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**DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT:** proposed timber play structure for Montpelier Children's Nursery (MCN) at 115 Brecknock Road, London N19 5AH

### **1. The context of this application**

This application for full planning permission applies to the proposed timber structure incorporated within the landscaping scheme for a newly built nursery building – the subject of Full Planning Application ref: **2010/3632/P**, submitted to Camden Planning by AY Architects in July 2010. The nursery building, which received Full Planning Permission on 12 November 2010 has been completed, and the nursery staff and children have settled in.

The Extra Room's design for the nursery garden takes into account the surveys and arboricultural reports undertaken prior to AY Architects' design of the building – see 2010/3632/P Supporting Documents-2745645. The proposed structure does not require the removal of any trees, and is designed not to interfere with their growth, root plates, or drainage.

The general landscaping – principally comprising planted woodland banks, fruit and herb beds, paving, steps, raised vegetable beds, bird boxes, surface drainage into planting beds, sandpit and water play – has been approved under Planning Condition 3 (ref 2012/5684/P)

For the position of the structure within the site, see **The Extra Room's** Landscaping Plan - dwg no MCN\_L001 dated 11 October 2012 – included with this application.

For the location of the site, see the OS map, doc OSsitelocation\_Montpelier Children's Nursery – which remains unaltered from the original 2010/3632/P submission, but is also included with this application.



View from Montpelier Gardens of the new building and the play area; the proposed timber structure will nestle behind the trees in the middle of this picture, replacing the existing blue climbing equipment

## **2. Purpose, character and scale of the play structure**

The play structure – dwg MCN\_L002 - incorporates activities of balancing, climbing, sliding and storytelling – **for the purpose of children’s play, healthy development and imaginative learning within a natural open air setting. Rather than have storytelling around one tree (which isn’t ideal for eye contact and communication)**, and at the suggestion of parents and nursery staff, we initiated the idea of incorporating a storytelling space within the timber structure set sympathetically within the trees in the southern area of the site.

The maximum height (at the front of the ridge roof) of the play structure will be 3.5m. The core of the structure is approx 3.5m x 3m, with a 1.2m high platform extending either side into a modest boardwalk that connects with the slide to the east, and incorporates the wobbly walk, fireman’s pole and ladder to the west.

As the structure is tucked behind the trees and to the north of the boundary with the park, it will not block light from the park. Nor will it encroach on the privacy of neighbouring private gardens of Brecknock Road, which are some distance away.

## **3. Landscape Materials and Construction**

### Natural materials

The emphasis within the whole nursery scheme is on the quality of materials, which are safe for the children and environment. With its wonderful woodland setting, natural timber, stone and pebbles are to be used. The landscaping of the nursery garden is designed to maximise reuse of the materials on site (York stone crazy paving and old concrete slabs) and minimise the carbon footprint of the garden build.

### Cedar for the play structure

To allow light and air through the site, horizontal battens (38mm wide with **19mm gaps**) of red cedar are proposed for the screening walls of the children's storyhouse. This allows views between the nursery garden and the park, linking the community inside and out – as does the nursery building.

Natural untreated Western red cedar balustrading, decking and battens for screen-walling, well sanded and splinter-free (both timbers have equivalent environmental credentials; the choice of which to use will be based on cost).

Black label cedar shingles for the roof cover, which will be visible from the public areas of Montpelier Gardens – and should look natural and charming beneath the **tree canopy. This roof, and the understorey 'den', will enable** the structure to be used for general play and storytelling in almost all weathers!

The cedar theme continues at ground level. Already delivered to site, and much enjoyed by the children, are cedar rings (donated by a local tree surgeon) being used as stepping logs, which will be rearranged in accordance with the Landscape Plan.

### **NOTE: all timber will come from sustainably managed sources**

### Slide, wobbly walk and other elements within the play structure:

- Slide of stainless steel – aligned with the axis **of the new building's** columns, roof and canopy
- Huck rubber and steel fixings for rope
- Natural hemp rope with steel core from Huck will be used for the Wobbly Walk feature

### Minimal interference with tree plates

Small concrete pads, maximum 300x300x300mm, set below the PlayBark surface, will secure the steel brackets that support the playstructure posts and the fixings for the bottom end of the slide. These will not interfere with the drainage on site or irrigation of tree roots.

### Rainwater harvesting

The intention is that all surface water will be retained on site, for the benefit of the woodland setting and new plantings. Rainwater from the single pent roof of the play structure will be collected in a waterbutt for irrigation of the garden.

All the paving on the garden side of the nursery building will have falls towards the planting beds. By necessity, the crazy paved terrace will be laid on sand and **cement with mortar joints. The reclaimed concrete pavers for the children's** gardening zone will be butt-jointed and laid on sand (as per the new concrete paving of the entrance path – **of which it's a continuation**).

### Levels

The levels on site will remain as existing, with the slight exception of easing the going of the replacement steps from picnic area to tricycle track, through the planted bank.

### Safe surfaces for children

In keeping with the woodland setting, PlayBark 10/50 laid to a depth of 200mm will be applied underneath and around the play structures, conforming with health and safety standards for the critical fall heights and fallout spaces.

**The 'den' space under the storyhouse** element, which does not fit within the critical fall zone of the climbing and slide structures, **will have a green 'carpet' of** Lazylawn (or equivalent) artificial grass, laid on sharp sand; the same quality artificial grass will replace the existing circle of Astroturf, in the central picnic table area of the garden.

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