

Proposals for YORK MINSTER REFECTORY & NEW PUBLIC OPEN SPACE

.... A sustainable future for York Minster and its Precinct

The Minster has developed proposals to explore how the Precinct could evolve in the future to meet the changing needs of its community and visitors.

The York Minster Precinct Neighbourhood Plan was submitted to City of York Council in April 2021 for examination. When adopted, the plan will form part of the City's planning policy.

The vision for the Neighbourhood Plan

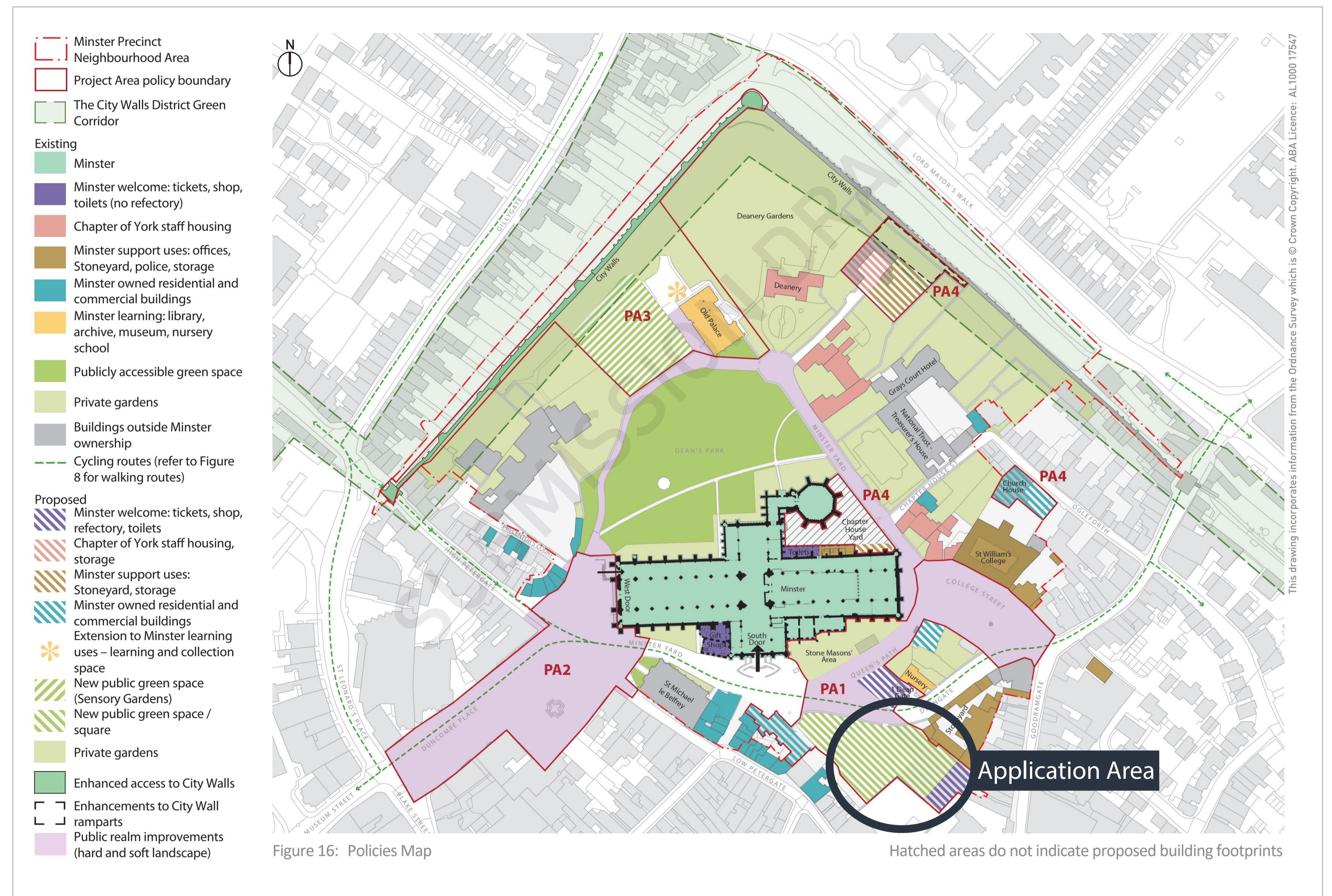
"In 2035 York Minster Precinct continues to be a welcoming and special place loved and used by the local community and visitors from around the world. It is acknowledged as a lynchpin in the cultural identity and daily life of the City of York and reaches out to engage the community in discovering God's Love."

The Neighbourhood Plan Proposals

The Neighbourhood Plan will provide the Minster with a clear strategy for the next fifteen years and will be used to secure funding for individual projects. The plan has been developed working with the City of York Council, Historic England, a wide range of stakeholders and the community to get the best plan in place.

The Neighbourhood Plan proposals for the Precinct show areas for potential development and improvement. The Submission Draft Policies map is opposite, and shows a cluster of new visitor facilities to the south of the Minster including a Refectory in the former song school, a ticket office and new public square and green space under Policy Area 1 (PA1).

These proposals will provide an improved welcome to the Minster, guiding visitors to the main entrance which is to be moved back to the South Door, as well as a new green space for the residents of York to enjoy.



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... Creating a warm welcome to Minster Yard

One of the first projects to come forward within the plan is the creation of a new destination Refectory and public open space for the use of residents and visitors to the Minster and city.

The Refectory and enhanced public realm will create a warm welcome for the 700,000+ people who visit the Minster from around the world in a normal year.

The landscape to the Refectory will form part of wider vision for the precinct (as outlined within the Neighbourhood Plan) and has therefore been considered in this context. As part of the wider project, 1 Deangate will become the main visitor welcome point and the landscape of the Refectory has been designed to fit into this wider context.

The landscape analysis of the wider south precinct details that one of the key considerations in the site's future development is the former school's physical severance from the Minster, with the former school not currently read as part of the Precinct.

The separation is reinforced by:

- ◆ The railings and position of gate.
- ◆ The site is accessed off a tarmac section of Deangate rather than Yorkstone paving public realm in the immediate context of the Minster.
- ◆ Parking to tarmac area outside the school within the railings.
- ◆ A lack of current use and inactivity.

A tighter analysis of the existing demise of the former song school has also been made:

- ◆ The song school Conservation Area Management Plan and Heritage Significance Statement found that the tarmac to the front of the nineteenth century building is a detracting feature, but the grass helps to soften its appearance.
- ◆ Although the external area nearest the building is north facing, the height of the building means that it should not be excessively shaded.
- ◆ Views to Minster and to the building frontage should be maximised.
- ◆ The "hardness" of the yard and surrounding walls serve to amplify sound to neighbouring properties.
- ◆ Biodiversity is likely to be at a low baseline.

On the basis of the analysis and vision of the Neighbourhood Plan, the relationship between the Minster and the former school will be strengthened through the application proposals by:

- ◆ Amending the boundary and entrances to ensure better visitor flow and to create unity between the site and the wider precinct.
- ◆ Creating a link by paving the Minster south entrance piazza and the school area in similar materials.
- ◆ Considering the area around Deangate through the creation of the visitors' hub to create a zone of activity.



York Minster Precinct - Concept sketch of the proposals based on the contextual analysis undertaken

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.... Securing the Minster's Future

Today, the Minster welcomes over 700,000 visitors in a normal year. It is a major pilgrimage site and tourist destination but it remains, first and foremost, a house of prayer.

It costs £22,000 per day to care for and operate the Minster. The Minster receives no ongoing Government funding or central Church of England financial support and relies entirely on the generosity of our community, paying visitors and funding bodies to maintain its care and operations.



The former song school is vacant and in need of extensive and ongoing repairs

York Minster Refectory

Developing a viable and sustainable business to underpin the care of the Minster lies at the heart of how we plan for the future.

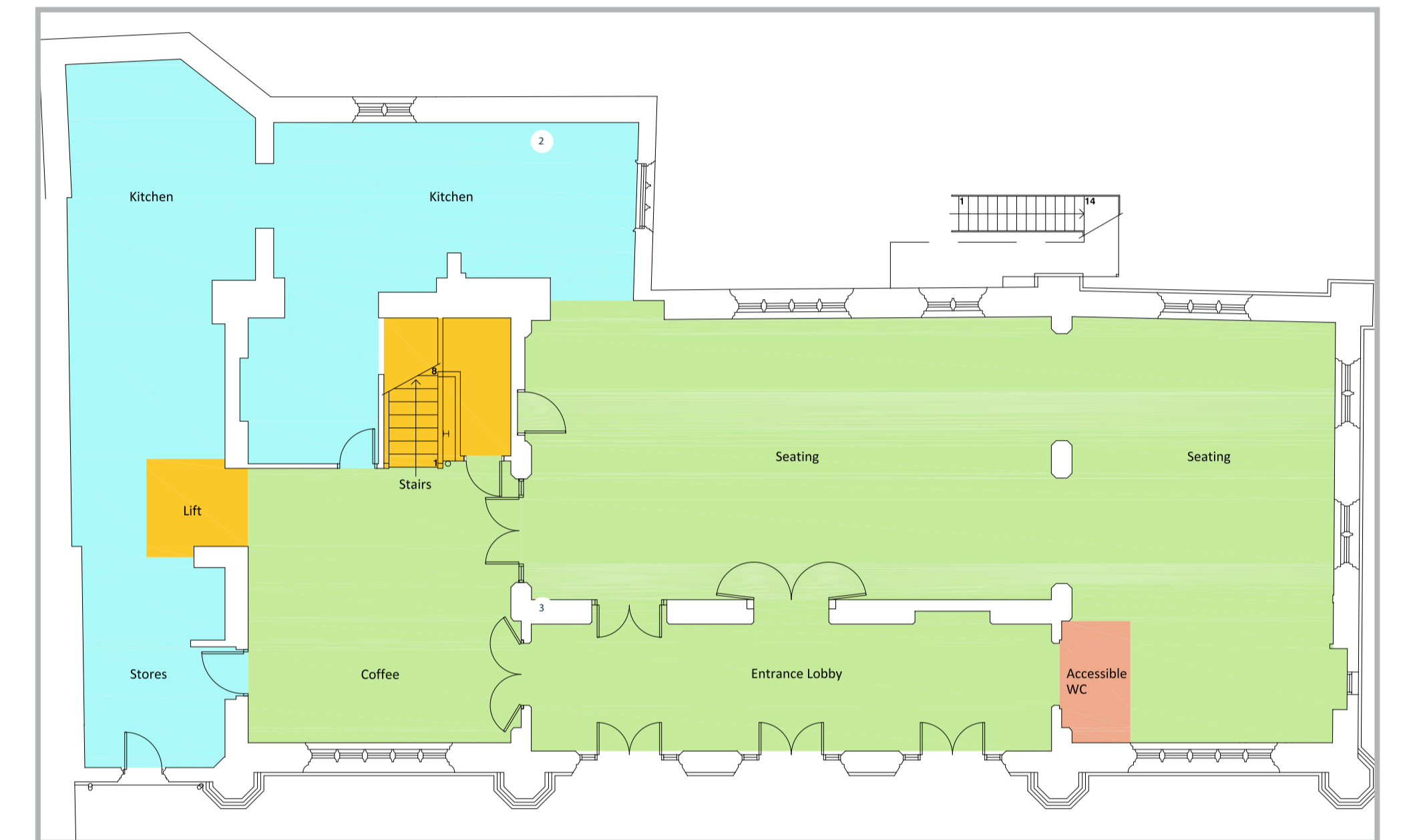
The Refectory is one of the first projects to emerge from the Neighbourhood Plan and will act as a catalyst for the wider precinct redevelopment. Unlike many other cathedrals, the Minster has no dedicated space to offer refreshments to visitors and no welcome centre for orientation and tickets.

The Refectory will be located in the former song school, which closed in summer 2020 following financial difficulties acutely exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic. Since its closure the building has remained vacant and is in need of various urgent repairs to safeguard its fabric.

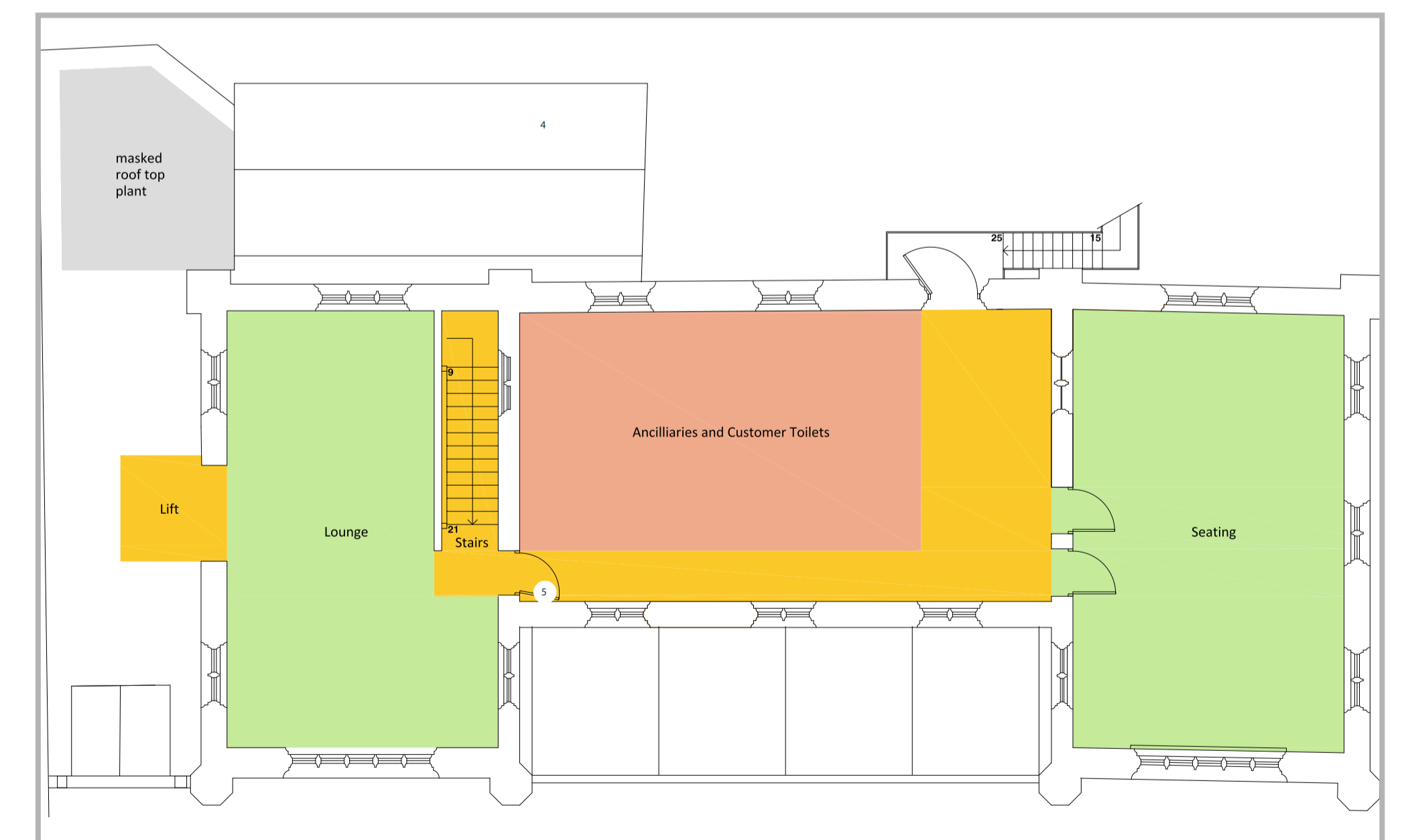
The York Minster Neighbourhood Plan was revised to take account of the school's closure with the proposals consulted upon between December 2020 and February 2021, prior to the Neighbourhood Plan submission in April 2021.

The conversion of the former school building into a Refectory is outlined as one of the key projects in the Neighbourhood Plan, with the conversion of the school and creation of improved public realm and landscape supported by Policy PA1. Within this policy the school is identified as Area A, where the policy states this type of development at Minster Yard will be supported.

The building is Grade II Listed and also lies within the York Central Historic Core Conservation Area. The Minster Precinct is also a designated Scheduled Ancient Monument so the proposals need to be treated with care.



York Minster Refectory - Proposed Ground Floor Plan Layout



York Minster Refectory - Proposed First Floor Plan Layout

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Landscape & Public Realm Proposals

Proposals for the Refectory landscape will fit into the wider ambition outlined in Neighbourhood Plan Policy PA1, but also work with the interim condition.

- ◆ The area of lawn will remain turfed, in keeping with the existing character of the south Precinct.
- ◆ The Refectory landscape will be centred on an axial route to the main entrance, and keeping open the key views between the façade and the South Transept.
- ◆ A soft division will be created between the main external seating area and the lawns to the front will create the best opportunity to increase biodiversity by broadening the range of species on site.
- ◆ The landscape will provide interest for families and integrate informal opportunities for learning and education, linked back to the site's former uses, part of which was a kitchen garden for the medieval deanery.
- ◆ The area opposite the existing lawn will be turfed to create a consistent frontage in keeping with the character of the south precinct.
- ◆ The boundary to the lawn will be made more porous to be more welcoming and improve pedestrian flow.
- ◆ Planting will be introduced to the blank wall perpendicular to the façade to reduce the reflection of sound towards neighbours.

Historic photographs of the school show that in the past there was a greater amount of vegetation to the front of the school. This was lost at some point in the last century. It is proposed to soften the external seating area by re-introducing planting to the blank brick wall perpendicular to the façade, that faces directly towards residential properties.

The potential to incorporate a pergola would help to further reduce the ability of noise to travel, as well as limiting intervisibility between these areas.

Reinforced planting along the boundary to Talbot Court will also be added.

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Sustainability

The re-use and adaptation of the former song school contributes to regeneration and sustainability at many levels.

The proposals provide tangible environmental benefits through the incorporation of solar photovoltaic panels and improved building fabric to reduce carbon emissions.

The proposals also provide less tangible benefits, such as place identity, social cohesion and provision of a valuable future income stream for the ongoing restoration of the Minster itself. These are significant public benefits that contribute to the comprehensive sustainability of the proposals.

Biodiversity

Areas of new planting will provide habitat and food for wildlife at the centre of the city, and within York's ecological networks. Introducing new species to increase biodiversity will also help to ensure the landscape can address the challenge of the changing climate.

Plant species chosen to benefit pollinators and other invertebrates will encourage the presence of birds and foraging bats found within the Minster Precinct by increasing the availability of food.

Plants will be selected for their nectar value, and the presence of berries in autumn and winter, while those with stems that can be left standing after summer will provide places for invertebrates to over winter.

Materials

Yorkstone to the central route will echo the palette around the south transept and Deangate. When future proposals for the area come forward, this route will read as a continuation of the wider south precinct landscape.

The use of resin bound or self binding gravel to the areas between the external seating areas and lawn would limit the required construction depth and need for surface water drainage. Levels in these areas will be closer to the existing and the limit of the permitted dig over the Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Wellbeing

By opening up the grounds of the former school, York Minster will give the city a new green space at the centre of town for visitors, residents and workers to relax and enjoy the magnificent surroundings.

The open lawn will provide space to enjoy views to the Minster in a calm and tranquil environment, bolstered with new planting.

The planting will be designed to engage the senses of touch, smell, hearing as well as sight with species chosen for their scent, velvety foliage and rustling leaves.

These plants will also provide habitat and food for wildlife, adding more interest for visitors and birdsong and the hum of insects to the local soundscape.

These areas of planting will create smaller, more peaceful and contemplative areas under the existing trees with seating orientated for the best views of the Minster.

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The Consultation

Whatever your reason for visiting the Precinct, we would encourage you to comment and help shape the future of this special place...

The consultation begins on Friday 21st May and closes at midnight on Sunday 13th June 2021.

The boards are available to view outside the former song school and also online at: masterplanning.yorkminster.org

We welcome and value all comments which will shape the final version of the proposals – please let us know what's important to you.

Owing to Covid all comments are to be made online and can be emailed to Alex McCallion at: alexmc@yorkminster.org

What Happens Next?

The views gathered as part of this public consultation are much valued. We will carefully consider all comments and integrate them into the final design where possible.

Following consultation, the design team will refine the detailed proposals which will form the basis of a planning application, due to be submitted in the summer of 2021.

We hope the new park and Refectory will be open for visitors in mid-2022.

