

GREYFRIARS CHURCH READING - SITE REDEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS STATEMENT OF NEED



Executive Summary

1. Location

- a. North West of Reading town centre between the retail and industrial areas. Largely divorced from the parish by a dual carriageway inner ring road.
- b. Environment and context of the church location will change rapidly over the next few years with the building of 1000+ dwellings within ½ mile of the church and the arrival of Crossrail to the town.

2. Church Community

- a. A Large and growing church with a congregation of 500 – 600 regular worshippers including a vibrant youth and children's section of approximately 100. Currently running 3 services on a Sunday
- b. A church site comprising Church and Centre which incorporates a coffee shop and bookshop.
- c. Weekday church activities on site include toddlers, women's bible study group, additional needs groups for both adults and youth various small group bible studies and special interest groups.
- d. The church is used for a wide range of local and wider church activities.

3. Local Community

- a. The site is used by a wide range of community groups including: Alcoholics Anonymous, University of the 3rd Age, Local School Groups and local retirement fellowships.
- b. The church plays host to a number of events such as choral concerts, conferences and celebrations.

4. The Need

- a. The church has outgrown the capacity of the existing buildings
- b. The current access to the church is confused and unwelcoming
- c. The context of the existing facilities are no longer in keeping with the mission and work of the church and the changing environment in which it finds itself.
- d. Accommodation for the staff team is inadequate and inefficient.

5. The proposals

- a. To refurbish and access to two recently purchased properties behind the church to provide office space, circulation area, newly sited bookshop and toilet facilities.
- b. Replace the existing West End with a new glazed lobby giving direct access to the church from all directions.
- c. Improve visibility of the West Window
- d. Create a new glazed entrance to the church beneath the West Window giving a clear view from the main entrance through into the church.
- e. A second potential phase to replace/renovate the church centre

Greyfriars Church, Reading - Statement of Need

General information

Location

Greyfriars Church is located at the north-west corner of Reading town centre, at a busy road junction and with significant passing pedestrian traffic. It is adjacent to the Chatham Street area of the town which Reading Borough Council has made a focus for regeneration through a series of new developments. Our location benefits from significant passing pedestrian traffic from people coming into the town centre from Caversham to the north and the Oxford Road area to the west. This will increased with the planned regeneration to the West of our site. We seek to be a visible and welcoming presence on Friar Street. Greyfriars' parish stretches northwards towards the River Thames, and is also served by our church plant, New Hope Community Church.



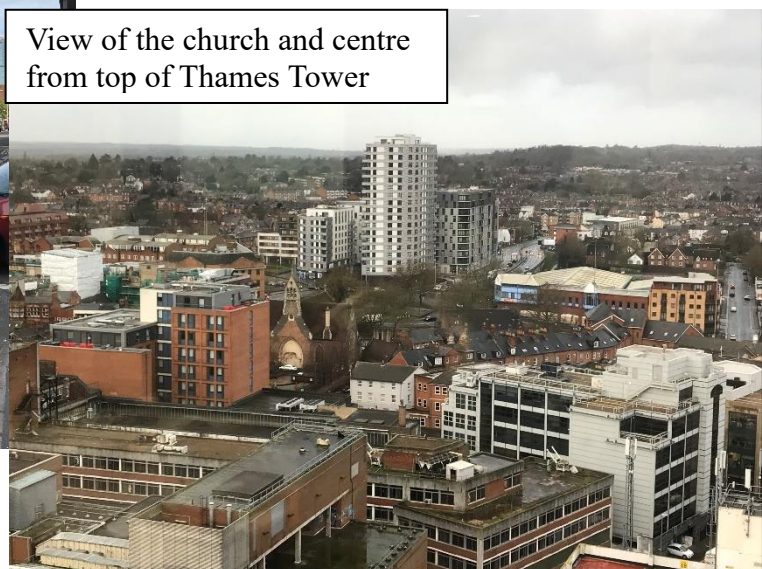
Aerial view of the location of the church



View toward the church looking West



General view looking towards the East



View of the church and centre from top of Thames Tower

The church community

Greyfriars is a large and growing church. There are 411 on the electoral roll, but 500-600 people regularly attend worship on Sunday and total congregation is around 1000. This membership includes a very wide spread of ages, with many young families and also many people in their twenties to forties, and is drawn from the entire Greater Reading area. Many small groups meet during the week in different places.

The church site

The site is an important focus in the weekly life of the church, with activities happening from early morning to late at night. The site comprises the church itself, the attached 'West End' lounge, the former vicarage and Memorial Hall (both now used for the Greyfriars Day Nursery), and the Greyfriars Centre and church offices. The Centre includes a bookshop, which is open five and a half days a week, together with a sports hall and a small number of meeting rooms. These rooms, the West End and the church itself (reordered in 2000) are used for church activities and by outside bookings throughout the week. The offices and portakabin house Greyfriars' growing ordained, lay and volunteer staff team.

In 2018 we were able to purchase two terraced houses (hitherto used by a counselling service) in Sackville Street adjoining the Memorial Hall and the north side of the church site.

Sunday services



- 9.30am 220 adults + 110 children (from ages 0-14) in crèche and age-based groups.
- 11.30am 70 adults: a more formal morning service.
- 6.30pm 200 adults, with a high proportion of 20s-40s, and some older teenagers (14-18).

Weekday/Saturday church activities

The Greyfriars site is busy throughout the week. Despite their rather awkward location at the bottom of the car park the bookshop attracts visitors into the Centre, and the various meeting spaces are used extensively by both church and community groups. Activities on the site include:

- Mum & Toddler groups - a weekly session of roughly 20 adults and 25 children, typically with no other church connection: very multicultural.



- 'Time Out' – 60–80 women (not exclusively Greyfriars members) meeting weekly for study, prayer and fellowship, with activities and crèche for pre-schoolers and babies.
- 'Tuesday Special' and 'All Stars' – weekly events for young people and adults with additional needs.



- 'Prayer Stop' ministry to passers-by, offering prayer on Fridays or Saturdays weekly.
- 'Pastors' Prayer' – a weekly prayer meeting attended by leaders of many churches and charities in Reading.
- Evening small group meetings and/or band rehearsals several nights of the week
- Alpha, Marriage Course and other church-wide courses. We have recently completed a School of Theology which was attended by over 170 a night.



Special Church Events

Throughout the year the church will run a range of special events which reach out to our local community as well as church members. Examples of these would be:

- Stable Trail, an interactive nativity play where visitors moved through the Christmas story.



- Easter events



Local Community

Greyfriars, currently sits between the extreme western end of the retail centre of the town and what is currently largely a light industrial area. However the context of our location is going to rapidly change in the next 5 years with in excess of 1000 new dwellings being built within 500 meters of the church. Crossrail and the new Heathrow rail link will further impact the environment in which we are located. Already we are seeing a move to a different type of resident moving into the area.

As a church we want to be in a position to respond to these changes as a focus of working out the mission and work of the church and to provide facilities and programmes that allow us to reach into our new community as it develops. We particularly want to provide space where the growing numbers of remote/lone workers can come and find community while they work.

Community bookings

Community bookings currently include the NHS, School Groups, Reading Borough Council groups, an Alzheimer's Group and carers support group, Alcoholics and Cocaine Anonymous, Berkshire



Adoption, U3A and both the John Lewis and Marks and Spencers retirement fellowships. Oxford Diocese uses the site periodically both for Deanery and larger Berkshire wide events. We also participate in "Bed 4 a Night" during January and February providing food

and shelter for those on the street.

We have a number community groups who would like to use the site but due to our constraints on availability are currently unable to do so.

Other bookings

In addition to church and community bookings the site also hosts a range of other events such as book launches, charity events and celebrations.



Typical Week Site Usage

Group	Sector
Staff Team Meeting	Church
Time Out	Church
Sunday Worship	Church
Reading MV Choir	Commercial
Big Sing Under 5's	Nursery
Band Rehearsal	Church
Intercessors Group	Church
20 & 30's Events	Church
School of Theology	Church
Weddings	Church
Deanery and Diocesan	Church
Other Special Events	Church
Funerals	Church

Group	Sector
Tuesday Special	Additional Needs
Trekkers 1 & 2	Church
Time out	Church
Youth Group	Church
Pastors Prayer	Church
Marriage Course	Church
Welcome events	Church
Church Prayer Evening	Church
Alpha	Church

Group	Sector
Various Ad Hoc bookings	Mixed
All Stars	Additional Needs
Trekkers 3 - 6	Church
Nursery Toddler PE	Nursery
Fit Fish	Community
CA	Community
Age UK	Community
Nursery Teddy Tennis	Nursery

Group	Sector
Small Group Meetings	Church
Euro speak	Commercial
NHS WOYM	Community
Compass Opportunities	Community
Arthritis Care	Community
U3A	Community
Henley College	Training
Smart Training	Training

Group	Sector
Scramblers 1 - 4	Church
Greyfriars Day Nursery	Nursery

Group	Sector
Younger Youth	Church

St Laurence
(5 Min Walk)

Group	Sector
John Lewis Retirement	Community
Toddlers	Community
AA	Community
Alzheimer's Society	Community
M & S Retirement	Community
Civil Service Retirement	Community
Dealing with Depression	Community
Prayer Stop	Outreach
Prayer Cafe	Outreach

Group	Sector
Prayer Breakfast	Church
Various Staff meetings	Church
Berkshire Adoption	Community
Small Group Meetings	Church
GML Meetings	Nursery
Alzheimer's Carers Group	Community



Finances

The church finances are in a healthy state: the parish share is paid in full. A designated Redevelopment Fund was established more than a decade ago and now has a balance of c.£3M. The church also benefits as the sole shareholder in Greyfriars Ministries Ltd. a commercial operation running a number of nurseries around the town which gifts its profits to the church.

Quinquennial report

The last Quinquennial survey was in 2015: no major issues were identified.

The Need

The buildings surrounding the church, which date from the early years of the 20th century, the 1970s and the 1980s, were visionary responses to the ministry needs of their time. However, although between them they provide a considerable amount of space we have largely outgrown our facilities. The site is disconnected and fragmented, inflexible, and deficient in a number of key respects. There has been a vision since the mid 1990's to see the ministry of develop. The reordering, establishment of New Hope Community Church and Greyfriars Nursery have been stages in the journey.



Greyfriars' Vision

is to see Reading changed by the love and power of Jesus. This involves us focusing on three things: equipping our people; reaching out to those who live and work alongside us; and resourcing the wider church. Our buildings need to serve and be adequate for this Vision.



Public accessibility

Greyfriars seeks to present an open and welcoming face to the town of Reading and its people. This aim is not well served by the rather forbidding exterior of the 1970s West End extension, nor by having to cross the car park to reach the bookshop, café and other facilities. We need an open and transparent frontage towards the street (Friar

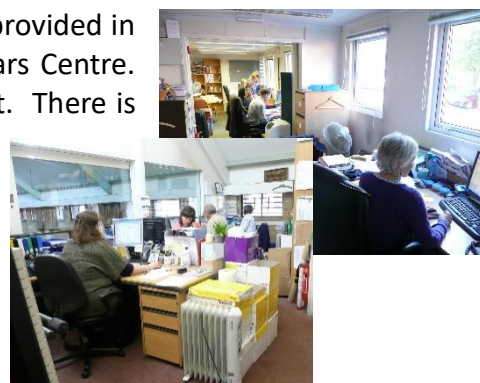
Street), opening into a large atrium and circulation space that gives immediate access to the bookshop, café and church, and links with offices and meeting rooms.

Sunday fellowship space

The church has seating for 380-400 people. Currently there is insufficient circulation space to allow for a congregation of this size. There needs to be welcoming space for people to relax, chat, share and pray with each other over a cup of coffee in comfort, with the ability to break out into a quiet space if necessary. This is a fundamental part of our life together. Currently the only available space for this is an awkwardly-shaped lobby of just under 60 square metres floor area which is also the main access route between the church and the car park and outside world. It is totally inadequate.

Offices

Office space for 16 staff members (including clergy) is currently provided in two elderly portakabins and a converted balcony in the Greyfriars Centre. These spaces are unsuitable, acutely overcrowded and inefficient. There is no disabled access to the balcony office which accommodates 7 staff members plus 4 staff for GML, the nursery operation. The need is for a modern, accessible, space that allows staff members to work comfortably, efficiently and that provides scope for growth in staff numbers to support developing ministries and to provide greater accessibility for church members.



Sunday children/young people's groups

We currently have around 110 children aged 0-14 each Sunday morning, meeting for most of the time in age-specific groups. Each group needs to be in a safe and secure environment which provides suitable space for a range of teaching activities including games and craft. Even using all the available buildings on site, including the Greyfriars Nursery further down the road, we are currently not able to provide sufficient separate spaces and many of those we do use are not particularly suitable. In order to accommodate our Younger Youth we are needing to hire space off site a five minute walk away. This, together with getting the younger children to their areas gives both safeguarding and security challenges.

Outreach and serving the community

We believe strongly that we should be outward looking as a church, not inwardly focussed. With a site in the centre of Reading we have the opportunity to give practical support, in the form of office space, to Christian charities working with those in need. We also believe, on the basis of experience elsewhere, that we can build bridges with the business community by providing 'co-working' space which will allow home workers to come and use our premises as a base.

Weekday/Saturday use of the church

The reordered church provides an excellent and very flexible venue for conferences and other events, including Alpha courses. To be used to best effect it needs much better supporting facilities than are currently available in the building: the kitchen and toilets at the church end of the site are very small, with no disabled toilet. There are also opportunities for opening the church, when not otherwise in use, for quiet prayer which are currently precluded – for security reasons – by its separation from the staffed areas of the site.

Prayer room

With the church used extensively for a range of meetings and events it is highly desirable to provide a separate quiet space that can be used for prayer.

Consultation and other evidence

An extensive consultation process was carried out with the congregation which 85% of those responding was in agreement with the plans. The consultation process highlighted:-

- A requirement for improved safeguarding and security
- A requirement for a dedicated youth space
- Clear support for the concept of providing both co-working space and room for partner organisations.
- Improved visibility and access the church
- Improved location for the Bookshop and Coffee Shop

- The provision of better office accommodation

We are constantly juggling bookings for space both from within the church and outside. There are increasing occasions where we are unable to offer any suitable solution.

The Proposals

In summary the proposals, in two phases are to:

- **Phase 1**
- Refurbish the two newly-acquired houses in Sackville Street and link them to the north side of the church by means of a new corridor that will also contain much improved toilet facilities including disabled provision and a new garden space;
- Replace the existing West End lounge and lobbies with a transparent single-storey structure incorporating a new main entrance, atrium, and café. This will adjoin the corridor leading to the Sackville Street houses.
- **Phase 2 (– subject to continuing work)**
- Refurbish, or Re-build on approximately the footprint of the present Greyfriars Centre, with the new building making use of the space envelope allowed by 'right to light' and daylight penetration considerations. The building will provide offices, meeting rooms and a main kitchen.
- Re-align the vehicle entrance and provide a more gently-graded car-park area with improved landscaping.

Throughout the scheme will look to utilise energy efficient technology and processes making the new facilities environmentally friendly.

In terms of the needs identified above:

- The proposed new main atrium at the west end of the church will present an open face to Friar Street, with entrances on its south and west sides. The atrium itself will incorporate a café counter and seating as well as a Reception desk. New doors will lead from the atrium into the church under the large west window. The new book sales area and reception will be visible and readily accessible.
- The main atrium will provide hugely improved fellowship space for Sunday services, with the café counter providing refreshments.
- We envisage that the upper floor offices of the Sackville Street houses will be made available to charities with whom we already have links. These offices will have their own separate entrance from Sackville Street and a ground-floor reception area. In the proposed new Centre we would like to provide a large open-plan office that can be used by home workers (who may or may not be members of Greyfriars) as co-working space.
- The integration of the site, with a staffed entrance close to Friar Street, will allow us to keep the church open much more of the time. The much improved toilets adjacent to the church, will also improve safeguarding and security while also increasing the practicality of the site for weekday/Saturday conferences and events.
- We will provide a prayer room on the ground floor of the Sackville Street houses, accessed through the side corridor,
- The ground, first and second floors of a possible new Centre may provide a large hall and a series of meeting rooms that will be well-suited to the needs of the Sunday children and

young people's groups. (The Greyfriars Nursery building will continue to be used on Sundays for the under-5s for whom it is well equipped.)

- The first floor of the possible new Centre would include a large open-plan church office, with associated meeting rooms. This will allow the whole staff to be co-located in a well-equipped, accessible, modern office space, with some scope for growth.

Sustainability

The design of the new buildings will reflect environmentally friendly energy provision and energy efficient spaces. The additional costs of running a larger facility will, to a great extent, be met through increased revenue from the use of the site coupled with a reduction of relative energy costs through the replacement of inefficient buildings with efficient.

Why now?

Since the completion of the reordering of the church interior in 2000 we have been considering possible schemes for the improvement or redevelopment of the other buildings on the site. Throughout that period we have been aware that the limitations and fragmentation of the existing facilities were a practical constraint on the growth of the church and its ministry. Other priorities – the New Hope church plant in 2001/2, the opening of the Greyfriars Nursery in 2006 – intervened, but over the period 2007 to 2013 a major scheme was developed and discussed in detail with the DAC, Reading Borough Council, and the heritage bodies. In the end, however, the PCC decided not to proceed, not least because the building scheme did not grow out of a clear vision for the church.

With a fresh sense of vision for Greyfriars emerging under the leadership of our new incumbent, Rev David Walker, the PCC concluded in mid-2016 that work on building options should re-start. The articulation of the new vision has highlighted how the ministry and mission of Greyfriars could develop and grow, and we need now to ensure that we have the right infrastructure to support that growth.

To support the vision for “equipping our people” the proposals provide flexibility for children and youth work, allow the staff to work together in one place, and have a prayer room embedded in the site. Building community is at the heart of our church, so we have designed space throughout the site to allow for people to come together and to grow in fellowship.

To support the vision for “reaching out to those who live and work alongside us” the proposals give us a café and bookshop accessed directly from Friar Street, providing a new space for people to come and meet, work and relax throughout the week; the potential for co-working space that will allow us to engage with home workers in the business community; and space that will allow us to partner with other Christian organisations in Reading.

To support our vision for “resourcing the wider church” the proposals will provide flexible spaces which will allow us to host a variety of events; a bookshop which provides valuable theological and biblical resources to Reading and beyond.

The proposals will also enable us to replace several ageing, energy-inefficient and problematic buildings with modern energy-efficient structures.

After many years of planning and prayer we are convinced that this is an appropriate and achievable scheme that is needed if we are to move ahead into the vision to which we believe we are called.

Consultation

A period of consultation with the congregation was carried out and confirmed that there is very strong support for what is proposed. The process included a number of meetings with the

congregation, stakeholders, ministries and interest groups. A questionnaire was circulated and more than 300 responses were received. As a result of the consultation a number of changes were made to the initial plans.

Comments from Consultation

"I love the blend of mission and home/welcome/hospitality in one. A space to invite and space to reach out. Very in keeping with the vision!"

"I think the proposal will allow the church to move forward with the 3 pronged vision.....demonstrating love to local community, serving, meeting their needs will be a witness-opening up the church entrance is a good visual thing as it welcomes people in and also shows more of what we're about and what we're doing."

"The fact that it says to the public that they are welcome and they can see in from outside in so many areas."

"It is a plan with a bigger vision to meet not just today's needs but our needs into the future."

"It is obvious that the current arrangements are no longer viable and that some form of redevelopment is necessary. The acquisition of the Sackville street house has helped in the possible redevelopment of the site."

"This is a marked improvement on the previous scheme and I welcome the more open and extensive consultation. "

"I love the blend of mission and home/welcome/hospitality in one. A space to invite and space to reach out. Very in keeping with the vision!"

"Believe they work hard to deliver an outworking of the vision and especially reaching out to the new influx of people moving close to GF. Love Integration of new and old buildings and believe it will give a real sense of space."

"The proposals represent an outward looking vision for the church in 21st Century Reading. They look to how the church can function in a variety of ways for Reading and interact with the local community."

"They are based on the vision and needs of Greyfriars. I also really like the open glass front/entrance to the church which should give it a welcoming feeling."

"They are ambitious and reflect the vision for the church well. There has obviously been lots of prayerful thought that has gone into the proposals by the team."

"This is such an exciting project & I have really felt God's strong and positive encouragement through prayer."

"We have been very encouraged by the amount of work already carried out and by the special sense of unity and expectation."

Photographs of space available

Main Church



Toilet Corridor



West End Meeting Room



Centre Rooms 3 & 4



Main Foyer Area

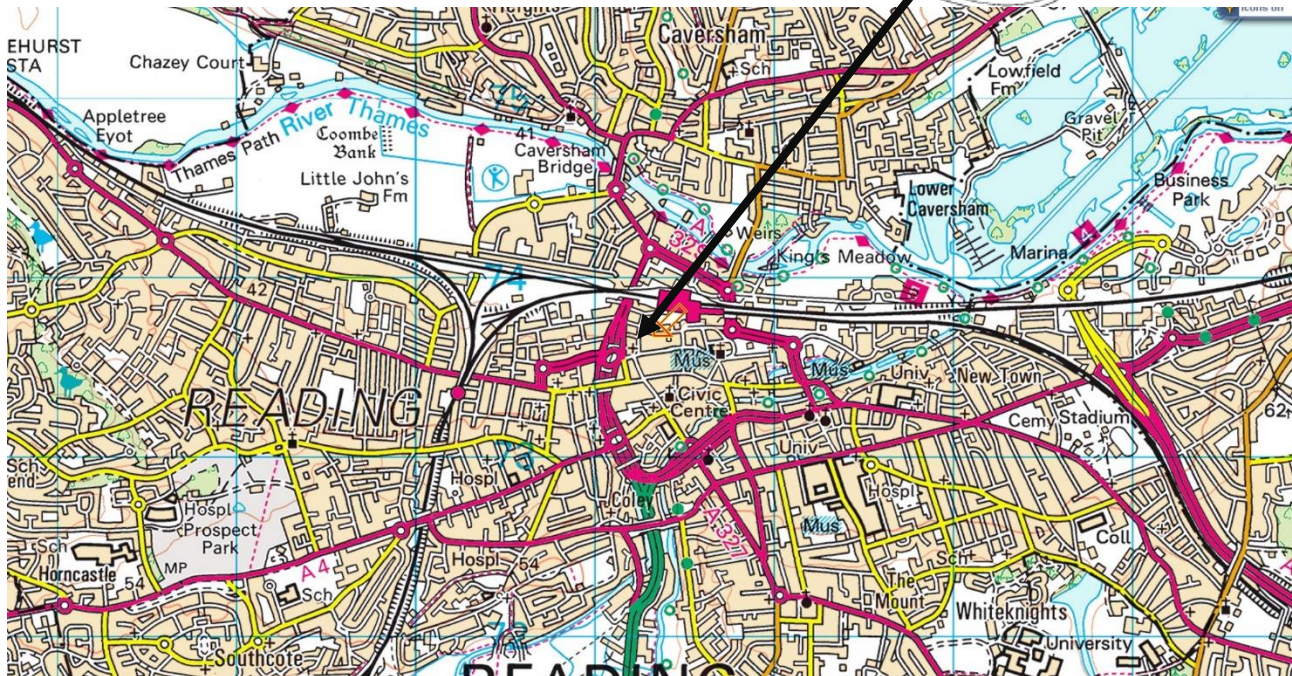
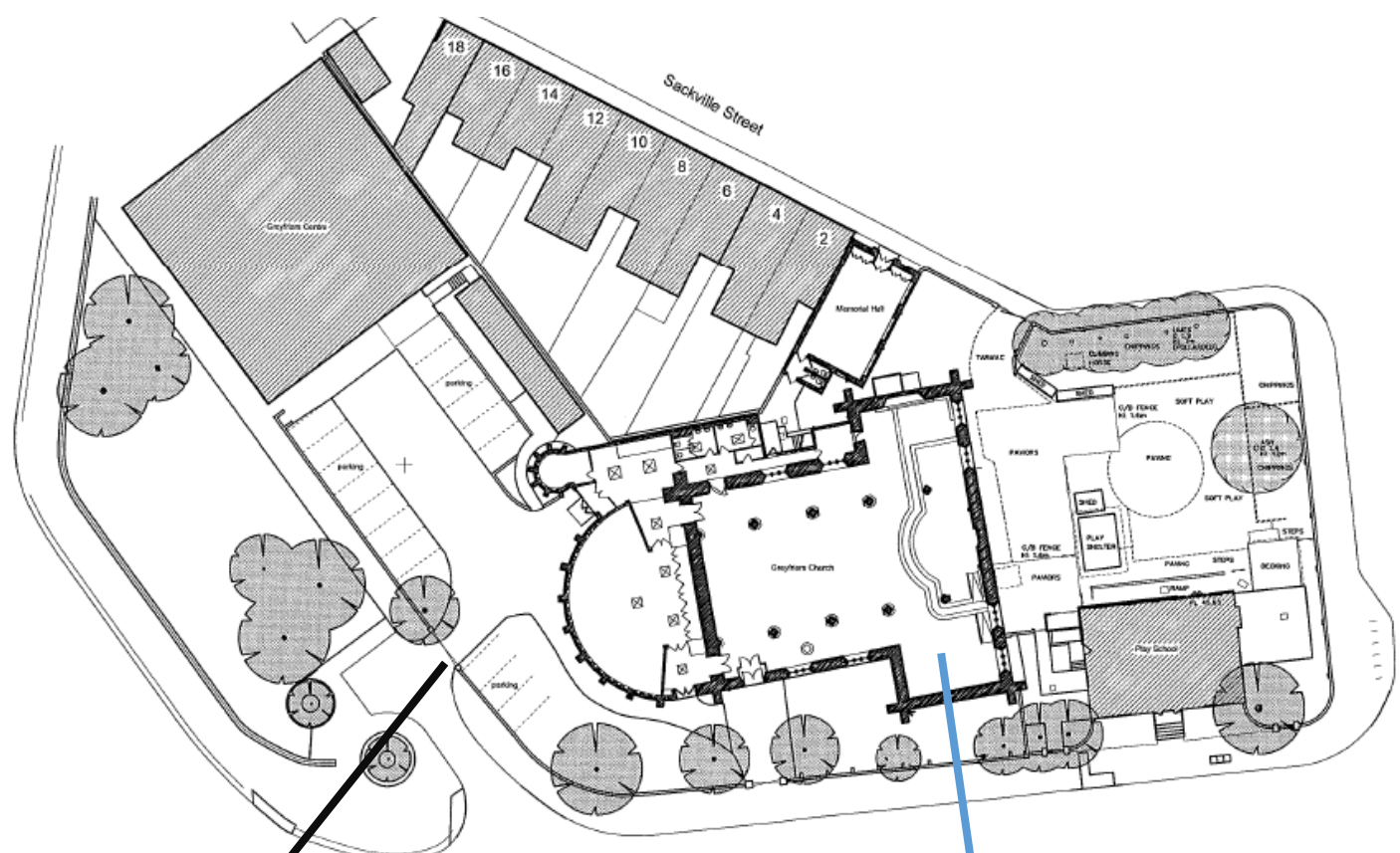


Centre Room 2



Centre Main Hall

Existing Site Plan and Location



Friar Street

View from Thames Tower

