





Design and Access Statement

Pontardawe Arts Centre

This document has been prepared by Childs Sulzmann Architects to support the planning application for the reconfiguration, refurbishment and extension to the Pontardawe Arts Centre to improve the current internal layout and provide a new dedicated cinema.

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1.0 Introduction

Arts Centre Background

Pontardawe Arts Centre has gained a reputation as an important cultural venue in South Wales. The theatre hosts professional work of the highest calibre, from classical music to drama and dance, literature and children's theatre to blues and world music; something for everyone to enjoy. The 450 seat theatre currently also shows films in between other events and shows within the programme. On site, there is additionally a Dance studio, also used for Community events, Meeting rooms, Bar, Cafe and an Art Gallery.

Having hosted regular cinema showings, Pontardawe Arts Centre has identified that there is a significant opportunity to now expand its film offer to include 'first release' blockbusters as well as art house movies within a new dedicated Cinema space.

A 'Friends of Pontardawe Arts Centre' has been launched and brings new impetus to the ambitions of the organisation and this project. It is a charity and this will enable fund raising, accessing grant aid and generating ideas for raising income. It will also help promote the centre and its programme of events, including lobbying for support when needed.

Project Background

The Pontardawe Arts Centre opened in 1996 and occupies the building of the earlier Pontardawe Public Hall and Institute. The Hall & Institute was opened on May 6th 1909 by the opera singer Adelina Patti, and contained a Reading Room, Billiards Room, and Club rooms. The Public Hall originally had a capacity of 1,500 people. Maintained by a management committee comprised of representatives from local chapels and trade unions, the Hall & Institute remained open until 1994 when the committee transferred ownership to the then Lliw Valley Borough Council, superseded nowadays by Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council. The latter, in combination with the Arts Council of Wales, are now looking to make an investment in the organisation so that it can become more financially resilient and sustainable in the future.

The original building was designed by W. Beddoe Rees of Cardiff and constructed by Radford and Greaves of Derby. The three separate architectural areas are still externally distinguishable today. The Institute housed the administrative spaces and library. The middle one storey section was the Billiards Hall, and The Public Hall continues as the Auditorium.

It was the intention of the establishment to "provide an opening for the introduction of best literary and musical talent which will have an inspiring and elevating influence on the life of the place". The ambition to now provide a state of the art but small scale, intimate Cinema in the town is entirely consistent with the history of the place.

The Brief

Extract from the ITT Client Brief:

- Work with the Council and Art Centre organisations to undertake the further design of options identified by a Design Feasibility Study (RIBA Stages 0-2) in support of a new build 70 seat Cinema within the external yard adjacent to the existing building.
- Possible reconfiguration of internal areas to facilitate an improved visitor experience and improve secondary income for the Centre.
- The project is being supported by the Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council and the Arts Council of Wales and will provide Pontardawe Arts Centre with the basis for a future funding application and subsequent construction.
- A Business Feasibility Study was also commissioned to run alongside the Design Feasibility Study which will be available to the successful consultant. It is the clients wish that the two separate pieces of consultancy are considered in close liaison with each other to provide a holistic development option for the building that will meet the Pontardawe Art Centre's future artistic, commercial and community aspirations.



Main auditorium facade and historic main entrance as viewed from Holly Street

1.1 Introduction

Cinema Project Aims

Extract from the ITT Client Brief:

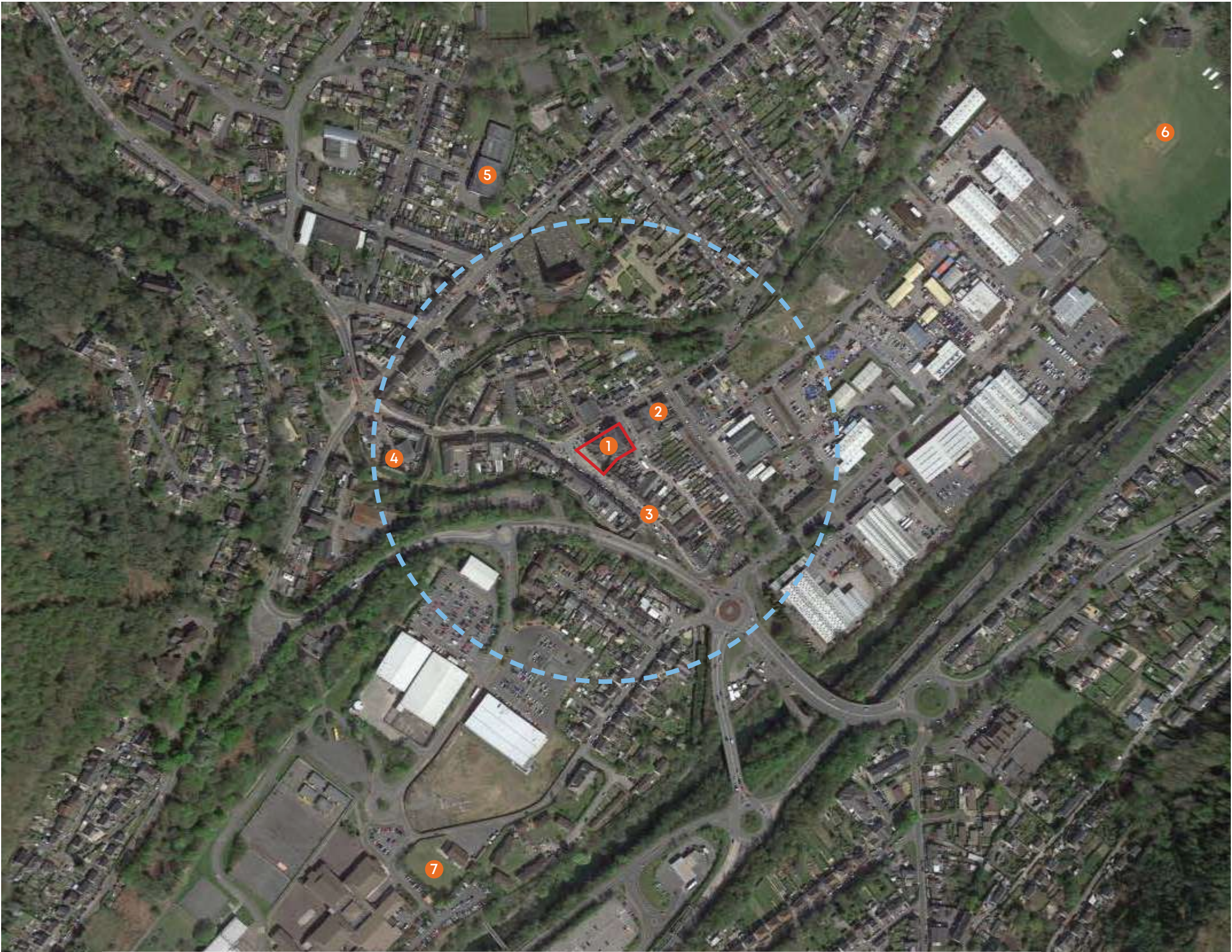
- Preparation for the future: modernisation and extension of the organisation's facilities to ensure that they are relevant and appealing to the next generation. This includes creating the conditions for a wider scope of both artistic and popular film programming, which both consolidates the existing audiences but also widens the appeal to new audiences, especially young people, within the community.
- Enhanced revenue making opportunities: increased financial sustainability from linking the activities of the Café and Bar to the foreground of the new Cinema (and vice versa).
- Improved visitor experience: increase footfall, dwell time and the opportunity for repeat visits from people within the community by offering them the conditions by which they can regularly and affordably enjoy high quality entertainment locally. It will create a warm and welcoming environment for audiences, providing them with an even more comfortable and pleasurable experience, which ultimately engenders a sense of belonging and loyalty to the place.
- Improved visibility: by providing a new contemporary building the scheme has the propensity to signal the activities within the building complex more dynamically.
- Improved access: making sure that the new facilities satisfy the requirements of the Equalities Act and are easy to use for people of all ages and abilities.
- Sustainability: ensuring that Pontardawe Arts Centre is a model for best practice in terms of energy conservation, creating a greener, more environmentally sustainable organisation through high standards to glazing, insulation, and energy controls and the implementation of low energy interventions such as LED lighting, efficient M&E services systems and renewables.



2.0 Site and Context Analysis

Wider Physical Context

- 1 Pontardawe Arts Centre
- 2 Pontardawe Library
- 3 Pontardawe High Street
- 4 Pontardawe Heritage and Visitor Centre
- 5 Pontardawe Swimming Pool
- 6 Pontardawe Recreational Ground
- 7 Pontardawe Rugby Football Club
-  Site Boundary
-  5 minute walk radius



2.1 Site and Context Analysis

History

The Pontardawe Arts Centre was opened in 1996, occupying the building of the former Pontardawe Public Hall and Institute. The building was designed by W. Beddoe Rees of Cardiff and opened in 1909 by opera singer Adelina Patti. The overall building was divided into three distinct areas: the three storey Institute which housed administrative spaces and the library, the single storey Billiards Hall and two storey Public Hall containing the auditorium.

The intention of the establishment had been to “provide an opening for the introduction of best literary and musical talent which will have an inspiring and elevating influence on the life of the place”.

The Pontardawe Public Hall and Institute eventually fell into dereliction and in 1994 the then Lliw Valley Borough Council acquired the lease of the Institute, seeking to improve the cultural offerings of the town. The new arts centre opened in 1996 and contained a new box office, the Oriel Lliw Art Gallery, a dance studio, meeting rooms, the restored snooker hall, a theatre bar and grand auditorium.



The Public Hall

The Billiards Hall

The Institute

2.2 Site and Context Analysis

Exterior Photographs



Entrance

Public Space

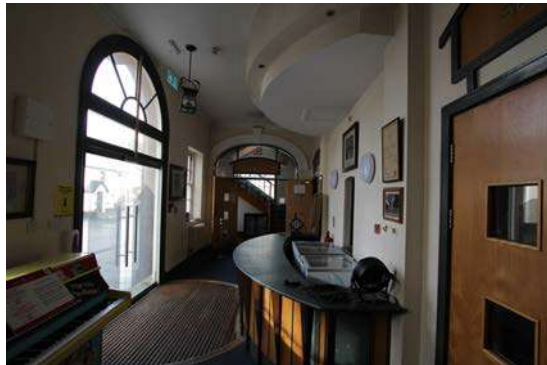
Courtyard

Holly Street

Rear Access

2.3 Site and Context Analysis

Ground Floor Photographs



Entrance + Reception

Corridor + Lift

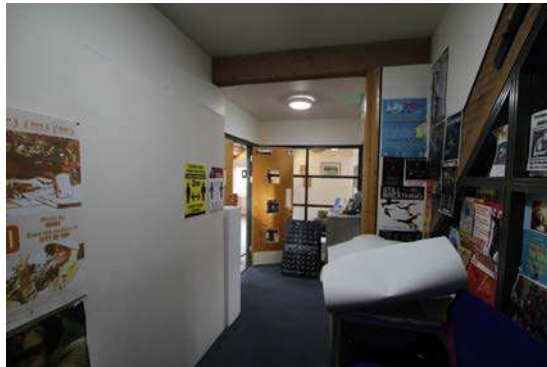
Bar + Studio

Auditorium + Foyer

Cafe + Kitchen

2.4 Site and Context Analysis

First and Second Floor Photographs



Studio

Lettable Space + Storage

Second Floor Offices

Gallery

2.5 Site and Context Analysis

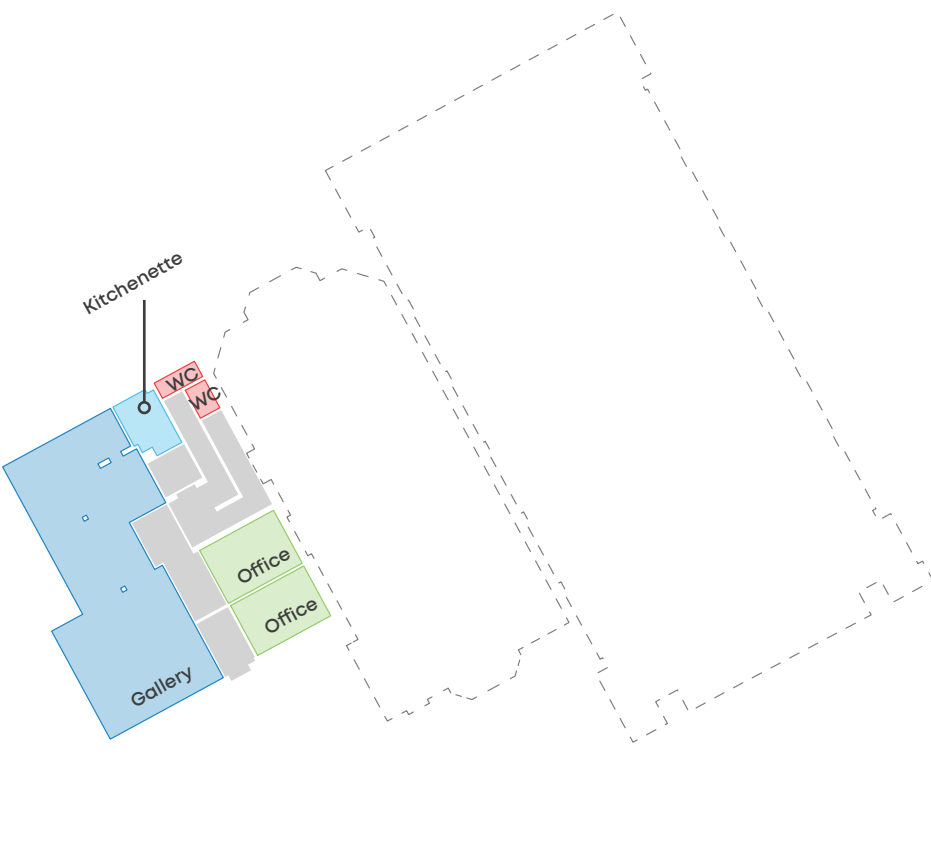
Existing Floorplans



Ground Floor Plan



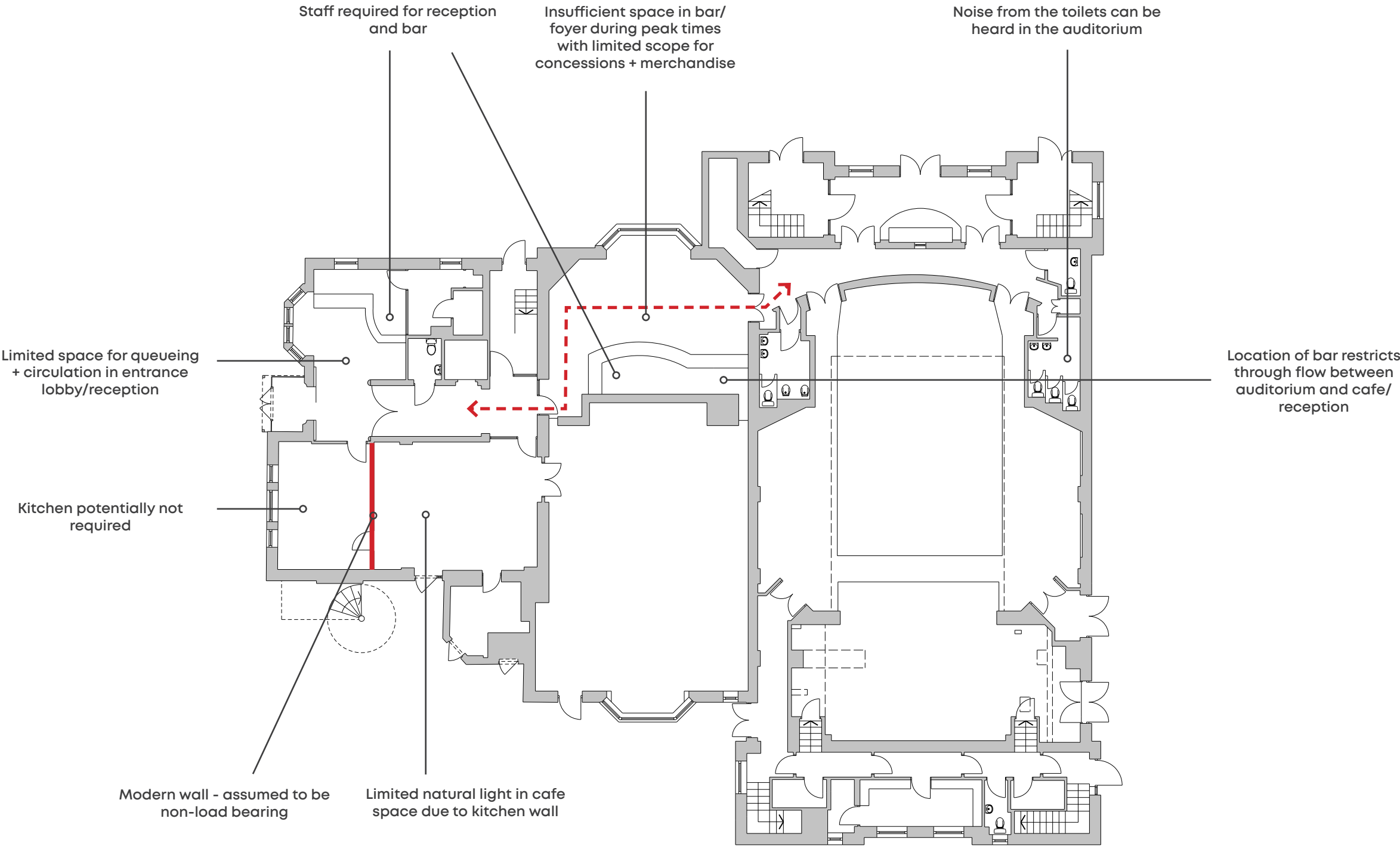
First Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan

2.6 Site and Context Analysis

Ground Floor Issues



2.7 Site and Context Analysis

Existing Escape Strategy: Escape via courtyard to front of site

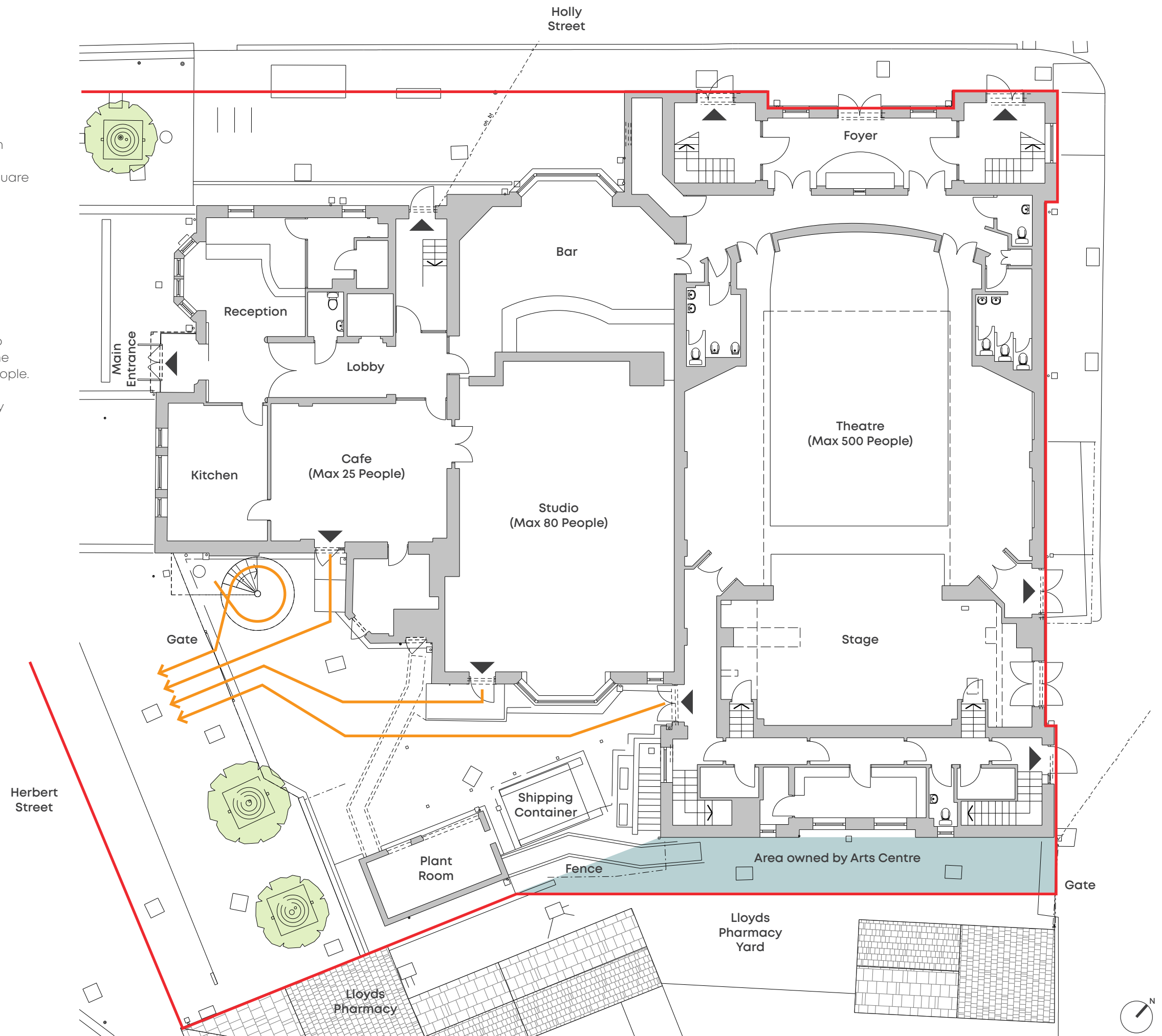
There are currently 4 final escape routes that rely on access through the existing courtyard via a gate to escape towards the assembly point in the public square on Herbert Street.

These escape routes are from the following spaces:

- **First Floor Studio** via the spiral staircase
- **Cafe** (Assumed max 25 people)
- **Studio** (max 80 people)
- **Theatre** (max 500 people)

The theatre is assumed to have 3 escape routes - to the rear, to the side and to the front. On this basis the required escape widths are based on 50% or 250 people.

At the rear of the site adjoining the Lloyds Pharmacy premises is a strip of land which is within the Arts Centre's ownership and can be used for additional escape to the rear of the site.



Key:

- ▶ Final exit
- Escape to rear
- Site ownership boundary
- Escape route

2.8 Site and Context Analysis

Fire Escape
Plant room retained + escape at rear of site

A number of options for the layout of the cinema were explored aiming to minimise the impact to the existing escape routes and alterations to the existing plant room.

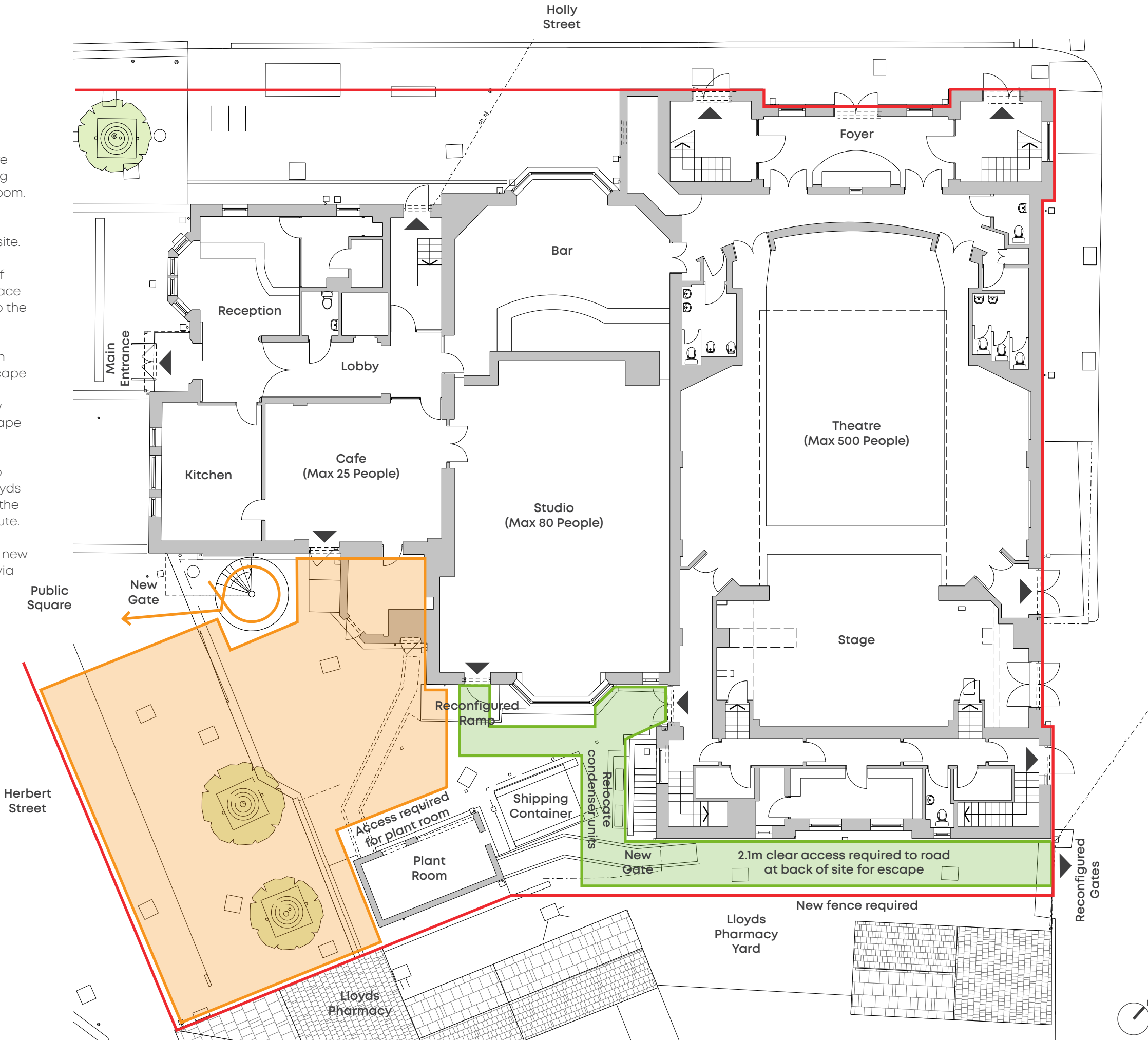
The orange hatch indicates the footprint of the proposed cinema and the impact that it has on the site.

The proposed cinema footprint will rely on the strip of land leading to the rear of the site to be used to replace the escape routes through the front gate leading onto the public square.

The plant room can be retained in its current location and would not require upgrading to 1 hour as the escape route does not pass within 1.8m. The location of the shipping container may have to be adjusted to allow an unobstructed width of 2.1m to accommodate escape from the cinema, Studio and Theatre.

Additionally a new gate and fence will be required to provide access to the new escape route past the Lloyds Pharmacy premises, whilst the existing gate fronting the back lane will need to be adjusted to suit the new route.

Escape from the Cafe will be through the cinema via new new escape route. Escape from the first floor studio via the spiral stair will be maintained as existing.



2.9 Site and Context Analysis

Flood Risk

We have requested site specific flood data from Natural Resources Wales (NRW) to inform our report. The design flood level (DFL) for the area is 32.26m AOD which takes into account a 1 in 100 year flood + climate change. Normally the floor level is raised 0.3m above the DFL for flood resilience which equates to a level of 32.56m AOD.

TAN 15 states that no floors for commercial and retail spaces should be under more than 600mm of water in the extreme event. NRW takes the 0.1% (ie 1 in 1000 year event) as the threshold. This flood level according to the NRW model is 34.44m AOD.

The existing building has a threshold level of 33.05 AOD which is safely above the 1 in 100 year flood event + 25% river flow of 32.56m AOD.

Further advice and guidance has been given for flood compensation which is discussed further in section 4.4 page 21.



Development Advice Map



Long Term Flood Risk Map

3.0 Precedent Projects

Similar Multi-Purpose Arts Venues

David Brownlow Theatre - Johnathan Tuckey Design



Tivoli Cinema, Bath - Run For The Hills



Kino, Rye - Johnathan Dunn Architects



3.1 Precedent Projects

Similar Multi-Purpose Arts Venues Continued

Picturehouse Central - Panter Hudspith Architects



East Dulwich Picturehouse - Panter Hudspith Architects



Olympic Studios - Henley Halebrown



4.0 The Proposal

Ground Floor Plan

Use

Pontardawe Arts Centre is located in the heart of Pontardawe. It is a community asset that plays a central role in the lifeblood of the village. It provides a key opportunity for local residents to benefit from cultural and wider learning experiences which complement a range of public policy. The facility is central to the economic wellbeing of Pontardawe and its residents and the proposed extension will improve the cultural offering of the building.

Amount

The proposed extension creates an additional floor area of 173m², this will provide the following additional facilities for the Arts Centre:

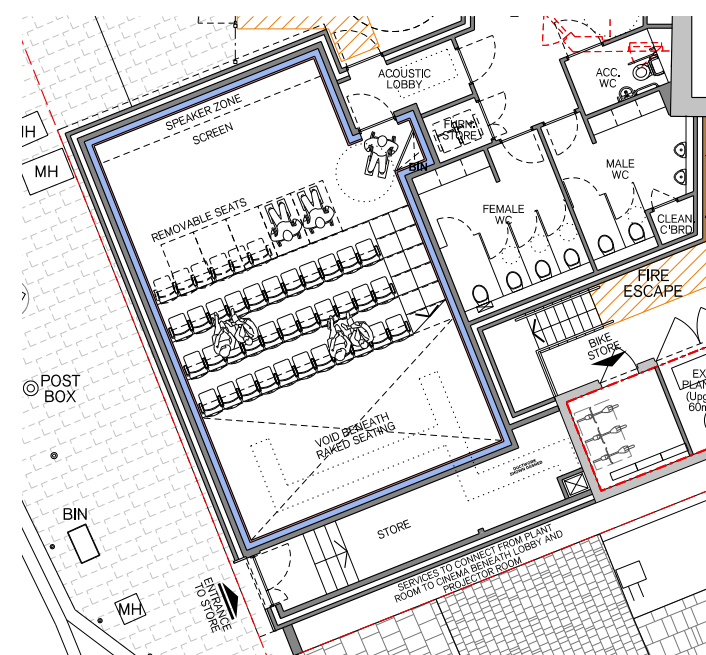
- 72 seat cinema with 2 x wheelchair spaces or 66 seat cinema with 5 x wheelchair spaces
- Lobby space, projector room and storage areas
- New male, female and accessible WC facilities, suitable for cinema capacity

The refurbished ground and first floors of the existing building will provide:

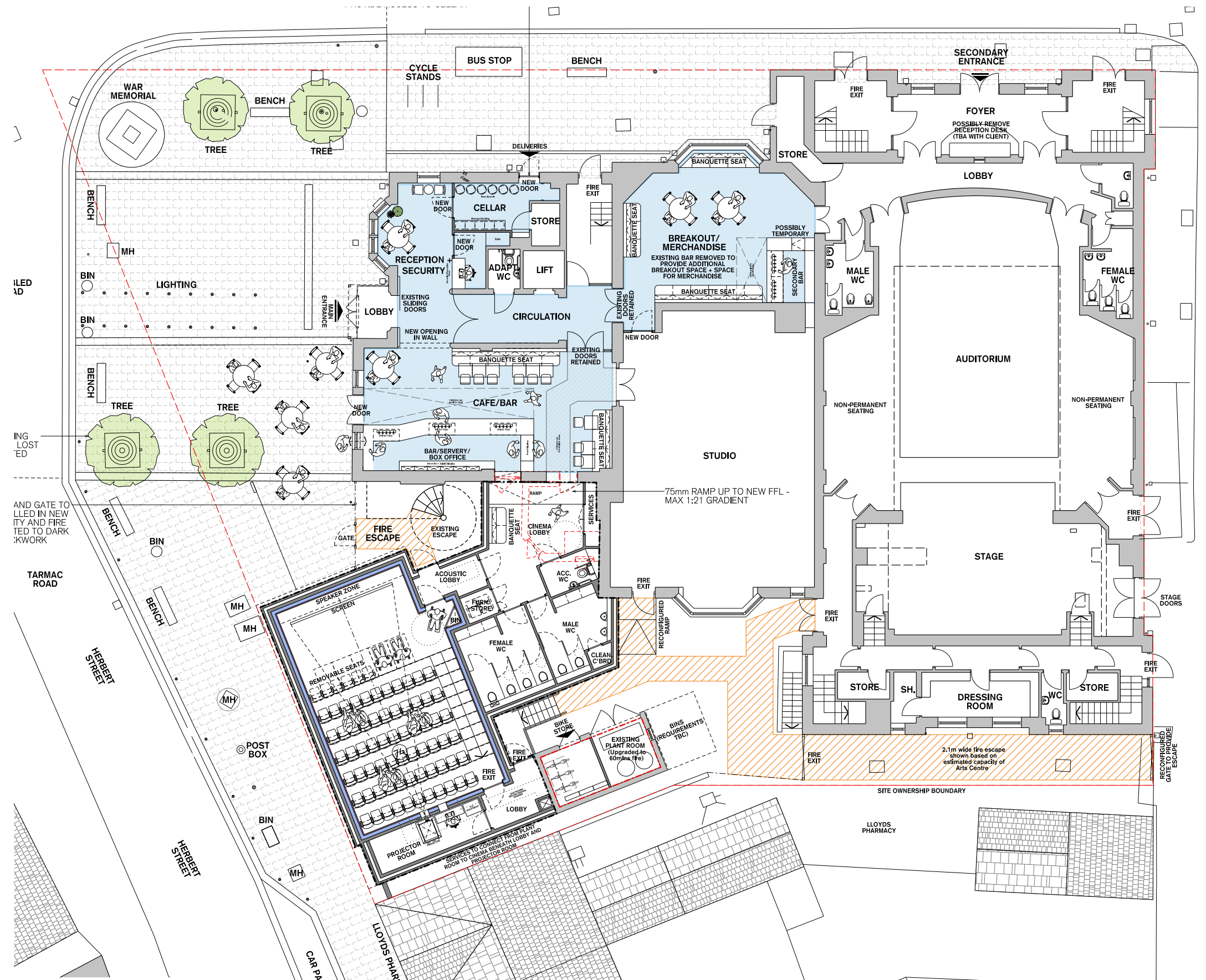
- New café, bar and box office area
- Improved foyer space for the main auditorium
- Improved staff and support spaces

Key:

- Internal refurbishment/alterations



Lower Ground Floor Plan showing storage space underneath projector room accessible from Herbert Street.



4.1 The Proposal

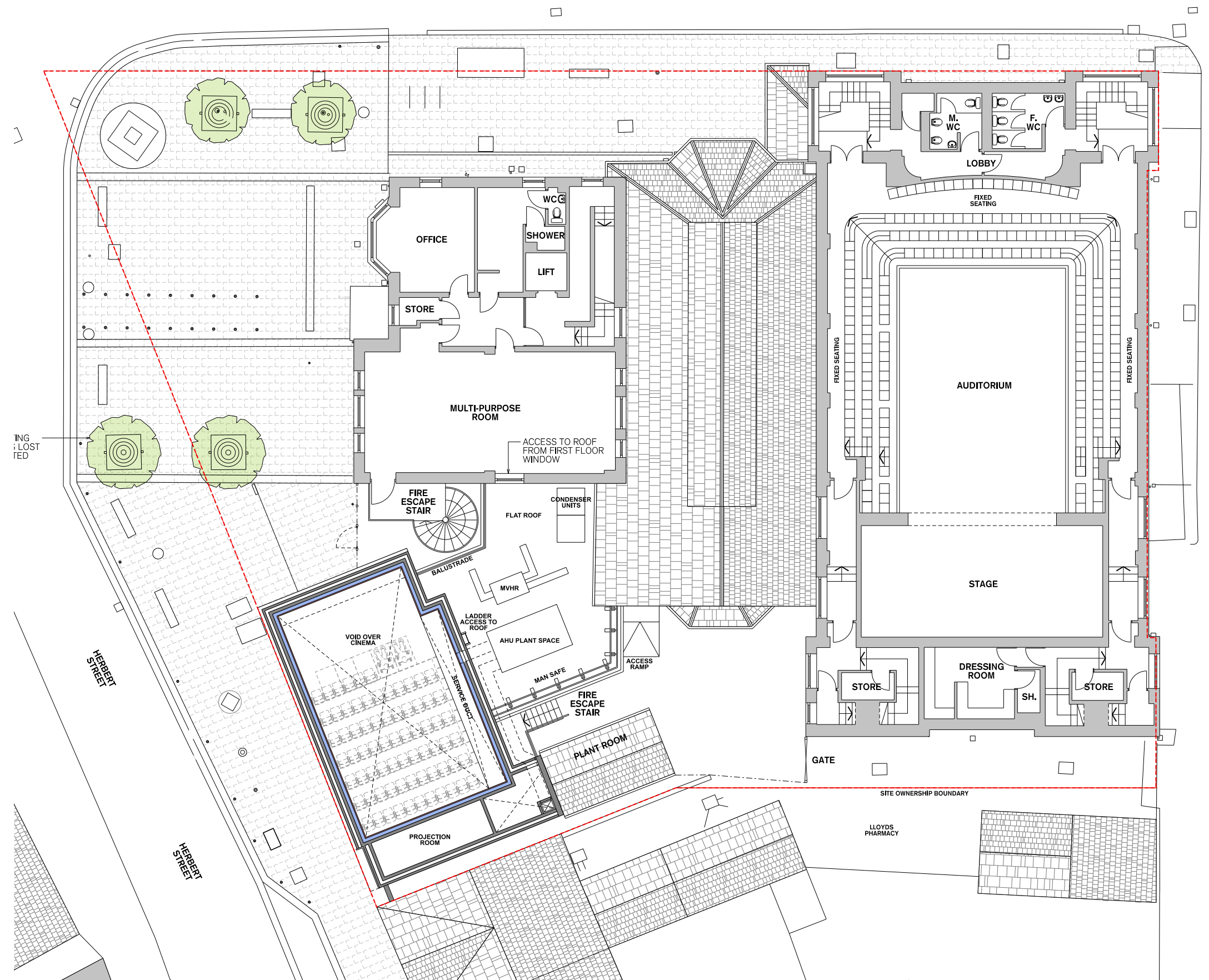
First Floor Plan

Layout

The layout for the new extension has been driven by the constrained nature of the site, the need to maintain fire escape from the existing building, the need to maintain the plant spaces serving the existing building and the shape of the site.

The dimensions of a cinema are dictated by the need to create an operational space that takes into account screen size, projection, and viewing conditions that generate a precise set of parameters for the best viewing experience. We have reviewed each one of these design criteria to consider the optimal layout for the cinema within the site area available for development. The proposed cinema layout in plan and section represents the minimum size required for a 70 seat cinema in this configuration.

This cinema design therefore generates a volume that must be accommodated within the site ownership boundary and has meant that due to the constraints the cinema has been pushed to the edge of the site parallel to the street frontage of the shops on Herbert Street. The cinema needs to be accessed from the main entrance, via the new café / box office, therefore the supporting functions have been placed between the new cinema and existing building.



4.3 The Proposal

Roof Plan + Landscaping

Roof Plan

To minimise the height of the extension the roof and the resulting impact of the extension on the surrounding street context a flat roof has been used for both the cinema extension and the lower link section. Plant will be housed on the lower section of roof so that it is shielded by the larger cinema block.

The main cinema block will have a single ply membrane or similar roofing membrane with a green roof to provide additional biodiversity. To provide safe access to both roofs a man safe system will be used.

Landscaping

The new extension will enclose the previous external courtyard area outside the existing plant room and also part of the public realm that sits alongside Herbert Street. The proposals also require the removal of the 2 existing trees within the public realm in order to accommodate the footprint of the new building. The proposal also includes the removal of the 3 redundant tall lighting bollards that sit in front of the windows to the new café to improve the relationship between the building and public realm and to improve access.

The location of the new extension, and its lack of active frontage, mean that the proposals need to consider how to offset the loss of space / activity and create a meaningful contribution to Herbert Street. The first proposal is to reinstate trees within the currently disused planting beds within the existing paving outside the main entrance of the building. The trees will be selected to be suitable for the urban environment and contribute to the ecology of the area.

The second proposal is enabled by the lowering of the cill of one of the windows to the new café to create a new door. This will improve the viability of extending the café function into the square, in turn activating the space, through the use of loose furniture by creating a direct connection to the internal café facilities.

