

## COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES  
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL  
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 17<sup>th</sup> July 2019

**Ward:** Abbey

**App No:** 190650/FUL

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

**Proposal:** Demolition of the existing western foyer, and replacement with a larger glazed foyer area and other internal works; and single storey rear extension to no's 2 and 4 Sackville Street to link the church to these buildings, and the change of use of the premises from Sui Generis (Counselling services offices) to Class D1 use (non-residential institution - public worship or religious instruction), and changes to external parking and landscaping.

**Applicant:** Greyfriars Church

**Date validated:** 2/5/2019

**Application:** 8 week target decision date: 24/6/2019

**Extension of time:** 26/7/2019

### RECOMMENDATION

**Grant Full Planning Permission, subject to the following conditions.**

#### Conditions

1. Standard 3 Year Time Limit
2. Approved Plans
3. Pre-commencement materials samples (including doors, glazing, rooflights and lanterns).
4. Pre-commencement programme for archaeological works
5. Pre-installation noise assessment
6. Hours of working (0800 - 1800 Mon-Fri; 0900-1300 Sat; Not at all on Sundays/Public Holidays)
7. Pre-occupation provision of vehicle parking
8. Pre-occupation provision of bicycle parking
9. Pre-occupation car parking management plan
10. Arboricultural method statement to be followed
11. Pre-commencement landscaping detail to be submitted
12. Pre-occupation Landscape implementation
13. Standard landscaping maintenance condition (5 years)
14. Tree and vegetation removal not within nesting season
15. Pre-occupation biodiversity enhancements
16. Scheme of archaeological works

#### Informatives

1. Building Regulations
2. Positive and Proactive
3. Ecclesiastical Exemption applies
4. Highways Act
5. Pre-commencement conditions
6. Bonfires
7. Terms and Conditions
8. CIL
9. Further Tree protection order approvals required

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Greyfriars Church is a Grade I listed building, completed in 1311, said to be the most complete example of Franciscan-architecture in England in use as a church. Adjoining to its West and North-west sides is a 1970s extension providing entrance lobbies for the church, a lounge area, kitchen and toilets. The main entrance doors to the church are located in this extension. On the north-west corner of the site, separate to the church is a 1980s extension providing a hall, meeting rooms, offices, a coffee shop and bookshop. Between these two permanent structures a temporary building provides additional office space. A separate small hall, dating from the early 1900s is located on the north side of the church.
- 1.2 The development site includes no's 2 and 4 Sackville Street, which were last in use as a Sui Generis (Counselling services offices) by the Council.
- 1.3 This application has been called in to Planning Applications Committee by Councillor Page, citing concerns for potential impacts on a Grade I listed Building.
- 1.4 Some works to buildings owned by religious groups or denominations in England are exempt from the provisions of The Planning (listed buildings and conservations areas) regulations (2014) by the Ecclesiastical Exemption order 2010. This includes the Church of England. The Greyfriars Church is part of the Diocese of Oxford, which is a Church of England Diocese. As such, the works to the Grade I listed building, which would normally require listed building consent, would not in this case. The Ecclesiastical Exemption does not exempt denominations from requiring planning permissions which affects the exterior of a listed building. Reading Borough Council are required to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the structure or setting of the listed building when considering whether to grant planning permission in this instance.

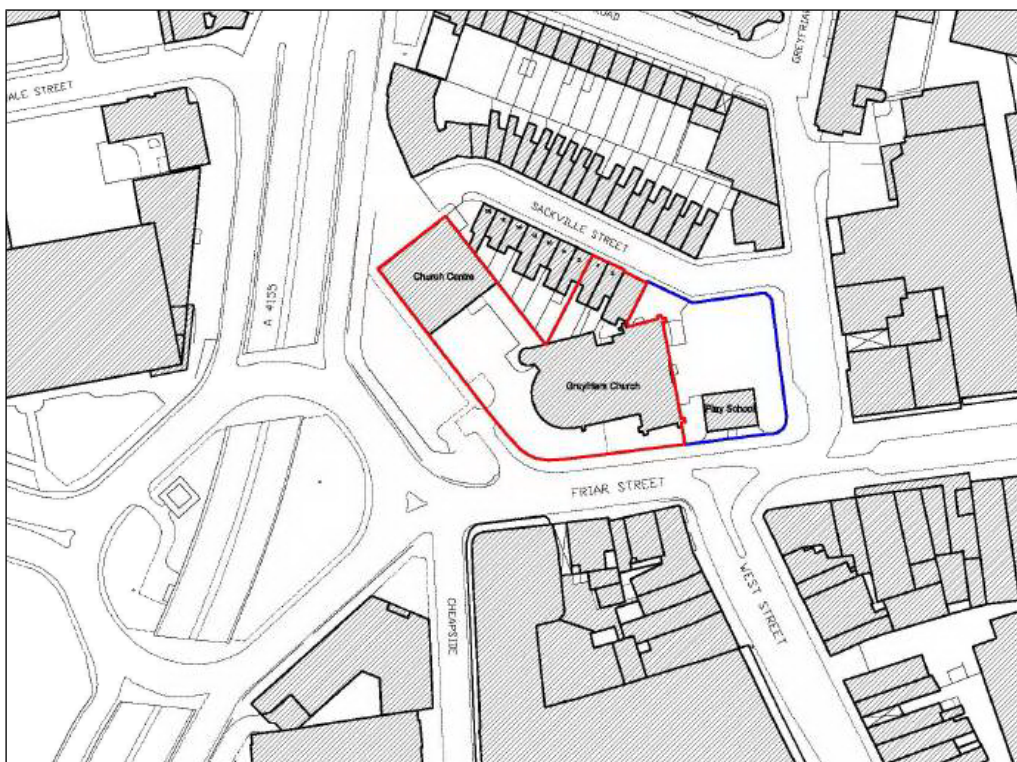


Figure 1 - Location Plan



Figure 2 - Aerial Image

## 2. PROPOSAL AND SUPPORTING INFORMATION

2.1 The application seeks full planning permission for:

- Demolition of the 'West end foyer';
- Construction of 'the new foyer extension';
- Removal of on-site mobile offices
- Demolition of the rear extension at 2-4 Sackville Street;
- Construction of a single storey link between the church and no's 2-4 Sackville Street;
- Integration of the Sackville Street properties to be part of the church, and host its ancillary activities;
- Associated changes to external parking and landscaping

For clarification, as Greyfriars Church enjoys 'Ecclesiastical Exemption' under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservations Areas) Act 1990 (and the Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (England) Order 2010). This means that Greyfriars Church would formally apply to Diocese of Oxford, which would include statutory consultations to the Local planning authority, Historic England, and the national amenity societies. The listed building consent would consider the internal works, and the means of attachment/alteration to the fabric of the listed building, whereas this application will consider the appearance, setting,

### **Submitted Plans and Documentation:**

- Proposed Plan Church & Link to Sackville St - GRE-4 173 01
- Proposed Roof Plan - GRE-4 175 00
- Proposed Floorplans 2&4 Sackville St - GRE-4 176 02
- Proposed North & South Elevations Church - GRE-4 177 01
- Proposed East & West Elevations Church - GRE-4 178 01
- Proposed Site Section AA - GRE-4 180 01
- Sections Through Church - GRE-4 182 00

- Proposed Sections Church Link AA-DD - GRE-4 183 01
- Proposed Sections 2&4 Sackville St - GRE-4 184 01
- Proposed Site Plan Phases - GRE-4 191 02
- 2-3 Sackville St Lift Shaft Detail - GRE-300 00
- Window Roof Abutment Detail - GRE-4 320
- Kitchen Plan - GRE-4 600 02
- Kitchen Elevations - GRE-4 601 01
- Existing OS Location Plan - GRE-4 150 00
- Existing Site Plan - GRE-4 151 01
- Existing Detailed Site Plan - GRE-4 151A 00
- Existing Church Floor Plan - GRE-4 152
- Existing Floorplans 2 & 4 Sackville St - GRE-4 153
- Existing North & South Elevations - GRE-4 155
- Existing East & West Elevations - GRE-4 156
- Existing Elevations 2&4 Sackville St - GRE-4 157
- Existing Elevations Church Centre - GRE-4 158
- Existing Sections Church AA & BB - GRE-4 160
- Existing Sections 2 & 4 Sackville St - GRE-4 161
- As Existing Site Section AA - GRE-4 162 00
- Existing GIA and GEA Areas - GRE-4 03 00
- Proposed GIA and GEA Areas - GRE-4 04 02
- Proposed OS Plan - GRE-4 170 00
- Proposed Block Plan - GRE-4 171 01
- Proposed Site Plan - GRE-4 172 01
- Planning Statement by Bluestone Planning dated April 2019
- Design & Access Statement by JBKS dated March 2019
- Acoustic report by Cole Jarman dated April 2019
- Statement of Need by Greyfriars dated April 2019
- Heritage Impact Statement by Oxford Heritage Partnership dated January 2018
- Statement of Significance by Oxford Heritage Partnership dated November 2017
- Sustainability Statement by Ridge Consultants dated March 2019
- Highways report including Travel Plan by Helix Highway Consultants dated November 2017
- Arboricultural BS5837 Report by BJ Unwin Forestry Consultancy dated December 2018 (revision)
- Archaeological Desk Based Assessment by Oxford Archaeology dated January 2018
- Ecology Survey by MPE Ecology dated February 2019

Amended and additional plans following discussions with tree protection officers, and transport offices:

- Tree retention and protection plan - GRYFTRP-JUN19
- Arboricultural BS5837 Report by BJ Unwin Forestry Consultancy dated June 2019 (revision)
- Proposed site plan - GRE-4 172 02
- 3D Views - GRE-4-7-2019 Phase 1

### 3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY



181498/PRE - Additional internal space, reconstruction of Church Centre, replacement of meeting room at west end, construction of new link to centre and reconstruction of car park together with external hard and soft landscaping to site and adjacent public realm.

172036/PRE - Additional internal space, reconstruction of church centre, replacement of meeting room at west end, construction of new link to centre and reconstruction of car park together with external hard and soft landscaping to site and adjacent public realm (approx 1047sqm).

160063/PRE - Proposed changes to the main entrance to Church.

100508/PRE - Pre-application advice for proposed development of new building

77TP962 - Change of use from residential to H.Q of Counselling and Outreach Service (2 & 4 Sackville Street) APPROVED

#### **4. CONSULTATIONS**

##### **RBC Environmental Protection**

- 4.1 Highlight issues in relation to noise arising from development, and noise from mechanical plant equipment, and noise during construction and demolition. These matters can be addressed by conditions requiring details to be submitted and approved prior to development commencing or prior to any additional mechanical plant being installed as set out above.

##### **RBC Transport**

- 4.2 Based on the submitted plans and supporting information, the development proposals are unlikely to generate a significant increase in vehicular trips to the site particularly during peak hours. However, the applicant intends to instigate and manage a Travel Plan to encourage the use of non-car travel by promoting sustainable travel, with the emphasis on reducing the reliance on single car occupancy car travel. The proposed development would therefore be acceptable from a transport perspective subject to conditions (see recommendations above).

##### **Historic England**

- 4.3 Historic England's response can be summarised as:
- The placement of facilities within adjoining building helps protect the listed building;
  - The proposed structure is as lightweight as possible, and allows the medieval elements to be better seen and understood;
  - The glass is appropriate given the difference from original fabric;
  - 'the new foyer extension' would be larger, but would not entail a higher degree of harm than the current 'West end foyer';

##### **Reading Civic Society**

- 4.4 No response received at the time of writing, but any response received will be reported to your meeting.

##### **RBC Ecology**

- 4.5 No objections subject to conditions as recommended above. Biodiversity enhancements will be integrated with landscape conditions outlined below.

**RBC Natural environment (trees) officer comments**

- 4.6 No objections subject to conditions as detailed below. Society for the protection of ancient buildings
- 4.7 No objections, recommendation that conditions be secured to ensure structural works, materials and detailing are sensitively undertaken.

**Berkshire Archaeology**

- 4.8 As the site is located within an area of archaeological potential, as identified on the local plan proposal map, the applicant provided a desk-based archaeological assessment. Berkshire Archaeology confirmed that the report is acceptable, and agrees that the proposal would be acceptable, subject to condition as the site lies in an area of archaeological potential, lying within the area of the Greyfriars Franciscan friary.

**5. Public Consultation:**

- 5.1 Due to the location of the site (being adjacent to the Inner Distribution Road (IDR), and adjacent to the other church owned land, and all properties on the Southern side of Sackville Street, all properties within Sackville Street were notified by letter, and a site notice was displayed on the gate fronting Friar Street from 13 May.

No representations had been received at the time of writing.

**6. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

- 6.1 Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy framework (NPPF) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'.
- 6.2 Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.
- 6.3 Section 72 (1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.
- 6.4 The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

**National Planning Guidance**

National Planning Policy Framework (2019)

National Planning Policy Guidance 2014 onwards;

**Reading Borough Local Development Framework (RBC LDF) Core Strategy (Adopted January 2008, amended 2015)**

CS1 Sustainable construction and design

CS4 Accessibility and the Intensity of Development

CS5 Inclusive Access

CS7 Design and the Public Realm

CS20 Implementation of the Reading Transport Strategy (Local Transport Plan 2006 - 2011)  
CS21 Major Transport Projects  
CS22 Transport Assessment  
CS23 Sustainable Travel and Travel Plans  
CS24 Car/Cycle Parking  
CS31 Additional and existing community facilities  
CS33 Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment  
CS34 Pollution and Water Resources  
CS36 Biodiversity and geology  
CS38 Trees, hedges and woodlands

**Sites and Detailed Policies Document (Adopted October 2012, amended 2015)**

SD1 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development  
DM1 Adaptation to Climate Change  
DM4 Safeguarding Amenity  
DM12 Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters  
DM18 Tree planting

**Reading Central Area Action Plan (Adopted January 2009)**

RC5 Design in the Centre  
RC14 Public Realm

**Supplementary Planning Documents**

Revised parking standards and design supplementary planning document (2015)  
Sustainable design and construction supplementary planning document (2011)

**Reading Borough Submission Draft Local Plan 2018**

Following the examination process, the independent inspector has identified a number of modifications that are needed to the Local Plan which require further period of consultation. These are known as main modifications. Consultation on these modifications is taking place between Wednesday 12 June and Wednesday 24 July 2019.

## **7. APPRAISAL**

The main matters to be considered are:

- Principle of development
- Design considerations and effect on the Listed Building
- Impact on residential amenity
- Design and the public realm
- Transport
- Ground conditions
- Community infrastructure levy
- Equalities impact

**Principle of development**

- 7.1 The site is located within the Reading Central Area, where the use of the church is an established community facility. As such, the continued use of the building and improvements to it and the community use is welcomed and acceptable in principle, subject to the considerations below.

- 7.2 The properties at 2 & 4 Sackville Street have been in use as Sui Generis (Counselling services offices) as approved under application reference: 77TP962, and as such there are no policy concerns for the loss of residential dwellings in this case. The key consideration for these premises is therefore the change of use from a Sui Generis (Counselling services offices), to D1 (non-residential institution - public worship or religious instruction) is considered as part of this application.
- 7.3 In this instance, it is noted that the adjoining church site is constrained by its size and shape, parking requirements and necessary landscaping, which limit opportunities for the expansion of the services offered for the community on site. The inclusion/merging of the 2 and 4 Sackville Street properties into the church planning unit is considered to be acceptable in principle, as the existing and proposed uses are considered to be very similar in terms of their impact and intensity (disturbance, noise, etc.).
- 7.4 Policy CS31 (Additional and Existing Community) states that proposals for new, extended or improved community facilities will be acceptable, particularly where this will involve co-location of facilities on a single site and that community facilities should be located where there is a choice of means of travel (including walking and cycling), and in existing centres where possible. Other policies, such as CS4, seek to locate such uses at areas of suitable accessibility. The provision of extended and improved community facilities on this edge of town centre site is therefore supported subject to review of the detailed elements of facilities that would be offered and other material planning considerations discussed below.

#### **Design Considerations and effect on the Listed Building**

- 7.5 Greyfriars Church is a Grade I Listed Building and therefore of great heritage significance. Works to the existing Listed Building, both internal and external, fall under the provisions of the Ecclesiastical Exemption (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) (England) Order 2010. Therefore, works that would have normally required Listed Building Consent from the Local Planning Authority would instead be subject to the internal procedures of the Church of England, administered by the Diocese of Oxford (DoO). As such, the proposed development will only be assessed accordingly.
- 7.6 Section 66(1), in the determination of applications affecting the setting of a Listed Building, states that:
- ‘in considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority, or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.’*
- 7.7 Under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, fixtures and curtilage buildings, that is any object or structure which is fixed to the building or is within the curtilage and forms part of the land and has done so since before July 1948, are also treated as part of the building for the purposes of listed building control.
- 7.8 The National Planning Policy Framework and Policy CS33 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) of the RBC Core Strategy set out that



works affecting the historic environment should seek to preserve and enhance the setting of heritage assets, including listed buildings.

- 7.9 To the north of the site is the 1981-83 Greyfriars centre (Church Centre), a brick-built structure with a sports hall, a café, a bookshop, meeting rooms and offices with toilets. Attached to the west end of the church is the West End, built in 1972/3, with a meeting room and small entrance foyer with male and female toilets but no disabled toilets. The building is built in flint and stone and is of a generally sympathetic style to the historic building. Between the West End and the Church Centre is a car park, and a raised embankment with a line of mobile units which serve as part of the church office provision.
- 7.10 It is proposed to demolish the modern West End foyer building and construct a new West End foyer attached to the West End of the church. The proposed new West End Foyer would link directly into the west end of the church, through new glazed doors with glazed panels. The structure would be built in glass with limestone, for the solid panels with glass in between. The flat roof is proposed to be covered in dark Grey Sarnafil membrane with skylights. The new main entrance to the church would be through the entrance on the west side of the New Foyer Extension. As noted above, the proposal includes works internal of the church, which would be covered by the Ecclesiastical Exemption, and as such are not specifically considered under this application.
- 7.11 It is proposed to remove the ancillary office mobile units and to re-provide this office accommodation in Nos. 2 and 4 Sackville Street. This would be joined via weatherproof link by roofing over the rear garden of No 2 Sackville Street and by rebuilding the existing rear extensions and attaching to the current access to the basement boiler room, the vestry, with access both to the adjacent 1902 Memorial Hall used as a Nursery School.
- 7.12 The full width single storey rear extension at 2-4 Sackville Street would measure 5.18m in total from the original wall of nos 2 and 4 Sackville Street. The extension is generally longer than that which would be acceptable for a house extension but in this case it is extending a property not in residential use and therefore should be assessed in its context with the neighbouring property. The building height and flat roof design is considered the most appropriate response to the situation.
- 7.13 Overall, the elements of the setting that are of high significance are the 14th century west window, which is well preserved and the south (Friar Street) elevation which is clear of development. Of moderate significance is the boundary line on the south side, as it is likely this preserves close to the original boundaries of the Friary despite the loss of all Medieval walling material. As such, it is considered appropriate to attach appropriately worded conditions which:
- Ensure all new external works of making good the retained fabric, and shall match the existing original works;
  - Due to the potential impact of the works, a schedule of works for attaching the proposed development to the existing heritage asset is required; to ensure all works are undertaken with care commensurate of the Grade I listed building; including methodology for the protection and support (structurally) of the listed building during the works;
  - Details and elevations of new glazed panels, new doors, and new rooflights and lantern windows

- 7.14 The proposed works have been subject to extensive pre-application discussions and refinement, including consultation with Historic England see above. Overall, the removal of the 1970's addition, the mobile units, and construction of the link, to use the Sackville Street buildings ancillary to the main use of the church are considered to reveal more of the original Western aspect of the Grade I listed building, and restore a more sympathetic setting to the western end through the incorporation of landscaping. As such, the design would contribute positively to the appearance of the listed building, and the site in general from the public realm, and would provide additional built form where it would be least visible, as such, the proposal is considered acceptable in terms of CS7, CS33, and RC5.

#### **Impact on residential amenity**

- 7.15 The nearest residential building is no.6 Sackville Street, which is in use as 2 flats. The ground floor flat contains a kitchen window which faces no.4, and a living room window which faces toward the rear, and a door to the garden which also faces no.4. Currently, the first floor flat is served by an external staircase, and landing (above the living room window), for access to the rear garden. The window currently does not experience a great level of outlook, and would also be subject to poor levels of privacy from neighbours using the external staircase.
- 7.16 RBC's Policies CS7 and DM4 aim to protect residential amenity of existing and future residents. Proposals therefore should not cause a significant detrimental impact on the living environments of existing residential properties, by loss of privacy and overlooking, access to sunlight and daylight, visual dominance, and overbearing effects of a development.
- 7.17 The proposed development would result in a 5.18m long extension, with a total height of 2.8m from ground level (at no.2 & 4 Sackville Street). The ground level is slightly higher at the proposal site, meaning the height of the extension as viewed from 6 Sackville Street may be slightly more than 2.8m. The tunnelling effect of the development, and the impacts on outlook would not normally be acceptable due to the location of the windows. However, in this instance, the outlook is already poor, and therefore, on balance, the impact of the proposed development would not cause a significant detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residents and therefore would be acceptable.

#### **Transport**

- 7.18 In transport terms, the development proposals are unlikely to generate a significant increase in vehicular trips to the site particularly during peak hours. However, the applicant intends to instigate and manage a Travel Plan to encourage the use of non-car travel by promoting sustainable travel, with the emphasis on reducing the reliance on single car occupancy car travel. The level of parking is acceptable and complies with Council's standards. The car park will be re-configured the south west part of the car park to accommodate the new foyer and entrance. The existing car park has 13 officially marked parking bays, with no disabled spaces. The re-configured layout provides 15 parking spaces (including 2 disabled spaces), therefore, there will be no loss of parking as a result of the proposals. The Highway Authority has no objection subject to the above mentioned conditions, and to provide a car park management plan, the proposal is considered to comply with, policies CS4, CS24 and DM12.

### **Ground conditions**

- 7.19 The site is near an Area of Archaeological Potential, the proposed development will result in groundworks within this area. The applicant submitted an archaeological desk-based assessment and this concluded that the below ground impacts have the potential to disturb important buried remains. Berkshire Archaeology agrees with the desk-based assessment and advise that a programme of archaeological work is required, and should be secured by a suitably worded condition.

### **Community Infrastructure Levy**

- 7.20 The proposal constitutes a chargeable development however Reading Borough Council charges CIL in respect of development for "All other chargeable developments Borough wide at £0". This also applies to proposed developments run by, or for a charitable purposes, or for a charitable institution, as identified by the applicant. As such, it is likely that if CIL were chargeable the exemption would result in a charge of £0.

### **Equalities Impact**

- 7.21 In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular planning application.
- 7.22 In terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

## **8. CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 This proposal has been carefully considered in the context of the Reading Borough Council LDF, and supplementary planning documents. As the proposed development will improve the appearance, and setting of a listed building, and provide an improved community use, the proposed development is considered appropriate and it is recommended that approval be granted subject to the above mentioned conditions and informatives.

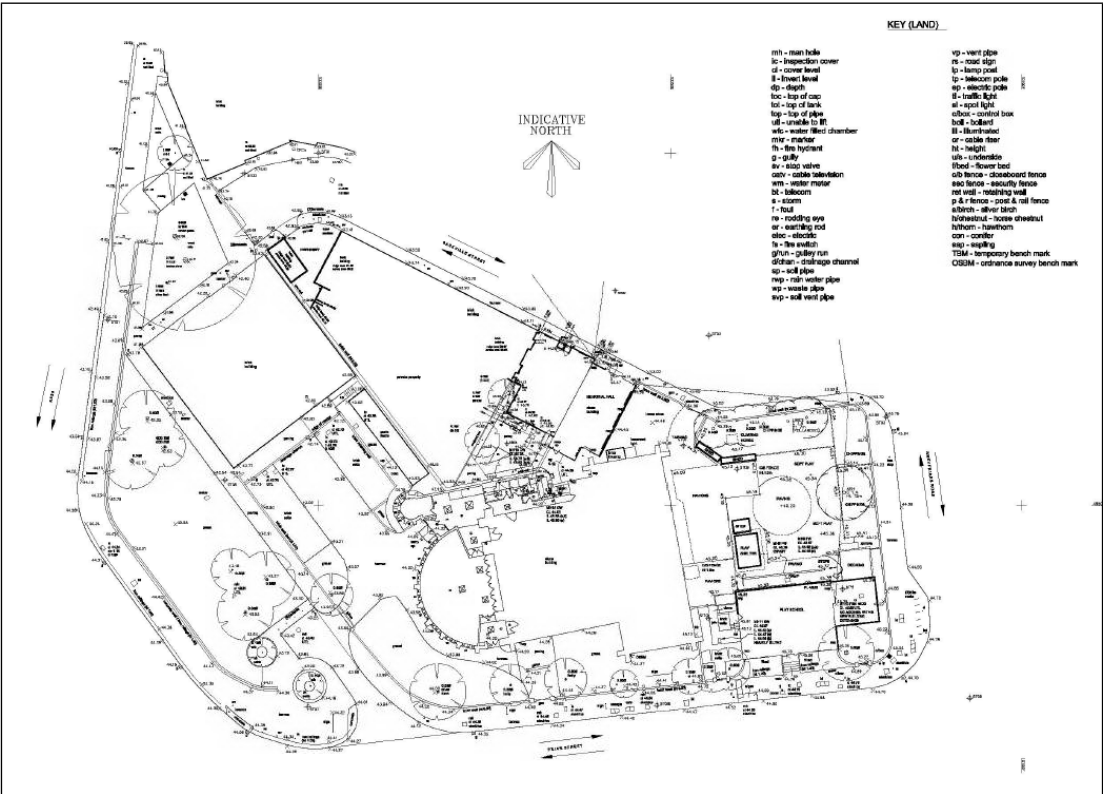
## **9. RECOMMENDATION**

### **GRANT subject conditions**

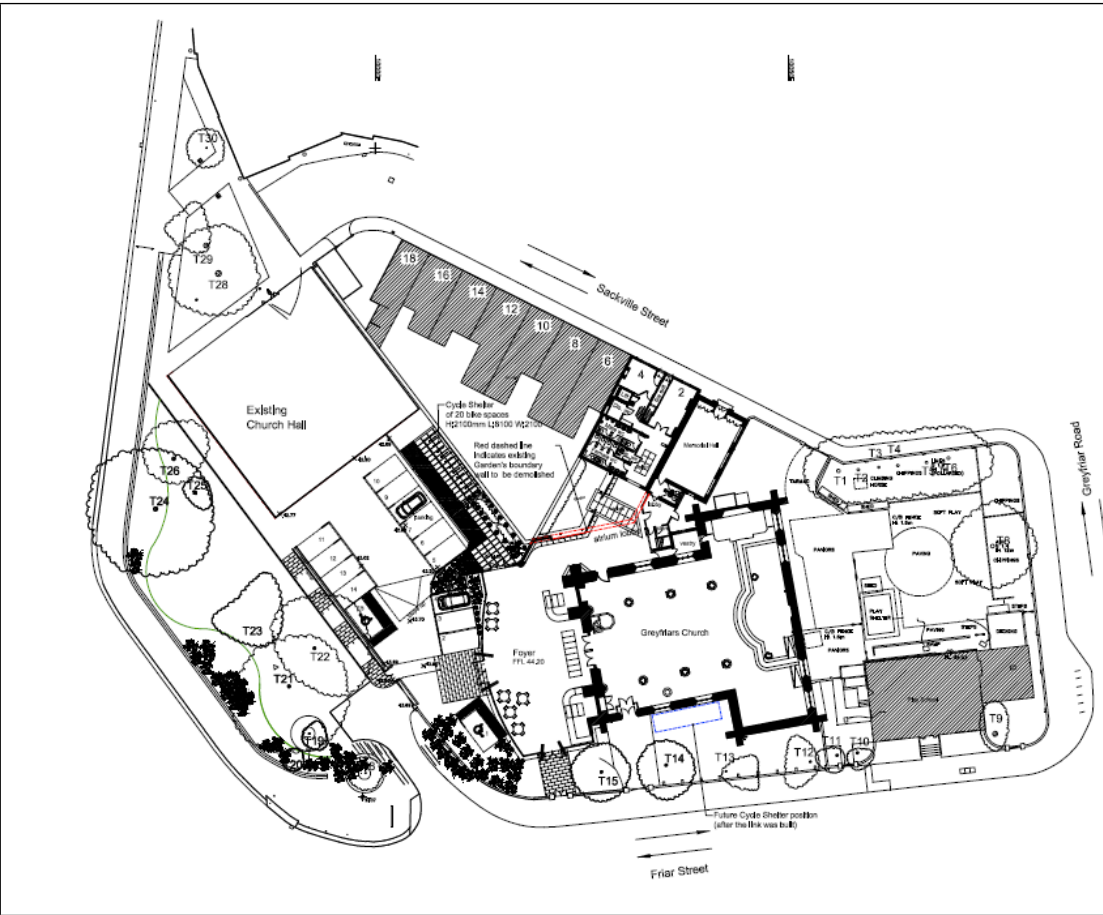
Case Officer: Anthony Scholes

# 10. PLANS AND PERSPECTIVES

## Existing Site Plan:



## Proposed Site Plan:





Existing Floor Plans:

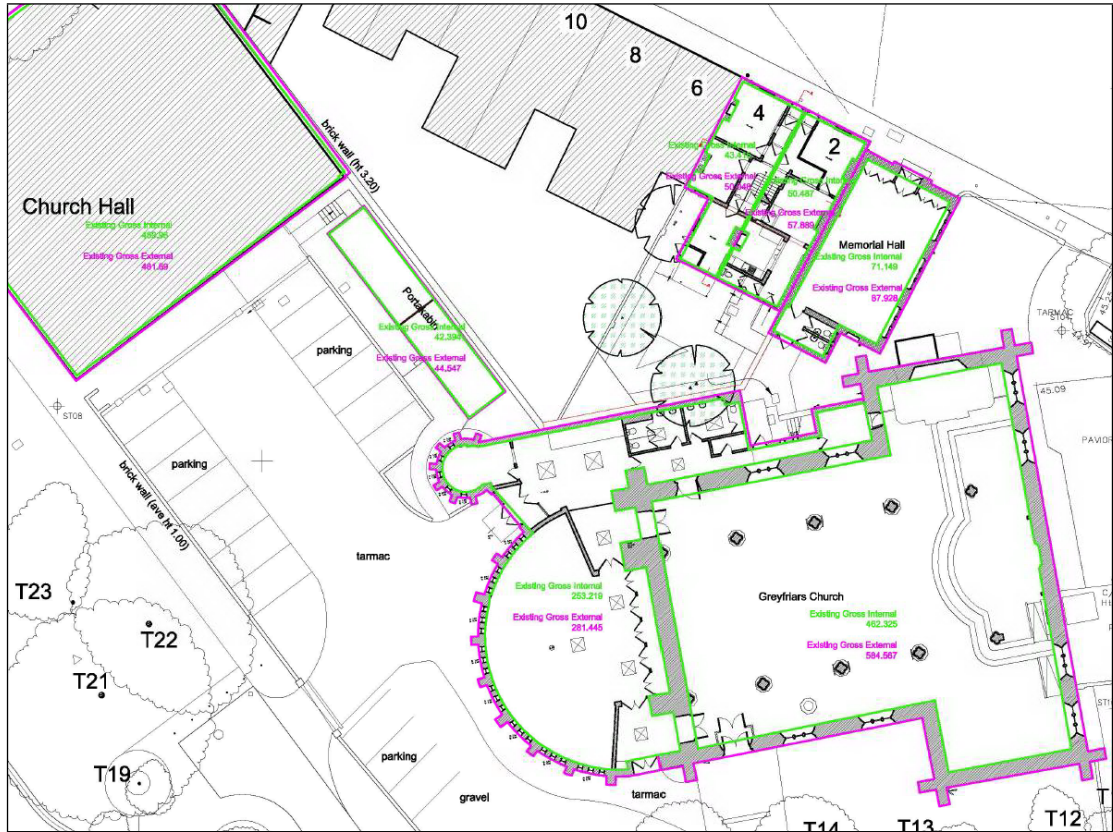


Figure 3 - Existing Ground floor plans (Greymfriars Church and Sackville Street)

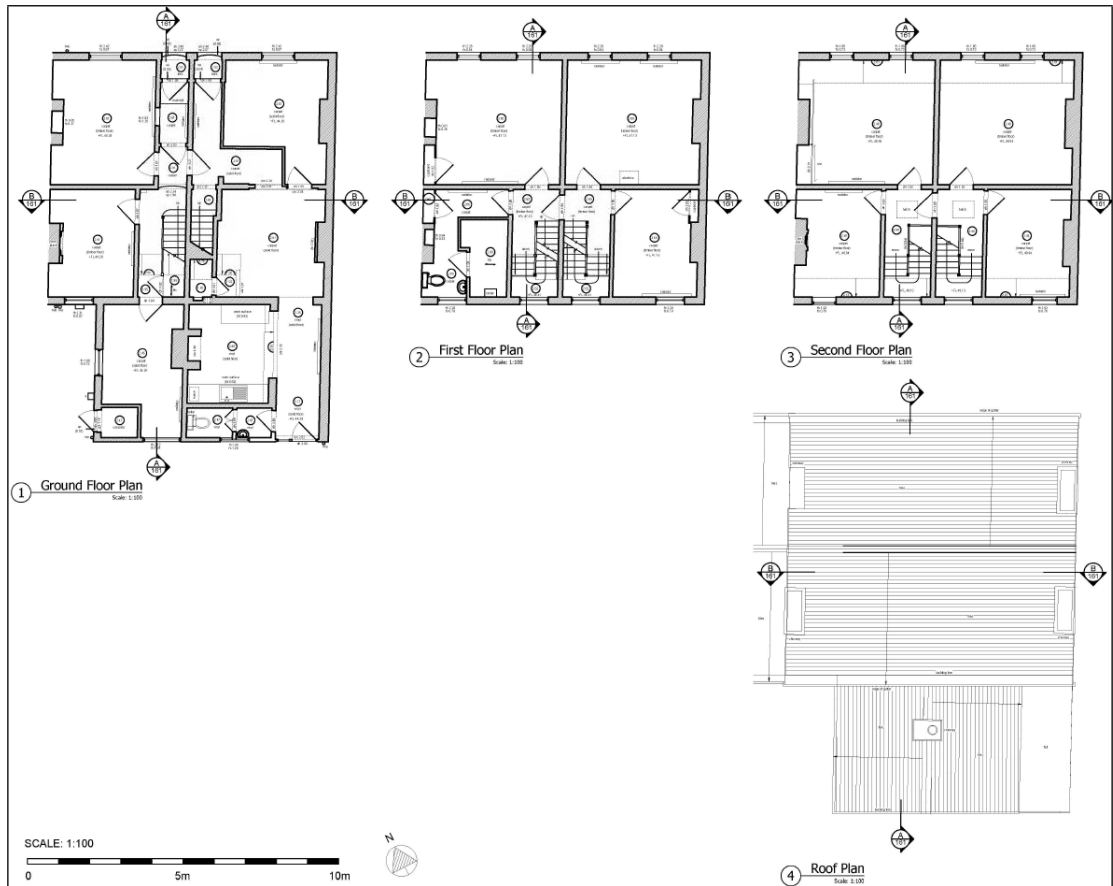


Figure 4 - Existing floor plans (Sackville Street - all floors)

# Proposed Floor Plans:

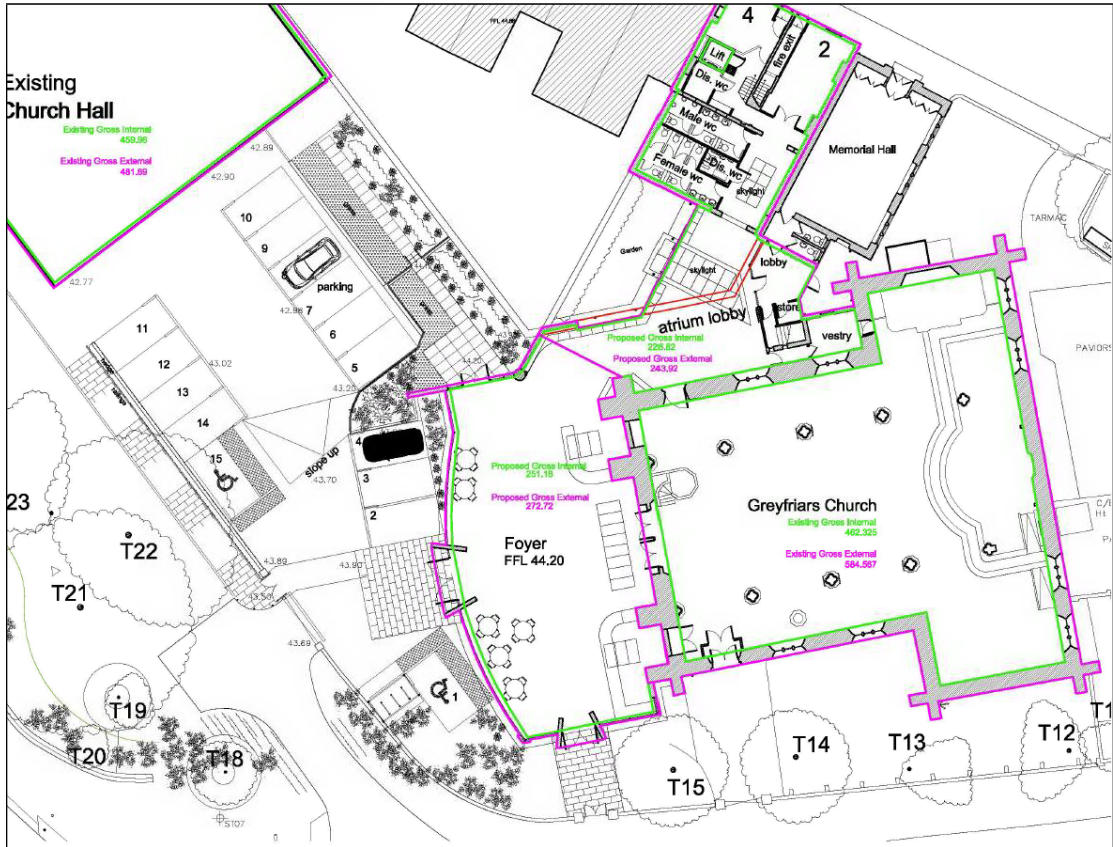


Figure 5 - Proposed floor plans (ground floor all)

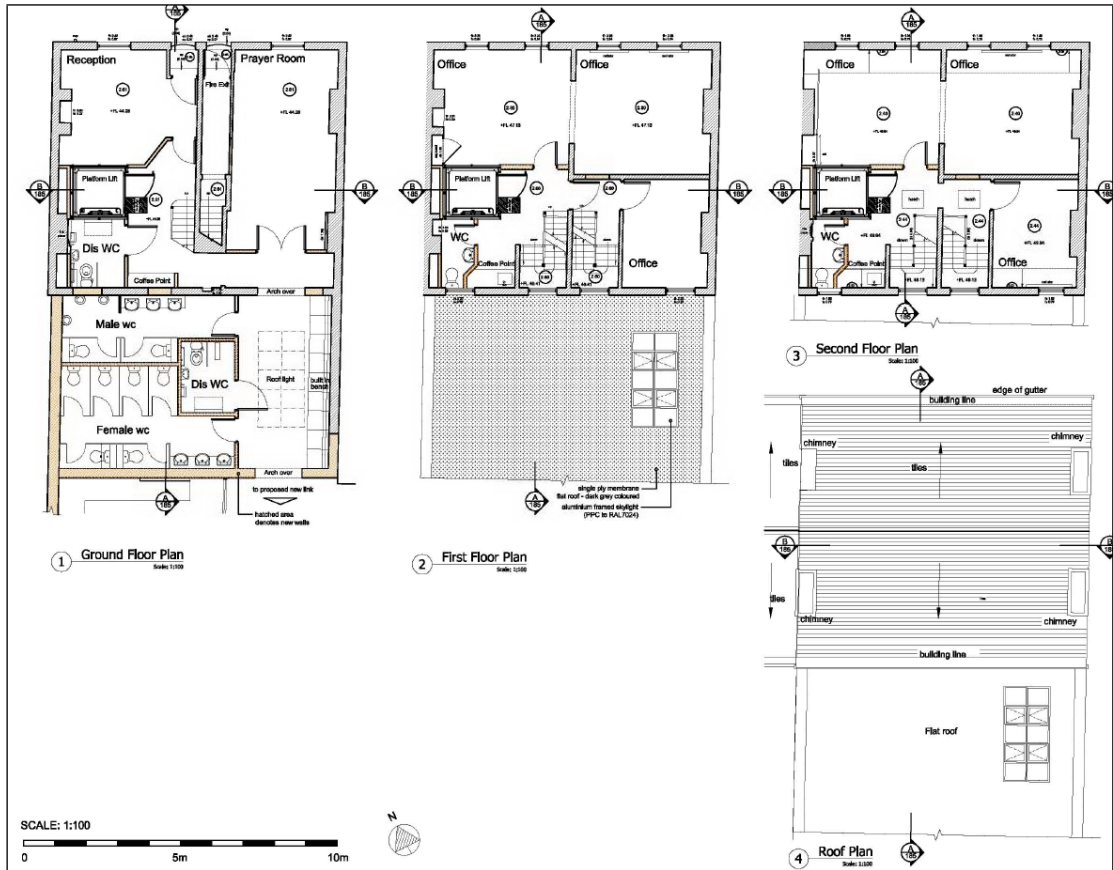


Figure 6 - Proposed floor plans (Sackville Street, all)

## Existing Elevations:



Figure 7 - Existing Elevations (Greyfriars Church North & South)

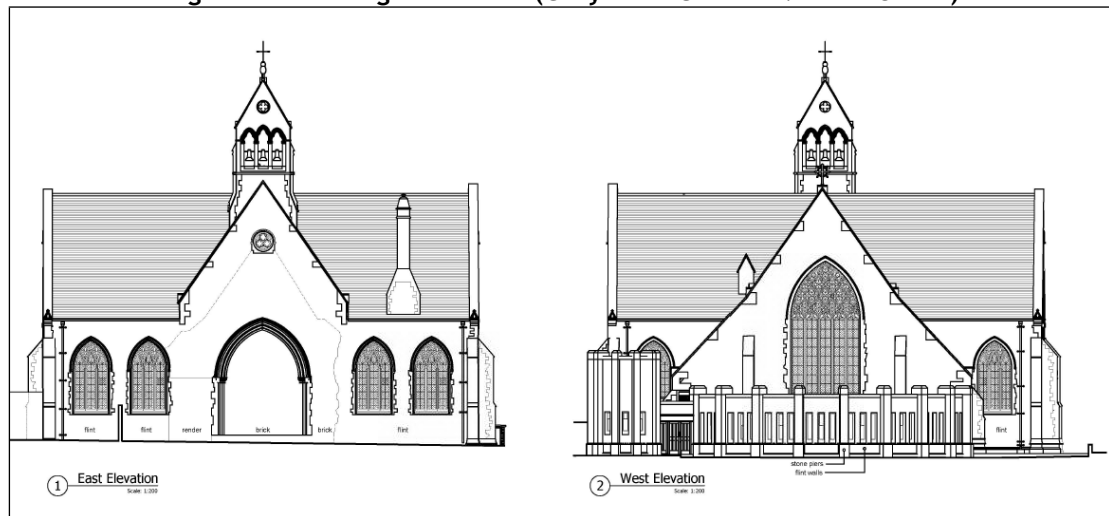


Figure 8 - Existing elevations (Greyfriars Church, East 7 West)



**Figure 9 - Existing elevations (Sackville Street - Front and rear)**



## Existing Section

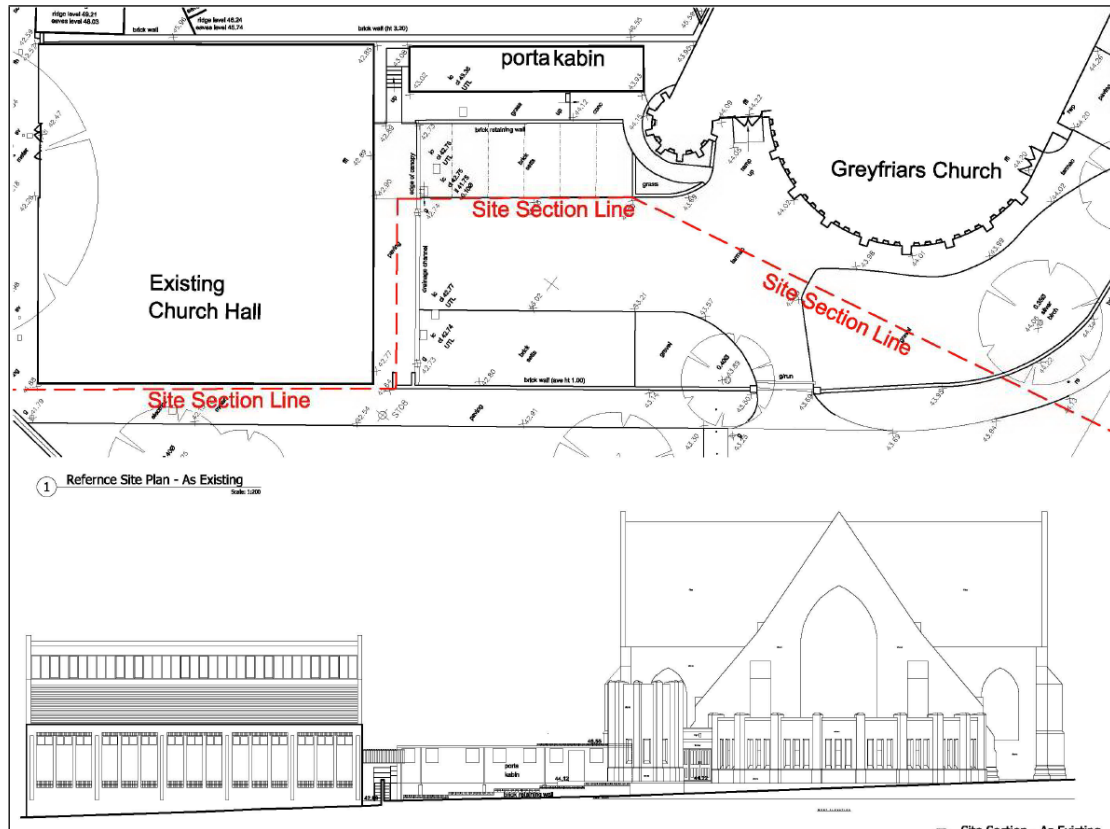


Figure 10 - Existing section (Greyfriars Church, Church Hall, and portacabins)

## Proposed Section

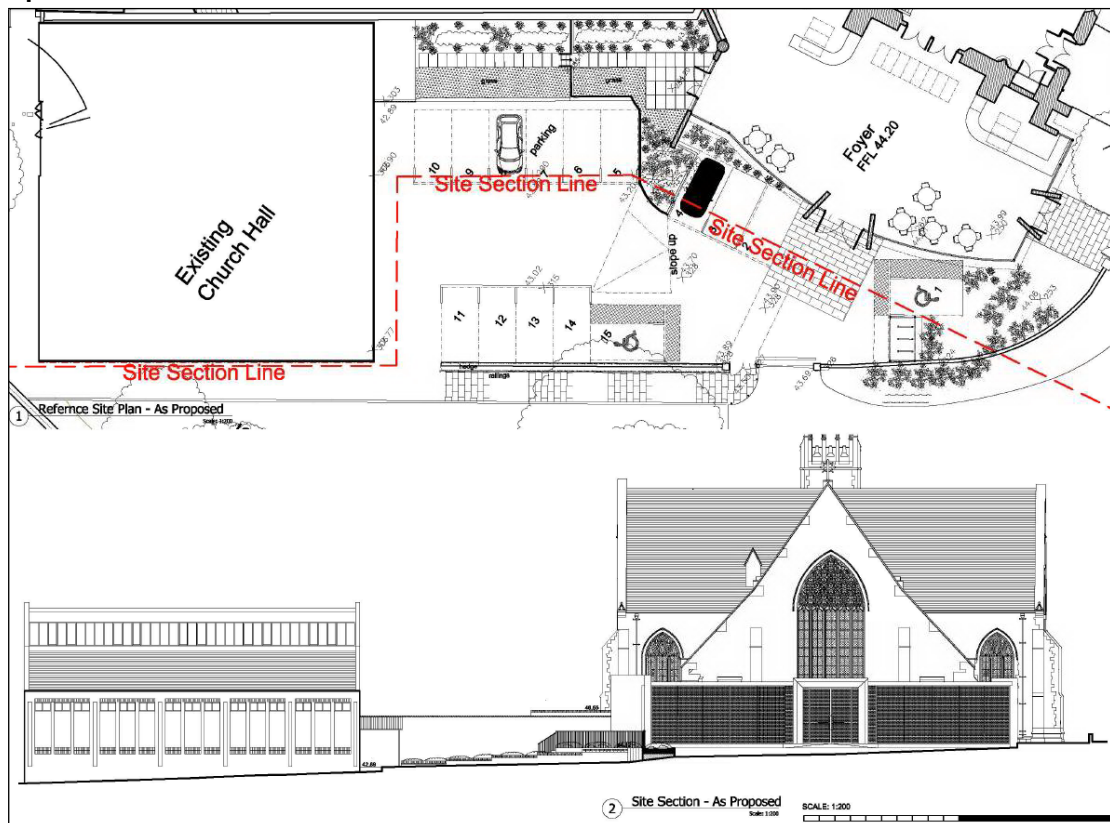


Figure 11 - Proposed section (Greyfriars Church, Church Hall, landscaping)

Proposed Elevations:

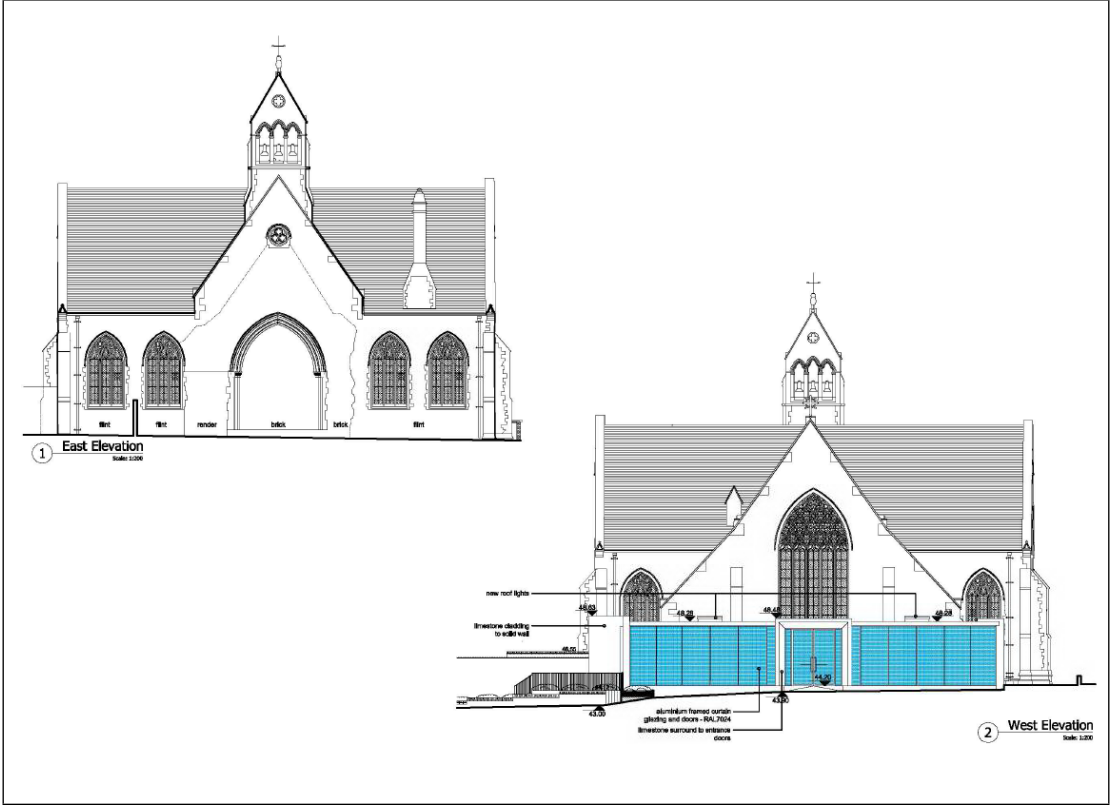


Figure 12 - Proposed elevations (Greyfriars Church, East & West)

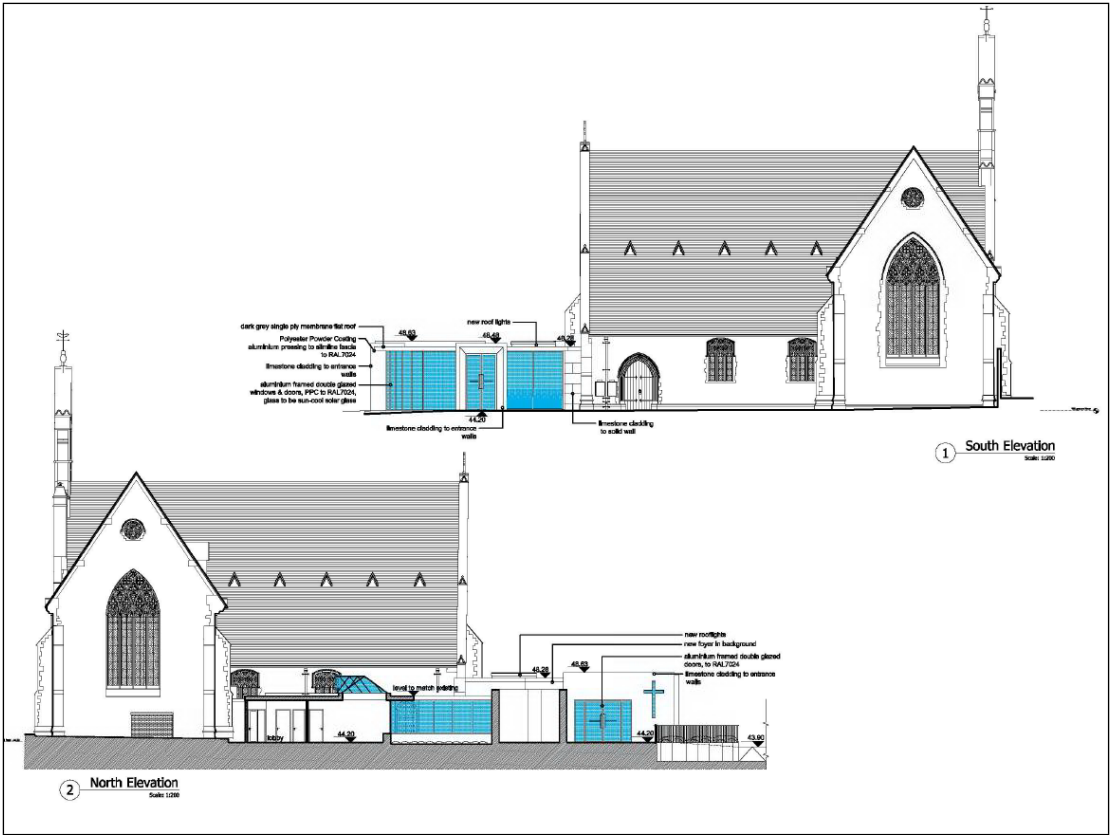


Figure 13 - Proposed Elevations (Greyfriars Church, North & South)

**Proposed Perspective views:**



**Figure 14 - Entrance and foyer perspective**



**Figure 15 - Perspective view of carpark and foyer**



**Figure 16 - 3D Aerial View**





Figure 17 - Perspective view of Sackville Street garden and link



Figure 18 - Perspective view from Friar Street