

Board of Commissioners  
Onchan District Commissioners  
Hawthorn Villa  
Main Road  
Onchan  
IM3 1RD

COPY

Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2015

Dear Commissioners,

### **Proposed Youth and Community Centre refurbishment**

I write to express comments and concerns in respect of the proposed Youth and Community Centre ("YCC", the "Building") refurbishment as per 'Proposed floor plan (Option 3)' and wish to request that this letter be discussed in public.

The analysis here within is primordial in relation to the proposed migration of our operational base from Kenyon's Café, 46 Main Road, Onchan to the Youth Facility based within the YCC following ODC Boards resolution to sell the property in which we currently reside. It is noteworthy that several points listed here within may have relevance to other user groups without prejudices to their occupancy within the Building.

### **Brief outline of our core offering**

We provide young people aged 11 to 18 with a recreational facility that acts as safe environment for young people to relax and meet friends while building a professional relationship with adults in the community who in turn are able to offer advice and guidance on any matter a young person wishes to discuss.

#### **Our charity aims to –**

- provide local and easily accessible services that meet the needs of young people within our community;
- work within the community to reach young people and tackle the associated issues of poverty, discrimination and abuse;
- support young people in accessing education, employment and training, information advice and guidance and informal social based learning;
- advocate community engagement that develops safer and healthier paces to live.

#### **The objectives of our charity are to –**

- stimulate a strong feeling of self-worth and confidence;
- increase health and well-being;
- empower young people to make informed decisions on matters relevant to their lives;
- promote a sense of belonging and encouraging them to be proud of the area they live in;
- promote the development of positive relationships with peers;
- offer advice, information, education and practical support.

Our drop-in sessions remain well attended by a healthy balance of young people between the ages of 11 to 16 attending one or more sessions per week. Our most notable success this term is a large group of school year 7's choosing to use our provision demonstrating signs of potential growth within the coming years.

During the period of April 2014 and March 2015, we recorded 2'160 attendances by young people. The most popular session remains Friday evenings with some sessions witnessing up to 40+ young persons attending throughout the session.



## Supplementary questions

I submitted several supplementary questions to Onchan District Commissioners (“ODC”) in advance of this letter in order to obtain some key points of consideration to assist with flourishing our analysis.

### Logistics in respect of the Youth Facility inclusive of youth store (“Facility”);

- Would soft furnishing (sofa’s, carpet etc) be acceptable to be permanently placed in the Facility?
  - *ODC: Yes*
- Would the fixed installation of TV’s, phone line and broadband be acceptable?
  - *ODC: These would be acceptable, but your organisation would be liable for all licences, contracts with telecom suppliers etc.*
- Would our organisation have exclusive and unrestricted access to the Facility at all times?
  - *ODC: Yes*
    - Which area of the building are you proposing for use by the DEC Youth Service’s Play Group which currently operates on Friday evenings?
      - *ODC: The DEC would be free to hire whichever part they felt most appropriate for their use*
- Do you have anticipated allowance numbers for the Facility in respect of fire regulations?
  - *ODC: This will need discussion with the fire services*
- Can you please provide proposed measurements of the Youth Facility broken in to Area 1 and Area 2 as per my attachment? *Attachment related to the email.*
  - *ODC: Area 1 is 6m x 4m; Area 2 is 2.5m x 2.5m inclusive of the tea area*

### Logistics in respect of the building;

- Will Hall 1 and/or Hall 2 be available for hire by external parties during the primary operating hours of Kenyon’s drop-in sessions (“Primary Hours”)?
  - *ODC: Yes*
- Will the sports hall be freely and regularly available for our use during Primary Hours?
  - *ODC: No it will be available for hire by any party at any time*
- Can the halls be locked independently while the youth facility is in use?
  - *ODC: Halls will be locked when not in use*
- Is there any external works happening as part of this proposed development?
  - *ODC: There are proposals to enhance the external entrance to the Youth Facility as it is intended that this will be the primary access route. The internal door is provided to allow access to the toilet facilities. An entrance canopy similar to that at the rear entrance to our offices is proposed over the door, and some improvement to the access from School Road.*

## Analysis

### Youth Facility environment

The environment of the Youth Facility (the “Facility”) has a direct impact on the attendance and usability by young people and we understand that they thrive in an environment they feel comfortable with and this in turn has an impact on the level of interaction that a professional such as a youth worker, support or social worker is able to achieve.

In May 2015, we asked young people, as part of a survey titled “Community and young persons’ response” (the “Survey”), what was important for a youth facility to have:

- 96.4% said internet access is important;



- 92.9% said comfortable furniture and general atmosphere are important;
- 81.5% said music and television are important.

Based on the fore mentioned pointers I believe the proposed Facility is too small with a realistic 'useable space' of 6m x 4m prior to clearway access considerations – this is equivalent to just over half that of our current useable space. *Appendix 1 demonstrates the realistic 'useable space' with clearways.*

The matters I foresee due to size of the Facility include:

- a) Drop-in sessions would be greatly restricted by the capacity numbers allowed within; thus, based on our current attendance figures, requiring young people to be turned away once capacity has been reached;
- b) Creating a welcoming, relaxing and desired atmosphere that young people say is an important aspect would be extremely difficult to achieve;
  - a. Placement and volume of furniture would be extremely restrictive once clearway access routes have been taken into account.
- c) Supporting young people in a time of need would be challenging due to very little 'get away' space for a more confidential discussion whilst continuing to supervise others:
  - a. It would be difficult to hold a conversation should others be playing music or watching TV;
  - b. Should the room have a static environment the conversation may be overheard by others;
  - c. The intimacy may detract a young person from raising a confidential matter.

I note and praise the allowance and acceptable use of soft furnishing, TVs and telecommunications, which is an important requirement for such a facility.

### **Youth Facility location**

Additional work to entice young people to use the Facility may be required in order to overturn the stigma of the newly located drop-in sessions being a 'basic youth club within a stale community hall'. Ultimately, we wish young people to feel welcome and safe during our drop-in sessions and choose to use our provision above that of hanging around on the streets and in local parks.

During the Survey, young people told us:

- Location of the building is important;
- If Kenyon's didn't exist or they decided not to attend they would most likely go out with friends (i.e. hangout in a park or on the streets);
  - Only two respondents said they would attend another youth organisation instead (e.g. Scouts, Girlguides, Cadets).

Some advantages of having an operational base near to the park exist however the current proposed Facility will somewhat be hidden from view from both the park and the natural through flow of young persons passing the front of the YCC – this could impact on young people being unaware of our presence and/or opening. One counterbalance could be the allowance of illuminated signage to be placed on the exterior of the Building in carefully considered placement to identify when our provision is open.

I note that you plan to develop the entranceway to the Facility and trust more adequate external lighting and safer access from the pathway and steps will be included within such developments.



## YCC environment

The area of coverage of the proposed layout for supervision is complex in a static environment and increases to an unacceptable level during any such time a matter(s) arises;

- A matter may consist of a reactive measure whereas a Youth Worker has to focus particular attention to a young person(s) requiring urgent support, to challenging behaviour, address a medical emergency or otherwise;
- *Please see Appendix 2 for sample proposed mapping and hypothetical matter demonstration;*

Several points of concern including some with safeguarding attributes exist under this proposed plan due to multiple users operating within the YCC having unrestricted access to shared areas and resources during the primary operating hours of our drop-in sessions (“Primary Hours”).

Such points of concern include:

- a) External user groups within Hall 1 and/or Hall 2 and/or Sports Hall during Primary Hours being unknown person(s) having shared use of YCC toilets with young people;
  - a. This would have to be considered as a high risk concern especially with the Halls being available for hire by any party at any time;
  - b. The same high risk concern would be in place should an external young person related activity be taking place in Hall 1 and/or Hall 2 and/or Sports Hall as visitors could have access to the toilets in addition to their responsible adult(s) being unknown to us;
- b) Upon discovering an adult within the Building our youth workers would be none-the-wiser as to whether that person was connected to an external user group or an unknown member of the public;
  - a. Normal practice within a youth facility would be to challenge any such unknown person in best interest of safeguarding and child protection – this would be a difficult and embarrassing task to identify access of persons and their authority to be within the Building;
- c) I fear the proposed environment includes several features that may tempt young people into challenging behaviours beyond their natural curiosity and trial – we must be realistic in accepting that we support young people who may push boundaries from time-to-time and this is one area of work as to the reasoning why we exist – to influence positive behaviour within our community:
  - a. External user groups occupying Hall 1 and/or Hall 2 and/or Sports Hall could be disturbed from time-to-time;
  - b. Amount of accessible area within the building provides opportunity for bullying to take place;
  - c. Young people risk being discredited through challenging behaviours within an environment which harvests temptation. During their youthful years, we as adults need to help steer young people onto the right pathway and placing them within an environment that we believe will further tempt curiosity and trail could be more damaging than good.

## Conclusion

The usable space of the proposed Youth Facility is just over half that of our current environment which would be extremely limiting and restrictive as our current environment is pushing the boundary somewhat and therefore we ideally need to expand to cope with future demand and usability. We wish to encourage



young people from the streets and parks to engage in a positive activity within a safe environment and would be unfair to work on a first come, first served basis and turn young people away due to the limitations of a new facility.

Effective management of the proposed accessible area would certainly require additional youth worker resources in order effectively supervise the Facility and accessible areas – this would require ongoing stable financial assistance.

Migrating young people to an environment that includes several features that may tempt young people into challenging behaviours beyond their natural curiosity and trial would risk discrediting young people – which I believe would be duly unfair considering our purposeful placement into such an environment.

Safeguarding is a concern with this proposal; in its current form, this operation could be considered neglectful towards young people especially on the basis that any youth project such as ours could easily be providing supporting services to a vulnerable young person(s).

Taking all the above into consideration I strongly feel the current proposal is not fit for purpose and certainly requires remodelling. I believe the following conditions would have to be met in order to successfully migrate our operation to the YCC;

- Usable space within Youth Facility to be at least double that of the proposed and in respect of fire regulations be at least 40 persons;
- Exclusive access to the whole building during Primary Hours or a Youth Facility comprising of a complete enclosed environment with exclusive toilets;
  - If not a complete enclosed environment; sustainable financial assistance to fund additional youth worker resources to an adequate operational standard;
- Goodwill and applied consideration to enhance awareness and attract young people from the streets and parks into the Facility.

I must note my worry in migrating our operation to an environment that is not suitable and/or attractive to young people may lead to an adverse effect within our community – please leave no stone unturned when considering options whether it be remodelling the YCC and/or potential alternative premises.

On behalf of the young people of Onchan we are calling on you, the Commissioners of Onchan, to assist with developing a plan for the future and provide security that the young people of Onchan can have a safe place they choose to visit where they can relax with friends and, in a time of need, seek help and support.

Yours faithfully,




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Protected copy

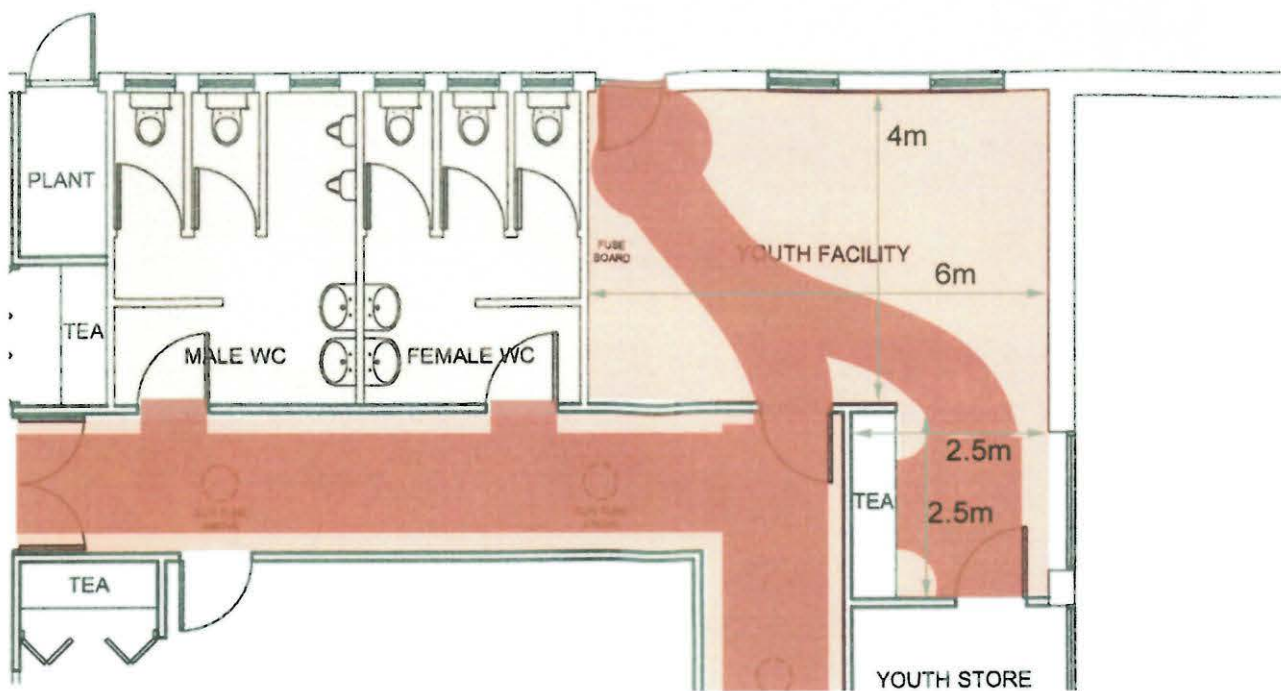
Martin Macfarlane  
Chairman  
Kenyon's Café



Clip map demonstrating proposed internal clearways through youth facility

**KEY**

-  Clearway for regular access and fire route
-  Primary accessible area in need of awareness
-  Secondary accessible area in need of awareness

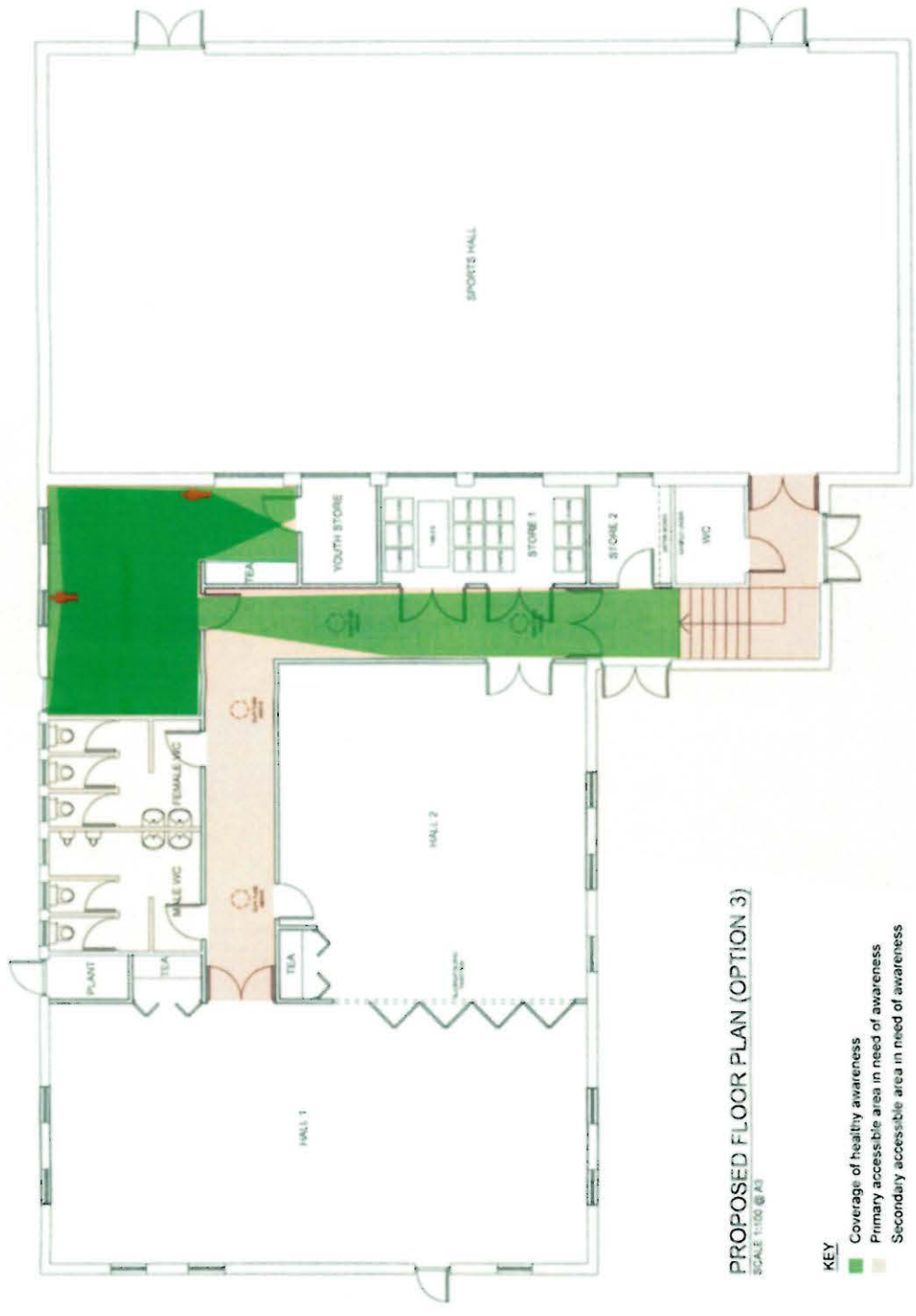


# APPENDIX 2

2 Youth Worker model currently applies to Tuesday and Wednesday sessions



2 x Youth Worker model  
General setting



2 Youth Worker model currently applies to Tuesday and Wednesday sessions

2 x Youth Worker model  
Based on single matter



PROPOSED FLOOR PLAN (OPTION 3)  
SCALE 1:100 @ A1

- KEY**
- Coverage of healthy awareness
  - Primary accessible area in need of awareness
  - Secondary accessible area in need of awareness



2 Youth Worker model currently applies to Tuesday and Wednesday sessions

**K** 2 x Youth Worker model  
Based on two matters



PROPOSED FLOOR PLAN (OPTION 3)

SCALE 1:100 @ A3

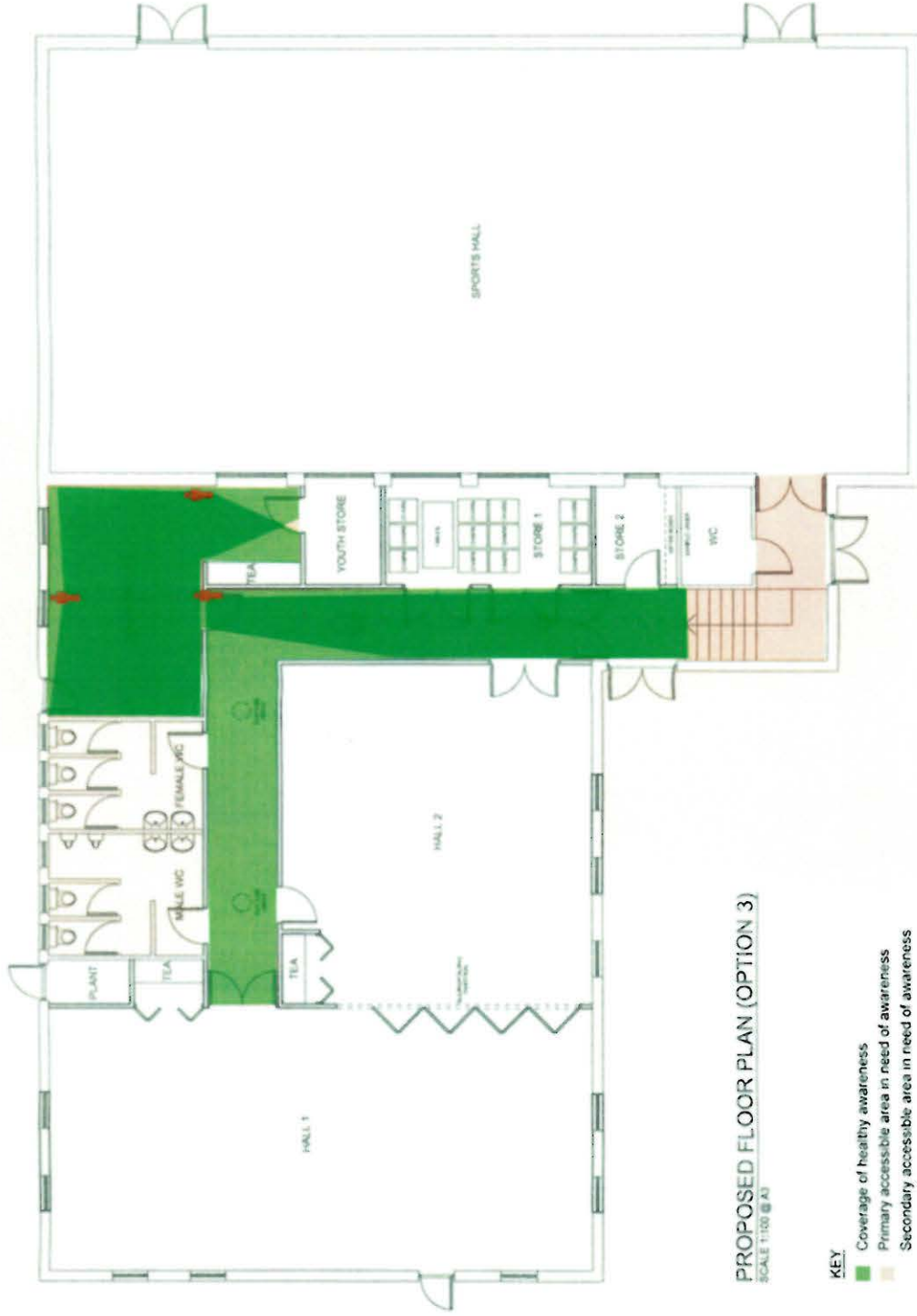
KEY

- Coverage of healthy awareness
- Primary accessible area in need of awareness
- Secondary accessible area in need of awareness

3 Youth Worker model currently applies to Friday sessions



3 x Youth Worker model  
General setting

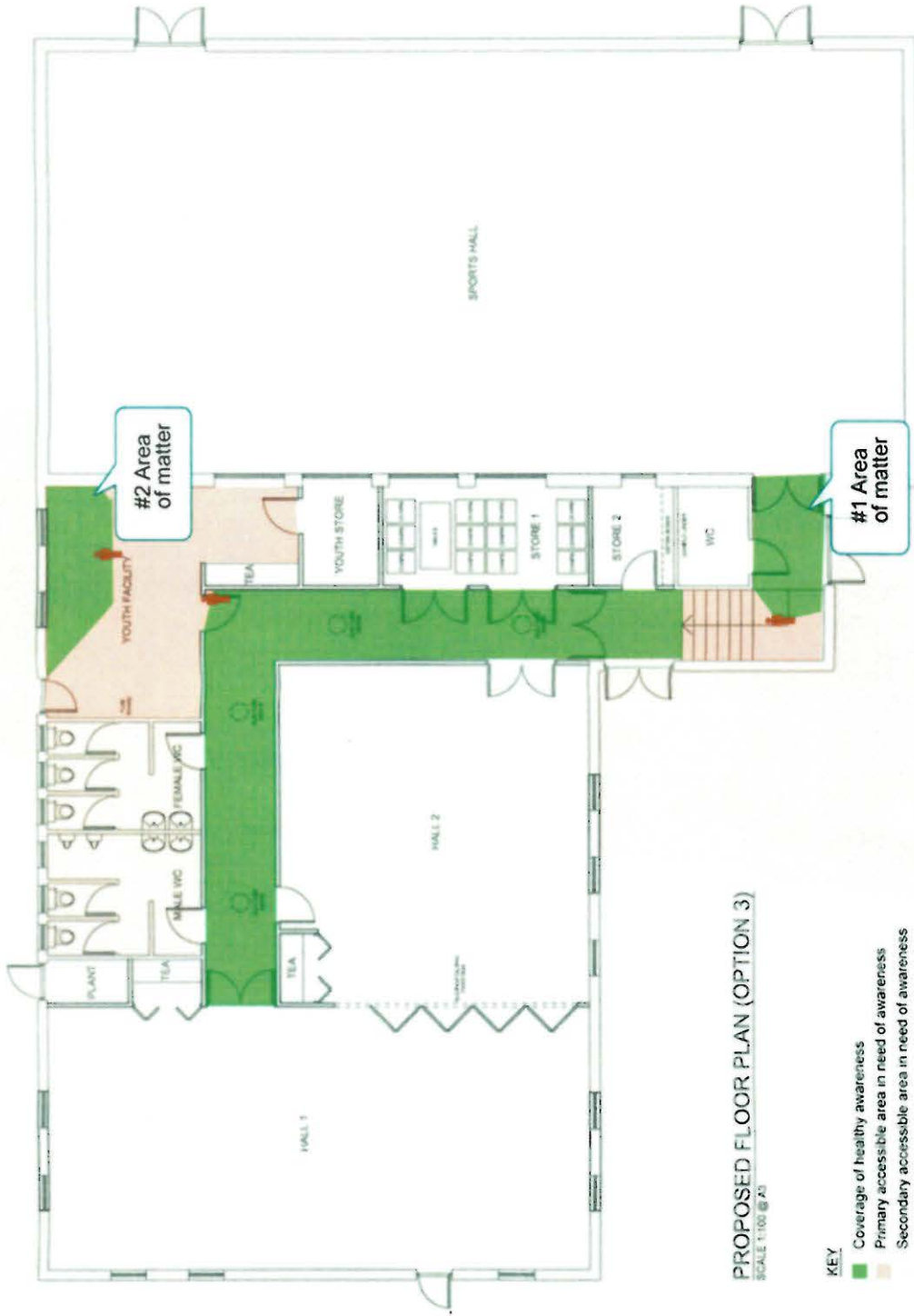


PROPOSED FLOOR PLAN (OPTION 3)  
SCALE 1:100 @ A1

3 Youth Worker model currently applies to Friday sessions



3 x Youth Worker model  
Based on two matters



PROPOSED FLOOR PLAN (OPTION 3)  
SCALE 1:100 @ A1

- KEY**
- Coverage of healthy awareness
  - Primary accessible area in need of awareness
  - Secondary accessible area in need of awareness