O'DonnellBrown

Drumbrae Outdoor Learning Facility

Department of Social Responsibility and Sustainability
University of Edinburgh

Design and Access Statement
November 2025

DRAFT

Contents

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Revision: 04

Status: Draft

Date: 21/11/2025

1.0 Brief

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1.1 Brief

This project forms part of the University of Edinburgh's Forest and Peatland Programme, an initiative aimed at creating woodland and enhancing open habitats to help offset carbon emissions associated with unavoidable university-related travel. The programme not only contributes to climate action but also delivers significant biodiversity and community benefits. The initiative is led by the Department for Social Responsibility and Sustainability (SRS), with operational support from the Estates Department.

The programme contributes to the University's broader net-zero objectives.

Drumbrae Outdoor Learning Facility

The University aims to create an outdoor learning facility at its Drumbrae site to enhance environmental education, strengthen community engagement, and support personal well-being. The proposed facility will provide inclusive, adaptable spaces for students, staff, and local residents, and will host an engagement programme with nearby schools, enabling people of all ages to connect with nature through both structured and informal learning experiences.

THE UNIVERSITY of EDINBURGH

Community Consultation Event - 18/06/2025

1.2 Consultation Process

As part of the ongoing development of the Drumbrae Outdoor Learning Facility project, a programme of consultation events has been undertaken to ensure that the proposals are informed by meaningful engagement with the local community, key stakeholders, and statutory bodies. These discussions have helped shape the emerging design and ensure that it responds to local needs, environmental considerations, and wider strategic priorities.

To date, the project team has hosted an initial community consultation event and met with relevant officers from Stirling Council. A further open community meeting has also taken place, providing another opportunity for local residents and interested parties to review the proposals, ask questions, and share feedback. The events held are summarised below.

Consultation Events:

18th June 2025 - Drumbrae Community Consultation
Our community consultation event was held in Bridge of Allan on 18th June 2025 where we presented our feasibility proposals to various key stakeholders invited by the client (University of Edinburgh).

26th September 2025 – Meeting with Stirling Council
UoE meet the Stirling Council Access and Sustainable Transport Officer and the Nature Restoration Officer.

21st November 2025 – Drumbrae Community meeting
This was an open community meeting that was advertised locally.

2.0 Site

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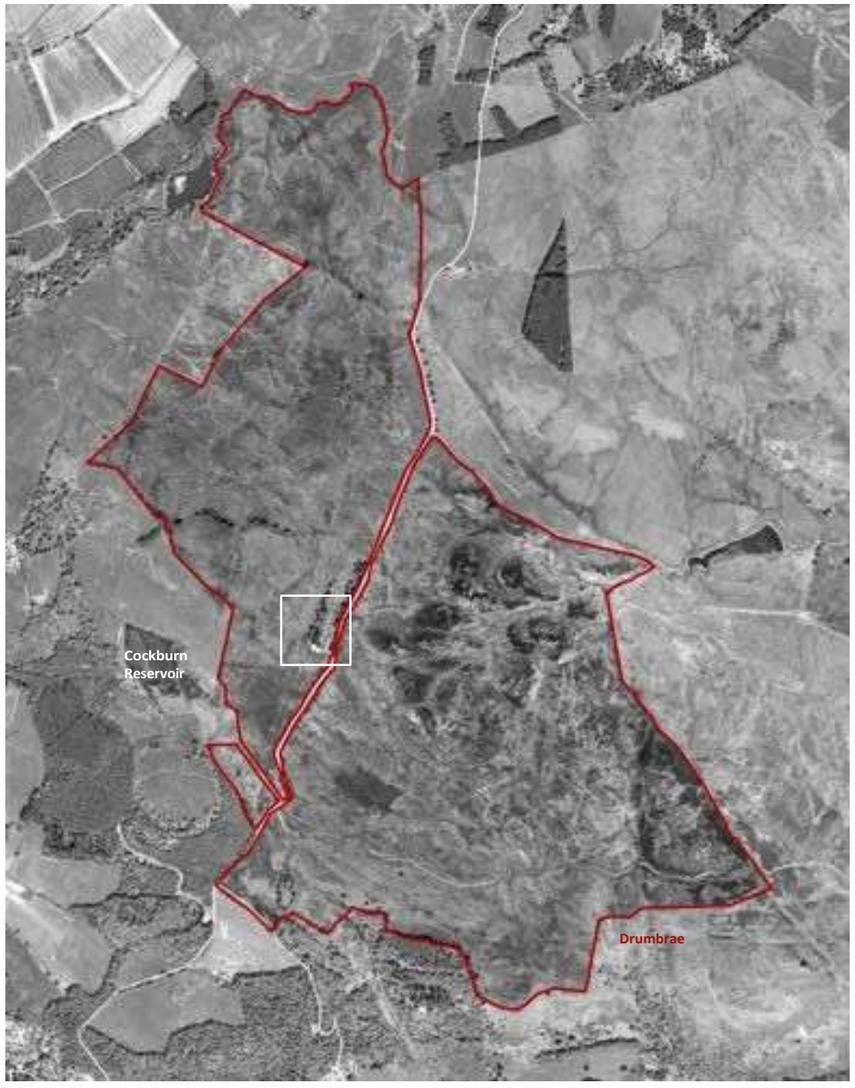
Location Map



Drumbrae Map

2.1 Location

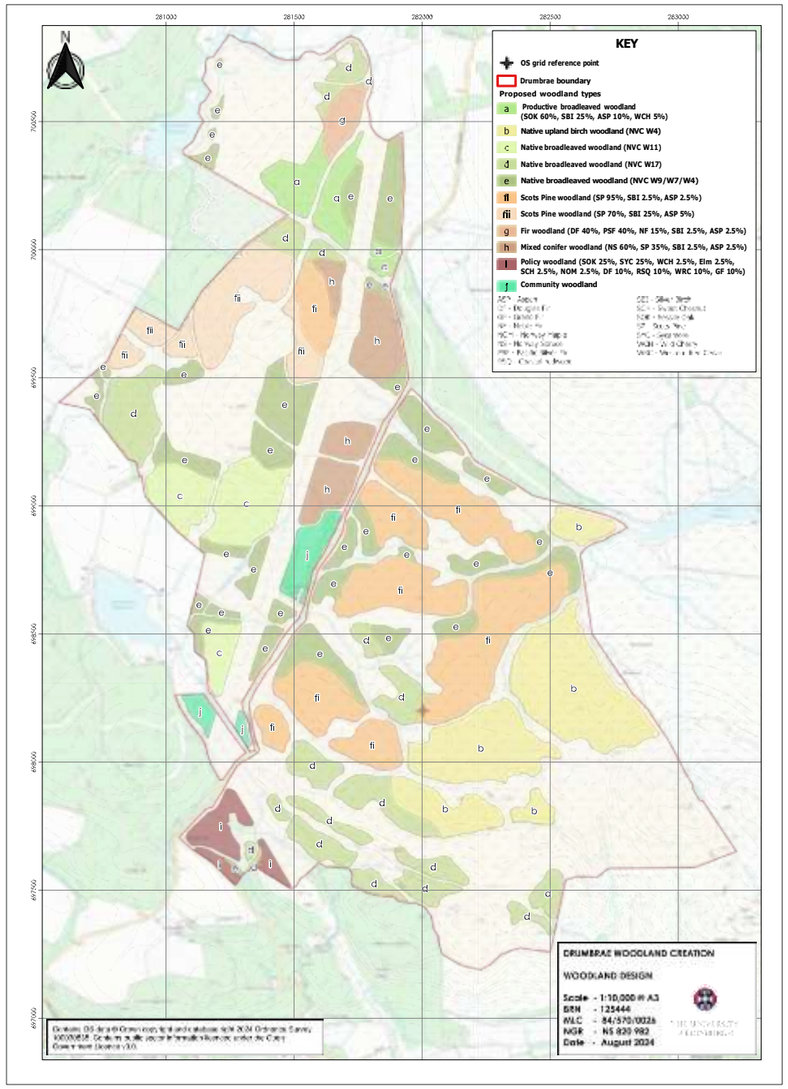
Drumbrae is a 430-hectare site owned by The University of Edinburgh. Located within the Stirling Local Authority Area, the site sits within in the Ochil Hills, just north of Bridge of Allan. Previously used as upland grazed farmland, it is now undergoing transformation into a woodland creation site.

Site Features

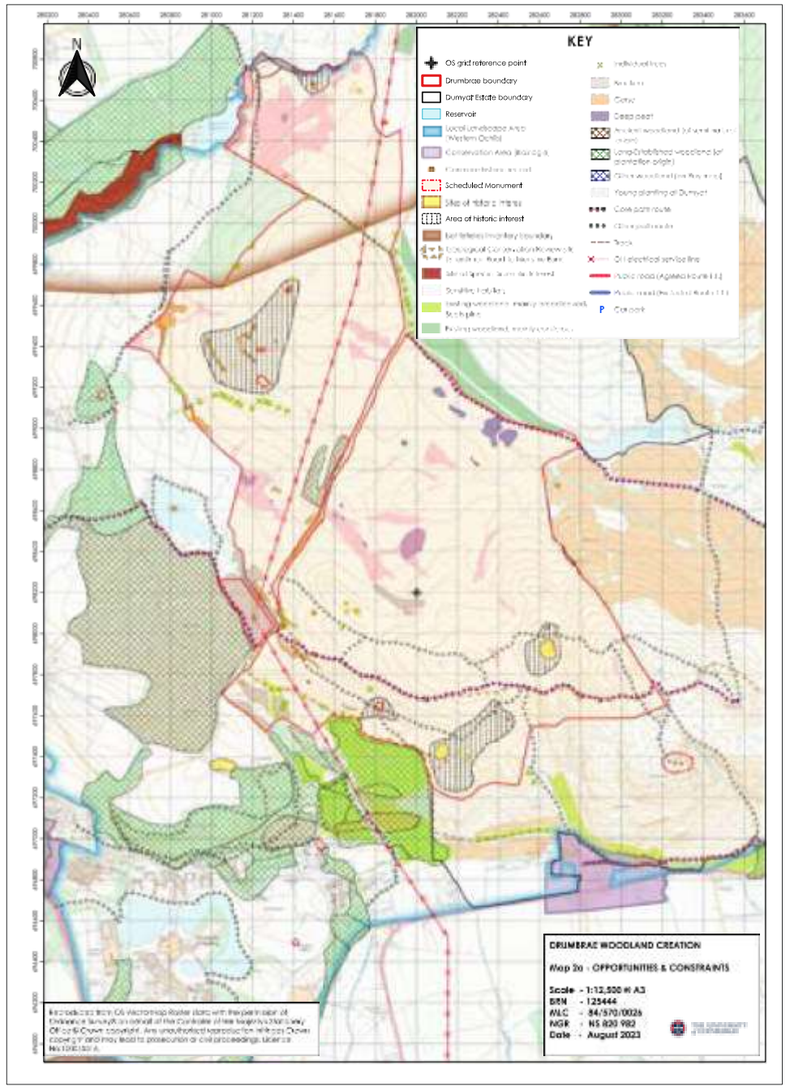
While the primary focus is on woodland development, the project also preserves and integrates areas of open habitat, geological interest, and archaeological significance. The site will also support biodiversity enhancements and research opportunities, further elevating its ecological and educational importance.

Access

The site is accessed via Sherrifmuir Road which is a quiet singletrack road with no formal pedestrian footway. Pedestrians and vehicles share the carriageway which is common for rural single-track lanes. However, the surrounding area includes amenities such as car parks and walking trails maintained by Stirling Local Authority, particularly around the nearby Cockburn Reservoir. The site is situated within one hour of Edinburgh, lies adjacent to the University of Stirling campus, and is close to the town of Bridge of Allan, making it accessible to local communities and institutions.



Woodland Design



Woodland Opportunities + Constraints

2.2 Woodland Creation Context

The University of Edinburgh has developed a woodland creation plan for Drumbrae. As part of this process, the University carried out a series of ecological surveys to better understand the habitats and species present on the site. The findings from these surveys informed the woodland design plan, which identifies specific tree species for planting across the wider site, ensuring the land is managed in a way that supports and enhances local biodiversity.

This work forms part of the University's wider commitment to achieving net zero carbon by 2040. As well as reducing emissions at source, the University is investing in nature-based solutions to offset unavoidable emissions, particularly those associated with essential travel. The woodland creation programme is a key component of this approach, with over half a million trees now planted across its estate to help capture carbon, restore habitats, and provide long-term benefits for people and nature.

Access + Protection Proposals

2.4 Site Context

The proposed Outdoor Learning Facility forms part of this wider masterplan for Drumbrae, acting as the operational base for the development, facilitating outdoor learning for visiting groups.

An area of woodland known as Cockburn woods has been identied as the site for the facility. Accessed via Sheriffmuir Road, the site is centerally located within the wider Drumbrae site. The site is surrounded by open moorland on all sides, though this landscape is set to change with the woodland planting and development.

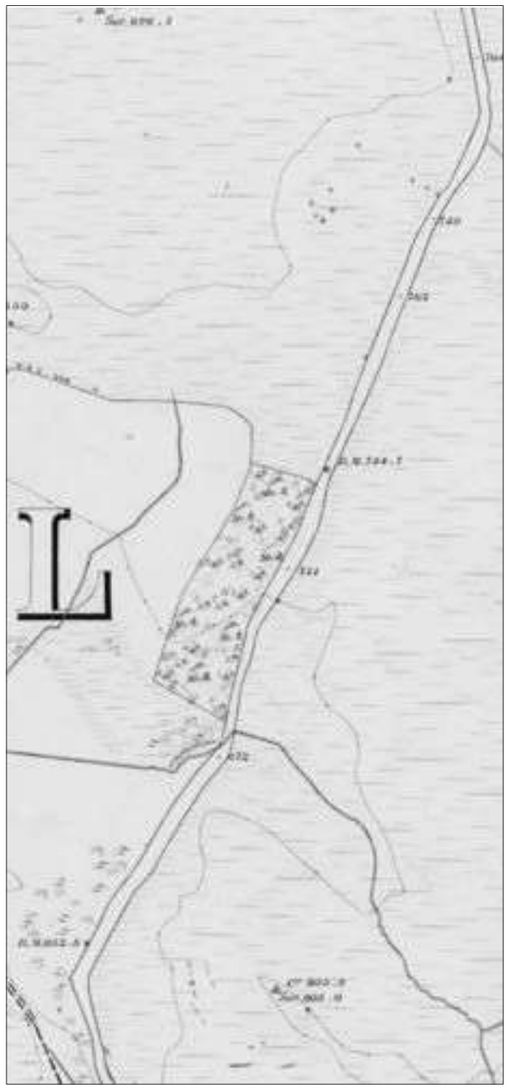
Cockburn Woods

Cockburn Woods from Sheriffmuir Road

2.4 Historical Context

Cocksburn forms part of one of the ancient woodland areas within Drumbrae, featuring both ancient and semi-natural woodland as well as long-established plantation woodland. The woodland remained largely unchanged for over a century, until selective felling occurred between the late 19th to mid-20th centuries to accommodate utility services crossing the site.

In more recent years, these services were redirected to the western edge of the woodland, creating a small clearing. The hardstanding area at the foot of the woodland pre-dates University of Edinburgh ownership and has not been altered since; it is likely to have been used previously for the installation of pylons. A nearby zone has been identified for community engagement activities and outdoor learning.



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1888

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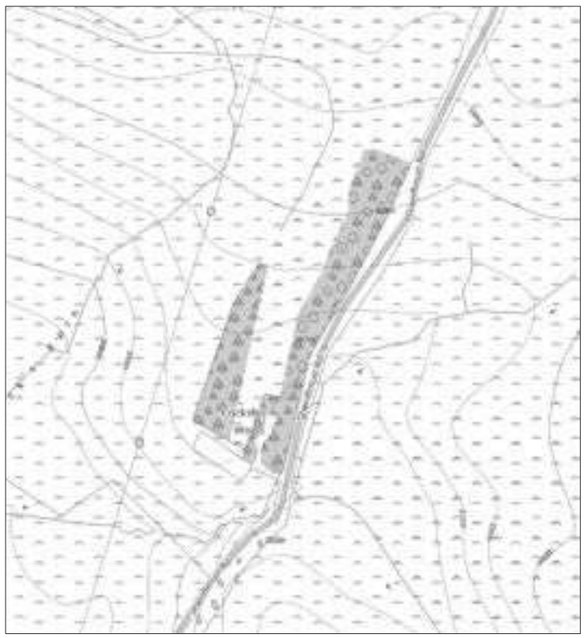


2022

2.5 Site Analysis

The site is accessed directly from Sheriffmuir Road and comprises two informal hardstanding areas currently used for parking and temporary storage associated with ongoing woodland planting operations. Historic tree clearance has opened up the area, allowing both hardstandings to benefit from consistent south-facing sunlight throughout the day.

A gated access point on the west side of the site leads to the electrical pylon located immediately adjacent, forming a key operational access route that must be maintained. The western edge is also defined by a deer fence, with additional fencing located on the opposite side of the road, enclosing parts of the wider planting area.

The upper hardstanding is partially sheltered by existing trees to the north and east, providing a degree of protection from prevailing winds.

- Hardstanding
- Road Surface
- Trees
- Site Boundary
- Deer Fence
- Watercourse
- Overhead Pylon
- Site Access

2.5 Site Photos

The following photographs document key aspects of the site and its immediate surroundings. These images support the view cones identified on the previous analysis page.

View 1 — Westerly outlook
Looking west towards Cockburn Reservoir, featuring the neighbouring electrical pylon.

View 2 — South-easterly view
A view across the surrounding moorland, looking over the existing track that passes through the site.

View 3 — North-eastern tree line
Trees bordering the north-eastern edge of the site, running parallel to Sheriffmuir Road.

View 4 — Access track
Looking up the access track from the site entrance, demonstrating the gradual rise in topography leading to the hardstanding.

View 5 — Towards site entrance
A view back towards the entrance, with the lower hardstanding to the left and sheltering trees along the boundary.

View 6 — Lower hardstanding
The lower hardstanding area, with a banked earth formation to the left, likely created during earlier levelling works.

2.5 Site Constraints + Opportunities

This map diagram show potential constraints and opportunities which were established during the site walk around.

Importantly to note, there are a number of areas of steep topography which would impact the placement of structures and the movement through the site, especially considering accessibility.

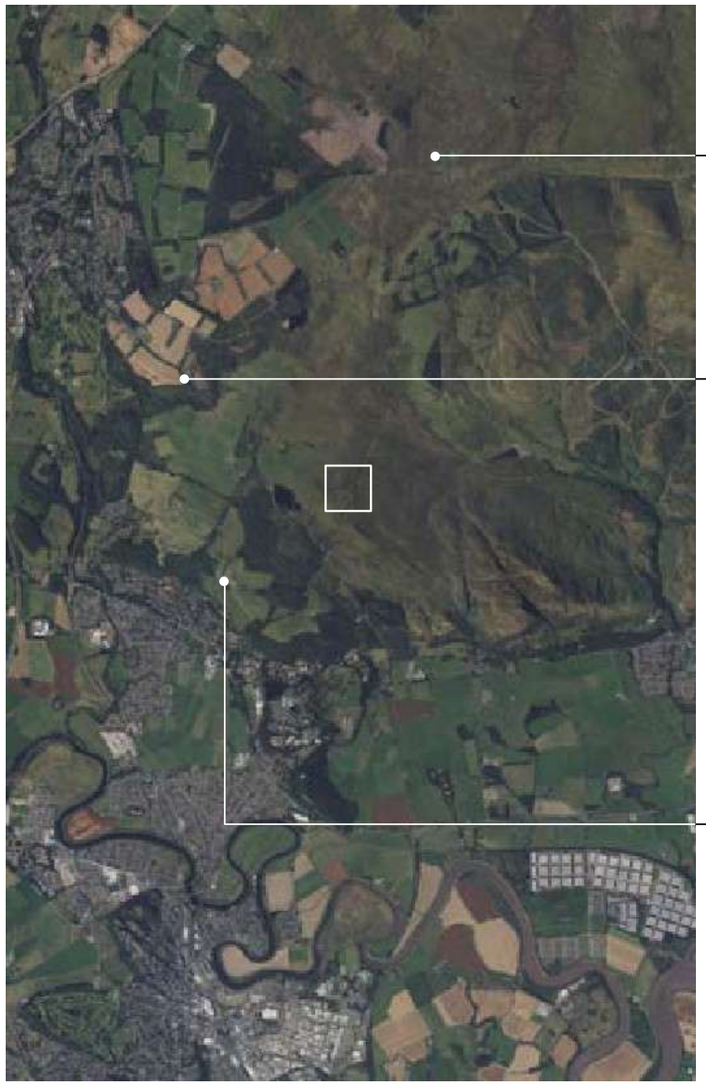
The prominent position of the site and advantageous topography allow for fantastic views in several directions. Maintaining views has been a consideration in the placement of a building on the site.

3.0 Approach

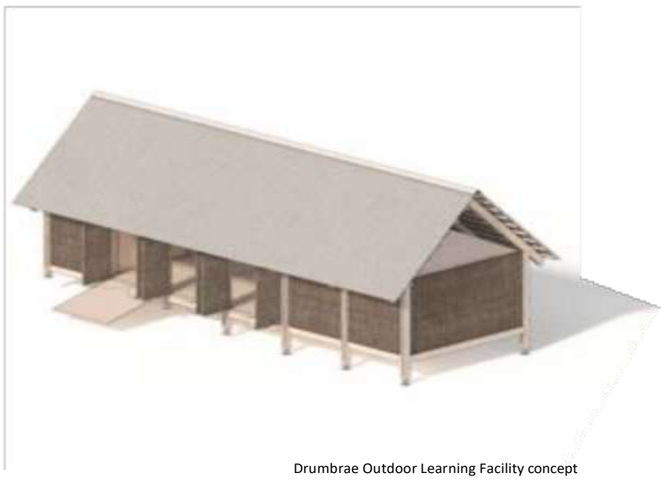
3.1 Local Vernacular + Context

The site lies within the Stirlingshire landscape, where a mix of agricultural buildings contributes to the local vernacular. These buildings express a simple, utilitarian character, shaped by the practical needs of working the land. Their forms are modest and functional, often featuring pitched corrugated roofs and timber cladding.

The proposed Outdoor Learning Facility draws inspiration from this tradition of working rural structures. The building acts as a shelter or shieling - a functional base for those managing and learning from the landscape. Its materials and proportions are informed by the local vernacular, ensuring it reads as a natural extension of the Stirlingshire countryside rather than an imposed intervention.



Location Map



Drumbrae Outdoor Learning Facility concept

3.2 Siting and Orientation

The diagram opposite illustrates the potential locations considered for the proposed building. Following an initial site visit, three possible areas were identified based on existing conditions.

A - Located at the west end of the existing hardstanding, where the current site toilet provision sits. This is the most exposed area of the site, offering the strongest views across Cocksburn Reservoir.

The position benefits from level ground and close proximity to parking, supporting accessibility. However, it is highly visible within the landscape and is separated from the proposed sensory trail and landscape, limiting integration with these features.

B - Located centrally between the two hardstanding areas and the community woodland. This area sits slightly below the west hardstanding and east earth mounds, offering good views with increased shelter.

However, this location does not occupy the existing hardstanding and a light touch solution' will be required

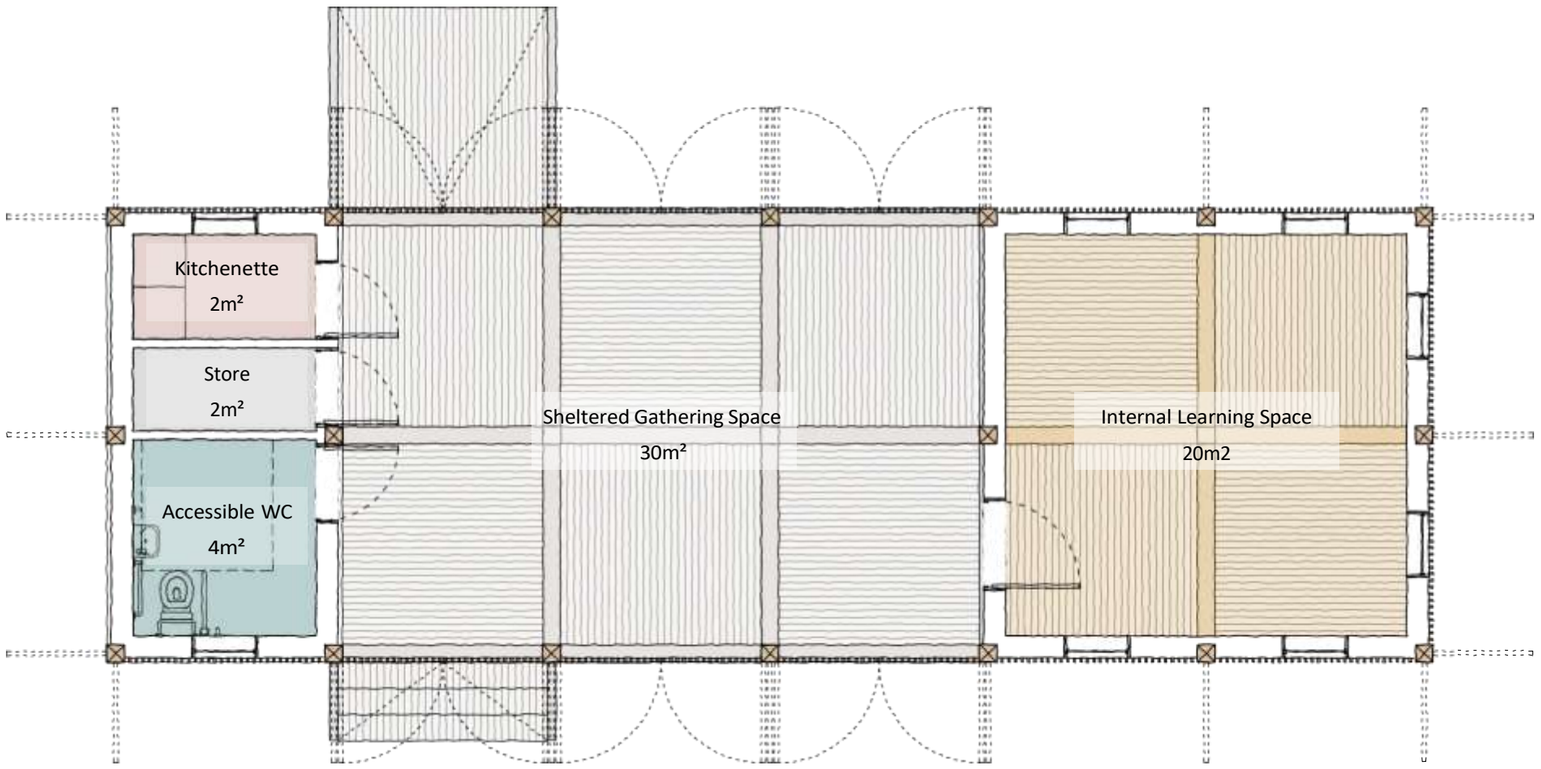
C - Located north of the lower parking area, tucked into existing earth bank, and sheltered by trees.

This is the most discrete and naturally protected location, however, it is distant from the main hardstanding, offers no significant views, and lies closer to the road. The uneven topography may also make construction and access challenging.

Following this assessment, Position B was identified as the most appropriate location for the proposed building. This choice balanced accessibility to the building, and discreetness of location. Key to note is that the context will be changing as the newly planted trees will mature resulting in changed visibility and views.

Visibility

Views

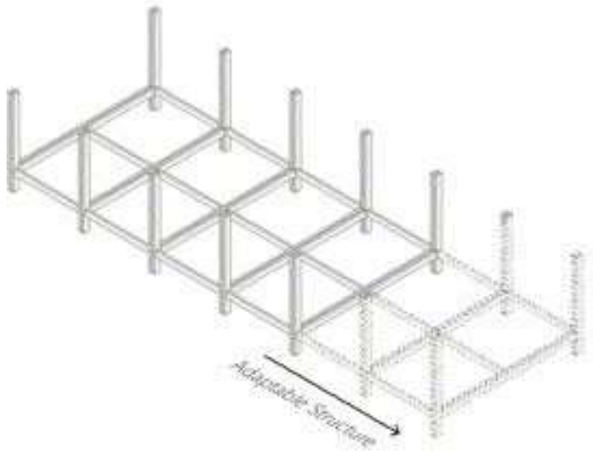


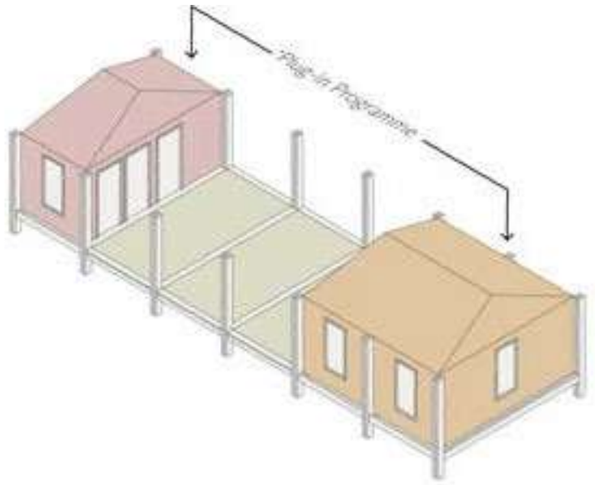
3.3 Framing the Brief

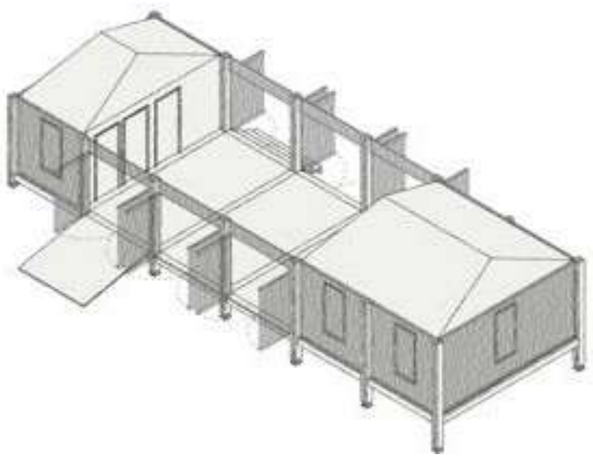
The proposed Outdoor Learning Facility will support the ongoing community woodland activity at Cockburn Woodland and Drumbrae. Building on the design strategy of a simple structural grid, the brief slots within this framework, responding to the operational, educational, and social needs of those managing and engaging with the site.

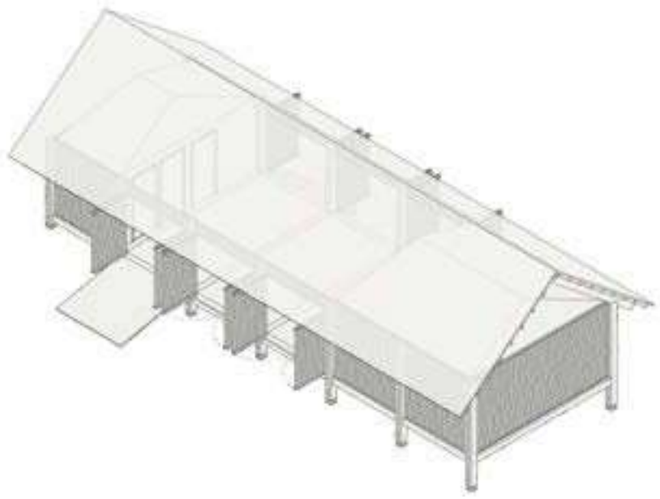
The facility is envisioned as a multi-purpose base, providing essential shelter and facilities for staff, students, and community groups involved in woodland management, research, and outdoor learning.

The brief is framed around four core requirements, set out below. As the project developed, the concept of an external shelter was introduced to provide a covered space for gathering and interacting with the landscape.









3.4 Design Strategy

The design strategy reflects the simple idea of providing shelter, adopting a clear and restrained methodology for setting out the building.

Foundation Grid

The building is supported on screw foundations arranged in a rational grid. This light-touch foundation system allows the structure to sit above the ground, minimising disturbance to the landscape.

Support Structure

From the foundation grid, a frame extends to support the walls and floor. The repetitive frame provides both structural clarity and flexibility.

External Gathering Space

An overhanging roof provides a sheltered external gathering area, accommodating up to 30 people. Ramps and stairs allow safe and accessible movement onto the deck.

Internal Space

As well as external shelter, the frame accommodates insulated internal rooms, offering fully enclosed shelter and protection from the elements.

Weather Protection

A perforated weather screen provides protection for the external gathering area while maintaining visual permeability and connection with the landscape.




Site Materiality




Proposed Material Palette

3.5 Material Approach

The material approach for the Outdoor Learning Facility is informed directly by the character of the Drumbrae landscape. The proposed building responds to its context - surrounding woodland, drystone boundaries, exposed earth tracks and wild grasses - adopting a material palette that allows it to sit quietly within the landscape.

Proposed Material Palette

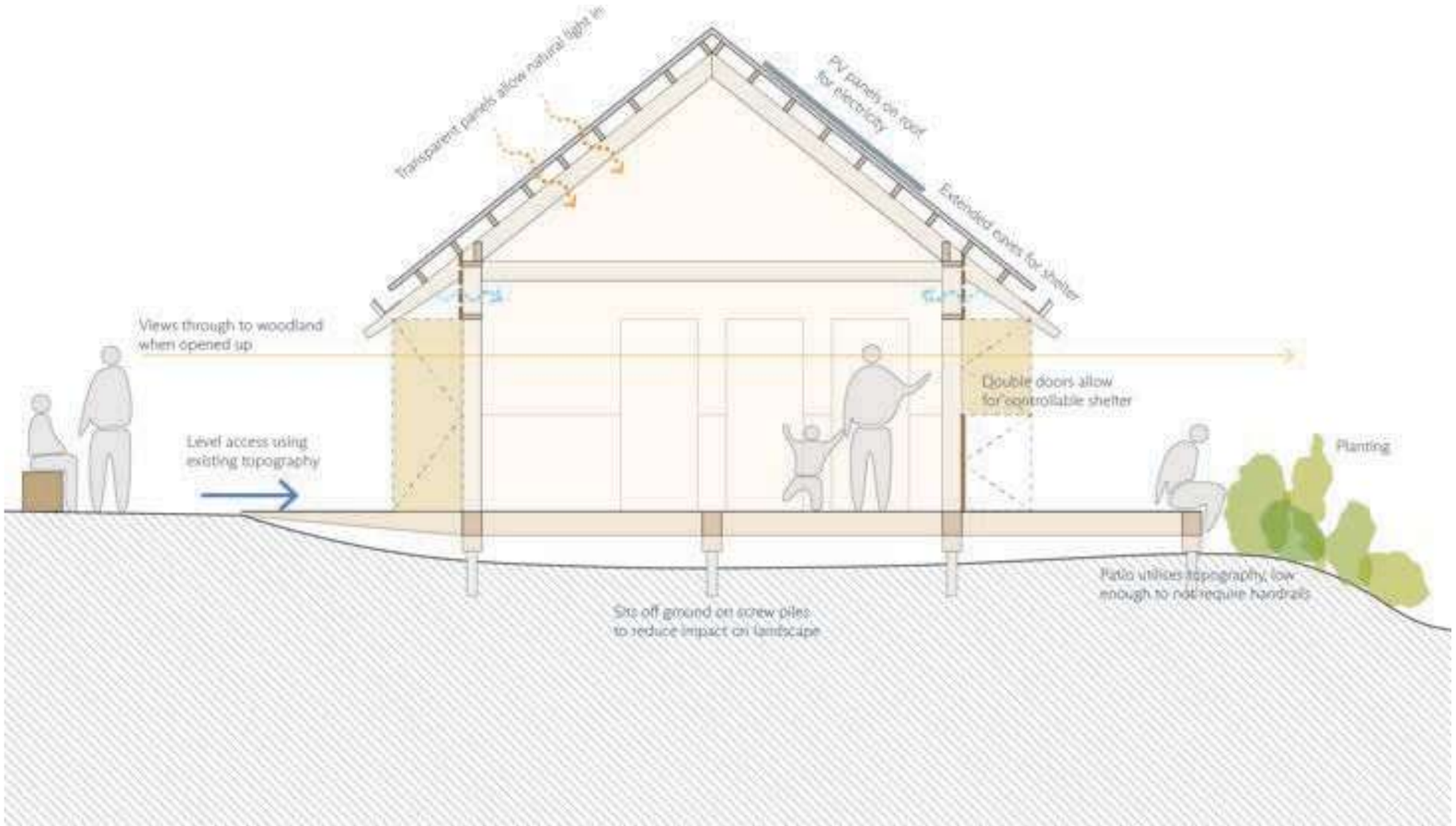
The selected materials include varied applications of timber, including the expressed timber frame, timber shingles and vertical and stacked battens. The use of timber and corrugated roofing is typical of this building typology.

Material Studies

3.5 Material Approach

Internal Material Precedents

The internal spaces are intended to be made using natural materials. We have looked at a number of precedents and examples, using timber but also exposed insulative products such as Hemp panels, or cellulose and cork.



Concept Section

3.6 Technical Approach

Given the remote nature of the site and the intention for the building to have the lightest possible environmental footprint, an entirely off-grid servicing approach has been adopted.

Structure and Foundations

The proposed construction is a predominantly timber-frame building supported on multiple small screw piles. This foundation system removes the need for concrete and avoids any significant ground disturbance. The building has been designed according to a "leave nothing but your footprints" principle: if removed in the future, it would leave the site largely untouched. The timber superstructure is also designed to be demountable, allowing components to be disassembled and removed without lasting impact.

Electrical and Heating

The building will be powered entirely by renewable energy. In line with the University of Edinburgh's commitment to sustainability, the operational strategy aims for net-zero performance. Power will be generated through roof-mounted photovoltaic panels and stored in an externally located battery system. Electrical demand will be minimised through efficient equipment and low-energy systems.

The building will remain unheated, as the primary activities it supports are outdoor in nature. Internal spaces will be insulated to provide a basic level of thermal comfort and to benefit from passive heat gains from solar exposure and occupants.

Water and Toilet Provision

Water use on site will be minimal. Potable water will be brought to the building as required by the SRS team via portable storage tanks. Toilet provision will be provided by an accessible composting WC, which operates without water and has been designed to integrate seamlessly into the building, ensuring ease of use and straightforward maintenance.

3.7 Management Approach

Building Management
The Drumbrae outdoor learning Facility will be managed directly by the University of Edinburgh as part of its wider woodland creation and outdoor learning programme. The building is intended for small-group educational use, including University staff, students, research teams, and community or school groups engaged in woodland management or nature-based learning activities. Access will be pre-booked and supervised by University personnel at all times.

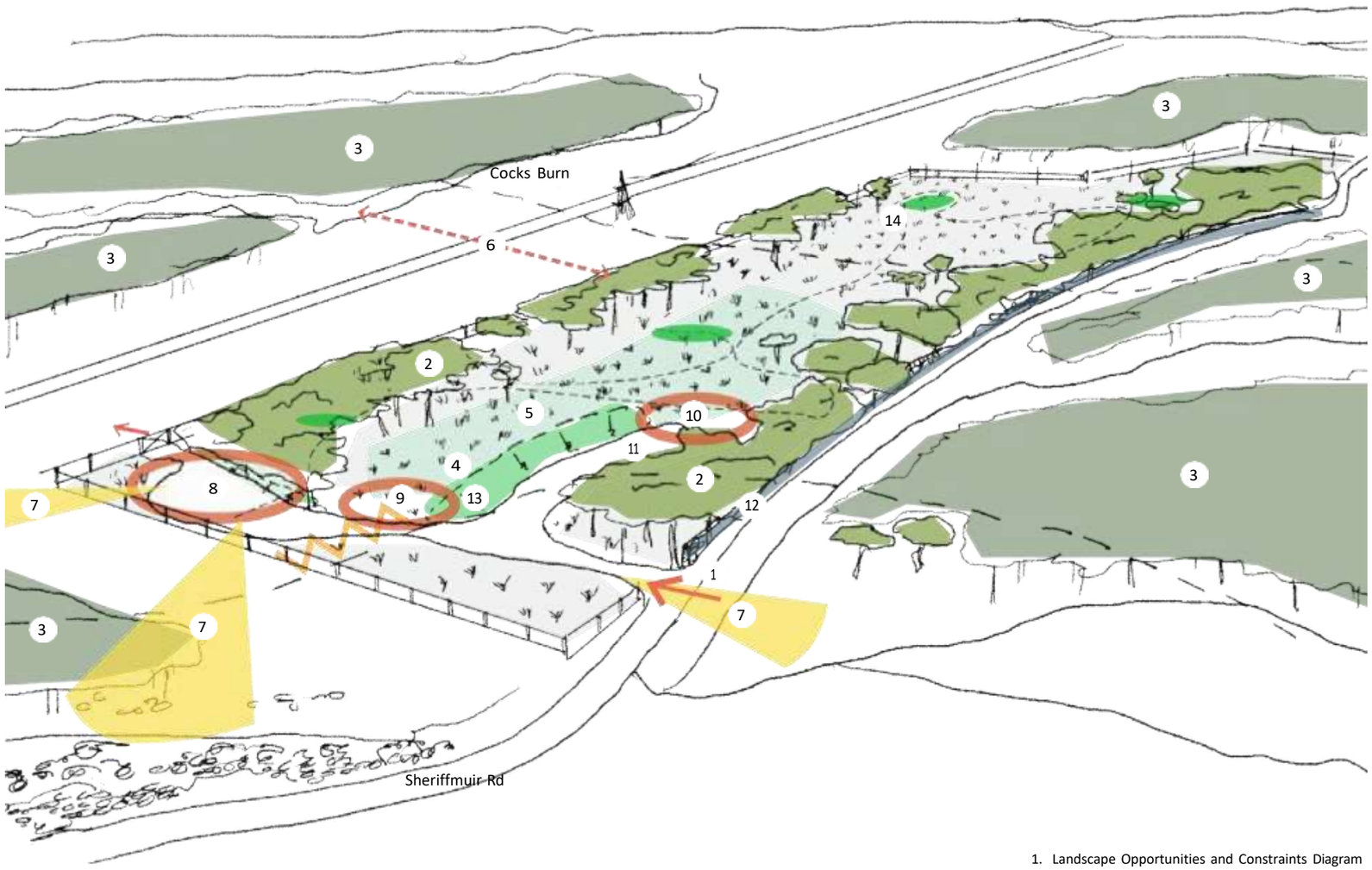
Operating hours
The use of this building will be daylight hours only. The building will be used to support organised student and staff visits and community activities, and it is not intended to be open outside of these times. The building staff will unlock, secure, and monitor the site as part of routine operational procedures.

Waste Management
Given the off-grid design, refuse management is minimal. All general waste produced during sessions will be carried off-site by staff and disposed of by the University. The composting toilet will be maintained and emptied with no requirement for commercial waste uplift.

Drainage
Drainage and water management are handled entirely on-site through natural percolation and SUDS-compatible features. The building is raised on screw piles, eliminating the need for excavated drainage systems, and no connection to public wastewater or surface-water infrastructure is required.

Overall, the management approach ensures low-impact, controlled use that supports educational and ecological objectives while maintaining the quiet, rural character of the site.

4.0 Landscape Approach



1. Landscape Opportunities and Constraints Diagram

4.1 Cockburn Woods - Opportunities and Constraints

1. Primary Entrance (Vehicle and pedestrian) to be retained
2. Existing Long Established Woodland of Plantation Origin LEPO. Opportunity to consider ancient woodland management practices including understorey planting, buffers and edge transition.
3. Future woodland (as identified in UoE Future Woodland Creation). Opportunity to align additional areas of planting with the aims of the scheme including species selection
4. Area of recently planted UoE trees to be considered in future proposals
5. Areas of wet grassland to be considered in proposals
6. OH electrical service line with 40m offset clearance zone.
7. Key Views towards Cocksburn Reservoir / Black Hill and Bridge of Allan/ Dumyat Hill to be retained
8. Position A - Outdoor Learning Facility : Area of existing hardstanding considered whilst retaining gate access to OH line. To be enhanced with planting to create feeling of enclosure whilst retaining key views.
9. Position B - Outdoor Learning Facility: Area between existing hardstanding and community woodland
10. Position C - Outdoor Learning Facility: North of parking area considered.
11. Existing Parking to be retained
12. Existing drystone wall boundary to be retained. Allowance to make repairs where wall has fallen
13. Topography is mounded in some places following works to car park and OH line access. Mounds to be naturalised
14. Opportunity for trail network and engagement points

4.2 Existing Character

The existing site at Drumbrae features a Scots Pine LEPO woodland, characterised by its ecological value and biodiversity. Textures make up much of the character of the site including rough, flaky bark, drystone walls, covered in moss and lichen, can be found on the roadside perimeter and blend into the landscape. Reeds grow in wetter areas, adding a coarse, flexible texture to the ground layer. Areas of the land are generally quite wet and hydrologically active, influencing both vegetation and potential land use.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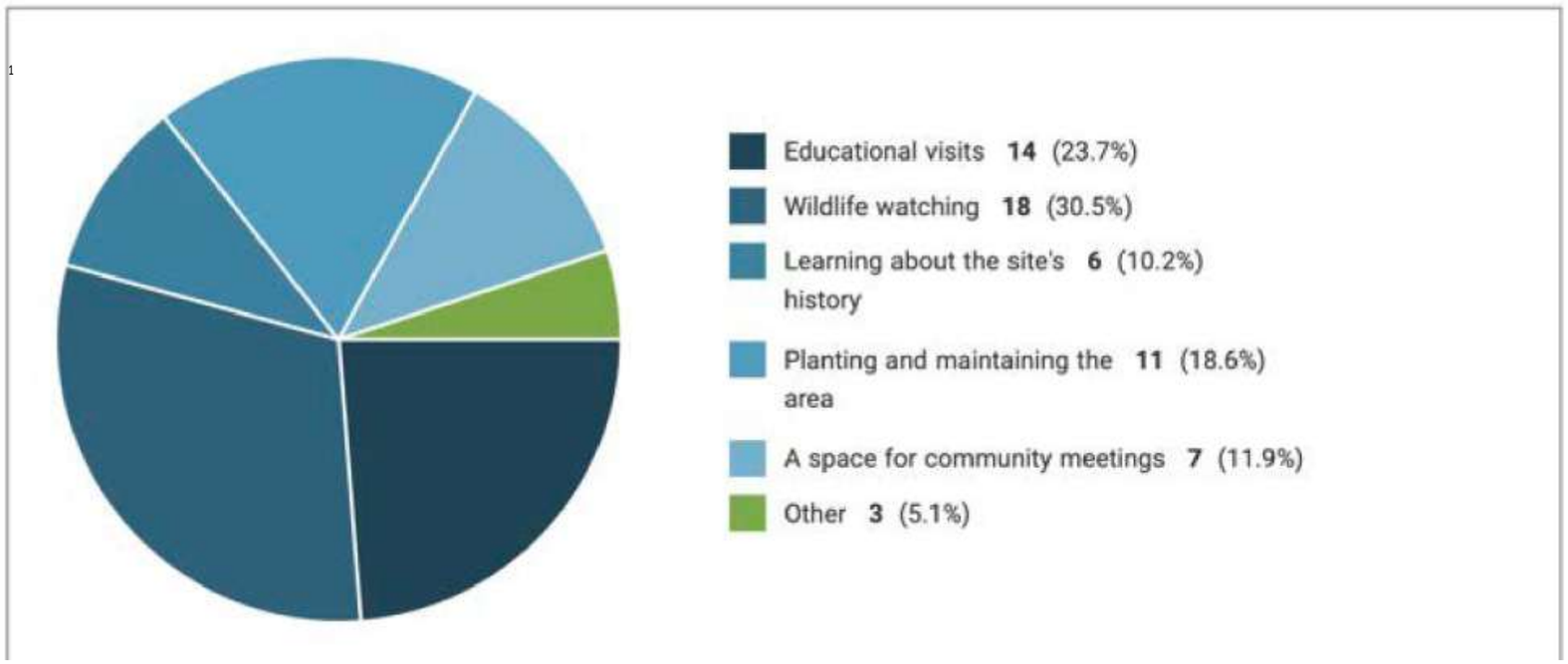
1. Existing LEPO Woodland predominately made up of Scots Pine and Birch
2. Wet Grassland and new UoE tree planting
3. LEPO woodland under storey currently quite bare
4. Existing drystone wall boundary
5. Scots Pine Bark
6. Entrance into site

If there was the possibility of a community woodland area, what would you like to use this space for?



1. Excerpt from Drumbrae Public Consultation, https://sustainability.ed.ac.uk/operations/forest-peatland/drumbrae/public-consultation (accessed 01/04/25)

4.3 Reflection on Previous Consultation

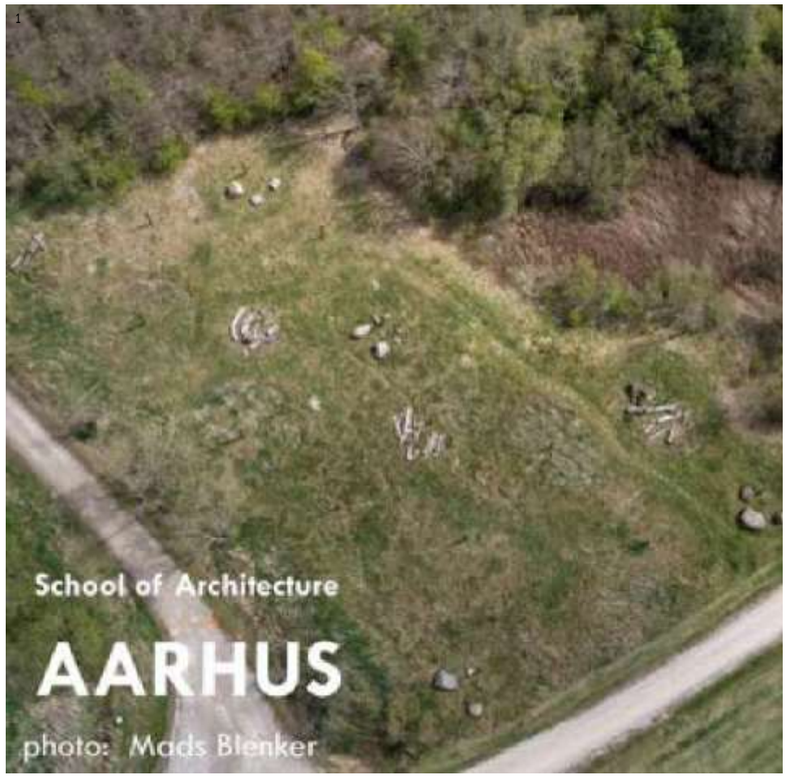
The University of Edinburgh conducted a public consultation on its plans to establish woodland and restore peatland at Drumbrae, held from Monday, 28 August to Friday, 29 September 2023. As part of the proposal development for the Drumbrae Learning Landscape Framework, we carefully reviewed the consultation feedback—particularly insights related to community use of the woodland—to help shape and refine the emerging proposals.

As well as common uses for this space, the consultation highlighted potential opportunities at the community woodland including

- Community Orchard and Harvests
- Tree planting activities
- Outdoor Outdoor Learnings
- Wildlife monitoring
- Forest Schools
- Recreation Activity meeting spot

These have been considered in development of the proposals.

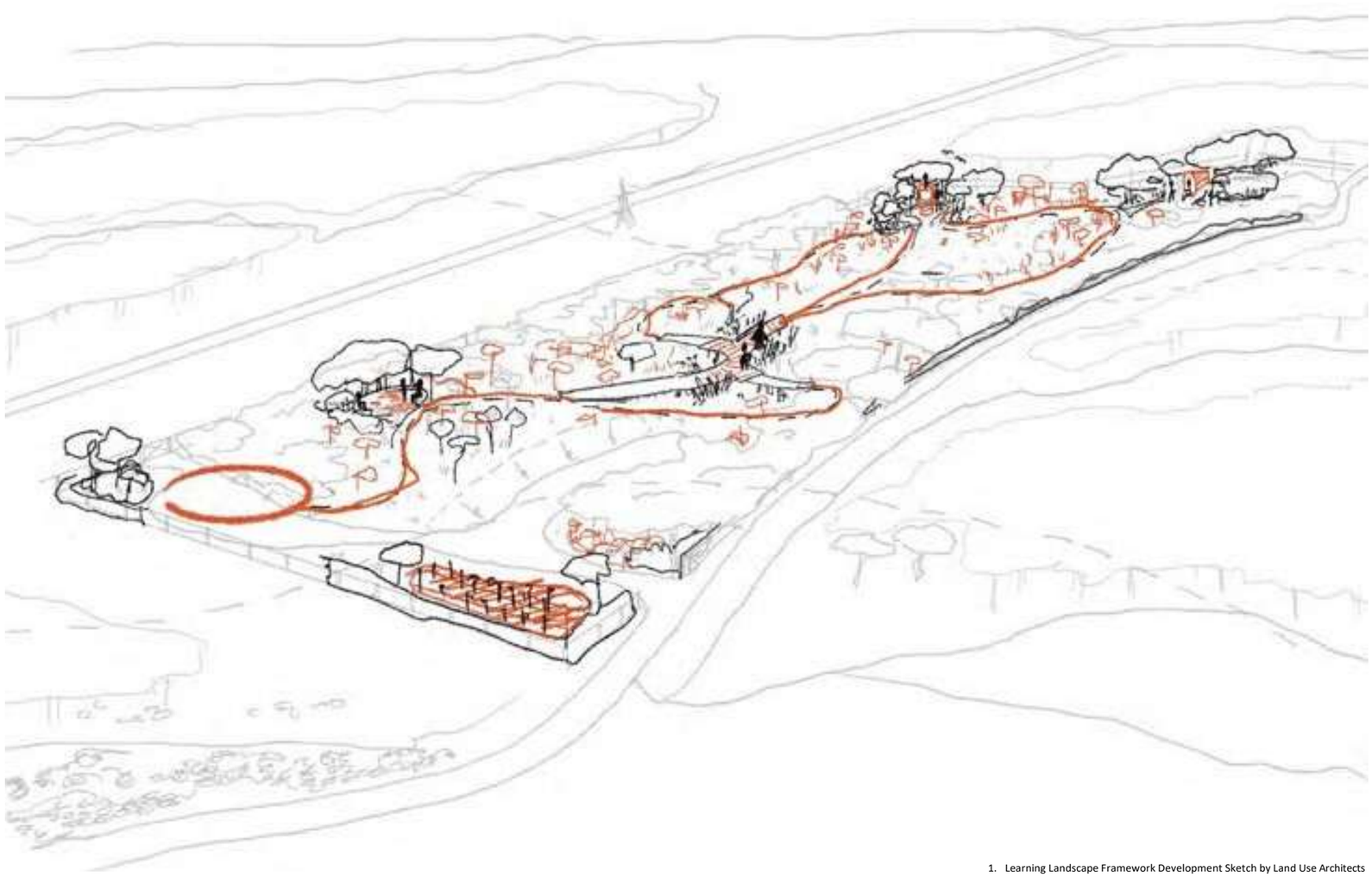
4.4 Precedents



At the start of the design process, we explored precedents that bridge ecology, learning, and future thinking. Studio in the Woods (by Invisible Studio Architects), School of Architecture's Aarhus AS on Interdisciplinary Land Labs, and The Symbiotic Matorral by Pasini Garza Ramos Rosasall shared several key elements that we felt were important to the Drumbrae site going forward.

- Interdisciplinary & Experimental Approach: Collaboration across different disciplines, integrating architecture, landscape, ecology, and engagement and learning.
- Ecological & Sustainable Design: Each project explores sustainable building techniques, including the use of local and natural materials to minimize environmental impact.
- Hands-on & Site-Specific Learning: They encourage practical, immersion experiences where participants engage directly with the landscape
- Focus on Natural & Rural Environments: These initiatives are rooted in rural or semi-natural settings, emphasizing a deep connection to the land and ecological systems.
- Community & Knowledge Sharing: They foster a culture of shared learning, whether through workshops, academic research, or participatory design.
- Design Framework: They start with a design framework and the project develops from there.

1. School of Architecture Aarhus
2. The Symbiotic Matorral
3. Studio in the Woods
4. Studio in the Woods



1. Learning Landscape Framework Development Sketch by Land Use Architects

4.5 Cockburn Woods - Learning Landscape Framework

A design has been developed for the Cockburn Woods site to provide a long-term vision for its transformation, including areas beyond the current planning application boundary. This vision establishes the context for the Drumbrae Learning Landscape Framework, which guides engagement with the evolving environment and supports the site's ecological potential.

The framework encourages immersive, sensory experiences and fosters awareness of natural processes, emphasising the 'more-than-human' world — including plants, animals, soil, water, light, and other forces that actively shape the land above and below ground. The design prioritises flexible, adaptable spaces and creates opportunities for future research, learning, and collaboration between the University and the wider community.

Key Framework Components:

Tactile Trails: A network of trails and walkways encourage visitors to meander and engage the senses through varied path materials, sensory planting and shifting seasonal changes to support management of visitor impact on more fragile ecosystems

Encounter Points: Designed spaces that promote social interaction and connection among visitors and the landscape. These spaces set the stage for opportunities in research, reflection, creative collaboration and future-thinking. Locally sourced materials are used for sculptural seating and small-scale, ecologically sensitive details to blend into the landscape while supporting biodiversity. (See next page for more information).

Successional Woodland Edges: Areas that are left to evolve over time, where early plant species gradually make way for more complex ecosystems.

Woodland Enhancement: Strengthening biodiversity through understorey planting and Scots Pine and Birch succession.

Foraging Corridors: Native edible plants for wildlife and visitors, including hedging and native fruit trees

Seed Pocket Gardens: Pollinator friendly spaces to support butterflies, bees and insects .

1. The Treehouse Inspiration: Simple timber sculptural intervention © Sobolki by Zheleznogorsk Nikita Karyuk
2. Shadow Glade Inspiration: Light reflecting on stone from trees © Park Naturmuseum by Robin Winogrond
3. Echo Point Inspiration: Simple timber sculptural intervention © RUUP by Birgit Õigus for Forestry Commission England
4. Water Walkway Inspiration: Walkway through wetter areas © Helix Park Ironside Farrar
5. Bench Inspiration: Local timber benches © 8 Seats Sculpture by Thomas Roelser
6. Micro Design : moss pointing micro more-than-human points © LUC

4.6 Learning Landscape Framework Encounter Points

Encounter Points: Designed spaces that promote social interaction and connection among visitors and the landscape. . These spaces offer opportunities for community programs and University departments, including SRS, the Edinburgh Futures Institute, the School of Biological Sciences, the Edinburgh School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture, the School of Geosciences, the School of Literature, and Health and Wellbeing initiatives.

The Treehouse: A raised platform offering new perspectives on the woodland ecosystem and opportunities for birdwatching

Shadow Glade: Shaded retreats within the forest, designed for rest, contemplation, and sensory immersion.

Echo Point: Structures encourage people to stop and listen to the sounds of the forest, to act as shelters for walkers and also become mini stages for performances and gatherings.

Water Walkway: A walkway across wetter areas allows people to observe reflections, and the movement of water, plants, and wildlife up close.

Sculptural Seating: Seating elements crafted from locally sourced timber and stone, shaped to reflect natural forms. These sculptural features will provide both functional seating, as well as playful opportunities throughout the site.

Micro Design: Incorporating small-scale, ecologically sensitive details enhances the sensory and visual experience while supporting biodiversity. Examples include: moss pointing, stone piles etc

1. Developing Concept Plan with Precedents

4.7 Developed Concept Plan

The Learning Landscape Framework Concept Plan outlines a range of features, including a raised tree platform, outdoor learning, playful sculptural seating, echo points, and walkway, all designed with sustainable, locally sourced materials. The planting strategy focuses on native species, with feathered and multi-stem trees, foraging corridors, hedgerows, sensory planting, and pollinator-friendly seed pockets, while retaining existing marshy grassland, dwarf shrub heath, and mature trees.

Paths will be finished with self-binding gravel, with gradients designed to meet BT Countryside for All Accessibility Standards and to minimise impact on the existing topography. Existing boundaries, such as deer fences and drystone walls, will be preserved and repaired as needed.

All interventions are informed by the completed tree survey and Ecological Appraisal, ensuring protection of root zones and sensitive integration into the woodland setting.

4.8 Planting Palette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1. Pinus sylvestris
2. Betula pendula
3. Salix caprea
4. Sorbus aucuparia
5. Corylus avellana
6. Rosa pimpinellifolia
7. Juniper communis
8. Vaccinium myrtillus
9. Calluna vulgaris

Individual Tree Planting - Mix of heavy standard and multi-stem

Pinus sylverstris / Scots Pine

Betula pendula / Silver Birch

Salix caprea / Goat Willow

Sorbus aucuparia / Rowan

Corylus avellana / Hazel

Woodland Enhancement Planting to Pockets of Existing Woodland. Approx 350m2

Trees for Succession Planting - Feathered

Pinus sylverstris / Scots Pine

Betula pendula / Silver Birch

Subcanopy layer

Sorbus aucuparia / Rowan

Rosa pimpinellifolia / Scotch Rose

Juniperus communis / Juniper

Field Layer

Vaccinium myrtillus / Blaeberry

Calluna vulgaris / Heather

RHS plants for pollinators
Bee png © Andrew Acree

4.9 Planting Palette














1. Prunus spinosa
2. Corylus avellana
3. Vaccinium myrtillus
4. Rubus fruiticosus
5. Primula vulgaris
6. Digitalis purpurea
7. Viola rivinana
8. Anemone nemorossa
9. Geranium sylvaticum
10. Rosa pimpinellifolia
11. Myrica gale
12. Polystrichum setiferum
13. Carex remota
14. Briza media

Foraging Corridors

Prunus spinosa / Blackthorn

Corylus avellana / Hazel

Vaccinium myrtillus / Blaeberry

Rubus fruiticosus / Blackberry

Sensory Planting

For Sight

- Primula vulgaris / Primrose
- Digitalis purpurea / Foxglove
- Viola riviniana / Dog Violet
- Anemone nemorosa / Wood Anemone
- Geranium sylvaticum / Wood Cranesbill

For Smell

- Rosa pimpinellifolia / Scotch Rose
- Myrica gale / Bog Myrtle

For Touch

- Mosses - transplanted from Drumbrae site where in abundance
- Polystichum setiferum / Shield Fern

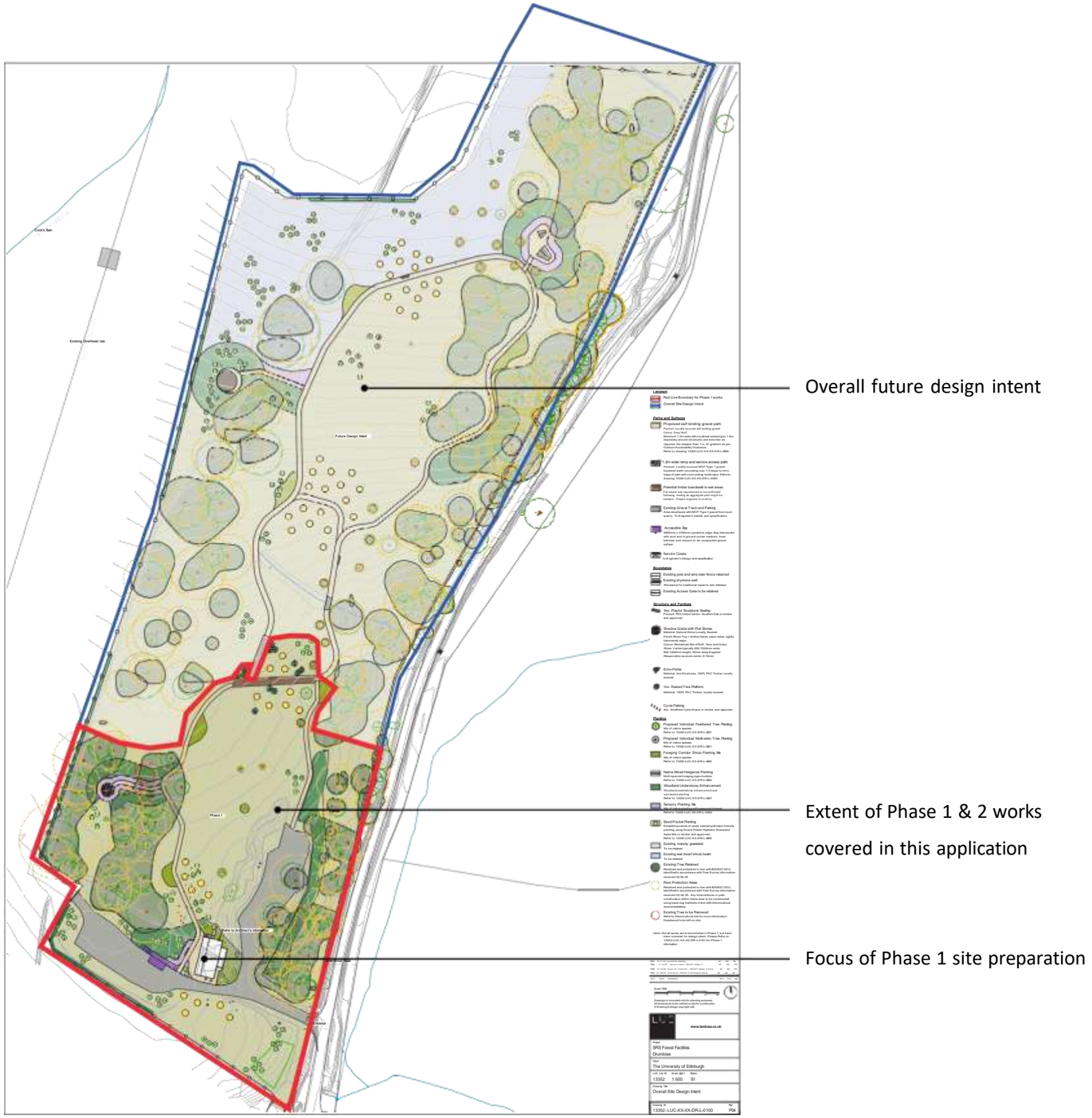
For Sound

Carex remota / Remote sedge

Briza media / Quaking Grass

Seed Pocket Gardens

Scotia Seeds Highland Grassland Seed Mix



4.10 Landscape Intent and Phasing

The landscape works at Cockburn Woods will be delivered in a coordinated sequence that aligns with the construction of the building and the wider woodland creation programme.

Phase 1 – Site Preparation and Access

The initial phase focuses on establishing access, defining circulation routes, and preparing the immediate setting of the building. This includes forming the primary paths, installing permeable surfaces, and implementing essential habitat protection measures around tree root zones.

Phase 2 – Core Landscape Elements

Following completion of the building structure, Phase Two introduces the core landscape features. These include native understorey planting, sensory garden elements, habitat pockets, and the creation of small gathering and encounter spaces. These features are designed to complement the woodland edge and provide year-round ecological and educational value.

Phase 3 – Woodland Enhancement and Long-Term Management

The final phase centres on ongoing woodland enhancement, delivered as part of the University's long-term woodland creation and management strategy. This includes the gradual establishment of new planting areas, expansion of foraging and habitat zones, and continual shaping of paths and open spaces as the woodland matures. Planting will evolve over time, with adaptive management ensuring biodiversity, accessibility, and educational function improve year on year.

Together, these phases ensure that the landscape develops in a sustainable, low-impact, and ecologically rich manner, supporting both the operational needs of the facility and the long-term vision for the Drumbrae woodland.

5.0 Pre-App Response

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5.0 Pre-App Feedback and Response

Theme	Pre-Application Feedback	Policy	Response
01 Land Use, Scale and Rural justification	Land Use & Rural Development The officer advised that the proposal represents a change of use to Class 10 (non-residential institution) and must justify its rural location, demonstrating a site-specific need for outdoor learning and ensuring the scale remains small and appropriate.	LDP 2.9 NPF4 29	The proposal provides a small-scale outdoor learning facility directly supporting the University's woodland creation programme at Drumbrae. Further justification can be found in Sections 1.2, 3.1 and Site plan drawing
02 Landscape & Visual Impact	Landscape Character (West Ochils LLA) Development in the Local Landscape Area must avoid significant adverse impacts on landscape character, scenic qualities, and the noted sense of remoteness; small-scale structures near existing hardstanding or pylons may be acceptable.	LDP 9.1 NPF4 14	The building's location reduces its prominence in the West Ochils LLA. Its timber cladding, shingles, and corrugated roof reflect local rural vernacular, helping it integrate into the landscape. Designed as a small-scale rural working structure, it considers views to and from key ridges and aligns with the established landscape character. Further information can be found in Sections 3.3–3.5 and Site plan and Site Elevation drawings
03 Trees, Woodland & Ancient Woodland	Tree Impacts & Ancient Woodland Impact on trees must be clearly understood. A site plan must show all proposed structures overlaid with Root Protection Areas (RPAs). If any trees are to be removed, a tree survey is required. No loss of ancient woodland or impacts on ancient/veteran trees will be supported. All retained trees require BS5837-compliant protection.	NPF4 6 LDP 10.1 BS 5837:2012	The building is positioned on previously disturbed ground between existing hardstandings, avoiding areas of mature woodland. The Arboricultural Impact Assessment confirms that no tree removals are required and that all works—including screw-pile foundations—are located outside Root Protection Areas. All tree protection measures will follow BS 5837:2012, with fencing and construction exclusion zones set out in the Arboricultural Method Statement. Please refer to Arboricultural Method Statement, Landscape Architects Plans, and site plan
	Woodland Management Due to uniform-aged Scots pine within ancient woodland of plantation origin, a Woodland Management Plan is encouraged.	NPF4 6 LDP 10.1	The University has an established Woodland Creation Plan for Drumbrae, which includes long-term woodland management objectives across the wider estate. The facility supports this programme by providing operational space for staff, researchers, and community groups. The development does not prevent or compromise future woodland management and is located within an already cleared area.
04 Biodiversity & Ecology	Protected Species & Wildlife A Preliminary Ecological Assessment is recommended to confirm presence of protected species. If any tree removal is proposed, surveys must include assessment for bats.	NPF4 3 & 4 LDP 8	The submitted Ecology Report confirms that the proposal avoids tree removal and is therefore unlikely to impact bat roost potential or nesting birds. A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal has been undertaken and demonstrates no significant ecological constraints. The project adopts a low-impact construction approach (screw piles, no ground stripping), further minimising disturbance.
	Biodiversity Enhancement The proposal should incorporate biodiversity enhancement measures aligned with NatureScot's "Development with Nature" guidance.	NPF4 3 LDP 8	The landscape proposals introduce sensory planting, understorey enhancement, foraging corridors, and habitat creation features such as "seed pocket gardens," deadwood microhabitats to support wildlife. The proposals look to exceed minimum biodiversity enhancement requirements and align with NatureScot "Development with Nature" guidance. Refer to Section 3.7 and Landscape Architect plans
05 Soil, Peat & Ground Conditions	Peat & Soil Management The applicant must confirm whether the site is on peatland or carbon-rich soil. Development on such soils is supported only in limited circumstances. Soil conservation and minimisation of soil sealing are required.	NPF4 5 LDP 14	The building footprint is on loose to medium dense brown Clay/Silt. The proposal minimises soil disturbance through the use of screw-pile foundations and raised timber decking, eliminating the need for excavation or concrete. Soil sealing is minimised to only the footprint of the pile heads and narrow paths.
06 Water, SUDS & Flooding	Surface Water & Drainage Development must not increase surface water flood risk and must manage all surface water through Sustainable Drainage Systems while minimising impermeable surfaces.	NPF4 22 NPF4 20	As the building is off-grid with minimal impermeable surfaces, surface water effects are negligible. Rainwater will be managed directly to surrounding permeable ground, and no increase in surface runoff is expected. SUDS principles have been embedded through permeable self-binding gravel paths and limited hard surfacing.

5.0 Pre-App Feedback and Response

Theme	Pre-Application Feedback	Policy	Response
07 Transport, Access & Parking	Trip Generation & Access Strategy A Transport Statement or Technical Note is required to set out site trip generation, user access, and the relationship with wider site uses. Vehicle travel is expected to be dominant due to rural location.	NPF4 13	Trip numbers are low, with only one group per day, typically arriving/departing outside peak hours. Most visitors arrive via organised minibus or EV-bus transport, keeping private car use minimal. Further detail: Transport Technical Note Ch.4 (Net Zero Transport) and Ch.5 (Trip Generation & Impact).
	Use Class Clarification Clarification is needed on use class to ensure permission cannot unintentionally allow other uses (e.g. outdoor nursery) with different transport implications.	NPF4 13	The building is for Class 10 educational use directly supporting the University's woodland programme. Operational patterns assessed in the TTN rely on this defined, limited function. Further detail: Planning Statement and Transport Technical Note Ch.4 (Proposed Development Use).
	Parking Provision The submission must show existing permitted parking use, confirm provision for current demand, and set out parking for new users to avoid displacement to the public road.	NPF4 13 LDP 1.1	Parking demand is modest and managed. Existing hardstanding parking is retained and a small, controlled area of approx. 8 spaces (including 1 accessible bay) is provided for facility users. No roadside displacement is expected. Further detail: Transport Technical Note Ch.4 (Car Parking).
	Servicing & Waste Management Servicing requirements, waste management arrangements, and associated vehicle trips must be described.	NPF4 13	Given the building's off-grid nature, servicing demands are minimal. The composting WC requires periodic emptying by University staff. Waste generated during educational sessions will be carried off-site by staff. No commercial waste uplift is required.
	Electric Vehicles & Active Travel Proposals should consider EV charging and secure cycle parking to support low-carbon travel.	NPF4 2 & 13	8 cycle parking spaces exceed minimum requirements. EV charging is not included at this stage due to the off-grid energy strategy but can be added in future. Further detail: Transport Technical Note Ch.4 (Cycle Parking & Net Zero Transport).
	Access Upgrades – Visibility Splays Access must provide visibility splays of 2.4m × 70m in both directions; applicant must demonstrate control of land to create and maintain splays.	Transport Development Requirement	Required 2.4m × 70m splays can be provided and maintained using land within University ownership. Further detail: Transport Technical Note Ch.4 (Site Access).
	Access Geometry & Construction Access must be upgraded in geometry, materials, and drainage; a bituminous surface must be provided for the first 6m. Gates, if proposed, must be set back 6m.	Transport Development Requirement	It is proposed that the existing site access will be maintained, with all vehicles travelling to/from the east via Sheriffmuir Road due to low increase in vehicle numvers accessing the site. Further detail: Transport Technical Note Ch.4 (Site Access).
	Car Park Design The materiality and geometry of the car park must ensure vehicles can turn and exit in forward gear.	NPF4 13	Parking uses existing hardstanding, with adequate space for turning so all vehicles exit in forward gear. Rural-appropriate materials retained. Further detail: Transport Technical Note Ch.4 (Car Parking & Layout).
	Construction Impacts Construction-related impacts on Sheriffmuir Road must be assessed, including routing, duration and vehicle types.	NPF4 13	Construction impacts are limited due to modular, lightweight construction and screw-pile foundations. A Construction Traffic Management Plan will be submitted, and pre/post-condition surveys of Sheriffmuir Road undertaken. Further detail: Transport Technical Note Ch.4 (Construction Access Considerations).

5.0 Pre-App Feedback and Response

Theme	Pre-Application Feedback	Policy	Response
08 Green Infrastructure & Open Space	Green Network Protection Development must safeguard existing green infrastructure, avoid loss of open space, and integrate multifunctional accessible outdoor space.	LDP 1.3 NPF4 20	The project strengthens existing green infrastructure by integrating woodland enhancement, sensory trails, native planting, and habitat features. No open space is lost; instead, the scheme activates and improves the surrounding area for educational and community purposes. Further detail: Sections 3.6–3.7; Landscape Drawings.
09 Climate, Energy & Low Carbon Design	Climate & Carbon Impact Design must minimise lifecycle carbon emissions and reflect climate and nature crisis priorities	NPF4 1 & 2	The proposal aligns with the University's net-zero strategy and is designed for minimal operational carbon. It is entirely off-grid, powered by roof-mounted PV and battery storage. The use of natural materials (timber, cork, cellulose) and screw-pile foundations significantly reduces embodied carbon. Further detail: Sections 3.3
10 Application Documentation Requirements	Clarity of Proposed Development The application must clearly identify: (i) all structures; (ii) exact location; (iii) activities on site; (iv) confirmation of no overnight accommodation; (v) current land use; (vi) impacts on trees with RPAs shown.	LDP 1.1 & 1.2	The DAS and architectural drawings clearly describe the building, its location structure, materials, and intended use. The application confirms there is no overnight accommodation. Current land use as woodland creation and operational hardstanding is documented. RPAs and tree constraints are shown on submitted plans. Further detail: Landscape and Architectural drawing package
	Required Technical Submissions Required documents include: Transport Statement/Technical Note, ecological assessment, tree survey, arboricultural method statement, and biodiversity enhancement proposals.	LDP 1.2 NPF4 3, 4, 6, 13	A comprehensive set of supporting documents accompanies this document • Arboricultural Impact Assessment • Transport Technical Note • Ecology Report • M&E Technical Note
11 Consultees	Consultees Likely to Be Engaged Application will likely require consultation with NatureScot, Archaeology, Transport Development, Tree Officer, and Stirling Area Access Panel (SAAP).	Advisory Note	We acknowledge the likely involvement of external consultees including NatureScot, Transport Development, the Tree Officer, Archaeology, and Stirling Area Access Panel. The proposed design and technical documents have been prepared with these consultees' likely requirements in mind, particularly around ecology, trees, accessibility, and sustainable transport.

6.0 Design

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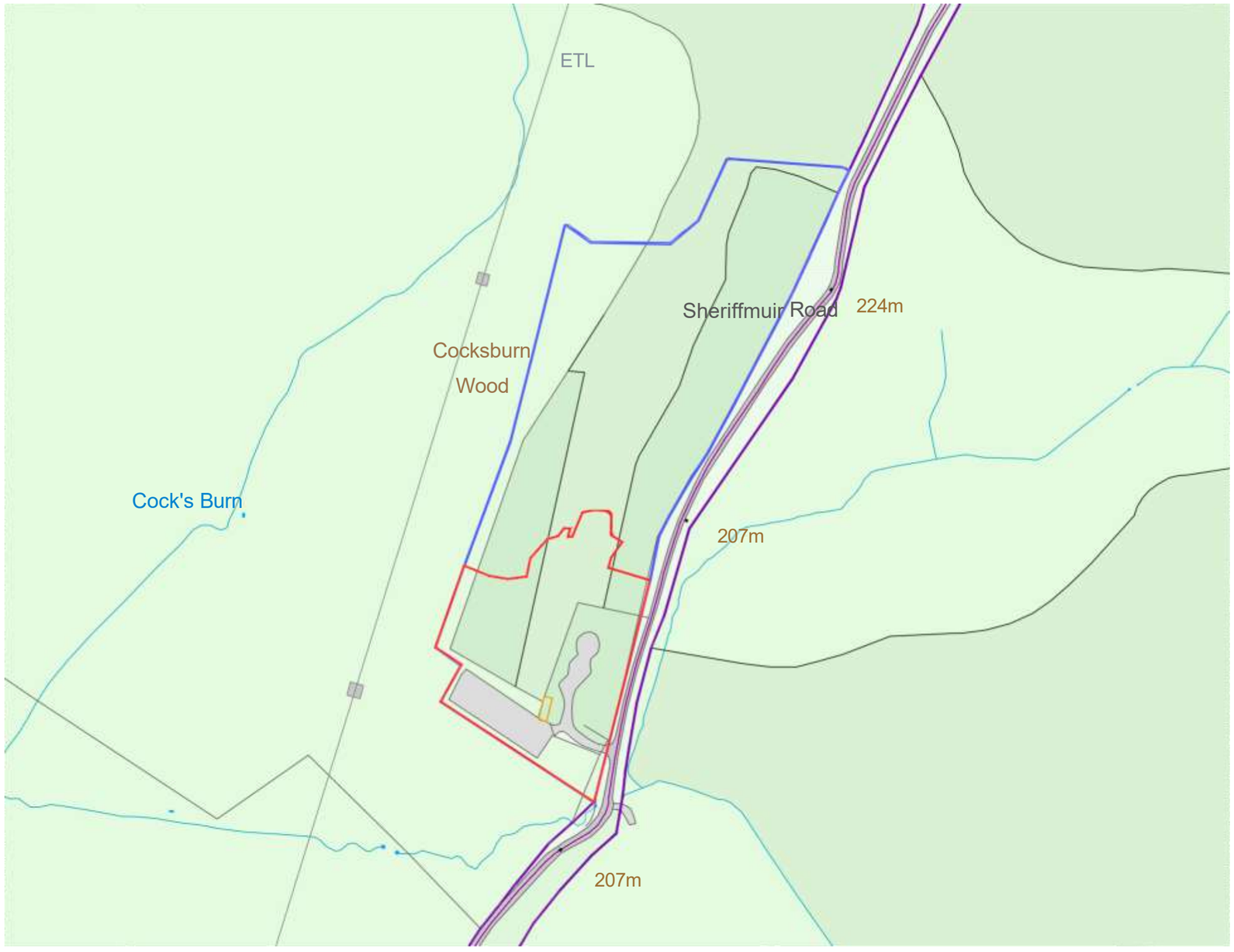


6.1 Location Plan

The landscape at Cockburn Woods will be delivered in three coordinated phases, aligning with the construction of the building and the wider woodland creation programme.

Phase 1:

Establish access, circulation, and the immediate setting of the building.

Phase 2:

Introduce core landscape features and small gathering spaces to complement the woodland edge.

Phase 3:

Ongoing woodland enhancement and long-term management, including new planting and adaptive care to support biodiversity, accessibility, and educational use.

This approach provides a clear, flexible framework for both the essential works and the longer-term evolution of the site.

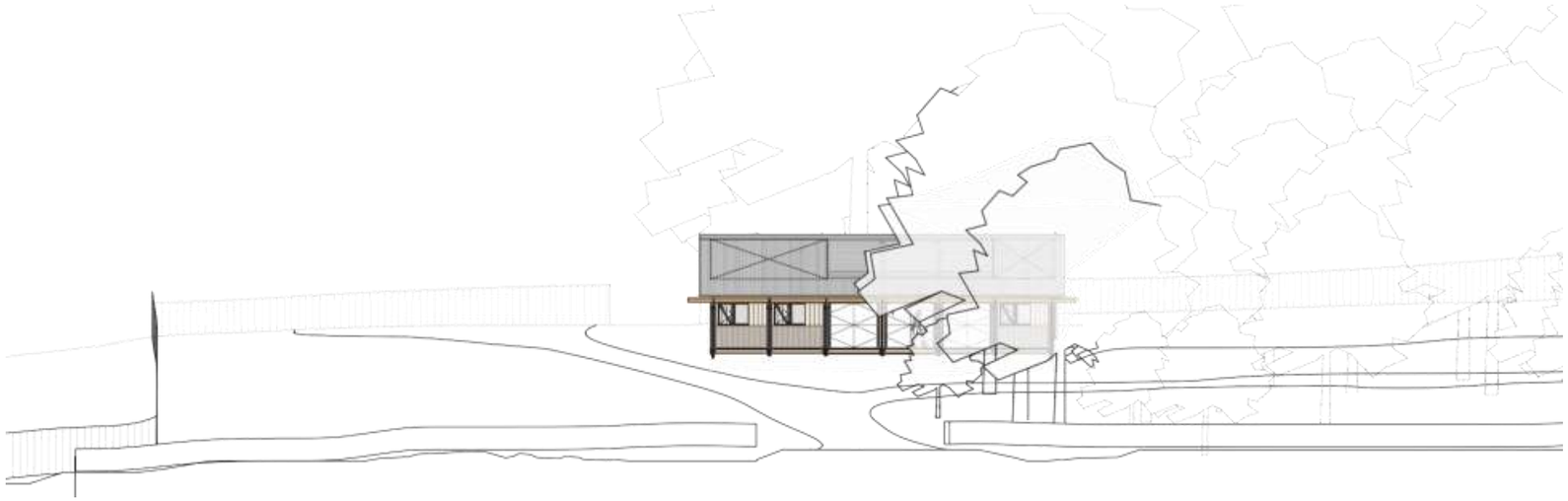
Key

- Ownership Boundary
- Overall Site Design Intent
- Red Line Boundary for works included in this application
- Proposed Structures

6.2 Proposed Site Plan

This drawing illustrates the location of the proposed facility within the wider Drumbrae woodland, showing access routes, existing hardstanding, tree constraints, and the overall relationship between the building and its landscape setting. It identifies key features such as circulation paths, arrival areas, and surrounding vegetation.

For more detail on the hard landscaping and soft landscaping refer to the accompanying Landscape Architects drawings

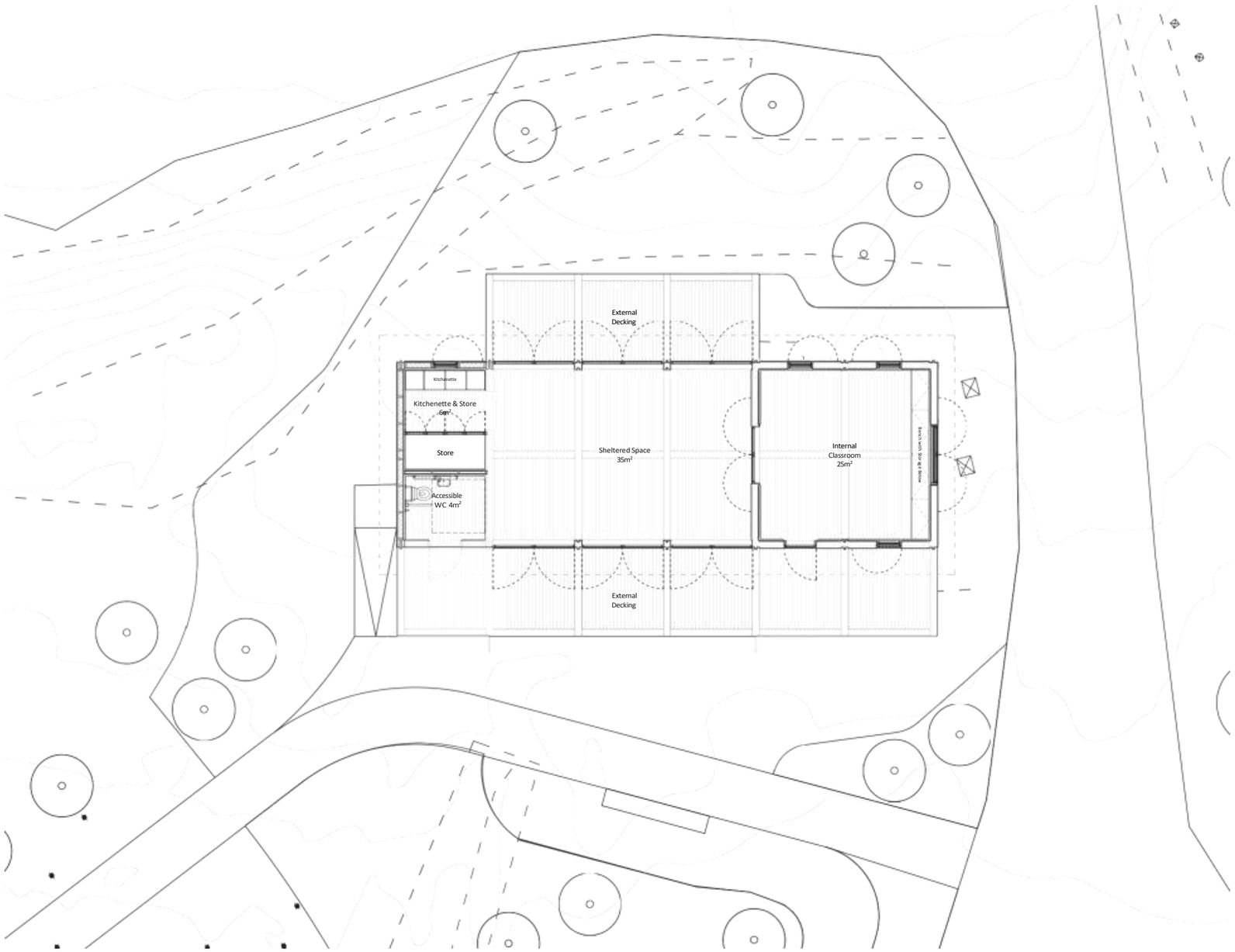


East Elevation

South Elevation

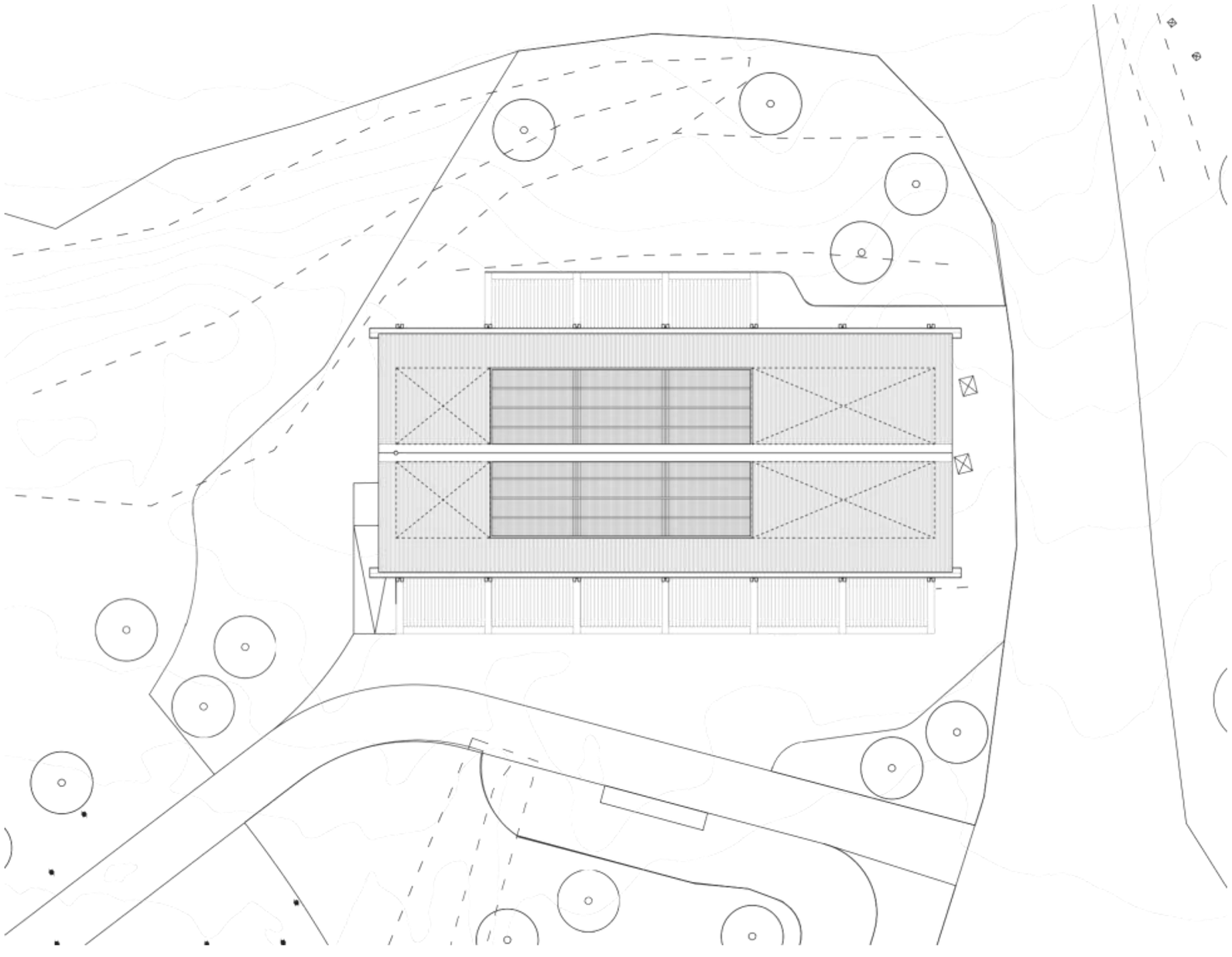
6.3 Proposed Site Elevations

This drawing illustrates the discreet nature of the proposed building within its wider landscape setting. By presenting the elevations at a larger contextual scale, it demonstrates how the facility sits low within the terrain, framed by existing woodland, earth banks, and topographic features. The zoomed-out views highlight the limited visual impact of the structure when seen from surrounding viewpoints, confirming that the building reads as a small, recessive rural element within the broader Drumbrae landscape.



6.4 Proposed Plan

The floor plan shows the simple internal arrangement of the facility, including the main flexible teaching space, storage areas, and access to the composting WC block. It highlights the compact, functional layout designed to support outdoor learning and woodland management activities.

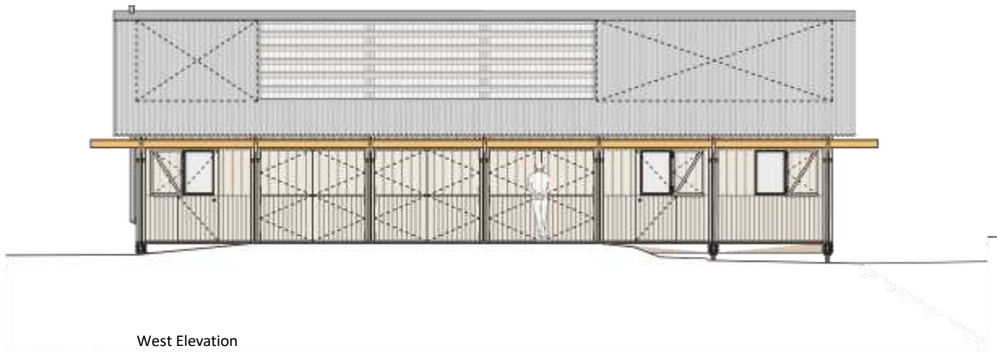


6.5 Proposed Roof Plan

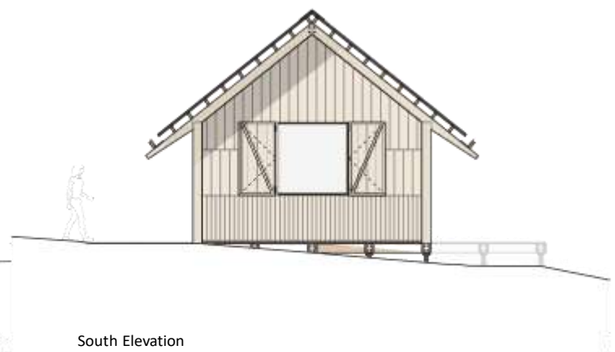
The roof plan identifies the building's simple pitched roof profile along with the area designated for photovoltaic panels. It illustrates the off-grid energy strategy and the discreet manner in which renewable technology is integrated to match the area of transparent roof surface bringing natural light into the sheltered space.

6.6 Proposed Elevations

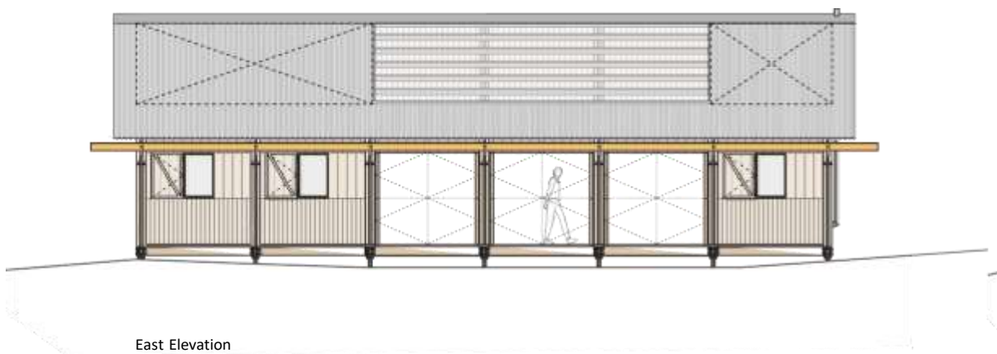
The building elevations show the external appearance, including timber cladding and corrugated roof sheeting. They demonstrate the modest scale, the natural material palette, and how the building blends into the woodland edge through muted tones and low visual impact.



West Elevation

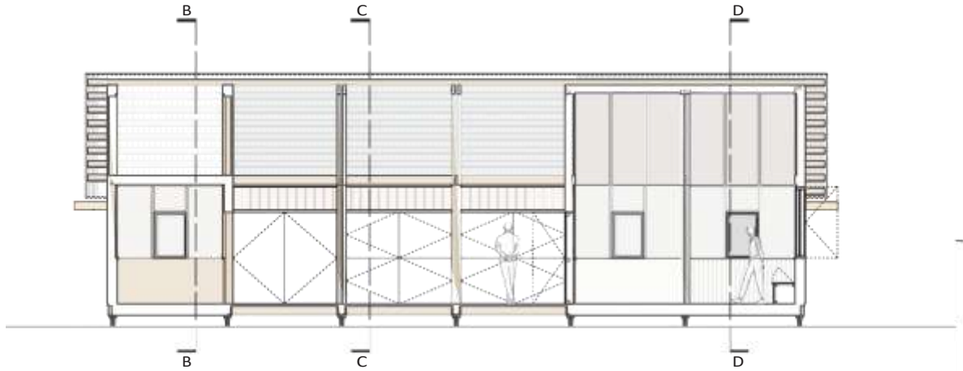


South Elevation

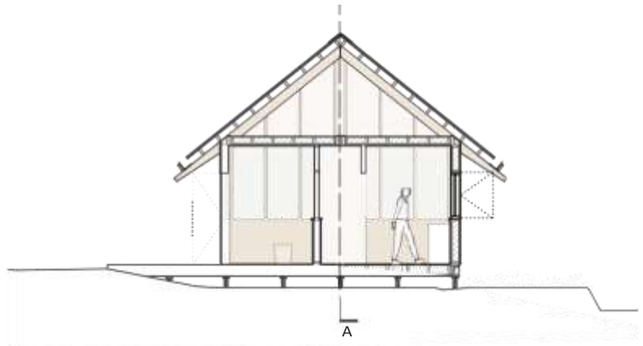


East Elevation

North Elevation



Section AA



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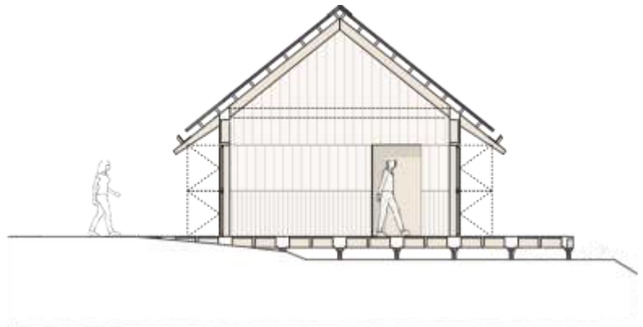
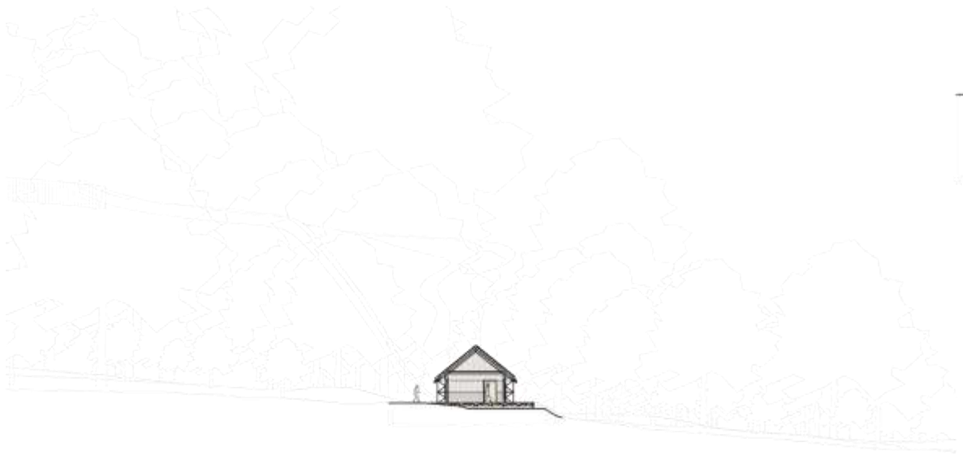


Section CC



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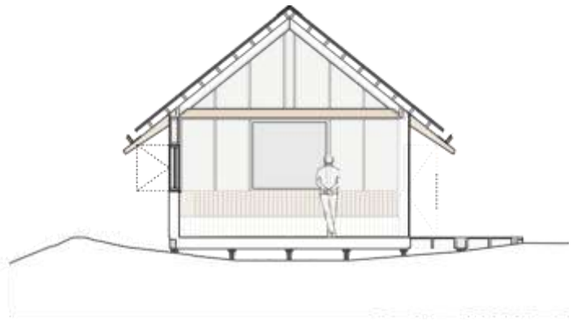


6.7 Proposed Sections

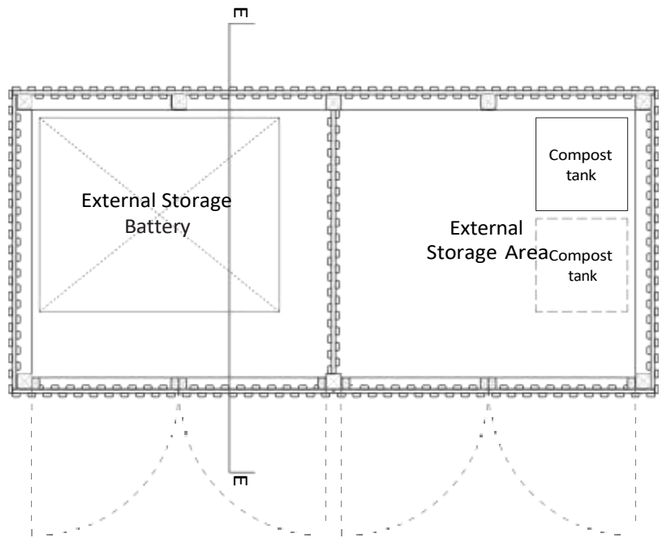
The sectional drawings illustrate the building's relationship to the sloping ground, showing the lightweight screw-pile foundation system, the raising of the floor above the ground surface, and internal volume. They explain the building's low-impact construction, natural materials, use of expressed timber frame and minimal earthworks.

6.8 Proposed External Store

This drawing presents the detailed arrangement of the proposed external store that supports the off-grid operation of the Forest Facility. It illustrates the compact footprint, showing the location of the battery storage, composting toilet tanks, and general equipment storage relative to the main building. The accompanying plans and elevations demonstrate the low-profile form, simple timber construction, and materials that match the classroom building. The drawing highlights how the store is integrated into the site with minimal visual impact, making use of modest height, natural cladding, and discreet positioning within the landscape.

Front Elevation

Side Elevations



Ground Floor Plan

Section EE

6.9 External View

A visualisation showing the building set within the woodland, demonstrating how it sits unobtrusively between existing tree lines and landscape features. It illustrates user arrival and provides an impression of overall scale and material expression.

6.10 Internal View

This image presents the character of the internal teaching space, showing the simple finishes, natural daylighting, and flexible open layout suitable for group activities, research sessions and interpretation.

6.11 View from Entrance

This visualisation shows the approach sequence from the site entrance, highlighting the discreet presence of the building, the surrounding sensory planting, and the integration of paths, cycle parking and seating within the natural landscape.