

THE EXTERNAL AREAS
at the Former Synagogue & Primrose Hill

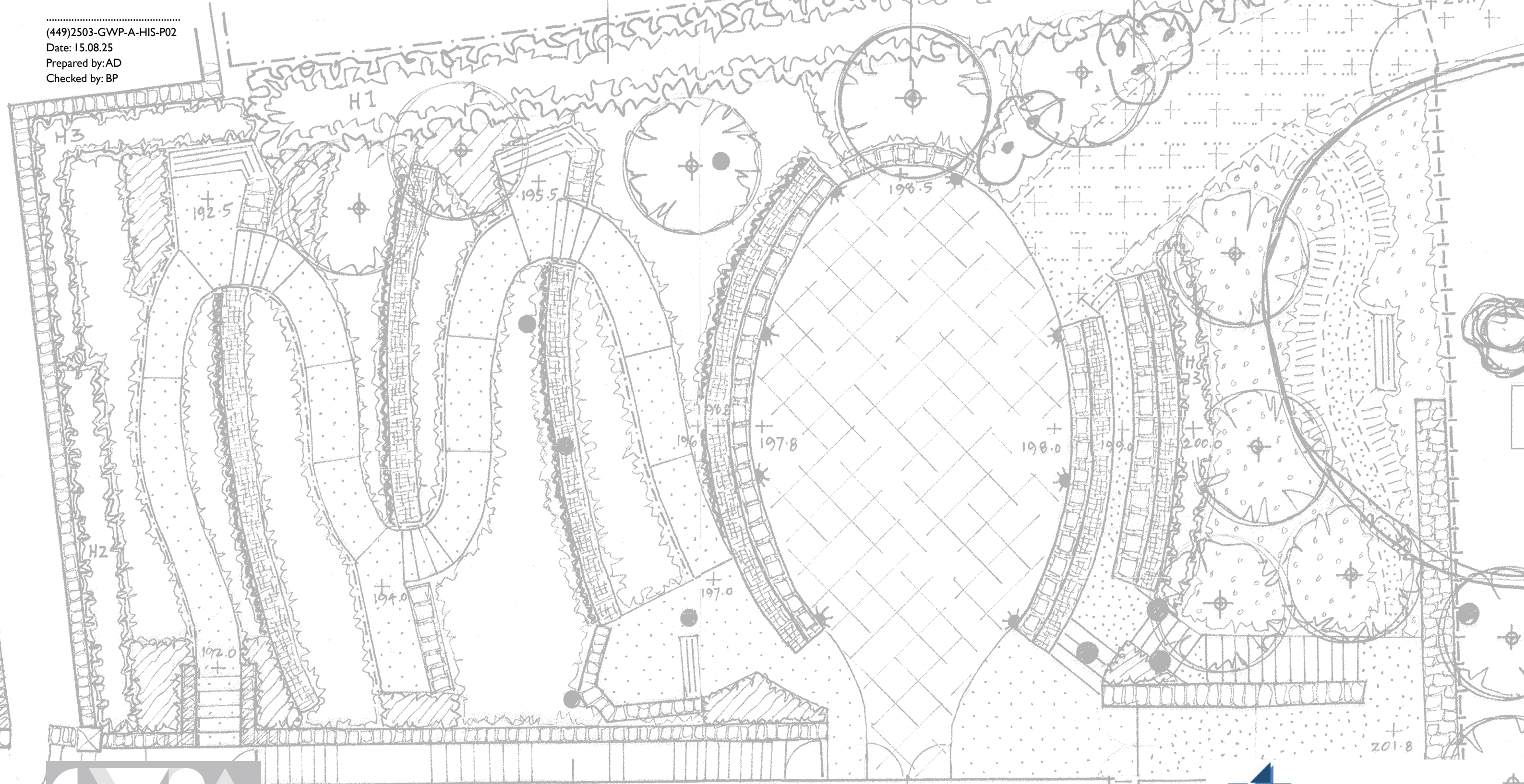
THE PROPOSALS

(449)2503-GWP-A-HIS-P02
Date: 15.08.25
Prepared by: AD
Checked by: BP

North boundary large hedge/tree belt -
approximately 30% existing coppiced,
30% transplanted from elsewhere on
site 30% new shrub planting.
Existing ground undisturbed.

'Anne Frank tree' - feature
tree, grown from original
Horse Chestnut.

Group of willow, hawthorn &
sycamore retained & coppiced



Existing steps repaired for safety.
Secure gate at either end.

Access from
Synagogue first floor

CONTENTS

8.0 Section Four - Explanation of the Proposals - External Areas

8.1 Existing Steps at the Front

8.2 Existing Steps at the Sides

8.3 Existing Steps at the Rear

8.4 Proposed New Structure to Rear

8.5 Derelict Land to North of Synagogue / New Garden

8.6 The Public Highway in front of both buildings



8.0 SECTION FOUR - EXPLANATION OF THE PROPOSALS - EXTERNAL AREAS

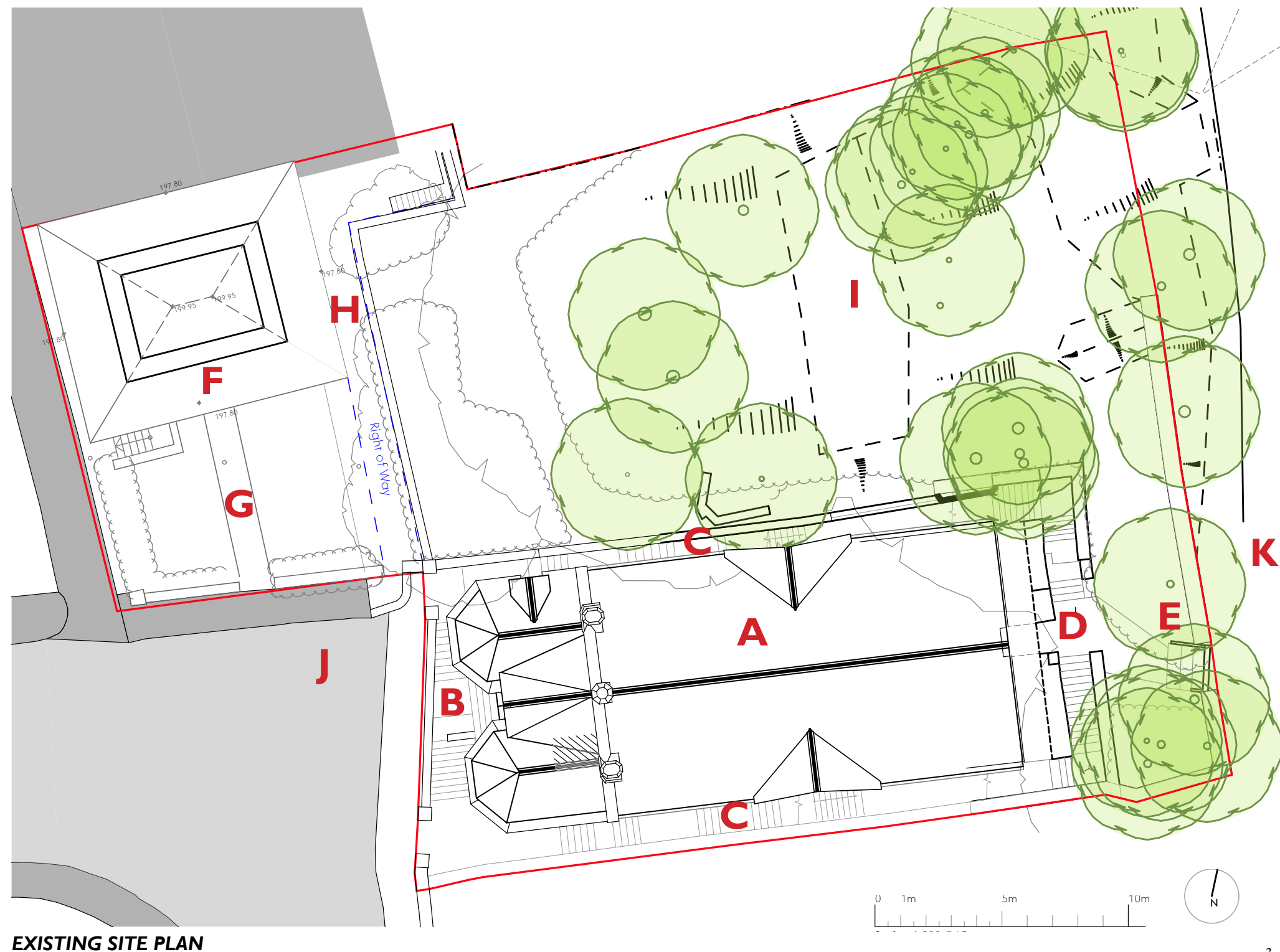
The Welsh Jewish Heritage Centre comprises the following aspects, for which the letters below relate to the existing site plan to the right:

- A The Former Synagogue
- B Entrance Steps at the Front of the Former Synagogue
- C Two runs of Steps & Retaining Walls to the Sides of the Synagogue
- D Steps and a Retaining Wall at the Rear of the Former Synagogue
- E A narrow strip of derelict land beyond the rear steps
- F Primrose Hill House
- G The Front Garden to Primrose Hill House
- H A 'Right of Way' Path to the east of Primrose Hill House
- I A large area of Derelict Woodland to the North of the Synagogue

Not part of the site, but impacting upon the site are:

- J The Public Highway outside both buildings
- K A Private Drive at the rear of the Former Synagogue

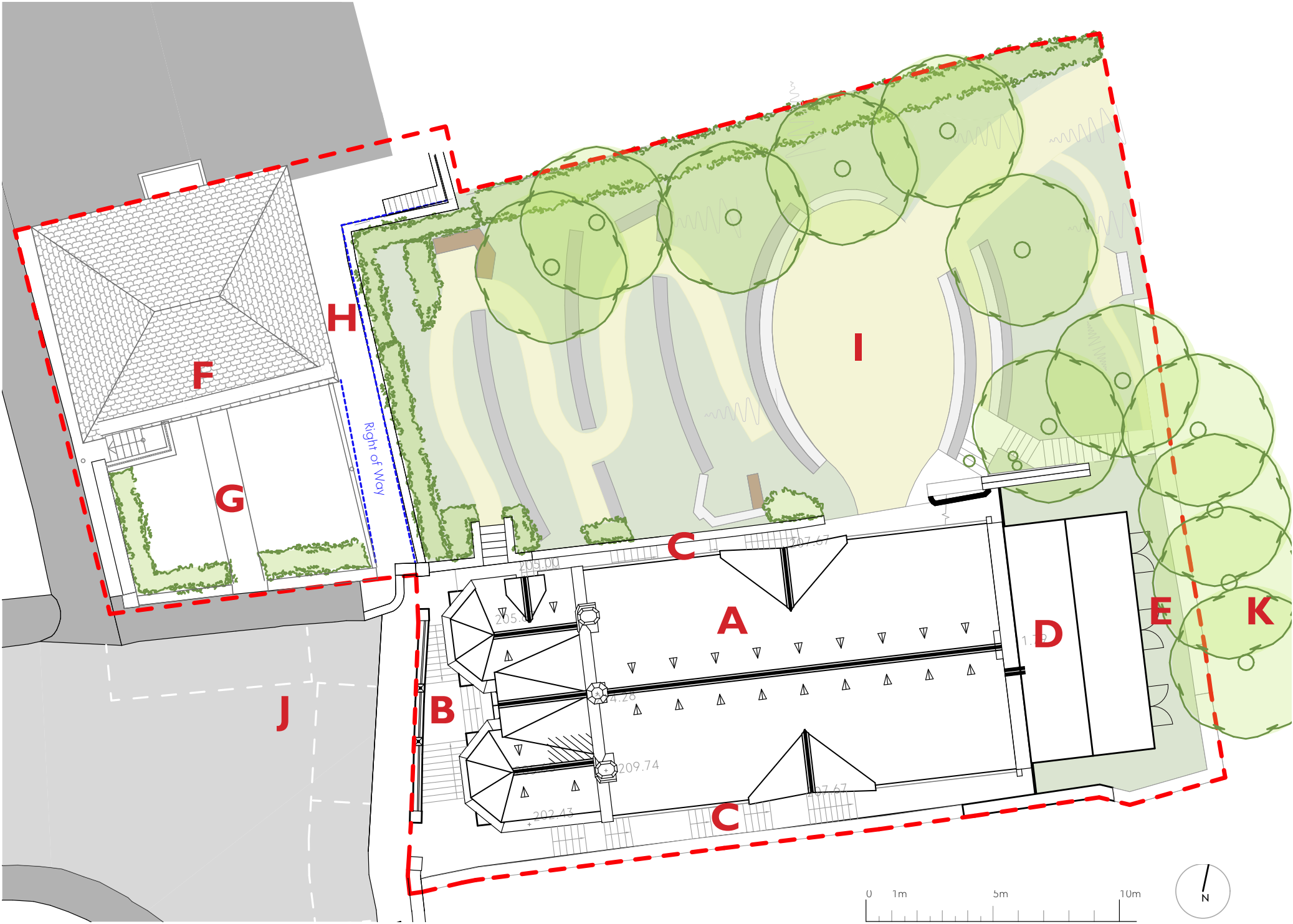
Within this document, we present the proposals for those External Areas referred to above; with the Former Synagogue and Primrose Hill House explained within their own separate documents.



8.0 SECTION FOUR - EXPLANATION OF THE PROPOSALS - EXTERNAL AREAS

Within this document, we present the proposals for those External Areas referred to above; which includes:

- B** Entrance Steps at the Front of the Former Synagogue
- C** Two runs of Steps & Retaining Walls to the Sides of the Synagogue
- D** Steps and a Retaining Wall at the Rear of the Former Synagogue
- E** A narrow strip of derelict land beyond the rear steps
- G** The Front Garden to Primrose Hill House
- H** A 'Right of Way' Path to the east of Primrose Hill House
- I** A large area of Derelict Woodland to the North of the Synagogue
- J** The Public Highway in front of both buildings



EXISTING SITE PLAN

8.1 Existing Steps at the Front

The stone steps, retaining wall and pillars to the front are in an extremely poor condition; having been pulled apart by buddleia roots and other damage. Steps are partially missing or fractured, the landing has lost much of its surface and the wall and pillars are misaligned. The proposals involve the wall being taken down to level steps; and re-built once all the roots are removed. The stone pillars are to be taken down and re-built straight, once all the roots are removed.

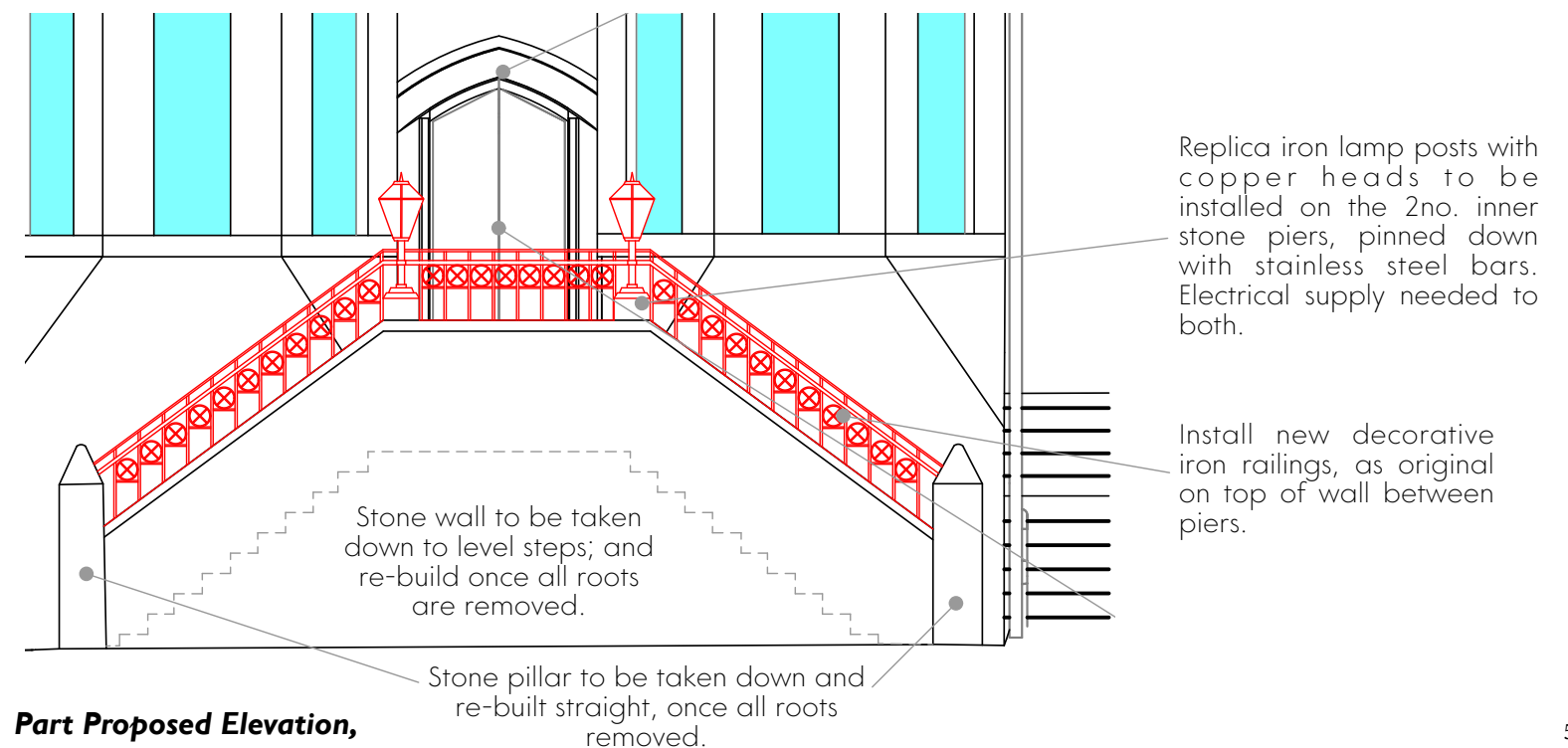
As the bottom image shows, there used to be decorative iron railings on top of the wall and iron lamp posts with copper heads on the two inner pillars. The proposals reinstate / replicate both the decorative iron railings and the two iron lamp posts with copper heads, which would be pinned down with stainless steel bars, with an electrical supply provided underneath the steps; all as shown in the bottom right hand elevation.



Retaining wall and pillars currently



Historical view of Synagogue frontage showing railings and lamps (source: 'alangeorge.co.uk' website)

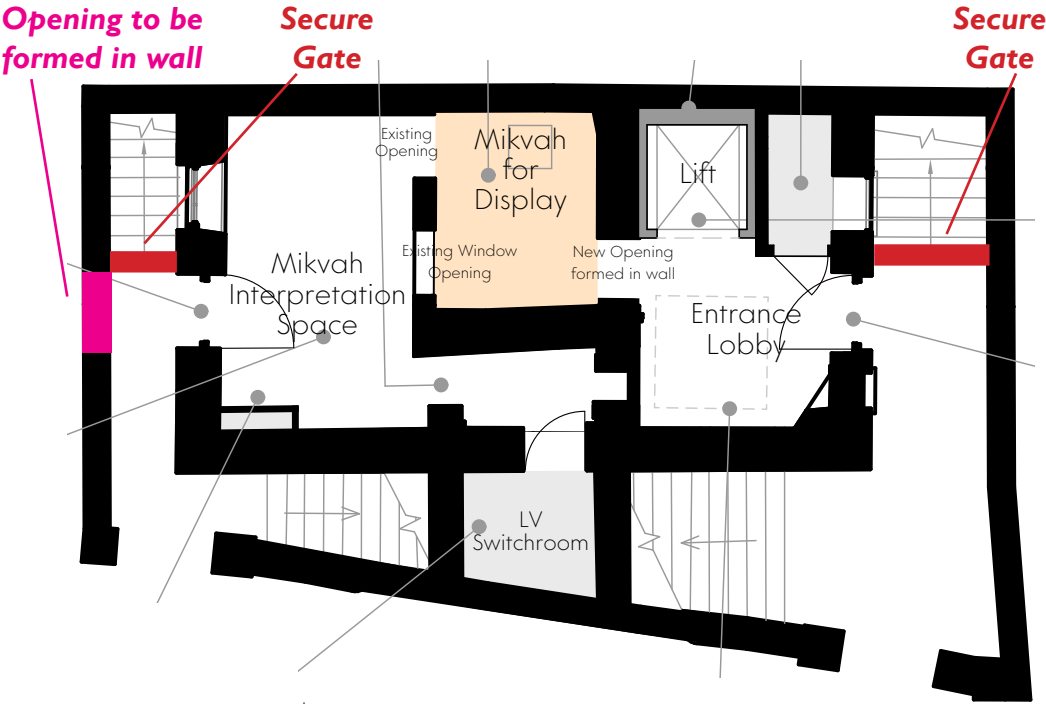


8.2 Existing Steps at the Sides

To both sides of the Synagogue, there is a long, steep set of stone steps leading to the rear, with some brick inner body. Both are flanked by a stone boundary wall. Apart from one location on the north wall, the Structural Engineer believe that these walls are either built up from the step level or have a single course below the steps. Also, the steps appear to be embedded into the external wall of the building. Therefore, it is not possible to remove and replace the steps without taken down the walls completely; which is not desired. As a result, it is proposed that these steps are repaired, like-for-like, as best they can in situ. This would likely comprise a step by step repair undertaken from the bottom of the flight to the top. The southern steps are generally in a reasonable condition however there are localised areas in poor condition with degraded treads and landing slabs, and some minor vegetation growth. The northern steps are in poorer condition, with most of the treads failing or locally missing leaving ground material under exposed and vulnerable. The proposals also involve localised repairs to the south wall. A new opening is proposed within the north wall to provide access into the garden, opposite the door into the building.

The rainwater drainage pipework appears to run within these steps, for their full length. These 225mm diameter pipes are encased in concrete on 3no. sides and sit approximately 200mm off the face of the building. they terminate at the bottom of the site. The north pipe appears to be in reasonable condition and in relatively clear; whilst the south pipe is blocked along its lower half. The proposals involve the clearance and in situ repair of these pipes, as far as can be done; and the in situ repair of the steps around the pipes. If possible, a sleeve may be inserted along the length of the pipes to improve their operation and to address any areas of damage which cannot be suitably repaired.

The stone flags to the base of both steps would also be re-laid and repaired, to ensure level and safe access.



Proposed Lower Ground Floor with Red Lines where gates are proposed

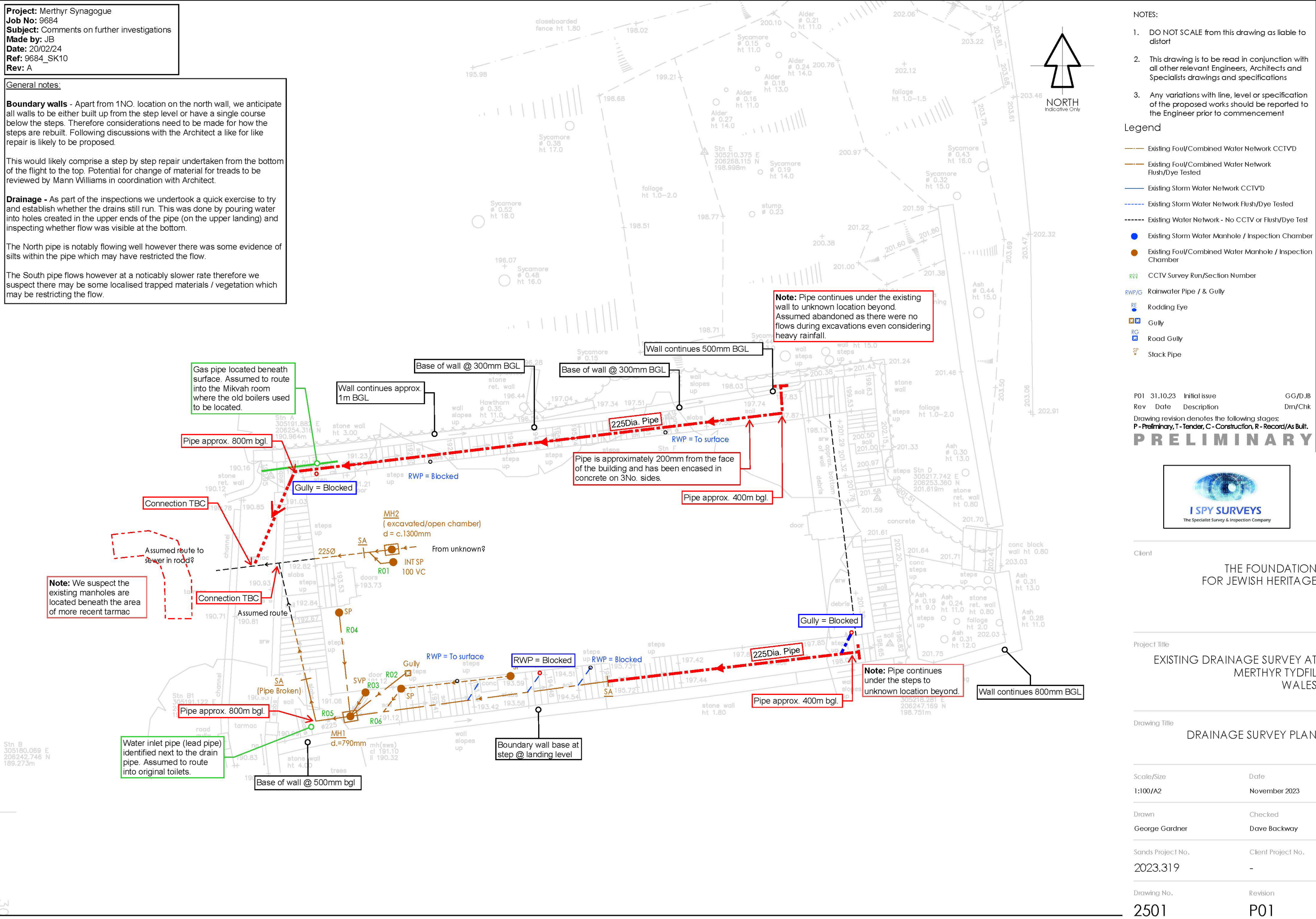


North side steps up the side of the Synagogue



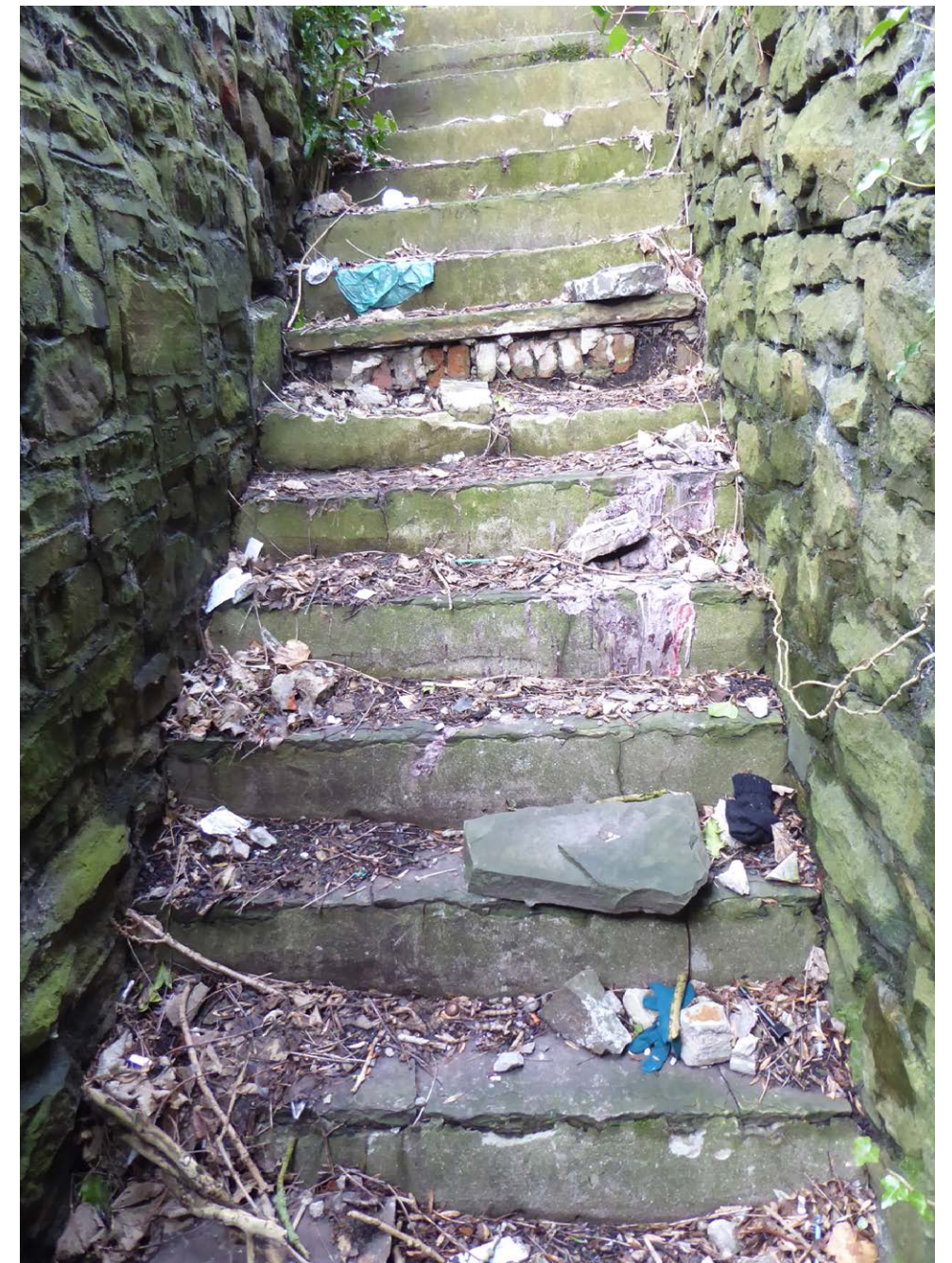
South side steps up the side of the Synagogue

8.2.1 Structural Engineering Details - On this page are the Structural Engineers Existing and Proposed Information relating to the Drainage running through these Steps and the other Drainage Connections



8.3 Existing Steps at the Rear

The site rises steeply from front to rear (west to east); and to the rear (east) of the Synagogue a set of symmetrical stone and brick steps rises from the interior's first floor to its second floor. The steps are separated from the gable wall of the Synagogue by a tall stone retaining wall. A steel and concrete bridge links the top of the steps with the second floor of the interior. This bridge is not an original structure, and was added in after the Synagogue closed for worship, along with the door inserted in the gable wall. On this page are photos taken of those steps in 2019. During an investigation in 2019, Heritage Structural Engineers, Mann Williams, determined that the retaining wall (which had already partially collapsed - see hole in photos below) was at serious risk of complete collapse, along with the stone and brick steps which the wall retains. Following discussions with the Cadw Historic Buildings Inspector, in 2020 the retaining wall was temporarily shored up and the wall's top courses taken down, with the stones stored on site. In retrospect, this LBC application also seeks to formalise agreement for that localised down-taking.



8.3 Existing Steps at the Rear

Pursuant to that essential shoring up of the retaining wall and the localised taking down of the tops of the wall, the photos on this page show the steps and wall as they are in 2025.

Discussions ensued, and investigations undertaken, to determine how to treat the steps, retaining wall and the area to the rear of the Synagogue.

Despite some stabilisation work (which was only temporary), the steps and retaining wall remains at significant risk of collapse. There is no options for doing nothing. However, the first questions were:

- Should the steps be repaired and re-built; or
- Should they be shored up for the long term and built over; or
- Should they be removed?

To repair and re-build would involve them all being taken down completely, and a new retaining structure constructed. Most of the steps would need replacing, due to very poor condition. This approach would involve so much intervention and new fabric, that it would not be true conservation. On top of this, the steps are difficult to access and, with no opportunity to use the space behind, this area would be barely used. As it is not overlooked, there would be concern that anti-social behaviour would continue.

Much consideration was given to the removal of the steps and retaining wall and providing a useful flat external space at first floor level, accessible from the main floor of the restored building. A series of investigations, led by Heritage Structural Engineers, Mann Williams, determined that the wall behind the steps was not retaining the land behind it, but that the steps were working with the front wall in retaining the ground. As a result, removing the steps and walls would require a large amount of ground removal and the installation of a significant new retaining structure. This would be expensive and would provide minimal real benefit. It would also result in the loss of a lot of historic fabric. However, even more of a driver was the fact that any such work would be incredibly difficult to do, with poor access, and would constitute a safety risk.

The only viable option was, therefore, the one which keeps the steps and the retaining wall as they are (with the top courses of stone already removed) and encapsulates them with a new retaining structure in front and a new slab on top. This would then allow for a lightweight structure to be built at the equivalent to second floor level. It would also preserve the walls and steps as they are, and avoid further loss of fabric. One final benefit with this approach is the opportunity to use the voids between the steps and the slab over the top as a compensatory hibernation roost, in the form of a cellar type construction, to account for the loss of the lower ground floor as a potential hibernation roost. Access for bats would be provided (through louvres, letter box style opening or hopper) along with an access 'locked door' for a bat worker to carry out maintenance. This 'hibernaculum' would include features for crevice-dwelling bat species, as enhancements, as well as fly-in access for brown long-eared bats.

On the next 4no. pages is Mann Williams' assessment of these options.



8.3.1 Existing Steps at the Rear - Options Assessment



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Project No: **Merthyr Synagogue
Potential Approaches to Rear Area**

Project: **9684**

Report No: 9684_DN_01
Page: 1 of 8

Engineer: **Joshua Bird** Director: **Pat Ruddock**

Date of Issue: **15/01/2024**

Revision: **A**

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Mann Williams were appointed by Neil Richardson from the Foundation for Jewish Heritage to provide structural engineering services for the proposed regeneration of the Merthyr Synagogue.
- 1.2 Merthyr Synagogue is a Grade II listed building (Cadw Ref: Merthyr Christian Centre, 11426)
- 1.3 Part of the proposed development at the synagogue comprises a new landscaping scheme at the rear of the site which aims to improve current access around the rear of the site, provide space for plant (Air source heat pumps) and potentially provide improved external space which can be used by visitors.
- 1.4 However due to the condition of the existing site (steps and retaining walls), the steep gradient and very limited access undertaking any works to create a usable space are difficult therefore the client has requested that Mann Williams explores 4No. options which are described in the later sections.
- 1.5 The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of how each option could be facilitated, and the pros and cons of each option which may help the client decide which option should be taken forward.

Design Note



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Project No: **Merthyr Synagogue**

Project: **9684**

Report No: 9684_DN_01
Page: 2 of 8

2.0 Condition summary of the rear landscaping

Note: This section will summarise the condition of the rear of the site and the steps based however for a detailed description of the condition of the rear of the site, refer to Mann Williams report 9684_R_JB_03.

- 2.1 The steps and landings generally are in very poor condition, with most of the original treads either significantly damaged, missing or improperly supported.
- 2.2 The rear wall is generally in reasonable condition and sound, with no obvious evidence of distress or significant deterioration. However, trial pits have revealed that it is not founded at depth; the base of the wall is just below the level of the adjacent steps. The newer concrete slab and bridge are also in reasonable condition currently with no evidence of spalling or exposed reinforcement observed during the inspection.
- 2.3 The inner masonry wall is in very poor condition and has a large collapsed area in the centre. A scheme of temporary propping was undertaken in 2020 to stabilise the wall and mitigate further collapses which could have compromised the remaining integrity of the wall.
- 2.4 Any proposals for the rear of the site will need to make considerations for how works can be undertaken safely while mitigating risk of further collapses of the masonry.
- 2.5 The existing alley between the gable and the front wall is approximately 1.2m wide therefore any works within this area are likely to be constrained and difficult.



8.3.1 Existing Steps at the Rear - Options Assessment



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Project No: Merthyr Synagogue

Project: 9684

Report No: 9684_DN_01

Page: 3 of 8

2.6 Accessibility to the rear of the site

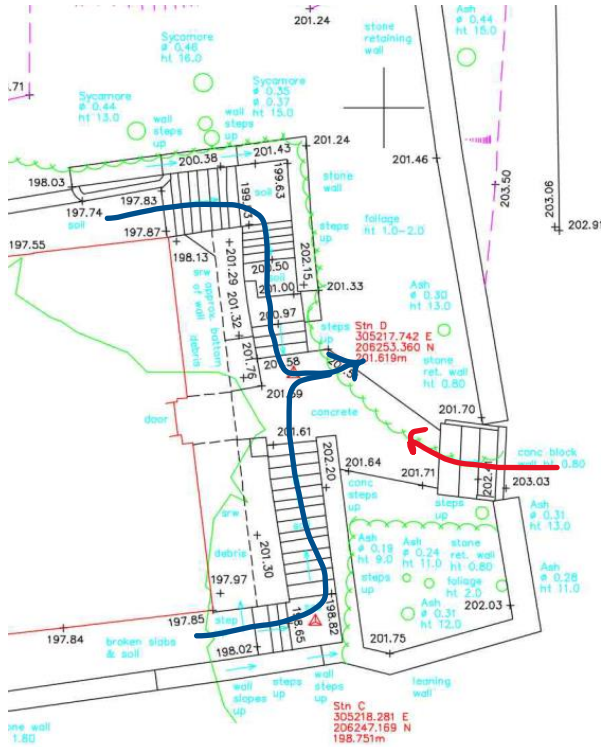
2.6.1 General access to the rear of the site is very poor. The existing steps along the north (1m wide) and south (1.4m wide) of the Synagogue are extremely steep and in poor condition, with the north steps in significantly worst condition.

2.6.2 Neither staircase is suitable for transport of significant materials, elements of temporary propping or plant equipment due to their condition and steep pitch. Concrete pumping may also be difficult due to the level difference from the front to the rear of the site and assuming concrete is to be pumped from trucks on the road outside the front of the synagogue.

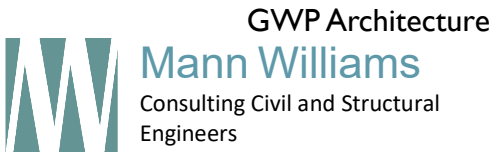
2.6.3 The steps up to the upper garden are also in very poor condition with most of the original treads missing or significantly deteriorated making access onto the top difficult also.

2.6.4 There is a rear access point which would be ideal for plant / materials access however this currently opens onto a neighbours driveway and no permission has been granted to make use of this access point. The client is to consider negotiations regarding access with the neighbour.

2.6.5 Details of the access from the public road to the lane above the site are not currently known but may also restrict plant access. This requires further investigation on site.



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Project No: Merthyr Synagogue

Project: 9684

Report No: 9684_DN_01

Page: 4 of 8

3.0 Proposed Options

3.1 Following further discussions and coordination with the Architect and Client, Mann Williams have been requested to consider 4No. options which are described further below. For each of these options, commentary has been provided on how these works could be undertaken including notes on requirements for further investigations or temporary works. Pros and Cons of the options have also been provided which consider buildability, impact on the historic fabric, general observations on possible impacts on programmes and costs, health & safety etc.

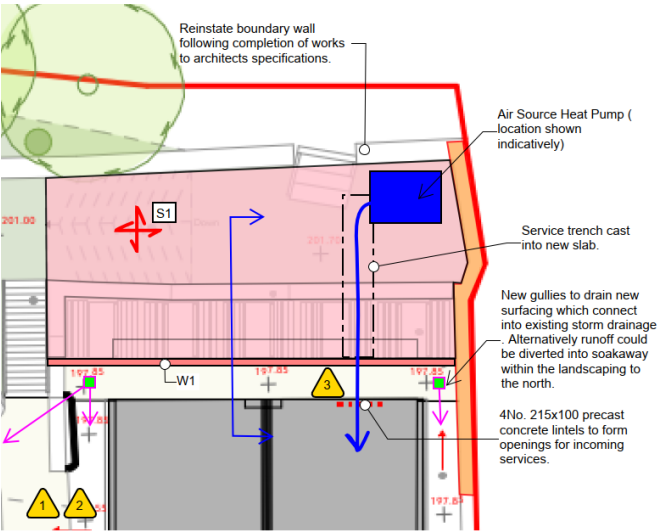
3.2 Option 1

3.2.1 Do Nothing. This option considers leaving the rear of the site in its current condition with no proposed works undertaken.

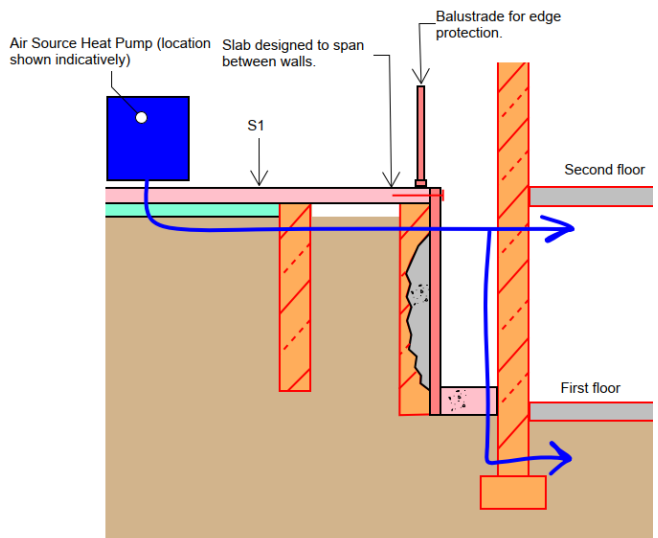
- ✗ Makes the rear of the site generally unusable in the proposed regeneration scheme and limits options for fire escapes which could also restrict occupancy and functionality of the building.
- ✗ The rear of the site would remain generally unsafe to access and the condition is likely to deteriorate further as the surfacing continues to deteriorate, or as further steps and masonry fabric are stolen from site.
- ✗ The temporary timber propping to the front wall is likely to deteriorate in the longer term therefore has the potential for the wall collapsing further which may cause issues with the gable wall of the building.

3.2.2 This option is generally considered not acceptable.

3.3 Option 2



Plan View



Section

3.3.1 This option which has been detailed further in Mann Williams drawing 9684-MWC-XX-XX-SK-S-90.0010 comprises the construction of a new sheet piled retaining wall in front of the existing masonry wall and a new insitu concrete ground bearing and partially suspended slab at the upper level. This option would encase the existing steps and walls and loads from the slab are proposed to be taken by the sheet pile wall and the ground (where ground bearing) only, and not taken by the existing walls.

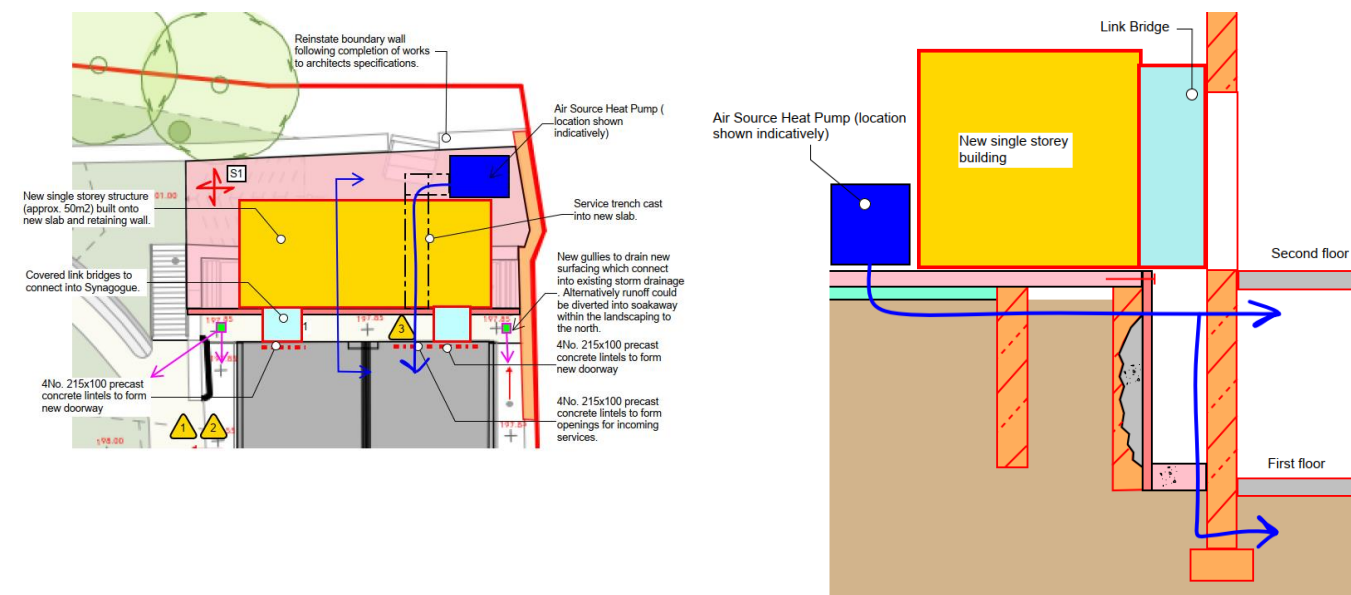
8.3.1 Existing Steps at the Rear - Options Assessment
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Project No: **Merthyr Synagogue**Project: **9684**

Report No: 9684_DN_01

Page: 5 of 8

3.3.2 The upper level could be utilised to support a new Air Source Heat Pump sited in an enclosure, be utilised as external circulation or seating for visitors. The upper level would be accessed via a new staircase located on the west of the slab.

- ✓ Minimal impact to the existing structural fabric as the existing steps and walls will be encased within the new structure.
- ✓ Forms a large usable area at the rear of the site with several potential uses, with space for MEP plant areas as required.
- ✓ Minimal requirement for excavations and removal of debris from site.
- ✓ Likely the cheaper of the options apart from Option 1.
- ✗ Potentially complex sequence of works including elements of temporary propping to the sheet pile wall. Associated health and safety concerns for operatives working in the gap between the front wall and the synagogue wall.
- ✗ Access for lifting equipment and concrete pumps likely difficult as noted in previous sections.
- Will require mechanical lifting equipment however this equipment may only be required to lift in the sheet piles, reinforcement cages, and potential temporary works.

3.4 Option 3

Plan View

Section

3.4.1 Option 3 comprises is the same as Option 2 described previously however with an additional consideration for adding a single storey structure on the upper level with link bridges back into the Synagogue.

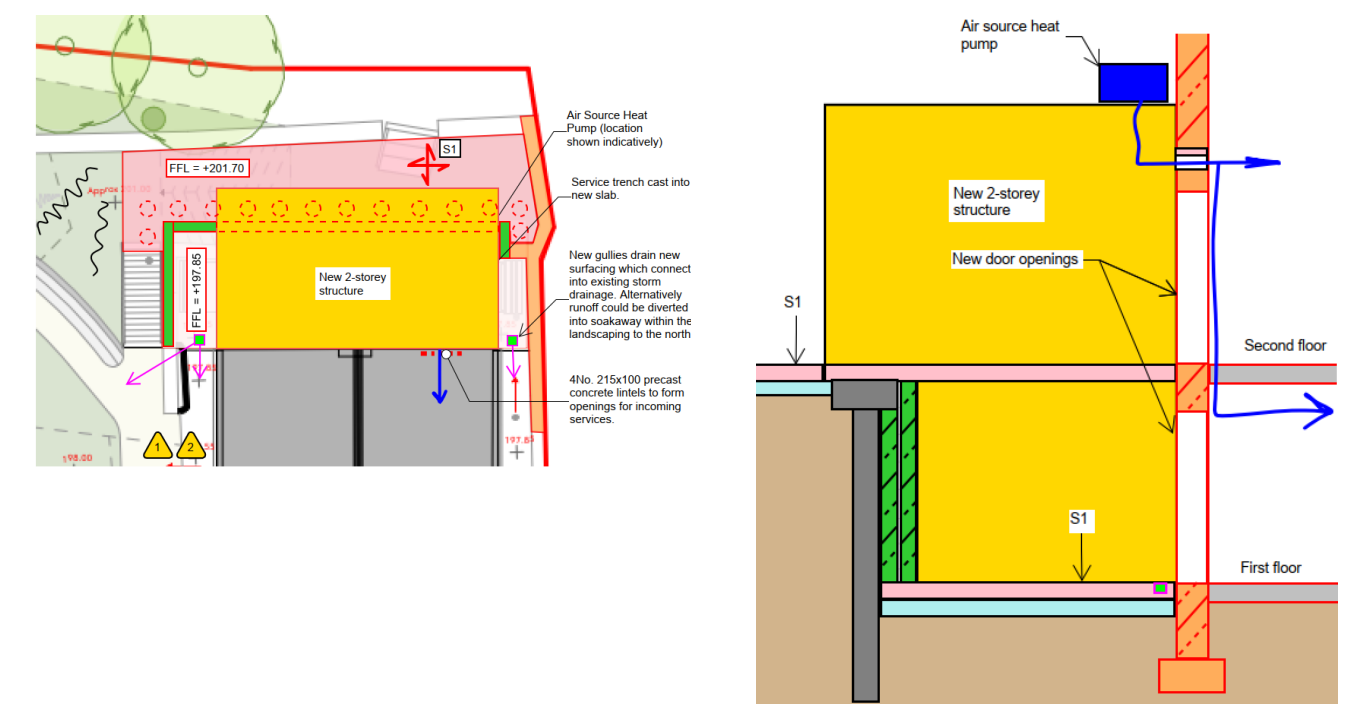
3.4.2 The new single storey building could comprise a timber or steel superstructure with a lightweight roof construction and cladding to the Architect's details and specifications. The link bridges could comprise cantilevering steel beams connected to the existing gable wall of the synagogue which support the walls and roof structure. The link bridges are proposed to not load the retaining wall.

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Project No: **Merthyr Synagogue**Project: **9684**

Report No: 9684_DN_01

Page: 6 of 8

- ✓ Minimal impact to the existing structural fabric as the existing steps and walls will be encased within the new structure.
- ✓ Forms a large usable area at the rear of the site with several potential uses, with space for MEP plant areas as required.
- ✓ Provides additional internal space which could be utilised as office space, increased exhibition areas etc and may generally considered more desirable by the client than external space.
- ✓ Minimal requirement for excavations and removal of debris from site.
- ✗ Potentially complex sequence of works including elements of temporary propping to the sheet pile wall. Associated health and safety concerns for operatives working in the gap between the front wall and the synagogue wall.
- ✗ Access for lifting equipment and concrete pumps likely difficult as noted in previous sections.
- ✗ Potential for differential settlement between new extension and existing building. Footings of the front wall are unknown and likely difficult / impossible to investigate therefore sufficiently to prove capacity.
- Will require mechanical lifting equipment which will need to be located on the constrained site however this equipment may only be required to lift in the sheet piles, and reinforcement cages.
- Residual risks of unknown ground conditions, particularly as the new slab will now support a habitable structure.

3.5 Option 4

Plan View

Section

3.5.1 This option consists of a contiguous piled wall constructed behind the rear wall which forms a new retaining structure that supports a new 2 storey extension which extends the usable space building space. The existing steps and retaining walls will be fully demolished. An insitu RC slab is to be constructed at first and second floor levels to form a moderately sized space at the rear to facilitate some benching and the proposed Air Source Heat Pump. The new structure would likely be of steel or timber construction built up off the second-floor slab and the capping beam at the head of the piled wall.

8.3.1 Existing Steps at the Rear - Options Assessment



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Project No: **Merthyr Synagogue**

Project: **9684**

Report No: 9684_DN_01

Page: 7 of 8

- ✓ Provides 2 floors of additional internal space which could be utilised as office space, increased exhibition areas etc and likely to be generally considered more desirable by the client than external space.
- ✓ Potentially safer to construct than the other options as this option limits time operatives have to spend in proximity to the failed retaining wall and on the existing steps in poor condition.
- ✗ Limits the usability of the surrounding landscaping. The upper level will likely be unusable except for access.
- ✗ Requires significant amount of excavation to remove existing steps and retaining walls
- ✗ Significant temporary works will be required to permit geotechnical inspections and piling during construction to avoid surcharging the existing walls during the works.
- ✗ Access restrictions are likely to make rig access difficult during the works.
- Will require a full geotechnical investigation including boreholes, trial pits etc to confirm the ground buildup at depth and to inform design parameters for the piles.

4.0 Discussions

- 4.1 When considering the options discussed in this report, all have various elements of complexity which makes selecting the "correct" option difficult. The prevailing issues of access make all of the options challenging for the potential contractors in particular when considering space for plant and large elements of temporary works.
- 4.2 It is strongly recommended that negotiations with the neighbour are had to establish whether access from the rear can be provided, however even if this is granted the site is still constrained and challenging to work within, and a significant amount of coordination and planning will be required to facilitate ground works, concrete pours, lifting of temporary works, materials and structural elements etc. Even if access through the rear is permitted by the neighbour, the access route to the rear is understood to be constrained therefore considerations need to be made for what plant equipment can utilise the existing route.
- 4.3 It is worth noting that the works to the synagogue building are typical of those required as part of any refurbishment of a historic building, and therefore will attract a certain type of building contractor suited to and experienced in that type of work. The works at the rear, whether option 2, 3 or 4, have at their heart significant civil engineering and groundworks. This requires quite a different approach and a different type of contractor. Procurement of the combined works will therefore require careful thought, as it is unlikely that a single contractor will be equally comfortable and/or experienced in both types of work. This is likely to lead to the subcontracting of a large element of the works, potentially by a main contractor not wholly familiar with managing such works.
- 4.4 Primrose Hill**
- 4.4.1 We understand the client is currently considering purchasing the neighbouring property Primrose Hill which would form part of the overall redevelopment scheme. Theoretically if this site was purchased it may provide an alternative access route to the rear of the Synagogue however there is still a significant slope (Approx 35° pitch) from the bottom of the site through the woods to the rear. We assume this is likely to require temporary scaffold platforms and ramps to permit suitable access for operatives, plant equipment and materials deliveries, this may require alterations or temporary dismantling of parts of the existing retaining wall.

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Project No: **Merthyr Synagogue**

Project: **9684**

Report No: 9684_DN_01

Page: 8 of 8

5.0 Conclusions & Recommendations

- 5.1 As stated previously in the report, a 'Do nothing' approach is not an option due to the condition of the steps and masonry walls. However, all options include significant temporary works and/or civil engineering interventions to a very constrained and inaccessible site.
- 5.2 At this stage there is still a substantial number of unknowns with regards to each of the options proposed above. The prevailing issues regarding access and the risks associated with working around the degraded steps and retaining walls need considerable thought and planning for any of the options to work.
- 5.3 In the more immediate case, we propose further investigation works are undertaken by David Siggery Ltd who undertook the previous phase of investigations. These works would aim to establish a general idea of the ground conditions at shallow depth at the rear of the site and items such as the footing of the 'front' wall which may be required to justify some of the options. Investigations to establish the existing arrangement and condition of the boundary wall to the steps up the sides of the building and their foundations could also be undertaken, in addition to further investigations of the existing buried RWP's and gullies in the north and south alleys.
- 5.4 We recommend that Mann Williams approach several Geotechnical specialist companies to obtain quotes for proposed ground investigations including boreholes, required to further develop the design of potential piled foundations. We will recommend as part of the tendering process that the specialists attend a site visit with Mann Williams to discuss the works and site constraints, in particular the available access for the investigations.
- 5.4.1 We also recommend beginning discussions with a specialist piling contractor to understand the viability of Option 4. Mann Williams can undertake these discussions if instructed.

8.3.2 Existing Steps at the Rear - Agreed Approach

Of the approaches described over previous pages, Option 3 was preferred. This involves keeping the steps and retaining walls as they are (with the top courses of stone already removed) and encapsulating them with a new retaining structure in front and a new slab on top. This would allow for a lightweight structure to be built at the equivalent to second floor level. It would preserve the walls and steps as they are, and avoid further loss of fabric. It would also allow the voids between the steps and the slab over the top to be used as a compensatory bat hibernation roost to account for the loss of the lower ground floor as a potential hibernation roost. Access for bats would be provided (through louvres, letter box style opening or hopper) along with an access 'locked door' for a bat worker to carry out maintenance, and features for crevice-dwelling bat species, as enhancements, as well as fly-in access for brown long-eared bats.

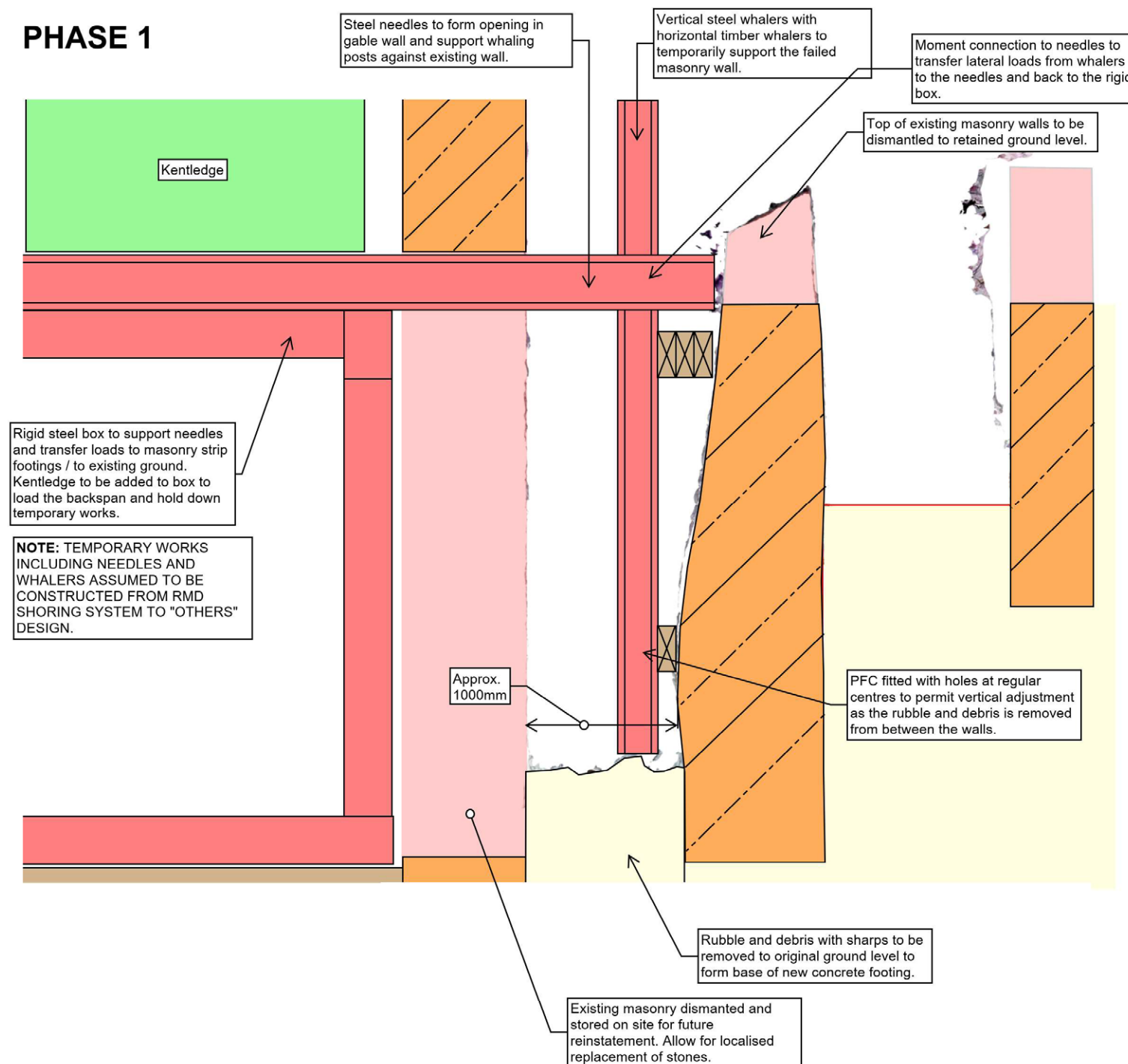
Whilst less difficult, less expensive, safer and more considerate of the historic fabric, this option is still difficult to achieve. Working access from above is significantly restricted by the constraints of the site and the private lane, whilst the steep slope of the site to the north makes working access from the site almost impossible. It would also be very difficult, and potentially unsafe, to install a retaining structure from above the structure being retained. The only viable solution is to install the new retaining structure from the front; however, the Synagogue building sits only one metre in front of the existing retaining wall, and that is not a suitable working area.

With these constraints in mind, and the absolute necessity for addressing the risk of collapse and newly retaining the structure, the Structural Engineers came up with the approach presented on this page, and the next, which now forms part of the final proposals.

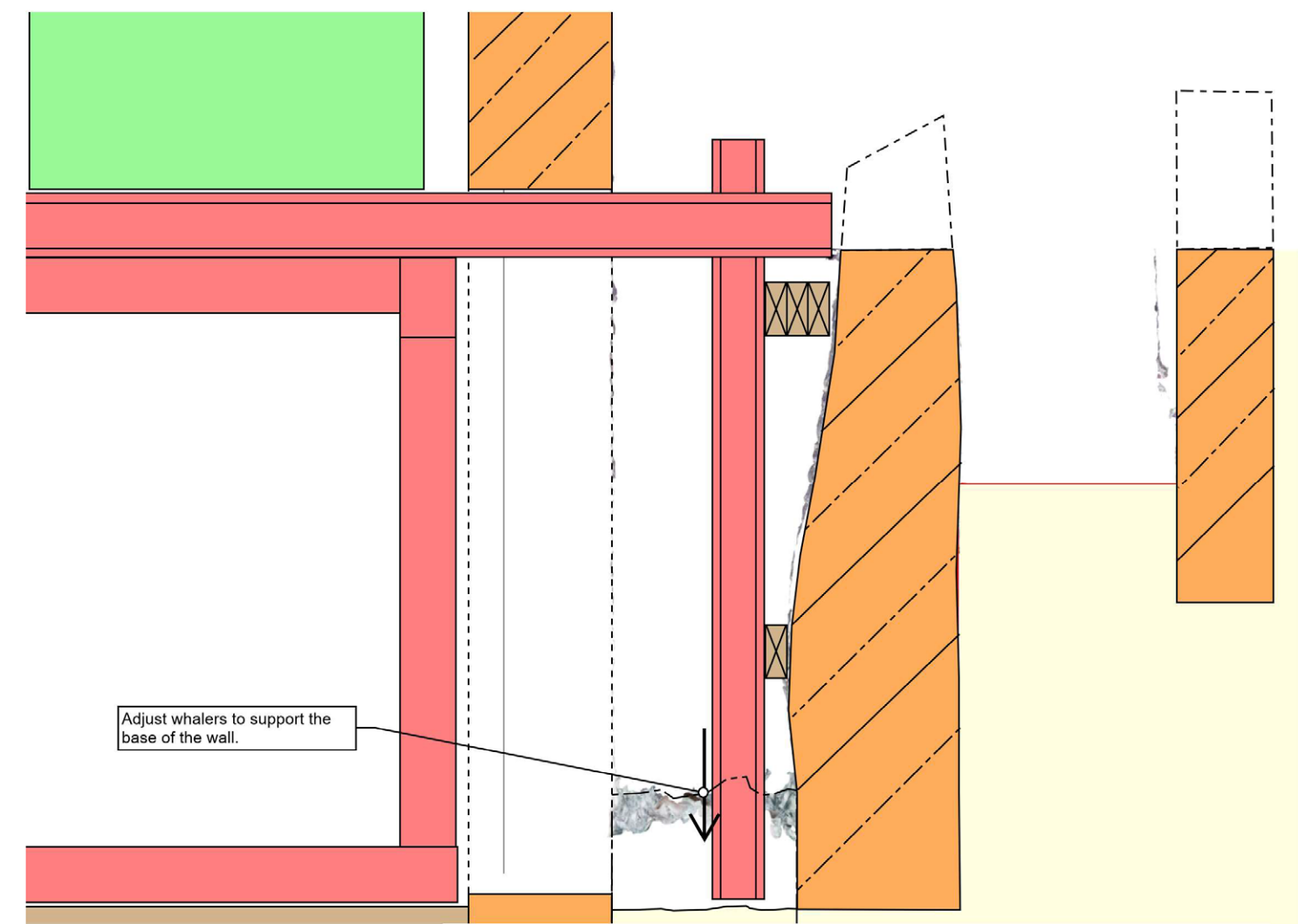
Phase 1 would involve the careful dismantling of two sections of the external stone gable wall of the Synagogue at first floor level, to form openings in order to access and work on the rear wall and steps. Each section would be approximately 1.2m wide x 2.2m high. The stones are to be numbered before dismantling and set aside for later reinstatement. The masonry above is to be steel needled for temporary support. A series of vertical steel whalers are to be installed in front of the existing failed retaining wall, with timber whalers set between the steels and the wall. The tops of the masonry retaining wall and the partly retaining wall behind would be taken down to the level which will be the underside of the new slab over. The rubble and debris within the 1 metre gap between the building and retaining walls will be removed to the original level of this gap.

Phase 2 would involve the vertical steel whalers being dropped and adjusted to support the base of the retaining wall.

PHASE 1



PHASE 2



8.3.2 Existing Steps at the Rear - Agreed Approach

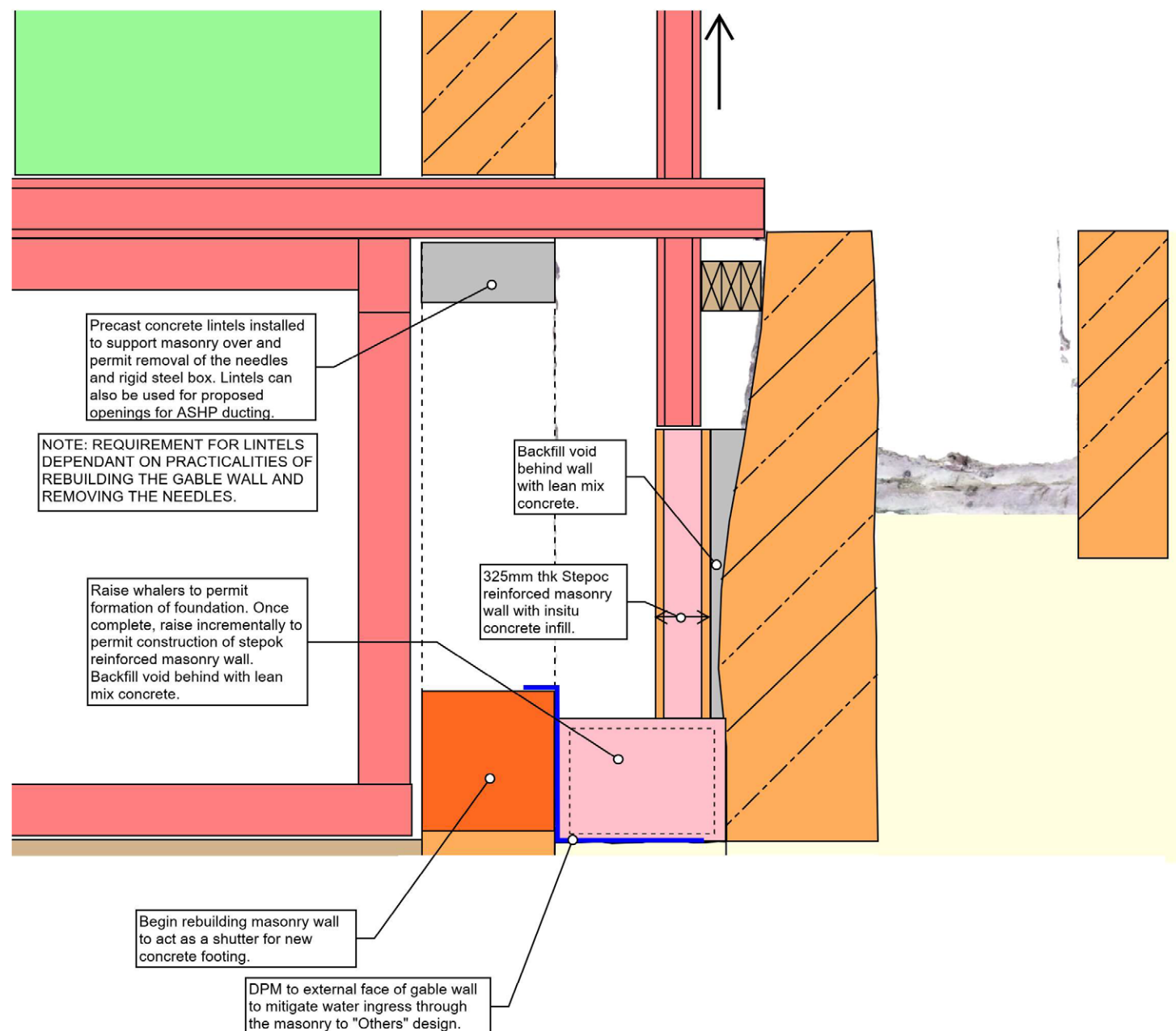
Phase 3 would involve the vertical steel whalers being raised as a concrete foundation strip is formed at the base of the retaining wall. The bottom of the two temporary openings in the gable wall would be laid with the retained stones to act as shuttering for this foundation strip. A damp proof membrane would be laid between the two partly to control water ingress to the building fabric, and partly to avoid the concrete 'sticking' to the stone, thereby making the installation potentially reversible. Off this strip, a 325mm thick reinforced masonry wall would be constructed with insitu concrete infill. As this happens, the space behind would be backfilled with a lean mix concrete.

To the two newly formed openings in the building's gable wall, precast concrete lintols would be installed, so that the steel needles can be removed. Then, the masonry to these openings is to be reinstated, as original with matching / suitable lime bedding mortar and pointing. In the case of one of the southernmost opening, a much smaller opening would be left under the lintol for the ducting from the external Air Source Heat Pump to pass through into the building.

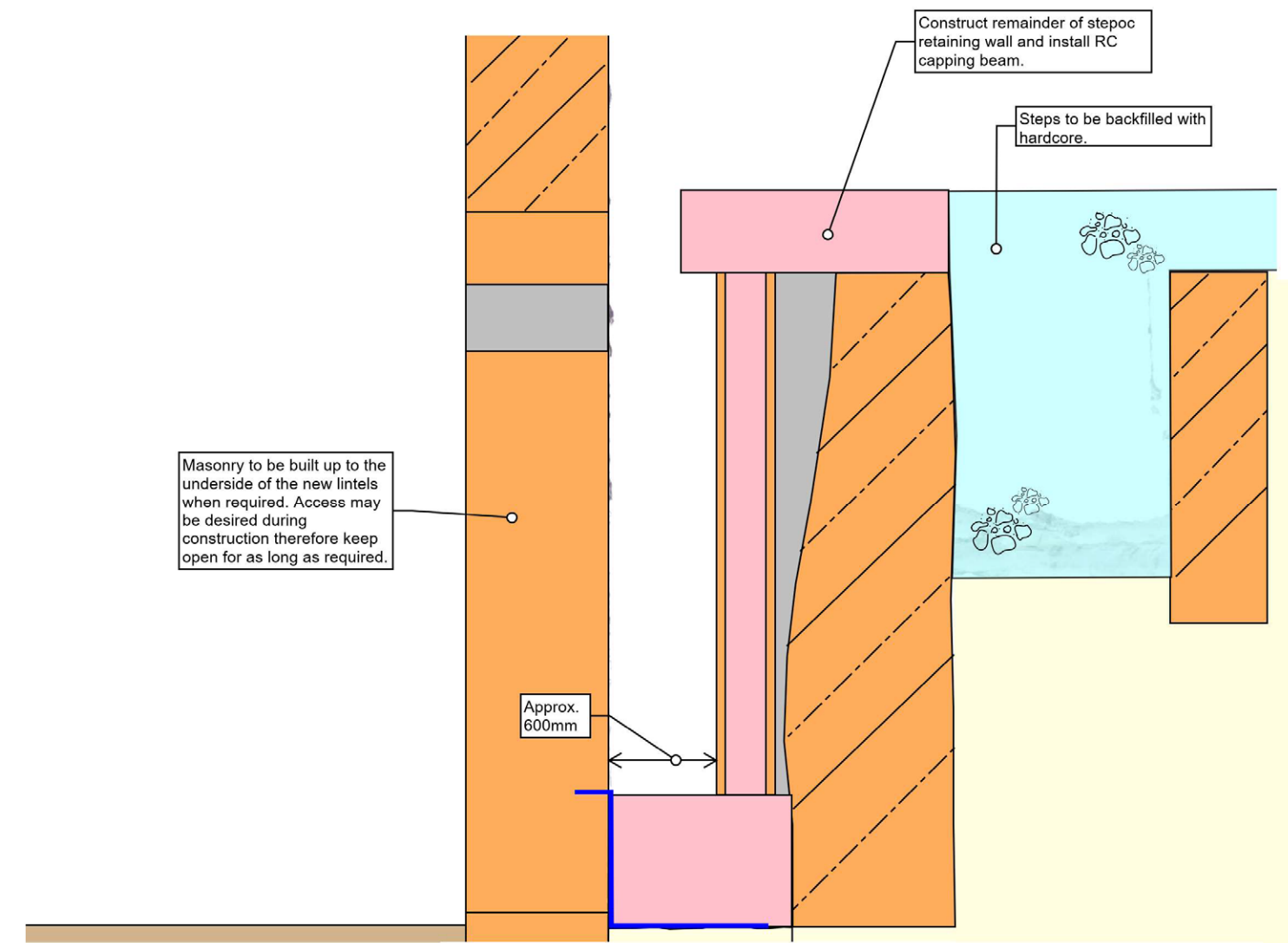
Phase 4 would involve the construction of the remainder of the new Stepoc and reinforced concrete retaining wall, and then a concrete capping beam would be cast over the top of both the new and original retaining walls. The resultant gap between the new retaining structure and the existing gable wall would be approximately 600mm (and so, just about accessible). There would be a drainage channel cast into this surface to drain away rainwater from the building.

As stated, the zone between the existing steps and the underside of the new slab is to be offered as a compensatory bat hibernation roost. This would mean that, whilst not shown on the drawing below, the reinforced concrete capping beam would extend over the steps and sit on the outer original masonry wall, thereby forming a void.

PHASE 3



PHASE 4 - COMPLETE



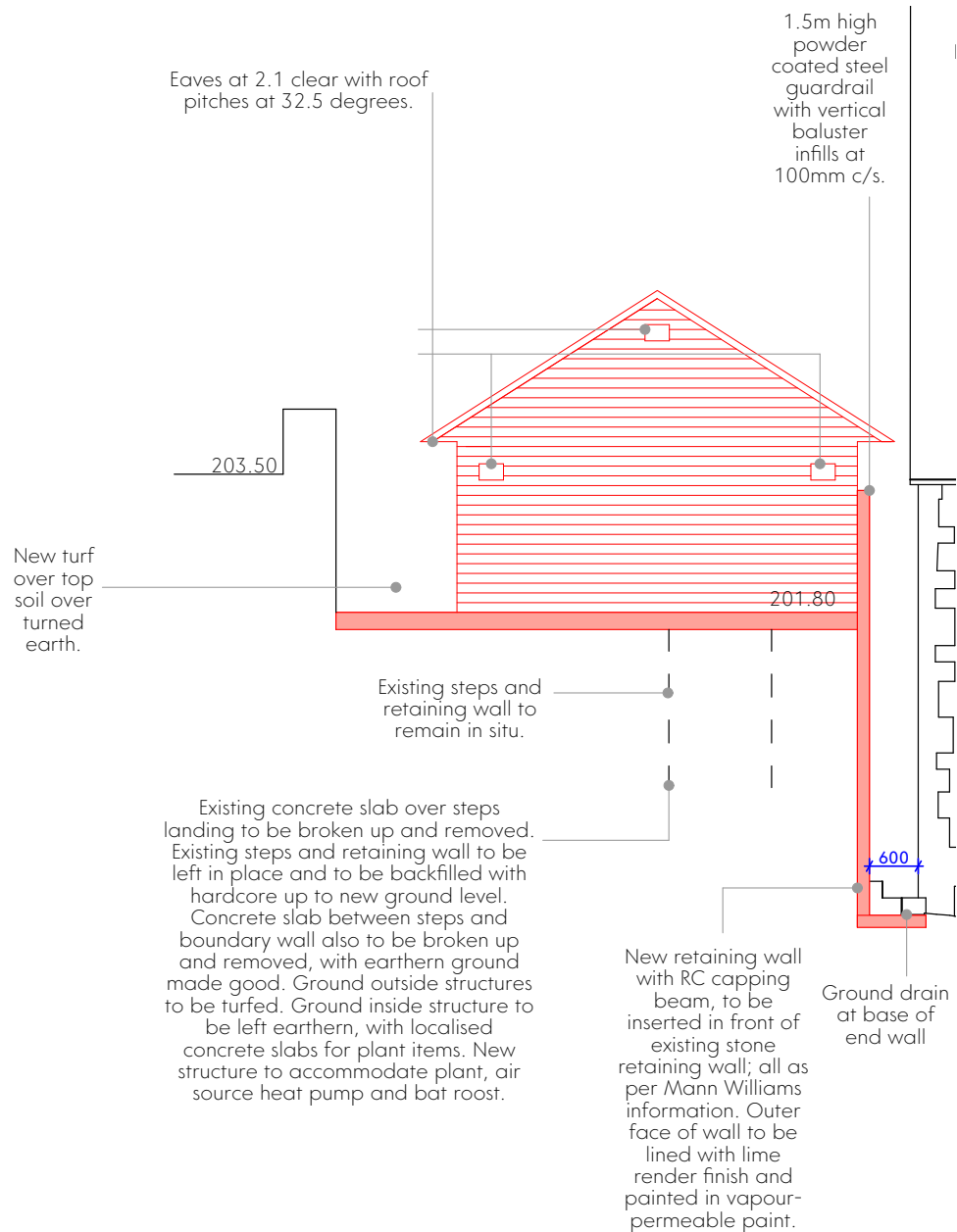
8.4 Proposed New Structure to Rear

With the decision to recreate the 1st floor double-height space within the Synagogue (with a 2nd floor balcony and void), and the subsequent omission of various spaces / facilities within the proposals, an option was discussed to build a new-build extension out the back (to the east), to accommodate these facilities, at least in part. This would involve the removal of the rear external steps and front retaining wall, with a new retaining structure inserted behind the current rear wall to the steps. This option had been reviewed in the 'Options Assessment' on the previous pages, and dismissed.

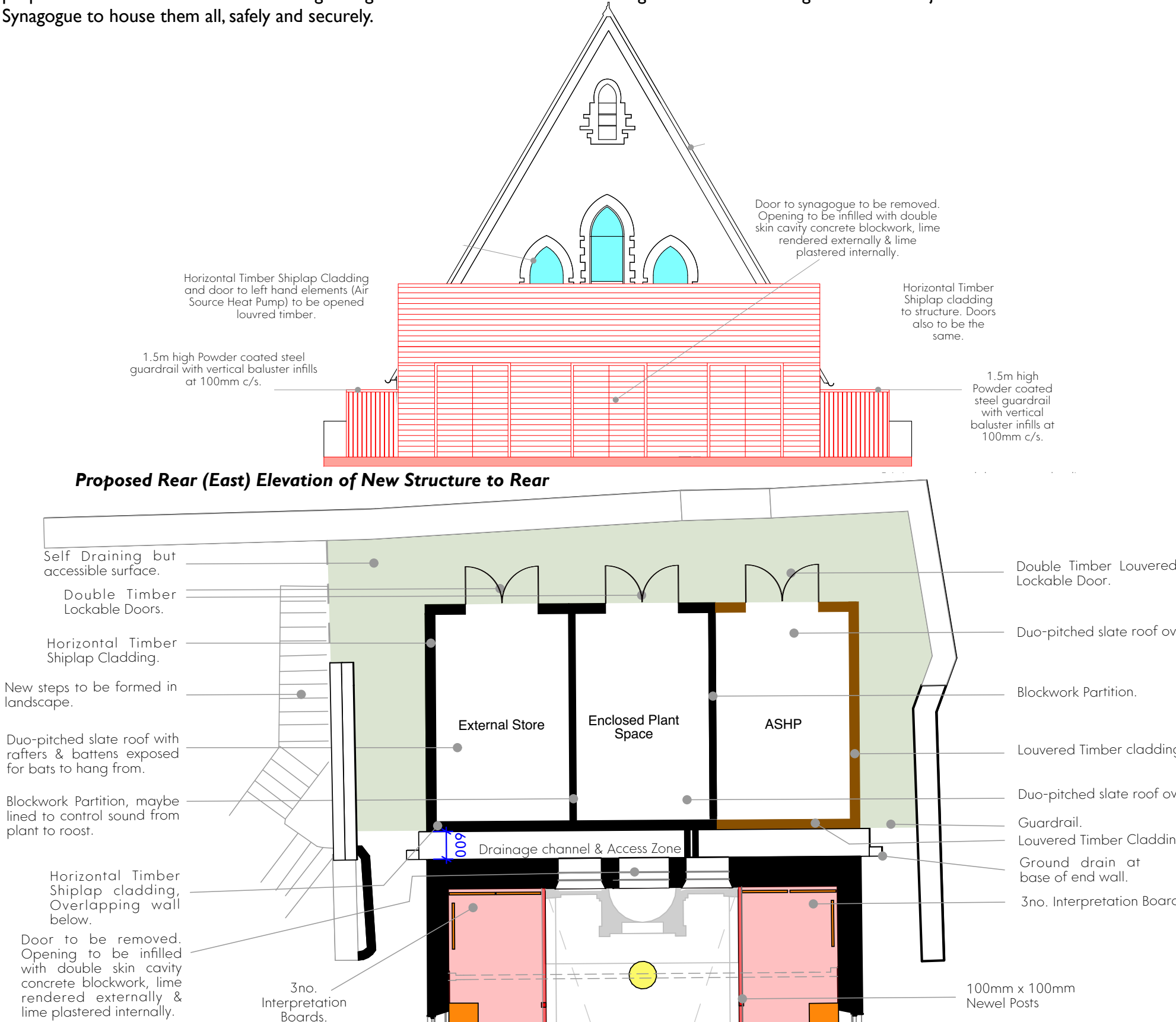
However, with the agreed approach to retain the steps and walls and build a new retaining wall in front and a slab over (with the space below acting as a bat hibernation space); this provided a level external area (at second floor level), incorporating the area above the steps and the narrow strip of derelict land beyond the steps.

With the rear of the site being the only suitable location for the external Air Source Heat Pump, this provides the obvious location for it, and its enclosure. Given the lack of space inside the building, and the desire to restore the original 'Prayer Hall' back to its original volume, there is nowhere to locate the necessary Plant provision, apart from out the back. This also needs to be enclosed. On top of this, the large 'garden' area will require equipment to be safely stored. With these three requirements, the proposals involve the construction of a lightweight structure behind the Synagogue to house them all, safely and securely.

On this page are the proposed plan and elevations for this structure, which would be a lightweight structure clad in horizontal timber shiplap cladding, which will sit well within the wooded environment here. The form would be simple, with a duo-pitched roof with a natural slate covering, as the Synagogue. The roof pitch would be shallower, to minimise visual impact. Given its location, this structure would not be visible from the public road; only visible from the private road behind, the new 'garden' and the back garden to the adjacent house.



Proposed Side (North) Elevation of New Structure to Rear



Proposed Plan showing New Structure to Rear

8.5 Derelict Land to North of Synagogue / New Garden

An Arboricultural Report was produced by Arboricultural Technician Services Ltd (Tree Consultancy) to assess the nature and condition of the trees within the derelict land to the rear (east) and side (north) of the Synagogue. The results of this assessment would guide any thoughts on how the existing wooden area could be best approached, i.e.:

1. Retain the trees, improve their condition and manage them;
2. Thin out the trees (focussing on those in worst condition) and landscape parts of the 'garden';
3. Remove most (if not all) of the trees and landscape the whole area to suit.

In the case of 2. and 3. this might offer an opportunity to prepare an area for the planting, and considered presentation, of a cutting from the Anne Frank Horse Chestnut tree.

Below are the Tree Survey Assessment and Tree Constraints Plan from Arboricultural Technician Services Ltd; forming a graphic representations of option 2. and 3., as set out to the left.

They are:

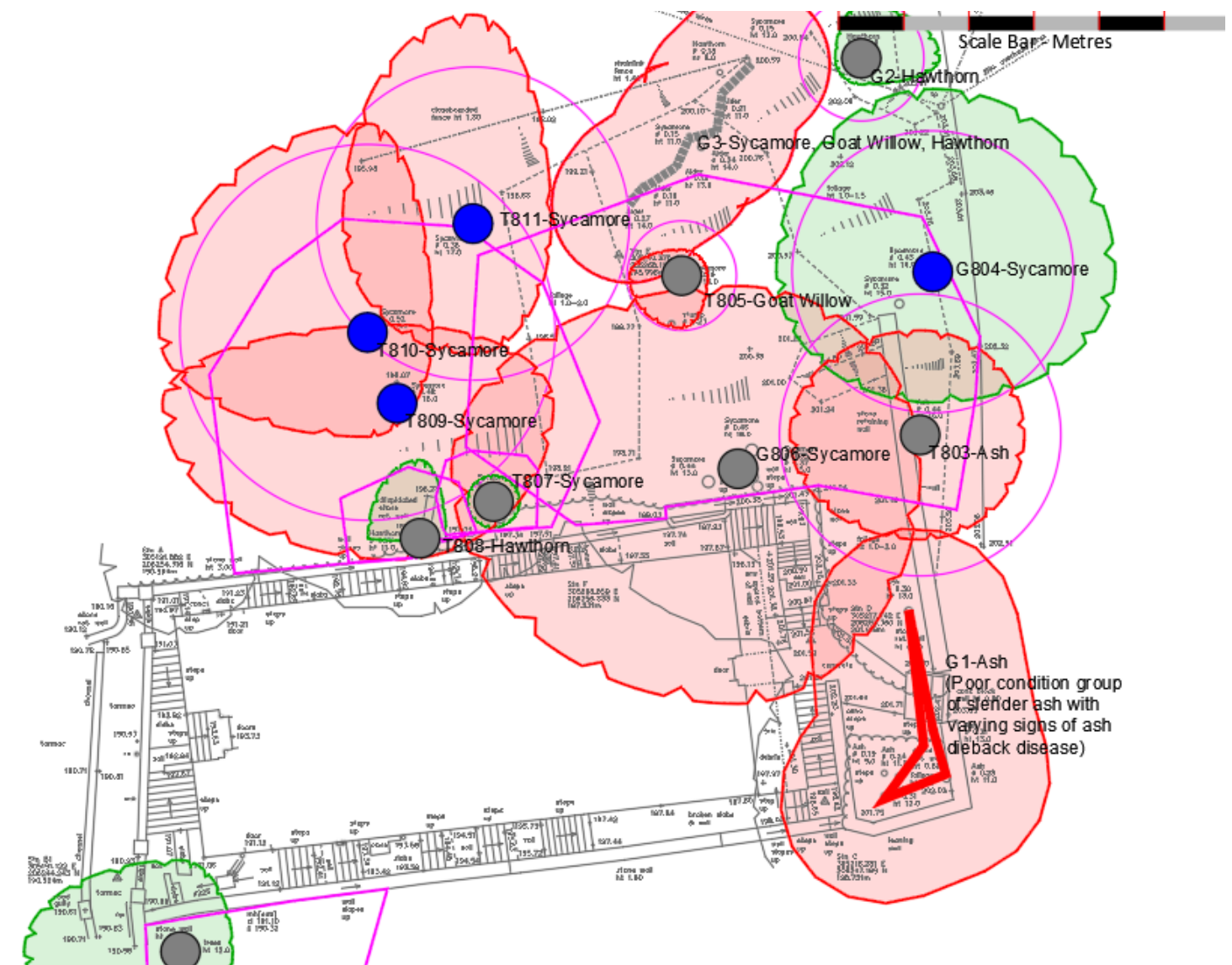
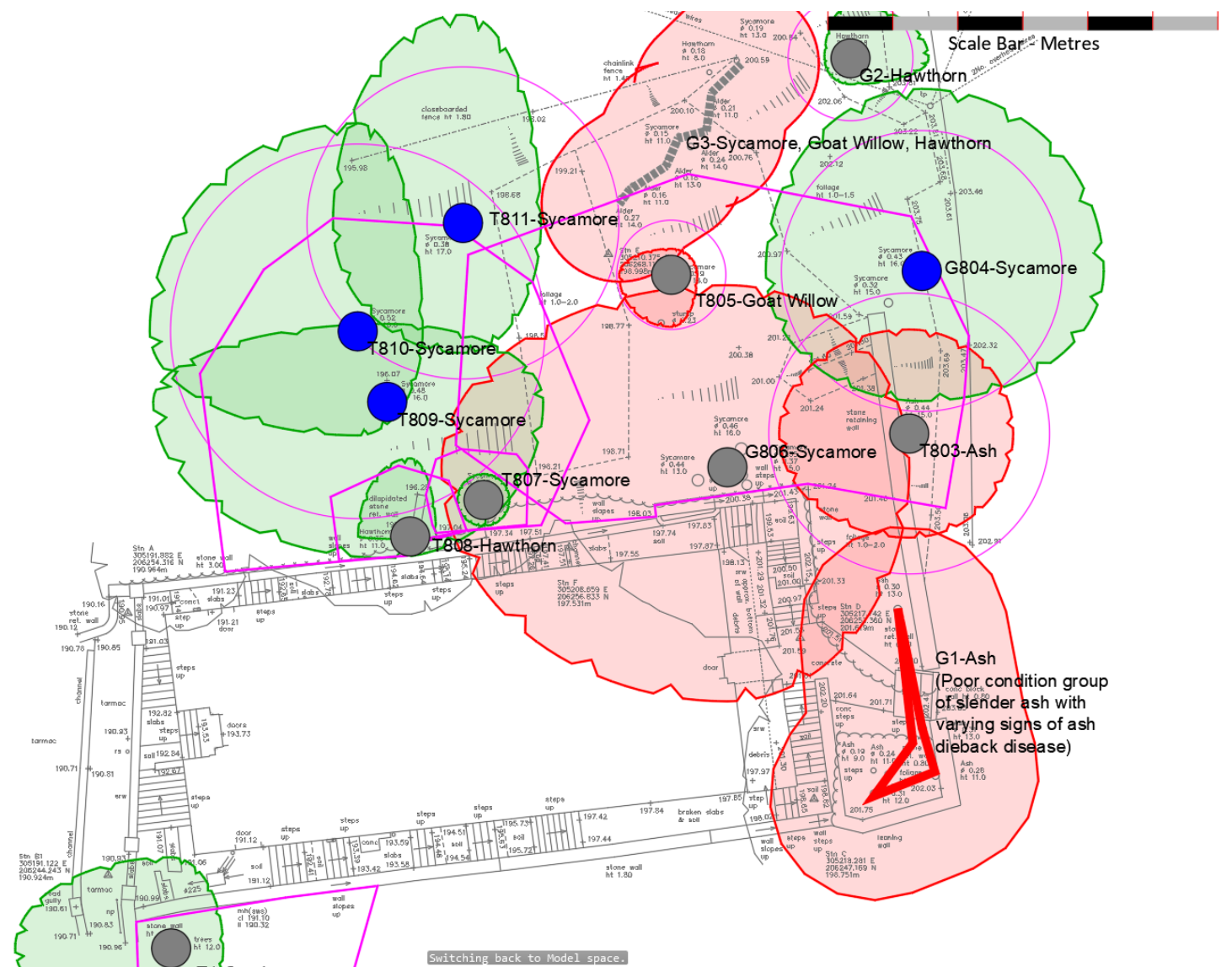
(Left) The part removal of the internal trees and boundary ash trees to allow for the landscaping of a large part of the overgrown garden area /renovation of the building - trees highlighted for removal as red transparency trees below.

(Right) The more ambitious longer-term landscape/arboricultural solution is the additional removal of the large three western sycamore trees to allow for a complete redesign of the garden area.

One matter of potential concern is that the Arboriculturalist advises that Sycamore species (of which many of the trees on site are) are believed to suppress other trees from developing under or near their canopy. Retaining a large number of the sycamore trees on this site may prevent the Anne Frank Horse Chestnut cutting from developing. Further to this, if the sycamore/s are removed, then some soil remediation will be required to improve the success of the landscape scheme.

TREE CONSTRAINTS PLANS below

- Trees with Blue trunks in 'Moderate' Condition
- Trees with Grey trunks in 'Low' Condition
- Trees within Red shape in 'Poor' Condition



8.5 Derelict Land to North of Synagogue / New Garden

Based on the Arboricultural Report, a concept was developed involving the removal of those trees deemed to be in both poor and low condition, and some of those in moderate condition; retaining others also in moderate condition.

This provides a large area in the centre of the side (north) site, which the proposals show as re-levelled to form a flatter terrace, with the ground behind retained with a wall, which also acts as an arc of seating, all of which could be focussed on the newly-planted Anne Frank Horse Chestnut tree.

This terraced area would be accessible from the Synagogue, with a new opening formed at that location on the north elevation of the building. The photo below is taken from that location where a new opening is proposed.

The ground to this area is very steep, and so the proposals seek to provide access up the site via steps and ramps.

On the next page is the Landscaping Proposal Strategy, followed by the Proposed Layout.

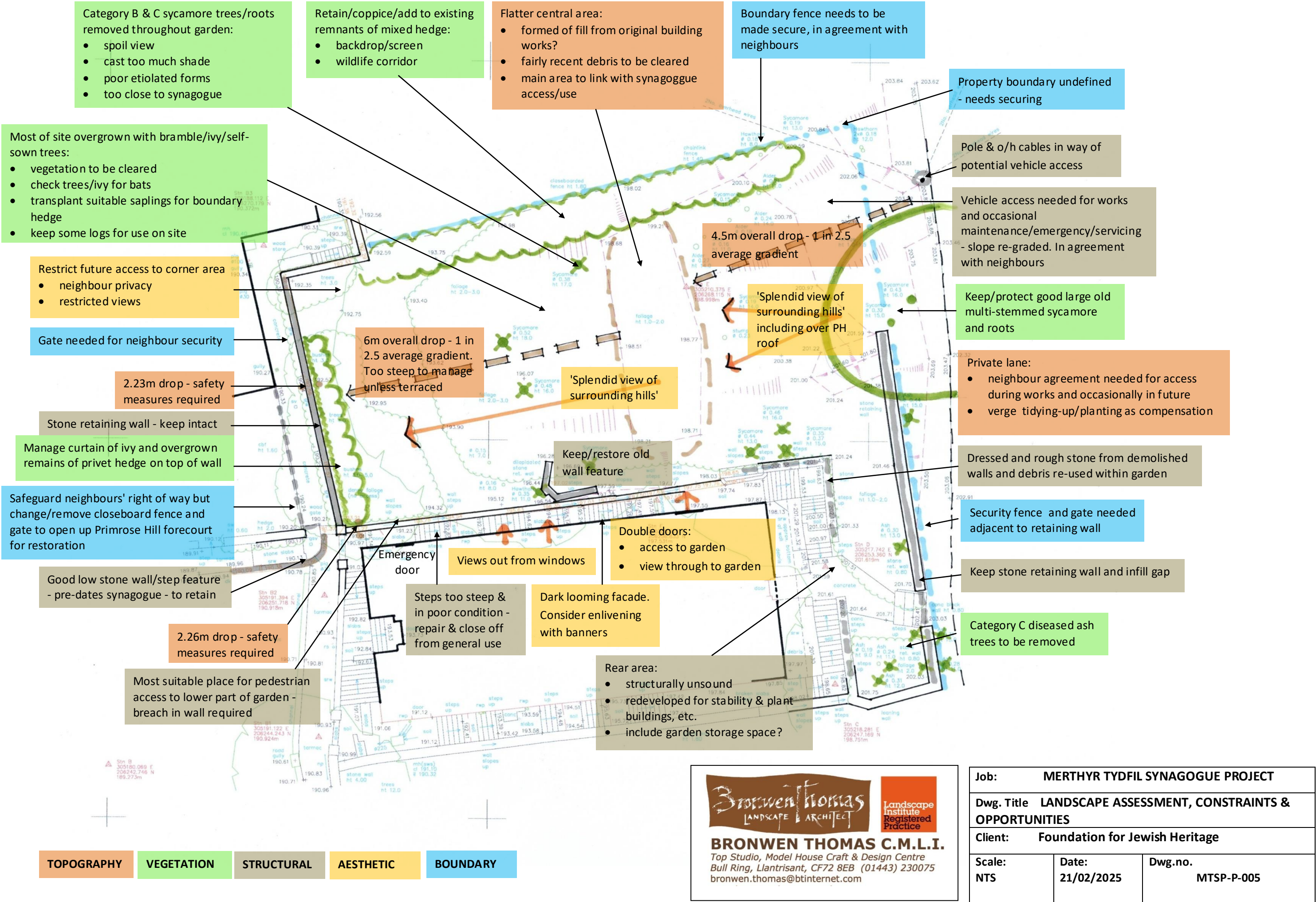


View of Derelict Land to North as seen from the Private Access Road to the East

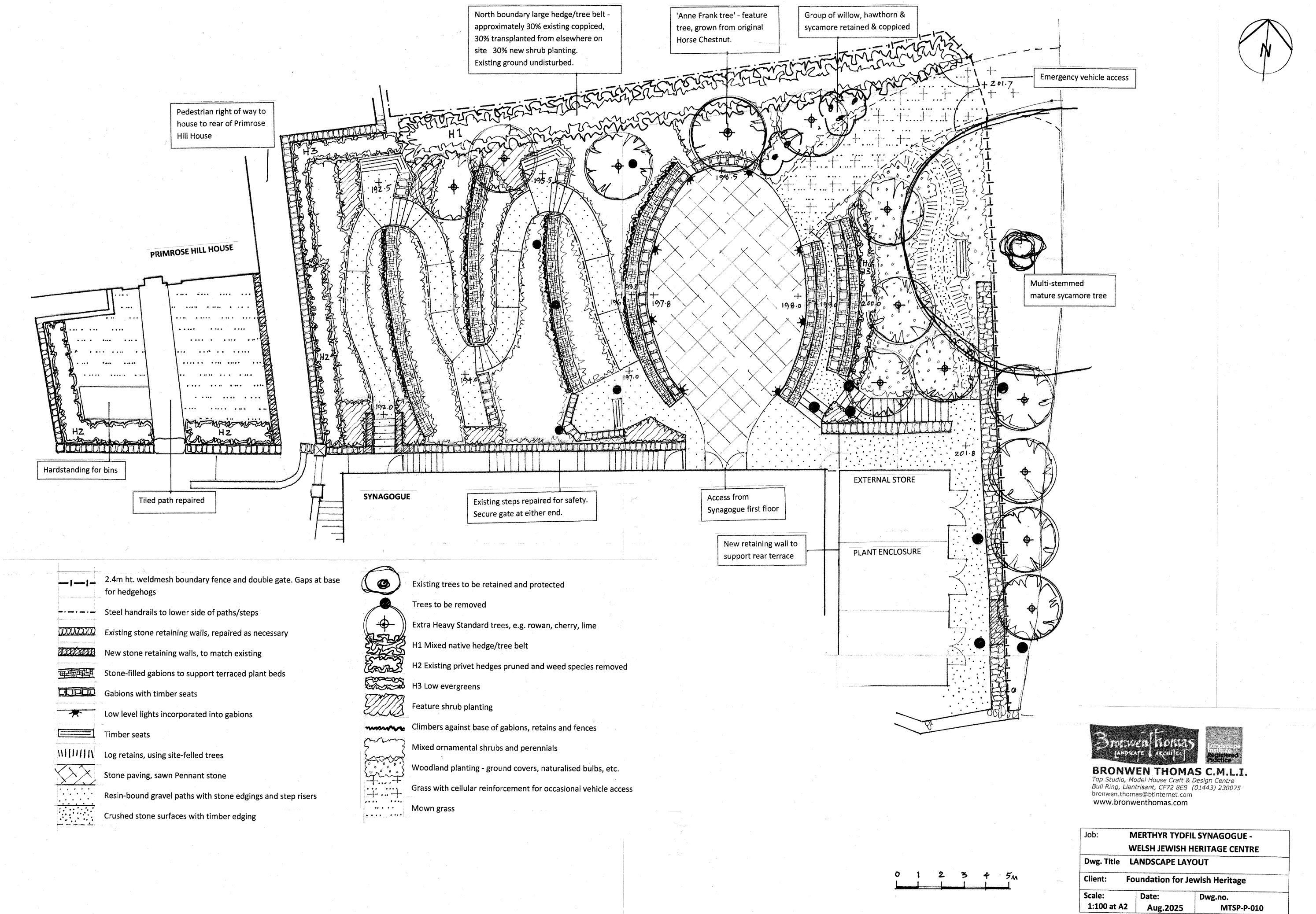


View of Derelict Land to North as seen from the Synagogue Building, with view running west to east

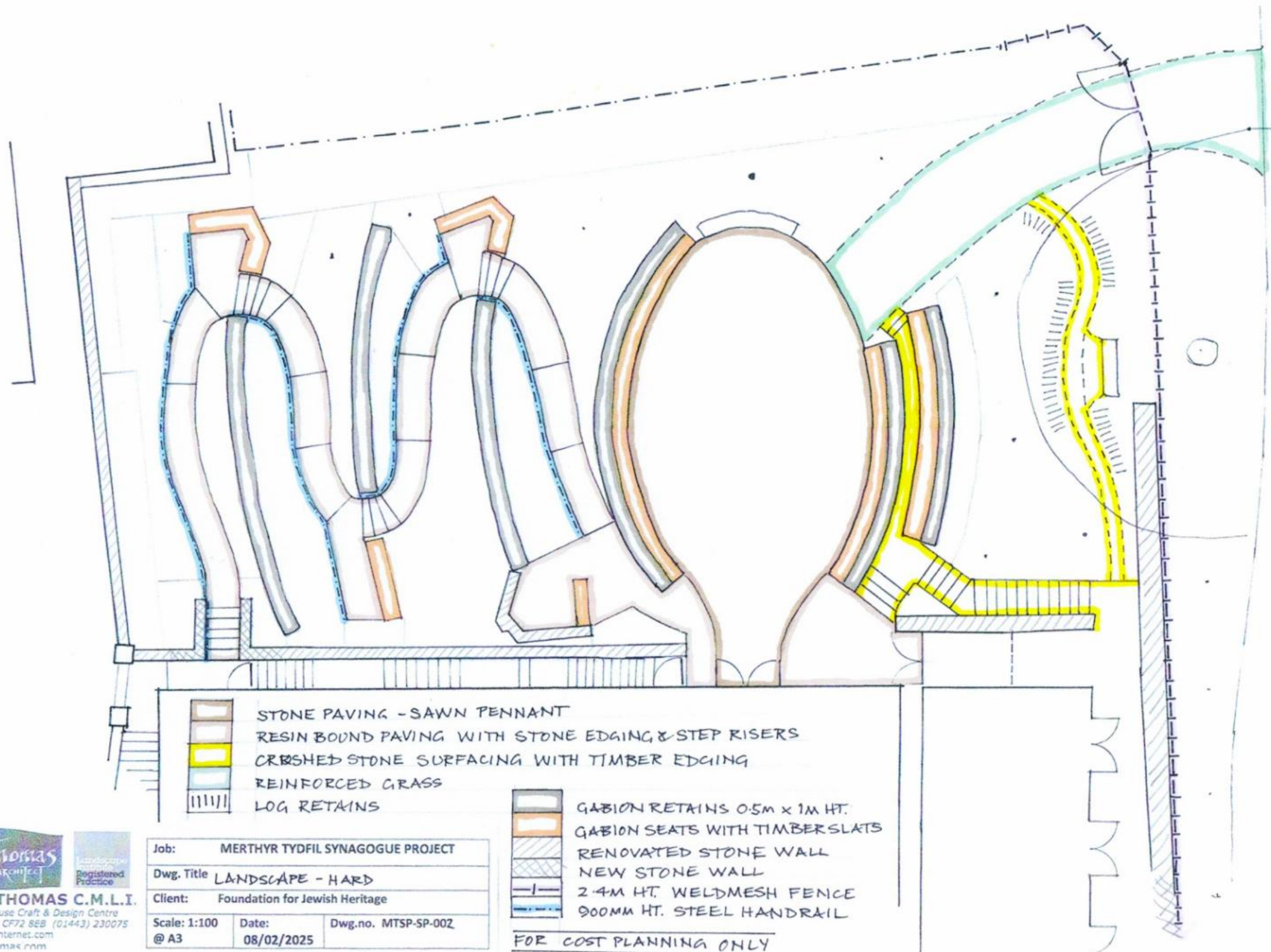
8.5.1 Proposed Landscaping Strategy for Derelict Land to North of Synagogue, produced by Bronwen Thomas, Landscape Architect



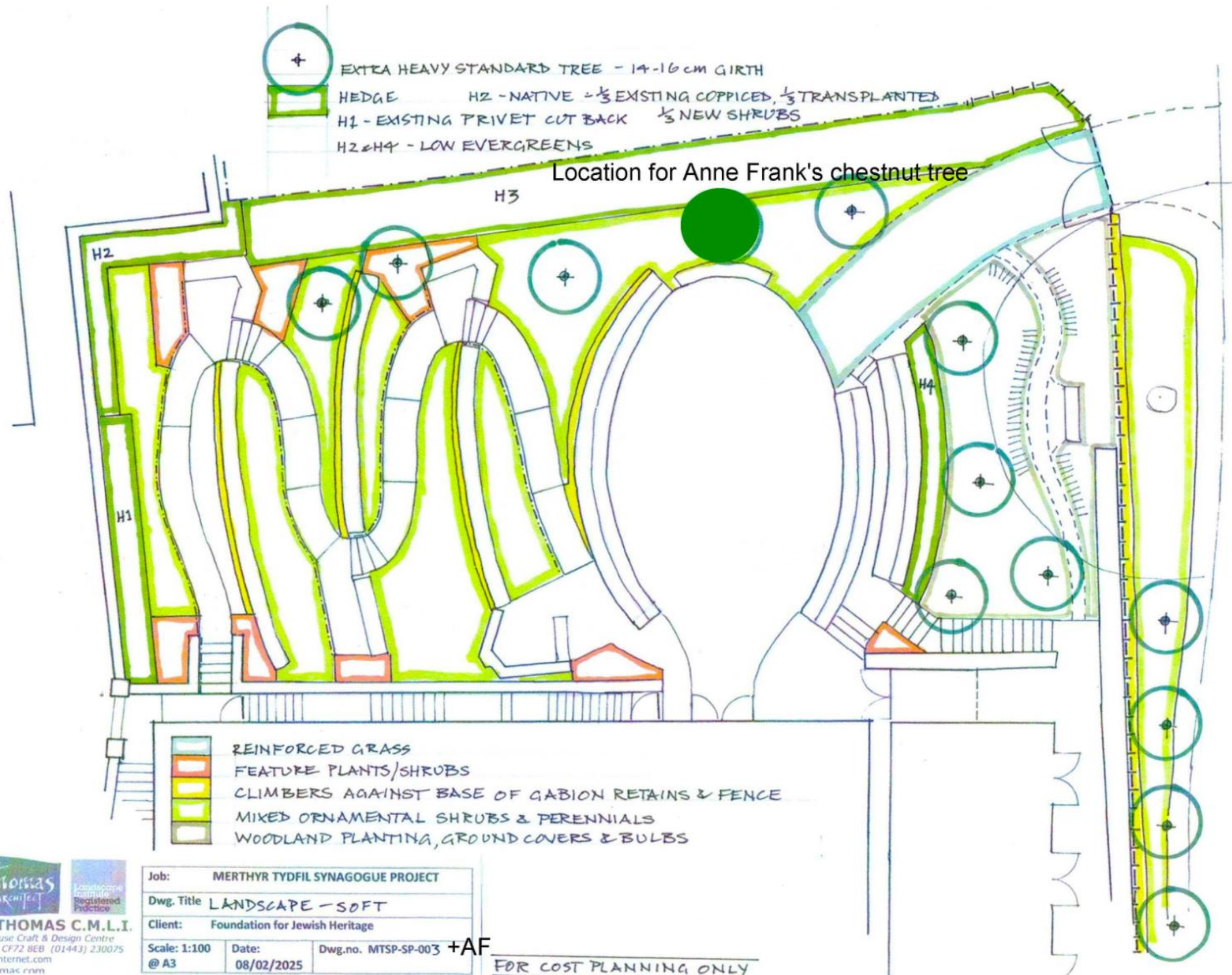
8.5.2 Proposed Landscaping Plan for Derelict Land to North of Synagogue, produced by Bronwen Thomas, Landscape Architect



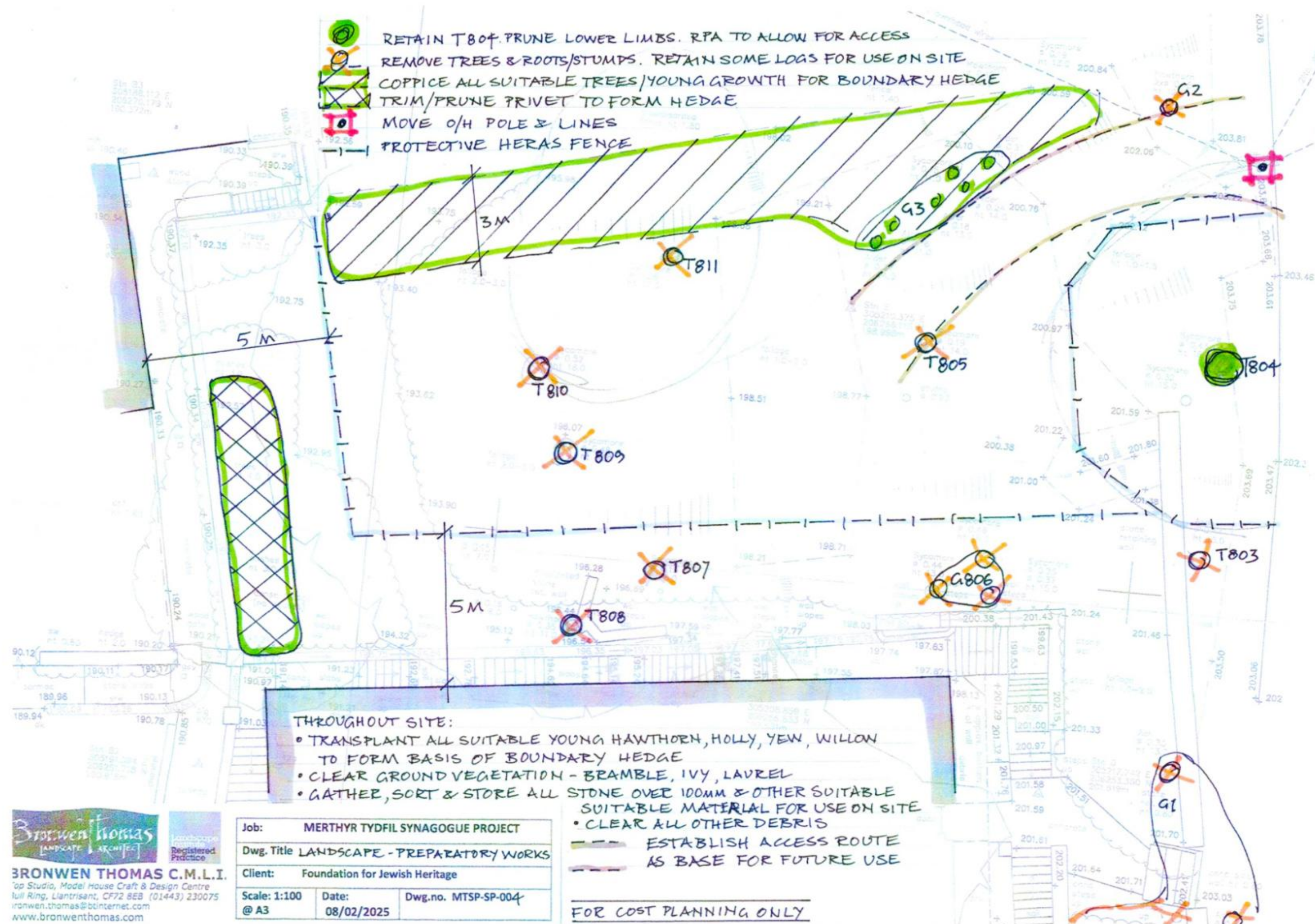
8.5.3 Proposed Hard Landscaping Plan, produced by Bronwen Thomas, Landscape Architect



8.5.4 Proposed Soft Landscaping Plan, produced by Bronwen Thomas, Landscape Architect



8.5.5 Suggested Preparatory Works, produced by Bronwen Thomas, Landscape Architect



8.5.6 Landscape Strategy Statement, produced by Bronwen Thomas, Landscape Architect



MERTHYR TYDFIL SYNAGOGUE PROJECT

LANDSCAPE STRATEGY STATEMENT

by

BRONWEN THOMAS LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

for

FOUNDATION FOR JEWISH HERITAGE

FINAL: August 2025



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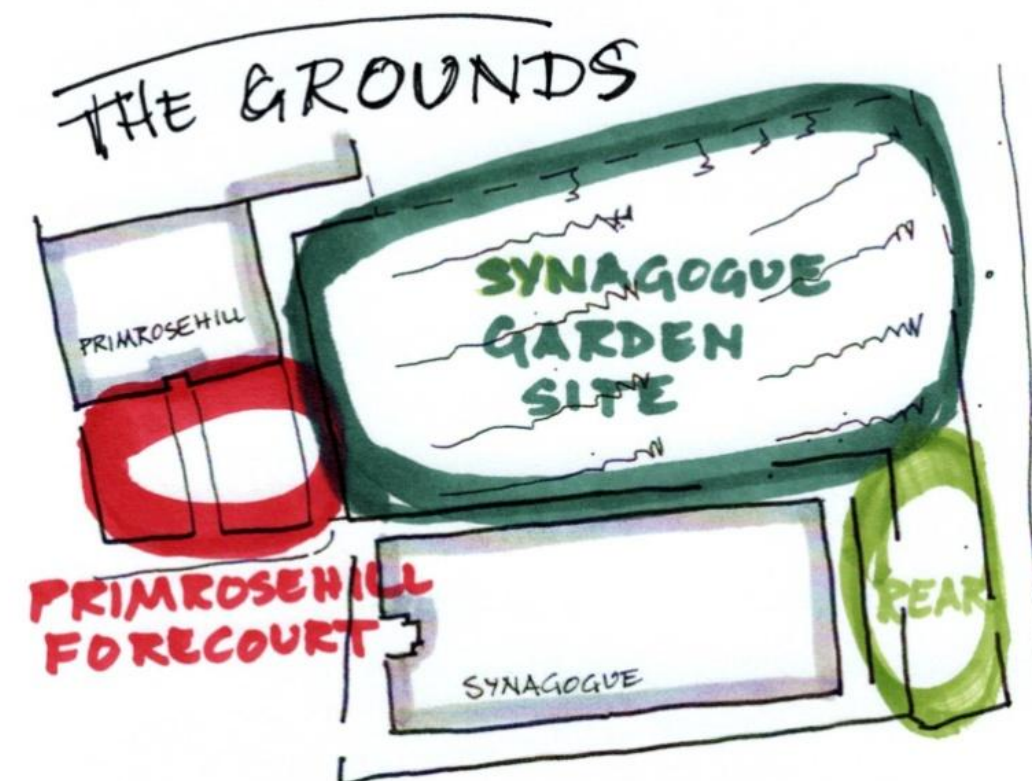
8.5.6 Landscape Strategy Statement, produced by Bronwen Thomas, Landscape Architect

INTRODUCTION

This statement outlines the principles developed for the design of the garden and other outdoor areas related to the Synagogue and Primrose Hill, collectively referred to here as 'the grounds'. It has been prepared by Bronwen Thomas Landscape Architect, a local landscape consultant and member of the design team, familiar with Merthyr Tydfil for many years and experienced in design and restoration within historic landscapes. This report has been written following site visits and discussions with other members of the design team and local residents in 2024/5.

The grounds are taken to be the undeveloped parts of the overall Synagogue and Primrose Hill site, namely:

- the focus of the designed landscape will be on the rectangular plot of land immediately north of the Synagogue. This plot links with the smaller area to the east (rear) of the Synagogue, currently occupied by derelict steps and which will primarily be taken up with new outbuildings. Together these are referred to in this statement as the **Synagogue garden site**;
- the rectangular front garden, or forecourt, of Primrosehill House, lying between the house and Church Street to the south, and which adjoins the Synagogue garden site to the east. This is referred to in this statement as **Primrose Hill forecourt**.



8.5.6 Landscape Strategy Statement, produced by Bronwen Thomas, Landscape Architect

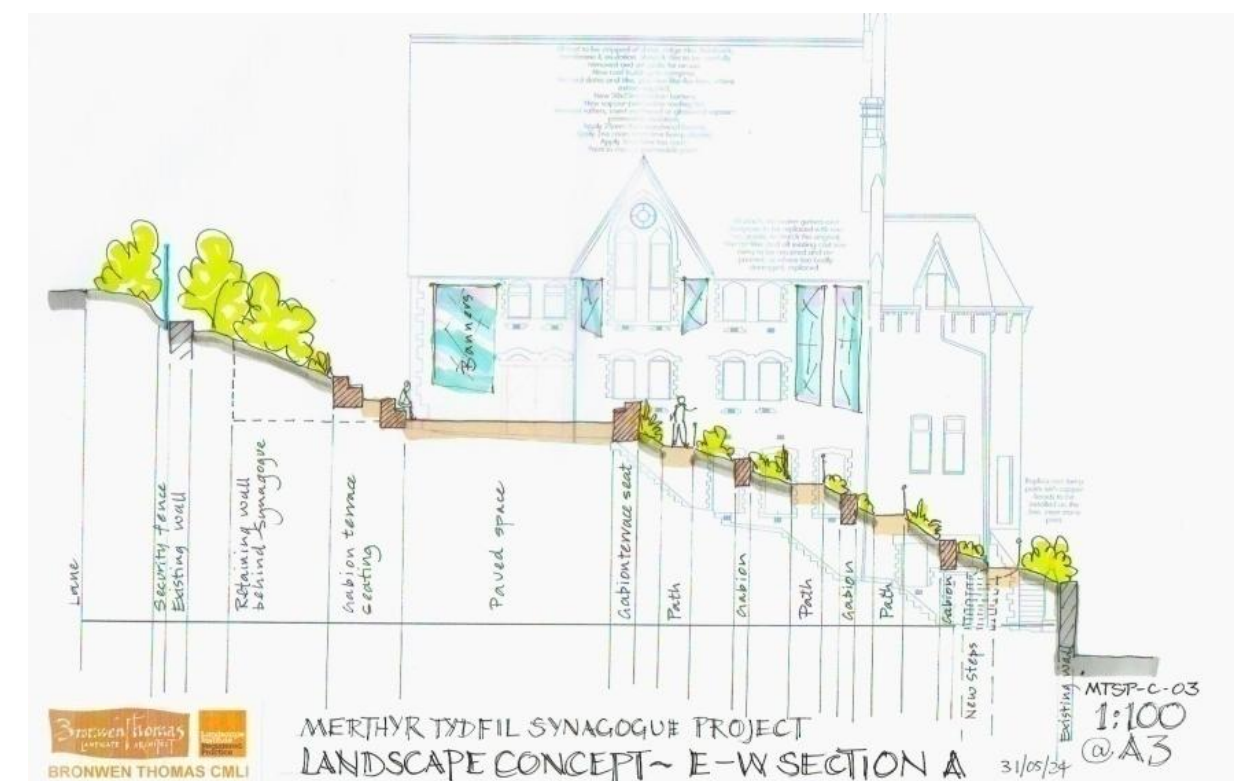
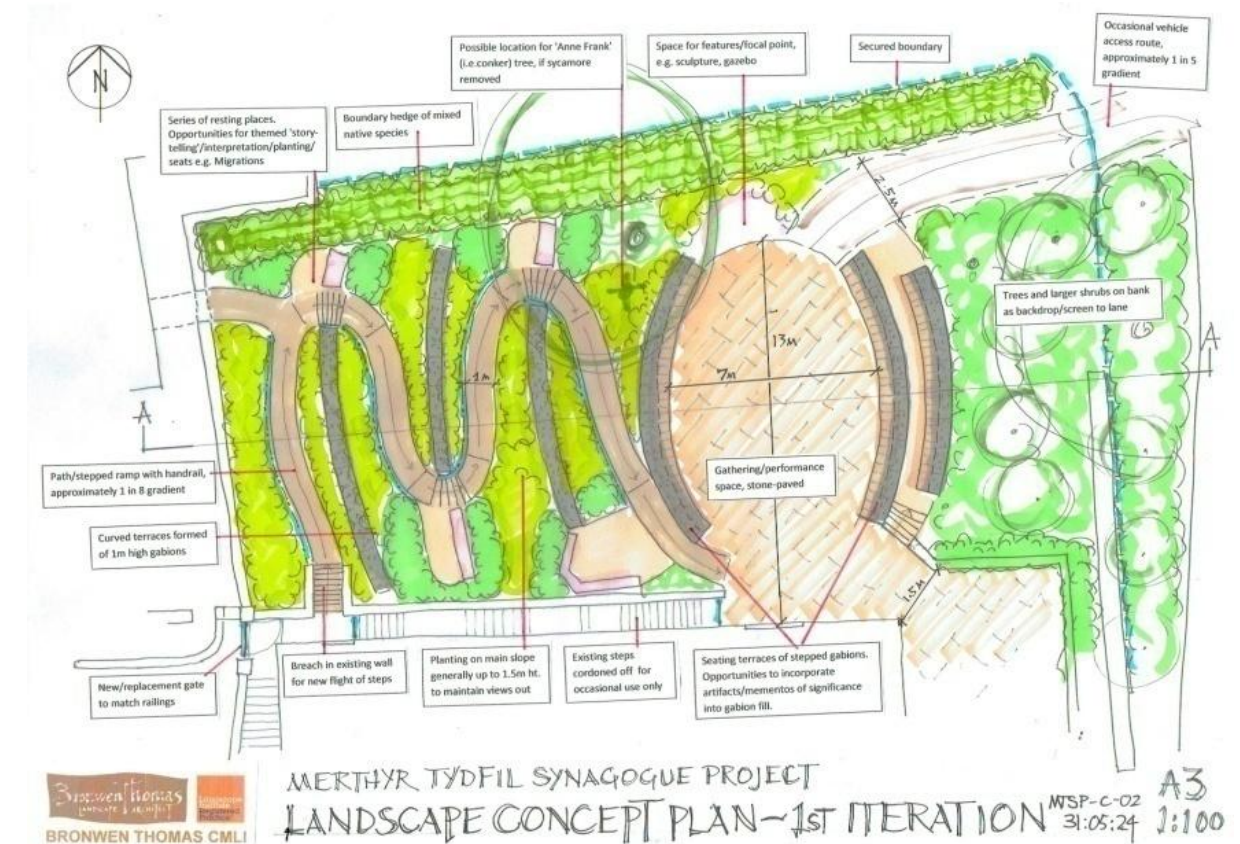
VISION

The Synagogue garden and Primrose Hill forecourt are to be integral parts of the visitor experience of the Welsh Jewish Heritage Centre, complementing and contrasting with the buildings and their content and usage. They will provide opportunities for outdoor events and gathering, further interpretation, understanding and learning, quiet contemplation and enjoyment, and for local community engagement.

Whilst conserving the limited on-ground historic features and respecting the heritage value of the whole site, the buildings and locale, the grounds will be of their time, adopting sustainable design principles and a contemporary aesthetic.

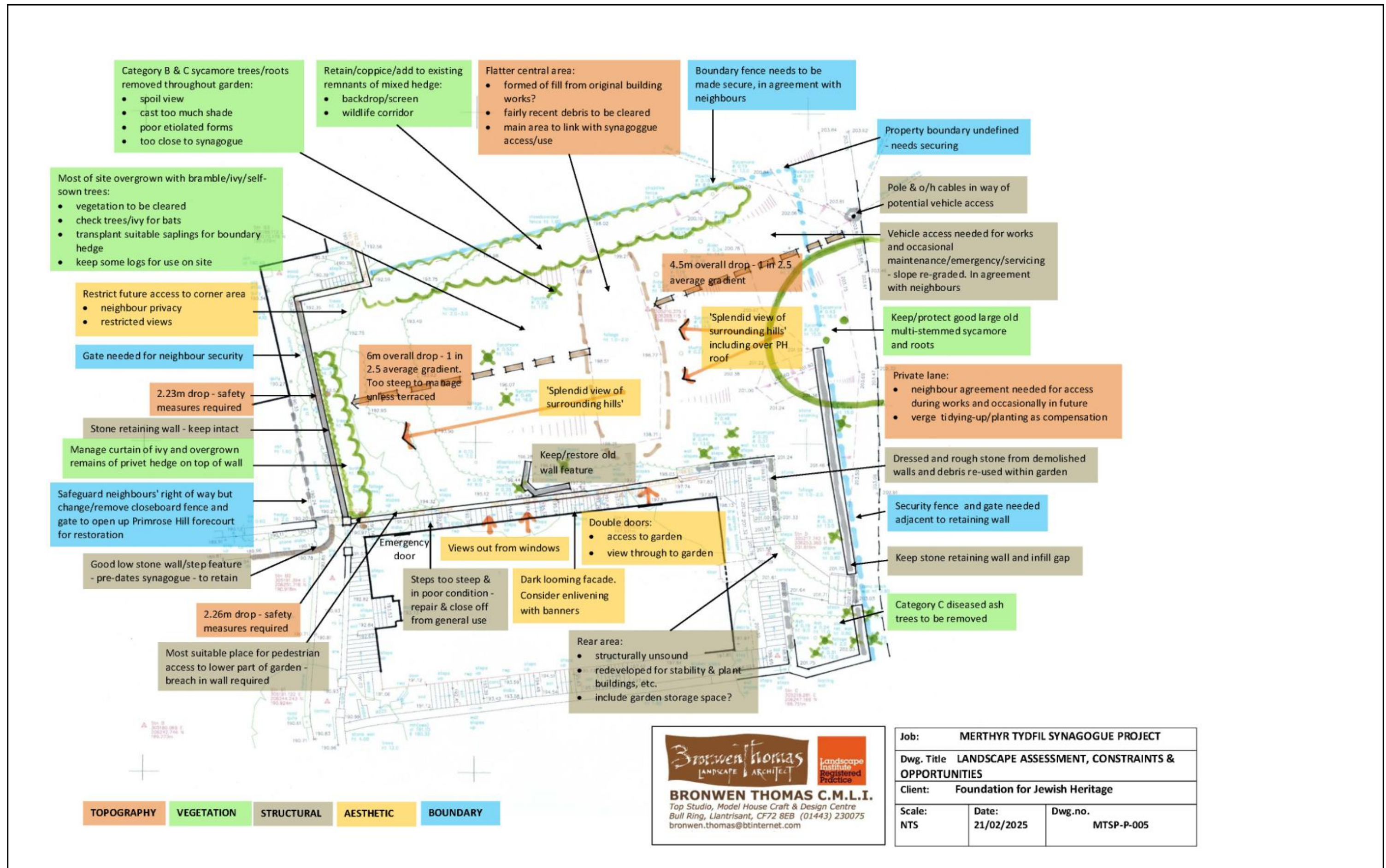
The Synagogue garden will make the most of the dramatic steep slope with extensive views across the valley. It will be terraced with a snaking path down to a new entrance near the Synagogue's main entrance. There will be a central paved small arena, with a new door directly from the first floor of the Synagogue, ensuring that it is accessible within the constraints of the steep site and limited access opportunities. Primrose Hill forecourt will function primarily as a visitor gathering area on arrival and departure. Together they will provide appropriate and attractive setting for the cultural centre, with physical and visual links between the Synagogue and Primrose Hill and a safe secure environment for visitors.

Biodiversity enhancement and the sustainability of functions, materials and processes are at the core of the development of the design for the grounds and their future management.



Early sketch proposals - Landscape Concept

8.5.6 Landscape Strategy Statement, produced by Bronwen Thomas, Landscape Architect



8.5.6 Landscape Strategy Statement, produced by Bronwen Thomas, Landscape Architect**LOCATION/HISTORY/HERITAGE VALUE - CURRENT SITUATION**

The whole site is on the steep west-facing slopes on the east side of the Taff valley, overlooking Merthyr Tydfil town. There is large private garden to the north and a private lane to the east, the Synagogue lies immediately to the south and to the west there is Primrose Hill House, separated from the Synagogue garden area by a high retaining wall.

The whole site lies within the Thomastown Conservation Area, and the grounds are within the curtilages of the Synagogue and Primrose Hill, both of which are Listed Buildings. This part of the Conservation Area is described as 'dominated by detached and semi-detached houses in spacious and wooded surroundings.' The site lies on the edge of this area with its gardens and small wooded areas linking up the slope to Thomastown Park and beyond forming a well-tree'd backdrop and setting for site, especially when viewed from approaches from the west, up from the town centre.

The early OS maps show Primrose Hill House (built early-to-mid 19th century) with a walled front garden, separated from the path leading to the house behind. There is a single tree in the south west corner and a central straight path from its front door to Church Street, much the same as it is now. The site of the Synagogue and its garden is shown as an open area with no trees marked which may have been allotment gardens, with a series of flights of steps up from Church Street.

The Synagogue was opened in 1877. A newspaper report at the time of the laying of the cornerstone notes that 'The contours of the ground was most awkward, necessitating a great deal of excavation and the erection of sustaining walls before the foundations could be got in.' It is likely,

therefore, that the current landform includes material dug out for these foundations and added to the natural slope, necessitating the retaining walls to Primrose Hill House and to the steps running up the north side of the synagogue. The complex arrangement of steps and stone walls up to the lane from the rear of the Synagogue were also part of the original building development and served to retain the hillside above. These walls are constructed of roughly coursed Pennant stone and are the main built features relating to the Synagogue and Primrose Hill within the grounds.

The area of the **Synagogue garden** was originally set aside for building the reader's house and for a playground for the children who attended the school in the Synagogue. No development, however, took place and no evidence has come to light of the site having been put to any positive use by the Synagogue. Neither has any evidence been found on the ground or in historic records of garden elements or planting within the site.

Early twentieth century photographs show trees developing on the Synagogue garden site and privet hedges along Primrose Hill frontage and atop the retaining wall to the Synagogue garden site, both of which remain more or less intact.

Primrose Hill House retains its side and front boundary stone wall and gateways and its pathway leading to the front door, intact. The distinctive red and black chequered tiles of the path are likely to date from the late nineteenth century or later.

Refer to the Heritage Assessment and its Appendices for further information.

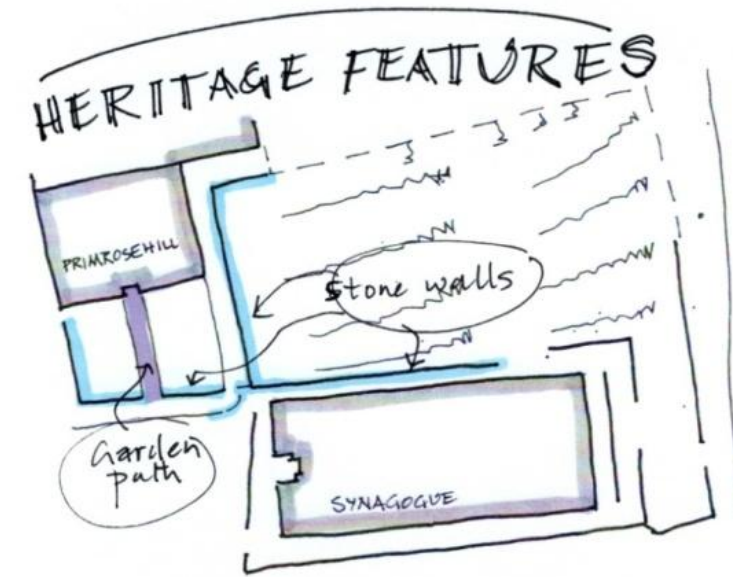
8.5.6 Landscape Strategy Statement, *produced by Bronwen Thomas, Landscape Architect***LOCATION/HISTORY/HERITAGE VALUE - LANDSCAPE STRATEGY**

The primary heritage value of the Synagogue garden site relates to its proximity to both the Synagogue and Primrose Hill House. There appears to be little integral heritage value in the fabric of the site itself. The main part of the Synagogue garden site therefore presents an almost 'blank canvas' as far as heritage value is concerned and there is scope to create a new garden that is unrestricted by historic precedence and restoration requirements.

The integrity of the built features, primarily retaining walls, relating to the Synagogue and Primrose Hill will be retained and incorporated into the design of the garden, and any alterations and repairs will be constructed to match.

When clearances are taking place, evidence of past artifacts, structures and activities within the Synagogue garden may come to light. If encountered, these will be evaluated and taken into account within the design and construction as it develops.

The simple formal layout of Primrose Hill forecourt is appropriate for the building style and for the proposed uses. Therefore it will be retained, with its stone boundary walls, hedge and tiled path.



8.5.6 Landscape Strategy Statement, produced by Bronwen Thomas, Landscape Architect

LANDFORM/DRAINAGE/ACCESS - CURRENT SITUATION

The land of the **Synagogue garden site** falls approximately 10m in its 30m length from east to west. There is a relatively level area across the mid slopes, generally aligned with the proposed door from the first floor of the Synagogue. This makes for an approximately 1 in 2.5 gradient in the upper and lower parts of the Synagogue garden site. There is a 2.25m drop to Primrose Hill forecourt and varying height drop to the steps alongside the Synagogue. The private lane to the east of the site is at a higher level, supported by a 1m high retaining wall at the boundary at the edge of the verge. To the rear of the Synagogue the high stone walls are structurally unsound. There is also a bank down to the north boundary with the neighbours' garden.

As noted previously, the landform is likely to be the result of tipping of excavated material on the existing slope at the time of the construction of the Synagogue. More recent debris, including from within the building, has been tipped especially on the central flatter area. This includes a considerable number of re-usable stone blocks.

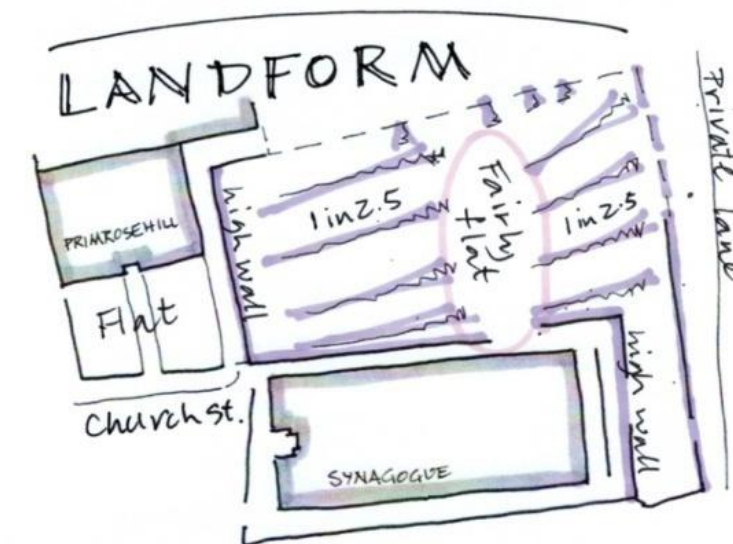
Due to its overgrown state, soil depths and structure have not yet been investigated. However, it is reasonable to conjecture that there is adequate sub-soil and top-soil for re-use as a garden, once it has been cleared of debris and unwanted vegetation.

The land naturally drains down the slope and appears to drain well into the underlying strata. There is no evidence of water built-up behind retaining walls or puddling on the surface. Surface water drainage from the building is embedded under the steps adjacent to the building.

Due to the steep gradients and high retaining walls, both vehicle and pedestrian access is limited to the Synagogue garden site. There is no direct access from Primrose Hill or Church Street to this area. The main pedestrian access is from the Synagogue door on the first floor. The steps alongside the Synagogue are too steep and narrow for general use, and are in poor condition.

The **Primrose Hill forecourt** is flat and has long been part of the frontage of the house. Access is via the pedestrian entrance gateway from the street.

The house immediately behind Primrosehill House has its access, pedestrian only, alongside the retaining wall that forms the eastern boundary of Primrose Hill forecourt. This right of way has its own gate and gateway and is separated from the rest of the forecourt by a close-board fence.



8.5.6 Landscape Strategy Statement, produced by Bronwen Thomas, Landscape Architect

LANDFORM/DRAINAGE/ACCESS/- LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

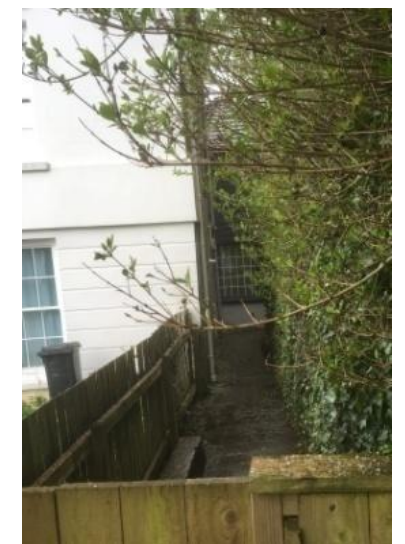
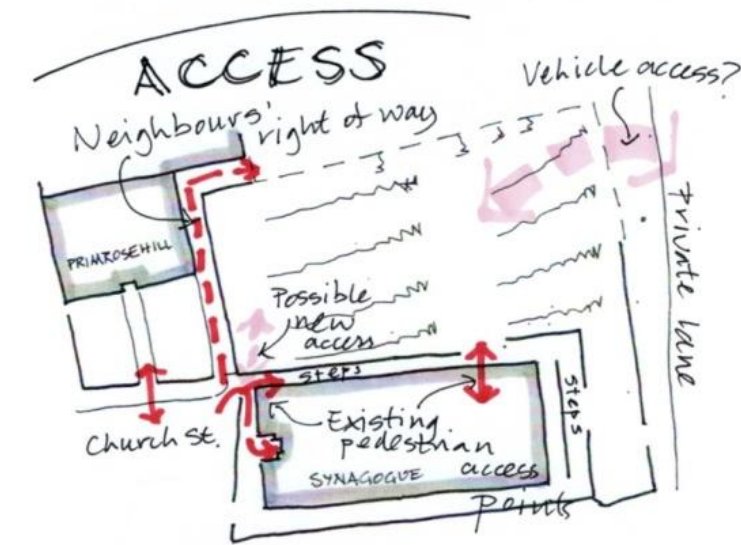
The options for access requirements for development works for the Synagogue building are given in the Conservation Management Plan (para.4.1.8). This states that there will be problems accessing all parts of the site during development works, including the Synagogue building and proposed additional stabilising works to the rear. All these options are likely to have considerable effects on the fabric of the Synagogue garden area, necessitating clearance of vegetation and the removal of trees, earthworks to make temporary vehicle routes, and requiring the protection of soils and vegetation to be kept. It is likely that the most feasible vehicle access, both during development and for future use of the garden, would be from the private lane to the east of the site. This would be very steep and require neighbour consent and remedial works to the lane itself. However, it would also allow for emergency vehicle access to the Synagogue in the longer term.

It is proposed that the main slope is terraced using stone-filled gabions to provide stability whilst allowing free drainage through and giving opportunities for plants to colonise and soften them. There will be a ramped path with steps zig-zagging down the terraces to near the main entrance to the Synagogue, requiring a breach in the side retaining wall. This will open up an alternative outdoor route between Primrose Hill and the upper floors of the Synagogue and the garden.

The entrance to Primrose Hill forecourt (and therefore to the House) via the pedestrian gateway from Church Street is unlikely to pose much problem for access for scaffolding, and small plant, machinery and fittings to Primrose Hill House during the works or for pedestrian and disabled access when functioning as part of the Heritage Centre.

The removal of the closeboard fence is proposed, further opening up the forecourt. The neighbours' path alongside Primrose Hill House will be gated.

Along with the opening up of new access points comes the need for securing the grounds. 2.4m high weldmesh fences and vehicle gate are proposed along the boundary with the private lane to the east and to the neighbours' garden to the north.



8.5.6 Landscape Strategy Statement, produced by Bronwen Thomas, Landscape Architect

BIODIVERSITY/VEGETATION/HABITATS/CLIMATE CHANGE - CURRENT SITUATION

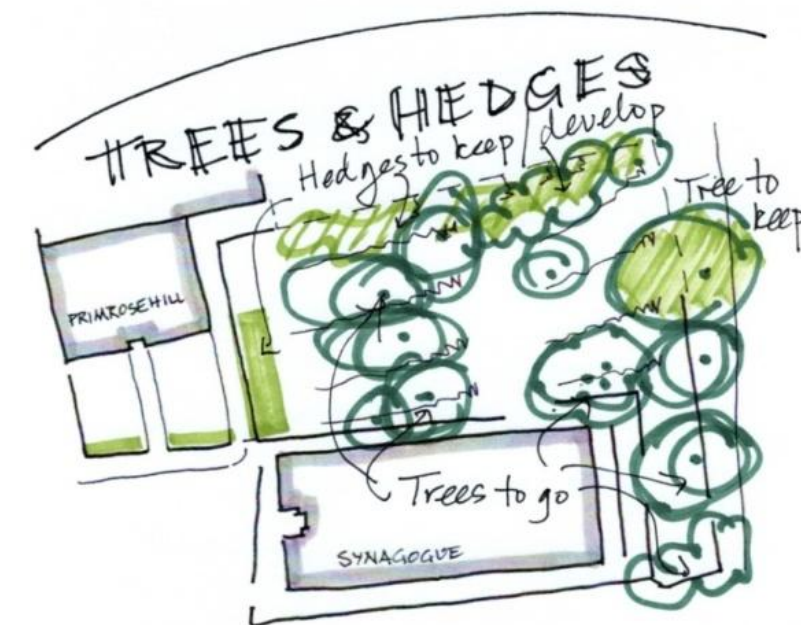
The main habitat on **Synagogue garden site** is semi-natural native mixed woodland which has developed since the Synagogue was built. This is comprised mainly of self-sown sycamore trees and ash trees, with bramble as the main component of the understorey, and ivy being the main species in the ground layer and climbing many of the trees and walls. Both the main tree species are common and the ash are all suffering from ash dieback disease which will eventually kill them. The Tree Report evaluates only four of the sycamore trees as Category B (Moderate) - desirable for retention, and the remainder as either Category C (Low) - optional for retention, or Category U (Poor) - unsuitable for retention. Many of the trees are in close proximity to the Synagogue and to retaining walls, potentially causing damp ingress and root damage. Apart from a larger, older multi-stemmed sycamore of the eastern boundary, all of the trees on the site are etiolated - grown tall and narrow due to overcrowding and lack of light. There are several other species of self-sown native and ornamental shrubs, saplings and small trees, including the aforementioned privet hedge.

This habitat has been evaluated as being of local ecological importance. Bat surveys show that several species of bats use the Synagogue for roosting and hibernation, and are likely to forage amongst the ivy-clad trees and shrubs of the site and further afield. Likewise a variety of birds and small mammals are likely to use this habitat for feeding, roosting and nesting.

Primrose Hill forecourt has privet hedges along its frontage and small lawns on either side of the central path.

The closest Site of Special Scientific Interest is more than 1km away, and the closest Site of importance for Nature Conservation - the River Taff - is nearly half a kilometre away. Therefore no impacts on these areas is anticipated with the developments on site.

The whole site lies within the context of large mature gardens with trees and small areas of woodland as well as Thomastown Park. Together these form a network of habitats and linkages for wildlife.



8.5.6 Landscape Strategy Statement, *produced by Bronwen Thomas, Landscape Architect***BIODIVERSITY/VEGETATION/HABITATS/CLIMATE CHANGE/PLANTING - LANDSCAPE STRATEGY**

Biodiversity enhancement is a key factor in the design of the Synagogue garden and the whole site. The step-wise approach to biodiversity enhancement - avoid, minimise, mitigate/restore, compensate - is being taken. Further detail is given in the Green Infrastructure Statement.

Avoid: Some trees and other vegetation on the garden site will be retained where they are in a healthy condition and form important screening and linkages, especially on the northern side where there is a variety of native trees and shrubs (e.g. hawthorn, willow, holly, yew). The mature privet hedges relating to Primrose Hill and the lower edge of the garden will be retained. However, in order to develop the Heritage Centre and its integral grounds much modification to the existing vegetation elsewhere will be unavoidable. Several of the trees need to be removed to enable the building works to the Synagogue and to protect the building in the future. Trees effected by ash dieback and other poor specimens will be felled, as will those that obstruct important views, prevent circulation and reduce planting opportunities.

Minimise: The clearance works and use of both the Synagogue garden area and Primrose hill forecourt will be carefully managed by adhering to method statements covering, for instance:

- timing of clearances and felling to avoid undue disturbance to bats and be outside the bird nesting season. This may involve phased removal of trees;
- ground level tree assessment for bats prior to any tree removal;

- coppicing of smaller trees and native shrubs that can be retained to develop into denser hedge backdrop;
- transplanting of native saplings and small shrubs to bulk up screening;
- protection of roots and canopies of retained trees;
- removal of invasive non-native species e.g. laurel;
- protection/conservation/re-cycling of existing soils;
- use on site of logs, timber and brushwood from fellings;
- disposal of cleared vegetative material and debris;
- construction routes, compounds and storage areas.

Mitigate/restore: Planning Policy Wales states that 'Replacement planting shall be at a ratio equivalent to the quality, environmental and ecological importance of the trees lost.' (para.6.4.42). A realistic approach is being taken which follows good design principles. New trees, mainly native species, will be planted where they will provide shelter and screening to the north side of the site, and to the eastern border. Effectively this will create a new woodland belt or large hedge, along with the coppiced and translocated trees.

Compensate: The loss of amenity and biodiversity value of the removed trees will be more than compensated. Detailed proposals will be developed that will provide more varied and diverse habitats, including for mammals, reptiles and amphibians, with an emphasis on planting that provides for pollinators and birds, being resilient to climate change and being relevant to Welsh Jewish heritage, as well as being pleasing to the eye and nose. Future maintenance (by volunteers) and management will be monitored and the design will allow for flexibility of requirements.

8.5.6 Landscape Strategy Statement, produced by Bronwen Thomas, Landscape Architect

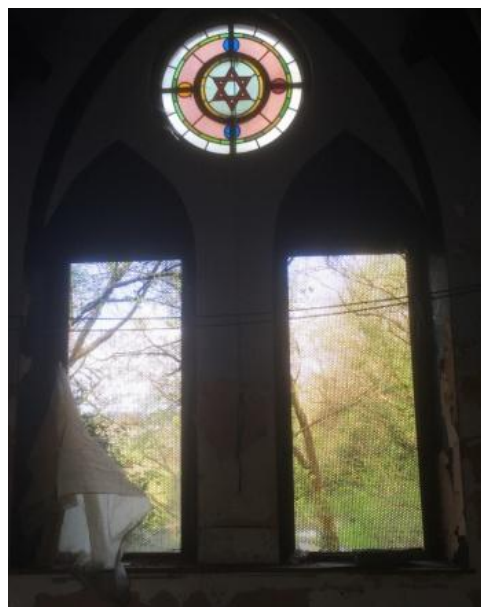
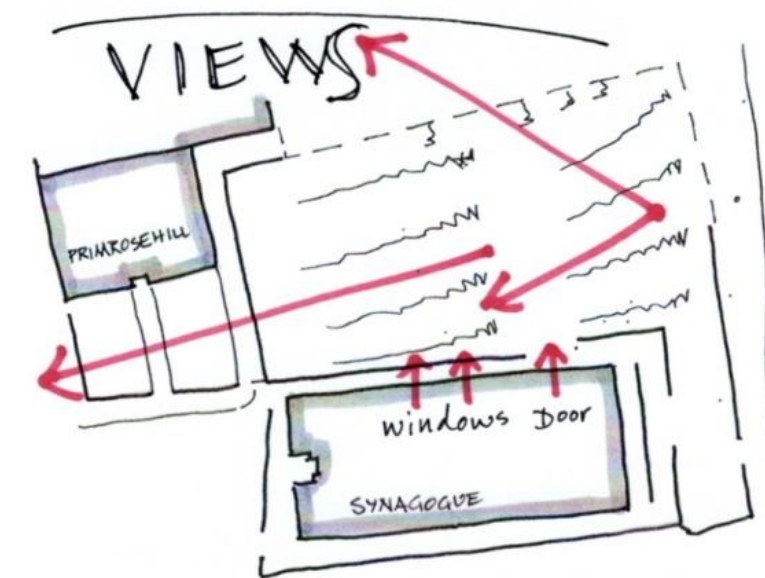
AESTHETIC QUALITIES/USE OF MATERIALS - CURRENT SITUATION

Currently the **Synagogue garden** site has a sombre character, overshadowed by the imposing north side facade of the Synagogue. Dense tree and scrub cover on and immediately adjacent to the site add to the dark cold atmosphere. The view westward from the Synagogue across the Taff valley was described in an 1876 news report as 'a splendid view of surrounding hills'. These similar views from the Synagogue garden site are now partially obscured by the trees and other vegetation. They are best seen from the upper part of the site where currently views can be glimpsed over the roof of Primrose Hill house to the open skyline to the west and north west.

From within the Synagogue there are views from windows both on the first and second floors, as well as potentially through the proposed first floor door. Approaching up Church Street and from other approaches the Synagogue is a formidable structure almost enveloped within its wooded site, giving an uninviting 'gothick' character to the site.

The facades of the Synagogue are of roughly coursed Pennant stone with dressed stone cornices, window surrounds and other details. There is also some similar stonework in the retaining walls, and numerous stone blocks deposited on the site.

Primrose Hill forecourt forms a contrast to the Synagogue garden site by being a simple level lawned rectangle, enclosed by stone walls and privet hedges, and bisected by the distinctive tiled path, complementing the classic facade of the house.



8.5.6 Landscape Strategy Statement, *produced by Bronwen Thomas, Landscape Architect*

AESTHETIC QUALITIES/USE OF MATERIALS/INTERPRETATION - LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

Removal of most of the larger trees will open up the 'splendid' views and allow light into the Synagogue garden site and the building, thus reducing its gloomy character and allowing more variety of vegetation to thrive. There will be several places, with seating, within the garden where these views can be appreciated, and consideration is being given to how the garden and beyond is viewed from within the Synagogue, through windows and the door from the first floor. There will be an emphasis of taller and denser planting on the north side where shelter and screening is required, and to the east to give privacy to the lane above and to blend in with the mature trees within the hillside gardens beyond.

Hard landscape materials will primarily be natural, local and re-cycled, including the re-use of stone, logs and found materials from the site. Pennant stone will be used for paving, gabions and edgings and timber for seats.

Opportunities for interpretation in the garden have been outlined in the Interpretation Plan. These will be further explored during the design development to ensure that interpretation and relevance to the ethos of the Welsh Jewish Heritage Centre is embedded in the fabric of the garden. A key tree will be the horse chestnut which is a sapling from the original tree that Anne Frank mentions in her diary. This will be located towards the northern boundary where it will be seen when entering the garden from the Synagogue and where there will be space for it to eventually develop into a large specimen. There may be opportunities to bring more colour to the garden and north facade of the Synagogue

with the use of banners and other such temporary or removable fixtures.



8.6 The Public Highway in front of both buildings

As a visitor attraction, which will focus notably on school groups; access, vehicular parking and drop-off, and servicing are important aspects. To that end, a Transport Statement was prepared by Red Oak Transport Planning, which is included with the application.

It summarises that, due to the town centre location, there is no dedicated parking associated with the current buildings, as has been the case throughout their historic use. Therefore, visitors travelling by car will be encouraged to utilise the parking options within close proximity to the site. On street parking in the vicinity of the site is predominantly permit-controlled, with a small number of short-stay and public parking spaces available.

It is proposed that one of the existing permit bays outside the Synagogue will be amended to become a disabled parking bay, which will allow disabled visitors the opportunity to park in close proximity to the centre, adjacent to the step-free access to the Synagogue building. An uncontrolled level-access pedestrian crossing is proposed leading from the disabled space to the entrance, formed by dropping kerbs locally and laying tactile paving. To provide level access from the pavement on the other side of the road, another pedestrian crossing is proposed opposite.

In order to facilitate servicing of the Centre and its commercial uses, it is proposed that the existing permit parking bay outside Primrose Hill is amended to become a loading bay. This will allow for the delivery and collection of goods from the centre, as well as allow loading and unloading of minibuses. This proposal would result in the loss of one permit parking bay. A survey has determined that the proposed loss of one bay would not have a detrimental impact on the availability of parking in the area.

To the right is the plan included within the Transport Statement; whilst below is the same extract from the Proposed Site Plan. Above and to the right are two photos of the road area in question.

