

## Weedington Road Play Centre

Supplementary Planning Report Incorporating:  
Existing Photographs  
Statement of Need  
Design & Access Statement

August 2013

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## Introduction

Earle Architects has been asked by College Francais Bilingue de Londres (CFBL) to submit a planning application for a sports facility at the Weedington Road Play Centre in Camden. The project is a joint venture with the Queen’s Crescent Community Association (QCCA) and it aims to address an acute need for a sports facility to serve the local community and pupils of CFBL. The identified need is borne of;

- insufficient playground space at CFBL for the school to undertake a full programme of physical education on site, and;
- low levels of physical activity locally - “at least 40% of Camden’s population are estimated not to engage in any physical activity<sup>1</sup>”

CFBL will work in partnership with QCCA to enhance the existing facilities at the Weedington Road Play Centre, which currently offers one outdoor MUGA and ancillary outdoor play areas featuring climbing frames, swings and the like.

A temporary planning consent is sought for an inflatable system within the existing outdoor space associated with the Weedington Road Centre. Given the limited time scale that the facility will be in service, an inflatable system offers clear benefits over more traditional building methods;

- it can be installed and be made operational much more quickly,
- it offers cost savings on enabling works, labour and material costs, and;
- it can be dismantled, removed from site and re-used in a different location.

The installation of the inflatable dome will form one part of planned works at the Weedington Road Centre - proposals for an additional entrance were granted in May 2013 (ref. 2013/1682/P). This dedicated community centre entrance (to separate community centre users from office staff) will improve circulation flows in and out of the building.

The impact on daylight levels within neighbouring habitable rooms is discussed in the Design & Access Statement within this report under the Scale section. No negative impact is anticipated.

The applicant (currently on summer holidays) should be pleased to prepare a construction management plan and facility management plan detailing measures to mitigate disturbance to local residents during the construction and operation phases, should this application be successful.

Detailed manufacturers information has been included as part of this planning application that includes;

- acoustic data relating to the fan set that inflates and heats the dome,
- power consumption data,
- lighting details,
- anti-vandal properties of the materials, and;
- the playing surface inside the air dome.

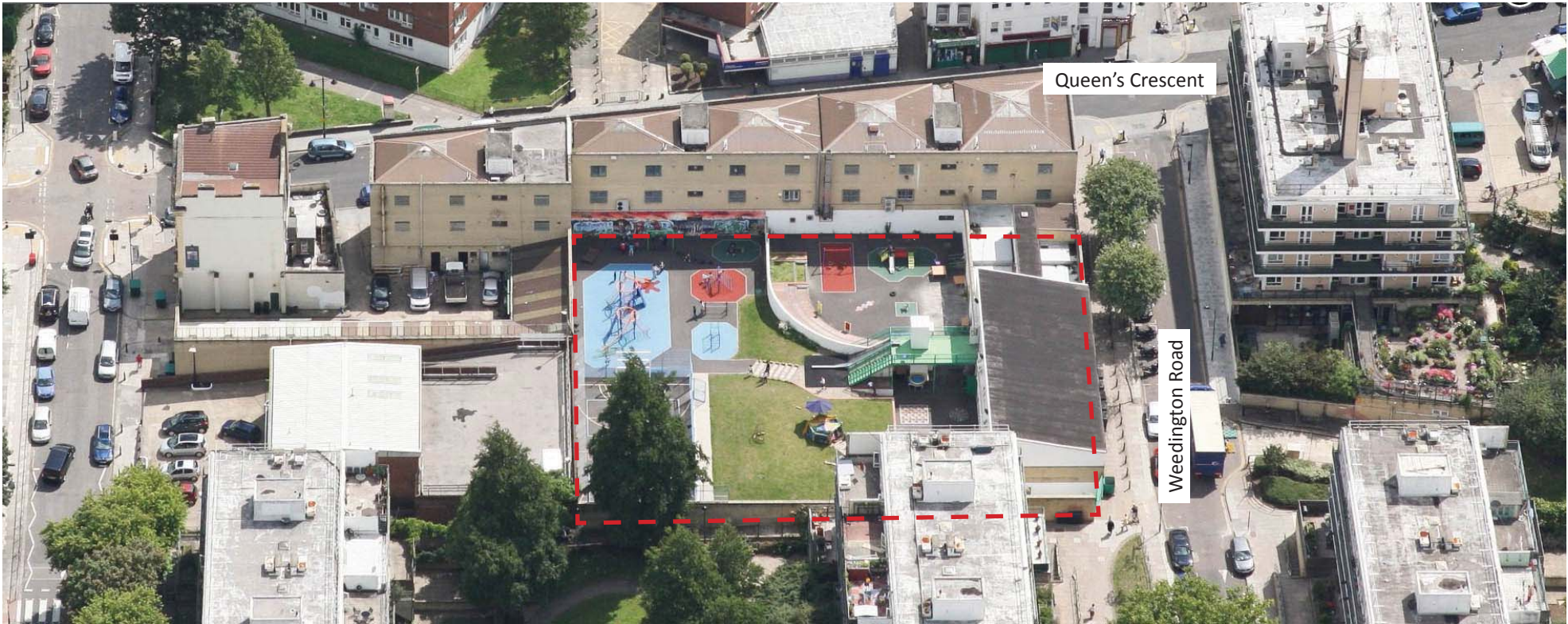
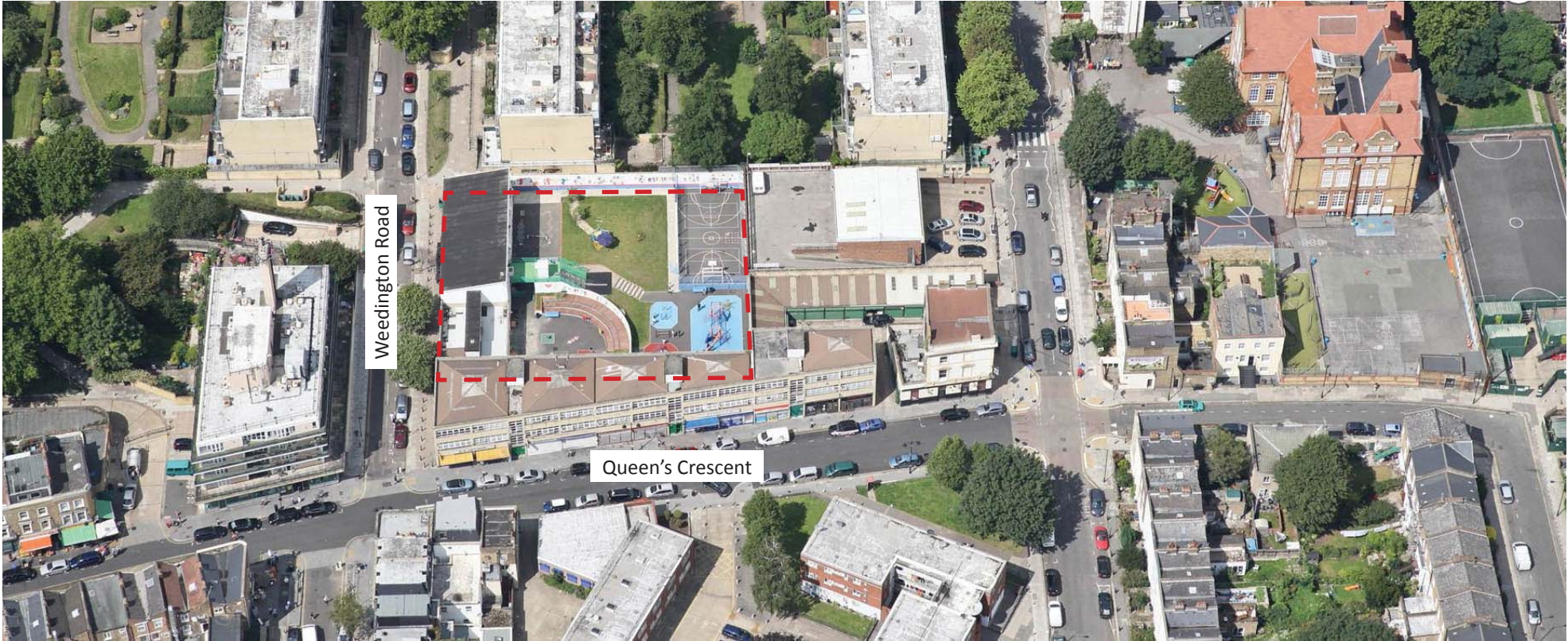
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1 Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Summary 2012 to 2013

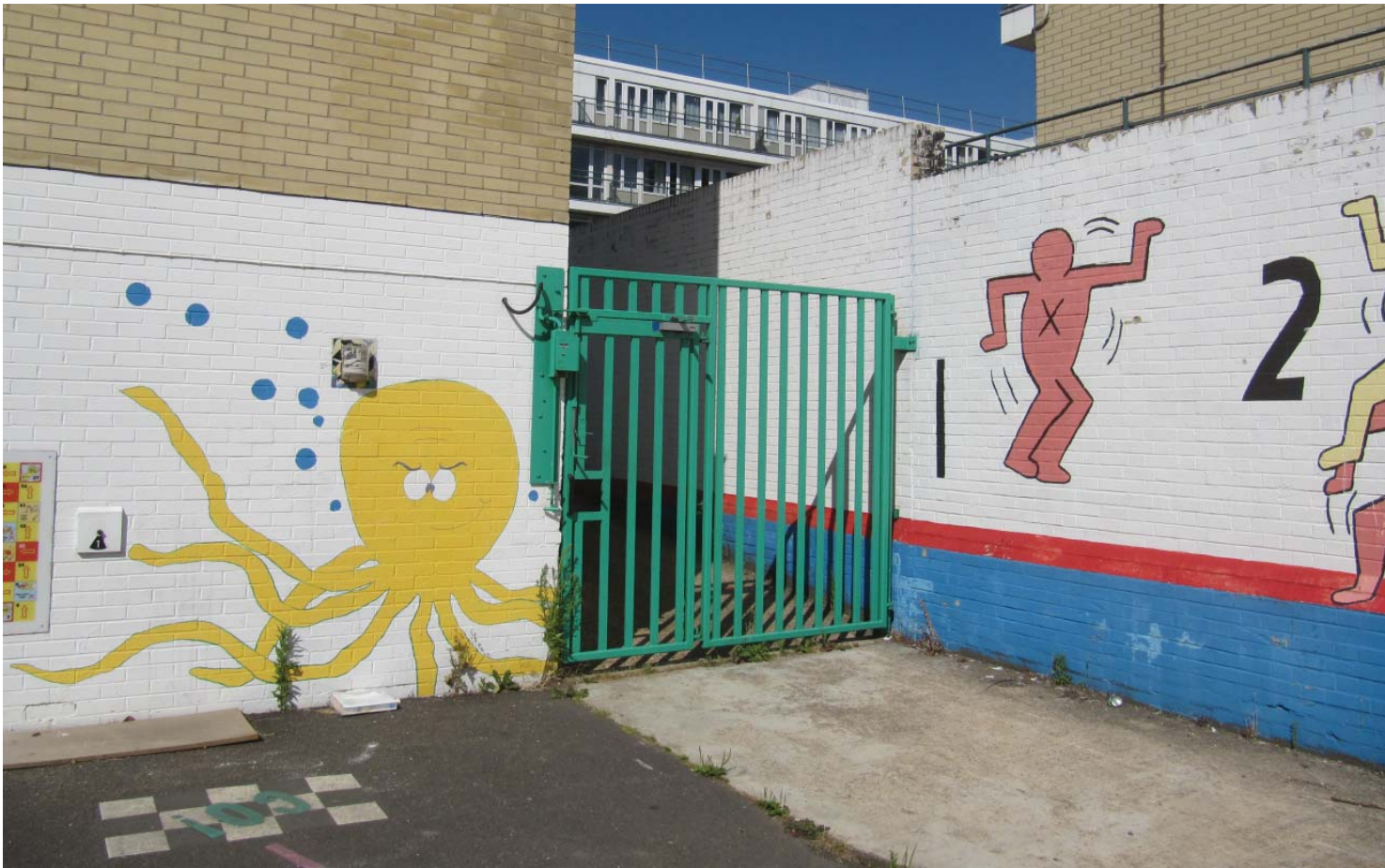


Existing Photographs

Photographs of the existing site are included on the following pages.















Statements of Need

Justification Statement

It is acknowledged that covering an existing outdoor space would normally be resisted by the council, however the benefit to the local community is significant and it should be noted that;

- the space will continue to be used for physical activities as part of an existing community centre so there is no loss of space for sports,
- the inflatable dome will benefit from heating, lighting and shelter from the elements, which will increase the hours of use and therefore the number of people it can serve compared with the existing open space,
- the inflatable structure will occupy approx. 64% of the external space,
- the structure will be temporary can be easily be removed from the site at the end of its service period - restoring the open space, and;
- There are limited options elsewhere to undertake sporting activities - listed below are the 6 sports centres within the London Borough of Camden together with observations to explain why each is unsuitable for CFBL;

Swiss Cottage Leisure Centre	Only 4 courts available
Kentish Town Sports Centre	No sports pitches or racquet sports courts.
Oasis Sports Centre	No sports pitches or racquet sports courts (except squash).
Talacre Community Sports Centre	Local but CFBL is unable to secure time slots due to level of demand and Talacre’s prioritisation of state schools.
The Armoury	No sports pitches or racquet sports courts.
Central YMCA	Central London location - too far away.

The size of the proposed inflatable structure is based on guidance by Sports England; “for school projects a minimum size of 34.5x20.0x7.5m is recommended. The 34.5x20x7.5m hall provides additional space for teaching school PE and coaching (particularly when the hall is sub-divided into two sections).”<sup>1</sup>

A joint statement by QCCA and CFBL is included on the following page.

1 Sports Halls Design and Layouts. February Revision 005 by Sports England



**Joint Statement by Queen’s Crescent Community Association (QCCA) and the Collège Français Bilingue de Londres (CFBL)**

*Management*

QCCA has been offered a lease to a Camden Council-owned site on Weedington Road. Under the terms of the lease, QCCA will create a Wellness centre at the site. This will include a Youth Club located within an existing building on the site. QCCA further intends to enter into a joint venture agreement with a local French school, CFBL, to erect a temporary covered structure on the land behind the existing building, enabling the provision of various other activities such as gymnastics, basketball, football, volleyball, badminton, etc.

This innovative partnership will enable maximum utilisation of the facility, with QCCA benefiting from usage for its community activities in the evenings, weekends and school holidays, while CFBL enjoys priority access on school days. In exchange for this access, CFBL will contribute a large share of the funding of the facility.

A joint management team will be set up between QCCA and CFBL to run the facility, handling bookings, administration, security, and access to the site. This team will also minimise any disturbance to the site’s neighbours, by managing access to and from the site before and after sports sessions.

*Vision*

Our joint vision is to provide a much needed facility to provide free and affordable physical activities, leisure provision and services for the benefit of the local community, including CFBL and other local schools. QCCA’s sports development strategy for Gospel Oak and Haverstock is “to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to take part in sport and physical activity in their local community.<sup>1</sup>” This strategy contributes to Camden’s Health and Well Being Strategies 2012, which aims to reduce health inequalities: “Health inequalities are entrenched in deprived communities, where more people have a shorter life and live with a long term health condition which can affect their quality of life.<sup>2</sup>”

The Gospel Oak population has one of the highest levels of obesity and general ill-health within the borough of Camden. It is well established that there is a strong correlation between physical exercise and improved health, improved sense of community, reduced crime and other negative unsocial behaviour. QCCA is also committed to increasing and developing the number of volunteers and sports and physical activity practitioners within its community.

The proposed wellness centre will provide significant benefit to all schools in the vicinity as well as the local community. Experience shows that for at least 6 months of the year (predominantly during school term time), weather conditions do not allow for predictable use of outdoor facilities for physical education. The proposed sports dome will enable consistent use of the venue, and consequent increase of

<sup>1</sup> QCCA Sports Development Strategy 2012-2013

<sup>2</sup> Health in Camden. Camden’s shadow health and wellbeing board: joint health and wellbeing strategy 2012 to 2013

physical exercise and sports activities and will contribute to the improvement of local schools (notably CFBL) pupils’ health.

*Users - Community*

Potential users live in the Gospel Oak and Haverstock wards, two of the most deprived wards in Camden and among the 7% most deprived in England. The areas are also dominated by high-density council housing and earlier this year it was estimated that 52% of children in the area are living in poverty. “Lower income groups in Camden were less active than those on higher income 14% vs 25%. Cost was a barrier to being physically active; and people were keen to use their local gyms.<sup>3</sup>” A high proportion of young people in the local area is ‘NEET’ (not in education, employment or training) and at risk of becoming involved in gangs and crime. The users will also include QCCA’s existing membership of over 300 young people who are engaged in youth work and physical activities.

*Users – CFBL*

CFBL (College Français Bilingue de Londres) is a Bilingual (French - English) independent primary and secondary School inspected by Ofsted and a registered charity which is regulated by Charities Commission. The school was opened in September 2011 in partnership with the French Government Ministry of Education. The school is for French-speaking boys and girls aged 5-15 and follows the French national curriculum. It enables pupils from all backgrounds, French or otherwise, to access the French education system within a stimulating French-English bilingual framework. In September 2013, 700 pupils are expected to be registered at CFBL, a large proportion of whom are Camden residents.

The school suffers from extremely limited outdoor space. Its playground is inadequate to provide the capacity required for playground breaks, which have to be staggered along the day to accommodate all classes, so it is impossible for the school to use the playground to provide the required physical education. In addition, sports facilities near the school are extremely limited, and for the few that do exist (eg Talacre, see below), priority is granted to state schools and CFBL has not been able to secure slots to meet its needs. Until March 2013, CFBL made some use of Maitland Park Sports Centre (an all-weather facility 10 mins bus ride from CFBL), although this was far from meeting the school's need (20 pupils maximum at any one time). But Maitland Park has now been closed, and its facilities are no longer available to the local schools and the community.

*Alternative, existing facilities*

The nearest sports centre to CFBL is Talacre. It is expensive for local community groups to hire, and in any case is at full capacity and cannot therefore be available for the school or much of the community.

<sup>3</sup> Camden Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2012 to 2013



# Sports Halls

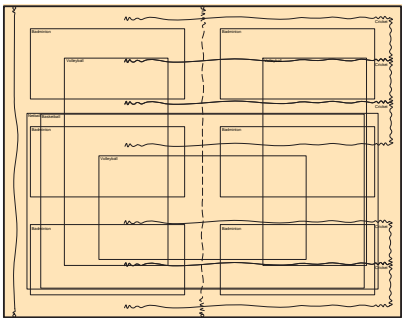
## Design Guidance Note

### Six court hall

The 34.5 x 27.0 x 7.5 m 6-court hall creates two team sports zones or a competition play area aligned with spectator seating. This 3 + 3 badminton court arrangement is recommended in preference to the 4 + 2 layout (33 x 27 m hall) originally used for this hall size. The 34.5 m length provides the required safety margin behind the badminton courts.

### Notes

- Align structure between badminton courts to provide three full-span bays or introduce a primary beam across the centre of the hall.
- Division netting is hung between the three rows of courts. It can also be considered between two end courts but this zone is usually designated for retractable seating.
- A height of 9.0 m and extra length is required for Premier standard badminton.
- Two standard basketball courts or two reduced five-a-side football courts can be laid across the hall.



Court layouts for a nominal 34.5 x 27.0 x 7.5 m six-court hall (3 + 3 court arrangement)

### Larger hall configurations

Larger sports halls can be conveniently organised as multiples of the layout for 4, 5 and 6 court halls that are described on the previous pages (see pages 6, 38 and 40).

This gives an efficient method of organising the court markings and the subdivisions of the space with dividing nets / screens to deliver a multi-sport programme.

These larger halls can also provide space for a range of show courts to be overlaid and spectator accommodation as may be required for higher levels of play and sporting events. In effect, such halls can operate as a small indoor arena<sup>19</sup>. However, careful consideration needs to be given to the many implications. For example:

- The strategic case for such a facility and the national facilities strategies for the particular sports that are being considered.
- The business, operational and design implications such as the requirements of NGBs, sponsors and TV companies.
- Technical issues regarding the health and safety, fire escape and general welfare of the spectators and associated accommodation.
- Additional safety zone and height requirements for the higher levels of play for the sports concerned.

See Sport England publication 'Developing the Right Sports Hall'.



<sup>19</sup> See Arenas: A Planning, Design And Management Guide - Sports Council 1998.

## Design & Access Statement

### Use

The proposed air dome will be used for physical education and recreation for both school children and members of the local community of any age, ie. the outdoor area of Weedington Road Play Centre will continue to be used in its current capacity.

### Amount

The size of the air dome is based on a standard 34.5x27m 6-court sports hall as described in Sports England's 'Sports Halls Design and Layouts' design guidance note - an excerpt of which is shown opposite. This configuration provides a high level of flexibility as it can be divided into 2 zones with the use of a central dividing curtain.

### Layout

The new air dome will include 2 entrances to enable independent access to either side of a central dividing curtain. Inside, a range of sports courts will be marked out on the playing surface.

### Scale

The height of the air dome (9m) is driven by Sports England's recommended sports hall height and by the curvature of the roof. The air dome will not easily be seen from the surrounding public streets due to the heights of neighbouring buildings and changes in ground levels - the dome will be lower than the adjacent workshop buildings along Queen's Crescent and it will sit lower than the street level along Weedington Road, thereby being screened by the play centre building.

There are no habitable rooms with windows directly opposite the dome - the nearest habitable rooms are located at first floor level flanking the proposed site (see image on the following page). The possible impact of daylight on the adjacent residential building has been assessed in accordance with the guidance in 'Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight: A Guide to Good Practice' by BRE and the results are illustrated on drawing 2-GA 301. No impact on daylight levels is anticipated.

### Appearance

The air dome is a white coloured inflatable with a green band up to 3m from ground level - a photograph is shown on the following page of a similar dome.

### Landscape

The external space around the perimeter of the air dome will be a hard tarmacadam surface laid to fall to a linear drain to avoid standing water.

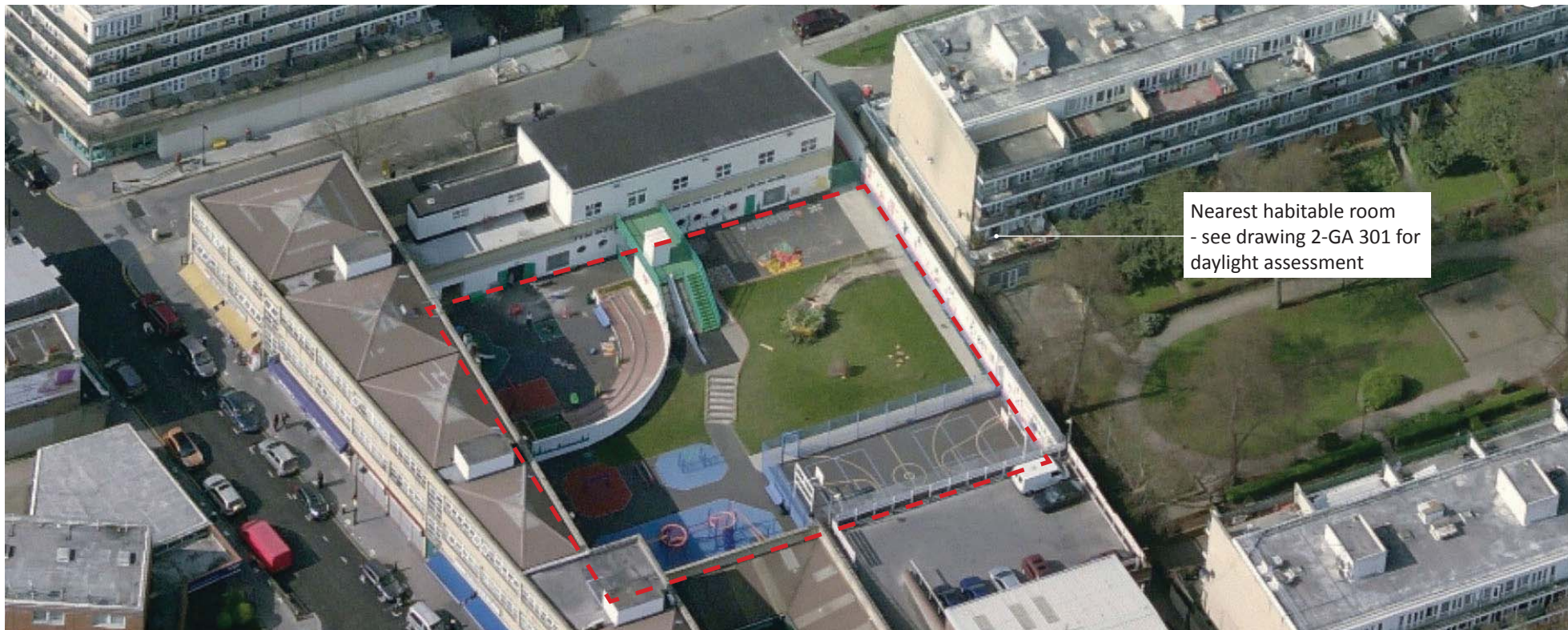
### Access

Weedington Road Play Centre enjoys ramped access from the street to its outdoor space, permitting wheelchair access. The air dome has a level threshold through its doors and features an 'air lock' door arrangement alongside the revolving doors to enable wheelchair users to easily use the dome. The green band around the bottom 3m of the dome provides a contrasting backdrop.





Left: an example of a completed air dome.  
Below left: an aerial view of the nearest habitable room.



Nearest habitable room  
- see drawing 2-GA 301 for  
daylight assessment