

Application Number	22/00285/FUL
Site Address	Grandstand, Worcester Racecourse, Grandstand Road, Worcester, WR1 3EJ
Description of Development	Demolition of existing weighing room to be replaced with a new timber frame building to provide jockey facilities and weighing area.
Expiry Date	An extension of time has been agreed until 5 October 2022.
Applicant	Worcester Racecourse Limited
Agent	One Creative Environments
Case Officer	Steven Hoang
	steven.hoang@worcester.gov.uk
Ward	Cathedral Ward
Reason for Referral to Committee	The Council is the freehold owner of the application site
Key Issues	The principle of development and whether the proposal would be sustainable form of development having regard to the 3 dimensions of sustainable development in terms of its economic role, social role and environmental role.
Web link to application	https://plan.worcester.gov.uk/Planning/Display/22/00285/FUL
Recommendation	The Corporate Director - Planning and Governance recommends that the Planning Committee grant planning permission subject to the conditions set out in section 9 of the report.

1. Background

- 1.1 The application was registered on 12 May 2022 and was due for a decision on 8 August 2022. An extension of time for the determination of the application has been agreed until 5 October 2022 to allow determination by the Planning Committee.
- 1.2 The application has been referred to the Planning Committee as it is outside the scope of the adopted Scheme of Delegation.

2. The site and surrounding area

- 2.1 The proposal site is a weighing room situated within Worcester Racecourse, also known as 'Pitchcroft'. The weighing room is located to the west of the Worcester Racecourse site, bounded by the River Severn (including towpath) to the west and the racing track to the east, this building is situated to the north of the Grandstand.

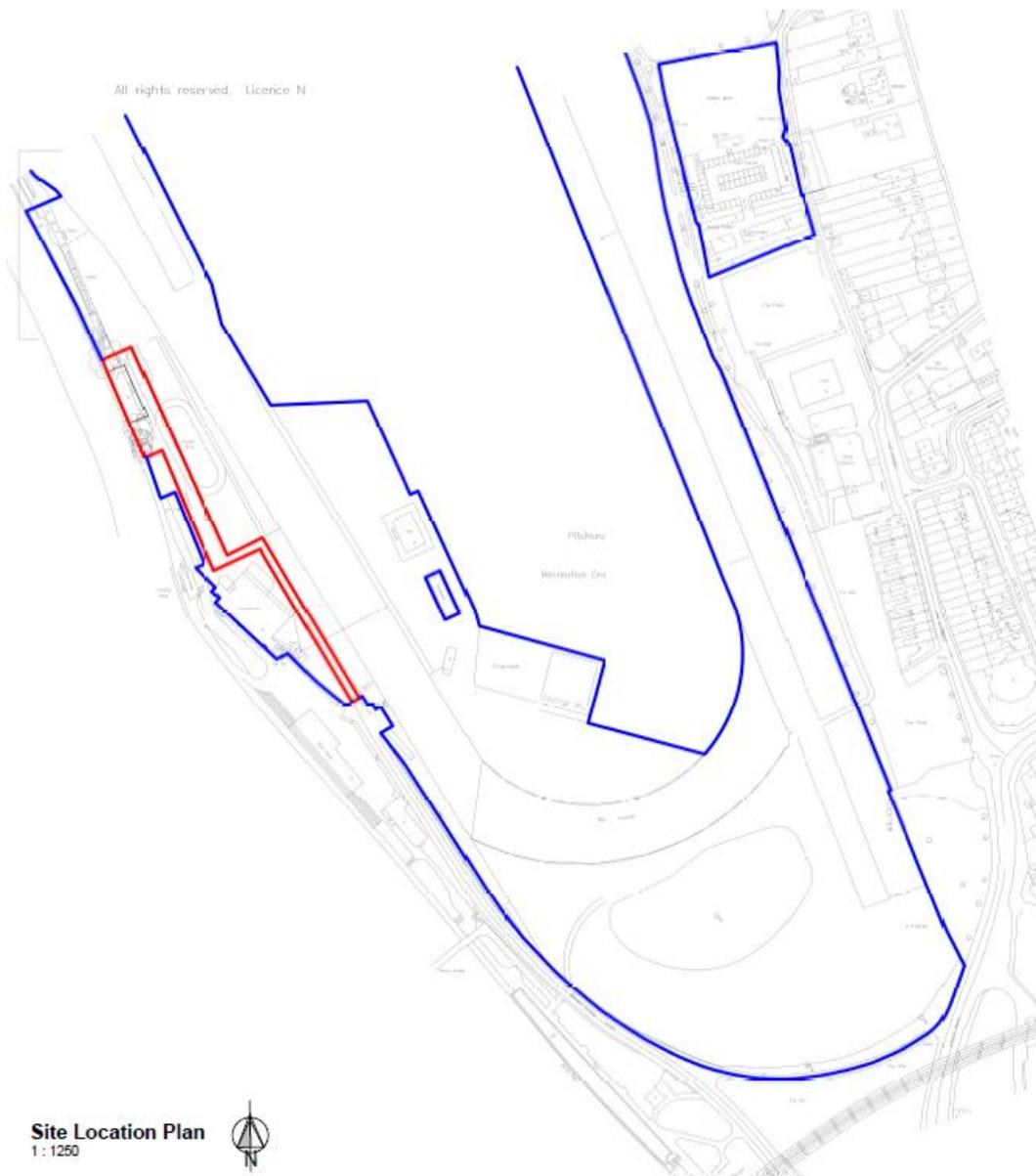


Figure 1: Location Plan

- 2.2 The weighing room is of a timber construction raised approximately 1.7m above the ground on rows of brick columns and stanchions. However, the building is a single storey structure used by Jockeys as a Rest Room, as well as providing a weighing area alongside a Broadcast Office and facilities including WC's/Showers and changing area. The main access to the proposal site is from Grandstand Road via a path leading to the weighing room, there is also access from Croft Road leading to the visitor parking area.



Figure 2: Northern approach to existing weighing room (left) and view between River Severn (right)

- 2.3 Worcester Racecourse has an open character with buildings such as the Grandstand, weighing room and stalls situated to the west of the racetrack. There are car parks surrounding the wider site along Grandstand Road, Croft Road and The Moors. The River Severn surrounds the western and northern boundaries of Worcester Racecourse, whilst a viaduct lies to the south, and to the east there is a mixture of buildings including the Swan Theatre and Barbourne Ex-Servicemens Club, further to the east are residential properties.
- 2.4 The site is designated within the Riverside Conservation Area, however no buildings within the site are listed. The site also lies within an Archaeological Sensitive Area (ASA), Flood Zone 3, Green Space and has the potential risk of contaminated land. It should also be noted that the adjacent River Severn is a Local Wildlife Site (LWS).

3. The proposals

- 3.1 The application seeks to demolish and replace the existing weighing room with the erection of a new two storey timber frame building featuring a mono-pitched roof. The proposed building will cover the footprint of the existing building and also extend further towards the south, increasing the building footprint by 68sqm.
- 3.2 The proposed building will continue to face the racecourse and is accessed from the southern and northern sections of the building (including a lift). Jockey's and other associated officials are expected to arrive via a path from Grandstand Road, while visitors will continue to arrive from Croft Road which leads to the visitor car parking.
- 3.3 The proposed ground floor will include a Jockeys' weighing area alongside changing rooms (including flexible change) and WCs/showers, a wash/dry room, Broadcast Office and Stewards room are also proposed. The proposed first floor will consist of plant rooms (including external plant), a canteen, private terrace, WCs and facilities for Jockeys including a physiotherapy and warming up area. Existing refuse storage and collection is located to the south of the building, these facilities shall remain to serve the proposed development.

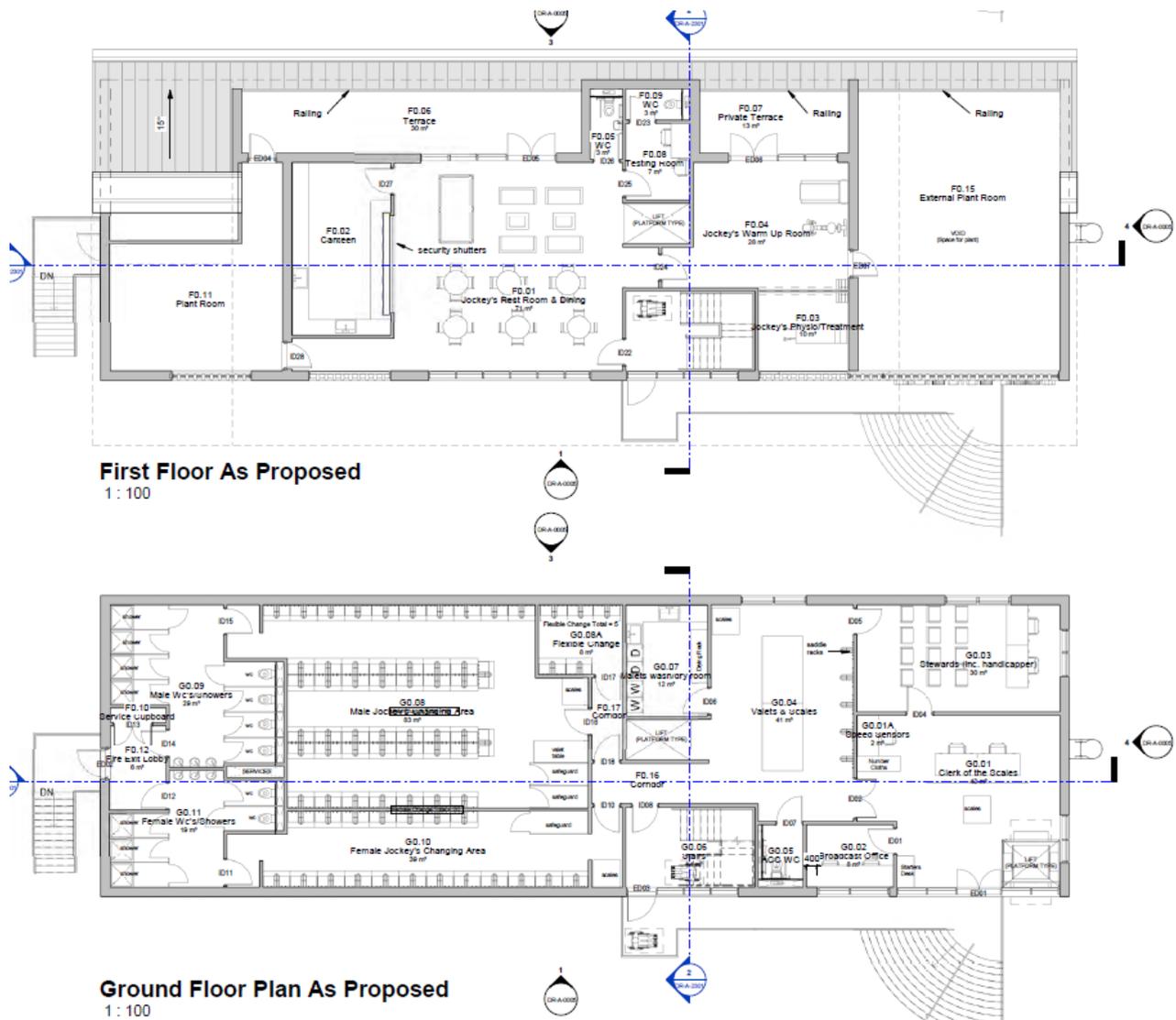


Figure 3: Proposed ground and first floors

3.4 It should be noted the building is elevated above ground by way of a podium design. The proposed elevations will consist of a mixture of timber cladding (dark/light brown) alongside vertical louvre panels and various sized aluminium framed windows and doors. A part flat part pitched roof design is proposed.

3.5 The application is accompanied by the following plans and supporting documents:

- Location/Block Plan and Existing & Proposed Plans/Elevations/Sections
- Design & Access Statement (including Historic Context and Photographs)
- Water Management Statement
- Letter from Geo Environmental Group, dated 27 May 2021
- Tree report
- Archaeological desk-based assessment and building recording
- Bat Roost Assessment, dated July 2022

3.6 In accordance with Article 15 (7) of The Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 (as amended), full details of the application have been published on the Council's website. As such, Members will have had the opportunity to review the submitted plans and documents in order to familiarise themselves with the proposals prior to consideration and determination of the application accordingly.

4. Planning Policy

4.1 The Town and Country Planning Act 1990 ('the Act') establishes the legislative framework for consideration of this application. Section 70(2) of the Act requires the decision-maker in determining planning applications/appeals to have regard to the Development Plan, insofar as it is material to the application/appeal, and to any other material consideration. Where the Development Plan is material to the development proposal it must therefore be taken into account. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires the application/appeal to be determined in accordance with the Plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

4.2 Paragraph 206 of the National Planning Framework (NPPF) states that "Local Authorities are called to look for opportunities for new development within conservation areas and World Heritage Sites, and within the setting of heritage assets, to enhance or better reveal their significance", and that "Development that is not well designed should be refused, especially where it fails to reflect local design policies and government guidance on design, taking into account any local design guidance and supplementary planning documents such as design guides and codes" (paragraph 134). This is further reflected in South Worcestershire Development Plan Policies SWDP 6 and SWDP 24, which seek to protect and enhance designated and non-designated heritage assets and guide against development that would cause substantial harm to the significance of any heritage asset and Policy SWDP 21, which sets generic design principles for development proposals. Policy SWDP 21 requires that all development will be expected to be of a high design quality and integrate effectively with its surroundings and that development proposals must complement the character of the area. Furthermore, proposals should respond to surrounding buildings and the distinctive features or qualities that contribute to the visual and heritage interest of the townscape, frontages, streets and landscape quality of the local area and states that the scale, height and massing of development must be appropriate to the setting of the site and the surrounding landscape character and townscape, including existing urban grain and density.

4.3 The key legal provisions relating to the consideration of heritage assets in the planning system are s72 (1) and s66 (1) of the Planning Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas Act 1990 which state that "special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area" and "have special regard to the

desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses”.

4.4 The Development Plan for Worcester now comprises:

- The South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) which was adopted February 2016, and;
- The Worcestershire Waste Core Strategy, which was adopted on December 2012.
- The Worcestershire Minerals Local Plan 2018-2036, adopted July 2022.

South Worcestershire Development Plan

4.5 The following policies of the SWDP are considered to be relevant to the proposal:

SWDP 1 – Overarching Sustainable Development Principles
SWDP 2 – Development Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy
SWDP 4 – Moving Around South Worcestershire
SWDP 5 – Green Infrastructure
SWDP 6 – Historic Environment
SWDP 21 – Design
SWDP 22 – Biodiversity and Geodiversity
SWDP 24 – Management of the Historic Environment
SWDP 28 – Management of Flood Risk
SWDP 29 – Sustainable Drainage Systems
SWDP 30 – Water Resources, Efficiency and Treatment
SWDP 31 – Pollution and Land Stability
SWDP 33 – Waste
SWDP 38 – Green Space

The Waste Core Strategy for Worcestershire - Adopted Waste Local Plan 2012-2027

4.6 The Waste Local Plan was adopted by Worcestershire County Council on 15 November 2012 and is a plan outlining how to manage all the waste produced in Worcestershire up to 2027. The following policies are relevant to this application:

WCS1 - (Presumption in favour of sustainable development)
WCS3 - (Re-use and recycle)
WCS17 - (Making provision for waste in new development)

Material Considerations

1. National Planning Policy Framework

2. National Planning Practice Guidance

3. Supplementary Planning Documents

4.7 The following Supplementary Planning Documents (SPD) are relevant to the application proposals:-

- South Worcestershire Design SPD
- Renewable and Low Carbon Energy SPD

4. Other material considerations

4.8 The following documents are relevant to the application proposals. Due to their status as evidence or guidance they cannot be given full weight.

Worcestershire's Local Transport Plan (LTP4) 2018 – 2030 Worcestershire County Council Streetscape Design Guide (2020)

5. Relevant Planning History

5.1 The site has been the subject of the following planning applications:

- 19584 – ERECTION OF A RACECOURSE ENCLOSURE NO PLANNING OBJECTION. Approved. Date (6 May 1966).
- 73/1235 – CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW RACE COURSE GRANDSTAND AND RELATED DEVELOPMENT. Approved. Date (19 October 1973).
- 74/0470 – CONSTRUCTION OF A PHOTO-FINISH TOWER RACING TECHNICAL CONTROL. Approved. Date (21 June 1974).
- L97M0065 – Application under Regulation 13 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Area) Regulations 1990 for the demolition of the trainers building and jockey changing facilities. Approved. Date (3 April 1998).
- P06D0452 - Erection of a viewing platform on the foundation piers to the former owners trainers bar. Refused. Date (11 October 2006).

Pre-application Engagement

None

Public Consultation by Applicant

None

6. Consultations

6.1 Formal consultation, including display of site notices, has been undertaken in respect of the application. The following comments from statutory and non-statutory consultees and interested third parties have been received in relation to the original and amended proposals and are summarised as follows:

Neighbours and other third-party comments:

No representations have been received.

Worcester City Council Archaeological Officer: No objection subject to a pre-commencement condition requiring the submission of a programme of archaeological work.

Worcester City Council Conservation Officer: No objections subject to a suggested materials condition.

Worcester City Council Landscape Officer: "I would concur with the WWT in that an eco assessment especially for protected species should form part of the application. The site lies within the excellent green corridor of the River Severn which supports many species, and the original building has been there for many years. As yet its suitability for wildlife is unknown, for example to bats, so an assessment should be made. The new building looks to be a good addition to the riverside landscape, however a specified landscape planting scheme to address the setting and biodiversity enhancement should be submitted."

Officer response: Further information was submitted regarding Bat roosting alongside other species.

Worcestershire County Council (Highway Authority): No objections.

Worcestershire Regulatory Services (Nuisance): No objection.

Worcester City Council - Refuse Management: No objection.

Worcester City Council – Planning Policy: No objection.

Worcester City Council – Emergency Planning: No comment.

South Worcestershire Land Drainage Partnership: No objections.

Lead Local Flood Authority: No objections.

Environment Agency: No objections subject to a condition requiring floor levels to be raised to a minimum height.

Sport England: No comment.

Canal & Rivers Trust: No objections.

Worcestershire Wildlife Trust: No objections subject to condition.

- 6.2 Members have been given the opportunity to read all representations that have been received in full. At the time of writing this report no other consultation responses have been received. Any additional responses received will be reported to members verbally or in the form of a late paper, subject to the date of receipt.

- 6.3 In assessing the proposal due regard has been given to local residents' comments as material planning considerations. Nevertheless, it should be noted that decisions should not be made solely on the basis of the number of representations, whether they are for or against a proposal. The Localism Act has not changed this, nor has it changed the advice that local opposition or support for a proposal is not in itself a ground for refusing or granting planning permission unless it is founded on valid planning reasons.

7. Planning Assessment

- 7.1 Policy SWDP1 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) sets out overarching sustainable development principles and these are consistent with the NPPF. The various impacts of the development have to be assessed and the beneficial and adverse impacts considered.

The Principle of Development

- 7.2 Paragraph 159 of the NPPF explains that "Inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future). Where development is necessary in such areas, the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere."
- 7.3 Clause (C) (ii) of Policy SWDP 28 of the SWDP states that: "New development (including extensions) and redevelopment will not be permitted in areas of existing or previously existing floodplain flow [as defined by the Environment Agency] shown as "Red Zone", or within eight metres of the top of both banks of other watercourses, as shown on the Policies Map. Where options for managed retreat or land swap exist, developers should explore these with the Local Planning Authority." It must be acknowledged that the site falls within the "Red Zone", however officers consider the proposal to be of an exceptional circumstance given that the same operational use is being retained and the proposal would not create a greater vulnerability to the site. In addition, the proposal provides a betterment as the floor level of the proposed building will be elevated higher above ground than the existing building and would not create a greater risk of flooding to visitors at the site by not increasing impermeable areas within the site. A condition requiring floor levels to be raised at a minimum height of 16.97m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum) shall be imposed in the event of planning permission being granted.
- 7.4 Policy SWDP 38 (B) of the SWDP explains that "Development of Green Space will not be permitted unless the following exceptional circumstances are demonstrated:
- i. The proposal is for a community / recreational use that does not compromise the essential quality and character of the Green Space; or
 - ii. An assessment of community and technical need (using recognised national methodology where appropriate) clearly demonstrates that the Green Space is surplus to requirements; or

iii. Alternative / replacement Green Space of at least equivalent value to the community has been secured in a suitable location.”

- 7.5 The proposed use of the development is considered to comply with Policy SWDP 38 (B)(i) of the SWDP subject to the proposal not compromising the quality and character of the Green Space, the impact of the development upon the character and appearance of its surroundings is discussed further in this report. It is also acknowledged that the proposal would not affect the existing public way or access to the site.
- 7.6 For the reasons outlined above, the proposed development is considered acceptable in principle.

Impact upon residential amenities

- 7.7 Paragraph 130(f) of the NPPF requires planning policies and decisions to, amongst other matters, “create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users” and Policy SWDP 21 of the SWDP requires that new development does not have a significant adverse effect on neighbouring amenity.
- 7.8 Officers note that the closest residential properties to the proposal site are situated along Hylton Road to the west. However, given the separation distance provided by the River Severn between the application site and the properties at Hylton Road, there would be no significant impact caused. Overall, the scale and siting of the development proposed would not impact upon the residential amenities enjoyed within the surrounding area.

Impact on Heritage Assets and Character of the Area

- 7.9 Sections 66(1) and 72(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, state that in considering whether to grant consent for a development that affects a listed building or its setting, local planning authorities shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest it possesses (S66); and that in determining applications affecting conservation areas, local planning authorities shall pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area (S72).
- 7.10 With regard to the NPPF, paragraphs 199 – 208 of the NPPF deal with the impact of development on heritage assets. Of particular note in this instance is paragraph 199, which states 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)”; paragraph 200, which states that “any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification”; and paragraph 202, which states that “where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to

the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use”.

- 7.11 Policy SWDP 6 of the SWDP states that “development proposals should conserve and enhance heritage assets, including assets of potential archaeological interest, subject to the provisions of SWDP 24”. SWDP 24 of the SWDP states that “development proposals affecting heritage assets will be considered in accordance with the Framework, relevant legislation and published national and local guidance” and that “where there is potential for heritage assets with Page 78 archaeological interest to be affected, this description should be informed by available evidence, desk-based assessment and, where appropriate, field evaluation to establish the significance of known or potential heritage assets”.
- 7.12 The existing building is considered to be no longer fit for purpose and appears ‘tired’, thus officers do not object to the demolition and loss of the existing weighing room. The proposed building would be noticeably taller than the existing building and will also consist of a larger floorplate than the existing, however the design of the proposal is considered to preserve and enhance the character or appearance of the Riverside Conservation Area, and will have the public benefit of securing the longer-term viability of the racecourse. The proposed timber materials are considered to integrate appropriately with the appearance of the surroundings, nonetheless, the use of a planning condition shall be imposed to require further details/specifications of proposed external



materials to ensure a high quality design is secured.

Figure 4 – 3D visualisation of proposed weighing room

- 7.13 Policy SWDP 38 of the SWDP seeks to protect the essential quality and character of the Green Space. In addition, Policy SWDP 21 of the SWDP expects development to be of a high quality design by ensuring matters such as siting and layout, relationship to surroundings and other development, scale, height and massing are addressed. Whilst the

proposed building would have a greater height than the existing weighing room, and also an increased building footprint, the overall height, scale and massing of the proposal is considered to appear sympathetic to the scale and height of surrounding buildings, as well as the layout of the the site. It is therefore considered that the proposal is acceptable conforming to the character of the surrounding area and would not harm the essential qualities of the Green Space.

- 7.14 In light of the above, the proposal would preserve and enhance the character of the Riverside Conservation Area and would not compromise the quality and character of the Green Space, and the surrounding area.

Other Issues

- 7.15 The Highways Authority have reviewed the proposal and have raised no objections. Officers acknowledge parking and access to and from the proposal site will remain as existing and consider appropriate provisions are in place to accommodate the proposed development. Also, the Refuse Management team have confirmed existing waste facilities and collection are suitable for the development as proposed.
- 7.16 Worcester Wildlife Trust (WWT) have identified the potential impacts of the development upon the adjacent River Severn (a Local Wildlife Site) and application site during and after construction. Consequently, a report was submitted identifying species such as bats, however further details are requested by WWT which can be satisfied by way of condition.
- 7.17 The site is situated within an Archaeological Sensitive Area, a desk based assessment was submitted with the application, however further information is requested by the Councils Archaeology and Planning Advisor; a programme of works, including a written scheme of investigation can also be requested by way of condition.

8. Conclusion and planning balance

- 8.1 Turning to the overall planning balance, the proposal is considered to be generally consistent with the aims and objectives of the SWDP.
- 8.2 The proposal is situated in a flood plain, a 'red zone' where new development or redevelopment is generally not permitted. However, the proposal would retain the current use of the site and provide a new building which is elevated further above ground level without increasing the impermeable area within the site, it is therefore considered that the proposed weighing room would not create a greater risk of flooding at this site.
- 8.3 The redevelopment of the weighing room would benefit the viability of the racecourse and also the public. The new weighing room would preserve the Riverside Conservation area, retain the essential quality and character of the Green Space and surrounding area whilst safeguarding the residential amenities of neighbours, as well as providing wider social, economic and environmental benefits.

- 8.4 It is considered that the submitted scheme has indicated more than sufficient detail to warrant approval. In fact, it is considered that the proposal is a well designed site utilising the full potential of the site within a sensitive location.
- 8.5 All comments received as part of the consultation process and all material planning issues have been considered in the determination of this application. Having regard to the totality of the policies in the Framework, it is considered that the proposed development is sustainable when looking at its social, economic and environmental credentials in the round. The adverse impacts of the development (taking into account the considerable importance and weight to be given to the less than substantial harm to the significance of the heritage assets) do not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits. Overall, it is considered that the proposals constitute an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable form of development that accords with the Framework and the Development Plan as a whole.

9. Recommended Conditions

- 9.1 In the event that Members are minded to grant planning permission the following conditions are recommended:-

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: To conform with the requirements of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall be carried out and completed in accordance with the following approved plans and associated documents and the specifications and recommendations contained therein, except where otherwise stipulated by conditions attached to this permission:

- a. ARCWR-ONE-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-0001 Rev.P03
- b. ARCWR-ONE-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-0002 Rev.P03
- c. ARCWR-ONE-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-0003 Rev.P04
- d. ARCWR-ONE-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-0005 Rev.P07
- e. ARCWR-ONE-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-0010 Rev.P01
- f. ARCWR-ONE-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-0011 Rev.P01
- g. ARCWR-ONE-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-2301 Rev.P01
- h. Design and Access Statement
- i. Limited Ground Investigation Ref: MP-WMO-0738 (GEG-21-683)
- j. Tree Report
- k. Archaeological desk-based assessment and building recording of The Weighing Room
- l. Bat Roost Assessment

Reason: To ensure compliance with the approved scheme.

3. Floor levels to be set no lower than 16.97mAOD, in accordance with the email from David Gridley of One Creative Environments (dated 31st May 2022). This figure includes an allowance for climate change, in accordance with National Planning Policy Guidance.

Reason: To protect the development from flooding in accordance with Policy SWDP 28 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan 2016 and Chapter 14 of the NPPF (2021).

4. No superstructure works shall take place until samples and full particulars of all external facing materials to be used in the construction of the development have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority.

Details submitted pursuant to this condition shall include but are not restricted to:

- a. Samples and details of external cladding;
- b. Details of external cladding, where relevant, shall include all types of brick or other cladding material to be used, details of bond, mortar and pointing for brick and details of joints, panel sizes and fixing method for other types of cladding.
- c. Samples and drawings of fenestration.
- d. Details of fenestration, where relevant, shall include reveals, sills and lintels.
- e. Drawings and details of entrances.
- f. Details of entrances, where relevant, shall include doors, reveals, signage, entry control, post boxes, CCTV, lighting and soffit finishes. Drawings shall be at a scale of no less than 1:20.
- g. Samples and details of roofing.
- h. Details of any balconies, terraces and associated balustrades, soffits and drainage.
- i. Details of any external rainwater goods, flues, grilles, louvres and vents.
- j. Details of any external plant, plant enclosures and safety balustrades.

The development shall not be carried out other than in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure a satisfactory external appearance of the development, that high quality materials and finishes are used and that the character and appearance of the conservation area is preserved or enhanced, in accordance with policies SWDP 6, SWDP 21 and SWDP 24 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan 2016.

5. No development shall take place until a programme of archaeological work, including a Written Scheme of Investigation, has been submitted to and approved by the local planning authority in writing. The scheme shall include an assessment of significance and research questions; and:
 - i. The programme and methodology of site investigation and recording.
 - ii. The programme for post investigation assessment.
 - iii. Provision to be made for analysis of the site investigation and recording.
 - iv. Provision to be made for publication and dissemination of the analysis and records of the site investigation.
 - v. Provision to be made for archive deposition of the analysis and records of the site investigation.
 - vi. Nomination of a competent person or persons/organisation to undertake the works set out within the Written Scheme of Investigation.

Reason: In accordance with the requirements of paragraphs 194 and 205 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (as amended) and SWDP 6 & 24 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan 2016.

6. The development shall not be occupied until the site investigation and post investigation assessment has been completed in accordance with the programme set out in the Written Scheme of Investigation approved under condition (5) and the provision made for analysis, publication and dissemination of results and archive deposition has been secured.

Reason: In accordance with the requirements of paragraphs 194 and 205 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (as amended) and SWDP 6 & 24 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan 2016.

7. No works shall take place until details of biodiversity improvement measures have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority (in consultation with Worcestershire Wildlife Trust). The biodiversity improvement measures shall take into account the impacts of light and noise on the river corridor (especially during construction), including a landscaping plan which overall demonstrates biodiversity net

gain/enhancement in line with the relevant planning guidance and law. The biodiversity improvement measures shall be completed in accordance with the approved details prior to the first occupation of the development and retained for the lifetime of the development.

Reason: To ensure an overall improvement to biodiversity in line with policy SWDP 22 of the South Worcestershire Development Plan (2016).