

# DESIGN STATEMENT

PROPOSED FACILITY CENTRE FOR  
WATER SPORTS ACTIVITIES AT  
FENIT, CO. KERRY

CLIENT: KERRY COUNTY COUNCIL AND FÁILTE IRELAND



[PLANNING] AUGUST 2023

TADHG CASEY ARCHITECTS

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## 0.1 Introduction

Fáilte Ireland has identified the need for Facility Centres for Water Based Activities to be developed throughout the country and engaged MCA Architects to develop an exemplar design for these facilities. This exemplar is being developed at several locations nationwide, Fenit being one location.

Kerry County Council is charged with developing these facilities in Kerry and appointed a Design Team led by Tadhg Casey Architects to do so in Fenit.

This report describes the design approach to incorporate a new Water Activity Centre at the entrance to Fenit beach, the design challenges and constraints at this site and the immediate public realm.

This report has been researched and written by Tadhg Casey MRIAI, B.Architecture, B.Sc. Arch. Tech, Dip.CL.

In summary the building design has endeavoured to responded sensitively to the site and surrounds whilst meeting all planning and development management standards. This is demonstrated by an architectural design response to site and context by locating a building footprint which can be accommodated on the site whilst ensuring the proper planning and sustainable development of the area.



**Comhairle Contae Chiarraí**  
**Kerry County Council**



# 01.

# Background

## 1.1 Fenit Village

Fenit is a scenic village in County Kerry, on the north shore of Tralee Bay. Fenit has a unique character, with a juxtaposition of large infrastructure, in terms of the railway line and harbour, amidst striking natural beauty. The village is an increasingly popular destination for visitors, with activities such as the recently opened Tralee Fenit Greenway, open water sea swimming, sailing, snorkelling, sea kayaking and fishing drawing people in. Visitors and locals alike make use of the beaches and walks, with their spectacular views over Tralee Bay. Fenit pier is located adjacent to Locke's beach, which has Blue Flag Status, and is also a popular walking and recreational fishing destination linking the pier with the village.

Fenit Marina, built in 1997, is a 130-berth marina located at Fenit Harbour and connected to the land by an 800m causeway and viaduct. The marina caters to leisure craft for boats from 6m to 15m in length with an approach depth of 5m which provides access at all tidal levels. Fenit harbour traditionally served as the merchants' port for Tralee. Coal, grain, timber, etc., were landed during the 20th century with oil and cranes becoming the main cargo until the fuel distribution base was dismantled in the late 1990s. The main deep sea pier is 175m long with extensive storage facilities available. Regularly accommodating 15,000 tonne ships, the port is a very picturesque mixed use port with a marina, fishing and commercial ships.

In 1851 a lighthouse was built on the Little Samphire Island, located a few hundred meters west of Fenit pier. A large bronze sculpture of Saint Brendan was erected in 2004 on Great Samphire Island, the rock around which the harbour was built. This island has been utilised as part of the port development and its name 'Great Samphire Island' appears to refer to the height when compared to its much flatter twin, Little Samphire Island. ("Samphire" is a small flowering plant used in cookery and lends its name to the twin islands in the bay.)

## Context

### THE CONTEXT

- Charming sea-side village
- Very exposed site, provide protection
- Visual and landscape considerations;
- Residential amenity; and
- Aims of the exemplar achieved

## 1.2 Brief

The brief to the Design Team led by Tadhg Casey Architects was to;

1. Investigate whether executing the exemplar on a restricted site such as Fenit was possible
2. Depending on 1, then deliver a project to the same scale, character and specifications as the exemplar design.

The brief developed by Fáilte Ireland and MCA Architects was as follows.

The provision of a sustainable water sports based facility to provide changing / sanitary / and meeting facilities for participants engaged in water based and other sporting activities , and to support the services of the operators providing activities in an area.

Exemplar design process;  
Develop a specimen design containing all the elements / components / facility provisions that might be common to all locations.

Project Aspirations;  
Concept development based on a number of clear objectives.

1. Sustainable design
2. Accessible design access for everyone
3. Toilet provision
4. Shower provision (Internal private / external non private)
5. Changing provision (Internal private / external covered non private)
6. Meeting space Covered Induction / Training /Social
7. Secure storage locker provision
8. Equipment cleaning facility
9. Maintenance requirements
10. External Terrace, meeting / seating / Viewing point while allowing expansion of facility space in summer months

Fáilte Ireland's' goal is to create a recognisable experience. In relation to brand and identity their stated aims are;

- Delivery of a building with a strong brand identity. The exemplar design is representative of this brand identity for national outdoor water based sports facilities.

- Key to this brand identity is the final delivery of a public amenity meeting a prescribed quality in design for sustainability, material robustness, and visual aesthetic & finish, resulting in a consistent and clearly identifiable finished form.

- Consistently well maintained, offering a high quality service provision resulting in a Continuity of Experience.

# 02.

## The Site

### Context

#### OBSERVING THE CONTEXT

- Busy location
- Greenway terminus
- Views are spectacular
- Heavily trafficked by many modes of transport
- Natural environment to be conserved



View of Site Looking West. Photo: Tadhg Casey



View of Site Looking South. Photo: Tadhg Casey



View of Site Looking West. Photo: Tadhg Casey





Site at Fenit, Co Kerry





EXISTING CONTEXT



# 03.

## Site Analysis

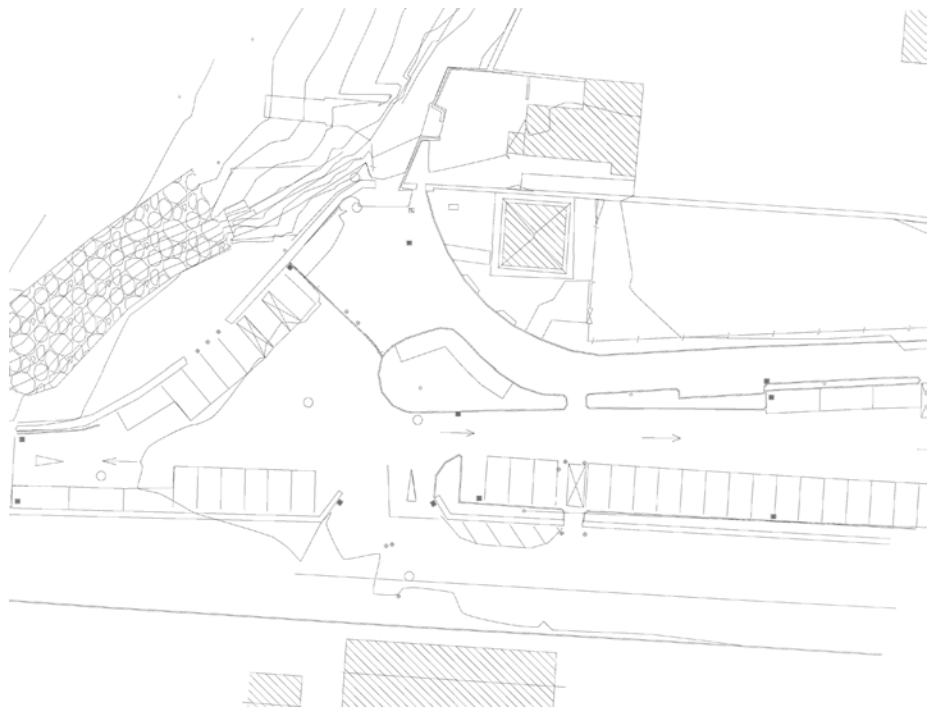
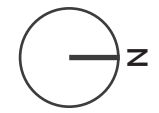
### 3.1 Introduction

Comprehensive site analysis, crucial in such a constricted site as this, was undertaken by Tadhg Casey Architects.

### Context

#### INVESTIGATING THE CONTEXT

- Observe in person, in different situations
- Desktop studies
- Awareness of the natural environment
- Visual and landscape considerations
- Residential and community amenity



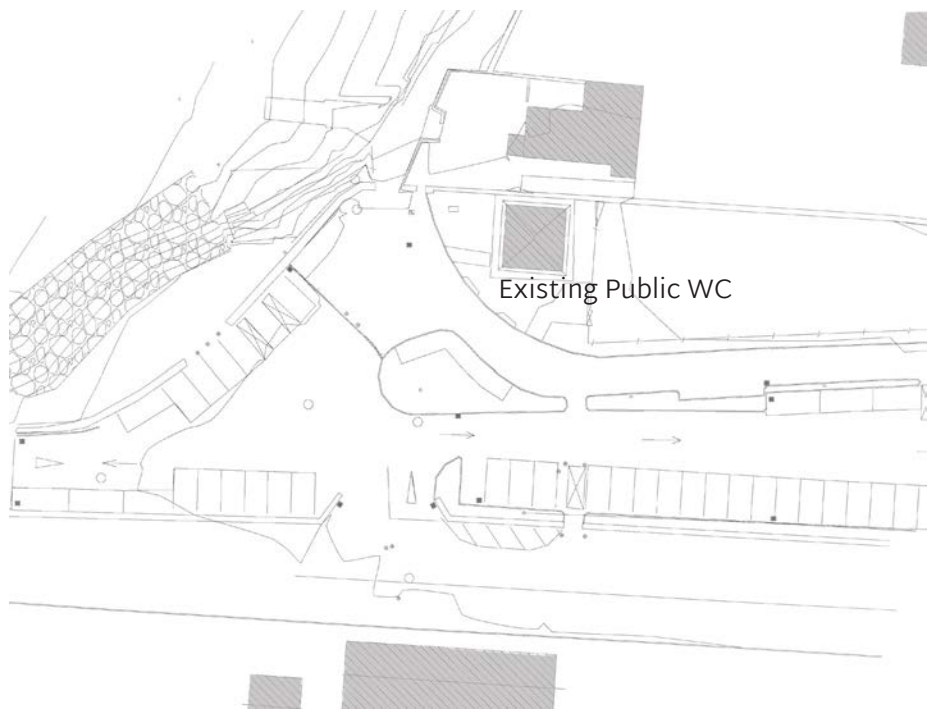
Base site



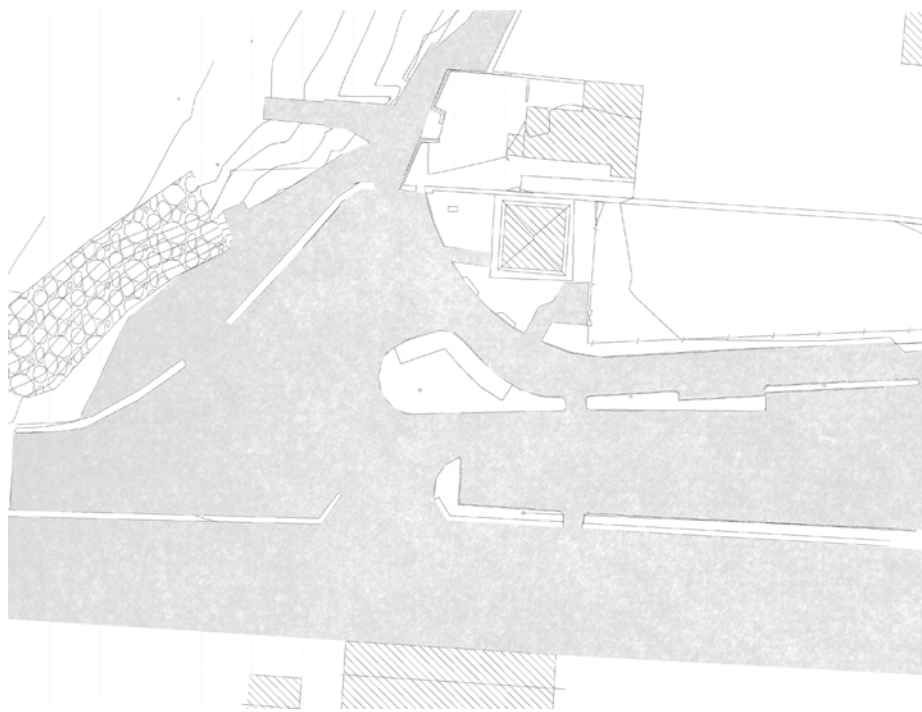
Public Realm



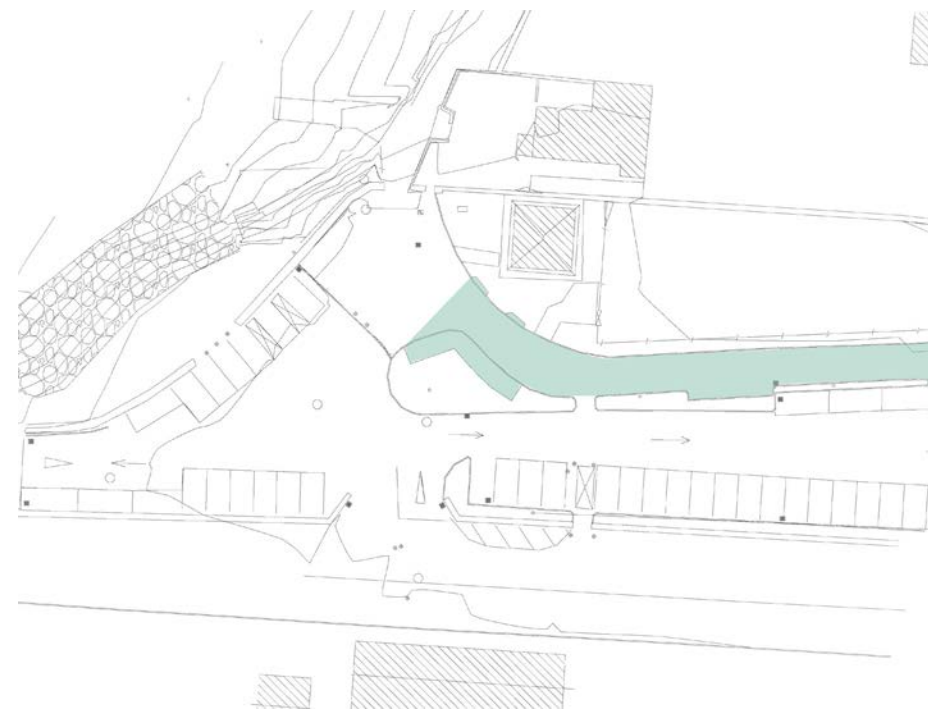
Beach realm



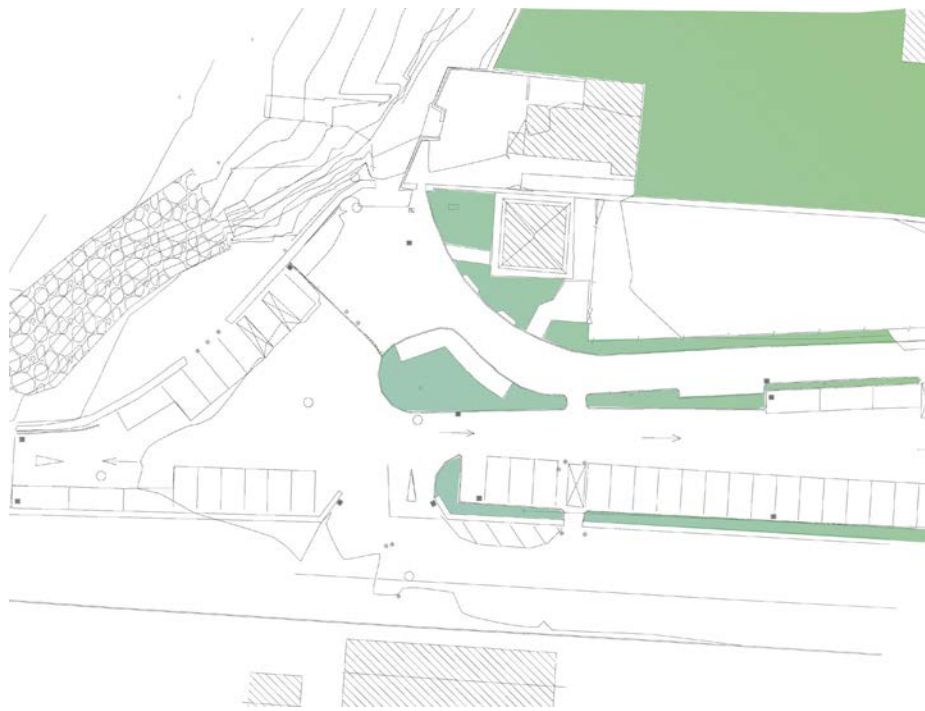
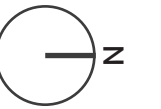
Buildings



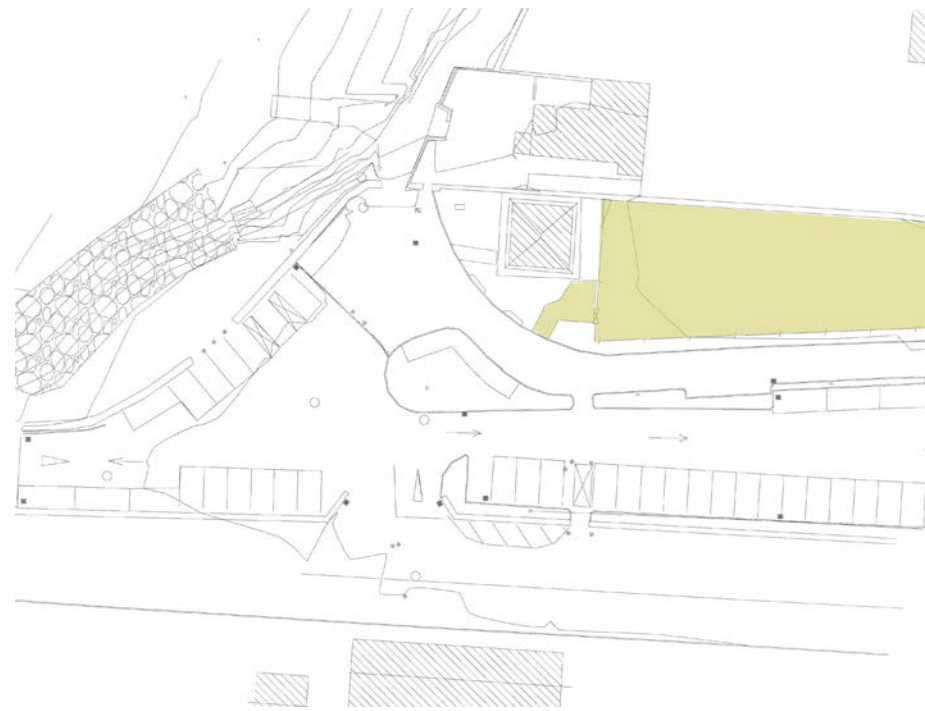
Hard standing areas



Greenway



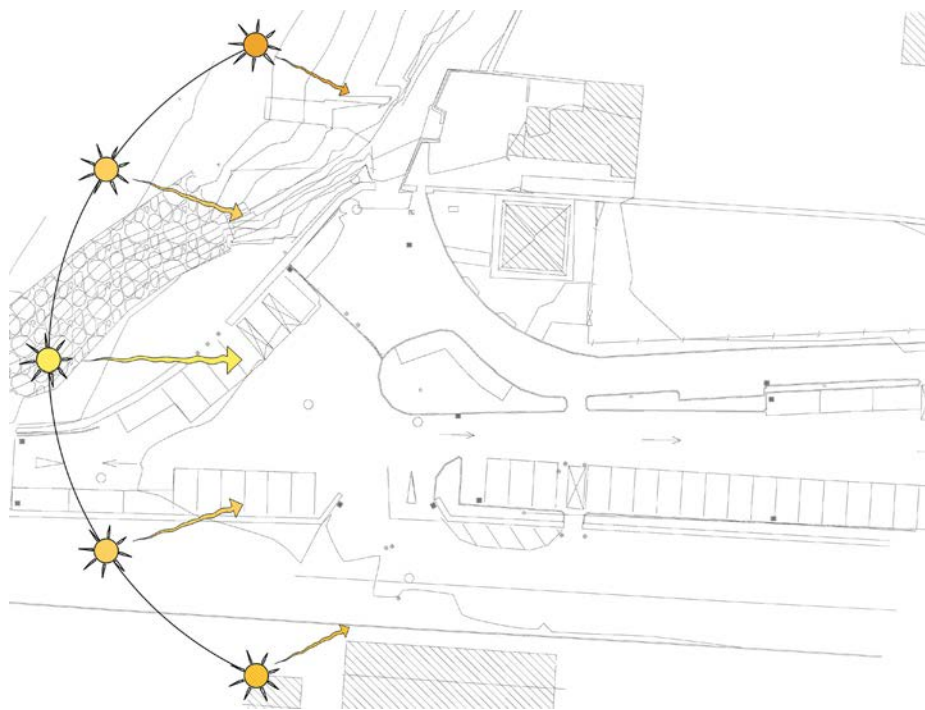
Grass



Public Playground



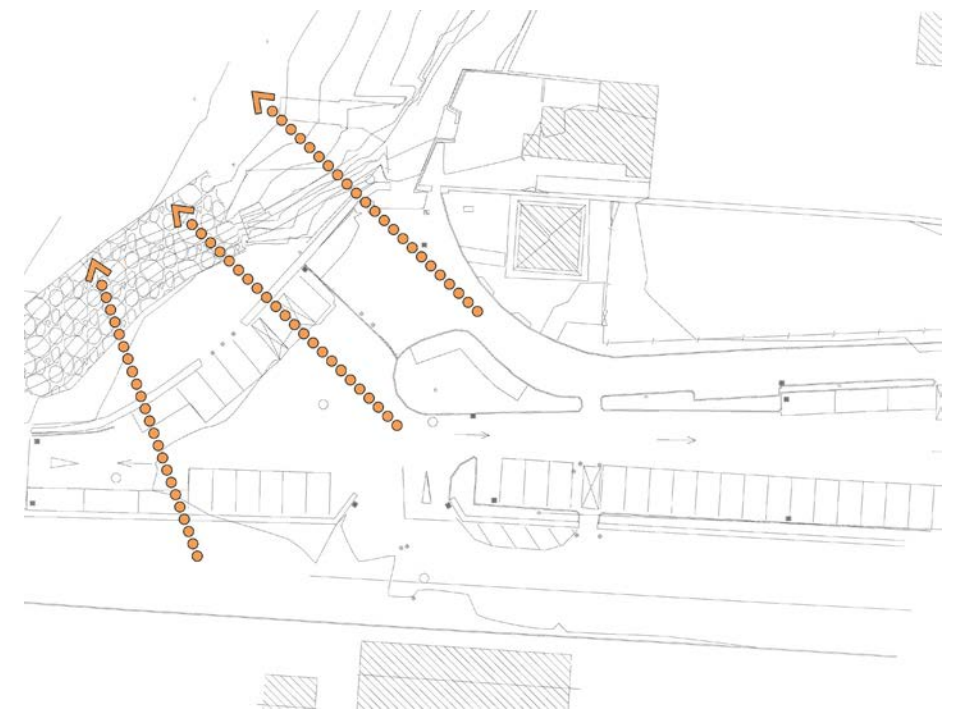
Approximate typical High water mark



Sun path diagram

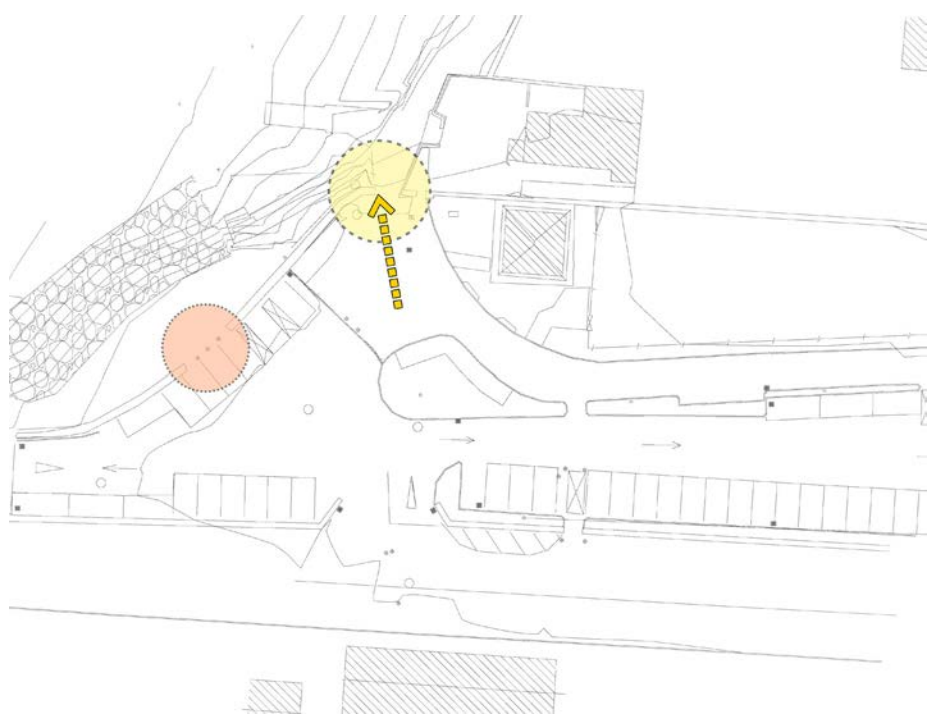
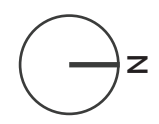


Prevailing Southwest winds

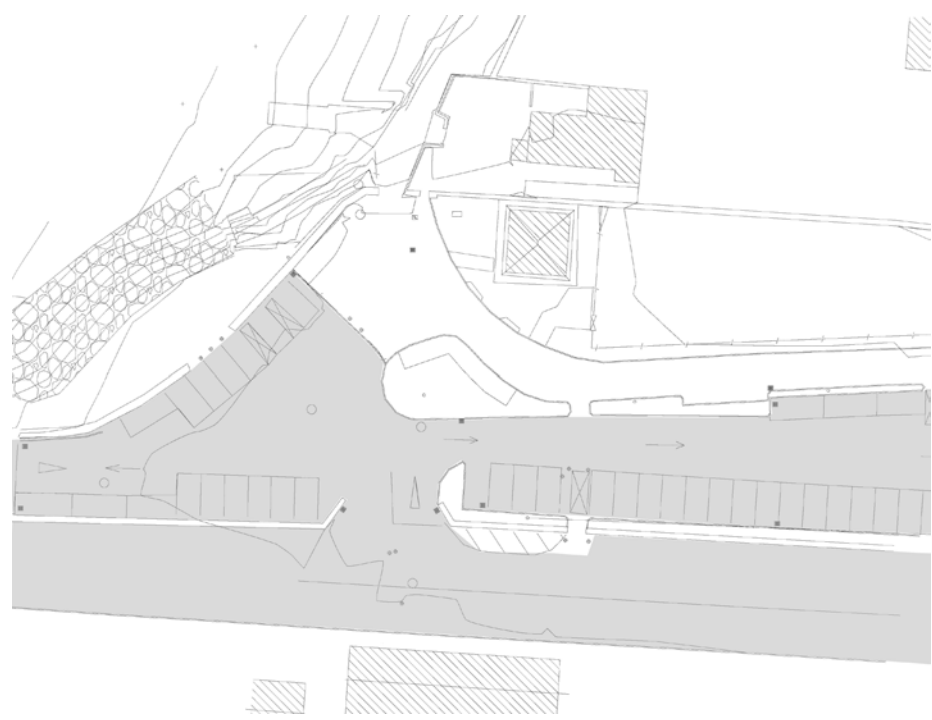


Main views





Key nodes: Beach access points: Note the yellow and it's approach - this is the main route on to the beach and is the most important node in this project. The orange is a secondary pedestrian access.



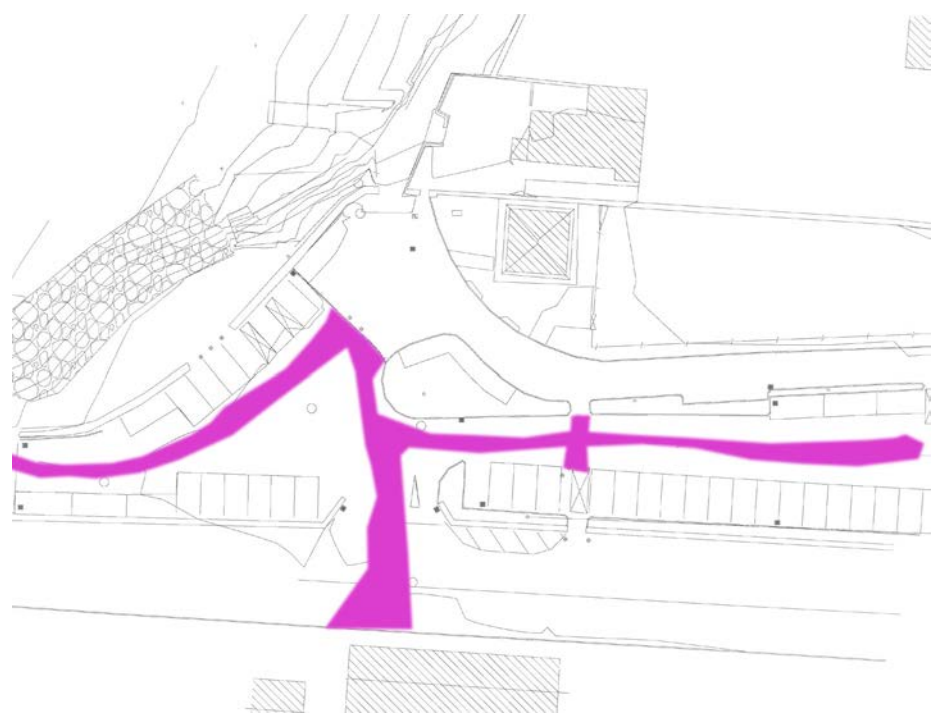
Space given over to vehicles



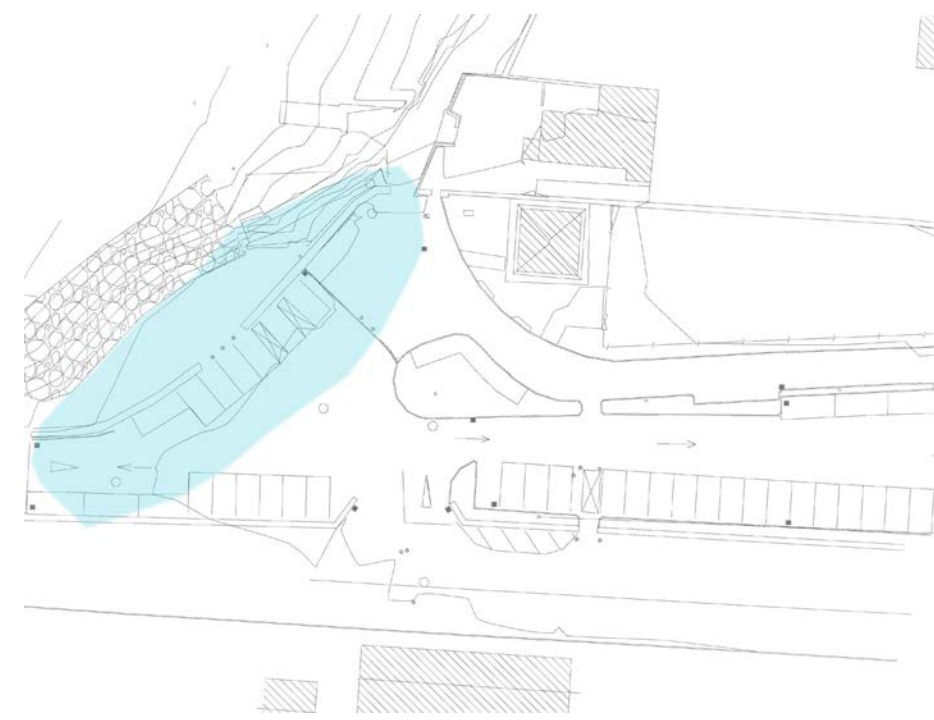
Main vehicle transit routes. Bottom - main road and parallel above - secondary car parking access route



Pedestrian trafficked zones



Zone where cars and pedestrians are sharing the space. Note these conflict zones are allocated to vehicles and are used by pedestrians on an informal shared basis.



Future Public realm opportunity - uncovered, paving, benches etc.

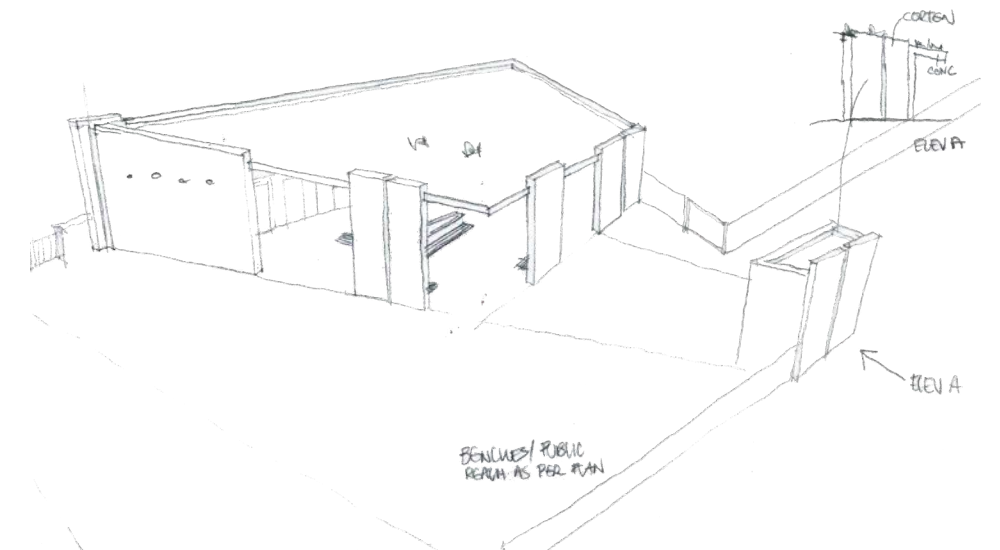
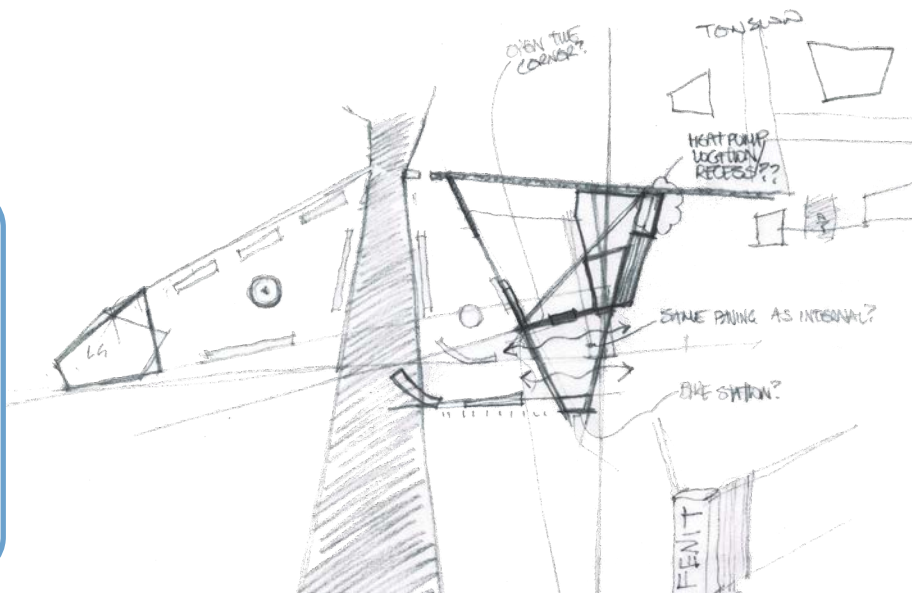
# 04.

## Development Progression

### Challenges

#### RESPONDING TO CONTEXT

- Very limited public beach frontage/usable space
- Access is limited and constricted
- Building needs to avoid access paths
- Views over entrance from main street enjoyed by community





# 4.1 Inspiration







## 4.2 Materials

The materials proposed here are chosen for their durability and identity. The predominant materials are corten steel (synonymous with the Wild Atlantic way signage), concrete and a green planted roof. PV panels will be present on the roof and contribute energy to water heating for the showers.

In order to reduce the environmental impact of concrete it is proposed to use a concrete mixture with a high GGBS content. The use of Ground granulated blast slag (GGBS) in the concrete mix will reduce the amount of carbon dioxide associated with the concrete. The result is concrete with a lower environmental impact but with the same or better durability standards as regular concrete.

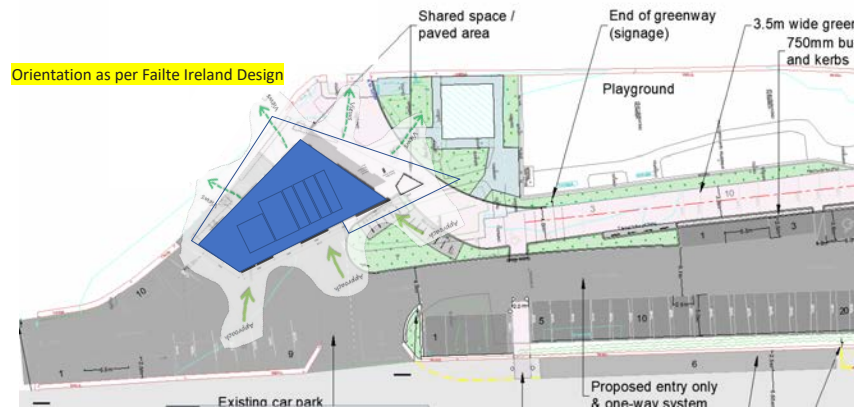
The materials in the existing building will be disposed of in accordance with Kerry County Council guidelines.

[Facility centre for water sports activities](#)

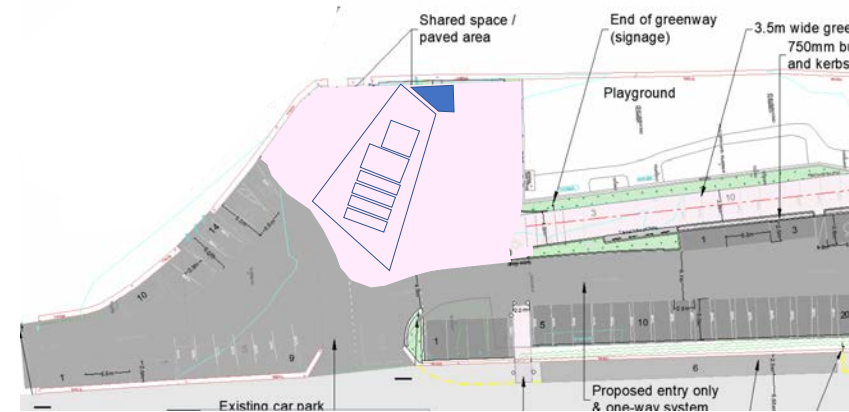


# 4.3 Exploring Placement Options

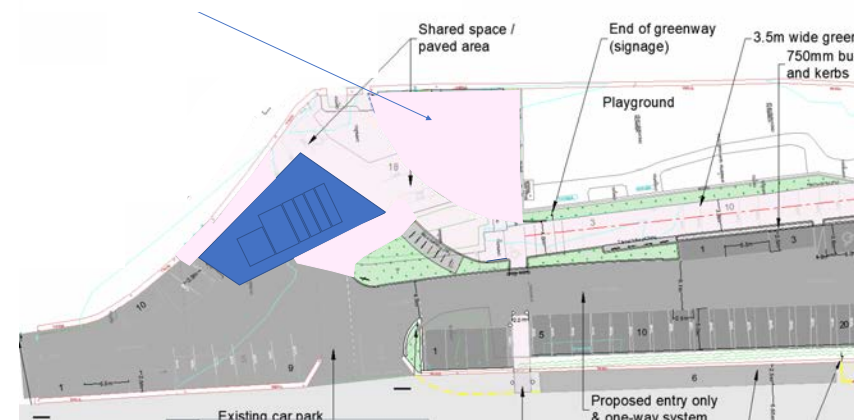
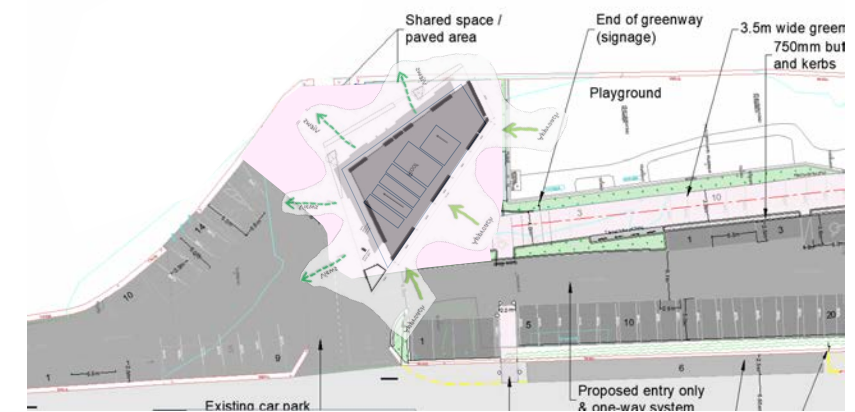
Option 1 : Facility as per FI design and orientation



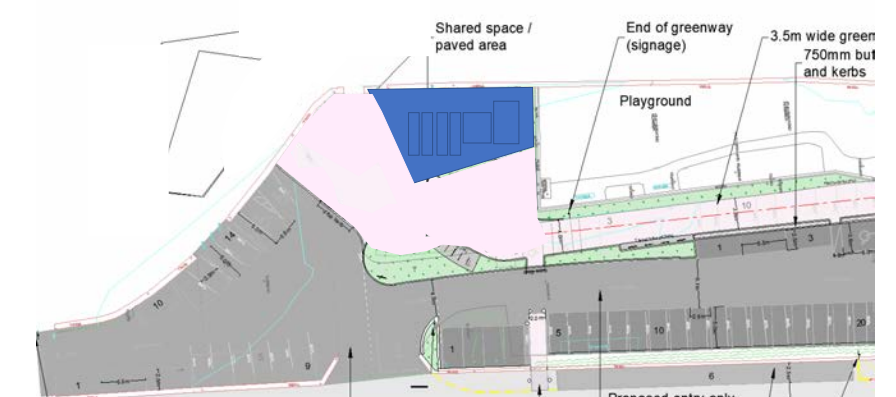
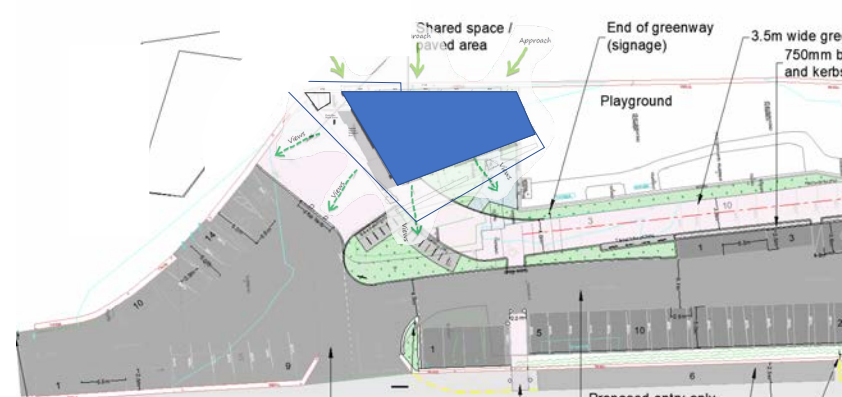
Option 2 : FI mirrored and orientated towards west



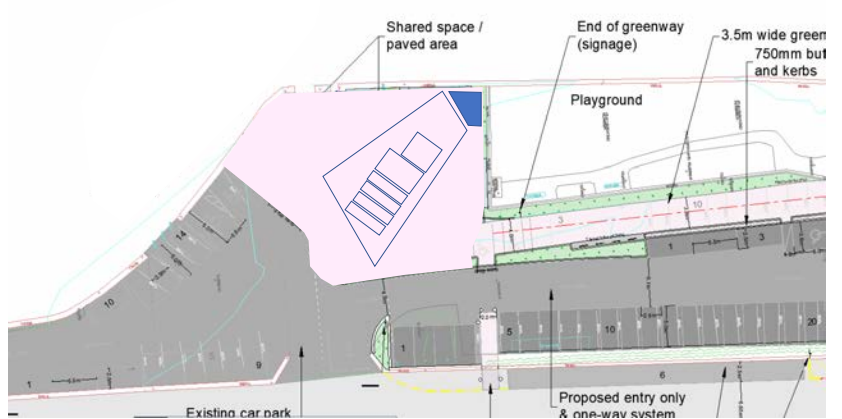
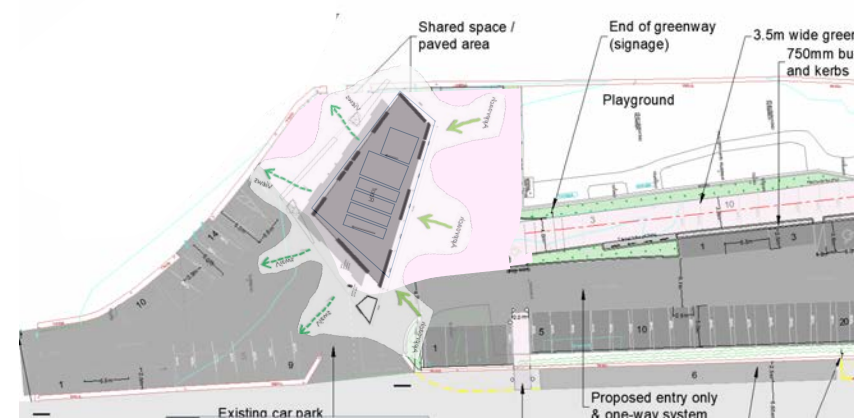
Option 3 : FI design mirrored and increased orientated towards west



Option 4 : FI Design positioned on existing facility footprint



Option 2 : FI mirrored and orientated towards west



## EXPLORING PLACEMENT OPTIONS

The options shown were examined by the Local Authority, Tadhg Casey Architects further examined placement options. It can be seen in the figures here, and was concluded that due to site constraints, in all cases one side of the exemplar design would not have any or enough passive surveillance, as well as failing other criteria such as access, views etc. Therefore it was concluded that the exemplar design would have to be altered for this location.



# 05.

# Development Proposal

## DESIGN AIMS AND OUTCOMES

- Achieving brief
- Strong presence, Improves Public Realm
- Minimising impact on surroundings
- Secure and Safe
- Community benefit

## 5.1 Proposed Location

The conclusion of the site analysis and exploration of placement was to locate the new building on the site of the current public toilets. It is proposed to demolish the existing building. Temporary toilet facilities will be provided during the course of construction of the new building.

This location was the only viable location due to the many site constraints. As can be seen on the previous page the other options would either impact access to the beach, views, roads or would have insufficient passive surveillance.

There is a recently granted planning permission to the west of the proposed site. A cafe and apartments is proposed on the site of a derelict cottage. In so far as was possible, the facility for water sports design outlined here has paid close attention and respect to this proposed development.

## 5.2 Proposed Design

The proposed design takes its inspiration and origin from the Fáilte Ireland exemplar design including its basis as a building that provides shelter but it not heated or fully enclosed. However, here in Fenit the form is heavily modified and these modifications are derived from the site characteristics. The main access to Locke's beach is key to maintain and this generates the form of the building on plan as well as the form and layout of the public realm improvements. The building is also influenced by achieving passive surveillance into the building to make it safer as well as making it feel safer. The proposed design necessitates the use of minor area of ground that is currently in the existing playground. To compensate for this loss benches will be installed on the external walls to the playground and all existing elements affected (primarily the swings and palm trees) will be relocated elsewhere in the playground where sufficient space exists to do this. Public realm improvements ensure that the space is made safer and more enjoyable for pedestrian and cyclist

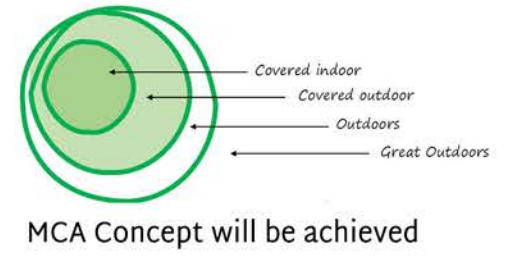
The main accommodations within the building are illustrated in the following pages.

## 5.3 Accessibility

The proposed design has a determined emphasis on accessibility and inclusion. Best practice has been followed with the result that Fenit will be a much more usable and welcoming place for people of all abilities when this facility is operating. The key features that lead to greater inclusiveness and accessibility are;

- 'Changing Places' facility which is now international good practice, this allows changing and care of people with needs that require more space to change and shower, a changing table, hoists among other features.
- Fully accessible 'Part M' WC and shower room.
- An extra 'Part M' accessible car parking space to the south.
- A new accessible set down area to the east which can accommodate larger mini-bus type vehicles for people with special needs. This will complement the 'Changing Place' changing room. 4no. existing car parking spaces will be lost to achieve this.
- Storage for beach wheelchairs.
- All features will be maximised to be as age-friendly, autism-friendly, inclusive and accessible as possible.

# 5.4 Proposed Plan



- KEY:**
- Beach wheelchair storage
  - Induction
  - Plant & Maintenance
  - Showers (4 Regular, 1 Family, 1 Accessible, 1 'Changing Place')
  - Lockers 45no.
  - Toilets (3 Regular, 1 Accessible, 1 'Changing Place')
  - Changing (2 Regular, 2 Family, 1 Accessible, 1 'Changing Place')
  - Bike Repair Station

Main Access protected  
 Neighbours Right of way protected

Secondary Access protected

Quality Public realm works

Benches to wall

Passive surveillance views = safe covered areas

Greenway realigned and terminated

'Pillar' concept enables the building and public realm to appear more elegant, incorporate form of the exemplar further and to announce the end of the greenway and beginning of the beach and facilities in architectural form.



# 5.5 Safety and Security

## PASSIVE SURVEILLANCE HIGHLIGHTED

Public Changing areas are designed to be overlooked from public areas so as to be as safe as possible. The design includes hidden sliding gates of corten metal to securely close the building when it is not in use.

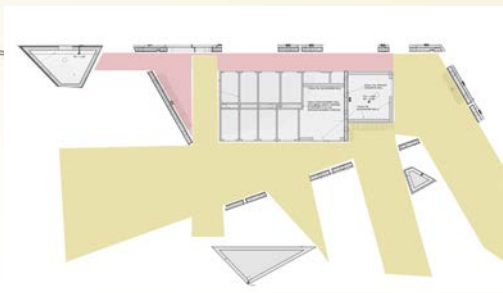
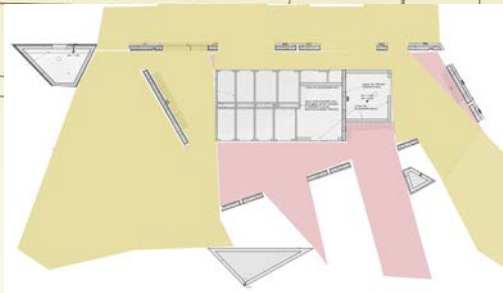


### THE EXEMPLAR IN FENIT

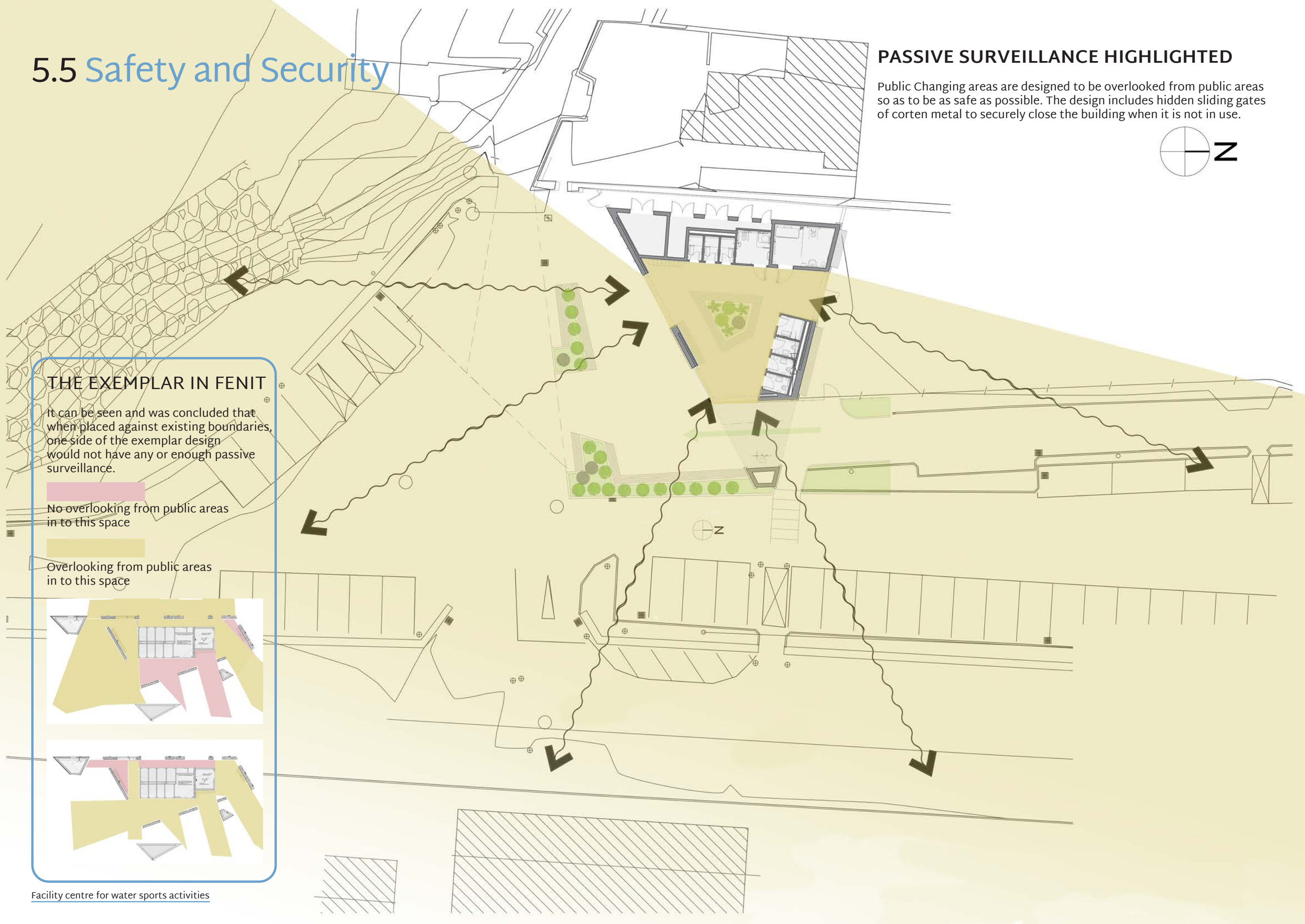
It can be seen and was concluded that when placed against existing boundaries, one side of the exemplar design would not have any or enough passive surveillance.

No overlooking from public areas in to this space

Overlooking from public areas in to this space



Facility centre for water sports activities



# 06.

## 3D Imaging





Above: Aerial showing existing site, looking south-west. Image: Tadhg Casey Architects



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Above: Aerial looking south-west with proposed building in situ. Image: Tadhg Casey Architects





Above: Aerial showing existing site, looking south. Image: Tadhg Casey Architects



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Above: Aerial looking south with proposed building in situ. Image: Tadhg Casey Architects





Above: Aerial showing existing site, looking north-east. Image: Tadhg Casey Architects





Above: Aerial looking north-east with proposed building in situ. Image: Tadhg Casey Architects



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Above: Proposed building and public realm improvements viewed from south. Image: Tadhg Casey Architects



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Above: Proposed building viewed from north. Image: Tadhg Casey Architects



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Above: Proposed building viewed from west. Image: Tadhg Casey Architects