

Thurso Lifelong Learning Campus

Option 1A: Post Meeting Considerations
February 2026



This document summarises our responses to the recent feedback received from the THC Education team relative to the Lifelong Learning Campus proposals and outlines further opportunities for exploration. Please note that these comments only refer to the **new-build shared campus option 1A** (included in this document).

Response to THC Comments

Library LRC

THC Comment: Potential to be shared.

The suggested 450 sqm shared provision is based on a reduction of the combination of the proposed High School and existing UHI areas that would total 545 sqm due to expected efficiencies.

Increasingly, libraries are becoming more flexible and are used in other facilities as informal learning / meeting and in some cases, casual dining spaces and this approach could be adopted here with further investigation to **provide even greater efficiency in terms of campus floor area**, subject to the development of an appropriate safeguarding regime.

Cafe Servery

THC Comment: Café is part of the curriculum for Secondary enterprise and barista training. The café has potential to be shared (12m2).

Noted.

Dining / Kitchen

THC Comment: The area briefed by THC is required between 11.45 and 2.15 for up to 5 sittings and is used for study periods outwith this. The commercial kitchen element could be shared, although additional space would be required to accommodate an additional servery.

The space requirements for the dining and kitchen components based on the combination of the school accommodation schedule and the existing UHI provision would be as follows:
Dining: 531 sqm, Kitchen: 265 sqm, Total: **796 sqm**.

The proposed area within the ‘shared’ option totals **600 sqm**. It is envisaged that most of this efficiency would be provided by creating a shared kitchen facility and reducing the UHI / Community cafe, **protecting the requirements of the school by providing a segregated area and, as suggested, with separate servery to both areas**.

The UHI / community cafe would be augmented in terms of available floor area by taking advantage of elements of the proposed breakout / flexible study spaces for casual dining.

Learning Plazas

THC Comment: These are classroom areas, I’m not sure moving these to shared spaces would be helpful for THC as we would need to escort / put safe grading measures in place to access them. What is the advantage seen in sharing is it purely to reduce? The main benefit of these spaces is they are on hand accessible from the traditional teaching spaces.

We proposed their location in the connected ‘central’ area in order that they could be used by both school and UHI (subject to timetabling) but if this is not deemed practicable there are other opportunities for shared teaching space elsewhere in the combined programme that could be explored.

CDT

THC Comment: Looking at our timetabling analysis for Workshops we are at 89% and Graphics at 81%. There wouldn’t be much in the way of scope for sharing these. Unless the other spaces were enhanced in some way, so the offering was improved for both parties by sharing? Similar to learning plazas there would be a need to escort / put safeguarding measures in place to share the space.

The current UHI Construction Wing has an overall area of 1400 sqm but this includes spaces that are not in use. In our estimation, this reduces the required area (based on current course offerings) to around 1200 sqm. The school requirement is for 540 sqm of workshops, graphic rooms and storage.

The feasibility study proposes a combined area of 1600 sqm that offers a saving on the combined maximum footprint. We believe that this would, subject to further design development and the development of an appropriate safeguarding regime, permit the co-location of school and UHI services in a way that would not be detrimental to education delivery and would afford opportunities to improve / enhance the offer in this subject area for both parties.

Home Economics

THC Comment: Timetabling analysis we are at 65% so a little more scope to share but similar safeguarding issues.

Provided appropriate safeguarding measures can be put in place we believe that with further design development an efficient shared facility could be created for the benefit of both the school and UHI.

Reception

THC Comment: In theory sharing could work, the area saving, is UHIs reception so oversized as it that it could be reduced and still accommodate THC and HLH on top of their staff?

The proposed shared reception is considerably larger than that within the school accommodation schedule and we are confident that it is of a sufficient scale to comfortably accommodate the needs of both parties.

External Play Space

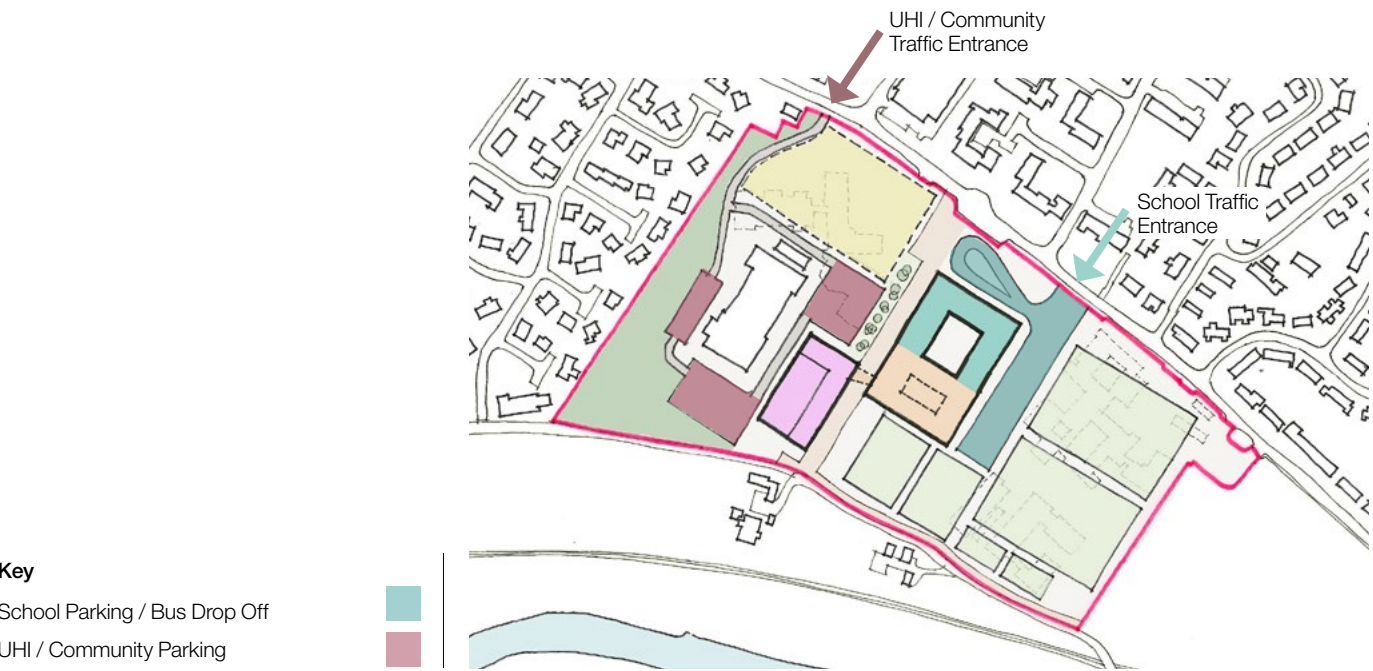
THC Comment: We would require secure access to external play areas in line with BB103 area metrics for primary and nursery including pitches. No internal courtyards!

The sketch layout shown in the feasibility study is a diagram demonstrating the potential distribution of the accommodation in three blocks. With more detailed design development the provision of external play areas with secure access could be incorporated.

Parking / Drop Off

THC Comment: Parking and drop off would need to be separated out for buses, ASN, nursery and the main school traffic. We have concerns about access and separation for the THC element as is, we would not be keen to increase traffic within the THC site for UHI or other services. Keeping clear and separate entrances would be required.

The preliminary site layout (see below) maintains a dedicated vehicle access to the 'UHI side' of the shared campus south of the school entrance on Ormlie Road that leads to significant new areas of car parking intended for UHI and community use. The entrance adjacent to the school is intended for buses, ASN, nursery and main school parking only.



Pedestrian Link

THC Comment: The main pedestrian link through the site and down the river to the town centre appears to be blocked with the UHI entrance. I thought the 'corridor of opportunity' pedestrian connection away from the main road was one of the main site strategies?

Noted, the linking building across this route is intended in the repurposing / retain options only (2 & 3) and would be open and accessible during building operational hours.

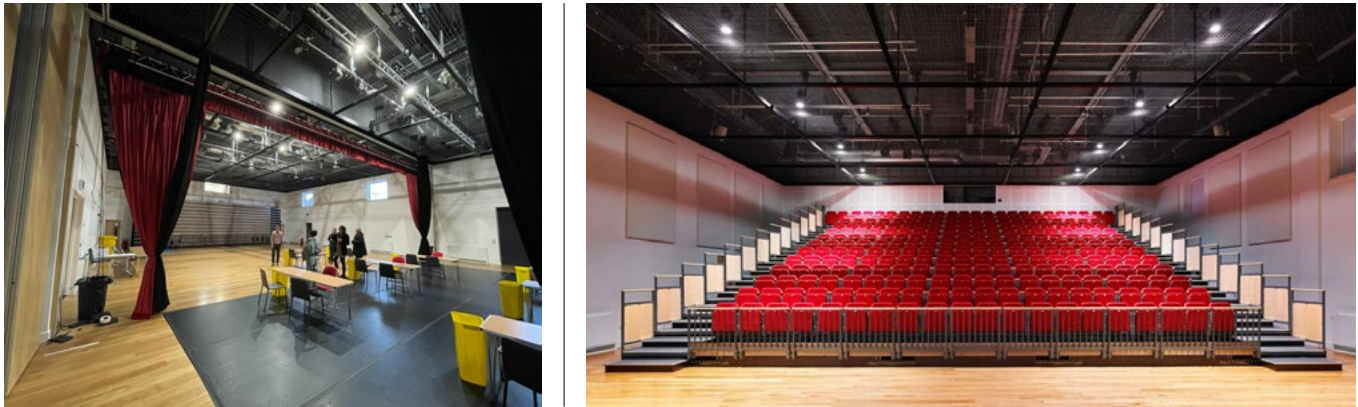
Further Opportunities

There are further opportunities for space to be shared within the wider combined programme that may not only provide additional flexible teaching / study / event spaces, but also provide savings in required new-build space.

Auditorium

The shared campus proposals include the addition of a new auditorium space. This space is considered to be a positive addition to the programme that could be used by the school, UHI and the wider community.

Rather than taking a traditional approach to creating a space with fixed seating, it could be designed with retractable bleacher style seating creating a flexible hall space for study / exams / large format teaching



Johnstone Town Hall - Flexible Auditorium Space with retractable seating shown in 'hall' and 'theatre' modes

Innovation Centre

The proposals incorporate an 'Innovation Centre' of considerable size (750 sqm) that would provide 'new' space that is not contained in the school requirements or the current UHI provision.

Our initial understanding is that it will contain a variety of spaces including flexible learning / study spaces that both the school and UHI could take advantage of, perhaps allowing for a reduction in the provision of this type of space within the current school / UHI requirements.

Sports Pitches

The provision of the MUGA pitches as part of the school provision could be augmented by introducing a durable heated enclosure, permitting their use in all weathers. A similar facility was introduced at Anderson High School in Shetland many years ago where it has been a great success and has stood up to the weather.

This would bring benefits to both the school, the campus as a whole and create a valuable asset for the wider community.

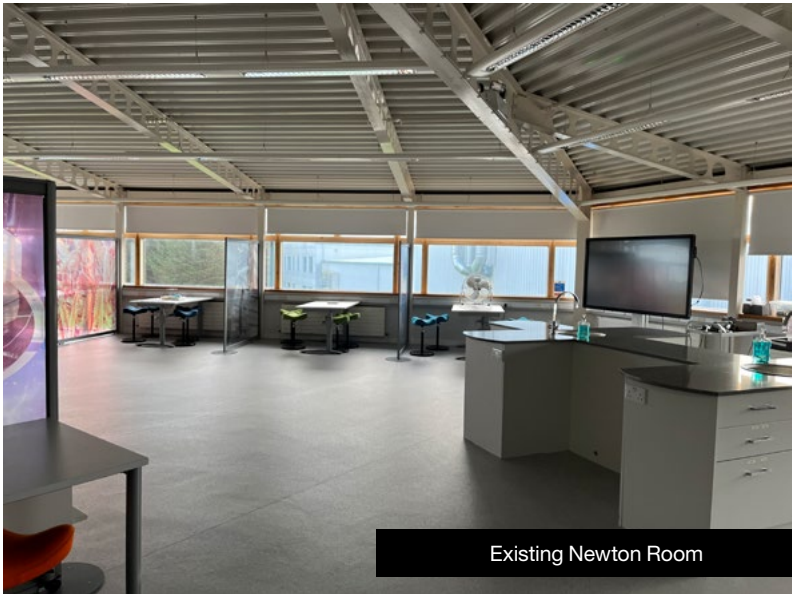
Crucially, this enhancement may negate the need to construct such a large indoor games hall within the school component of the campus, reducing the footprint and overall new-build area. In terms of the use of the Games Hall for exams, the reduction in area would be countered by the introduction of other large spaces like the auditorium that would be suitable for large group examination settings.



Indoor Training Facility - Anderson High School, Shetland

Newton Room

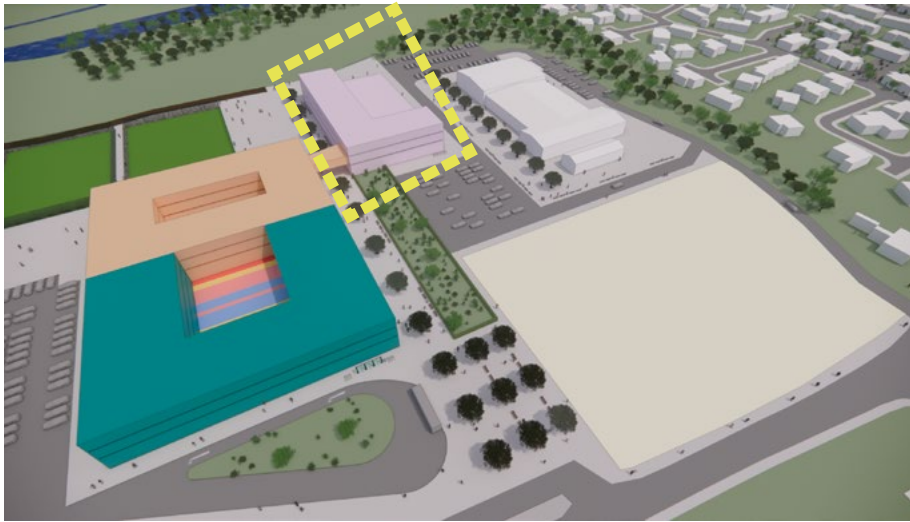
A replacement for the existing Newton Room forms part of the proposals and this could be designed to provide a greater degree of flexibility than the current facility.



Existing Newton Room

UHI Specific Opportunities

The new-build option 1A introduces a UHI specific building (illustrated below) containing a variety of spaces. It may be possible with further exploration to reduce the area of this component through rationalisation and efficient sharing of space.



Option 1A massing in context highlighting the UHI new-build facility

Flexible Study / Breakout Space

The proposals currently include circa 400 sqm of flexible study / breakout space. As stated earlier, an element of this space could also be used to augment the cafe facilities but, beyond this, there are perhaps opportunities to rationalise this area through the use of the proposed Library and parts of the Innovation Centre to serve this purpose.

Formal Teaching Space

The formal teaching space of 300 sqm already assumed the sharing of some of the school space in the form of non-specialist classrooms.

There may, however, be an opportunity to reduce this further by capitalising on the flexibility of the auditorium space to provide a variety of teaching environments and take advantage of the presence of the Innovation Centre as part of the overall mix.

CFEE / ERI

A replacement for the current CFEE and a new home for the ERI, allowing its relocation from George Street are both incorporated. Currently the combined area of both existing facilities, 1060 sqm has been included. Owing to the synergy between both in terms of spaces used and areas of research, their co-location may permit a rationalisation to a smaller new build area without compromising course delivery or research.

Elements of the proposed Innovation Centre, once the programme has crystallised may also provide an opportunity for further reduction.

Option 1a: A new-build shared campus with no requirement for early demolition of existing facilities

This variation on option 1 also proposes the creation of a new-build lifelong learning Community POD and replacement UHI facilities, locates the new purpose built facilities on the sports pitches of the current high school at the heart of the site.

This permits the construction of the new campus with minimal disruption to both the existing school and UHI allowing them to continue to function during construction.

Once the new campus is complete, the school site can be cleared to provide new sports pitches as shown in other options.

The UHI portion of the site, once cleared (with the exception of the ETEC building) creates a potential development sitefronting onto Ormlie Road that would be suitable for a variety of uses, including office or residential.

The extent of the site considered for the new campus buildings is ahown in the adjacent image.



Extent of site for the new Lifelong Learning Campus

The relatively compact nature of the available site has led to the development of three complementary and physically connected blocks forming the proposed campus.

The blocks are envisaged as follows:

- 1. A Central building containing the majority of co-located and community facilities (with the exception of sports facilities
- 2. A Community POD building that contains nursery, primary and secondary education spaces
- 3. A UHI building that contains new teaching / lab and workshop spaces and is closely associated with the retained ETEC facility

The outline accommodation contained in each block is shown in the adjacent table and a proposed site plan and massing view follow on the next pages that are reflective of these stated areas.

1. Central Building		
Space		Area (sqm)
Auditorium		400
Innovation Centre		700
Learning Resource Centre (Library)		450
Canteen / Dining		600
Catering & Hospitality Teaching incl. Home Economics		350
Salon / H&B Facilities		430
Learning Plaza/Community Space incl. Meeting rooms/spaces		480
Reception/Community Exhibition Space		120
Newton Room		190
Staff Areas		140
Meeting rooms / spaces		60
Partner Space (Potential NHS)		1500
Total:		5450
Plus services (36% :1960)		7410
Approx. Area Per floor (3 floors assumed)		2470

2. Community POD		
Space		Area (sqm)
Secondary	Non Practical	1446
	Science	686
	Art	166
	Music	203
	PE (Without retractable seating)	1363
	Shared Areas	201
	ASN	190
	SEBN	190
	Guidance	82
	Staff Areas	370
	Auxilliary Areas	231
Primary	Teaching	1266
	Physical Education	499
	ASL	158
	Staff Areas	185
	Sanitary Areas	159
	Catering and Cleaning	137
ELC	ELC	501
Total:		8033
Plus services (36% :2891)		10,924
Approx. Area Per floor (3 floors assumed)		3640

3. New UHI Building		Area (sqm)
Space		Area (sqm)
Flexible Study / Breakout		400
Formal Teaching Space		300
CFEE Replacement		480
Environmental Research Institute		580
Construction Skills incl. Craft, Design and Technology		1600
Administration		250
Total:		3610
Plus services (36% :1300)		4910
Approx. Area Per floor (3 floors assumed)		1636

Option 1a: A new-build shared campus with no requirment for early demolition of existing facilities

The adjacent site plan shows the distribution of the three distinct yet connected volumes that comprise the Lifelong Learning Campus and their relationship with the retained element of the UHI Campus and the new sports pitches.

The east-west pedestrian route remains from option 1 and provides access to the main entrance within the central shared facilities building, shown in orange.

Within this building, community / meeting rooms, flexible teaching spaces, a new auditorium, learning resource centre, cafe, innovation centre, a new Newton Room, and shared staff areas can be found.

This is also the location for Catering and Hospitality teaching spaces that also form the Home Economics department, and the health and beauty teaching spaces with their public accessible salon.

From this building users are distributed at ground floor level into the Community POD block (aqua / green) that contains the nursery, primary and the majority of secondary

teaching spaces and via en elevated bridge link at first floor level into the UHI Block. This contains specialist teaching spaces, environmental and science research labs and technical workshops, shared with secondary school pupils.

The new UHI block (pink) has been strategically located to maintain a close proximity with the retained ETEC building.

The demolition of the majority of the UHI assets, together with the relocation of the vehicle access junction on Ormlie Road creates a potential development site of circa 0.85 Hectares at the couth west corner of the site, suitable for a variety of uses.

New sports pitches on site of current school building

New central shared facilities building provides a main entrance to the Lifelong Learning Campus and physical links to its distinct component parts (Community POD and UHI)

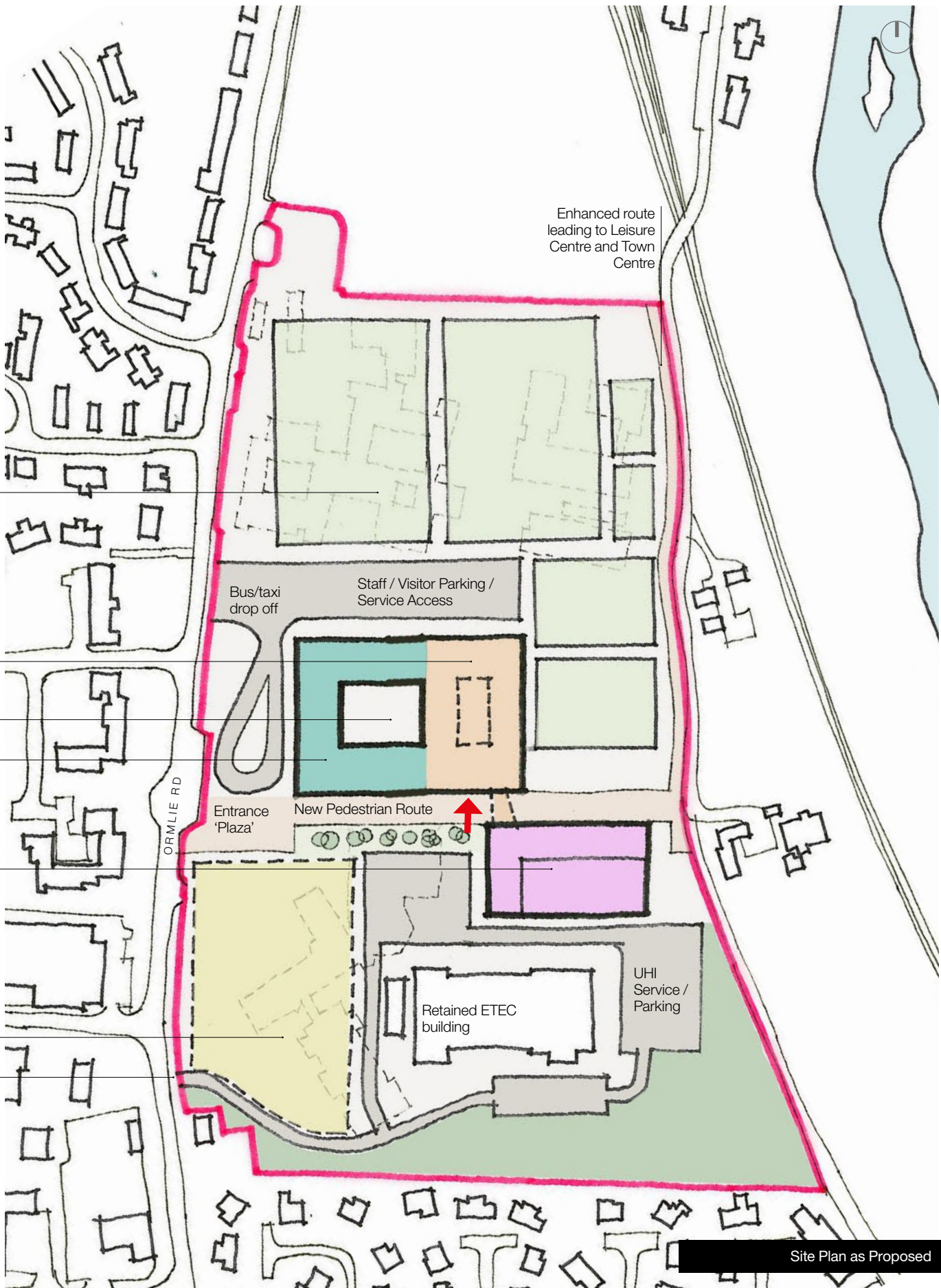
Secure external play space for nursery and primary pupils

New Community POD. Area based on Education requirements (Nursery / Primary / Secondary). Physically connected at ground floor level to central shared facilities building

New UHI building located adjacent to the retained ETEC facility and physically linked by elevated bridge link to central shared facilities building

Demolition of majority of existing UHI campus creates potential 0.85 Hectare development site suitable for a variety of uses incl. office / residential etc.

New vehicle access from Ormlie Road serving new / retained UHI buildings and potential development site



Key

Community POD Block

Shared Facilities / Entrance Block

New build UHI Block

Retained ETEC building

Site Plan as Proposed

Option 1a: Proposed Massing in Context

The adjacent image shows the massing of the proposed new elements alongside the retained buildings that form this option for the lifelong learning campus.

Please note that all new elements are shown as basic massing forms with no architectural design and that their 'boxy' nature is not reflective of their potential ultimate form / roofscape design.

Advantages of this Option

Co-location of Services: Reduction in required New-Build Accommodation within the Community POD

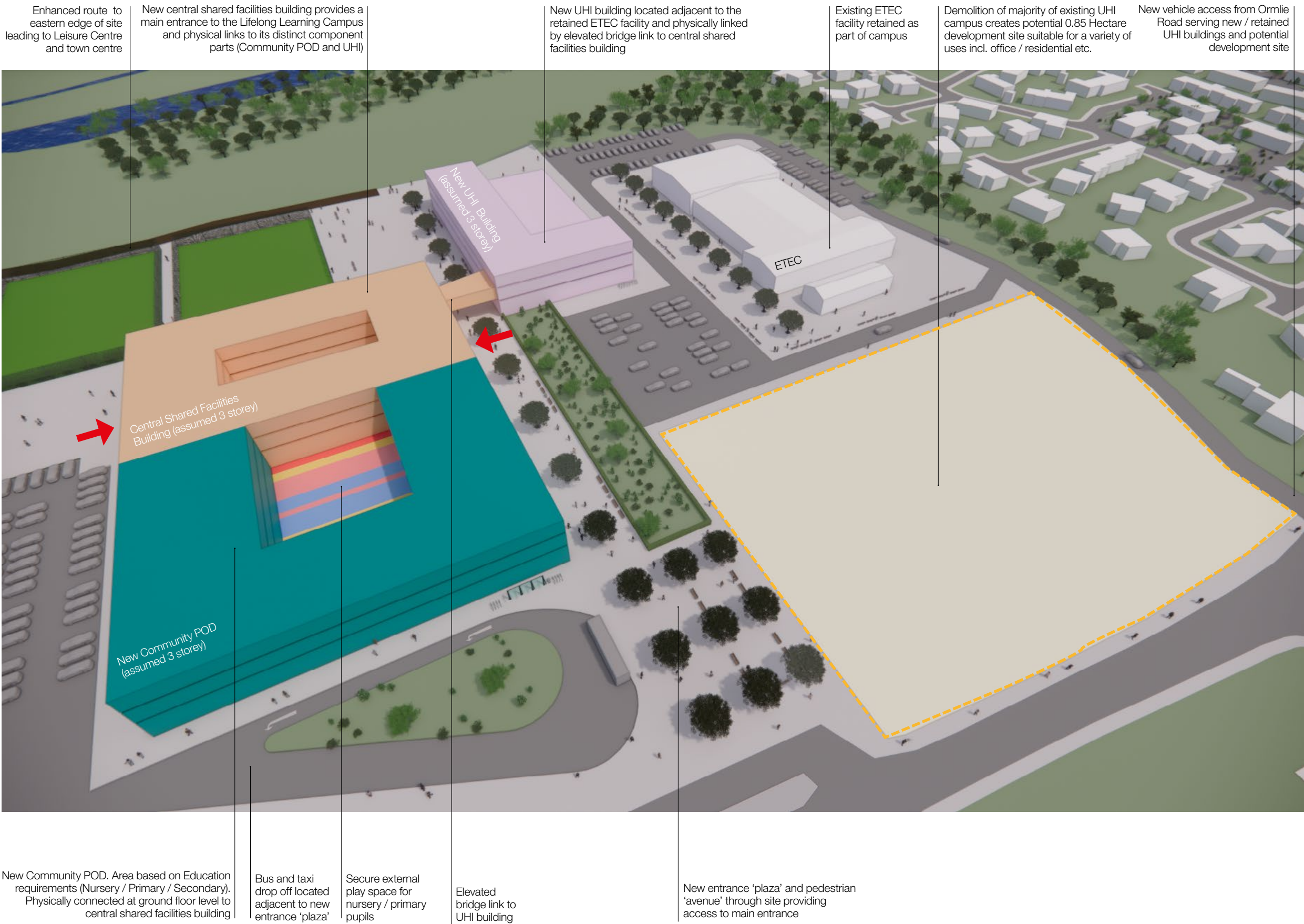
The co-location of the services / facilities provides a significant reduction in required new build space.

Improvements on Existing Condition

- Positively transforms both the existing school UHI campus giving them greater presence, future-proofing their estates
- Improves circulation, accessibility and legibility, and provides new spaces for flexible learning / study / breakout
- Creates a defined potential development site

Challenges of this option

- Would require considerable capital investment



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