

# Linking Learning



The Linking Learning project focuses on the learning ethos in early years education and how it should be prolonged to create a more self-directed learning experience for children. Often in nurseries and Children's Centres, children have the freedom to choose their spatial environment and subject contents, essentially enabling them to be the protagonist of their own learning. However, quite often as children progress through education these freedoms can be restricted, resulting in pupils being contained inside cellular classrooms learning from a rigid curriculum.

The outcome is a new build project for Gibshill Children's Centre in Greenock. Through communication with the Head and Deputy Head of the Centre, the new building is designed to facilitate their vision of creating free-flow access for the children. Designed for 100 children between the ages of 2-9 the Centre's new 3265 square meter plan allows the children to navigate seamlessly from space to space in an environment that contains no classrooms. In their place are Home Zones, these are spaces for each age group to start their day and a safe place to return to at any point. Out-with that is a variety of breakout spaces the children can utilise to play and learn.

**"You've got to have an environment that encourages curiosity and creativity."**

Janine Burns, Head of Centre at Gibshill.

**"Ideally we would love an environment that lends itself to the children as independent learners moving smoothly and having flexibility in their learning and play."**

Craig Scott, Deputy Head of Centre at Gibshill.

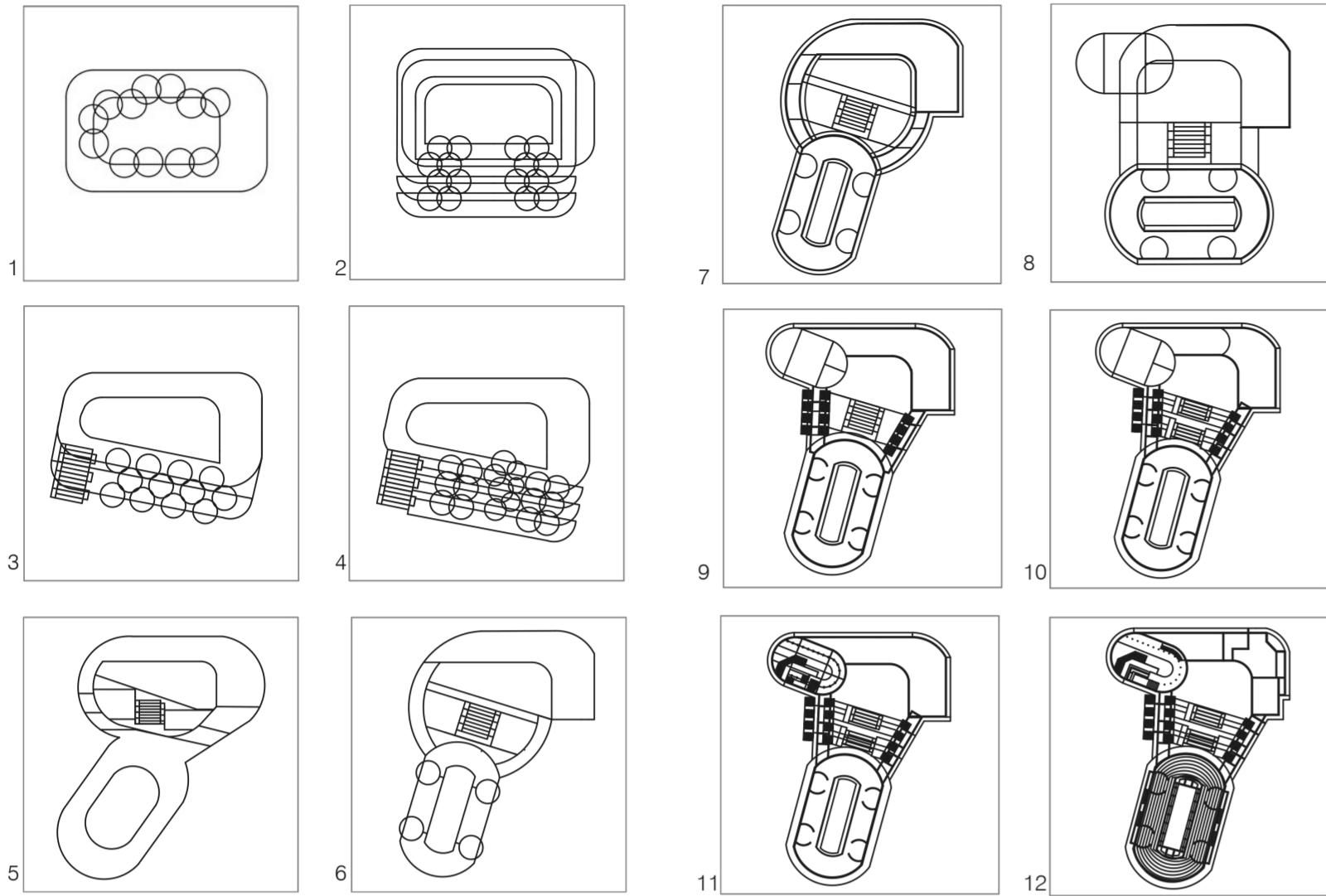
**"What we have always tried to design is where you have different volumes. Some kids like that protective cover of a low space like crawling under a table but equally there's the other kid who like being on top of the table."**

Gavin Murray, Senior architect at Inverclyde Council.

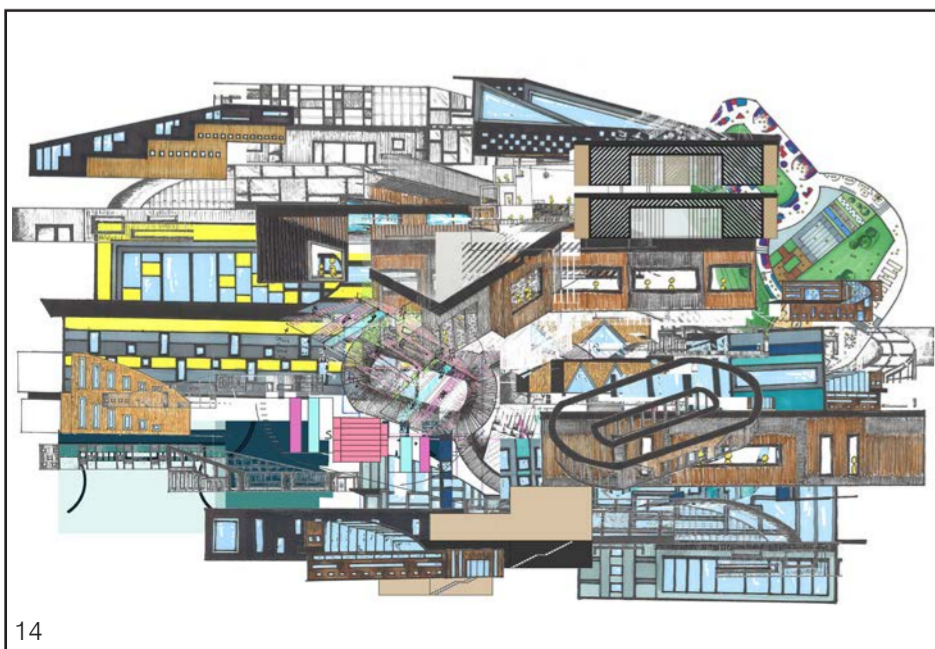
Outdoor play is a huge part of the ethos and curriculum at the Children's Centre. To maximise the opportunity for outdoor play and learning the buildings design offers direct unassisted access outside from all sections of the building. Helping to give children and teachers flexibility in the an environment that starts to blur the lines between internal and external space. Gibshill is a very community orientated part of Greenock with the staff at the children's centre always keen to engage with the local community and showcase the activities taking place at the Centre. Attached to the North East of the Children's Centre is a community cafe that only offers visual access not physical access into the Children's Centre. The buildings overall design enables children to have safe free flow access inside and out while simultaneously helping link the relationship between education and the community.



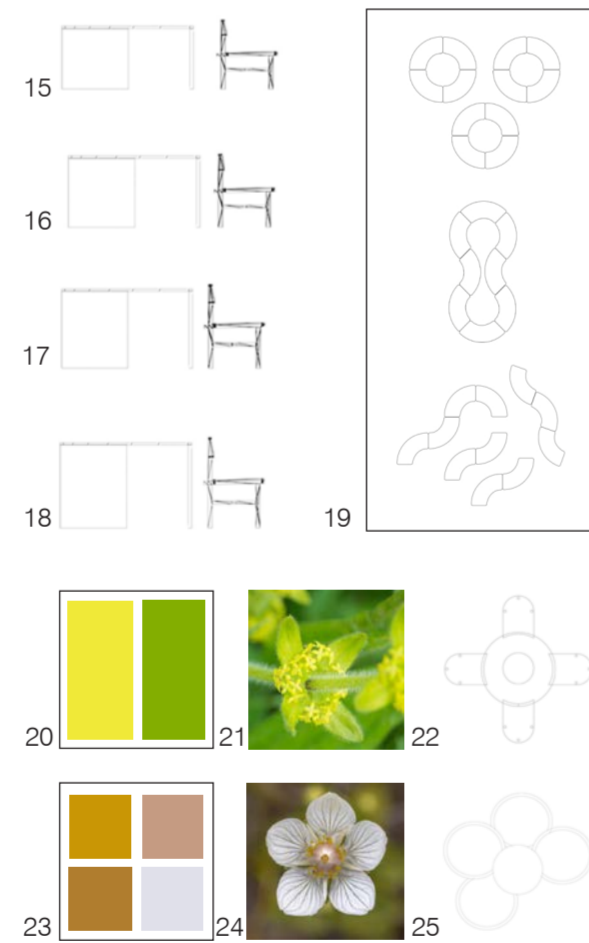
# Research & Development



1. Circle pods that wrap around the outdoor space.
2. Stepped structure pushing through the embankment.
3. Three tiered plan with circular zones extending out connected by a ramp on the west side.
4. A central core that could interlink each level.
5. The shape from links in a chain creating the Big Link at the top of the embankment.
6. Home zones included alongside a ramp that connects the garden with the top of the embankment.
7. East and west wing start to form levels.
8. Top level moves connecting to straight wings.
9. The straight wings remain but top level reverts back to being off-set by 15°, stair have been implemented creating 3 levels.
10. The outside area has 5 levels connecting to the central ramp, ground level, top level and both wings.
11. Little Link is formed that connects to the west wing on two levels.
12. The kitchen, cafe and gym hall are measured out.



13. Collage of early development ideas.
14. Collage of sketch concepts.
15. Home zone 1 desk height 400mm & chair height 210mm.
16. Home zone 2 desk height 460mm & chair height 260mm.
17. Home zone 3 desk height 530mm & chair height 310mm.
18. Home zone 4 desk height 590mm & chair height 350mm.
19. Possibilities for aligning the desks.
20. Colour palette
21. Japanese Crosswort
22. Plan of breakout space
23. Colour palette
24. Grass of Parnass
25. Plan of breakout space



The design process focused on the existing outdoor area at the Children's Centre as the staff felt this was an integral part of the identity at Gibshill. Influenced by the shape from links in a chain and through a holistic design approach, the buildings plan is created to wrap around and connect all areas of internal space with the existing outdoor space. Another key focus in the design process was to expand the Centres footprint by utilising the space at the top of the embankment behind the Centre. Through out the Children's Centre there are new carefully considered design aspects with the view to maximise the pupils experience. There is ergonomically designed furniture throughout, there are also doors measured 1.5m in height, helping to create a sense that the buildings functionality has been tailored directly to the children.

By having direct contact with the management at the Centre, helped in creating a hierarchy of spatial importance that is focused on the teaching and learning embraced at the Centre. Rosan Bosch Studio have designed many educational spaces that developed away from traditional designs and teaching methods. In their designs there are no classrooms and children have freedom in locating the chosen space to play and learn in. The work done at Rosan Bosch Studio has heavily influenced the design outcome as their designs offer a template for a more progressive attitude towards learning environments. By combining the insights from relevant people in the field of education and educational design, the outcome was able to evolve into an environment that encourages a more progressive attitude towards learning. With a focus on flexible learning spaces and free flow access.



29. North and West exterior of Gibshill Children's Centre on Smillie Street.



30. Overgrown ash football pitches located at the top of the embankment south of Gibshill Children's Centre.



31. Gibshill Children's Centres outdoor play space.

## Interviews

**Janine Burns - Head of centre at Gibshill**

- Want to keep as much of our outdoor space as possible
- Would love to just have more space
- A free flow environment where children can transition from one space to another
- Gibshill is quite a small community where people know each other well
- Creating space that move naturally into one another, they are fluid and not just walls

**Craig Scott - Deputy of centre at Gibshill**

- A space that is welcoming, warm and nurturing
- Don't want to lose that natural feel
- There is so much potential playing in natural environments it very purposeful for children
- Having space to create wee cosy spaces and being able to adapt and change spatial layout

**Gavin Murray - Senior architect at Inverclyde Council**

- Away from traditional classrooms, breakout spaces can develop according to the users
- Variety of spaces must be created to accommodate children's personality
- Noise pollution can be an issue in open planned designs, using material that can soften acoustics
- Outdoor play is becoming far more popular
- Getting to the top level at Gibshill will provide amazing views across the River Clyde

**Patricia Wylie - Head of Centre at Glenpark**

- Free flow access from space to space
- Using natural materials
- Plenty of natural light and space
- If the outdoor spaces are resourced properly children never want to come inside
- Windows at child height

**Fabrizio Vizzi - Architect at Rosan Bosch Studio**

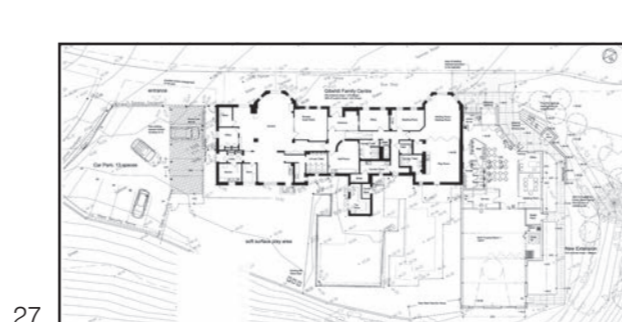
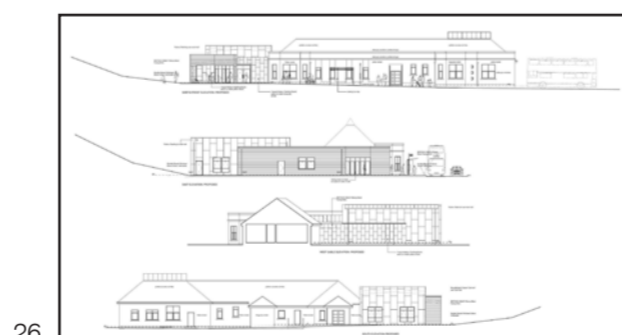
- Try create different level in which children can interact with space
- Children should always have a safe go to place not a classroom as we want to move away form that
- It is important to find a way to connect the community and school together through design



32. Learning space at Vittra School Brotorp designed by Rosan Bosch Studio



33. Learning space at St. Andrew's Scots School designed by Rosan Bosch Studio.



The Natural Connections Demonstration Project, which worked with children from 125 schools in a 4-year initiative aiming to empower teachers to use the outdoors to support everyday learning. It is highlighted in the report that:

- 92 per cent of teachers surveyed said that pupils were more engaged with learning when outdoors and 85 per cent saw a positive impact on their behaviour.
- 92 per cent of pupils involved in the project said they enjoyed their lessons more when outdoors, with 90 per cent feeling happier and healthier as a result.
- 79 per cent of teachers reported positive impacts on their teaching practice.
- Almost 70 per cent of teachers said that outdoor learning has had a positive impact on their job satisfaction and 72 per cent reported improved health and wellbeing.



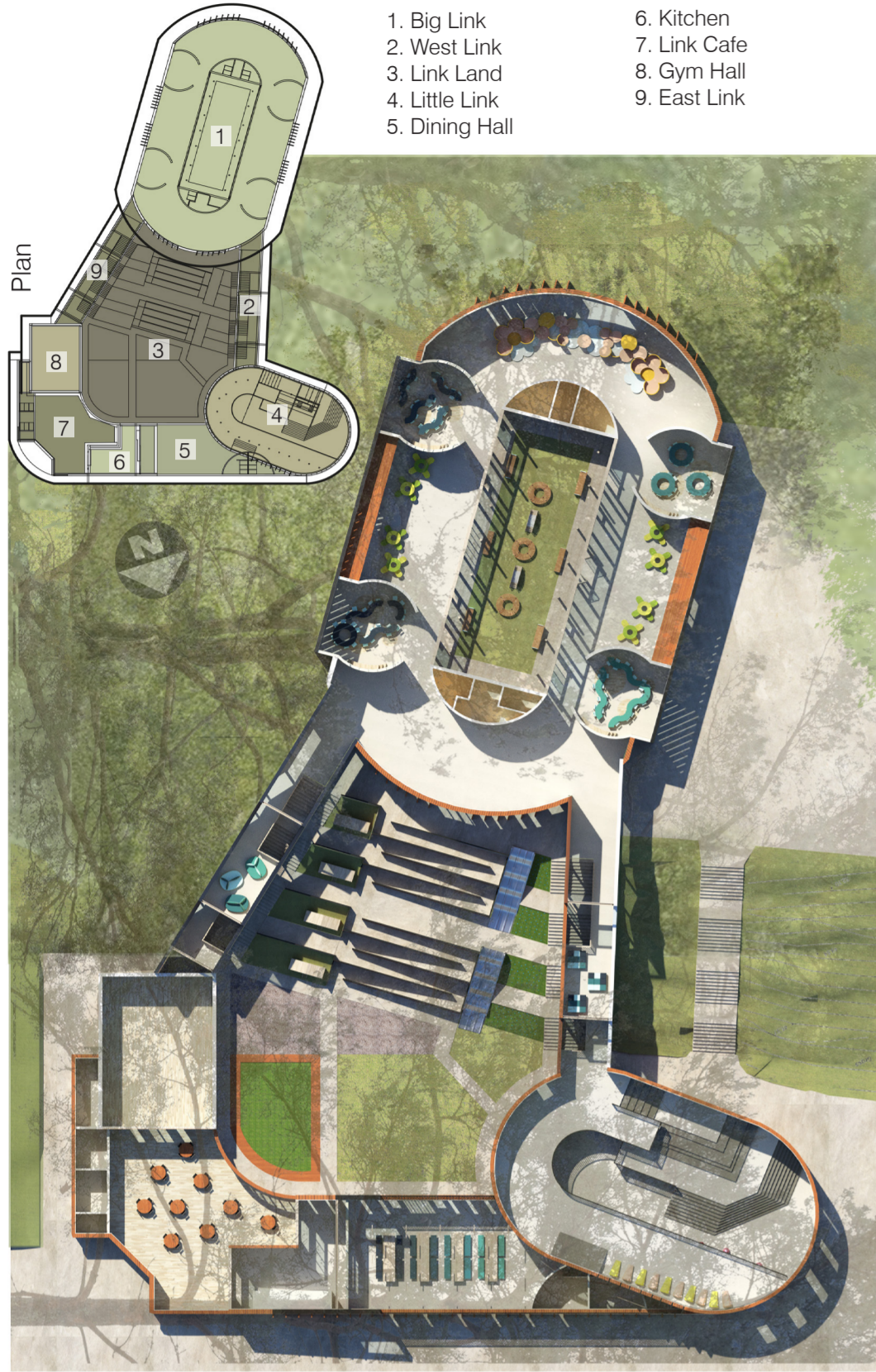
34. Glenpark Children's Centre outdoor space.



35. Glenpark Children's Centre interior.

Elevations and Exterior

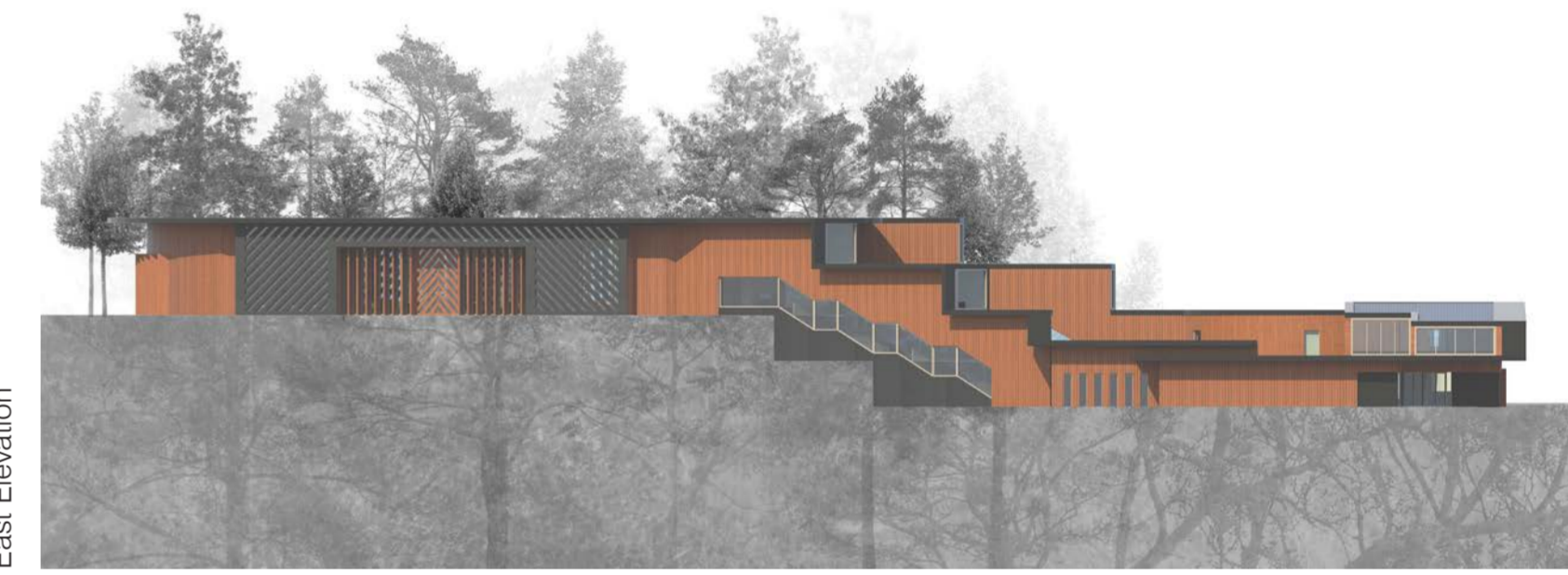
- 1. Big Link
- 2. West Link
- 3. Link Land
- 4. Little Link
- 5. Dining Hall
- 6. Kitchen
- 7. Link Cafe
- 8. Gym Hall
- 9. East Link



North Elevation



East Elevation



South Elevation



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- 10. Exterior of Little Link on Smillie Street leading round to the new main entrance on the west side.
- 11. New main entrance located at the west side of Big Link.
- 12. Entrance to Link Cafe located on Smillie Street.
- 13. Angled windows on East Link.
- 14. Facade of the east side of Big Link.



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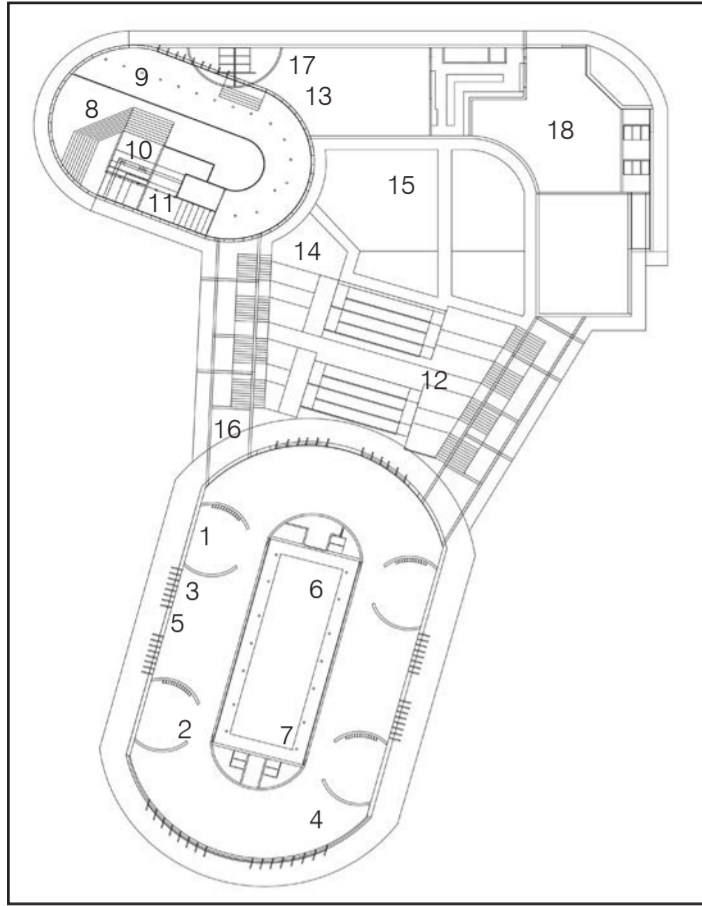


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Two materials are used throughout the exterior, black diamond Richlite panels and timber. These choices of material help to create an aesthetically well balanced design constructed from naturally resourced sustainable materials. The new entrance point for the Children's Centre has been relocated to the west side of Big Link, whereas the community cafe entrance has remained on Smillie Street. Large windows are a common theme in the design as it is critical that children can have visual access to the world around them. Additionally these visual access points help open up education to the local community showing glimpses of the creative and playful environment within. By creating the outdoor space for the children within the footprint of the building means that there is no fence around the building which would of created a physical barrier between the community and education. Instead the Children's Centre remains physically attached to the community rather than appearing as a separate entity.

West Elevation





1. Home zone one.
2. Home zone two and courtyard.
3. Breakout zone.
4. Breakout zone.
5. Section of Home zone one & two separated by breakout zone
6. Courtyard.
7. Courtyard.
8. Breakout zone.
9. Breakout zone.

10. Breakout zone.
11. Entrance to breakout zone under the stairs.
12. Outdoor learning hut on the level between both ramps.
13. Accessible rooftop of the Dining hall.
14. Ground level of Link Land showing ramps, slides and climbing wall.
15. Ground level of Link Land with access to Dining hall
16. Threshold between Big Link & West Link.
17. Interior of Dining Hall.
18. Interior of the Community Cafe.



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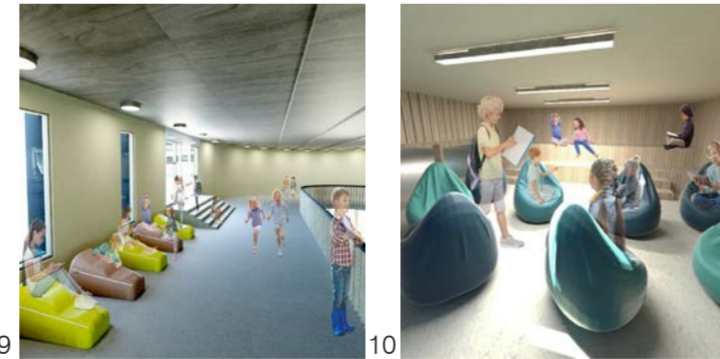
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The central area of the new Children's Centre (Link Land) has a ramp that connects from ground level up to Big Link at the top of the embankment. The ramp runs at 1:12 making it wheelchair accessible and a fun path for children to move from level to level. On the west side of the ramp are slides and climbing walls giving the pupils a playful alternative. Whilst on the east side are four play huts that the children can utilise for playing and learning. At ground level the footprint of the existing outdoor space has remained giving the Centre's staff and pupils the creative freedom to design and maintain a personalised outdoor space.

Big Link is the starting point of the day where the Home Zones are located these are spaces dedicated to each age groups. Out with the Home Zones are a series of breakout spaces and a central courtyard that is directly accessible from the full east and west side.

Natural materials are a focus of the interior as well as a soft delicate colour palette the concept is to create a natural feeling environment that is not over stimulating. Oaks planks, timber beams and posts are used helping create a sense of nature. All the walls are insulated with perforated plaster board to help minimise noise pollution. Forbo marmoleum flooring is used through out helping to create a calm atmosphere that helps to highlight the coloured furniture, breakout spaces and landscape.

Scale Model 1:100



For more information visit :  
Website - <https://letticedesign.wixsite.com/portfolio>  
3D & physical model video - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rBIQuUUg1rI>  
Project magazine - [https://92172778-a6c7-463e-ab19-1dca52b40a62.filesusr.com/ugd/a5ee6f\\_863c83a3c7184cd586477b729e235847.pdf](https://92172778-a6c7-463e-ab19-1dca52b40a62.filesusr.com/ugd/a5ee6f_863c83a3c7184cd586477b729e235847.pdf)