

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF DEVELOPMENT AND DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES TO THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE TO BE HELD ON 12 MARCH 2003** (this matter is the responsibility of Councillor R Henley (Leisure), Councillor C Croad (Property) and Councillor Ms Lisgo (Community Leadership))

LYNGFORD PARK (TO THE REAR OF PRIORSWOOD LIBRARY), TAUNTON - REQUEST BY SOMERSET COUNTY COUNCIL FOR A GROUND LEASE OF PART OF THIS SITE FOR A NEW SURE START DEVELOPMENT

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To consider the principle of developing part of the Borough Council's recreational open space at Lyngford Park, as part of the Sure Start Taunton programme to assist local pre-school children and their families in an area of relative deprivation.
- 1.2 This Council is part of the multi-agency Sure Start Partnership and it is envisaged that a presentation to the Executive will be made by local representatives of Sure Start.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The Borough Council owns an area of land known as Lyngford Park, which is shown hatched on the attached plan. It is currently used for recreational open space and part of the land to the rear of the Priorswood Library currently has an existing toilet block and children's playground. This is the area where the County Council is interested in taking a ground lease and is bounded by two footpaths, as shown cross hatched on the attached plan. (Appendix 1).
- 2.2 The Sure Start Taunton programme is part of the Government's Sure Start national initiative to alleviate child poverty and is focused on children under the age of four and their families, in areas of relative deprivation. Following a successful bid funding has been secured for a 10 year period for services and funding of approximately £600,000 has been achieved for a new family centre facility to serve the North Taunton area. Sure Start Taunton aims to stimulate the physical and social development of pre-school children to provide a better foundation for future learning and ultimately secure a strengthened community. Services will be delivered which should make a positive difference to the lives of local people and their families.

3. Current Proposals

- 3.1 A firm of architects has identified options for a development of a new Sure Start facility at this location. Such a development will need to consider how best to deal with the provision of public conveniences within the area as well as the proposed relocation of the existing children's play area. (See Appendix 2).

4. Loss of public open space, play equipment and youth shelter
- 4.1 The proposed site is located within a public open space annotated in the Taunton Deane Local Plan (revised deposit) for recreational open space. Planning Policy C3 prohibits development of this area unless it conforms to one of the following three criteria:-
- (a) there is an excess of good quality, recreational open space of the type which would be lost, sufficient to meet local demand; or
- (b) the proposed development provides recreational or community benefit greater than the long term value of the open space that would be lost; or
- (c) equivalent provision in a convenient location is made to at least an equal standard and with equal community benefits.
- 4.2 There needs to be sufficient consultation with the local community to establish the case under criteria (b). If the development goes ahead, the play equipment and youth shelter must be replaced and relocated. If criteria (c) were to apply, then the open space land lost to the development will need to be replaced (probably by negotiating free public access to a school site as it is unlikely that new land will be available or affordable). There is a need for carefully designed consultation to identify where the facilities that will be lost should be resited and to gain an informed opinion from the community about the acceptability of the loss of a part of their public open space in the locality.
- 4.3 From our current information it would appear that the north Taunton area is undersupplied with public open space against the standard adopted in the Local Plan of 6 acres per thousand population. This suggests that Members and the local community should be very cautious about the loss of even a small part of an open space in this area. Careful consideration will need to be given upon the strength of local views about the community benefits from this partnership project. These views can then be balanced against those concerning the loss of this piece of public open space.
5. Priorswood Public Conveniences
- 5.1 The Priorswood toilets have been repeatedly vandalised over a number of years. As a result they have been shut for long periods often because before the damage could be repaired the works in progress would be the target of further vandalism. In the past, we have installed people counters to establish usage and found that very few people use the facilities.
- 5.2 Alternative means of providing public conveniences have been suggested in the past such as incorporating access to the facilities into the library as a means of controlling use or removing them from the current site all together and providing new conveniences on Priorswood Place.
- 5.3 The future provision of public conveniences is to be considered as part of a best value review. This will require consultation to be carried out.

## Options

- Option 1 Sure Start provide controlled public access to limited facilities within the family centre.
- Option 2. Surestart include limited public conveniences semi-detached to the centre with separate access.
- Additional building costs are unknown
  - Fixtures and fitting out ~ £35k
- Option 3. The public conveniences are removed and limited new facilities are provided on Priorswood Place (subject to services being accessible).
- Cost of demolition ~ £10k
  - Automatic facility from JC Decaux (one unisex/disabled cubicle: ~ £20k PA Lease for minimum of 20 years, plus installation costs ~ £10k, or,
  - Pre fabricated semi automatic facility (gents cubicle plus a ladies/disabled cubicle, similar to the bus station) ~ £80k plus installation ~10k
  - Semi automatic facility, traditionally constructed on site (gents cubicle plus a ladies/disabled cubicle) ~ £70k + installation ~ £10k
- Option 4. The public conveniences are removed and no alternative is provided.
- Cost of demolition ~ £10k

5.4 Alternative facilities at Priorswood place will be comparatively expensive. If the conveniences are removed without any alternative provision then the Sure Start Partnership should fund the costs of demolition. The best way forward can only really be determined by more effective consultation to see what level of provision the local community requires.

5.5 The Partnership therefore needs to ascertain local opinion. The Council can then be better informed when considering whether or not it should make the provision of facilities a condition of leasing/gifting the land.

## 6. The Legal Issues

6.1 Although it would appear that there are no covenants in respect of this land which would prevent the Borough Council from granting a suitable ground lease to the Somerset County Council for the Sure Start project development, it would be necessary to advertise such a disposal under the provisions of Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 and have regard to any objections raised.

## 7. Comment

7.1 The “balancing” between various “community needs” in this case is not easy. It is a priority of the council to help local communities shape their own future, and to offer opportunities for those at risk in our deprived areas. As an active member of the Sure Start Partnership the Council is assisting in the delivery of the Sure Start programme to alleviate child poverty. The Council is also

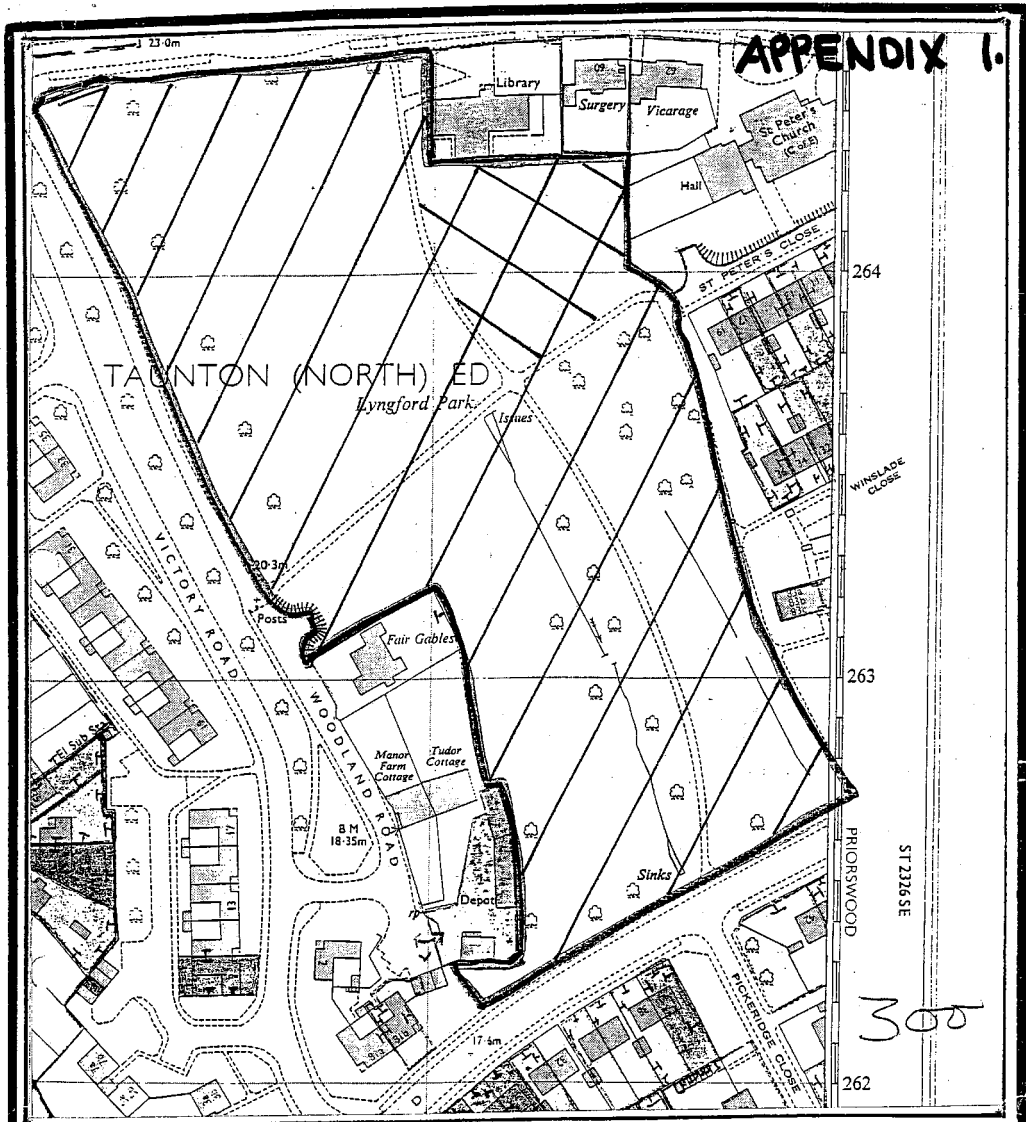
trying to increase local involvement in the management and development of its green space, and trying to direct future park facility spending to our deprived wards. It is also a priority of the Council to encourage healthier lives and we wish to develop a programme of activities in parks to benefit local communities.

- 7.2 From initial discussions carried out with and within the partnership it would appear that this piece of public parkland is not of community benefit ; it warrants some attention; this could involve public investment; and there may be an opportunity to provide a much needed community facility that the local community would prefer.
- 7.3 If this proves to be the case, the Council can then ensure that the Sure Start programme makes proper financial provision for replacement community facilities that will be affected by this scheme.

8. Recommendation

- (1) Public consultation is warranted to identify the value of this piece of Lyngford Park to the local community, and the need to replace the toilets, play area, youth shelter and public open space.
- (2) That the public consultation exercise should be carried out as an integral part of the Sure Start programme. Any further consultation should ideally be undertaken by the end of March.
- (3) Any ground lease will be conditional upon the Council accepting that the community benefit is greater than the long-term value of this piece of parkland, and to the replacement facilities being funded as part of the Sure Start programme.

Contacts: Alan Hatridge, Director of Development  
Penny James, Director of Community  
Services  
David Thompson, Chief Valuer



**APPENDIX I.**

TAUNTON (NORTH) ED

Lyngford Park



**TAUNTON  
DEANE BOROUGH  
COUNCIL**

**VALUATION SERVICES**

The Deane House, Belvedere Road,  
Taunton, TA1 1HE  
Tel 01823 356356

drawn by:
date:
drawing No:
scale:

Based upon (or reproduced from)  
The Ordnance Survey Map with  
the sanction of The Controller  
of H.M. Stationary office.

Lyngford Park  
Taunton

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For Identification Purposes Only:



APPENDIX 2

Mr David Thompson  
Chief Valuer  
Taunton Deane Borough Council  
The Deane House  
Belvedere Road  
Taunton  
SOMERSET TA1 1HE

Our ref: CW/59513/KAS/SW

25 February 2003



Dear David

**SURE START TAUNTON (PRIORSWOOD)**

Further to our progress meeting on Monday 10<sup>th</sup> February and our subsequent conversations, I am pleased to enclose for your information 3 outline options for our proposed building. The options are concept and only intended to show the proposed scale of the building in relation to the site.

You will be aware it is our intention to fund and relocate the existing playground on the site opposite. However, we would seek clarification from Taunton Deane that the existing equipment does comply with current standards.

Our preferred route into the site is via the existing library access and through the car park. It would be our intention to minimise disruption for the library staff and to ensure that car park spaces are not lost as a result. We are currently discussing this with Library Services (Somerset County Council).

In respect of the existing WC block, our enclosed plans illustrate both:-

- 1) A new public WC adjacent to the new Sure Start building with disabled provision; and
- 2) The existing public WC remaining on the site.

Aesthetically, we feel that keeping the existing WC block in its current location and without upgrading it to a satisfactory standard would be a significant disadvantage to the community. However, we understand the financial constraints the Borough Council are faced with and it would be our intention as part of the Planning Consultation process to discuss this in more detail with you.

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Our Ref: CW/59513/KAS/SW

David Thompson

25 February 2003

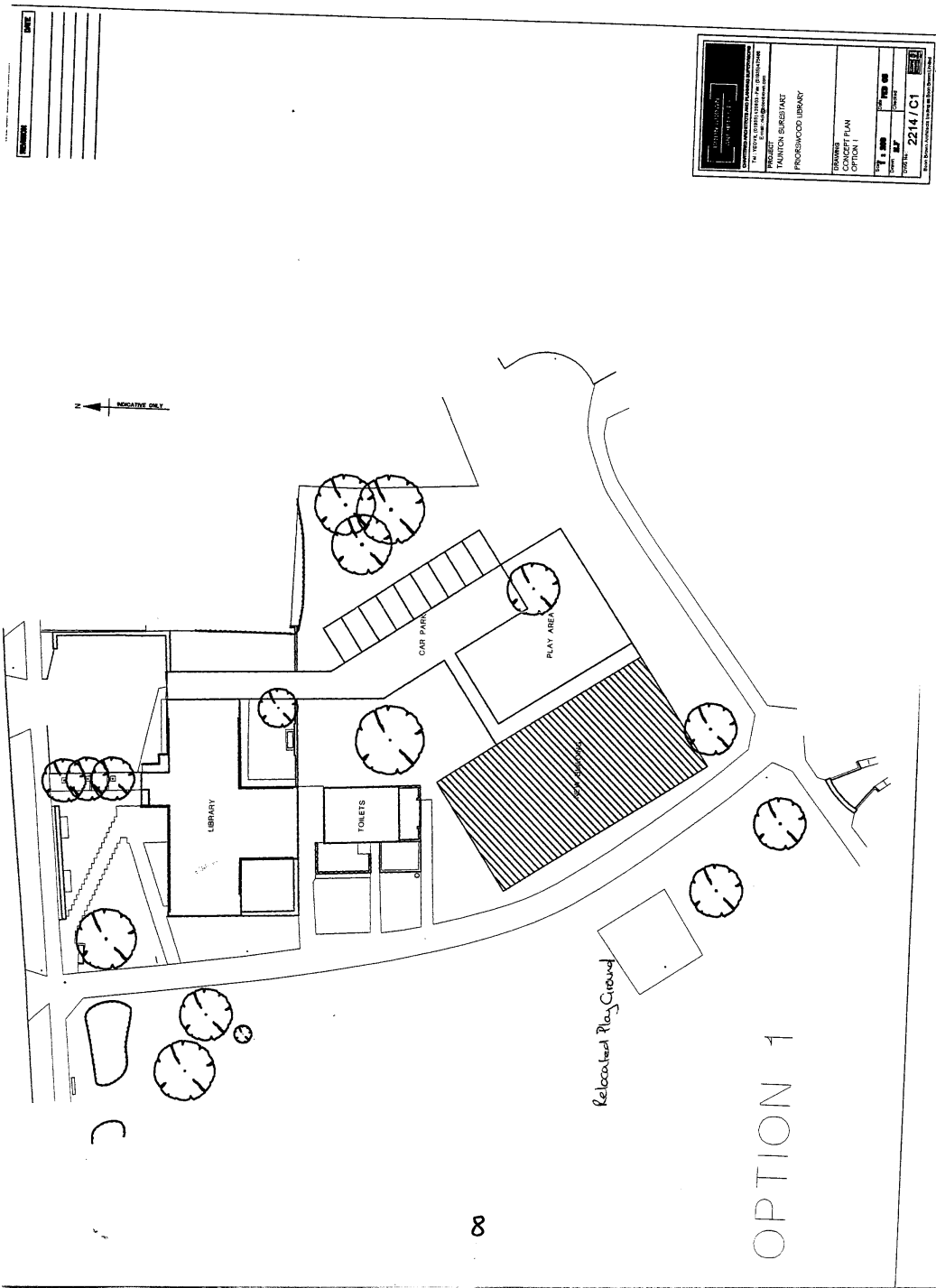
I trust the enclosed information is sufficient for your immediate report to the Executive Committee but do contact me if you require anything further.

Yours sincerely



Keith Snelling  
Principal Surveyor  
for Symonds Group Ltd

cc: Nick Francis – Boon Brown Partnership  
Dave Evans  
Chris Sherman – Somerset County Council  
John Bazley – Sure Start Taunton (Programme Manager)



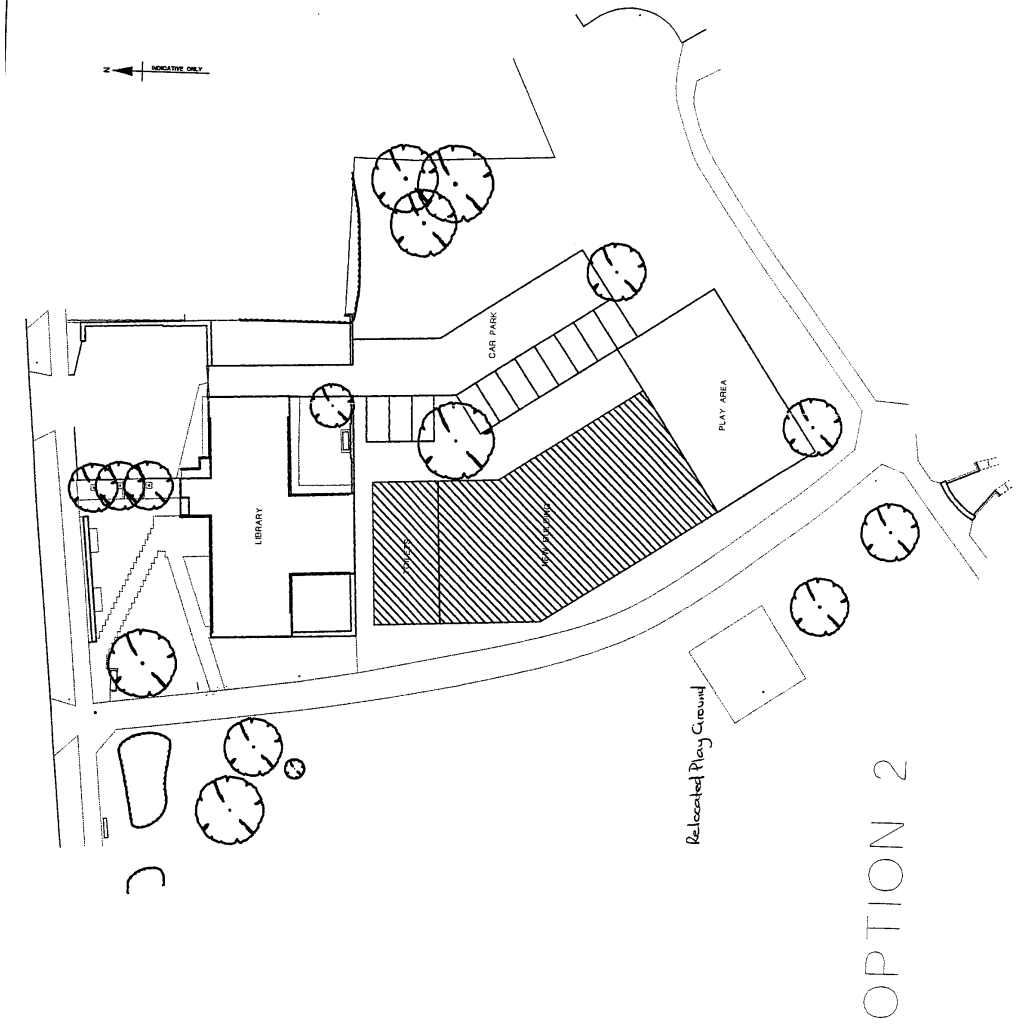
NO.	DATE	DESCRIPTION

THE CITY OF WINNIPEG AND DISTRICTS COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT	
<b>PROJECT:</b> FAUNTON BURGHART PROGRESSWOOD LIBRARY	
<b>OWNER:</b> CITY OF WINNIPEG COMMUNITY PLAN OPTION 1	
<b>DATE:</b> 22/11/02	<b>PROJECT:</b> 2214 / C1

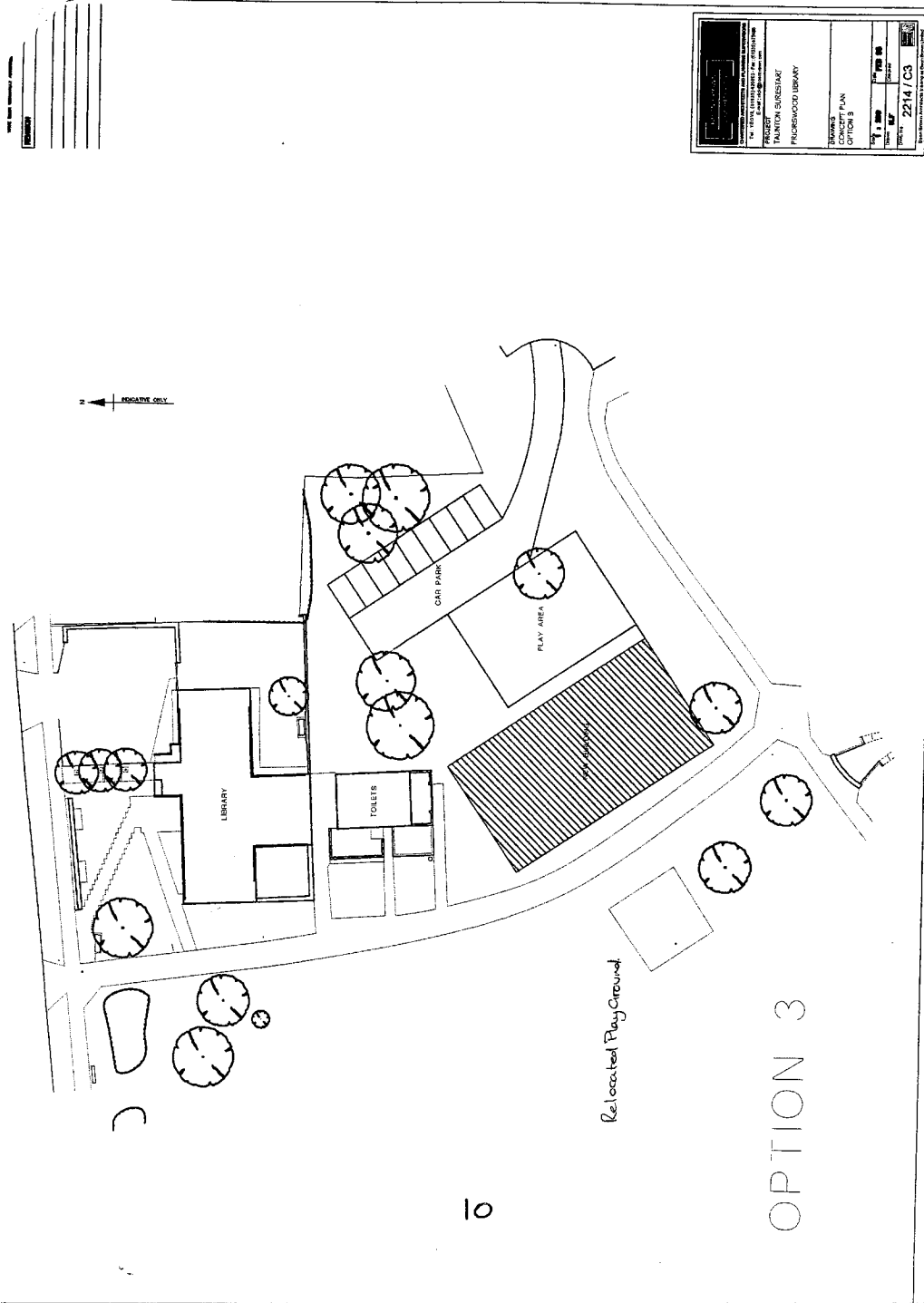


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<b>MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD</b>	
DATE: 2/20/03	
PROJECT: TAUNTON BURSE/FART	
SITE: PRICKWOOD LIBRARY	
DRAWING: CONCEPT PLAN	
OPTION: OPTION 2	
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PROJECT: TANTON SUBSTANT PROJECT NO: 2003-001 DATE: 2003-03-10	
PROJECT: FRUGROSDALE LIBRARY	
DRAWN: [Name] CHECKED: [Name]	DATE: 03/10/03
SHEET: 2214 / C3	

