07 January 2026

Reading Borough Council
Working better with you

Title	**PLANNING APPLICATION REPORT**
Ward	Emmer Green
Planning Application Reference:	PL/25/1679 / REG3 Full planning permission
Site Address:	READING CREMATORIUM & HENLEY ROAD CEMETERY, 55 ALL HALLOWS ROAD, CAVERSHAM, READING, RG4 5LP
Proposed Development	Reading crematorium redevelopment phase 2A and associated works for a new staff area, Funeral Director's collection facilities, installation of a plant room and works to improve courtyard accessibility including retaining walls, level adjustments, new ramps and staircases.
Applicant	Reading Borough Council
Report author	Nathalie Weekes
Deadline:	19/01/2026
Recommendations	GRANT Planning Permission, subject the following conditions:
Conditions	1. Time limit 2. In accordance with approved plans 3. Materials as specified 4. Soft Landscaping Scheme, to include the planting of 3 trees to be submitted and maintenance (pre-occupation) 5. Plant/louvre noise
Informatives	1. Positive and proactive engagement 2. Terms and Conditions 3. Nuisance Law 4. Highways 5. Contaminated land

1. Executive summary

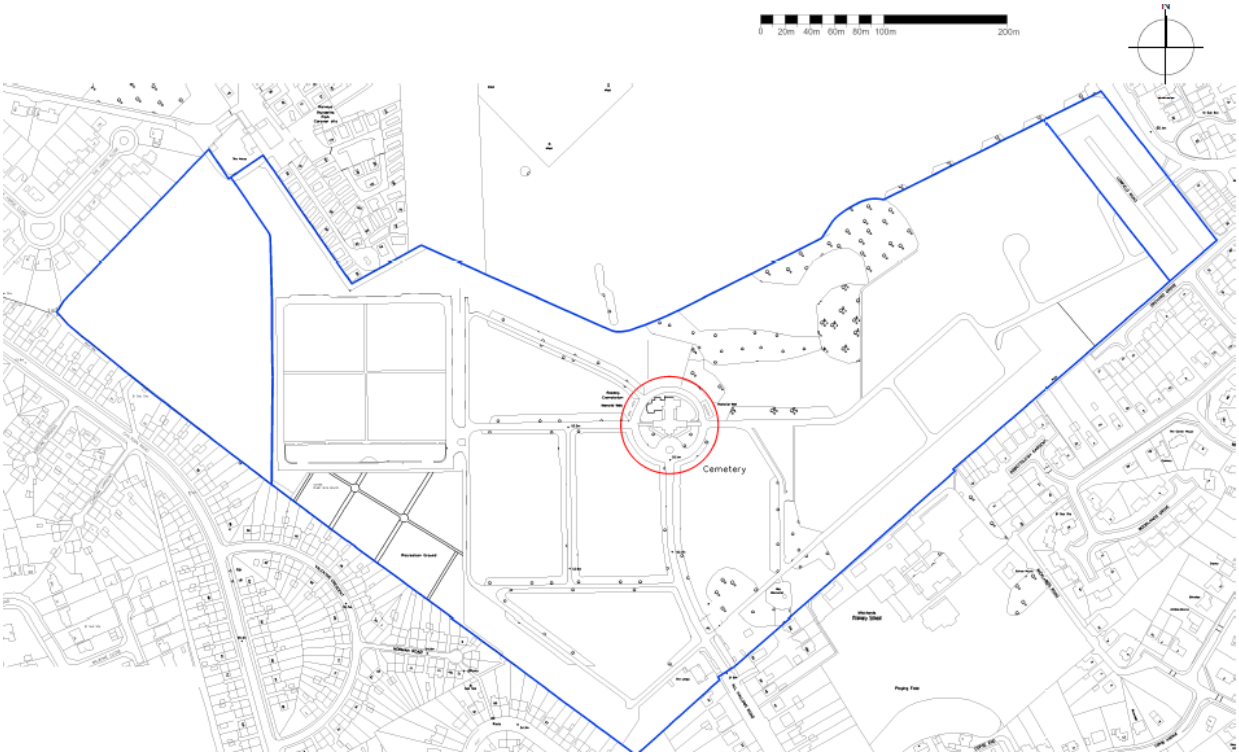
1.2 The proposal involves various alterations to the existing crematorium. These include an extension to the staff area and relocated funeral collection area, plant room relocation, additional of louvres to the cremator room, courtyard works to improve drainage and levels, and external ramps to enhance accessibility. No concerns are raised and planning permission is recommended be approved.

2. Introduction and site description

2.1. The cemetery and crematorium are located at the north end of All Hallows Road in Caversham. The application site relates to a one hectare triangle of land located on the south western boundary of the cemetery site adjacent to the rear garden of the residential properties along Norman Road and Valentine Crescent.

2.2. The application is referred to Committee owing to it being works to a property owned by the Council, and the application has been submitted by the Council's Property Services team.

Site location plan:



Background

2.3 The current cemetery site was used as farm land up until 1924 when it was purchased by the Reading Corporation "for the purposes of a cemetery or burial ground". Henley Road Cemetery was opened in 1927 and is the current burial site for the Borough of Reading but also accepts burials from the wider area. There are currently 25,000 graves for full/coffin burials and 3,000 cremation plots for burial of cremated remains, covering an area of 50 Acres (20.2 ha.). Large areas of the site consist of traditional style graves with headstones and kerb sets. The Cemetery also contains 118 Second World War burials, about half of them forming a war graves plot, immediately inside the main gates.

2.4 The cemetery and crematorium are RBC owned and operated and are located at the north end of All Hallows Road in Caversham. The application site relates to the crematorium building which is located centrally within the cemetery site.

2.5 The property is not listed, nor in a conservation area.

2.6 The site is located within the North Reading Dry Valleys and Chilterns Escarpment 'Major Landscape Feature' as defined by Policy EN13 of the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) and is within a potential 'habitat area' and area of potentially contaminated land.

3. The Proposal

3.1. The proposal seeks full planning permission for various alterations to the main buildings located within the central island where the central crematorium buildings are located. Works are proposed to improve provision of services, increase the staff room area and collection of ashes whilst improving accessibility and drainage on site. This proposal forms part of a longer scheme of works to improve the facilities at Reading Crematorium.

3.2. Pre-application planning advice was sought prior to submitting the application.

3.3. Works comprise:

Staff area: Increase internal area by 16 sqm, to improve the staff provision and create a new Funeral Collection point. The current Funeral Collection will be converted to a Plant Room

Cremator Room: Two large louvres to be installed in the South gable wall to ventilate the new cremators.

Plant Room (At the current Funeral Collection): Gulley added with drainage run, route to be to the rear of the building to the courtyard manhole

Other:

New Retaining Wall to support the road when the Courtyard ground is levelled

New timber closed board fencing above the new retaining wall

New ramp at the entrance and exit of the West Chapel, with modifications to the one-way traffic access tarmac road

3.4. The proposals do not seek a material change of use but rather propose intensification of the existing Sui Generis Use Class crematorium via provision of additional internal space, and associated crematorium facilities.

3.5. Submitted plans and documentation:

- HC_Planning Statement-01 2025-10-31
- P-001 Location_Plan
- P-002 P-002-Block_Plan
- 00-2856-2022-P-Drg Register-Issue Sht-01-2025-11-21
- 03-PLANNING-100-200-300-Drawings-2025-11-21
- HC_Construction Method Statement-01
- HC_Material-Schedule of Luminaires
- HC_Bat Scoping Survey - R1166.001
- HC_Biodiversity Net Gain - Mitigation Strategy-01
- CIL
- As received 21 November 2025

- Estimated Generic DFGT Noise Data 040521
- 2856-22-CR Ph1A-14-2856 007 Proposed Extract Location Plan
- As received 12 December 2025

- VnL-4. Supply and Extract Fans T4
- VnL-SF1-EF1-A-EF1-B-Drawing-4367-RHB-XX-GF-DR-M-1102-P1
- VnL-5. Grilles and Louvres T4
- VnL-EF1-B-Raptor_SPA
- VnL-L5-EF1-A-EF1-B-Louvre-Shutte
- P-003 P-003-Existing Parking Layout And Location of Tree Planting
- HC_Biodiversity Net Gain - Mitigation Strategy-01
- HC_Biodiversity Net Gain-The_Small_Sites_Metric_1.2.3-01
- VnL-SF1-L4-4367-MMS-SKM01
  As received 17 December 2025

- 4367-RHB-XX-GF-DR-E-3103-T1 Proposed lighting and fire alarm layout
- 4367-RHB-XX-GF-DR-E-3103-T2 Proposed lighting and fire alarm layout
- 4367-RHB-XX-XX-SP-0001 Phase 2A Specification for the mechanical, electric and public health MEP services
- 4367-RHB-XX-XX-SH-E-0003 Phase 2A Equipment system schedules for the electrical services
- RE_RC-2022 PH2A tree works

- As received 18 December 2025

4. Planning history

180752/REG3 Extension to cemetery to provide an additional 1376 burial plots - Granted

180027/PREAPP - Change of use of land to burial plots to extend existing cemetery
171021 – New reception and administration building – Granted
031357 - Extension to provide 3,256 additional grave spaces car parking and boundary railings, on land to the west of the current crematorium – Granted
030010 - Extension to crematorium to provide 3,344 additional grave spaces and erection of boundary railings – Withdrawn
930318 - Extension to the office and reception area in the Lodge – Granted
900397 - Construction of a glazed entrance canopy for the main chapel of the Crematorium – Granted

5. Consultations

5.1. Statutory:

None required

Non-Statutory:

RBC Environmental Protection – No objections subject to a plant noise condition and contaminated land informative. Noise assessment of the proposed changes appears to be acceptable. Additional information was required in relation to the proposed louvres.

RBC Transport – No objections.

RBC Natural Environment (Trees) – No objections, subject to conditions prior to occupation, to secure a soft landscaping scheme with 3 trees to be planted and implementation and maintenance of the landscaping.

RBC Natural Environment (Ecology) – Additional information was requested regarding lighting and BNG data. An update will be provided.

RBC Conservation officer – No Objection. It appears that there have been some extensions and alterations, none of which have a negative impact on the building's legibility of original form and appearance. As such, if the building is / was added to the local list, this application is/would be acceptable on heritage grounds, proportionate to the significance of the building (non-designated heritage asset).

Environment Agency – No response has been provided at the time of writing this report.

Public consultation:
Two separate site notices were displayed around the application site on 9 December 2025 for the statutory period.

No letters of representation received.

6. Legal context

6.1 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'.

The following local and national planning policy and guidance is relevant to this application:

National Planning Guidance
National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (as amended)

Reading Borough Local Plan (2019)
CC3: Adaptation to Climate Change
CC7: Design and the Public Realm
CC8 Safeguarding Amenity
EN1: Protection and Enhancement of the Historic Environment
EN12: Biodiversity and the Green Network
EN13: Major Landscape Features and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty
EN14: Trees, Hedges and Woodlands
EN16: Pollution and Water Resources
EN17: Noise Generating Equipment
EN6: New Development in a Historic Context
EN8: Undesignated open space
EN7: Local Green Space and Public Open Space
TR3: Access, Traffic and Highway-Related Matters
TR5: Car and Cycle Parking and Electric Vehicle Charging

Other documents relevant
Reading Open Space Strategy (2007)

Local Plan Partial Update

6.2 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. A consultation version of the draft update of the Local Plan was published on 6th November 2024.

6.3 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. It is a matter of planning judgement rather than legal fact whether a plan or policies within it are out-of-date. This will depend on whether they have been overtaken by things that have happened since the plan was adopted, either on the ground or through changes in national policy, for example. Officer advice in respect of the Local Plan policies pertinent to these applications listed above is that, other than Policy H1 (Provision of Housing) they remain in accordance with national policy and that the objectives of those policies remain 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’. Policy H1 is out of date because the Council is not currently meeting its annual housing targets for general housing as calculated using the standard method in National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) (as required now policy H1 is out of date) or for the provision of Affordable Housing.

6.4 The Local Plan Partial Update was submitted to the Secretary of State on 9th May 2025. Submission marks the beginning of a process of public examination led by an independent Inspector. Due to the stage of examination, the draft Local Plan can be afforded limited weight. Any incidences where policies relevant to this application are

changing or relevance of any new policies proposed to be introduced by the draft Local Plan Partial Update will be discussed within the Appraisal section below.

7. Appraisal

7.1.

I. Land use matters

II. Design and appearance

III. Amenity

IV. Natural Environment

V. Transport

VI. Other issues

I) Land use matters

7.2 Crematoriums are civic community facilities. The NPPF (December 2024) sets out general support for provision of community facilities and Paragraph 98 a) States that to provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:

a) plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environment.'

7.3 This approach is reflected within the Reading Borough Local Plan (2019) where Policy OU1 (New and Existing Community Facilities) outlines general support for proposals for new, extended or improved community facilities, particularly where this will involve co-location of facilities on a single site. The supporting text to Policy OU1 at paragraph 4.7.2 outlines that community facilities encompass a variety of things including health, education and training, civic and administrative, recycling and other civic amenity sites. It is considered that existing crematorium use is the type of community facility referred to by this policy.

7.4 Therefore, in purely land use terms intensification of the existing crematorium use is supported by and would align with Policy OU1.

I) Design and appearance

7.5 The NPPF (2024) defines open space as land or water of public value offering recreation or visual amenity. The crematorium sits within a circular plot surrounded by service roads and parking. The land around the main buildings will be retained as open space with allocated burial areas and is considered to comply with Policy EN8 (Undesignated Open Space).

7.6 The proposal would result in a small change to the appearance of the crematorium buildings sited within the central core. Proposed ramps and skid -resistant paving materials will improve accessibility into the Chapel buildings, with a new path to access the funeral collection point. The expanded staff area is to the rear of the centre and will be sited to the rear of a low brick retaining wall and close board timber fence. The proposed development is considered would have a negligible impact and the public benefits of the works proposed will enable an improved offering at Reading crematorium in accordance with policy OU1 (Community facilities). Materials are considered to match and complement to existing buildings, in line with policy CC7 (Design in the public realm) and CC6 (Accessibility and the intensity of development). The RBC Conservation

officer has commented '*if the building is / was added to the local list, this application is/would be acceptable on heritage grounds, proportionate to the significance of the building (non-designated heritage asset).*' The development is not considered to have any impact outside of the Reading cemetery is not considered to detract from the wider landscape character in line with policy EN13 (Major landscape features)

III Amenity

7.7 The noise and emissions from the proposed new plant and siting of the louvres have been reviewed by the RBC Environmental protection team. The site is noise sensitive to ensure there is minimal disruption to users of the chapels. A plant/louvre condition is recommended. The proposed works are not considered to result in any significant impact to surrounding residents due to the distance between neighbouring houses and the central area within the cemetery and due to the proposed plant specifications.

7.8 The intensification of the use of the site is considered unlikely to result in any detriment to surrounding neighbours above the existing recreational use of the land.

IV Natural Environment

7.9 The proposed extension of the staff area is on existing hardstanding. A bat survey has been undertaken and a response is awaited from RBC ecology who have been provided additional Biodiversity Net Gain information. The impact of lighting on the local habitat is also under review. Three new trees are proposed to be plated on site to improve biodiversity within the grounds of the Reading cemetery. The RBC Natural Environment team recommend a condition for further information to be provided regarding the planting of the 3 additional trees, maintenance and replanting.

7.10 The application site comprises well-maintained amenity grassland with trees and hedges bordering the area. On this basis and given the well maintained nature of the surrounding cemetery and on following the receipt of the RBC Ecology feedback an update will be provided on the proposal and whether it is likely to detrimentally affect any protected species or priority habitats. The additional planting of 3 trees is a positive and welcome addition to the biodiversity of the site.

7.11 The proposal is considered to accord with Policy EN14.

V Transport

7.12 The existing crematorium building is located on a circular piece of land within the wider cemetery and crematorium site and is encircled by service/access roads and car parking.

7.13 The access arrangements to the crematorium would remain unchanged using the existing access from All Hallows Road and existing internal network of service roads across the site. Vehicles approaching from the central internal access road are directed left to 66 car parking spaces and directed right to 58 car parking spaces. These arrangements are expected to remain effective and safe following the proposed modifications.

7.14 The proposals include the provision of new ramps to improve pedestrian access and support inclusive movement around the site. The ramps will be compliant with Part M of the UK Building Regulations guidance to ensure that buildings are accessible to and

useable by people of all abilities, including those with disabilities. The small reduction in the width of the road due to the ramps is considered acceptable.

7.15 The proposed development complies with policies TR3 and TR5.

VI Other Issues

7.16 Sustainability – The proposed development will include a requirement to Health and safety and sustainability and will exceed Building regulation specifications, with the use of sustainable materials, water conservation and increased energy efficiency. On balance the sustainability measures are considered acceptable for the small developments proposed in this instance.

7.17 Contamination – A contaminated land informative is recommended to be attached to the permission as there is potential for contaminated land at this site and the construction works may open up exposure pathways

7.18 The proposal would not be liable for the Community Infrastructure Levy.

8 Equalities Impact

8.1 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. There is no indication or evidence (including from consultation on the application) that the protected groups have or will have different needs, experiences, issues and priorities in relation to the particular planning application. As referenced earlier in the report, it is important to many religions that they are able to have the option to bury their dead, rather than cremate them.

8.2 In terms of the key equalities protected characteristics it is considered there would be no significant adverse impacts as a result of the development.

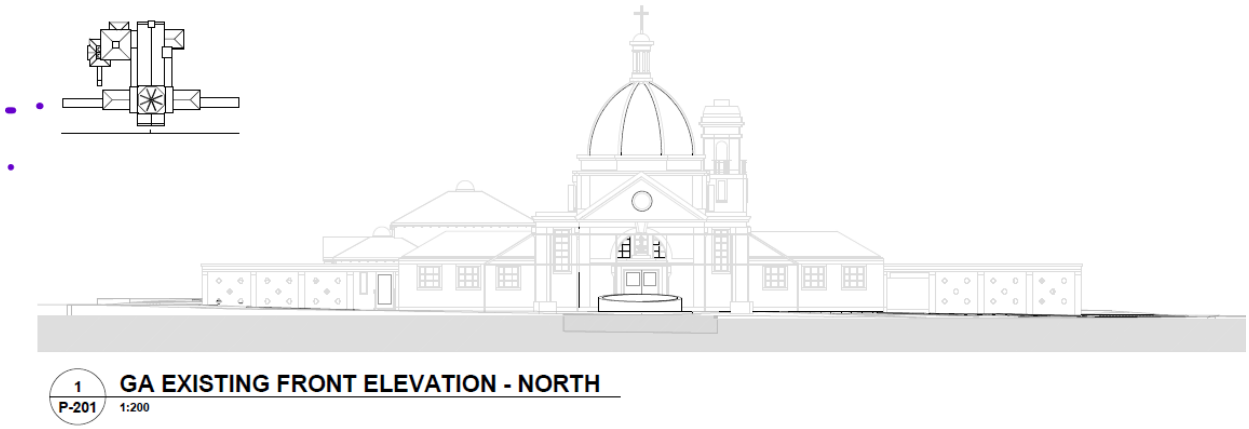
8. Conclusion

9.1 The proposal supports an important community facility (Policy OU1) The proposed development is considered to be acceptable in the context of national and local planning policy and other material considerations as set out in this report. As such it is recommended to grant full planning permission subject to the recommended conditions and informatives.

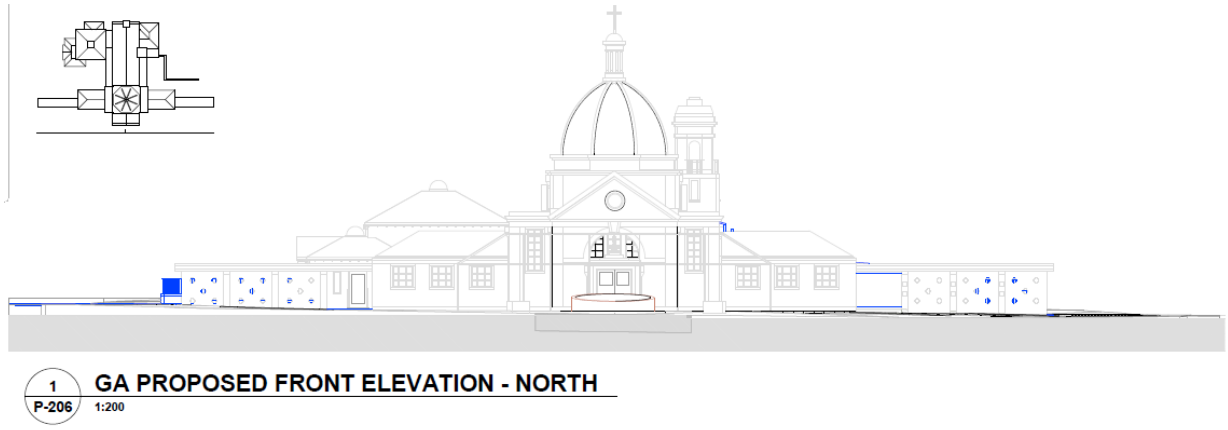
Plans & Appendices

1. Existing and proposed elevations

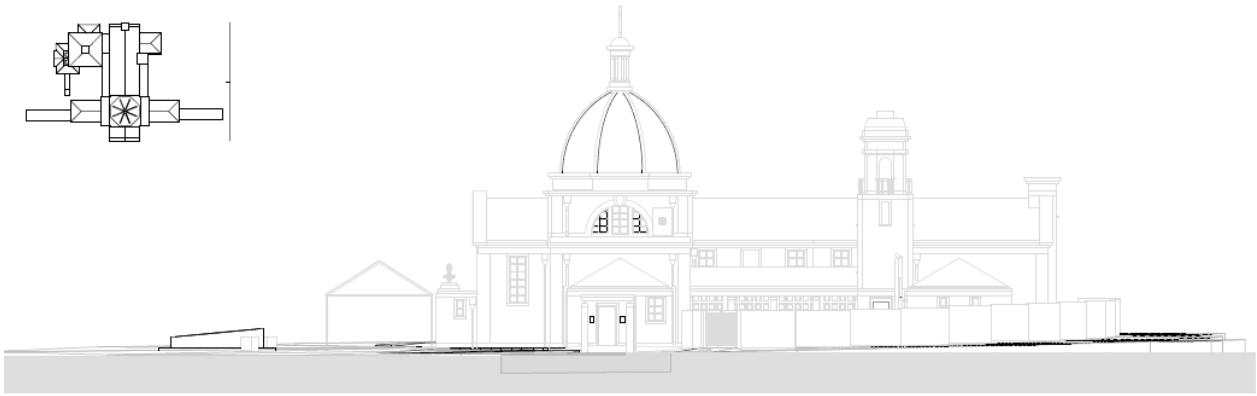
2856/2022/P-201 Rev A GA Existing front elevation - North



2856/2022/P-206 Rev A Proposed front elevation - North

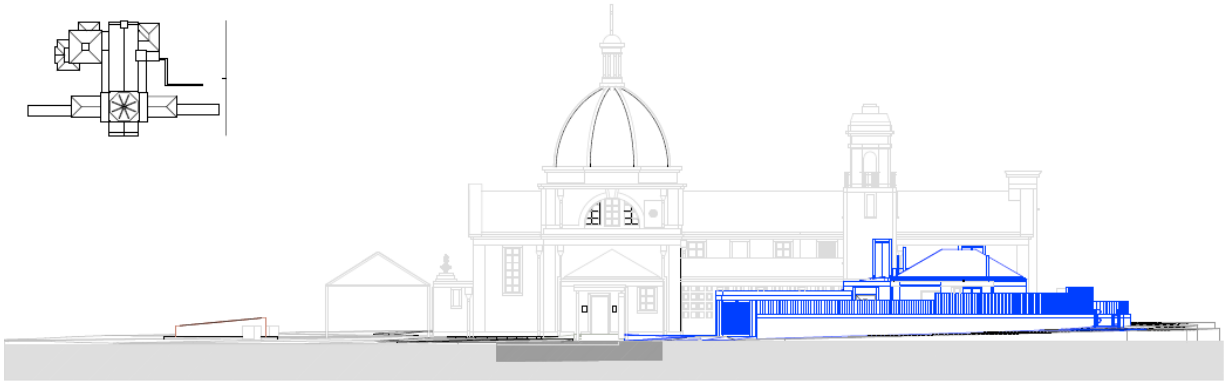


2856/2022/P-201 Rev A GA Existing side elevation - East



2 P-201 **GA EXISTING SIDE ELEVATION - EAST**
1:200

2856/2022/P-206 Rev A Proposed side elevation - East

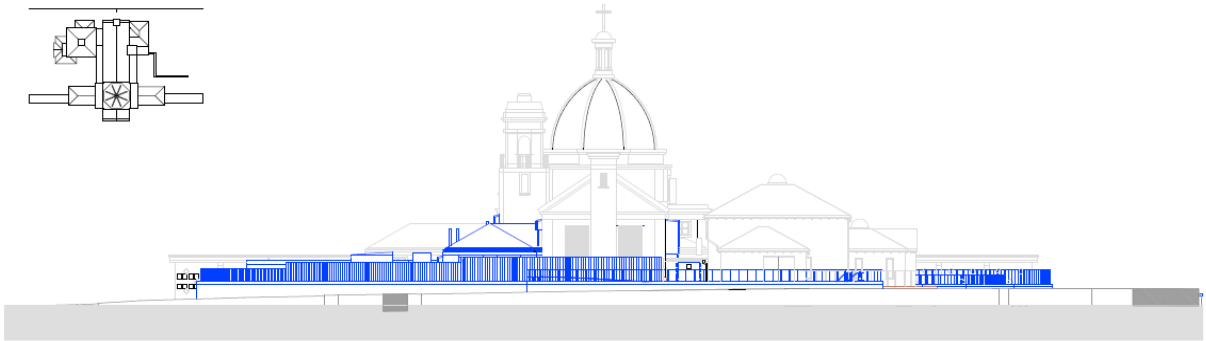


2 P-206 **GA PROPOSED SIDE ELEVATION - EAST**
1:200

2856/2022/P-202 Rev A GA Proposed rear elevation – South

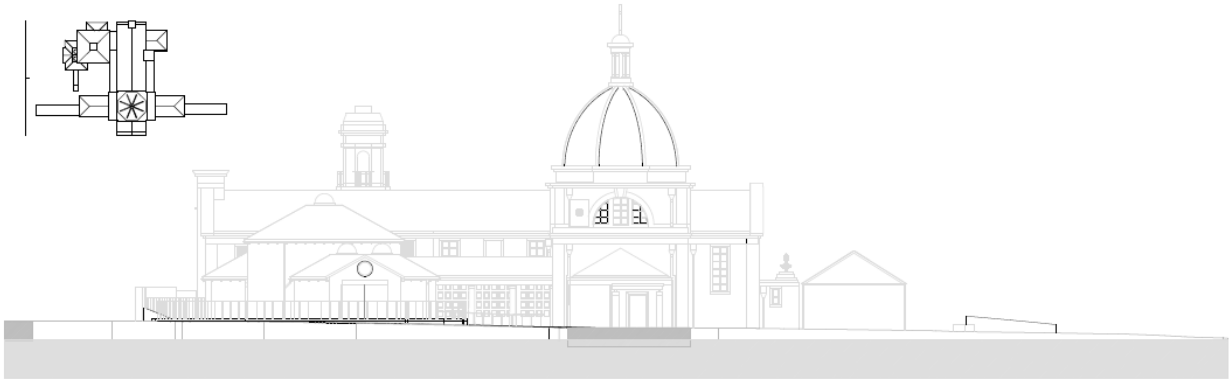
1 P-202 **GA EXISTING REAR ELEVATION - SOUTH**
1:200

2856/2022/P-207 Rev A GA Proposed rear elevation – South



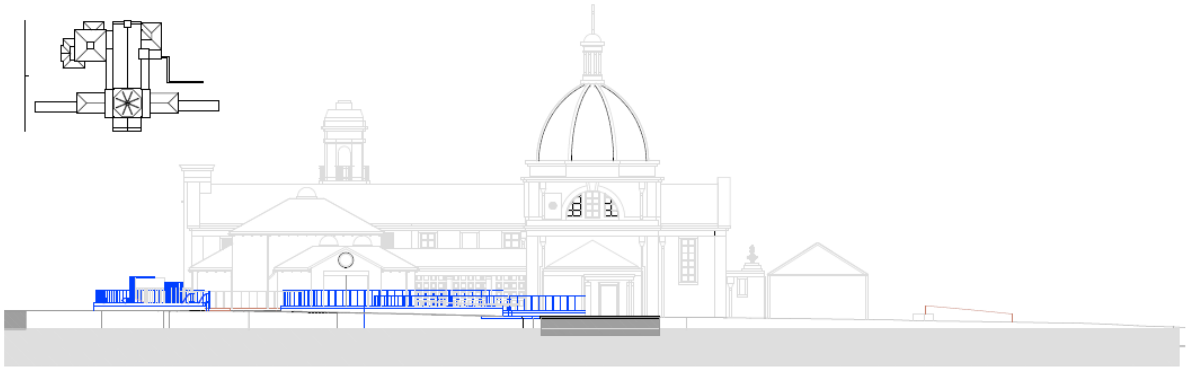
1 P-207 **GA PROPOSED REAR ELEVATION - SOUTH**
1:200

2856/2022/P-202 Rev A GA Proposed rear elevation – West



2 P-202 **GA EXISTING SIDE ELEVATION - WEST**
1:200

2856/2022/P-207 Rev A GA Proposed rear elevation West



2 P-207 **GA PROPOSED SIDE ELEVATION - WEST**
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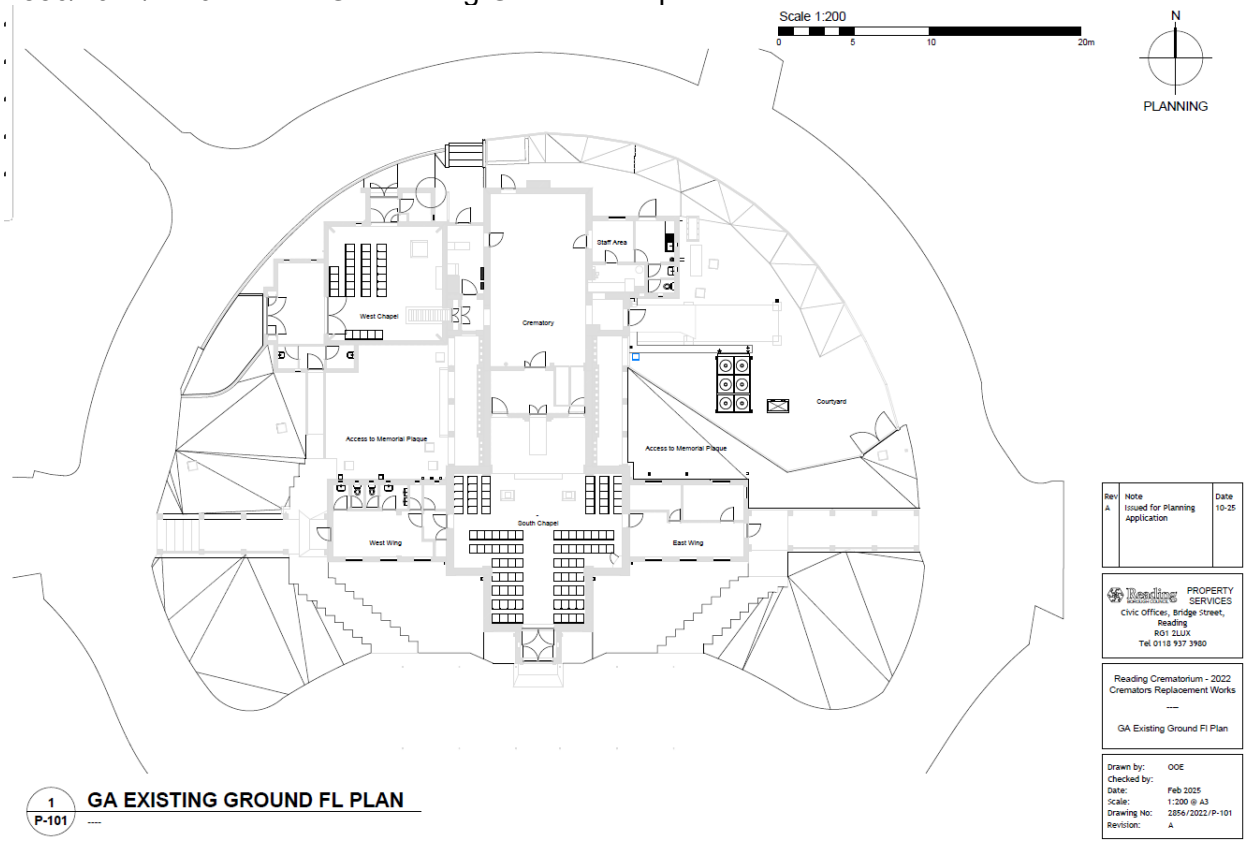
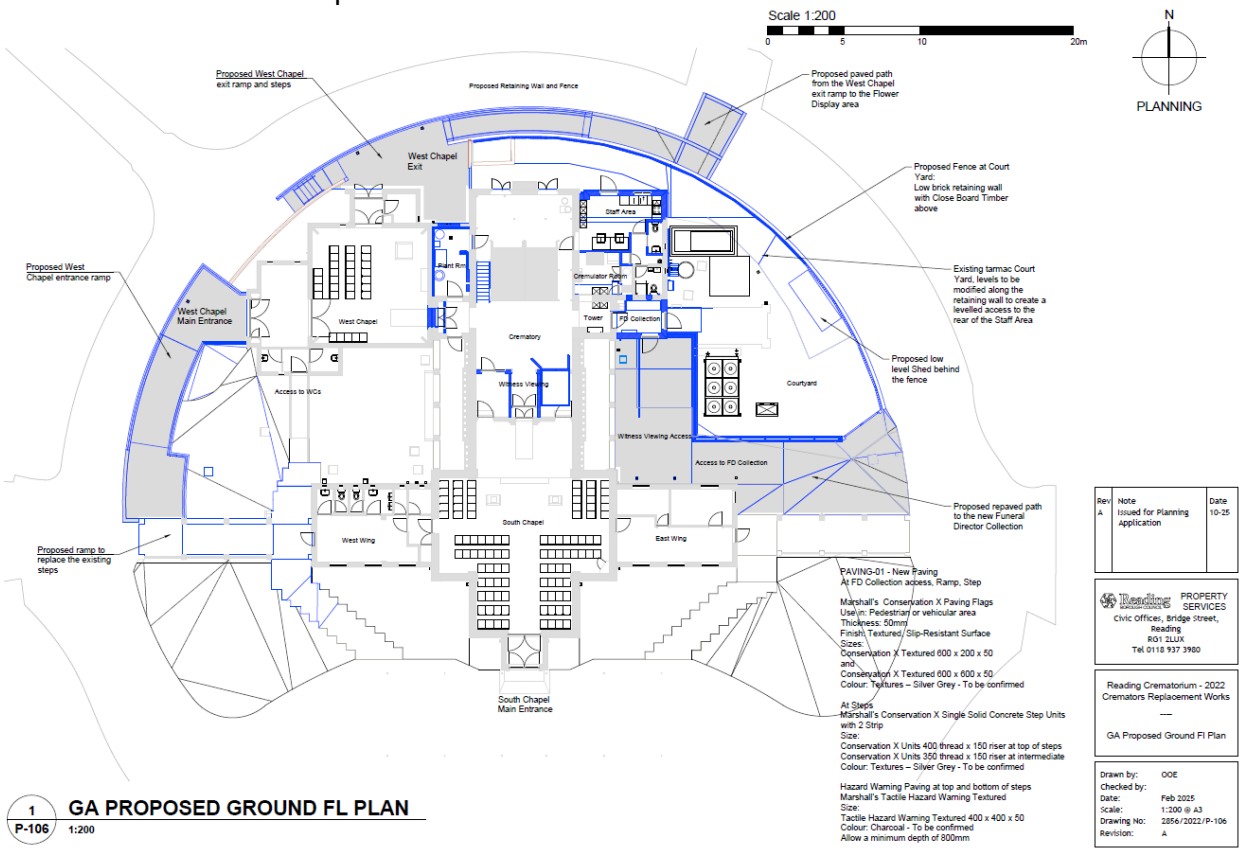
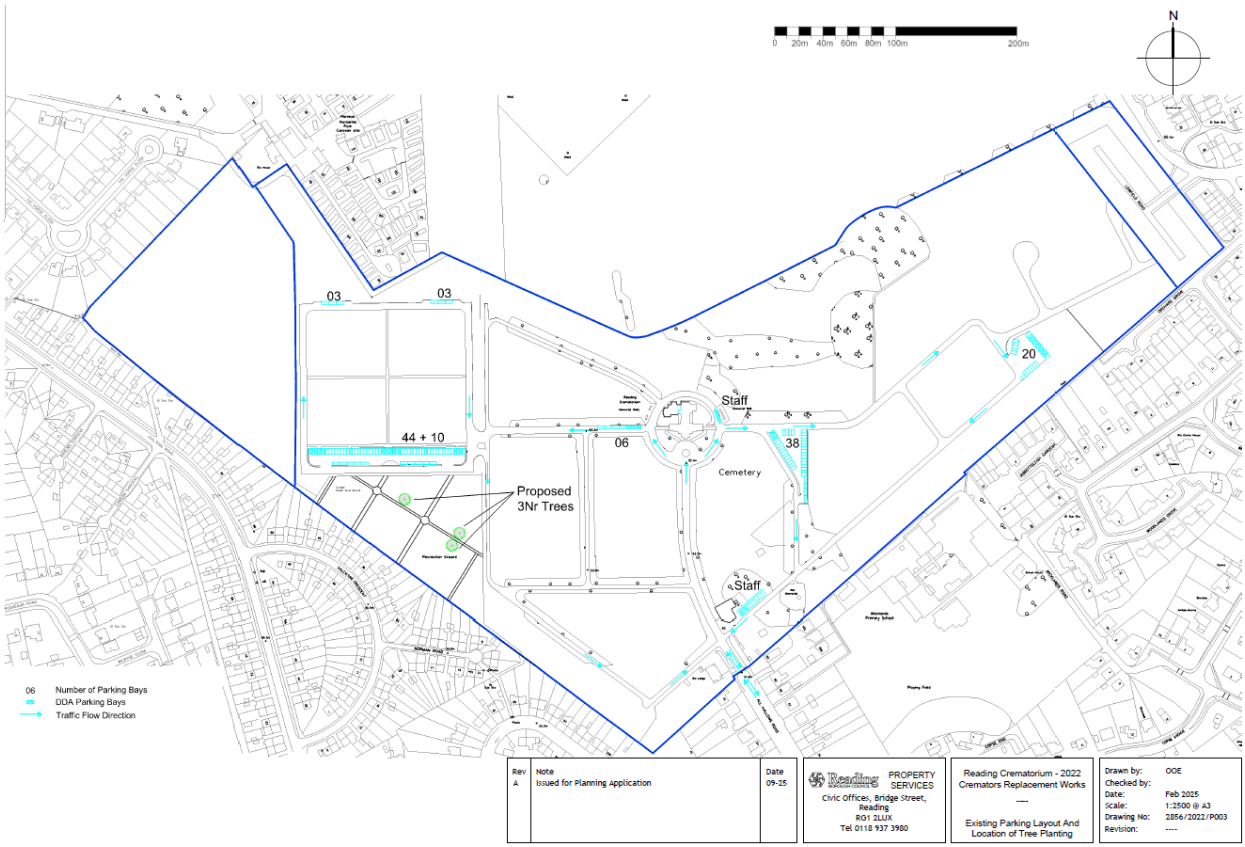
2. Existing and proposed ground floor plans

2856/2022/P-101 Rev A GA Existing Ground floor plan



2856/2022/P-106 GA Proposed Ground Floor Plan



3. Location of Proposed tree planting - 2856/2022/P003