

## Planning Officer's Report – LDCA 21 AUGUST 2025

<b>APPLICATION</b>	<b>2025/54</b> – Proposed Redevelopment of Harford School
<b>PERMISSION SOUGHT</b>	Full Permission
<b>REGISTERED</b>	1 <sup>st</sup> July 2025
<b>APPLICANT</b>	Education, Skills & Employment Portfolio, SHG
<b>LOCALITY</b>	Harford School, Longwood
<b>ZONE</b>	Intermediate
<b>CONSERVATION AREA</b>	None
<b>CURRENT USE</b>	School
<b>PUBLICITY</b>	The application was advertised as follows: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Sentinel Newspaper on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2025</li><li>▪ A site notice displayed in accordance with Regulations.</li></ul>
<b>EXPIRY</b>	17 <sup>th</sup> July 2025
<b>REPRESENTATIONS</b>	None Received
<b>DECISION ROUTE</b>	<del>Delegated</del> / LDCA / EXCO

### A. CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

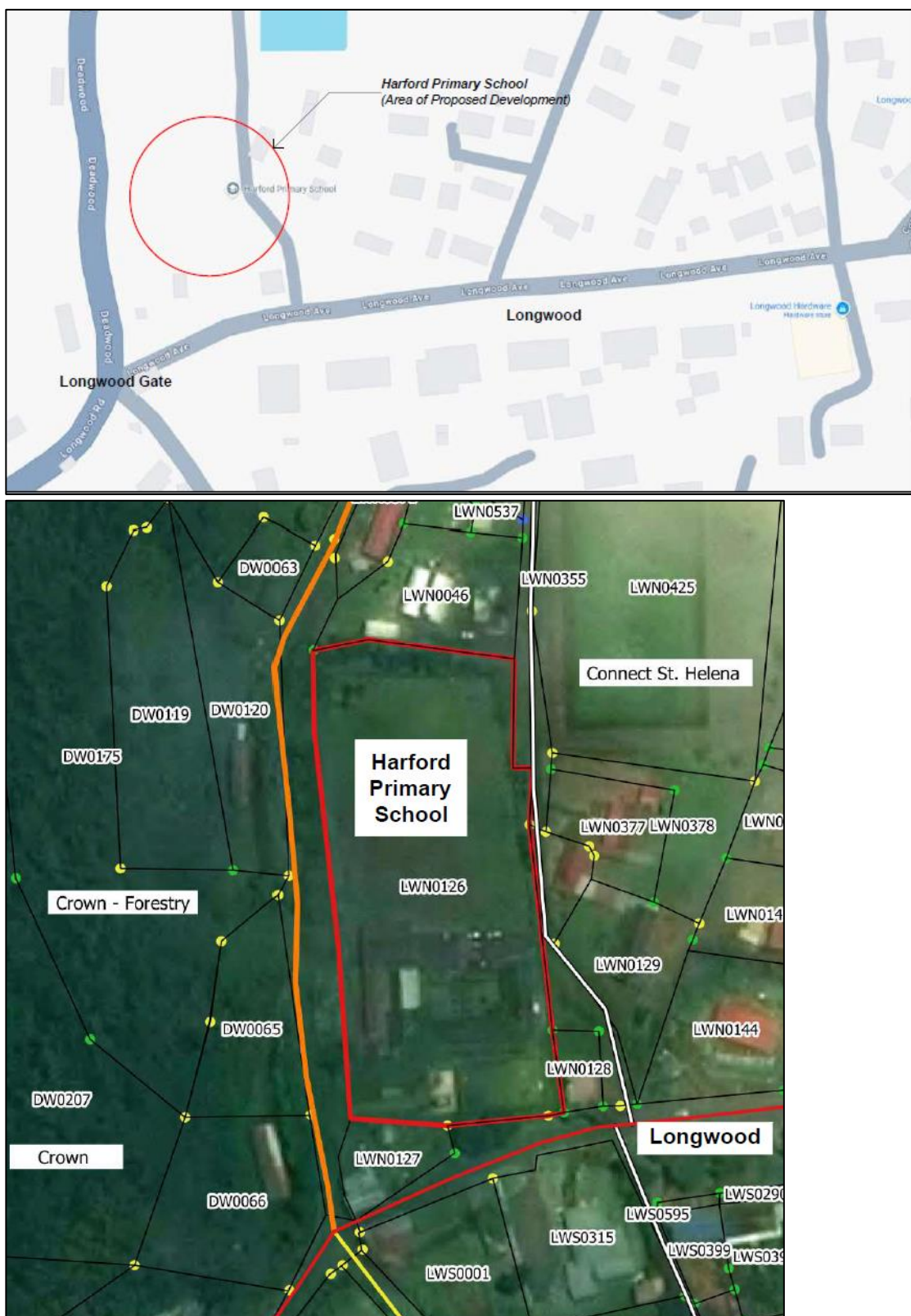
1. Sewage & Water Division	No Objection
2. Energy Division	No Response
3. Fire & Rescue	No Objection - Comments
4. Roads Section	No Objection
5. Property Division	No Objection
6. Environmental Management	No Objection - Comments
7. Public Health	No Response
8. Agriculture & Natural Resources	No Response
9. St Helena Police Services	No Response
10. Aerodrome Safeguarding	No Response
11. Economic Development	No Objection
12. National Trust	No Response
13. Sure SA Ltd	No Objection
14. Heritage Society	No Objection
15. Maritime	Not Applicable

## B. PLANNING OFFICER'S APPRAISAL

### LOCALITY & ZONING

The application site is at Harford Primary School in Longwood, where the plot is designated within the Intermediate Zone, and has no conservation area restrictions.

**Diagram 1: Location Plan & Satellite Image**



## PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

The applicant has stated in their submission that the proposed upgrade and reconfiguration of Harford Primary Schools forms part of a strategic initiative to modernise and improve the education infrastructure on St Helena. This project specifically focuses on transforming Harford Primary into a dedicated Early Years and Key Stage 1 (KS1) learning environment, aligned with COBIS (Council of British International Schools) and UK educational standards.

Reconfiguration of Harford Primary was formally approved by the SHG steering committee on 6 March 2025, following a detailed review of the Island's education provision. This review recognised the need for age-appropriate, high-quality learning environments that support the cognitive, emotional and social development of younger learners.

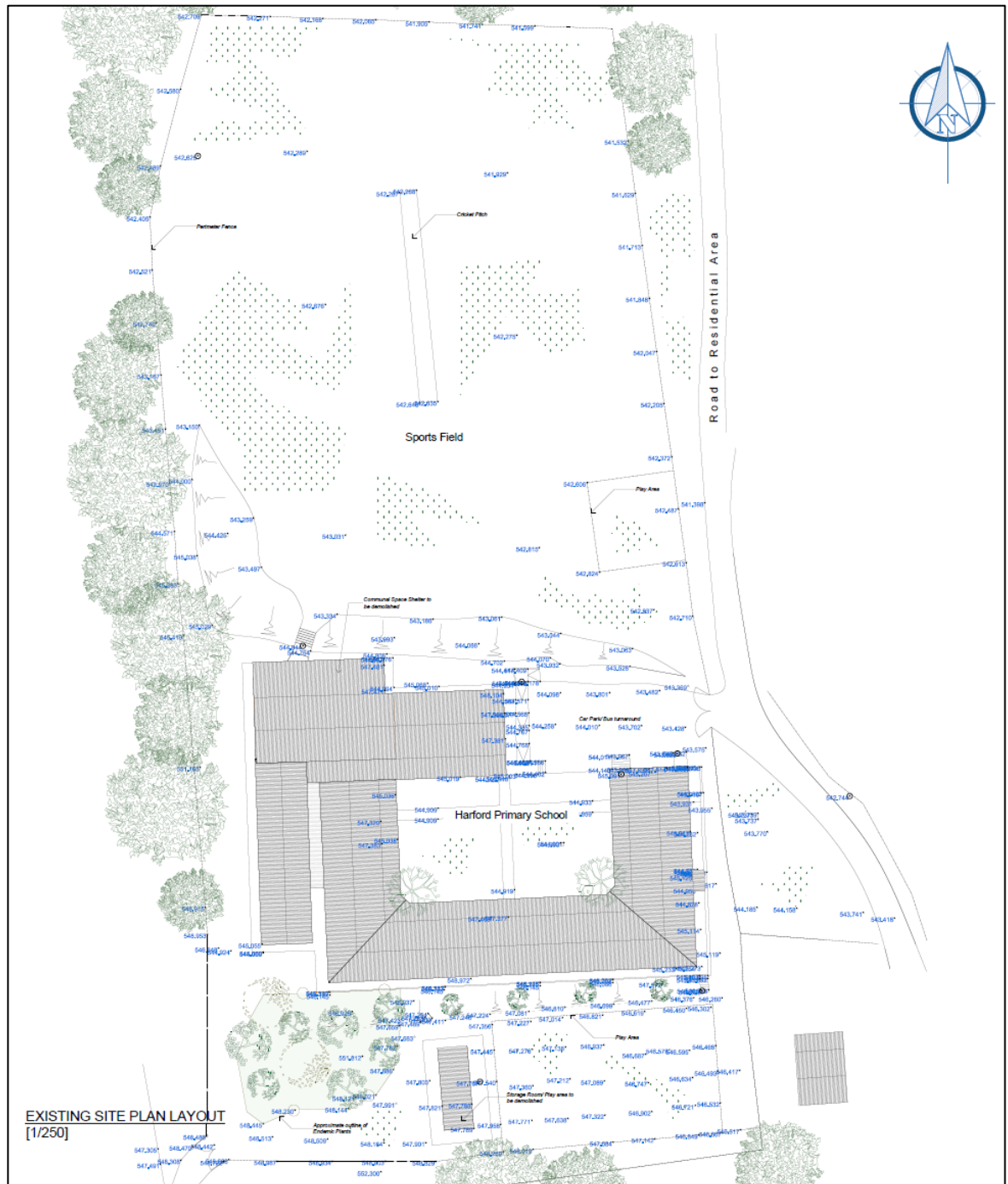
Subsequently, on 18 March 2025, the Education, skills and Employment (ESE) Portfolio announced a broader structural change to the primary school education system. This included the closure of all three existing primary schools at the end of the 2025-26 School year and reopening in September 2026 as restructured, age-specific schools. Harford was identified as the designated site for early years and KS1 Education, serving as a foundational setting within the revised education framework.

The reorganisation project involves comprehensive internal refurbishment and spatial redesign to create a safe, inclusive, and stimulating learning environment tailored to the developmental needs of children in their early stages of education. The design prioritises flexibility, accessibility, and safeguarding, ensuring that all facilities meet current best practice standards in early childhood and primary education.

**Diagram 2: Existing Aerial Photograph**



**Diagram 3: Existing Site Layout**



The redevelopment of the school comprises several components to achieve the following objectives.

### Improved Vehicular Access & Parking Arrangements

Firstly, is the creation of a dedicated bus drop off/ pick up zone as well as accessible parking to the east of the school building. This solution will ease congestion on the road during peak times, and significantly improve safety for the children arriving and leaving school. Secondly, a new staff and visitor parking area will be formed providing five car parking spaces just to the north of proposed gates onto the school field. Some minor in-filling will be required along with the erection of new fencing to be tied in with the existing.

### Diagram 4: Proposed Site Layout



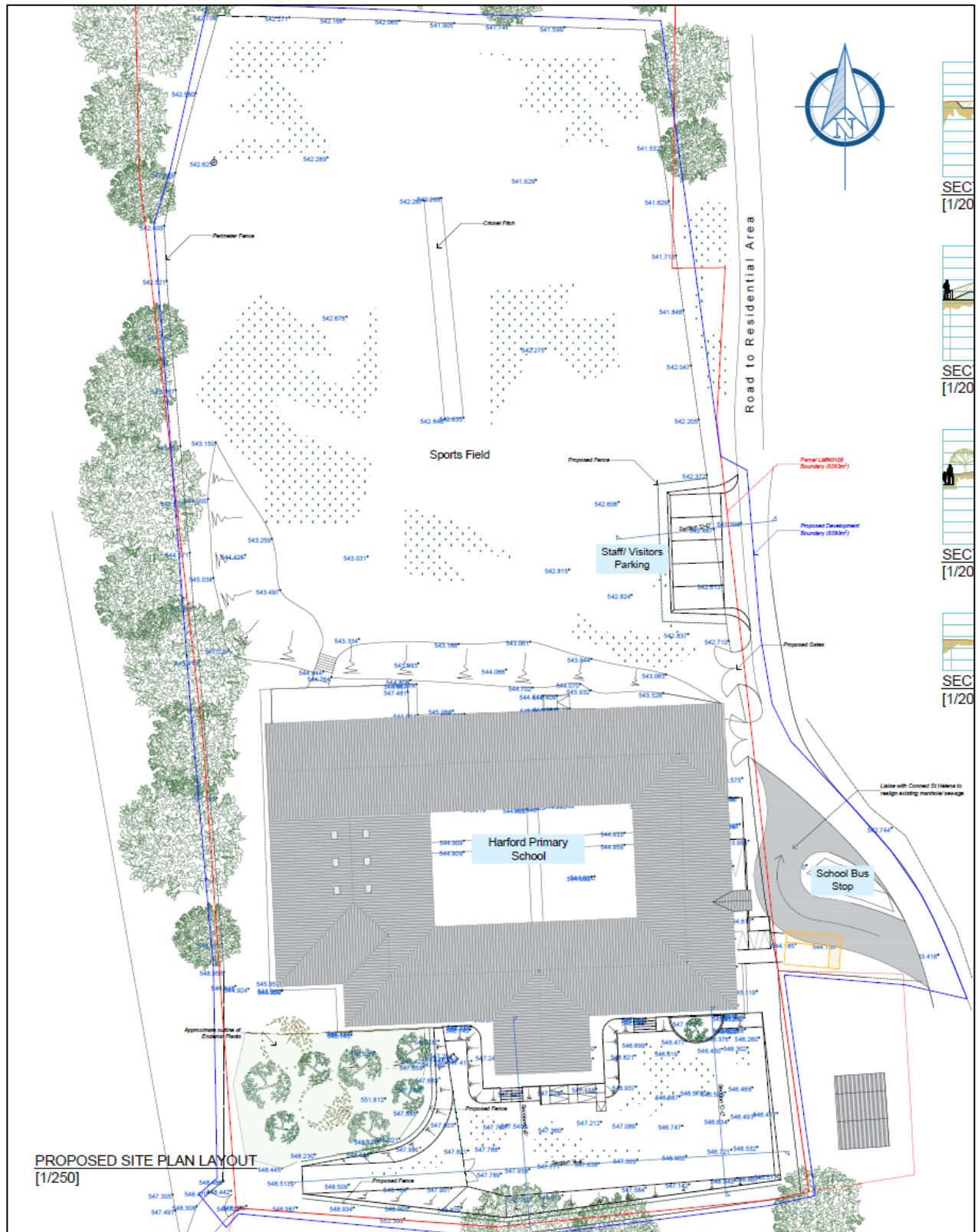
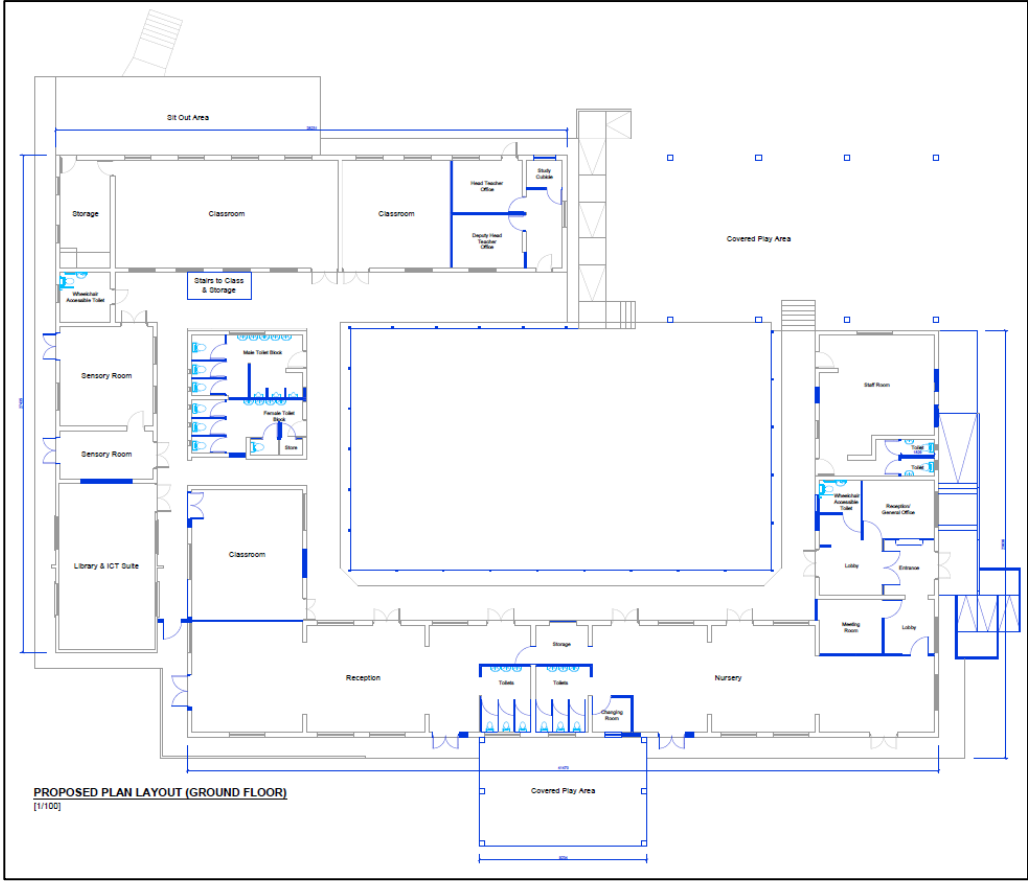


Diagram 7: Existing Layout (Entire building)



Diagram 8: Proposed Ground Floor Layout

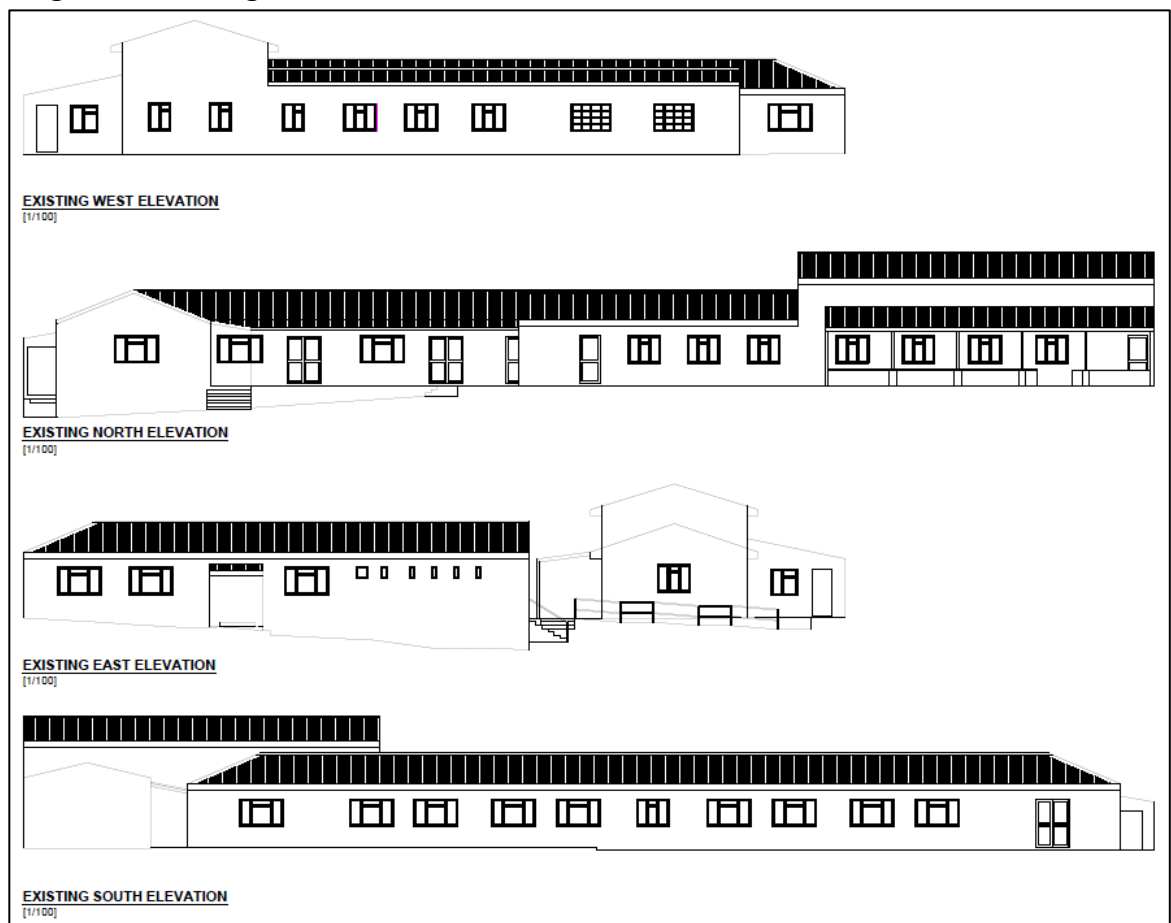


## Functional Layout & Appearance

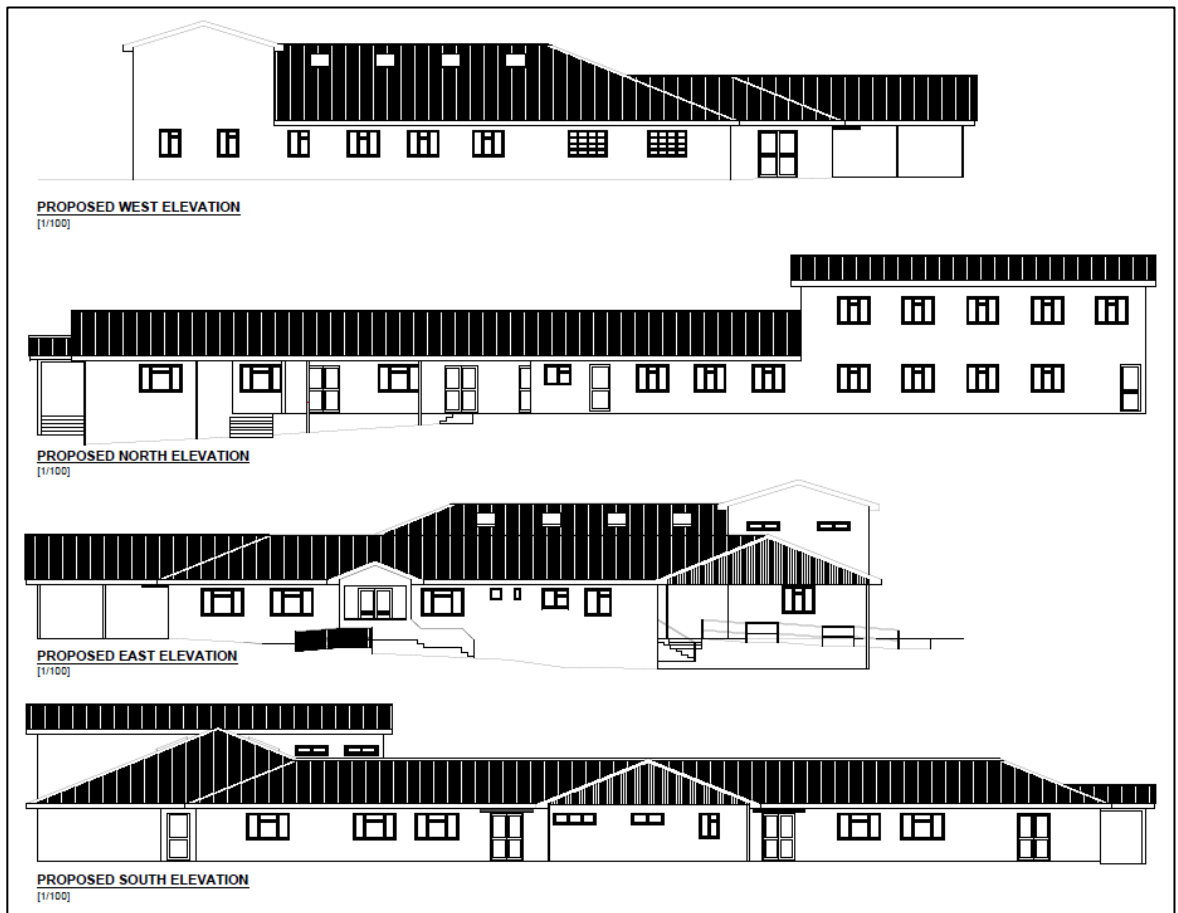
In terms of internal layout changes there will mainly be areas of blocking up and knocking through to create stud partitions, additional glazing and doors to re-purpose these rooms for different uses. With regards to new constructions on-site that will be most notable is the hardstanding area to the north east being a covered play area, as well as a covered play area to the south, and the addition of a first floor on the north-west corner of the building. This first floor will comprise a classroom and storage area. Access to the first floor will be via a staircase. Whilst improvements have been made to the building to make it more accessible for wheelchair users, provisions have been put in place that each year group would have two classrooms, therefore any member of staff, pupil or visitor that is wheelchair bound is allocated to the ground floor class for this particular year group utilising the first floor.

Due to the current roofing being asbestos, it is intended to replace roofing with aluminium sheeting. The most significant change to the appearance of the building is the west wing, where both dual pitched roofs on both the current male toilet block/YR4 & YR6 classrooms, and the home craft, utility and YR5 classroom will be combined to form one large hip valley to tie in with the new first floor extension. The reason behind this is due to the current configuration relies upon a box gutter centrally located between the two building, which requires on-going maintenance, as well as increases the likelihood of leaks. By removing this section and constructing a single hip this will avoid this issue entirely, and the school can then benefit from additional storage space within the roof.

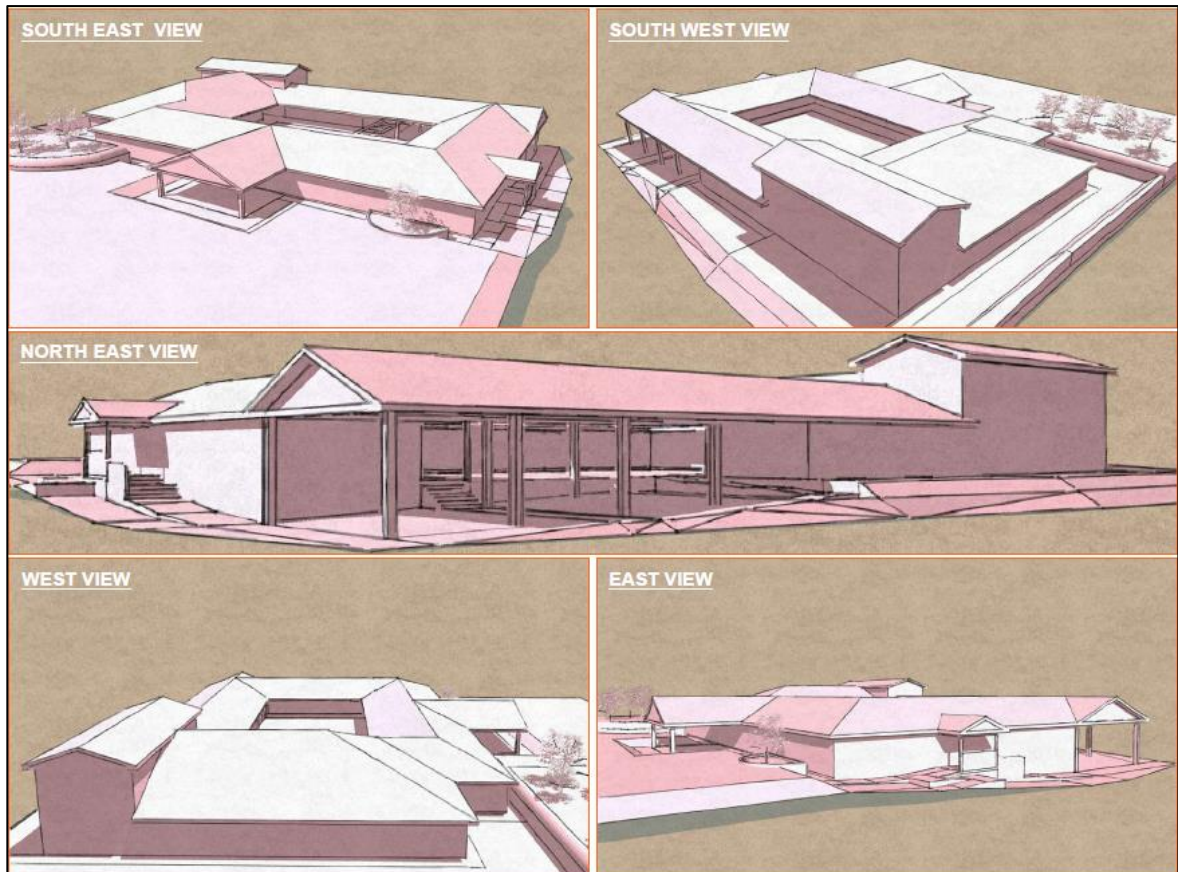
**Diagram 9: Existing Elevations**



**Diagram 10: Proposed Elevations**



**Diagram 11: Proposed 3D Concept**





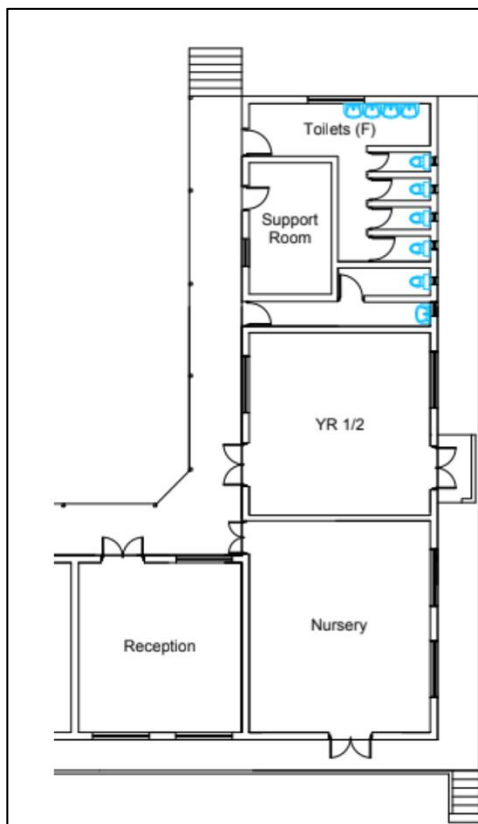
## Inclusivity & Accessibility

The applicant has stated that to ensure the school environment is more accessible for wheelchair users and those with additional needs, a new wheelchair accessible ramp is proposed at the new principle entrance of the building on the east elevation along with a dedicated disabled parking bay. Internally, there will be two fully complaint wheelchair accessible toilets installed to enhance the convenience and dignity for all users.

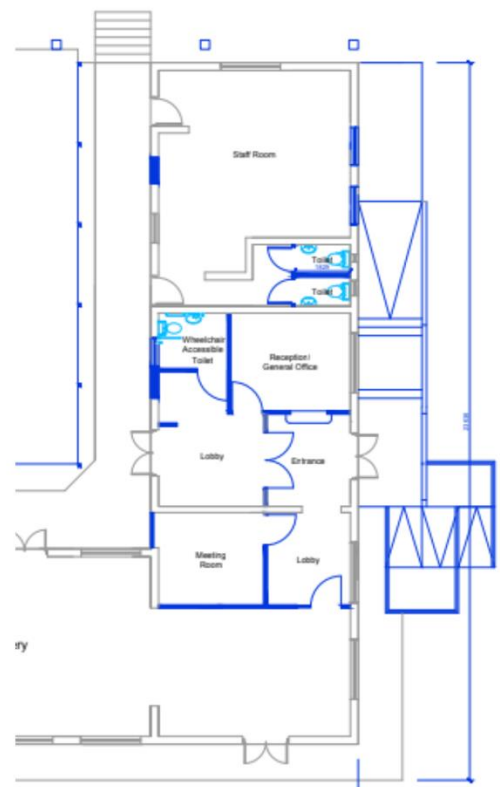
To further support students with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), the scheme includes a purpose-designed SEND Hub and sensory room, both with direct access to an outdoor area to support a range of learning and wellbeing activities. In addition, the existing verandah has been widened to provide clear, unobstructed circulation space, allowing safe and comfortable movement for wheelchair users throughout the school. Also proposed is a SEND hub and Sensory Room which has direct access to an outside play area.

Comparing the current layout on the east wing of the building to what is proposed, the existing year one and two classroom will become the new entrance that will be gained from the proposed access ramp and stairs. This room will be subdivided becoming a lobby, reception/general office and wheelchair accessible toilet. The former Nursery will be subdivided into a meeting room and further lobby to separate this area from the new location of the Nursery classroom on the southern wing. The support room and female toilets will now be converted to a staff room with two toilets.

**Diagram 5: Existing Layout**



**Diagram 6: New Wheelchair-Accessible Entrance**



## **Improved Amenity & Landscaping**

To the south of the school building, the existing storage room will be demolished, and the land utilised for the southern playground will be excavated. This area sits currently 1.4m above the finished floor level, which limits visibility between staff and students. To improve passive supervision and safety, the playground level will be reduced to approximately 0.6m above the finished floor level. This play area will be secured with fencing with emergency/maintenance vehicular access to remain within the southwest corner of the site.

The applicant further proposes landscaping works with the aim to enhance the external environment of the school while maintaining a natural and welcoming setting for young learners. Existing trees will be retained where possible provided they do not interfere with the existing or proposed structures. Opportunities to further enhance the outdoor areas through planting are currently being explored.

## **Transitional Arrangements**

Whilst no assembly hall has been shown on the drawings, the applicant has indicated that the Harford Community Centre will be used during adverse weather conditions and a covered play area when the weather is inclement. It is ideal for school assemblies, once a week. Children will be accompanied at all times while “off site”. As the use of the hall by the school does not require Development Consent, details of this arrangement are not included in this application and are not for consideration.

Phase 2 of the school project will consist of providing a dedicated assembly hall, subject to a separate development application.

## **STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK & REPRESENTATIONS**

There were no objections received from stakeholders during the consultation period. No representations were received from any members of the public. Comments were received from Fire & Rescue Services as well as Environment Management Division.

**Fire & Rescue** – No Objection: ‘The St Helena Fire & Rescue Service will need to have sight of a scale plan, for the installation of passive & active firefighting media, for this building, including an operational fire hydrant/s that complies with the minimum requirements in accordance with UK fire hydrant regulations.’

**Chief Environment Officer** – No Objection: ‘This application has been discussed on site with the PMO and staff from ENRP’s Terrestrial Conservation Section, Environmental Risk Management Section and Environmental Protection Section. Of note were the number of mature endemic plants on the site which are protected species under the Environmental Protection Ordinance, 2016. A compromise was agreed whereby one small gumwood could be root balled, removed and transplanted in another area on site, the large mature gumwood and scrubwood could be subject to minimal pruning to prevent damage during roof removal and replacement and the other endemic plants would remain as is. An on-going dialogue with the PMO and ENRP is requested

to ensure the impact on the endemic protected plants is minimised throughout the construction phase and any necessary works to be done to them are agreed in advance.

It was also noted that the existing asbestos roof would need to be removed and replaced with new corrugated aluminium roofing. The removal of the roof and disposal of asbestos should be done in accordance with established best practice to minimise exposure to harmful fibres. It was also identified that some of the existing floor tiles were also asbestos and these should also be removed and disposed of in accordance with established best practice to minimise exposure to harmful fibres.'

## **LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORK**

The relevant policies of the Land Development Control Plan (LDCP 2012 - 2022) that are applicable in the assessment of the proposed development are set out below:

- Intermediate Zone Policies: IZ1 a, b, f, g, h
- Social Infrastructure Policies: SI1, SI.5 & SI.12
- Energy Policies: E.4 & E.8
- Water Policy W2
- Sewage, storm and Drainage Policies SD1, SD6 & SD7
- Roads & Transport Policies: RT1 & RT.7

## **OFFICER'S ASSESSMENT**

The applicant has stated in their submission that the proposed upgrade and reconfiguration of Harford Primary Schools forms part of a strategic initiative to modernise and improve the education infrastructure on St Helena. This project specifically focuses on transforming Harford Primary into a dedicated Early Years and Key Stage 1 (KS1) learning environment, aligned with COBIS (Council of British International Schools) and UK educational standards.

In assessing the proposed development, Policy SI.5 indicates that a site would be kept available for a central primary school for the island. Given the recent decision by Education in light of a falling school population, to reduce the number of primary schools and concentrate the remaining (and expected) school population in 2 of the existing 3 primary schools. Harford (in Longwood) and St Pauls Primary Schools are to be retained/extended and an application has also been submitted for St Pauls (to come to a future LDCA meeting). It is now unlikely that space at St Helena Secondary School would need to be retained for a new primary school in future. The proposal results in a material change in the need for additional primary schools on Island and the proposal to extend existing school is therefore acceptable in principle taking into account these material circumstances.

LDCP policies SI1 & SI.12 requires all development reasonably needed for the social development of the island to be designed to be sustainable in all services, to which this development will comply as provisions are already in place. The improvement of making

the school more inclusive and accessible with the construction of ramps and disabled friendly toilets is in compliance with policy SI.12.

In terms of the buildings use as a school, this has been established for a number of years and will intensify slightly. Provisions in the form of a suitable and safer drop-off and pick up point for buses has been proposed, where there is sufficient turning radius, that will not negatively impact on the existing residential road and therefore is compliant with policy RT1. Parking within the current school is limited and therefore the addition of demarcated spaces is welcomed.

The layout of the building will provide a more secured facility and therefore conform with COBIS standards.

The appearance of the proposed extensions both first floor and on the ground floor is not considered to adversely impact the functionality or appearance of the building. Whilst the proposed extension on the western elevation will be quite prominent, justification for this in the form of improved protection of the building from water ingress can be supported. There is no adverse impact on adjoining residential or visual amenities. Overall the design will be coherent within itself and is therefore in compliance with policy IZ1.

In the absence of an assembly hall for a temporary period Harford Community Centre on the other side of the public road will be used for school assemblies once a week and for covered play. As the two uses – schools and public halls - are in the same Use Class (Use Class D1) as defined in the LPDC (General) Regulations, 2013, there is no material change of use and this does not therefore require Development Consent for the temporary use.

To ensure appropriate planting is carried out a landscaping condition will be added if the Authority is minded to approve the application, along with details on the fencing to ensure there is no adverse impact on existing development.

Overall, the development will sensitively enhance the existing site while delivering a safe, inclusive, and engaging environment for all proposed users. The scheme will support the educational needs of the school community both now and into the future. Accessibility, wellbeing, and sustainability have been key drivers throughout the design process, ensuring the final outcome reflects the values and aspirations of the school and wider community.

The proposal will accord with Intermediate Zone, Social Infrastructure and other relevant policies of the LDCAP and can therefore be supported.