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1. Introduction

Project Brief & Overview

This proposal is for a flexible multi-use community space on the site at 68 Pier Road, Erith. The proposal seeks to provide a valuable community resource; a community venue with a café, event space and flexible room hire with an overall area of commercial space approximately 310m². The spaces have been designed to host a variety of activities throughout the times of the day and week, whilst acting as a safe space in Erith.

The proposal involves the fit out of the vacant unit at 68 Pier Road which occupies a key strategic location in Erith Town centre. The ground floor unit has remained empty since the development was completed in 2007. The proposal aims to bring life back to this part of Erith while making a positive contribution to the streetscape and wider built environment of the town centre.

2. Site and Context

A Vision for Erith

Erith & the Wider Context

The proposed fit out and use of 68 Pier Road is intended to provide a community provision within Erith. It is intended to uplift the street scene of which it is a key part, and to complement provisions/businesses elsewhere in the nearby environment.

The site at 68 Pier Road is part of several projects in and around Erith Town Centre that aim to re-invigorate Erith. Each of these projects have an important role to contribute in shaping the locality and strengthening the activities that already exist there. Erith is embarking on a period of substantial change and growth. Key to ensuring a successful future for Erith is to approach this in a sustainable way, supporting and reinforcing the existing neighbourhoods and communities.

Examples of these projects include the acquisition of key sites for redevelopment, the refurbishment of the Carnegie Library to a café and workspace, and the Erith Lighthouse a meanwhile project providing a food offer and a space for the community to gather.

68 Pier Road

68 Pier Road is situated on the ground floor of the Atrium Court Building, a mixed-use building with commercial units on the ground floor, residential units above and car parking below. The site has been left unoccupied since the completion of the building in 2007, whilst occupying a prominent position in Erith Town centre on the corner of Erith High Street, and facing the busy pedestrianised Pier Road. To the east of neighbouring 66 Pier Road is Fit4Less Gym, which occupies Unit 1 Atrium Court. To the west of the 68 Pier Road is the locally listed building at 70 Pier Road.

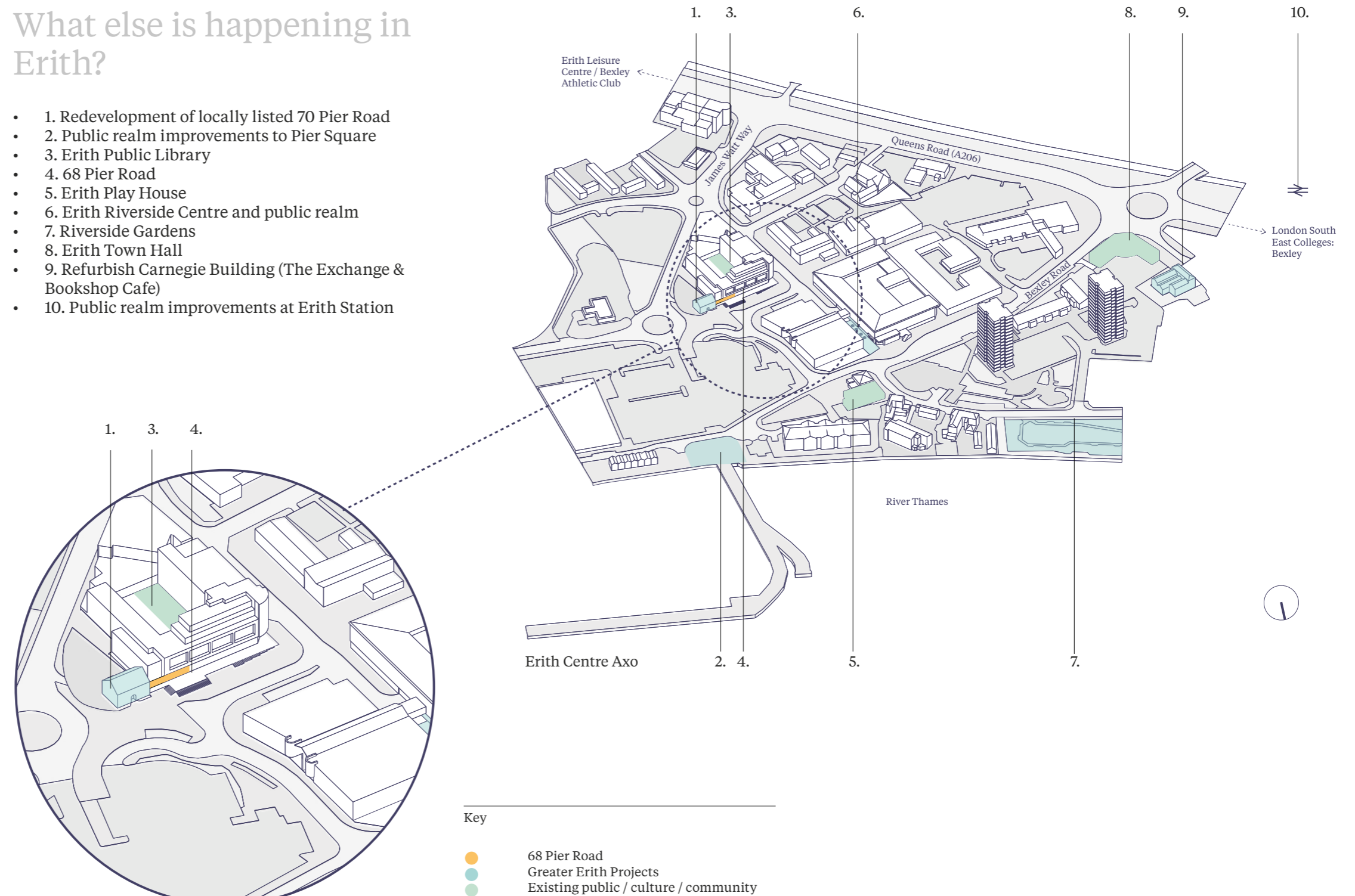
The site itself is not in a conservation area, however it is located across the street from the boundary of the Erith Riverside Conservation Area.

Flood Risk

Whilst it is acknowledged that the site is located in flood zone 2, the minor extent of proposed works within this application concern the internal fit out of an existing building at raised ground floor level which do not affect response to flood resilience, as such a flood risk assessment not required.

What else is happening in Erith?

- 1. Redevelopment of locally listed 70 Pier Road
- 2. Public realm improvements to Pier Square
- 3. Erith Public Library
- 4. 68 Pier Road
- 5. Erith Play House
- 6. Erith Riverside Centre and public realm
- 7. Riverside Gardens
- 8. Erith Town Hall
- 9. Refurbish Carnegie Building (The Exchange & Bookshop Cafe)
- 10. Public realm improvements at Erith Station



3. The Existing Site

68 Pier Road

The Existing Building

The existing building was completed in 2007. Since its completion the two ground floor units 66 & 68 have remained unoccupied. The contractor in charge of the construction of the building went into administration before the building was completed and as such there are no as built drawings.

Both units were granted planning permission for class A1/A3 use.

To date no surveys of the existing building have been carried out.

Access

The primary access to the site, 68 Pier Road, will be from the from the adjacent Public Highway (Pier Road). There is a level change of approximately 1-1.2m between this primary access and the level of Pier Road. Access is therefore provided via steps and a ramp.

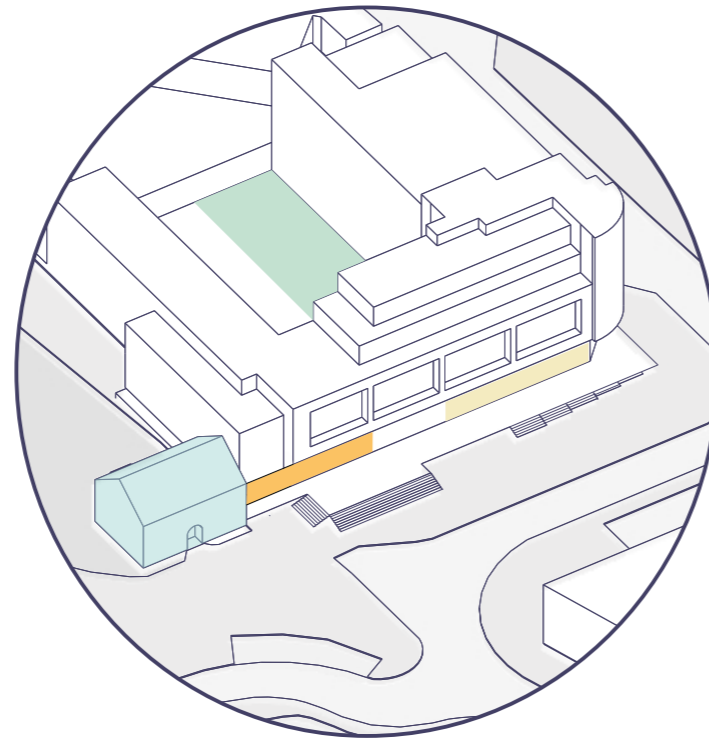
The unit can be accessed via an unheated service corridor to the rear of the units. This corridor provides access for deliveries and to the bin store while also serving as means of escape.

Public realm

In front of 68 Pier Road is an area of pedestrianised public realm. It is noted in the brief that this area is currently under utilised. At present there is very little there to engage passers-by and encourage them to linger.

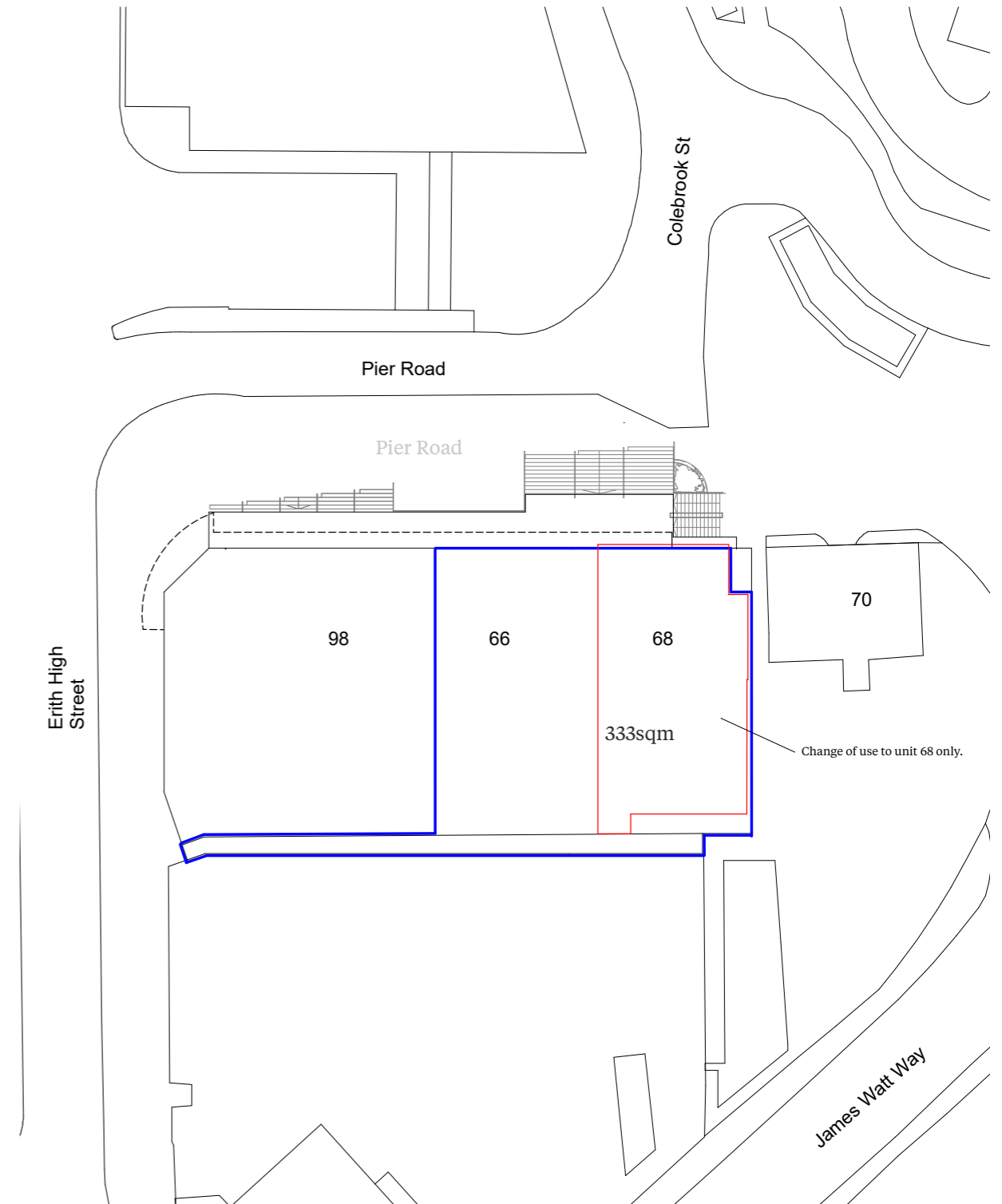
70 Pier Road

The neighbouring locally listed 70 Pier Road is due to be refurbished along with construction of a new extension to the rear to provide office space alongside residential units. The extension would impact on the vistas and the levels of light entering the windows in the east-facing wall to the rear of 68 Pier Road.



Key

- 68 Pier Road
- 70 Pier Road
- Erith Library
- Fit4Less Gym



Site plan as existing

3. The Existing Site

Site Photographs

External condition

The existing frontages to 66 & 68 Pier Road have generous structural openings that are currently secured with timber hoarding. The openings to the site have the potential to create an 'active frontage' addressing the brief and wider streetscape activation. Sections of this hoarding around the two doors have been painted to enable Erith Kitchen to run some selected events in the space.

Internal condition

Internally, the unit is a shell only. The walls, floors and ceilings have been left exposed without any finishes. A number of services have also been left exposed, most notably drainage pipes which run just below the ceiling slab and down along the structural columns.



1.



3.



2.



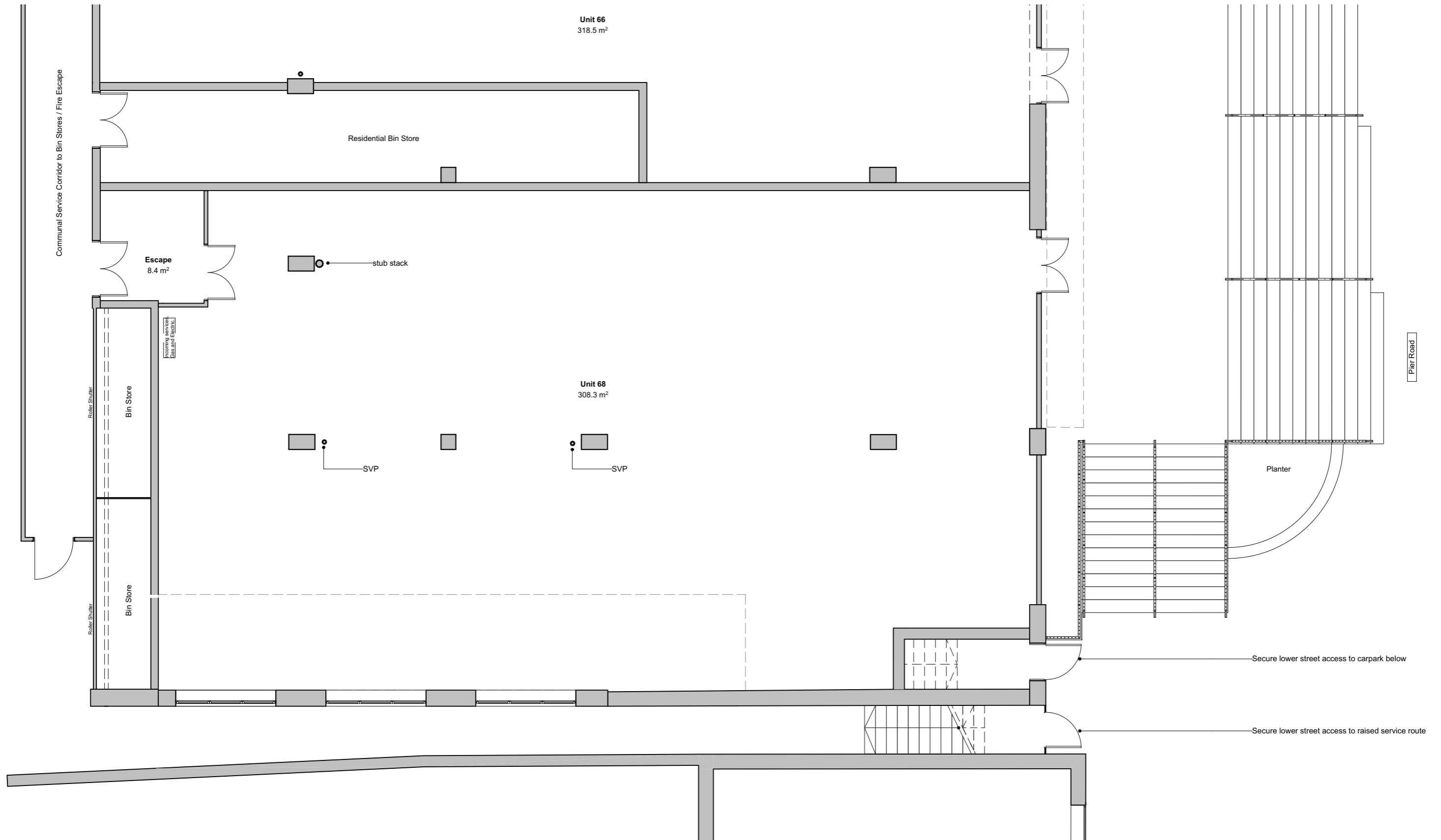
4.

Key

- 1. Street view of 68 Pier Road
- 2. Front elevation of 66 & 68 Pier Road
- 3. Internal view of windows towards the rear of 68 Pier Road
- 4. Internal view towards rear of 68 Pier Road

3. The Existing Site

Existing Ground Floor Plan



4. Previous Scheme Pre-application Feedback Summary

Pre-application Feedback Summary

The client has already been through a pre-application process with a previous proposal with Surman Weston Architects. Written feedback from LPA (Local Planning Authority) was received on the 20th January 2020.

The feedback from the LPA was largely positive and supported the principle of the proposal. The key points from the feedback are summarised in the adjacent table.

Pre application feedback summary			
	Description	Comment	Response
1.	Change in use from A1/A3 to a mixed community use, including, but not limited to; cookery classes; professional training; dinner events; and kitchen hire for local businesses.	No issues raised.	No concerns raised.
2.	To bring the units into use, creating an active frontage to bring additional footfall into this part of the town centre and create a revenue from the intended business.	Fully supported	No concerns raised.
3.	Heritage; the site is located the River Thames Area of Archaeological Search.	No issues raised.	No concerns raised.
4.	Proposed material pallet for the new frontage to Pier Road, including poly carbonate	'LPA has serious concerns regarding its temporary appearance, how well it will age and how well it will allow light to penetrate the units. It is advised that examples are provided where this has been used in a similar scheme so that the material can be assessed in further detail.'	We have sought to address the concerns raised by the LPA regarding the material pallet of the façade. This proposal provides a robust material pallet that offers security whilst remaining open inviting users and interaction, making a positive contribution to the streetscape.
5.	Proposed extract ventilation system.	Environmental health has raised concern over the feasibility of providing an adequate extract ventilation system on the site that can discharge residual cooking odours at high level. Potential for odour complaints for residents above the two units.	This proposal has a reduced emphasis on the kitchen provisions with removed onsite cooking facilities such that the need for cooking extract ventilation systems have been eliminated. Alma-nac have been working closely with an M&E consultant in the design responding to the requirements of the proposed space.
6.	Proposed opening hours.	Due to the town centre location it the LPA has suggested that the opening hours are restricted to no later than 11pm in accordance with UDP Policy SH08.	Opening hours restricted to no later than 11pm.
7.	Highways impact.	No issues raised.	No concerns raised.

5. Offering & Ongoing Management

Working with GCDA

The proposed use of 68 Pier Road will be managed by GCDA.

About GCDA

GCDA, Greenwich Co-operative Development Agency are a registered charity who's aim is to help to support communities to be healthy and sustainable. They do this in a number of different ways;

- Through support to help to develop enterprises that meet economic and social needs, and which are cooperatively managed.
- Through building the knowledge and skill of the communities through training programs and courses with a focus on enterprise, health, and the environment.
- Creating community hubs, places for the community to gather.
- Promoting a healthy lifestyle for all, and particularly those experiencing health inequalities.

Relevant experience

GCDA have lots of previous experience at managing similar initiatives to the one proposed at 68 Pier Road. Below are some examples of their work.

1. Lockside Kitchen Royal Albert Wharf



Lockside Kitchen is a sustainable community kitchen in at the Royal Docks managed GCDA. They host regular Supper Clubs, Pop-ups, and workshops.

2. Greenwich Kitchen Greenwich



Greenwich Kitchen is a high-quality professional production and training kitchen. The kitchen facilitates a range of classes and workshop as well as being hired out for professional use by local businesses.

3. Made in Greenwich Greenwich



Made in Greenwich is GCDA's first shop situated within the historic centre of Greenwich. The shop sells the work of local makers.

The offering for 68 Pier Road

Based on previous experience and consultation with the local community in Erith, GCDA have confirmed their offering for the kitchen as a community café space which serves food that has been prepared off-site and heated and served, such as a soup kitchen that can provide affordable meals and a space that is accessible to all. There is scope for the spaces to be used for evening events that GCDA host, which could include community dinners as well as other events.

Flexible space

As well as providing the kitchen facilities, the proposal includes flexible spaces which will also be managed by GCDA. The day to day access to these spaces are via the courtyard and doors that offer a degree of openness or closure for GCDA to manage depending on the event requirements. The courtyard space is multi use for events or open as a safe space for the community. The lounge to the rear of the unit can be used for more intimate workshops and group events that can be managed by the GCDA and accessed via the kitchen, allowing for ease of control. Dedicated bookable meeting spaces can be used for a variety of purposes from working and meeting to workshops or studio spaces. These flexible spaces are a valuable community resource which has the potential to accommodate a range of activities including; after school club, yoga/pilates/other exercise classes, special interests clubs, private group hire, private lesson hire. The activities and their demand is expected to evolve as the space establishes itself within the community.

Changing Places Toilet

As well as the associated storage space and WC facilities provided, funding has been granted for a Changing Places toilet which are a limited provision yet extremely important for people that may be limited in their own mobility so need equipment to help them either get on the toilet or have their continence pad changed.

Ongoing community involvement

GCDA intend to engage community involvement throughout both the build and the running stages of the project. It is important that the local community are involved with the ongoing development of the proposal to ensure that it remains relevant to them. GCDA are keen to work with and engage local community groups in elements of the construction or/and the production of furniture for the café.

The courtyard space creates an opportunity for providing a display space for local makers to display and sell their products, such as a market arrangement. Other events can also be held here that engage with community makers or groups, such as hosting performances and exhibitions.

6. Design Development

Layout Strategy

The proposed design responds to the budget by dividing the existing unit into a reduced area of (insulated) internal fit out whilst the remaining area of the unit can be utilised as flexible spaces with a reduced level of construction required.

1. 'Skinny' Layout Strategy

This option provides frontage to both the internal and flexible space, however the internal space does not maximise the use of the windows to the east elevation.

2. 'Hopscotch' Layout Strategy

This option provides frontage to both the internal and flexible space, with the internal space then utilising the windows to the east elevation. The flexible space to the rear is then restricted in use due to the positioning and access. This also has a large internal area so more costly.

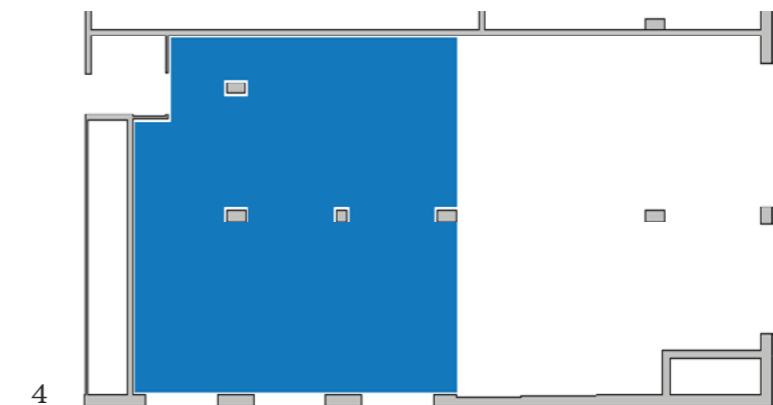
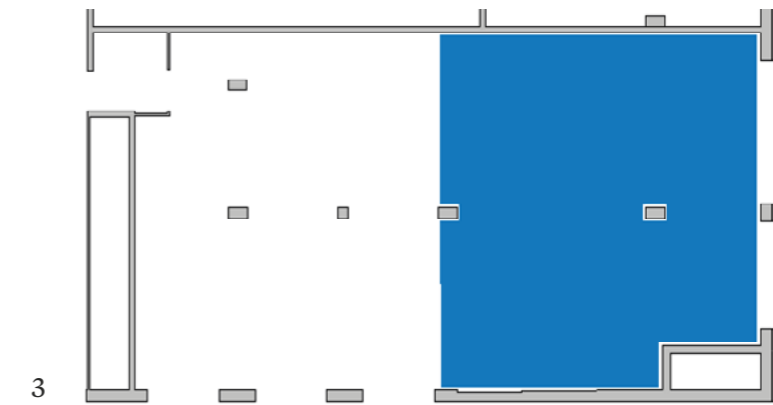
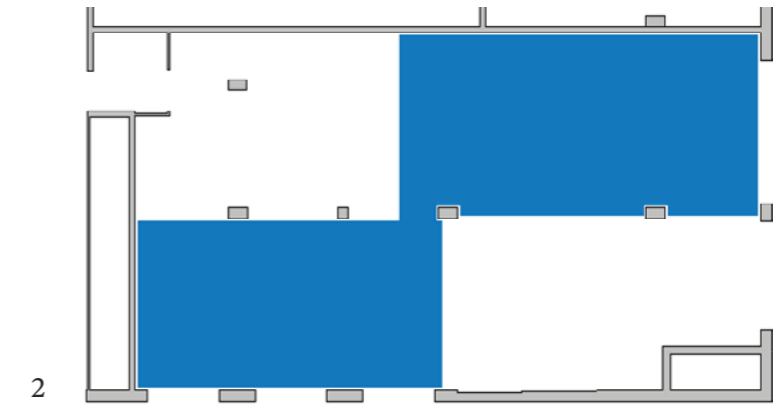
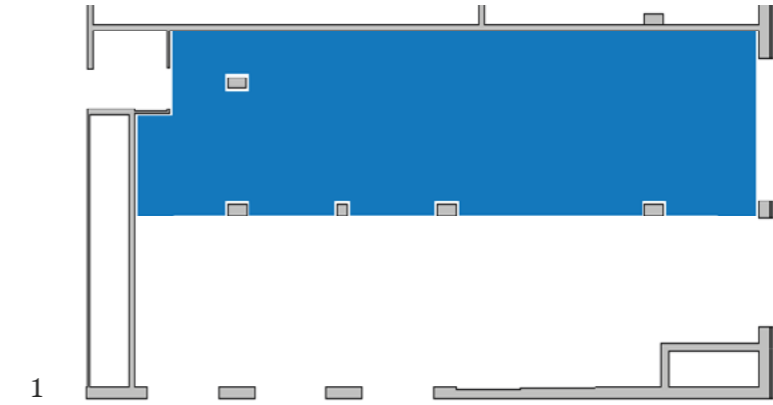
3. 'Front' Layout Strategy

This option provides maximum frontage to the internal space, whilst the flexible spaces utilise the existing windows to the east elevation. With the flexible space located behind, this reduces access and development potential.

4. 'Back' Layout Strategy

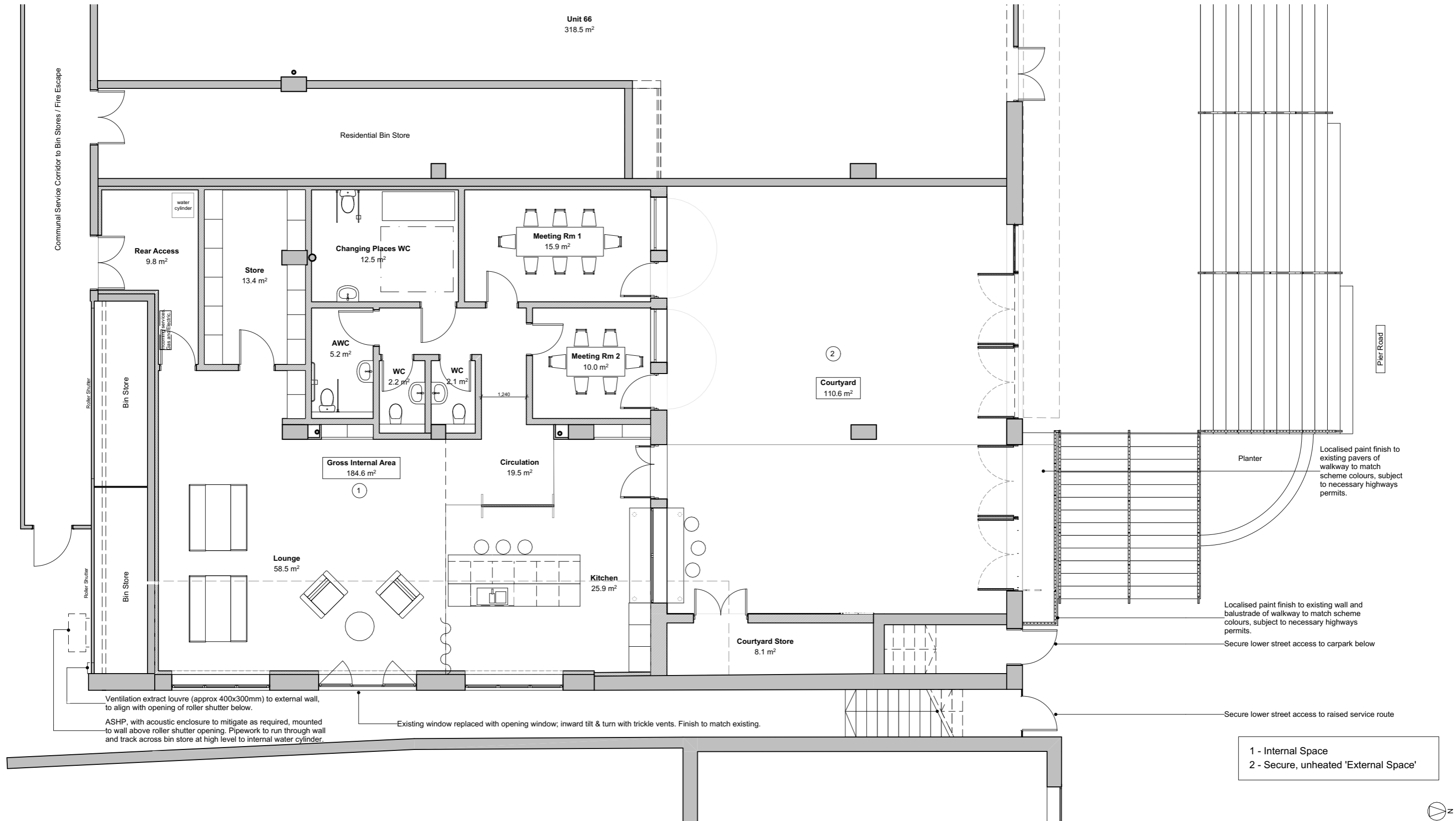
This option provides maximum frontage to the flexible space whilst the internal space utilises the existing windows to the east elevation. This holds the potential for increasing engagement and activation of the community centre uses into the flexible space whilst the flexible space extends the streetscape bringing people into the community centre.

The 'Back' layout strategy was favoured and has been developed into the proposal submitted.



7. Proposed Design

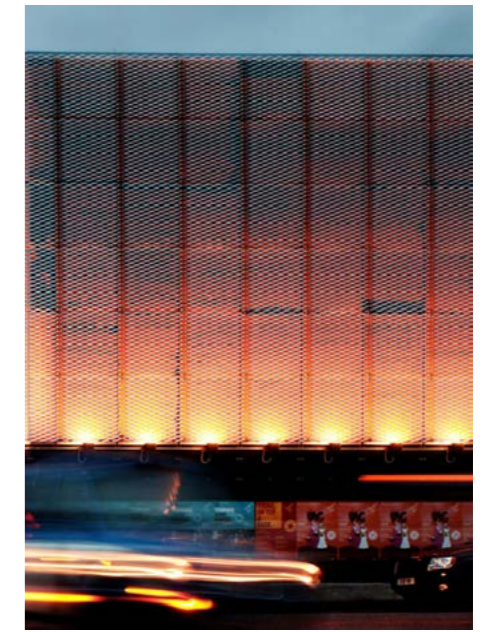
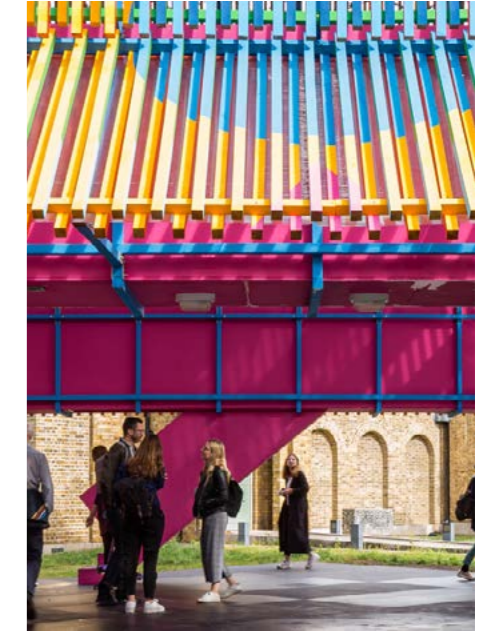
Proposed Ground Floor Plan



8. Active Street Frontage

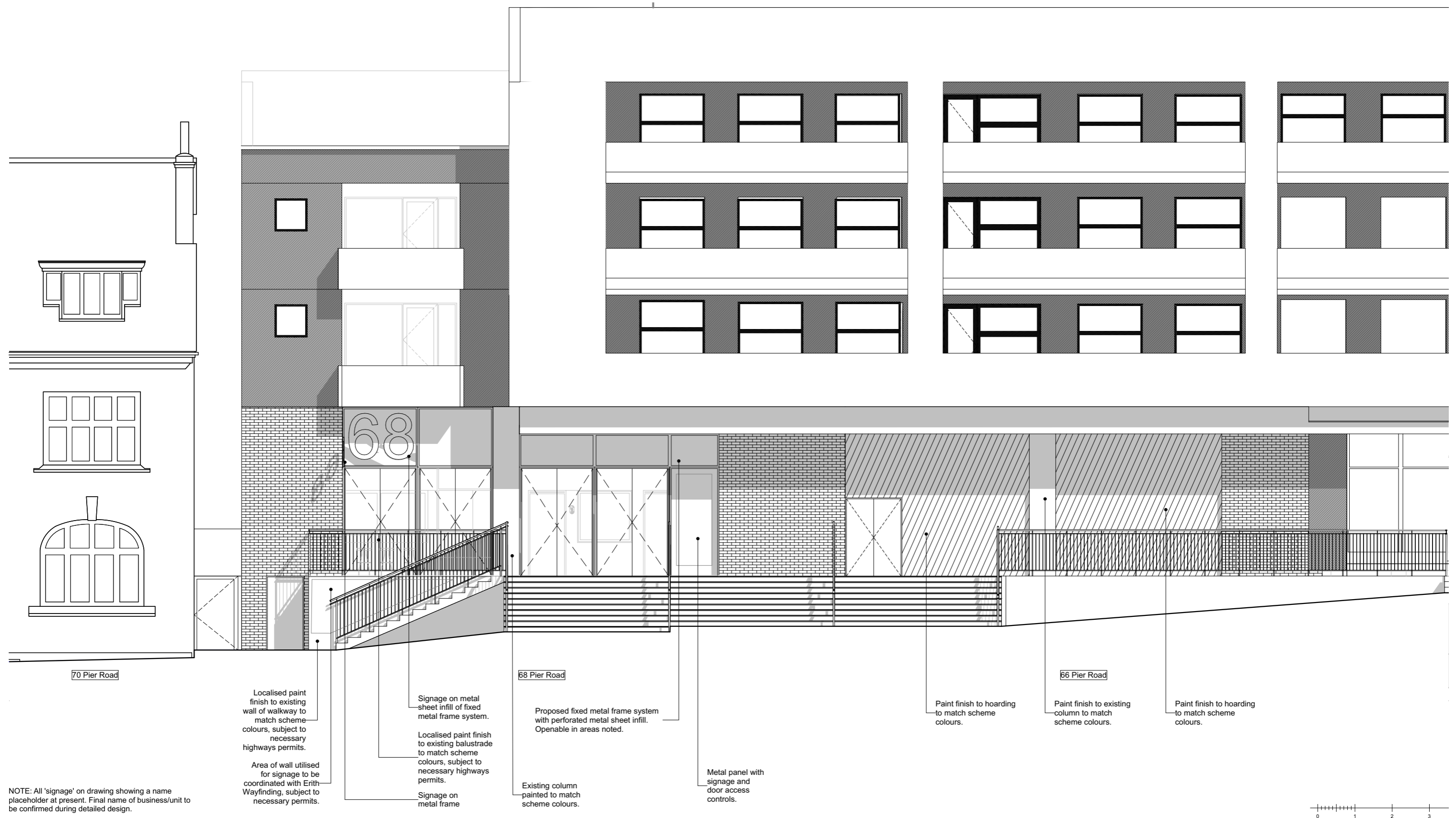
Exterior Material Palette Precedents

- Colourful
- Visual identity
- Bright
- Low cost
- Demountable
- Secondary security
- Allow transparency



9. Proposed Design

Proposed North Elevation



NOTE: All 'signage' on drawing showing a name placeholder at present. Final name of business/unit to be confirmed during detailed design.

10. Design Intent

Character of Spaces

The precedents adjacent provide an indication to the treatment of the fit-out proposed. The character of the spaces reflect the nature of the proposed uses of each space, whilst considering sustainability, budget and community engagement opportunities throughout the project.

The proposed colour scheme allows for the courtyard spaces and street frontage to be vibrant and characterful encouraging awareness of the community centre, whilst being robust. The internal spaces utilise muted tones of these colours to create a more homely environment.

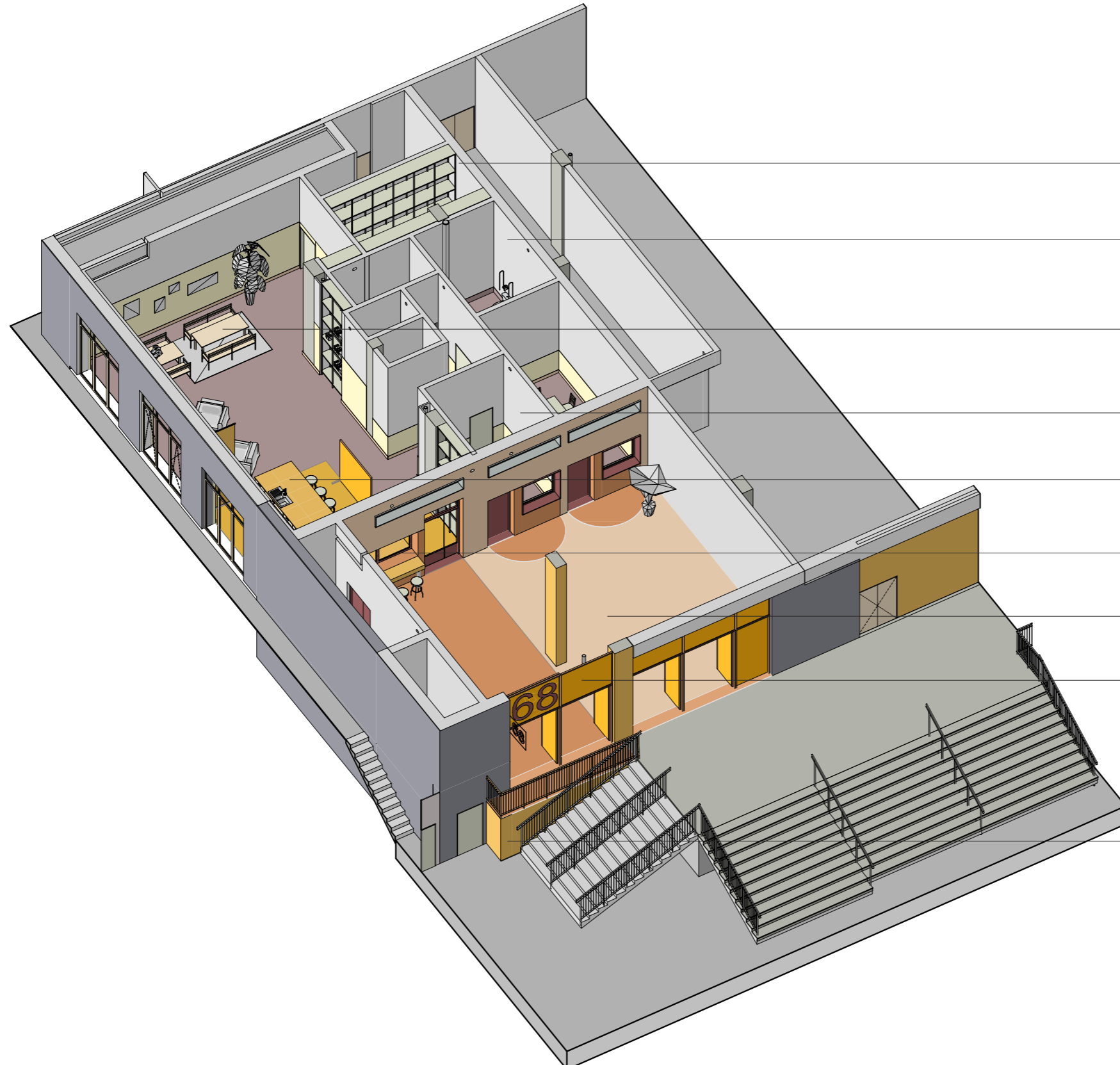
The character of the courtyard will utilise exposed existing surfaces and services, combined with new metal screens, coloured doors and windows and new floor treatment that combine to make an engaging but flexible space.

The internal areas will be insulated and have paint finishes providing opportunity for furnishings to create a flexible yet familiar and comfortable environment for the users. The proposal considers opportunities for re-use or upcycled items that may include some fittings, decorations and furniture.



11. Proposal Overview

Axonometric View of Scheme Design



Storage and back of house, rear access to communal corridor and bin stores.

Changes Places Toilet

Lounge area of homely characteristics as main space to community centre, flexible open plan to host gatherings, events, meetings, workshops or informal conversations. Proposed curtain to separate from kitchen when needed.

Bookable rooms for community use.

Kitchen area, open plan for homely feel.

Hatch from kitchen into courtyard, extending cafe use.

Courtyard, unheated flexible space.

Metal frame with mesh infill of colour finish to match scheme colours. Openable mesh screens create visible connection between courtyard to street whilst providing a secure boundary.

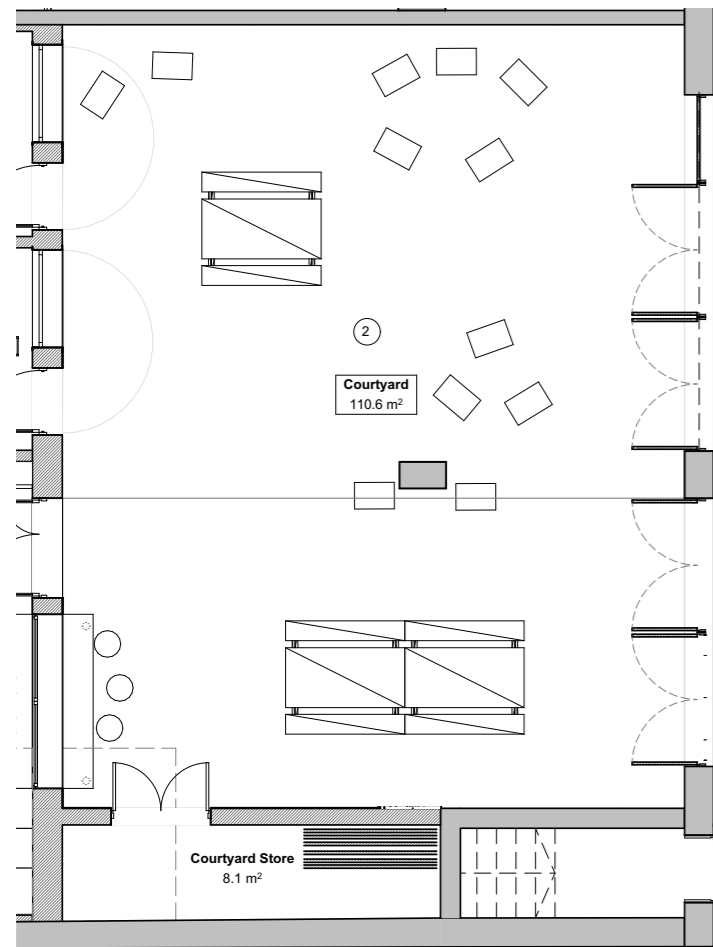
Paint finish to walkway (subject to necessary highways permits) to extend schemes presence and increase street activation.

12. Flexible Community Space

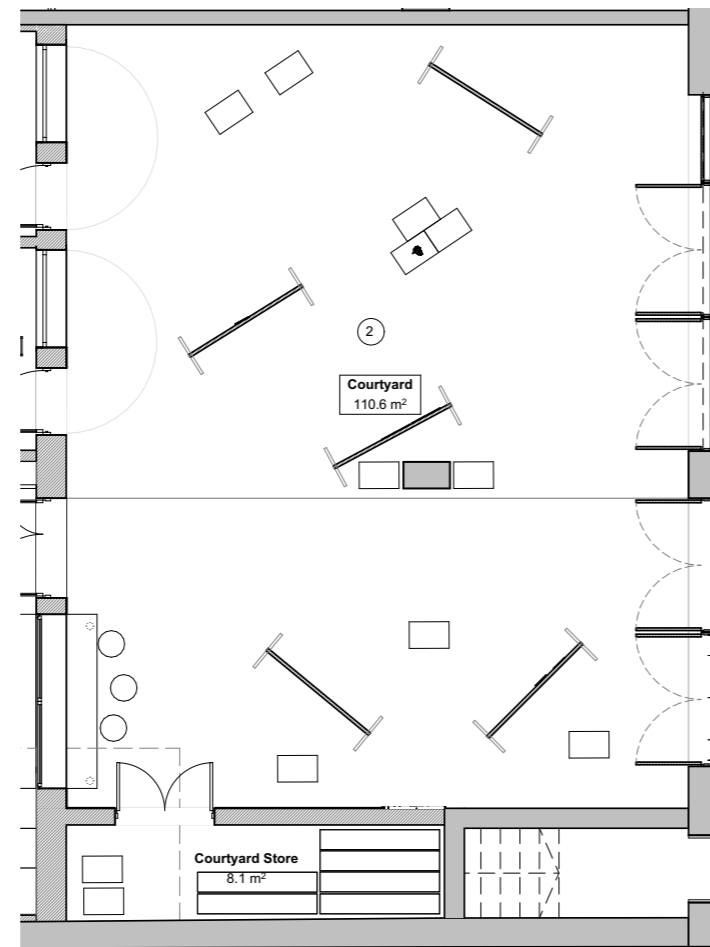
Indicative Courtyard Layouts

The Courtyard: A Multi-use Flexible Space for Community Engagement

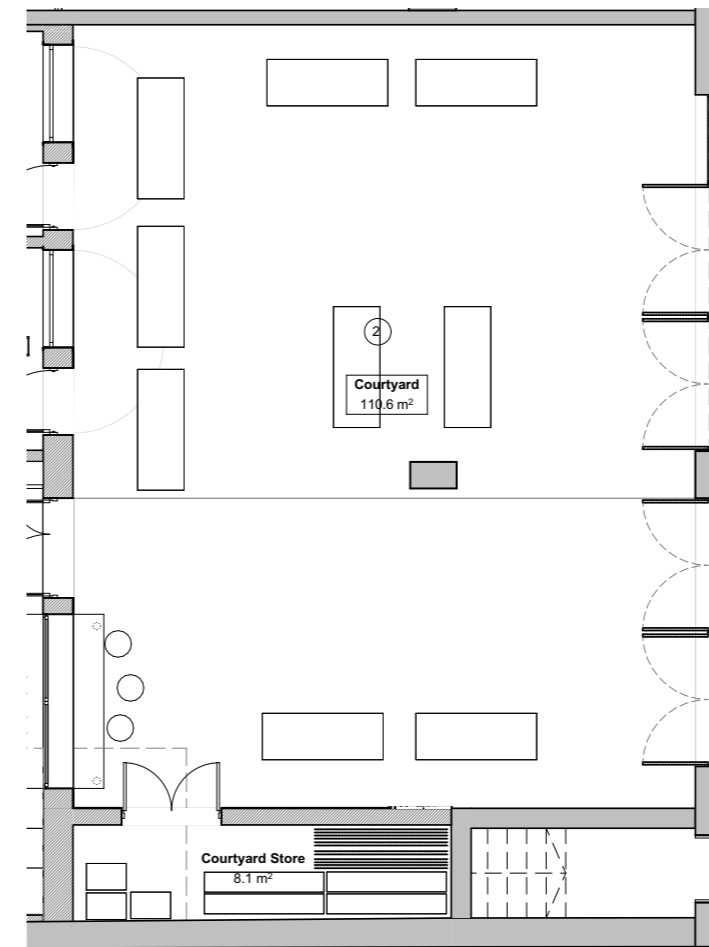
The plan extracts show the proposed courtyard space of the scheme in a variety of indicative layouts demonstrating possible usage and occupation of the space.



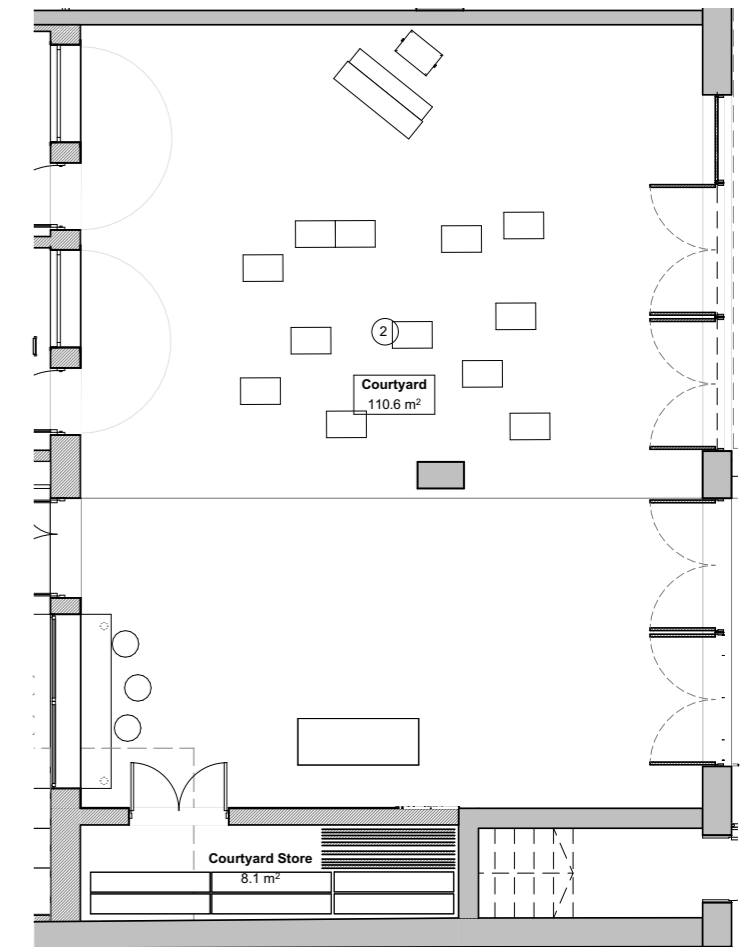
Everyday Use



Exhibition Layout



Market Layout



Performance / Presentation Layout

13. Precedents

Internal / External Character



Minimal Intervention; homely feel

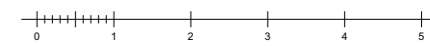
Incorporated signage within bespoke perforated metal cladding

14. Proposed Design

Proposed East Elevation



NOTE: All 'signage' on drawing showing a name placeholder at present. Final name of business/unit to be confirmed during detailed design.

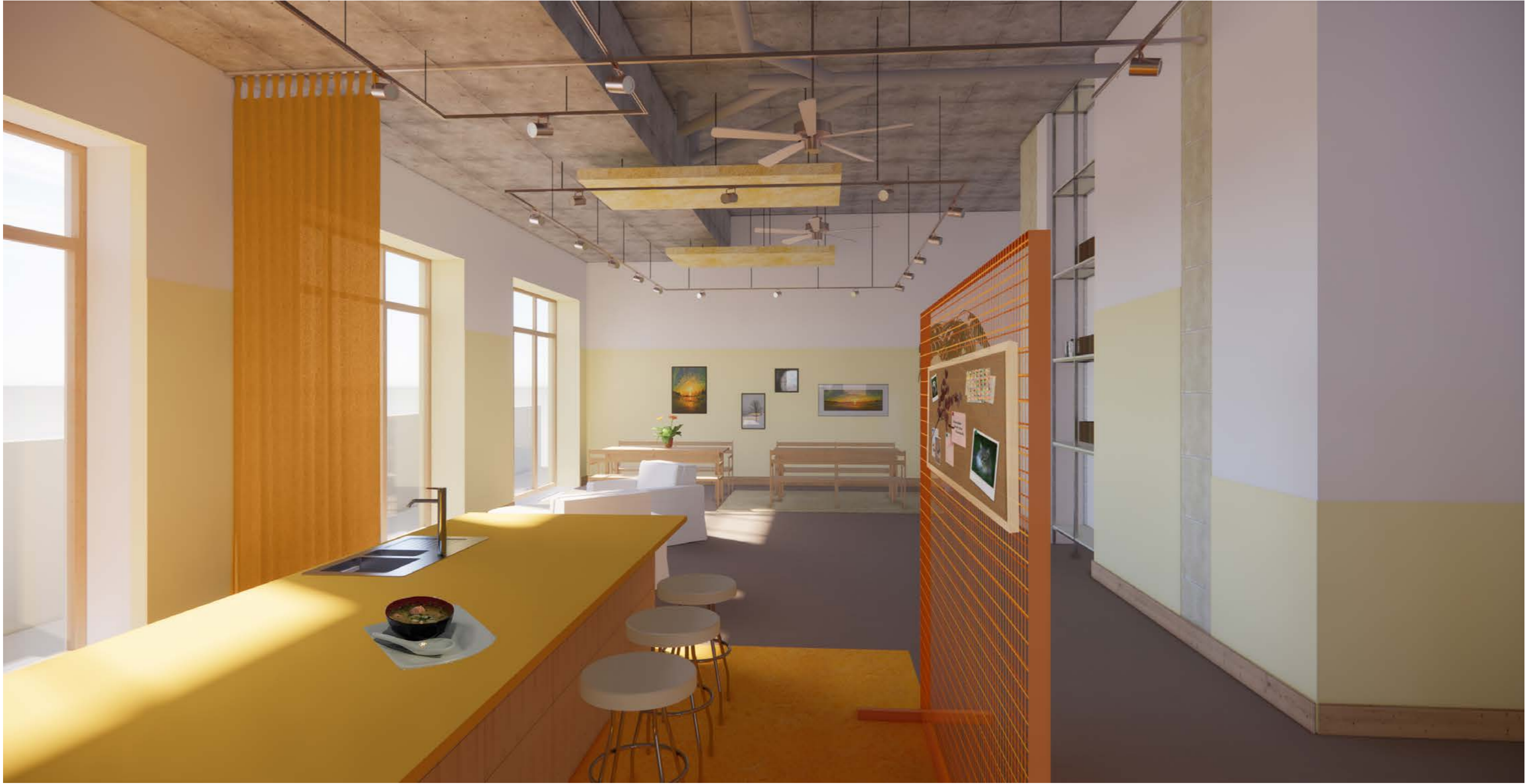


14. Proposed Design

The Courtyard



14. Proposed Design Kitchen and Lounge



14. Proposed Design
External View

