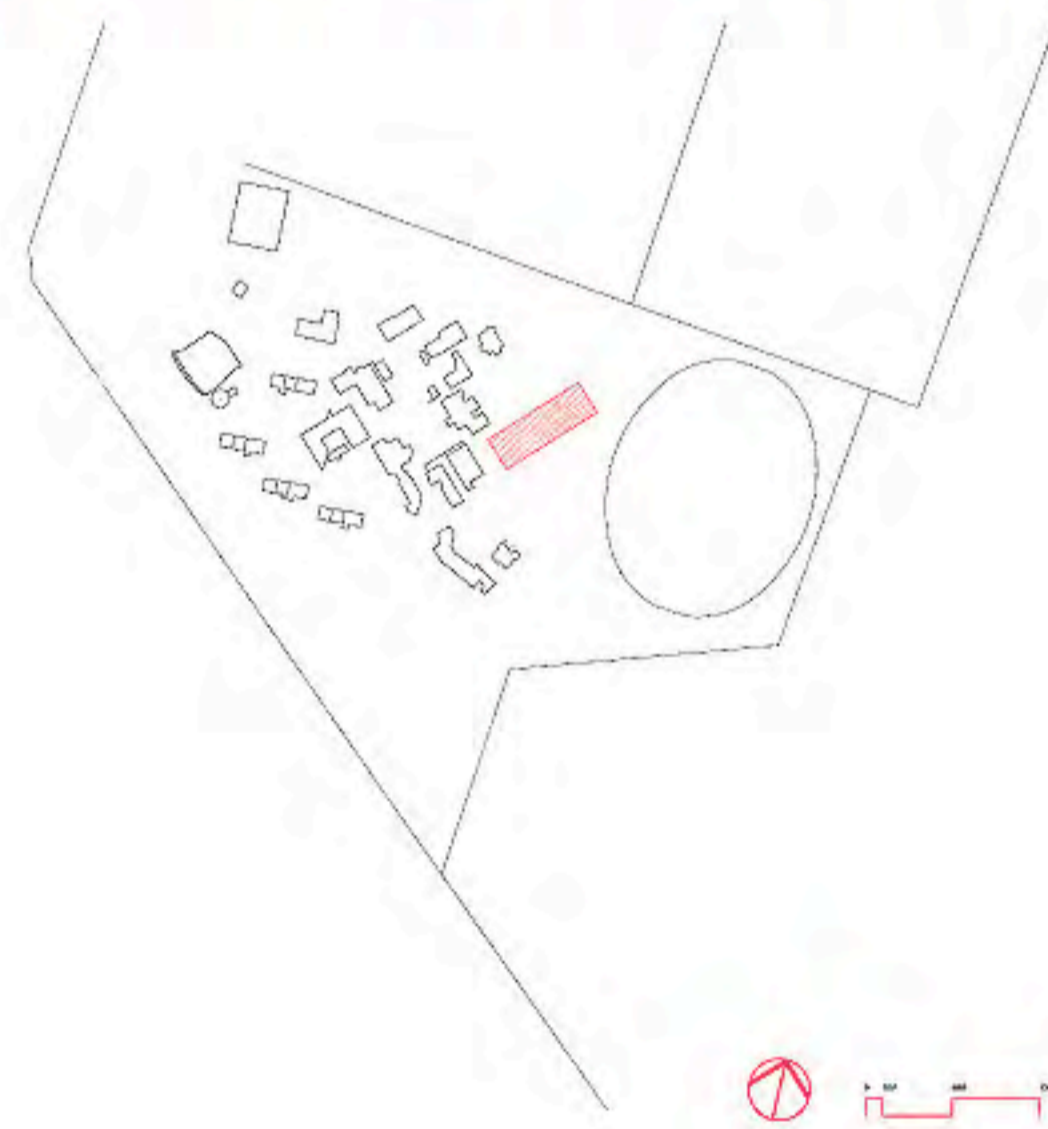


Architect: Sean Godsell Architects
Client: Woodleigh School
Builder: Kane Constructions
Landscape: Sean Godsell Architects
Area: 1200m²
Photographer: Design: 1999-2001
Construction: 2001-2002

Sean Godsell Baxter, Victoria, Australia Woodleigh School Science Building

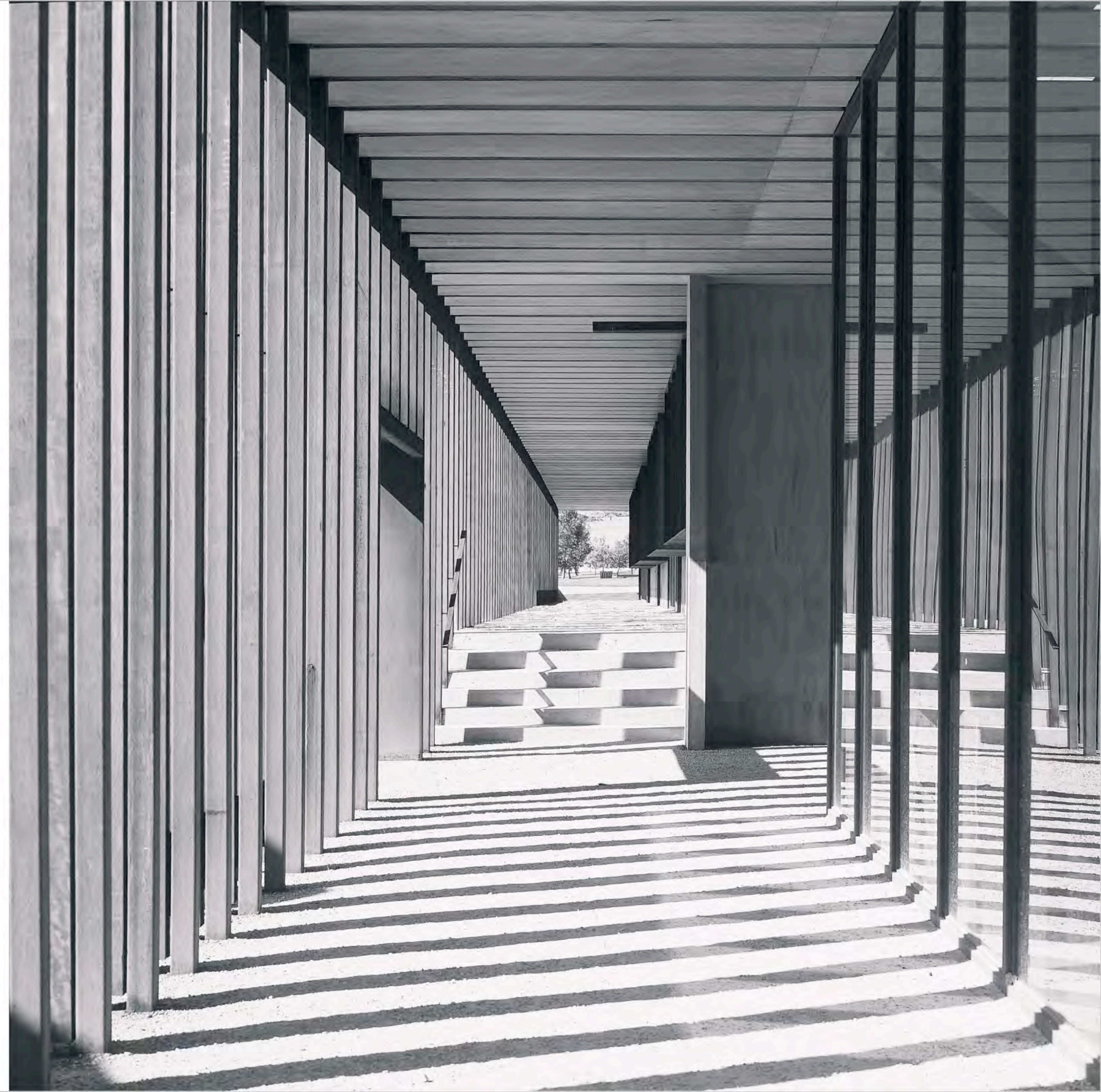


Architect's statement A 60m x 20m single-storey steel structure is embedded into the side of a gently sloping site to form the eastern edge of a new quadrangle at Woodleigh School. The simple portal frame which is a combined oxidised steel and ironbark structure forms covered ways on the east and west sides of the building and doubles as a shading device. The building is designed as a Gallery of Science – where the day-to-day activities of the users of the building are put on display for all to see, the aim being to stimulate and generate interest in the students by encouraging interaction. The classrooms become daily experiments in education, housed in a nurturing environment and protected from the weather using sound design principles.

The new Science Building forms the eastern flank of the North Lawn – a new major outdoor space for senior students. The conventional quadrangle model of the original school is repeated in this gesture, and the library becomes a pivotal building to both old and new outdoor spaces. In that sense the building is seen as an ordering device for this corner of the campus. The building is low and cuts into the slope considered to be the continuation of the hills to the north. Grass moguls are a deterrent to games of football and cricket – encouraging students to see this area as a quiet, more study-oriented part of the campus.

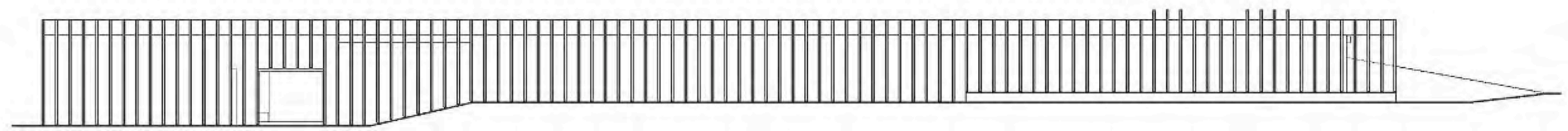
Five classrooms are accessed via a traditional covered way. All classrooms are serviced by a commonly accessed preparation lab. A display and propagation greenhouse and aquarium interrupt the rhythm of classroom modules. A staff resources room and head of department office terminate the prep room at the south end of the east side of the building, forming the staff entry. A separate project room breaks away from the main building to form a covered outdoor teaching space.

The use of natural materials and natural light deep into the classrooms enhances the idea of a nurturing built environment, one which encourages learning and student interaction. The rigorous repetition of timber and steel columns/shading device offers actual and symbolic protection of the internal environment. This was a deliberate biological analogy: the warm underbelly (endoskeleton) protected by the tough outer structure (exoskeleton). Sean Godsell

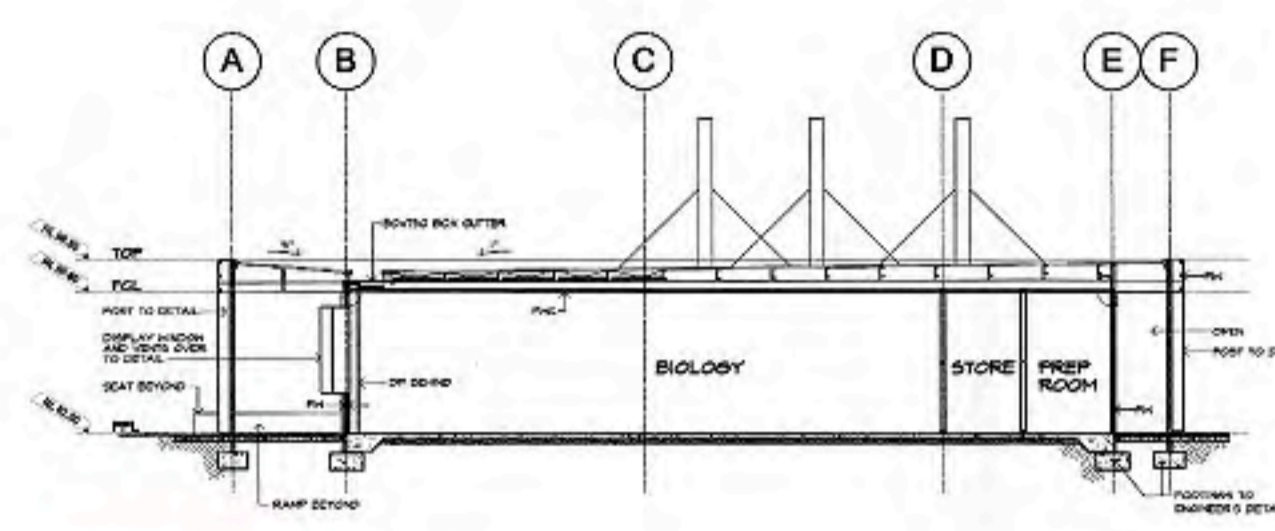


In relating the science building to existing buildings scattered over the campus like so many loose marbles, Sean Godsell makes sense of the jumble of positive and negative spaces. The new building is oriented to bring order to its ad hoc neighbours and define a new quad to the north; it also engages with the school oval on the southern flank. A rationalist, Godsell favours a type of reductionism in regard to modularity and the repetitive figure of the building. He works with a reduced palette of materials – stained sawn timber, insitu fair-faced concrete, rusted steel, plywood, and gravel underfoot, where pavers might be expected – interested in their tactility and also in using them experimentally.

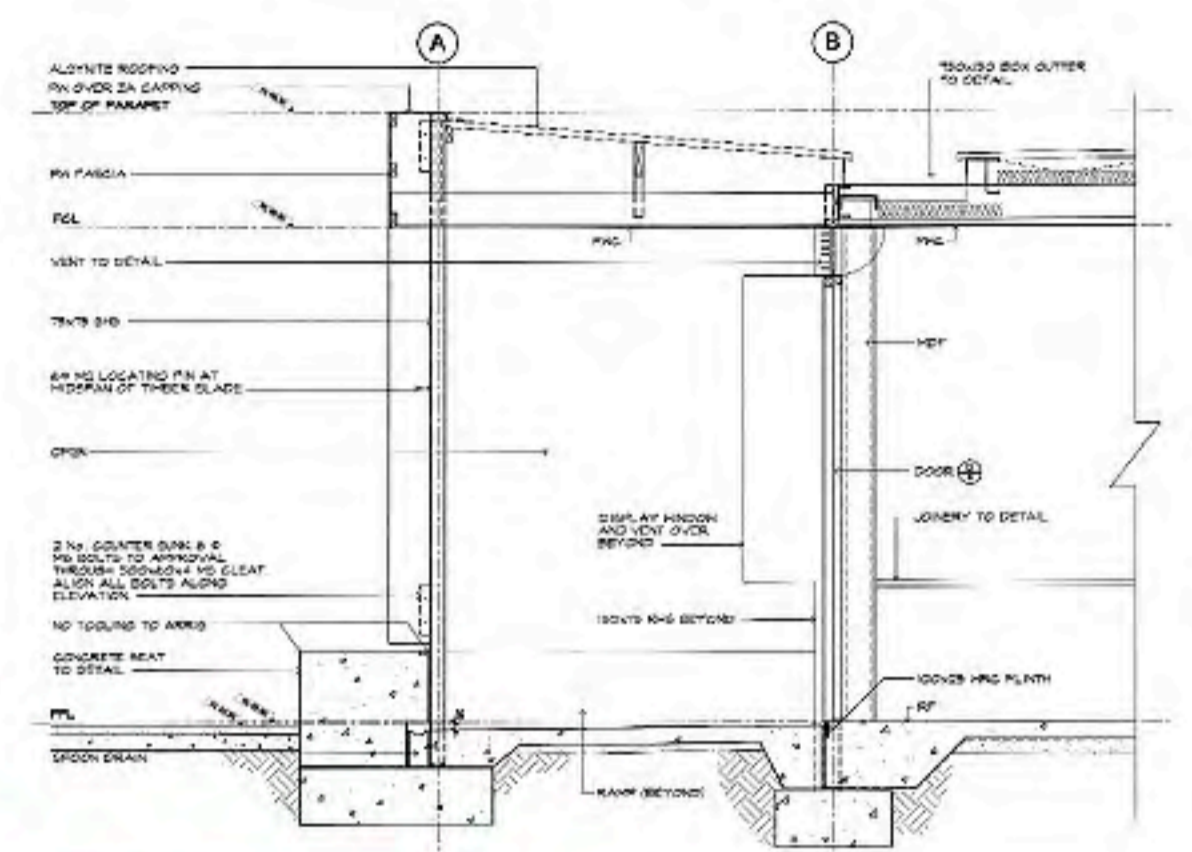
The linear building presents itself as timber, although construction is a steel portal frame. Vertical hardwood fins fixed to the outer edge of the steel face create a colonnade, an appropriate campus reference. There are also important ideas here about rhythm and scale, and achieving dimension and presence with great economy. Each column is matched at ceiling height with a corresponding void in a positive/negative game set up by an internal plywood lining laid across the building to alternately cover ducting and let in light through the translucent roofing into the deep plan: a simple idea delivering maximum amenity and visual impact and reinforcing the rhythm of the colonnade.



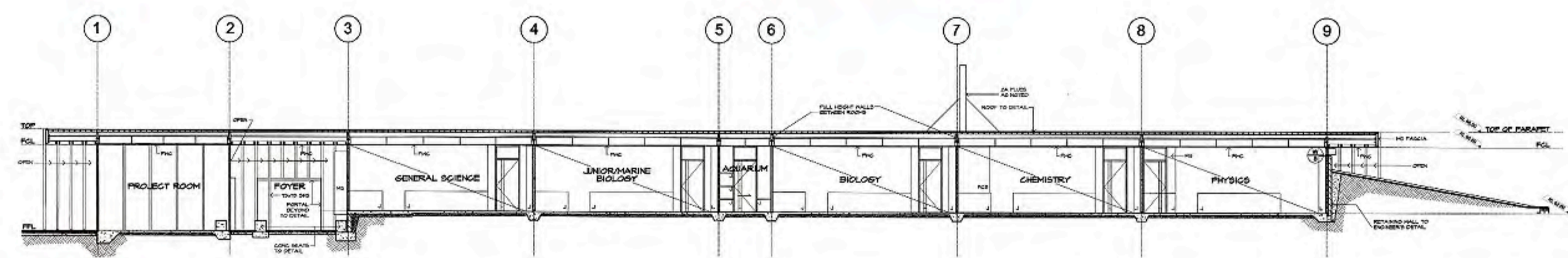
East elevation



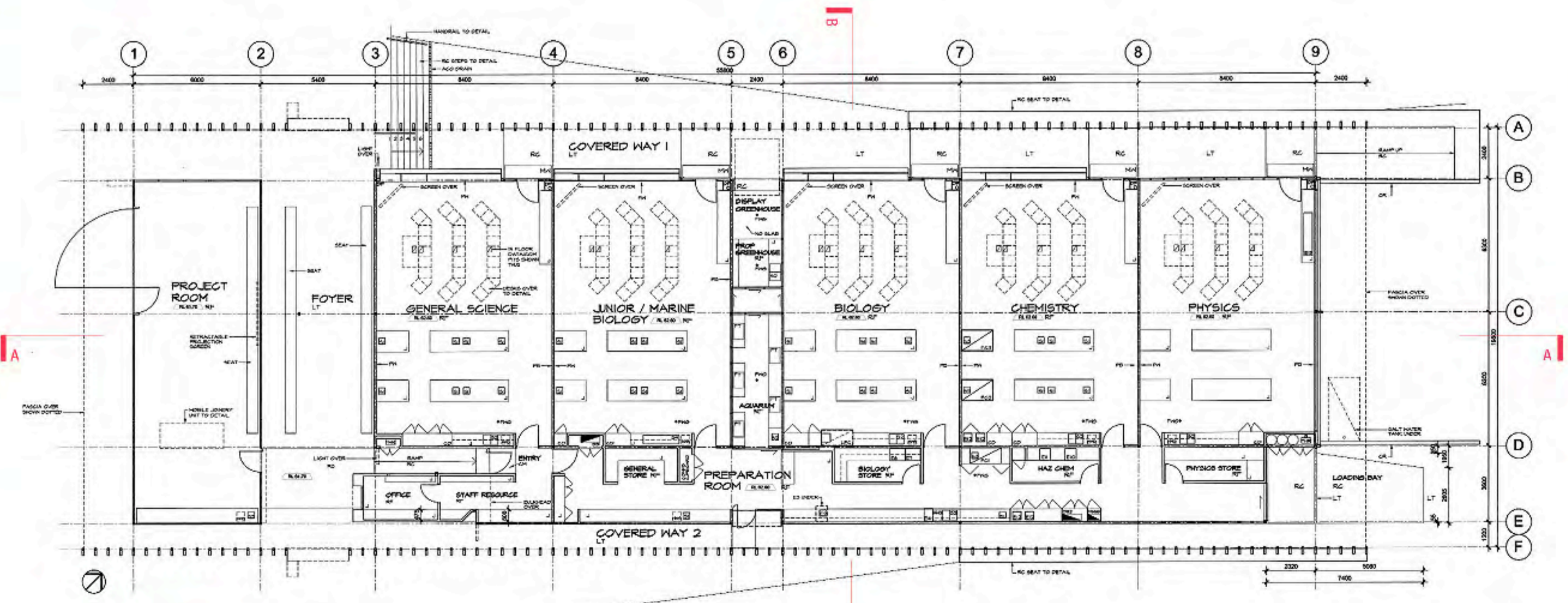
Section BB



Detail section through walkway



Section AA



Ground floor plan

