

Forest Kindergarten Project

Case Study



Project Background

The Scottish Government's Early Years 2020 strategy seeks to support the following core aims:

- Providing 1140 hours per year to all 3 and 4-year olds
- Extending provision for 2-year olds
- Introduction of a new national standard for Early Years
- **Promoting the use of outdoor play and learning.**

In response, the City of Edinburgh Council identified the expansion of its existing Forest Kindergarten offering as part of the solution, proposing the formation of five new facilities across The city.

In addition to the Forest Kindergartens, the Client requested the team review the Granton Community Garden initiative and seek to provide a suitable accommodation solution to support the ongoing work of the existing Community Garden.

Client Brief

The agreed brief for the five Forest Kindergarten facilities was developed on an existing successful facility located at Cammo, which was visited during the design development period. The core features of the brief include:

- Accommodation to support staff resources to operate within the forest setting
- Provide storage and drying accommodation for each facility
- Provide toilet facilities (composting) for staff to utilise.

Development Partner: Hub South East Scotland Ltd

Client: The City of Edinburgh Council

Main Contractor: Morrison Construction

Construction Social Enterprise: Rebuild

Architect: Oberlanders

Cost Advisor & Principal Designer: AECOM

Civil & Structural: Wardell Armstrong

Contract: Design & Build

Value: £635k

Inspiration for Proposed Solution

In 2018, Hub South East, in partnership with the City of Edinburgh Council, delivered the **Leith Meanwhile Project**. The project comprised the refurbishment of C-listed building, turning it into modern office space, as well as the transformation of the rear of the building with the creation of workspaces in shipping containers. These shipping containers were repurposed into space for artist studios for community use and the project was an excellent example of our Strategic Partnering Services in action, as well as providing paid training opportunities through construction social enterprise, Rebuild. You can read more about this project on Hub South East's website –

<https://www.hubsoutheastscotland.co.uk/projects/leith-meanwhile-project/>

Following the success of the Leith Meanwhile Project, City of Edinburgh Council approached Hub South East to develop a similar solution for Forest Kindergartens using shipping containers to provide suitable accommodation for staff use, storage and toilet facilities.

Hub South East engaged the same team of Morrison Construction and Rebuild, to undertake the work.

Project Overview

Following detailed consultation with the Client, it was decided that each of the Forest Kindergarten facilities will contain the following key features:

- Two re purposed container units at each location (23m2 each)
- Unit 1 – to provide a support base for FKP staff to operate from
- Unit 2 – to provide storage accommodation and a composting toilet
- Access ramp and deck to link the units
- Preparatory works and service connections.



SUPPORTING SOCIAL ENTERPRISE

The shipping containers, procured on the Forest Kindergarten project were repurposed by Edinburgh based construction social enterprise, **Rebuild**, giving trainees paid work experience whilst they learned new skills on site.

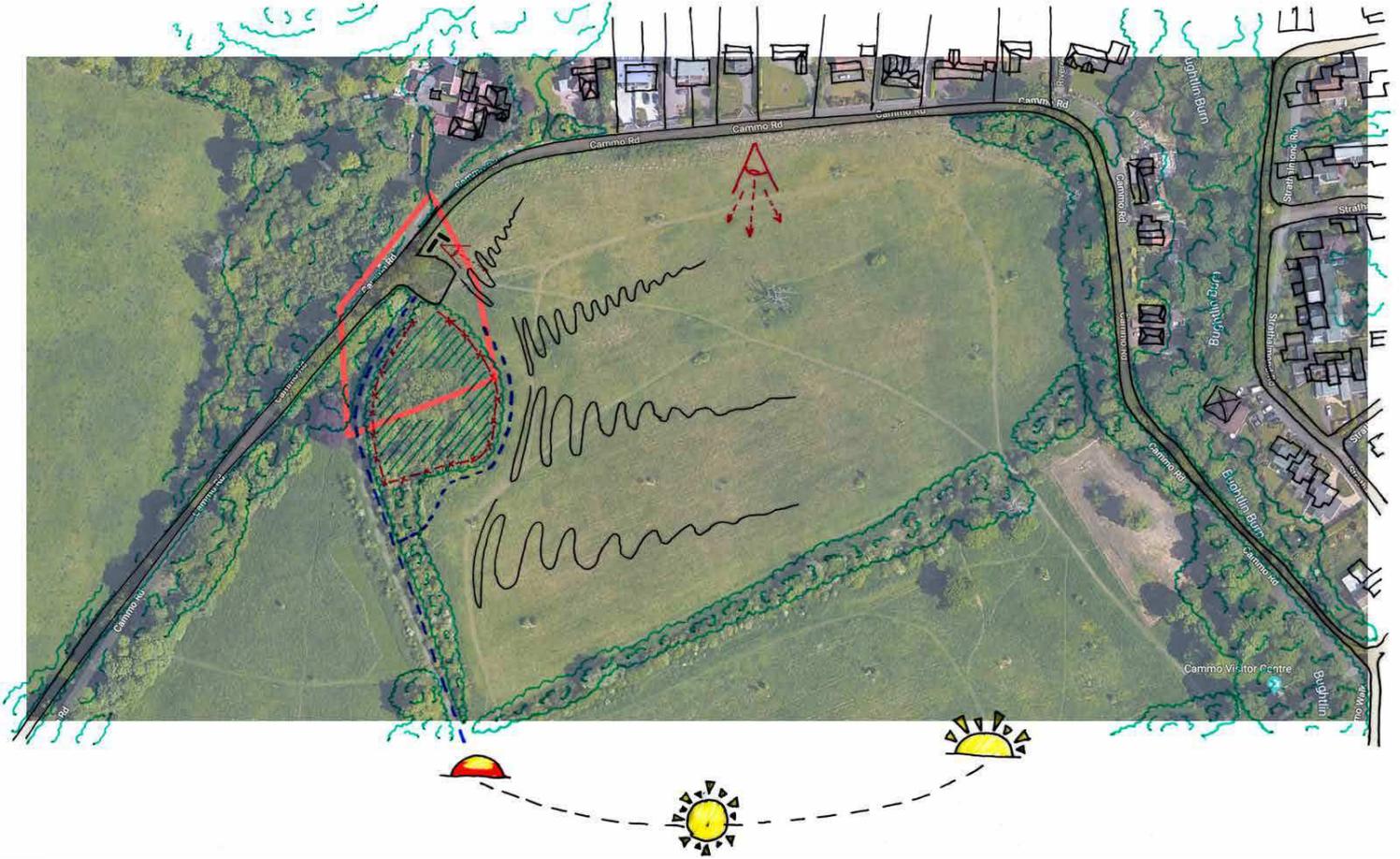
We're incredibly proud to have supported Rebuild in its first live project at Leith Meanwhile and knowing the social and economic benefits this realised, the team was delighted to welcome them back for the Forest Kindergartens project.

Knowing that the trainees grow in skills, experience and confidence during their time on site and that it leads to further employment opportunities, is fantastic and allows the project to create a lasting legacy beyond outdoor learning.

You can see a video made by Rebuild about what they do – filmed on site at Leith.

<http://www.rebld.co/>

Example of Site & Design: Cammo Estate

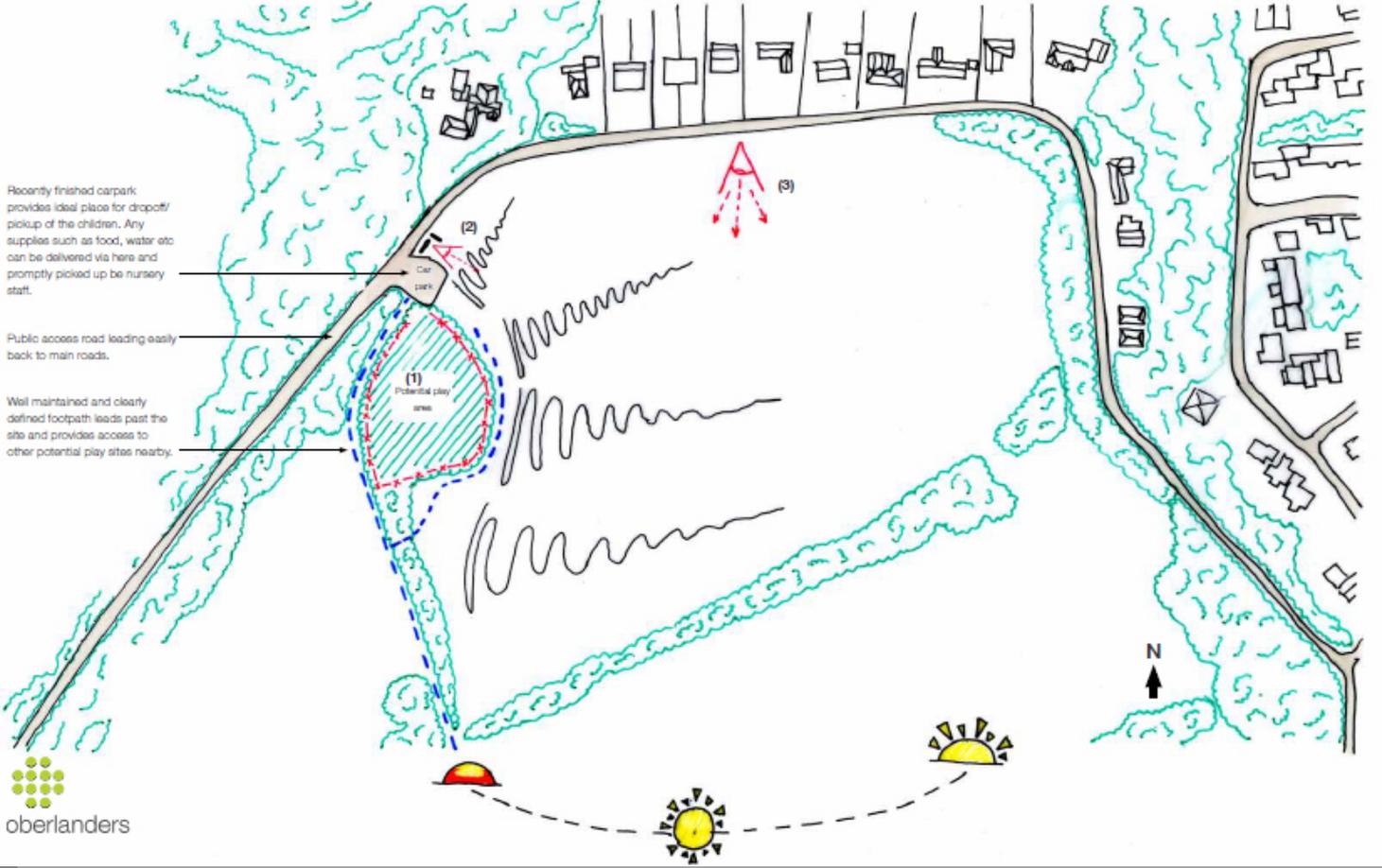


(1) Nearby copse has potential as a place for the nursery to play close by the site. Issue - copse is surrounded, though not fully enclosed, by barbed wire fence. Removal possible? At least opening close by site.

(2) Beautiful view out across the field, trees and the city in the distance. Commanding view of immediate surroundings allowing staff to see any people approaching and if any children that are lost. Container to be placed on existing hardcore.

(3) Large local houses look out across common and woodland. Siting of proposal is tucked away out of sight of these properties. The proposal becomes less contentious and arrests protests regarding spoilt view and impact on environment.

Cammo

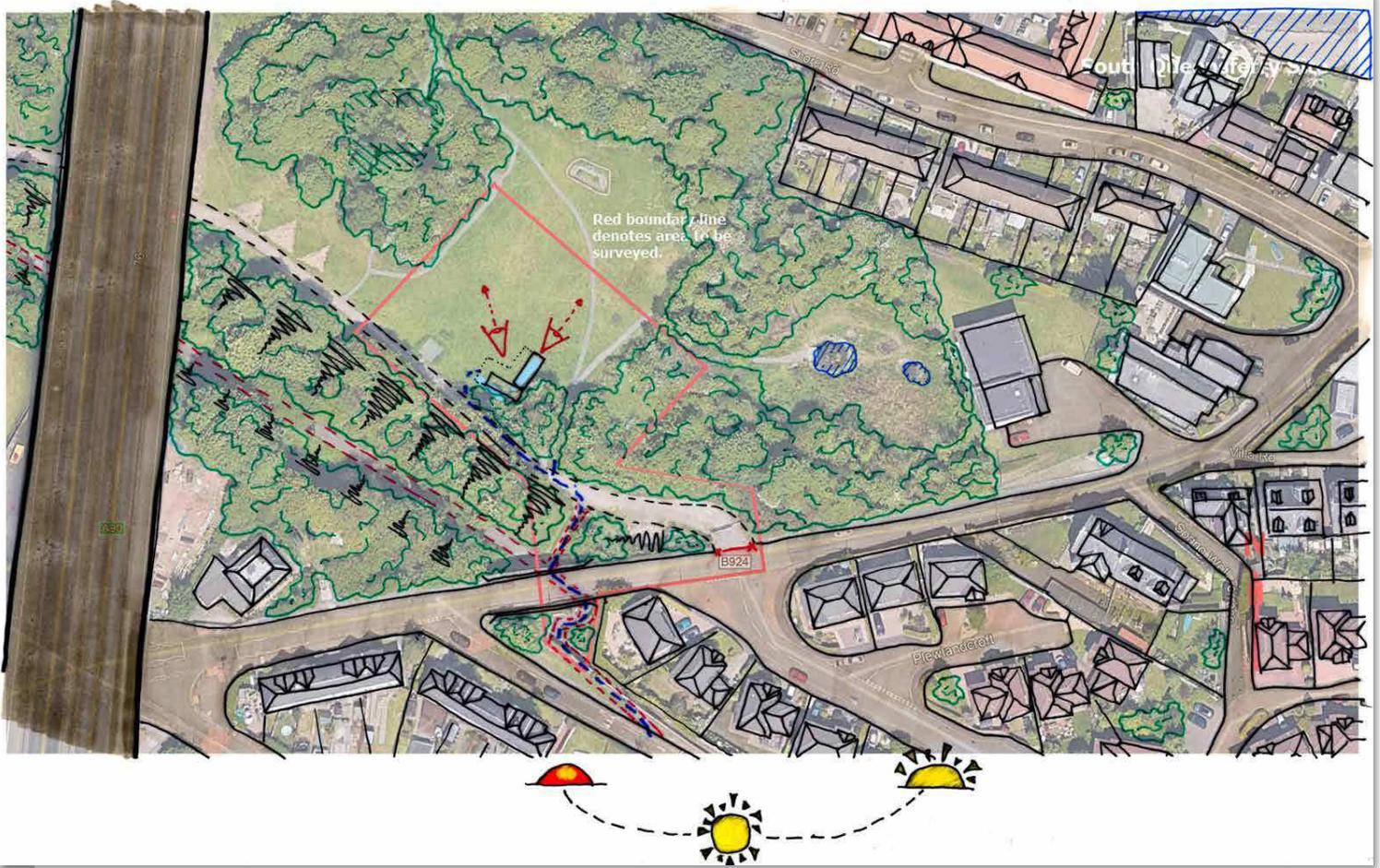


Recently finished carpark provides ideal place for dropoff/pickup of the children. Any supplies such as food, water etc can be delivered via here and promptly picked up by nursery staff.

Public access road leading easily back to main roads.

Well maintained and clearly defined footpath leads past the site and provides access to other potential play sites nearby.

Example of Site & Design: South Queensferry



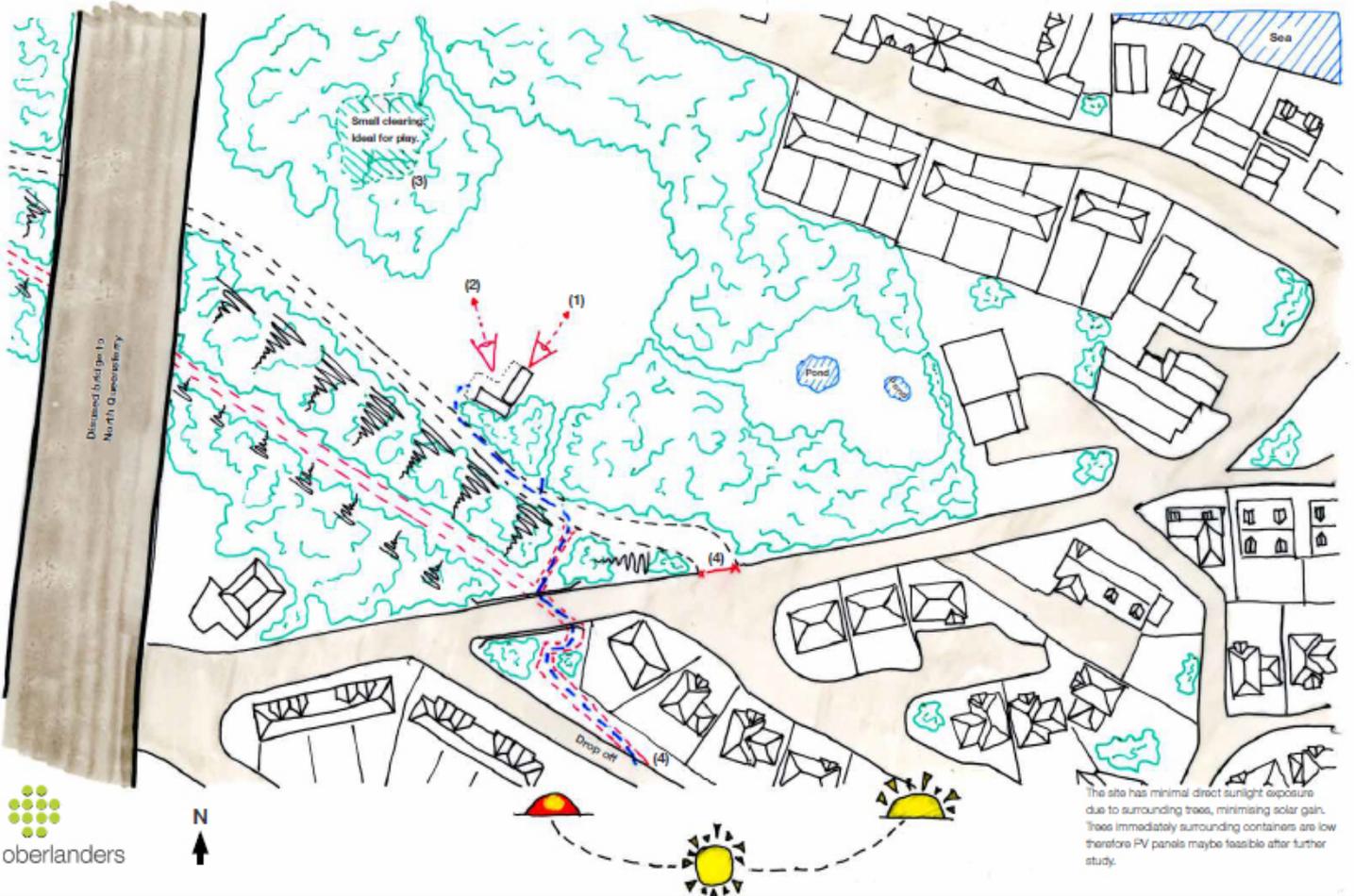
(1) Orientation creates view out to beautiful view of the Firth of Forth. Inspiring and exciting vista for the children.

(2) Orientated towards likely play area to be used by nursery. Good sight lines across local area. In reverse the nursery buildings will be highly visible from around the site which will help with wayfinding for any lost children.

(3) Clearing in nearby woodland copse shows signs of promising play site. Existing timber seating arranged in circle. Close proximity to containers.

(4) Existing entrance to site poses a danger. Blind exit onto a busy road. Alternative access from footpath under the bridge. Drop off possible from street where path begins. Drop off road markings required? Access to site for supply deliveries ok.

South Queensferry



The site has minimal direct sunlight exposure due to surrounding trees, minimising solar gain. Trees immediately surrounding containers are low therefore PV panels maybe feasible after further study.

Advantages to Outdoor Learning

Forest Kindergartens promote and support children's holistic learning and the natural environment allows children to develop creatively, emotionally, intellectually, physically, socially, and spiritually.

Being in nature increases children's positive mental health and wellbeing, combats the effects of stress, and encourages a greater understanding of self-awareness and our human impact on the natural world. All the more relevant in a post Covid 19 environment.

The Forest Kindergarten model is based on the Scandinavian approach of nature-based education and child-centred learning through play.

Each site will initially cater for 15 children, potentially rising to 20 and be part of a blended learning experience for nursery age children with two days in a forest setting and 2 days in a traditional nursery environment.

Community Engagement & Benefits

Community engagement is always at the heart of a Hub South East offering, and creating positive benefits for the local community is as important in a small project as it is in a major regeneration project.

In addition to the positive benefits that Rebuild bring, the local community for each site has been consulted throughout the development process and each local school's art department has been invited to provide input to the external art treatment for the units. Morrison Construction has given support by offering to provide all the materials for the community to complete the art installation.

Both Oberlanders and Hub South East have pledged time to support the community art installation by picking up the brush or roller.

The Grassmarket Community Project, a local charity (and Hub South East's charity Partner), also assisted by manufacturing and supplying the bespoke timber signage for each site, made from recycled wood in its woodwork social enterprise.

Testimonials



The sense of confidence and self worth that comes with learning new skills and immediately being able to see the results of that labour is something that helped me through a difficult time and if we can replicate that with even a fraction of our trainees, then we will make a lasting impact and help them positively improve their lives.

Paul Hunter, Founder – Rebuild



After the Leith Meanwhile development, with support and advice from Hub South East, we have used the lessons learned on this project to inform the roll out of our Forest Kindergarten programme across the city.

We've offered outdoor education as part of a blended early learning and childcare provision since January 2017 in two heritage sites in Edinburgh, but in order to extend this to allow for an increase in pre-school hours, we need to provide ancillary support accommodation on site for the storage of resources and to provide welfare and shelter for staff breaks and children on occasion.

Using shipping containers is a great flexible solution which helps us achieve our objectives. This is an exciting project which offers a range of opportunities for children to positively engage with the natural world and provide holistic engagement in all aspects of their learning while improving health & wellbeing.

**Robbie Crockatt, Learning Estate Planning Manager,
The City of Edinburgh Council**

