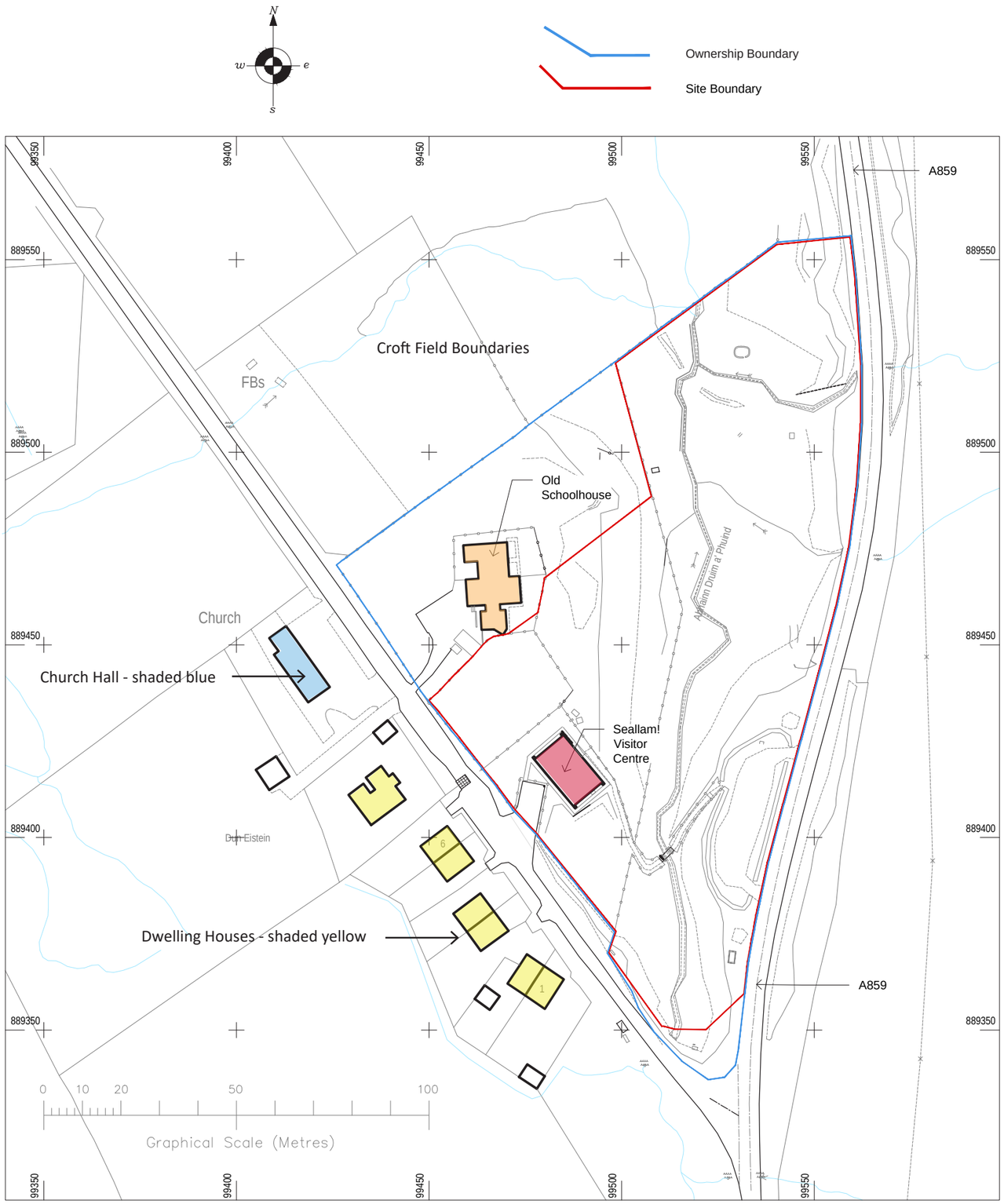
Design Statement : Hebrides People Visitor Centre

Prepared By Studio Hebrides Architecture
December 2023

on behalf of
Northton Heritage Trust,
Hebrides People ,
Seallam! Visitor Centre,
An Taobh Tuath (Northton),
Isle of Harris,
HS3 3JA

Date 08.12.23
Revision A

Contents



1. Introduction
Location of Development

Background Information

Name of the scheme;
HEBRIDES PEOPLE VISITOR CENTRE

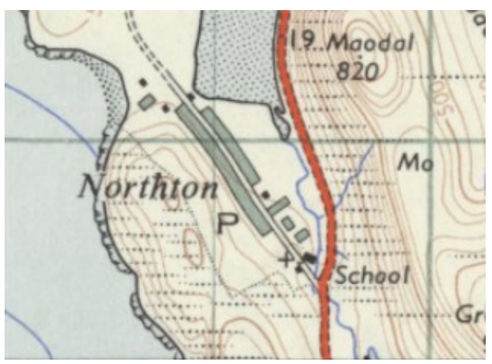
Applicant;
NORTHTON HERITAGE TRUST

Description and Aims of Proposal;
The genealogy resource at Hebrides People, known as 'Cò Leis Thu?', is based on over 60 years of research by Bill Lawson, widely recognised as an authority on Western Isles genealogy.
Bill Lawson founded 'Cò Leis Thu?' with his wife Chris in 1988, and opened Seallam! Visitor Centre (now Hebrides People Visitor Centre) in 2000.
Hebrides People is now run by the Northton Heritage Trust, a Community Benefit Society and a registered Scottish charity.

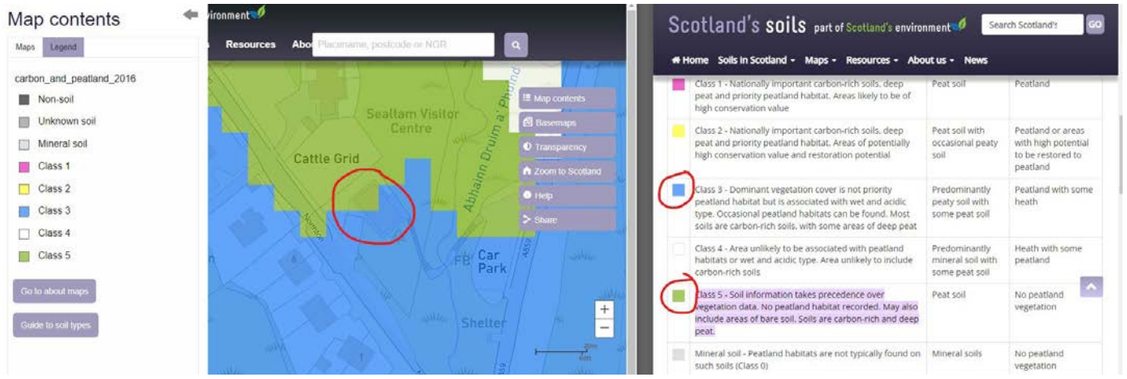
The development proposes to alter and extend the existing Hebrides People Centre building in order to construct additional and exciting new Genealogy Exhibitions, Exhibitions on St Kilda, New Student accommodation building and associated parking area.
There will be an enlarged parking area and new access onto A859.
There will be new landscape features and attractions, including paths and walkways, sculptural and informative installations and a play area.

Site Location and Ownership;
The proposed development is located on land that is owned by the Applicant. All the surrounding Land is under ownership of the Bays of Harris Estate with the exception of the Private Dwellings and Church Hall.
The surrounding land use consists of Common Grazing Land, Crofting Land, Private Dwelling Houses and a nearby Church.

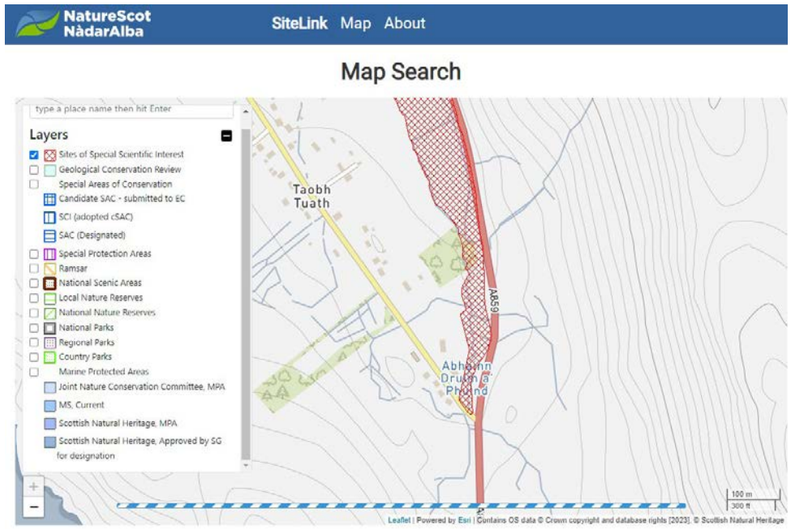
The site and surrounding area was only substantially developed and occupied from the 20th Century onwards as shown on Historic Ordnance Survey mapping. The site is currently within a National Scenic Area and partially within a Site of Special Scientific Interest.



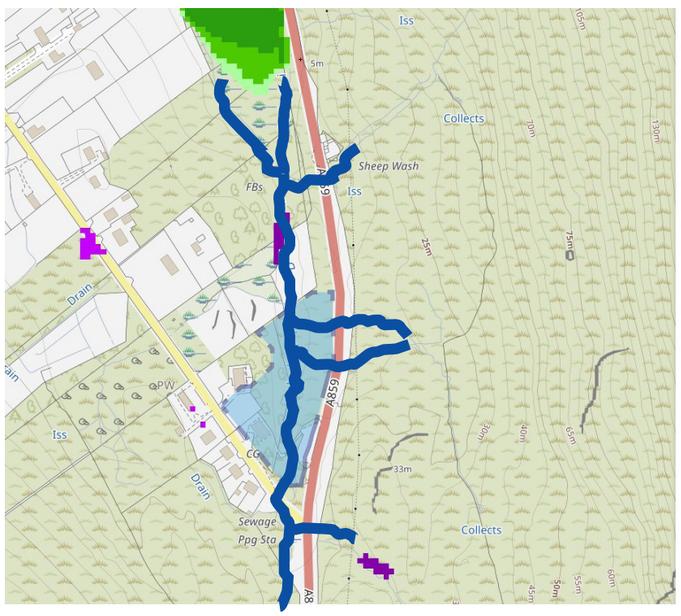
1. Introduction
Pre-Application Consultations and Studies

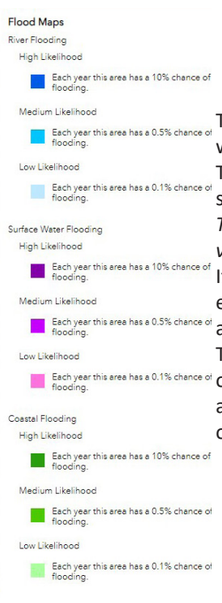


The Site covers areas that include 2 classes of peatland soil.
However, the 2 classes of peatland habitat on the site are not classed as nationally important.
It is proposed that soils will be retained and re-used on site where possible in order to enhance the landscape proposals.



The Site partially covers an area that is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. (SSSI)
The feedback received from Nature Scotland on the matter is that development of the proposed site will not directly impact on the features for which the area has been designated as a SSSI.
The detailed proposals and contractor methods will require to ensure that "downstream" contamination of the SSSI will be avoided during construction and occupation.





The Site partially covers an area that has a water course passing though it.
The main water course passing through the site is known as *Abhainn Druim a' Phuind.*
The relevant watercourses in the immediate vicinity have been highlighted dark blue.
It is not proposed to alter the route of any existing water course or to direct any part of any existing water course through a culvert.
The proposals will seek to mitigate the risk of any current flood incidents nor contribute adversely to increasing the risk of flood events occurring.

The Applicant received initial feedback from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Planning Department that the principle of the proposal is likely to be supported.

This was particularly noted with regard to the project's intended complementary links to other St Kilda visitor centre projects that are currently proposed throughout the Islands.

However, it was noted that the site is a sensitive one and there are a number of matters that would require to be addressed, as part of the application process.

The site is within the National Scenic Area and a Site of Special Scientific Interest.
The proposal, therefore, required screening under the Environmental Impact Assessment Regulations 2017, Paragraphs 10 (b) Infrastructure project and 12 (c) Tourism and Leisure.

Accordingly, the main issues that were addressed in pre-application studies and consultations covered the following aspects, including potential impacts on:
- the natural environment;
- the landscape and visual impact and effects on the character and appearance of the area;
- the local road network, including the provision of parking and turning within the site;
- drainage and flood risk;
- the potential for the loss of or disturbance to peat.

The project Design Team team have made engagement with NatureScot, SEPA and with the Comhairle's Roads Officers. The applicant also arranged for the appointment of further consultants to undertake studies, both site and desktop based.

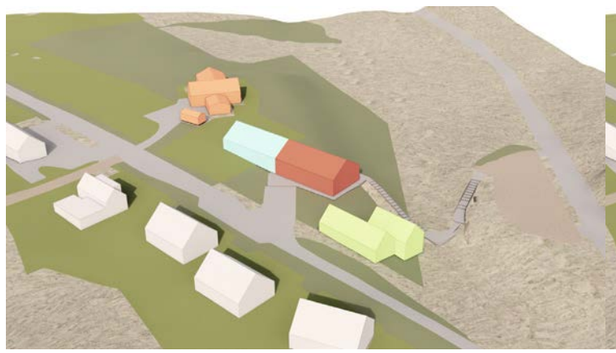
These Studies and Consultations included the following undertakings to support an Application for Planning Consent;

- Establish a consensus with CnES roads department officers with regard to the main access, car and bus parking arrangements
- Contaminated Land Study
- Ecological Appraisal
- Drainage Strategy Report
- Flood Risk Briefing Note
- Scottish Water Pre-Development Capacity Review
- Cultural Heritage Assessment

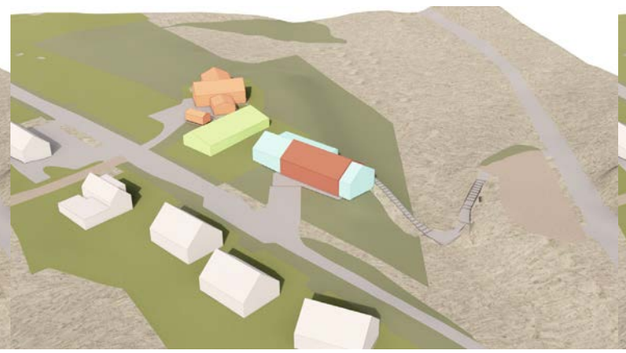
2. Design Overview
Massing

Various massing options were considered during design development in order to explore how the site could be sensitively developed whilst also delivering the brief for the proposal.
The existing Seallam! building is shown RED with proposed extension to that shown CYAN. The new build accommodation building in shown green. The old school house is shown ORANGE.

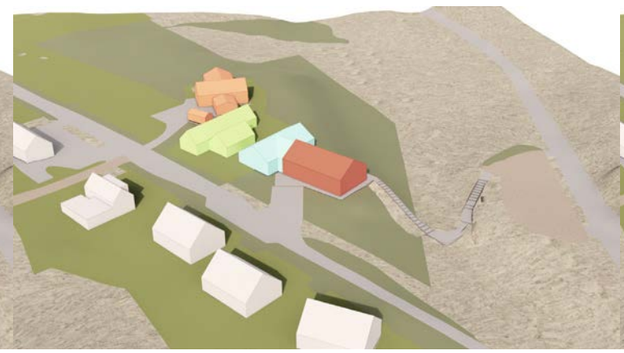
Massing Proposal 1



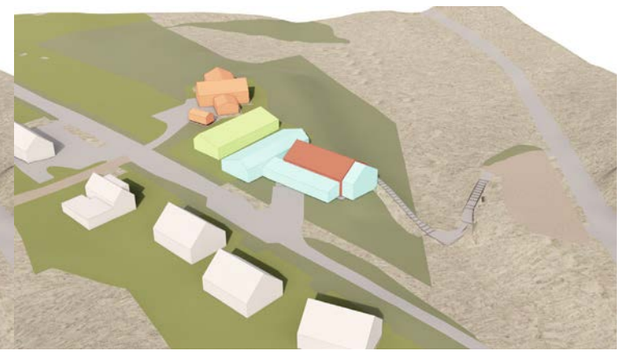
Massing Proposal 2

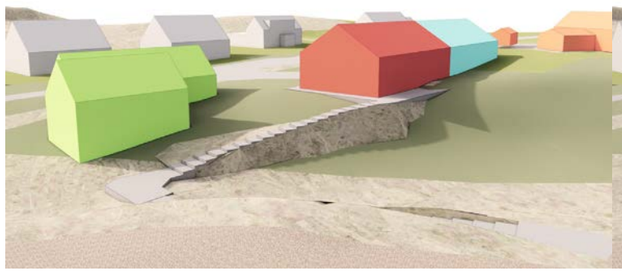


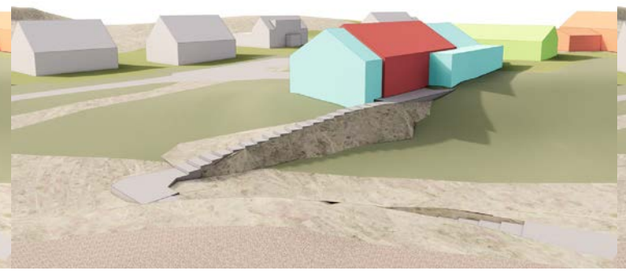
Massing Proposal 3

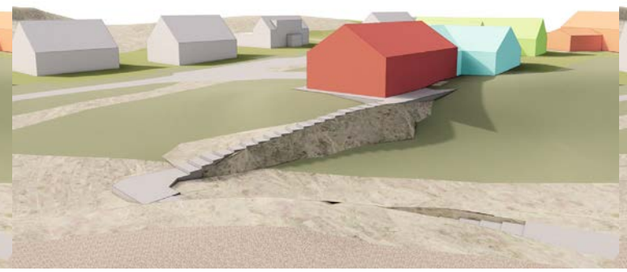


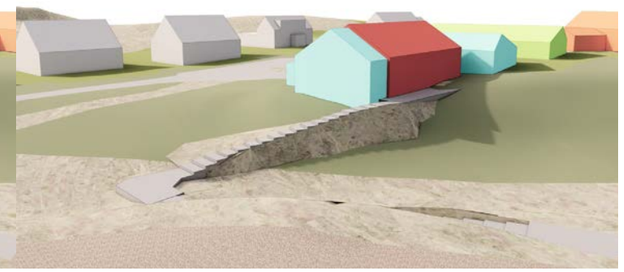
Massing Proposal 4

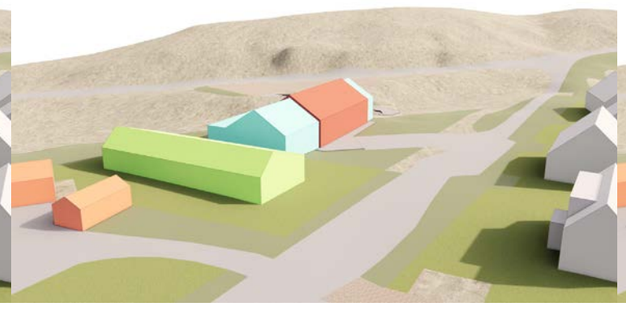












Massing Proposals 1 and 4 were not developed because, although they met the brief requirements with regard to accommodation provision, they are far removed from the existing pattern of settlement in Northton.
Massing Proposals 2 and 3 were considered most suitable for further design development.

Design Statement : Hebrides People Visitor Centre

2. Design Overview
Existing Site

The site and buildings owned by the Applicant are outlined and shaded on the adjacent plan, which shows the existing site.

Red is the existing Hebrides People Visitor Centre
Orange is the Old Schoolhouse.

The intention is to develop the area highlighted blue in order to locate the new building structures in the least obtrusive manner. Massing Proposal 3, from the previous page, was considered the most appropriate for development with regard to minimising disruption to the existing topography and to meet the Applicant's Design Brief.

This area is also the most practical for development; being relatively level compared to most of the site.

There will be no buildings constructed within the SSSI area.

However, there will be landscaping works and car parking constructed in the SSSI area with the appropriate mitigation measures.

The main areas where regrading of the existing ground contours will occur are indicated green. This is to accommodate the proposed buildings, parking layout and access routes

Refer to drawing number 2303_EL_090 for more details on the existing site conditions.

Design Statement : Hebrides People Visitor Centre

2. Design Overview Proposed Site

The proposed building developments are highlighted blue; in order to locate the new building structures in the least obtrusive manner as determined during the massing study.

The existing site topography will be largely maintained with alterations to suit the proposed new buildings, car park and pedestrian link to the building from the car park.

It is not proposed to alter the route of the water course known as Abhainn Druim a' Phuind.
The design team have worked to accommodate the project brief on this basis.
(refer to Section 3. of this report for more details)

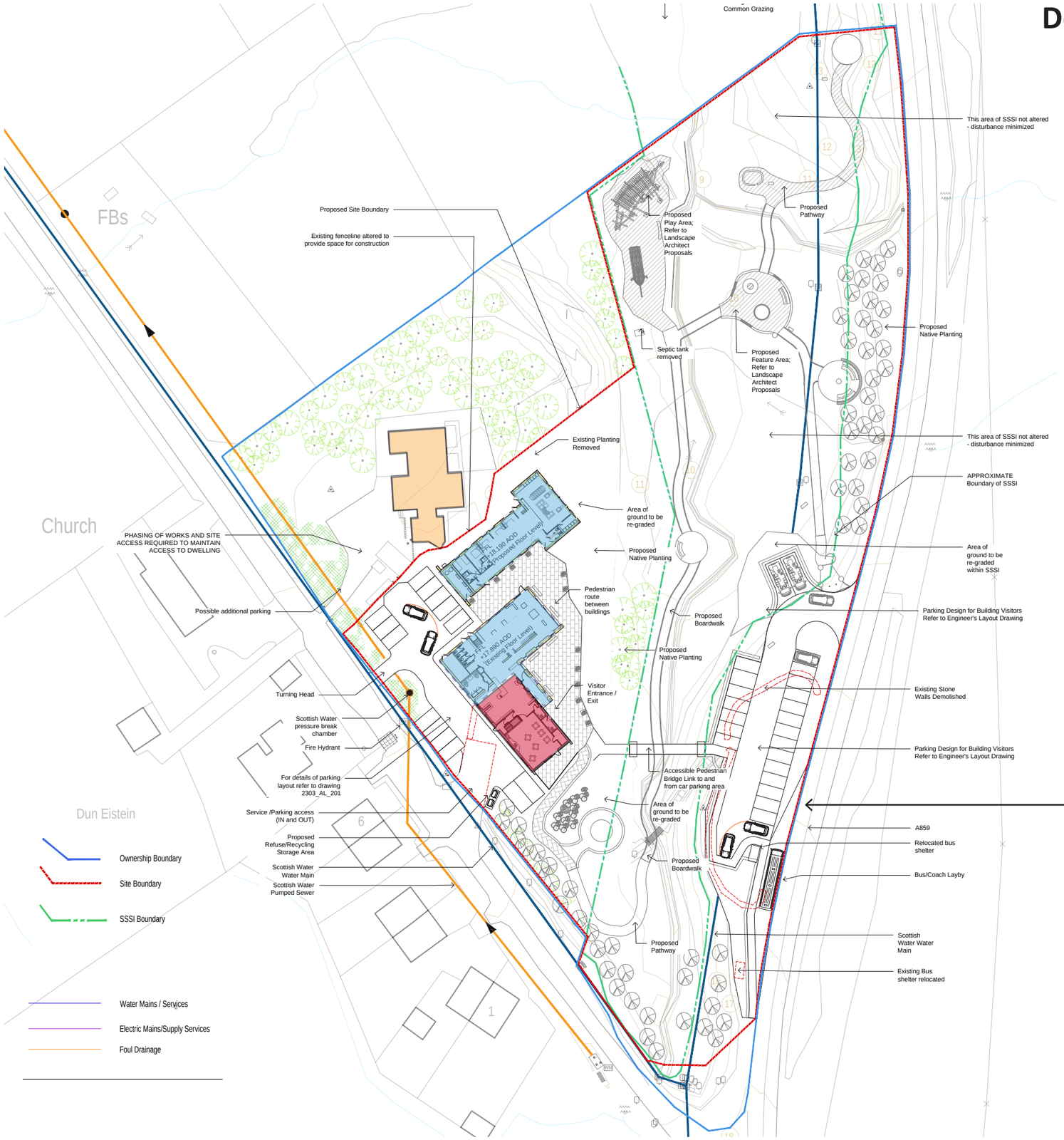
The Landscape Design is intended to enhance the visual amenity and provide an attraction to visitors.

The proposal is to create new landscape features and pathways by making best use of a "light touch" approach to development and to minimize or eliminate the need to remove any soils form the site.

However, it is accepted that some soils will have to be removed from site to develop the car park and pedestrian link.
(refer to Section 4. of this report for more details)

Please refer to drawing number 2303_AL_901 and Landscape Architect's Drawing for more details on the proposed site layout.

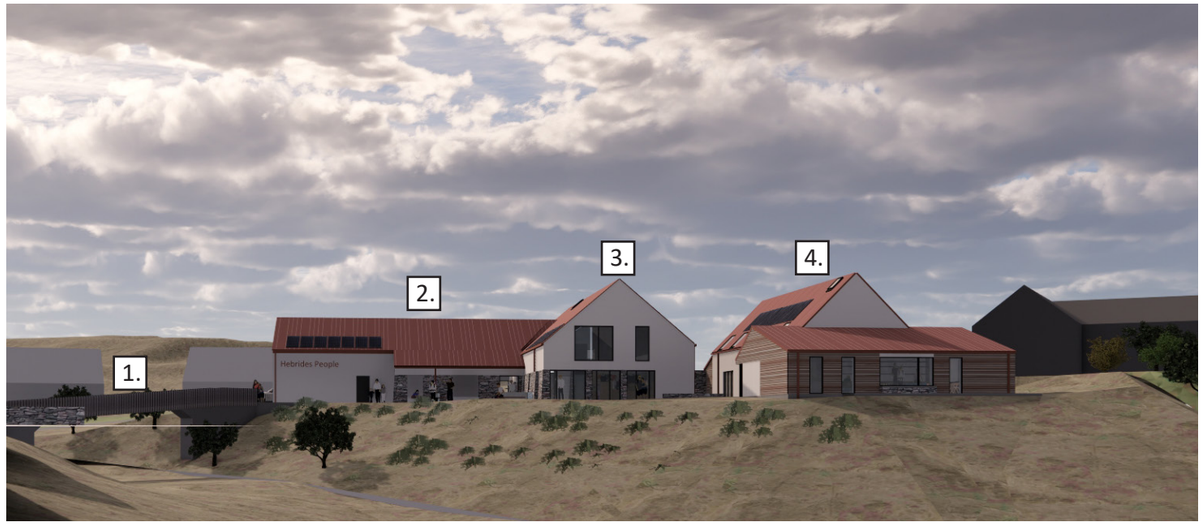
For Parking Details refer to Section 4



Example of Bridge Style - Corndavon Bridge, River Gairn

2. Design Overview
Building Design

The design has been developed to best work within the existing topography and arrangement of the existing buildings. The scheme has the potential to be phased.
The new building work is intended to compliment the surrounding area, provide the accommodation the applicant requires, and avoid being out of scale.
To achieve this aim, a modern take on traditional building forms has been developed.



KEY
1. New accessible pedestrian link - conceived as a bridge 2. Existing Seallam! building 3. Extension to existing Seallam! building 4. New build accommodation building

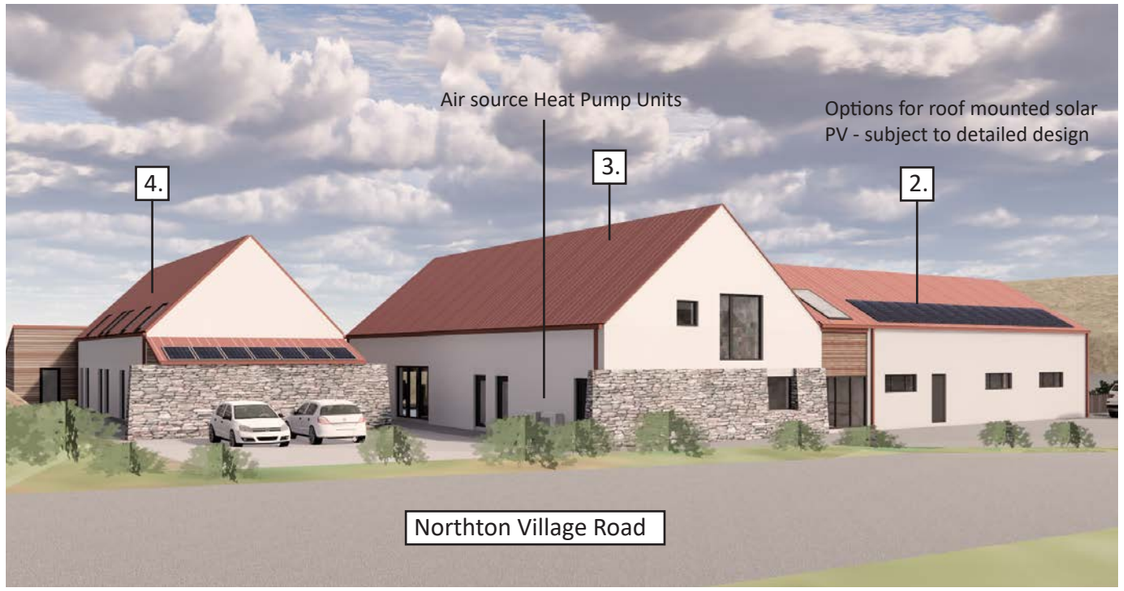
2. Design Overview
Visual Amenity

The Design has been developed to work within the surrounding natural area in order to minimize significant changes to the landscape and manage effects on the character and appearance of the area.

KEY
1. New accessible pedestrian link - conceived as a bridge 2. Existing Seallam! building 3. Extension to existing Seallam! building 4. New build accommodation building

2. Design Overview
Visual Amenity

Areas of existing vegetation are proposed to be retained or replaced as the development allows. The intention is to try and ensure the new buildings appear well bedded in their surroundings, when viewed from afar.



KEY

1. New accessible pedestrian link - conceived as a bridge 2. Existing Seallam! building 3. Extension to existing Seallam! building 4. New build accommodation building

Design Statement : Hebrides People Visitor Centre

3. Landscape Design

Please refer to the Landscape Design Plan prepared by RGS Landscape that has been submitted in support of the Planning Application.

With regard to the treatment of the SSSI Site the following design principles and construction practices are proposed;
During the construction phase all top layers of vegetation within the SSSI to be carefully removed in manageable sizes 300mm +or- in thickness to be removed and placed with care for reuse within the site.
All others layers will be removed and stored in mounds no higher than 2m

All general construction work within the SSSI site to be worked from rubber mats with minimum thickness of 10mm and positioned so that any machinery does not come in contact with SSSI vegetation.
It is proposed that larger machinery will be able to work from the existing car park area, which is itself formed on made ground consisting of imported material.
Smaller excavators up to 1 m wide to work within the SSSI are off rubber mats.
A mini dumper of max 500kg in weight to be used to bring in material for construction and material only stored for immediate use.
Immediate use material to be stored on heavy duty plastic sheeting to reduce any damage to the existing vegetation material.

Reinstatement of SSSI vegetation to be in reverse order with care taken when moving and placing top layer of vegetation as directed by the L A (Landscape Architect)

The adjacent images further illustrate the features noted on the Layout Plan;

Boat Theme

Signage

Bird Hide

Estate Fencing five bar, Kissing gate entrance.

Stone pillar with bird feature

Stone Walls

Corten steel railing

Rubber Grass Matting

Railing, Rubber Grass Matting, Boardwalk

Recycled Plastic Timber Boardwalk

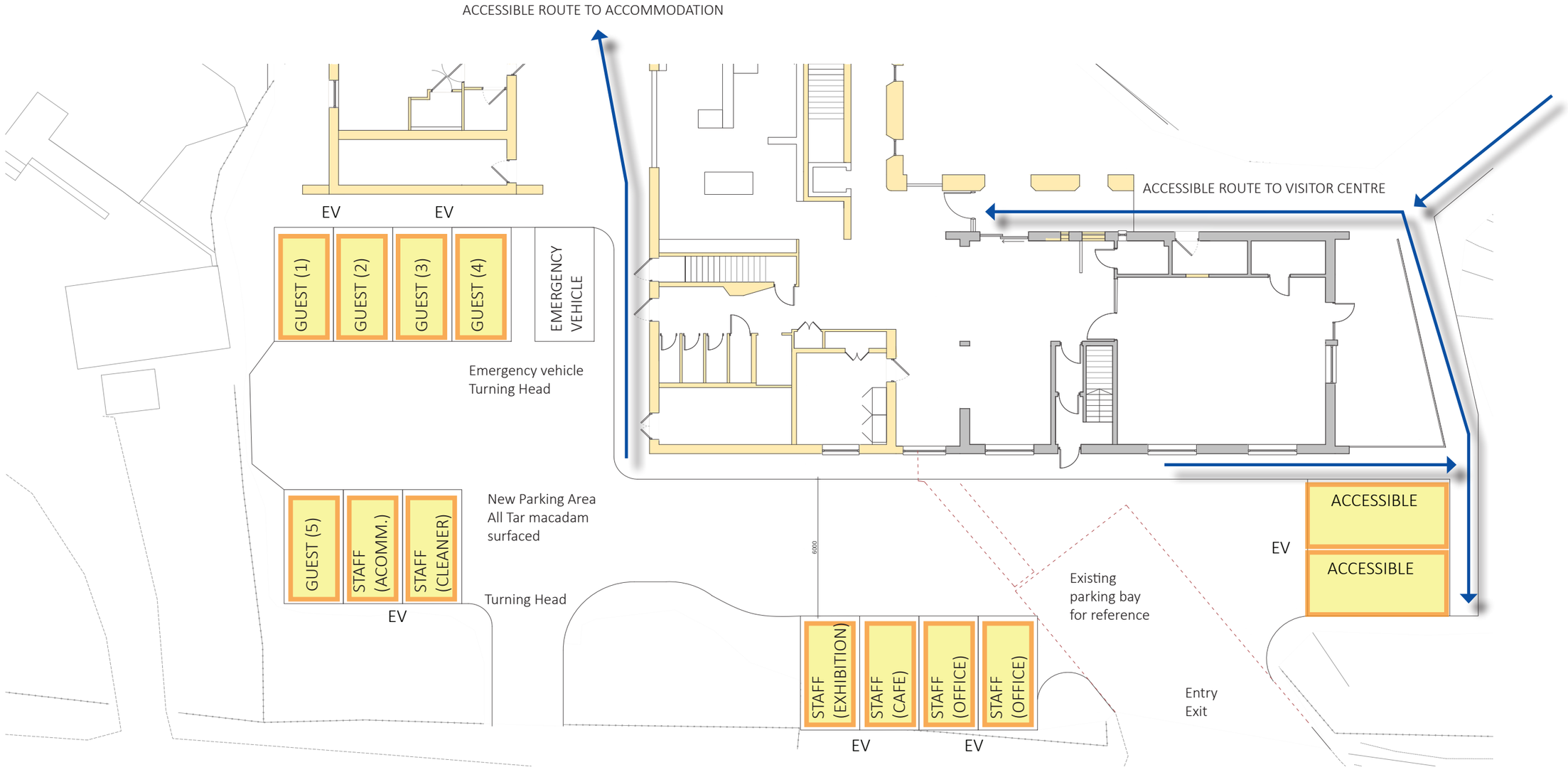
4. Car Parking Building Adjacent

The general intent is to provide the parking provision following consultation with CnES Planning Authority and to minimise the impact on SSSI area and avoid detriment to the “visual amenity” of the immediate area.

To achieve this the site has been arranged to provide essential parking close to the buildings and then the remainder of spaces are provided in a long, linear arrangement to reduce the need to construct parking that infringes too far into the SSSI.

The proposals include parking that will be adjacent to the building in addition to the main parking area accessed from the A859.
It is proposed that EV provision will be situated in this area.
The ratio of EV provision will be determined as part of the Building Warrant Approval.

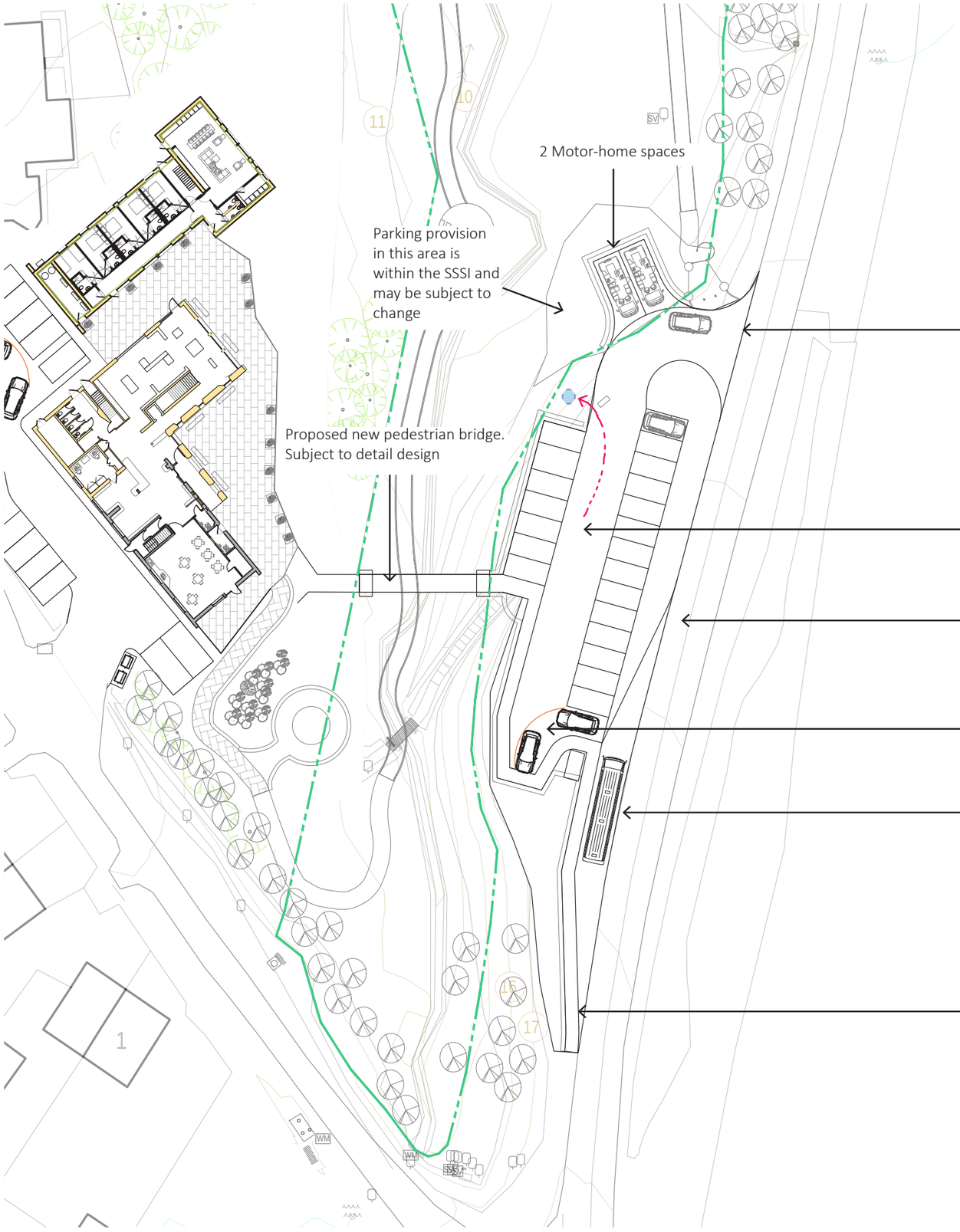
BUILDING ADJACENT PARKING WILL PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING EQUIVALENT SPACES;
All provision for the accommodation building; 5 Guest Spaces, 2 Staff Spaces.
1 Emergency / drop off space
4 further Staff spaces for Exhibition, Cafe and Offices



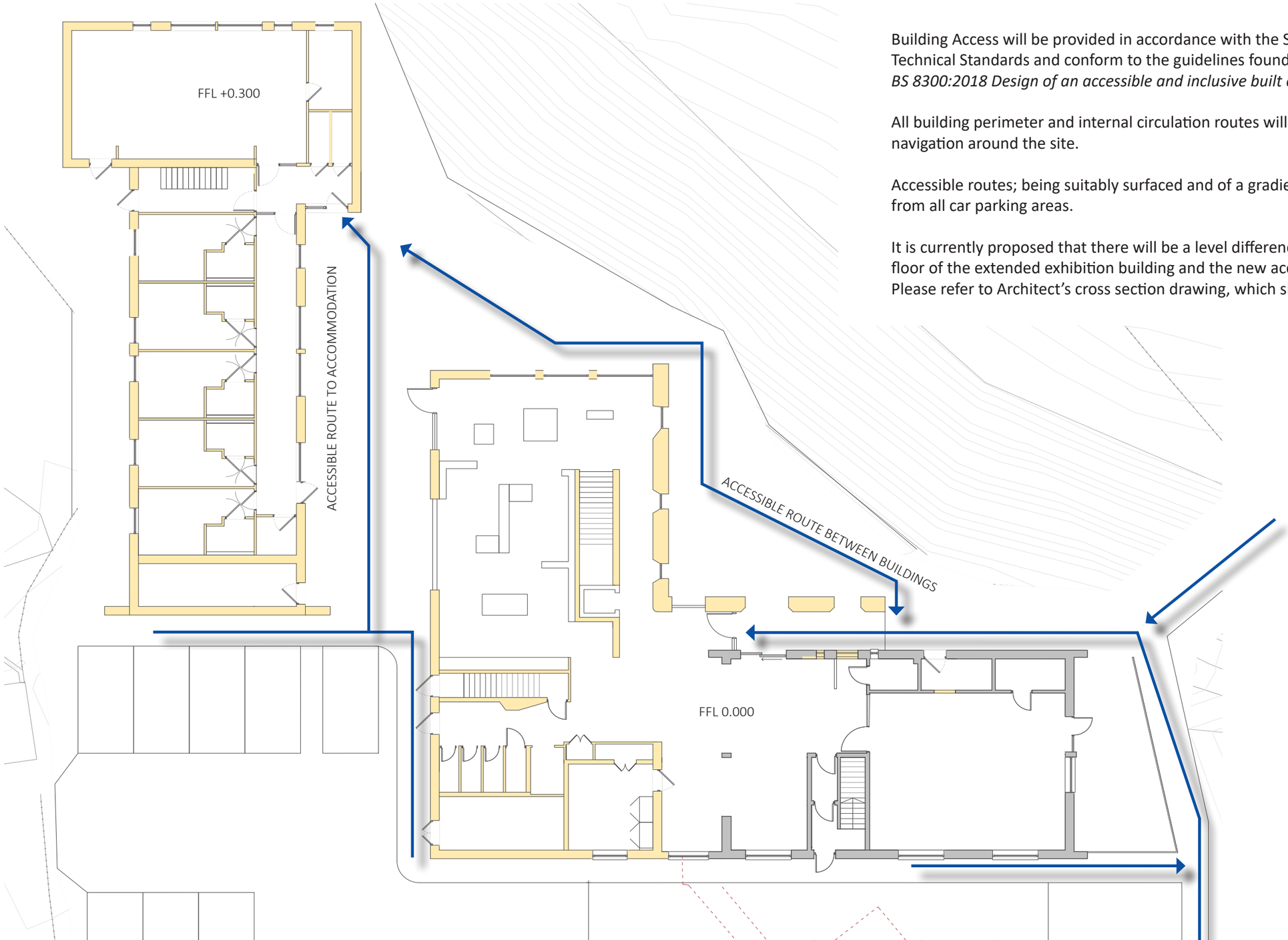
Design Statement : Hebrides People Visitor Centre

4. Car Parking

The parking provision that cannot be “building adjacent” (as shown on drawing 2303_AL_201) amounts to a minimum of 14 and a maximum of 21 standard car park spaces.
The spaces that extend into the SSSI area are subject to detail design with regards to ground contouring



5. Building Access



Building Access will be provided in accordance with the Scottish Building Regulations, Technical Standards and conform to the guidelines found in
BS 8300:2018 Design of an accessible and inclusive built environment

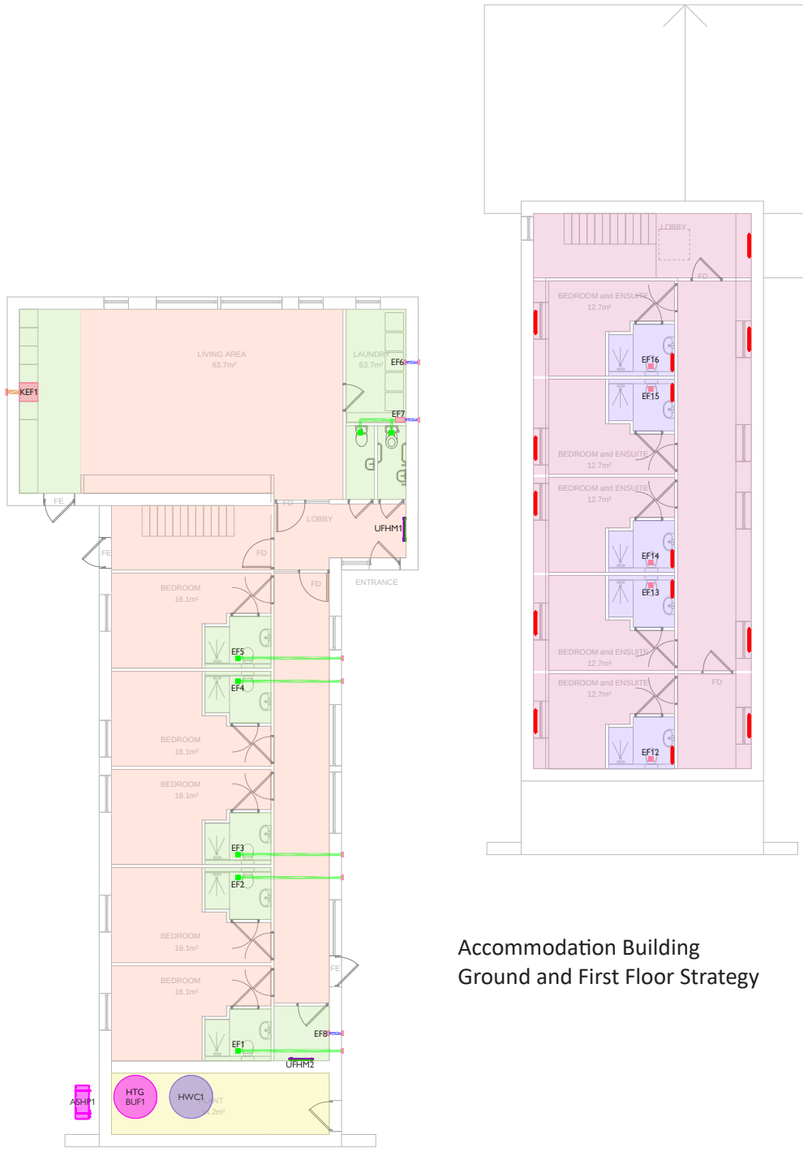
All building perimeter and internal circulation routes will be designed to be inclusive and to aid navigation around the site.

Accessible routes; being suitably surfaced and of a gradient of 1:20 or shallower, will be provided from all car parking areas.

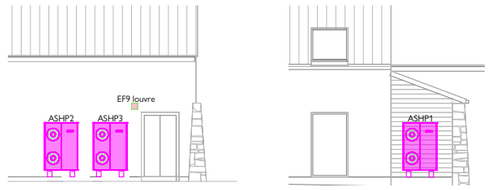
It is currently proposed that there will be a level difference of 300mm between the finished ground floor of the extended exhibition building and the new accommodation building.
Please refer to Architect's cross section drawing, which show this.

6. Building Services Mechanical

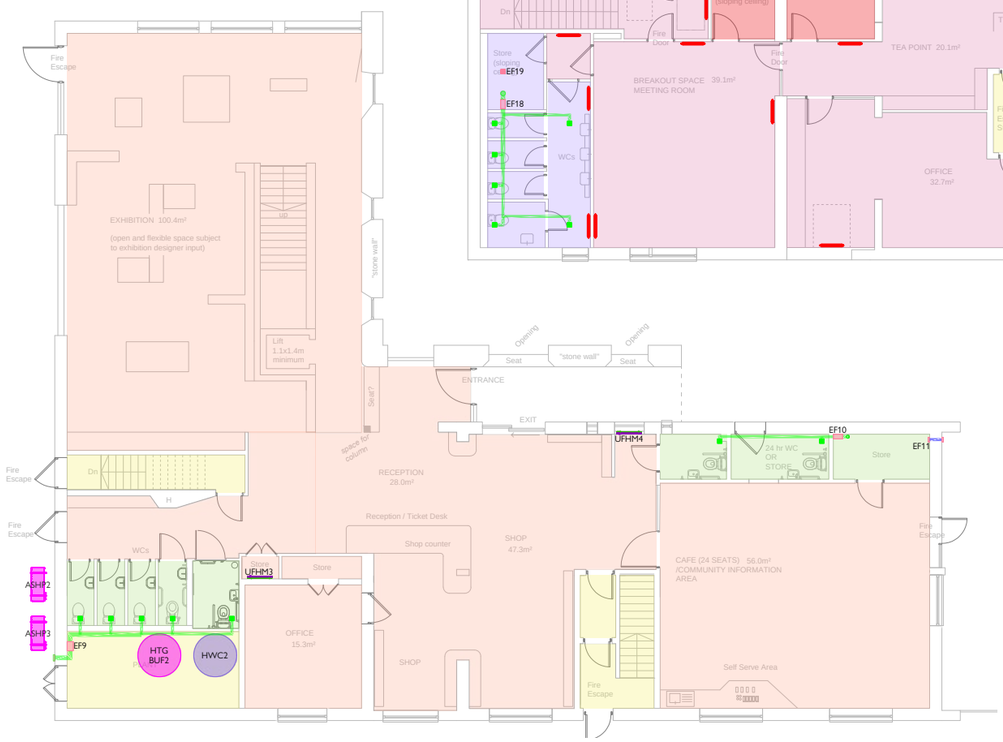
The Overall Strategy is to ventilate the proposal building naturally where possible and make use of Low and Zero Carbon Technologies in order to meet Planning Policy and Building Standards Emission Targets.
The Low and Zero Carbon Technologies currently proposed are Air Source Heat Pumps to provide heating and hot water and Solar PV (Refer to Page16) to offset power required to be drawn from the National Grid.



Accommodation Building
Ground and First Floor Strategy



Air Source Heat Pump units have been sited with regard to visual amenity and noise



Exhibition Building
Ground and First Floor Strategy

6. Building Services Electrical

Photo-voltaic Array (PV)

High output photo-voltaic (PV) panels may be installed on the South West and South East facing roofs on each building. Each panel will be high output, circa 375Wp, and 20% efficient. The yield from each PV array will feed directly into the corresponding buildings LV main switchboard and support the buildings base electrical load.

An East – West array would be proposed as this would provide a steady yield and production of kWh through out the day and also to provide a better match to the building use profile.

In any instances where the output from the PV Array exceeds the energy demand from the building, the PV output will export the surplus to contribute to the local distribution network operators grid infrastructure load requirements, this will be via a new G99 compliant type grid connection.

External Lighting

The external lighting, to the building perimeters and walkways, shall be carefully located, so that all areas are sufficiently illuminated. The external lighting shall be sympathetic to the surrounding environment and luminaires shall be selected to minimise glare and light spill to adjacent buildings and roads. Light pollution shall also be reduced by selecting luminaires with a flat cut off where practical, to help contribute to the Darksky protocol.

The philosophy for the lighting design for the site effectively will help protect wildlife ,plants, and bats and provide safety and security for all inhabitants. The proposal is to install low level LED lighting. This would comprise of bollards, wall mounted and column mounted luminaires, utilising products which are compliant with dark sky approvals, as best as possible.

To help assist with this it is deemed that generally 'For bats and other light sensitive species, a lower colour temperature of LED is preferred. The LED colour temperature recommended is 2700K. This is in line with recommendations (Bats and artificial lighting in the UK ILP 2018) using low level lighting.

Where practical, the luminaires will be full cut off/flat glass type, all with no tilt (0% uplight) which minimises glare and light spill whilst providing excellent directional control using quality optics.

The use of LED and advanced optic technologies will help to achieve this whilst ensuring that security and safety is compliant with regulatory lighting levels required.

The external lighting scheme shall be designed in accordance with:

CIBSE LG6: The Exterior Environment
CIBSE LG21: Protecting the night-time environment
BS 5489 BS EN 12464-2 Institute of Lighting Engineers Guidance Note for the Reduction of Light Pollution.
Typically Parking areas will achieve 10 Lux average, 0.25 Uniformity
Pedestrian areas around building perimeters, walkways, including the bridge, 5 Lux average and 1 Lux minimum

External Lighting Controls

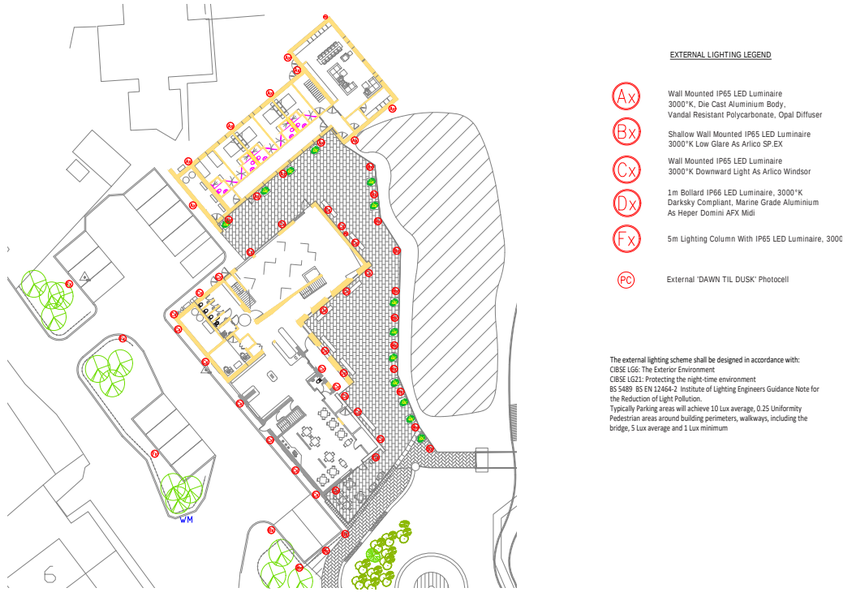
All external lighting will incorporate automatic programmable controls in the form of Photo Electric Cells with multi-channel controllable contactors. Programmable Time Switch Units C/W over-ride facility

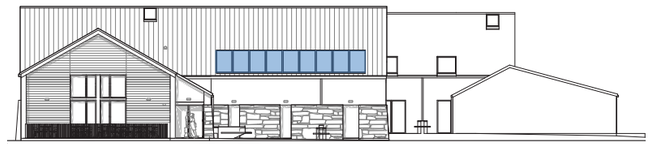
All external luminaires shall incorporate automatic controls that shall enable automatic switch off during daylight hours and also in accordance with a time schedule. A programmable 7 Day Time Switch with auto summer/winter time change facility shall be provided with multi-channel contactors. The photocell shall be adjustable and to be located at high level on a North/East Facing wall, The photocell shall initially be set to 50lux.

Electric Vehicle Charging

On site Electric Vehicle Car Charging facility shall be provided. The charge points shall be of the pedestal type and include 22kW and 7.5kW charging facilities.

The chargers will have dynamic controls which will monitor the base load of the buildings and permit the available capacity to the EV charging points with what is available. This will help prevent over loading the available electrical capacity to each building.





Options for roof mounted solar Pv shown blue shaded - in an East / West Split Array in order to take advantage of the orientation of the existing buildings, which has determined the overall layout of the proposals

7. OPERATIONAL OVERVIEW

The intention is to operate the redeveloped facility on a similar basis as it is currently but with enhanced facilities and exhibitions.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF HOW THE BUILDING WILL FUNCTION DAY TO DAY;

Hebrides People Building including external areas.
Normal opening hours likely to be 10:00hrs to 17:00hrs Monday to Friday
Saturday opening – by arrangement
Evening opening – by arrangement
External toilet / washroom – 24hrs, 6 days per week

GENERAL STAFFING ARRANGEMENTS
- Business Development Manager / Facilities Manager
- Receptionist / Shop Manager
- Tour Guide / Information Manager
- Seasonal Staff
- Cleaner (part time)

TYPES OF VISITORS AND HOW THEY WILL USE THE BUILDING

User type- Coach Party
Pre-booked coach parks in lay-by at allocated time slot
- coach party members make their way across the accessible bridge.
- welcomed at reception.
- directed to start of exhibition locations.
- will visit shop.
- will visit and gather in cafe / reception area.
- will leave at allocated time slot.

Individual Visitor/Tourist (including local residents)
- welcomed at reception.
- directed to start of exhibition locations.
- will visit shop.
- will visit and gather in cafe / reception area.
- will leave at allocated time slot.

Research Students / Academics
- Pre-booked Research Students / Academics
- welcomed at reception.
- directed to Accommodation Block
- opening meeting to advise and inform guests.
- directed to study area(s)
- assist with research / academic information.
- presentations / meetings / events as required (onsite and off-site)
- Eating arrangements to be advised
- will leave at allocated time slot.

Individuals Researching genealogy and family history.
- Potentially Pre-booked or call in on spec.
- welcomed at reception.
- mutually agree scope and support available in timescales etc
- directed to study area(s)
- assist with research / academic information where possible.
- directed to start of exhibition locations.
- will visit shop.
- will visit and gather in cafe / reception area.
- will leave.

VISITORS GREETED AT RECEPTION

COMMON AREA OF ACCOMMODATION BUILDING

EXHIBITION AREA
VISITORS DIRECTED AROUND EXHIBITIONS

SHOP AND SOCIAL AREA
RETAIL SPACE AND TEA COFFEE SPACE

Design Statement : Hebrides People Visitor Centre

Prepared By Studio Hebrides Architecture
December 2023

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Hebrides People

Cò leis thu?