



Land Adjacent to St Michael's Memorial Parish Hall, Park Lane, BS2 8BE

Design & Access Statement

20th December 2023

ASKEW CAVANNA
architects

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"...what an asset this would be for Bristol's creative ecology of which dance has been poorly served. I fully support this application and think the development of this site will home creative opportunities that will ripple across the City and beyond."

Heidi Vaughan, Artistic Director/ CEO, Tobacco Factory Theatres

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0. Introduction

0.1 The Brief

This statement has been prepared for St Michael's Memorial Parish Hall in support of a planning application to Bristol City Council for a proposed dance rehearsal space in central Bristol by Askew Cavanna Architects.

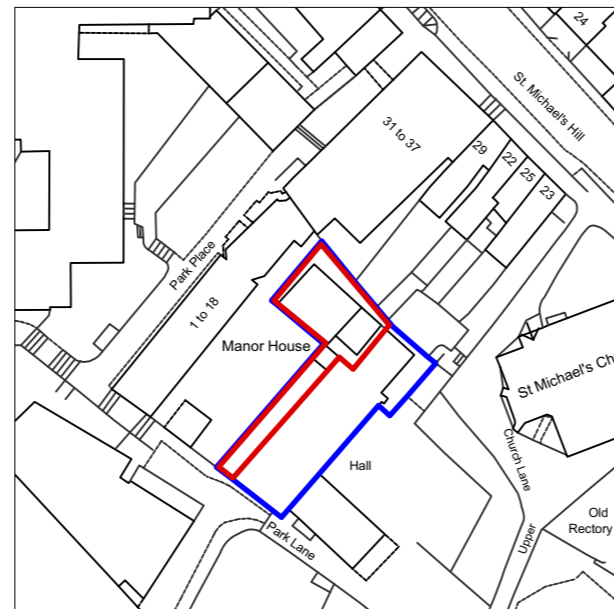
The project involves the removal of a derelict and unsightly scout hut, and the construction of a new, purpose-built dance hall, offering a suitable and accessible rehearsal space in central Bristol. Sustainability is a key project motivation and the build aspires to achieve passivhaus certification, as well as reuse currently redundant brownfield land.

The new building is a vital part of a wider ambition for the area to create a trio of spaces forming a centre of excellence for dance, forging synergies with St Michael's Memorial Parish Hall and the newly refurbished and nationally recognised facility of the former church, the Mount Without. The three unique spaces hope to bring to life a vibrant hub, with a collective focus on the performing arts, creating a place of pride for community use and acting as a beacon for the arts.

This statement includes a description of the principles and strategies that have informed the development of the design and how it responds to the local environment and site context.

This Design and Access Statement is to be read alongside the full planning application, which will include the following:

- Existing and proposed plans, elevations and sections
- Energy Statement
- Ecology Report
- Arboriculturist Assessment
- Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment and Heritage Statement

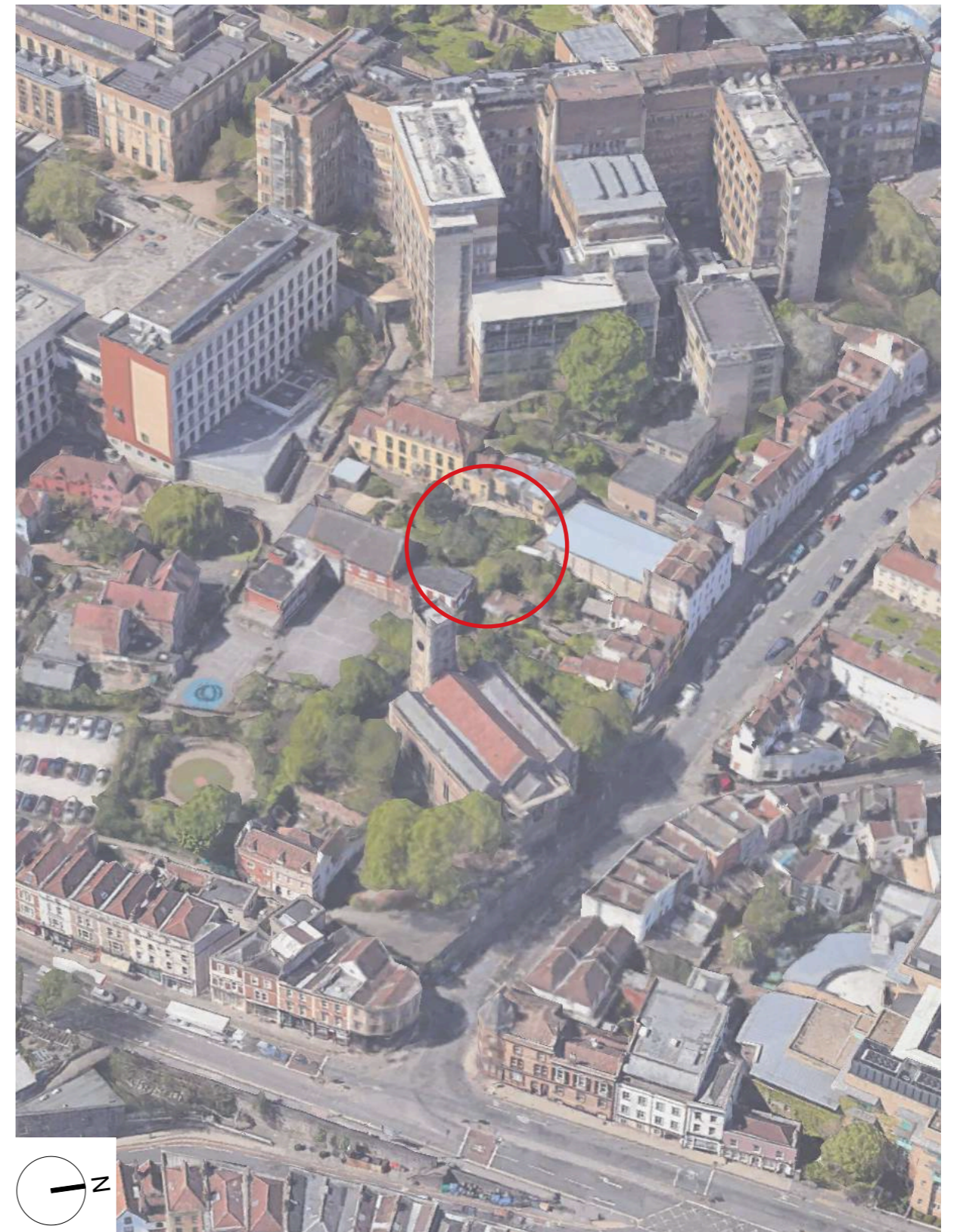


Site Location and ownership boundary

Key:

— Site Boundary

— Ownership Boundary



The site: Land adjacent to St Micheal's Memorial Parish Hall, Park Lane, Bristol (Google Earth)

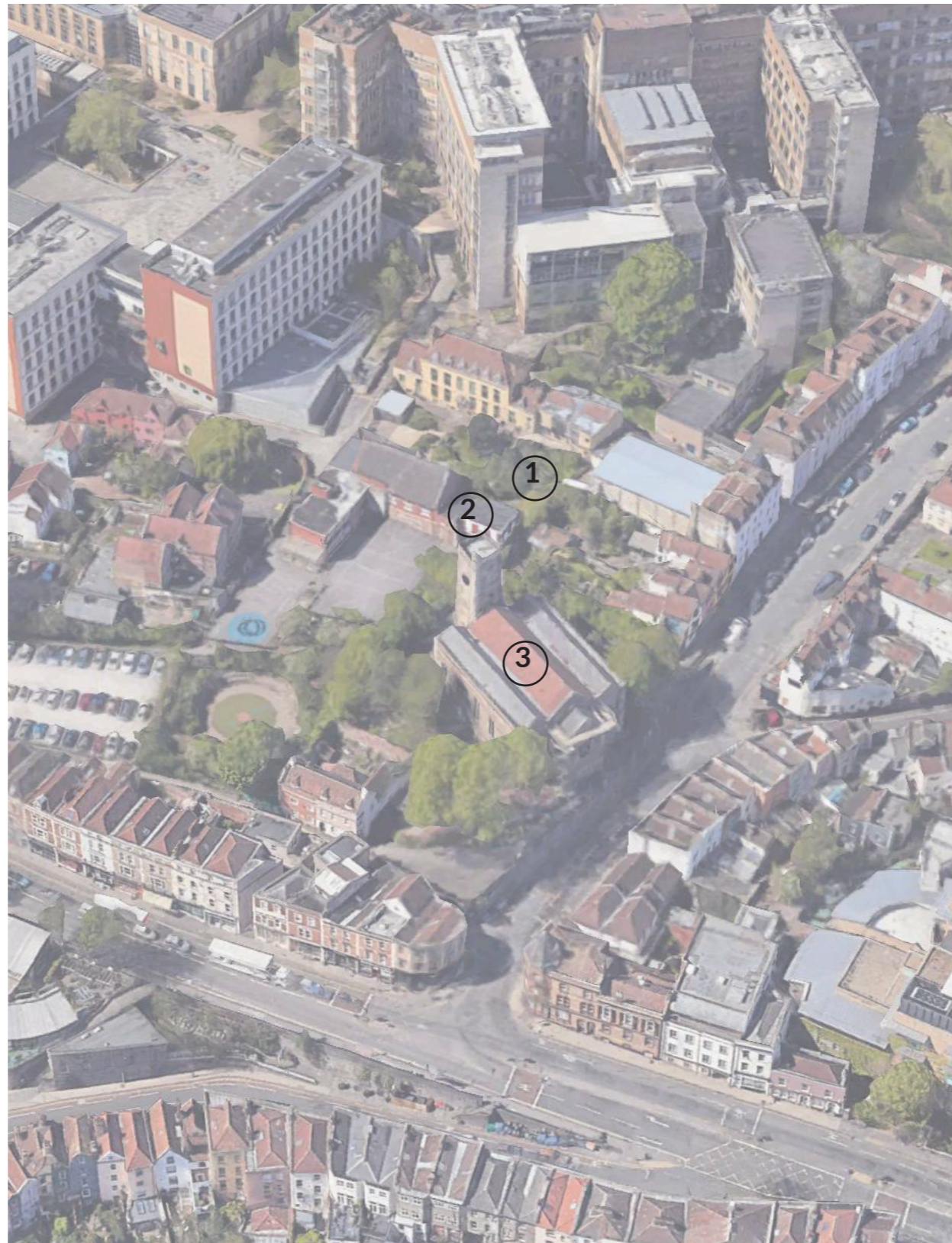
1. Assessment

1.1 Site Location

Located immediately northwest of the centre of medieval Bristol, the site falls within the St Michaels Hill and Christmas Steps Conservation Area. The area is considered one of Bristol's most charming and historic districts, characterised by its picturesque streetscape, intimate alleys, and quality and range of built fabric.

The site is accessed off Park Lane to the south-west and is bound by gardens to the north-east, and beyond this is the busy street of St Michael's Hill. The site itself is a sunken area measuring approximately 180m² and is currently occupied by a dilapidated concrete framed former scout hut. St Michael's Memorial Parish Hall abuts the site to the south-east and the Manor House boundary wall presents itself to the north-west. The Mount Without is a stone's throw east of the site.

The centrally located site is easily accessible via public transport, only a 7 minute walk from Rupert Street bus stops and a 25 minute walk westwards from Bristol Temple Meads Station. The site currently functions as a community space without vehicular parking, and this intention remains with the new proposal.



Site context (GoogleEarth)



1. Dilapidated scout hut on site



2. Aerial of St Michael's Memorial Parish Hall



3. The Mount Without

1. Assessment
1.2 Site Factors & Constraints

Historic Context

The site is in close proximity to the Mount Without and St Michael's Memorial Parish Hall.

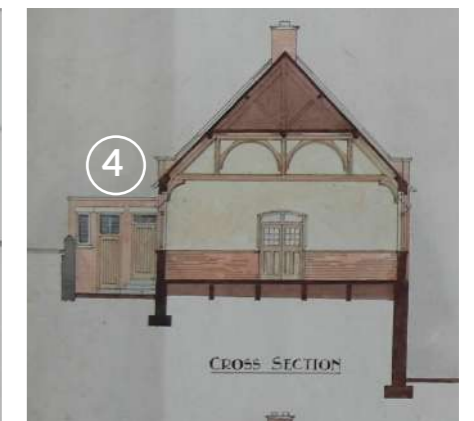
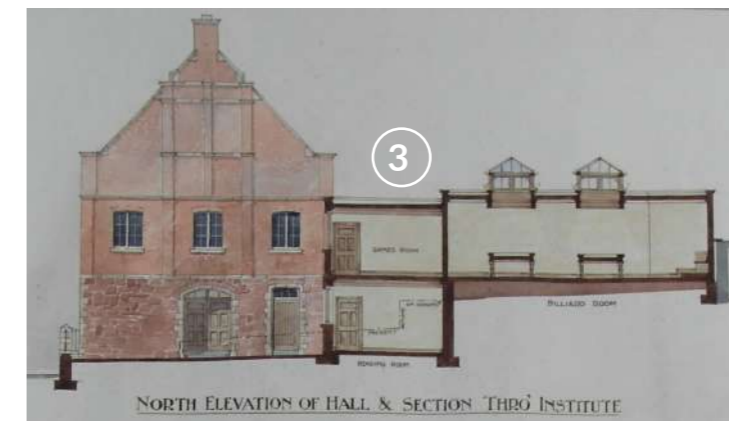
Formerly St Michael's Church, the Grade II* Listed Mount Without offers a venue for dance, art, music and celebration. First built in 1147, the church was originally named Saint Michael The Archangel On The Mount Without, as it stood just outside the city walls. Following 20 years of neglect and a major fire in October 2016, the iconic building has since been transformed into a venue with a stunning new roof and an impressive floor space with a professionally laid dance floor. The church is considered the most prominent feature within the Conservation Area, and the distinctive medieval tower is visible in many local views.

Abutting the site to the south-east is St Michael's Memorial Parish Hall, built in 1925 as a memorial to those men of the community who fell in the Great War. The hall was built with funds raised by the local community and now serves as a community hall run by a volunteer board of trustees, used by the neighbouring school and is also a popular space for yoga and dance classes.

On the site itself stands a dilapidated scout hut of late 1940's/ early 1950's build, last functioning in 1985 and is currently overrun by scrub. Following planning approval in 1949, the scout hut was originally built as a temporary building, and the structure was to be removed by 1952.

The Archaeological Assessment has revealed that the plans for the original hall were to be considerably more extensive than was built. 1925 plans by Bristol Architect A R Gough, show the original design included the provision for a skittle alley and a billiard room and also had its own separate elaborate entrance way to the rear (north-east).

Please see the desk-based Archaeological Assessment and Heritage Statement for further information on the historical development of the site and its surroundings.



Original proposed drawings for the Memorial Hall. Photos by Avon Archaeology, credit Bristol Record Office: Drawings show a fully in-filled site (1), with part double, part single storey building (3) and a single story flat-roofed entrance (4) accessed along the paved passage from Park Lane (2). The proposed elevations are red in tone to tie in with the surrounding red brick buildings (5).

1. Assessment
1.2 Site Factors & Constraints

Flood Risk Assessment

The site is within flood zone 1 and so has a low probability of flooding from rivers and the sea.

Mining Assessment

The site is outside of a Coal Authority Development High Risk Area.

Ecology

The site is overgrown and predominantly comprises dense scrub, see the Ecology Report for further information.

Trees

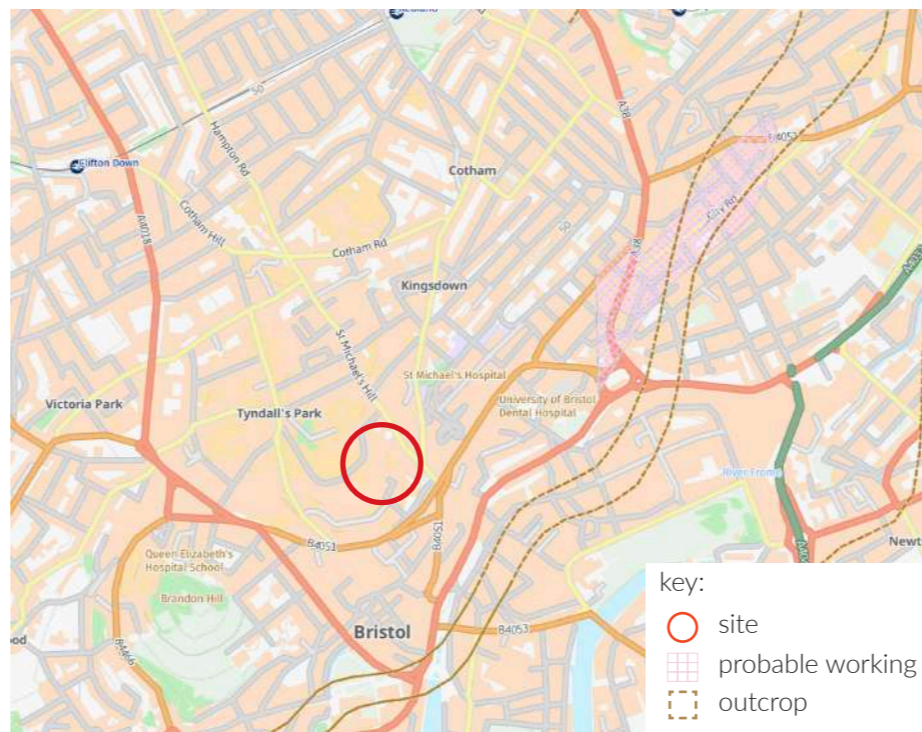
A tree survey was undertaken and is attached with this application.



The Mount Without viewed from the playground of Willow Park Church of England Primary School (south of the site).



Flood Risk Map (Zone 1).



Coal Mining Authority Map.



Existing scrub on the roof of the existing scout hut.

1. Assessment

1.2 Site Factors & Constraints

The site is characterised as a sunken, urban site occupied by a dilapidated single storey scout hut with undercroft. Due to the site's sunken nature, there is a low visual impact and views outwards are restricted. The higher ground level in the NE area of the site (see section to follow) is the only location where there are views out of the site, glimpsed through trees (during winter), toward the spire of the Mount Without.

Site levels:

- The site falls significantly from NW to SE. There is a level difference of approx. 2.9m across the site. With concrete steps providing access to the upper level.

Site structures:

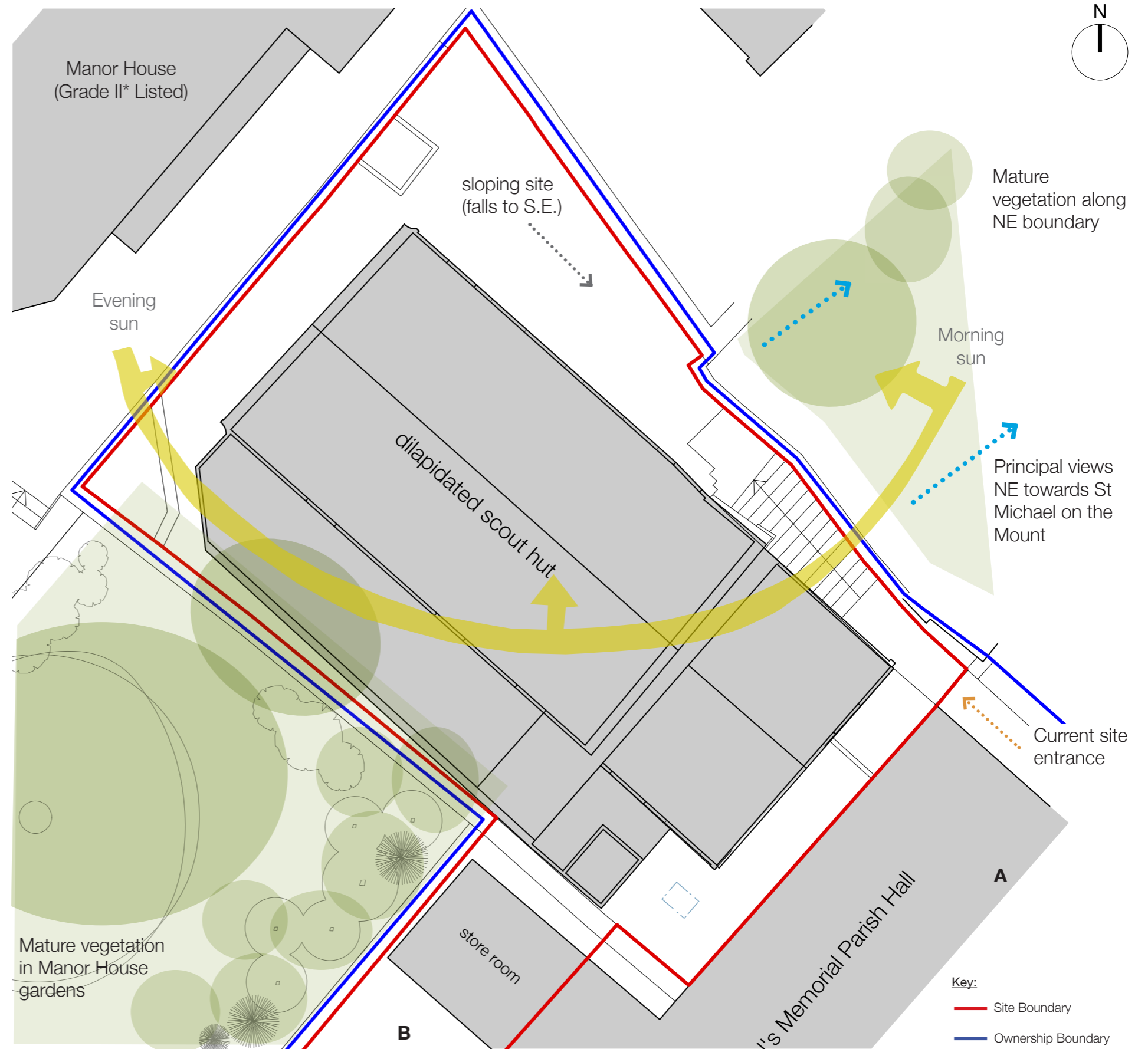
- There is an upper and lower level to the existing scout hut, both consisting of precast concrete portal frames with masonry in-fill, concrete slabs and metal roofs. There is a masonry retaining wall between the upper and lower levels.

Access:

- Gated access to the site is currently through a very narrow passageway directly from Willow Park C of E Primary School playground, which itself is accessed via Park Lane or Upper Church Lane. There is currently no accessible entrance to the site.

Services:

- Key services run underground along Park Lane, including a combined public sewer, LV electricity cables and low pressure gas main. Within the site, a private combined sewer and inspection chamber are to the SW corner, running SW along the external walkway between the Manor House gardens and the Parish Hall to join the Public sewer below Park Lane.



1. Assessment

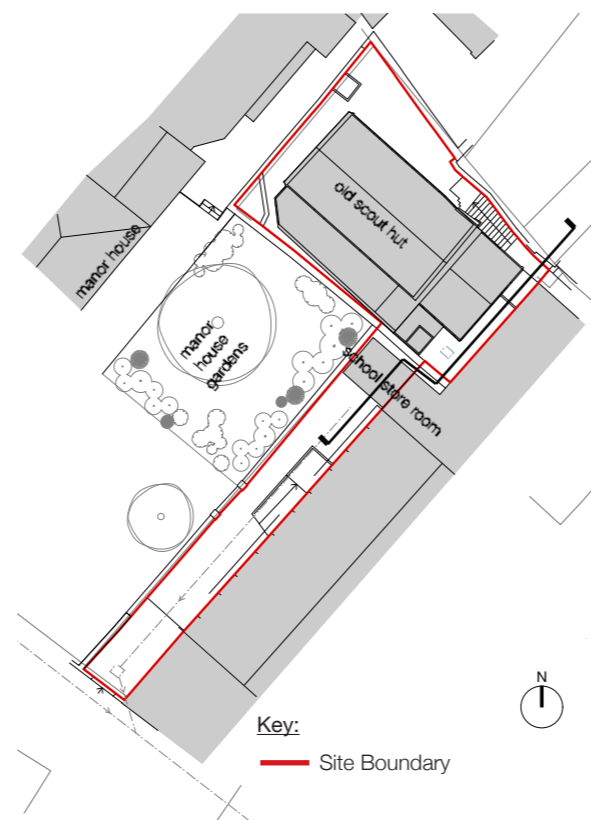
1.2 Site Factors & Constraints

Existing site levels

1. The levels along the Park Lane passageway approach gradually slope down towards the site, landing almost halfway between existing upper and lower slab levels of the existing scout hut
2. Existing store obstructs the only area where an accessible access to the site could be provided.
3. Retaining wall encloses the building / site, screening the building along the southern elevation
4. External steps join the upper (northern) slab level to the sunken SE corner, stepping down around 2.9m
5. To the NW edge, the neighbouring residences step up another 2.3m from the upper slab level



Sits Section: Existing South East elevation (elevation 1)



Southern approach along memorial hall boundary

1. Assessment
1.3 Existing Site Photographs



1. Site access way from Willow Park C of E primary school playground



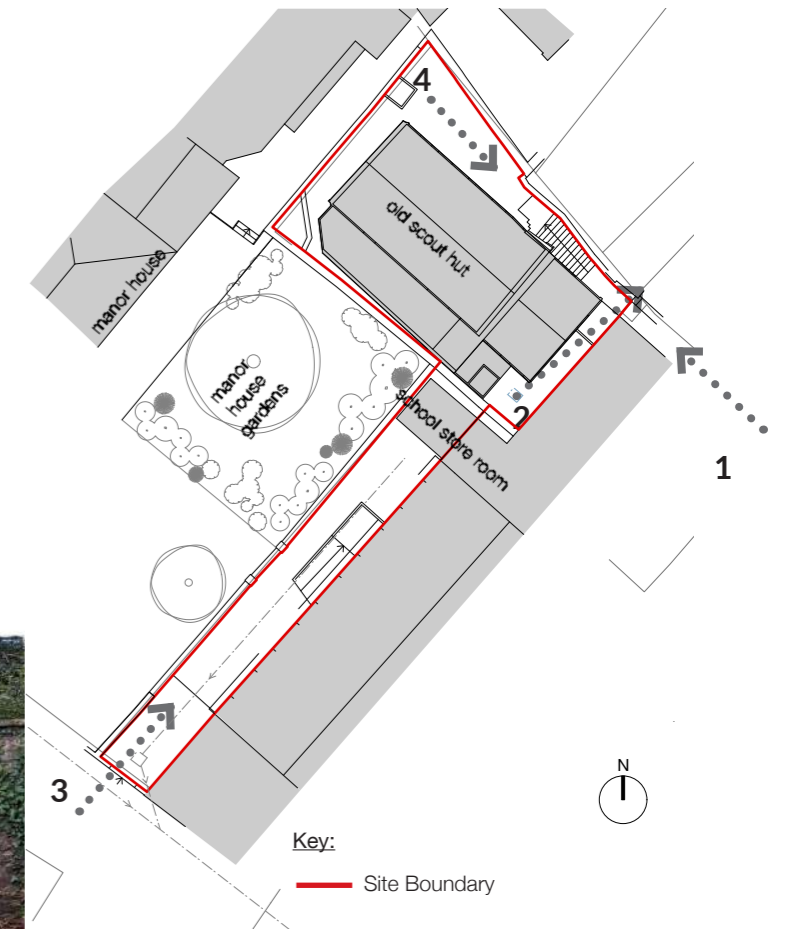
2. Site access way facing Willow Park C of E playground



3. Park Lane entrance to the Memorial Hall



4. Existing site looking SE from Mansion House terrace

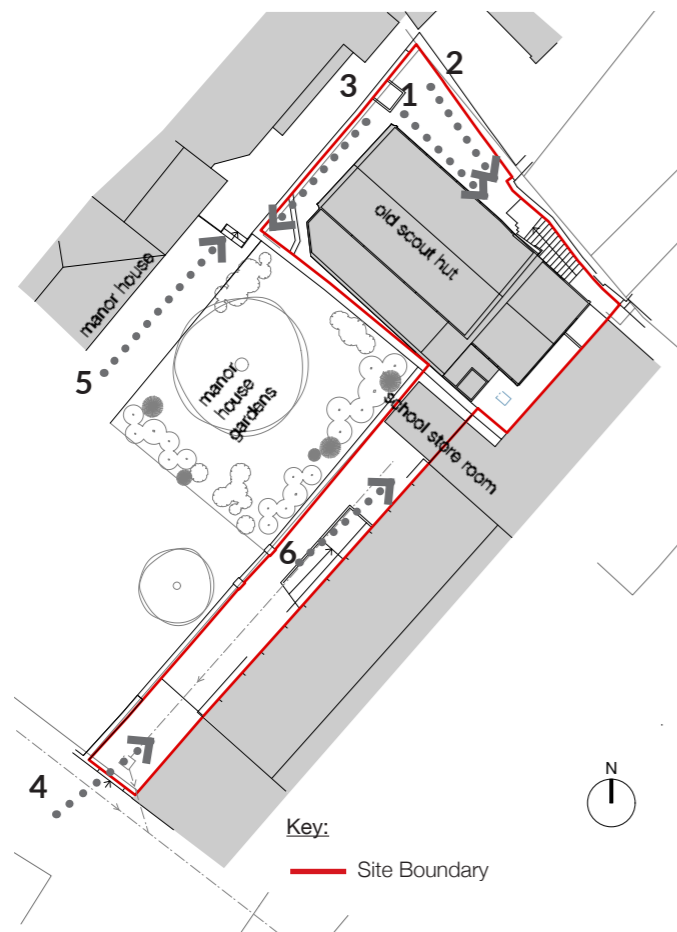


1. Assessment
1.3 Existing Site Photographs

The dilapidated scout hut (which last functioned in 1985) currently occupies the site. The hut received planning permission in August 1949, and was originally for 'two huts for church, scout and youth activities'. Whilst the approved building was to be temporary in nature, the structure still stands, despite its plans to be demolished by September 1952.

The Park Lane passageway (image 4), about 2.5m wide, provides access to the Memorial Hall on its NW elevation, and separates this access from the Manor House's garden via a stone boundary wall.

The northern section of the Manor House has been designed as an inward looking building with small openings and sideways orientated openings. The spaces overlooking the site are kitchens and the buildings circulation.



1. Existing scout hut



2. Level change along north-eastern boundary



3. Level change along north-western boundary



4. Southern approach along Park Lane passage. The only 'street view' to the proposed building location.



5. View towards north-west of site from Manor House terrace



6. Memorial Hall store to rear of Park Lane passage.

1. Assessment

1.4 Planning History & Policy

The previous and only planning application on the site is detailed within the desk-based Archaeological Assessment and Heritage Statement.

49/02871/U_U 1949: Approved planning proposal to construct a temporary scout hut. Despite the plans for a temporary structure, the scout hut remained in use to the public until 1985.

There are no Scheduled Monuments or listed buildings within the site boundary itself; however, the site falls within a Conservation Area and the Hall is locally listed as an Undesignated Building of Merit. The originally medieval church of St Michael lies immediately to the east of the site. Further details can be found in the Heritage Statement.

Relevant Planning Policy & Design Guidelines

The following national and local Policies have been consulted and considered during the design process to ensure it meets the required standards and follows best practice guidelines:

National Planning Policy Framework

Local plan:

- Core strategy
- Progressing Bristol's development

Supplementary Planning Documents:

- Bristol Development Framework Core Strategy (Adopted June 2011)
- Planning Obligations SPD (Adopted on 27 September 2012)
- Archaeology and Development SPD 7(Adopted March 2006)
- St Michael's Hill & Christmas Steps Character Appraisal
- Responding to Local Character - A Design Guide (1998)
- Climate Change and Sustainability (July 2020)
- Waste and Recycling Storage and Collection Facilities (Adopted December 2010)

A planning application for the dance studio would be classed as a Minor Development. Bristol City Council's planning policies set out the characteristics of the development sought by the Council as follows:

- More efficient use of land and a greater mix of uses will be encouraged. Design of development expected to be of the highest standard in terms of appearance, function, conservation of heritage assets, sustainability and maintaining and enhancing green infrastructure. (BCS2)
- Leisure, arts and culture uses will be primarily located within or, where appropriate, adjoining the centres in the identified network and hierarchy serving Bristol. (BCS7)
- Community facilities should be located where there is a choice of travel options and should be accessible to all members of the community. Where possible community facilities should be located within existing centres and existing community facilities should be retained. (BCS12)
- Development should contribute to both mitigating and adapting to climate change, and to meeting targets to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. New development should demonstrate how it would contribute to meeting targets to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. (BCS13)
- New development required to demonstrate how sustainable design and construction have been addressed. Development to provide satisfactory arrangements for the storage of refuse and recyclable materials as an integral part of its design. (BCS15)
- New development will maximise opportunities to re-use previously developed land. (SCS20)
- Development should deliver high quality urban design & contribute positively to an area's character and identity, creating or reinforcing local distinctiveness. Development to promote accessibility and permeability by creating places that connect with each other and are easy to move through. (BCS 21).
- Development proposals in Conservation areas will safeguard or enhance heritage assets and the character and setting of areas of acknowledged importance. (BCS22)

St Michael's Hill & Christmas Steps Character Appraisal includes the following relevant points:

- Area is one of Bristol's most charming and historic districts. Characterised by its picturesque streetscape, intimate alleys, panoramic views, and quality and range of built fabric.
- St Michael on the Mount is the most prominent feature in the Conservation Area, which sits on an elevated platform just above Perry Road.
- Local views tend to be shorter and confined to a specific locality, including views to skylines, local landmarks, attractive groups of buildings, views into streets and squares.
- Glimpses allow intriguing glances to intimate routes / spaces, and make an important contribution to local character.
- The Area is particularly rich in its diversity and variety of buildings, containing a harmonious jumble of building styles and details with virtually no two buildings being the same. The character of the area is derived in large part from the quality of the buildings, many of which are listed and retain traditional features.
- With the exception of local landmarks and institutional buildings, an overall harmony derives from the human-scale and overall consistency in materials: stucco render, Bath and rubble stone, red brick, Clay double roman tiles. The consistent use of traditional materials gives a cohesion to the Conservation Area
- High-quality design and materials are encouraged, sensitive to the character or appearance of the Conservation Area.

The current national legislative and planning policy system identifies, through the National Planning Policy Framework, that applicants should consider the potential impact of development upon 'heritage assets'. Please see the Heritage Statement for further information.

2. Design Proposal

2.1 Project Aims & Design Principles

The proposed development involves the demolition and removal of a dilapidated scout hut, and the construction of a purpose-built single storey dance rehearsal hall with an undercroft in its place.

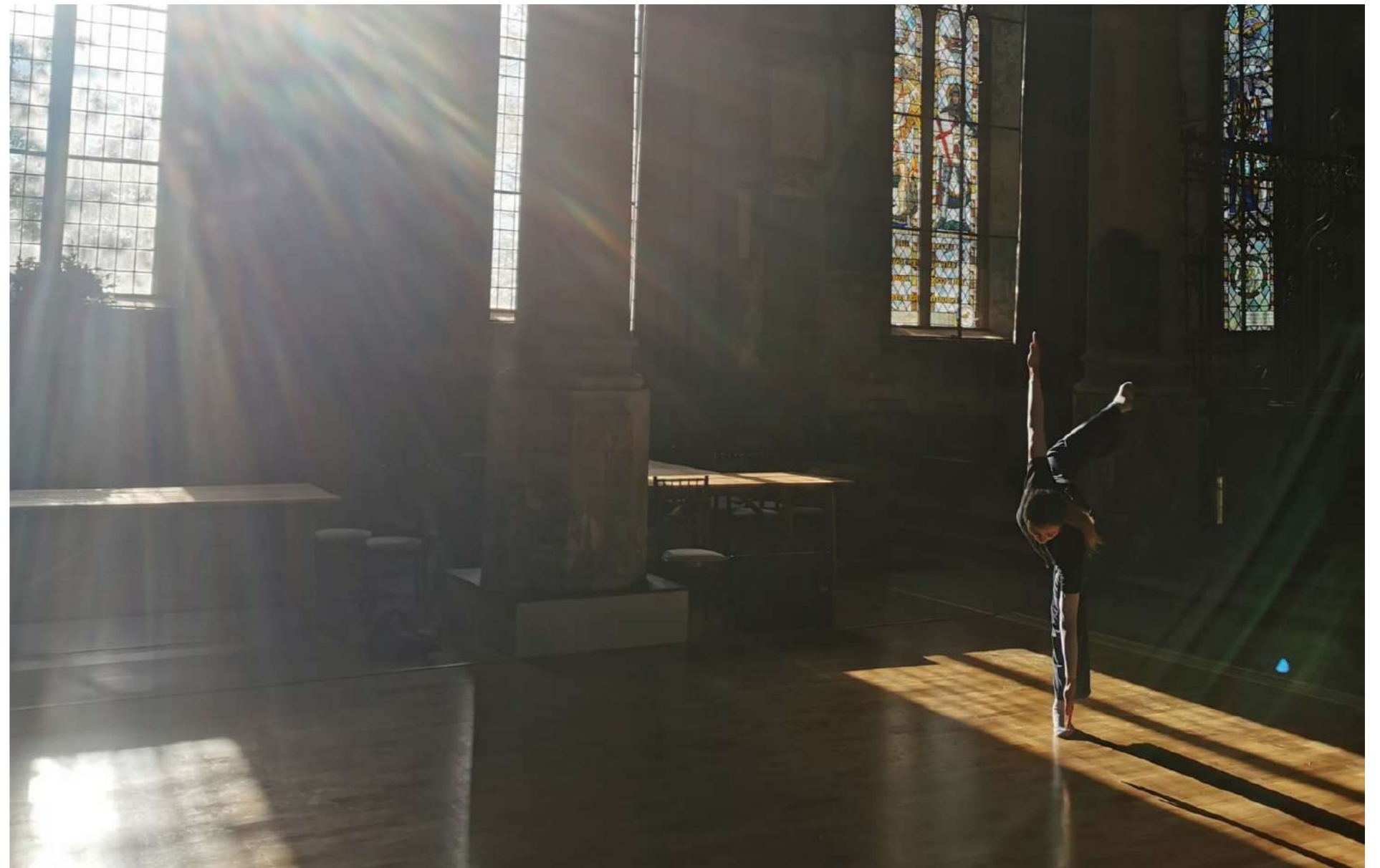
The proposal is to create a dedicated dance studio that will work in conjunction with the existing Parish Hall and the sensitively re-imagined former church, providing a unique facility for Bristol and the wider region, acting as a hub for the development and performance of dance. The building will be a highly sustainable, low energy and environmentally sensitive design, aiming to achieve Passivhaus certification.

The proposed works looks to re-use and extend the existing upper level concrete slab. The design reacts to the setting and works with the existing site levels, creating a sunken dance hall and a lower-level store/plant room. Drawing from the character of the site itself, the design is simple, and respects the original single storey nature of the scout hut.

The brief for the building includes a dance space for up to 20 people and accompanying facilities including a shower, storage and dressing spaces.

"Trinity recognises the immense value that a dedicated and accessible space for dance and theatre can bring to both professional and non-professional groups, as well as schools and charities in the city...the initiative to replace the derelict scout hut with a state-of-the-art dance studio compliments and strengthens existing and planned offers to improve and strengthen a network of dance infrastructure that contribute to the cultural richness of Bristol."

Emma Harvey, Trinity Community Arts



2. Design Proposal

2.2 Proposed Site Plan

Design Proposals

- The existing scout hut is demolished (including lower slab) and replaced with a new dance hall
- The new dance rehearsal space is approximately 80sqm
- Ancillary functions (store, offices etc.) are contained to the SE end of the building to maximise the dance hall area on the widest part of the site
- The new building makes maximises top light via rooflights

Access

- Accessible entrance along newly formed ramp, via Park Lane. Requires part demolition / alteration of parish hall store
- All rooms and facilities are provided on one level (fully accessible)
- No vehicular access or parking on site remains, with new bike stores introduced.

Storage

- The lower ground floor is used for storage only and is accessed from the lower ground level only

Amenity Space & Landscaping

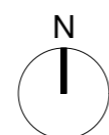
- A sunken courtyard is enclosed within the existing retaining walls to the NE corner

Safety & Security

- Careful consideration into window placement ensures there is no overlooking from or to the neighbouring residences along the NW edge
- Secure bike storage is located next to building entrance.

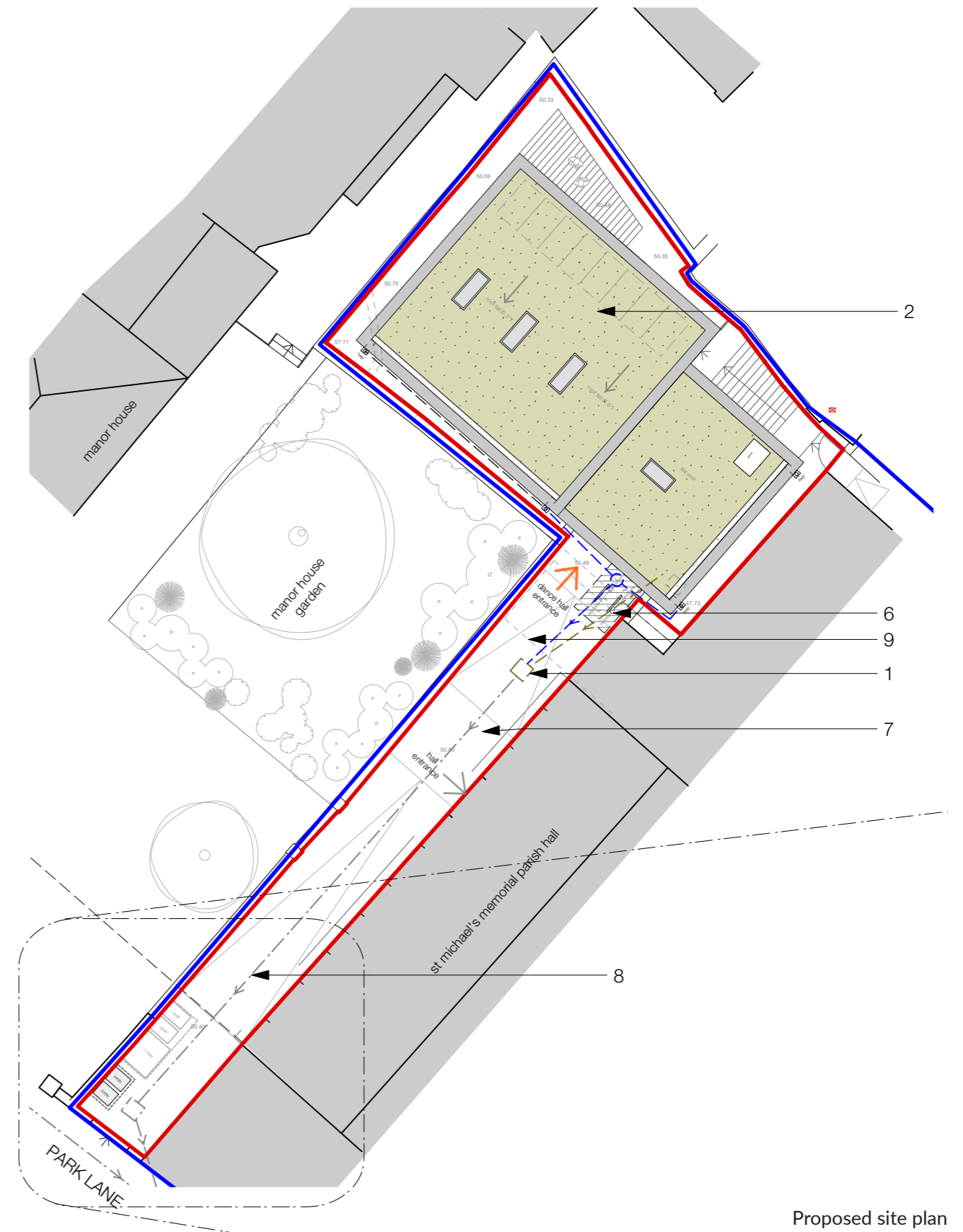
Notes

1. Indicative new inspection chamber for new foul and surface water connection to existing combined sewer. Subject to existing sewer condition and invert levels
2. Proposed green roof to dance hall
3. Dedicated bin storage (school)
4. Dedicated bin storage (Dance hall) 1 No. 240ltr recyclable waste, 1 No. 240ltr general waste
5. Access from Park Lane
6. 2No sheffield bike stands for secure bike parking (4No bikes)
7. Newly formed access ramp, concrete
8. Existing combined sewer, location indicative only.
9. existing store annexe partly demolished to make way for new access to dance hall



Key:

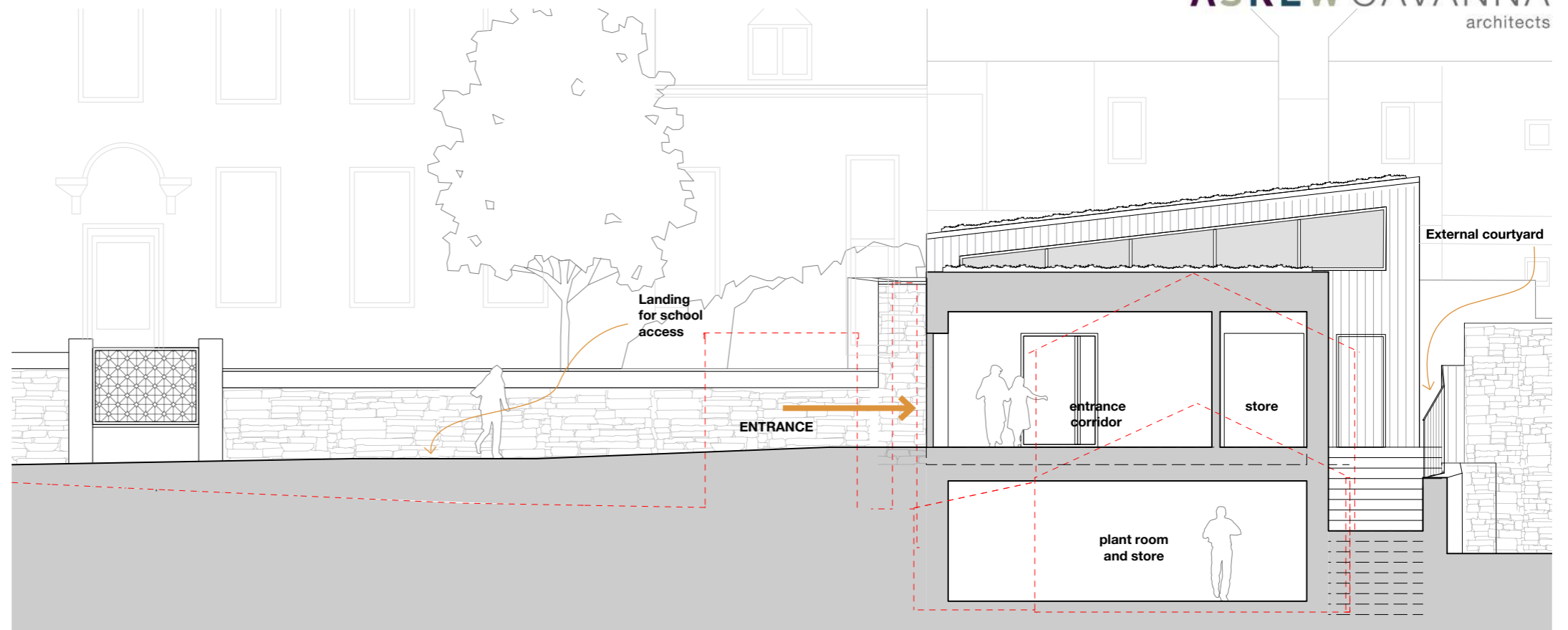
- Site Boundary
- Ownership Boundary



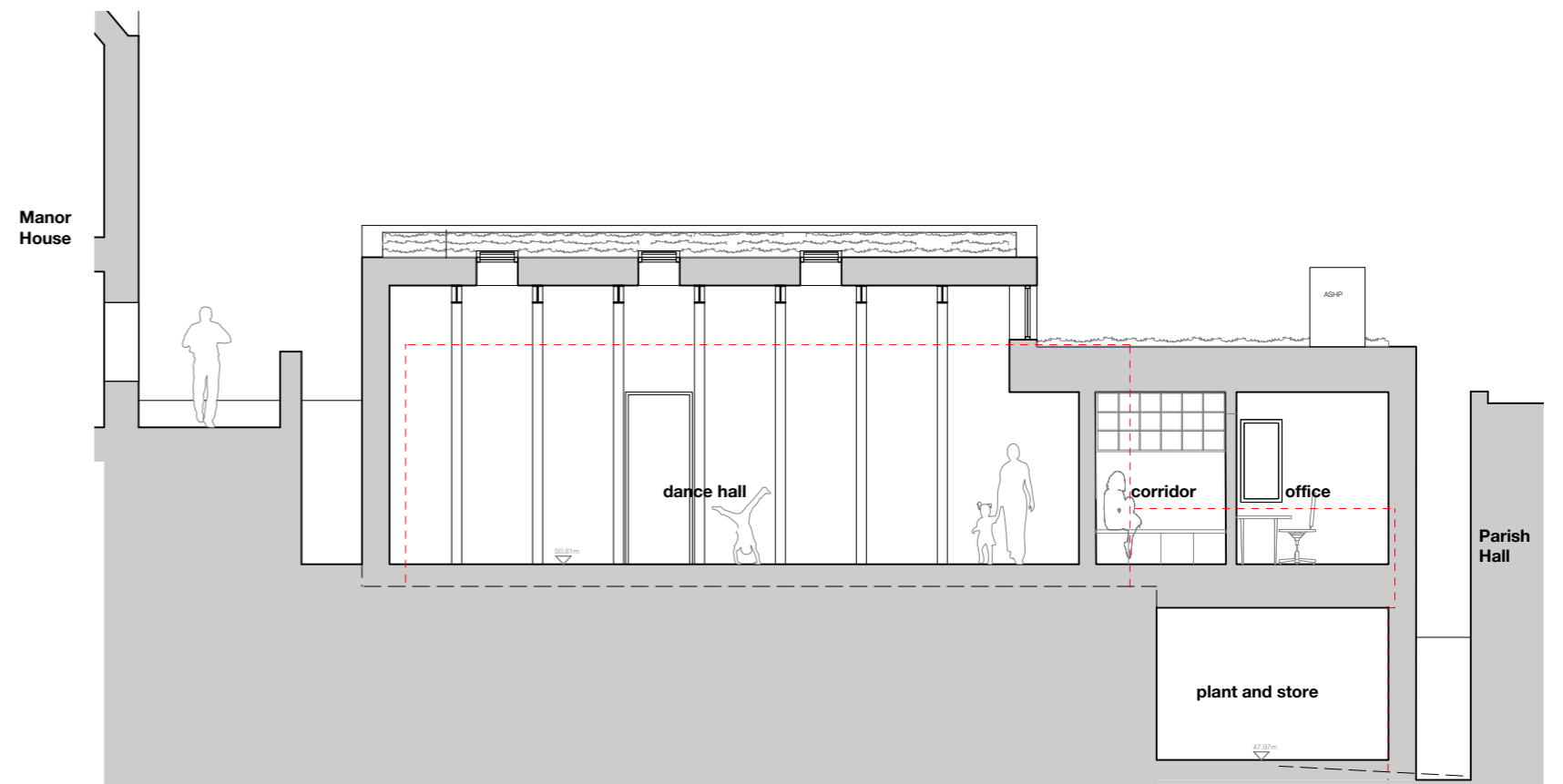
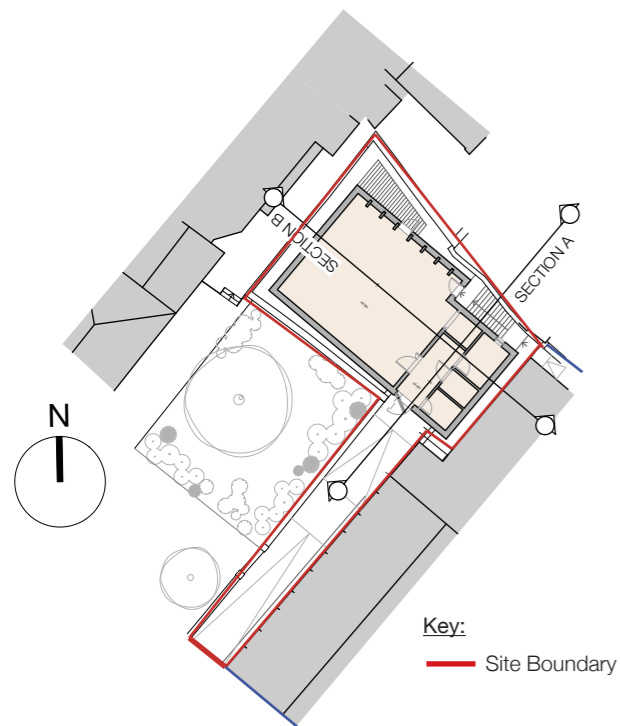
Proposed site plan

2. Design Proposal
2.3 Proposed Sections

- Ramped access from Park Lane to be re-laid to provide accessible entrance to the parish hall and the new building
- Monopitch roof to give clear span for dancing
- Rooflights and clerestorey windows to maximise natural light
- A green roof 'hides' the building when viewed from above and increases biodiversity.



Section A



Section B

2. Design Proposal

2.4 Layout and Scale

Building layout

The new building sits over the existing scout hut footprint and extends slightly to the north-east corner, ensuring the dance hall achieves the required area, but minimising the impact on the site. Despite the restricted footprint area, the proposal meets the spatial requirements through a well-ordered plan.

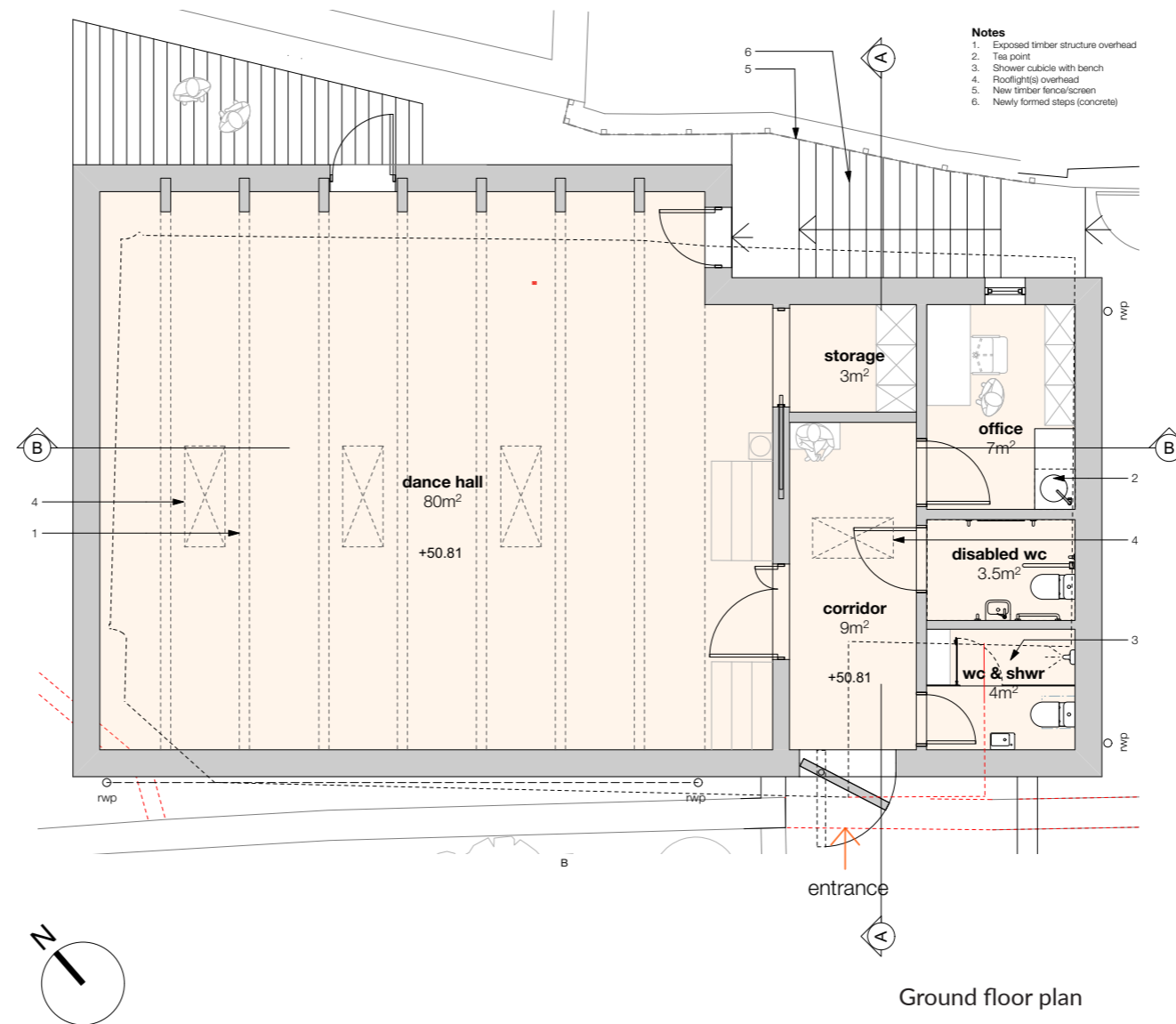
The facilities and services are located to the south-east, and a central entrance corridor acts as a transition zone, leading into the hall. The dance hall itself is a generous, open space, lit from sky lights and clerestory windows, which flood the space with natural light. A small external amenity area provides a break-out space for building users.

Accessibility

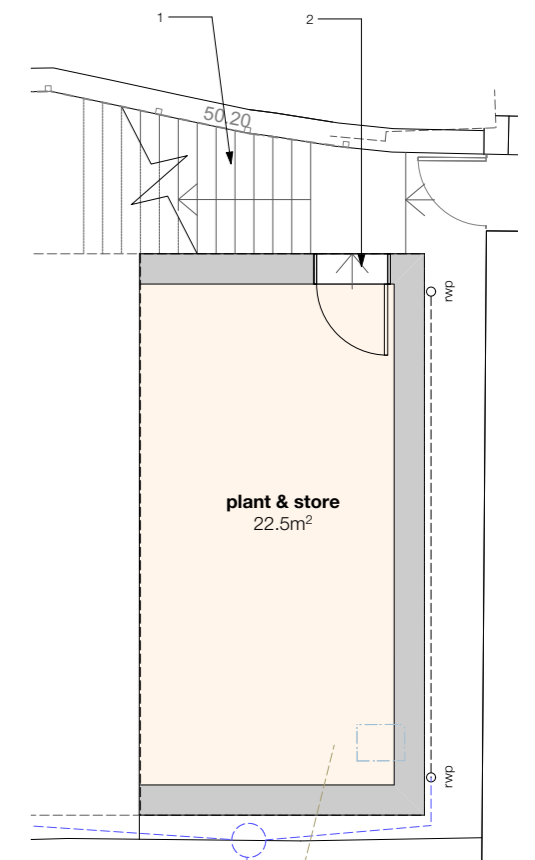
The proposed building is fully accessible, with level access throughout including access to the external deck. The plant and store is located on a lower level and is accessible via an external staircase to the eastern edge of the building.

Scale

The new building reflects the scale and massing of the existing scout hut by remaining single storey in its majority, and utilising the existing site topography to have a small portion (to the east) over two storeys. As the mass of the building remains sunken in the site, the visual impact is minimised. Further design considerations such as a monopitch roof profile and green roof help to minimise the visual impact further.



Ground floor plan



Lower Ground floor plan

"...there is simply not the infrastructure here to support their careers as young dancers. This exciting proposal... will be a step towards changing this and will support the development of dance in Bristol to benefit both artists and audiences."

Sarah Kingswell, Company Manager, RIS Youth Dance
(formerly CEO of Theatre Bristol)

2. Design Proposal

2.5 Appearance & Materials

The new building has been designed to be a simple piece of architecture that focuses on the quality of internal environment and responds respectfully to the character of the surrounding context. Enclosed by existing retaining walls, the elevations respond to their context, working with site levels, surrounding materiality and views. Materials are selected for durability and sustainability along with their qualities of warmth and comfort, introducing a respectful, contemporary building on the site.

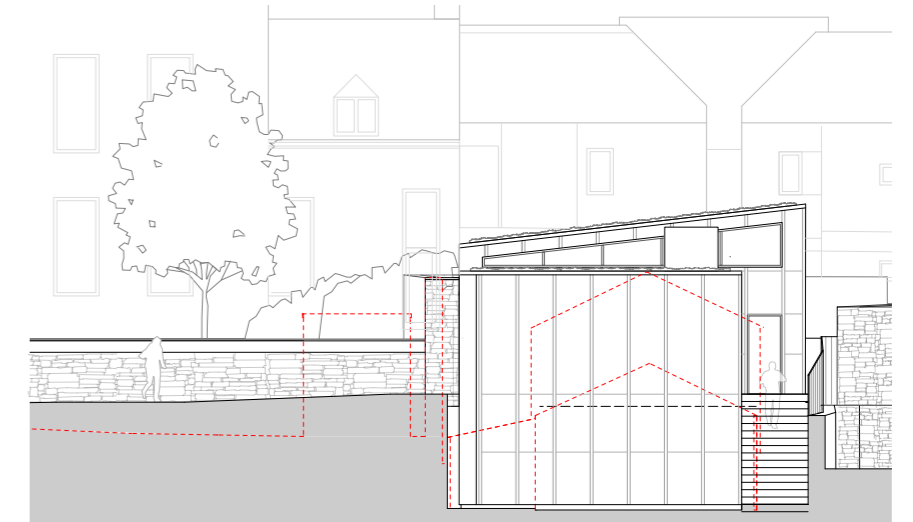
The mono-pitch green roof helps to soften the building further into the landscape and minimise the visual impact from surrounding buildings.

Elevations

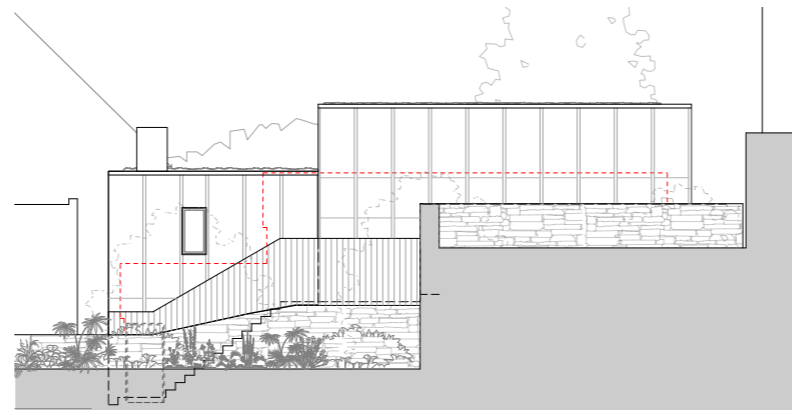
- All elevations are treated in a robust, red cladding, laid vertically in reference to the St Michael's Character Area characteristics and surrounding buildings.
- The south-west elevation is the only one that has a 'street' frontage, which is viewed from Park Lane across a paved passageway. The remaining elevation is hidden behind the stone retaining wall, however the building entrance is through a red brick facade that references the surrounding red brick buildings and creates a subtle transition between old and new.
- All other elevations sit immediately behind existing rubble stone perimeter walls, some with additional vegetation along, meaning nearly all views to the new building are obscured.



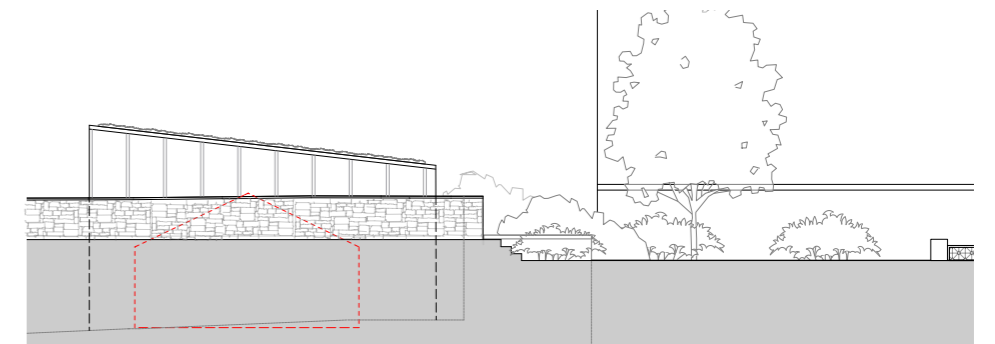
South West Elevation



South East Elevation

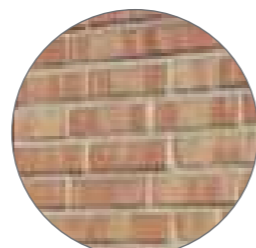


North East Elevation



North West Elevation

Proposed Materials



Red Brick



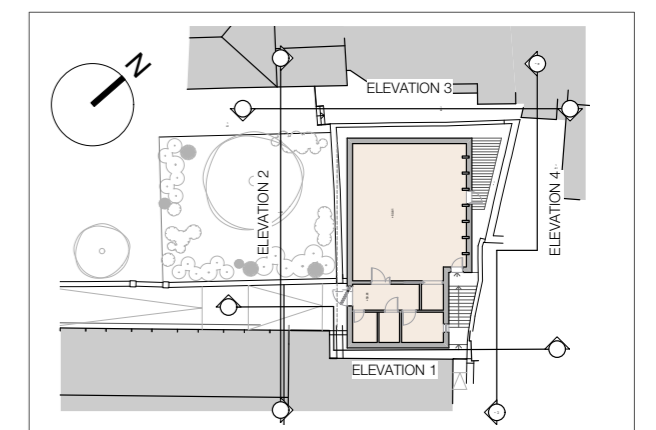
Green Roof



Cement-bound
particle board

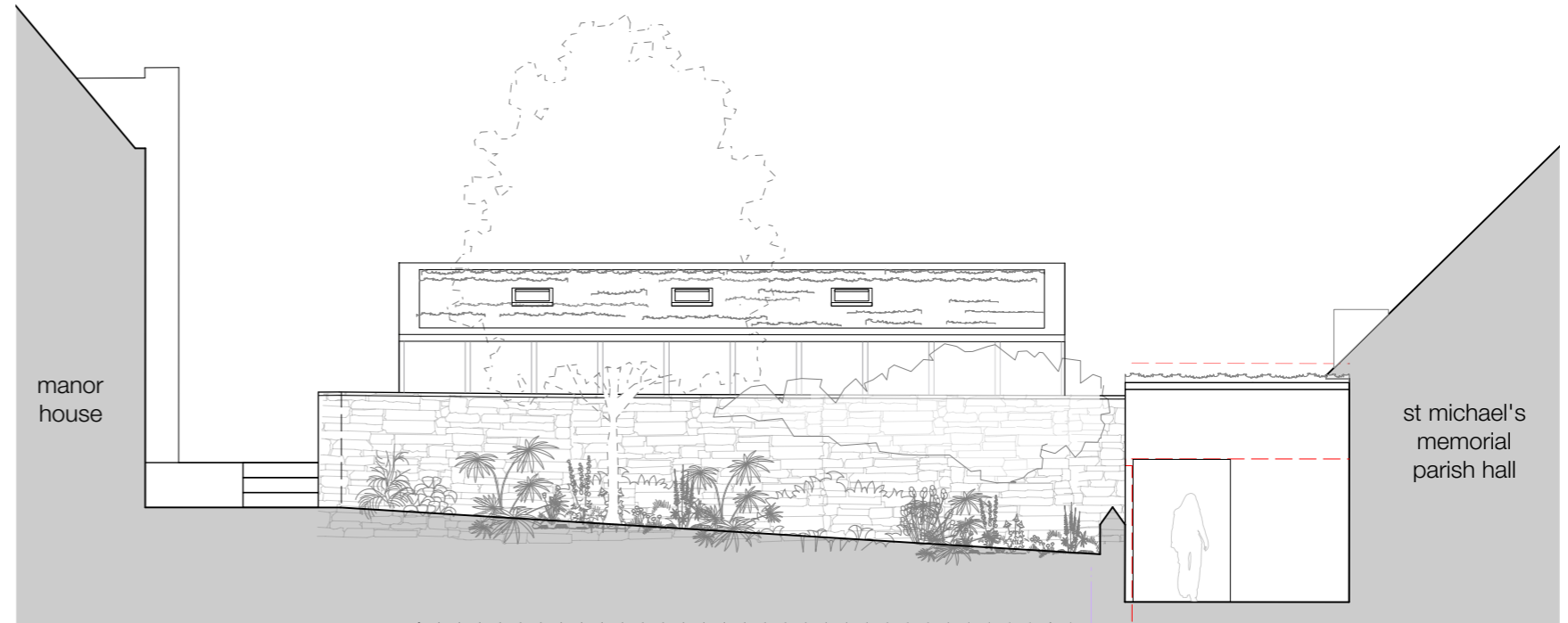


Aluminium windows

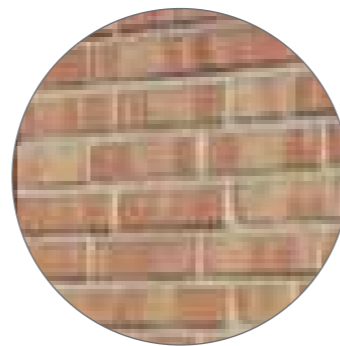




Existing materials on site



South West Elevation: Entrance from Park Lane



Red Brick



Green Roof



Cement-bound particle board



Aluminium windows

Proposed Materials

Bricks - Red coloured facing brick is proposed for the entrance wall, to tie in with and compliment the existing Parish Hall and retaining walls on the site. The brick finish is a robust and sustainable choice, in- keeping with the context.

Cement-bound particle board - Red colour cladding respectfully introduces a modern take on the surrounding context and is durable, lightweight and with minimal maintenance costs.

Green roof - Mono-pitch green roof helps to screen the building from above, promote biodiversity and assist with surface water drainage.

Windows - Triple glazed, composite aluminium / timber.

Doors - Timber solid core door

Rooflights - Triple glazed, timber

2. Design Proposal

2.6 Sustainability Strategy

The proposed building looks to achieve the highest levels of sustainable design and high quality construction, ensuring energy efficiency, carbon reduction and long term cost optimisation. As such, the project aspires to achieve Passivhaus certification, and will be tested against measured targets throughout the design, construction, and occupation stages.

A Passivhaus consultant has been involved in the project from concept design stage and has helped to indicate optimal building geometry, openings, building fabric and energy systems. The Passivhaus Planning Package has been used at concept stage to assist in design development.

The following principles will be applied:

- Very high levels of insulation
- Green roof
- Accurate design modelling using the Passivhaus Planning Package
- High performance windows with efficient glazing and insulated frames
- Airtight building fabric
- Maximise the use of day-lighting to reduce artificial lighting energy demands by the strategic placement of roof-lights and openings.
- All light fittings will have low energy LED lamps.
- All plumbing appliances will be low water usage.
- The provision of a common semi-enclosed bin store for general waste and recycling bins is located near the site entrance.

A separate energy and sustainability statement is attached as part of the planning submission documents.



Visualisation illustrating proposed internal corridor / lobby



Visualisation illustrating proposed interior of new dance hall

3. Public Consultation

A Consultation Report was produced and shared by the Trustees of St Michael's Memorial Parish Hall on *insert date. The following page summarises the feedback received from local residents and those involved in various Bristol-based creative organisations. The scheme has received overwhelming support, with responses highlighting the need for the facility in the city and the excitement and approval of the proposed design.

Respondents;

- Christmas Steps Arts Quarter Planning Scrutiny Committee
- Norman Routledge, Bristol Historic Buildings
- Charlotte Geeves, Bristol Old Vic
- Stuart Wood, Head of School and Co- Artistic Director, Bristol School of Acting
- Clare Reddington, CEO, Watershed, Cultural cinema and digital creativity in Bristol UK
- Jonathan Brecknell, Director, Urban Creation
- Emma Harvey, Trinity Community Arts
- Sarah Kingswell, Company Manager, RISE Youth Dance (formerly CEO of Theatre Bristol)
- Sharon Clark, Creative Director, Raucous
- Heidi Vaughan, Artistic Director/ CEO, Tobacco Factory Theatres
- Sheila Hannon, Creative Producer, Show of Strength
- Dienka Hines, Executive Director & CEO Travelling Light Theatre Company
- Matthew Whittle, Wardrobe Theatre
- Samir Savant, Chief Executive, St George's Bristol.

"This plan for the Parish hall to have a dance rehearsal space, where there is a shortage across the city, will allow all levels of dance rehearsal there, that will hopefully often culminate in a performance at The Mount Without."

Norman Routledge, Bristol Historic Buildings

"It (the scout hut) has been derelict for far too long and the lack of maintenance is beginning to affect the integrity of the boundary walls with our property."

Jonathan Brecknell, Director, Urban Creation

"a single storey building having a minimal impact on the site, the chosen materials including the flat green roof are absolutely appropriate, and relevant"

Christmas Steps Arts Quarter planning scrutiny committee

"A dedicated dance studio has the potential to rejuvenate and diversify our cultural offerings. Dance is a universal language that transcends barriers and fosters a sense of community and connection... opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to engage in a vibrant and expressive art form.

... it also contributes to the overall cultural vibrancy of our city, attracting a diverse audience and fostering a supportive and inclusive community.

Cultural development is closely tied to economic and social growth, and initiatives like this proposed studio have the potential to enhance our city's profile and make it a more attractive place to live and visit."

Sharon Clark, Creative Director, Raucous



"looks like a great idea and well needed in terms of dance space in the city."

Charlotte Geeves, Bristol Old Vic

"Adequate provision for dance has long been a problem in Bristol, so I was delighted to hear of your dance studio plans - particularly on a site that has been neglected for nearly 40 years... it's much needed and deserves to succeed, and particularly now when more resources and funding for arts and culture are so desperately needed."

Sheila Hannon, Creative Producer, Show of Strength

4. Summary

As part of a collective aspiration to join three creative spaces together, the proposal responds as a sensitive addition to the site, in place of an unsightly existing hut. Built using robust materials with low embodied energy, the building showcases both passive and active devices to ensure low energy consumption.

The design considers scale, context, architectural form and addresses sustainability issues, creating a welcoming, engaging building. Through the demolition of an unsightly and derelict scout hut, the proposal of a new purpose-built dance hall positively contributes to the local area and site, allowing the Parish Hall to expand their offerings to the community and wider Bristol.

"The dance ecology of Bristol has been poorly served for many years and the city is the poorer for it. This facility could really help support the growth of the art form in the city and be a great asset."

Stuart Wood, Head of School and Co-Artistic Director, Bristol School of Acting



Visualisation illustrating new entrance to proposal from Park Lane