

Planning History

Recorded information for the site indicates that the existing PCC building was originally constructed in 1958 and partially refurbished in 1985. The building was also extended after a 1997 planning application with partial extension in the late 1990's to form an enlarged equipment room associated with the antenna. Details of the relevant planning history can be found below:

- 19970463: Erection of extensions to the Port Control Centre at roof level on the north and south elevations to form rest room, kitchen, toilet accommodation and enlarged equipment room. Granted permission 24 December 1997.
- 19980214: Change of the external facing materials to the Port Control Centre fronting the River and erection of a 6m high flagpole on the roof. Granted permission 22 May 1998.
- 19980247: Display of individual internally illuminated lettering at 2nd and 3rd floor levels on the River elevation of the Port Control Centre. Consent for advert granted 2 June 1998.
- 20190222 & 20190223: Conversion of existing archive area into an area for staff welfare and social activities, erection of a new terrace on the riverside elevation with additional windows and roof lights to the front and back elevations of the link section of the London River House; installation of photovoltaic solar panels on the roof of the London River House main block (east and west elevations); installation of a river water cooling plant system; alterations and improvements to the hard and soft landscaping to the front of the Royal Terrace Pier entrance and forecourt. Granted permission 17 May 2019.

Planning Policy Context - Local Plan: Gravesend Core Strategy (Adopted 2014)

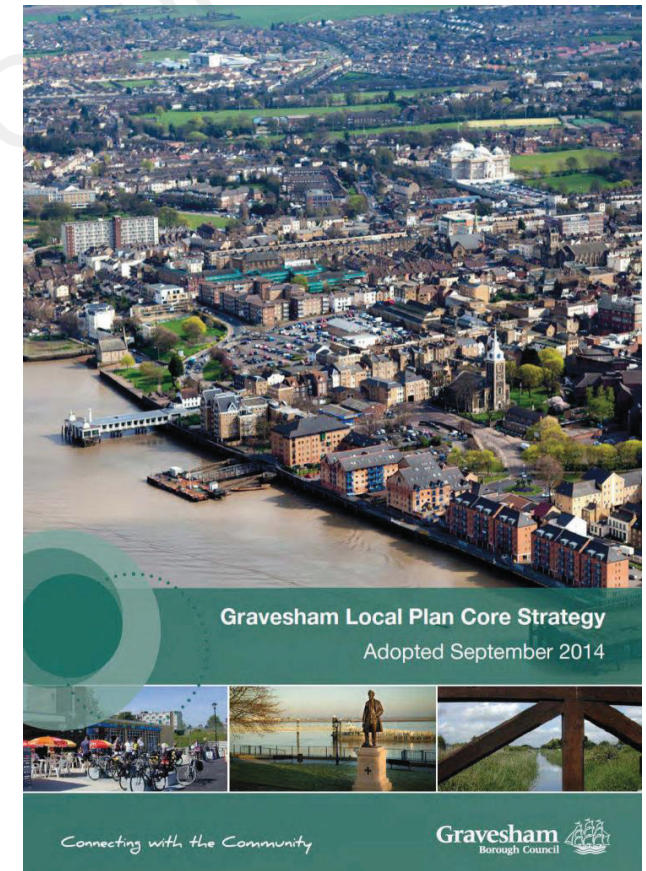
The following section provides an overview of some of the key policies of the adopted Gravesend Local Plan, and how these have been taken into account as part of this proposed development:

- Policy CS01: Sustainable Development

Extract from Gravesend Local Plan Core Strategy:

“When considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework and in this Core Strategy. It will work proactively with applicants jointly to find solutions which mean that proposals can be approved wherever possible, and to secure development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area.”

This application aims to improve the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area through the refurbishment of the existing PCC building to ensure that the PLA, and particularly its VTS operations can continue to operate safely and effectively both now and into the future utilising modern technology to ensure the PLA sets the benchmark for VTS services in the UK.



Gravesend Local Plan Core Strategy

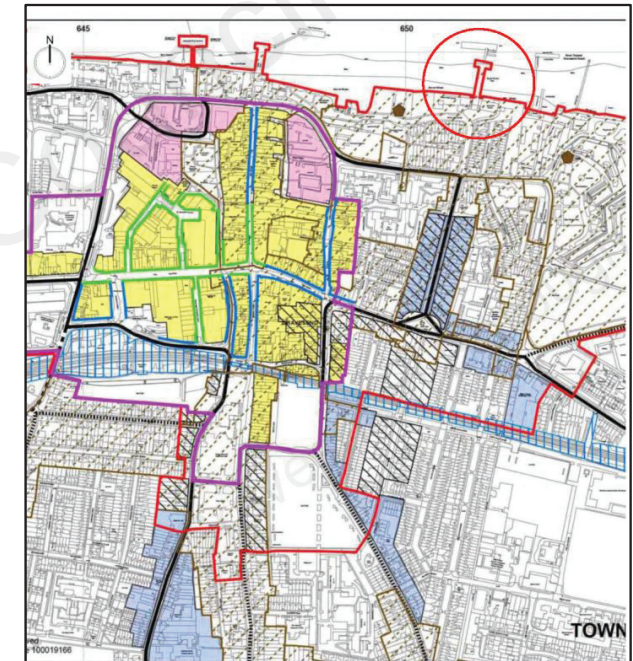
Planning Policy Context - Local Plan: Gravesend Core Strategy (Adopted 2014)

- Policy CS05: Gravesend Town Centre Opportunity Area

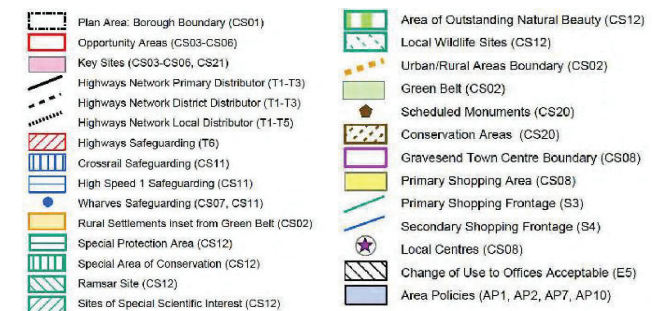
Extract from Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy:

“The Gravesend Town Centre Opportunity Area will be the principal focus for town centre related economic and social activity in the Borough. This will be achieved by consolidating the existing retail area, encouraging a mix of employment and residential uses, improving its role as a transport hub by the creation of a public transport interchange, promoting an evening economy through giving support to the provision of leisure uses and taking full advantage of its heritage and riverside setting.”

This application will enhance the office facilities at the PCC facility, following on from the successful enhancement of London River House and the Link completed between 2019-2021. In addition the proposed landscaping works to the public realm in front of the PCC and the wider London River House complex will create a consistent approach that will better link the PLA's facility to Gravesend Town Centre and celebrate the fact that the UK's largest port has its state of the art headquarters based in Gravesend which serves the entirety of the PLA's jurisdiction from Teddington Lock in the London Borough of Richmond Upon Thames to the Thames Estuary. The PLA is proud of its location in Gravesend and as the UK's largest Port wishes to ensure that its base of operations is modernised and future proofed for the long term, to act as an example of best practice as a Port Authority and a high performing VTS operations.



Gravesham Local Plan Policies Map



Planning Policy Context - Local Plan: Gravesend Core Strategy (Adopted 2014)

- Policy CS07: Economy, Employment and Skills

Extract from Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy:

“5.1.35 Development proposals facilitating the expansion of river-related employment will be supported, particularly where these involve the use of the river for transport and/or provide specialist training or other facilities intended to support the continued use of the River Thames as a major commercial waterway.”

This proposal will ensure that VTS operations linked to the Port of London within Gravesend can continue both now and into the future, which will support the continued use of the River Thames as a major commercial waterway, in line with the PLA's Thames Vision 2050 plan which details how maritime technological change is set to be manifest across ship propulsion, auxiliary systems, navigation, monitoring and control. At the PLA our preparations will include developing a flexible new maritime control hub, ready to adjust as new technology and approaches, including vessel autonomy and potentially shore based pilotage, start to take shape.

Planning Policy Context - Local Plan: Gravesend Core Strategy (Adopted 2014)

- Policy CS18: Climate Change

Extract from Gravesend Local Plan Core Strategy:

“Flooding - Proposals in areas at risk of flooding must be accompanied by a Flood Risk Assessment (in accordance with national policy and Environment Agency standing guidance as appropriate)

Sustainable Drainage and surface water run-off - The Council will seek to minimise the impact of drainage from new development on waste water systems. In particular, the Council will: require that surface water run-off from all new development has, as a minimum, no greater adverse impact than the existing use; and require the use of Sustainable Drainage Systems on all developments where technically and financially feasible.

Carbon reduction - The Council will seek to reduce the overall carbon footprint of the Borough. In particular, the Council will In the context of national policy on the transition to zero carbon development via amendments to Part L of the Building Regulations, require proposals for development of the Key Sites throughout the Borough and other major development elsewhere in the Gravesend Town Centre Opportunity Area to consider the potential and include proposals for low carbon and renewable energy generation, including combined heat and power. Where choosing not to do so, applicants must submit evidence which demonstrates that compliance is not technically or financially feasible or that improved fabric energy efficiency or an allowable solution results in improved carbon saving benefits”

On flood risk and drainage, this is discussed on page 30 of this document and in the associated Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy.

With regard to Carbon Reduction, as part of the proposed development, energy efficiency shall be achieved through compliance with and improvements upon the current Building Regulations Part L 2021 Volume 2 (Conservation of fuel and power in buildings other than dwellings) (see part 4.1 of the submitted Energy Statement).

In addition a number of Low or Zero Carbon (LZC) technologies have been assessed for their viability to be included in the design. Further detail can be found in parts 5.3.3 – 5.3.6 of the Energy Statement including on the provision of solar panels and electric heat pumps as part of the proposals.

Planning Policy Context - Local Plan: Gravesend Core Strategy (Adopted 2014)

- Policy CS19 Development and Design Principles

Extract from Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy:

“The Council will seek to manage new development in a way that makes a positive contribution to the built, historic and natural environment. Ensuring new development is attractive and fit for purpose, reinforces local character and safeguards people’s amenity is the key to achieving successful neighbourhoods and gaining community acceptance of changes to their local area. However, this does not mean that only traditional design solutions will be supported. The Council recognises the positive impact that contemporary, innovative design solutions can have in appropriate locations, particularly where they embrace sustainability and enhance local distinctiveness.”

“5.15.7 National policy recognises the contribution that a high quality public realm makes in creating successful places. Public art is a component of the public realm and can contribute to the creation of a strong sense of place and local distinctiveness in a scheme. It can take many forms from physical pieces to creative lighting, street furniture and street paving. The Council will expect applicants to consider opportunities to provide public art as an integral part of their approach to the public realm.”

“New development will include details of appropriate hard and soft landscaping, public art, street furniture, lighting and signage and will ensure that public realm and open spaces are well planned, appropriately detailed and maintained so they endure;”

“New development will protect and, where opportunities arise, enhance biodiversity and the Borough’s Green Infrastructure network. Support will be given to environmental enhancements where opportunities arise;”

“The layout of new development will create a safe and secure environment and provide surveillance to minimise opportunities for crime and vandalism.”

This application will greatly assist in strengthening the character and distinctiveness of the local area and will make a positive contribution to the environment. The refurbishment of the PCC will result in a significant improvement to the existing façade, including the overall Conservation Area designation and the adjacent listed pier. The area will be further enhanced by the proposed external works, which will create a clear and more welcoming entrance to the PLA’s offices and create a consistent public realm, clear of clutter, creating a stronger sense of identity across this site. The proposed development will also result in the removal of redundant infrastructure on the PCC facility, and create a replacement comms tower onto the roof of Alex House, designed to meet current and future requirements in a more streamlined and modern design. This will ensure that the essential VTS function of the PLA’s operations at Gravesend can continue to successfully and safely operate. In addition, as part of the proposed works the proposed development will avoid adverse environmental impacts from pollution, including noise, air and light pollution, particularly during the construction stage. Further information on how these matters are taken into account can be found in the associated outline Construction Management Plan.

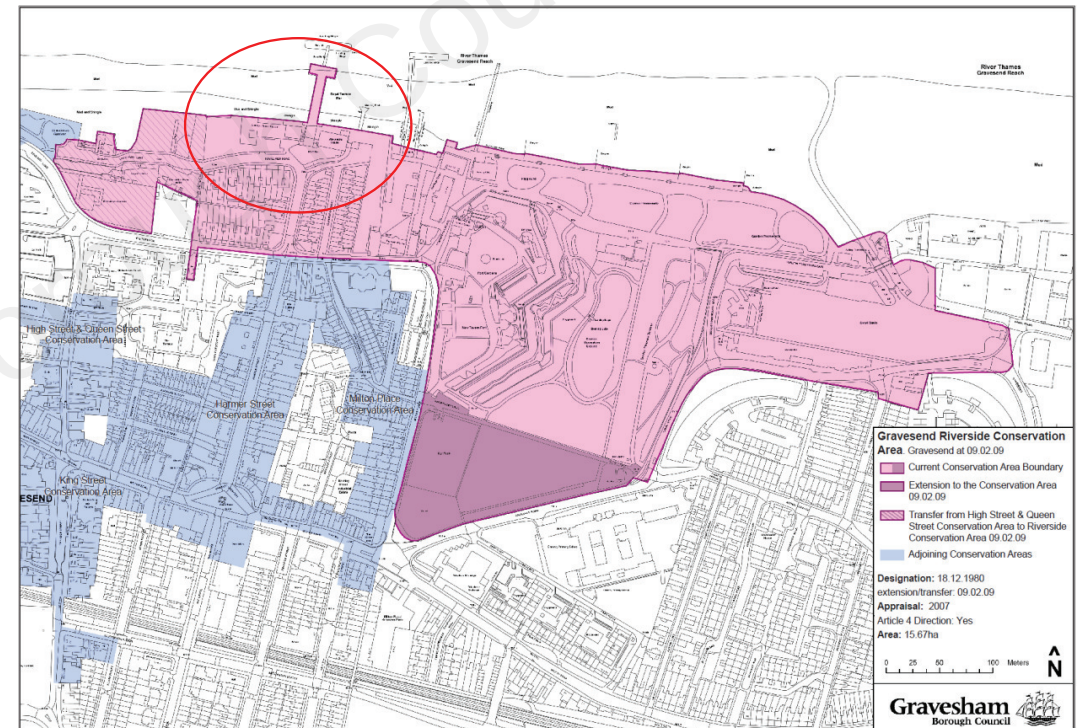
Planning Policy Context – Gravesend Riverside Conservation Area

Extract from Gravesham Local Plan Core Strategy (Policy CS20):

“The Council will accord a high priority towards the preservation, protection and enhancement of its heritage and historic environment as a non-renewable resource, central to the regeneration of the area and the reinforcement of sense of place.”

It is considered that the development proposals will enhance the setting of the historic environment and wider conservation area, including the Grade II Listed Royal Terrace Pier through the following means:

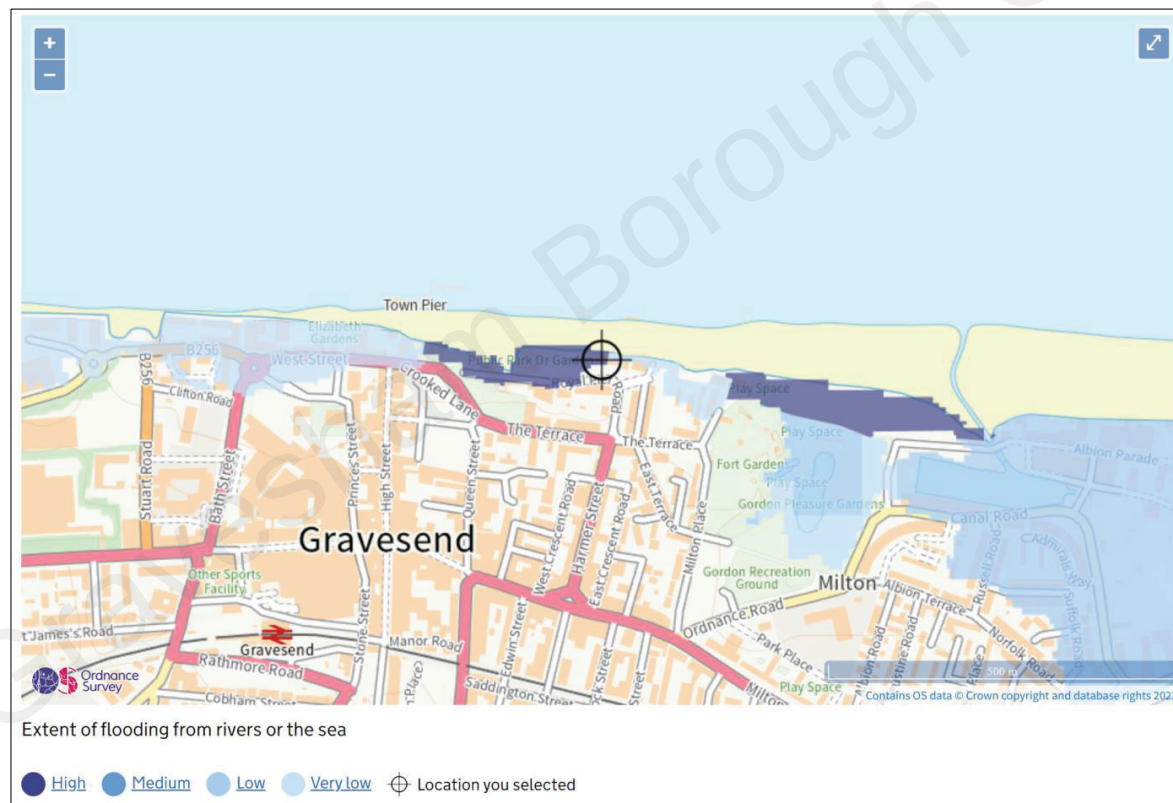
- A considerate refurbishment of the PCC building itself, currently designated as a ‘neutral’ building in the Conservation Area Appraisal. The building will be designed in muted colours in keeping with the surrounding buildings and landscape and will be constructed of materials that compliment the tones of the existing area whilst taking into the account the Conservation Area context of the setting of the adjacent listed pier.
- The proposals will involve the removal of redundant infrastructure and unsightly parts of the existing building, including eastern staircase and rooftop unit.
- The external landscaping proposals will enhance the wider area by creating a clean, consistent approach that is more accessible and appealing for staff and visitors to the site whilst being considerate to the areas conservation area designation through the type of paving proposed and design of the area of the external area.
- The removal of the car parking directly in front of the entrance and the waste bin location will assist in achieving an enhancement to the general public realm in this area, which will serve to create a sense of civic public realm to the site, enhancing links to Gravesend and presenting a more welcoming face to the public.



Gravesend Riverside Conservation Area Boundary

Planning Policy Context – Flood Risk

Flood Risk: The application site is located within Flood Zone 2& 3 and the PCC building is located within an area benefiting from flood defences. Specifically, the site is currently protected from potential flooding by a variety of flood defence walls along the river frontage and around specific elements of the site, where critical services and accommodation are located. The proposed development will not result in a greater flood risk, above and beyond what is already experienced, to the area, and there would be no requirement to amend or change the existing flood defences that are in place and there are no proposals for any encroachment into the areas between the existing building and river wall to the North. Further information on flooding and drainage matters can be found in the associated Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy.



PROPOSALS

- Development scope
- Constraints and Opportunities
- Design Strategies
- Internal Organisation
- External Envelope - Materials + Detail
- Landscaping and Public Realm
- External Lighting and Signage
- Comms Mast
- Visual Impact

Proposals – Development Scope

The adjacent drawing shows the proposed red line boundary for development and the blue showing the overall ownership boundary of the PLA.

Whilst the majority of the development will be centred around the current PCC building. The proposals include extensive areas of landscaping and the relocation of the comms tower from the PCC to Alex House. The proposals also involve the alteration of some existing processes including the removal of seven parking places from the front of London River House and the relocation of the existing waste collection area to the London River House car park to the west of the site. Hence the extension of the red line boundary to include these elements.



Constraints and Opportunities – Defining the challenge

The PLA site is an interesting collection of buildings with an important function but doesn't maximise the potential of its setting. Our analysis of the site, buildings and context led to the following issues requiring attention -

Limited connection and views to the river

Jumbled arrangement of building types and aesthetics

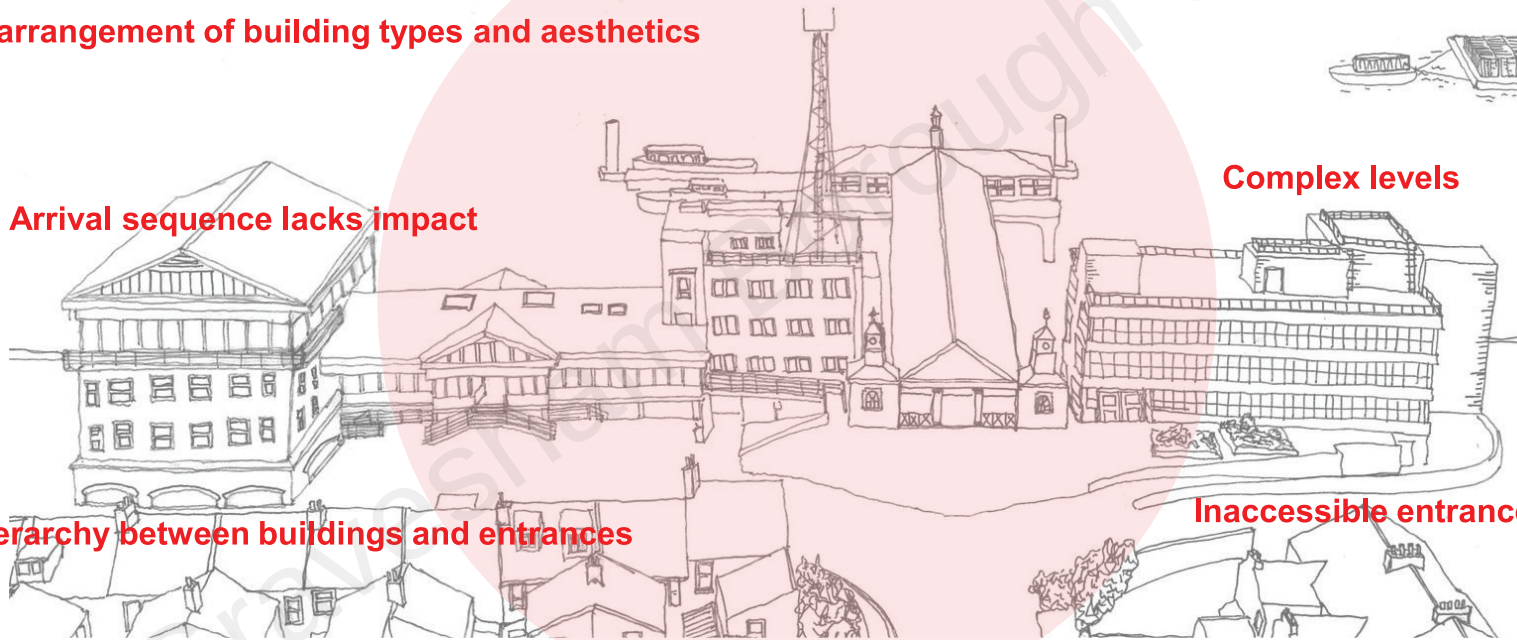
Arrival sequence lacks impact

Complex levels

Lack of hierarchy between buildings and entrances

Inaccessible entrances and workspace

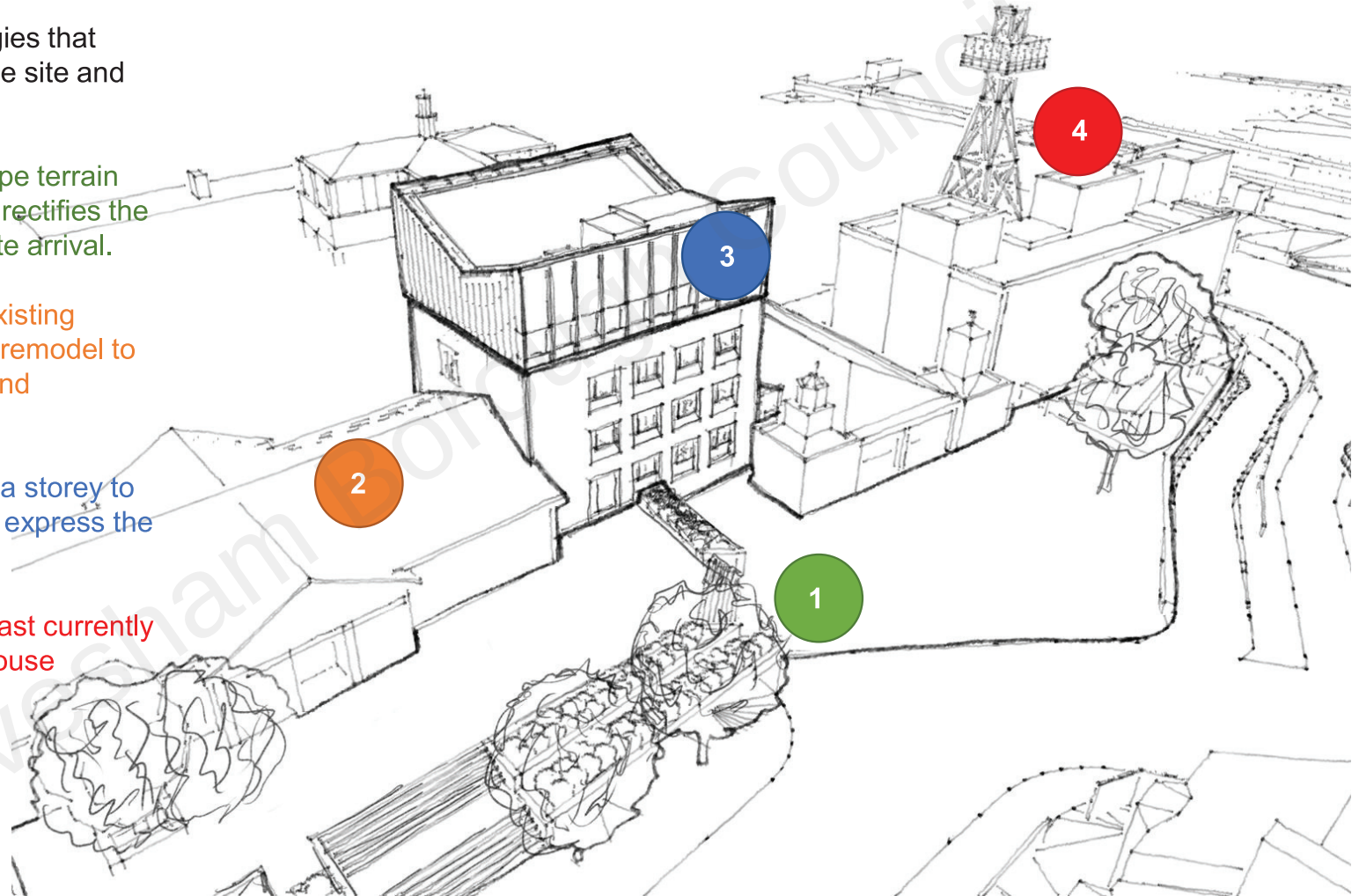
Limited connection to the town



Design Strategy – Design Strategies Summary

We have identified 4 key design strategies that respond to the existing challenges of the site and building:

1. **Urban Design Concept** - A landscape terrain that unifies the PLA ensemble and rectifies the access and perception issues of site arrival.
2. **Remodel** - Retain the bulk of the existing building to limit carbon impact and remodel to improve workplace, performance and character
3. **Extension** - Extend the building by a storey to house a new port control suite and express the new era of PLA occupation on site.
4. **Relocate** – Relocate the comms mast currently on PCC to the roof of Alexandra House

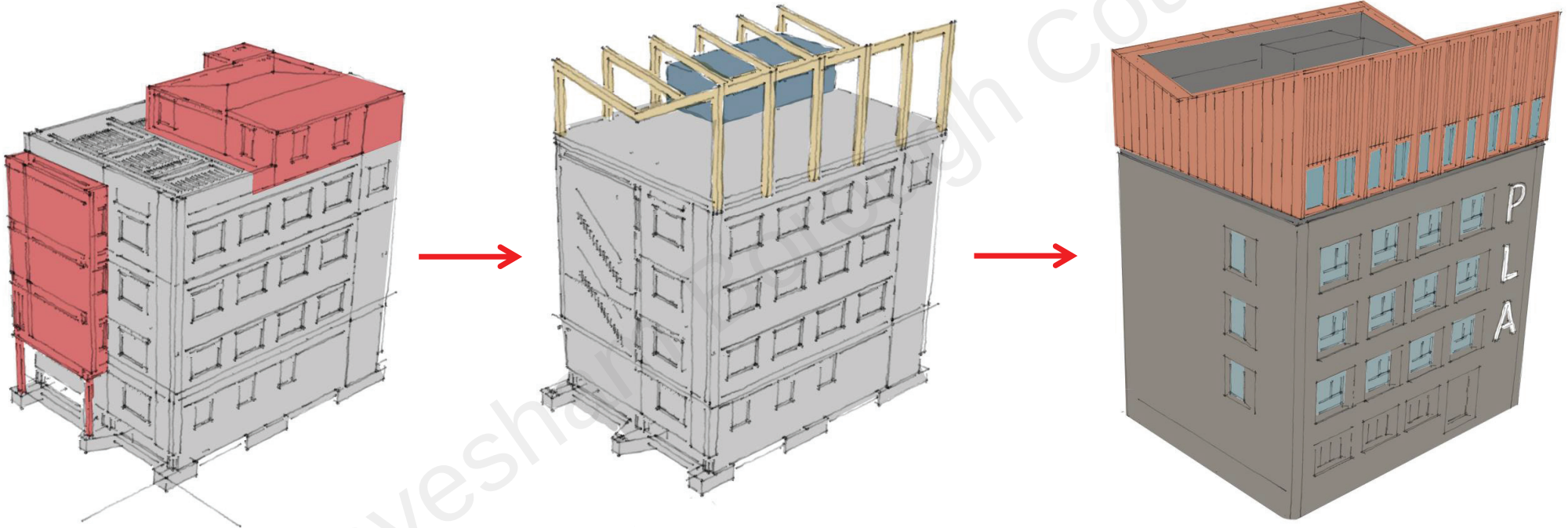


The following pages outline the thinking behind these strategies

Architectural Concept

Sustainability targets driving design choices

Retaining the bulk of the existing building has informed the architectural strategy and visual expression of the proposals.



Existing building retained with fourth floor accommodation and secondary stairwell removed to simplify form.

New lightweight timber structural frame forming a rooftop enclosure to house the VTS suite, a new core located in the south west corner simplifies vertical circulation.

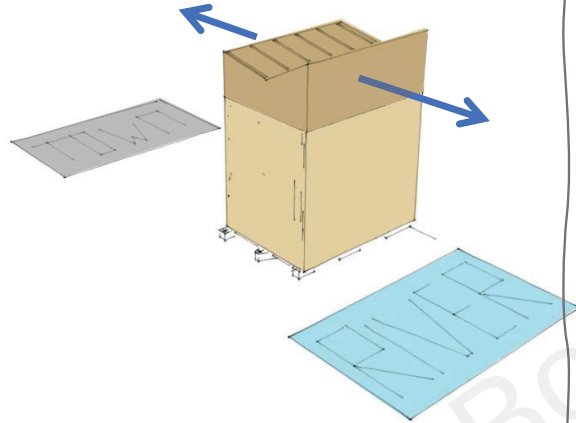
This existing building fabric is overlaid and windows replaced to upgrade the performance. The new extension is expressed as a new object sat on this existing box with specialist windows to the VTS floor and views towards the river

Architectural Concept

A building form that reflects its location on the rivers edge.

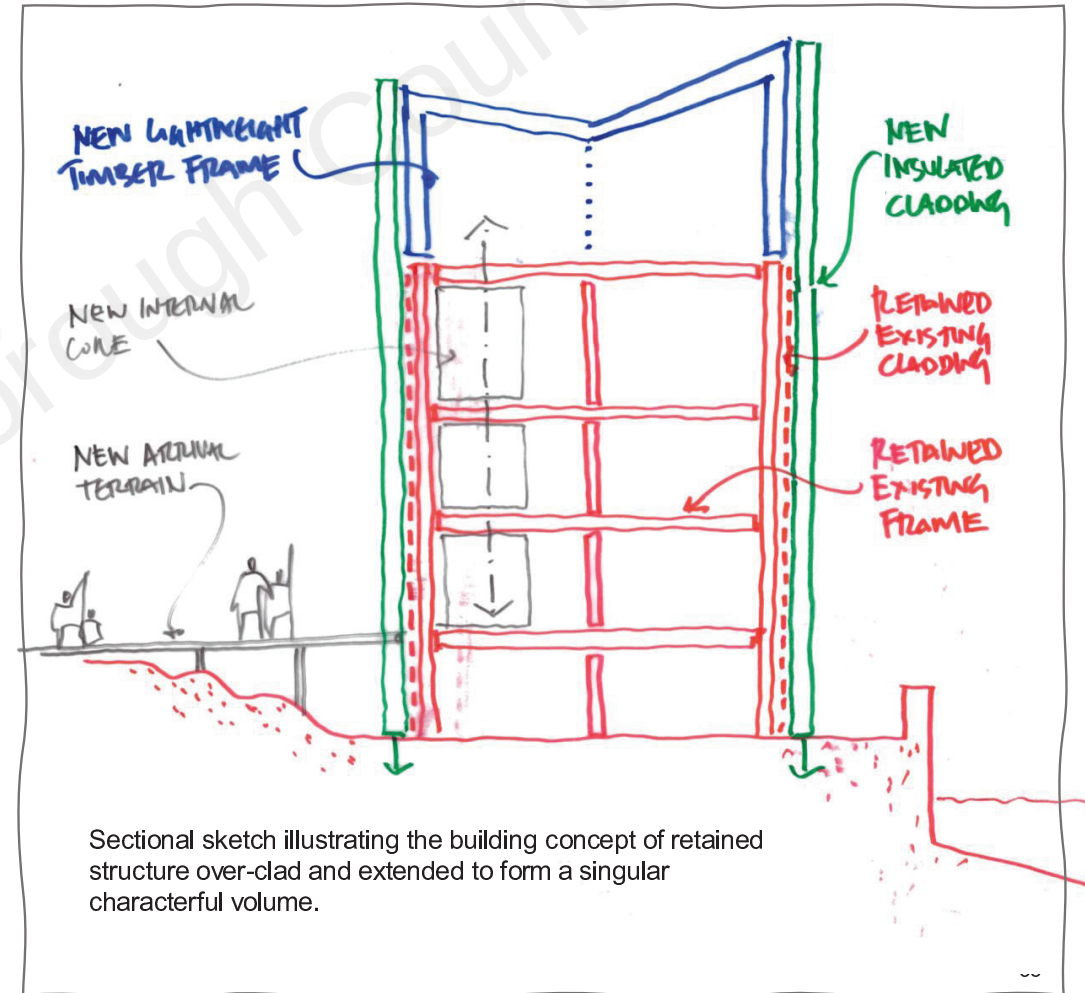
A simple massing the addresses the river and the town context

Massing diagram illustrating how the amended volume is unified through cladding and orientated towards the river and town. The overall volume is prominent but overly dominant and in keeping with its riverside and conservation area context.



Existing façade retained, upgraded with new insulation positioned externally.

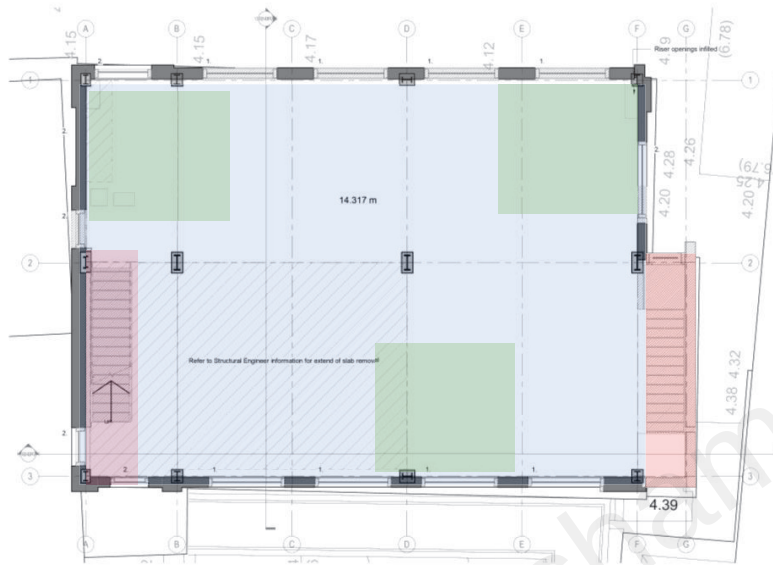
This solution improves the U-value and the embodied carbon figure is relatively low, moisture management is easier and the net internal area is not impacted. A new external skin is required which offers the opportunity of a transformative aesthetic. Preferred solution.



Sectional sketch illustrating the building concept of retained structure over-clad and extended to form a singular characterful volume.

What can we learn from analysing the existing building, its structural frame and vertical circulation ?

Existing building internal organisation

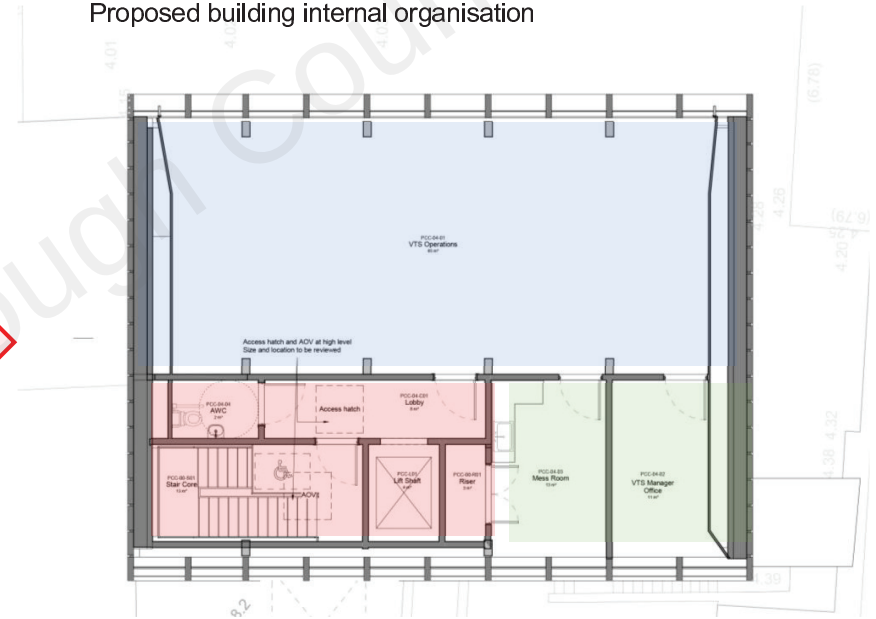


The existing building structure is a concrete-encased steel primary frame which has an eccentric grid. The grid dimension is unsuitable for future workplace use as the PCC.

The existing building has two access cores, which create an awkward arrangement internally and don't link to the adjacent building in a satisfactory manner. There is also no lift access to the PCC within the building. Support space (in green) is randomly distributed on floors depending on the level

Our initial thought is that removing one access stair and creating a new single stair and lift core would be beneficial to the internal planning of the new PCC.

Proposed building internal organisation

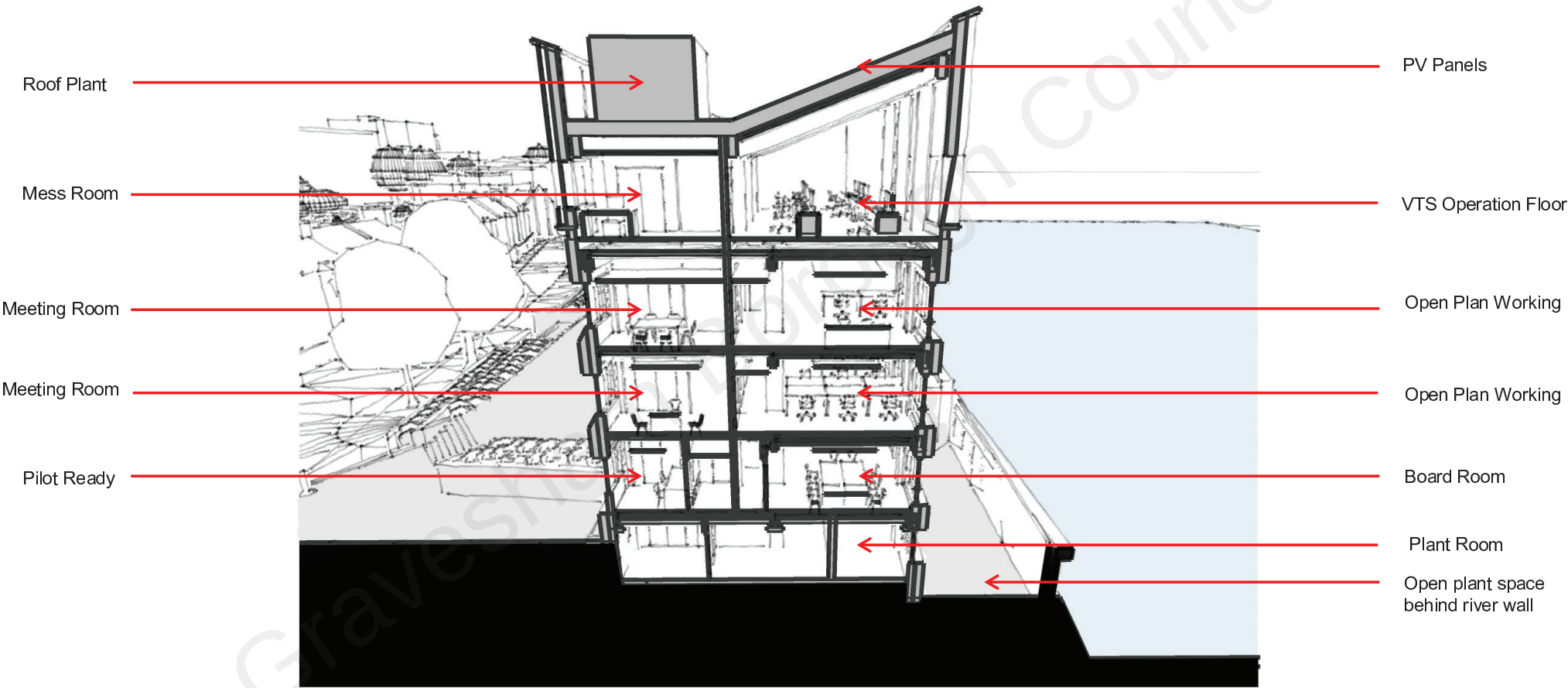


This Level 4 layout shows the organisation in its simplest form. A core is placed towards the southern façade containing a lift, a stair, a WC ‘superloo’ a wheelchair refuge point and a main services riser.

This configuration allows the northern part of the plan to be flexible open plan workspace taking advantage of river views. The south east corner of the plan is occupied by support space including meeting rooms, private offices, tea points etc.

This biased configuration places the major open plan spaces toward the river to maximise occupier engagement with the Thames.

Proposal – Internal Layout Section



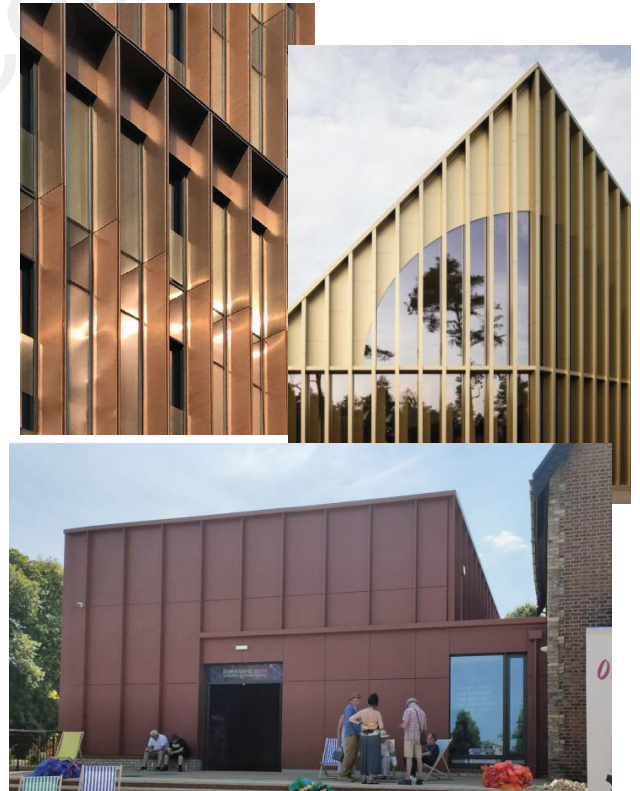
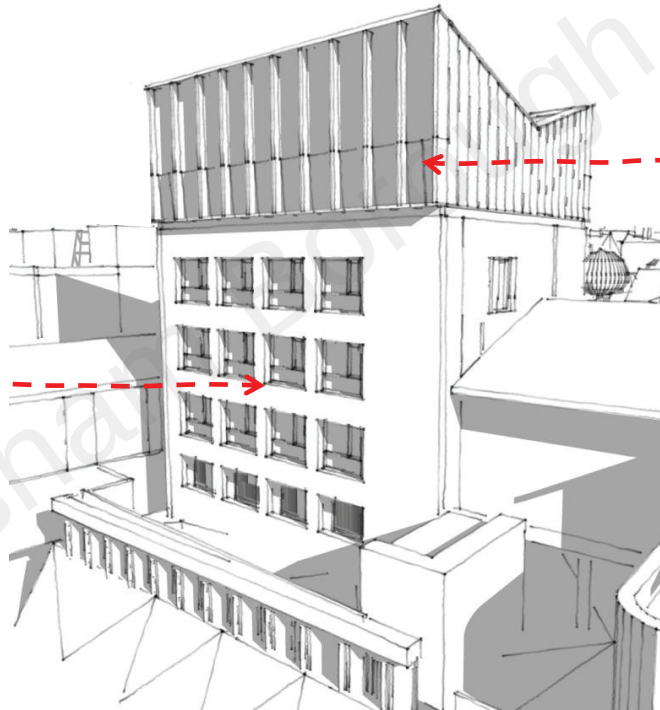
The sectional diagram above shows the potential layout of spaces in the refurbished and extend new PCC

External Envelope + Materials

The emerging material palette and expression seek to unify the retained part of the PCC building through simple, rigorous openings and solid textured surfaces and to express the new, extended upper volume in a lightweight vertical rhythm. This concept subtly expresses the newness of the proposal whilst embedding the PCC in its context.



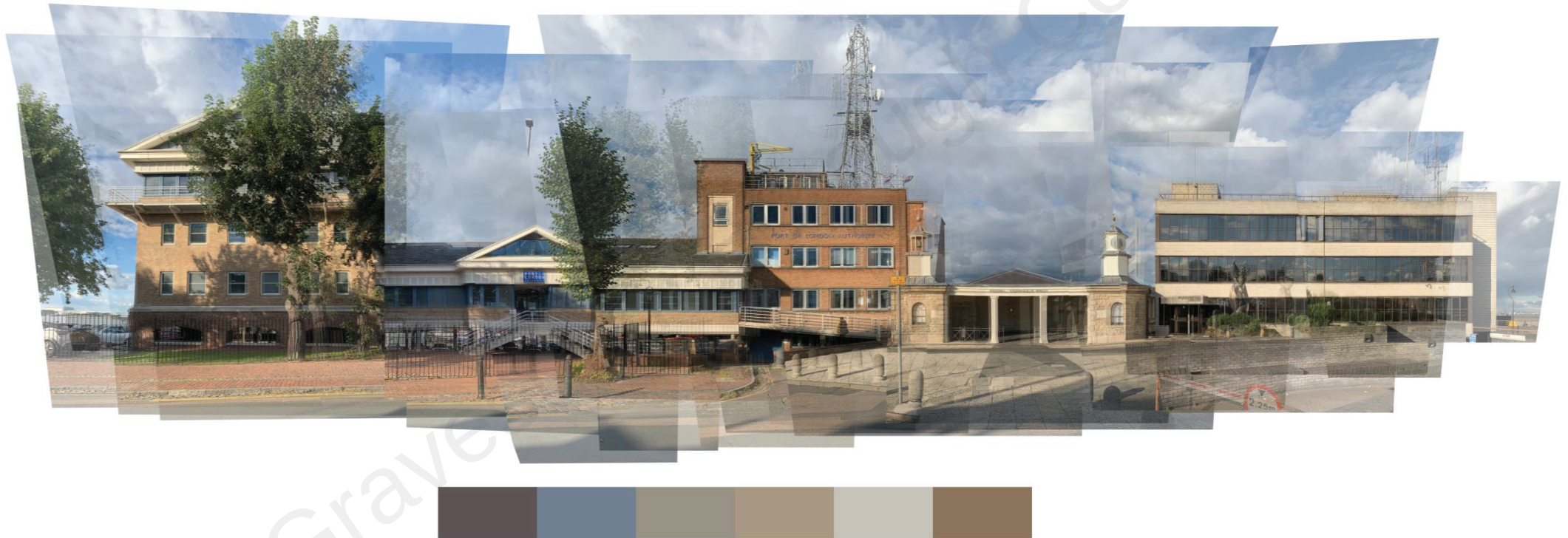
Simple, monolithic base and sides in render of varying textures



Articulate, fine, expressive top in, metal and glass.

External Envelope - Colour

The emerging material palette for the PCC need to have a contemporary expression while be fitting of its conservation area context and sit comfortably within the current ensemble of buildings. The material swatches taken from site below don't give a strong indication of the colour the building should be expressed in but the new building should be able to work with this range so as not to stand out too much



Simple, monolithic base and sides in render, stone or tile

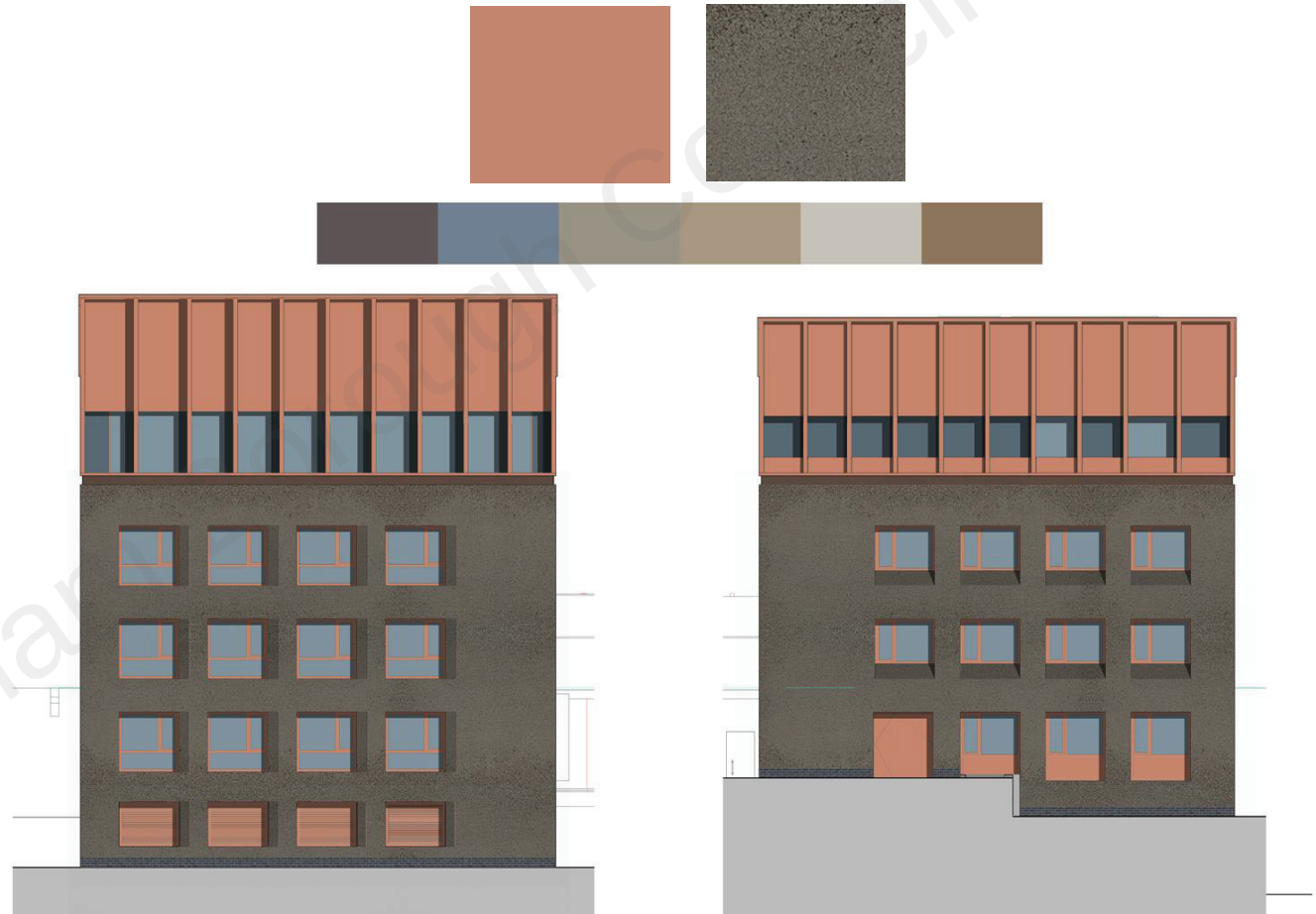
External Envelope - Colour

A palette of dark, earthy textured render that will be more forgiving to weathering and a tonal, metallic top that compliments the tones of the existing area has been chosen for the new PCC.

Whilst any final colours and textures will be subject to conditional approval, this palette allows for the new building to confidently express its new place within the ensemble and establish its importance while not being overbearing or causing harm to the conservation area context or setting of the listed pier.

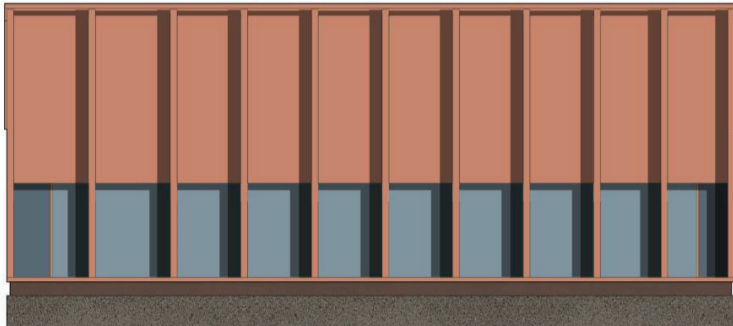
The images adjacent show the key North and South elevations that address the river and the town and the relationship of the colours to the existing palette onsite shown above. We have proposed that the same colour for the top is to be carried through to the new windows in the base to strengthen the relationship between the two.

Example colour pallets sat next to existing building colour swatches



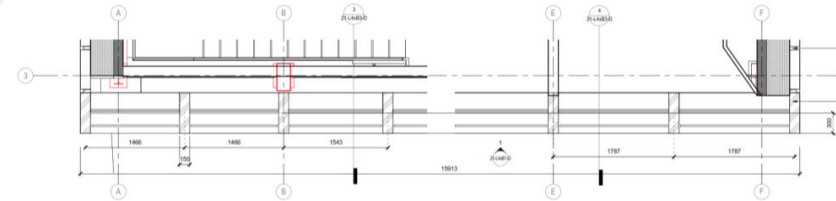
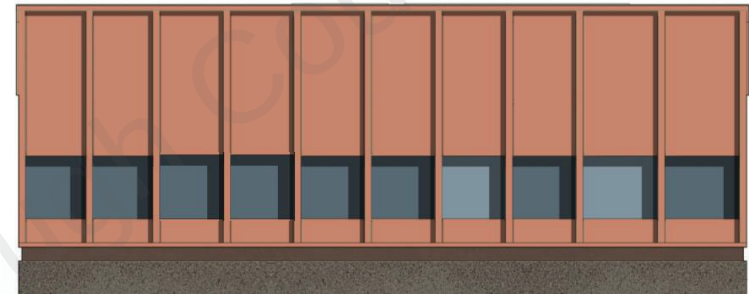
External Envelope - Detail

Level 4 North Elevation



The North elevation addresses the river and has a higher window set back and at an angle to reduce glare for the VTS operators this will give a consistent picture window out towards the River Thames. The solid panels at high level allow for the mounting of VTS screens above the windows which is a normal arrangement for a VTS office

Level 4 South Elevation

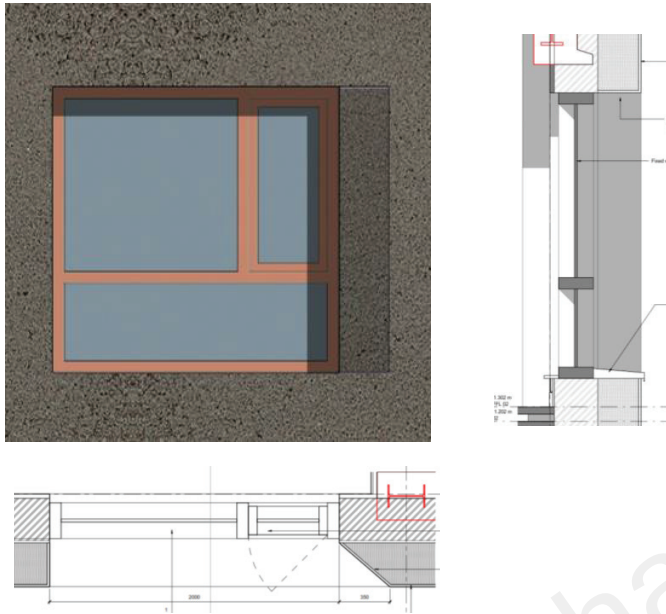


The south elevation is lower and has smaller windows to reduce overheating and have a mixture of opaque and translucent glass. This has been done to provide consistent window to solid arrangement as per the North elevation. The solid portion at the lower end allows for desks to be placed against the window which differs from the North elevation also. Moreover, the reduced size and amount of translucent glazing also prevents from overlooking neighbouring properties.

The details for the top extension to the PCC have been crafted to create an articulated box using metal fins, solid panels and curtain wall glazing with subtle changes depending on the orientation.

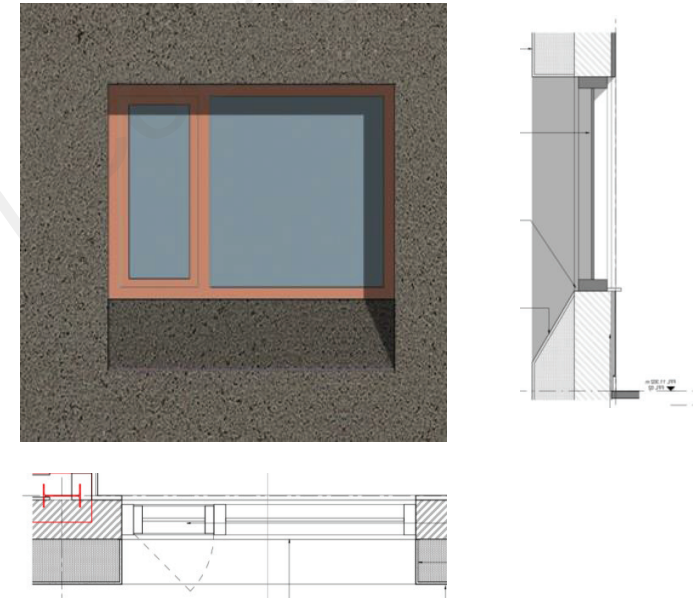
External Envelope - Detail

Typical window Levels 1-3 North Elevation



The windows to the north are larger to allow for more light. They are a mix of fixed and openable portions to allow for natural ventilation and the overclad render has been shaped with a chamfer to provide more opportunity for light to enter and provide oblique views along the river

Typical window Levels 1-3 South Elevation



The windows to the South as per the level 4 extension are smaller and are shaped to the same size as the existing openings. They also use a mix of fixed and openable sections and the same chamfer detailing has been applied but to the base to make the overall opening feel larger while allowing for a desk to be placed right up against it internally.

The windows within the refurbished PCC lower portion exploit the existing window openings again with slight variations in the size and detail depending on the orientation. The overclad render will present as a rough texture to the outface and where the render have been chamfered will be smooth to provide variation