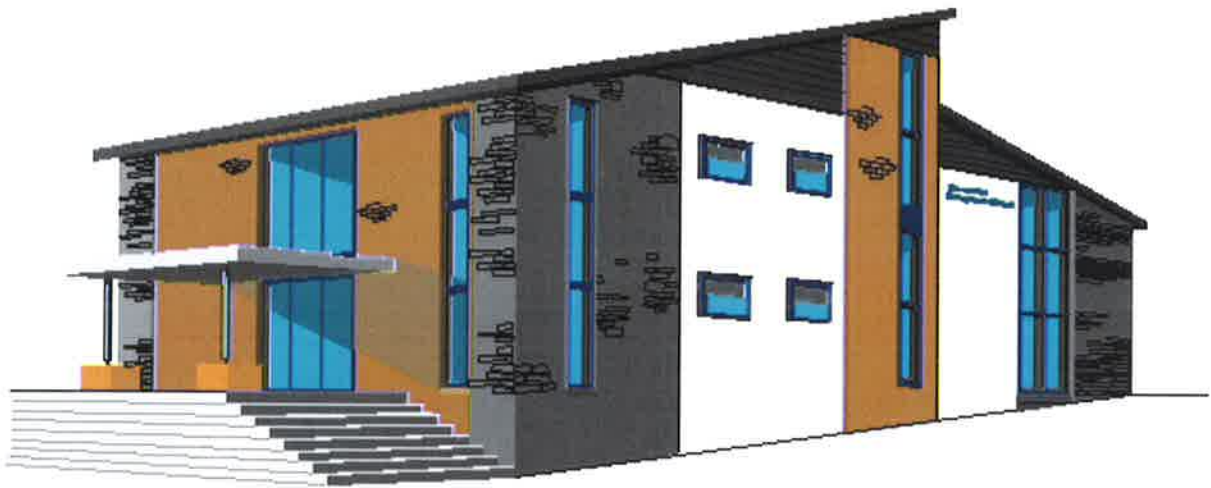




**DESIGN ACCESS STATEMENT
FOR
A NEW COMMUNITY CHURCH
BUILDING IN
YNYSMEUDWY, PONTARDAWE**

**PREPARED BY:
BUILDING PROJECT COMMITTEE AND CONSULTANTS**

**DATE:
JULY 2020**

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1. Summary of the Proposal

This proposal is to build a new Community Church Building in the village of Ynysmeudwy, Pontardawe.

There is currently a church building providing this facility but it is old, 19th century Victorian, is cold, damp and far too small for the activities that take place. Allied to this the need to meet public standards for disabilities, parking, health, and safety and the need for a new building becomes ever more pressing.

The project aim is to provide a first class facility that will enhance the community, be a welcome lift to the area, and enable existing and new activities to be undertaken in a pleasant, warm and welcoming environment.

The land has been procured from Neath Port Talbot Council and the funding for the project will be obtained through grant applications, the sale of the existing building and through appeals and fundraising activities.

The proposals have been viewed by, and are supported by, the County Councillors for the area, the AM Minister, the Local Council, the users of the current building, future users, the local Care Home, the local schools.

2. Project Vision, Aims and Objectives

Over the last two to three years it has become increasingly clear that the current building facility could not meet the needs of its users, nor hope to satisfy the ever increasing regulatory demands placed on facilities that are open to the general public. As such, a building committee was established to:

- review the current use of the building
- assess the needs of the current users
- seek to determine the future needs of users for facilities and rooms
- consider the wider aspect of opening the building to greater public use
- bring forth plans for change
- consider the financial implications and how these may be satisfied
- ensure the viability of the finance and project management of such a large scale undertaking
- ensure we remain true to our Christian values for our members and for the community at large

The following vision, aims and objectives were established.

Project Vision

To develop a multi-purpose Facility that will serve the community for many years to come.

Project Aims

To produce a project that can be delivered by the church members taking into account both logistical and financial implications on said members and the church as a whole.

To be inclusive in our thinking and design ensuring as far as possible that the final outcome will satisfy not only the church requirements but also those of the general public.

To provide a building that will be viewed as an asset to the community in both its looks and its ability to improve user experience and use.

Project Objectives

To satisfy the identified needs of the users and church as detailed in the 'Analysis of Need' section of this document.

3. Site and Context Analysis

3.1 Background Information - Existing Building History and Use

The existing Mount Elim Church was built in 1886 and is typical of many Victorian church and school type buildings at that time. It is stone and originally had wooden floorboards and wooden panels to four feet in height around the walls.

It was built as a Baptist Church and held services up to 1969 when unfortunately it had to close. It remained unoccupied until 1979 when it was bought as a church through two local people Dr. K.J Barker, a local GP, and Mr. David Sercombe a teacher in Cwmtawe comprehensive school. They worked with the Baptist union of Glamorgan to purchase the building and began a series of extensive renovations including a new floor, the repairing of the windows, rewiring, and total redecoration.

The building has been used as a church serving the local community ever since and has subsequently had a number of small extensions including: a room at the back for meetings, storage and a small kitchen; a small side room for Sunday school; and a new porch area which includes toilet facilities. It has also had a new roof and new windows over the last 20 years.

The activities in the building have extended over time and now offer a 'Busy Bees' crèche club, after school club, regular ladies coffee mornings, men's breakfasts, meeting facilities, concerts, school activities with the local primary school, Slimmers World, Local Choir practise, as well as the regular church meetings and services. There are also close links with the Dan y Bryn residential home nearby and a monthly service is held at the home for the residence, some of whom attend the church services and activities that go on within Mount Elim.

As an organisation we are heavily involved in charity work and use the building for charity events and for the collection of food for the local food bank. Each year we collect for the Shoe Box appeal and for charities both close to home and further afield in Africa and other countries.

The building is situated just into Ynysmeudwy and therefore serves both the Ynysmeudwy and Pontardawe communities. People also use the building from the nearby communities of Rhydyfro, Cwm Gors, Godre-graig, Altwen, Rhos and beyond.

3.2 Need for New Building

Whilst the building is used by many groups it has become obvious that it is no longer fit for purpose and cannot meet the modern standards expected of a facility used by the public.

There is damp in the back rooms and in the main building. The kitchen does not contain a cooker and is extremely small and cramped. This makes it difficult to expand the offerings beyond teas and coffees when so much more could be achieved to the benefit of the community e.g. lunches for the elderly.

The heating is not adequate and not inviting, especially for the less able who are put off attending the site in cold weather.

The disabled facilities are poor with no disabled toilet and the toilets themselves need renovation and updating to at least include a baby changing facility.

The storage facilities are cramped with no spare space which greatly restricts the activities that groups can undertake.

The single meeting room is also used for a variety of other purposes such as crèche, Sunday School, prayer meetings, meaning it is not always available to hold more than one meeting at a time.

There is no off road parking and access is via a slope which is difficult for the elderly and less abled.

The following pictures show the current condition of the inside of the building.



The main hall set out ready for a children's group. It is very constrained and limiting. Heating is via electric heaters and there are areas of damp in the corners of the front of the hall.

The meeting room at the rear of the building. This houses the crèche on Sundays, meetings and teas and coffees are served. It is cramped, cold and very uninviting. It also has damp around and above the entrance.



The kitchen is actually this size!!

It contains a fridge that is just visible on the left of the picture and a microwave. There is no cooker or dishwasher as there is no room.

The toilets are cramped and not suitable for disabled. Also there is no room to install baby changing facilities.



3.3 Community - Pontardawe/Ynysmeudwy

The community is typical Welsh valleys although has changed over the years as commuting to Swansea and access to the M4 has become easier. Nevertheless the area still has large parts where unemployment is high and social care is very much a necessity.

The Pontardawe Ward has over 2,300 houses of which 25% are rented as Social/Council houses. The population is around 5,500 and this contains a wide population age range and culture from professionals to those claiming benefits or unable to work.

A significant figure to note is the number of households who do not have their own transport which is 25%. This makes the building of community facilities where people can access them without the need of a vehicle a major benefit.

Pontardawe itself has a town centre with a variety of shops, restaurants and facilities such as doctor's surgeries, pharmacies, vets and a bus station. There are no facilities in Ynysmeudwy. Our site location is over a mile from Pontardawe town centre and as such offers a local facility to the surrounding houses and estates.

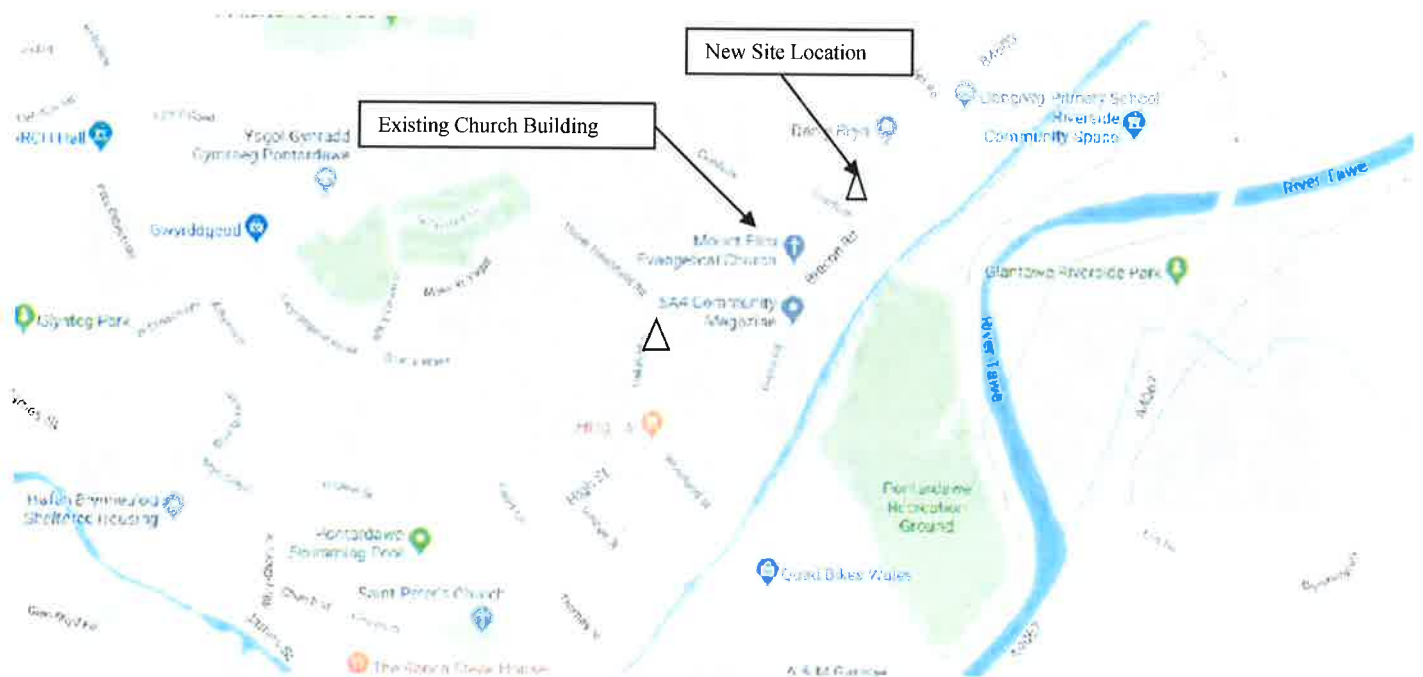
There are a number of local Primary schools but the closest one, Llangwig, is only 400 metres away. The area is also served by Cwmtawe Comprehensive School in Pontardawe, Ysgol Gyfan in Ystalfera and Neath Port Talbot and Gorseinon Tertiary colleges.

The Dan y Bryn Residential home is less than 200 meters away.

3.4 Site Map Location

The site for the new build is on Brecon Road, Pontardawe SA8 4PD. It is on the old road out of Pontardawe and lies a few hundred yards from Llangwig primary school and next door to the Dan y Bryn Residential home.

It is on the corner of Coedcae and Brecon Road as shown below. Site Location:
XY: 272749, 204682.



The site area is roughly 28m across by 32m long as shown by the blue lines on the picture below. There is a boundary dispute between the Council and the neighbour behind and a boundary for this plot has been agreed between the Council and ourselves.

It is large enough to offer both a building and parking and is ideal for public transport with a bus stop being 50 metres away.

Facilities for water, drainage, electricity, gas and telephone are all available.

The front of the site does not overlook any houses as the houses opposite are built at a much lower level. The house behind is raised as you proceed up the hill so a new build will not obstruct the neighbours immediate view.



The site slopes from the main road rising upwards to the neighbour behind. It also slopes from the side road upwards to Dan y Bryn care home. At its most extreme there is a 5-6 metre drop from the top most corner to the bottom corner presenting a challenge for the design. See the picture and diagram below.

On the diagram below the site is the area marked in red. The green area is the land in dispute with the neighbour. The numbers indicate the height above sea level.

There is an old entrance onto the site just off the turning of the junction but this we will not be permitted to use for access as it is too close to the junction. Access will be via Coedcae off the side road.

There is an electric substation at the rear of land.



4. Interpretation – Determining the Need

The process has been detailed and wide ranging and has taken over 3 years to reach this stage of Planning submission. The following has been undertaken:

- ❑ Analysis of Need
- ❑ Initial Options Explored
- ❑ Initial Design Proposal
- ❑ Site Visits to Similar Completed Projects
- ❑ Design Review and New Proposal
- ❑ Comparison of Proposal Against Need and Original Objectives
- ❑ Acceptance Process of Design

4.1 Analysis of Need

Various actions and discussions have taken place with both individuals and groups who use the current facility. A summary is below:

- ❑ There was a general recognition by groups using the building that it was becoming too small, not enough storage space and too restrictive for them to expand their activities and groups.
- ❑ Consultation with the groups occurred and they were requested to identify what they required to be able to improve their group activities and to increase what was on offer generally to the public.
- ❑ The following changes were identified by the users of the building:
 - New kitchen
 - Increase size of existing hall
 - Disabled toilets
 - Baby changing facilities
 - A second hall to enable multiple use simultaneously
 - Improved heating and insulation
 - Increased storage capacity for toys, tables, chairs and so forth
 - Suitable areas for children's' play for crèche, Sunday school, mothers and toddlers and after school groups
 - Sound system
 - Meeting rooms
 - Administration room for stationery, printing, copying, books, projector, computer
- ❑ Allied to these requests the following were also highly desirable from any development/improvement project:
 - Off road parking
 - Parking for disabled

- New equipment and chairs
 - Wi Fi access
 - Presentation facilities and equipment
 - Improved health and safety
- The following were also consulted for their views:
- Local Councillors
 - County Councillors
 - AM Minister
 - Other providers of community facilities
 - Local schools
 - Care Home

Before proceeding further the Building Project Committee (established to oversee this project) visited other facilities that had gone through a similar process and had turned their buildings into modern multi-purpose facilities or purchased new buildings.

We visited Baglan Community church, Highfields church in Cardiff, and Clydach Evangelical church.

All were different in size and design but all had a modern feel and a welcoming aspect to the general public.

It was felt that we should consider if we too could design a less traditional building and one that presented a more modern face.

The visits also helped us to understand the potential uses of a building and how different activities could be held to attract the general public. Some pictures of sites visited are below:





4.2 Conclusion of Need

It was obvious from the analysis that a major revamp and extension of the current building was required and possibly even more radical options should be explored.

The initial options considered were:

1. To extend the existing building at the front and to renovate it to bring it up to standard for general public use.
2. To purchase land behind the existing church and build a new facility linking this to the existing building.
3. To purchase and move to another suitable building.
4. To close the church and build from scratch on a new site.

Option 2 to purchase the land behind the church was too costly so was rejected at an early stage.

5. Design Development – The Journey to Date (History of Design)

5.1 Initial Proposal – Extension on Current Site

The conclusion of the Building Committee from the analysis of need was that the facilities could be provided by extending the existing building on the current site. The following steps were taken:

- ❑ Consultation with other designers and architects
- ❑ Two sets of initial plans were drafted. One that built on the traditional look and feel of the building and the alternative giving a modern style look and feel.
- ❑ These plans were then:
 - Presented to the Members of the church
 - Discussed with users of the building
 - Shown to local councillors for their view and input to the project
 - Discussed with other designers and architects
 - Discussed in the Building Project meetings
 - Discussed with the Neath Port Talbot planners as an initial feel to the viability of the project and suggestions for changes that may contravene planning rules or improve the design

Traditional extension:



Modern Extension:



The following process was followed:

- ❑ Both designs were displayed in church for 4 weeks
- ❑ They were re-shown to Neath Port Talbot planning where some minor adjustments were recommended
- ❑ They were re-shown to the local councillors
- ❑ They were re-shown to the groups who use the building
- ❑ They were re-shown to local designers and architects for their opinions and comments
- ❑ They were taken to the local school along with the old plans for their views

It was decided to proceed with the modern design.

On submission of the plans to the Council they were rejected due to a lack of off road parking.

This left the church with one of three options:

1. Consider a smaller extension to the existing building that did not increase the size of the hall and therefore would not require additional parking.
2. To purchase and move to another suitable building.
3. To close the church and build from scratch on a new site.

5.2 Smaller Extension on Existing Site

This option was considered and plans drafted.

It was felt that this option of a smaller extension and renovation of the existing building was not cost effective and did not meet the analysis of need as specified at the outset of the project. Consequently this option was rejected.

5.3 To Move to Another Building

Suitable buildings that were for sale were considered but all proved either:

- ☐ Too costly
- ☐ No parking
- ☐ Too small
- ☐ Wrong location

The search for such a building continued in case one came onto the market.

5.4 New Site

With the aid of the Estates Department within the Council we began the search for a suitable plot of land for a new building.

After having explored over 12 possible sites a small piece of land only 300 metres from our existing church was made known to us.

This land belonged to the Social Services department within the Council and its location was ideal being so near to our current site, next to the Residential Care Home and nearer to the local Primary School.

The advantages were:

- ☐ Near to our current location so continuity of users could be preserved
- ☐ A little further into Ynysmeudwy so better able to serve that community
- ☐ Nearer to the Care Home so the links with the Home could be strengthened and activities increased
- ☐ Nearer to the local school so links could be strengthened and activities increased
- ☐ Space for a car park

The disadvantages were:

- ☐ Not an ideal site for working
- ☐ It is not very large so compromises may have to be made in the size of the building depending on any building or planning restrictions

Plans for the site and the new building were made and the same process as before followed:

- ❑ Presented to the Members of the church
- ❑ Discussed with users of the building
- ❑ Shown to local councillors for their view and input to the project
- ❑ Discussed with other designers and architects
- ❑ Discussed in the Building Project meetings
- ❑ Discussed with the Neath Port Talbot planners as an initial feel to the viability of the project and suggestions for changes that may contravene planning rules or improve the design

Both Planners and Highways were met on site to discuss the type of building, its location and highway and parking concerns. These were all fed into the final plans.

It was important to ensure that the design would deliver what the original users had requested. As with all designs there has to be compromise but we feel that we now have plans that:

- ❑ Meet the original Vision, Aims and Objectives as set out at the beginning of this document
- ❑ Satisfy all the requirements expressed by the groups and users of the facility
- ❑ Will attract new users and groups in the future
- ❑ Will be an attractive addition to the look and feel of the area
- ❑ Will be an asset to the local community

It was agreed to proceed with this proposal and the go ahead was given to purchase of the land.

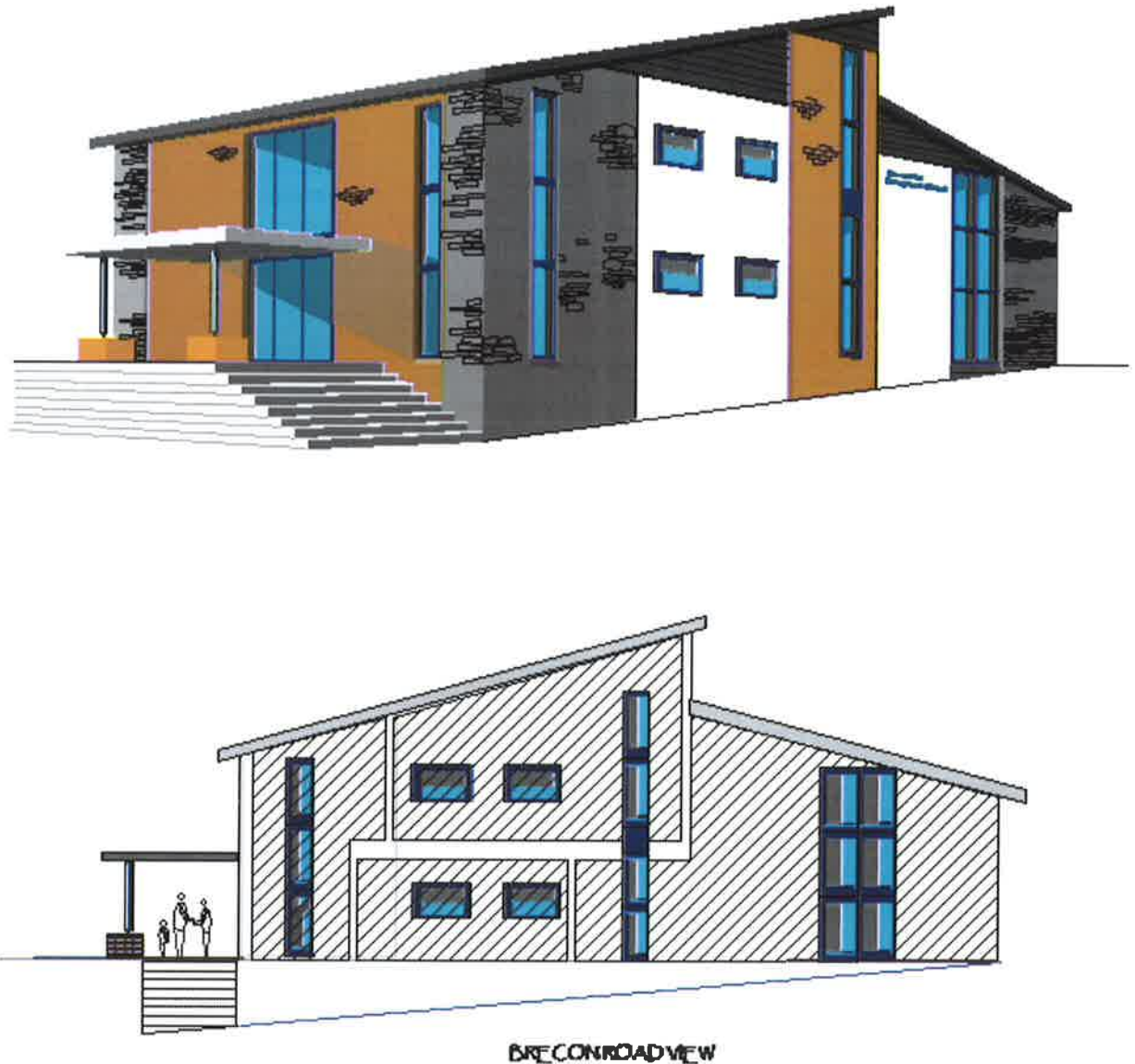
5.5 Purchase of Land

This is now complete and contracts have been exchanged subject to planning permission.

6. The Proposal

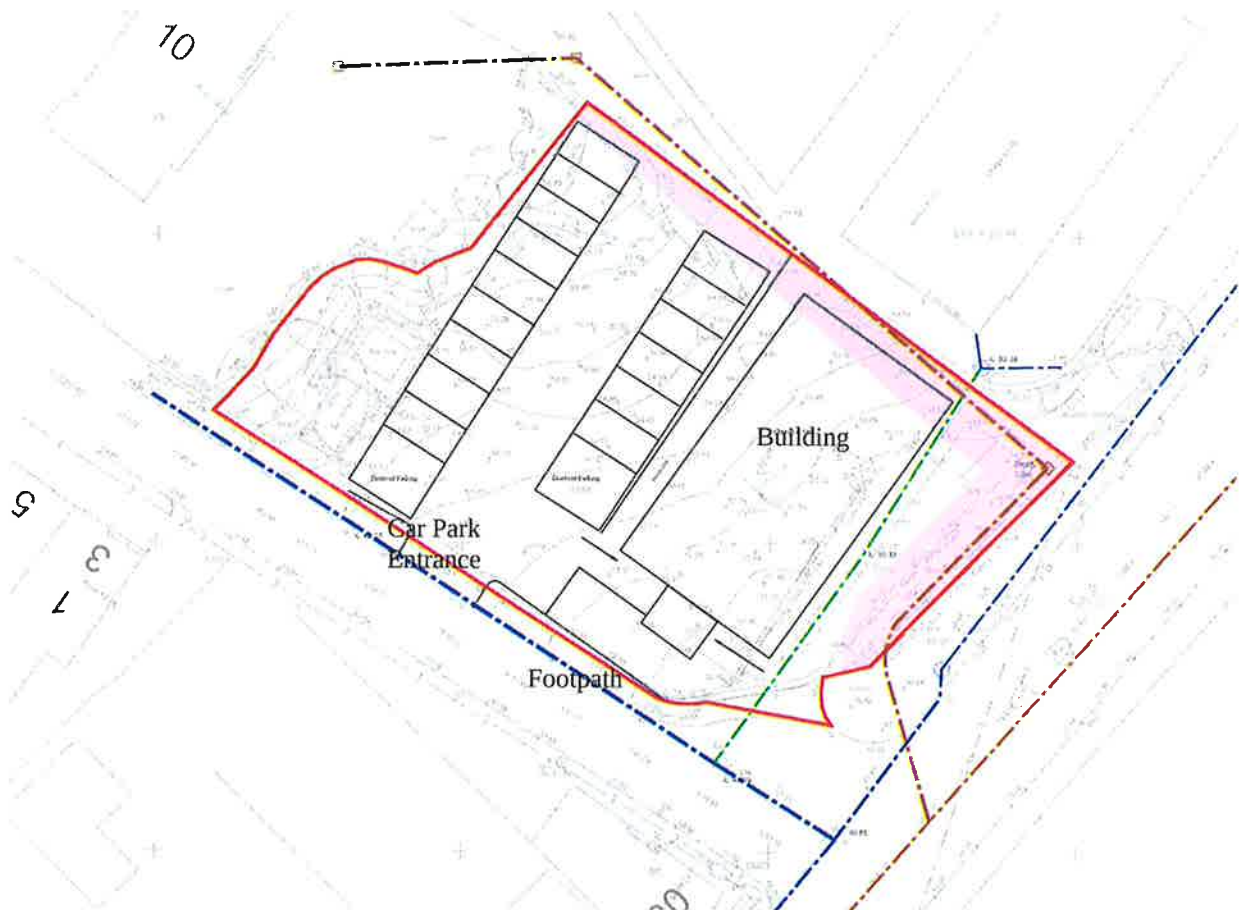
6.1 The Design

The diagram below shows the proposed design



It is a contemporary design that we feel will be an architectural asset to the growing area of Pontardawe. Its openness at the entrance will give it a welcoming feel as it will not be hidden or bound behind high walls making it accessible to the public.

The diagram below illustrates the site layout with the building being at the front of the site in a line between the buildings on either side which are the end house of the row and the Care Home.



The wall facing the main road will be attractively designed and broken up with stone/plaster/glass with the split roof giving a unique look to the overall building.

The steps will provide an attractive welcoming aspect along with the external porch and glass front.

There will be a footpath along the front of the building leading to the car park making easy access along flat ground.

The car park is at the rear with ample parking and disabled parking next to the entrance on level ground.

The car park itself will slope gently from back to front and the area in front of the building will be suitably landscaped to provide an attractive appearance from the road. The car access off the main road will maintain its wide entrance and be re-marked to enable easier viewing when exiting.

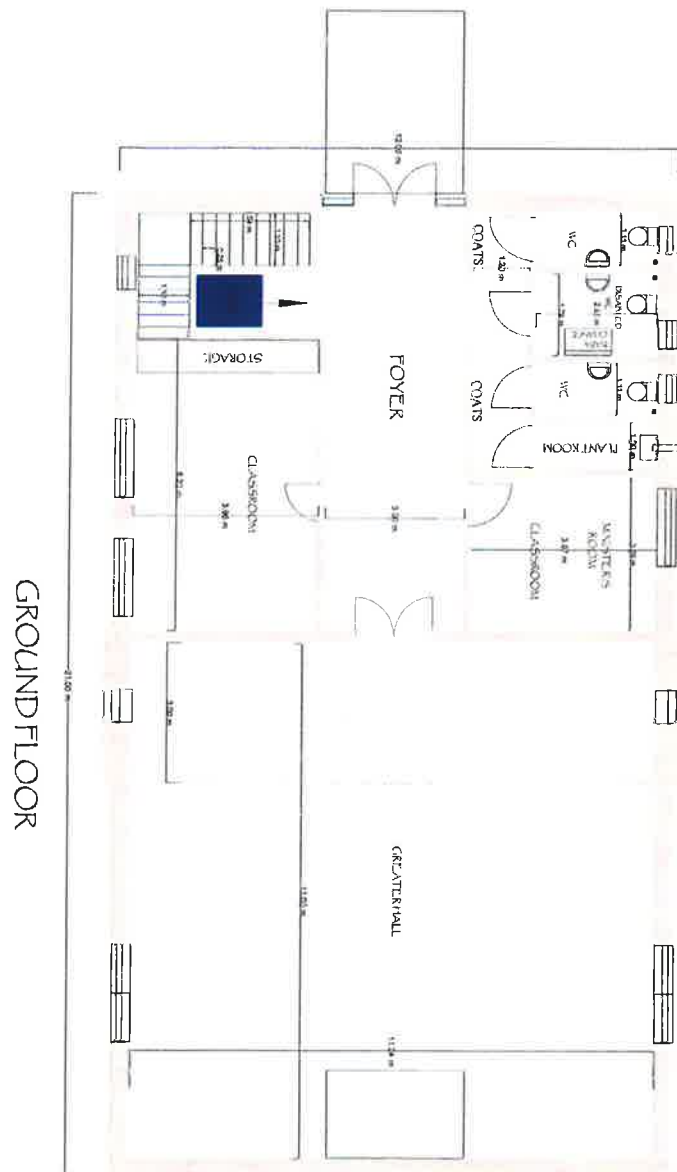
The exit from the car park will be open on one side giving excellent visibility. Its wide nature will also improve the safety aspects of entering and exiting.

The design of the roof keeps the apex low so not dominating the skyline or the view of the neighbours.

The cross sectional view shows the mezzanine floor allowing the main hall to have a high ceiling giving it a feeling of space and size.

The layout enables multiple activities to take place at the same time utilising both halls.

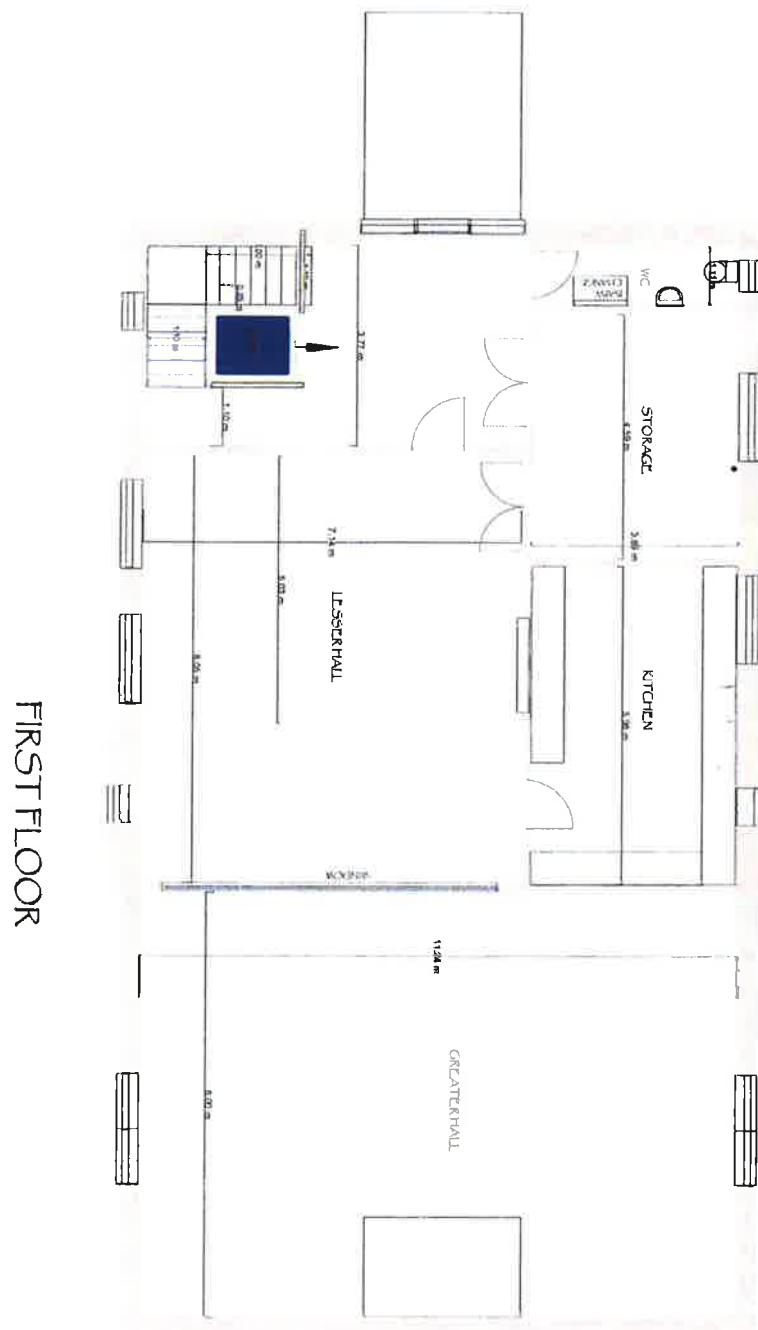
The layout of the ground floor is:



Flat entrance, large foyer area, toilets with disabled and baby changing facilities. A lift to the upper floor.

Two rooms for meetings and a large hall for events and concerts,

The layout of the first floor is:



Lift and stairs to the first floor.

Additional toilet upstairs. Large foyer area on the landing. Second hall with fully furnished kitchen and ample storage.

6.2 Character

As described above, the building will be a welcome attractive addition to the area bringing a modern look and feel.

It will be open and not 'hemmed' behind walls and its easy access and car parking facilities will be a big attraction to its users.

The roof design will be a unique feature in the area and will add to the interest giving an uplift to the community that developments such as this can happen in Ynysmeudwy which is often lacking such projects.

The range of traditional and modern sustainable materials used in the design and construction will add to the pleasing look of the building.

The windows will be large and be an attractive feature of the design breaking up the walls facing the main road and enabling ample of light into the interior.

The overall design of the roof and windows give it a modern contemporary look.

The building will have its own character and, as it will not be a church style structure, will attract the general public as well as church goers.

6.3 Access

The access has been designed with consultation from the Highways department and includes:

- ❑ New footpath
- ❑ Flat access from the car park
- ❑ Disabled parking next to the entrance
- ❑ No major roads to cross from the Care Home
- ❑ Pedestrian crossing on the main road just outside the building
- ❑ Lift to upstairs
- ❑ Bus stop 50 metres along the road
- ❑ Easy access from main road for pedestrians

As people attend the current building by car and on foot it is important that both pedestrian and vehicle access is easy and natural. We will share an overflow car park with the Care Home next door so foot access from the Home via the pavement will be required and has been designed accordingly.

6.4 Movement

Movement to and from the building as well as within it has been carefully considered.

There is a large foyer area both inside and outside where people naturally congregate. This is important for:

- Normal operation to enable people to quickly go to the areas of the building they require and avoid crowding
- For safety evacuation
- For disabled access ease of use
- To reduce bottlenecks
- For the general feel of the building making it open, light and airy and adding to the community aspect

Likewise there is a landing foyer area at the top of the stairs to enable easy access and egress to the upstairs rooms.

The flow through the building is natural with no undue corners or bends restricting movement or access. It has a natural feel leading you to both halls.

Toilets are both upstairs and down reducing the movement between the two floors.

There is a lift and stairs to the upper floor, both easily accessible and not in the way of any natural walk flow areas.

Outside movement is easy and convenient with a large open area at the front and double doors for the entrance.

The movement to and from the car park is uncomplicated with good visibility and no blind spots.

The movement from the pavements to the building is either via the steps or the footpath to the flat level. Both are straight from the pavement with no crossing of roads or interference.

6.5 Environmental Sustainability

The project will use a range of traditional and modern sustainable material and will use energy saving devices throughout.

If possible solar panels will be installed to reduce electricity costs and low energy bulbs will be used for all lighting.

Cladding will be used on walls and ceilings to reduce heat loss and windows will be double or triple glazed.

Consideration will be given to the following in the design and implementation:

- ❑ Underfloor heating on timers and thermostatically controlled enabling the building to only be heated when in use and to the right temperature
- ❑ Separate heating for upstairs and down to enable different sections of the building to be independently heated
- ❑ Low energy lighting
- ❑ Recycling rain water for toilet facilities
- ❑ Hand towels/blowers/air blades
- ❑ Solar panels for electricity generation
- ❑ Re-use of material from existing site in:
 - the build of external walls
 - backfill for building up the land in required areas
 - landscaping
- ❑ Double/triple glazing
- ❑ Material insulation
 - building regulation requirements for insulation and plasterboard
 - wall and ceiling insulation

The re-use of material will be particularly relevant for this build due to the sloping nature of the site and the removal of existing walls. Material removed from any levelling of the land will be used to back fill and raise the lower levels. Also the stone wall material that will be released from the knocking down of the stone wall at the side of the site will be reused on building up the front wall and on the front side of the building.

A storm water design will accompany the plans to ensure adequate drainage off the site into the existing storm water pipe system. This design will include a flow control into that system. Likewise a suitable outlined sewerage design into the existing sewer has been agreed with the Water company ensuring existing facilities are maintained and that we access the existing system at an appropriate point.

Natural light will be a major source of the lighting in the building with large south facing windows and roof windows giving as much natural light as possible. The artificial light will be to recommended standards.

For the inside of the building as regards user experience and comfort the following will be installed:

- ❑ Hearing Sound loop
- ❑ Sound and vision system linked throughout the building
- ❑ Wide access doors and corridors
- ❑ Disabled toilet facilities
- ❑ Baby Changing Facilities
- ❑ Fully fitted steel kitchen
- ❑ Comfortable seating
- ❑ Flat floors – no steps or slopes

The recommendations from the Ecology report will be designed into the landscaping along with the consideration of bat boxes at appropriate locations where suitable.

We will also fully utilise the Councils recycling services for plastic, glass, cardboard, paper, tin and clothes with appropriate signage and monitoring.

6.6 Community Safety

The building, being open to the footpath will receive lighting from the street naturally and have no 'hidden' areas. Additional to this there will be outside lighting for the car park and entrance area. The lighting at the rear of the car park will be subdued as per the ecology report to encourage wildlife.

It will meet all Fire regulations and be fully kitted with fire extinguishing equipment which will be serviced regularly.

The stair and lift will be to the required fire safety standards and the lift will be serviced regularly.

Appropriate fire alarms and fire lighting and signs will be installed.

A First Aid kit for the building will be maintained and a Safety Officer appointed. Also the purchase of a defibrillator will be explored.

