

Urban Design Comment Form:

**F/22/94241 – Land adjacent to Boorley Park Primary School,
Nairn Road, Botley, SO32 2SH**

From: Urban & Landscape Design Team to Development Management

Urban Design Officer: Marta Oliveira

Planning Officer: Rebecca Altman

Date: 7 February 2023

Proposal: Erect single-storey children's nursery with off road car parking

Summary: No objections *in principle* to the delivery of a nursery in this location however there are a number of issues that need to be addressed:

- It is considered that failure to include the land outlined blue continues to create a significant constraint to creating a scheme that successfully balances built form, landscape and provision for vehicles.
 - Pedestrian/vehicular conflict resulting from dominating road design, putting highly vulnerable users at risk
 - Uninspiring building design
 - Gloomy internal spaces that create over reliance on artificial light
 - The elevations should be carefully considered. Till now it looks a poor designed building with a very monotonous elevation treatment in terms of tones and rhythm.
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From the information supplied, I would like to comment as follows.

1. Site Context

The site falls within Boorley Park, a new strategic residential development. The nursery will be located adjacent to a primary school, with both facilities sharing an access from Wallace Avenue, the primary route through the housing development.

2. Siting, Building lines, Footprint & External Layout:

The building is sited towards the northern part of the site and served by a standard road that priorities vehicles over pedestrians. Given this is a shared access for a nursery and primary school, the road needs to be designed as a *street* where pedestrians and cyclists have priority.

Moreover, as the site is off the main road, a design which enhances the sense of place would always be required. Therefore, the proposed design should improve the relationship between the building and the public realm, to create a strong sense of arrival that feels welcoming and easily accessible whilst enhancing the character and identity of the place.

The site plan needs to be extended to include the link with the existing road. Also, a roof plan should have been submitted to help to understand the design.

From the site entrance, the building will be viewed within a sea of tarmac and car parking. This fails to create a strong sense of arrival.

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The building entrance is concealed behind the parking area. The entrance to the building needs to be made more prominent, and a larger pavement area outside the entrance is needed. It is recommended that the parking layout is revised to move spaces away from the entrance to provide a larger circulation / comfort space outside the entrance.

There needs to be a safe pedestrian priority route from the site entrance to the building entrance. Currently children will have to cross the very wide parking/turning area raising concerns over safety as a result of pedestrian/vehicular conflict and so, moving the building entrance further south, closer to the site entrance is recommended.

Consider the use of coloured tarmac and/or a block paved surface to soften the appearance of the parking area.

Furthermore, the current design has group rooms and play areas with a northerly aspect whilst the parking area benefits from a southerly aspect. As it stands, many of the internal rooms and spaces have no direct access to natural light creating an over reliance on artificial light.

To address these issues, the previous Urban Design Officer recommended the following amendments was provided:

- Move the parking, turning area and bin store to the northern part of the site and move the building and its associated play spaces to the south so the entrance lobby is closer to the site entrance.
- Rotate the building 90° counter-clockwise, and swap the location of the entrance lobby with the kitchen so the building entrance is directly visible from the site entrance. This would have the added benefit of giving the classrooms and play spaces a westerly aspect. The northerly aspect currently proposed will increase reliance on artificial light.
- Having rotated the building, move the kitchen and utility rooms to the northern elevation as this would now be adjacent to the parking and servicing area. This could enable a larger and more welcoming reception area to be created.
- Move the garden area to the southern boundary where it could provide an attractive and welcoming setting to the building and potential extend around the back of the building, potentially enabling access from the play areas. The garden could then be actively overlooked from the adjacent classrooms and staff rooms, with greater scope for the children being able to visit the garden safely.

None of these recommendations are considered to add cost to the scheme. They are just improvements to the layout recommended during the planning stage with the aim to achieve a stronger sense of arrival and, teaching and play areas with a brighter outlook.

If the council are minded to approve this application, at the very least, roof lights should be incorporated into the building and high level or slot windows on the partitions between classrooms to further distribute light through the building.

Also, bi-fold doors should be installed on the rear elevation to provide easy access to the outdoor play spaces and to ensure that the rooms make the best use of free heat energy from sun. In warm weather they could be opened fully to aid ventilation and enable seamless movement between inside and outside.

It is not clear which material is being proposed to the outside play areas - the Explorers and Adventurers. Consider providing rubber surfaces on these area as this would still enable

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bicycle riding, ball games and other activities to occur in this space but would provide a more forgiving surface.

It is recommended to consider the possibility of creating an additional pedestrian link to the housing to the west.

3. Height, Form, Scale & Mass

No objections in principle. A single storey building would also be appropriate on the site.

4. External Appearance & Materials

The elevations should be carefully considered. Till now it looks a poor designed building with a very monotonous elevation treatment in terms of tones and rhythm.

The Nursery's south elevation is predominantly blank, uninviting and treated as a back building. This frontage is exposed to the public realm and will require further development to treat it as a front elevation with a balanced void-to-solid ratio and a well-defined entrance.

Clearly defined entrance is an important element to the legibility of the area and help to achieve a successful active frontage.

A sympathetic relationship with the character of the area would be needed by employing a refine approach to the architectural language, materials and detailing.

If the previous approved materials are considered to be unviable, it would be encouraged to propose a simple palette of high-quality materials, such as brick and natural slate, with a consistent high-quality detailing to reinforce the overall design concept. The brick detail can be an important feature to pay attention to when designing a building whilst providing cost effective schemes. There is a wide range of styles, such as protruding brickwork, which are low-cost ways of adding depth and interest to the external appearance of a building

Also, this could be reinforced by softening the car parking area with appropriate landscaping such as additional trees within the parking area to create a car 'park' in accordance with the Quality Spaces SPD.

5. Sustainability

It is considered that far more could be done to improve the sustainability of the scheme:

- Permeable surfaces should be incorporated;
- The pitched roof should accommodate rooflights to reduce the current reliance on artificial light;
- Consider sedum roofs to the flat roof and green walls to add visual interest to the building and form part of the wider landscape strategy for the site;
- Improve and enlarge areas of soft landscape and reduce significantly areas of hardstanding.