

## COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES  
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL  
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 3rd March 2021

**Ward:** Abbey

**App No:** 191848/FUL

**Address:** Greyfriars Church, Friar Street, Reading, RG1 1EH

**Proposal:** Demolish Existing Church Centre, Construct New Three Storey Church Centre with Plant Enclosure on Roof and Single Storey Glazed Link at Ground Floor Level. Associated hard and Soft Landscaping and External Works

**Applicant:** Greyfriars Church

**Agent:** Bluestone Planning

**Date validated:** 26/11/2020

**Application:** 13-week target decision date: 20/3/2020

**Extension of time date:** 10/03/2021

### RECOMMENDATION

Agree the proposed changes to materials, design and BREEAM level and adjust the wording of conditions 2 (approved plans), 3 (materials) and 23/24 (BREEAM) as set out in the March 2020 PAC report (Appendix 1) accordingly.

Amended conditions:

2. Approved Plans
3. Materials - As proposed
- ~~23. Pre-commencement BREEAM 'Excellent' assessment~~
24. Pre-occupation BREEAM '~~Excellent~~' 'Very Good' assessment - Post Construction

## 1. INTRODUCTION & ASSESSMENT

- 1.1 This planning application was considered at Planning Applications Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and the resolution was to grant planning permission subject to conditions (PAC report (and update report) attached as appendix 1 and 2 to this report). However, the planning permission has not yet been issued following a request from the applicant to amend the proposed external material finishes and BREEAM standard for the new church centre building. The application has therefore been brought back to Planning Applications Committee for these amendments to be considered.

## *Materials*

- 1.2 The scheme as approved proposed to provide a wedge-shaped new church centre building clad in limestone panels and incorporating large off-set glazing panels with dark grey aluminium window frames. The officer report from March 2020 PAC set out that the contemporary style of the building and use of high-quality materials was considered to be a significant improvement above the appearance of the existing church centre building. Officers and Historic England considered the proposed building would enhance the setting of the host Grade I listed church. Visuals of the design approved at March 2020 PAC are shown below (further visuals and design are also set out at the end of the March 2020 PAC report in appendix 1).



Visuals showing design as approved at PAC in March 2020

- 1.3 Following consideration and approval of the application at PAC in March 2020 the agent for the application contacted officers to advise that a revised materials pallet was to be proposed. The agent advises that the reason for seeking this change is due to the resultant high costs of providing the building in the approved elevational treatments and finishes and in particular the limestone cladding. The agent advises that the Church cannot fund provision of the building with the currently approved pallet of materials and that even with the revised material pallet now proposed fundraising will still be required.
- 1.4 Discussions have been ongoing with officers, the Council's Conservation and Urban Design Officer and Historic England in an attempt to agree an alternate materials pallet which is affordable to the Church and also results in a new church centre building of suitable visual quality which preserves and enhances the setting of the host Grade I listed church.
- 1.5 The revised material pallet proposed incorporates retention of limestone cladding (Jura Limestone, Beige Cross-cut and Sandblasted) to part of the front/south elevation of the building (triangular section on the visual below where the signage for Greyfriars Centre is shown). This is the elevation of the building where the main entrance is, and which faces the church and towards Friar Street. Retention of this part of the south elevation in stone provides a visual link to the single storey corridor element which is also to be provided in limestone cladding and would connect the new church centre building to the church. The link corridor was approved under a separate planning permission (ref. 190650) at PAC in July 2019. The corridor element which is also shown on the visual below is under construction on site and incorporates a mix of limestone cladding and glazed finishes.





Visuals showing amended church centre building design

- 1.6 It is proposed that the rest of the south elevation and the rest of the building, at first floor level and above, would be provided in a light buff brick (Ibstock Bradgate Light Buff) which would be finished with similar colour light pointing which would be brushed in finish and would sit flush to the brick surface to present a high quality and clean cut finish and display similar colour tones of the Jura Limestone. As per the design approved at PAC in March 2020 a strip of vertical louvres is proposed to the centre of the south elevation which provides a visual break and natural transition point from the limestone cladding to brick work. Photographs of the proposed brick and limestone cladding are shown below.



Jura Limestone Beige (Cross-cut and Sandblasted)  
and Ibstock Bradgate Light Buff brick

- 1.7 A change is also proposed to the ground floor elevations of the building where instead of blue rendered finish, lbstock natural blue riven linear long bricks are now proposed together with a dark coloured raked pointing to provide a more textured and higher quality finish to this part of the building.



lbstock natural blue riven linear long bricks

- 1.8 In addition to the proposed changes in materials some changes to the building structure are also proposed in order to make further cost savings. Externally this is shown in the roof form of the building which would appear as a regular flat roof as opposed to the angular roof form with peaked corners previously proposed. This change can be seen in the visuals set out earlier in this report and the comparative elevations shown below. Notwithstanding this the overall height of the building would not exceed that previously approved whilst the overall external footprint of the building would show a small increase of 20m<sup>2</sup>. Internal room layout would also remain the same as previously approved.



Comparative West Elevation (Original Approval - Top / Proposed Amendments - Bottom)

- 1.9 The proportions and siting of windows are also now proposed in a more regular fashion. Notwithstanding this, the window frame material is proposed to be the same as that approved previously with the windows to be provided with dark grey aluminium frames and sills. The sloping roof to the east elevation of the building is proposed to be provide in slate as approved previously.
- 1.10 Officers consider that the proposed amendments to the materials and details of the design of the church centre building do result in a drop in visual quality of the scheme when compared to that approved as PAC March 2020. However, the proposals are still a significant improvement when compared to the existing church centre building and in Officers opinion the proposals still demonstrate a good standard of design and use of high-quality materials such that the proposed development is still considered to enhance the setting of the host Grade I listed church and accord with Policy EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment). Both the Council's Conservation and Urban Design Officer and Historic England do not object to the revised proposals. Officers therefore recommend that conditions 2 (approved plans) and 3 (materials) of the March 2020 PAC report recommendation are amended reflect the revised plans and details.

*BREEAM*

- 1.11 The report considered and approved at PAC in March 2020 included conditions (nos. 23 and 24) to ensure that the proposed development achieved a BREEAM standard of Excellent in accordance with Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction) and the Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019) which requires that all major category developments achieve this standard.
- 1.12 The agent for the application has since provided a detailed BREEAM study for the proposals which demonstrate that that the building can only achieve a BREEAM standard of Very Good. This report sets out the constraints of the site/development which prevent it from meeting the Excellent standard and can be summarised as follows.

Because the site location is determined by the location of the church itself:

- Cannot gain BREEAM points for consideration of use of alternative sites (the building is required on the church site) and/or remediation of contaminated land (the site is not contaminated)
- The building lies in an area of poor air quality and high ambient noise levels. Carefully designed ventilation and cooling will avoid the need for opening windows, but the need for active ventilation and comfort cooling mitigates against securing BREEAM points for passive design solutions, free cooling and elimination of some refrigerant gas emissions;
- The sites already high accessibility index cannot be improved

The function of the building has major implications for its structure:

- The large ground-floor reception area and hall, with rooms and office space above requires a heavy reinforced concrete frame which does not score BREEAM construction points;
- Because a building of this type and use has to have a reinforced concrete structure, points cannot be gained for a design that allows easy disassembly and adaptation.

- 1.12 The supporting text to Policy CC2 acknowledges that some types of development may struggle to achieve the Excellent standard and that in these circumstances developments must demonstrate that the standard to be achieved is the highest possible for the development, and at a minimum meets the BREEAM Very Good standard. Officers are satisfied that the application has provided a detailed BREEAM report which demonstrates that the development would overall still perform well in terms of sustainability in achieving a BREEAM Very Good standard, but that specifics of the site and nature of the proposals are limiting factors. Officers therefore recommend that condition 23 is removed as the applicant has now provided their pre-construction report and that condition 24 is amended to require the development to achieve a BREEAM standard of Very Good.

#### *Other*

- 1.13 The officer recommendations regarding all other aspects of the development remains as per the previous report at appendix 1.

## **2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 Agree the proposed changes to materials, design and BREEAM level and adjust the wording of conditions 2 (approved plans), 3 (materials) and 23/24 (BREEAM) accordingly.

## **3. APPENDICES**

Appendix 1: March 2020 PAC report

Appendix 2: March 2020 PAC update report

**Case Officer:** Matt Burns

Submitted Plans and Documentation:

#### *Amended Plans & Documents*

- GRE CENT 171.08 Proposed Block plan
- GRE CENT 172.07 Proposed Site plan
- GRE CENT 173.05 Proposed Floor Plan - Church Centre - Ground Floor & Middle Floor

- GRE CENT 174.04 Proposed Floor Plan - Church Centre - First Floor & Second Floor
  - GRE CENT 175.06 Proposed Floor Plan - Church Centre - Roof Plan
  - GRE CENT 180.04 Proposed Elevations - Church Centre
  - GRE CENT 182.09 Proposed Site Section AA
  - GRE CENT 185.06 Proposed Section - Church Centre - D-D
  - GRE CENT 186.06 Proposed Section - Church Centre - E-E
  - GRE CENT 187.06 Proposed Section - Church Centre - F-F
  - GRE CENT 188.06 Proposed Section - Church Centre -G-G
  - GRE CENT 150.06 Existing OS Location plan
  - GRE CENT 158.01 Existing Elevations - Church Centre
  - RDG Z03STPLE0106 Rev T1 - Proposed Electrical Services Greyfriars Centre - Lighting Strategy External Layout
  - GRE CENT 170.06 Proposed OS Location plan
- 
- GRE CENT 01.03 Comparative Ground Floor Plans
  - GRE CENT 02.03 Comparative Middle Floor Plans
  - GRE CENT 03.03 Comparative First Floor Plans
  - GRE CENT 04.03 Comparative Second Floor Plans
  - GRE CENT 05.03 Comparative Roof Plan
  - GRE CENT 06.04 Comparative North and South Elevations
  - GRE CENT 07.04 Comparative West and East Elevations
  - GRE CENT 08.03 Comparative Site Section AA
  - GRE CENT 09.03 Comparative Section DD
  - GRE CENT 10.03 Comparative Section EE
  - GRE CENT 11.03 Comparative Section FF
  - GRE CENT 12.03 Comparative Section G
- 
- JBKS Updated Design & Access Statement (Feb 2021)

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 8<sup>th</sup> February 2021

- Greyfriars Church BREEAM Status Summary: Planning Application Reference 191848
- RIDGE Greyfriars Church BREEAM Evidence Schedule

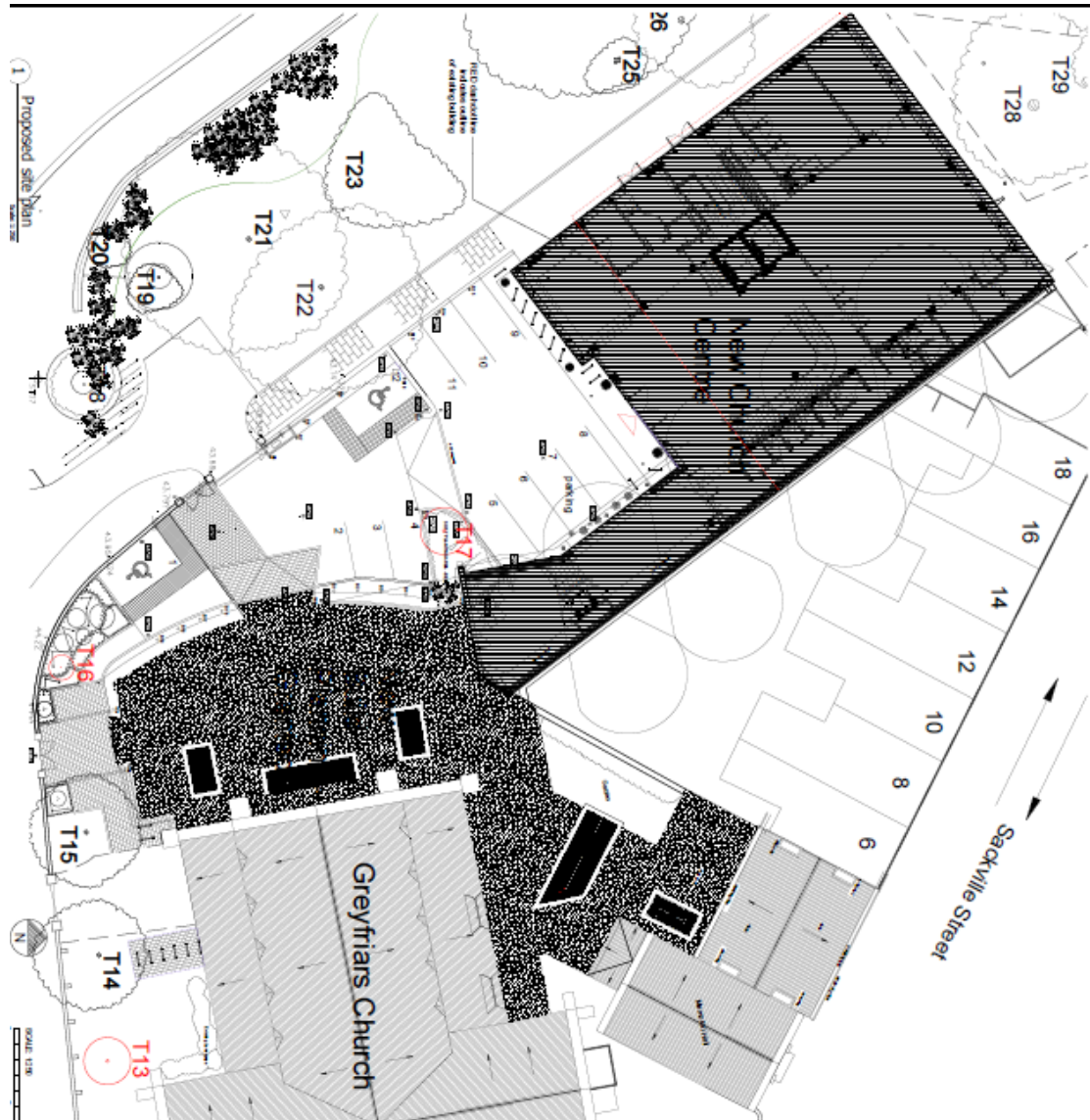
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2020

*Previously Considered Plans & Documents*

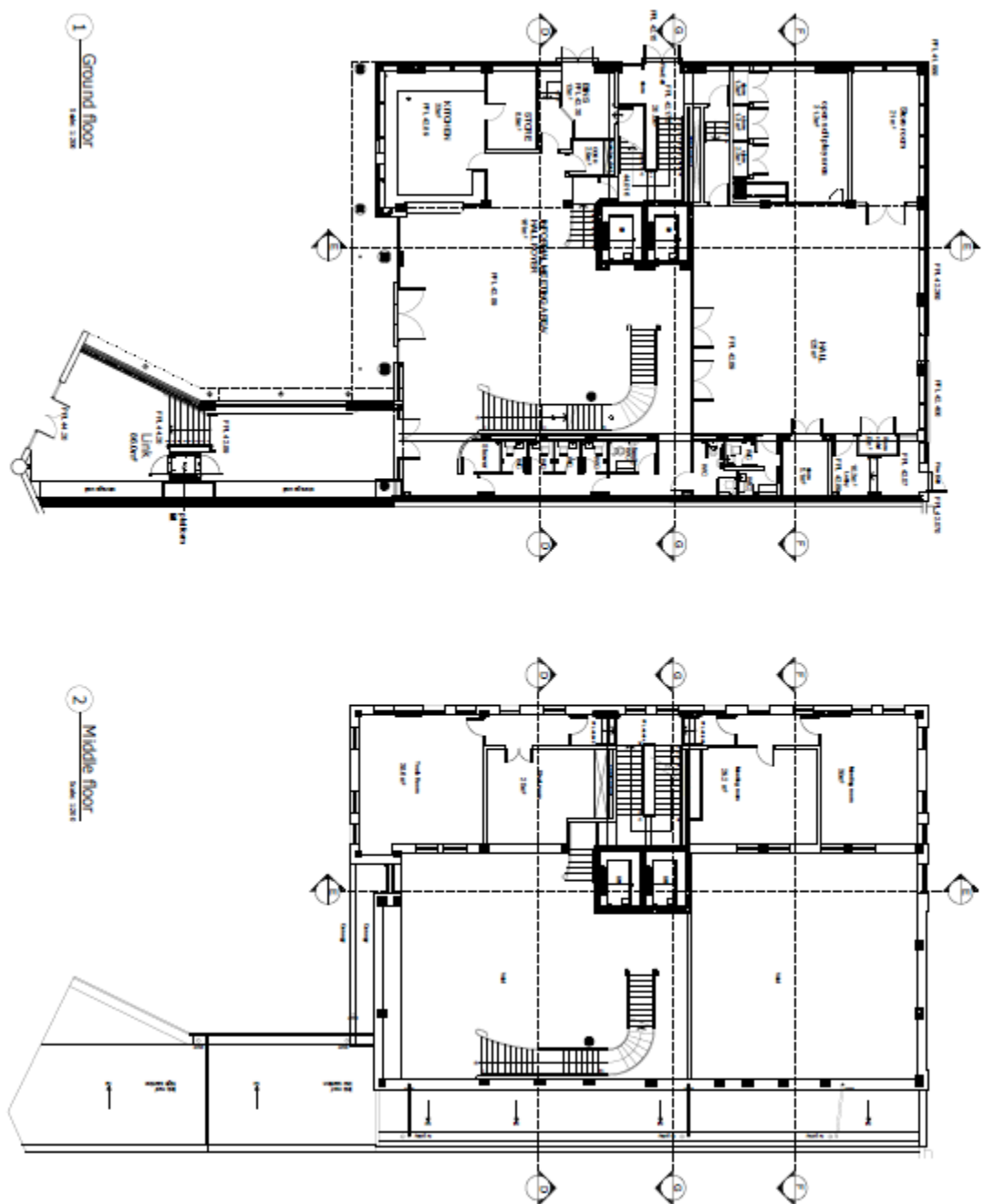
- GRE CENT 151.00 Existing site plan
- GRE CENT 152.00 Existing Ground Floor Plan - Church Centre
- GRE CENT 153.00 Existing 1st Floor Plan - Church Centre
- GRE CENT 154.00 Existing Roof Plan - Church Centre
- GRE CENT 156.00 A Existing Ground floor plan - Church & New Extension
- GRE CENT 156.01 B Existing Ground floor plan - Sackville Street
- GRE CENT 157.00 Existing Roof Plan - Church & New Extension

- GRE CENT 158.00 Existing elevations - Church Centre
  - GRE CENT 159.00 Existing elevations - Church & New Extension East & West
  - GRE CENT 160.00 Existing elevations - Church & New Extension North & South
  - GRE CENT 161.01 Existing Sections - Sackville Street
  - GRE CENT 162.00 Existing Site Section AA
  - GRE CENT 163.00 Existing Sections - Church & Link -BB - CC
  - GRE CENT 164.00 Existing Sections - Church & Link - AA - DD
  - GRE CENT 165.00 Existing Section AA - Church Centre
  - GRE CENT 166.00 Existing Section BB - Church Centre
- 
- 5050 P1 Proposed Drainage Layout Option A
  - 5051 P1 Proposed Drainage Layout Option B
  - 4141 Proposed M & E Layout Ground Floor
  - 4142 Proposed M & E Layout Gallery Floor
  - 4143 Proposed M & E Layout First Floor
  - 4144 Proposed M & E Layout Second Floor
  - GRYFRRPA-OCT19 Root Protection Areas Plan
  - GRYFRRSH-OCT19 Theoretical Shading Plan
  - GRYFRTR-OCT19 Tree Crowns Plan
  - GRYFRTRP-OCT19 Tree Retention & Protection Plan
  - Planning Statement by Bluestone Planning dated November 2019
  - Design & Access Statement by JBKS dated November 2019
  - Phase 2 Acoustic report by Cole Jarman dated October 2019
  - Statement of Need by Greyfriars dated April 2019
  - Heritage Impact Statement by Oxford Heritage Partnership dated September 2019
  - Statement of Significance by Oxford Heritage Partnership dated November 2017
  - M&E Concept Design Report (including BREEAM) by Ridge Consultants dated November 2019
  - Transport Statement including Travel Plan by Helix Highway Consultants dated October 2019
  - Arboricultural BS5837 Report by BJ Unwin Forestry Consultancy dated October 2019
  - Archaeological Desk Based Assessment by Oxford Archaeology dated November 2019
  - Addendum to Archaeological Desk Based Assessment by Oxford Archaeology
  - Preliminary Roost Assessment by MP Ecology October 2017
  - Ecology Survey to Inform BREEAM pre-assessment by MP Ecology February 2019
  - Daylight Sunlight Report by Syntegra dated September 2017

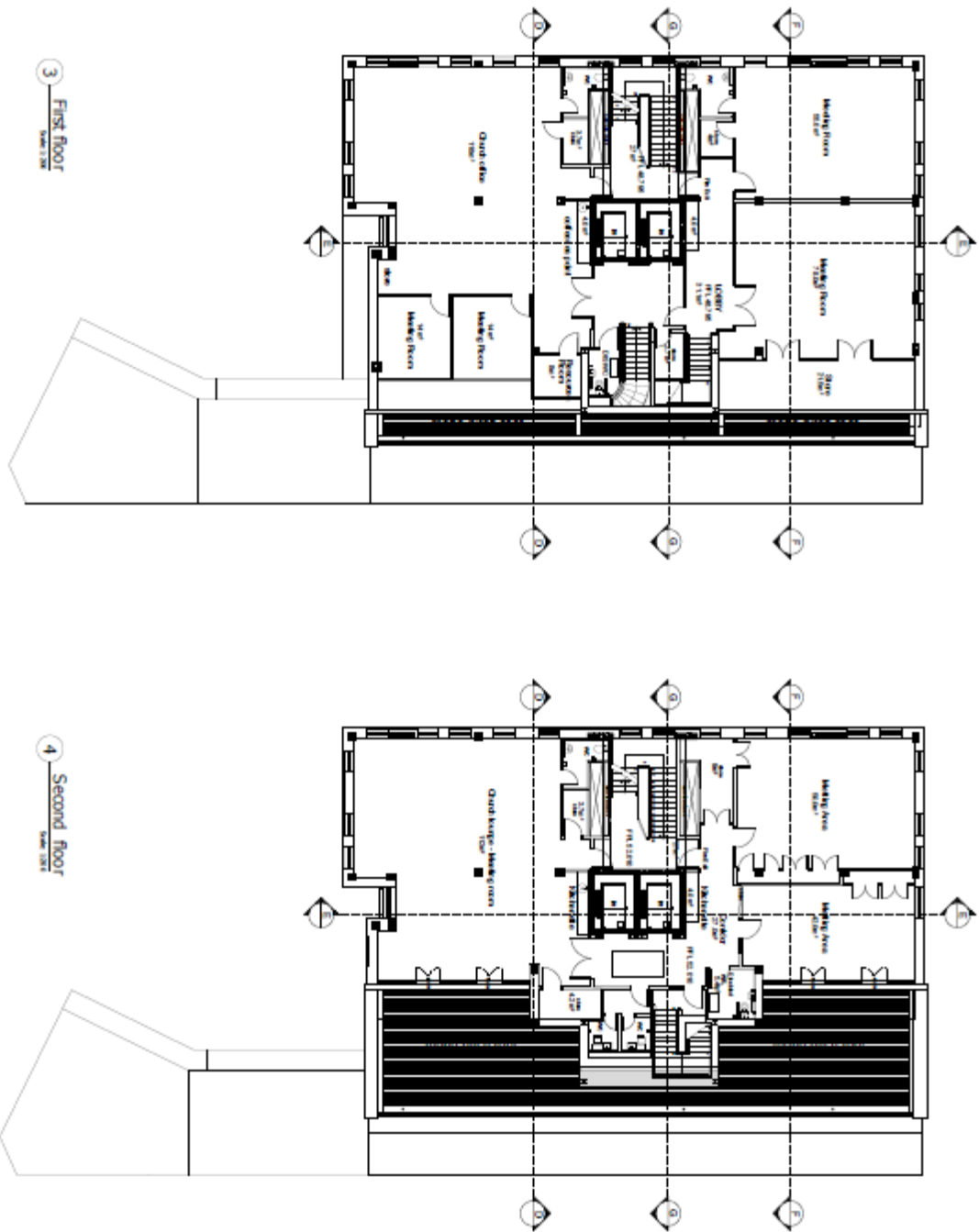
Received by the Local Planning Authority on 19<sup>th</sup> November 2019



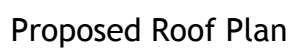
Proposed Site Plan

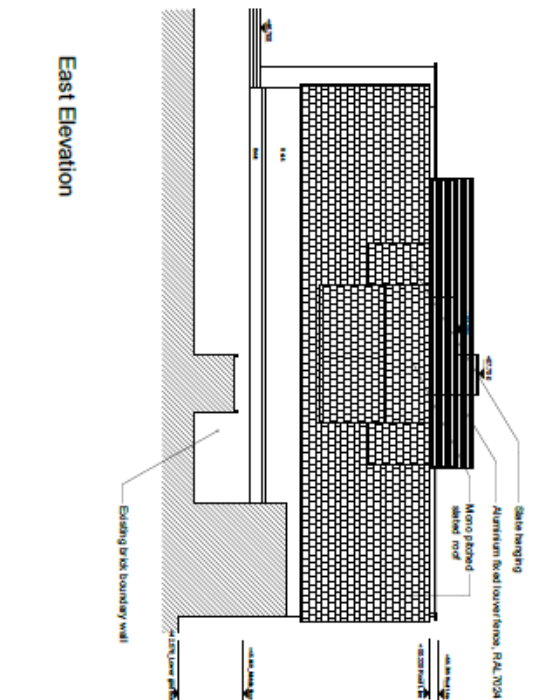
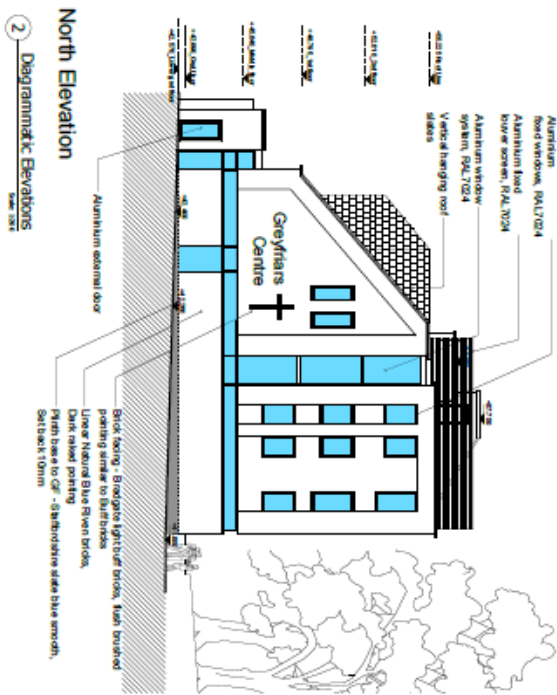
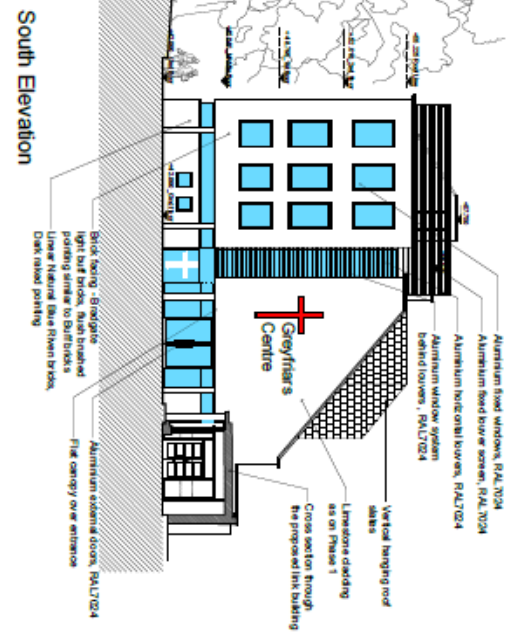
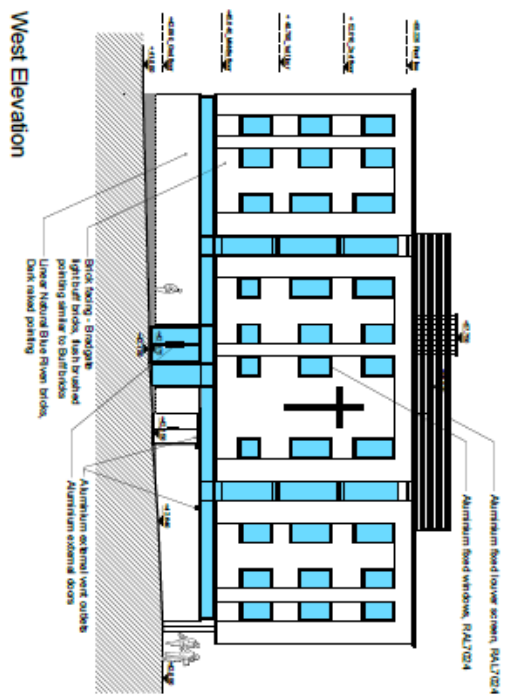


Proposed Lower and Upper Ground Floor

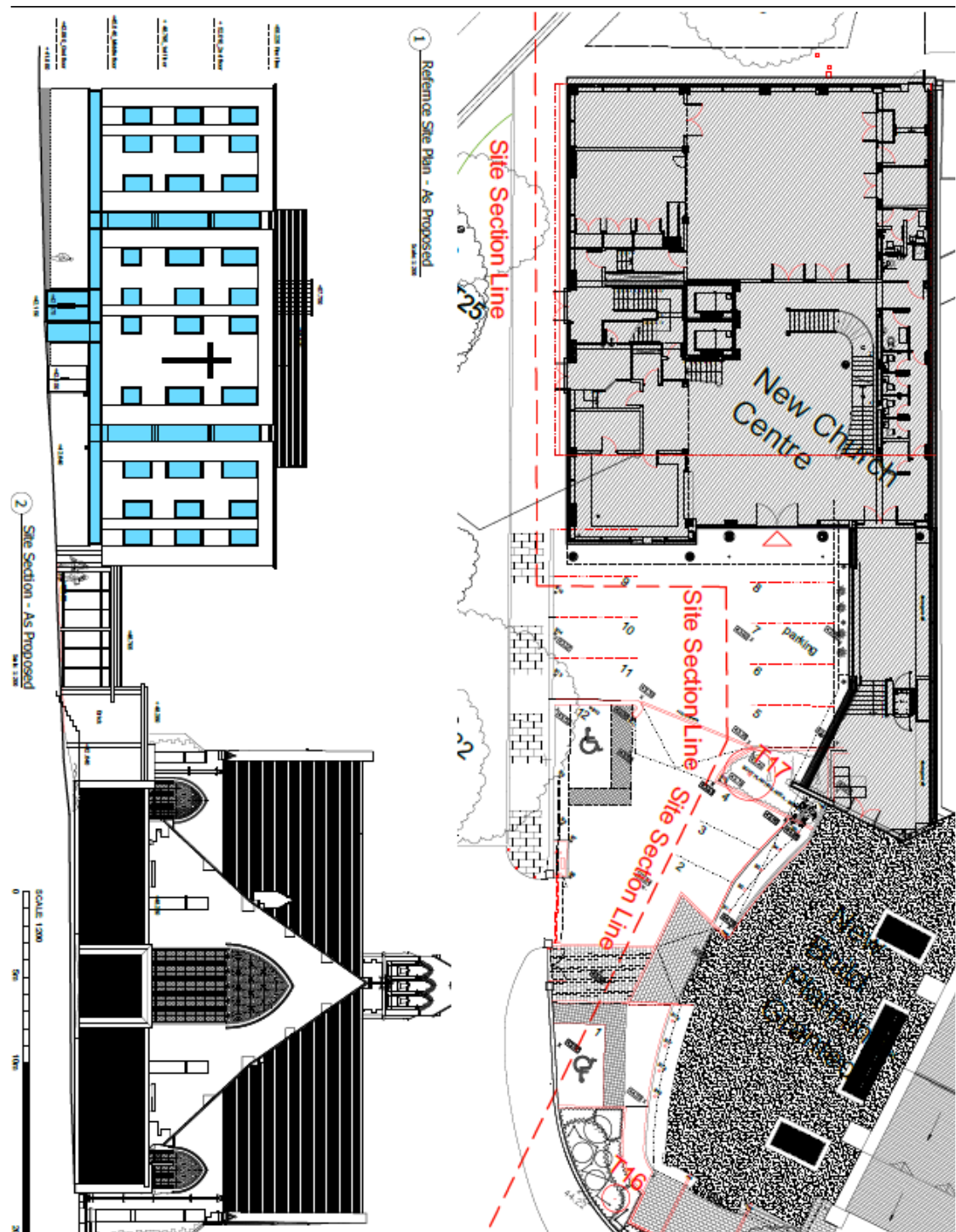


Proposed First and Second Floor Plan



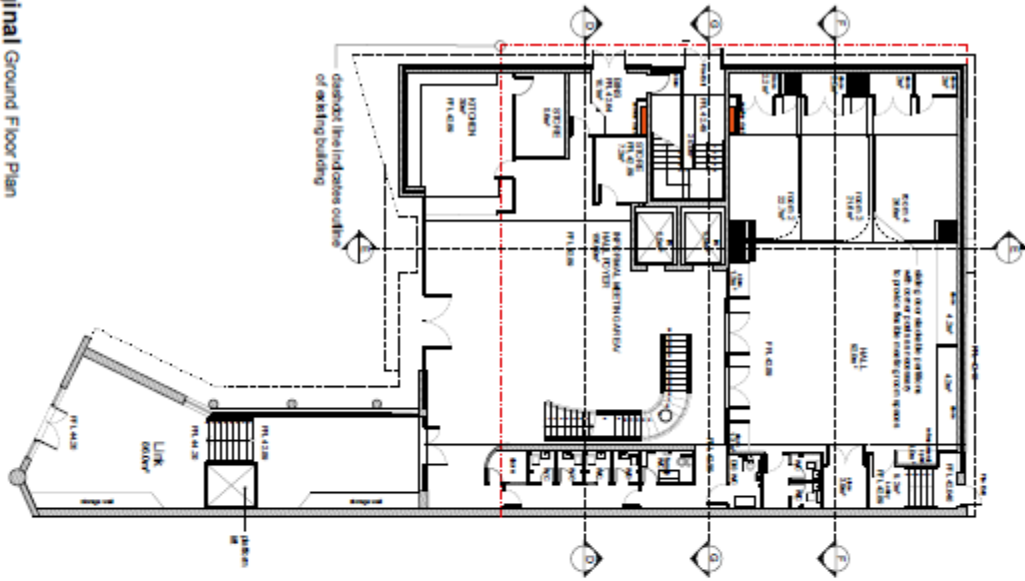


Proposed Elevations

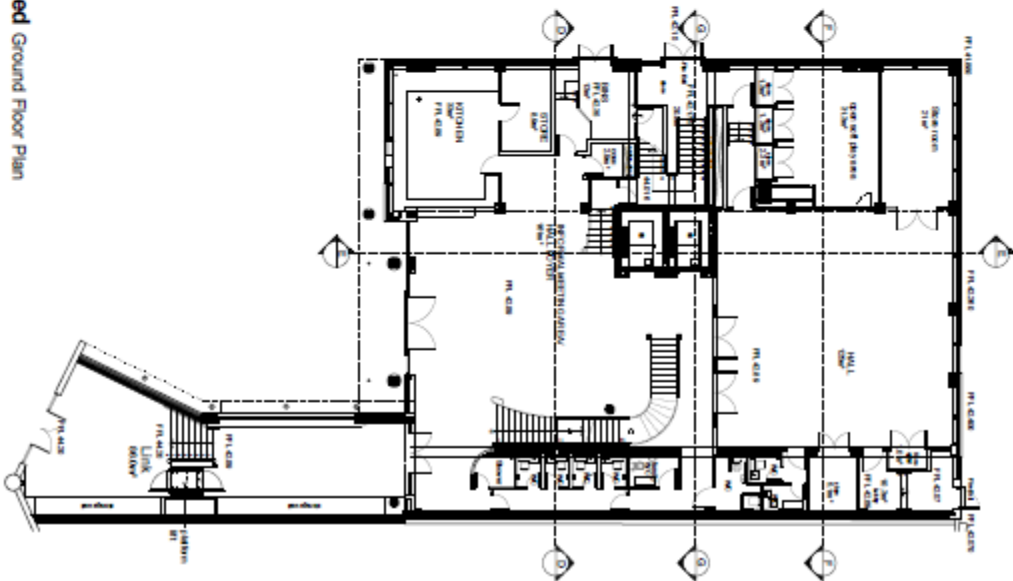


Proposed Site Section with Church

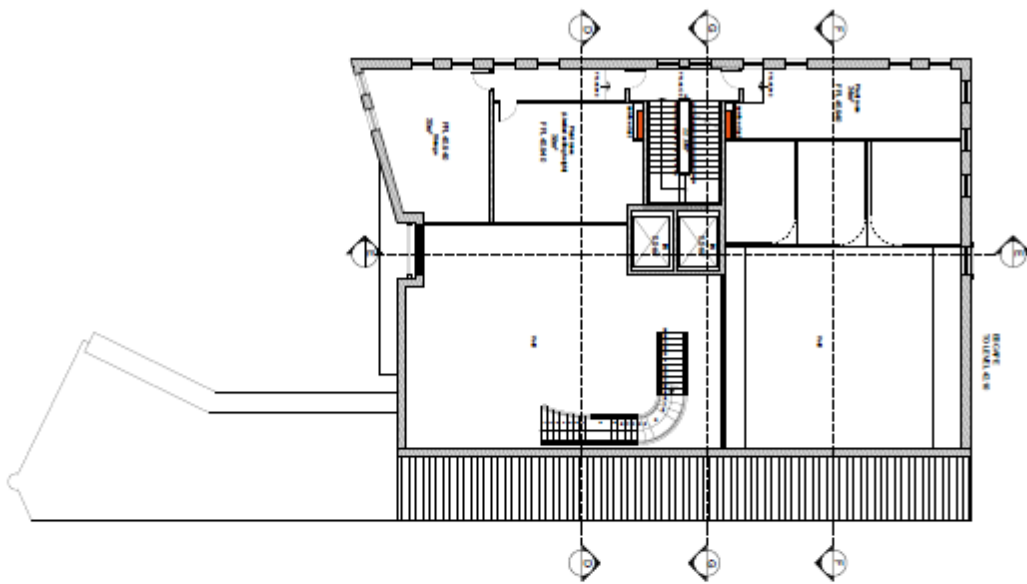
Original Ground Floor Plan



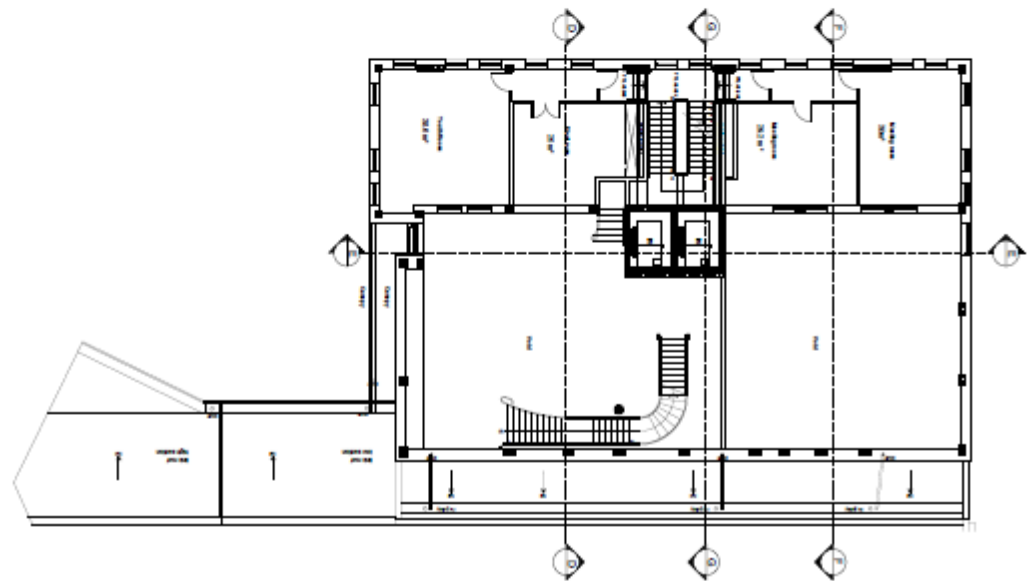
Amended Ground Floor Plan



Comparative Plans - Original Approval and Amendments - Lower Ground Floor

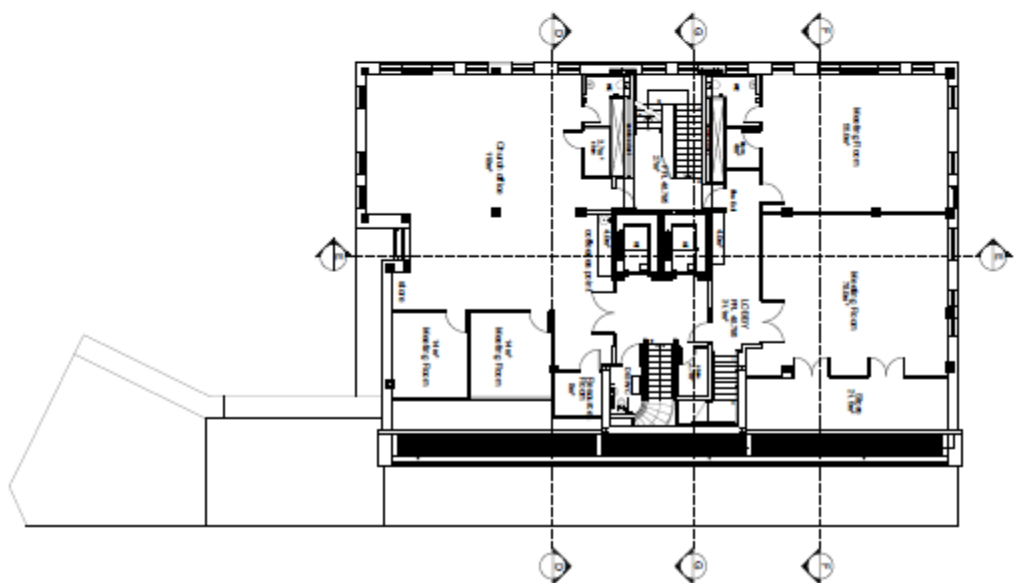
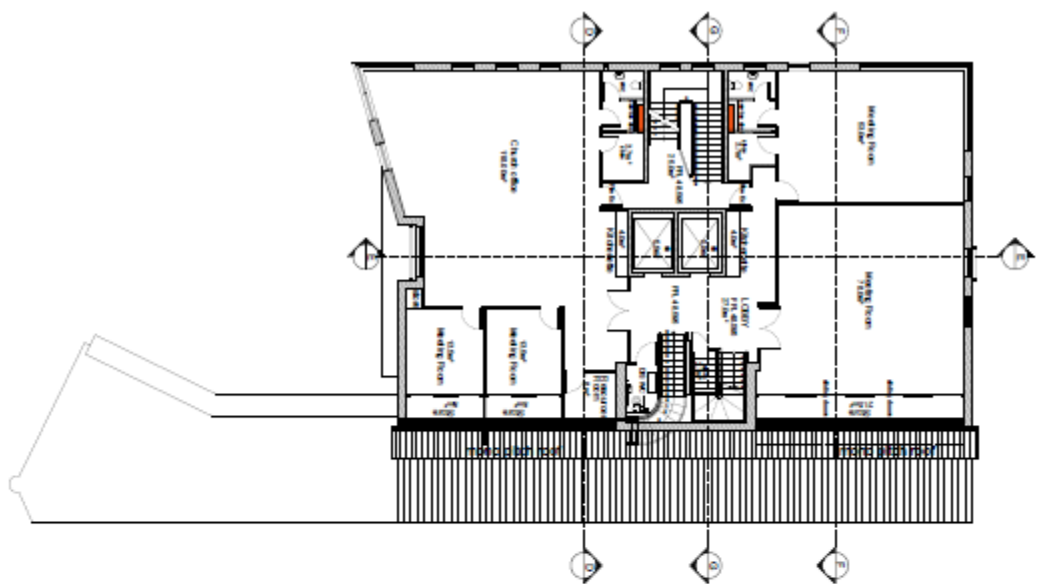


Original Middle Floor Plan

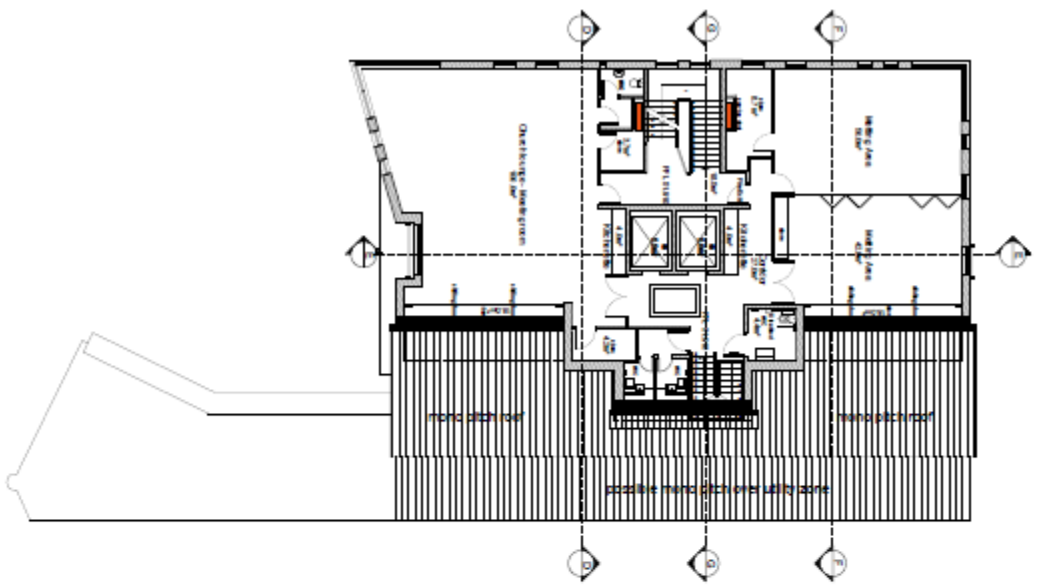


Amended Middle Floor Plan

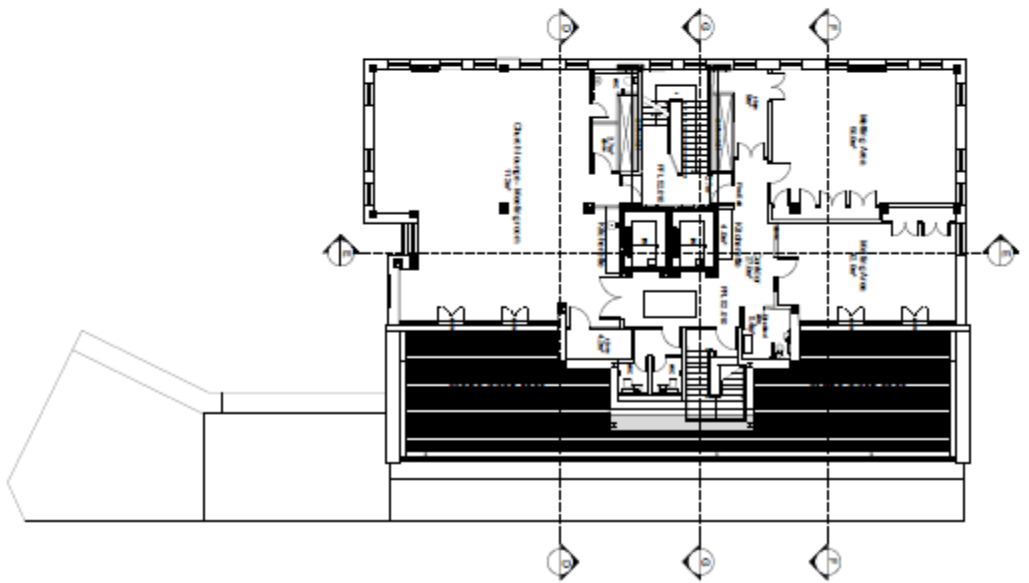
Comparative Plans - Original Approval and Amendments - Upper Ground Floor



### Comparative Plans - Original Approval and Amendments - First Floor



**Original** Second Floor Plan



**Amended** Second Floor Plan

Comparative Plans - Original Approval and Amendments - Second Floor





Comparative Plans - Original Approval and Amendments - South and North Elevations



Comparative Plans - Original Approval and Amendments - East and West Elevations



Comparative Plans - Original Approval and Amendments - Site Section with Church



Proposed Visual



Proposed Visual



Proposed Visual