

# **SHOCK**

**STOP HOUSING OBLITERATING THE CHARACTER OF KEINTON**

## **SCHOOL SUBMISSION**



**Protecting Keinton Mandeville Primary School**

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## INTRODUCTION

There has been a primary school in Keinton Mandeville since 1818. The first Head was appointed in 1841. Such schools in rural areas are a key part of the community fabric, and Keinton Mandeville Primary School ('the School') is no exception. Their size and roll numbers reflect the scale and population of the rural settlement they were designed to serve. Over the years, the School's roll has fluctuated around 120 pupils (in mixed years groups) depending largely on birth rates (although the School's reputation has also attracted out-of-catchment children at times). The School is a valued village asset. It is popular and thriving, and rightly seen by parents as a place of education to which they can confidently entrust their children. Such an environment does not emerge by accident and cannot be taken for granted. It reflects a coming together of excellent leadership, caring and committed teaching and support staff, and active Parent/Teachers Association, and a Governing Board with a wide range of experience and expertise.

The School has faced numerous challenges in recent years: funding constraints; reduced education authority resources; the tantalising prospect of a much-needed pre-school on site; an increase in pupils with special educational and disability needs (SEND); possible change of status to an academy school and, mostly recently, consistent and significant oversubscription, as the impact of village expansion since 2016 (92 new houses) feeds through into in-catchment pupil numbers.

The School's planned admission number (PAN) (set by Somerset CC the admission authority) has been, for some years, 21. That figure would imply 147 pupils in September 2021 but in fact the roll was 156. It is now 160. We understand that an increased PAN to 24 is under consideration. The PAN ensures that the intake is at a level a school can cope with and is also a way of balancing demand. It is not, however, a rigid cap as the local education authority will expect a school to accept all in-catchment children who apply - naturally since primary school children should always be educated in the community in which they live.

## SUMMARY

**Village schools, like Keinton Mandeville Primary School, serve exactly the same purpose now as in the Victorian era when most came into being- to provide primary education to young children within the rural settlement where they live, in contrast with the much larger, more centralised institutions for secondary learning.**

**Their continued value to a community is recognised by SSDC in its Local Plan Review: it rightly identifies primary schools as key amenities essential to any policy to qualify rural settlements for new developments. But such primary schools are small scale, in line with size of the settlements whose children they nurture. This leaves them vulnerable to changes in funding, pupil mix, or, most importantly, pupil numbers. This is why educational and planning policies must work hand in hand to ensure all primary schools within a local area are nurtured- no school can be looked at entirely in isolation.**

**This is why the scale of development in a rural settlement must be modest, so as to invigorate, not jeopardise, the amenities the community relies on, the most important of which is the village school. For the reasons explained below, LVA's**

**120-house estate would swamp Keinton Mandeville Primary School. In the unlikely event that a seventh classroom could be squeezed onto the site the rest of the school could not be enlarged to match. And there would, in the interim, be years of 'making do' which would put intolerable strain on staff and facilities alike. The reality, however, in SHOCK's view, is that the school site cannot sustain a seventh classroom- and this is further proof that the scale of the LVA estate is completely out of kilter with the village, and should not be approved by SSDC.**

#### A KEY FACILITY IN SSDC's RURAL SETTLEMENTS PLANNING POLICY

The existence of a local school was one of the key criteria/features used by SSDC in its Local Plan Review in deciding whether a rural settlement can accommodate further housing. However, this must imply a functioning school, with the capacity to take more children. Obviously, a derelict school would not meet the criterion. But nor would a school with no room for more pupils. That is the case with Keinton Mandeville Primary School, which has only just secured approval and funding for a sixth classroom to cope with in-catchment demand from new houses already built in the village.

#### THE IMPACT OF THE LVA ESTATE

Using the standard formula, the 120 houses of LVA's estate would be expected to result in 39 extra pupils, two of whom with possible SEND status. These numbers are taken from Somerset County Council's consultation response to SSDC (but the SEND projection is well below the current school and national ratios). This would put the role at 199. At least another 15 must be factored in for houses approved but not yet built in the village. However, these children could not be distributed equally between the classrooms available because Regulation 4(1) of The Schools Admissions (Infant Class Sizes) (England) Regulations 2012 cap infant classes at 30. This means the actual distribution would be 3 classes of 30 infants and 3 classes of 41 juniors (or 36 if only LVA estate numbers were included). These numbers cannot be accommodated within existing classroom sizes at the School.

#### A SIXTH CLASSROOM

A key objective of the Head and Governors over the last 5 years has been to secure a sixth permanent classroom for the School to cope with the housing developments now completed around the village. After a rejection in 2021, success came in March 2022 when Somerset County Council approved the expansion and funding for it. However, as yet, no planning application has been made, nor builders selected, so the September 2023 target to have the classroom available for use may be ambitious. In the meantime, the School has been able to accommodate the extra class by (temporarily) sacrificing space used for library/reading, one-to-one tuition, and focused group support. That space has also been used to allow year groups to be taught separately for key subjects such as science.

#### WHAT DOES THE VILLAGE THINK?

Nearly 450 villagers have objected to the LVA estate. Of them, some 270 explicitly referred to the risks posed to the school by the LVA estate, including all the Governors who live in the village. Most objectors will be parents or grandparents of children schooled in Keinton Mandeville who recognise the life-start and love of learning the School gives to their offspring.

## WHAT DOES LVA THINK?

At the Parish Council November 2021 'consultation' meeting LVA, when asked about the School's lack of capacity, replied that the standard solution was to bus children out of the village to other schools with spare capacity. While this may be 'standard' for secondary pupils, it is highly undesirable for primary pupils for obvious reasons; their young age; the dislocation between their schooling and their community; the cost of travel in an area devoid of public transport; and the adverse impact on the children, especially with SEND status, difficult family circumstances, or siblings which cannot be found places in the same school. Busing out also raises significant safeguarding issues.

## DO SCHOOL NUMBERS MATTER?

All the received wisdom of educational specialists, and child psychologists suggests smaller class numbers mean more effective schooling (for a recent in-depth study see '*Examining the Effect of Class Size on Classroom Engagement and Teacher Pupil Interaction.*' Blatchford and others). See the Schedule to this Submission which also contains extracts from similar studies which identify the detriments of excessive class sizes. Common sense points the same way. This is especially so for infants, recognised by the legislative cap of 30 applied to infant classes. For juniors there is no legal cap. Class size is also a key factor for parents in school choice, where options exist. The private primary option nearby for wealthy villagers is Millfield, which boasts average class sizes of 14 pupils and fees of £15,000 a year.

In recent years, at the School, as numbers grew with new housing, homework marking, pupil assessment, and parental feedback practices all had to be revised to avoid overburdening teachers with unreasonable demands. Even so, the School lost a teacher through work stress. Excessive numbers have inevitable consequences, even in the best-run schools.

## PHYSICAL SPACE

The space available for teaching is the corollary of pupil numbers. Like many village schools, Keinton Mandeville School has small classrooms. It is already difficult for teachers to move around a class to assist individual pupils, or support small group work. If the School had to be evacuated in an emergency the cramped spaces and pupil numbers could compromise safety. It also directly affects the well-being of more anxious and neurodiverse children. Day-to-day they are also an obstacle to best teaching practices, but one which school results show the School's teachers overcome. That this is objective fact and not biased opinion is shown by the fact that the School's classroom sizes and other teaching space do not meet modern building parameters for new primary schools in the Department for Education Area Guidelines for Mainstream Schools- Building Bulletin 103 (June 2014).

## A 7<sup>th</sup> CLASSROOM SOLUTION?

Those who are familiar with the school premises and configuration doubt whether there is space available to be given up to a 7<sup>th</sup> classroom. However, Somerset County Council, at its own cost, has embarked on a feasibility study to assess that option. No doubt some parents, like the author, feel that the cost should be borne by LVA, and

should not come out of a school's budget which already struggles to meet the educational needs of Somerset.

Even if space for a 7<sup>th</sup> classroom could feasibly be found the remainder of the school remains the same. Common spaces (the hall, break-out and one-to-one areas, toilets, the library, the administrative and staff facilities and the external play space) all remain as tight as they are already. Bolting on a classroom for extra pupils does not enlarge the school's facilities generally- a new village school on a new site would be necessary to achieve that. For example, the School has, under the current Head, introduced the OPAL concept to the School and now attained Gold OPAL status. The acronym stands for Outdoor Play And Learning and utilises outdoor space not for unfocused 'playtime' but to encourage learning through play, group activities, and team work. But the extra requirements to make OPAL effective (e.g. equipment sheds, the 'field' kitchen and a range of social spaces and varied surfaces for children to use as part of their play) also put space at a premium.

### THE IMPLICATIONS OF BUILDING BULLETIN 103

It is instructive to examine in more detail the School's situation against the space requirements of BB103 on the basis of current and potential pupil numbers. Despite the additional space created by the newly commissioned 6th classroom, the assembly hall, circulation areas, toilets, gross internal area, and net external area (space available for play and learning) do not meet the minimum recommended requirement for a school of 160 pupils, as set out in the BB103 document. Wholesale changes to the school, and potentially the acquisition of a larger plot would be needed should the school intake expand further.

As mentioned, the new housing estate is predicted to provide 39 additional primary aged pupils. But even with just 15 extra pupils (175 on roll) the 'basic teaching' areas also fail to meet the recommended minimum area, and therefore, the granting of planning permission for the LVA housing estate would necessitate a 7th classroom. Even if a 7th classroom could be physically accommodated to cater for the predicted increase in numbers on roll to 199, the strain on the hall, WCs, internal circulation capacity, and outside play area would be exacerbated. In addition, staff and administration areas would not meet recommended minimum requirements. BB103 also recommends a 'small group room' for every 150 pupils. Above 150 and a second should be provided – so in addition to a 7th classroom there would also be a need for a second 'small group room'.

The Appendix below presents the raw data and calculations for the School, following the methodology set out in BB103. This provides the evidence for the statements above and the tables below.

#### Scenario 1 – 160 pupils and 6 classrooms – current position

Basic Teaching area	Pass
Large Spaces (Assembly Hall)	Fail
Learning Resource Area	Pass
Staff & Administration Areas	Pass
Storage areas	Pass
Non Net area (circulation, Lobby, WC etc)	Fail
Net internal area	Pass
Gross internal area	Fail

Net site area (Site area less parking and access)	Fail
Total site area	Pass

Scenario 2 – 175 pupils and 6 classrooms – based on 52 houses awaiting approval

Basic Teaching area	Fail
Large Spaces (Assembly Hall)	Fail
Learning Resource Area	Pass
Staff & Administration Areas	Fail
Storage areas	Pass
Non Net area (circulation, Lobby, WC etc)	Fail
Net internal area	Fail
Gross internal area	Fail
Net site area (Site area less parking and access)	Fail
Total site area	Fail

Scenario 3 – 199 pupils and 7 classrooms – based on LVA estate alone

Basic Teaching area	Pass
Large Spaces (Assembly Hall)	Fail
Learning Resource Area	Pass
Staff & Administration Areas	Fail
Storage areas	Pass
Non Net area (circulation, Lobby, WC etc)	Fail
Net internal area	Fail
Gross internal area	Fail
Net site area (Site area less parking and access)	Fail
Total site area	Fail

## THE EDUCATIONAL MICROCLIMATE

No school is a factory where increased output depends on the flick of a switch. Nor are children nuts and bolts. A good school not only teaches facts it develops character and an ethos for life. Those of us who know the School well recognise it as a caring environment as well as a learning one. This depends in large part on its teaching and support staff having the space, time, and energy to pursue the broader longer-term objectives of education in a stable 'steady state' setting. Key elements of the School's life- the OPAL project; 'buddying' across age groups; and whole school projects (such as 'The Lost Words') depend on having a degree of spare capacity. Keinton Mandeville School can evolve (and is evolving) to meet new demand commensurate with the scale of the community it serves and with its status as a **village** school. But its reputation with parents, success with children, and Ofsted ratings are bound to be adversely affected if it has unreasonable burdens imposed on it by unmeritorious development and bad planning decisions.

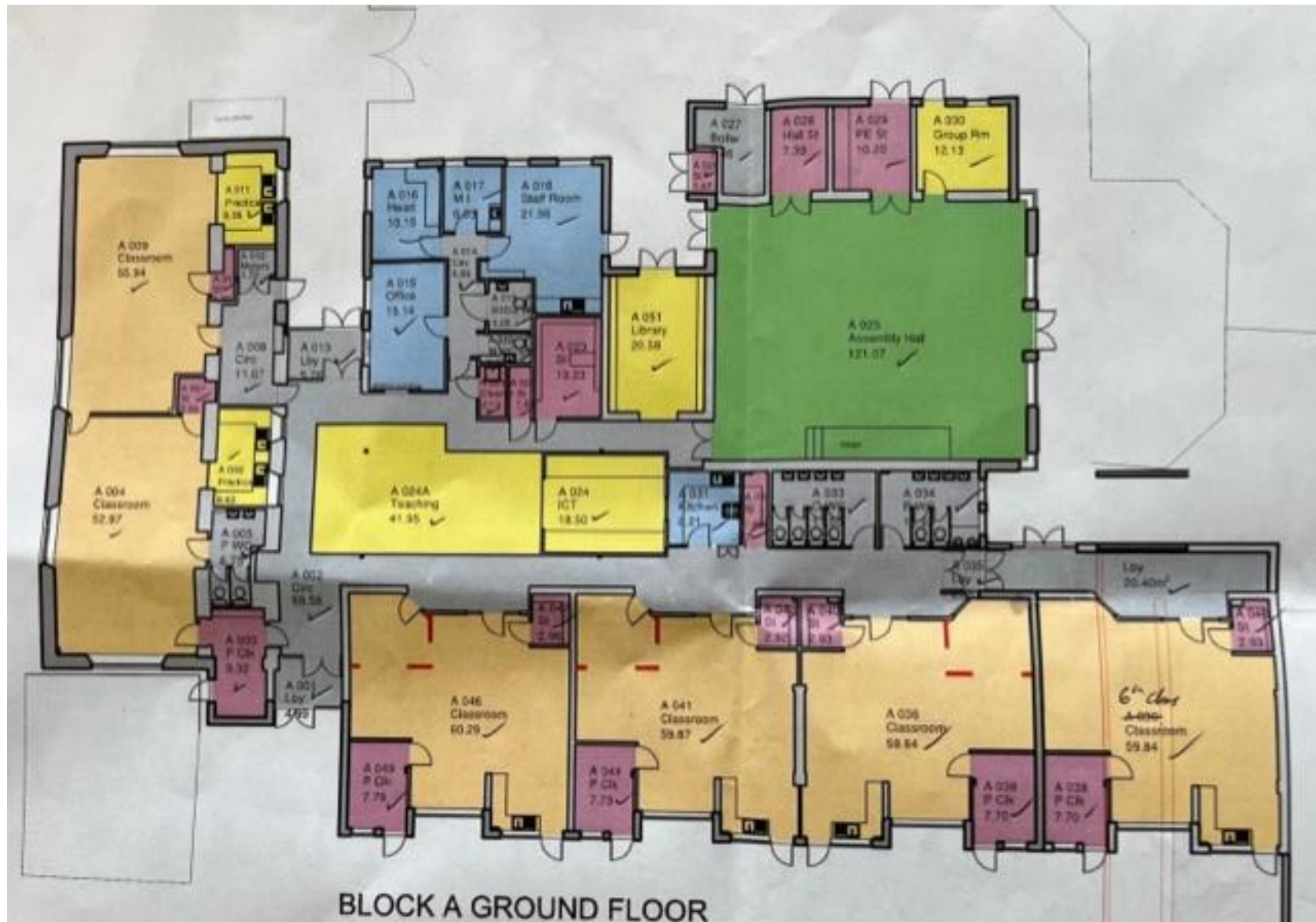
**This is why SHOCK believes Keinton Mandeville Primary School and its present and future pupils should be protected by SSDC rejecting the LVA application to build a 120-house estate, and it asks SSDC to do so.**

SHOCK  
September 2022

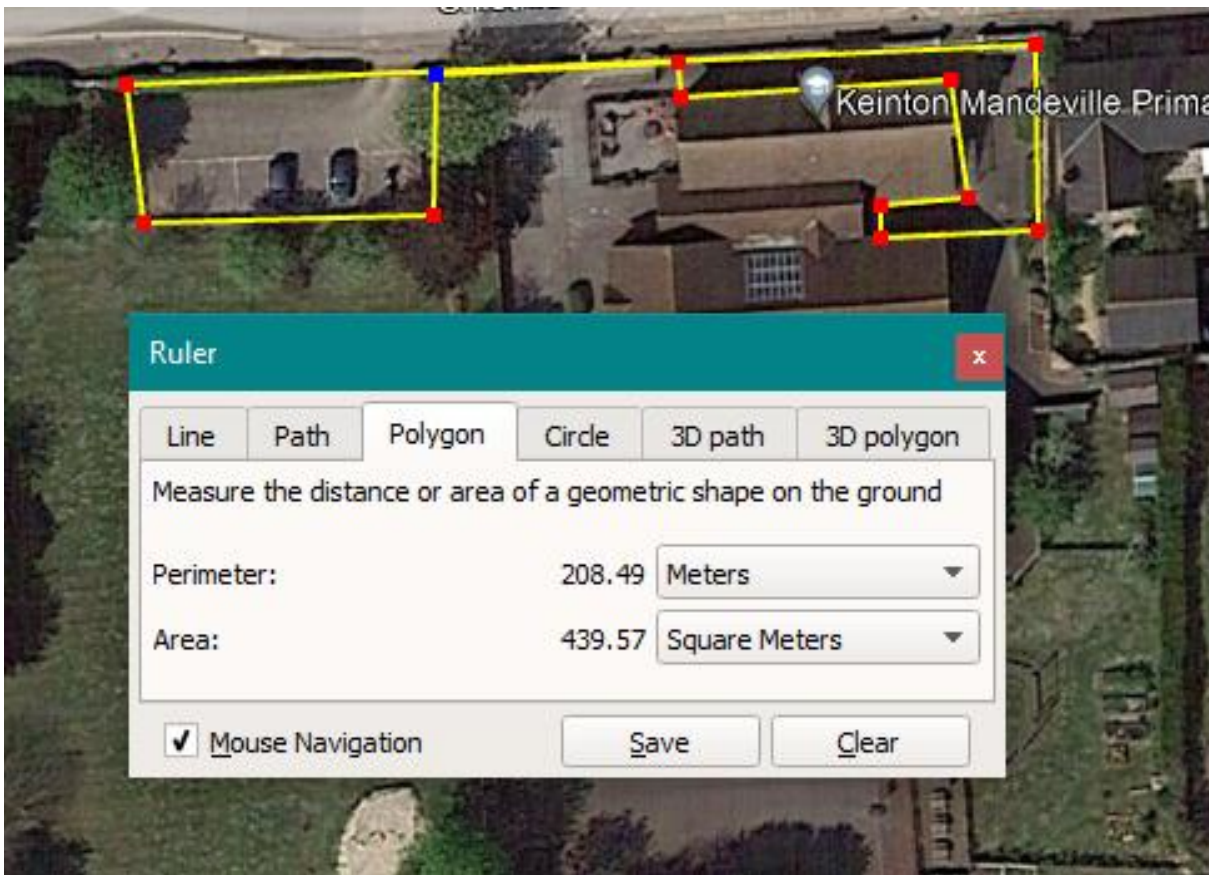
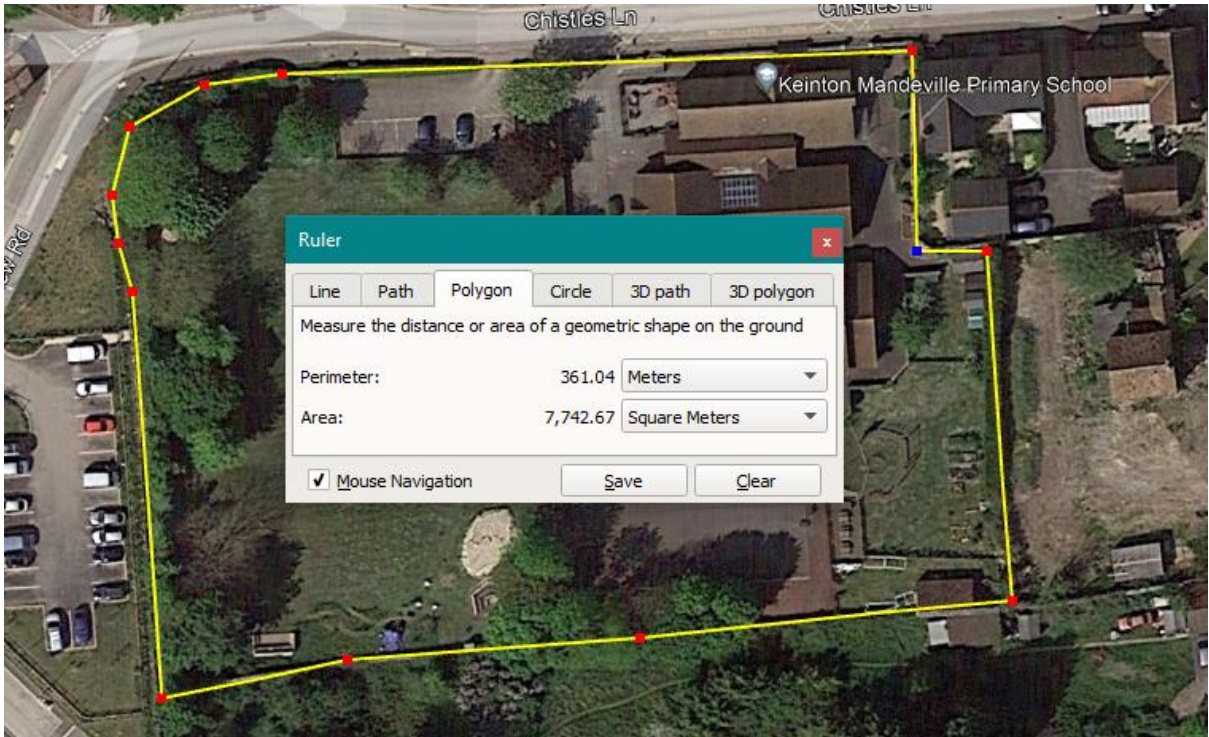
# **APPENDIX**

## **Raw Data and Calculations for Keinton Mandeville Primary School**

# SCHOOL LAYOUT



# SCHOOL LAYOUT



## AREAS

Room	Desc	Area	Zone Class	Room	Desc	Area	Zone Class
A009	Classroom	55.94	Basic Teaching	A049	Cloak	7.79	Storage
A011	Practical for A009	8.38	Learning Resource Area	A041	Classroom	59.87	Basic Teaching
A010	Store	1.56	Storage	A042	Store	2.92	Storage
A004	Classroom	52.97	Basic Teaching	A044	Cloak	7.73	Storage
A006	Practical for A004	8.43	Learning Resource Area	A036	Classroom	59.84	Basic Teaching
A007	Store	2	Storage	A038	Cloak	7.7	Storage
A003	Cloak	9.32	Storage	A040	Store	2.93	Storage
A024A	Shared Teaching	41.95	Learning Resource Area	6th Cla	Classroom	59.84	Basic Teaching
A024	IT Space	18.5	Learning Resource Area	6th Sto	Store	2.93	Storage
A015	Office	15.14	Staff and Administration	6th Clo	Cloak	7.7	Storage
A016	Head	10.15	Staff and Administration	6th Lob	Lobby	20.4	Non Net
A017	MI	6.83	Staff and Administration	A035	Lobby	2.35	Non Net
A018	Staff Room	21.96	Staff and Administration	A002	Circulation	89.58	Non Net
A021	Cleaners Store	2.13	Storage	A001	Lobby	4.99	Non Net
A022	Store	1.88	Storage	A008	Circulation	11.07	Non Net
A023	Store	10.23	Storage	A012	Meters	1.72	Non Net
A051	Library	20.58	Learning Resource Area	A013	Lobby	5.76	Non Net
A031	Kitchen	8.21	Staff and Administration	A014	Circulation	6.89	Non Net
A032	Store	2.86	Storage	A005	WC	6.75	Non Net
A026	Store	1.67	Storage	A019	WC	3.28	Non Net
A027	Boiler	7.46	Non Net	A020	WC	2.97	Non Net
A028	Hall Store	7.39	Storage	A033	WC	11.55	Non Net
A029	PE Store	10.2	Storage	A034	WC	10.93	Non Net
A030	Group Room	12.13	Learning Resource Area	7th Cla	Classroom	59.84	Basic Teaching
A025	Hall	121.07	Large Spaces	7th Sto	Store	2.93	Storage
A046	Classroom	60.29	Basic Teaching	7th Clo	Cloak	7.7	Storage
A047	Store	2.96	Storage	7th Lob	Lobby	20.4	Non Net

## SIX CLASSROOMS AREA PROJECTIONS

SIX CLASSROOMS					
Pupils	175	29.2	Pupils per classroom		
Zone	Base Area	Per Pupil Area	Min. Requirement	Projected Actual Area	Status
Basic Teaching	0	2	350	169.2	FAIL
Large Spaces	100	0.3	152.5	121.07	FAIL
Learning Resource Area	10	0.1	27.5	109.97	PASS
Staff and Administration	30	0.2	65	62.29	FAIL
Storage	20	0.15	46.25	52.2	PASS
Non Net	110	1.2	320	7.46	FAIL
Net Internal Area	240	2.9	747.5	514.73	FAIL
Gross Internal Area	350	4.1	1067.5	522.19	FAIL
Net Site Area	1800	30	7050	6370	FAIL
Total Site Area	2000	33.3	7827.5	7750	FAIL
Hall size for juniors should be at least 140m2					FAIL
One "Small Group Room" per 150 students					FAIL

"School Playing Field Area"

## SEVEN CLASSROOMS AREA PROJECTIONS

SEVEN CLASSROOMS					
Pupils	199	28.4	Pupils per classroom		
Zone	Base Area	Per Pupil Area	Projected Min.	Projected Actual Area	Status
Basic Teaching	0	2	398	169.2	FAIL
Large Spaces	100	0.3	159.7	121.07	FAIL
Learning Resource Area	10	0.1	29.9	109.97	PASS
Staff and Administration	30	0.2	69.8	62.29	FAIL
Storage	20	0.15	49.85	52.2	PASS
Non Net	110	1.2	348.8	7.46	FAIL
Net Internal Area	240	2.9	817.1	514.73	FAIL
Gross Internal Area	350	4.1	1165.9	522.19	FAIL
Net Site Area	1800	30	7770	6280	FAIL
Total Site Area	2000	33.3	8626.7	7750	FAIL
*Projected Actual Area assumes an additional 7th classroom of the same footprint as the planned 6th classroom					
Hall size for juniors should be at least 140m2					FAIL
One "Small Group Room" per 150 students					FAIL

"School Playing Field Area"