

28 May 2025



Reading
Borough Council

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| Title | PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT |
| Ward | Caversham |
| Planning Application Reference: | PL/25/0606 (FUL) & PL/25/0607 (LBC) |
| Site Address: | Caversham Court Gardens, Church Road, Caversham, Reading |
| Proposed Development | Repair and conservation of part of the eastern boundary (screen) wall at Caversham Court Gardens including: part dismantling and rebuilding of two sections of the wall, repairs in situ to the wall, repairs to brickwork arches over existing below ground vaults, new structural concrete slab over vaults, alterations to existing surface water drainage and new supplementary surface water drainage, new paving to inner pavement, root protection measures. |
| Applicant | Reading Borough Council |
| Report author | Marcie Rejwerska |
| Deadline: | 18 th June 2025 |
| Recommendations | Subject to no substantive objections received by 21 st May 2025: Grant planning permission and grant listed building consent, subject to conditions. |
| Conditions | <p>Full planning permission:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Time Limit – Three Years2. Approved Plans3. Materials as Specified4. Construction Method Statement to be submitted prior to commencement5. Tree replanting location, details, maintenance and timetable for planting to be submitted prior to commencement of works.6. Archaeology – Written Scheme of Investigation to be submitted prior to commencement of works. <p>Listed building consent:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Time Limit – Three Years2. In accordance with approved Plans and Schedule of Works3. Any replacement material to match/no other structural work is permitted4. Full Survey and Cataloguing to be submitted5. Dismantling methodology6. Cross section of the wall to be submitted |

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| | 7. Details of replica arches to be submitted |
| Informatics | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Terms 2. Complaints about construction 3. Highways 4. Positive and Proactive |

1. Executive summary

- 1.1. The proposal is to repair the eastern section of the boundary wall at Caversham Court Gardens, which is Grade II listed, including repairs to the existing vaults below the wall to strengthen the structure, new paving and additional surface water drainage. The proposed works require the removal of one existing mature tree on the site.
- 1.2. The proposal is recommended for approval subject to the conditions as outlined above.

2. Introduction and site description

- 2.1. The proposal relates to the flint wall running alongside Church Road and comprises the boundary of Caversham Court Gardens, a Grade II Registered Park and Garden. The wall itself is Grade II listed under listing number 1113446. The listing for the wall reads as follows:

CHURCH ROAD 1. 5128 (South Side) Caversham Screen wall at north-east end of Caversham Court Recreation Ground SU 7074 11/445 II GV 2. Early-mid C19. Probably by Augustus Welby Northmore Pugin. Gothic. Flint on ashlar and brick basement. About 10 foot high with stone cope and occasional pinnacles. Brick lacing courses to south. 4 lancets to left. Entrances framed by 3 bays on each side with weathered buttresses and ogee-shaped panels. Returned to north in brick with chamfered cope. This part of the wall also has gateway, presumably formerly linking stable court: ogee headed archway, ashlar fronted to south, with 4 flanking bays (brick lined ogee panels to south). Part of wall realigned in early part of C20. Pugin attribution based on recollection of Marianne Loveday (former leaseholder).

- 2.2. The full listing description for the Registered Park and Gardens can be found on the Historic England register at the following weblink:
- 2.3. <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1000582?section=official-list-entry>.
- 2.4. The gardens are located within the St Peters Conservation Area.
- 2.5. The application is required to be determined by Planning Applications Committee as Reading Borough Council is the applicant.

3. The Proposal

- 3.1. Full planning permission and listed building consent is sought for structural repairs and conservation works proposed to be carried out to the eastern boundary (screen) wall to Caversham Court Garden between the carriage and pedestrian arched openings gateway and the tea hut/toilet building to the south. The carriage and pedestrian arched openings gateway and all other parts of the eastern boundary (screen) wall are to remain undisturbed. The works are described in full within Section 7 of this report.
- 3.2. At the end of July 2024, a section of the wall was subject to partial collapse.

3.3. Documents and plans received:

1041-PR00-001-Location Plan
1041-PR00-002-Existing Block Plan
1041-PR00-003-Existing Site Plan
1041-PR00-004-Proposed Block Plan
1041-PR00-005- Proposed Site Plan
1041-Caversham Court Gardens-Heritage Statement-Revision 1
22138 Caversham Court Gardens KRP Repair

Received by the LPA on 23 April 2025

4. Relevant Planning History

- PL/19/0944 – Repairs to wall. Planning application withdrawn.
- PL/07/0863 - Restoration of the Grade 2 Listed Garden and its structures, including repair and re-building of replicas and new disabled access ramp. Refurbishment of toilet to kiosk and toilets, and soft landscaping. Planning application granted
- PL/07/1602 - Restoration of the Grade 2 Listed Garden and its structures, including repair and re-building of replicas and new disabled access ramp. Refurbishment of toilet to kiosk and toilets, and soft landscaping. Planning application granted.
- Pre-Application Advice – April 2025.

5. Consultations

5.1 The planning notice was attached to nearby street furniture on 30th April 2025 and left in place for a minimum of 21 days (until 21st May 2025).

No letters of representation have been received at this time. An update report will follow after 21st May (when the 21 days has lapsed) to confirm whether any letter of representation have been received.

5.2 Internal consultees:

• **RBC Natural Environment –**

- Over the course of several years, intermittent discussions have taken place with regards to a suitable replacement planting (as required under law) location, including replacement in the same location, replacement in the Vicarage rear garden, extension of the existing grass area (with the young Lime) to plant in that and planting within the pavement on the other side of the main entrance (RBC land, in addition to the 2 Limes that were there). All were dismissed for one reason or another.
- The Friends of Cav Ct and the Tree Wardens are keen to ensure the Lime lined frontage of Caversham Court is retained. As you are aware, RBC have had to fell two Limes on the north side of the main entrance due to poor health – these trees can be seen on Google St view in 2022.
- For clarity, the replacement tree (for the Diocese Lime) is required, and was always assumed to be planted over above those RBC should be replanting anyway as part of normal procedure, i.e. 3 replacements are now due; 2 by RBC and 1 by the Diocese. However, I understand

that the applicant is proposing to replace the Diocese Lime in one of the RBC locations – it is unclear where exactly.

- The submissions provided do not provide clarity on the matter of trees. What is required is a clear tree removal & replacement plan. This should not be onerous and I would suggest it plots the Lime to be removed and the replacement planting location (addition of a current photos indicating the location would be helpful), along with the tree details, which I assume will be a Small-leaved Lime (*Tilia cordata*) of 14-16cm girth / 4.25m high – this should be checked with Streetscene who, I assume, will sourcing, planting and maintaining it.
- **RBC Conservation Officer** – No objections, subject to recommended conditions.
- **RBC Transport Development Control** – No comments regarding SuDS. No objections in terms of Transport, subject to conditions.
- **Berkshire Archaeology** – No objections subject to recommended condition.

6. Legal context

6.1 Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires the LPA 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 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) - among them the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development'. However, the NPPF does not change the statutory status of the development plan as the starting point for decision making (NPPF paragraph 12).

6.3 In this regard, the NPPF states that due weight should be given to the adopted policies of the Local Plan 2019 according to their degree of consistency with the NPPF (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the NPPF, the greater the weight that may be given).

6.4 Accordingly, the latest NPPF and the following development plan policies and supplementary planning guidance are relevant:

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (amended February 2025)
 National Planning Practice Guidance
 Conservation Principles Policies and Guidance 2008, Historic England
 HEAG304 Listed Building Consent, Historic England Advice Note 16, 2021

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)

Policy CC1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
 Policy CC7 – Design and the Public Realm
 Policy EN1 – Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
 Policy EN3 – Enhancement of Conservation Areas
 Policy EN12 – Biodiversity and the Green Network
 Policy EN14 – Trees, Hedges and Woodland

Other Documents

St Peters Conservation Area Appraisal 2018

Local Plan Partial Update

6.5 The current version of the Local Plan (adopted in November 2019) turned five years old on Tuesday 5th November 2024. The Local Plan was reviewed in March 2023 and around half of the policies in the plan are considered still up to date. However, the rest need to be considered for updating to reflect changing circumstances and national policy. The submission draft of the Local Plan Partial Update was submitted on 9th May 2025.

6.6 Although there is a five-year period for carrying out a review of a plan after it is adopted, nothing in the NPPF or elsewhere says that policies automatically become "out of date" when they are five years old. Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to this application and listed above is that they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remains very similar in the draft updated Local Plan. Therefore, they can continue to be afforded weight in the determination of this planning application and are not considered to be 'out of date'.

7. Appraisal

7.1. The main considerations relevant to the determination of this application are:

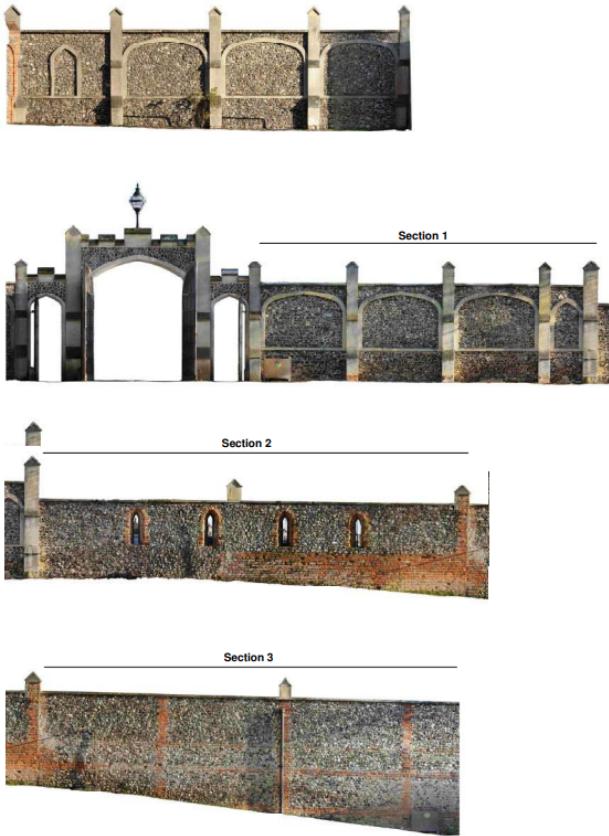
- i. Heritage Impacts
- ii. Trees
- iii. Surface Water Drainage
- iv. Archaeology

i) Heritage Impacts

7.2 Policy EN1 states "Applications which affect Listed Buildings will not have an adverse impact on those elements which contribute to their special architectural or historic interest including, where appropriate, their settings." Policy CC7 also outlines relevant design considerations.

7.3 The overall principle of the proposed works is acceptable and welcomed to ensure the longevity of this heritage asset.

Eastern Boundary Screen Wall – west elevation (garden side) photographs – Photos by KRP Engineers



7.4 Section 1 and 2 - Due to the unstable nature of the wall, as determined by the structural engineer, sections 1 and 2 of the wall are to be recorded, catalogued and carefully dismantled and then rebuilt to match existing on a 'like for like' basis, utilising as much of the original materials, including stone masonry, flints and bricks, as possible, bedded and 30 pointed in a natural hydraulic lime mortar. The foundations of the wall are to be exposed, by trial pitting, following the dismantling of the wall to allow the engineer to assess their adequacy and to determine if necessary and essential strengthening are required. Tree root protection is to be incorporated into the works to protect the rebuilt wall from the adjacent lime trees.

7.5 Section 3 - The soffit of the vaults requires raking out and repointing of the masonry with a naturally hydraulic lime mortar. Any dislodged bricks require resetting so that they follow the profile of the arches. The abutments, piers and original portions of flank wall require raking out and repointing, again in lime mortar, resetting any dislodged bricks. The foundations to the piers and abutments are to be verified by trial pitting to allow the engineer to assess their adequacy or call for strengthening where necessary. A reinforced concrete cover slab is to be provided over the below ground arches. The slab is to be suspended, spanning between stub walls constructed on the line of the masonry walls that support the arches.

7.6 The proposed extent of works required, and the associated methodology has been sufficiently justified by the applicant and is considered acceptable for this site, and as such the works are considered in accordance with policies CC7, EN1 and EN3.

ii) Trees

7.7 Policy EN14 states “individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance, and Reading’s vegetation cover will be extended.”

7.8 There are two existing trees of note in close proximity to the section of the wall to be repaired. There is a small sapling on the left hand side of the entrance gate which is not affected by the works. One mature tree (nearest to the east section of the wall where the proposed works are to take place) is to be removed as part of the proposal. It is considered that this would result in a degree of harm to the visual amenity of the area, however the works are necessary to preserve the listed building, and it is considered that the works are necessary to avoid a greater degree of harm, namely the continued deterioration of the wall.

7.9 The tree to be removed will have the stump ground out and root protection will be installed along the wall to prevent any remaining roots from further damaging the wall foundations.

7.10 For context, the tree to be removed belongs to the Diocese. On the right hand side of the entrance gate, two mature Lime trees belonging to RBC have already been removed due to being diseased.

7.11 A tree replacement is proposed to be planted where 1x Lime tree has recently been removed on the right hand side of the entrance gate. At this stage, officers have requested the submission of a tree removal and replacement plan to clearly identify the location of the proposed replanting. Should this be received before the 22nd of May, the plan will be included in an Update report to the Committee, however, until these plans are received a condition is recommended for the plans to be secured prior to commencement of works.

iii) Surface Water Drainage

7.12 Policy EN18 encourages smaller schemes to incorporate SuDS where possible. Parts of the garden grounds are within Flood Zones 2 and 3 as the park is located on the River Thames bank.

7.13 The pavement extending down from the main entrance to the park, above the underground vaults and as far as the first drain lying to the south of the existing kiosk is to be replaced with a SUDs permeable resin-bound gravel system, with cut-off drains provided at each end of the run of paving, with additional drains provided at each end of the impermeable cover slab over the arches. The cut off drains will discharge to soakaways as surveys have failed to identify an alternative suitable means of water disposal.

7.14 The proposed drainage is considered acceptable for this location and would not affect the historic character of the site.

iv) Archaeology

7.15 The application site is within an area of archaeological potential. Due to proposed groundworks within previously undisturbed land (SuDS within areas of undisturbed lawn), Berkshire Archaeology have recommended a condition to secure a Written Scheme of Investigation. This is in accordance with Paragraph 218 of the NPPF (2025) which states that local planning authorities should *‘require developers to record and advance understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost (wholly or*

in part) in a manner proportionate to their importance and the impact, and to make this evidence (and any archive generated) publicly accessible’.

8. Equality implications

8.1 Under the Equality Act 2010, Section 149, a public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under this Act;
- advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
- foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

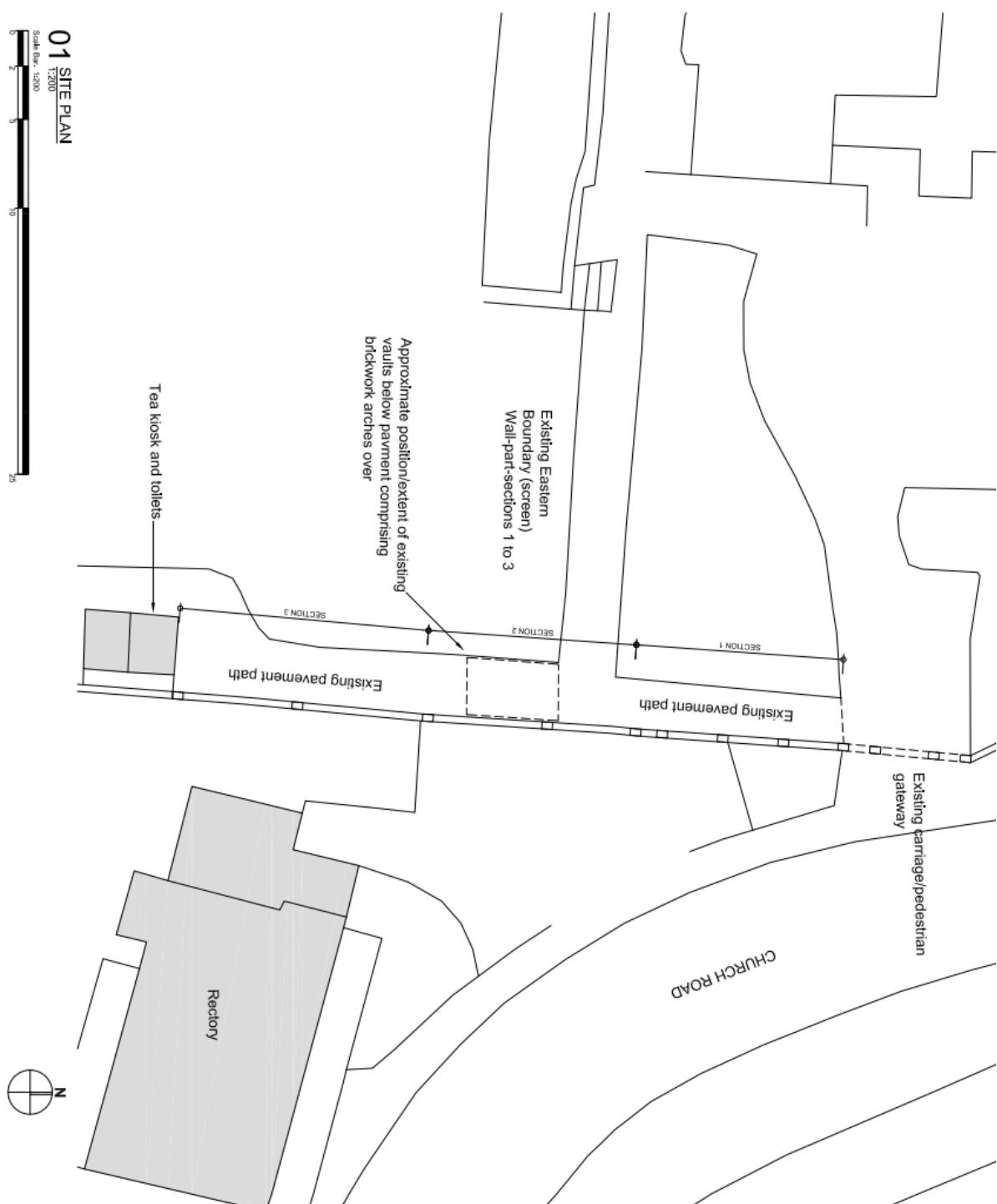
8.2 The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this application.

9. Conclusion & Planning Balance

9.1 As with all applications for planning permission considered by the Local Planning Authority, the application is required to be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise, as per Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and Section 16(2) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

9.2 The proposal is considered necessary to ensure the longevity of this heritage asset, and the proposed works and methodology are considered an appropriate response. The harm arising from the removal of the existing tree is outweighed by the heritage benefits. The proposal is therefore considered acceptable and is therefore recommended for approval, subject to conditions as listed above.

Plans



Approximate position/extent of existing vaults below pavement comprising brickwork arches over

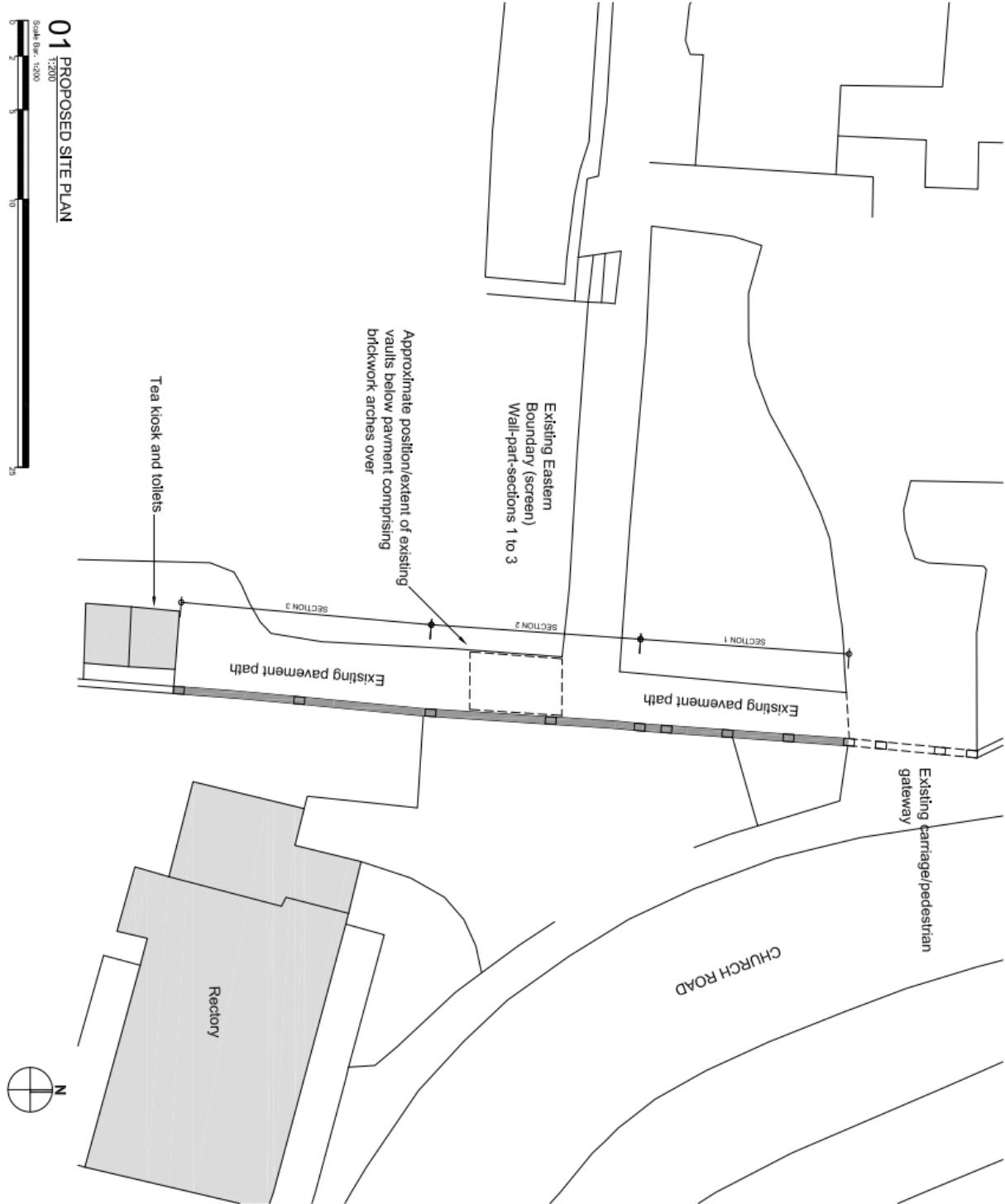
Existing Eastern
Boundary (screen)
Wall-part-sections 1 to 3

Existing Pavement Path

Existing carriage/pedestrian gateway

CHURCH ROAD

The image shows a site plan for 'Caversham Court' with a 'MorseWebb' logo in the top right corner. The plan includes a map of the site with various building footprints and a legend for 'Proposed' and 'Existing' structures. A north arrow is also present.



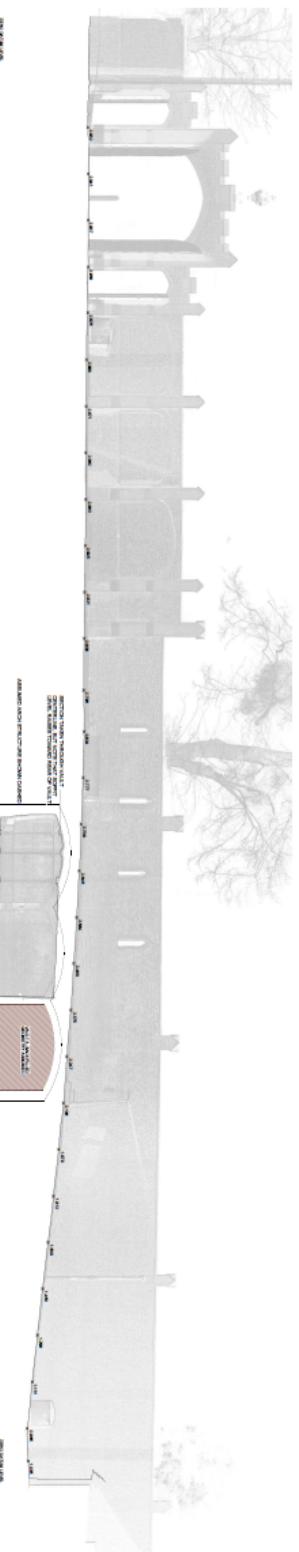
| Proposed Site Plan | |
|--------------------|-------------|
| 1:200 (0003) | PRELIMINARY |
| 1041 | 005 |
| PR00 | 0000 |

1A. SECTION A - PROFILE THROUGH VAULT WITH GROUND LEVELS

1A. SEC
SCALE 1:50

1B. SITE PLAN

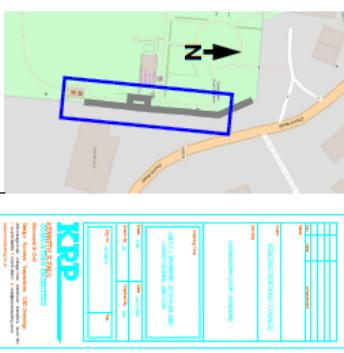
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SYMBOLS USED

| | |
|------------------|------------------|
| BLK | BLK |
| DOOR | DOOR |
| DRAG | DRAG |
| GATE | GATE |
| GRAB | GRAB |
| HELOC | HELOC |
| KERB | KERB |
| LEVEL | LEVEL |
| NO DAY | NO DAY |
| PATH REUSE | PATH REUSE |
| PATH | PATH |
| POST | POST |
| RADING | RADING |
| SERVICE COVER | SERVICE COVER |
| SOL | SOL |
| STEP | STEP |
| ARMING STRUCTURE | ARMING STRUCTURE |
| TREE | TREE |
| WALL | WALL |

KEY PLAN



KPMG