

# Architects Becerra

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## PREAMBLE

The school is located in the inner west region of Sydney, New South Wales, Australia. It is in a leafy suburb established during the post war period. The location of the school is bound to the south by one of Sydney's busiest arterial roads, Parramatta Road, north by Burton Street and to the east by Broughton Street. The school has served the needs of the Parish in providing quality education in the Catholic tradition since the 1850's. Since, the school has grown with a number of buildings on the parish site. In 1998 a building committee was formed in association with the school principal, the parish priest and the Catholic Education Office Sydney to create a master plan for the school. We were members of this committee as parents of students at the school and as parishioners.

The result of many consultations with staff, students, parents and parishioners was to consolidate the school to the western side of the parish campus. The process was to be done in stages to facilitate the uninterrupted function of the school. In 2001 the first stage was complete. This stage included the refurbishment of the existing Burton Street building accommodating Year 1 on the first level and the relocation of the administration offices and staff facilities to the ground level of this building. The project also included a new library with Year 2 classrooms above. The existing school lacked identity and included buildings that were institutional and did not respond to current pedagogy.

Architects Becerra became involved in 2006 with the second stage of the works including the documentation of the Year 5 and Year 6 classroom block. The design intent was to maintain the style already established for the identity of the school, therefore similar building materials, colours and finishes were used to integrate the new with the recently completed existing buildings.



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In 2009 Architects Becerra were commissioned for the refurbishment and extensions to the school library. The increase in area was to meet the demands of educational needs in the technological world upon which schools operate. The library area was increase by 65 square metres towards the north creating a glazed roof area. There was also the relocation of the reception desk, creation of a computer laboratory, two speech rooms for one to one assessment and the design of a flexible learning room connected to the main library area by sliding glazed wall.

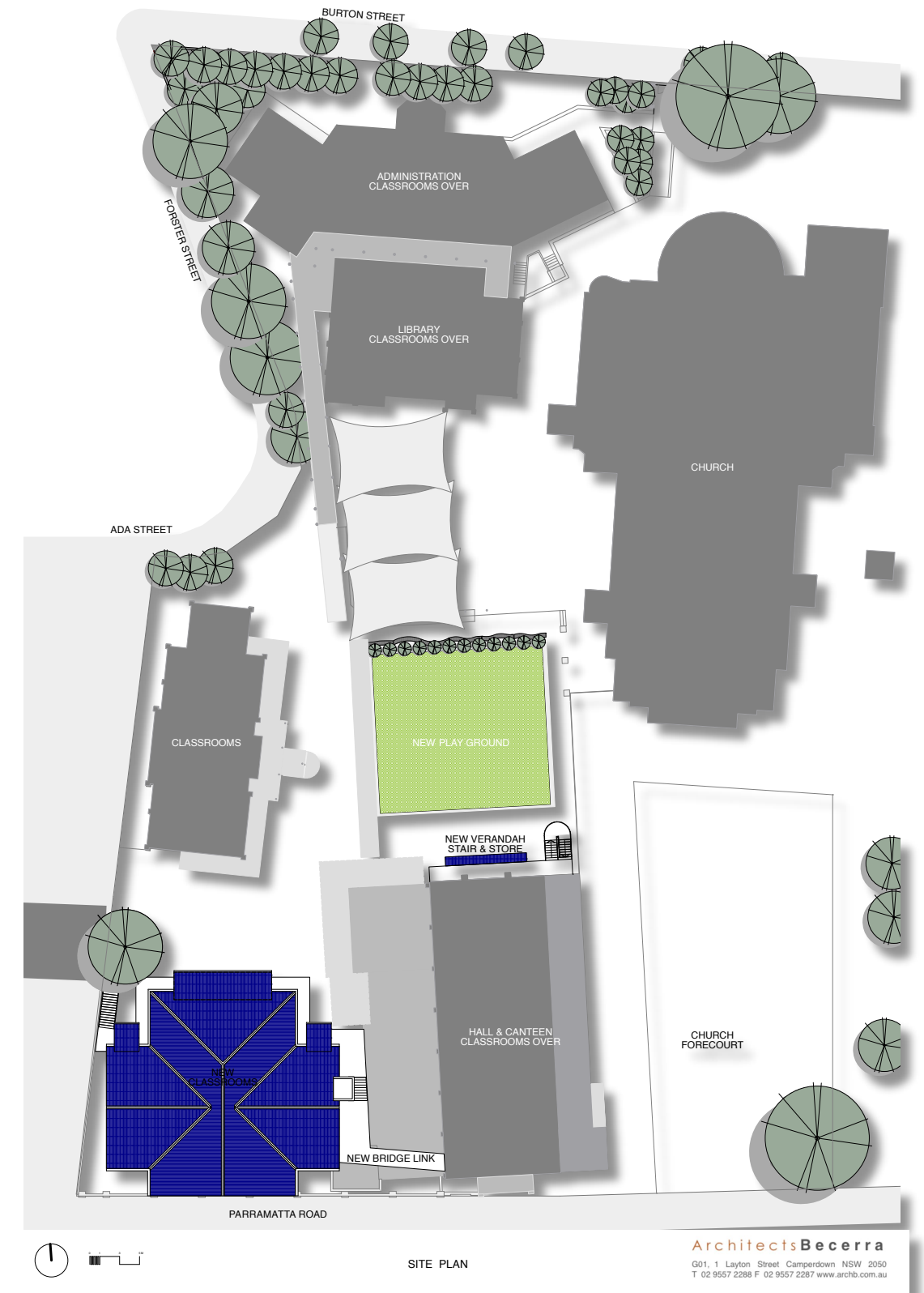
In 2009 the Australian Government announced the economic stimulus package in response to the global financial crisis, which included the Building the Education Revolution (BER). We were engaged to plan and design new classrooms for kindergarten and Year 3 on an AU\$3million budget.

## PLANNING AND DESIGN

At this stage the school had been amalgamated on the western side of the site. An existing 1970's brick, concrete and tiled roof building was situated in the middle of the site. We investigated the reuse of this building but the cost of renovating, due to its structure, was excessive. The conclusion was TO demolish and relocate this building on the southern boundary backing onto Parramatta Road. This meant that all school buildings would be on the perimeter of the campus with the play areas congregated into one large space providing an improved recreational area with superior supervision, perimeter security and a visual link of the whole school site that had not existed. The new artificial grass, soft fall, playground allows students to participate in the physical education program within campus.

In addition to this the site had been identified as a heritage precinct and the church was listed as a heritage item. The demolition of this building would allow due curtilage to the church, therefore was supported by all stakeholders.

Another factor taken into consideration when locating the new building was the excessive noise generated by traffic along the major arterial road, which bound the site to the south. We decided that the new building should back onto this road to screen noise and pollution. In turn we had to address other issues created such as vehicular noise and pollution. Our response was to create small courtyards that would double up as wet areas and gardens.



SITE PLAN



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The BER project allowed the implementation of the open learning pedagogy. The planning of the two education streams was to have class pods, which were visually connected and able to be moved based on educational needs of the students. This was achieved by creating sliding glass panels between the three classes and having a combined visual arts and resource breakout space accessible to all classes. Combining the break out spaces for all three classes into one was an efficient use of equipment and space. Storage cupboards line one wall of each classroom and include a student bag store and equipment store. These cupboards are lined with pin board material for visual displays. The implementation of storage cupboards along one wall allowed for a larger learning space as well as increased storage, which is readily accessible from within the classroom.

The project also included a lift, which was strategically located to allow for access for people with disabilities to as many levels of the existing school as possible.



GROUND FLOOR PLAN





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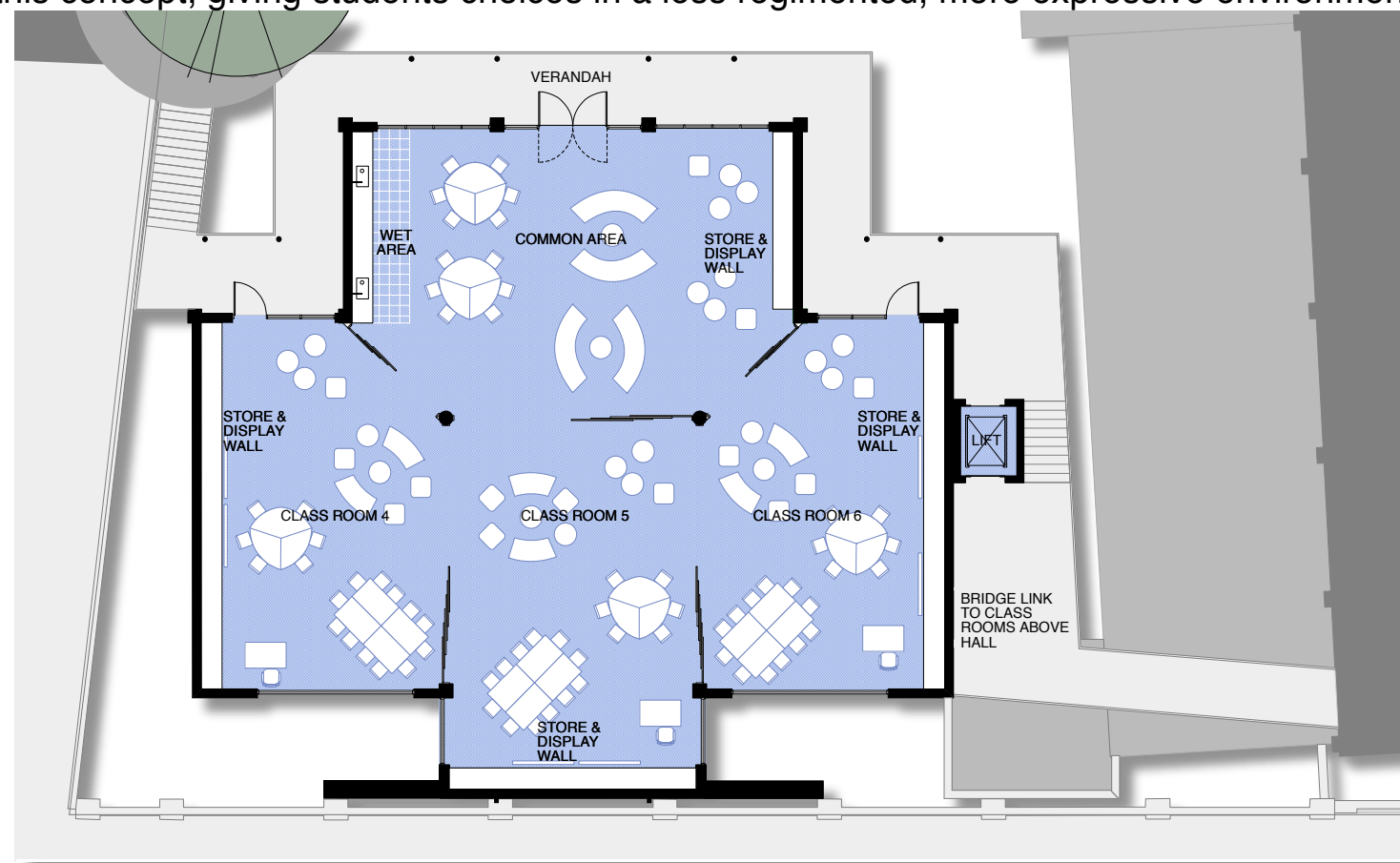
The planning process included consultation with

- the school governing body, the Catholic Education Office (CEO)
- the school, staff and students of St Mary's Concord
- the community, parish, parents and Parish Priest, Father Paul Crowley
- the building consent authority, The Building the Education Revolution Task Force established to fast track the approval process.

### RESPONDING TO THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Through out the planning process it was fundamental that the design responded and supported the needs of the educational program. The learning environment was to support the staff in creating a stimulating, interesting space that each student could identify with.

Many aspects of the educational program encourages each individual student, to work at their pace within a group of students with similar abilities. The space is capable of functioning as one large open space or four spaces separated by operable, glazed screens. The operable glazed screens create the flexible learning spaces, which allow the year group to come together as an assembly or break out into smaller groups. The furniture and furniture arrangements compliment this concept, giving students choices in a less regimented, more expressive environments.



LEVEL 1 FLOOR PLAN

St Mary's Concord





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### ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

Since the completion of the building works the CEO have used the building as an example to other schools to encourage the development of new environments for teaching and learning.

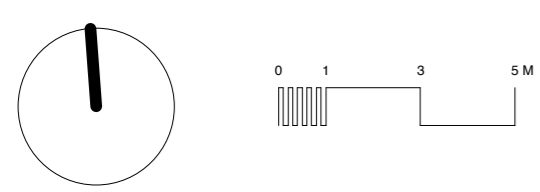
As the building was located backing onto an arterial road the acoustic integrity of the building was a major consideration not only to soften student noise internally but also to alleviate street vehicular noise. This was addressed in the construction of the building through the use of perforated plasterboard with insulation to the ceilings, masonry walls and carpet tiles on reinforced concrete to the floors. In addition to this industrial window frames with heavy duty glazing to reduce noise transmission were implemented.

All classrooms implement passive environmental controls such as natural cross ventilation, sun screening for shade and northerly orientation for maximum daylight penetration. In addition to this, roof ventilators, ceiling fans and air conditioning for extreme conditions, support the facilities.

Solar control is achieved on the ground floor by the verandah on the first floor shadowing the glass facade. Steel awnings were implemented on the first floor to achieve the same thing.

The completion of the building works in 2011 along with the refurbishment of the school administration building and hall has meant that St. Mary's Primary School is an exemplary teaching and learning facility in the inner west region of Sydney.



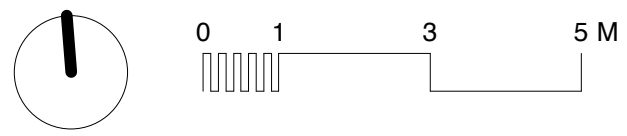


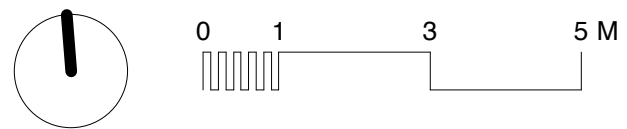
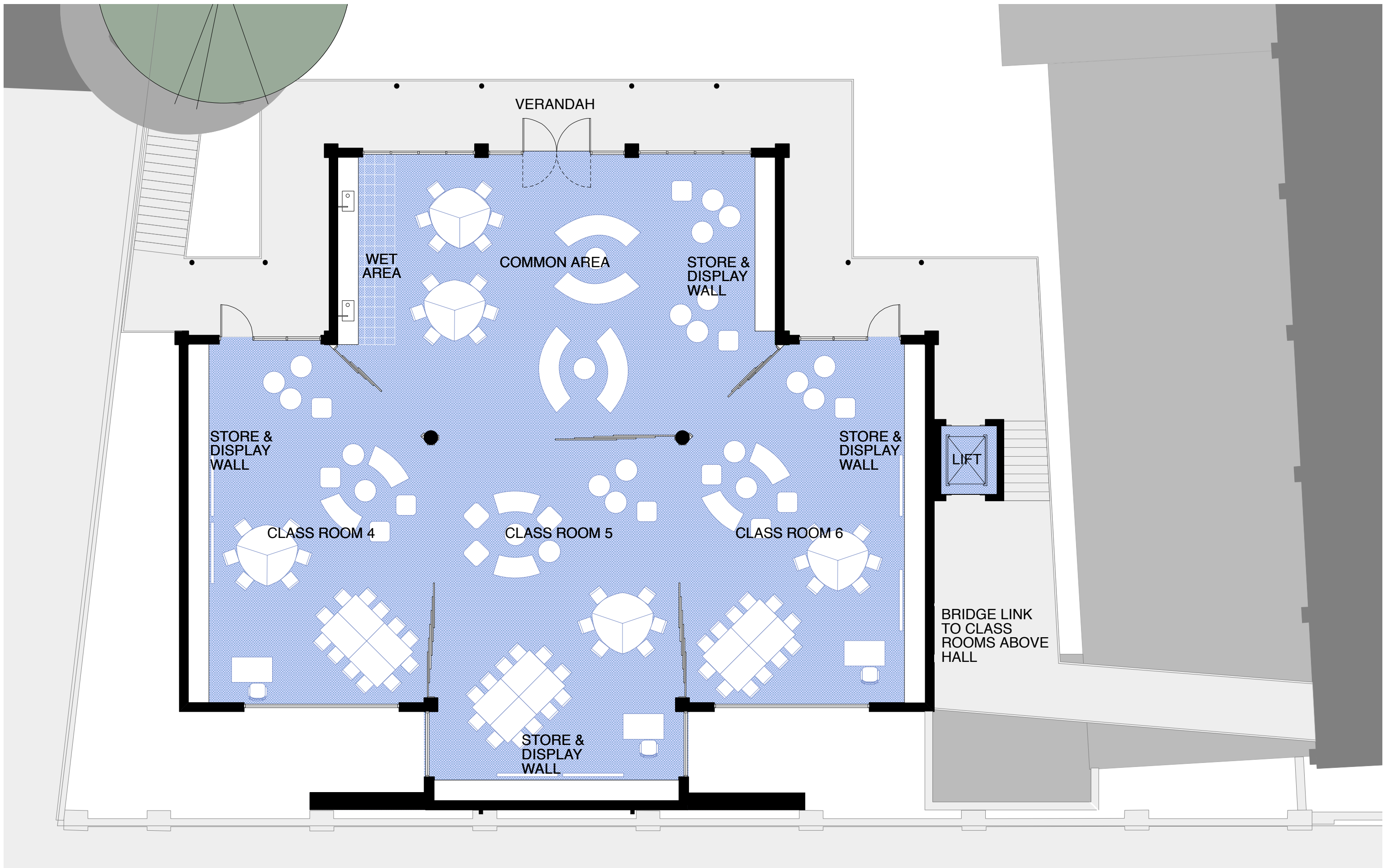
SITE PLAN





GROUND FLOOR PLAN





LEVEL 1 FLOOR PLAN

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