

Planning Statement - Design & Access Statement

Park Centre, 60 Park Rd, Burgess Hill RH15 8ET

Context

The site is situated on Park Road, near the northeastern corner of St John's Park, and lies within the St John's conservation area. A short walk to the west along Park Road leads to Providence Strict Baptist Chapel, a Grade II listed building with a similar façade. To the south, the Parish Church of St John, also a Grade II listed structure, adds to the area's historical significance.

According to information from the Park Centre website (<https://parkcentre.org.uk>), "The St John's Institute, now known as the Park Centre, was built in 1872 and gifted to the town by 19th-century artist and philanthropist Emily Temple. Originally, the Institute served various recreational and leisure activities, including concerts and major events such as religious and political meetings. More recently, the building has functioned as a 'Find It Out Centre' for WSCC, providing local residents with advice, information, and support and serving as a youth centre."

The site is bordered by neighbouring properties on both sides and at the rear, all of which overlook the Park Centre. Beyond the northeast boundary lies a small wooded area that separates the Park Centre and adjacent properties from the Marle Place playground.

No trees or shrubs are on the site and 95% of the outdoor space is covered by non-permeable materials. At the front of the building, there are six parking spaces directly accessible from Park Road.

The original Victorian structure has a gross internal area of 395 sqm and has been extended twice at the rear during the mid/late 20th century, adding 313 sqm with a two-storey extension. The site closed to the public in 2021 and now requires significant structural and cosmetic renovations before it can be reopened.

Justification

This project aims to enhance public spaces for the community of Burgess Hill, a vision widely supported by the Park Centre committee and improving functionality is essential for the building to thrive. Additionally, the current state of the building is derelict, necessitating substantial structural and cosmetic work.

The project will introduce several new spaces that can be utilized independently, thanks to newly created side access points. This approach seeks to diversify the building's use and accommodate as many people as possible, ensuring accessibility for all, including disabled users. These multipurpose areas are colour-coded in the plans for clarity, promoting efficient space utilization while addressing fire safety requirements.

The proposed first-floor extension on the west side will provide accessible toilet facilities and essential storage, allowing the hall to accommodate up to 145 people.

An extension on the east side, referred to as the "red room" in the plans, will serve as a potential exhibition space. Internal alterations to the existing Victorian building will connect this new gallery to the café area. The boundary between the Park Centre and No 58 Park Road consists of a combination of fencing and wall structures. Most of this boundary features a hedge exceeding 4 meters in height, which will conceal the proposed ground and first-floor extensions.

A 'changing place' facility will be added, making the Park Centre a more inclusive and comfortable environment for wheelchair users and the general public.

The potential rental of some rooms, along with the various activities and community events hosted at the building, including the café, will generate income to support its long-term maintenance.

Amount

The proposed two-storey side extensions have been meticulously designed to maximize the functionality of the site. This will create an additional 150 sqm of internal space, increasing maximum occupancy to 335 people.

The west side first-floor toilet block extension will add 40 sqm, including a covered external walkway leading to one of the side entrances of the building.

The east side extension, known as the "red room," will span two storeys and cover 82 sqm, with a mezzanine overlooking the gallery entrance.

In addition to upgrading existing building elements to comply with current regulations, the proposal includes 122 sqm of biodiverse green roof space, significantly benefiting local wildlife, a consideration often overlooked in previous site modifications.

The main existing pitched roof will be insulated and equipped with solar panels, utilizing the 102 sqm roof area effectively.

Scale

The heights of the proposed extensions are designed to harmonize with the existing surroundings.

For the west extension, the first-floor roof will feature a crown design (part pitched, part flat) that follows the slope of the main roof, minimizing its impact on the neighboring properties' natural light. This roof will be lower than the existing adjacent flat roofs. The ground floor roof will be situated below the decorative detailing on the existing front elevation.

In the east extension, the ground-floor roof will match the height of the west extension, while the first-floor roof will be lower than the eaves of the original Victorian building. The first floor has been set back on the east side to avoid encroaching on the neighbouring property (No 58).

Landscaping

At the front, the new hardstanding for the driveway will create a cohesive finish leading up to the building. The flooring on each side of the front elevation will transition to a paved area that is level with the hard standing.

In front of the parking spaces, light posts approximately 1 meter high will be installed. Additional lighting will be incorporated into the porch area (wall-mounted), the side extensions (ceiling-mounted) and the rear garden.

Currently, the rear of the building consists of an uneven hardstanding with no vegetation or habitats. The proposal seeks to transform this area into an accessible garden featuring bushes and plants. This space will include new benches, planters, timber decking, and a covered outdoor area. Raised flower beds will be built along pathways and ramps, designed at accessible heights for wheelchair users. The garden will also benefit from adequate lighting.

Access

The main access from Park Road will remain unchanged. Covered bike storage will be provided at the front of the site, along with a dedicated disabled parking space in the car park.

The ground floor of the building will be level with the sloped drive and patio at the rear. The design will ensure wheelchair accessibility throughout the property, including the front drive and garden, by equalizing internal floor levels where possible and adding a new lift, platform lifts, and ramps.

Appearance - Existing

The front elevation has undergone several modifications throughout the 20th century. The original portico was demolished and replaced with a painted timber and glass porch featuring a felt roof. Two first-floor windows on the front elevation have been boarded up with plywood as well as many of the windows on the side elevations. The entire front elevation has been painted white, and wall-mounted lighting has been installed above the front door. The front pediment has been filled with what appears to be render. The right side of the front elevation was extended to mirror the left side of the elevation and a lift was installed behind which is now out-of-use. An original large central window on the front elevation above the main entrance has been lost.

The side elevations remain unpainted, preserving the original brickwork, lintels, and cornice details.



Image of Park Centre from 1910 from article *Emily Temple: Burgess Hill Benefactress*. Full article available at <https://parkcentre.org.uk>



Image showing the current appearance of Park Centre

Appearance - Proposed

The design proposal aims to blend traditional and contemporary styles, utilizing matching bricks, full-height glass, and green roofs.

The glazed porch will be removed and replaced with a brick portico that responds to the design and scale of the original brick portico that has been lost.

The paint and render on the front elevation shall be removed and the original brickwork shall be restored. All boarded-up windows throughout shall be reinstated. The two blocked-up windows on the east side of the front elevation will be reinstated, restoring the symmetry of the front elevation and allowing more natural light into the proposed gallery behind. All windows on the front elevation and those visible from the main staircase will be upgraded to traditional double-glazed timber box sashes. This restoration honours the building's original design and character while enhancing energy efficiency. While other windows will be powder-coated aluminium with a white finish. Existing white uPVC windows within the previous additions to Park Centre shall be retained where possible. A recessed false window above the main entrance shall be established on the front elevation to align with the original central window that has been lost. This shall help to restore the original composition of the front elevation.

The out-of-use lift on the east side will be removed.

The proposed extensions will be constructed with brickwork that matches the original colour. The existing pitched roof will be upgraded to meet building regulations, utilizing like-for-like slate tiles and incorporating in-line solar panels.

The gallery entrance will feature full-height glazing set back from the front elevation, partially concealing it from street view and creating a covered porch area.

The proposed green roofs will include a stepped cornice detail at eaves level.

Five full-height narrow frosted glass windows with hidden frames will be installed on the east elevation within the gallery, and a roof light adjacent to the mezzanine will be added, remaining invisible from the street scene.

The bin storage structure at the front will feature an aerated timber screen that complements the brick colour. An information board attached to the bin storage will be visible from Park Road, informing local residents about events and activities at the Park Centre.

This proposal complements the original design and presents an opportunity for the rejuvenation of the existing building and coordination of the various modifications that have been made over the years.

Foul Drainage

The existing foul drainage system runs along the west side of the building and is already connected to the public sewer. We plan to utilize the current drainage route and may increase flow pending permission from the relevant authority.

Rainwater Drainage

Currently, rainwater drainage is directed into the public foul sewer. We aim to improve this by implementing Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS). Soakaways will be installed, and we intend to introduce a rainwater harvesting system if feasible.

Sustainability Assessment

The proposed construction will adhere to current regulations, ensuring insulation is integrated into all elements to comply with Part L of building regulations. All glazing will be double-glazed, and existing roof insulation and coverings will be upgraded.

In-line solar panels are planned for installation on the existing pitched roof, as indicated in the drawings.

Extensive green roofs will be incorporated into the extensions and bin storage.

The garden area will feature trees and bushes, replacing the current hardstanding.

Water-saving dual-flush toilets will be installed in all new bathrooms.

All lighting will utilize LED fittings.

The entire site and building will be designed for wheelchair accessibility.

The layout allows different areas of the building to be separated via access routes and circulation, enhancing efficiency and comfort for all users.