

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

ROWLAND RANK CENTRE
ALDWICK ROAD
BOGNOR REGIS
WEST SUSSEX
PO21 3QQ



INTRODUCTION

This document sets out the Design & Access Statement to accompany the Full Plans application for an extension and alterations to the Rowland Rank Centre.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The history of the Rowland Rank Centre in Bognor Regis is strongly tied to the development of the local community.

The RRC was originally an agricultural barn (known as Hammonds Barn and New Barn variously) as part of the farm of some 200 acres which Rowland Rank purchased at the same time as buying and rebuilding Aldwick Place.

The land was actively farmed by Rowland Rank between the first and second world wars. He built a dairy and bred dogs, horses and cattle.

One of the large properties on the farm was not needed by Rowland Rank and he gave that building to Dr Bernardo's as a home for the children they cared for. The home was named Margaret House but was subsequently sold by the charity and new homes built on what is now known as Margaret Close.

Rowland Rank's main business was running Mark Mayhew Flour Mills in Battersea.

Following Rowland Ranks death in 1939 the family were forced, over time, to sell the majority of the small estate.

Hammonds Sussex flint barn became an isolated disused barn soon surrounded by new houses.

There had always been a plan to convert the barn into a building for wider community use but it wasn't until the Lions Club of Bognor Regis became involved in 1982 that a way of making this possible became apparent.

The Rank family obtained outline planning permission for a centre before selling the rest of the land. John Rank wanted to have the centre named in honour of his late father, Rowland Rank – brother of the more widely known J Arther Rank.

The local Lions Club took on what has been its biggest project to carry out the conversion, with a separate Charitable Trust registered, and the late Lavinia, Duchess of Norfolk as Patron, having known Rowland Rank in his lifetime.

The current Centre opened its doors in December 1988. Along with the Lion's club, initially West Sussex County Council Social Services used the new centre as a "drop in" hall for the elderly and St John Ambulance used it as a headquarters building.

It was aimed to provide a space for local residents to engage in a range of community activities. It has functioned as a hub for social events, clubs, and various local organizations. The centre's development reflects the wider trend of building community-based infrastructure during the mid-20th century, as local populations in areas like Bognor Regis expanded and people began to seek more opportunities for leisure and socializing outside of traditional venues like pubs or cinemas.

John Rank granted the Lions Club a 99 year lease on the premises and the rent is a specimen white gardenia, paid at 11am on July 11th every three years – the time and date being that of the death of Rowland Rank.

Over the past 30+ years the Centre has proved to be a wonderful facility for the town and wider community but sadly, due to present cut-backs, West Sussex County Council Social Services have withdrawn their support and use of the Centre with the subsequent loss of the main source of income. In recent years the building has become predominantly unused and currently needs some repair and renovation.

Earlier this year discussions began by the Lion's Club to find a new custodian for the Rowland Rank Centre due to the financial uncertainties of its future. Local charity PACSO have subsequently taken over the remaining lease.

CURRENT CONTEXT

PACSO came into being in the late 1990s, when Clare Elkington (an Occupational Therapist & freelance Community Playschemes coordinator) and Chris North (a social worker in the Child Disability Team) joined a focus group of professionals working with children and young people with a disability in the Chichester and Arun area, recognising the need to support parents and carers, with additional needs for respite. Clare began to organise a playscheme especially for them and a National Lottery Award provided the funds for the first playscheme in 2000.

Parents And Carers Support Organisation or PACSO, are registered with the Charity Commission and Ofsted as an out of school provider.

All children, no matter their abilities or challenges take part in designed activities around what the children can feel, hear, see, and move with. Although many of the PACSO children had developmental delays, the approach is that PACSO isn't 'school'. Designed play spaces that are safe and where all children can relax and enjoy themselves at whatever level. Learning often occurs but isn't the main goal.

PACSO services continued to grow and develop in response to the parents and carers requests, particularly for After School Clubs where children with a disability could have fun and experience activities that they were often excluded from in the mainstream.

In 2016, PACSO collaborated with Chichester Nursery School & Family Centre and bought a share in a minibus, which enabled them to collect children from the special schools to attend PACSO After School Clubs, extending the hours of respite for the parents and carers.

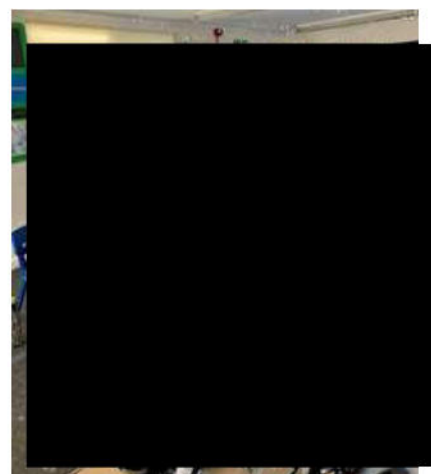
As PACSO has grown, so has our need for administrative support.

In 2016, the committee was replaced by a Board of Trustees composed of volunteers with the skills, knowledge and experience to take PACSO forward.

The Trustees have often said that their biggest asset is their incredible PACSO Team of staff and volunteers, many of whom began volunteering as teenagers, became paid Playworkers and then have gone on to qualify as Physio, Speech, and Occupational Therapists as well as Paediatric nurses.

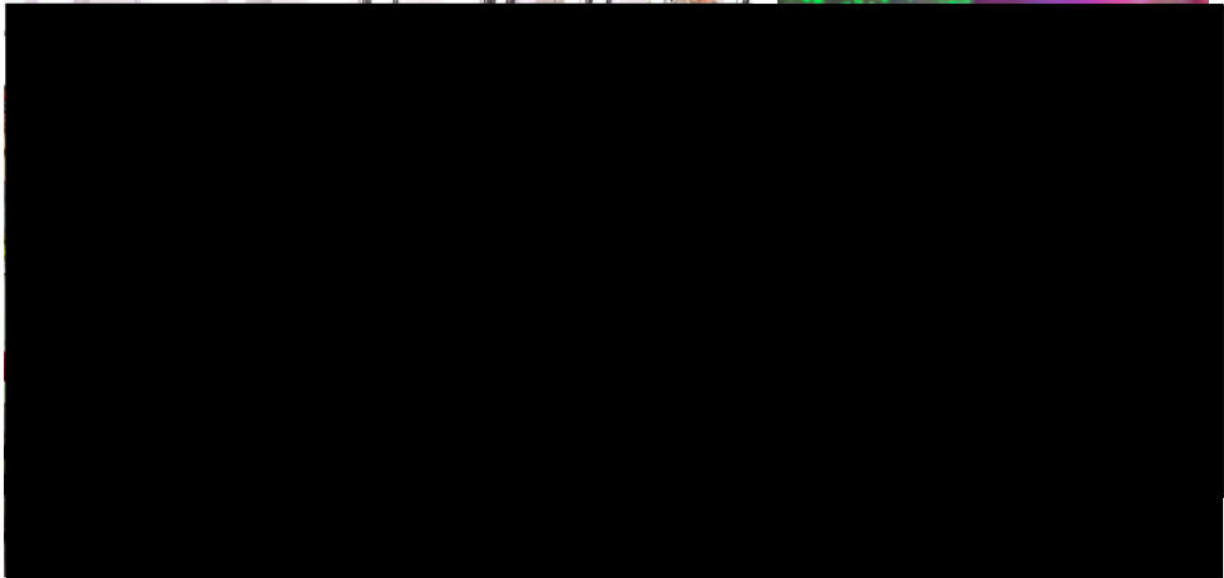
Emma Drain volunteered from school at 16, worked as a casual Playworker all through university, and then gave up her successful career in teaching to work for PACSO full time as Play Manager. In 2021, in the middle of a global pandemic, the Trustees appointed Emma as their Chief Executive Officer to lead PACSO into the next phase of our story.

PACSO has always operated from several locations. When The Venue (original base) was sold in 2014, PACSO moved the children's events to Fordwater School and the Chichester Nursery School. The office base has also moved a few times, and the dream is to have a base with everything in one place, somewhere to just open a cupboard to set up, rather than fetch and lug boxes of toys from random garages/stores before each Saturday Club, Play-Day and Youth scheme.



In 2018, the Gillbard family, as a legacy for their son Jonathan, donated land which ultimately has led to the dream of having one base for PACSO a reality.

PACSO has been going over 25 years, with a story that has evolved through connections and friendships which have lasted to create the special a very community. The Rowland Rank Centre will ultimately provide them with a long term operational base.



PROPOSED WORK

Existing timber frame storage buildings along one edge of the courtyard building will be removed in full. A new single storey extension along the length of the existing courtyard space will be built to provide specialist rooms.

Within the existing buildings left hand wing, the main entrance and lobby area will be reused and provide an adjacent reception/office space. Additional administrative, office accommodation, staff/visitor WC's will be provided along with utility room and changing space. This area will have keycode access for staff only.

The main hall will be utilized for group activities, with the introduction of folding door to split the large space into two areas if required. The stage will be removed and storage retained.

The existing kitchen will be modified to provide accessibility for all.

Within the new right hand wing, new WC's are provided with DDA accessibility. A soft play space, sensory room, workshop/activity room (for arts and crafts, music and dance) and youth room (for games, lounge and chill out area) and will provide the essential break out areas for individual or group activities.

There will be level entry and level access to all ground floor accommodation

Office/staff administrative accommodation with storage will be provide within the existing first floor accommodation.

SITE/LANSCAPING

The site is flat. No felling of existing trees is proposed as part of the works. The existing mature edged landscaping will be retained and added to. The boundaries of the property shall be retained as existing.

The addition of the ring hand wing to the set of buildings reinforces the courtyard design. This also provides a protected and safe central outdoor space for outdoor play provision. (see separate outdoor area information document).

DESIGN PHILOSOPHY

The new extension has been designed to create a visually appealing, but modern extension that complements the existing property whilst providing improved additional space. The scheme proposed relates sympathetically with the existing buildings and visually integrates with the site in design, form, and materials.

The new extension is designed to be thermally efficient, whilst providing high levels of glazing, maximising daylight and creating excellent natural ventilation through high and low level window openings with cross ventilation. Solar panel will be fixed to the new flat roof to maximise solar energy gain for the whole property.

We do not create any adverse overshadowing, overlooking or overbearing that affects the neighbouring properties. Our proposal is based on quality of design, an understanding of the location and the necessity to provide an exemplary completed project.

EXTERNAL APPEARANCE

The construction materials proposed for the new extensions reflect the existing buildings and local environment. A controlled palette of good quality materials is proposed, such as facing brickwork, flint work detailing, triple glazed powder coated aluminium glazing and slate roofing tiles.

SUSTAINABILITY

The new building will be built to exceed current environmental design requirements and comply with Building for Life Standards.

Energy consumption will be minimised by the provision of underfloor heating and solar panels to the new pitched roof.

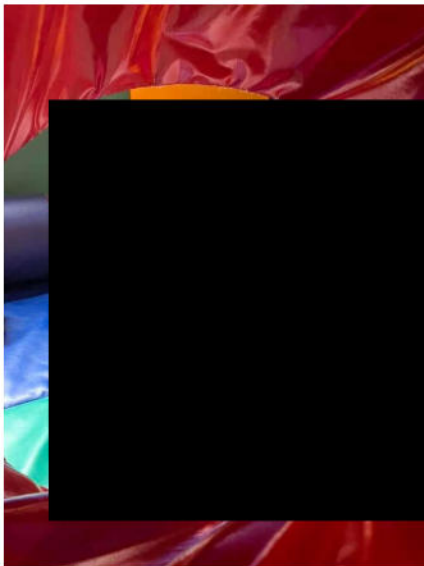
Climate change features include drought resistant planting and the natural environment and biodiversity will be protected with continued planting within the site.

PACSO encourages its staff to use public transport where possible, bicycle racks will be provided and electric charging points within the car park area.

ACCESS & PARKING

The existing access route from Aldwick Road for vehicles and pedestrians onto the site will be retained.

Existing car parking numbers will be retained (electric charging point added) and bike racks for use by staff provided.



SETTING

The dwelling is set within the built up area boundary of Aldwick.

The new extension has been sited to minimize any impact on the adjacent properties.

The site is not within an area defined as being at risk of flooding by the EA.

PLANNING ITEMS

There are no recent applications for the site.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

On Saturday 17th January 2026 following a local leaflet distribution local residents attended an open morning at the Rowland Rank Centre hosted by PACSO to explain the proposed works and future use of the building. Positive feedback was provided and all those who attended were all in favour of the reuse as described. Some wanted conifer trees removed as part of application.

CONCLUSION

Careful consideration of the impact of the scheme on the area has been undertaken. We do not create any adverse overshadowing, overlooking or overbearing that unduly affects any neighbouring properties. Our proposal is based on quality of design, an understanding of the location and the necessity to provide an exemplary completed project. The submitted scheme is appropriate and sympathetic in terms of scale, height, appearance, form, siting and layout, within the street scene. The proposal is in keeping with its surroundings and PACSO are keen to retain and enhance the area.

The proposal complies with the relevant Development Plan policies in that it would have no materially adverse effect on the visual amenities of the locality or the residential amenity of the property, nor would it have an adverse impact upon the established character of the surrounding area.