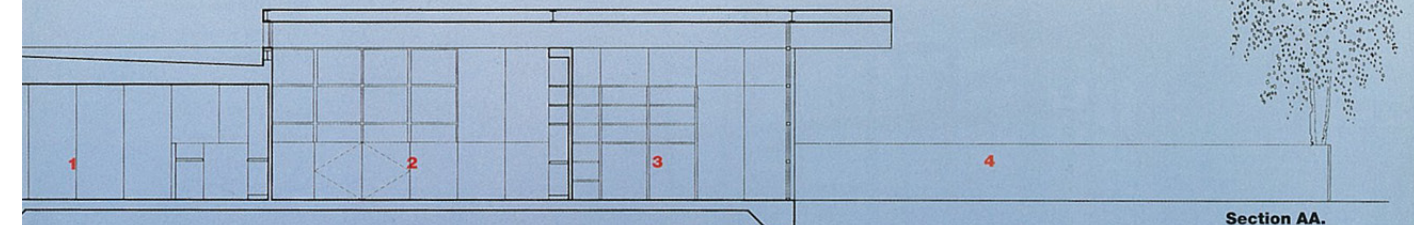
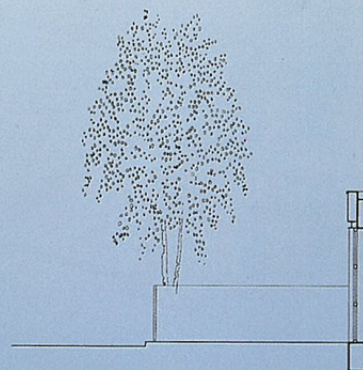
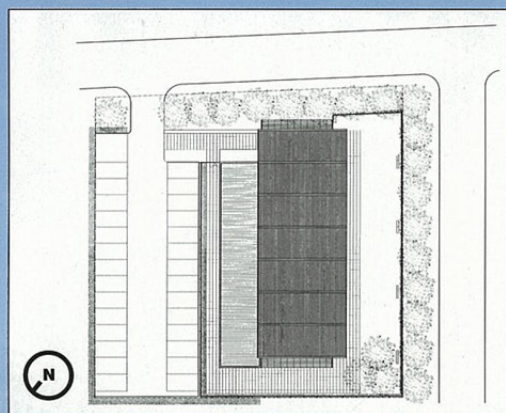


**BUILDING STUDY**

Walters and Cohen's day nursery, Stockley Park

# Learning curve

At its second nursery for the Jigsaw group, Walters and Cohen has persuaded its client that children can thrive in a building that's guaranteed not to remind them of home. Amanda Baillieu reports



Section AA.

**KEY TO CROSS SECTION**  
 1 Baby home base  
 2 Activity street  
 3 Home base  
 4 Play garden

The barrel-vaulted main building (pictured) contains the activity street and home base, which leads out on to a small garden (see cross section, above).

Stockley Park, one of the UK's most successful business parks, is also held up as a shining example of the 'added value' of decent architecture. In the late 1980s, buildings by Foster & Partners, Troughton McAslan, Ian Ritchie and others followed in the successful footsteps of Arup Associates, and this year Arup's third phase will finally begin on site.

It is, then, a place where, despite being surrounded on three sides by suburbia and two miles to the north of Heathrow Airport, architecture really matters. So when Jigsaw Nurseries wanted to move from Portakabins on Stockley Park East to purpose-built premises on the west side, the park's management took more than a passing interest in the design.

Jigsaw only builds on business parks, but had met no resistance to its standard pitched-roof, brick design elsewhere—until it proposed building on Stockley Park. Enter Cindy Walters and Michal Cohen, who were told by their client to 'do some-

thing that would fit in with the park'. The idea was that their design would become a prototype to be used whenever Jigsaw's own preferred brick box was rejected.

As things turned out, the prototype was first built, albeit in different materials, at a business park in Bristol, Parkway North, which opened 18 months ago. Stockley Park – which staff have renamed Jigsaw Heathrow so they can 'theme' the nursery after the constituent parts of an airport – opened last month.

Until Walters and Cohen appeared on the scene, all Jigsaw nurseries followed a standard brief. Since meeting the South African-trained duo, the client has been on a steep learning curve. The practice was told its input would not extend to the interior, but it persuaded Jigsaw to junk the internal corridors and air-conditioning in favour of natural light, underfloor heating, windows that open, and space – lots of it.

Most importantly, the building form is generated not by some arbitrary idea of







The nursery entrance is where the two building forms – the transparent main building and the subordinate solid building – meet (left). The activity street is naturally lit and the entire building enjoys underfloor heating (below).

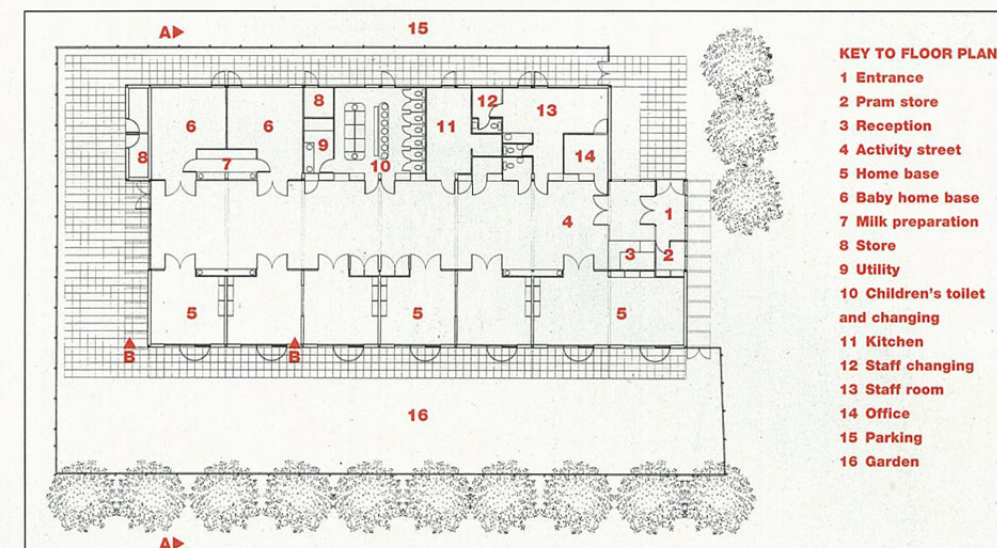
what a nursery should look like, but by its three main functions: the 'home bases', the activity 'street' and services. 'We wanted nursery staff to be able to create a number of different spatial environments within the building to suit the activities of the different age groups,' says Cohen.

The home bases are areas that groups of children of similar age identify as home. The activity street is a mixed-activity area where children of all age groups – from three months to five years – can interact and play. Like the Bristol nursery, the home bases and the street were to be separated by large pivot doors that swing open, dividing up the main space as required, but the client saw the doors as an extravagance and axed them.

The home bases and street are adjacent to one another under the main barrel-vaulted roof, with the service zone in the lower subordinate building. The two linear forms – one transparent, the other solid – slip past one another to create the main entrance to the school.

Between these large doors are storage units for paint, paper and toys, with preparation bowls for everyday use. The service zone contains toilets, staff room, kitchen and other cellular spaces. Materials are cheap – the building cost a fraction over £500,000. And it was built as a design-and-build contract, but with the difference that the architects made sure the contractors, who they'd worked with in Bristol, had a proper performance specification.

Working with Jigsaw, for whom they are now developing a prototype three, Walters and Cohen have to sit in meeting rooms with nursery school staff who talk about making the nurseries 'cosy' and

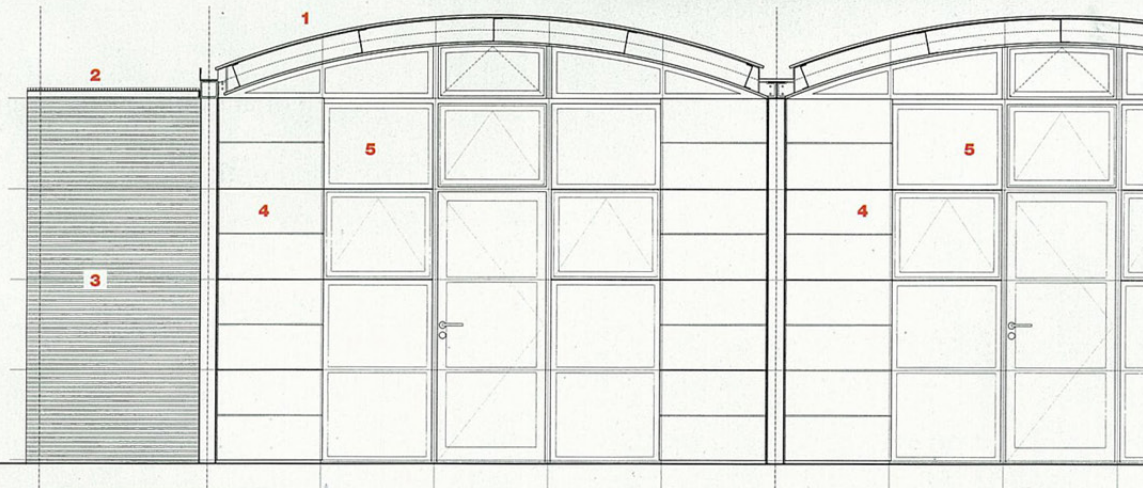




## KEY TO SECTION

- 1 Sinusoidal powder-coated aluminium roof
- 2 Aluminium grate
- 3 Silver sinusoidal powder-coated aluminium sheeting
- 4 Iroko timber panels
- 5 Powder-coated aluminium double glazing

**Construction detail:**  
the nursery was built to a tight budget but the choice of materials – aluminium roof sheeting, timber panels, and tight, geometric glazing – gives a strong identity and presence.



Detail of south elevation (BB).

'homely' – not a concept that cuts much ice with architects generally. But like the 'go green and stop red' that all nursery schools insist on, cosiness is held up as not only an atmosphere that must be engendered by staff, but an architectural quality that, sadly, has led to most new-build nurseries looking like a cross between a Wendy house and a Wimpey home.

Children at Stockley Park may be a little young to appreciate modernism, but one day they will come to understand that their nursery had entirely different parentage.

## CREDITS

**Architect** Walters and Cohen  
**Structural engineer** Whitby Bird and Partners  
**Main contractor** Gilmac Building Services  
**Landscape design** Charles Funke Associates  
**Landscape contractor** Tudor Stone Landscaping

## Cost Specification

<b>Cost</b>	<b>£565,200</b>
<b>Total area</b>	<b>600m<sup>2</sup></b>
<b>Cost per m<sup>2</sup></b>	<b>£942</b>
<b>Costs</b>	
Groundworks	£92,200
External works	£46,000
Drainage	£14,400
Structure and external cladding	£200,600
Mechanical and electrical	£80,000
Internal partitions and storage units	£60,000
Kitchen and utility room	£17,000
Decorations and finishes	£9,000
Fittings	£10,000
Preliminaries	£36,000

## Specifications

## Structure

Painted mild steel by AEP (reader enquiry no 201) and Gilmac Building Services (enquiry no 202).

## Roof

Sinusoidal powder-coated aluminium roof sheeting by Talfab (enquiry no 203) installed by Keith Lodge Industrial Roofing (enquiry no 204).

## External walls

Sinusoidal powder-coated aluminium wall cladding by Talfab (enquiry no 203) installed by Keith Lodge Industrial Roofing (enquiry no 204).  
 Iroko timber panels and doors by Gilmac Building Services (enquiry no 202).  
 Powder-coated aluminium glazed curtain walling and doors by Triad (enquiry no 205).

## Internal finishes

Melamine-faced partitions by Montage (enquiry no 206) and Gilmac Building Services (enquiry no 202).

Perforated powder-coated sinusoidal aluminium ceiling by Talfab (enquiry no 203) installed by Keith Lodge Industrial Roofing (enquiry no 204).

## Floors

Carpet by Gradus Ultracare (enquiry no 207).  
 Vinyl by Rikett Permalux (enquiry no 208).

## Mechanical and electrical

Underfloor heating by Nuheat (enquiry no 209).  
 Light fittings by Iguzzini (enquiry no 210) fitted by Readflex (enquiry no 211).