

PART 3

THE SITE

3.1 Suitability The site should preferably be in an open but not unduly exposed situation and have convenient access to a suitable road and all mains services. Site levels, water tables and soil substrate should be suitable for development, and be such that any changes of level and requirements for drainage can be achieved in a cost-effective manner.

3.2 Size The size should be sufficient to adequately accommodate:

- a. the buildings, including any provision for youth and community use;
- b. possible future extension;
- c. vehicular circulation, parking; and
- d. play spaces, playing pitches and courts.

Factors such as shape, planning restriction, contours and ground conditions should be considered with regard to the usability of the site. Because playing pitches occupy so large a proportion of the total, the required area will understandably increase considerably where an economic layout in terms of land use cannot be achieved. Because this factor is so variable it is impossible to recommend site area requirements with any accuracy.

Restriction on the availability of land may necessitate the location of playing pitches on a separate site.

3.3 Site Development The development should recognise and utilise where practicable, any existing physical features of potential educational or aesthetic value. These include trees, streams, topography and good views. Where possible these should be protected and enhanced so as to ensure that the design harmonises with, rather than imposes itself upon, the landscape. Recognition should also be given to the siting and orientation of the building(s), the relationship to open areas, traffic noise, vehicular and pedestrian access and the location of underground services.

3.4 Provision for Future Extension The possibility of future extension should be borne in mind in the initial siting including the proximity to boundaries. Schemes of extension to existing buildings may be subject to siting constraints, but should where possible acknowledge the desired educational relationship to existing accommodation. See also 3.19 Temporary Accommodation.

3.5 Planting Framework

A planting framework should be provided for the school grounds which would integrate the various outdoor spaces, define and control access, and provide an atmosphere that is conducive to both work and play. Because the main concept is that a landscape scheme will be adopted and adapted by the school, the facilities provided within the building contract will be largely limited to establishing a strong layout and planting framework. A landscape scheme showing possible future development of specific areas of the site should also be prepared for the school to develop privately to their own requirements, within the planting framework, at a later date.

A boundary shelter belt of native tree whips and bare root shrubs can provide shelter, privacy, quiet play spaces and a wildlife habitat. Early establishment of the framework is advisable in order to maximise its success.

There may be the opportunity for more formal colourful shrub planting with seasonal interest to the front of the school to offset the building and enhance the sense of arrival.

The planting layout should take into consideration factors such as the minimum planting distances of trees from underground services, buildings, and each other.

Planted areas should reflect the need for ease of maintenance, and should avoid desire lines, unsuitably shaped junctions of grass to hard surfacing, shrubs or fences. All planting should be adequately protected.

Choice of plants and shrubs should reflect physical features such as exposure, soil type and aspect. Growth habit or form should be suited to a particular location and have all year round interest.

Prickly or poisonous plants or trees should NOT be used.

3.6 Potential Educational Uses of School Grounds

The potential educational value of school grounds should be appreciated. Opportunities exist for enhancing the curriculum particularly in the areas of science, geography, art and physical education.

Some examples of desirable facilities which relate to curricular study are:

- a. variety of seasonal colour, texture and shape in leaf forms, seeds, etc;
- b. variety of nature habitats;
- c. provision of a weather station;
- d. areas for future planting, possibly in conjunction with other schools;

- e. opportunities for a general study of the environment;
- f. recreational activities with possibly a cross-country track; and
- g. a glasshouse and garden adjacent to the biology accommodation. The garden should be in a sheltered position, well drained, have a sunny aspects, good topsoil and be easily accessible by maintenance machinery.

3.7 Hard Play Space(s)

Every school should have a play space(s) of suitable dimensions for general recreation. The size should be based on an area of 150 m² for every complete 30 pupils of the enrolment. For example, a school with 1,000 pupils would have an entitlement to a space for 990 pupils, namely 4,950 m². The total area may be provided by a number of spaces of varying size. Appendix 1 gives the recommended area for each enrolment band.

Hard play spaces should be readily accessible from the school buildings and have a smooth, durable, non-slip surface with adequate drainage falls and gullies. Where appropriate, these spaces may be provided with markings for Physical Education or other activities.

3.8 Playing Pitches and Courts

See Appendix 2 for the recommended schedule and sizes of playing pitches and courts. In considering sizes for development as playing pitches, the following factors should be considered:

- a. size, shape, contours, subsoil;
- b. the likely orientation of pitches where NNW-SSE is generally the most desirable;
- c. the balance of grass to non-turf surfaces in relation to anticipated usage;
- d. the proximity to buildings; and
- e. access for maintenance machinery.

Layouts for athletics should ensure that javelin throwing is not into direct sunlight, and that the shot putt is not located on any pitch.

Where the proposed site has a large difference in levels, consideration should be given to developing the layout by a cut/fill method, terraced if necessary. Prior to design, trial pits to indicate the type of subsoil material should be taken.

The following should be considered in selecting the types of playing surfaces:

- f. grass pitches have a wide application, but have limited usage particularly in wet weather;

g. sand mattress (grass) pitches have a similar application with virtually unlimited usage, but require a higher maintenance commitment;

h. synthetic surfaces are expensive in large areas and unsuitable for games involving frequent falling. However, consideration should be given to this surface for a cricket pitch in place of a grass square, having high usage, low capital and maintenance costs, and requiring less space;

j. hard porous (waterbound) pitches have high usage, but have high maintenance costs and are unsuitable for games involving frequent falling; and

k. hard porous (bitumen or emulsion bonded) surfaces suitable for tennis courts.

Pitches should be laid to falls across the line of play and to an even gradient; for grass pitches approximately 1 in 100, but not greater than 1 in 80. To reduce the effects of surface water damage on hard porous (waterbound) pitches, these should be laid to a maximum fall of 1 in 100. Tennis courts, normally laid side by side, should be level, (if previously graded should not be steeper than 1:80 both horizontally and longitudinally).

Appropriate stone dust and fine aggregate should be used for hard porous pitches, and appropriate sand for sand mattress pitches. Materials for tennis courts should be such that the surface is porous. Professional advice should be sought in all cases.

Access to a water supply is desirable for the maintenance of hard porous pitches and cricket squares.

See also 3.18 Site Security.

For further more detailed information refer to the Department for Education Building Bulletin No 28.

3.9 Site Access Generally

Careful consideration should be given to the location of exits and entrances to the site. These together with circulation within the site (driveways, parking areas and delivery areas for service vehicles) should be designed so as to avoid risks to pupils, staff and the general public.

3.10 Entrance Location

Where a choice of location is available, the entrance should preferably be from a quiet road. All entrances should:

- a. be carefully sited with regard to traffic hazards;
- b. be clearly visible to vehicular traffic;

- c. be provided with barriers or other means of controlling pupils as considered necessary; and
- d. comply with any other conditions specified by the Planning Authority.

3.11 Planning Authority Requirements

The Planning Authority may stipulate conditions governing the design of the entrance(s) such as location, road width, drainage, set back of gates and sight lines.

3.12 Vehicular Access

Entrances, driveways and turning spaces should be suitable for large long vehicles such as mobile dental clinics, fuel tankers, goods and refuse vehicles, grounds maintenance machinery and, as necessary, school buses.

Adequate accessibility should be provided for fire fighting vehicles.

3.13 Road Widths

A width of 3.7 m is usually for fire fighting vehicles, and is considered adequate for one-way traffic, with 5.5 m considered for two-way traffic.

3.14 Bus Lay-by or Turning Circle

Either of these facilities should be provided as considered necessary. Where buses are to enter the site, a turning circle of adequate radius should be provided with parking space for loading/unloading. This should be located as near the entrance gates as possible, but in order to meet this facility with the least use of school grounds, or where the site is restricted, a 'half moon' layout at the entrance should be considered as an alternative.

3.15 Staff and Visitors' Parking

The following minimum provision is recommended:

- a. one space per member of teaching staff and full-time member of administrative staff;
- b. two spaces per three members of ancillary staff including school meals staff;
- c. one space per ten pupils over 17 years of age; and
- d. visitors' parking on the basis of 30% of the total of a. and b.

Visitors' parking includes an allowance for pupils' picking-up/setting-down. Additional provision may be required where it is anticipated that traffic problems might occur as a result of the development.

Additionally, a minimum of one bay 3.2 m wide should be suitably located and designed for the use of disabled persons. Some adjacent parking could provide flexibility in the number of such spaces should the need arise.

Where out-of-school hours use is envisaged ie parents' meetings, school concerts etc, consideration should be given to the use of a hard play space for additional parking. This area should therefore be suitably constructed with appropriate access. Collapsible bollards or other means should be used to secure the area during school hours.

3.16 Pedestrian Access Safe pedestrian access should be provided, separate from vehicular access.

3.17 Access for Disabled Persons Access for disabled persons should be possible from a convenient vehicle setting-down point with a dropped/ramped footpath kerb and a ramp at main entrances to the building(s) as necessary.

3.18 Site Security Depending upon circumstances, adequate site security should be provided to protect the building and the site generally.

The security of playing pitches from possible vandalism and domestic animals should also be considered in relation to the health and safety of pupils.

3.19 Temporary Accommodation Temporary accommodation should preferably, and where appropriate, be located conveniently to related subject accommodation. It should be visually acceptable, and if possible be sited in areas which do not significantly reduce the hard play spaces below the recommended area, or impede future development plans.