

Heritage & Site History

The Methodist community has occupied the site for just over a century. In 1873, a large cruciform plan church, designed by John Johnson in the Romanesque style, was built at the apex of the Archway Road and St John's Way. The church occupied a prominent position on the intersection of Archway Road and Junction Road until it was demolished in the thirties.

The growing, predominantly working class, population created the impetus for the construction of a new, larger place of worship. It was decided that a Central Hall would be best suited for this purpose. Methodist Central Halls combined both religious and secular activities in order to have a greater impact on the local community. It was their belief that providing associational facilities that could provide opportunities for self improvement would attract working class people.

The Archway Central Hall and Central Hall Buildings (now Archway Methodist Church) opened in November 1934. The building cost £66,106 to complete, £35,000 of which was given by J. Arthur Rank owner of the Odeon cinema chain; a devout Methodist businessman who was interested in using religious films to spread the word of God. The architects were George E. Withers and K. G. Withers of London. George Withers had practised with Charles Bell, the designer of the Bermondsey Central Hall (1898) and had collaborated with him on the Plumstead Central Hall (1903). On his own account, he designed a range of commercial buildings, including factories and hotels; and also a small number of Wesleyan chapels. Withers had also built the Central Hall at Hampton-on-Thames in 1926 and so had considerable experience with this type of building. The builders were C. P. Roberts and Co., a local Islington firm.

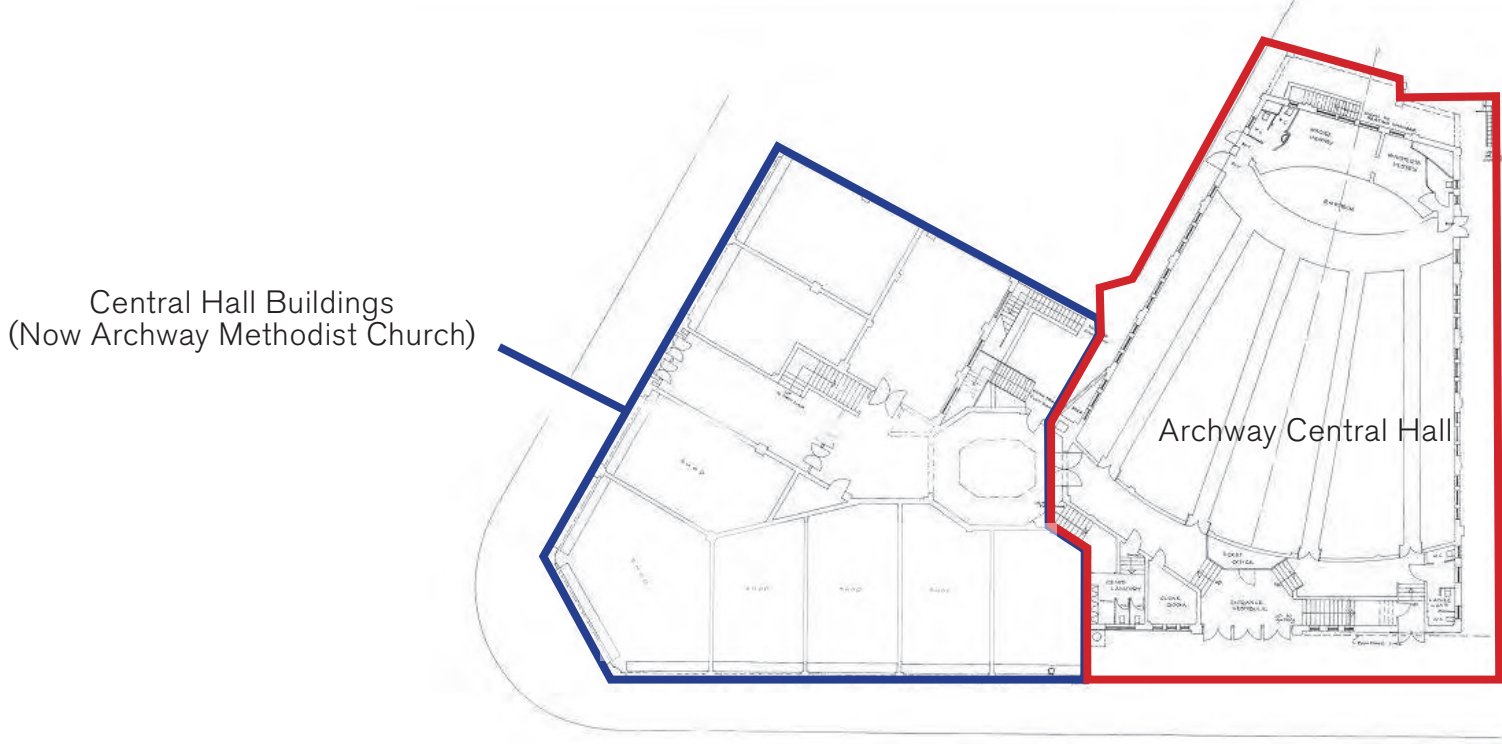
It is no coincidence that the Archway Central Hall was designed in a semblance of the Art Deco style, similar to many of Rank's contemporary Odeon cinemas. The main hall could seat 1500 and was fully equipped for film screenings. Designed as a self contained unit, it could be rented out to the public as a source of revenue. The street level was occupied by eight shop units, which were leased for commercial use.

After the war, the congregation began to decline in numbers and the church was even forced to sell the projector, in order to stay afloat. The parish then decided to redirect some of their social activities towards youth work. This was very successful throughout the fifties and sixties, unlike the religious worship, which continued to decline.

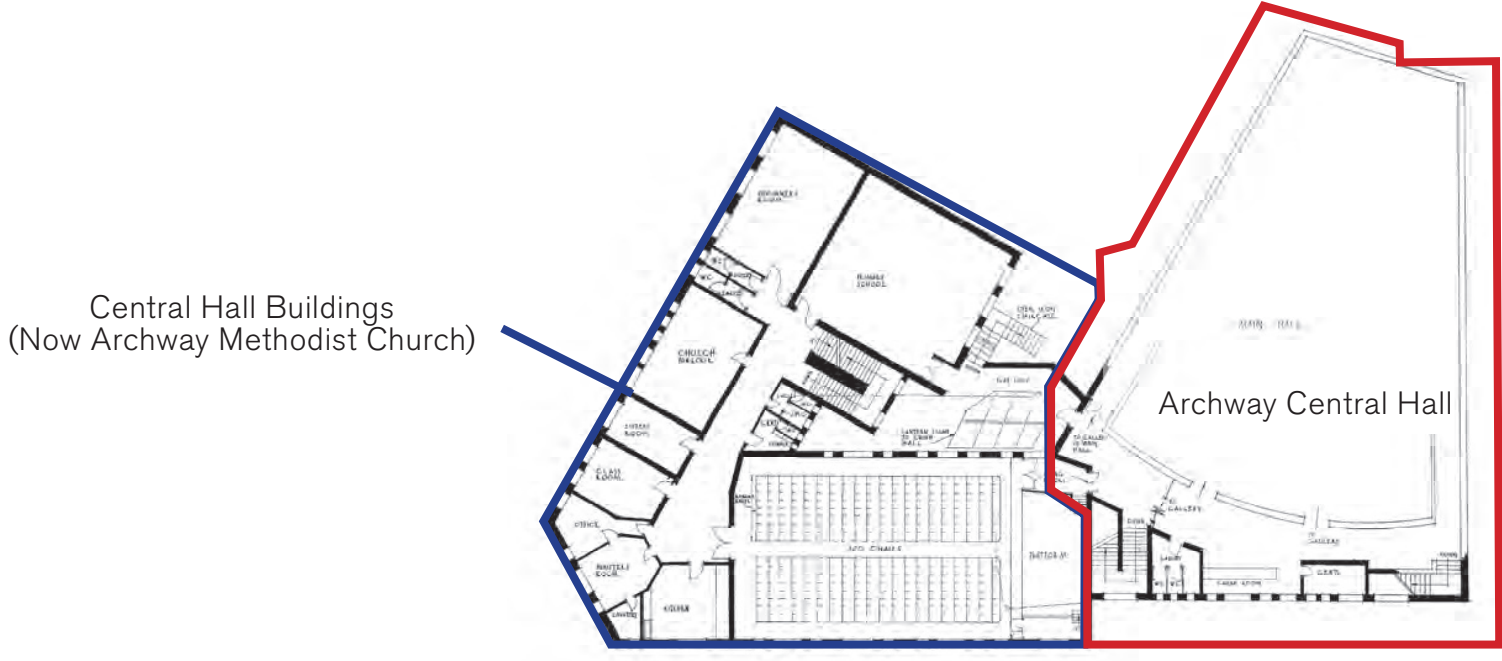
However, the diminishing congregation was unable to keep up with the growing cost of maintenance and could not afford desperately need refurbishment to rectify years of neglect. This led to the sale of the building in 1997. The Hall has remained vacant and incapable of use for the last 20 years and despite the building changing ownership on a number of occasions, a viable occupier for the building could not be found.

Stephen Levrant Heritage Architecture (SHLA) were instructed by Flowervale Properties to undertake a comprehensive heritage assessment of the building and concluded :

"An assessment of the significance of the building concludes that it possesses low evidential and aesthetic values, medium historical value, and low to medium communal values. The building as a whole was considered for statutory listing in 1989-90, but was rejected because of the high level of alteration, loss of distinctive features and the unexceptional quality of the Art Deco detailing."



Ground Floor Plan of the Archway Central Hall and Central Hall Buildings, 1934. Source Archway Methodist Church



First Floor Plan of the Archway Central Hall and Central Hall Buildings, 1934. Source Archway Methodist Church

— Application site boundary
— Not forming part of this application



Elevations of Archway Central hall, scale 1:500



Assessment of the existing building

Our proposed new build scheme evolved after a number of potential alternative options which involved the retention of the existing building were first considered. In the end, it was concluded that demolition of the existing building was the only viable option available which would allow the site to be brought back into use after remaining vacant for almost 20 years. To arrive at this conclusion, Flowervale Properties, undertook the following steps:

1. A detailed structural assessment was undertaken by a Chartered Engineer with extensive experience in historic building conservation. Following the initial assessment, the Engineer recommended undertaking extensive opening up works to establish the severity of the structural defects which he observed;
2. Following the opening up works the Engineer produced a subsequent assessment which was then given to a Quantity Surveyor (who as it turns out regularly advises London Borough of Islington) to carry out a detailed costings exercise to help inform a decision on whether or not the retention of the existing building, in its existing use, was viable. Following the costings exercise it was confirmed by, James Brown, a RICS Registered Valuer that the retention of the existing building was not viable;
3. Flowervale Properties then sought to establish if any other alternative option that involved the retention and refurbishment of the existing building could be viable. In total, 14 options were comprehensively tested and none were found to be viable either;
4. The viability exercise concurred with the view of a 1992 English Heritage report on the building which concluded that the building, owing to "serious structural decay" is likely to be "pulled down and rebuilt" - See below.



Demolition of the existing building

Excerpt from the English Heritage Report on Archway Central Hall from 1992, page 4

ARCHWAY CLOSE, N19
ARCHWAY CENTRAL HALL

4

used for sports and social occasions. Stage at end. Shallow vaulted false ceiling. Matchboarded dado. Woodblock floor'.

Third Floor:
Caretaker's flat. Flat-roofed penthouse set back from the Archway Close frontage with access to large terrace.

Furnishings & Fittings:
Lighting: Auxiliary system (disused), ran on gas: original bronze-finish lamp-brackets in form of short flambeaux with moulded glass shades.
Piano: Worship Room contains a Bechstein grand with an elaborately inlaid case.
Painting: Lounge on first floor contains a watercolour of Tower Bridge and the Pool of London, n.d., probably pre-First World War, by H. E. Tidmarsh

Memorials: Stained glass memorial window of 1947 removed from Prayer Room, now at back of Worship Room, artificially lit. In memory of Norman T. C. Sargant, died 1946 aged 72. Shows Christ standing within aedicular frame, above a pool into which water is flowing. City of Jerusalem in background.

Condition: Interior generally good. Exterior shabby and exhibiting signs of serious structural decay, attributable to rusting of the steel frame. Serious cracking apparent in places, e.g. on the caretaker's flat. Some of the brickwork fronting Archway Road has been rebuilt where it had cracked. Stone cornice along St John's Way frontage replaced and/or cement-rendered. Most of the exterior reconstituted stonework has been painted.

The condition of the building is detailed in a surveyor's report of 1987⁸

Comments: Given the condition of the building and the cost of putting it right, it is likely that it will be pulled down and rebuilt. Although very characteristic of its period, the main features giving it distinction (the tower and main hall) have been lost or altered and the quality of the detailing of the building is unexceptional.

References:

1. Ex inf. Mr JS Ellis
2. *The Opening of the New Archway Central Hall* (1934) (commemorative booklet, in collection of Mr JS Ellis)
3. There is some doubt about this; the architects' perspective views reproduced in *The Opening of the New Archway Central Hall* show a flagpole but when the tower was demolished it was topped by a cross. Ex inf. Mr JS Ellis
ISLARCI/September 1989, revised April 1992



Front Elevation



Front Elevation



East Elevation



East Elevation



East Elevation - This elevation was never meant to be visible



Auditorium looking north



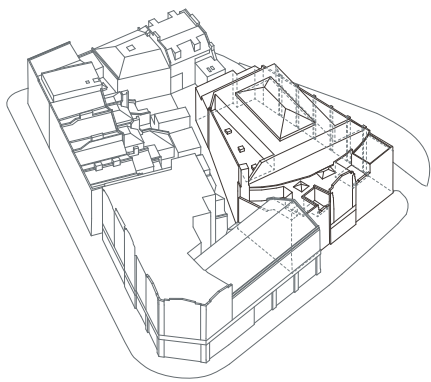
Design Rational

The massing study was carried out as an iterative process in order to assess how the site could be configured and to generate a starting point for architectural expression.

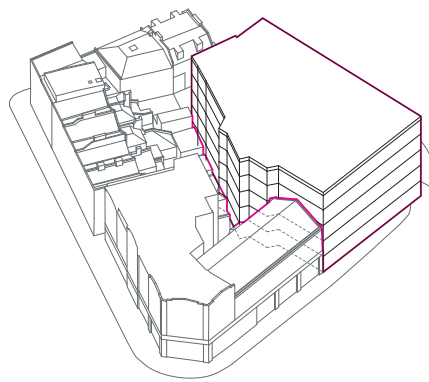
Each massing permutation took into account the following key factors that were defined in accordance with the brief and our analysis of the site's constraints:

- Viability; optimizing floor space.
- Optimising use of B1(a) and community space (D1/D2).
- Structural integrity; carefully exploring building arrangement to minimise structural complexity.
- Sunlight obstruction; assessing the impact of the building's mass on the neighbouring sites.
- Vistas; particularly in terms of the protected view of the City from Archway Road.
- Engagement; using our understanding of the wider context to create a building that contributes positively to the local townscape.

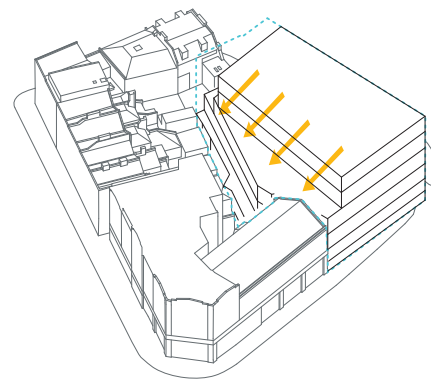
The Archway Island is located within the St. John's Grove Conservation Area (CA28). The conservation area is predominantly residential although the buildings on Junction Road and on the Archway Island are mostly commercial. A second conservation area , The Holborn Union Infirmary Conservation Area, encompasses the Whittington Hospital to the west. The Archway roundabout also falls within a locally protected view of St Paul's Cathedral and the City (LV4).



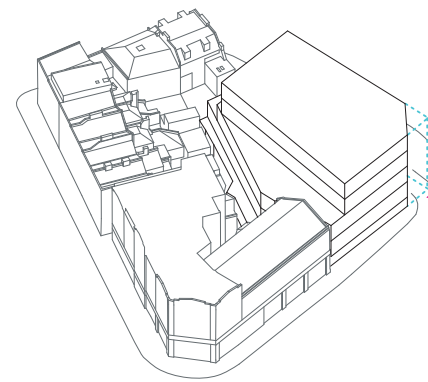
1. Existing Methodist Central Hall



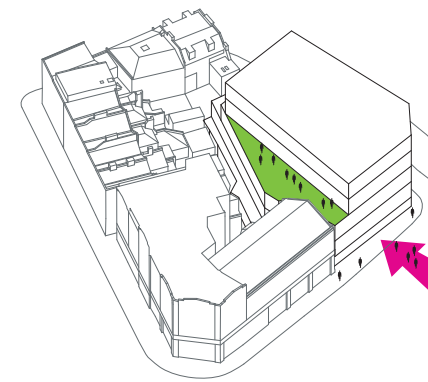
2. Initial massing - covering all the area within the red line boundary



3. Upper floors pushed back to allow light into neighbouring properties



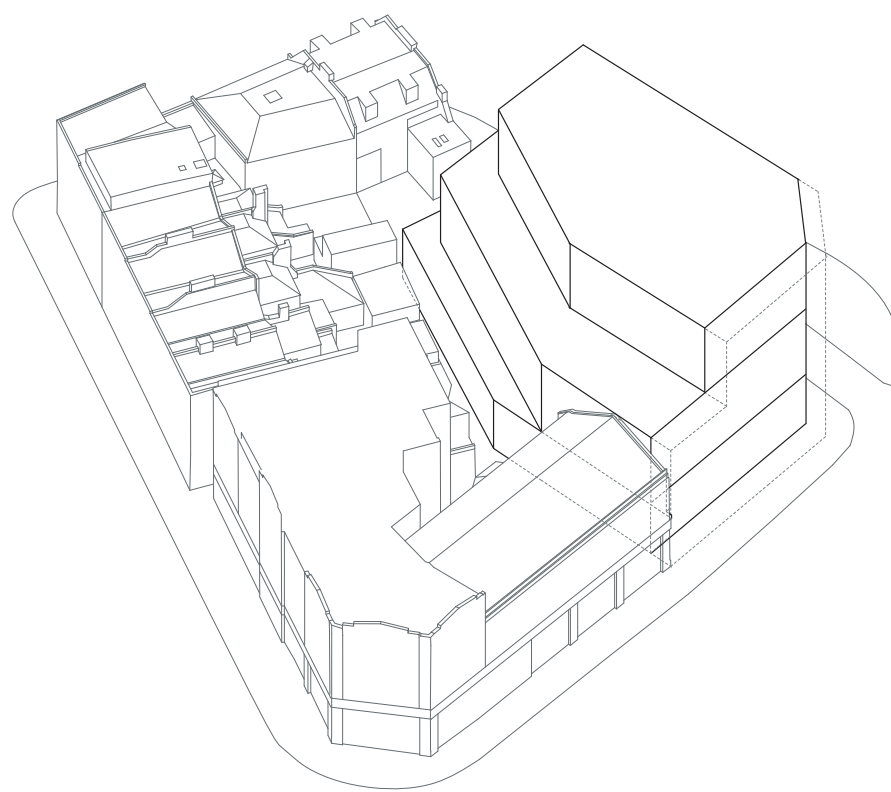
4. Corner is chamfered to emphasise entry point and mimic adjacent corner building



5. Street side ground floor is pushed back to create intermediary space between public and private: encourages social interaction



The complex of buildings that make up Archway Methodist Church, including the Hall, were originally red brick, Portland Stone, and bronze coloured steel window frames.

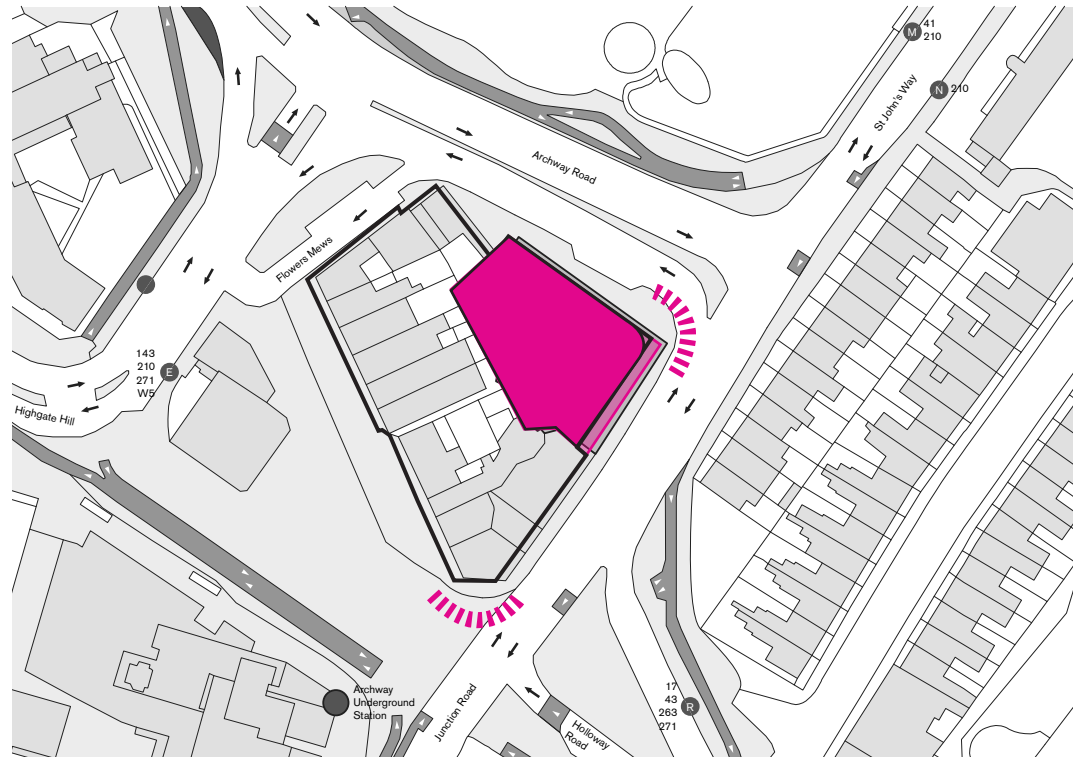


6. Facade design emphasises verticality while also scaling the building with its surroundings

Ordnance survey (1935).
The approximate position of the existing building is highlighted, next to the terraces No1 to No9 on St Johns Way, which were demolished by middle 1930s.
The side elevation was never intended to be seen within a streetscape, but rather faced onto a narrow alley. The roofscape of the hall was also intended to be concealed behind the principal elevation.



Current situation.
With the demolition of the terrace the site now has a prominent corner condition. The new proposals aim to emphasize this new orientation with a main entrance and rounded corner.



The area surrounding Archway boasts a wide variety of building typologies and land uses. The smaller peripheral streets are mostly made up of houses and flats while the larger roads feeding into the gyratory are lined with taller commercial, semi commercial and residential buildings.

Buildings along the traffic axes that surround Archway were studied to be used as references for the redevelopment of the Methodist Hall. Specific focus was given to the building mass, the design of the corner, and the facade organization.

Below are some examples of curved or chamfered corners from buildings along Junction and Holloway Road. In most cases when there is a tripartite horizontal division between floors, the window proportions highlight the vertical axis.



Design Development

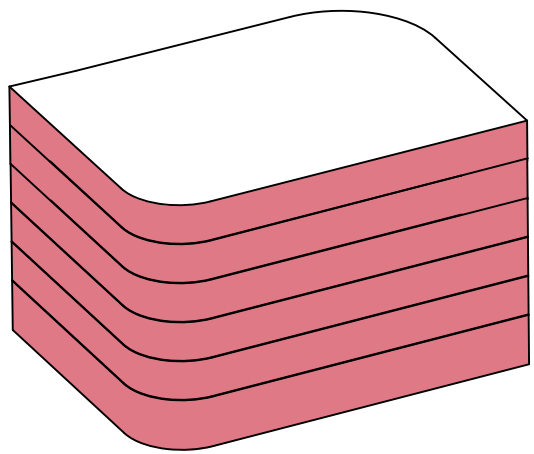
Stephen Levrant Heritage Architecture have prepared a detailed Heritage Statement for this site, and we have worked with them during the design process. This work has informed the development of our design. We also undertook a detailed Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment.

After establishing a basic volume for the new building, it was important that it responded contextually to its surroundings to emphasize the now prominent corner; to re-interpret the Art Deco elements; and at the same time to keep a uniformity to the façades. A number of volumetric and facade studies helped define the overall density, weight, and impression of the proposed volume.

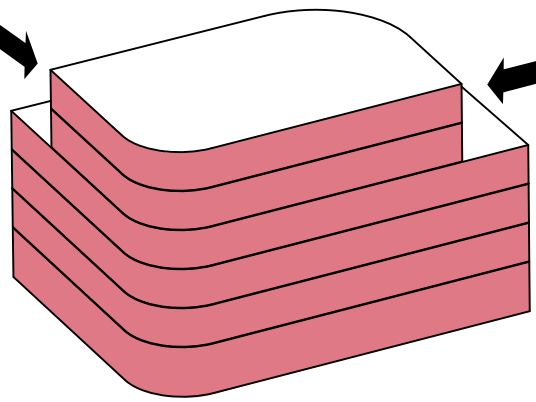
The new design references the cinemas built by J. Arthur Rank, as well as responding to its location by addressing its prominent corner position in a similar way to other local buildings.



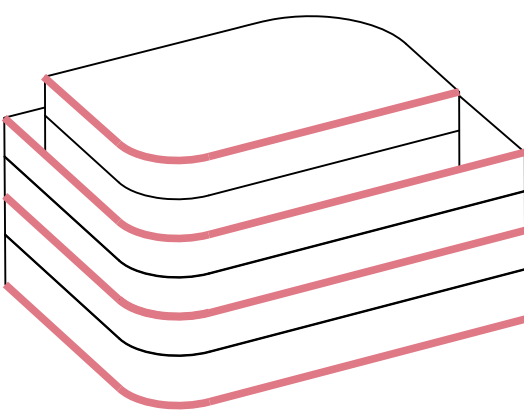
Examples of Odeon cinemas built by J. Arthur Rank



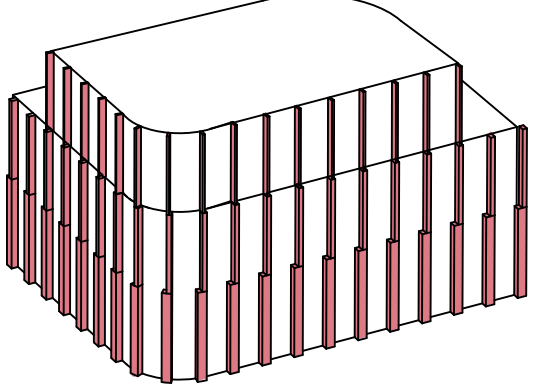
The massing is shaped with a characteristic curved corner, referencing several buildings of the surrounding area.



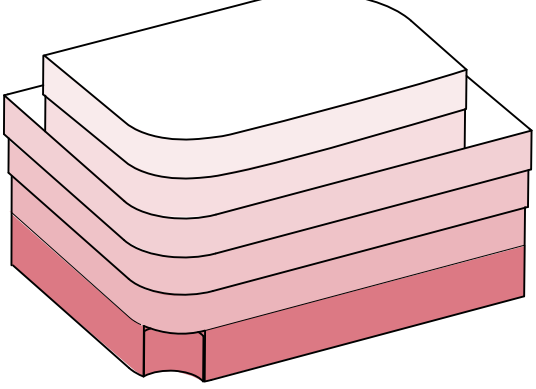
The upper two levels are pushed in to highlight the creation of a corner and to reduce the overall height of the street elevations where they meet the adjacent buildings.



The six levels have a tripartite division, grouping pairs of floors. This is similar to many historical buildings in the conservation area.



Each of the three parts is assigned with a different density of vertical mullions to create three zones with distinct ratio of solidity.



The materiality of the building changes gradually from bottom to top.



Buildings along Junction and Holloway Road



Materials

Material references: The collection of buildings that make up Archway Central Hall and Central Hall Buildings (now Archway Methodist Church), were originally red brick, Portland stone, and bronze coloured steel window frames. More recently areas of stone have been rendered over, and windows replaced with modern white PVC frames. The Central Hall itself has a strong grounded form, with an array of long windows that emphasize the vertical proportions.

The design of the new building seeks to reference elements of this design and reinterpret it with modern materials and detailing. An array of thick vertical Portland stone piers are set around the building in a regular rhythm. These run vertically up the building, gradually stepping back in size every two floors, and so reducing the ratio of stone as you move up the building. At the same time bronze panels and window frames increase in size moving up the building, enabling a gradual change over of material and detailing towards the top.

Window openings on ground floor are recessed 600mm to provide a stone reveal and emphasize the massing of the building. Moving up this recess gradually decreases, until on the top floor the glass



Bronze



Portland Stone



Brass



South Elevation - St Johns Way



East Elevation - Archway Road



ARCHWAY CENTRAL HALL

MARCH 2018

1. Community Conference Hall

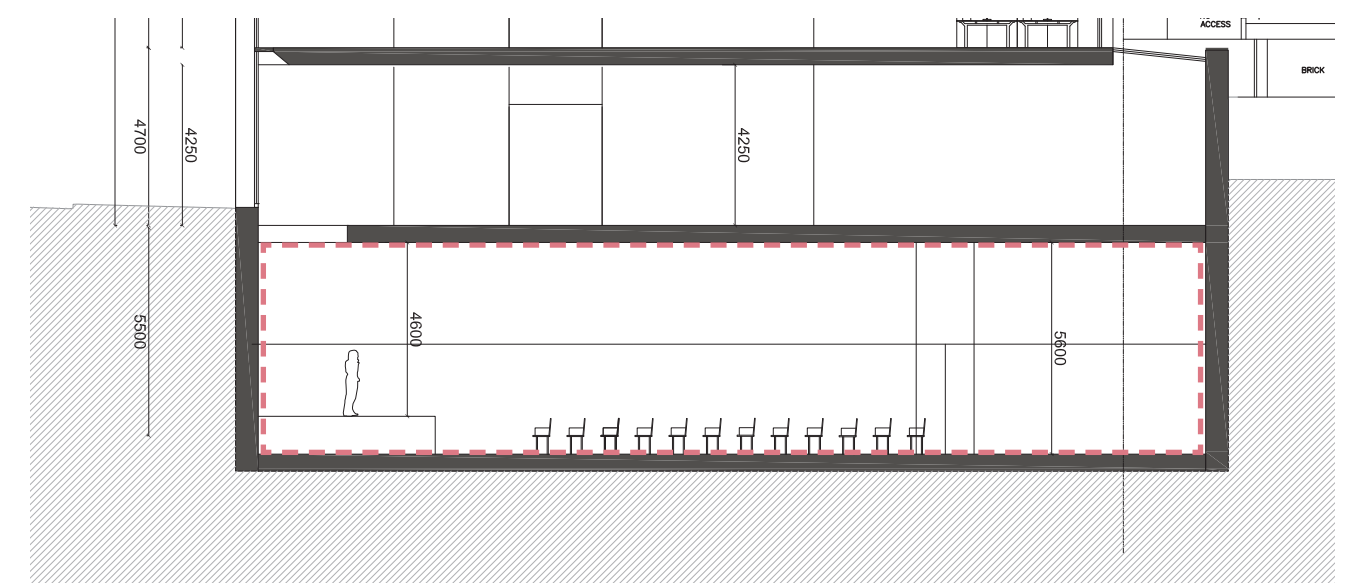
Multi-Function Community Space

Following extensive research into the historic uses of Archway Central Hall it became apparent that the existing building on the site was essentially too large, inflexible (despite various sub-tenants occupying the building throughout the years) and not fit for purpose hence why it has always struggled financially and was ultimately abandoned by the Methodists. Bearing this in mind we have sought to provide a modern community space in the lower ground floor that has been designed so that it is as flexible as possible in order to support a variety of local community uses while at the same time being of a size that can remain independently financially viable for future generations.

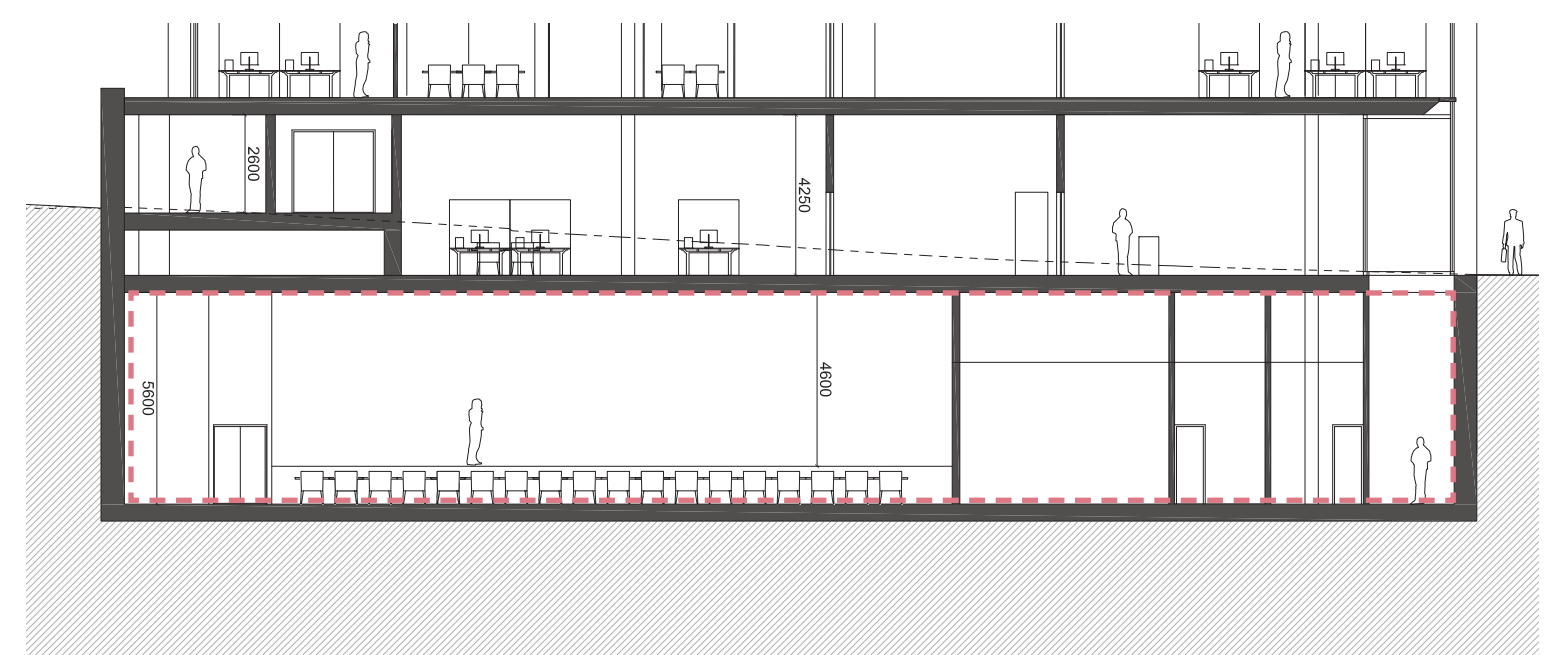
The proposed community space will be delivered in shell and core and will benefit from exceptionally high floor to ceiling height (5.6m), an abundance of natural light and significant ground floor street frontage with a large ground floor lobby that can double up as a ticket office. For illustration purposes, we have provided four indicative floor plan options showing potential individual uses which could all be accommodated under one operator - see next board.



Ground Floor Plan: Indicative entrance
1:200



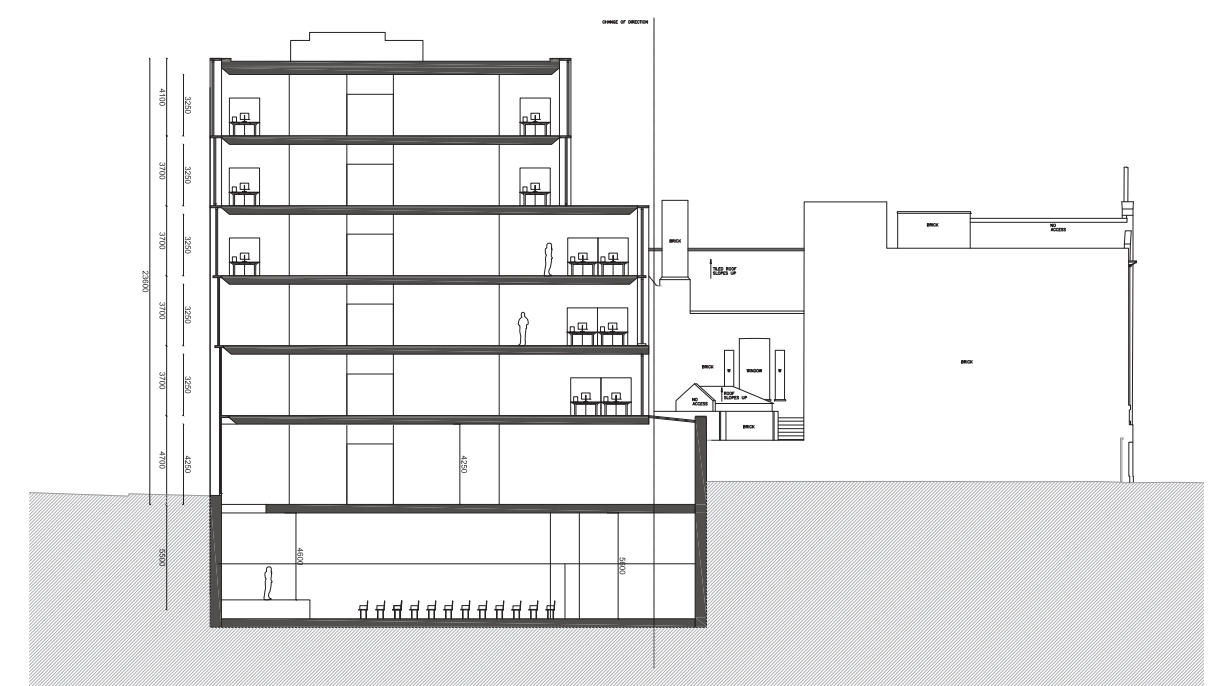
Section East West (Ground Floor & Lower Ground Floor)
1:200



Section North South (Ground Floor & Lower Ground Floor)
1:200

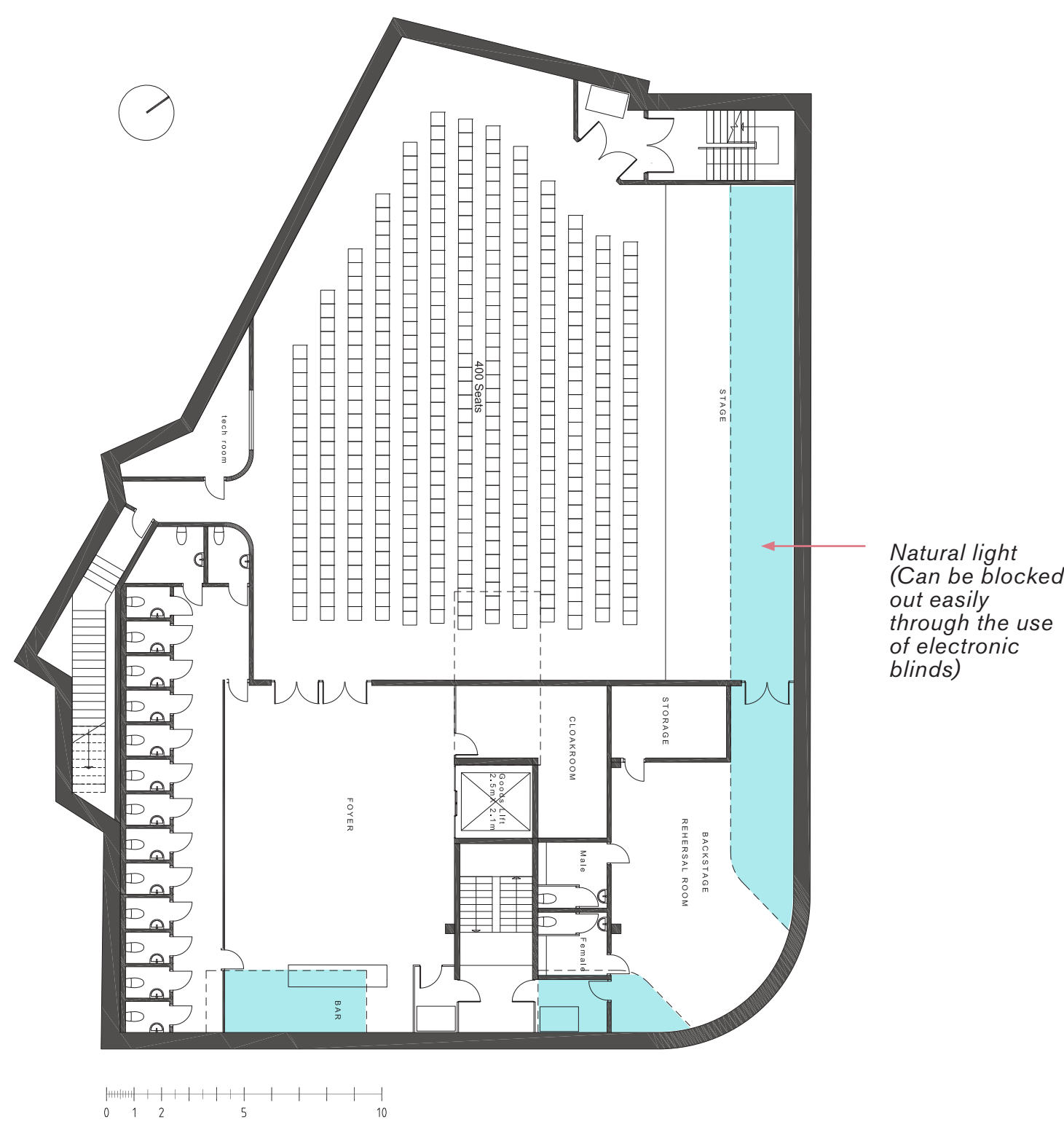


Section North South
1:400



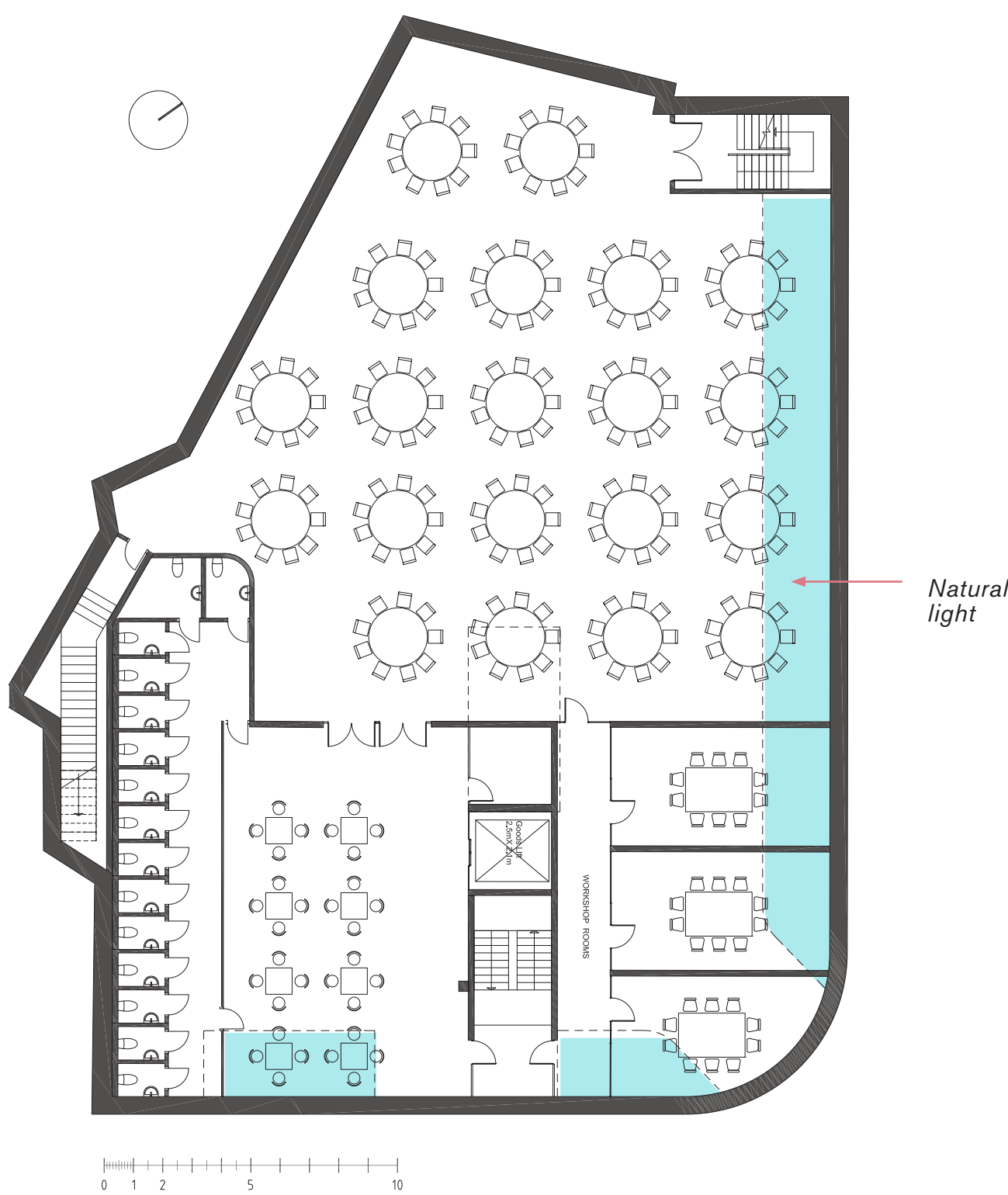
Section East West
1:400

Multi-Function Community Space



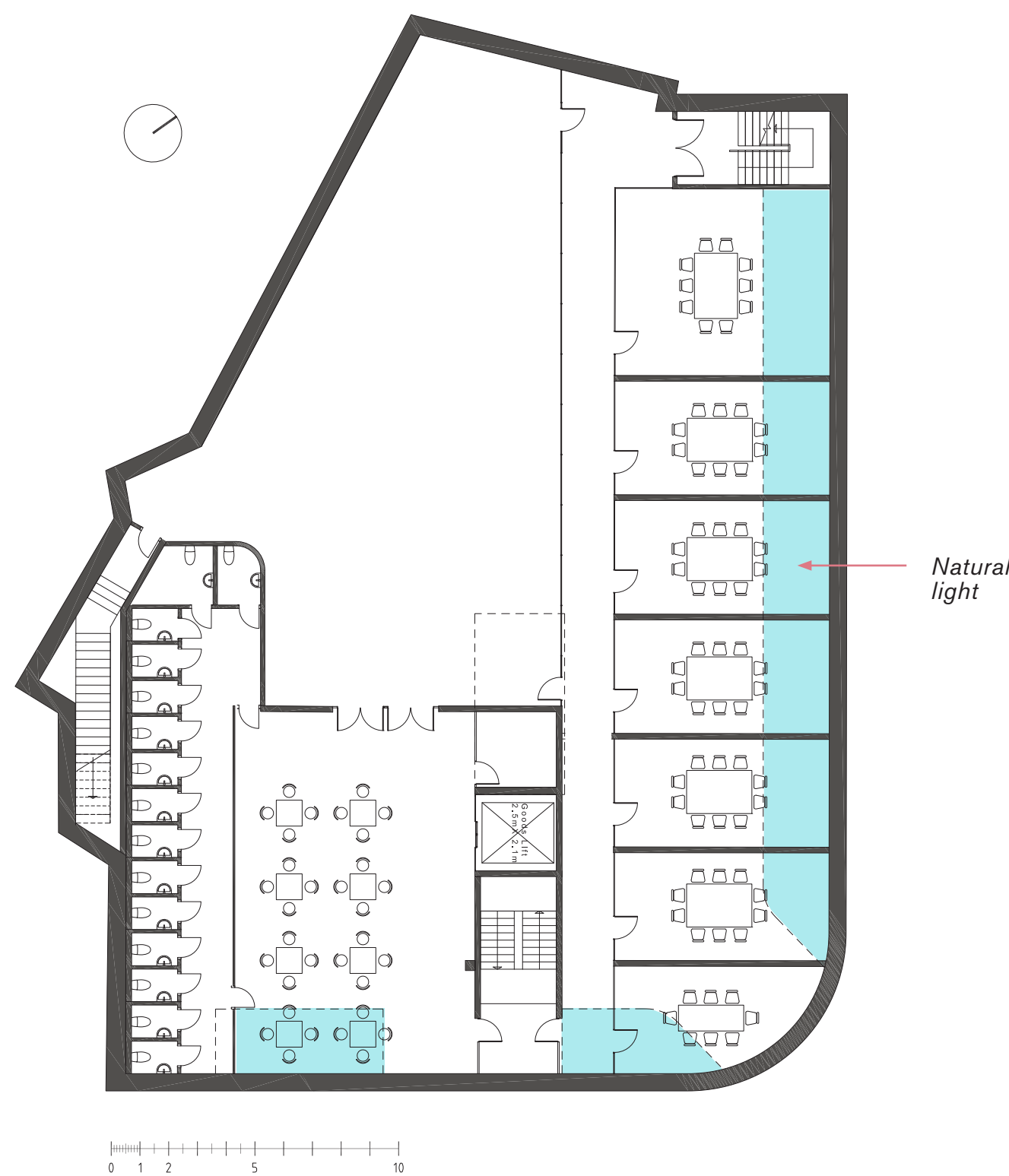
Option A - Conference Hall:

This space has been designed so that it can accommodate 400 patrons and could be used to hold local forum groups, public events and could even be used by local universities as a backup lecture hall. The space includes backstage facilities, a technical room and cloakroom and storage facilities and as such it could also double up as a Theatre space (subject to planning) – the Theatre Trust and a local theatre group provided input at design stage.



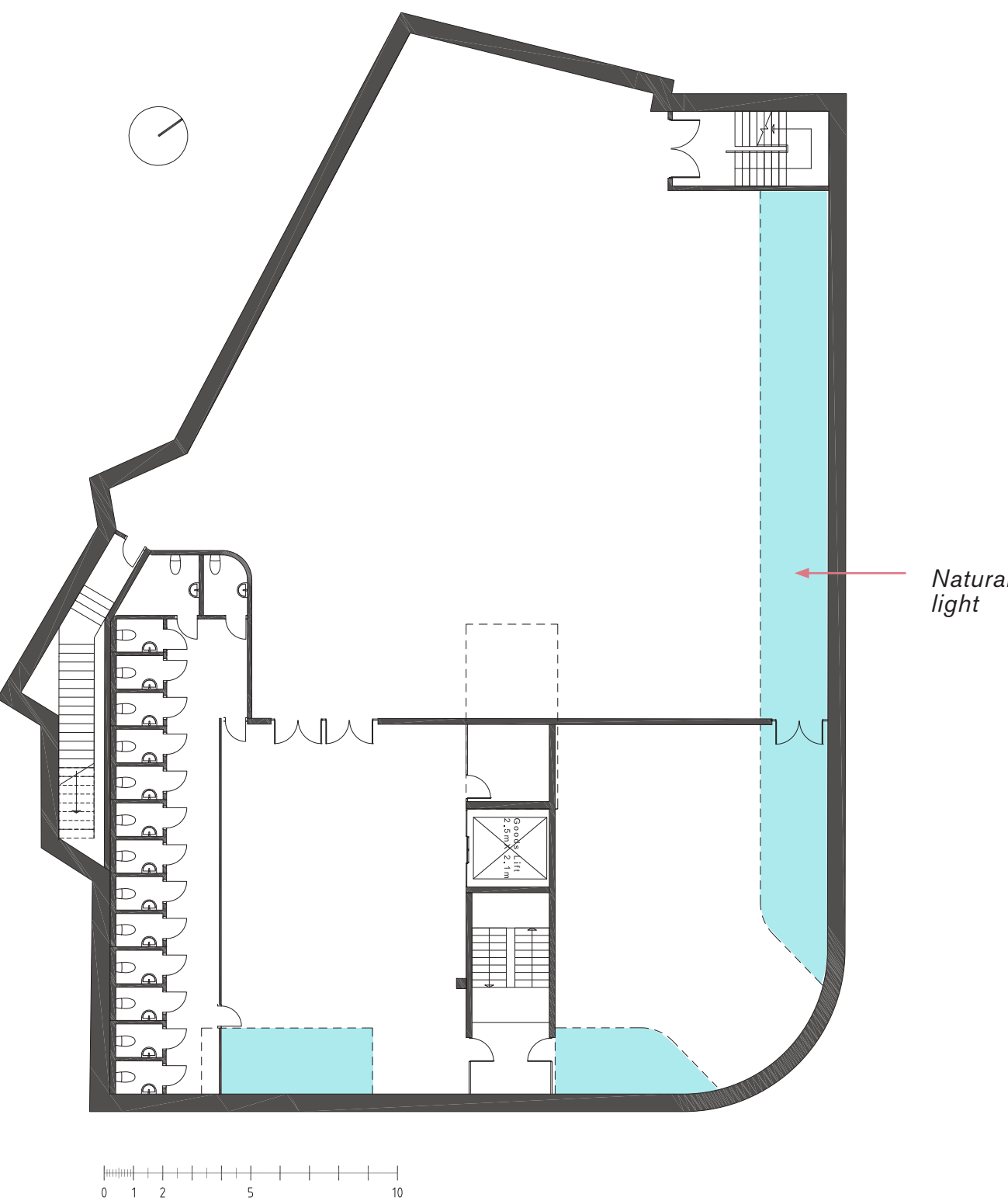
Option B - Community Centre:

This space could be used as day centre where retired local residents could meet, have lunch/tea and engage in day time activities or even accommodate children's groups during the day, Sunday school whilst in the evening potential other uses could include a dance hall, bingo hall, book club and pilates/yoga studio.



Option C - Community Workshop & Training/ Education Centre:

The space can easily be subdivided with natural daylight from the light-well into the rooms. The larger space being used as a Pilates/yoga studio at night time, or children's groups during the day.



Option D - Church Meeting Hall:

This was the last use of the building before the Methodists abandoned the Central Hall and moved their worship hall to the adjacent Archway Methodist Church in 1997.

In addition to the above, other possible uses could include a gym, doctor's surgery, dentist, art gallery, art house cinema, museum, etc. All of these uses would not be viable in the existing building nor would the existing building be suitable to accommodate these uses physically.

Office Space

The site does not currently contain employment floorspace and is sited within a designated Town Centre Area. The provision of new business floorspace is encouraged by the Local Development of Plan, and the Council should support the proposals in this regard.

The site has a Public Transport Accessibility Rating (PTAL) of 6b, therefore access to public transport in this area is excellent. Also, the London Plan sets out a target for 3.9 million sq m of office space to be provided throughout the city by 2031. It is clear that in order to meet this target, the most sensible starting point is to optimise office capacity in Town Centres and other similarly designated areas throughout the city.



100,000 Sq Ft = Amount of office space lost in Archway as a result of Residential Permitted Development Rights

In the context of this city-wide target, it is important to discuss the impact of the introduction of permitted development rights for office to residential conversions in London. A large amount of office space has been lost as a result of this – for example, in Islington, in the first 18 months following the introduction of permitted development rights for office to residential conversions, 75 applications for prior approval were granted for a total of just over 700 residential units. In Archway specifically, Archway Tower was converted into 118 private rented units and Hill House is currently being converted into 147 private residential units. The net loss of office space as a result of these two conversions alone is in excess of 100,000 sq ft. Our client's proposed scheme goes some way towards countering this loss of office space.

Furthermore, an Employment Land Study was undertaken by LB Islington in 2016 to provide up-to-date employment forecasts and inform the Local Plan review process. The Study finds that, over the period to 2036, Islington's workforce is forecast to grow significantly, particularly within the professional and technical services sectors which generate most demand for office floorspace. Of the forecast growth of 50,500 jobs, 60% of these are within sectors that would require office accommodation. In order to meet this expected demand, the ELS suggests a target of 400,000 sq m office floorspace between 2014 and 2036.

First Floor Plan
Scale: 1:100

