

## COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH AND NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES  
READING BOROUGH COUNCIL  
PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 20 July 2022

Ward: Coley

App No.: 211485/FUL

Address: Berkshire Record Office, 9 Coley Avenue, Reading

Proposals: Extension to the existing Berkshire Record Office

Applicant: West Berkshire Council

Deadline: An extension of time has been agreed until 29<sup>th</sup> July 2022

### RECOMMENDATION:

#### GRANT

##### Conditions to include:

- 1) TL1 - standard time limit 3 yrs.
- 2) AP1 - Approved plans.
- 3) Materials and samples to be approved (pre-commencement)
- 4) Vehicle parking in accordance with submitted details (compliance)
- 5) Landscaping scheme to be provided to be approved, to include a minimum of two Rowan trees (pre-commencement)
- 6) Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan to be provided to be approved (pre-commencement)
- 7) Ecological enhancements to be approved (pre-commencement)
- 8) BREEAM 'Good' or equivalent sustainability assessment to be submitted to be approved (pre-commencement)
- 9) BREEAM certificate or report demonstrating compliance with criteria referred to in condition above (prior to occupation)
- 10) Noise assessment to be submitted to be approved for any mechanical plant prior to installation
- 11) Hours of construction works (compliance)
- 12) No burning of materials or green waste on site (compliance)
- 13) Vegetation to be removed outside of the bird nesting season (compliance)

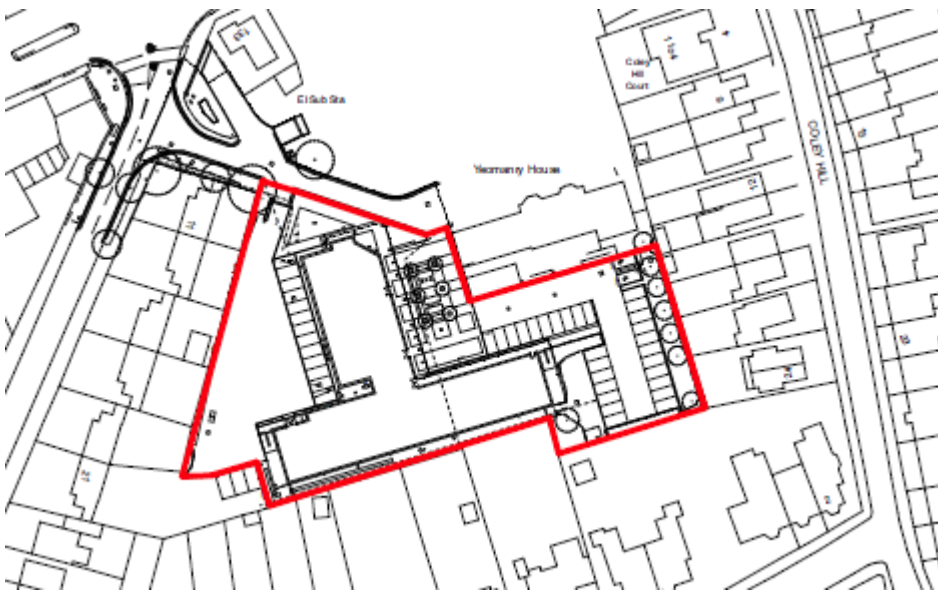
##### Informatives to include:

- 1) Positive & Proactive
- 2) Pre-commencement conditions seen and agreed by applicant
- 3) Terms and Conditions
- 4) Building Control
- 5) Complaints about construction
- 6) CIL
- 7) Highways Act
- 8) Works affecting Highway
- 9) Separate Advertisement Consent

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The application relates to the Berkshire Record Office, a two storey, flat roofed 'T-shaped' building located to the east of Coley Avenue and south of Castle Hill.
- 1.2 The building is referenced in the Russell Street/Castle Hill/Oxford Road Conservation Area Appraisal, which notes that it is a modern, purpose-built building with minimalist design. The building comprises large glass panels with concrete and steel, as well as brick and render elements.
- 1.3 The building is located to the south west of Yeomanry House, a Grade II Listed Building and it is within the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area.
- 1.4 There is a Holm Oak within the site directly adjacent to the south west corner of the building, which is protected under Tree Preservation Order 5/17. The site is also within an Air Quality Management Area.
- 1.5 The surrounding area is predominantly residential; however, it is noted that Yeomanry House to the north east has recently been granted planning permission and listed building consent for use as a day nursery.
- 1.6 The site location plan together with site photographs are shown below:

Site location plan (not to scale)



Site photographs



View from front of building



View of location of proposed extension

## 2. PROPOSAL

2.1 Full Planning Permission is sought for an extension to the Berkshire Record Office on the south east side of the building. The extension would be of two storey height with a flat roof. It would comprise of brick and render to match that of the existing south east element of the building.

2.2 Since the application was originally submitted, revised plans were received incorporating the following amendments:

- glazed link (comprising a series of vertical strips of glass) between existing and proposed elements
- two new trees as replacements for the Holm Oak tree which is proposed to be removed.
- reduction in footprint to accommodate required forecourt and parking spaces depth.

### 2.3 SUBMITTED PLANS AND DOCUMENTS:

Location Plan 6140-P-001 Rev P01  
Existing Site Plan 6140-P-10 Rev P01  
Existing Ground Floor Plan 6140-P-200 Rev P04  
Existing First Floor Plan 6140-P-201 Rev P01  
Existing Roof Plan 6140-P-900 Rev P01  
Existing Elevations 6140-P-700 Rev P01  
Received 8<sup>th</sup> September 2022

Typical Tree Pit Detail 6140-P-3701  
Received 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022

Proposed Elevations 6140-P-711 Rev P01  
Received 13<sup>th</sup> June 2022

Proposed Site Plan 6140-P-20 Rev P04

Received 28<sup>th</sup> June 2022

Proposed Ground Floor Plan 6140-P-210 Rev P05

Proposed First Floor Plan 6140-P-211 Rev P04

Received 8<sup>th</sup> July 2022

Design and Access Statement

Preliminary Ecological Survey

Heritage Statement

Tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment

Received 8<sup>th</sup> September 2022

### 3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 03/00152/FUL - Erection of an enclosure for air conditioning equipment. Permitted.
- 3.2 97/00926/FUL - New record office building for the Royal County of Berkshire and associated staff/public car parking following demolition within grounds. Permitted.

Nearby site:

- 3.3 190629/REG3 and 190722/LBC - Use of building as a day nursery and Office. Internal and external alterations to a listed building. Permitted 16/5/2022.

### 4. CONSULTATIONS

RBC Conservation & Urban Design Officer (CUDO)

- 4.1 Further to revised plans, no objection, subject to materials condition, discussed further below.

RBC Transport

- 4.2 Further to revised plans demonstrating acceptable forecourt and parking sizes, no objection subject to condition. Discussed further below.

RBC Natural Environment

- 4.3 Further to revised plans demonstrating replacement planting, no objection subject to condition. Discussed further below.

RBC Ecology

- 4.4 No objection, discussed further below.

RBC Berkshire Archaeology

4.5 No objection, discussed further below.

## **5. Publicity**

5.1 Properties at Coley Hill, Castle Hill and Coley Avenue were notified of the applications by letter. A site notice was also displayed at the application site and a press notice provided.

5.2 One letter of support has been received.

## **6. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY AND GUIDANCE**

6.1 Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.

6.2 Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the local planning authority in the exercise of its functions to pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area.

6.3 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that proposals be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Material considerations include relevant policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) which states at Paragraph 11 “Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development”.

6.4 Accordingly, the National Planning Policy Framework and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

**National Planning Policy Framework 2021**  
**National Planning Guidance 2014 onwards**

6.5 The relevant sections of the NPPF are:

Section 2 - Achieving Sustainable Development  
Section 8 - Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities  
Section 9 - Promoting Sustainable Transport  
Section 11 - Making Effective Use of Land  
Section 12 - Achieving Well-Designed Places  
Section 15 - Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment  
Section 16 - Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment

6.6 **Reading Borough Local Plan (November 2019):**

CC1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

CC2: Sustainable Design and Construction  
CC6: Accessibility and the Intensity of Development  
CC7: Design and the Public Realm  
CC8: Safeguarding Amenity  
EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment  
EN2: Areas of Archaeological Significance  
EN3: Enhancement of Conservation Areas  
EN6: New Development in a Historic Environment  
EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network  
EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodland  
EN16: Pollution and Water Resources  
EN17: Noise Generating Equipment  
TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters  
TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging  
OU1: New and Existing Community Facilities

#### **6.7 Relevant Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are:**

Revised Parking Standards and Design (2011)  
Sustainable Design and Construction SPD (2019)  
Tree Strategy (2021)

#### **6.8 Other relevant documentation / guidance / legislation**

Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area Appraisal (2020)  
Historic England Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 1: Conservation Area Designation, Appraisal and Management (Historic England, 2016)  
Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 2: Managing Significance in Decision-Taking (Historic England, 2015a)  
Historic Environment Good Practice Advice in Planning Note 3: The Setting of Heritage Assets (Historic England, 2015b)  
Principles of Conservation (Historic England, 2008)  
Guide to the Conservation of Historic Buildings (British Standards Publication BS 7913:2013, 2015)

### **7. APPRAISAL**

The main matters to be considered are:

- Design and impact on the setting of heritage assets
- Impact on neighbouring properties
- Traffic generation and parking
- Natural Environment - trees and landscaping
- Sustainability
- Archaeology

**Design and Impact on the Setting of Heritage Assets**

- 7.1 Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) requires that all development must be of a high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is situated.
- 7.2 Whilst the building subject of this application is not listed, the application site is within close proximity to Yeomanry House (to the north east) which is a Grade II Listed Building. As such, there is a duty imposed by Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requiring decision makers to have special regard to the desirability of preserving the setting of that listed building, or any features of special architectural historic interest which it possesses. This is reflected in Policies EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment), EN4 (Locally Important Heritage Assets) and EN6 (New Development in a Historic Context) of the Local Plan. EN1 states that *“historic features, areas of historic importance and other elements of the historic environment, including their settings will be protected and where possible enhanced”*.
- 7.3 The site also lies within the Castle Hill/Russell Street/Oxford Road Conservation Area and as such there is a duty imposed by Section 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requiring decision makers to have special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a Conservation Area. This is reflected in Policy EN1 (Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment) as above and Policy EN3 (Enhancement of Conservation Areas) which states that the special interest, character and architecture of Conservation Areas will be conserved and enhanced and that development proposals within Conservation Areas must make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. The Council will, therefore, have regard to both the quality of the townscape and the quality and interest of the area, rather than solely that of the individual building.
- 7.4 Paragraph 197 of the NPPF states in determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:
- a) The desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
  - b) The positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
  - c) The desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 7.5 Paragraph 199 of the NPPF details that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective

of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

- 7.6 With regard to the above, the proposals have the potential to affect the heritage significance of both the nearby Listed Building and the Conservation Area.
- 7.7 The proposed extension would have a relatively large footprint, resulting from the capacity requirements of the BRO to meet increased storage demand. The extension would have the same two storey height as the existing building and with a flat roof which in broad terms would appear as a continuation of the existing building. Whilst large, the extension would not be disproportionate to the size and scale of the main building and would retain sufficient space within its setting due to the suitable distances that would remain between the building and the boundaries.
- 7.8 The Conservation Area Appraisal records the Berkshire Record Office as a modern building (2000) of modern materials and design. It is considered that the existing building is of good quality design, well-proportioned and finished to a high standard. The proposed extension would be of modern design largely comprising of brick and render to match that used in the existing building. Further to negotiations with the applicant, the extension now incorporates a glazed link section between the existing and proposed and better-considered proportions. This adds visual interest to the overall appearance as well as providing a distinct break between the existing and proposed built form and preserving the original form and proportions. The vertical glazing elements proposed within the front and rear elevations would also reflect the visual lightness of the existing glass paneling elsewhere on the building.
- 7.9 The Council's Conservation and Urban Design Officer (CUDO) considers that given the position of the proposed extension, it would have a neutral impact on the conservation area and minimal impact on the adjacent listed building. Officers agree that the extension would be well designed to respect the existing form of the host building and this good design would be located in an area of lesser visual sensitivity to the rear of the listed building and in a relatively secluded part of the Conservation Area away from sensitive views.
- 7.10 Details of materials would be secured via condition, to ensure design quality, to include submission of samples given the visual sensitivity of the site.
- 7.11 Based on the above assessment, the proposals are not considered to result in any significant adverse harm to the special historic or architectural interest of the building or its setting and would be in accordance with national guidance and Policies EN1, EN3 and EN6 of the Reading Borough Local Plan 2019.



- 7.12 The proposals do not include details of signage at this stage. Should this be proposed, this would be subject to a separate Advertisement Consent application, if required, and an informative will be attached giving this advice.

### **Community Facilities**

- 7.13 Policy OU1 (New and Existing Community Facilities) says proposals for new, extended or improved community facilities will be acceptable and supports proposals for on-site intensification of important facilities. The supporting text at paragraph 4.7.2 explains that community facilities is a wide-ranging term which could encompass civic and administrative facilities. It is considered that the Berkshire Record Office is an important facility, and the proposal is therefore supported in broad terms under this policy.

### **Impact on Neighbouring Properties**

- 7.14 Policy CC8 (Safeguarding Amenity) seeks to ensure development does not cause harm to the living environment of existing properties, in terms of loss of privacy, overlooking and visual dominance, amongst other things. Policy EN16 (Pollution and Water Resources) seeks to protect surrounding occupiers from the impact of pollution.
- 7.15 The neighbouring properties potentially most affected by the proposals are Yeomanry House to the north and the residential properties of Coley Hill to the east and Castle Crescent to the south.

Given the nature of the proposals, no significant windows are proposed on any elevations and the strip glazing which forms the glazed link would offer minimal views towards neighbouring properties and is not considered harmful. As such there would be no material loss of privacy for any neighbouring property.

The proposed extension would clearly be visible from neighbouring properties. However, given the distance of more than 15m to the residential properties of Coley Hill and Castle Crescent and to Yeomanry House, no significant overbearing or overshadowing effects are considered to arise.

- 7.16 A condition is recommended to require submission of noise assessment should any mechanical plant be proposed in future, as indicated on the proposed plans.
- 7.17 Given the above, it is not considered that the proposal would generate any significant material harm to residential amenity through privacy or overbearing effects, noise or disturbance to the extent that it is harmful to the health and well-being of neighbouring residents and as such, with the recommended conditions attached, it would satisfy Policy CC8.

## **Traffic Generation and Parking**

- 7.18 Policies TR3 (Access, Traffic and Highway related matters), TR1 (Achieving the Transport Strategy) and TR5 (Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging) seek to address access, traffic, highway and parking-related matters relating to development.
- 7.19 6 car parking spaces currently sited to the east of the building would be lost to facilitate the extension. However, a revised parking layout shows 10 car parking spaces proposed on the west of the building, resulting in an increase in 4 spaces. During the course of the application officers raised concerns that the enlarged building would result in an unacceptable reduction in the depth of the forecourt to the east and parking spaces to the north. Revised plans were received reducing the footprint of the extension to allow the forecourt and parking spaces to comply with parking standards. No changes to the existing vehicular and pedestrian access routes are proposed.
- 7.20 Given the above, and subject to the recommended conditions, it is considered that the proposals are acceptable in transport terms and would accord with Policies TR1, TR3 and TR5.

## **Natural Environment - Trees and Landscaping**

- 7.21 Policy CC7 (Design and the Public Realm) seeks that development shall maintain and enhance the character of the area in which it is located including landscaping. Policy EN14 (Trees, Hedges and Woodland) requires new development to make provision for tree retention and planting to assist in extending the Borough's vegetation cover. The site is located within a Conservation Area and Air Quality Management Area which increases the importance of tree retention.
- 7.22 There is a protected Holm Oak tree within close proximity to the south east corner of the building and it is proposed to fell this tree. The Council's Natural Environment Officer has confirmed that the tree condition is poor and furthermore it is leaning towards a parking bay with potential to fall. As such, there is no objection to the felling of this tree. Notwithstanding, this tree provides a degree of visual amenity, visual softening, and contributes to canopy cover within the area. Replacement tree planting should be secured and at a ratio of 2:1 as per the Tree Strategy.
- 7.23 During the course of the application additional information was provided, proposing two Field Maple trees to be provided adjacent to the eastern parking bays, alongside an existing tree line. The Council's Natural Environment Officer has confirmed that, whilst these trees would not achieve the same height as the Holm Oak, the proposals would have the positive benefit of increasing the number of trees within the site and closing a gap in an existing line of trees. The advice received is that it may be more appropriate to align the species with that of the remainder of the

tree line (Rowan); however, it is considered that this can be dealt with by way of condition. Therefore, a condition requiring landscaping details to be submitted to include tree planting is recommended. As such the proposals are considered to comply with Policies EN1, EN3, CC7 and EN14 of the Reading Borough Local Plan.

### **Ecology**

- 7.24 Policy EN12 (Biodiversity and The Green Network) requires that new development should provide a net gain for biodiversity where possible and should incorporate biodiversity features into proposals where practical.
- 7.25 An ecological survey has been submitted with the application and the Council's Ecologist considers this has been undertaken to an appropriate standard with no impact on protected species.
- 7.26 A condition is recommended to ensure that enhancements for wildlife are provided within the new development. This could include design features such as swift bricks, in accordance with Policy EN12.

### **Sustainability**

- 7.27 Policy CC2 (Sustainable Design and Construction), supported by the Council's Sustainable Design and Construction SPD seeks that minor non-residential development such as this should comply with BREEAM Level of 'Very Good'. The application submission includes commentary stating that the proposal could not meet 'Very Good' standard. However, it does state that it would likely achieve a BREEAM rating of 'Good'. It is noted that Policy CC2 recognises that some types of development, such as industrial, warehouses, or schools might find it more difficult to meet the standards. The policy states that in such cases developments must demonstrate that the standard to be achieved is the highest possible for the development. The applicant has undertaken discussions with BRE who have agreed that the proposal could be assessed as an industrial building under the warehouse sub-category. Given the nature of the proposals, for the storage of documents, officers agree with this position. Officers also acknowledge the inherent difficulties in meeting BREEAM criteria such as the facility not having any windows and as an extension to an older building.
- 7.28 A condition is recommended to require either the standard BREEAM certificate to be provided demonstrating 'Good' standard or for an alternative sustainability assessment addressing the requirement of Policy CC2 to be submitted and approved in writing by the LPA. With this condition secured, it is considered that the proposal will comply with the principles of Policy CC2.

### **Archaeology**

- 7.29 Policy EN2 (Areas of Archaeological Significance) seeks to protect areas of archaeological potential. Whilst the site is identified as an area of archaeological interest, the Archaeology Officer has confirmed that there will be no significant archaeological implications as a result of the proposals with no further archaeological investigation required.

### **Equalities Impact**

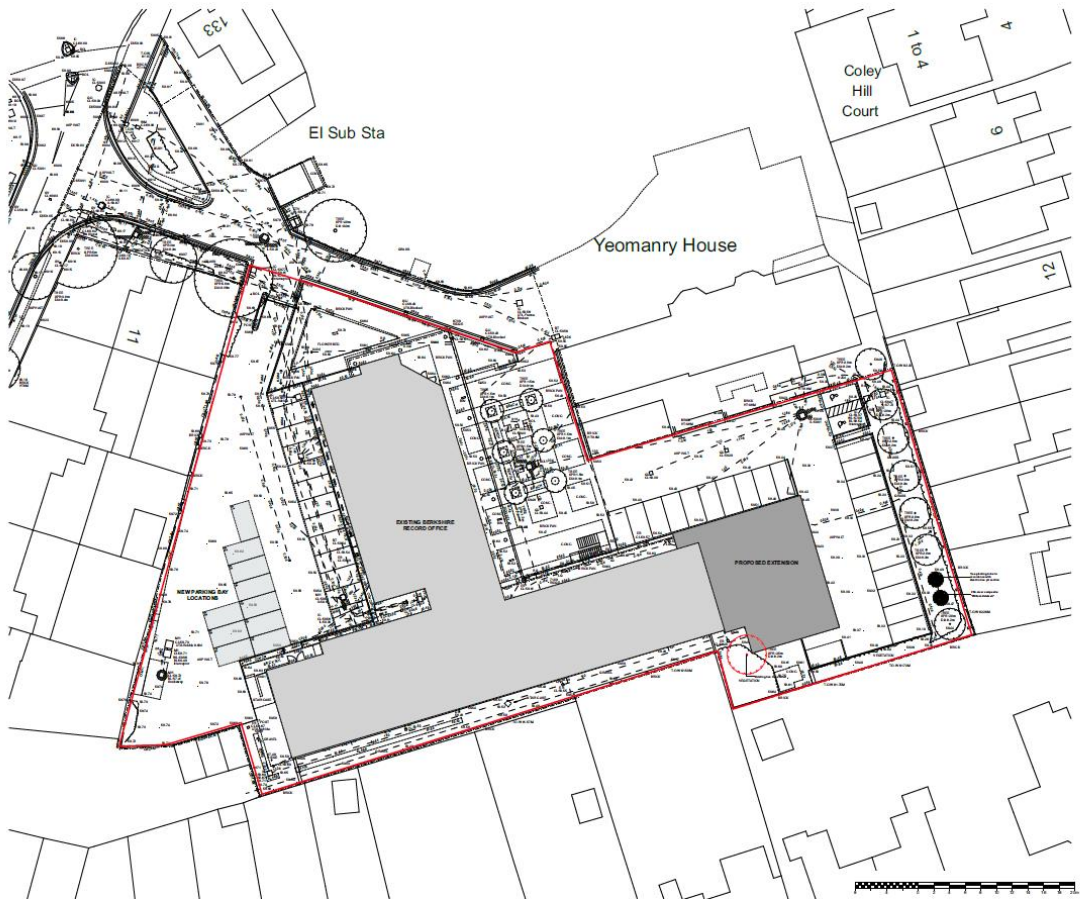
- 7.30 When determining an application for planning permission the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups as identified by the Act have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this planning application. Therefore, in terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the proposed development.

## **8 CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 The proposed development is considered, following revisions and clarifications submitted during the course of the application, to be appropriate in the context of national and local planning policy and other material considerations as set out in this report.
- 8.2 The proposals will allow for the continued use of the Berkshire Record Office for storage and the works are not considered to detract from the setting of the nearby listed building or the character and appearance of the conservation area. The proposal will not result in significant harm to the amenity of neighbouring occupiers and will be acceptable in highways and natural environment terms.
- 8.3 Officers have worked positively and proactively with the applicant on this scheme with amendments secured to address initial concerns. The planning application is recommended for approval subject to conditions as detailed above.

**Case Officer:** Ethne Humphreys

**Plans Considered:**



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**REVISIONS**

NO.	DATE	DESCRIPTION
01	04/08/2020	ISSUE FOR PERMIT
02	04/08/2020	ISSUE FOR PERMIT
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20	04/08/2020	ISSUE FOR PERMIT

— Site Boundary

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PLANNING DRAWING

DRAWING TITLE  
 Proposed Site Plan

PROJECT  
 Record Office Expansion

CLIENT  
 West Berkshire Council

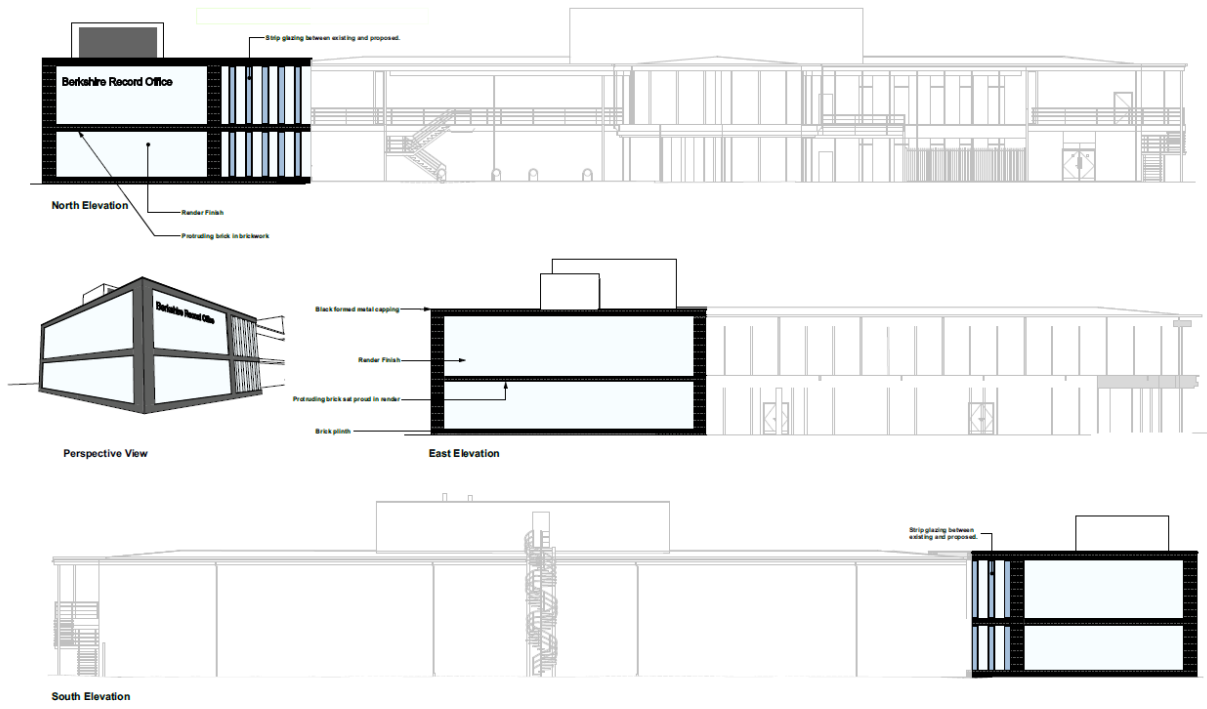
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 DATE Oct 2019

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Proposed Site Plan



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PROJECT  
 Record Office Expansion

CLIENT  
 West Berkshire Council

DRAWING TITLE  
 Proposed Elevations Alt. Option

DRAWING NO. 6140-P-711  
 REV P01

SCALE 1:100@A1  
 DATE December 2020

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Quattro Design Architects, High Wycombe Street  
 Slough, Berkshire, UK SL2 3DP 1: 01493 404204

Proposed Elevations

