

FORMER CINEMA BUILDING  
DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT  
JUNE 2024



PURCELL

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# FORMER CINEMA BUILDING: DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

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# SECTION 1.0: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 Project Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Purcell, on behalf of Vinci St Modwen, to describe the proposed works associated with the refurbishment of the Grade II listed, former Cinema building. The building, which is on Historic England’s ‘At Risk Register’ is located within St. Andrew’s Gate, Town Centre Extension (TCE) site, within St. Andrew’s Park. The statement serves to provide an explanation of the proposals and support the listed building consent application and the Full Element of the TCE Hybrid Planning Application.

The proposed scheme has been carefully developed to address the heritage sensitivities of the building, respond to pre-application feedback and ensure the building meets the requirements of the end operator, to enable it to be in an active use.

Listed building consent is sought for:

“All internal and external alterations to the former Cinema building, to enable reinstatement of the gym use (Use Class E(d)) and change of use to provide a cafe (Use Class E(b)).”

The Full Element of the Hybrid Planning Application seeks full planning consent for:

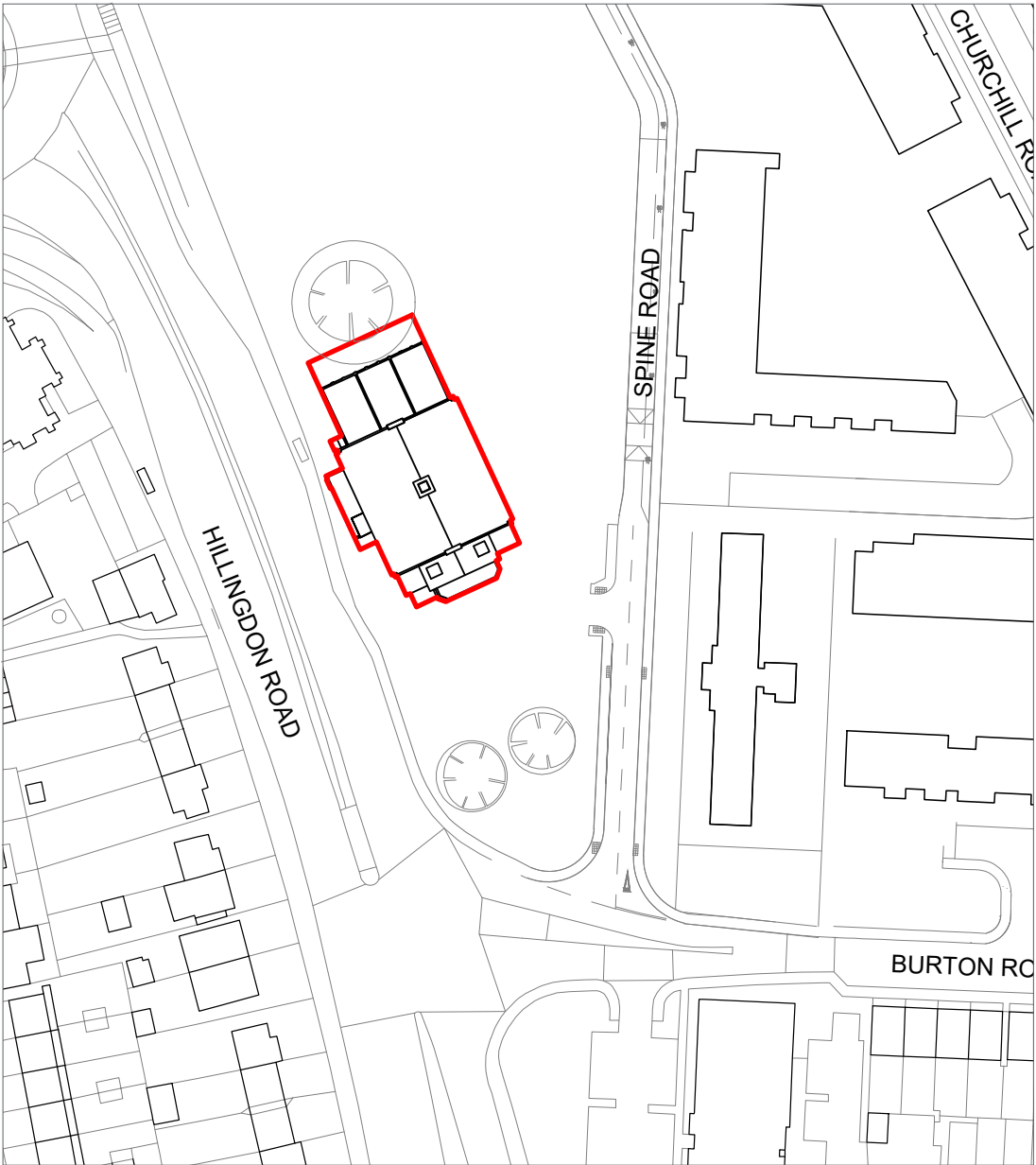
“The reinstatement of gym use (Use Class E(d)) and change of use to provide a café (Use Class E(b)) within the former cinema building; and external alterations; and associated car parking, hard and soft landscaping and all other associated works”.

## 1.2 Project Team

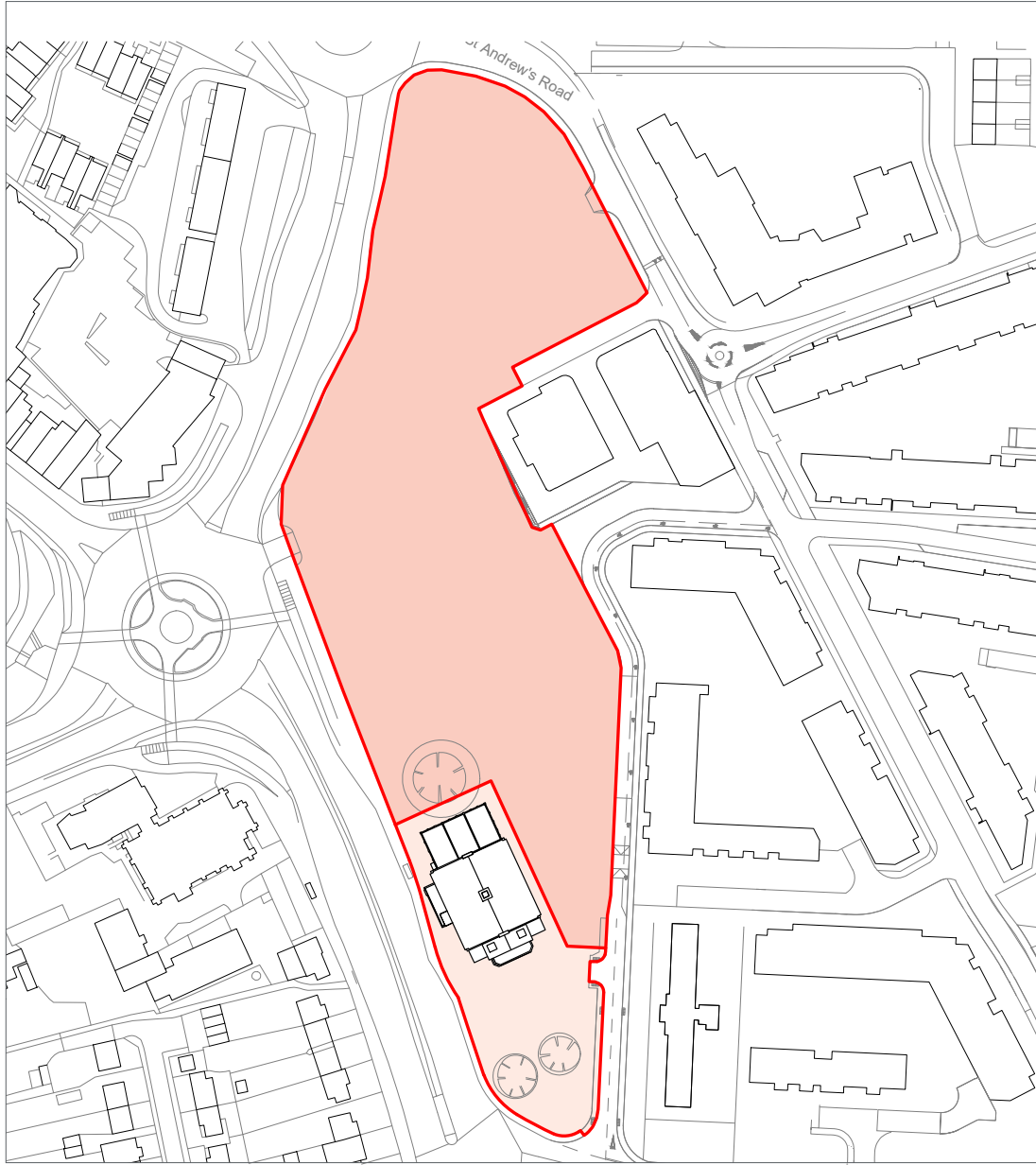
The project team has collaboratively developed a proposal for the former cinema building that responds to the constraints and opportunities of the site, client’s brief and requirements of the proposed use for the building.

The design development to date has been explored with the following core team:

- Client – Vinci St Modwen
- Architect – Purcell
- Landscape Architect – Gillespies
- Structural Engineer – Conisbee
- Cost Consultant – BTP Group
- Heritage and Planning Consultant – Lichfields
- Energy and Sustainability – Hodkinson
- Fire – Orsa



Listed Building Consent Application Boundary



TCE Hybrid Planning Application boundary



South elevation



East elevation



View of former cinema across Hillingdon Road from north-west



SECTION 1.0: INTRODUCTION



South elevation



View across Hillington Road from south-west



View from north-east



North elevation



SECTION 2.0: CONTEXT

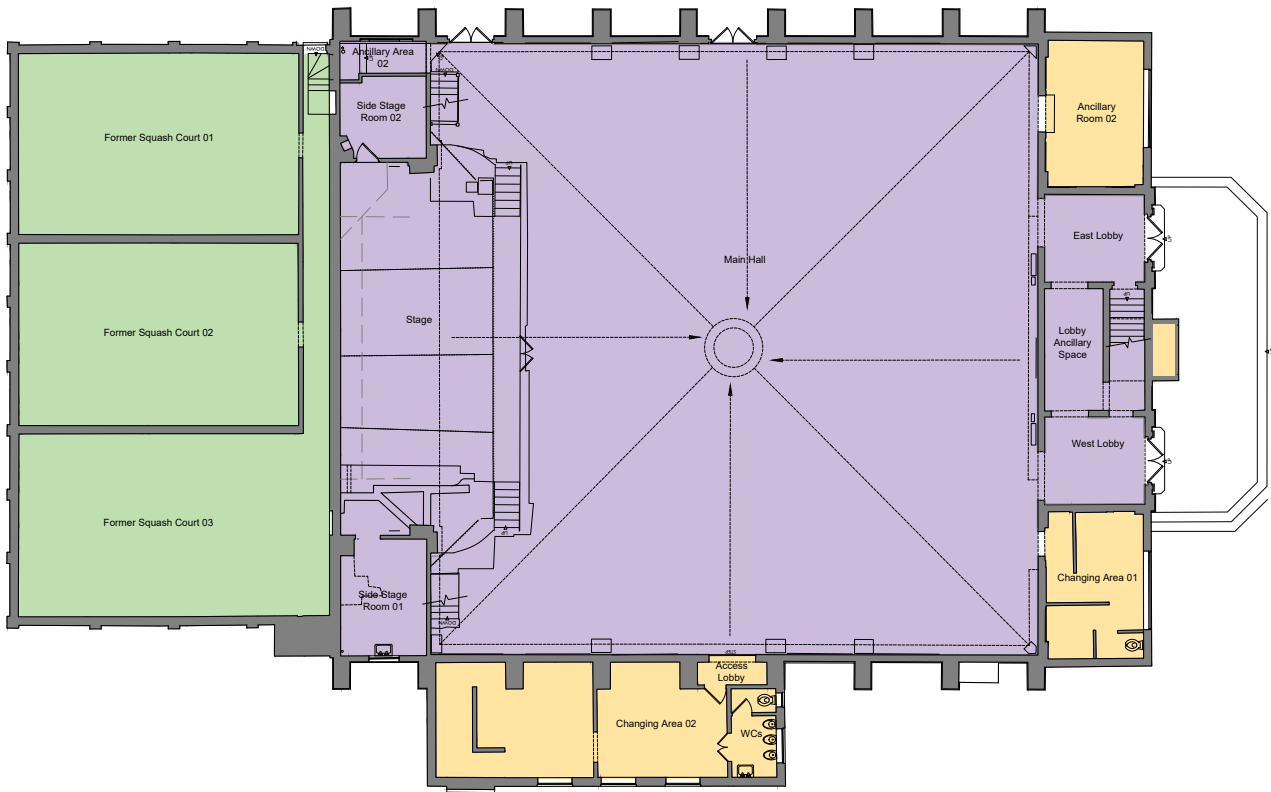
2.1 Physical Context

The former Cinema building is located within St. Andrew's Park. It historically stood at the western edge of the former RAF Uxbridge base.

The former Cinema building and wider TCE site lies within the eastern section of the demarcated Town Centre boundary for Uxbridge, as defined in the Hillingdon Local Plan. It is located within the London Plan's Metropolitan Town Centre designation. The building is seen in views from the end of the High Street. The building is located to the east of Hillingdon Road and is accessed via the Spine Road, which extends north from Burton Road.

Residential development which ranges in height from 2 to 8 storeys is located within the building's context. The locally listed Mons building, which has consent for conversion to residential is located, to the east of the site.

The former Cinema building is Grade II listed and is identified as a Category A building (immediate risk of further rapid deterioration or loss of fabric) on Historic England's Heritage at Risk register. The building was constructed in 1919, soon after the formation of the RAF Uxbridge base. The building comprises three main elements; The Main Hall and associated spaces, the Former Squash Courts and modern (non-original extensions).



- Main Hall and associated spaces
- Squash courts
- Modern extensions (non original)

This plan is not to scale



Site context aerial view.



View of building behind site hoardings from the south-east



View of building across Hillingdon Road from north-west



View of building across Hillingdon Road from south-west



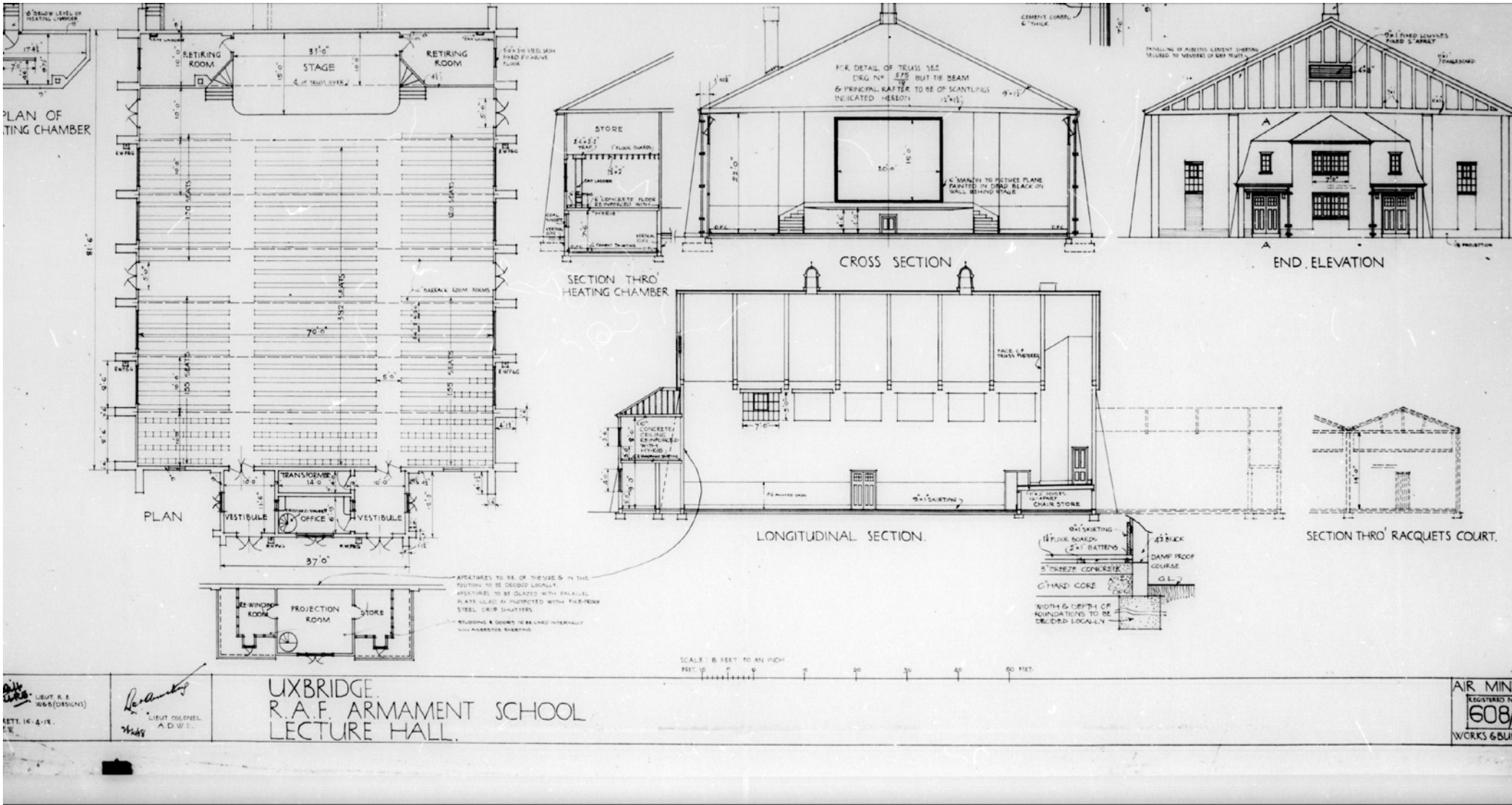
SECTION 2.0: CONTEXT

2.2 Historical Context

From at least the early-18th century, the former Cinema site and wider area formed part of the Hillingdon estate, at the heart of which stood Hillingdon House.

In late 1917, it was decided to establish a School of Armament on the estate to instruct Royal Flying Corps (RFC) recruits in gunnery. This was soon followed by the School of Bombing in January 1918. With the formation of the Royal Air Force in April 1918, the Hillingdon Estate passed into RAF ownership, becoming an RAF base (called variously RAF Uxbridge, RAF Depot or West Camp) with an initial focus on demobilisation of air personnel following the end of the first World War followed by training and character-building of the young men of the service in the inter-war period. It was also in April 1918, at this very early stage in the development of the RAF, that designs for the former Cinema were drawn up by Lieutenant J.G.N Clift of the Royal Engineers, who was seconded to the Air Ministry.

A comparison of Clift’s drawing and the building erected shows that the former Cinema building was constructed in a more ornate style than Clift’s original design concept. Construction of the former Cinema is thought to have been undertaken in 1919 by Higgs and Hill Ltd. It is not clear from the archival records but it is assumed that the squash courts also date to 1919 and were constructed at the same time as the former Cinema.



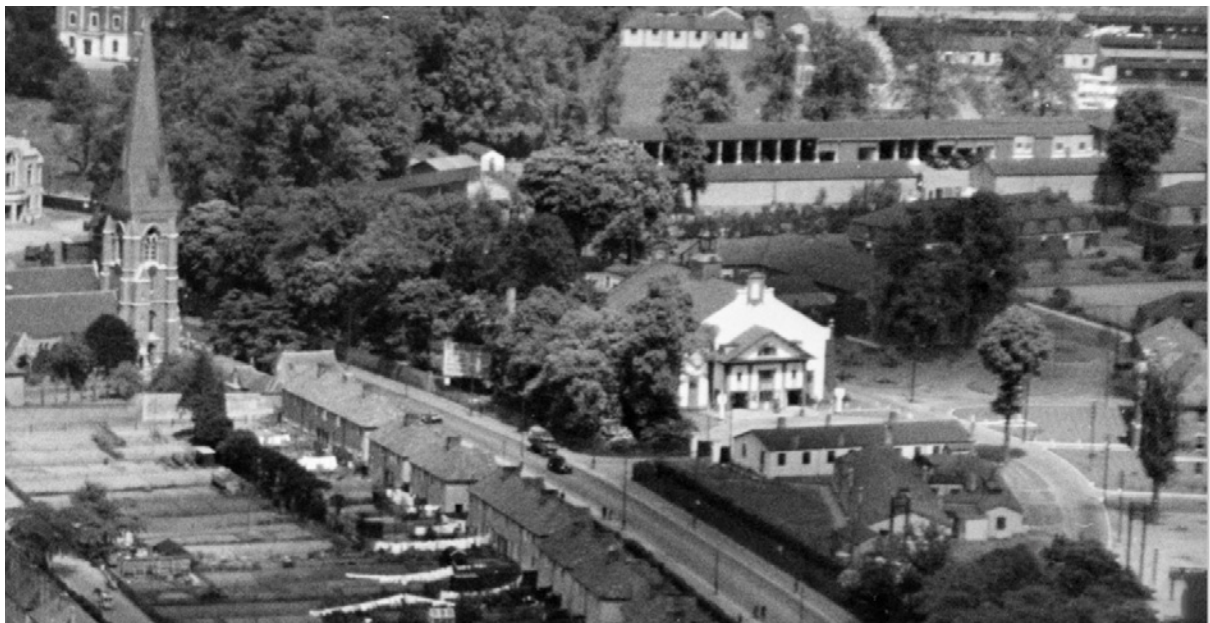
J.G.N.Clift design proposals for RAF Armament School lecture hall



South elevation, 1919



Interior photo of cinema, 1945



Aerial view from south-west, 1933



## SECTION 2.0: CONTEXT

The former Cinema is believed to have been converted to a gym and concert hall in 1960. The pitched roof of the squash courts appears to have been replaced with a flat roof around the same time.

During the 1960s either side of the porch on the front, south-eastern, elevation later flat-roofed single storey extensions were constructed as well as a flat-roof extension covering the original pay office window. A further single-storey extension with an external plant room at first floor level to the Hillingdon Road elevation is also a later addition.

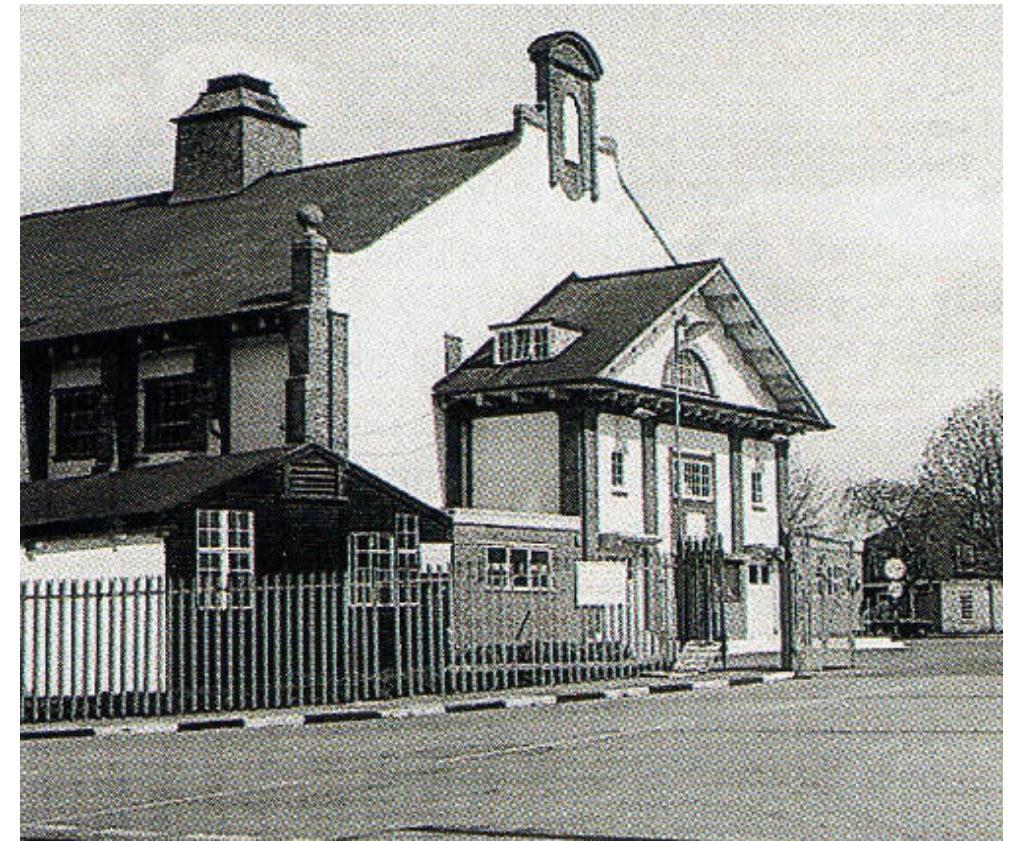
It is understood that the gym use could have ceased completely in the 1970s when a purpose-built gym was erected at RAF Uxbridge.

RAF Uxbridge remained operational until March 2010, when the base was closed as part of the scaling back of the RAF. The area has been approved for residential-led mixed use redevelopment (ref: 585/APP/2009/2752) and the majority of the former RAF buildings have been demolished. The former Cinema building serves as a visual reminder of the former RAF complex.

The wider St. Andrew's Park development is now well-advanced and has transformed the context of the former Cinema building from a military camp to a high-quality residential area.



*South elevation, 1960s*



*View from south-west, date unknown*



© GoogleEarth 1999



*Aerial view of site context*



SECTION 2.0: CONTEXT

2.3 Current Condition

The existing building is visually in a dilapidated state, as a result of it being long term vacant. The Structural Survey, prepared by Conisbee and submitted in support of the Listed Building Consent application confirms that the structure is in a fair, sound condition.

The exterior brickwork is considered to be in fair condition. There are elements of damaged brickwork which will need to be cleaned out and repointed.

Internally most of the rooms and areas are dilapidated and require extensive repair work. The works required are considered to be cosmetic remediation works.

The single-glazed windows on the east and west elevations including the high level Crittall windows are in a very poor state of repair, rusted and are beyond salvaging. Windowpanes are missing and have been temporarily boarded.

Sections of the high-level cornice, ceiling, stage and staircase require repair works.

The former Squash Courts do not have a roof.

For full details of the building condition please refer to the Structural Survey, prepared by Conisbee and submitted in support of the Listed Building Consent application.



Aerial view of former cinema building from north-east



View looking north from within squash court



North elevation of main hall from within squash court



North elevation of main hall from within squash court



SECTION 2.0: CONTEXT

Current Condition



South Elevation of former cinema building



North Elevation of Former Squash Courts



West Elevation of former cinema building from Hillingdon Road



Main Hall and Stage



Former Squash Court 01



Main Hall as viewed from the stage



# SECTION 2.0: CONTEXT

## 2.4 Heritage Statute and Policy

The relevant statutory development plan for the Site comprises the Hillingdon Local Plan Part 1 Strategic Policies (adopted November 2012), Hillingdon Local Plan Part 2 Development Management Policies (adopted January 2020) and the London Plan (adopted March 2021). The heritage statutory considerations for the proposal are s.16(2) and s.66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 (“the 1990 Act”).

Material considerations include the National Planning Policy Framework, the National Planning Practice Guidance, the National Design Code and relevant Historic England guidance.

A full assessment of the proposed scheme in the context of key heritage policies and statutory considerations is outlined in the Heritage Statement submitted in support of the Listed Building Consent application and the Full Element of the Hybrid Planning Application.

The site sits within the London Borough of Hillingdon planning authority. The accompanying planning and heritage statements set out a more comprehensive assessment of the relevant local and national planning policies adhered to by this project. The below is a high level summary:

### National Policy Background

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2023) is the overarching planning policy document for England and provides guidance about how to implement the Planning Act 1990. The policies are in place with the aim of ensuring sustainable development, and emphasises the need for assessing developments against the framework’s overarching objectives; economic, social and environmental.

### Local Policy and Guidance

There are two parts to the Hillingdon Local Plan, which set out the future strategy for the borough to guide future growth and planning decisions.

Local Plan: Part 1 – Strategic Policies, adopted on 8th November 2012 and sets out the overall objectives for growth and development up to 2026. Local Plan Part 2 which focuses on Development Management Policies and Site Allocations was adopted on 16th January 2020.

Please refer to the accompanying planning statement for a summary of the planning history of the site.

## 2.5 Movement Routes and Current Access

The existing site is not publicly accessible. Pedestrian, cyclist and vehicle access into the site will be obtained from the Spine Road which is being delivered by the Town Centre West phase of development in St. Andrew’s Park. There is an area of hardstanding which extends south from the building. This was historically used as a car park with a capacity for up to c. 43 vehicles.

The site has historically been inaccessible from Hillingdon Road as it was formerly located within the secure boundary associated with the former RAF Uxbridge base. There is an existing footpath which extends along the site boundary which extends along Hillingdon Road and Burton Road. There is a change in levels between the site and Hillingdon Road.



## SECTION 3.0: PROJECT HISTORY AND CONSULTATION

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### 3.1 Project History

The former Cinema building has always been identified as a feature to be retained as part of the wider St. Andrew’s Park development. The original site-wide hybrid planning consent (ref. 585/APP/2015/848, as amended), granted in January 2012 for the comprehensive redevelopment of the former RAF Uxbridge secured full planning consent for the retainment of the former Cinema building to provide a gym. This consent was secured on the basis no building works were required. The dilapidated state of the former Cinema building has meant the original consent can’t be delivered as building works are required.

The original site-wide hybrid consent also envisioned that a theatre would be provided to the north of the former Cinema building on the current TCE application site. The S106 Agreement associated with the consent required the land for the theatre and the former Cinema building to be gifted to the Council on occupation of 700th residential unit delivered under the consent. A transfer notice was served on the Council, but the Council confirmed there was no longer a business case for the theatre or for the Council to take ownership of the former Cinema building on the basis the Borough already has three existing entertainment venues that provide a significant programme of cultural and community events. A Deed of Variation to the S106 Agreement was agreed in March 2022 to reflect the Council’s decision not to accept the transfer and secure a £1.25 million financial contribution towards the provision of social, leisure, recreational, community and environmental schemes in the London Borough of Hillingdon.

Following this, VSM carried out a comprehensive campaign to try and secure an operator for the former Cinema Building and Squash Courts. From discussions with a wide range of potential occupiers it became clear that the Grade II listed status of the building, its existing floorplan / layout and size restricted their ability to present a commercially viable offer. This meant that enquiries received were never backed up by formal offers. There is no credible interest in the building other than from the proposed gym and café operators. As such, there are no reasonable alternative development scenarios that would re-introduce an active use on the site. If the gym and café use are not progressed then the former Cinema Building will remain vacant, inaccessible, and unusable and be of no public benefit.

### 3.2 Pre-Application Consultation

VSM have engaged in pre-application discussions with LB Hillingdon and the GLA to discuss the gym and cafe proposals. No. 2 pre-applications meeting were held with LB Hillingdon and a single meeting was held with LB Hillingdon and the GLA. The proposals were also presented during no. 2 public consultation events held in St. Andrew’s Park. The proposed scheme has been revised and developed in response to the pre-application feedback received from LB Hillingdon and the GLA. Full details of the pre-application consultation are set out in Appendix A.

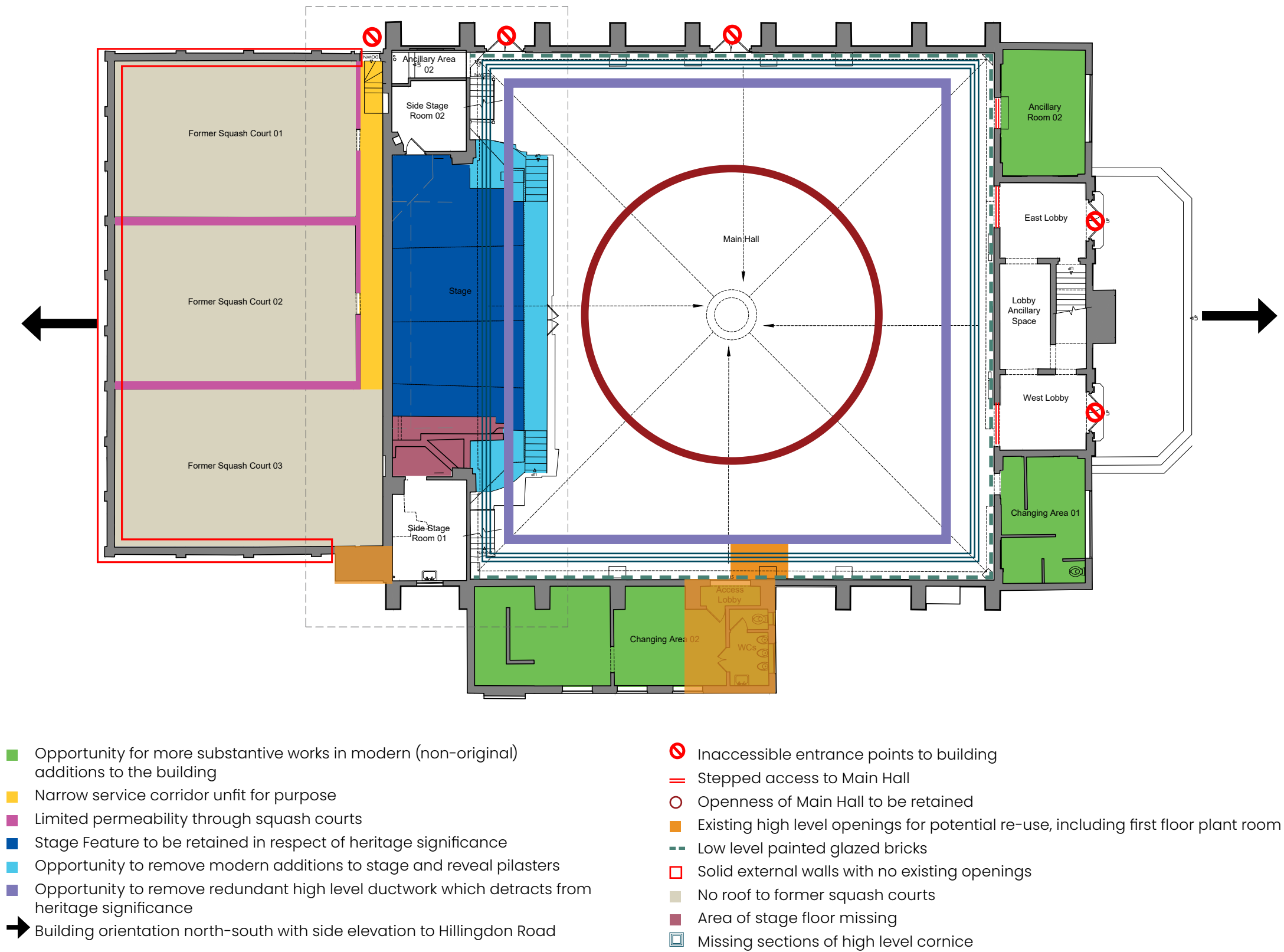


SECTION 4.0: OPPORTUNITIES, CONSTRAINTS AND DESIGN PRINCIPLES

The former Cinema building is orientated north to south with the primary entrance to the southern elevation. Secondary entrances for fire escape and servicing are located along the flanking elevation to the east.

An assessment of the building’s opportunities and constraints has been undertaken as summarised on the diagram. The opportunities, constraints and historic fabric of the building have informed the following series of design principles which have been incorporated into the proposed scheme to ensure a balance of historical preservation and modern functionality:

- Respect Heritage Significance: The priority is to conserve, repair and re-use the currently dilapidated heritage asset. Building uses should be identified to minimise intervention to the existing building whilst ensuring a long-term future.
- Aesthetic Considerations: Materials, colours and techniques should seek to complement the historic appearance of the building. Design interventions should be reversible where possible.
- Functional Enhancement: Modern equipment, servicing and utilities will be required to enhance the function of the building and create a comfortable environment for building users.
- Structural Stability: Structural changes should only be made where required to ensure the building can be brought back into active use and ensure longevity of the building structure. A new roof to the former Squash Courts must be incorporated within the scheme.
- Accessibility: The accessibility of the building should be improved. Accessible entrance points into and throughout the building should be provided.
- Improved External Setting: The building design will be complemented by a landscape scheme which should integrate the building with its surroundings and enhance the setting.
- Energy Efficiency and Sustainability: Measures to improve the energy efficiency and sustainability of the building should be incorporated where they will not harm the heritage significance of the building.





# SECTION 5.0: PROPOSED SCHEME

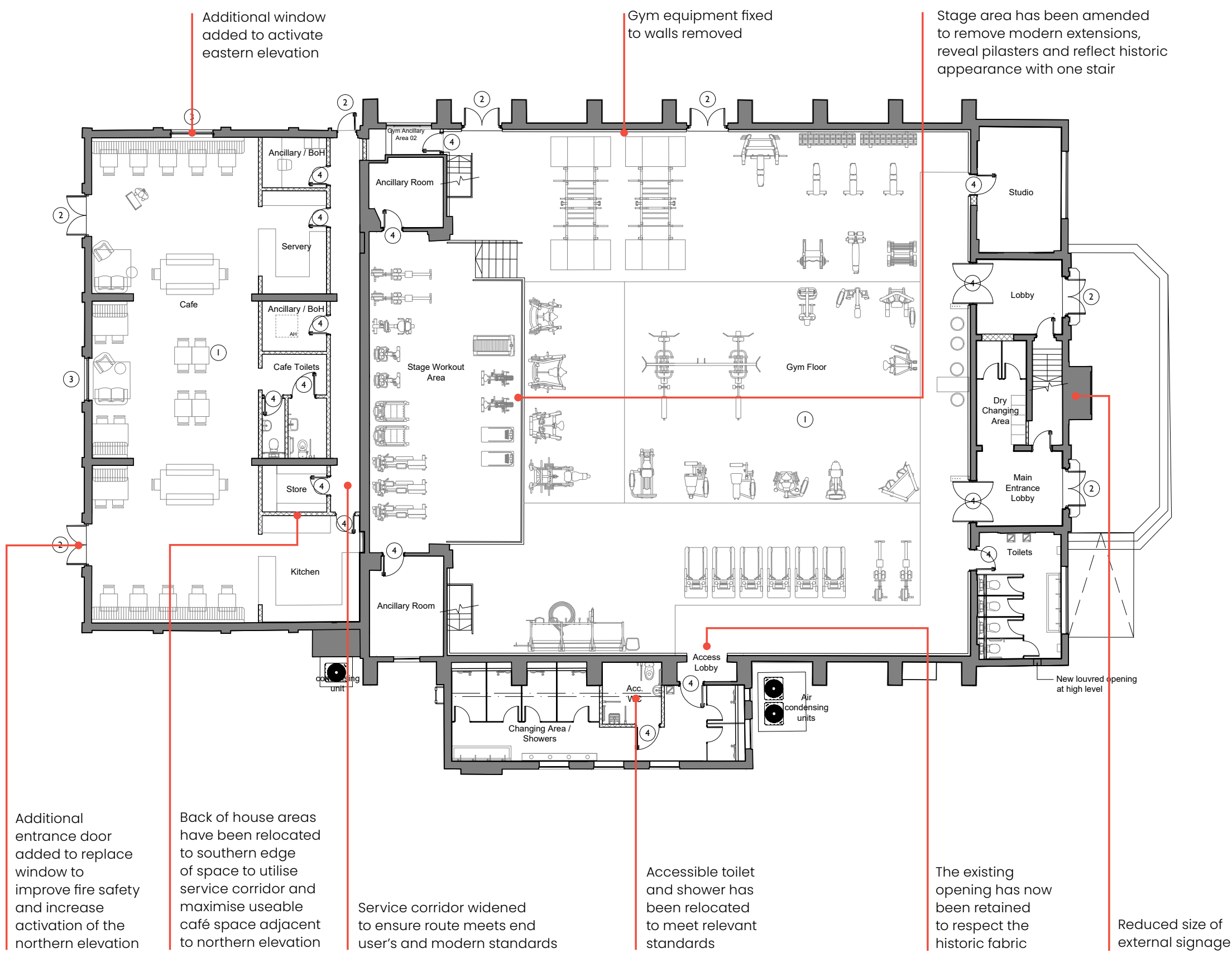
## 5.1 Pre-Application Consultation

VSM carried out numerous pre-application discussions with the London Borough of Hillingdon (LBH) during 2021 and 2022. Two meetings focused on the former Cinema in August 22 and November 22. The proposals for the former Cinema building have also been discussed with the GLA at a pre-application meeting on 21/09/23 and a site visit on 06/10/23. LB Hillingdon also attended the GLA meeting and site visit. A full overview of the pre-application feedback is set out at Appendix I.

The proposed scheme has been revised and developed in response to the pre-application feedback received from LB Hillingdon and the GLA. The scheme seeks to address the feedback received. The plan shown to the right sets out the keys changes which have been made in response to Officer's feedback and the heritage constraints associated with the building. In summary, the key changes comprise:

- A reconfigured café space to optimise the accessibility of the space and increase window / visually permeable openings and ensure the space can be serviced.
- Later, modern additions to the stage will be removed to reveal the full height of the pilasters. The stage comprises a single useable space that will not be subdivided. A single stair access is proposed to reflect the original form of the stage.
- The low level painted glazed brickwork will be retained. A protective shroud will be installed over the glazed brickwork. No exercise equipment will be fixed to the walls.
- The internal lighting strategy for the Main Hall has been revised. The low level, band lighting, has been removed
- The proposed signage area has reduced in size.

Areas of scheme amendments compared to November 2022, pre-application scheme by Form and Craft Architects





SECTION 5.0: PROPOSED SCHEME

5.2 The Proposed Scheme

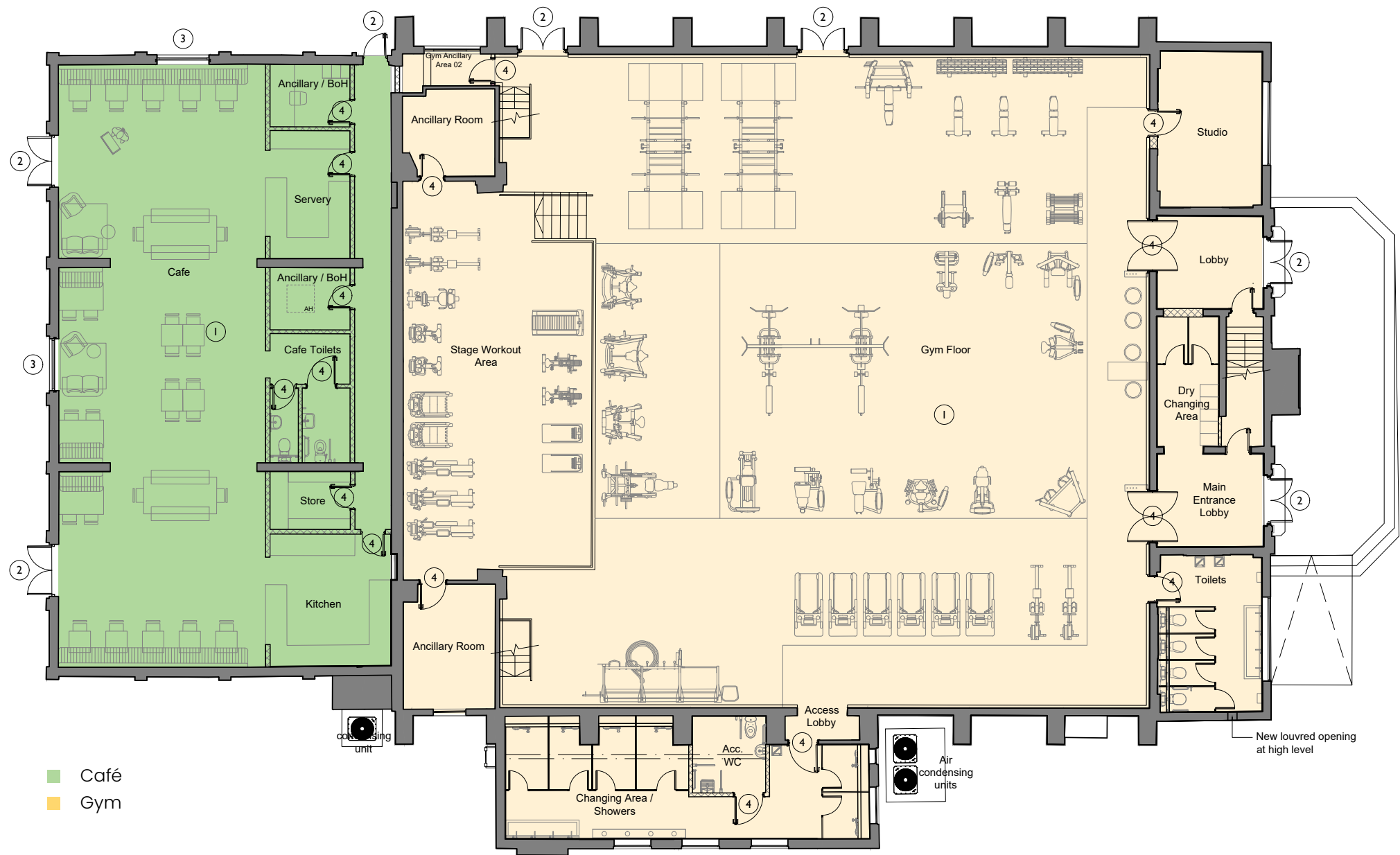
Following an assessment of the site’s opportunities, constraints, heritage context, the pre-application process and end operator engagement, it has been agreed in principle with LB Hillingdon and the GLA that the Main Hall and associated areas can accommodate a gym use and the former Squash Courts converted to provide a café.

The proposed layout for the gym and cafe has been developed to utilise the existing layout of the former cinema building as closely as possible, requiring minimal rearrangement and alteration.

The proposed gym use is consistent with the building’s last active use and can be delivered within the existing spatial arrangements of the building. The Main Hall, including the gym area will provide space for gym equipment. The existing changing areas and toilet areas will be re-furbished for re-use. The rooms at lower ground level and on upper floors will accommodate ancillary uses.

The former Squash Courts will be re-purposed to provide a café space. New openings in the northern elevation will enable this space to be brought back into active use.

The following pages provide a detailed overview of the proposals.





# SECTION 5.0: PROPOSED SCHEME

The Main Hall and associated spaces will accommodate the gym use. A full overview of the works is outlined in the Schedule of Works submitted in support of the Listed Building Consent application. The following provides an overview of the proposal.

## Gym User Areas

The Main Hall, entrance lobby, studio and changing area will be accessible by users of the gym.

## Main Hall

The approach to the Main Hall is to preserve the open-plan nature of the space and provide a light touch and reversible refurbishment of the space to respect the historic character of the building and bring it back into public use. The proposed scheme and internal fit-out seek to celebrate the building's past whilst providing a characterful and flexible environment suitable for modern training.

The existing wall finishes are in very poor condition. The proposal is to leave untouched the painted glazed brickwork at lower-level on all four internal walls and protect them with a plasterboard 'shroud'. This allows the reinstatement of glazed brick work in the future and ensures the bricks would not be damaged by the proposed gym use. The existing wall finishes will be repaired. The existing plasterboard on the southern wall will be extended and repainted. The render on the upper sections of the east and west walls will be repaired and repainted.

The later extension and stairs to the stage will be removed allowing the pilaster bases to be visible as originally intended. The stage will be repaired and refurbished for gym use, with damaged or broken joists to be fully replaced and the front opening infilled with timber. The timber will be sealed to enhance durability and a floor finish added to meet the end operator's requirements. The floor finish will be agreed via a condition on the Listed Building Consent. A new staircase will be installed in the approximate location of the original stair, to provide access to the stage area. A glazed balustrade will be added to the front of the stage. This is required to ensure the stage can be used safely. The light-weight balustrade, that is visually permeable has been chosen to reduce the prominence of the feature. The redundant timber and metal rig equipment will be removed.

The plasterwork to the back of the stage wall will be repaired and repainted black as originally intended. The proscenium and pilasters will be repaired and painted black. The high-level wooden stage structures, cat ladders and corner metal landing will be retained to illustrate the historic workings of the stage.

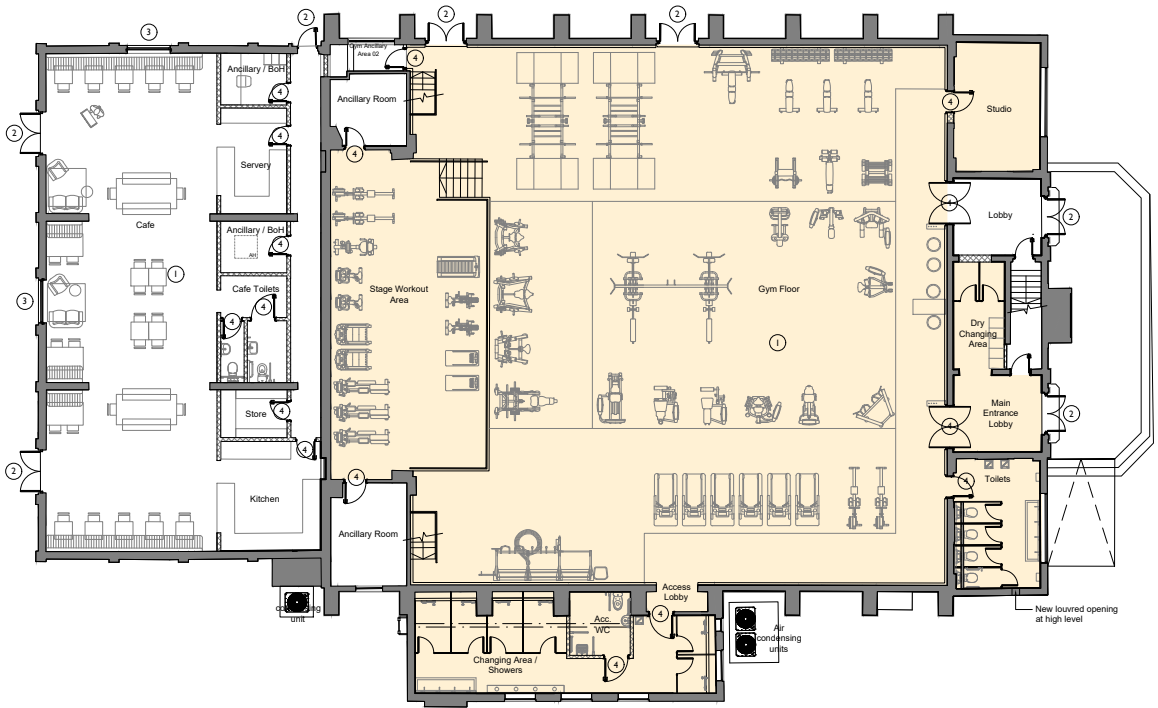
A timber balustrade will be introduced to the west side of the stage to match that which already exists to the east side. This will establish a sense of symmetry in views towards the internal northern elevation of the Main Hall.

The high level cornicing in the Main Hall will be retained and repaired. The existing high level Crittall windows in the Main Hall are in a very poor state of repair and are beyond salvaging. The proposal includes replacement of the existing windows with double-glazed white metal windows to match the existing, including all ironmongery. The first-floor projection window on the southern wall will be replaced.

New internal doors (single and double) will be inserted into the existing openings within the north and southern walls of the Main Hall. These will be complementary grey metal doors to complement the character of the Main Hall. Replacement external fire escape doors are required to the east wall, this is due to the existing poor condition of the fire doors and the need to meet modern safety standards.

The large-scale, high-level ductwork attached to the ceiling will be removed allowing views to the domed ceiling. Upgraded, wall-mounted M&E will be introduced just below the replacement high-level windows which has been designed to meet the requirements of gym use. The opening to the first-floor plant room will reuse the outline of the existing opening. It will be smaller in size with the remaining opening to be filled in with matching brickwork. The proposed new ductwork and wall-mounted fan coil unit will be finished in a stainless steel to provide a modern, honest aesthetic appropriate to the use of the hall as a gym. A discreet wall-mounted cable tray will sit neatly beneath the fresh air ductwork with all redundant surface mounted cabling to be removed.

A zone for audio and visual equipment will be provided on the south, east and west walls to allow equipment to be carefully and discreetly fixed to the wall. This is required by the end operator to ensure the building can successfully operate as a gym.



Ground floor plan highlighting the gym area.



Gym internal view