

## COMMITTEE REPORT

BY THE DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES

READING BOROUGH COUNCIL

ITEM NO.

PLANNING APPLICATIONS COMMITTEE: 8th November 2017

**Ward:** Abbey

**Application No.:** 171223MJB /LBC

**Address:** Town Hall Blagrove Street Reading

**Proposal:** Erection of a galvanised walkway to assist with access for maintenance of ventilating plant to the roof of the Huntley & Palmers Gallery of the museum

**Applicant:** Reading Borough Council

**Date received:** 21 July 2017

**Application target decision date:** 18<sup>th</sup> September 2017

**Extension of time decision date:** 10<sup>th</sup> November 2017

### RECOMMENDATION

GRANT LISTED BUILDING CONSENT, subject to the following conditions and informatives:

#### Conditions

1. The works to which this consent relate shall be begun not later than the expiration of three years from the date of this consent.

Reason: in accordance with Section 18 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as amended by the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. This consent relates only to the following plans, drawings and documents and the works hereby approved shall be carried out in all respects in accordance with the submitted application, supporting information and accompanying drawings:

- Town Hall Location Plan
- Drawing ref. 151026/04 - Proposed New Walkway to Town Hall Courtyard (Chiller access)
- Drawing ref. 151026/001 - Proposed New Walkway to Town Hall Courtyard (Chiller access)
- Drawing ref. 151110/001 - Proposed New Walkway to Town Hall Courtyard (Chiller access)
- Drawing ref. 151110/002 - Existing Elevation to Town Hall Courtyard
- Drawing ref. 151110/002 - Proposed Walkway Location
- New Rooftop Walkway to Town Hall Courtyard (chiller access) Town Hall, Blagrove Street, Reading Heritage Statement dated 18 July 2017
- Lionweld Kennedy Safety Grating specification

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 24<sup>th</sup> July 2017

- Drawing ref. 1562/02 - Details of New Walkways

- Drawing ref. 1562/03 - Structural Steelwork Details

Received by the Local Planning Authority on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2017

Reason: To ensure that the works carried out are fully in accordance with the approved drawings and details in order to protect the special historic and architectural character of the listed building, in accordance with Policy CS33 of the Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy 2008 (Altered 2015).

3. Unless such work is clearly and specifically referred to on drawings or other documents approved, no features of architectural or historic interest, including brick corbelling as shown on drawing ref. 1562/02 - Details of New Walkways drawing and ref. 1562/03 - Structural Steelwork Details received by the Local Planning Authority on 12<sup>th</sup> October 2017 shall be altered, replaced or removed without the written approval of the local planning authority. Any such features encountered during the work shall be drawn to the attention of the local authority.

Reason: To accord with Reading Borough Council Core Strategy CS33: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment and for the purpose of ensuring that work is appropriate to the special architectural or historic interest of the listed building.

#### Informatives

1. For the avoidance of doubt, no other works are approved except those as authorised by this Consent. Any other works required to the Listed Building may require a separate application for Listed Building Consent and/or an application for Permitted Works to a Listed Building.

2. Adequate protection and support to the building(s)/ the building and adjacent structures shall be provided to the satisfaction of the local planning authority at all times during the work. Sufficient care shall be taken in the design and execution of all work, including any demolition and the preparation and the erection of any scaffolding, to ensure that no damage is incurred to the historic fabric of the listed building.

3. Officers have worked positively and proactively with the applicant in agreeing an extension of time for decision of the application.

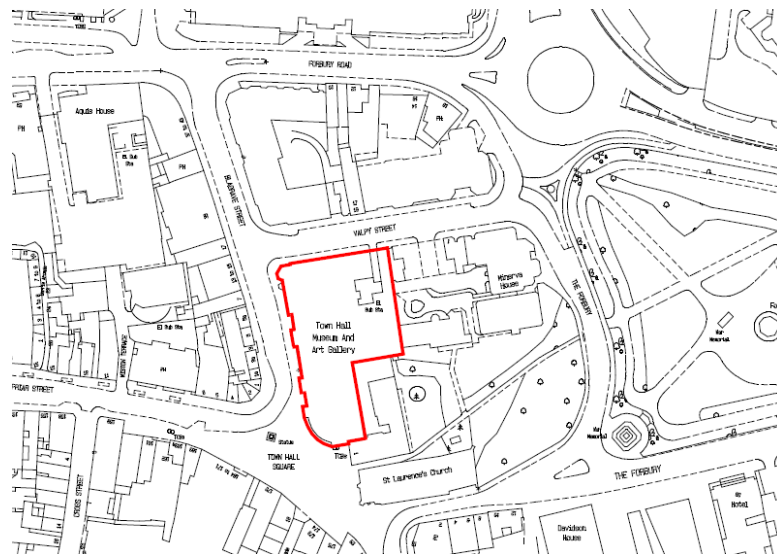
## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 The Town Hall is a listed building located on the east side of Blagrove Street within Reading Town centre. The clock tower part of the building, designed by Alfred Waterhouse, is Grade II\* listed whilst the other parts of the building are Grade II listed. The site is located within the Market Place/London Street Conservation Area.

1.2 The Town Hall was built in several phases between 1786 and 1897. The earlier Georgian part of the building is now hidden behind the later Victorian additions which front Blagrove Street and Valpy Street. The Victorian building's

architectural styling was established with the building of the extension designed by Alfred Waterhouse in 1875. The building is in the French Gothic Style with red and grey brickwork facade with terracotta ornamentation. This has been carried forward in the additions that followed.

- 1.3 Waterhouse's design included a Clock Tower over the entrance which provides a focal point at the end of Friar Street and there is a second tower designed to provide a landmark feature from the Market Place. Within the urban context the towers signify the importance of this municipal building. The Waterhouse building is modest in its scale, comprising of two storeys (with attic space) whilst the Clock Tower is five storeys.
- 1.4 The town's municipal administration used the building until the Council decided to construct new civic offices. In 1976 the Council moved out to the newly built Reading Civic Centre. The library remained up until 1985, when it moved to the new central library on the King's Road. Following these moves there were plans to demolish the Town Hall and replace it with a new cultural centre but these were subsequently dropped in favour of a major restoration and refurbishment to the building. This work commenced in 1986 and was completed in 2000. The Town Hall now houses the Museum & Art Gallery of Reading, the Concert hall, the Waterhouse Chamber, the Victoria Hall, several conference rooms, a public cafe and the 3B's Cafe and Bar. The building also includes office accommodation for the Council's Arts and Theatre Service and the Berkshire Coroner.



## 2. PLANNING HISTORY

910804 - External sign (unilluminated) in 250mm high gold Times Roman Type face to read Gift Shop to west (Blagrove St) elevation - Granted

900527 - Internal refurbishment and alteration to provide enlarged museum facility with disabled access in materials to match existing - Granted

010573 - Installation of 2 no. vertical Sliding sash timber windows, to be in keeping with existing windows, to the Earley Charities Room, including soldier courses above heads to match - Granted

060052 - Exterior signage - 2no. Non-illuminated banners and vinyl lettering to doors - Granted

061330 - Exterior signage - 2no. Non-illuminated banners and vinyl lettering to doors - Granted

170987 - Internal alterations including, refurbishment of cafe and bar areas, replacement of bar area steps with new steps and wheelchair platform lift, replacement partition walls, refurbishment of toilets, replacement lighting and additional doors - Granted

### **3. PROPOSALS**

- 3.1 Listed Building Consent is sought for the erection of a galvanised walkway to assist with maintenance access to existing ventilating plant equipment to the roof of the Huntley & Palmers Gallery of the museum.
- 3.2 The proposed walkway is required in order to meet health and safety regulations which the existing walkway to be replaced does not. The new walkway would provide for safe access to all parts of the working area around the plant equipment as well as access to allow maintenance of guttering which is currently inaccessible.
- 3.3 The proposed walkway would be located on the north elevation wall of the internal courtyard at the rear of the building on a flat asphalt covered reinforced concrete roof. The walkway would be formed of two sections, either side of the existing plant equipment, one adjacent to the edge of the courtyard elevation (6.7m in length) and one flush to the rear wall of the building beyond (8.5m in length). The structure would be manufactured from galvanized steel open mesh flooring with a galvanized steel guardrail and mesh infill and solid kickboard to the exposed edge of the roof. The guardrail would be located to the edge of the courtyard elevation and would be 6.5m in length and 2m in height. The applicant has confirmed that the walkway and handrail would be finished in black.
- 3.4 The application is brought to Planning Applications Committee because the applicant and landowner is Reading Borough Council.

### **4. CONSULTATIONS**

#### **Historic England**

- 4.1 No comments, advise to seek the views of our own specialist conservation adviser.

#### **RBC Heritage Consultant**

- 4.2 No objections, subject to conditions.

#### **Public Consultation**

- 4.3 Neighbouring premises adjoining the site were notified of the application by letter and a site notice was displayed on Blagrove Street.
- 4.4 No comments have been received.

### **5. LEGAL AND PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT**

- 5.1 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 the listed building or its setting or any features of special interest which it possesses.
- 5.2 In accordance with Part 13 the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Regulations 1990 (as amended) where a local planning authority requires listed building consent for the demolition, alterations or extension of a listed building in their area or conservation area consent for the demolition of a building within a conservation area in their area, the authority shall, make application to the Secretary of State for that consent.
- 5.3 This application has been assessed against the following policies:

#### **National**

National Planning Policy Framework  
National Planning Practice Guidance

#### **Reading Borough Local Development Framework Core Strategy (2008, 2015)**

CS33 - Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment

### **6. APPRAISAL**

#### **Effect on the Historic Character of the Listed Building and the setting of Heritage Assets**

- 6.1 Located centrally to the building, adjacent to an internal courtyard the Town Hall building shields views of the existing plant equipment from Valpy Street to the north, Blagrove Street to the west and the surrounding Market Place/London Street conservation area. The proposed roof surface level walkway and 2m high guardrail, set below the existing 2.8m high plant apparatus would also not be visible from the street-scene or conservation area.
- 6.2 Whilst visible internally from the courtyard and surrounding internal windows the walkway and guardrail would, in visual terms, be subservient to the existing plant

equipment. The walkway guardrail would act as a partial screen to the apparatus and as a modest and functional addition to the existing plant structure is not considered detrimental to the setting of the listed building.

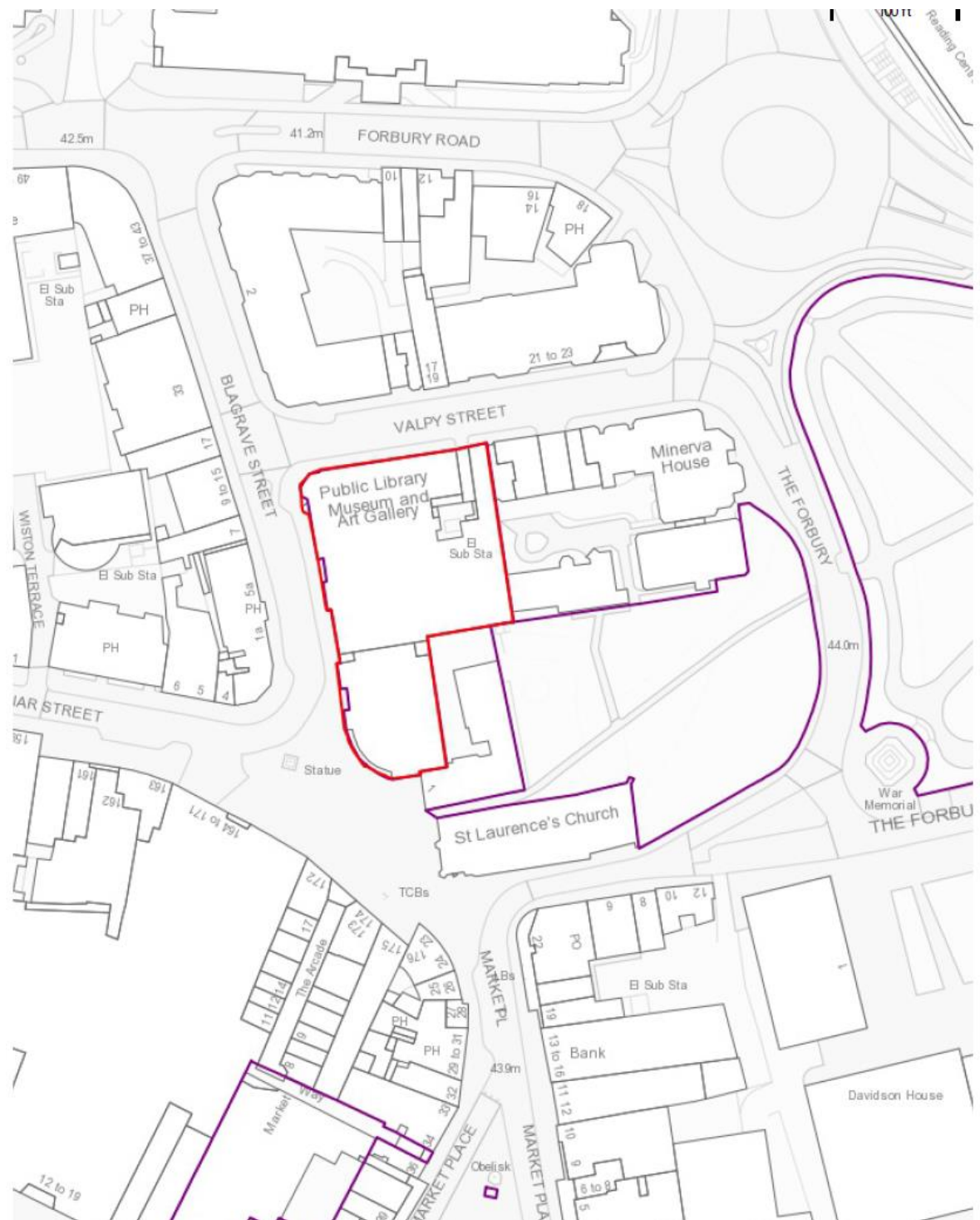
- 6.3 The steel frame of the walkway and guardrail would, in the main, be fixed to the existing plant structure itself. However, in order to provide sufficient structural support the walkway would also be bracketed to the top edge of the courtyard elevation wall. Detailed drawings of the six fixing points of the brackets have been submitted as part of the application. The proposals have been reviewed by the Council's Conservation Consultant who is satisfied that fixing points to the building have been kept to a minimum, are necessary to support the proposed structure and method of affixing would have very minimal impact on the buildings fabric .
- 6.4 The walkway structure is required to accord with health and safety regulations to allow the plant equipment to be appropriately maintained. Maintenance of the plant is essential in enabling the building to continue it is current active and economically viable use. Based on the details submitted it is considered that the proposals would not be detrimental to the grade II and II \* listed building and would succeed in preserving the buildings historic character in accordance with Policy CS33 of the Core Strategy 2008, 2015.

**ii) Equality**

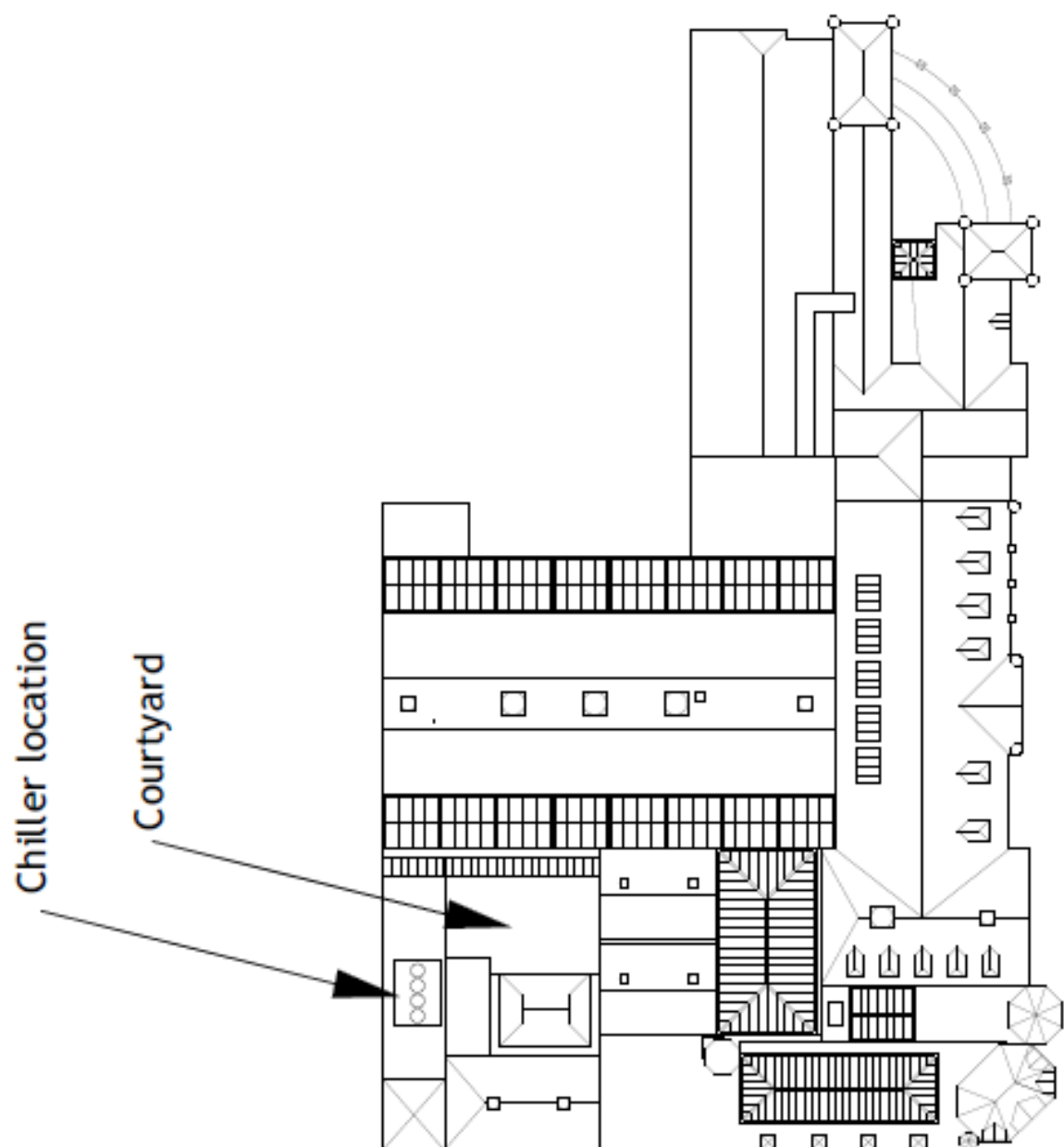
- 6.5 In determining this application the Council is required to have regard to its obligations under the Equality Act 2010. The key equalities protected characteristics include age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation. It is considered that there is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the current application) that the protected groups would have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to this particular planning application.

**7. RECOMMENDATION**  
**GRANT LISTED BUILDING CONSENT**

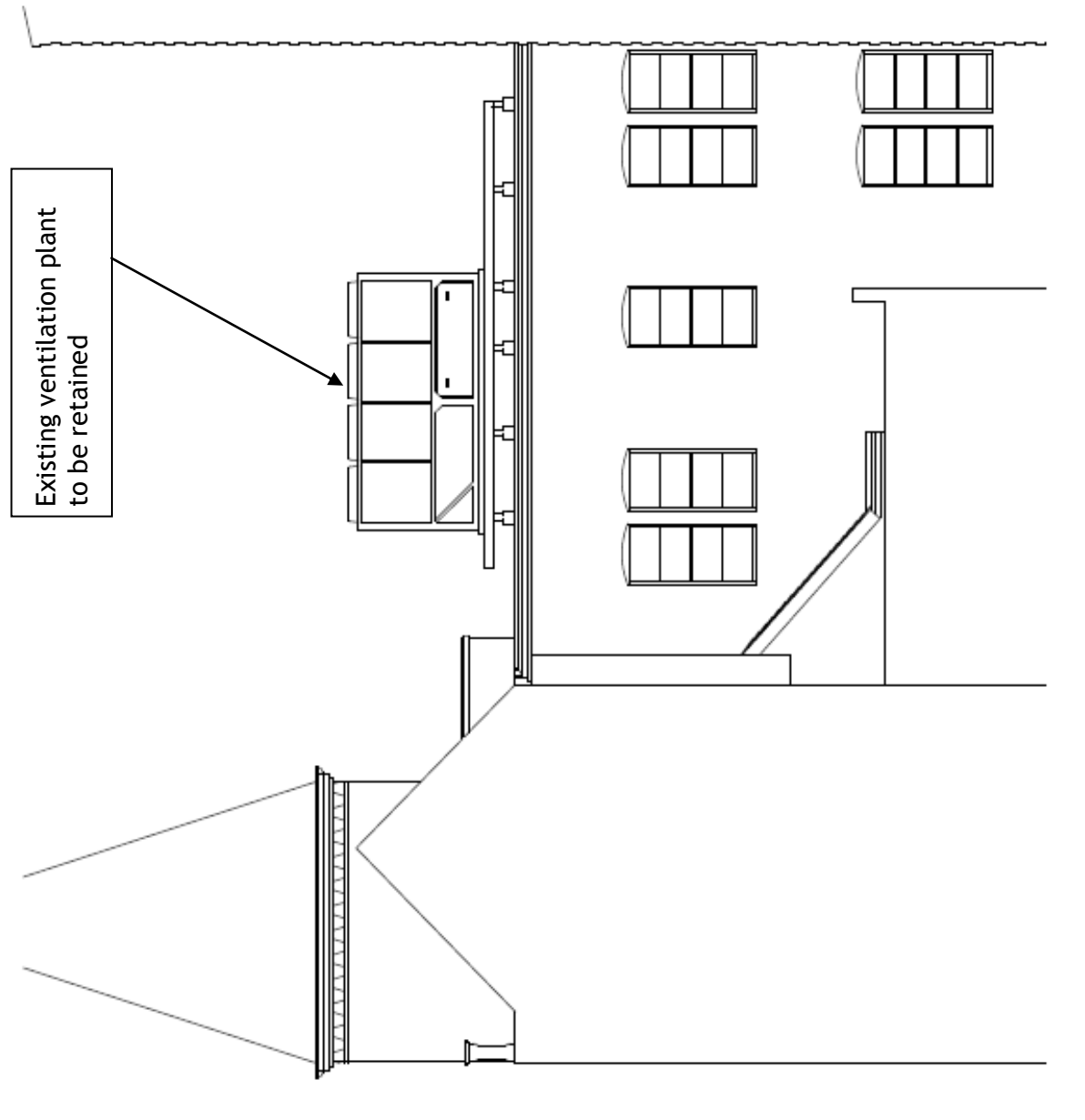
Case Officer: Matt Burns



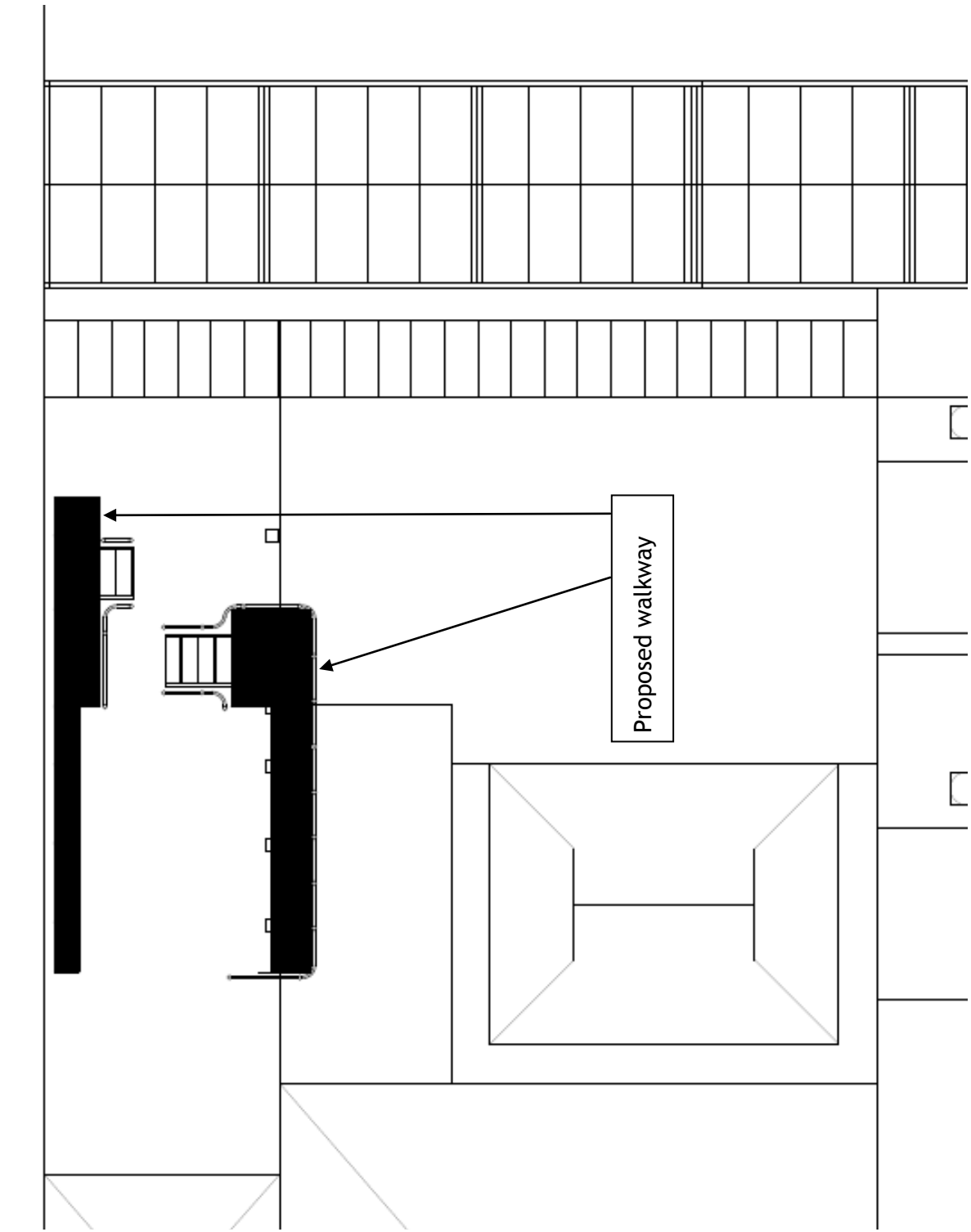
Location Plan



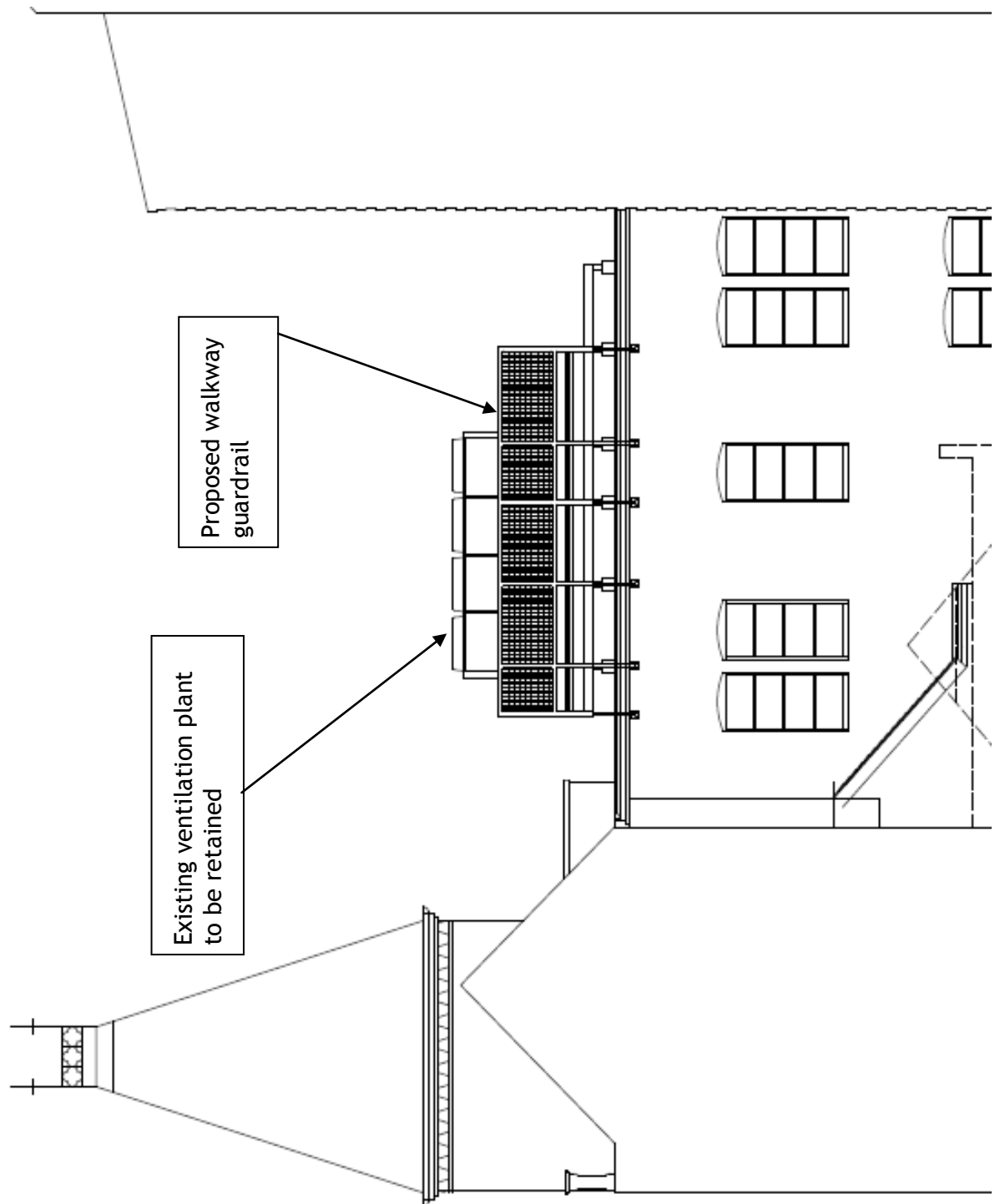
Existing Roof Plan



Existing Courtyard Elevation



Proposed Roof Plan



Proposed Courtyard Elevation