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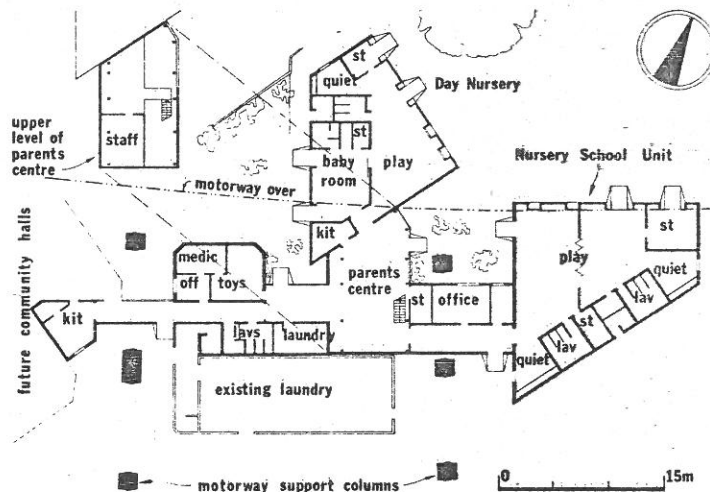
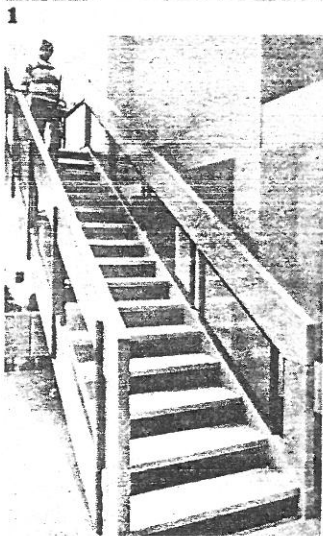
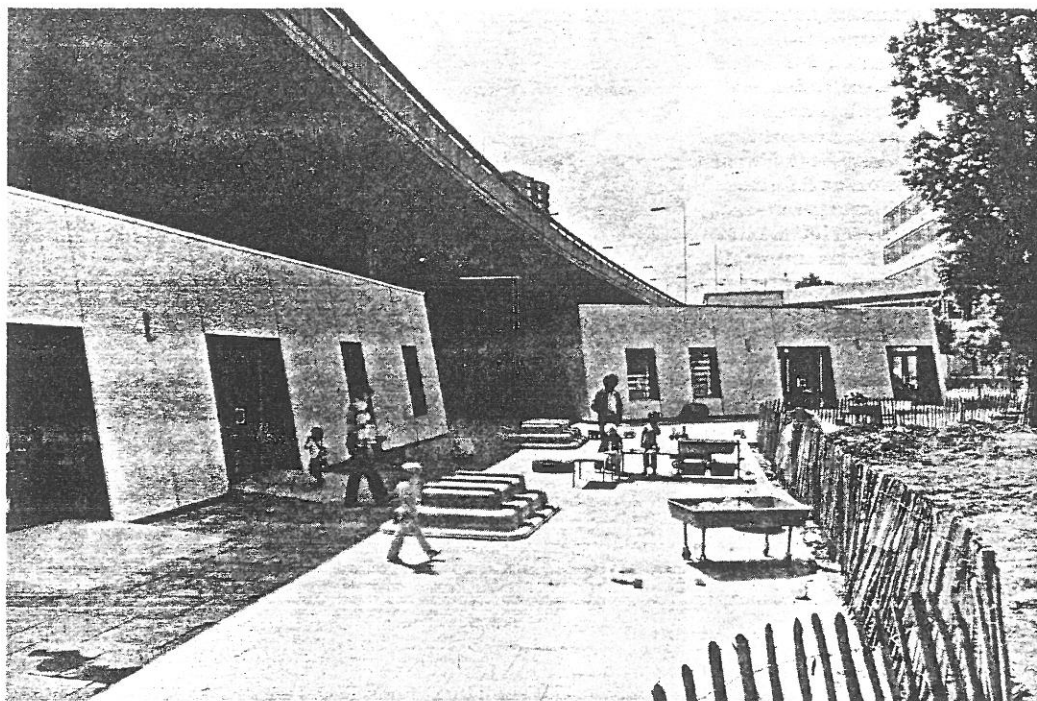
KENSINGTON  
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PUBLIC ARCHITECTURE by Nick Wates

# MAXILLA'S MOTORWAY CHILDREN

The space under the Westway flyover (A40M) in North Kensington, London, is the modern equivalent of nineteenth century railway arch development. Since the elevated motorway was built 10 years ago a plethora of activities have sprung up underneath ranging from car repair workshops and small offices to old people's lunch clubs and adventure playgrounds. Unlike most other buildings, the recently completed Maxilla Nursery Centre does not use the motorway as a roof structure, as road engineers require access to the columns at this point. Instead the building slots in between the columns as an independent structure.

The centre was initiated and developed by the Westway Nursery Association, a community group mainly consisting of local parents. The association succeeded in getting support from the Inner London Education Authority, the Kensington and Chelsea borough and charitable trusts. Design work was done by ILEA architects in close conjunction with the Westway Nursery Association. Barry Wilson, job architect, said that the close liaison had been 'very expensive but very rewarding. It's not where you have gone wrong but where we have gone wrong.' The nursery centre is described by its co-ordinator as a 'trail-blazer' for the kind of unified services for the under-fives currently envisaged by Government. It has three elements: a nursery school for 60 three to five-year-olds, a day care centre for 30 toddlers and eight babies, and a parents' centre with facilities for adult education, a toy library and a snack bar. Physically and socially the parents' centre is the hub of the building with the other elements in separate wings, so that they can function separately if the need arises. No special sound insulation was found to be necessary as the building is in the 'sound shadow' of the motorway. Initially the architects were concerned that lead pollution levels might be dangerously high but tests found that levels were no higher than anywhere else in the city. The building is clad with compressed asbestos-cement sheet. The contract price was £215 000. The architect's intention was to design a building 'that looks as if it is meant to be there rather like a neat piece of industrial design, pleasant in itself but in no way competing with the dominant form of the motorway'. Assistant architects were Christopher Chapman and Walter Leski.



- 1 The inclined walls, according to the job architect, 'play down the motorway, allowing it to sail over'.
- 2 Stairway in parents centre.
- 3 Apart from steel framed parents centre the building is timber frame and blockwork.