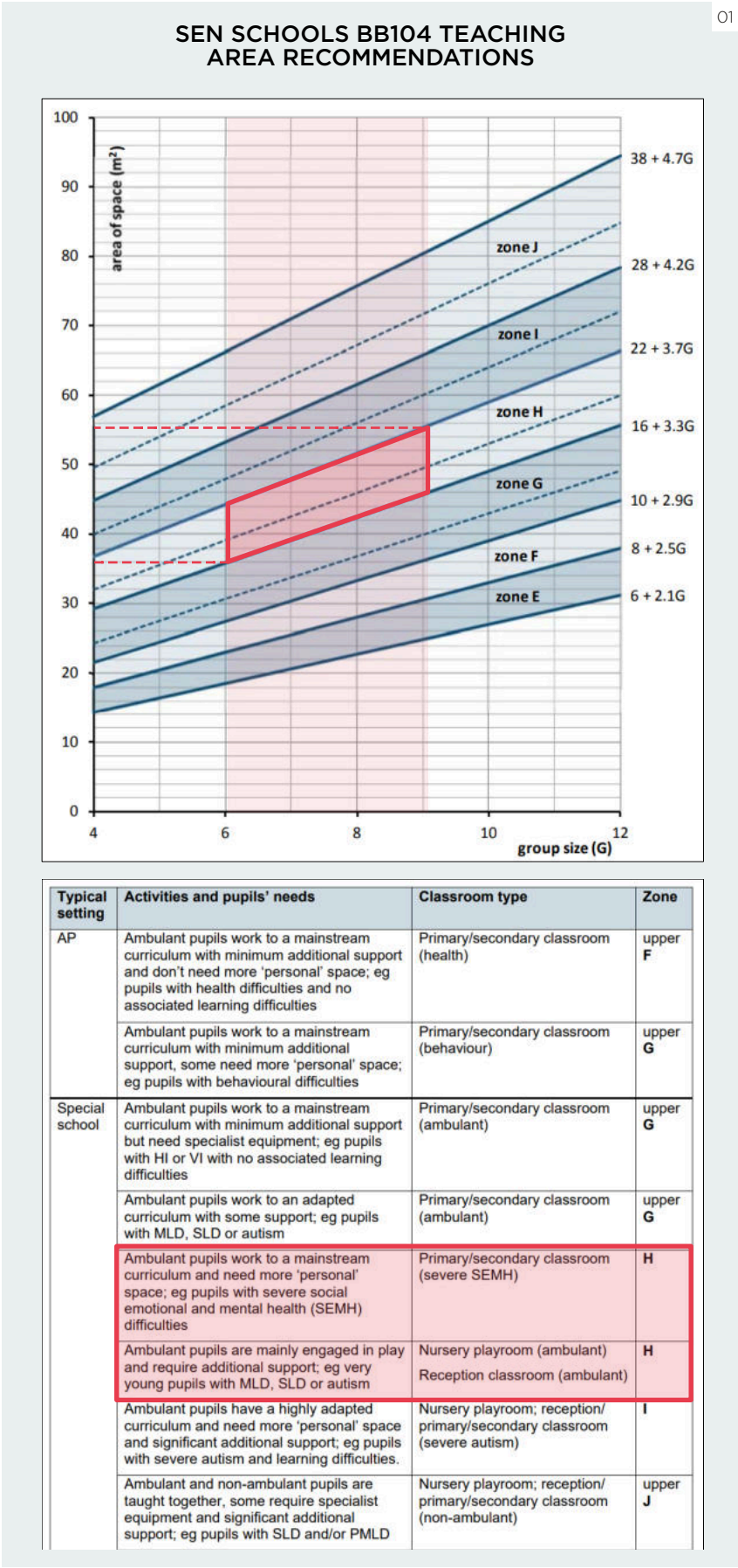
SEN PROVISION

- As agreed with RBC, the BB104 space requirements for ambulant pupils (MLD/SLD/Autism/SEMH) in special school have been used for the purposes of this feasibility study.
- The SEN pupils are understood to be within **Zone H** for the activities and pupils needs
- The proposals are based on the following pupils' numbers:
 - 72-place SEN Primary;**
- The proposals are typically based on class sizes of **8 pupils**, in line with Reading Borough Council's brief.
- The proposed external works have been assessed against the BB104 space requirements. For further information on proposed external works, please refer to the Landscape Architect's information.

MAINSTREAM PROVISION

- Reduction of current capacity of the primary schools from 3FE (630 pupils) to 2FE (420 pupils) and removal of other current site users (i.e. TVS)
- The proposals are based on the following pupils' numbers:
 - 420-place Mainstream Primary School at The Ridgeway;**
- The areas have been assessed against the BB103 area recommendations for 2FE Mainstream Primary schools, and proposals seek to address underutilisation of space.
- The proposals are based on class sizes of **30 pupils**.

01 Extracts from the Building Bulletin 104 (BB104).
02 Extracts from the Building Bulletin 103 (BB103).

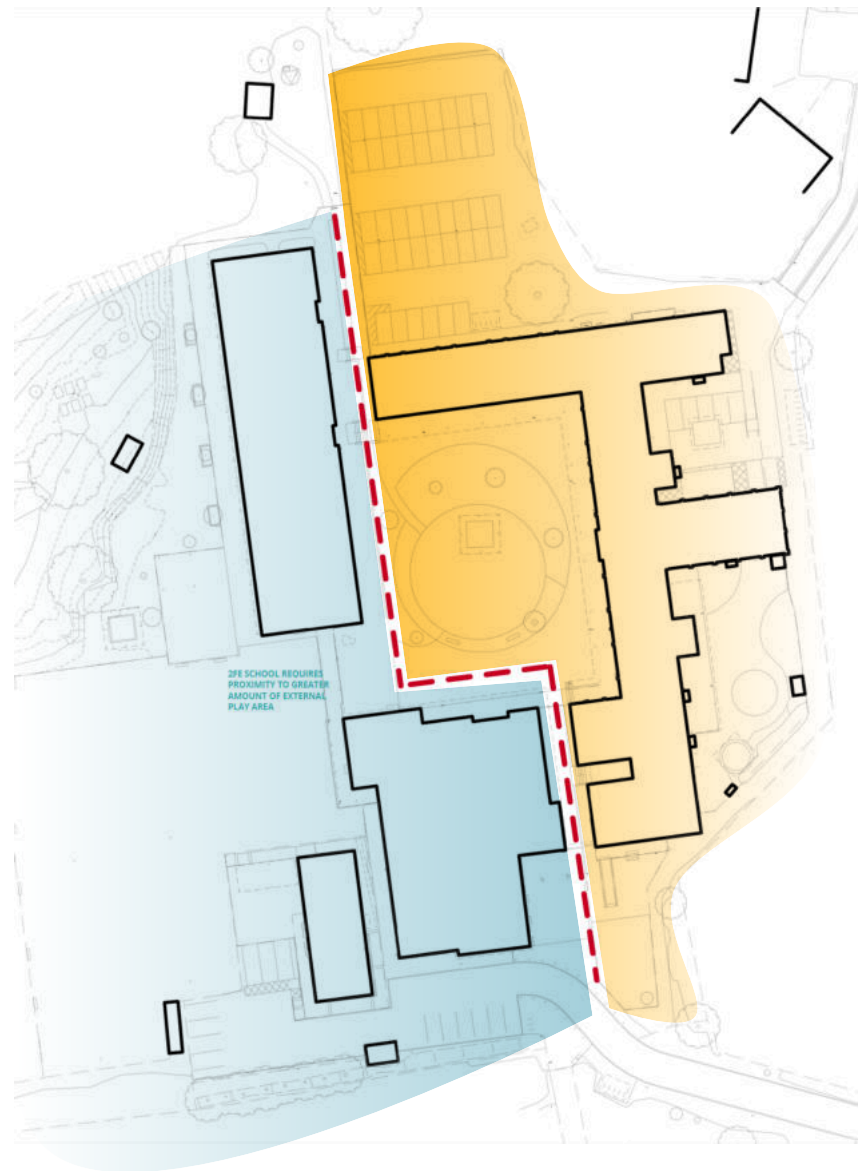


04

DESIGN DEVELOPMENT

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01_THE RIDGEWAY - KEY SITE MOVES

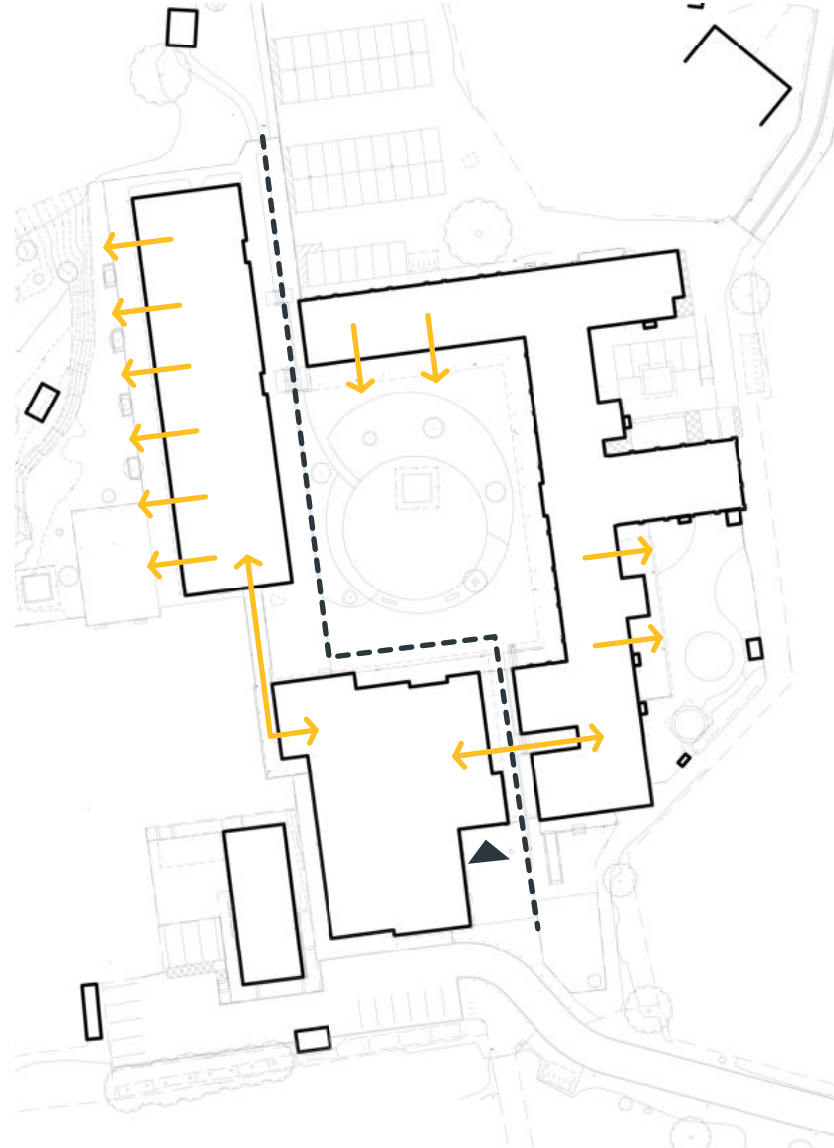


MOVE 1 SPLIT SITE

Assessment of outside space and adjacencies, high level conclusion of how areas could be accommodated

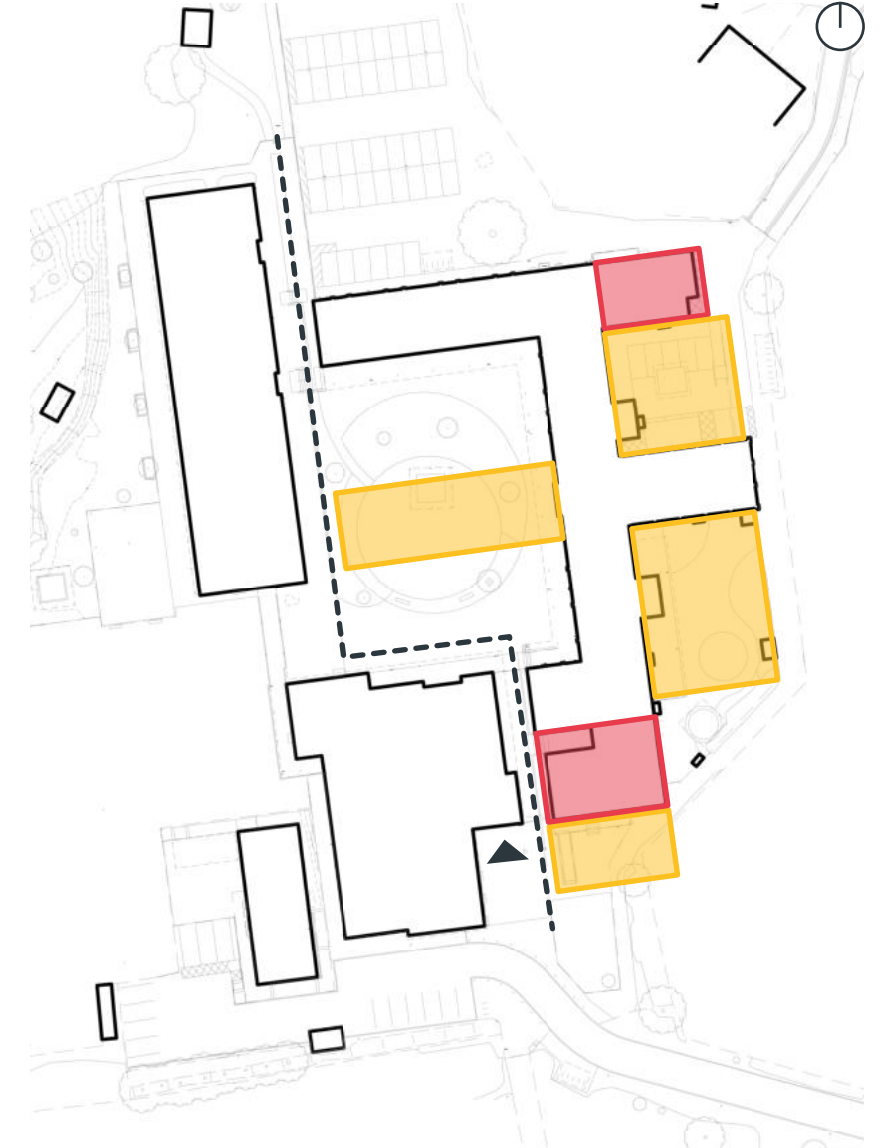
SEN Primary

2FE Primary



MOVE 2 IDENTIFY KEY RELATIONSHIPS

Assessment of successful relationships that should be maintained in existing school

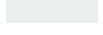


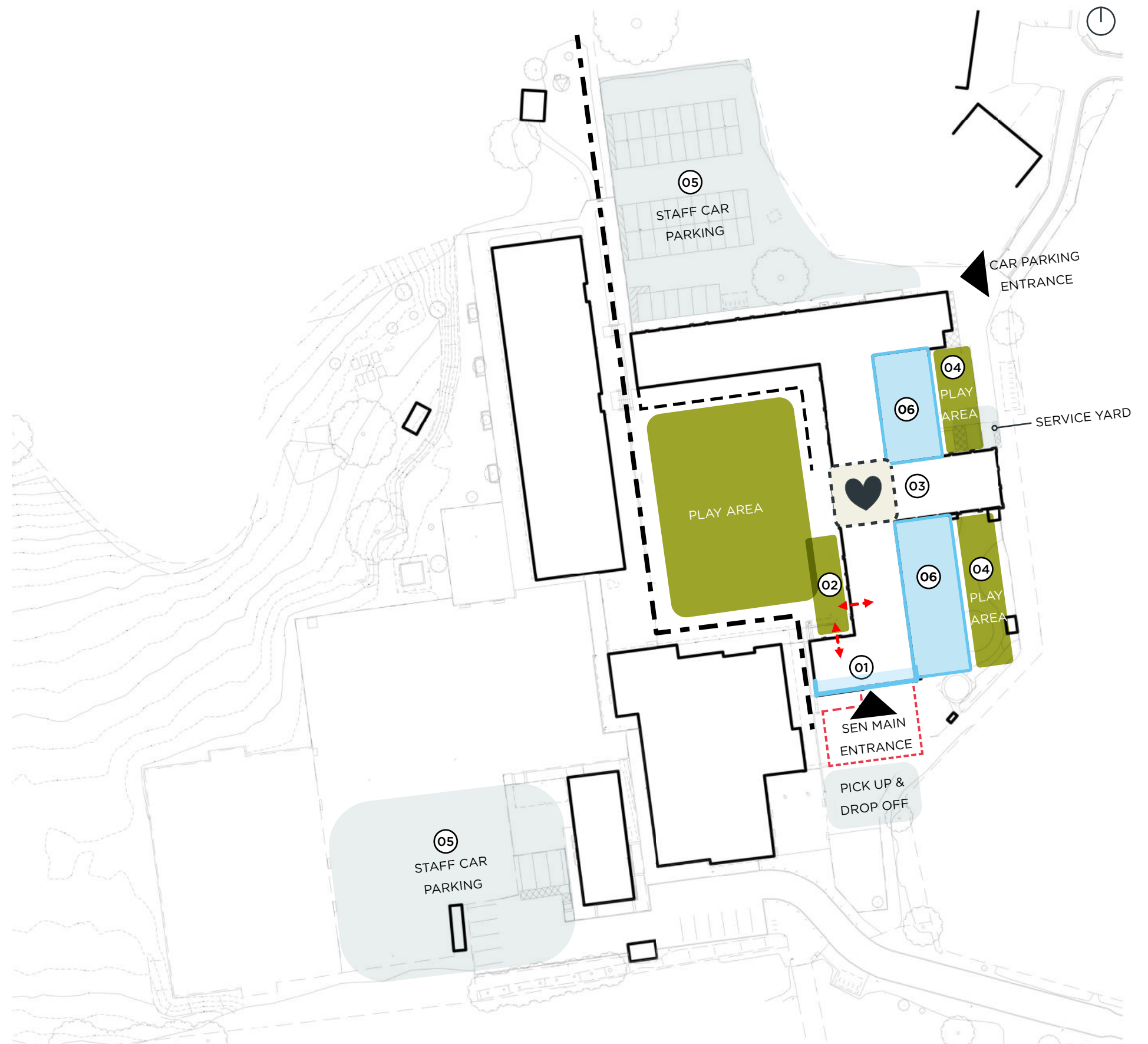
MOVE 3 IDENTIFY & APPRAISE AREAS WITH POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT

Assessment of buildings of poor quality that could be improved, and external area that would suit development

01_THE RIDGEWAY - KEY DESIGN MOVES

1. Proposal enhances the school's frontage, creating a clearer and more welcoming entry point.
2. Opportunity for a new Year R play area directly connected to both YR classrooms within the large courtyard.
3. An enhanced central space becomes the heart of the school and serves as the library, improving flow and cohesion.
4. Two smaller external areas located either side of the hall allowing for outdoor learning and/or dining.
5. Shared staff car park maintained with direct road access
6. Extensions subject to separate Lawful Development Certificate are single-storey, simplifying access and supporting inclusive design.

-  Existing Building
-  Proposed New Build Extension subject to separate Lawful Development Certificate
-  External Play Area
-  Library
-  Demolition
-  Car Parking



05 ARCHITECTURAL WORKS

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ARCHITECTURAL WORKS OVERVIEW

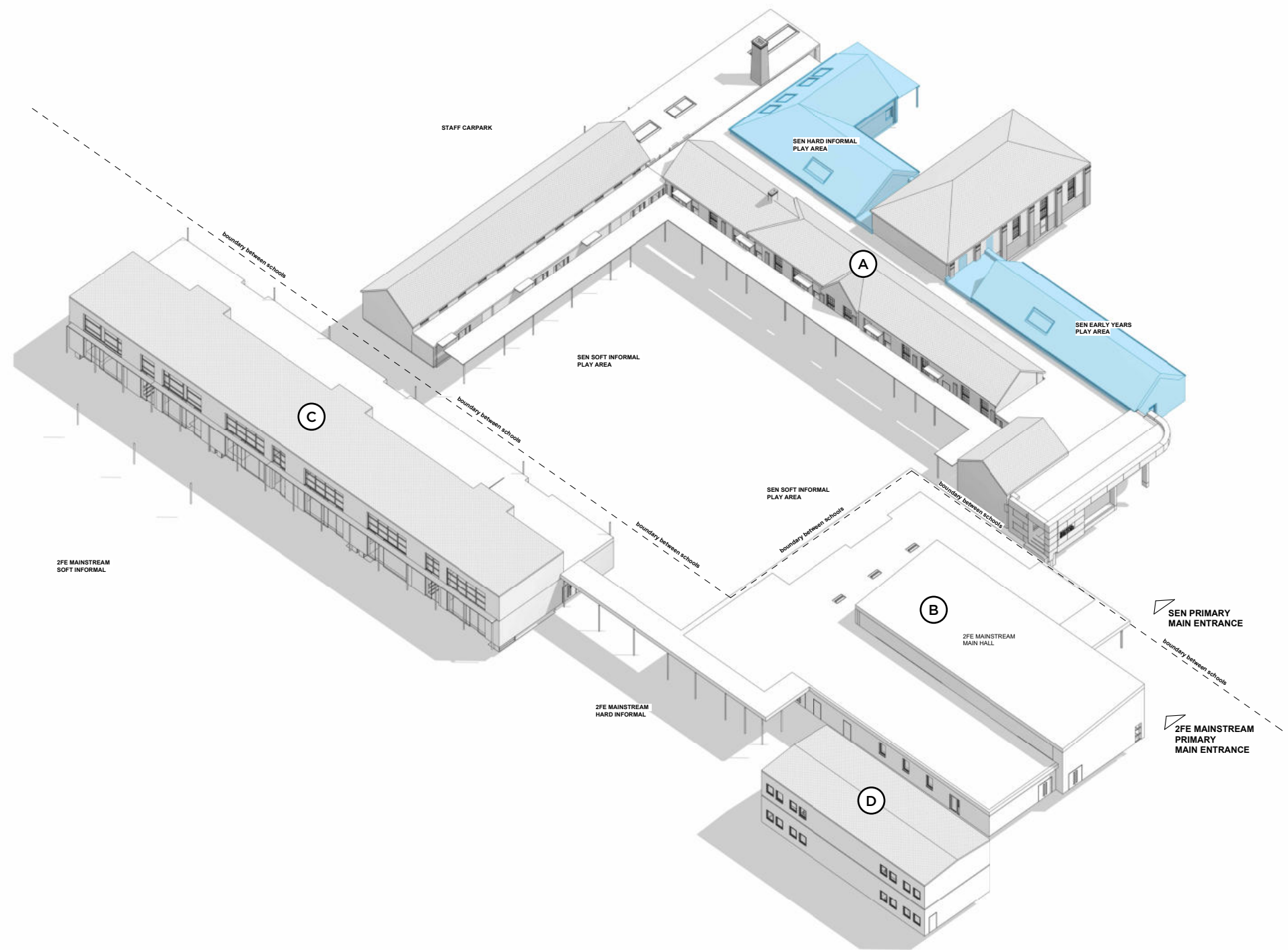
The proposed architectural works consist of the following items:

- The internal refurbishment and reconfiguration of the existing Main Building (Building A)
- The creation of two new build single-storey extensions to the east of Building A.

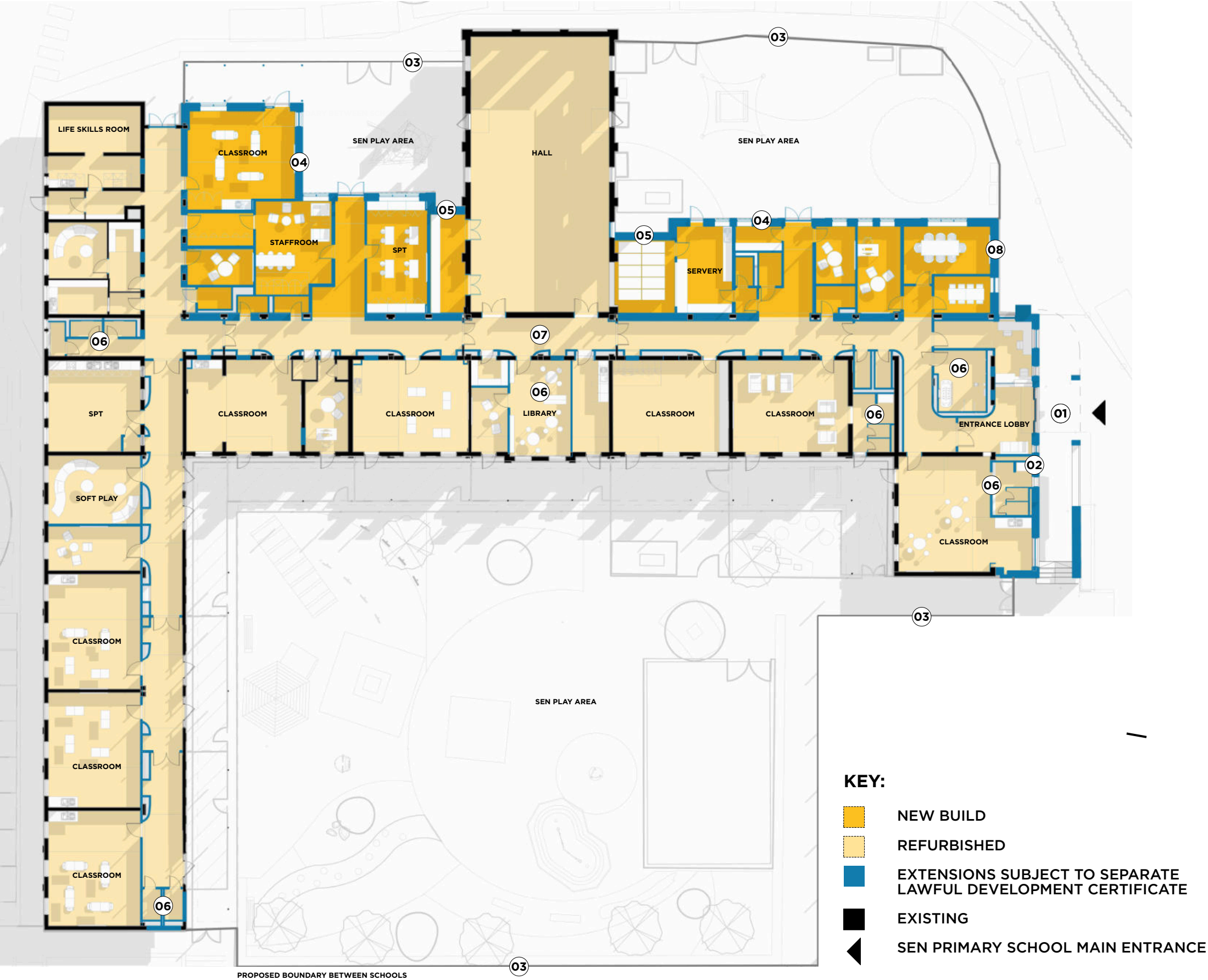
The latter is to be considered under permitted development rights and a Lawful Development Certificate application has been submitted separately.

The refurbishment scope of the project is focused on upgrading the existing building finishes and services to better suit the needs of SEND pupils.

The proposals seek to provide the adequate suite of spaces in line with government guidance captured in documents such as the Building Bulletin 104. As a result, localised internal reconfiguration of the existing building is proposed to create learning resources spaces such as group rooms, a therapy room and a sensory room to assist pupils and staff alike.



PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN



01 Proposed demolition of an existing single storey modular building to allow for new frontage and main entrance to the proposed SEN Primary School and associated external works. **Item included for information only. Extensions subject to separate Lawful Development Certificate application.**

02 Proposed demolition of existing wall and strip-out of existing doors and windows. New thermally upgraded external wall, doors and windows to be installed as shown. **Item included for information only. Extensions subject to separate Lawful Development Certificate application.**

03 Proposed external fencing/boundary between the SEN Primary School and The Ridgeway Primary School. Please refer to the Landscape Architect's proposals for further information.

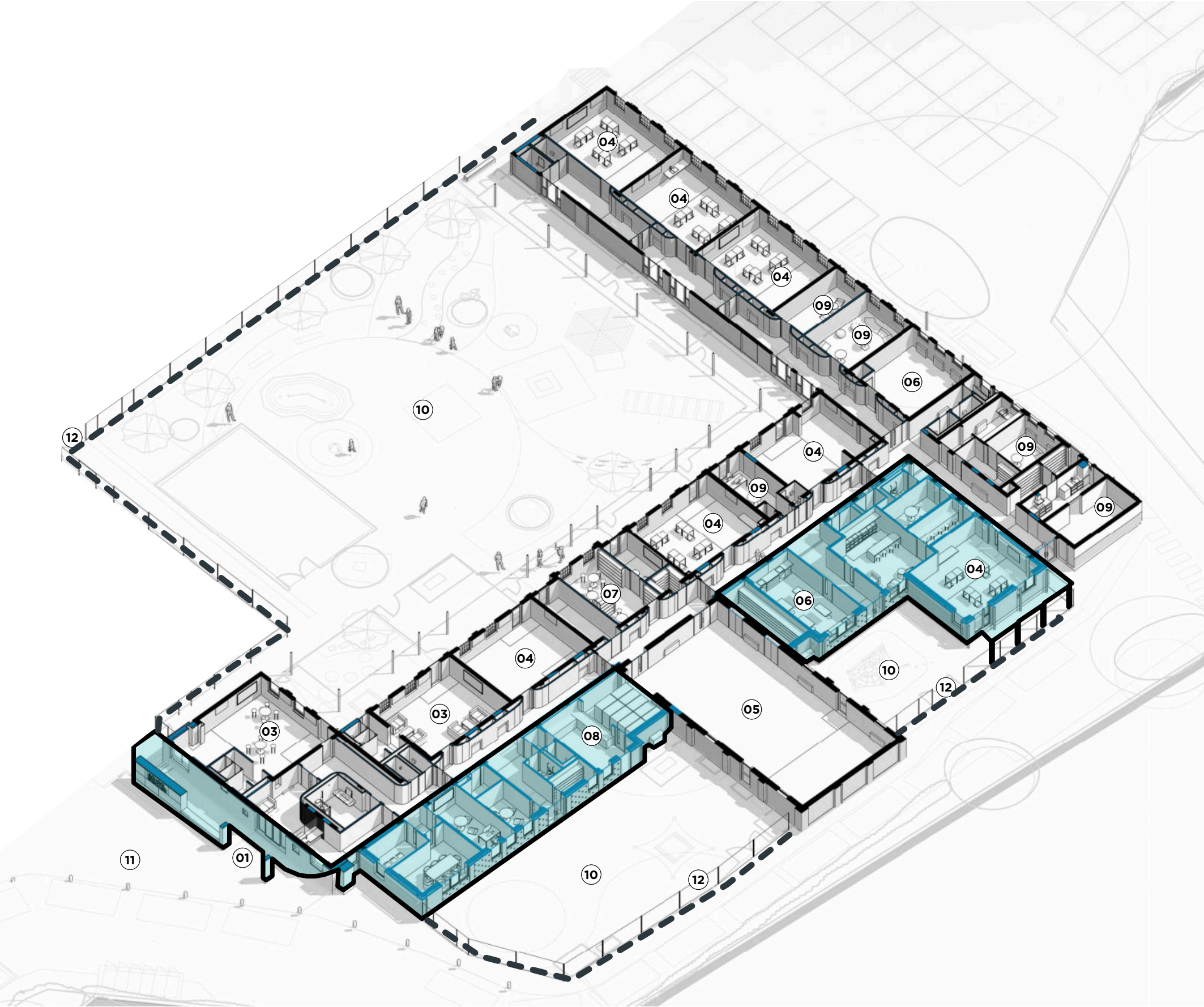
04 New build single storey pitched roof extension to the north-east side of the existing building and either side of the existing hall. **Item included for information only. Extensions subject to separate Lawful Development Certificate application.**

05 Recessive new build single storey flat roof links between the existing hall and the pitched roof extensions to minimise visual impact to the existing hall and articulate the proposed massing. **Item included for information only. Extensions subject to separate Lawful Development Certificate application.**

06 Localised reconfiguration of existing spaces to better suit SEND pupils' needs by creating teaching and learning resources facilities, and sanitary facilities. **Item included for information only. Extensions subject to separate Lawful Development Certificate application.**

07 Refurbishment of floor, wall and ceiling finishes throughout the existing building to meet the needs of SEND pupils. **Item included for information only. Extensions subject to separate Lawful Development Certificate application.**

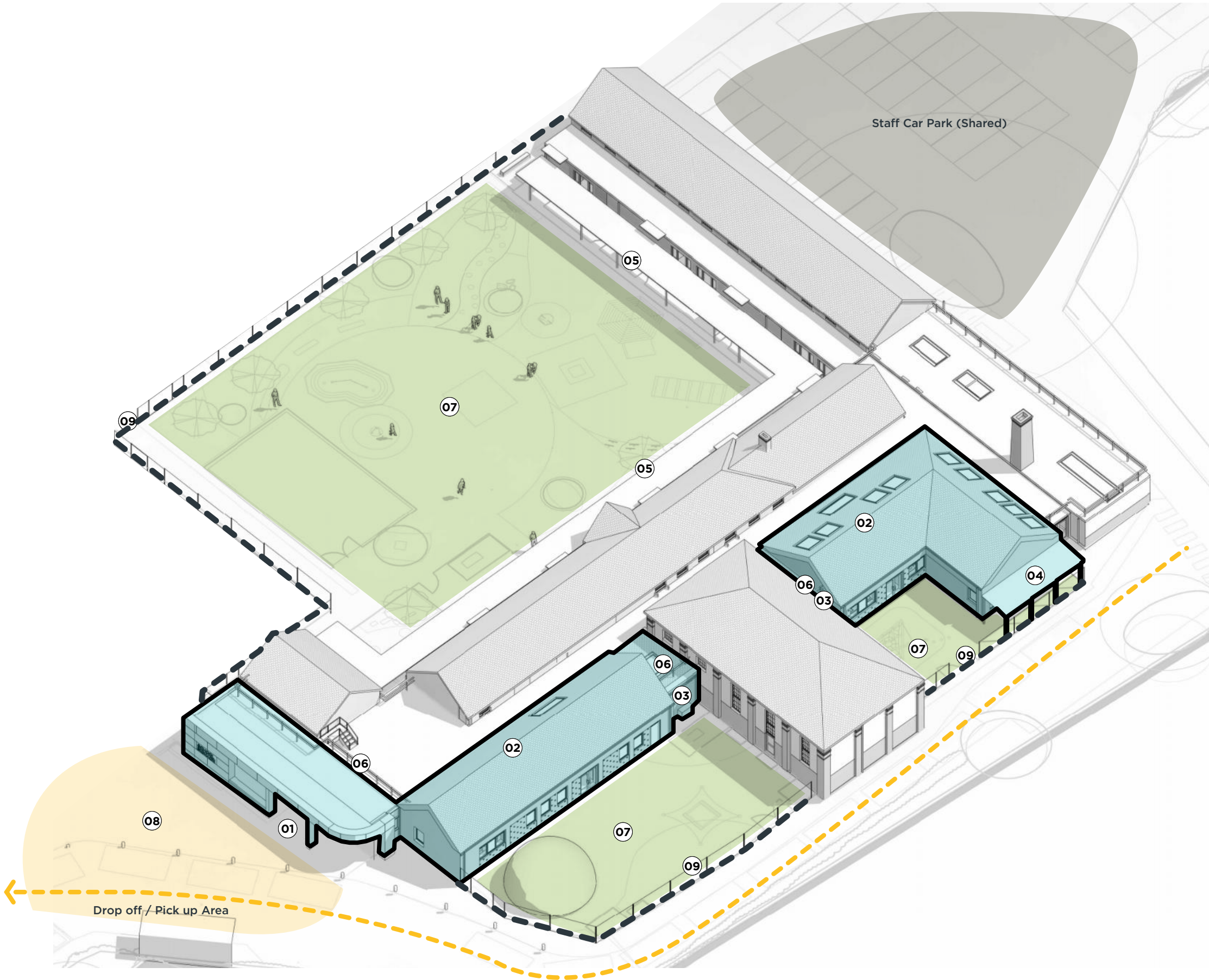
PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR AXONOMETRIC VIEW



KEY

- New build extensions to existing buildings are permitted development and subject to a separate Lawful Development Certificate.**
- 01** Main SEN Primary School entrance.
- 02** Entrance lobby and reception.
- 03** YR Classrooms with direct access to designated YR external play area.
- 04** General teaching classrooms with direct access to external play areas.
- 05** Multi-purpose hall.
- 06** Specialist teaching classrooms.
- 07** Centrally located library.
- 08** Servery facilities.
- 09** Suite of learning resources (soft play, group rooms and sensory rooms) distributed across the plan.
- 10** External play areas.
- 11** New drop-off and pick-up area.
- 12** SEN Primary school boundary.

PROPOSED AXONOMETRIC VIEW



KEY

-  **New build extensions to existing buildings are permitted development and subject to a separate Lawful Development Certificate.**
- 01** Main SEN Primary School entrance.
- 02** New build single storey pitched roof extensions.
- 03** New build single storey flat roof links to existing hall block.
- 04** New canopy to classroom.
- 05** Existing canopy to main courtyard to be retained.
- 06** Metal roof safety handrail.
- 07** External play areas.
- 08** New drop-off and pick-up area.
- 09** SEN Primary school boundary.

06

PROPOSED EXTERNAL WORKS

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LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS

The landscape strategy supports the educational and operational needs of both the primary pupils, and the SEND students to create an integrated indoor-outdoor learning environment for both schools. The school benefits from its setting adjacent within a strong green infrastructure setting with the largely tree or hedge lined boundaries to the site; these will remain as such in the proposed scheme and are untouched. A full arboricultural survey has been undertaken in accordance with BS 5837 ‘Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations’ and forms part of the submission documents.

The reconfigured site layout retains the majority of trees, with the removal of two Category C young trees in the central courtyard to facilitate the inclusion of more level play space and a small enclosed hard games court. All retained trees impacted by the development area will be fully protected to BS recommendations throughout construction.

The proposals for the SEND school include the introduction of a new drop off and pick up facility, utilising the northern vehicular access, which is widened for fire and maintenance access, and provides a one-way approach to the new entrance area to the south of the SEND buildings; vehicles will then exit via the southern road access. Details of the management of this are set out in other submission documents.

The existing cycle shelter to the east of the site is removed to allow for additional drainage measures, with reprovion in the northern car park area. Refuse store and secure cycle parking for the SEND school are provided adjacent to the main entrance. Primary school refuse and cycle facilities remain as existing.

To facilitate the increased requirements for parking, the existing southern car park has been extended to the north into the existing playground with fencing realigned and gated access provided for emergency and maintenance access. Electric vehicle charging facilities are provided within the car park.

01 Proposed diagrammatic site plan produced by Terra Firma showing the proposed external works at The Ridgeway.

02, 03 Existing photos of one-way route for drop-off and pick-up.



LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS

To mitigate the loss of playground for the primary school a new area of hard surfacing is provided to the West of the existing artificial grass pitch to replace an area of existing mown grassland which is currently unused due to its uneven nature.

The SEND facilities include three enclosed courtyards utilising existing features and complementing these with new play equipment, sensory planting and the provision of the small, enclosed games court. The central courtyard benefits from the provision of additional tree, hedge and shrub planting, which also serves to provide a buffer between the space and the adjacent primary school building. Classrooms opening into the central courtyard have enclosed associated outdoor spaces under the existing canopy that in turn open onto the wider courtyard.

Along with the provision of new hard surface space the primary school also benefits from the provision of a new outdoor play space with covered space and new equipment for the relocated reception and nursery classrooms.

With the difference in levels at the adjacent entrances to the two schools, levels have been carefully considered to ensure full accessibility.

For further detail regarding the landscape proposals, please refer to the Landscape Architect’s information submitted as part of this application.



- 01, 02** SEND Courtyards: new play equipment
- 03, 04, 05** Sensory planting species: texture, movement and smell (Stachys, Pennisetum and Rosemary)
- 06, 07, 08** Primary early years: new play equipment

TRANSPORT PROPOSALS

The proposed development at The Ridgeway School includes the reconfiguration of transport arrangements to support the expanded educational offer, recognising the differing transport needs of SEND pupils and responding to predicted travel demand, highways safety, and sustainable transport objectives.

Key transport works and strategy include:

ACCESS ARRANGEMENTS & CIRCULATION

- Retention and improvement of the two existing vehicular access points: the main northern access from Willow Gardens (to be used as the main entry for SEND pupil vehicles and staff), and the southern access from Hillbrow (used for one-way exit).
- A new one-way system has been designed for drop-off and pick-up, minimising congestion and improving safety for SEND pupils' arrivals/departures.
- During peak times, vehicles enter from Willow Gardens and exit through Hillbrow, ensuring site traffic is contained within the school boundary and does not create on-street congestion.

CAR PARKING

- The main north car park is retained and enhanced, providing 44 standard car spaces (including 1 accessible space to serve the existing primary school staff).
- A new/extended south car park for 42 spaces (including accessible spaces) for SEND staff parking needs to support the SEND school. Overall, this accommodates 79% of SEND staff parking needs, responding to travel plan management and, where possible, encouraging some mode shift.
- Parking layout includes provision for electric vehicle (EV) charging in accordance with RBC policy and future-proofing for increased ultra-low emission use.

DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP FACILITIES

- A dedicated drop-off/pick-up facility is provided for the SEND school, with capacity for up to 6 vehicles at a time and on-site queuing for up to 19 more, enabling safe, efficient, and fully on-site transition arrangements for pupils with complex needs. Detailed vehicle tracking confirms the site layout works for minibuses and taxis, plus emergency and refuse vehicles.

PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLE ACCESS

- Safe, segregated, and improved pedestrian routes in/out of the site (from both north and south) have been maintained and enhanced.
- A new formal pedestrian crossing will be installed to link the southern pedestrian access with the main entrance.
- Secure, convenient covered cycle storage is provided and relocated as needed, including provision for adaptive cycle lockers (SEND), aligning with RBC policy for active travel and staff/pupil needs.

The transport works provide a safe, efficient, and inclusive access and parking strategy that caters for all users, including those with additional needs.

The scheme is in accordance with local and national policies, actively promotes sustainable and active travel options, and respects the local neighbourhood context by containing car movements within the school site and minimising any highways or on-street impact.

For further information, please refer to the transport consultant information submitted as part of this planning application.



ECOLOGY & BIODIVERSITY

PRELIMINARY ECOLOGICAL APPRAISAL

An updated Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been undertaken for The Ridgeway Primary School to inform proposals to redevelop the site to provide enhanced SEN facilities. The 2.8 ha site comprises existing school buildings and hardstanding, with areas of managed and semi-improved grassland, scattered trees, an intensive orchard, scrub and two small parcels of lowland mixed deciduous woodland. A veteran oak tree of up to county-level importance is present on the northern boundary. The site is not subject to any statutory ecological designations but lies immediately adjacent to The Cowsey Local Wildlife Site, which borders the northern, western and southern boundaries.

Most habitats directly affected by the works comprise hardstanding and modified/amenity grassland of low or very low ecological value. Small areas of other neutral grassland and one semi-mature tree (site-level value) will be lost to new hard landscaping and building extensions; the woodland parcels and veteran oak will be retained and protected. No waterbodies occur on site and no ponds were identified within 500 m; the site is therefore of negligible importance for great crested newt and other amphibians. Habitats are also of negligible value for reptiles and do not support dormouse, otter or water vole, although there is limited potential for hedgehog to use boundary habitats.

A separate bat survey identified small common pipistrelle day roosts within two existing buildings. These roosts and all mature/veteran trees will be retained, and the scheme is not predicted to result in the loss or damage of any bat roosts or significant foraging habitat. The site provides nesting opportunities for common bird species; swift boxes are already present on one building and will be retained.

Construction-phase impacts on retained habitats and the adjacent Cowsey LWS will be controlled through a CEMP: Biodiversity, including protective fencing, controlled access, pollution prevention and sensitive lighting. Works to vegetation and buildings will be timed and supervised to avoid impacts on nesting birds and small mammals.

The scheme will incorporate biodiversity enhancements such as additional native planting, integral bat and bird boxes, bee bricks and hedgehog-friendly boundary treatments. As the proposals will remove more than 25 m² of habitat, the development will be subject to mandatory Biodiversity Net Gain and will deliver at least a 10% net gain in accordance with the Environment Act 2021 and local planning policy.

BIODIVERSITY NET GAIN (BNG) ASSESSMENT

A Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment has been prepared by John Wenman Ecological Consultancy LLP to support the planning application, following a preceding Preliminary Ecological Appraisal. The assessment covers the whole school site (1.75 ha) and has been carried out using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, in line with the Environment Act, the National Planning Policy Framework and Reading Borough Local Plan Policy EN12.

The site consists mainly of school buildings, hardstanding and amenity/modified grassland, with areas of other neutral grassland, scattered trees (including a veteran oak), scrub, traditional orchard and introduced shrub planting. The site is not statutorily designated, but The Cowsey Local Wildlife Site borders the school on three sides, and parcels of lowland mixed deciduous woodland within the wider school grounds are priority habitat. No internationally designated sites occur within the search area and the site lies outside any SSSI Impact Risk Zone. The school building to be affected was found to have low bat roost potential and subsequent survey recorded no roosts.

The proposals involve new parking, circulation and play areas which will result in the loss of areas of modified and other neutral grassland and two trees to new hardstanding and surfaced play. The design retains the veteran oak tree and existing woodland, and includes the planting of 14 new urban trees and new ornamental and amenity landscaping.

Using the Statutory Biodiversity Metric, the scheme results in an on-site net change of -23.64% in habitat units and -100% in hedgerow units, giving a deficit of 0.39 habitat units and 0.18 hedgerow units against the mandatory 10% net gain requirement. As a result, it is not possible to achieve 10% BNG within the constrained school site. The applicant therefore proposes to secure the shortfall through the purchase of off-site biodiversity units from an appropriate local habitat bank, ensuring that the development delivers at least 10% biodiversity net gain overall. Construction-phase measures will be implemented to avoid indirect impacts on The Cowsey LWS (such as encroachment, runoff and soil compaction).

07

PROJECT STRATEGIES

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ACCESS STRATEGY

ACCESS STRATEGY

An independent accessibility review by a specialist consultant has informed the design of the new Ridgeway SEND Primary School. The scheme has been developed with reference to key statutory and best practice documents including Approved Documents M, K, B, T and S, BS 8300-1 and BS 8300-2, BS 9999, Building Bulletins for SEND provision (BB100, BB102, BB104), and current guidance on neurodiversity, signage and inclusive sport. These principles underpin both the external layout and the internal arrangement of the building.

EXTERNAL ACCESS

The external environment is planned to provide step-free, safe and legible access for all users. Gradients, level landings and widths on primary routes are being designed to meet or exceed current guidance. Accessible parking and drop-off arrangements will incorporate appropriate bay sizes, transfer zones, lighting and safe, clearly defined pedestrian routes. External furniture, drainage features, planting and lighting columns are being coordinated so they do not obstruct access, and provision for cyclists is being separated from main pedestrian routes where practicable.

BUILDING ACCESS AND CIRCULATION

Principal entrances will provide compliant level access, adequate clear widths and appropriate lobbies, with door opening forces, leading edges and ironmongery designed for ease of use by pupils, staff and visitors with a range of needs. Internal corridors, stairs and landings are designed to satisfy inclusive width, gradient and guarding standards, avoiding projections or services that could narrow routes or create hazards. Highly serviced and specialist areas are being planned to support the use of assistive equipment where required.

FACILITIES, WAYFINDING AND CONTROLS

The school will include a range of sanitary and welfare facilities to support pupils with SEND, staff and visitors, including accessible and ambulant WCs located in step with standard provision and within appropriate travel distances. Shower, toilet and changing facilities are being considered in relation to the school's specific pupil profile, with space safeguarded for equipment such as hoists where necessary. Staff areas and refreshment points are being planned to allow inclusive use, including consideration of worktop heights and clear manoeuvring space.

Wayfinding will be supported by clear, consistent signage designed in accordance with recognised good practice for SEND settings. Tonal contrast between walls, floors, doors and fittings will be used to aid people with visual or cognitive impairments. Manifestation to glazed screens and doors will comply with current regulations. Controls, switches, window handles and entry systems are being positioned within accessible height ranges and designed to be usable by people with hearing, speech or mobility impairments, with provision for hearing enhancement at reception.

FIRE SAFETY AND INCLUSIVE EVACUATION

The fire strategy is being developed in line with BS 9999 and BB100 to support the safe evacuation of all building users, including those with reduced mobility or complex needs. This includes consideration of refuge locations, alarm systems (audible and visual), door widths, stair capacities and the potential use of evacuation equipment and lifts where appropriate. The approach to compartmentation and security zoning will ensure that accessibility standards and travel distances to refuge points and accessible WCs are maintained.

ACOUSTIC & SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGIES

SUSTAINABILITY & ENERGY STRATEGY

A Sustainability Statement has been prepared by RCDC to support proposals at Ridgeway Primary School for new parking, landscaping and boundary treatments to facilitate a new SEN school. Although the planning application relates to external works, the statement also considers the associated refurbishment (c.1,595 m²) and extensions (c.348 m², subject to a separate Lawful Development Certificate) to demonstrate that sustainability is embedded across the wider project.

The strategy responds to the Reading Borough Local Plan (including Policy CC2), the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD, RBC's School Development Sustainability Strategy and relevant Building Regulations, and is informed by best-practice guidance such as the RIBA 2030 Climate Challenge and LETI. A fabric-first, "Be Lean, Be Clean, Be Green, Be Seen" hierarchy is adopted.

For the new-build accommodation, the design incorporates optimised orientation, high levels of insulation and airtightness, natural ventilation and good daylighting to reduce energy demand and support occupant comfort, particularly for SEN users. Refurbishment works focus on proportionate improvements to the existing fabric, with roof insulation identified as the key intervention, while retaining as much of the existing structure and services as practicable to minimise embodied carbon.

Building services adopt efficient and predominantly electric solutions in the new-build areas (VRF/VRV systems with controlled cooling, LST radiators and LED lighting), with mixed-mode ventilation using heat recovery to meet BB101 requirements. Refurbished areas continue to use the existing central boiler system, upgraded with LST radiators and provision for future connection to low-carbon heat (e.g. air source heat pump). Water use is reduced through low-flow sanitary fittings, with further water-saving opportunities to be explored as design develops.

On-site renewable energy generation is provided by existing solar PV, with opportunities for additional PV on the new-build roof to be taken forward at detailed design. While this will reduce operational carbon emissions, full net-zero operation is not anticipated to be achievable on-site. Embodied carbon is addressed through retention and reuse of existing elements, rationalised construction build-ups and preference for responsibly sourced, low-impact and, where appropriate, bio-based materials.

Further measures include provision of cycle parking, on-site EV charging (4 active spaces with additional passive provision in line with Part S), and enhanced energy monitoring via the existing BMS with post-occupancy evaluation. Overall, the project represents a proportionate and robust response to RBC's sustainability objectives within the constraints of an operational, largely refurbished school site.

ACOUSTIC STRATEGY

Acoustic matters for the proposal have been addressed in two specialist reports by Sound Advice Acoustics Ltd:

- Environmental Noise Impact Assessment (SA-8151/Rev1), and
- Internal Noise Assessment (SA-8311/Rev1).

Both assessments are undertaken with reference to Building Bulletin 93 (2015), BS 8233:2014, BS 4142:2014+A1:2019 and the NPPF/NPSE.

The environmental report is based on measured background noise levels on site. It confirms that, with the specified façade glazing and trickle ventilation, internal noise levels in the new accommodation can meet BB93/BS 8233 criteria. It also derives design noise limits for proposed external plant such that the BS 4142 assessment at the nearest residential properties is of "low impact" and corresponds to "No Observed Effect Level" under NPSE.

The internal report demonstrates that calculated reverberation times and airborne sound insulation for the existing and proposed school buildings achieve the requirements of BB93, including corridors and circulation areas. One Practical Room requires 15 m² of acoustic wall panels, as recommended. Treatments are also specified for structural steelwork and service risers to control flanking sound transmission.

STRUCTURAL, CIVIL ENGINEERING AND DRAINAGE STRATEGIES

FLOOD RISK ASSESSMENT

A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy has been prepared by Marbas Group Ltd to support the proposed refurbishment and extensions at The Ridgeway Primary School, Hillbrow, Reading. The site is an existing school campus of approximately 2.48 ha within Flood Zone 1 (low probability of fluvial/tidal flooding) and is well removed from the River Thames and River Kennet. Environment Agency and SFRA mapping confirm the site is at very low risk from rivers, the sea, surface water, reservoirs and other artificial sources, with sewer and groundwater flood risk assessed as low.

The proposals involve a modest net increase in built floor area of c.366 m² and a reconfiguration of the school from a 630-place 3FE primary to a 420-place 2FE primary plus an 82-place SEN primary. Overall pupil numbers and foul water flows are not expected to increase. Existing separate foul and surface water systems are retained, with foul water continuing to discharge to the Thames Water foul sewer via the existing on-site pumping station; no new off-site foul connections are proposed.

Surface water drainage has been designed in line with the SuDS hierarchy, NPPF, PPG and Reading Borough Council policy. Phase 1A external works will use permeable paving with open-graded sub-base to provide source control, attenuation and infiltration where ground conditions allow. For Phase 1B building extensions, infiltration is not appropriate due to underlying London Clay and shallow groundwater; runoff from new roofs will therefore be attenuated on site and discharged at a controlled rate of 2.5 l/s to the public surface water sewer, subject to Thames Water agreement. The system is sized for the 1 in 100 year rainfall event plus 45% climate change, with designed exceedance routing away from buildings.

The FRA concludes that the development will be safe for its lifetime, will not increase flood risk on or off site, delivers betterment to the existing drainage arrangements, and accords with national and local planning policy on flood risk and sustainable drainage.

STRUCTURAL STRATEGY

The structural strategy has been developed to combine targeted interventions to the existing buildings with simple, robust new-build construction.

Across the refurbishment areas, the proposals include localised alterations such as infilling redundant openings with masonry to match the existing construction, introducing new lintels and steel members where openings are formed or modified, and retaining existing structural elements where these remain suitable.

CIVILS STRATEGY

The civil engineering strategy has been developed primarily around the rationalisation, retention and selective upgrade of the existing below-ground drainage infrastructure, while accommodating the new school layouts and external works.

The proposals identify and retain suitable existing foul and surface water drainage runs where possible, introduce new foul and surface water pipework, manholes, gullies, channel drains and associated connections where required, and remove or abandon redundant drainage once confirmed as no longer live.

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