

FEASIBILITY STUDY: LIVE ENTERTAINMENTS AND COMMUNITY CENTRE:TWO SITES: THE CATTLE MARKET
ELIZABETH WAY ROUNDABOUT

1. INTRODUCTION1.1 General Background

There has been an almost total lack of provision for live entertainment in Cambridge for many years. In a city which to many people is synonymous with artistic and academic excellence and creative endeavour, this is a very serious situation. There is no shortage of local musical, theatrical and artistic talent, and no shortage of appreciative audiences, but the longterm lack of provision of a suitable venue for live entertainment and community activities to act as a focus for music and the arts has served to fragment and demoralise the local community of musicians, performers, creative artists, and all those who enjoy live entertainment. Many attempts to establish regular live entertainment venues in pubs and halls around the city have failed due to inadequate sound insulation or too close proximity to residential accommodation. Those that survive seem to do so precariously, and are in any case very small. The events of November and December 1985 served to bring the widespread frustration felt by a large section of the community to the attention of the City Council. Council Leader Chris Howard committed himself to the establishment of a new venue for music and live entertainment in the city, and Councillors and Council Officers were able to hear the views of the people on this subject at a number of open meetings. A proposal was worked up by Council Officers for the conversion of an industrial unit on the Clifton Industrial Estate at the Cattle Market, Cherry Hinton (JDC AAA 7.3,86). The City Council then awarded a grant to the Cambridge Venue Group to carry out a Feasibility Study on this site and on the Elizabeth Way Roundabout site. The brief for the Study was as follows:

(i) To carry out a detailed appraisal of the Cattle Market and Elizabeth Way sites, along with a clear assessment of what objectives could be achieved on each site, including the possibility of using the spaces under Elizabeth Way Bridge to provide workshop facilities, with access from the roundabout, if possible. To include a full report on the Architectural/Building aspects of both sites, taking into account all environmental, planning, and acoustic considerations.

(ii) To report on all possible staffing and management options for the proposed centre, for both sites, with detailed costings, projected sources of income, and full business plan.

- (iii) To report on the CVG's meetings with Councillors and local residents groups in the areas of both proposed sites.
- (iv) To carry out a detailed market research programme by means of a properly designed and administered questionnaire, to show perceived need for the centre, and to allow estimates of public usage for all facilities on both sites.
- (v) To report on possible sponsorship of any aspect of the proposed centre, including grant aid.
- (vi) To report on other centres of a similar size and nature elsewhere in the UK, with details of their running costs, management structure, etc.
- (vii) To report on proposals put forward by particular groups or organisations for the operation of any part of the proposed centre.
- (viii) To report on the likely role of the proposed centre in the life of the city, and on the role of the Corn Exchange.

1.2 Scope and Status of the Study

This Study fulfils its brief. The Market Research survey undertaken is the first of its kind in the city, and the results have far-reaching implications for all those with responsibilities for meeting the needs of the community. The Study outlines the facilities and services that should be available in a new centre, and shows that it could be self-financing, given the one-off capital commitment necessary to establish it. It carries out a detailed comparison of the two sites, and invites all interested parties to join in a constructive partnership to go forward from this initial stage to ensure that the new centre gets under way as soon as possible to meet the urgent need that exists for it.

1.3 Key Concepts

The popular demand for a new venue for live entertainment and community activities in Cambridge is unquestionable. This is emphasised in the Market Research report. An important element running through all the events and services in the venue would be the overall atmosphere: decor, seating facilities, ease of access, and policy matters such as the mix of different types of entertainment, unwaged reductions on ticket prices, bar prices, and the all day opening of the venue. A combination of openness and style in all these areas would work to make the venue popular and relaxed, accessible and fashionable, crowded and successful, and a focal point for the community: in short, a facility of which everyone in the city could be proud. As is demonstrated in the detailed plans in this report, it is the combination of events and services that would make the venue a self-financing concern once established, and one which would create a number of jobs and training opportunities in an industry to which many young people

are committed. What also matters is the cooperative running of the venue, on a day-to-day basis between workers, and more generally with the involvement of users, musicians, performers, tenants, the City Council and the local community, including local residents groups, in membership and in the Management Committee.

- 1.4 The report which follows is divided into sections, each of which is interrelated, and which combine to provide a detailed overview of the proposed uses, finances and management of the venue, and a basis for action in its establishment and on the choice of site.
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SECTION 7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 This report from the Cambridge Venue Group itemises the Group's realistic proposals for the establishment of a new centre for live entertainment and community activities in Cambridge. It demonstrates the need for, and the demand for such a venue, and outlines the potential that the scheme possesses for filling the gaps in current provision and for combining a winning selection of interconnected cultural, social, and community activities under one roof. It shows the employment creation aspects of the proposal, and demonstrates that the venue could be self-financing, as other similar venues elsewhere in the UK are, given the support of the community and its representatives, and a one-off capital commitment to establish it. It identifies the aspects of the proposal which need further research, and invites all interested bodies and individuals to combine to make a constructive partnership to ensure that the venue is established quickly and successfully as a longterm investment in the social and cultural life of the City of Cambridge.

7.2 The main criteria for the suitability of sites as identified in the City Council's reports of 9.9.83 and 7.3.86 on the Venue Centre proposals were as follows:

- (a) Remote from residential accommodation in order to minimise noise nuisance.
- (b) Capable of being available for use quickly and at realistic expense.
- (c) Having suitable parking facilities within easy reach.
- (d) Ideally, having the right atmosphere for the proposed use.
- (e) Being easily accessible by foot or by bicycle.
- (f) Capable of being easily reconverted to another use.

Neither of the two sites looked at in this report can be said to meet with all these criteria. The Officers Reports of 9.9.83 and 7.3.86 cited above accepted that the Cattle Market site complied with (a) (c) (e) and (f), and stated further that "it is scarcely likely to have the ideal atmosphere and obviously the development of a new industrial unit is not going to be executed cheaply". We would agree with these conclusions for this site, with the following comments:

Re: (b) The building costs per square metre are liable to be 12 per cent higher than at Elizabeth Way.

Re: (c) The use of one car park for both the Venue and the Park and Ride scheme could cause problems: on the other hand it could bring large numbers of people

to the Venue.

Re:(d) The creation of the right atmosphere is not impossible given the right building.

Re:(e) The accessibility to potential users of a venue on this site *is questionable. Our market research showed that* a significant proportion would find transport to and from the site a problem. It seems unlikely that a venue on this site would be able to fulfil its primary role of acting as a creative community focus for the city, nor of acting as a drop-in centre during the day. This has obvious implications for its financial viability, and the whole question of transport provision and accessibility must be thoroughly looked into if this site is to be seriously considered. A late night bus service in particular would be essential.

For the Elizabeth Way site, our comments are:

Re:(a) It is apparent from the Architects Report and Acoustic Report that direct noise from the venue would not be a problem, and would not intrude above background levels. However, indirect noise nuisance caused by people leaving the venue, especially late at night, is a possibility that naturally concerns local residents. If a way can be identified of preventing venue users from parking in residential streets such as Abbey Road and Priory Road, or of positively encouraging them to park elsewhere by offering concessions, then the current fears of some local residents could be allayed, especially in view of their proposed representation on the venue Management Committee.

Re:(b) It is hoped that the County Council will respond favourably to this proposal and cooperate actively with the City Council and the Venue Group to secure the necessary funding for the Venue. Building costs are relatively cheap on this site, and the "value for money" aspect of the development on this site is stressed in the Architects Report.

Re:(c) The report has established this.

Re:(d) A Venue on this site would be an exciting, innovative project. The proposal has already caught the public imagination and become a talking point in the city. Its central location would be a huge asset, and the involvement of the community that much closer.

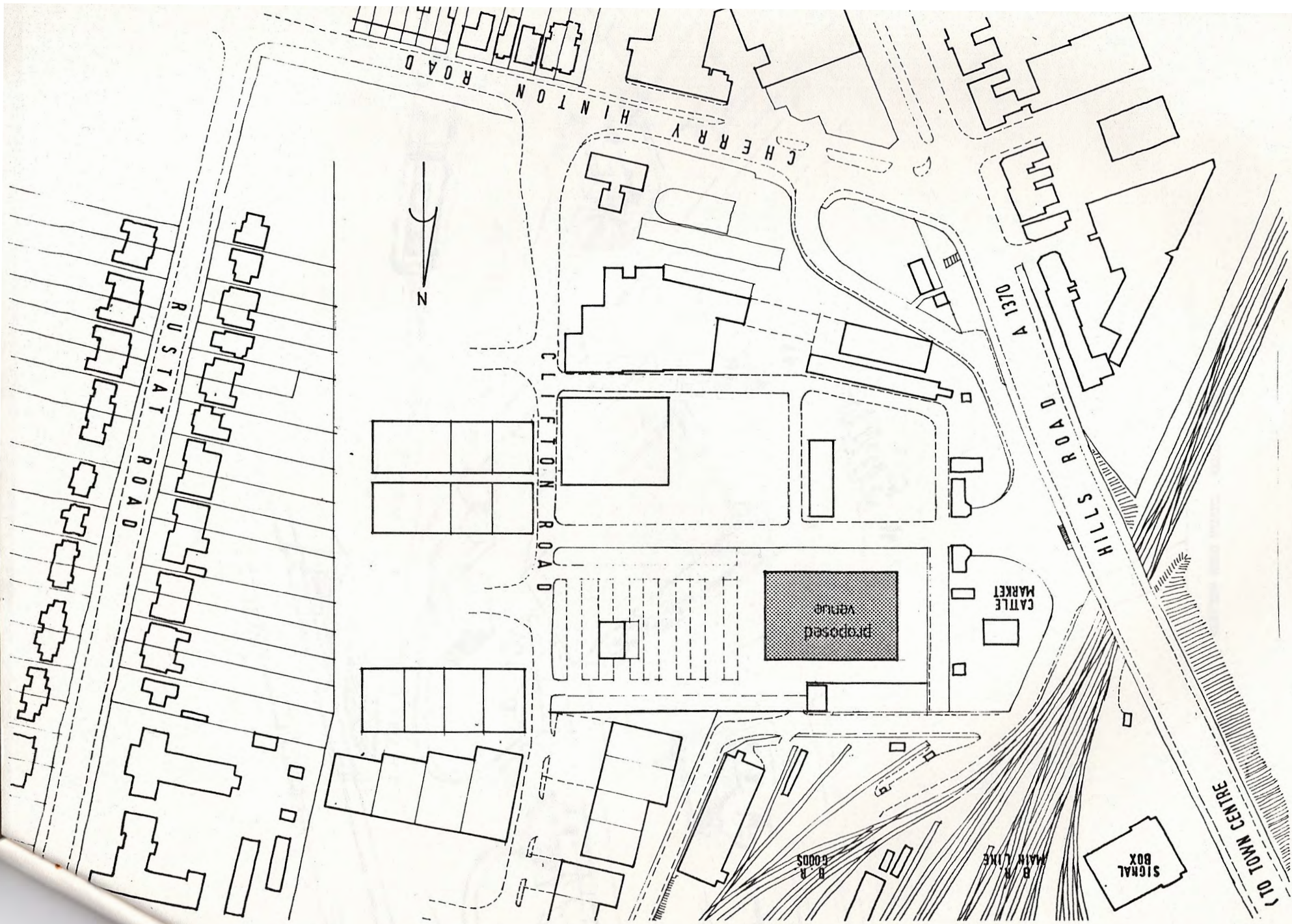
Re:(e) The report has established this.

Re:(f) The Architects Report stresses that land of this sort is a very scarce resource in Cambridge and that whilst not having the same reconversion possibilities as the Cattle Market, a venue on this site is cheaper to build and more likely to be financially viable. Reconversion options are listed in the Architects Report.

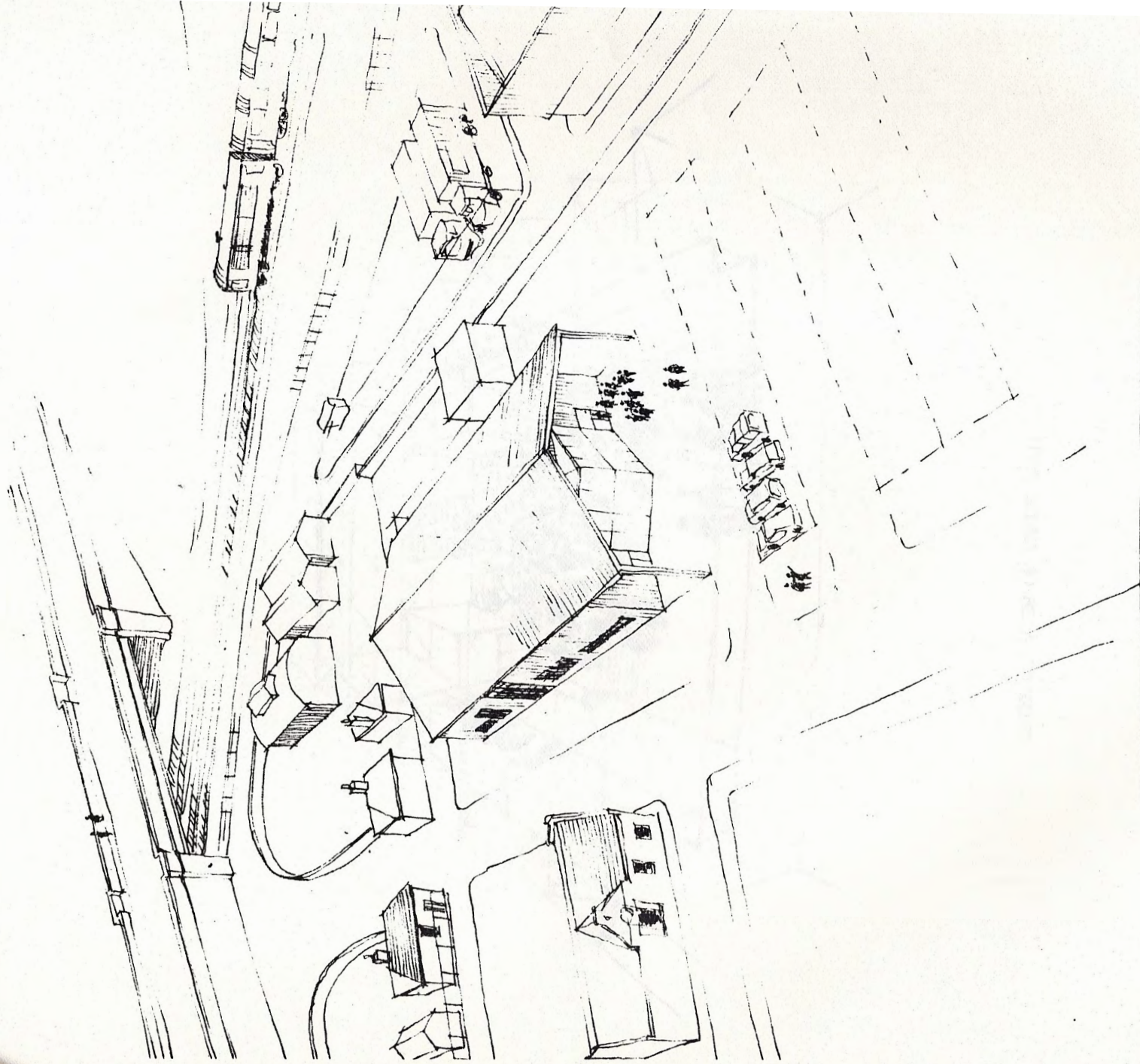
7.4 CONCLUSIONS

- (i) There are no technical objections to building the proposed Venue on either site.
- (ii) Whilst the Cattle Market Site is more easily available at the moment, the Elizabeth Way site offers more space for less money and is also likely to improve the Venue's prospects of financial viability.
- (iii) There is a very high level of support within the City for a Venue of this nature, and an urgent need for a higher level of provision for live entertainment and community activities.
- (iv) A Venue on either site could be financially viable, given the right building and the right workers, and needs a one-off capital commitment to establish it.
- (v) Further work is needed on establishing the availability of the Elizabeth Way site, and on exploring possible partnership options between the City Council, the County Council, the University, and other interested bodies to establish the venue.
- (vi) Both sites pose parking and transport problems which must be solved.

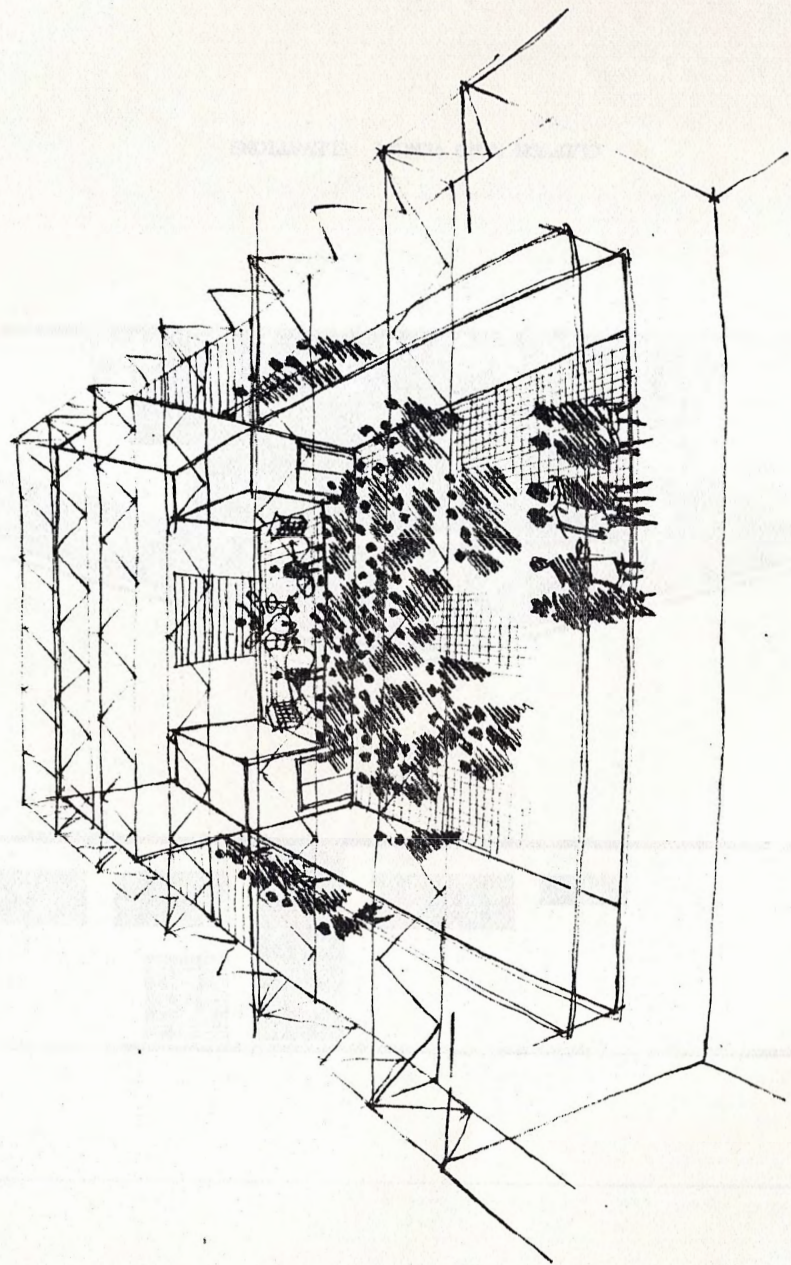
The Cambridge Venue Group has demonstrated the need for a venue. It has produced a report containing practical proposals. The need for action now cannot be stressed too greatly.



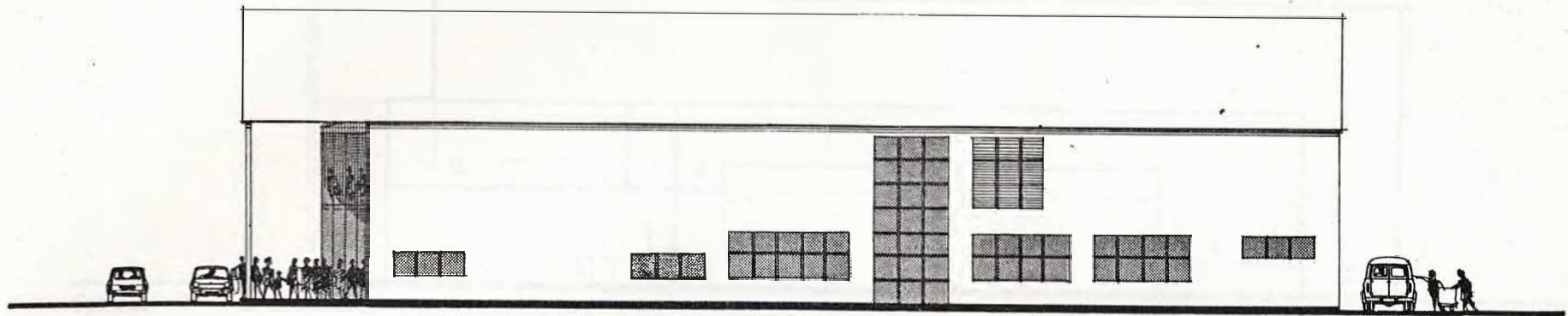
CLIFTON ROAD VENUE. LOCATION PLAN



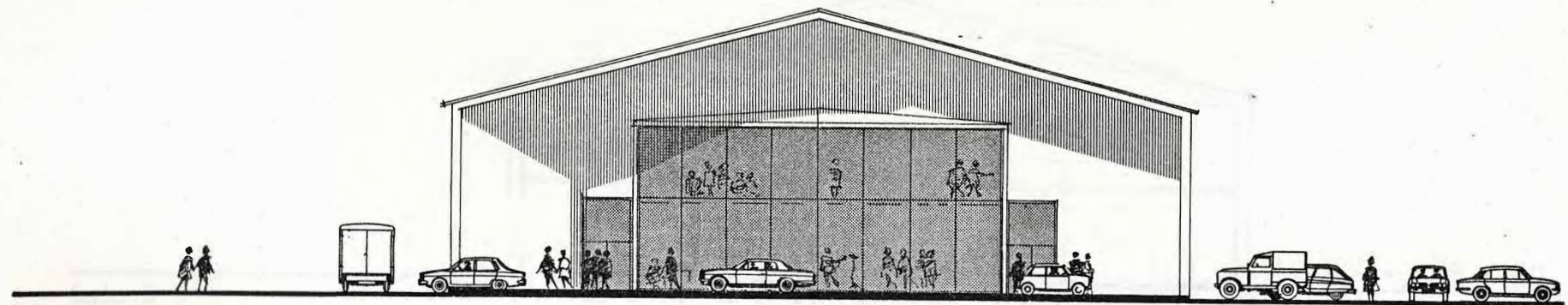
CLIFTON ROAD VENUE. AERIAL VIEW



INTERNAL VIEW OF VENUE HALL

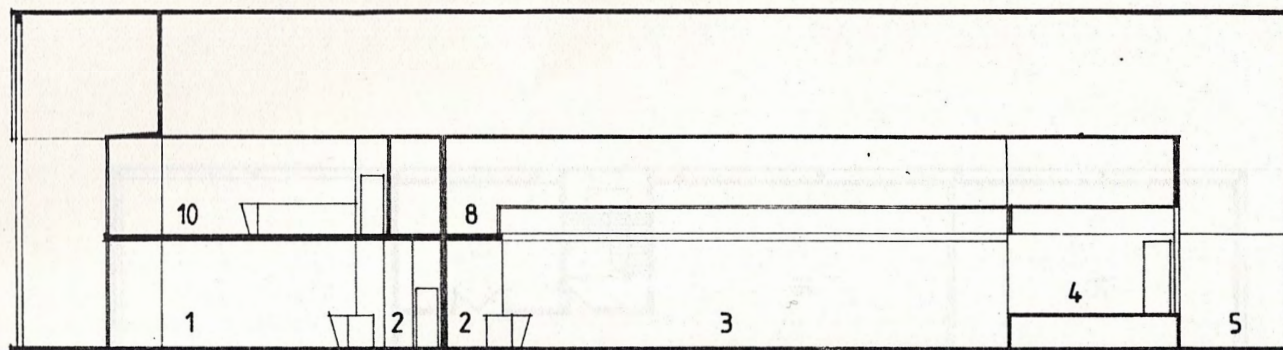


Side Elevation

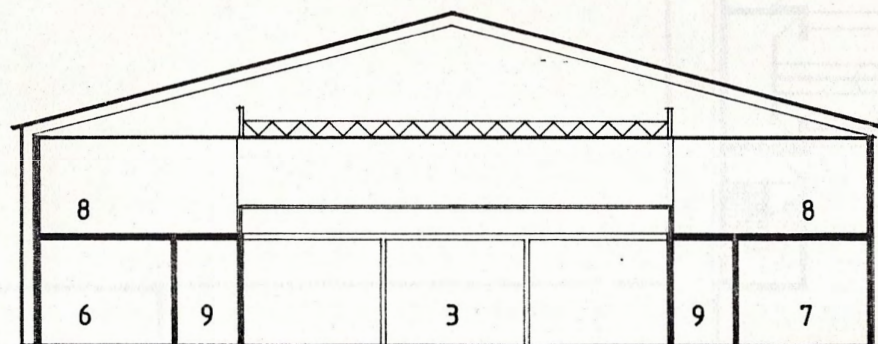


Front Elevation

CLIFTON ROAD VENUE. ELEVATIONS



Section A-A

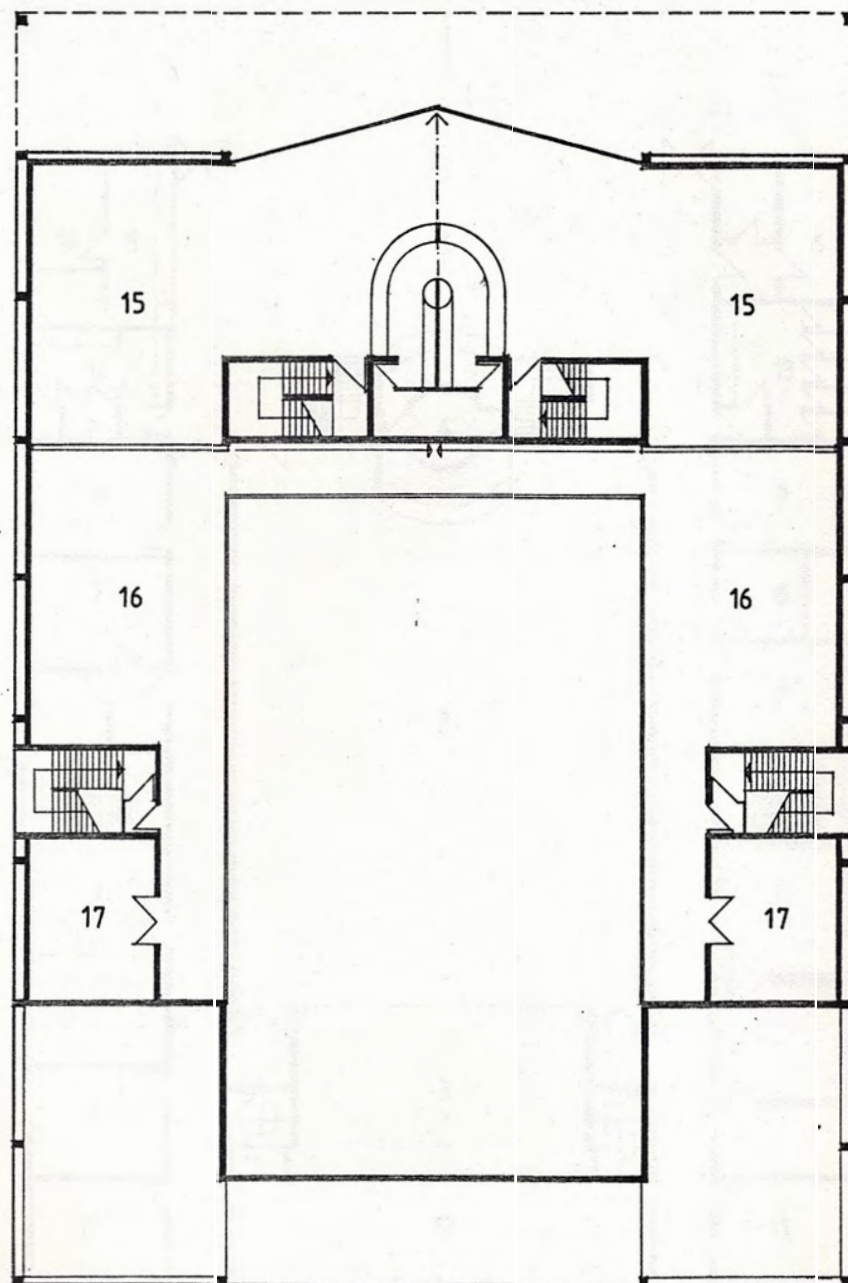


Section B-B

CLIFTON ROAD VENUE

KEY TO ACCOMMODATION SHOWN IN SECTIONS THROUGH THE BUILDING

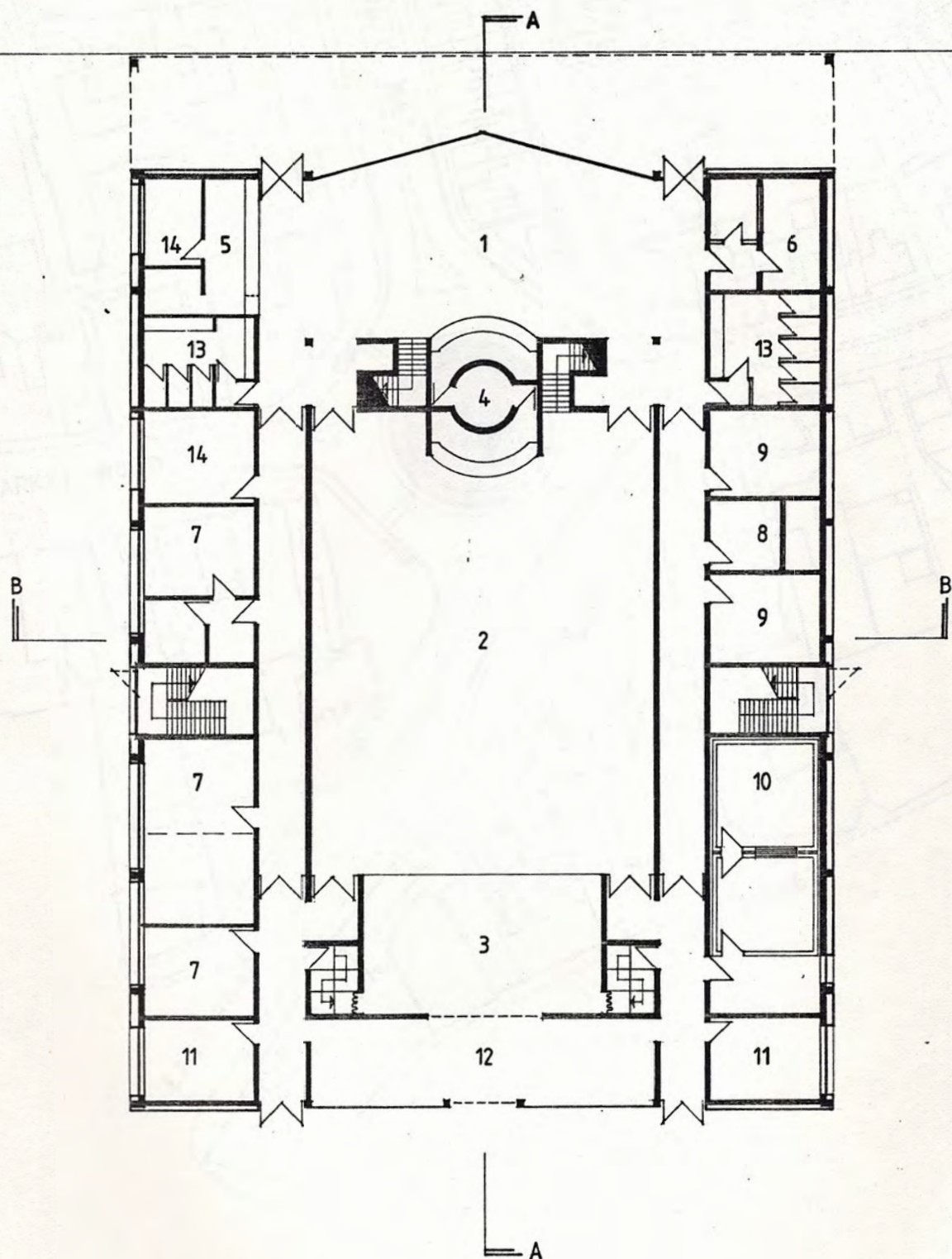
- | | |
|----------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. FOYER | 6. CAMBRIDGE ARTS FORUM |
| 2. COFFEE BAR | 7. MUSIC REHEARSAL STUDIO |
| 3. VENUE HALL | 8. VIEWING GALLERY |
| 4. STAGE | 9. CIRCULATION SPACE |
| 5. BACKSTAGE STORAGE | 10. BAR |



CLIFTON ROAD VENUE

KEY TO FIRST FLOOR ACCOMMODATION

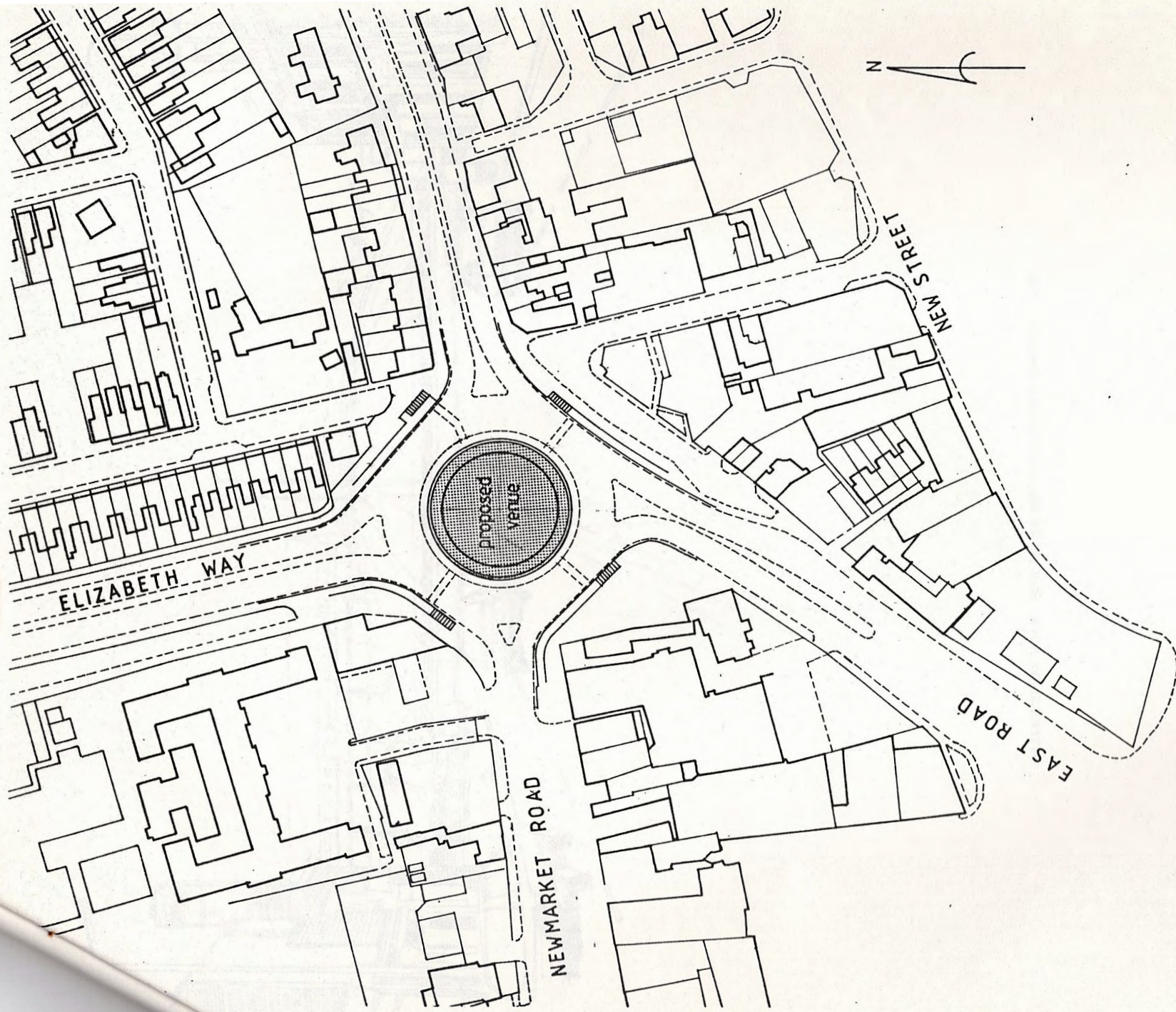
- 15. ~~x~~. BAR
- 16. ~~x~~. VIEWING GALLERY
- 17. ~~x~~. PLANT ROOM



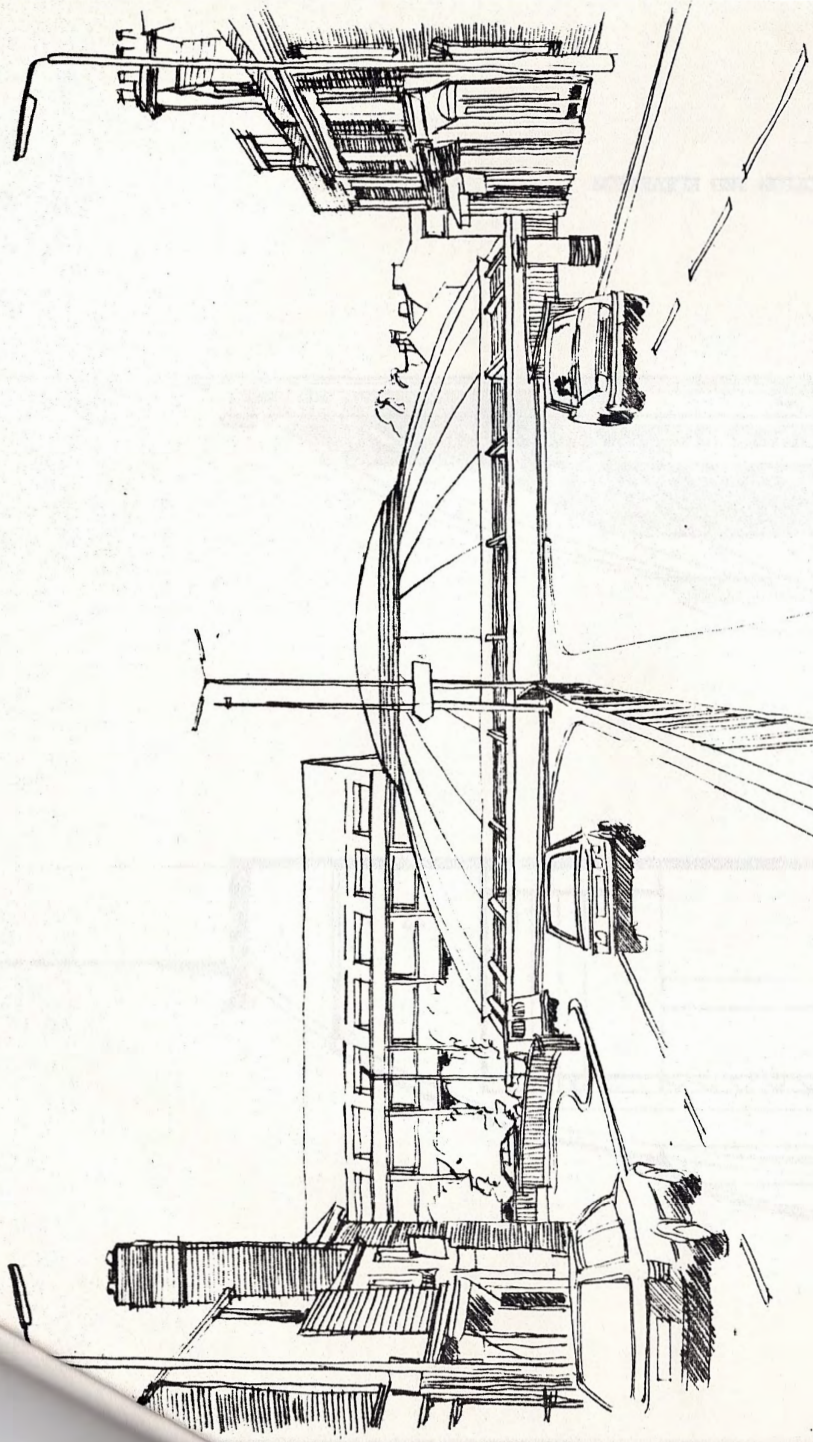
CLIFTON ROAD VENUE

KEY TO GROUND FLOOR ACCOMMODATION

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|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. FOYER | 8. EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC WORKSHOP |
| 2. VENUE HALL | 9. MUSIC REHEARSAL STUDIO |
| 3. STAGE | 10. RECORDING STUDIO |
| 4. COFFEE BAR | 11. DRESSING ROOM |
| 5. BOX OFFICE & CLOAKROOM | 12. BACKSTAGE STORAGE |
| 6. CAMBRIDGE COMMUNITY RADIO | 13. TOILETS |
| 7. CAMBRIDGE ARTS FORUM | 14. OFFICE |

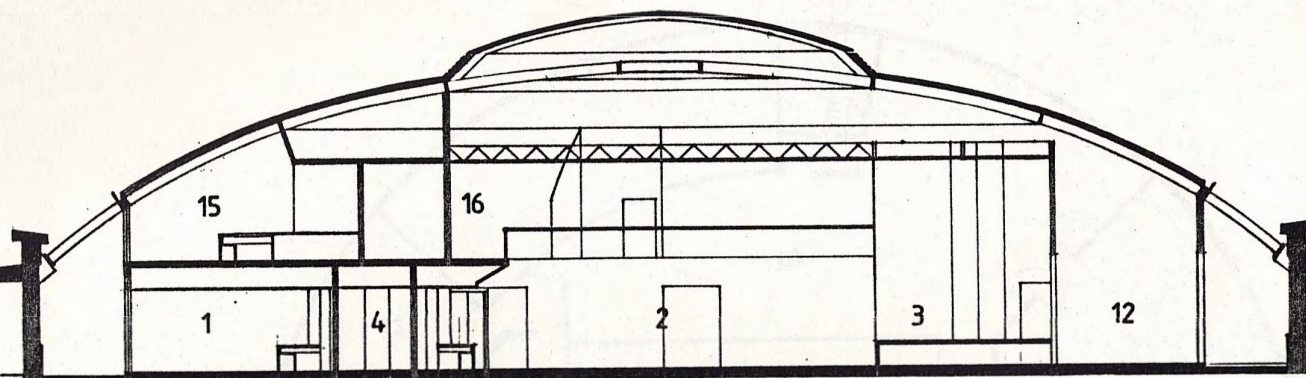


ELIZABETH WAY VENUE. LOCATION PLAN

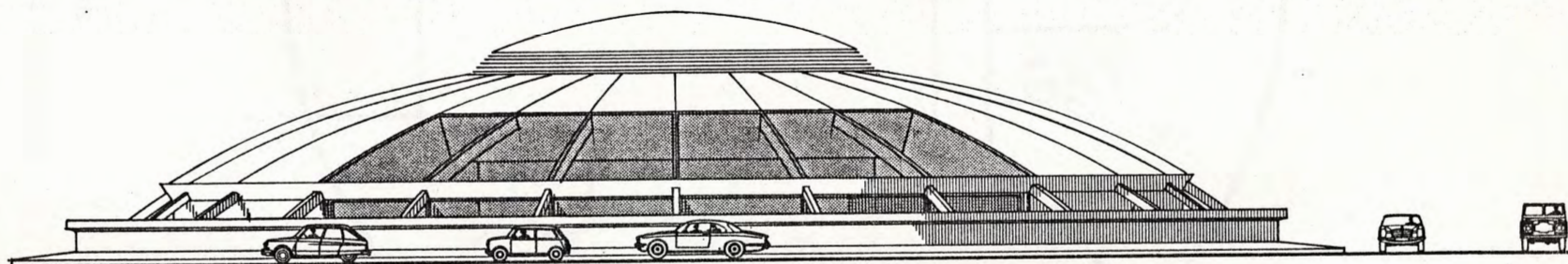


ELIZABETH WAY VENUE. VIEW OF THE NEW BUILDING FROM NEWMARKET ROAD

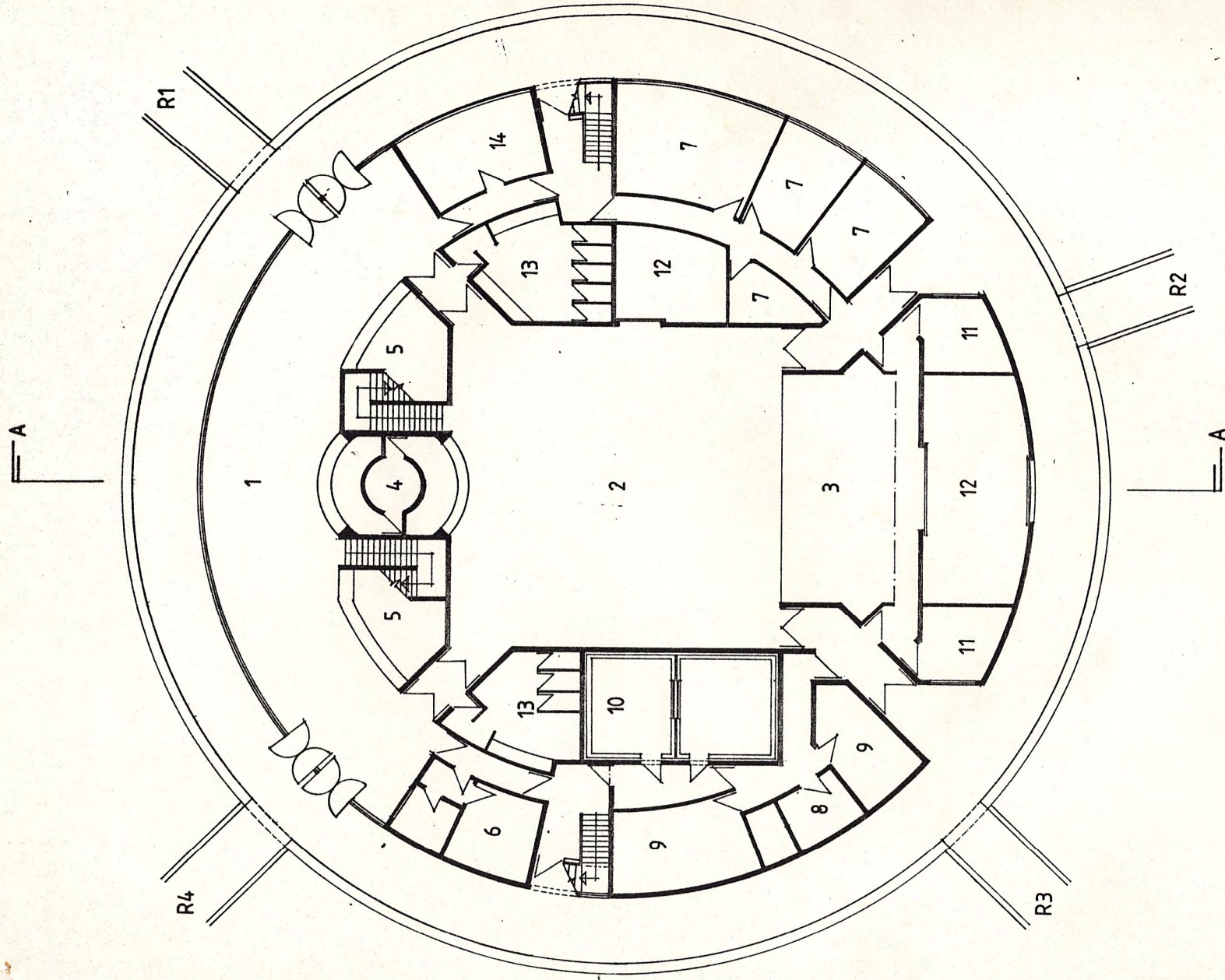
Section A-A
see plans for
accommodation key



Elevation



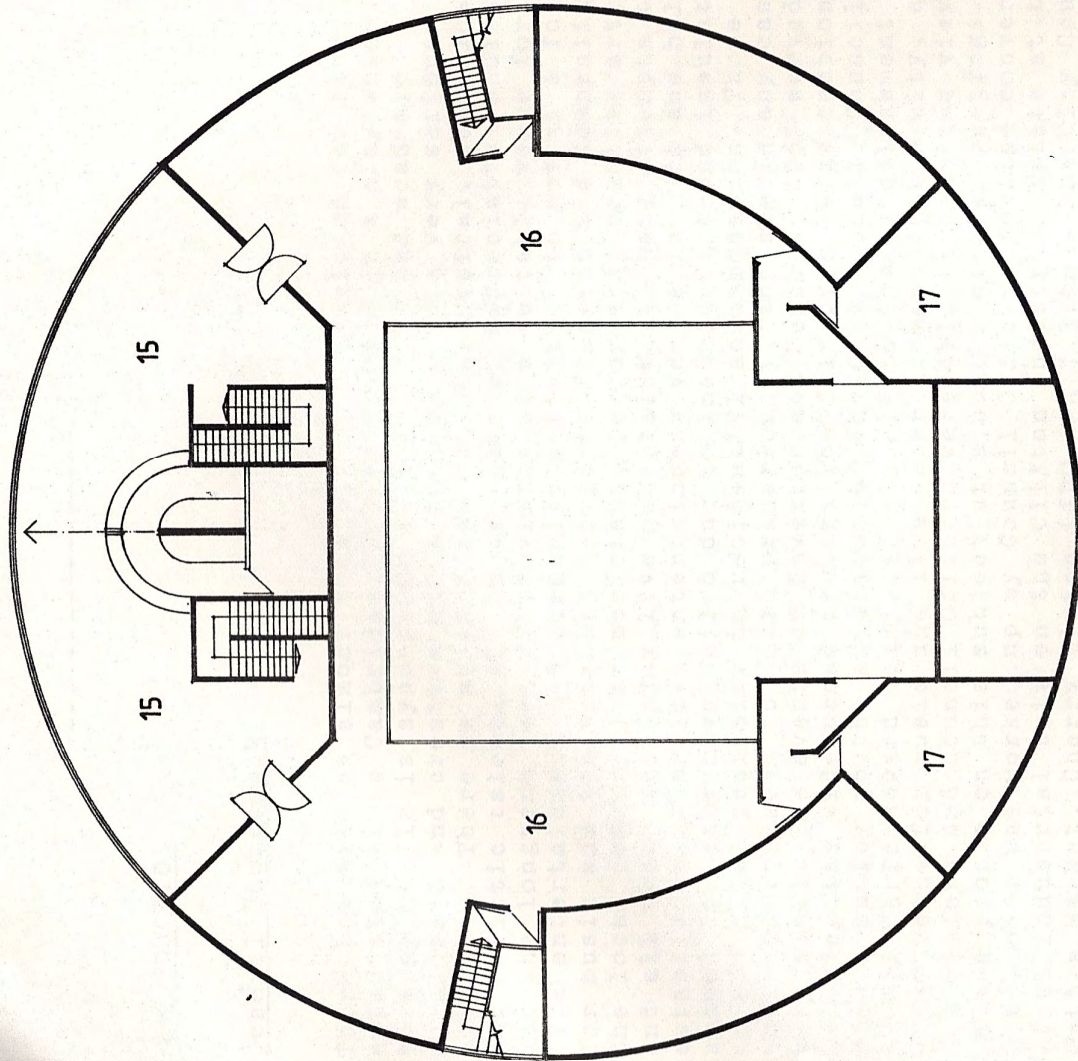
ELIZABETH WAY VENUE. SECTION AND ELEVATION



ELIZABETH WAY VENUE

KEY TO GROUND FLOOR ACCOMMODATION

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|------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. FOYER | 8. EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC WORKSHOP |
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ELIZABETH WAY VENUE
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17. PLANT ROOM