



Chartered Town Planner
Spindrift
83 Main Road
Portskewett
NP26 5UG

Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) Impact Assessment

Former Line Painting Depot, 19 Grovelands Road, Spencer's Wood.
Reading. RG7 1DP.

Redevelopment of existing hall with new build hall.

Prepared on behalf of: Sarum Hill GHT.

AUGUST 2025

ATOMIC WEAPONS ESTABLISHMENT (AWE) IMPACT ASSESSMENT

**New Church Building Replacement (Use Class F.1f)
Application 250702**

19 Grovelands Road, Spencer's Wood.

Reading. RG7 1DP

Prepared on behalf of Sarum Hill Gospel Hall Trust.

Prepared by: Andrew Beard MRTPI (Consultant)

Date: 1st August 2025

Reference: ABP/0431



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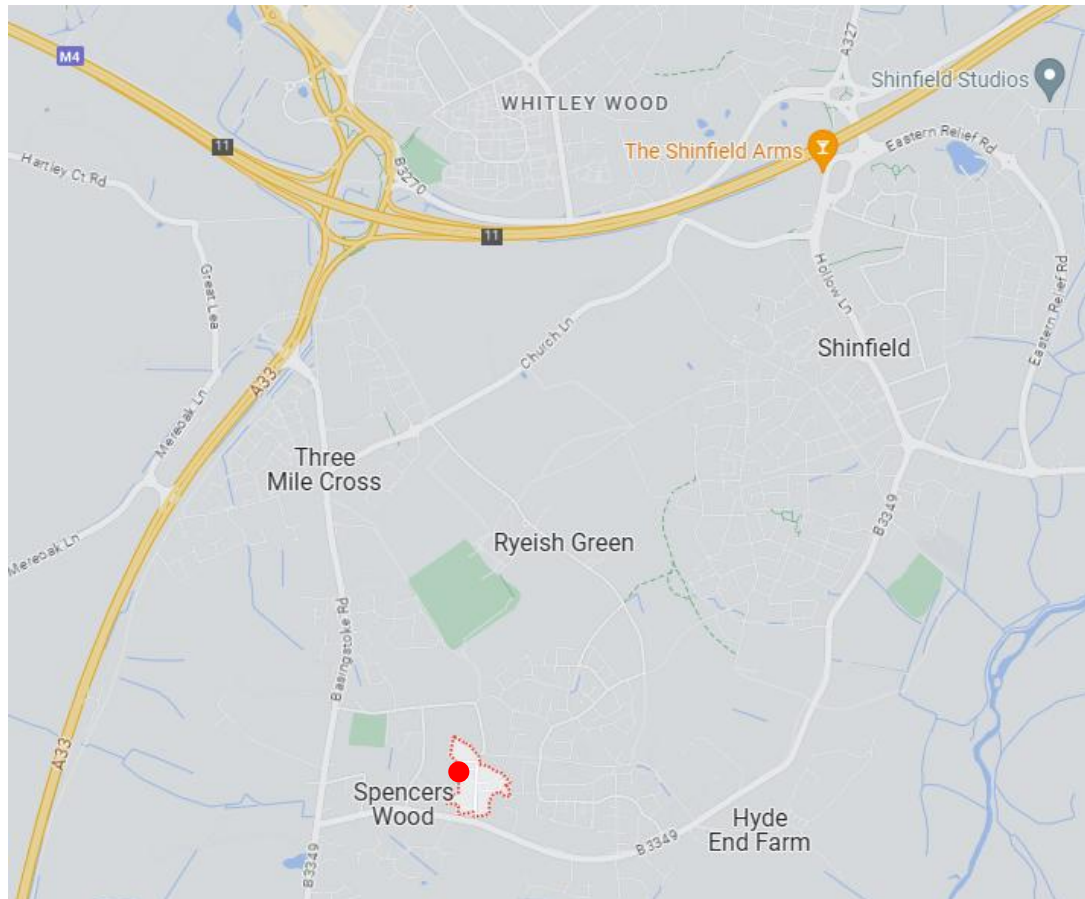
1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This AWE Impact Assessment has been prepared to update the previous report for the initial change of use 241396.
- 1.2 The existing building is a lawful church for 35 attendees as granted by permission.
- 1.3 It will provide a replacement local hall for the congregation already living within the village and is not creating growth as an influx of people to the area.
- 1.4 The church level of use is solely for religious services and there will be no social functions undertaken at the site.
- 1.5 The proposed development is a replacement building for an existing use.
- 1.6 The site area and context are shown below as part of the location Plan.

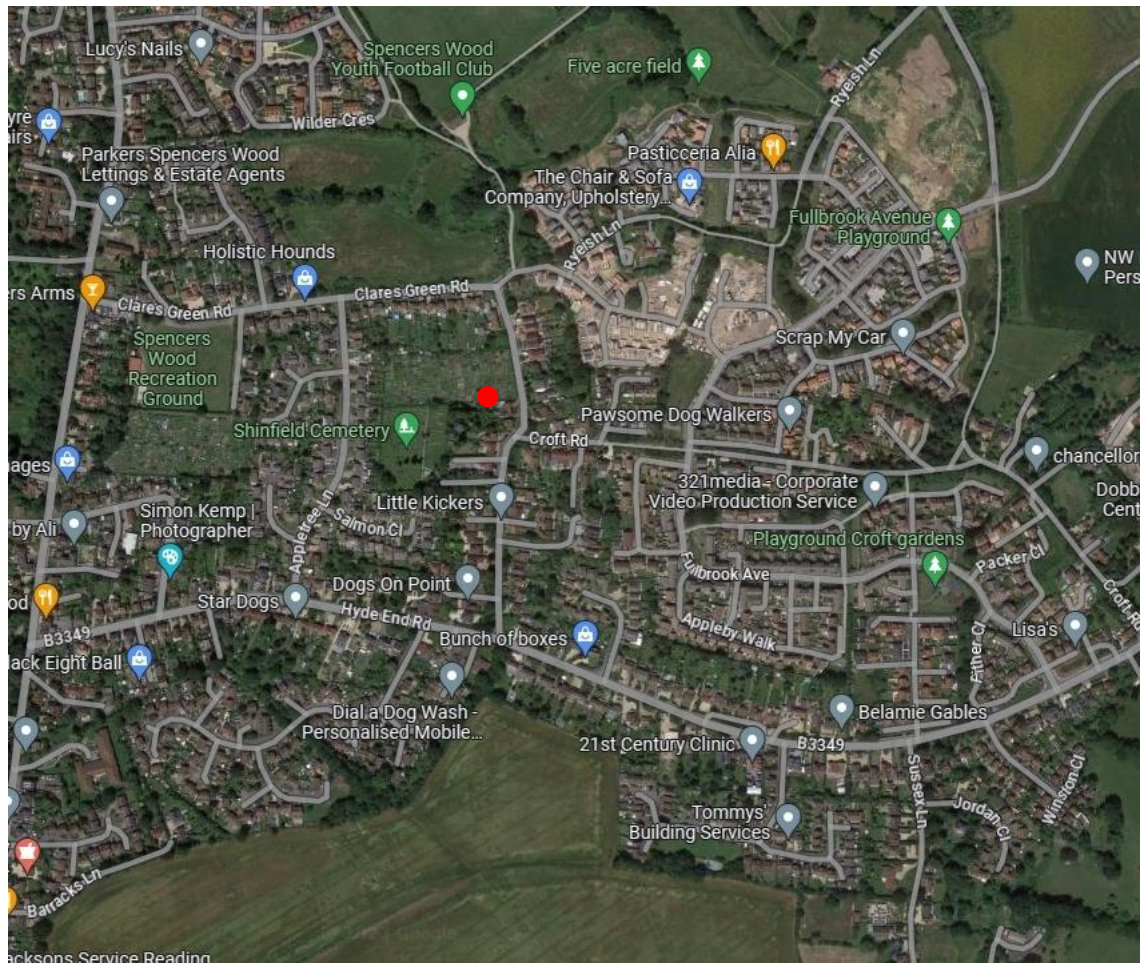


2. SITE LOCATION & DESCRIPTION

2.1 The site is located within the village of Spencer's Wood, south of three Mile Cross and the M4 within Wokingham District Council. It is close to recent major new housing building on the edge of Spencer's Wood.



2.2 The site is part of an existing urban area with a full range of housing and services.



2.4 The previous site use comprised:

- A former bungalow dwelling building (used as commercial, offices for depot) In 2023 there was a rear portacabin.
- A hardstanding area over the whole rear area. (lorry/vehicle parking)
- A rear open framed building.
- Parking to front directly off street.
- Existing gates.
- Boundary landscaping (trees, hedges)





3. EXISTING LAWFUL USE

- 3.1 The church is currently operation under permission 241396 but with condition 8 limiting use to 4 hours per week for 35 people.
- 3.2 The applicants originally suggested 35 people as the building only has smaller rooms, but a new hall will be able to cater for 50 on basically the same footprint.

PEOPLE ASSESSMENT

- 3.3 The previous commercial use was secured by certificate and catered for

Heavy Lorries 11 = 11 drivers

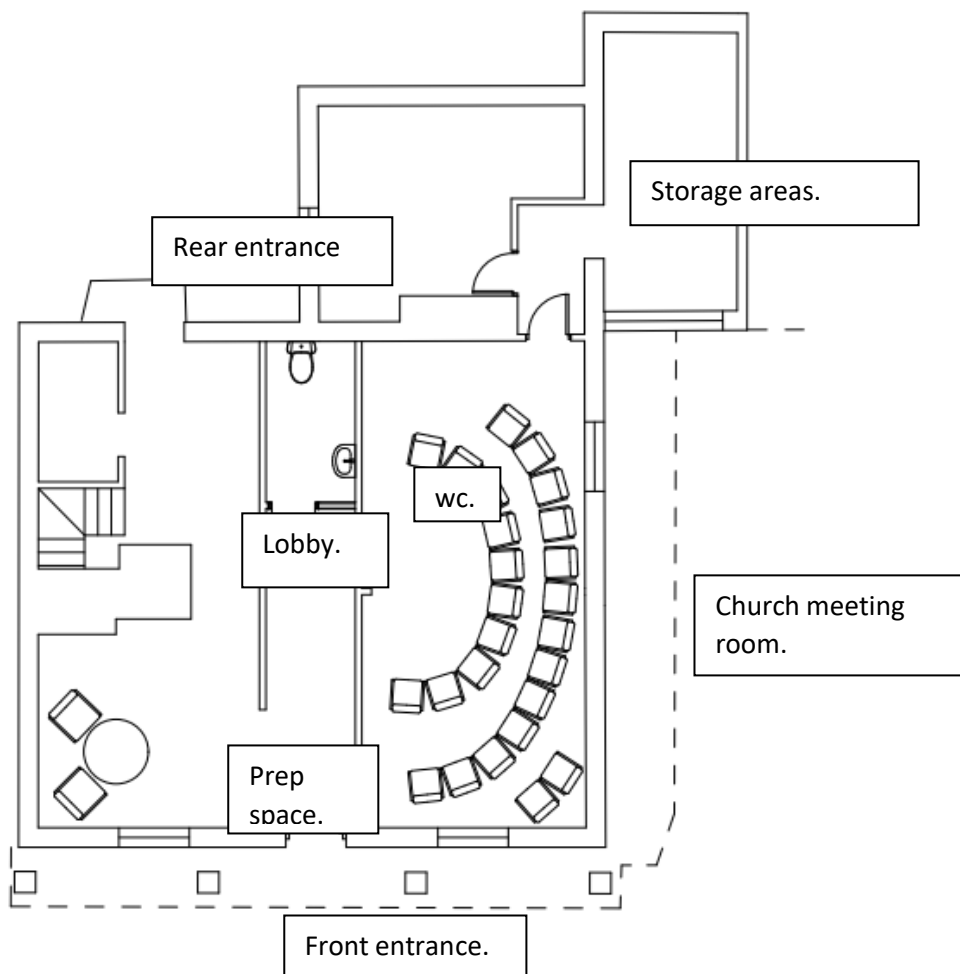
Offices = photographs show generally 4 cars parked to the front

Use was 6 days a week all day.

Use would have involved visitors and deliveries.

- 3.4 A reasonable conclusion would be that up to 20 people would have been on site through the working week.
- 3.5 This would deliver 20 x 37 (working week) = **740 hours of attendance**

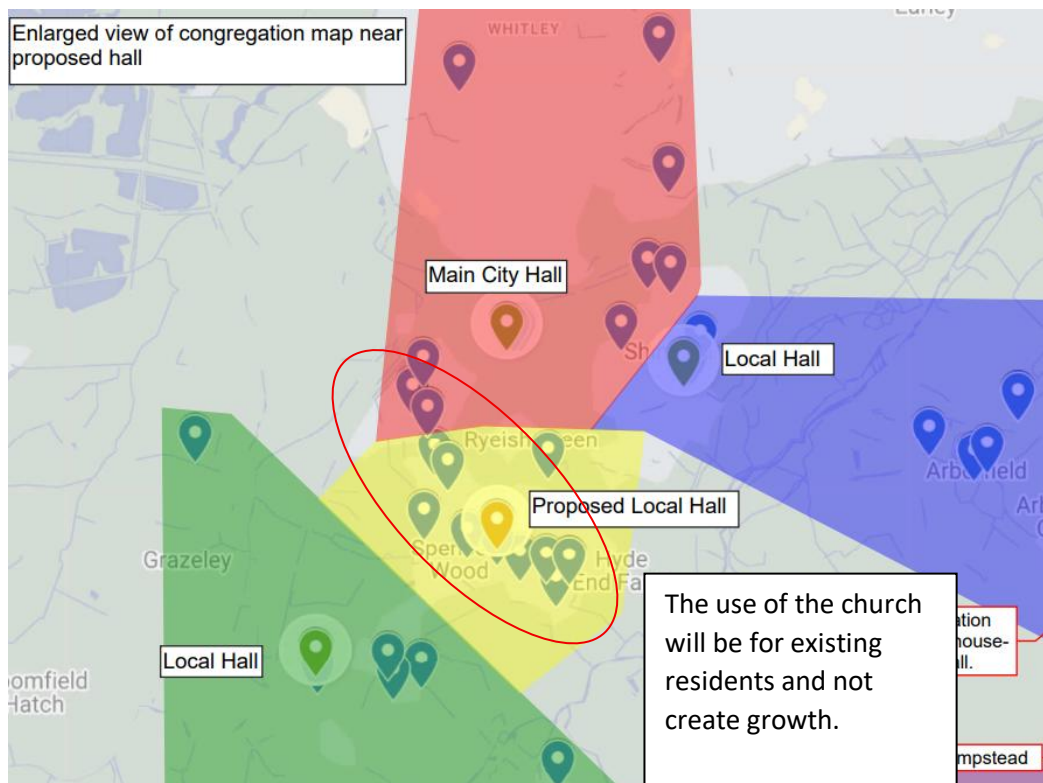
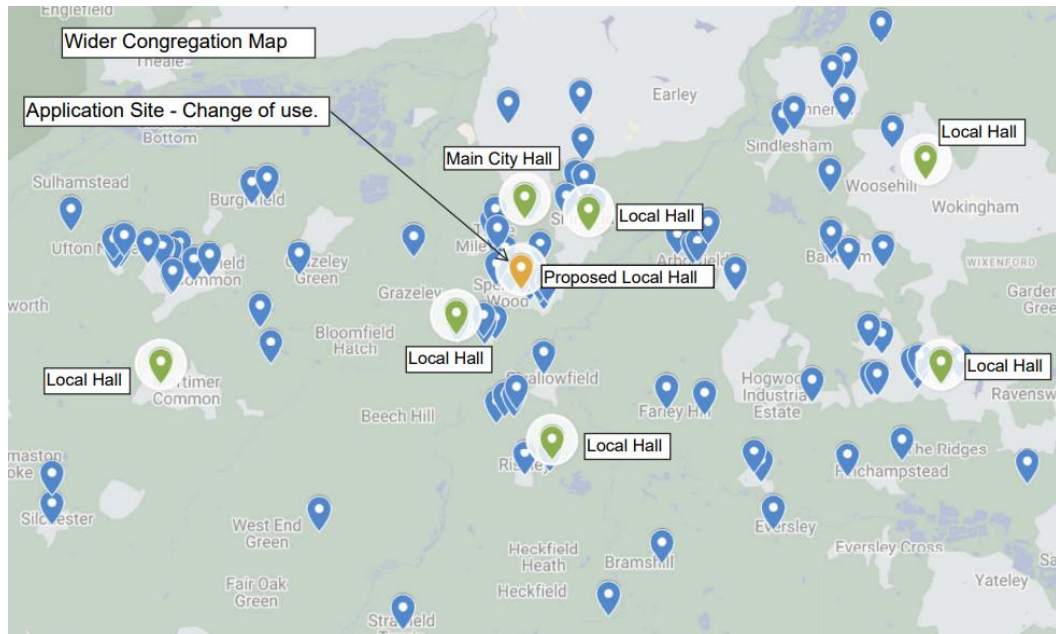
- 3.6 The existing permission allows for 4 services (of 1 hour) for 35 people.
- 3.7 This creates **140 hours of attendance**. A significant reduction, but only because the existing change of use could only use a single room within the site. The reduction was therefore significantly artificially reduced.



The maximum attendance at the hall would be 35, with the floor plan showing seating for 25 persons.

3.8 The new hall will not bring new households from outside the area into the zone to use the church. It will serve 50 people already local to the area.

3.9 The new hall will enable 13 existing households to be catered for.



3.10 The proposed new hall will be 4 one hour services for 50 people. This creates **200 hours of attendance.**

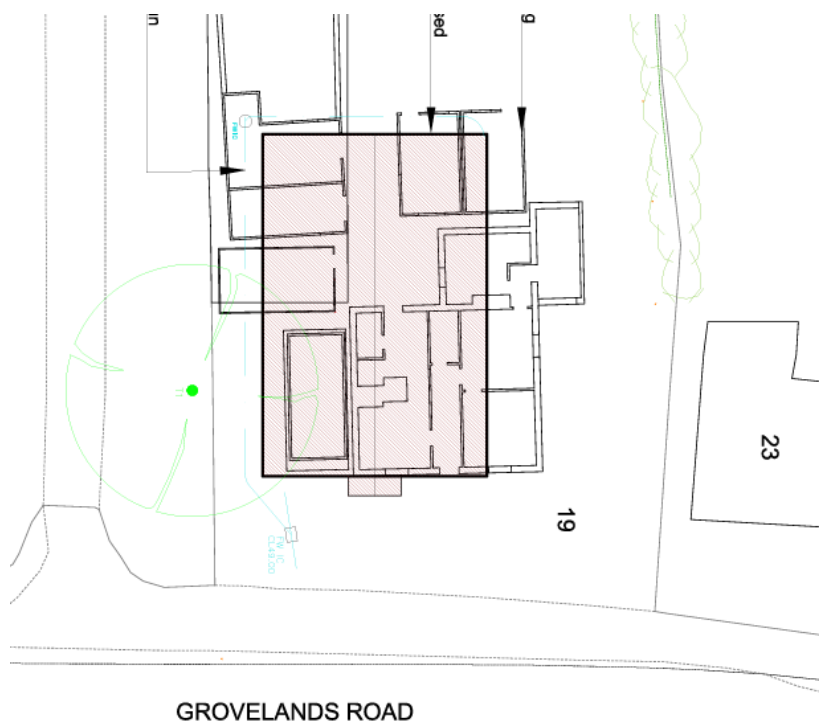
3.11 The hall is not a major increase and it will not bring other people into the area as surrounding halls already exist to serve outlying areas.

COMMERCIAL ORIGINAL USE 740 hours

CURRENT CHURCH USE 140 hours

NEW CHURCH 200 hours

3.12 Overall, there has been a significant reduction, and the change of use was only for a staged approach, but the permanent new hall is a major reduction from previous use.



increased

Floor space is not

5. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

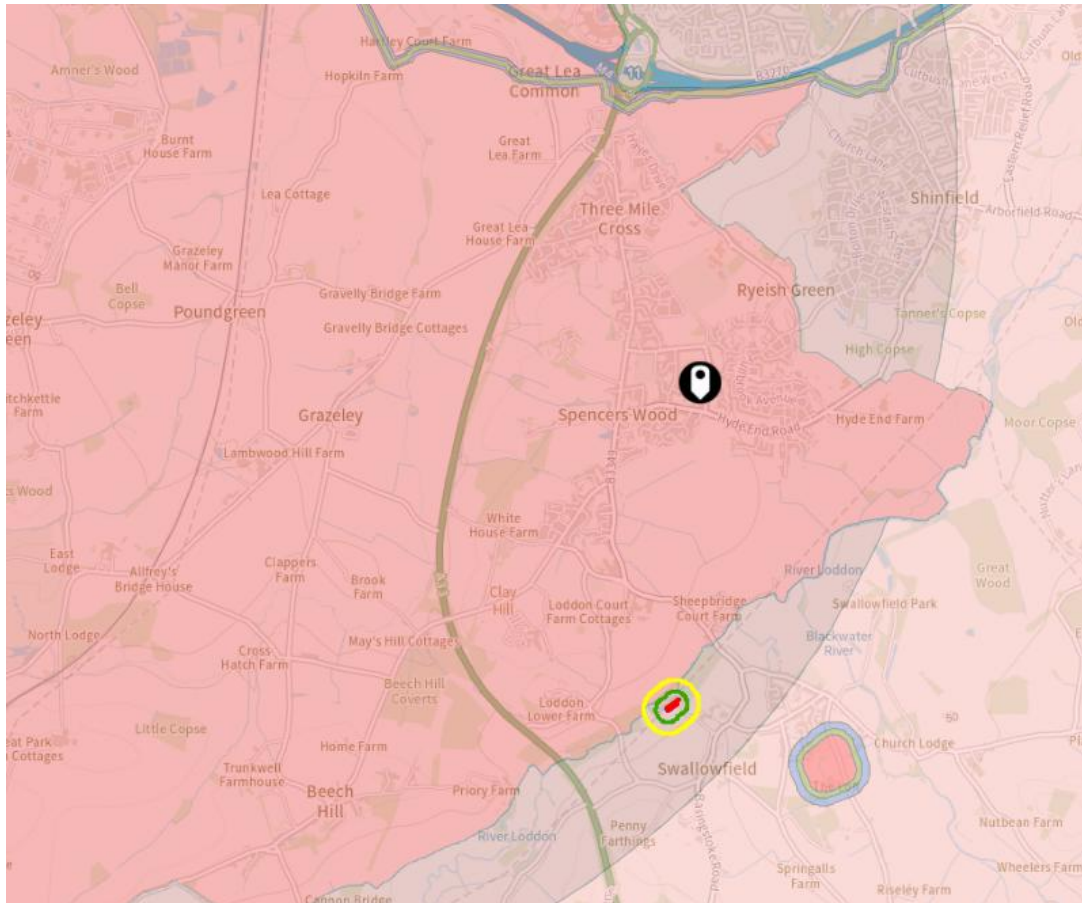
5.1 The key policy in relation to AWEIA is TB04.

Policy TB04: Development in vicinity of Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE), Burghfield	
1. Development will only be permitted where the applicant demonstrates that the increase in the number of people living, working, shopping and/or visiting the proposal (including at different times of the day) can be safely accommodated having regard to the needs of "Blue light" services and the emergency off-site plan for the Atomic Weapons Establishment site at Burghfield. 2. The applicant will need to provide this information where the proposal exceeds the scale of development detailed below for the consultation zone as defined on the Policies Map.	
Consultation Zone (Distance from AWE Burghfield)	Scale of development
Inner (0 - 1.5 km) <i>This corresponds with the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ) for the site</i>	All residential or non-residential applications where one or more additional person may live, work, shop and/or visit (all applications except house extensions, shop fronts, advertisements, Listed Building, Conservation Area consent, prior notifications and telecommunications).
Middle (1.5 – 3 km)	All residential or non-residential applications where 50 or more additional people may live, work, shop and/or visit.
Outer (3 - 5 km)	All residential or non-residential applications where 500 or more additional people may live, work, shop and/or visit.

5.2 The new church will not create any residential development, increase or growth. It will serve existing residents in households already in the area.

5.3 The new church will still result in a significantly reduced overall activity and use from the previous lawful depot CLE use.

- 5.4 The site is located at the outer edge of the Detailed emergency planning Zone (DEPZ) AWE Burghfield.



- 5.5 The interactive policy map states –

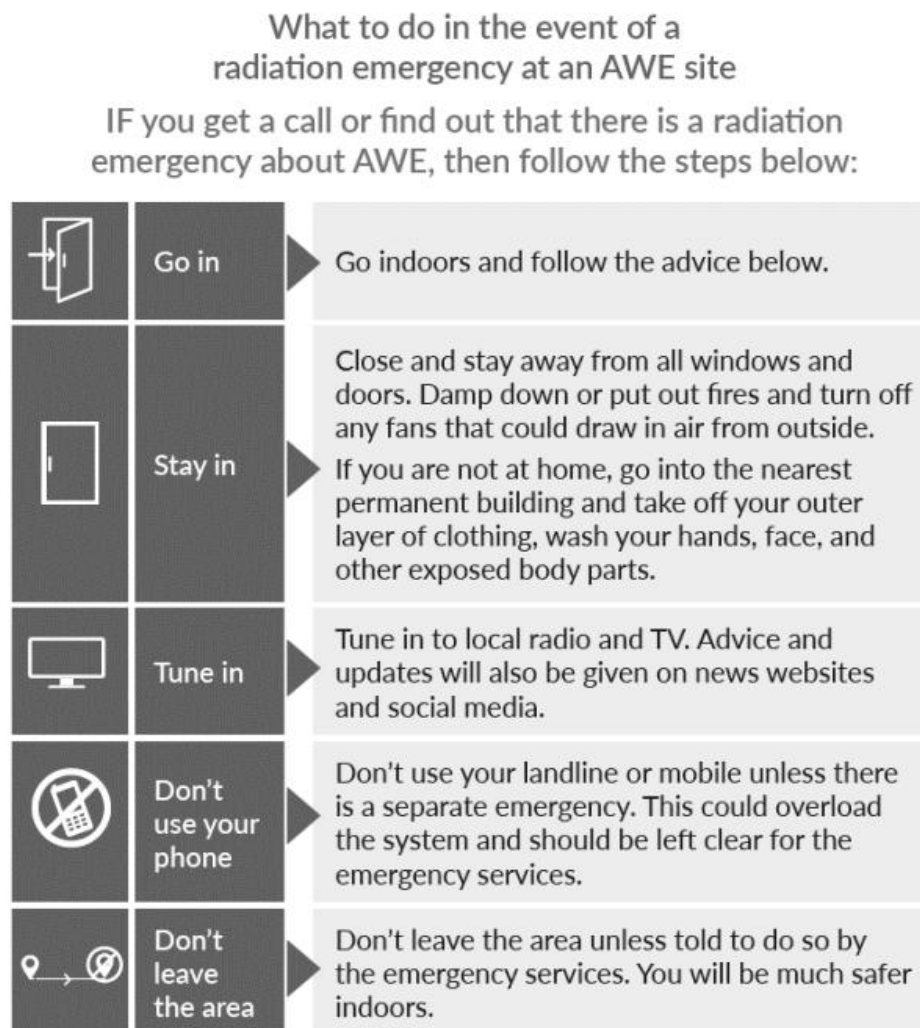
Planning applications for: Any new development, re-use or re-classification of an existing development that could lead to an increase in residential or non-residential populations thus impacting on the off-site emergency plan; or, any new development, re-use or re-classification of an existing development that could pose an external hazard to the site.

NB: This is the Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ).

- 5.6 The new hall will not increase people in the area of the zone; it serves existing households.

6. MANAGEMENT PLAN

- 6.1 Management plans are already in place for the existing use. These can be updated prior to use of the new hall.



- 6.3 The key principle is to achieve sheltering in any event scenario, prior to being safe for going home.

6.5 In many scenarios' churches are used as refuge centres for residents affected. Any users can remain in the building with short term provision of food, drink and communication networks for the church use.

6.6 In relation to evacuation - You should not evacuate unless you are told to do so. Normally, the safest place for you is in a building, which may be for several days depending on the situation. However, if you need to be evacuated urgently from the area, you will be told how this will be done and what you need to do by the emergency responders. The site will have improved adequate access and turning space for emergency vehicles, should evacuation become necessary. The emergency procedure will involve.

1. You should go into the nearest permanent building immediately, and stay there.

This is because contamination levels are likely to be higher outside buildings than inside. Staying inside is the most important advice because the fabric of the building will provide a layer of protection against any ionising radiation and will reduce exposure to any radioactive particles.

2. If you are outside and in the downwind area, as advised by the emergency services, at the time of the incident, you may benefit from decontaminating yourself.

Take off your outer layer of clothing can remove up to 90% of radioactive material. Wash your face, and other exposed body parts at a sink or tap.

3. As a precautionary measure, everyone within the DEPZ area will be advised to shelter in the initial response stages of a radiation emergency. Sheltering may be necessary for up to 48 hours.

4. Keep any Pets inside. If any were outside at the time of the emergency these should be kept separate in a room or building.

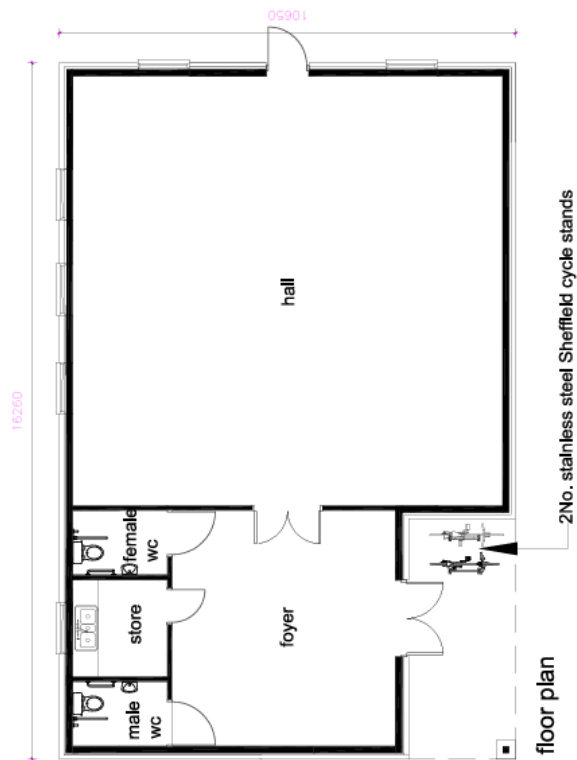
5. Close all windows and doors to stop radioactive particles from entering the building

6. Turn off air-conditioning units. These may draw air in from outside so should be shut down to minimise the risk of particles entering the building

7. Observe news websites or listen to local radio for instructions/updates. During an emergency, updates will be broadcast regularly.

8. Do not make phone calls by landline or mobile, or use mobile data. This is important because the phone system could be overloaded, preventing the emergency services and other responders from receiving or making calls, or from contacting you. You can still call 999 in an emergency.

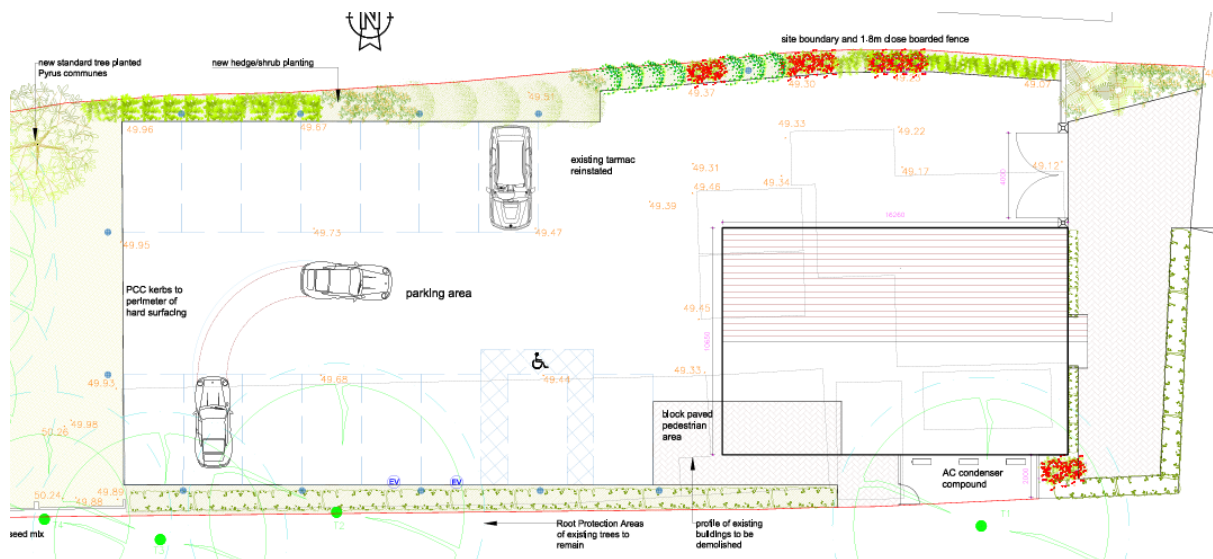
9. Stay where you are. The main risk at AWE is from Alpha radiation, which is why you will be safer to stay where you are rather than travelling around outside; vehicles provide less protection against ionising radiation than houses and other solid buildings. If you try to leave the area, roads could quickly become gridlocked and prevent access for emergency services. By leaving, you could also end up in an area with more radioactive contamination. It is very unlikely that an evacuation would be necessary but, if that does happen, details of what to do will be given.



The hall is limited in size and has facilities for temporary safety in the event of an incident – toilets available.

Windows are limited to ensure safety from any blasts.

The site could also be used by emergency services if necessary in time of crisis, it could form a base with parking for emergency vehicles.



7. CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The replacement hall is a continuation of the existing lawful use.
- 7.2 The hall whilst larger only serves existing local residents.
- 7.3 An average 50 attendance only delivers 200 hours on site.
- 7.4 The previous commercial use was 740 hours.
- 7.5 The existing use is 140 hours, but even turning the existing site back into a dwelling for a family of 5 would create 840 hours 5 x 24 (day) x 7 (week)
- 7.6 The church use is the lowest even at 200 by a large margin to either commercial or housing use. The footprint of the new building is the same as existing.
- 7.2 The use of the church will be for existing households already in the area. The level of use is approximately 50 people in a controlled environment; it is not open to drop in unscheduled visits.
- 7.3 The use will not create any residential growth or put additional people at risk.
- 7.4 The risk from this AWE Impact Assessment is considered low and not an issue in relation to policy TB04.