

Regarding the Acquisition
of the Blue Pool
by Melksham Town Council

As presented by members of the Friends of Melksham Assembly Hall



When Wiltshire Council made the Blue Pool site available, Friends of Melksham Assembly Hall (FoMAH) saw a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to combine the Blue Pool and adjoining Assembly Hall.



However, such an ambitious endeavour needs public approval and Town Council support, not to mention long-term sustainability from financial and environmental viewpoints.

We propose to examine the widest range of possibilities in order to ensure an informed final decision on how to proceed.

An outline Business Plan under separate cover goes into greater detail listing advantages and disadvantages for each option.

OPTION 1

Do nothing

OPTION 2

Do minimal

OPTION 3

Build a bespoke facility to replace the Assembly Hall

OPTION 4

Expedite the wishes of the FoMAH group and fully investigate the plausibility of amalgamating the Assembly Hall with the Blue Pool

In the next few months, we will work with the Town Council to research the financial ramifications and how each of these options will impact the town, and present our findings at the next Town Council Meeting on 25 September, 2023.

Aspects to be considered include:

- Capital cost
- Revenue and ongoing costs
- Meeting town needs and desires
- Reducing environmental impact
- Staff and volunteer resources
- Operational structures and financial planning, e.g. direct operation, Community Interest Company (CIC), Charitable Trust, etc.
- Funding and grant sources, e.g. public works loan board, lottery fund, etc.
- Long-term care of existing assets
- Related works, studies and surveys – such as ...

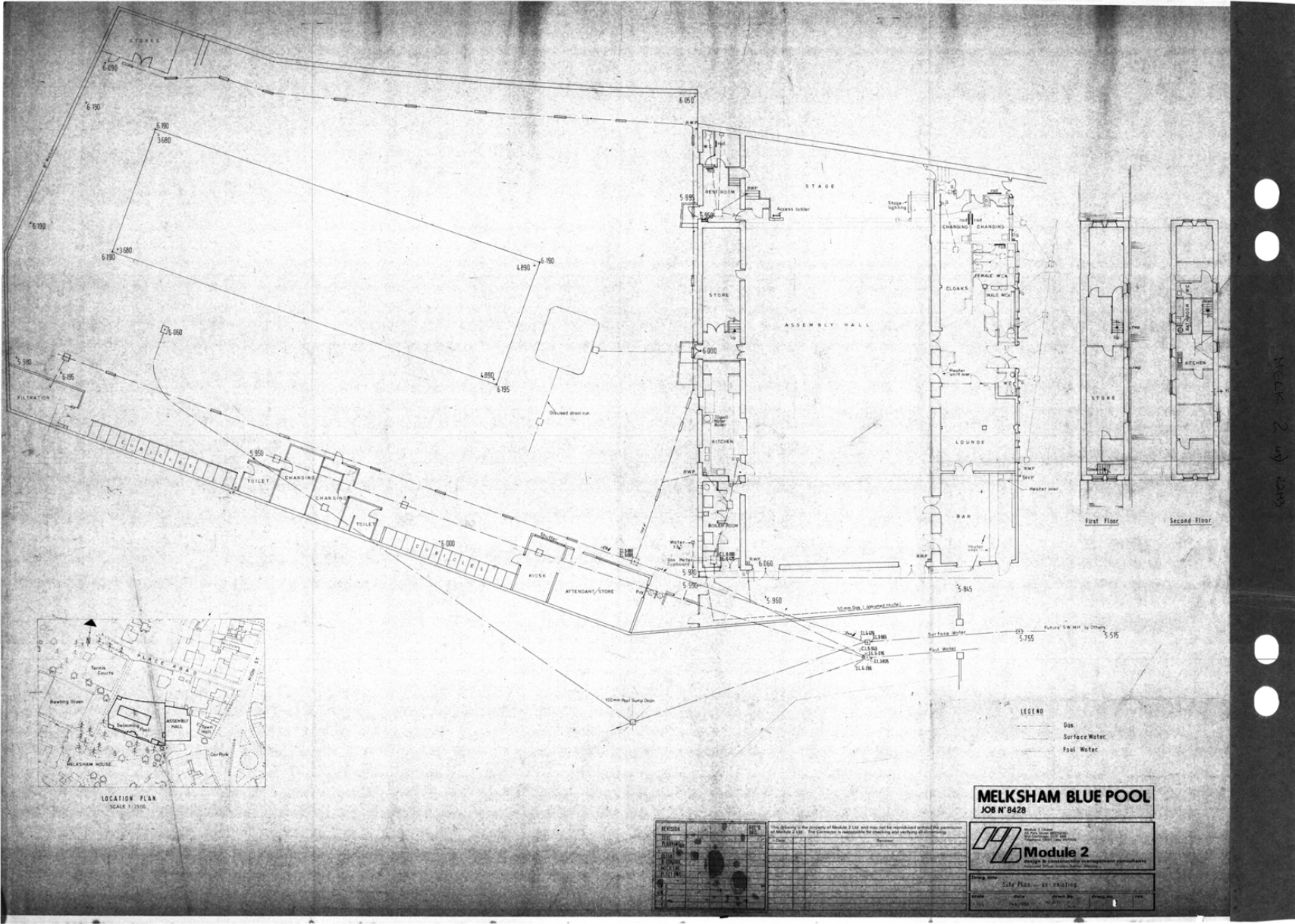
Already noted and part of our evidence base:

- Blue Pool floor plans from Wiltshire Council, 1986 and 2006
- Needs Survey 2022
- Priority for People 2021
- Neighbourhood plan 2020
- Planning Application for maintenance shed 2022
- Melksham Town Centre masterplan 2023
- Draft Wiltshire Local Plan 2023
- Land registry enquiry 2023
- Listed buildings index 2023
- Various external sources such as Centre for Alternative Technology, Crown Commercial Services

The FoMAH group is favouring OPTION 4 at this early stage, based on maximizing the fulfilment of needs at a sensible cost and with environmental considerations, while minimising disruption; works involved will not impact the Assembly Hall scheduled events, nor disrupt the traffic flow to and from Melksham House and Melksham Community Campus.

The following pages are to illustrate the advantage of combining the Blue Pool site with the Assembly Hall. Although nothing is set in stone, there are some key elements which are paramount to this plan. Melksham needs a **museum**, the Assembly Hall will be better and more safely served by an **improved reception** and proper **public toilets** and **parking**, and a **base for the Assets and Amenities** team.

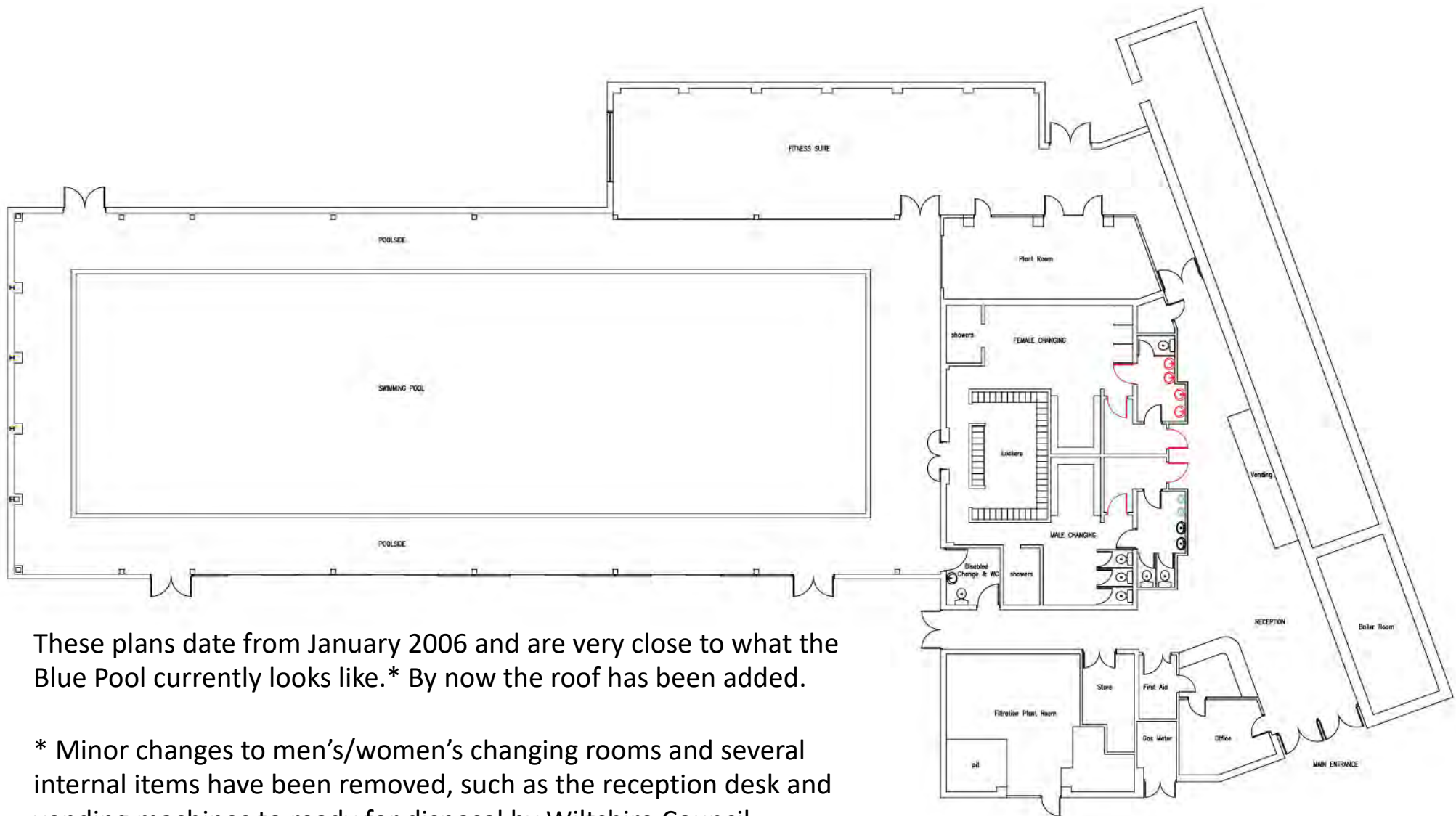




In 1986, the Blue Pool closed for two years to make significant changes.

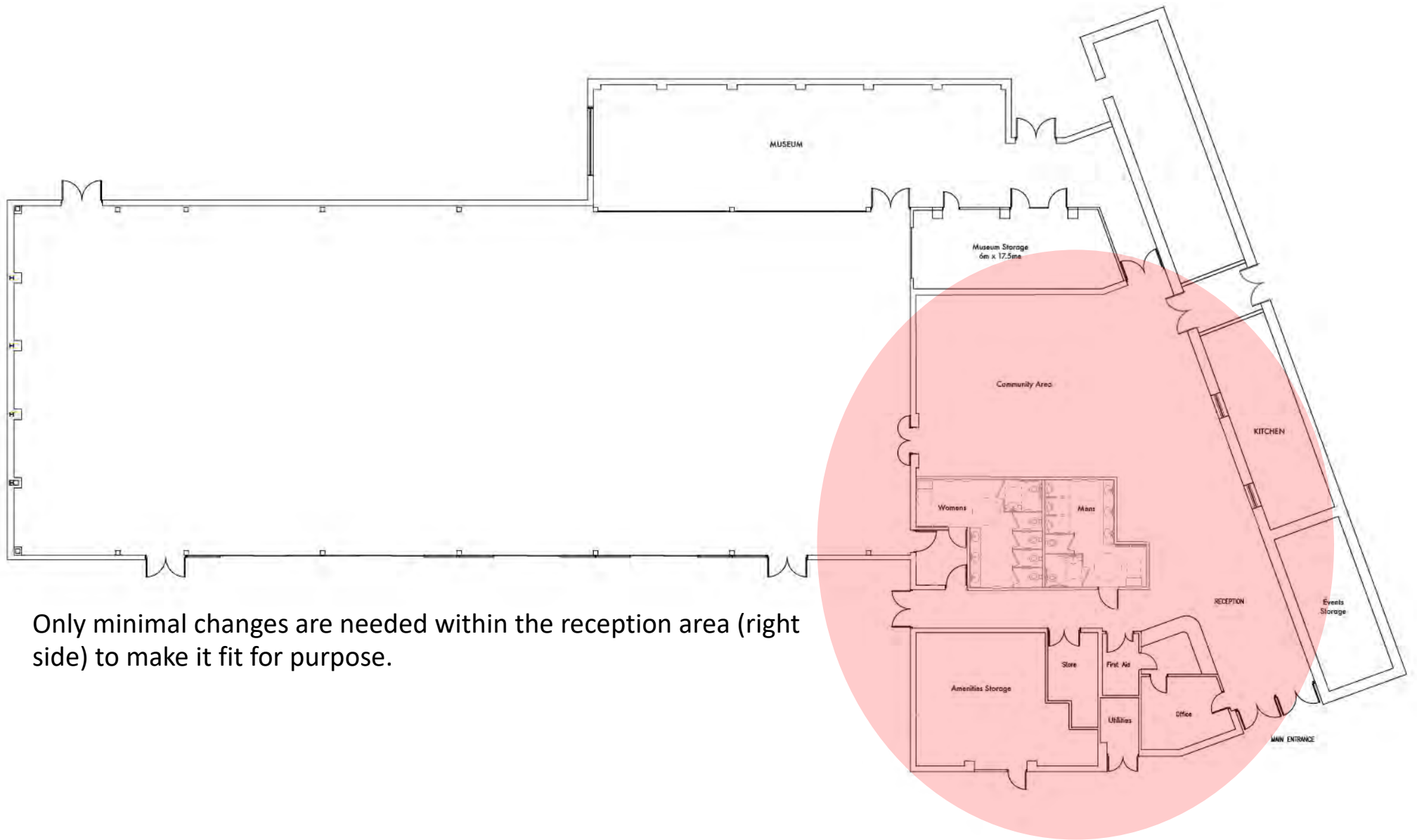
This is a copy of the original floor plans at the beginning of the project and include the Assembly Hall.

These plans can assist in finding utility networks and closed passageways to help in planning/construction.

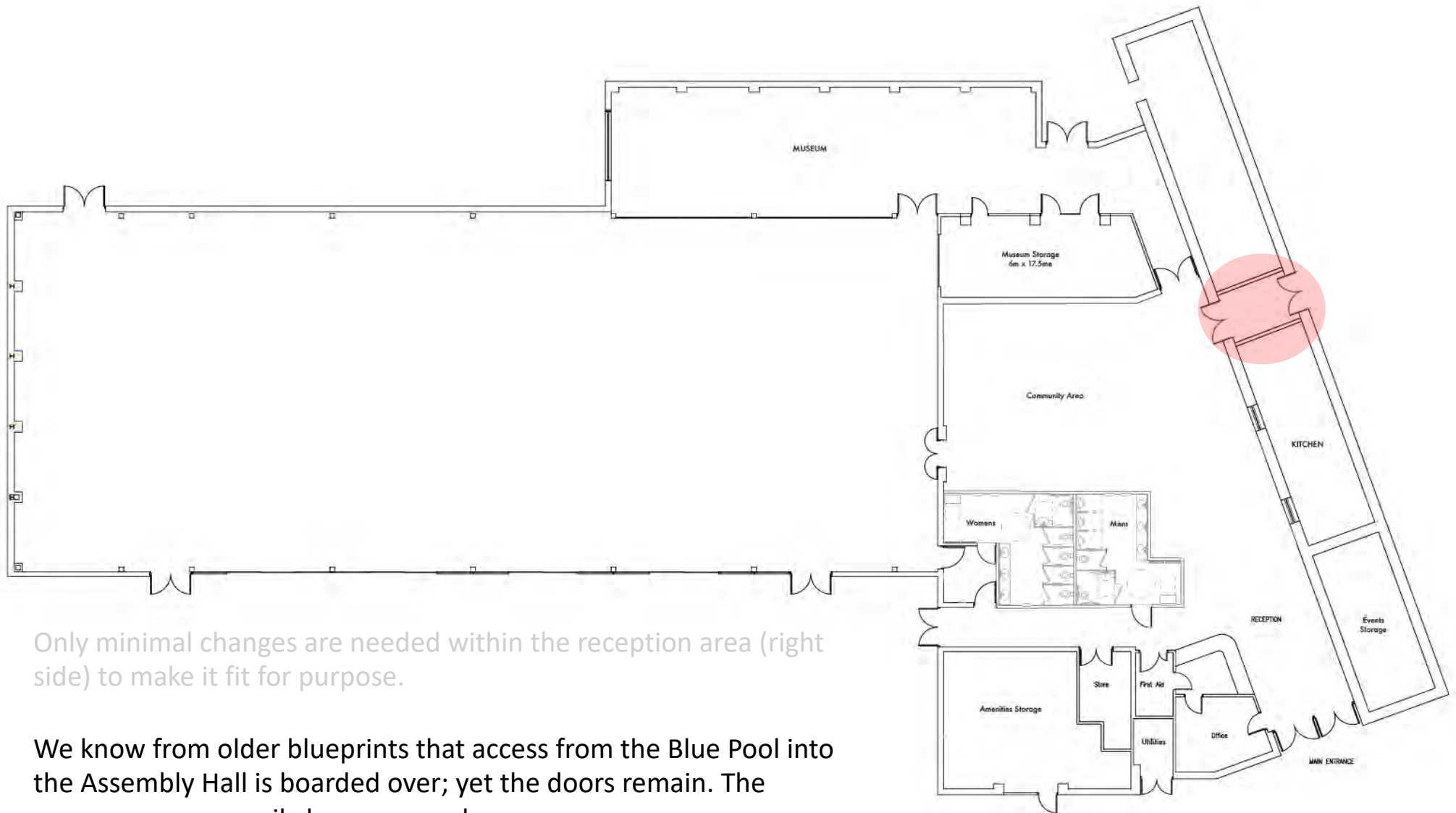


These plans date from January 2006 and are very close to what the Blue Pool currently looks like.* By now the roof has been added.

* Minor changes to men's/women's changing rooms and several internal items have been removed, such as the reception desk and vending machines to ready for disposal by Wiltshire Council.

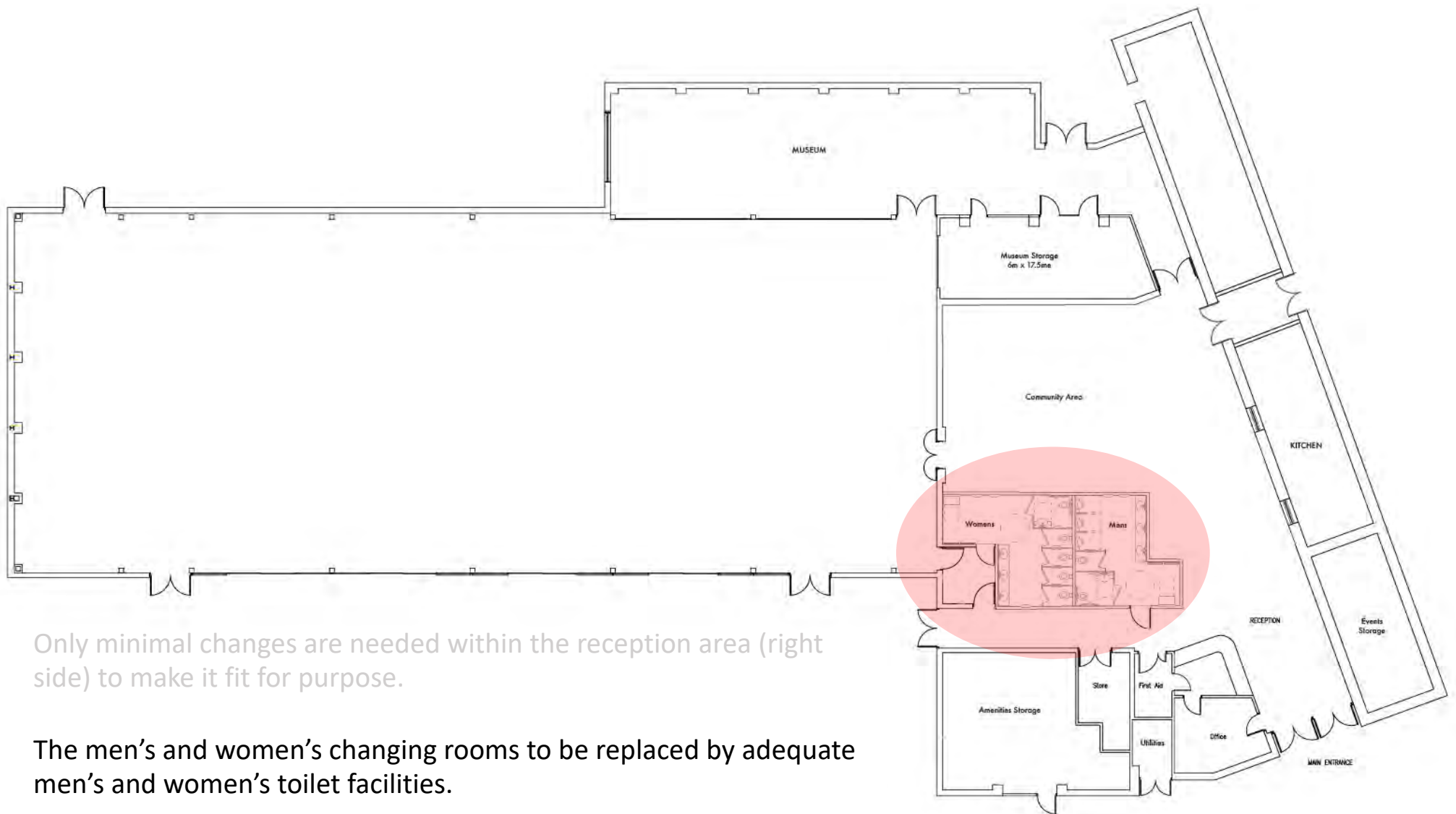


Only minimal changes are needed within the reception area (right side) to make it fit for purpose.



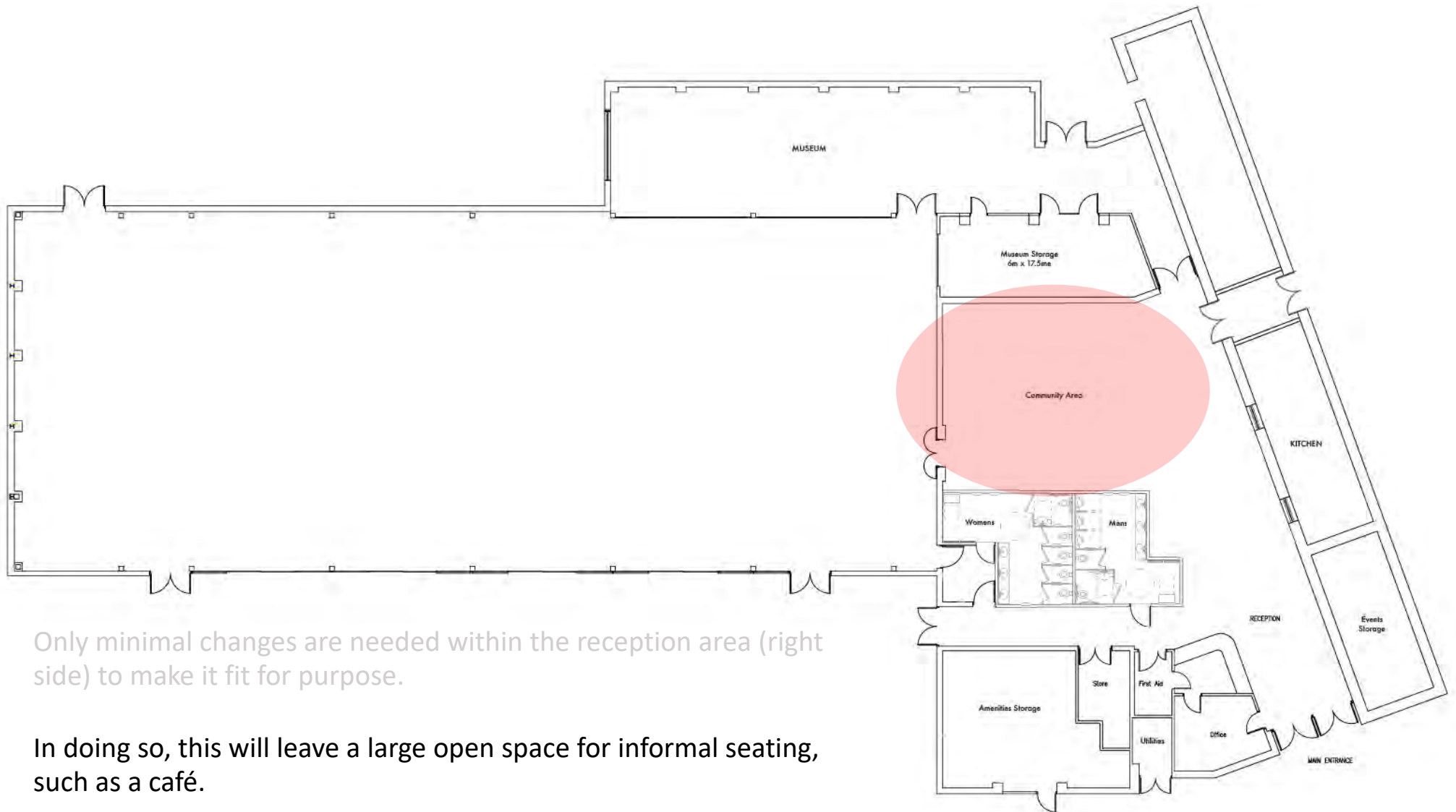
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We know from older blueprints that access from the Blue Pool into the Assembly Hall is boarded over; yet the doors remain. The passageway can easily be re-opened.



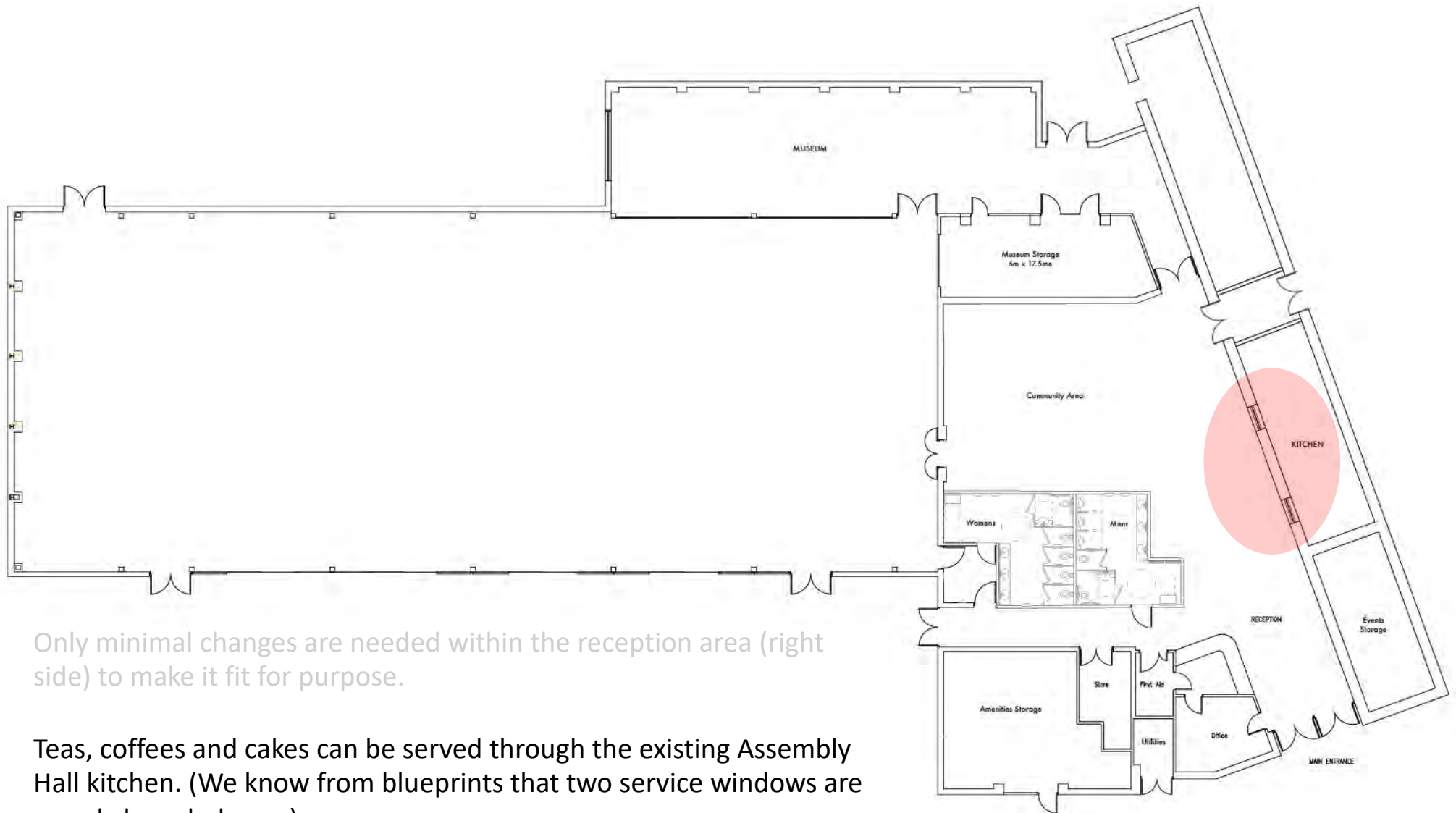
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The men's and women's changing rooms to be replaced by adequate men's and women's toilet facilities.



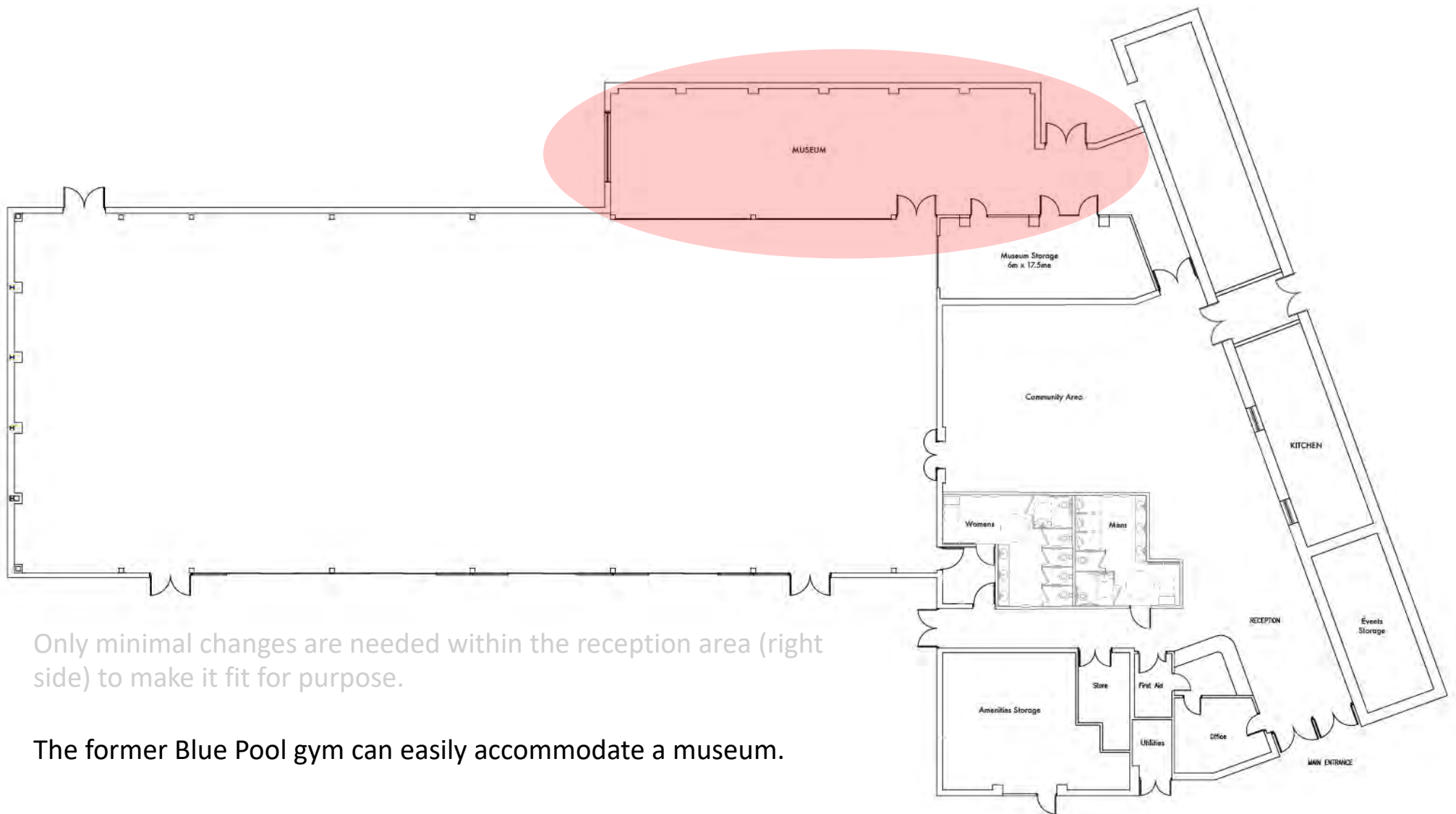
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In doing so, this will leave a large open space for informal seating, such as a café.



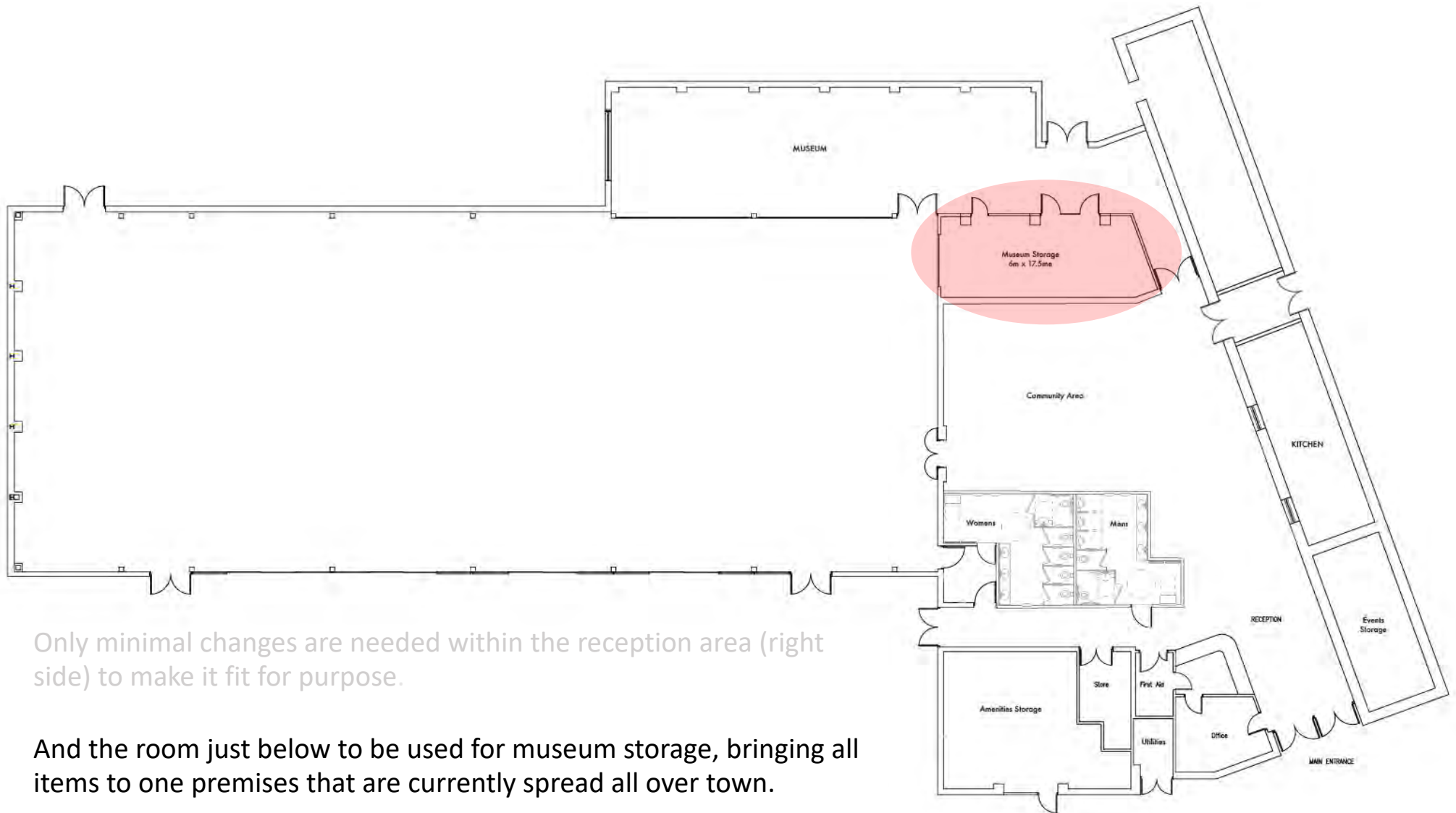
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Teas, coffees and cakes can be served through the existing Assembly Hall kitchen. (We know from blueprints that two service windows are merely boarded over.)



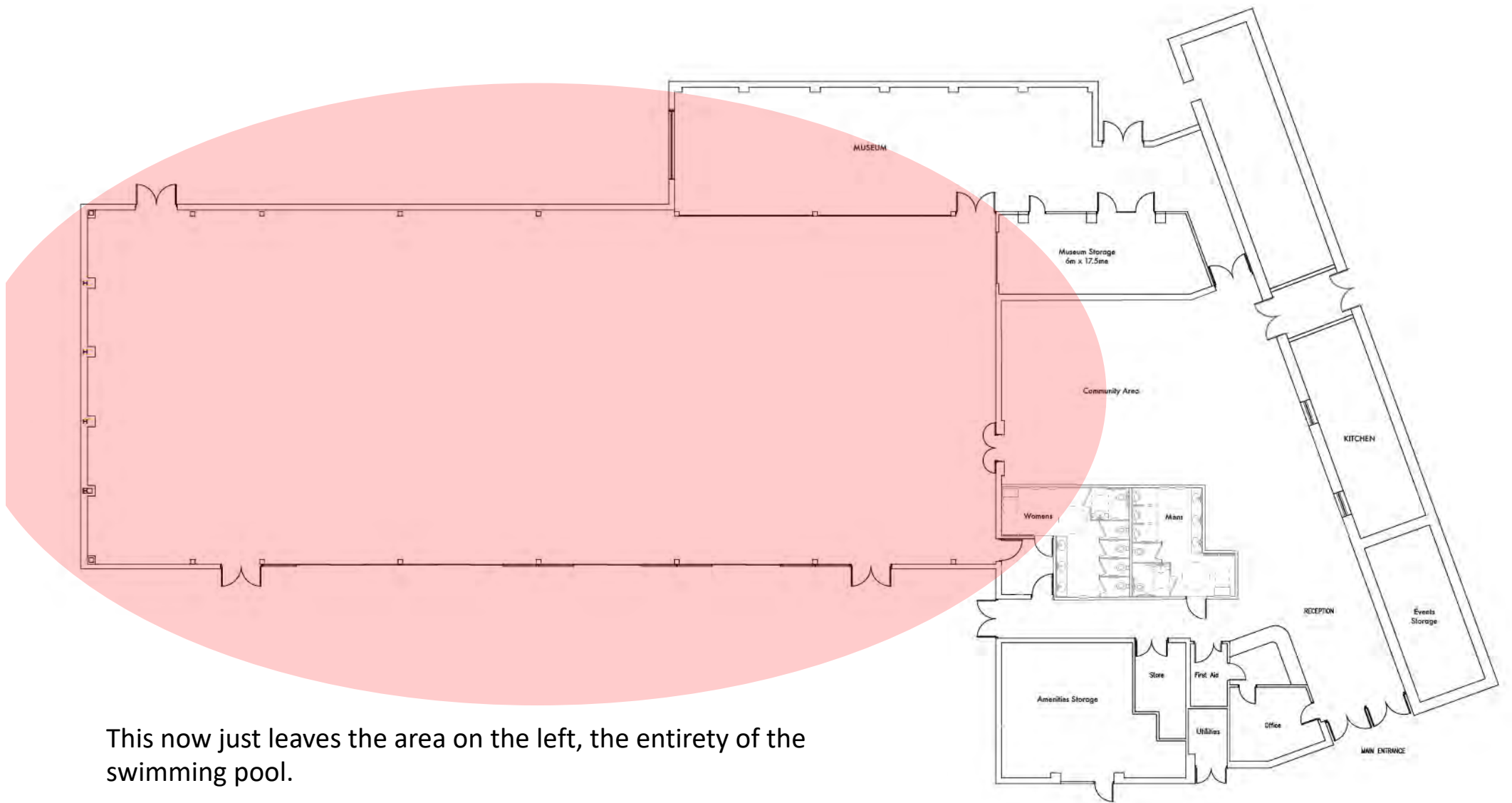
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The former Blue Pool gym can easily accommodate a museum.



Only minimal changes are needed within the reception area (right side) to make it fit for purpose.

And the room just below to be used for museum storage, bringing all items to one premises that are currently spread all over town.



This now just leaves the area on the left, the entirety of the swimming pool.

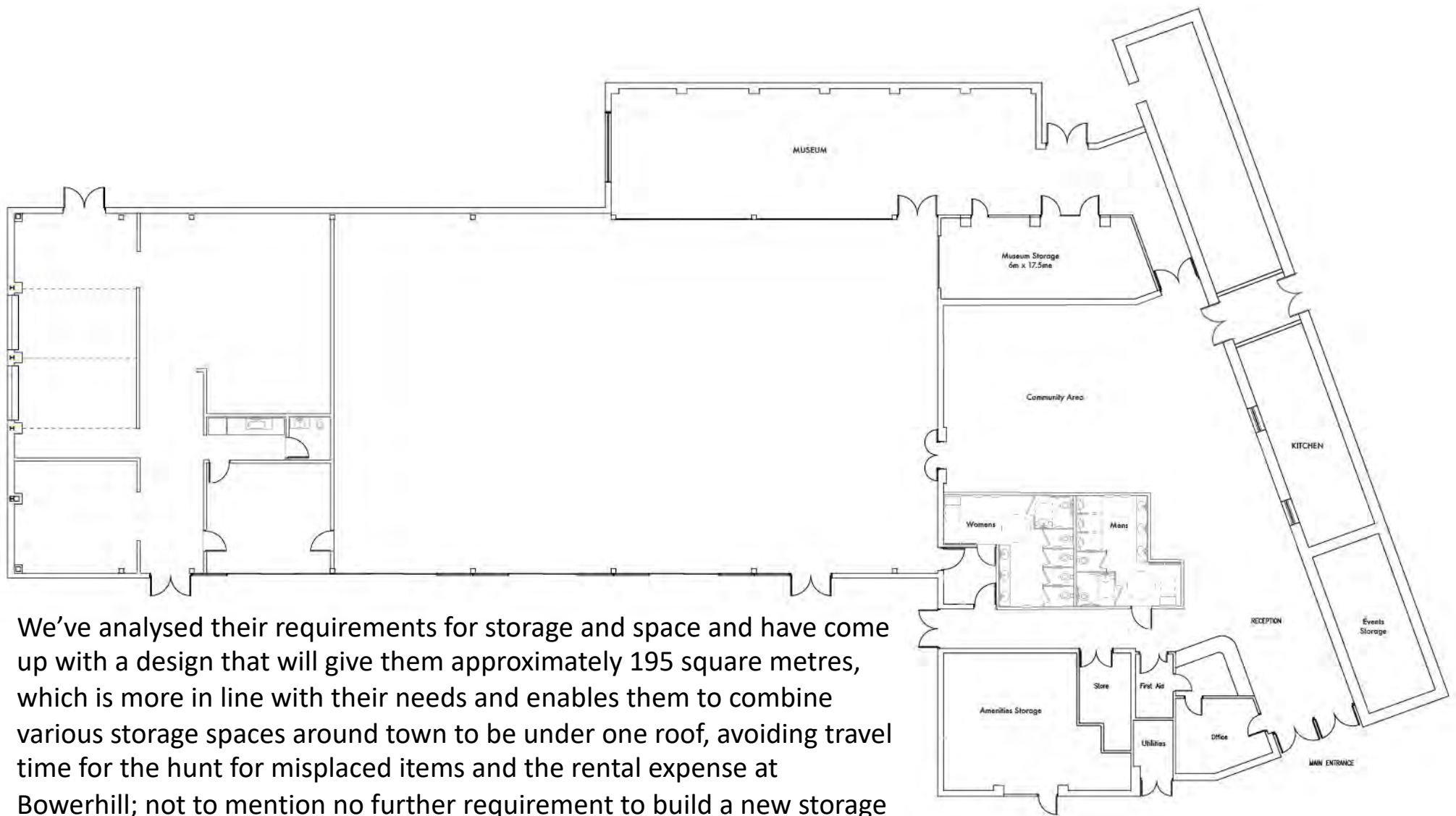
The Asset and Amenities team currently use approximately 135 square metres of space in the leased building in Bowerhill.



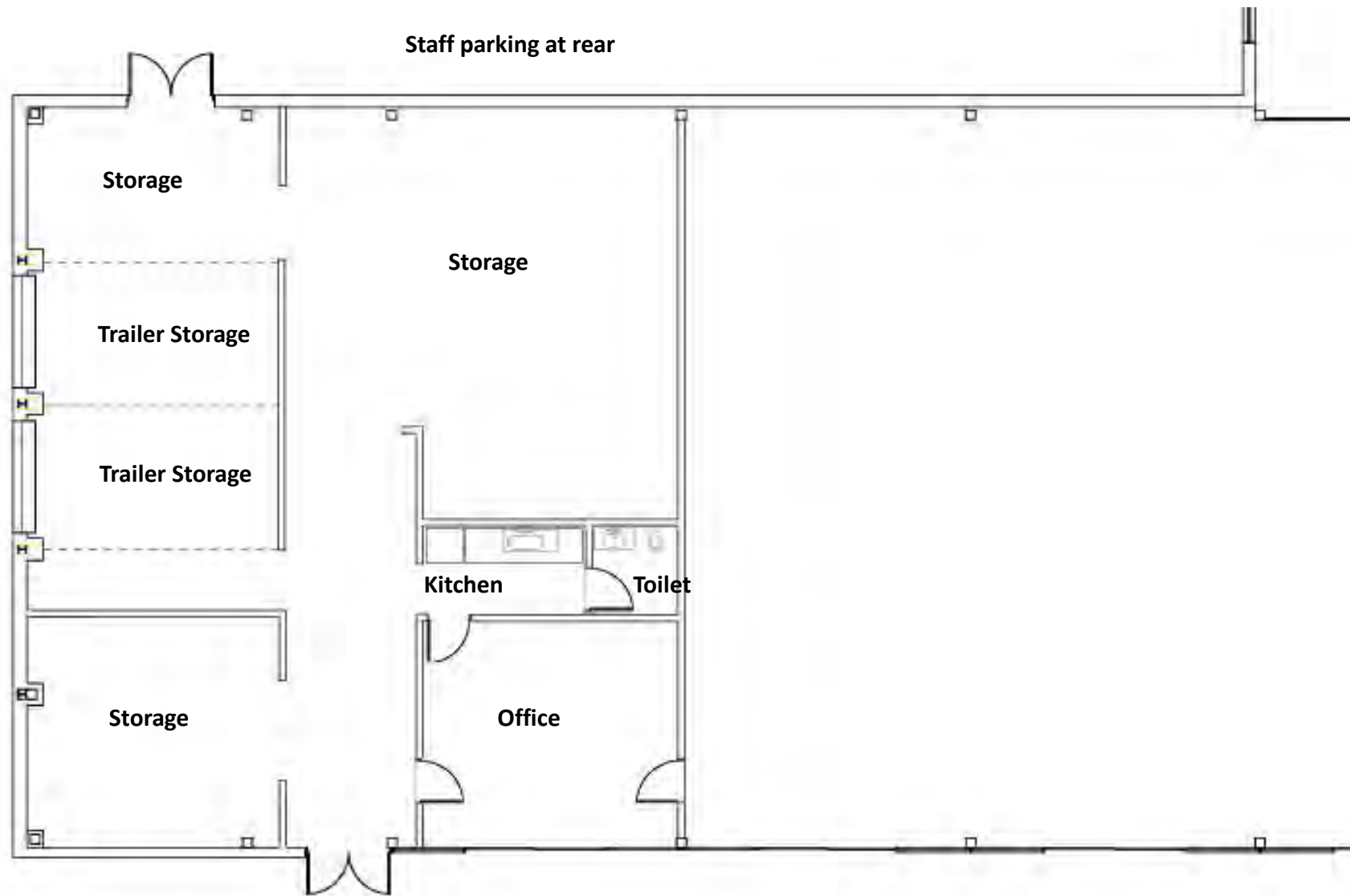
In November 2021, NVB Architects of Frome proposed a replacement for the storage facility in King George V Field to replace the existing unit that served as a National Kitchen during WWII.

In this sketch, the unit was to measure 120 square metres, initially at a cost of more than £200,000. The plan was shelved when the cost almost doubled over the following years.



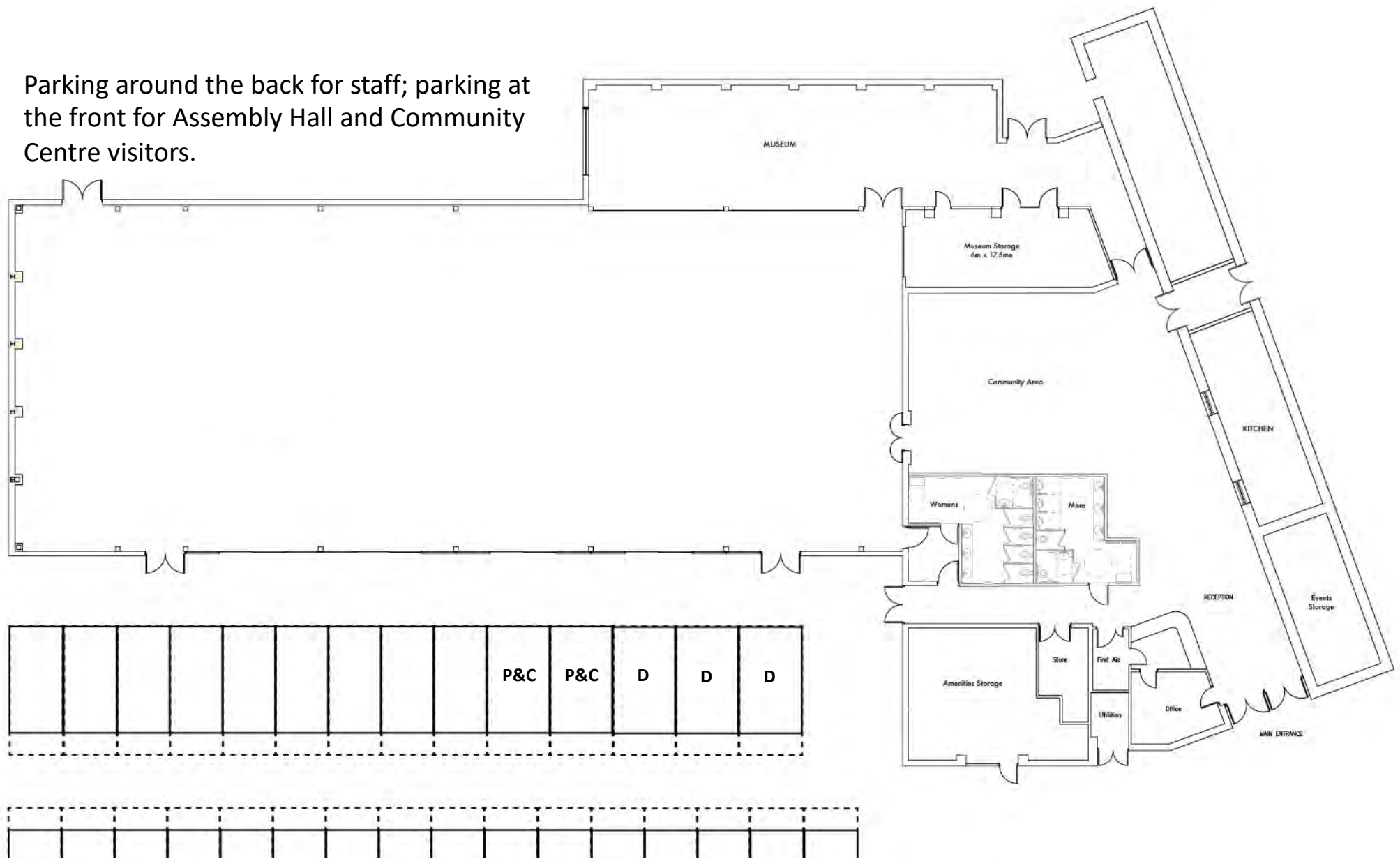


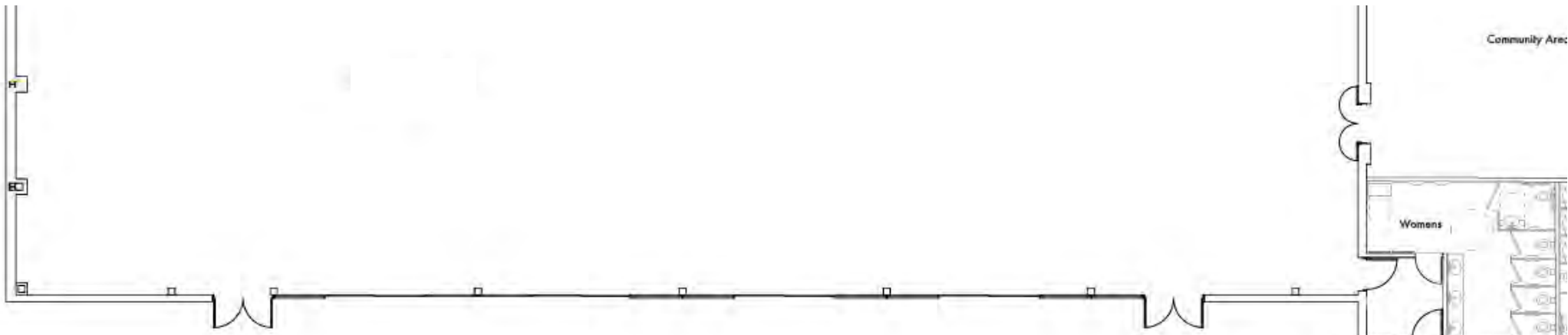
We've analysed their requirements for storage and space and have come up with a design that will give them approximately 195 square metres, which is more in line with their needs and enables them to combine various storage spaces around town to be under one roof, avoiding travel time for the hunt for misplaced items and the rental expense at Bowerhill; not to mention no further requirement to build a new storage facility at King George V Field.



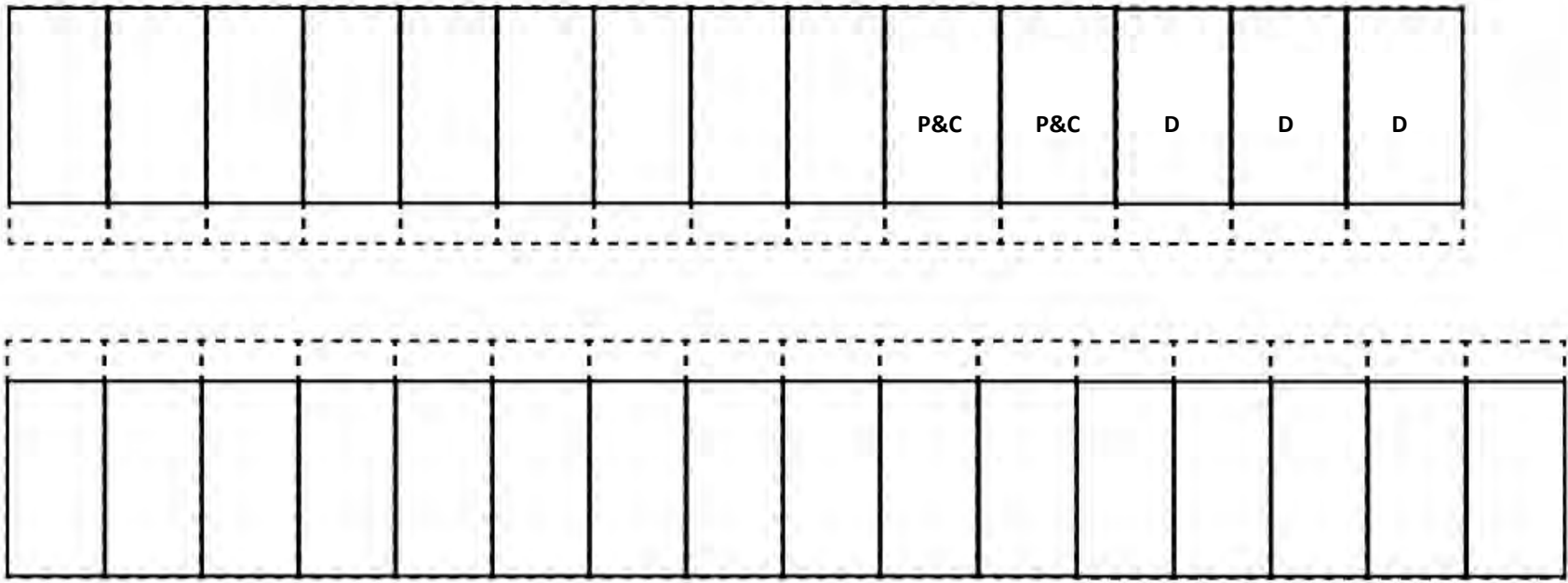
Here is a proposed layout and how it would fit in the space provided.

Parking around the back for staff; parking at the front for Assembly Hall and Community Centre visitors.

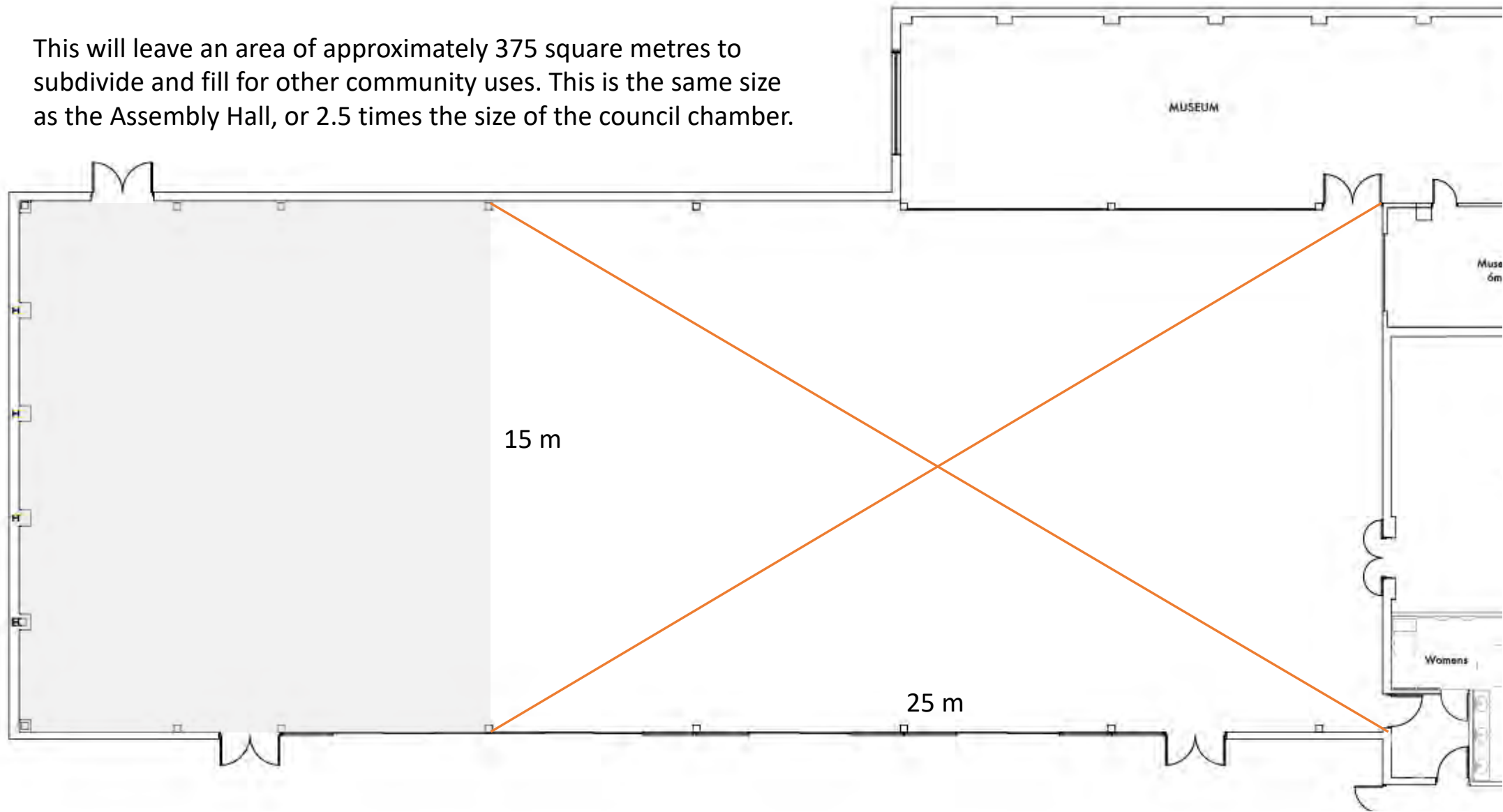




There is room for 30 parking spaces, with 5 of these being larger disabled spaces



This will leave an area of approximately 375 square metres to subdivide and fill for other community uses. This is the same size as the Assembly Hall, or 2.5 times the size of the council chamber.



Many suggestions by town residents to fill this space have been made, including:


- art gallery
- booking office for Assembly Hall events
- cafe area
- Citizens Advice office
- climbing wall
- community group meeting space
- community hub
- craft room
- creche
- exhibition area
- general enquiry desk
- lecture room
- mosque
- games room for adults
(jigsaw puzzles, chess/draughts, whist, bridge, etc.)
- game room for youth (Xbox, Nintendo, Lego, etc.)
- photography exhibition
- polling station
- pop up bank
- public WiFi access
- safe space
- school art exhibition
- skittles
- staff offices
- support room
- TIC gift shop extension

A large orange shape on the left side of the page, consisting of a vertical rectangle on the left and a quarter-circle on the right.

Personal Notes

I am disappointed that the only feedback a quarter of the way into the 3 months is that our clerk is waiting to hear from a quantity surveyor.

That sounds to me like putting the cart before the horse because we need a structural engineer to advise what can be done first, rather than a project manager when there is no project yet.

A decorative yellow dashed line consisting of four curved segments, located in the bottom right corner of the page.



No date has yet been set for the Assembly Hall Working Group meeting which needs to be called in parallel, and I am on the group.



Our Town Clerk, the Committee Clerk, the Head of Operations and our Finance officer are all on annual leave this week. I hope that this means that they will all be back available over the next 8 weeks, during which we need to have few meetings to progress all these issues.

Can I ask, therefore, for this meeting to delegate to the FoMAH team who have presented to you tonight authority to engage a structural engineer to inform us on the possible, and to call an AHWG / FoMAH meeting in around 2 weeks to give a path to progress on the timescale already set by this council.



FoMAH

Friends of Melksham Assembly Hall

AHWG

Assembly Hall Working Group

Our Volunteers

Friends of Melksham Assembly Hall Committee including:

- Paul Carter, museum
- Graham Ellis, liaison on Town Council
- Lisa Ellis, design and planning
- Howard Jones, project co-ordination
- Geoff Mitcham, entertainment
- Lousia Lewis, food and beverage
- Mike Saunders, buildings and environment
- Paul Seemayer, font of hall knowledge
- Terri Welch, horticulture and landscapes

Melksham Assembly Hall Working Group

To Be Advised

And thank you to Town Council and Wiltshire Council staff

