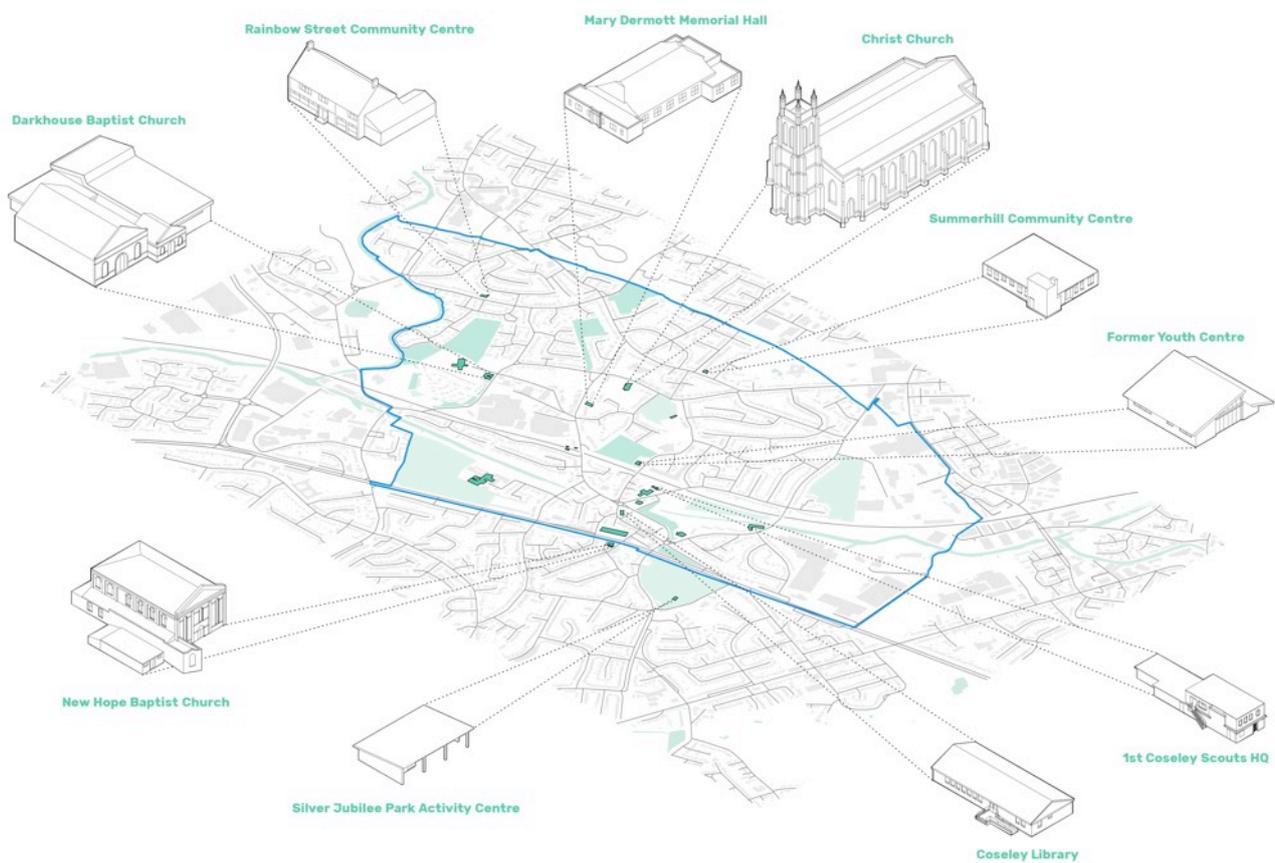


A guide to making changes to welcoming spaces and places

Prepared for East Coseley Big Local by APEC Architects



East Coseley is a connected community in which local people work together and with local organisations to create and maintain vibrant and welcoming activities, events, green spaces and community places, and take responsibility for their economic and environmental future.

In 2019 and 2020, APEC Architects collaborated with East Coseley Big Local to develop a strategic plan for the Big Local funding and legacy. Part of the plan focuses on **creating, maintaining and improving community hubs and green spaces**, with aims to:

- Explore opportunities to create a Big Local hub on the High Street.
- Continue to work with local organisations, and local groups and clubs to create welcoming green spaces and community places.
- Work with APEC Architects to support people who manage and run community buildings to develop knowledge around overseeing cost-effective building/repair programmes and accessing funding beyond Big Local investment.

In October and November 2020, we led two **Understanding our buildings** workshops with people involved in community buildings across Coseley. This document collates the experience and knowledge we shared in these workshops, with additional information, so that building custodians in Coseley can use this as a guide when making changes to their welcoming spaces and places in a strategic way that help them work even better for the people that use them, for many years to come.

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1 | Long-term and strategic thinking



“We need to get that roof leak fixed”.

“We need wifi to support more groups”.

“We need to think about how people can physically distance.”

“The kitchen needs replacing.”

There are many people who are motivated by improving the lives of those in their communities, and many of them are doing amazing work *in spite* of their buildings.

Custodians of community buildings are frequently confronted with challenges that they need to resolve urgently. Even the smallest project can be thought about strategically, in relation to the rest of the building and the wider area.

A **long-term strategic plan** for a building can help inform any decisions.

Some buildings have maintenance plans, which set out when light bulbs need changing, or when roof maintenance is needed, but they don't encourage people to think about whether the building is best serving today's needs and expectations.

A strategic plan should be a live document, that is frequently revisited and appraised against changing needs. It should relate to buildings and the wider area to help people make decisions that are informed by considering the long-term **sustainability** and **resilience** of welcoming spaces and places.

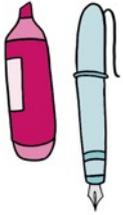
Identifying the potential challenges and barriers

Thinking strategically involves thinking about *all* of the barriers that may prevent people from using a building. These can include:

1. **Accessibility and inclusivity** – people need to be able to easily move around and use spaces to feel welcomed:
 - Steps, changes in levels, or steep ramps.
 - Doors are too narrow to fit a wheelchair or double buggy.
 - No wheelchair accessible toilets.
 - No or limited accessible parking or bicycle parking.
 - Nothing to clearly communicate where the entrance is, what happens in the spaces, or whether the building is open.
 - Doors are too heavy.
 - Lack of a hearing loop.
 - Corridors too narrow to move around easily in a wheelchair.
2. **Function** – some barriers can limit what activities can take place:
 - Lack of compliance with fire safety and building regulations.
 - Spaces too large or small for activities.
 - Spaces limited to one or few uses for religious, security or safeguarding reasons.
 - Lack of storage.
 - Lack of sound insulation between spaces.
 - No safe outdoor space for activities.
 - Limited quantity of sockets.
 - No or limited wifi.
 - Lack of appropriate equipment (kitchen, performance etc).
 - Lack of flexibility.
3. **Quality and Health** – spaces need to feel healthy for people to occupy for periods of time:
 - Lack of daylight.
 - Lack of ventilation.
 - Damp.
 - Unattractive or dingy spaces.
 - Flickering or buzzing lights.
 - Noisy heating.
 - Fluctuating temperatures.
 - Roof leaks.
 - Feeling unsafe when it is dark.
4. **Running costs** – heating and lighting bills can be prohibitive, or opening times may be limited by who is available to manage the spaces.

Example of making changes without a strategic plan

"We've just paid for a wall to be decorated but new funding has come in for insulating buildings. We wish we thought of insulating before spending money on decorating the wall because it will now be wasted."



Activity

What challenges or barriers limit the use of your building?

Write down as many ideas as you can.

2 | Funding your project

The basic building blocks of funding applications

There is lots of funding available. You just need to know how to approach funding applications.



"We want to build a new hall."

"We want to recruit a youth worker."

"We want to set up a women's football team."

"We want a new boiler."

Whatever you would like funding for, the basic building blocks of a successful funding application are:



1.
How do
people
experience
life now?

2.
The project /
funding request

3.
How do you
want people
to experience
life?

Example

There are older teenagers in my community who are at risk of becoming involved in gangs.

I want to have a parade of elephants down the street every second Sunday.

I want to give them better life aspirations and choices.

The project itself is the secondary element of the funding application. The key part of the application is how you get people from the first block (how they are experiencing life now) to the third block (how you want them to experience life). The starting point is what the **needs** are in your community, and how you can meet these needs.

Funding is about people

The most important thing to remember in any project or funding application is that funders are not concerned with how many brick you need, or the types of doors you choose. They need to be confident that your project is delivering **outcomes for people**.

Funding application example 1

Our boiler is 20 years old has stopped working. We host lots of groups in our building. To carry on running our groups, we need to replace our boiler.

Funding application example 2

We are a busy community centre but we have noticed in the winter that less people visit us or participate in activities. We have spoken to people and they have told us they would prefer to stay at home to be warm rather than visit our community centre which is too cold for them. This means that some people are not seeing other people for a whole week. To help them keep in touch with the community and improve their wellbeing, we would like funding to replace our boiler.

The funding application examples above are for the same project, but the second example is much more likely to be successful because it focuses on the **needs of people**.

This approach also applies to heritage funding. The funders won't be concerned about failing stonework; they will want to know how your project will enable more people to engage with heritage.

How has Covid affected funding?

Covid has caused several funders to pause their funding schemes, or changed their criteria to focus on responding to Covid, and there are still plenty of unknowns.

However, given the catastrophic effect that Covid has had on community cohesion, as funding begins to reopen it will be even more focussed on bringing communities back together in a safe, welcoming and empowering way.

Keep people at the heart of what you do and you won't go far wrong.

Asset based community development focuses on how the community can be empowered to use their own gifts, skills and talents to solve their own problems.

Traditional approach

We think people need to learn IT skills so we will provide IT classes.

Asset based community development

We want to provide a space where people can come together and address their own challenges.

Useful funding links



<https://www.fundingcentral.org.uk/default.aspx>

<https://www.threesixtygiving.org/>

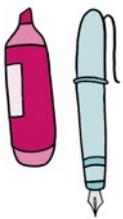
Example of turning barriers into a case for change

Our community centre was built a hundred years ago as a memorial to those who had fallen in the Great War. It's not listed but is much loved by many in the area and our community marks remembrance day there every year. It's quite a landmark in the centre of our neighbourhood.

In recent years, it's become used less and less, as we are aware that the facilities and condition are not up to expected standards. Until a couple of years ago, we held lots of activities for older people including hot lunches as we have a good catering kitchen. However, our boiler broke and we couldn't afford to replace it. We've relied on portable heaters since but many of the older people found it too cold. Many people also find the entrance steps very difficult. We do have a portable ramp but there's not always a volunteer around who is strong enough to safely put it into place. Because of this, we can't guarantee wheelchair access.

AgeUK are really keen to run a twice-weekly Dementia Cafe in our building, which there's lots of demand for. An arts charity also wanted to use our hall for art therapy but they need access to a sink, separate to those in the kitchen and WCs. Neither group can use it in its current condition.

We are really excited by the opportunities, but need to look at our building holistically through an architectural feasibility study and that includes seeing what else people in our community want, so that our building can best serve our neighbourhood for years to come!



Activity

Try to develop your own case for change.

Refer back to the challenges and barriers you identified in Section 1 | Long-term and strategic thinking.

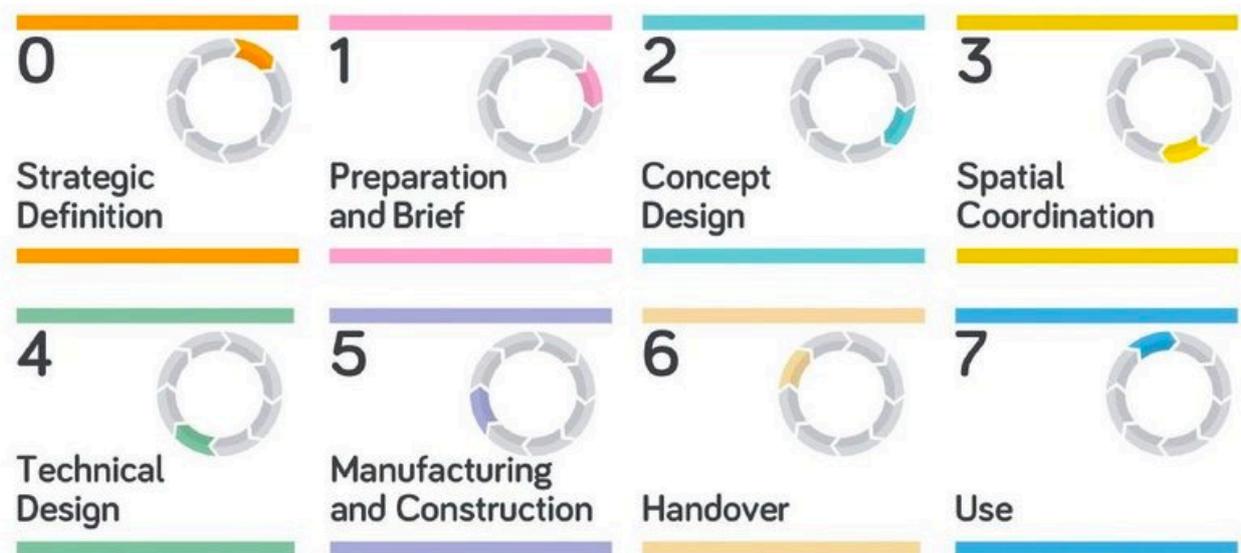
3 | How to start a building project

RIBA Plan of Work

When talking about projects, construction professionals will often talk about the RIBA Work Stages. It's worth any building custodian knowing a bit about this before embarking on a building project.

The **Royal Institute of British Architects** (RIBA) set out stages that construction professionals work to, called the **RIBA Plan of Work**. This is an industry standard way of describing the different stages of the construction process

These are different stages to get you from the initial idea of a building project, through design, permissions and construction to you moving in.



RIBA Plan of Work 2020 stages Credit: RIBA

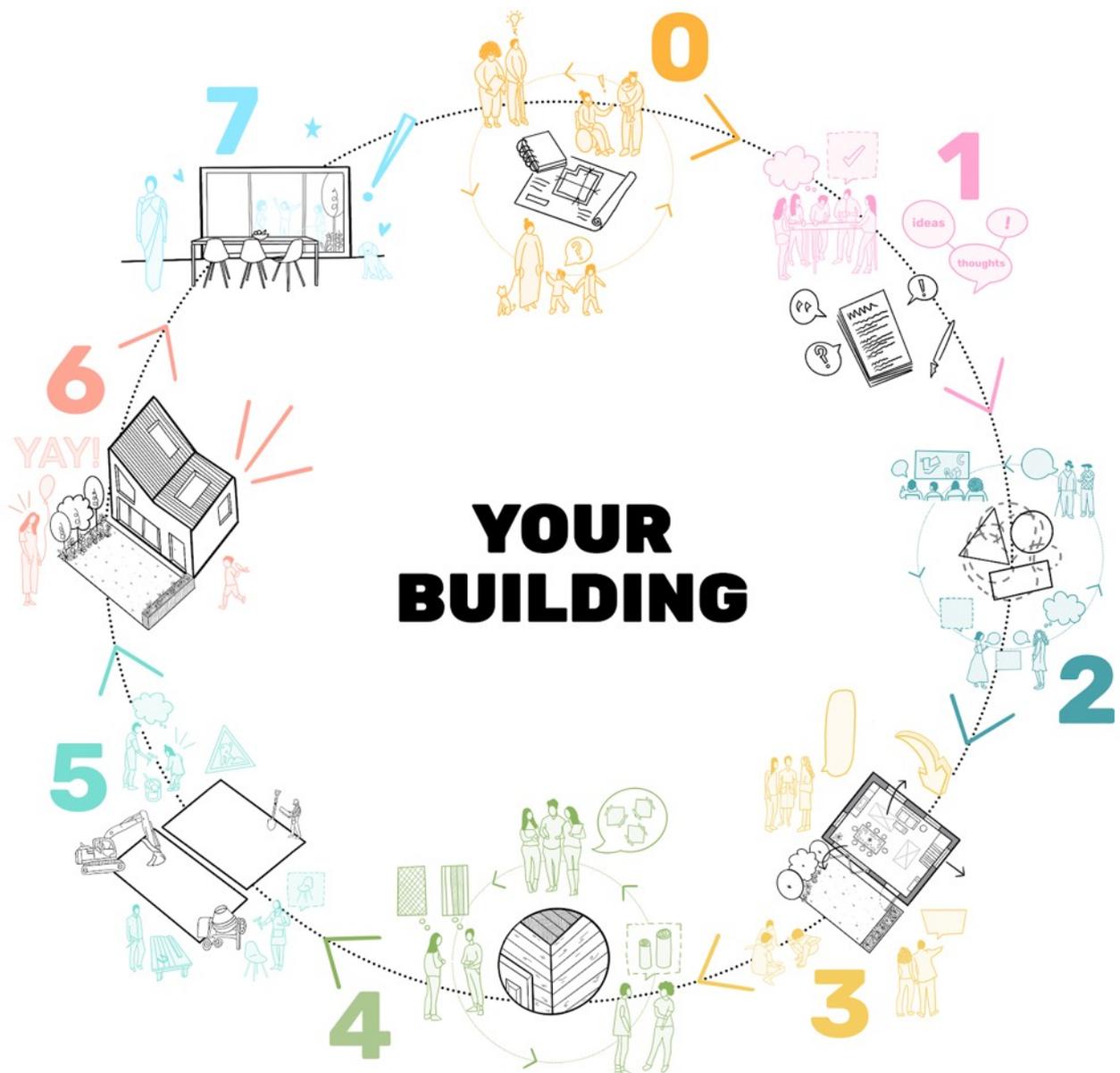


For more information on the RIBA Plan of Work, you can visit the RIBA's website:
<https://www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/resources-landing-page/riba-plan-of-work>

A guide to making changes to welcoming spaces and places

Rather than see this as a linear process, it can help to think of it as a **circular process**, or a cycle in the life of your building.

While you are using your building (Stage 7 Use), you will learn more about what works and doesn't work in your building, as well as become aware of any changing needs by the people that use the building. This can lead to an idea or need for a building project, which will lead you into Stage 0 Strategic Definition.



Finding your Steering Group



The journey from inception to completion of a building project can be long, can be bumpy and can require a lot of energy. It's really important to assemble the right people, your **Steering Group**, to embark on that journey together, with a shared vision (even if you don't know what that vision looks like yet).

The success of a project very often comes down to how the Steering Group works together:



- Don't do it on your own.
- Vision and strong leadership.
- Cohesive team.
- Open-minded and positive.
- Able to make decisions collectively.
- Representative of range of users.

Tip

Some groups fall into the trap of having representatives from every group that uses the building but this can lead to people feeling isolated or needing to 'fight their corner'. It can be better to have a person with a general awareness of different groups and viewpoints.



steering group

Some Steering Groups can spend a lot of time thinking of what the solution is to a challenge or barrier before approaching construction professionals (your design team) who can help with this initial stage.

The best way for a Steering Group to prepare for starting a project is to talk through the following questions:

- What is your shared vision?
- Is your vision strategic, long-term and sustainable? Where might you be in 5 to 10 years?
- Do you have a budget, or an idea of how the project will be funded?
- What information do you already have about your building and activities?
- Are there any 'no go's' (whilst remaining as open-minded as possible)?
- What is your commitment to the environment?

Finding your brief

Before you engage with construction professionals you will need to provide them with a brief for your project:

- Give your design team challenges, rather than solutions.
- Avoid preparing a detailed brief and schedule of areas or rooms.
- Provide a written document that encapsulates what you know already:
 - Your vision
 - Your values
 - Challenges that you have identified
 - The activities you want to accommodate
 - Operational requirements
 - Plenty of adjectives for how you want the place to feel.

This initial brief will evolve throughout the project as your architect interrogates the challenges with you. Their objectivity and creativity can unlock opportunity from these challenges.

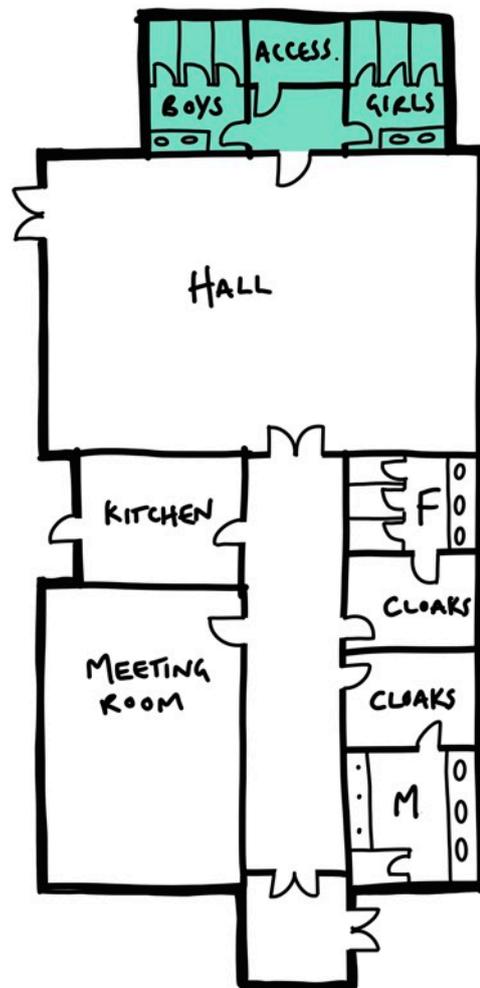
A guide to making changes to welcoming spaces and places

An example of a brief based on a solution

We need a new extension block of children's toilets at the end of our church hall. The drawings should also include an Accessible WC there too with a baby change shelf.

A response to a brief based on a solution

An extension block as described is drawn up, submitted for planning permission and built at the end of the hall. It comprises modern children's WCs cubicles; 3 girls' and 3 boys'. An Accessible WC is provided separately too with a baby change shelf.



An example of a brief based on a challenge

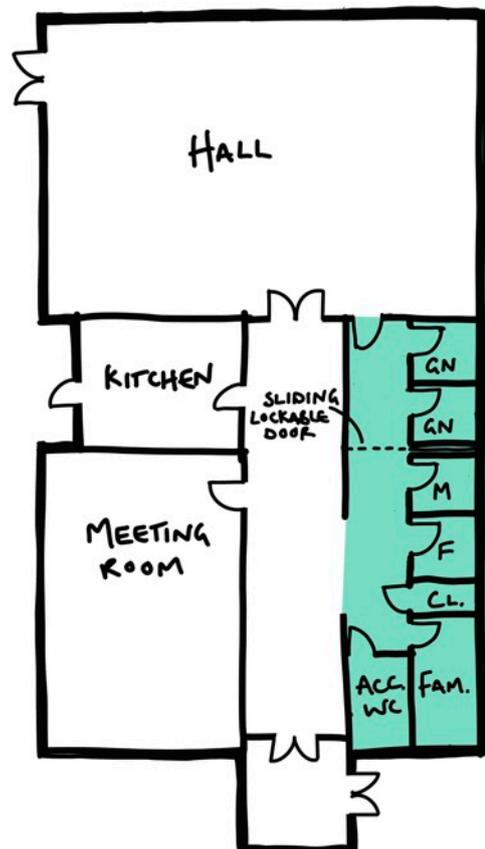
When our children's groups are in our church hall, no other users can use the meeting room for safeguarding reasons as the WCs are accessible from the main entrance hall. There are male and female WCs and cloakrooms in the building which are in a poor condition, and are badly laid out. The cloakroom areas are never used. We have no Accessible WC. Parents often complain that the only changing table is in the female WC.

Our meeting room is really useful and holds about 15 people. We get lots of interest in hiring it out in the evenings from the local community, but because children's activities are on 3 nights a week, we are limited. We could probably hire it twice over. We also know that the condition of the WCs puts other people off from hiring the building for private functions.

A response to a brief based on a challenge

The existing WCs are reconfigured to provide 1 wheelchair accessible WC, and 5 individual WC rooms; 1 male, 1 female, 2 gender neutral and 1 extra large family WC with space for a pushchair and baby change table.

The unisex WCs are accessed from a lobby that can also be directly accessed from the Hall, and the door from the lobby to the main entrance can be locked. This means that children's groups can have exclusive access to those WCs during operation. That leaves 3 WCs available for other groups. All are fitted out to a high quality and to current standards.



Outcomes to a brief based on a solution

All the fundraising goes towards the new toilet block.

The church can't afford to improve the existing WCs which deteriorate further.

Potential users of the meeting room are put off by the bad condition of the toilets and the fact that the only Accessible WC is through the hall which is often in use by children's groups.

The children's WCs are off-putting for people considering hiring the hall for private functions- primary colours, children's motifs and low sinks and mirrors.

The building is not used any more intensively than previously, and there is no increase in income. The volunteer cleaning team have got more WCs to clean.

Heating/ lighting costs have risen due to the extra floor area.

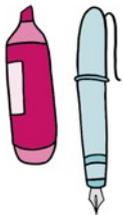
Outcomes to a brief based on a challenge

The children's groups are pleased that they have good quality WCs. They've bought a step so that younger children can reach the sinks.

The improved WCs mean that new users are attracted to hire the Hall, and the meeting room. In addition to the Church's use, a wide range of organisations are attracted including those offering services to the elderly, disabled and young families due to the good facilities. More people in the community are getting to know the church.

Revenue increases, and running costs have gone down slightly as the new WCs use less water, and energy efficient lighting and hot water heaters were installed. The cleaning team can clean WCs quicker as better specification.

A second phase to build an additional meeting room off the main entrance is being planned.



Activity

If you were to start from scratch, what key things would be in your brief? What are your aspirations?

Think about the types of activities, spaces, atmosphere, environment.

What challenges are there in meeting your aspirations?

Refer back to the challenges you identified in Section 1 | Long-term and strategic thinking.

Identify opportunities that could help you meet your aspirations.

Finding your design team

A range of professionals are needed to deliver building projects, who would form your design team.

Usually a project starts with a lead professional, who will help you appoint the rest of your design at relevant points throughout the project. This can be a:

- **Project manager**
- **Surveyor** - Some Steering Groups go directly to a surveyor to produce drawings for a project with a pre-determined solution.
- **Architect** - Architects have skills of both a project manager and surveyor, with additional creative skills and experience with people's needs to determine whether the nature of your project is something very different to what you may have first thought. This can be key for any funding applications you would like to make.

Other members of the design team can eventually include:

- Fundraiser
- Quantity Surveyor / Cost Consultant
- Structural Engineer
- Landscape Architect
- Principal Designer - to comply with CDM Regulations 2015
- Building Services Consultant / Mechanical & Electrical (M&E) Engineer
- Interior Designer
- Ecologist
- Arboriculturist
- Archaeologist
- Artist

Working with your design team

The best projects are where there is a relationship between client and design team, where client can be challenging, honest, visionary, positive but doesn't try to do the design team's job for them. Things to consider include:

- **Clear communication routes** with the Steering Group.
- **Clear roles and responsibilities.**
- **Give them challenges, not solutions.**
- **Make sure you get the best out of them** in the skills in which they are trained... and don't expect them to be experts in areas that they aren't.
- **Ask questions and be honest** if you don't understand or like something.

What do architects do?

“Architects will champion [your] vision. Architects apply impartial and creative thinking... They are problem solvers... They will work to understand your needs and support your strategic decision making. Architects add value...”

RIBA Plan of Work 2020 stages Credit: RIBA

Good architects do the following:

- **Create designs not drawings.** Drawings are the output of an in-depth design process. It can be quite easy for someone to draw a beautiful and arresting scheme that attracts people, but the design itself could have little substance. Architects are trained to go through an in-depth design process to ensure a scheme meets people’s needs, before creating drawings.
- **Gain a deep understanding of your requirements** through listening and research.
- **Offer objective, pragmatic, holistic and creative solutions** to meet YOUR vision and that are mindful of your budget, building management capacity and ongoing sustainability.
- **Communicate ideas** effectively in an inclusive way.
- **Add value** with efficient and sustainable designs.
- Apply their technical expertise to **ensure all relevant regulations and standards are met.**
- **Help plan your project to meet ongoing operational needs** through the construction process.
- **Guide you through the construction process** as an independent advisor to you, whilst ensuring you meet your contractual obligations to minimise risk of litigation.
- **Ensure that the building is handed over fully complete** to the required quality, fit for purpose and meeting all legal requirements.



For more information on working with an architect, you can visit the RIBA’s website:

<https://www.architecture.com/working-with-an-architect/why-use-an-architect#:~:text=Architects%20apply%20impartial%20and%20creative,best%20return%20on%20your%20investment.>



Selecting your architect

The relationship between a client and an architect is often a long one! Even on a small project with not many ‘bumps’ on the ride, it is usually longer than a year from inception to completion, so it is important that you feel comfortable with them. Here some things to consider when selecting an architect:

- **Are they an architect?** Qualifications and memberships matter. In the UK, the title ‘architect’ is protected for people who are registered with Architects Registration Board (ARB). However, there is no protection of function for architects in the UK, so anyone can design a building, and submit planning and building regulation applications. People who aren’t architects do not need to comply with a code of conduct or professional standards, or even have Professional Indemnity Insurance.

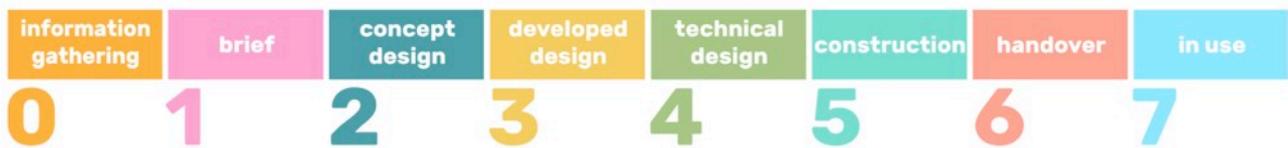


To find out whether someone is an architect, you can visit ARB’s website:

<https://arb.org.uk/public-information/>

- **Are they an RIBA Chartered architect or practice?** These architects need to comply with professional standards in addition to ARB’s requirements,
- **Do they have any Conservation Accreditation** (if there are heritage assets)?
- **Have they got experience in this type of project?**
- **Are they used to non-commercial clients?**
- **Do you get along with them?**
- **Do they understand you and your vision?**
- **Do you like their design approach?**
- **Can they lead/ bring together a design team?**
- **How do they ensure cost control?**

4 | The feasibility study (Stages 0-2)



There can be a tendency for people to rush through a project to reach a particular goal or a predetermined outcome for their building. It is really important at the start of this process to make sure that the need for changes to a building are fully understood for both short-term and long-term needs. This is particularly important for community buildings, where resources are limited, and where communities want these buildings to stay in use for as long as possible.

You might have quite a clear idea of what your building needs: it could be to repair a roof, to refurbish a kitchen, to install a ramp, to install wifi, or to upgrade your heating. No matter how small the change, it will cost time and money to make happen. This is where feasibility studies are helpful.



The process of the feasibility study can take you to Stage 2 Concept Design, A feasibility study can:

- Help building custodians to make **strategic** and **holistic** decisions to minimise resource wastage.
- Open up routes and possibilities for **future funding**.

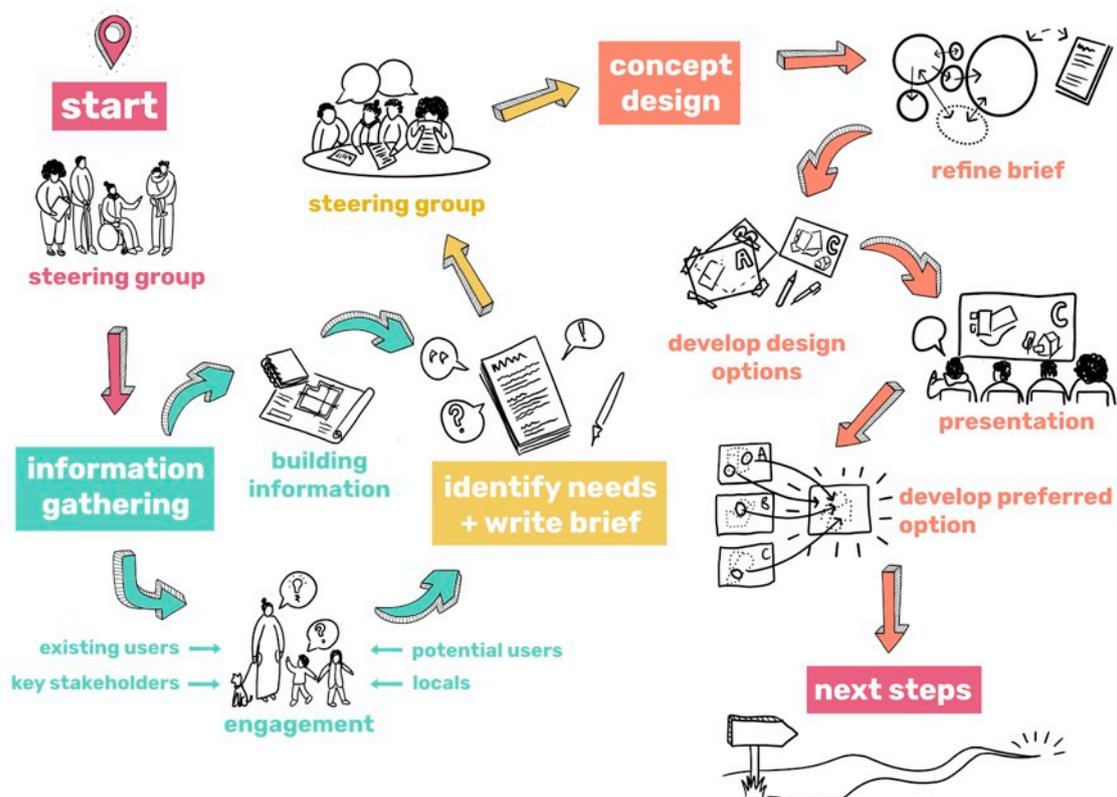
Example of a project without a feasibility study

A community building group have paid for a toilet extension because they feel the old toilets put groups off from using the building. When the extension is completed, they find that the number of visitors has not increased. They eventually receive feedback that people avoid their facilities because they feel like it is unwelcoming from the outside, and there's not level access into or throughout the building. The building group decide to address these issues, but realise the recent toilet extension completely blocks the only place they could create a welcoming and accessible entrance. So they either have to keep it as it is, or demolish it.

A feasibility study is a chance to take a step back and find out:

- What the existing and potential building users **need**
- What current **barriers** or challenges are preventing people from using the building
- What **changes** are possible to meet immediate need, and ensure the long-term use of the building

Feasibility studies help to unearth all the needs, barriers and possibilities so building custodians can consider all of these things at the same time, and figure out which barriers can be overcome as a priority and in a way that doesn't hinder future changes when more funding becomes available. The process of the study can look like:





Information gathering

Once an architect is appointed, they start with getting to know you. They usually have an initial conversation with the Steering Group about your vision for the project, the challenges and requirements in broad terms, including the budget, what are your sustainability aims, and your operational requirements.

Then we move onto information gathering, where they find as much as possible about the community, site and existing buildings.

This stage includes gathering **objective data** which can include:

- Drawings - OS plan, level survey, building survey, utility/drainage layouts, tree surveys, parking layouts or numbers
- Building fabric condition surveys or Quinquennial Inspections
- Legal information - ownership, deeds, tenant agreements, rights of way
- Adjoining owners - disputes that may affect proposals or 'friendly agreements'
- Asbestos Management Surveys
- Historical information - photos or drawings
- Access Audit / DDA Compliance documents
- Fire escape plans / risk assessments
- Statement of Need
- Previous proposals from other consultants
- Planning History
- Listed Building descriptions
- List of existing user groups
- Activity timetable
- Staff roles

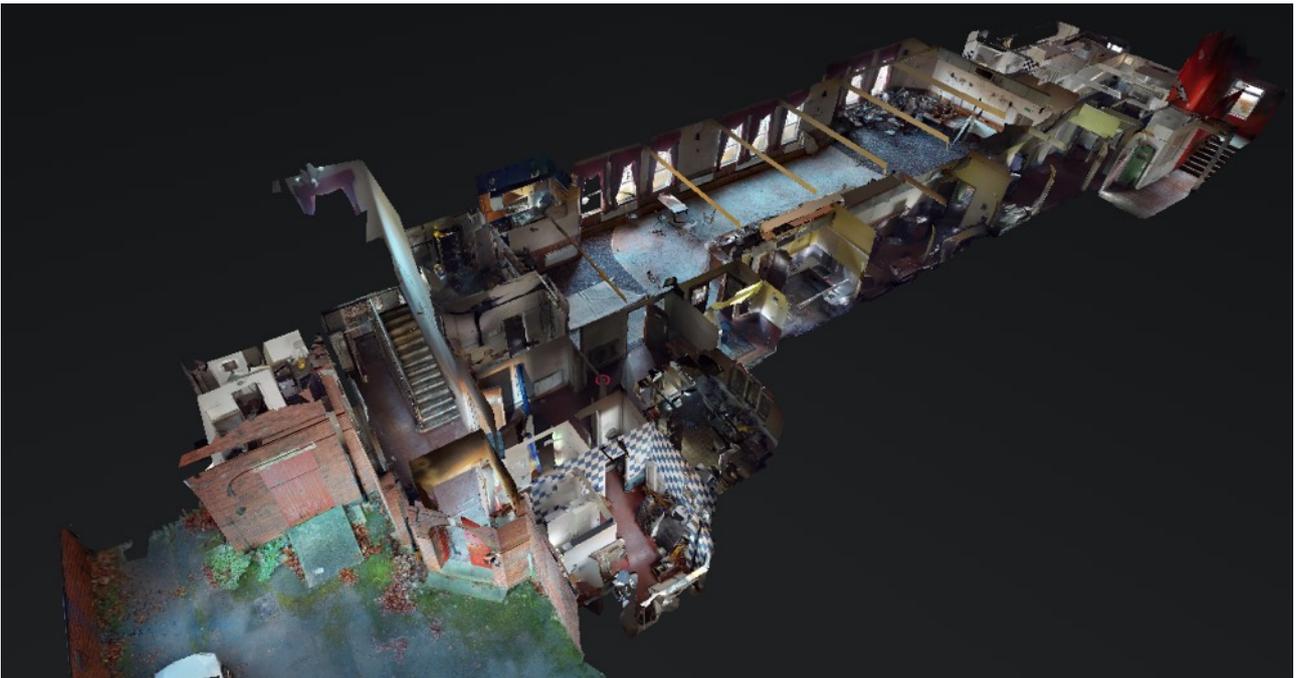
As a building custodian, you might have a lot of this information already. If key information is missing (e.g. existing building plans), the architect can determine if these are essential for the study, or if they could be provided at a later stage.

A guide to making changes to welcoming spaces and places

As a minimum, your architect would begin with **desktop study** research which will include things such as the site history, local planning policies that they need to be mindful of, and analysis of any information you have about the site and buildings.

Your architect will also advise on what **surveys** you will need to obtain before design work can commence. This can include:

- Floor plans - these need to be accurately scaled, and provided in a Computer Aided Design (CAD) format such as DWG.
- Elevations - drawings of the outside of the building
- Sections - cutaway drawings to show floor and ceiling levels, and roof pitch
- Topographical survey - site levels
- Tree surveys - including the condition of the trees and the extent of tree root protection areas



An example of a 3D point cloud survey that creates a model you can explore. It is a useful tool for the design team, and a way to engage people with the building if they cannot physically visit it.

With existing buildings, it is also worth undertaking **building inspections**. This would be a visual inspection of the building fabric, followed by a report that would identify areas that need repair or maintenance, as well as the urgency of these so you can consider this in your long-term plan and budgeting for the building. This is also a service that a surveyor could provide for you.



Stakeholder engagement

The information gathering stage also includes gathering **subjective data** from people, which funders will be particularly interested in.

Engaging with stakeholders can lead to:

- A better understanding of how the **building operates**.
- Learning about the **community's memories** of your building.
- Finding out **unexpected barriers** to people using the building
- Uncovering **opportunities** and strengthening your own **networks**.
- Understanding how **different community facilities** can complement each other, rather than compete.
- Local people feeling **valued** having participated in your study.
- Additional **funding**.
- Stronger **planning** applications supported by local people.

This is also an opportunity for building custodians to broaden their **networks**, and develop relationships with existing and new contacts. These contacts might have skills, knowledge, resources or connections that could have a positive impact on the building's long-term future.

Your architect would first talk to the Steering Group about who your **stakeholders** are: who currently uses your building, who could use it, and who has previously been unable to use it. They would also ask you to identify any other stakeholders you would like to engage. These could be local residents, groups, Councillors, police, local businesses etc.

These discussions will help the architect identify who they should reach out to, and how they can do it in an inclusive and accessible way.

Inclusive engagement is about designing a strategy that meaningfully reaches as many people as possible.

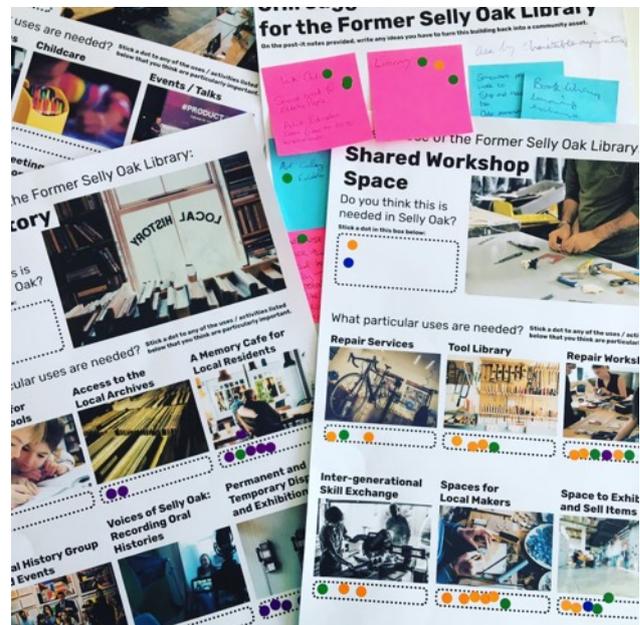
Accessible engagement is about how you go about it to overcome things like language barriers, access to internet, or even confidence.

Methods for engagement and participation



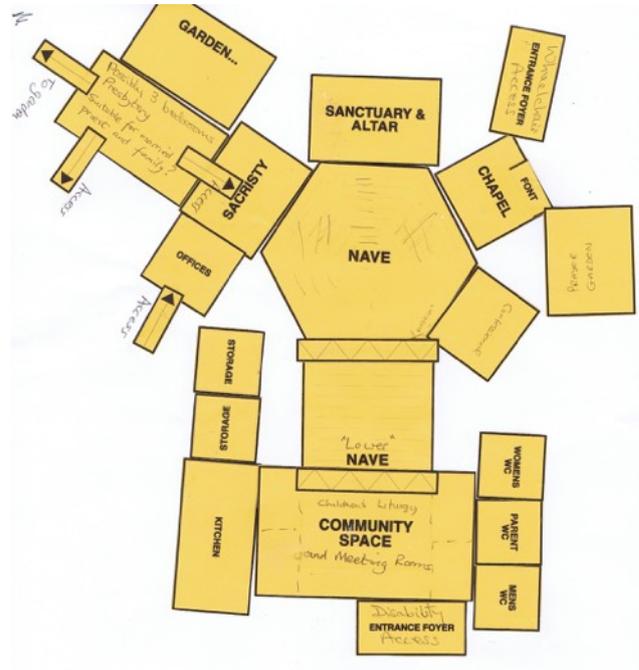
Group discussions can be facilitated to discuss particularly themes, or may include activities such as **network mapping** to encourage participants to reach out to their own networks to contribute to the engagement process.

Questionnaires can be particularly useful to gain detailed opinions from people who are not comfortable with sharing their thoughts with others, or who are unable to attend events and activities. These can be made available and shared online.



Drop-in interactive activities such as displays with inspiration and opportunities for people to mark or vote their preferences and jot down their own ideas can be useful for drop-in chats, or to be left out for people to contribute to over time.

A guide to making changes to welcoming spaces and places

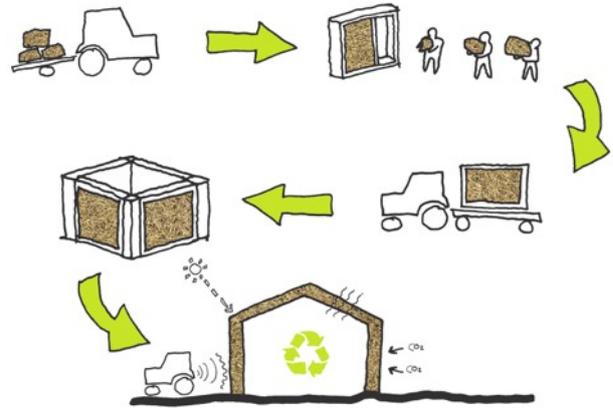


Modelling workshops in 2D and 3D are useful for participants to get a hands-on understanding of the project and stimulate their imaginations.



Strategic workshops with maps and group activities can help people think about things in a different way, share their ideas, and collectively develop a vision.

A guide to making changes to welcoming spaces and places



Series of design workshops and talks can be facilitated, for example with young people, to help them feel empowered by more actively being involved in the process, as well as helping them discover new skills and knowledge along the way.

Types of responses

Stakeholder engagement can result in a variety of responses. **Qualitative information** can be obtained if it would be helpful to know for business planning:

- How many people currently use the building
- How many people are 'put off' from using the building
- How far people live from the building and their travel method preferences

However, the most important information for the project and funders, is the **qualitative information** that is unearthed from engaging with stakeholders. It can help building custodians find out what is important to stakeholders:

What makes your community space special to you?



What would you like your community space to feel like?



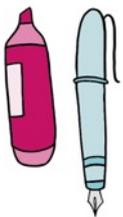
A guide to making changes to welcoming spaces and places

Engagement can help reveal what **local needs** are:

- Young people's activities (e.g. age 13-18).
- Activities for people with disabilities or long-term health issues
- Activities for people facing loneliness
- Support for carers
- Activities for families with young children
- Activities for young professionals
- Activities for active retired people
- Opportunities to connect with new people
- Group exercise
- Working remotely but alongside others
- Hobbies/ Clubs accessible to all e.g. sports
- Health and wellbeing services including 'social prescribing'
- Getting help and support to set up an enterprise
- Opportunities to learn digital skills
- Spaces for children to do homework
- Access to green space
- Creative activities
- Support for people suffering from addictions
- Food poverty
- Need for financial advice
- Support for people who have been recently bereaved

Engagement can also tease out specific opinions about **where facilities can be improved**:

- *"A community feel, but needs to be more inviting for local community."*
- *"Inside the hall is very underwhelming."*
- *"Better toilet facilities especially baby changing facilities that fathers can use!"*
- *"Some people are less friendly and welcoming than others."*



Activity

Write down as many stakeholders as you can think of for your building.

How do you think you could reach them all in an inclusive and accessible way?



Developing the brief

Following the information gathering and engagement stage, your architect will gather all their research and findings to talk through with the Steering Group and determine how the initial brief can be developed.

The Steering Group must decide what findings and desires are complementary to their vision, and are to be included in the brief. Needs are often identified that can 'add value' to the brief. Often, it is about how the building fits in or complements other community infrastructure, e.g. after school club use or horticulture therapy for a local mental health charity, bereavement counselling, supervised access visits (especially given the closure of many state run facilities).

The brief before any community engagement

We need to build a self-contained extension at the back of our building to accommodate our community cafe with a kitchen and WCs.

The brief after community engagement

We want our building to reflect our church's mission as a hub for the whole community.

The cafe should be a welcoming focal point from which other activities in the building are accessed. The cafe should be flexible in size, 'growing' into an adjacent activity room at busy times.

The brief is a written document that outlines what the project vision is, and what the needs are. It is a document that will evolve throughout the process and will be used to inform how the designs are developed. It is important that the architect is very involved (and ideally writes it) in order to demonstrate a sound interpretation of the client's requirements. The developed brief should include:

- The underlying **context/ need** for change
- The **vision** and **mission**, where relevant
- Appraisal of the **existing building** (where relevant)
- Types of **activities** to be accommodated
- **Quantitative** requirements- amount and types of space
- **Qualitative** requirements- feel of the space
- **Essential** requirements as well as desirables
- Requirements that are mindful of the **existing building** but not constrained by it.
- Any '**no go's**' if applicable
- **Environmental** aspirations
- Any desires to go above and beyond **statutory requirements** e.g. equality of access, environmental / regenerative design

The briefing process itself can really help clients feel ownership of it. People may have come to the table with different expectations of the project. This helps the group get behind a common vision and decisions about what is critical and what is desirable, as well as what is not.

Extract from an example vision within a brief

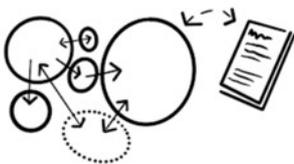
The Coro's mission is: "We exist to champion, develop and enrich the social and cultural life of Ulverston". The Coronation Hall's redevelopment should facilitate its mission. It is recognised that people feel better connected when they have a stake in the town's core amenities; and The Coro is a key asset of the town, and with special community value given that it was built by the local people rather than by a civic authority. Ulverston has the potential to be a more vibrant and creative town where there's a buzz on the streets all year round, and not just during the festivals.

The Coro should be a creative place that welcomes and nurtures new ideas, and where people can help one another to develop. The Coronation Hall will be the community, cultural and civic centre of the town, enjoyed by all of Ulverston's citizens' and encouraging visitors to a wide variety of cultural entertainment.

The redeveloped Coronation Hall should build on the strengths of its cultural, community and heritage roots to become a destination arts and community venue that will appeal to a much wider audience of local people, regional visitors and tourists.

The redeveloped Coronation Hall should provide the optimum basis for securing its sustainable future whilst delivering the purpose set out in its mission.

It should feel revitalised, vibrant and welcoming, and provide the right quality and type of facilities that appeal to the local and artistic communities alike. It should be accessible, inclusive and open; designed in a way that people can feel comfortable and attracted to drop in, when not attending a particular event.



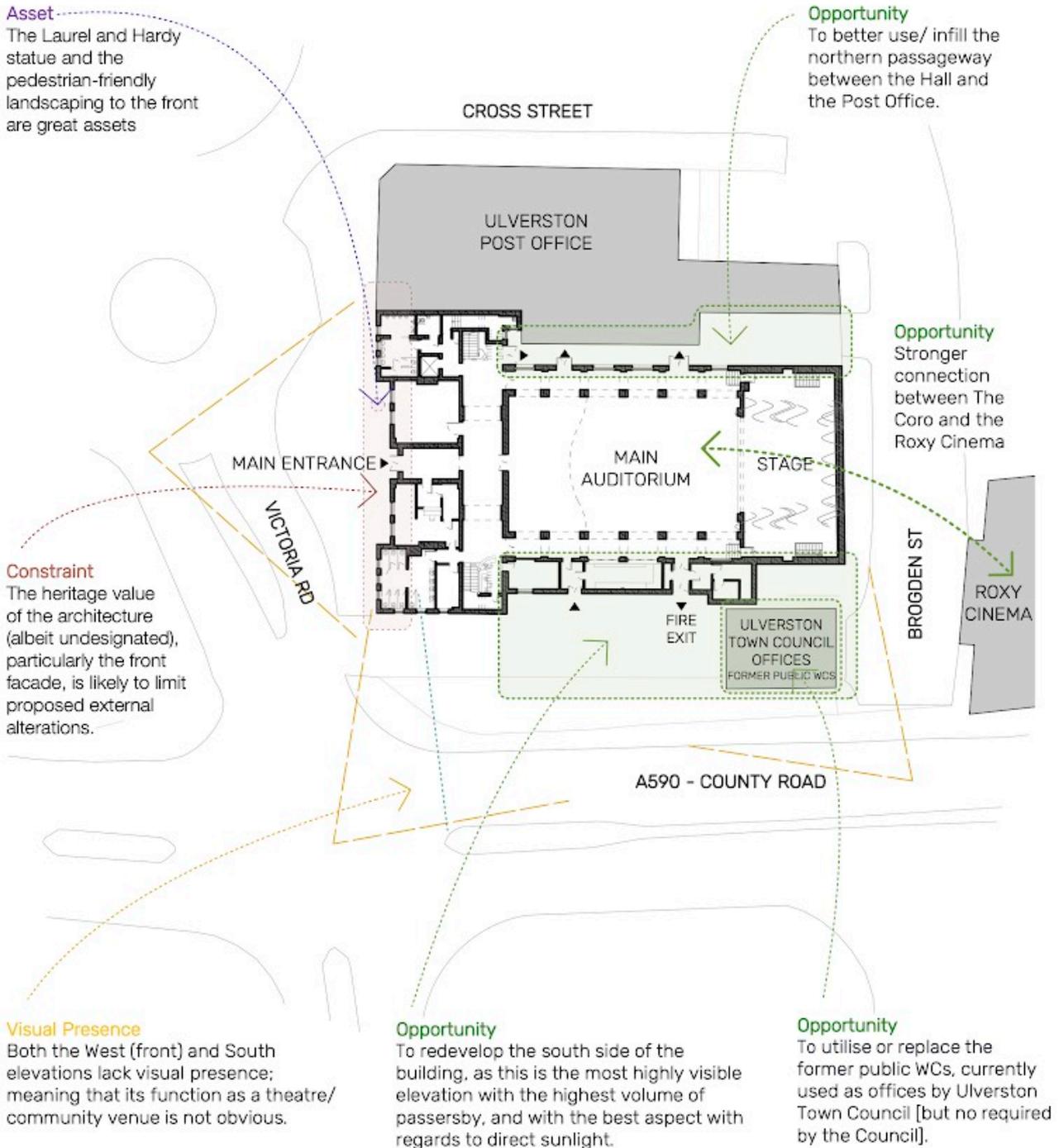
Interrogating the brief

Once the written brief has been approved by the Steering Group, your architect will develop a deeper understanding of the required spaces, measuring it up with any existing buildings, refining the brief if necessary before exploring design options.

Time spent researching and defining the brief, and time spent exploring and interrogating the options cannot be undervalued. Lines on paper are much easier to move than walls built in the wrong place.

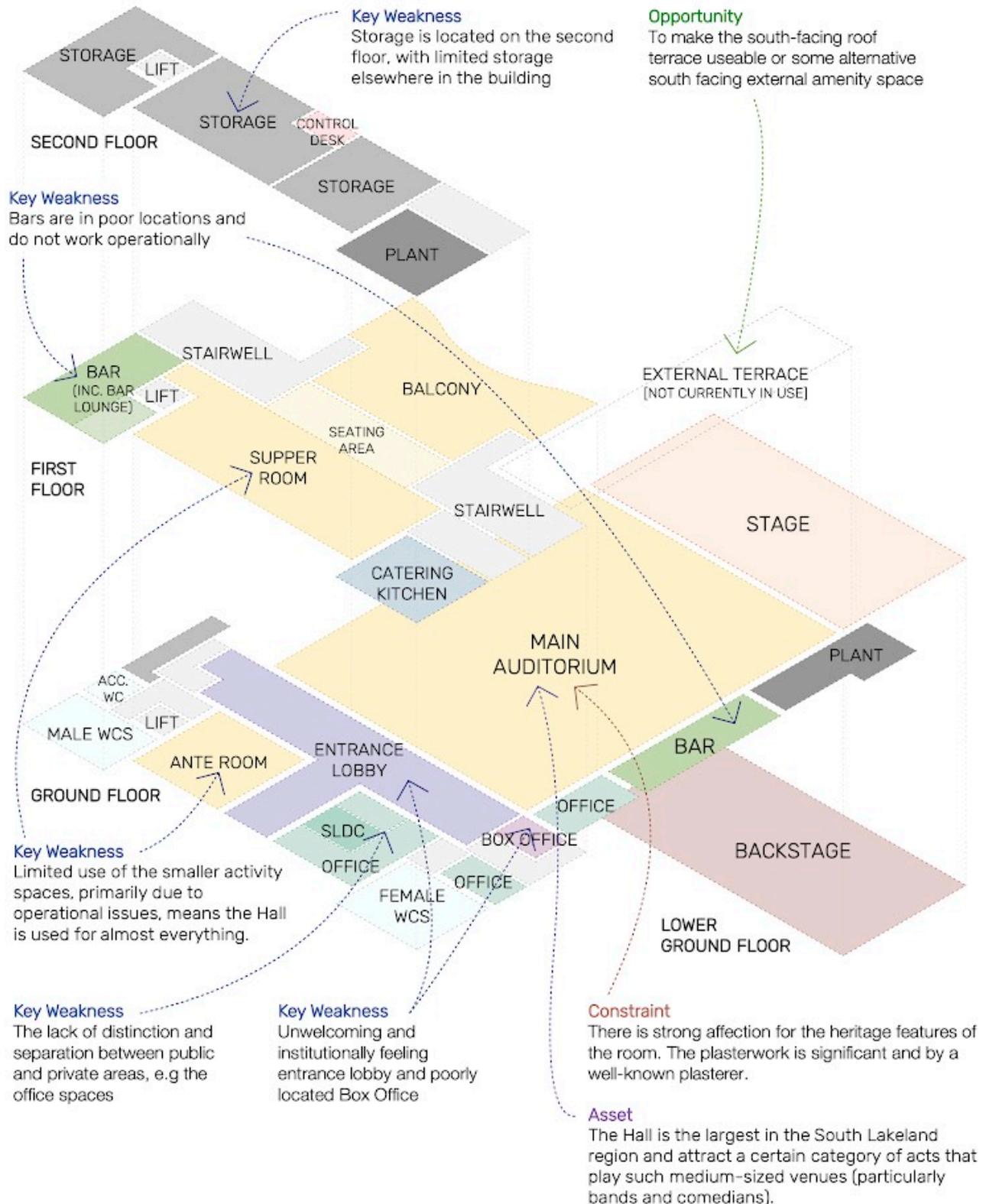
Site Analysis

Firstly, your architect would analyse the building and its site in context e.g busy roads, visible frontages, light and orientation, opportunities to extend/ develop/ sell, opportunities for shared space, footfall etc.



A guide to making changes to welcoming spaces and places

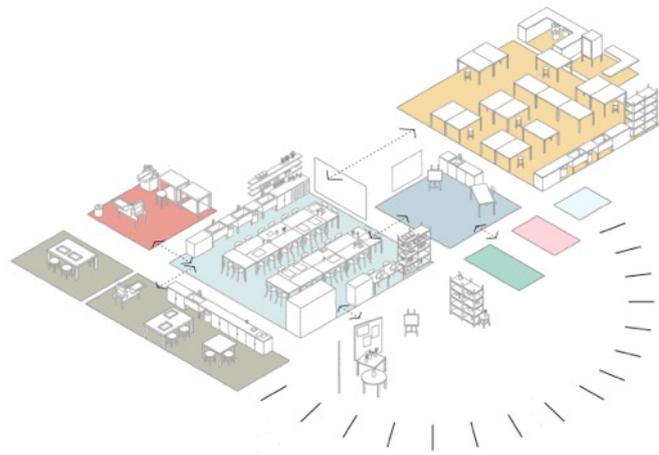
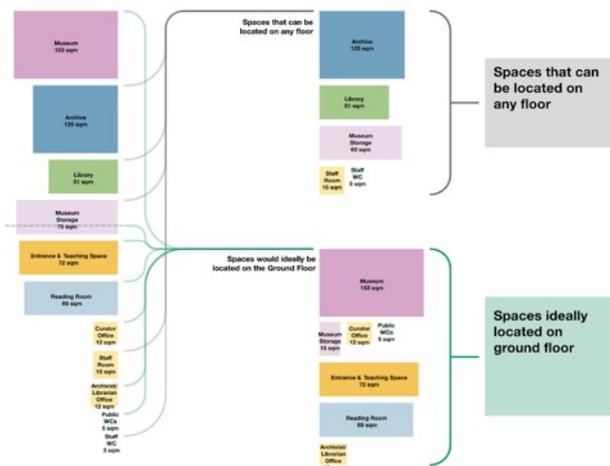
Next, your architect would consider the building itself, measuring it up against the brief and identifying assets, weaknesses, opportunities and constraints.



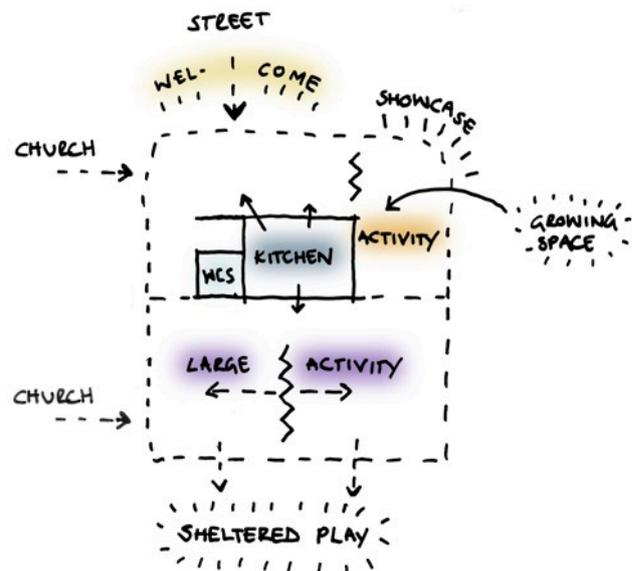
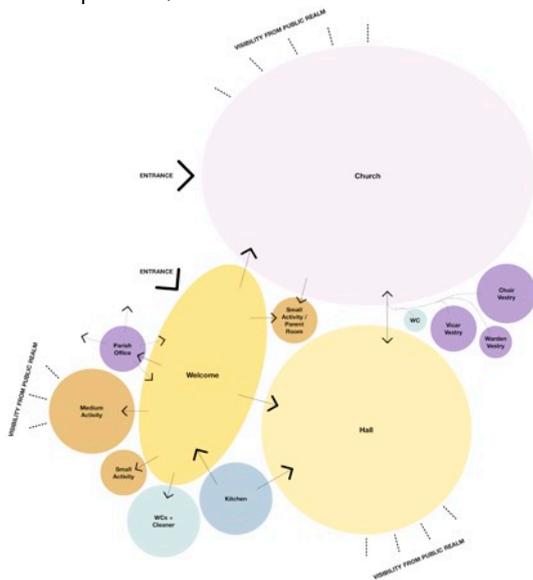
Visualising the brief

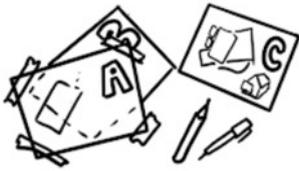
Your architect will likely visualise the written brief in various ways.

- Understanding areas required** - Doing an appraisal of the proposed floor areas against existing floor areas can reveal how well the amount and type of spaces compare to the brief. It may result in the conclusion that an extension is required to meet the brief.
- Understanding functions required** - Even working out furniture layouts can be important at this stage if a certain number of people need to be accommodated doing a particular activity.



- Understanding relationships between spaces** - Abstract or partly abstract diagrams can also represent the brief and help explore the relationships between spaces, and that can start to be applied to the actual site.





Concept design

With a greater understanding of the brief, your architect would then develop design options that meet the needs. Quite often numerous options are explored and analysed before reaching options that are ready to present to the Steering Group.

Most capital funders will want to see that alternative options were considered as part of the early stage of the design process. The feasibility study usually includes the development of several conceptual design options. Concept designs should focus on the layout of spaces on the site. Different options may represent several different approaches (e.g. new build, extension or refurbishment) or may each prioritise different aspects of the brief.

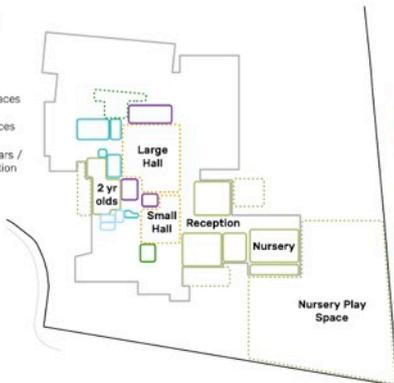
Example - A school shares space with a church

A school wanted to explore how space could be created for a congregation who had just sold their church building, as well as improve staff and pupil spaces. The simplified diagrams of the option plans below were presented to show a comparison between the different options and the existing layout.

Existing plan

Key - Existing Spaces

- Existing staff spaces
- Existing hall spaces
- Existing Early Years / Nursery / Reception spaces
- Existing Focus Provision
- Existing Intervention
- WC
- Store



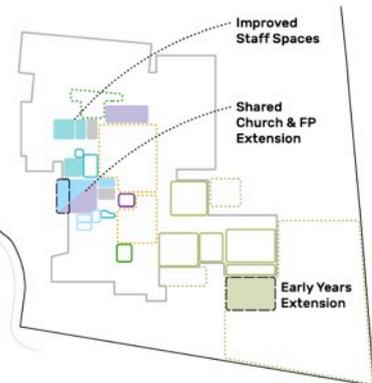
Key - Proposed Spaces

- Staff spaces
- Hall spaces
- Early Years / Nursery / Reception spaces
- Focus Provision
- Intervention
- Church
- WC
- Store
- New Build

Option 1

Pros
Separate staff group and small meeting rooms.

Cons
No space for both Focus Provision KS1 and KS2 breakout if the Church is using the FP base.
Cost of front extension.



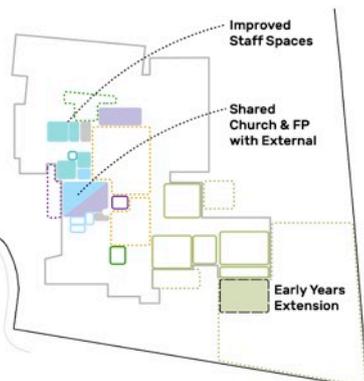
Option 2

Pros
Retains front play area.
Front extension not required.
Office has private meeting area.

Cons
Staff room combined with meeting space.

No space for both Focus Provision KS1 and KS2 breakout if the Church is using the FP base.

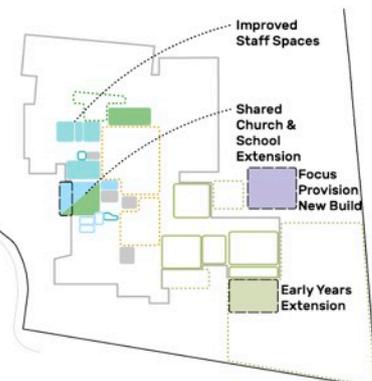
Loss of site manager office.



Option 3

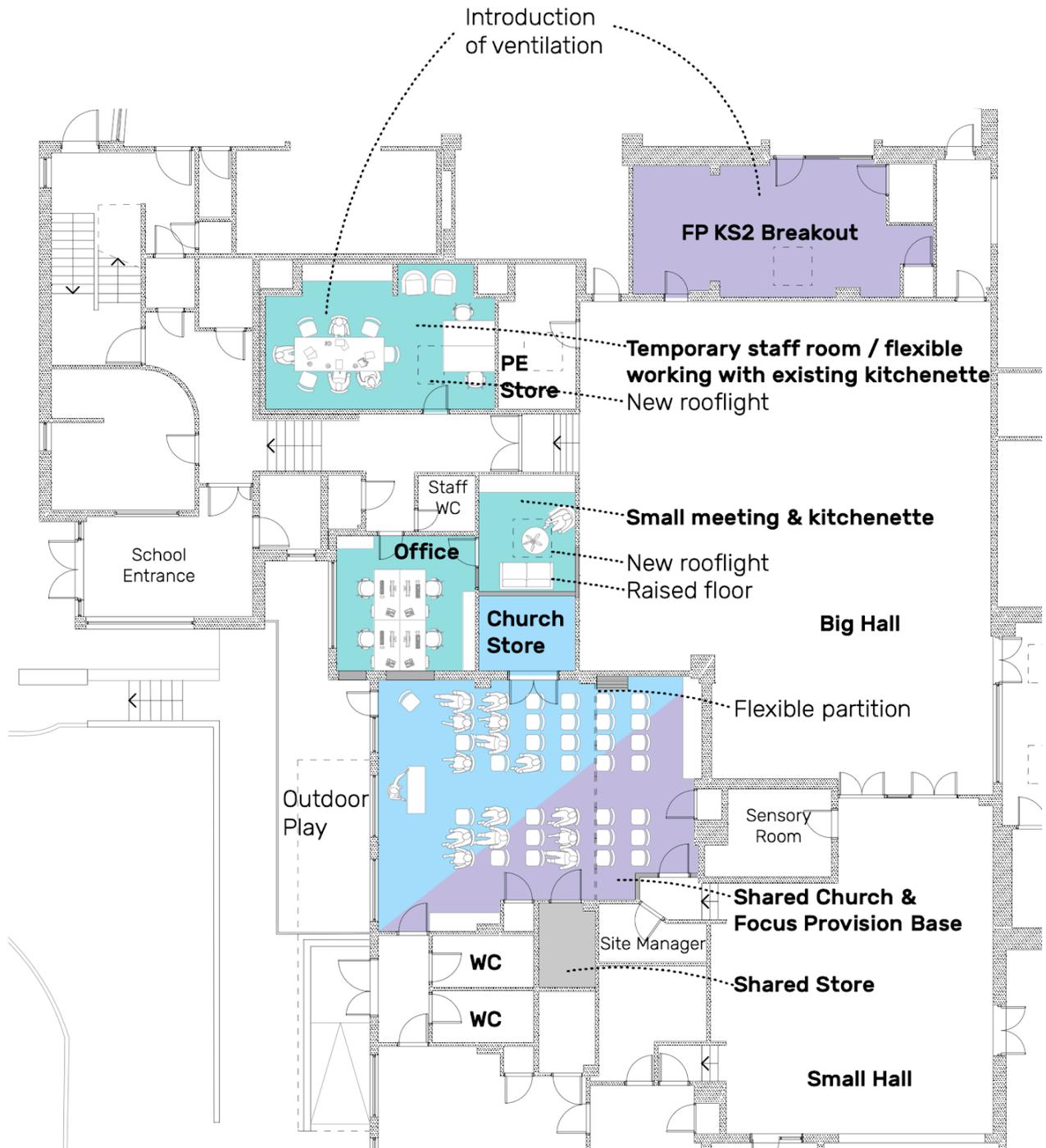
Pros
All staff meeting areas achieved.
Dedicated FP spaces.
Flexible shared space with Church.

Cons
FP new build not connected with school building (inclusion).
Cost of front extension and new build.



Example - A school shares space with a church

The diagrammatic layouts were then shown in more detail as a scaled plan. This is representative of the level of detail you would expect at concept design stage.



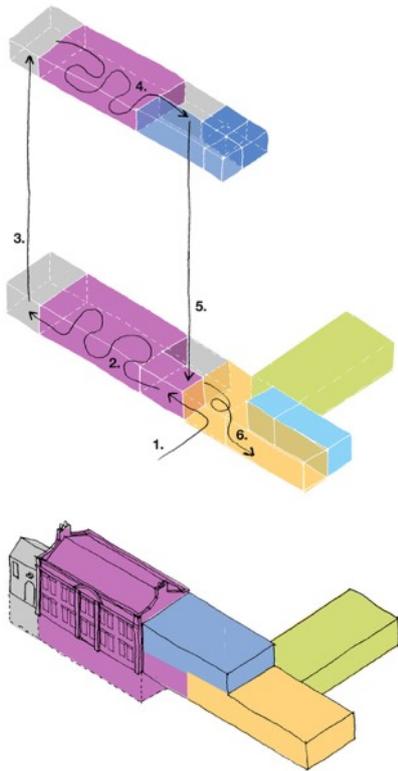
A guide to making changes to welcoming spaces and places



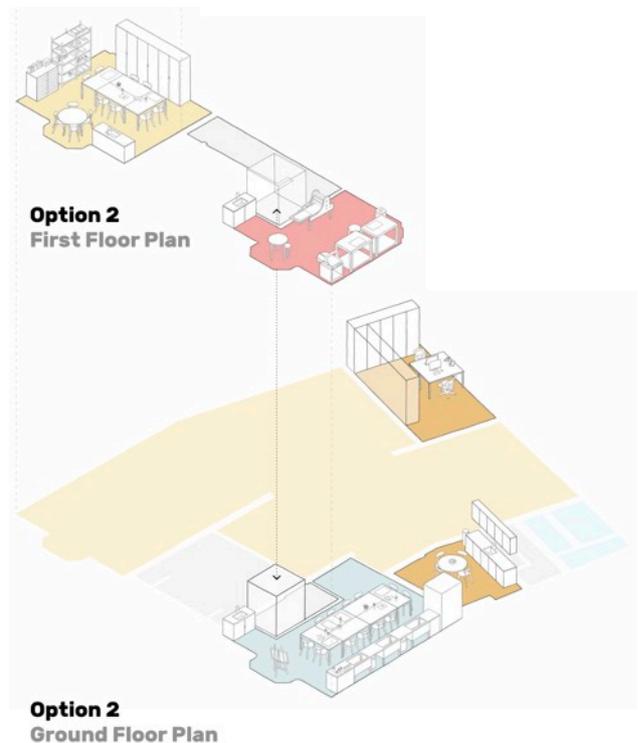
Your architect will present their process to the Steering Group to explain how the concepts have evolved.

The group's reaction to the proposals is a vital extension of the briefing process, so it is important that they are presented in person (virtually or physically) and that people are able to react openly.

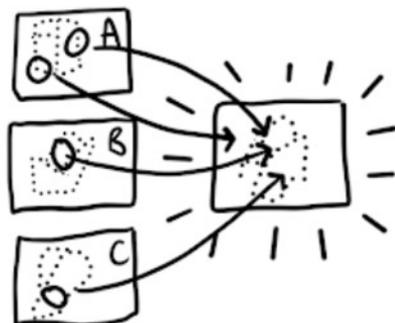
Not everybody understands drawings in plan, so your architect may use other drawings:



3D massing sketch



Drawing of intervention in existing spaces



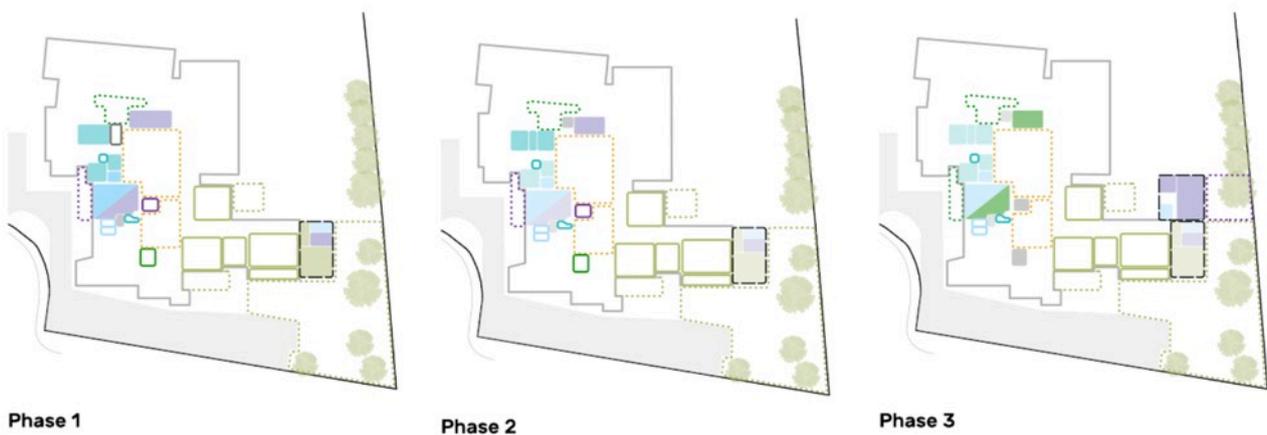
Ideally, a preferred option is identified. Often the Steering Group require aspects of another option to be incorporated.

Example - A school shares space with a church

A preferred option was developed out of combining the Steering Group's favourite parts of two options, and making further changes in response to feedback.



Whilst your urgent need may require a small intervention, the study should be strategic and consider even small projects as part of a long-term **phasing** plan.





Next Steps

At the end of the feasibility study, with your architect, you will take stock of the whole process and start thinking about how you can progress the project onto the next stage.

Your architect should advise you of the next steps with recommendations for how the project can be progressed, including:

- Identification of the **biggest risks and opportunities** for the project - The recommended next steps should provide a risk-based approach to advising the Steering Group on how to take the project forward, addressing the key project risks first. Such risks may include land ownership issues, consents from authorities (such as planning and listed building consent), uncertainty of capital costs, availability of funding, or structural concerns. Your architect can advise you on suitable specialists who may advise on these risks, or where further architectural work may be required.
- Obtain any **missing information** e.g. legal titles/ rights of way, drainage survey
- Continue to **engage people** in the process with new and existing contacts
- **Sharing** your ideas with the community, funders, stakeholders
- Obtain **Budget Cost Plan** for some cost certainty
- Research possible **funding opportunities** - The level of information provided in the Feasibility Study is likely to be sufficient for making first stage funding applications to grant-givers, albeit that some require statutory consents to be granted before making any commitments.
- Seek advice on **financial sustainability** (e.g. business plan)
- **Statutory Consents** e.g. Planning Permission, Listed Building Consent - Statutory Permissions are usually one of the key risks (unless no permissions are required) and so it is likely that some sort of Pre-Application guidance is recommended if it hasn't already taken place.

Case Study | B12 Urban Village Hall | Stages 0-2

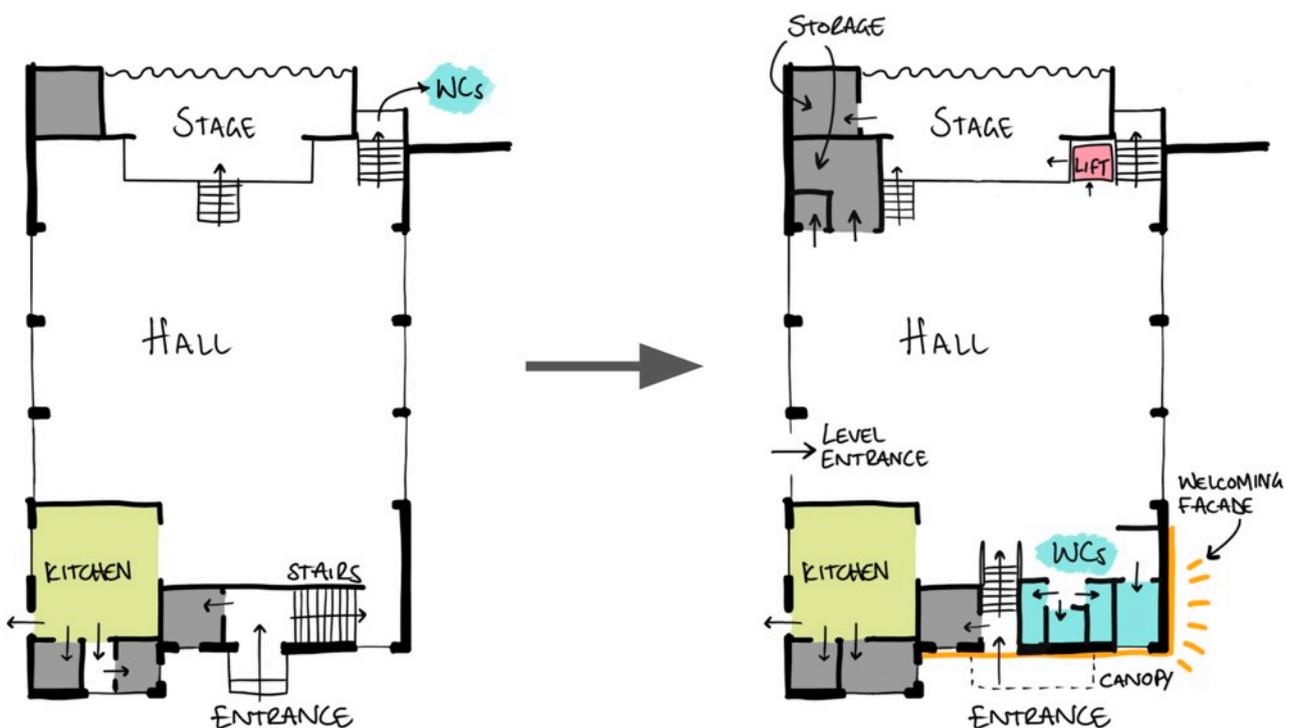
The building custodians of this hall wanted to resolve the issue with their WCs only being accessible up stairs and into a third party space. Another key barrier was people using wheelchairs could only access the hall through the kitchen.

Research and stakeholder engagement also revealed that the building didn't have a strong presence so a lot of people didn't know it was available for hire. There was a lack of mid-priced 'conference' facilities in the area, inadequate storage meant unsightly stacks of tables and chairs in the space, and there was a shortage of stages for rehearsal and amateur groups to perform. The kitchen was a good size but its upgrade would make the facility much more attractive for hire.

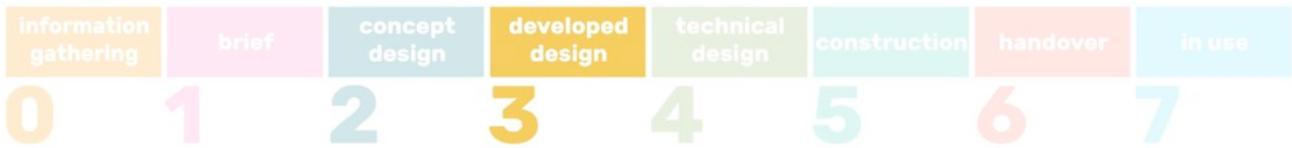
A strategic plan and design were developed to resolve these issues across two phases.

Phase One | A small grant was obtained to pay for a new entrance door enabling wheelchair access and pushchairs, and access from the street. By doing this, there was no longer a need for such a wide staircase down to the other entrance door as two exits improve emergency escape.

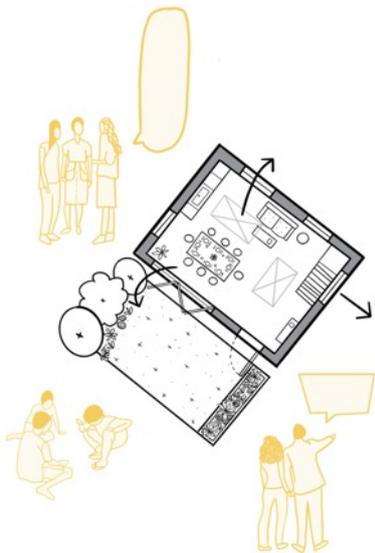
Phase Two | The staircase was reconfigured to create space for accessible WCs, windows were replaced and the heating upgraded to improve the comfort of the space, and a lift was installed to an upgraded stage.



5 | Stage 3 Developed Design



Design development with the design team



During Stage 3, the design is developed in more detail, internally and externally.

This would be done alongside input from, where relevant, the wider design team, such as a **structural engineer** and a **building services consultant** (who would advise on how the building utilities can be more sustainable).

A **cost consultant** or quantity surveyor would pull together information from all the designers to cost the project (in more detail if you have already obtained a more budget cost plan following the feasibility study).

Depending on what the intervention is, the other designers may need more **surveys** or **investigations**, such as a drainage or ground conditions survey, to progress their part of the design.

The design team would also start having conversations with the **Building Control** team (discussed in more detail in Stage 4).

It is ideal for there to be **continued engagement** with your stakeholders to make sure they remain involved in the process, so they can provide their feedback, contribute to the design process, feel valued, and potentially support any planning applications.

CDM Regulations 2015

To comply with **Construction, Design and Management Regulations**, you will need to appoint a **Principal Designer**, who will coordinate the design team's effort in eliminating foreseeable health and safety risks in the design.

This will culminate in a pre-construction health and safety plan that would be passed on to the builder, so they can complete their own duties under the CDM Regulations.



For more information about your client duties under CDM Regulations, you can visit HSE's website:

<https://www.hse.gov.uk/construction/cdm/2015/summary.htm>

Planning Consent

If the change you are proposing requires an alteration to the outside of the building, or changes the use of the building, you will need to submit a **planning application** to the Local Authority.

If you have a listed building, you will need to submit a **listed building consent application** for any internal changes too. Certain religious buildings can be subject to **Ecclesiastical Exemption**. This means that certain alterations would be decided by internal processes, and additional advice should be sought from your governing authority if you are a custodian of a religious building.

Your architect would prepare any applications required for you on your behalf, preparing all the drawings, as well as a document demonstrating how the proposals have been developed in compliance with local and national planning policies. You might also need input from an arboriculturist and/or ecologist if your proposal affects trees or wildlife.

The planning decision process is at least 8 weeks, and includes a consultation stage with local residents, councillors, police, highways and environmental department, wildlife, canal and heritage groups and other statutory consultees. This is where your stakeholder engagement comes into its own. People can submit letters of support for your application.

From a risk point of view, planning is the most important risk to get out of the way first. Once that's out of the way, risk is mostly money related. The next stage helps to iron out the remaining unknowns.



For more information about the planning application process, you can visit the Planning Portal website:

https://www.planningportal.co.uk/info/200125/do_you_need_permission

Case Study | B12 Urban Village Hall | Stage 3

The internal layout changes required changes to the external appearance of the hall. The existing double doors were to be replaced with a single door, which would be easier for people with mobility needs to operate. A canopy was proposed to shelter people waiting to enter the hall. The existing exterior of the building was also covered in pipework and cabling, so new cladding was proposed to conceal this and improve the external appearance. This presented the opportunity of introducing insulation to these walls to improve comfort internally, and integrating signage to make the building more visible from the street.

Due to the external changes, planning permission was required. The below elevation drawings were created to communicate these changes to the planning department, and planning approval was granted.

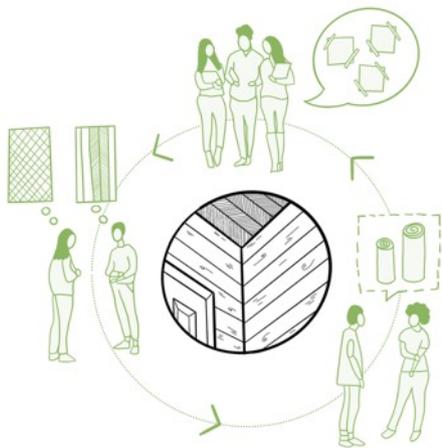


EXISTING ELEVATIONS



PROPOSED ELEVATIONS

6 | Stage 4 Technical Design



Preparing the tender package

This stage ends with you going to tender to obtain quotes from contractors.

It is really worth investing time and effort in this stage to define as much detail as possible about the construction of your project, so once the project is on site you know exactly what you're getting.

Some people go straight to builders for quotes from planning application drawings. However, we would always recommend that a fully detailed drawing and specification package is developed to obtain quotes. If everything is not explicitly detailed, there is a risk of valid claims for additional costs from the contractor. With a fully developed tender package, you would have more choice and control with the design, material selection, installations etc.

To do this, the design team work together in even more detail to figure out how everything will be constructed. This will involve creating **detailed construction drawings** and **specification documents**. Together, they will create a really detailed information pack that contractors can base their costs on, which they will be held to once your appointed contractor goes on site.

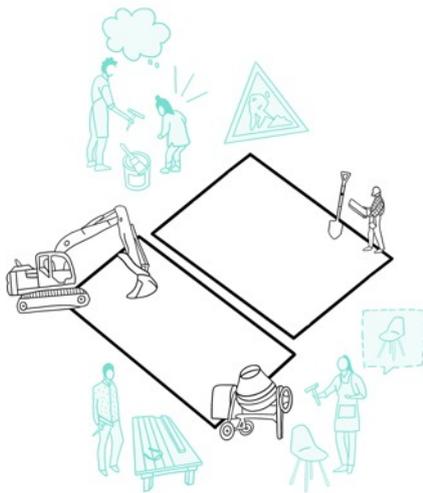
There are likely to be **planning conditions** on your planning approval that will need to be discharged. This can be confirmation of external materials, tree protection methodologies, drainage details or even the location of bicycle stands.

At the end of this stage, you would have a **costed technical design package**, and a lot less unknowns. Of course, there can always be surprises on site, especially if you're working with existing buildings, so the costs will always include a percentage for contingency to cover that risk.

There would also be a **preliminaries** document that would define further information that the contractor would need to consider e.g. working hours, noise levels, access, welfare facilities, programming in community events they need to work around etc.

Once you have agreed a contract sum with your preferred contractor, your architect can be appointed as your contract administrator. They would then prepare a **building**

7 | Stage 5 Construction



Your appointed contractor will set up on site, ensure that the site is continually compliant with **health and safety and CDM Regulations**, and commence the works.

As your **contract administrator**, your architect will make regular visits to site, checking progress and workmanship is in accordance with the contract.

The contractor will make monthly applications for payment in arrears of work completed so far. The contract administrator, often with input from a quantity surveyor, will check that this application is accurate, and certify payment to be settled by the client. This process is to protect the client and ensure the contractor is paid in a timely manner.

The architect deals with day-to-day queries from the contractor and manages any **variations** to the agreed contract, whether it's a change requested from the client group, or a change that's required to respond to one of those remaining unknowns.

They will also chair **site meetings** with the contractor, design team, and if appropriate the client group too.

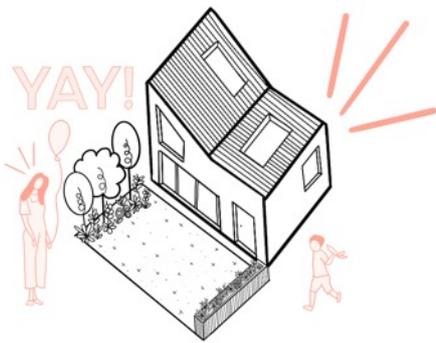
If any **disagreements** arise, or the project is delayed for some reason, the contract administrator will act as an impartial party to ensure that the contract is properly executed to its terms.

Case Study | B12 Urban Village Hall | Stage 5

Client meetings continued to take place alongside site meetings to approve material samples and colours.



8 | Stage 6 Handover



Once the project is almost ready, your architect will carry out **snagging** where they keep an incredibly detailed record of things that aren't quite right that haven't already been picked up. If there are no major or a significant quantity of snags or defects, the project will be ready to handover so you can move in.

There will then either be a 6 or 12 month **rectification period** where the contractor has to rectify (or as we say 'make good') any defects. A percentage of the contract sum will be retained by the client throughout this period (**sum of retention**). At the end of this period, your architect carries out a last inspection, the contractor makes good any remaining defects that have arisen during that period, and are paid the sum of retention.

Case Study | B12 Urban Village Hall | Stage 6

Before and after of the external alterations.



9 | Stage 7 In Use



Stage 7 is a fairly new stage. It was introduced by the RIBA to encourage people to think of a building project as a **cycle**.

Some clients appoint architects and building service consultants to carry out **post occupancy evaluation** to assess the impact of the works on value - whether this is in relation to social value, economy / income, wellbeing, environmental impact.

Due to limited funds available to community buildings, this stage is quite rare, but is still an option. If you carry out a phased project, this stage is particularly useful, in case you and the design team learn something about the early phases that may require changes to the future phases.

We tend to see Stage 7 as where we start on a project, particularly with existing buildings. You are all in stage 7 now. Learning how your buildings work and what doesn't work as well. This information will inform the briefs of future projects.

Case Study | B12 Urban Village Hall | Stage 7

Opening night at the newly refurbished hall.

