

# Report to Development Control Committee

Agenda  
Item:  
**A.4**

Meeting Date: 3rd October 2014  
Portfolio: Economy and Enterprise  
Key Decision: Not Applicable:  
Within Policy and  
Budget Framework  
Public / Private Public

Title: CONSULTATION ON A PLANNING APPLICATION: No 1/14/9015  
107, BOTCHERGATE, CARLISLE FOR NEW OFFICES FOR  
CUMBRIA COUNTY COUNCIL  
Report of: Director of Economic Development  
Report Number: ED.38/14

## Purpose / Summary:

This report sets out the consultation and identifies the issues for consideration on a planning application for new offices for Cumbria County Council.

## Recommendations:

That the following comments be reported to the County Council:

That further consideration should be given to the separation distances between the proposed four-storey building and the properties in Tait Street

Further consideration be given to the alignment with Stanley Hall and the opportunity to screen the gable end with an innovative structure at a third storey level set back from the main facade

Consideration be given to a design review such as Places Matter!

## Tracking

Executive:	
Overview and Scrutiny:	
Council:	

## **1. BACKGROUND**

- 1.1 Under Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning General Regulations, Cumbria County Council have applied to themselves as local planning authority for the demolition of numbers 107, 109-111 and 113-117 Botchergate and the erection of 2/4 storey office building with ancillary and support accommodation (New offices for Cumbria County Council). Surface parking for 95 cars.
- 1.2 The County Council is the determining body as the application is for their own offices on their land. The City Council has been consulted on the application.

## **2. PROPOSALS**

- 2.1 The proposed development is for high quality office space with ancillary accommodation as well as public facilities. This was set out in a County Council brief for the development and the breakdown of space is approximately 3265m<sup>2</sup> of office space, 712m<sup>2</sup> meeting space, 465m<sup>2</sup> back office space and 128m<sup>2</sup> of Public Front of House space. The scheme is set out with a two-storey section fronting onto Botchergate with a four-storey section further back into the site. The roof level has a 3m high plant room and enclosure along the south eastern edge of the four storey section.
- 2.2 The space created within the building has been designed to separate the cellular areas of accommodation (front of house and management suite) from the open plan offices. The internal layout has been designed for a range of flexible working styles and spaces to meet the “Better Places for Work – Agile Working Handbook”. The four storey block creates a clear open office space punctuated by a central atrium to provide natural light and ventilation.
- 2.3 The two storey front element of the design houses the public facilities and management suite creating a civic core fronting onto Botchergate. This provides an active frontage with a clear identity for the building. The back of house facilities are located on the north west elevation with direct access to the car park.
- 2.4 The proposal retains a strong frontage onto Botchergate creating a building with presence in the streetscape. A new high quality public space will be created incorporating two flag poles and there will be a slight gradient to the entrance (not greater than 1:40). Feature lighting will be used to highlight the entrance and signage. A shared surface will be used at the existing site of William Street offering

links to the rear of the site. Offices and accommodation will offer passive surveillance of this area.

- 2.5 The car park to the rear of the building will include 95 parking spaces. This has a dedicated staff entrance at the rear of the building. The north west elevation includes access for deliveries, plant maintenance and access to the staff cycle store.
- 2.6 The level of the building to the rear is approximately 400mm higher and the two areas are linked via a sloping gradient in the street which is no greater than 1:21.
- 2.7 The proposal is designed to respond to the context through the appropriate use of scale and use of masonry walls with “punched” bay openings at regular intervals creating a constant rhythm along the facade. The two storey element incorporates stone cladding referencing a common building material in the area giving it a high quality feel reflective of the major civic buildings within the city.
- 2.8 Panels of brick have been introduced referencing the use of brick coupled with stone in the neighbouring Stanley Hall and other historic buildings in Botchergate. The vertical rhythm is accentuated by forming bays over two storeys. Within each bay a composition of glazed, solid and louvered panels create a detailed module with a consistent pattern assisting with the emphasis of the vertical rhythm of the building.
- 2.9 Environmental performance of the building is also key to the design utilising a mixed mode ventilation strategy requiring openings at every 3m of the facade. The design creates a facade with 40% glazing in each typical 6m bay to enhance thermal performance, reduce solar gain yet maintain good levels of light.
- 2.10 The primary elevation to Botchergate is the only part of the building with a street frontage. It is designed at two storeys to fit with the contextual scale of the existing buildings along Botchergate. Each bay is recessed further back from the street with a greater set back forming a public space to announce the main public entrance. Simple signage will be located along the flank wall along with a stone plinth to create identity. A simple glazed panel forms the link to the Stanley Hall ensuring visual separation. Vertical fins have been introduced across part of the glazed entrance facade to provide solar shading and increased privacy whilst maintaining views out.

- 2.11 The south east facade faces onto Cecil Street car park. The front element of the building adjoins Stanley Hall and a small courtyard is set within the building to provide natural light. This will be contained by a single storey brick wall. The main facade utilises the 3m bay pattern with brick framing the curtain wall sections. The main core continues up to roof level with a louvered screen extends out to enclose the roof top plant. Trees and soft landscaping have been introduced along the boundary edge to provide a visual amenity and a screen to Cecil Street Car Park.
- 2.12 The north east elevation faces into the staff parking areas containing the primary staff entrance. The 3m bay detail repeats on this elevation with a brick frame. The staff entrance is denoted by a glazed slot which aligns with an internal atrium and street which runs through the building. Larger glazed openings are introduced to the stair core creating a feature element.
- 2.13 Along the William Street facade the two storey building continues the vertical pattern with stone cladding and brick infill panels reinforcing the simple concept. A recessed element creates a visual break between the two-storey and four-storey parts of the building. At the rear of the building the ground floor accommodates back house facilities and plant areas with direct access to the car park. The upper floors carry through the 3m bay pattern with brick frame.
- 2.14 All parking will be located at surface level to the rear of the site. 95 parking spaces have been provided including 6 disabled bays. Visitor parking will be accommodated within this area. High quality materials and landscaping will be used to create an attractive space. Planting will soften the hard landscaping. Hedge planting will be introduced along the rear of residential properties on Tait Street to improve the appearance of the boundary wall. Tree planting will be incorporated along the Cecil Street car park boundary to offer a visual boundary.
- 2.15 An internal secure cycle store providing sufficient space for up to 90 cycle spaces using a double stacked system has been included within the scheme. An internal refuse store has been provided with sufficient room for separate recyclable waste bins. A hardstanding has been provided directly outside the bin store for collection.
- 2.16 Additional reports have been submitted with the application covering Transport Assessment; Archaeological Assessment; Contamination Report; Ecological Report, Bat Survey, Drainage Assessment; External Lighting Assessment, Site Waste Management Plan and a Sustainability & Energy Report.

### **3. ASSESSMENT**

- 3.1 In undertaking the assessment of this application Members must be aware that this is the City Council's response as a consultee and we do not have the benefit of all the usual consultees considerations and responses as they report direct to the County Council.
- 3.2 When considering this application it is important to note the overarching principles in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). In particular there are key core planning principles which underpin decision taking. The NPPF states that planning should not simply be about scrutiny but should find ways to improve the places in which people live their lives; it should proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver business and thriving local places that the country needs and take account of the needs of communities; planning should always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupiers of land and buildings.

#### **The Principle of Development**

- 3.3 The proposal to develop new offices and relocate the County Council from the Lower Goal Yard/Citadel buildings area to Botchergate creates an obvious tension in planning policy terms as it moves further away from the centre of Carlisle. Instinctively there are concerns over the future of the Citadel site and this will be addressed as part of the Council's new Local Plan and continuing work on the City Centre Development Framework which recognises that the site can accommodate a variety of uses. The NPPF acknowledges that business needs should be taken into account in the consideration of planning issues and therefore the need for a more efficient operational base for the County Council. Clearly redevelopment of the existing site would be a preferable position to anchor new office development in the City Centre however this would result in an underutilised site and implications for key heritage assets that may result in the inefficient use of land and buildings. A new modern office development meets the business needs and therefore assessing the principle of the location is pertinent to ensure the chosen location conforms with planning policy.
- 3.4 The Carlisle District Local Plan 2001-16 (CDLP) does not have a definitive boundary for the City Centre. It is defined in retail policies with a clear relationship to the Primary Shopping Area however the City Centre contains a number of other uses and can be clearly said to extend to the Citadel Station and The Crescent.

Whether Botchergate, and this site in particular, is within the city centre is important to how this proposal should be assessed.

- 3.5 Paragraph 24 states that Local Planning Authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan. When considering edge-of-centre and out-of-centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites that are well connected to the town centre.
- 3.6 In considering this application there are a number of key points:
- The site is shown on the City Centre Inset Plan and could therefore be argued that it is within the city centre;
  - If the city centre is defined as far as the northern end of Botchergate the site is within 300m of the centre (this is the comparable benchmark in the local plan for retail development). This would result in defining the site as edge-of-centre.
  - If the site is therefore edge-of-centre, there are no sites within the city centre that are currently available of a size that could accommodate the proposed development. It would therefore be the next sequentially available site.
  - The CDLP also contains policy DP2 which acknowledges the need to regenerate Botchergate south, the area is not defined in the plan however this site is clearly in the Botchergate south area. Whilst the Local Plan promoted further work on an Area Action Plan for Botchergate this has not developed however the key motivation behind this policy was for long-term regeneration. A proposal of this scale which would introduce a significant footfall into Botchergate would be a key contributor to regeneration of the area.
  - The site is very accessible with public transport links (bus and rail within a short walk) as well as a proposal integrating cycle storage and easy pedestrian access.
- 3.7 Having considered all those points in the paragraph above it is clear that whilst the site may not be a town centre site and is further away from the current operational offices, it would accord with planning policy as set out in the NPPF. The principle of development of this site is therefore acceptable.

### **Impact on Neighbouring Properties**

- 3.8 The proposal is for a two-storey building fronting Botchergate with a four-storey building at the rear. There are a number of uses which adjoin this site. Stanley Hall immediately adjacent on Botchergate abuts the development and there will be no impact on the amenity of users of that building. An existing office building was

already located adjacent to Stanley Hall. The juxtaposition of the two buildings is discussed further in the design and conservation area consideration. Cecil Street car park is also adjacent to the site and proposals include landscaping to soften the boundary between the two uses. This would also help to define the separate sites providing clear boundary treatment.

- 3.9 The site is also surrounded by housing particularly in Tait Street. These buildings are Grade 11 listed properties and over time there have been a variety of uses on this site including previous buildings evidenced from historic maps in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The built form of this site has therefore varied over time and development of this site can not therefore be said to prejudice the setting of those listed properties. There are however concerns about the scale of the development and how this impacts on the residential amenity of Tait Street. CDLP Policy CP6 aims to protect residential amenity. The Council's Supplementary Planning Document "Achieving Well Designed Housing" sets out a 21m separation distance between two-storey housing where primary windows face each other. Whilst this proposal is for new offices, there are a significant number of windows facing Tait Street properties. The proposed development provides a 21m right to light buffer. Given that the development at this point is four-storey concerns are raised as to whether this separation distance to the building is sufficient to protect residential amenity. It is acknowledged that a landscape buffer and parking are placed between the buildings and this is considered an acceptable use to maintain separation. The height of the proposed building and separation distance remain a concern.

### **Design and Scale of Proposal and Impact on Conservation Area**

- 3.10 Detail of the design of the proposal is set out in section two of this report. The frontage building on Botchergate is within the Botchergate Conservation Area with the remainder of the development adjoining Botchergate and Portland Square/Chatsworth Square conservation areas. Consideration of the proposals in terms of design and scale can not be separated from consideration of their impact on conservation areas.
- 3.11 Whilst some analysis of the historic context is contained within the Design and Access statement submitted with the application, it lacks a specific analysis of the conservation area in the form of a heritage impact assessment. Neither does it analyse the context in relation to the Listed terraces in Tait Street.
- 3.12 The proposed use has an opportunity to provide a landmark building and attention has been given to height and materials as well as form to integrate the development

into the existing context. It should be noted that under conservation legislation any development within a conservation area should seek to preserve or enhance that conservation area. This must be the underlying principles when assessing the proposed development. The Council's policies LE17 and LE19 are significant for consideration to ensure that any replacement buildings enhance the conservation area especially where buildings are proposed for demolition.

- 3.13 The scale of the building is significant with a four-storey structure proposed on the existing William Street car park. In order to ensure that this has a reduced impact on the conservation area the building form has been reduced to a two-storey development fronting Botchergate. In addition, whilst there are similarities in the form of the external appearance of the building with a strong vertical emphasis, the materials have been changed to more strongly reflect the context and significance of the building.
- 3.14 Paragraph 57 of the NPPF recognises that it is important to plan positively for the achievement of high quality and inclusive design for all development, including individual buildings, public and private spaces. These issues have been dealt with constructively in the proposed design.
- 3.15 Within the existing Botchergate conservation area the proposed entrance replaces a two-storey rendered building which turns the corner into William Street. In order not to lose the historic street pattern the proposed use presents a public space at the corner of William Street and breaks up the continuous street form. Following a review of the Botchergate Conservation Area a workshop was held to consider the future of the area. At that meeting it was noted that there is a lack of green space and openness which afforded the opportunity for relaxation and social interaction on what is regarded as a busy thoroughfare. The provision of public space at the entrance to the proposed offices utilises the building form to create additional space in the streetscene and create identity and visual interest for the building. Thereby providing an enhancement within the conservation area.
- 3.17 Paragraph 60 of the NPPF states that decisions should not attempt to impose architectural styles or particular tastes and they should not stifle innovation, originality or initiative to conform to certain development forms or styles. It is however proper to seek to promote or reinforce local distinctiveness.
- 3.17 The juxtaposition of the proposed building against the Stanley Hall highlights the possible tension between designs of substantially differing periods of construction. In order to marry these together a clear glazing curtain wall is provided to allow



visual separation and has recently been used in other contemporary/historic juxtapositions such as the College Swifts Mews redevelopment. This results in the desired effect of allowing the historic building to still maintain its status and avoids the new building significantly dominating the old. Whilst the building replaces an existing two-storey office, the gable end of the Stanley Hall has been exposed to view for considerable time however the contrast with the front facade of the building suggests that it was never intended to be exposed. This does provide the opportunity for additional height on the new building to mask the gable end at third storey level. Whilst this presents an opportunity it would have to be stepped back from the front in order to minimise dominance in the street scene. It would also be possible to consider aligning the parapet levels of the two buildings for greater continuity in the townscape view.

- 3.18 The proposed building emphasises the vertical structure of the building with back painted glass spandrel panels for legibility of the horizontal floors without detracting from the quality facade created. This horizontal element picks up the horizontal course of stone cills in the adjacent Stanley Hall.
- 3.19 Paragraph 62 of the NPPF recommends the use of design review arrangements to provide assessment and support to ensure high standards of design and refer major projects for design review. Given the significance of this project for the County Council it would be worthwhile considering the use of “Places Matter!” to review the design of the building as part of the application process.
- 3.20 Signage can also have a detrimental impact on a conservation area and is often considered as an afterthought however in this instance the design of the building has been used to maximise the integration of signage at key points. The County Council’s logo will appear on the William Street facade of the building along with a stone signage plinth. This plinth will no doubt provide an additional role as a “perch” which obviates the need for additional street furniture which can detract from the design concept and adds additional clutter into the conservation area.
- 3.21 The retention of access along William Street reflects the historic street pattern and retaining this link retains views into the rear of the site. In order to deal with this from a design perspective stone is maintained on the facade of the two-storey building. Set back into the site the four-storey element presents a different perspective and the greater emphasis towards brick and glass ties in well with the surrounding emphasis of brick structures. Although not in a conservation area its proximity and location is clearly visible from the surrounding conservation areas.

- 3.22 The Conservation Area Advisory Committee considered the application at its recent meeting and had concerns about the prominence of view from Cecil Street which would concentrate on the four-storey element. Paragraph 65 of the NPPF states that planning permission should not be refused for buildings which promote a high level of sustainability because of concerns of incompatibility with existing townscape. Whilst this building uses brick to blend in with surrounding context it also has a greater use of glass which is to increase the natural daylight emphasis of the open plan arrangement reducing the demand for artificial light. In this context balancing energy efficiency and external appearance comes into conflict however the design has attempted to introduce changes to the regular pattern to break up the dominance of a modern office building.
- 3.23 Overall the design of this proposed building is a strong statement in a traditional conservation area. The clear message contained in the NPPF is that architectural styles should not be imposed and innovation should not be thwarted. The proposed design has made laudable attempts to take contextual references to acknowledge local interest in the area but with a modern interpretation. In relation to the Local Plan the loss of existing buildings is acceptable given the proposed development which would provide a significant statement building and stimulate regeneration in the Botchergate Conservation Area. Although there may be minor issues concerning the relationship of the proposed Botchergate frontage and Stanley Hall building these would not be sufficient to warrant recommending refusal of the application due to the impact on the conservation area.

### **Other matters**

- 3.24 The site provides for 95 car parking spaces which is far greater than the existing office arrangement. This is however still significantly short of the required number of spaces. In considering the requirement for parking cognisance needs to be given to the location. In this context the offices are reasonably close to the city centre with buses and train access in close proximity. In addition the development proposes a significant amount of cycle parking (storage for up to 90 cycles) which provides a real alternative to the use of the car. It is also acknowledged that directly adjacent to the site is Cecil Street car park.
- 3.25 Provision is made for refuse/deliveries/servicing that utilises the same vehicular entrance as the car park with turning areas for refuse vehicles accessed through the car park. Whilst this may not be an ideal arrangement, the site's location dictates that it would not be appropriate to attempt to segregate access as this could create greater conflict with pedestrians.

#### **4. CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 The initial letter of consultation asked for comments within 21 days I.E. 18<sup>TH</sup> September 2014. The Case Officer has been informed that the City Council is not able to respond within that timescale as the matter will be reported to the next available Development Control Committee.

#### **5. CONCLUSION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 Having considered the proposed development in many aspects it is found to accord with the Development Plan and the NPPF. There are however some concerns which if addressed would assist in compliance with overarching policies.
- 5.2 That the following comments be reported to the County Council:  
That further consideration should be given to the separation distances between the proposed four-storey building and the properties in Tait Street  
Further consideration be given to the alignment with Stanley Hall and the opportunity to screen the gable end with an innovative structure at a third storey level set back from the main facade  
Consideration be given to a design review such as Places Matter!

#### **6. CONTRIBUTION TO THE CARLISLE PLAN PRIORITIES**

- 6.1 The proposed development and its location would assist in meeting the vision to promote Carlisle as a prosperous City, one in which we can all be proud by encouraging investment within the City of Carlisle.

**Contact Officer: Chris Hardman**

**Ext: 7502**

**Appendices Application drawings  
attached to report:**

**Note: in compliance with section 100d of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 the report has been prepared in part from the following papers:**

- **Application 1/14/9015 Cumbria County Council**

**CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS/RISKS:**

**Chief Executive's – N/a**

**Deputy Chief Executive – N/a**

**Economic Development – N/a**

**Governance – N/a**

**Local Environment – N/a**

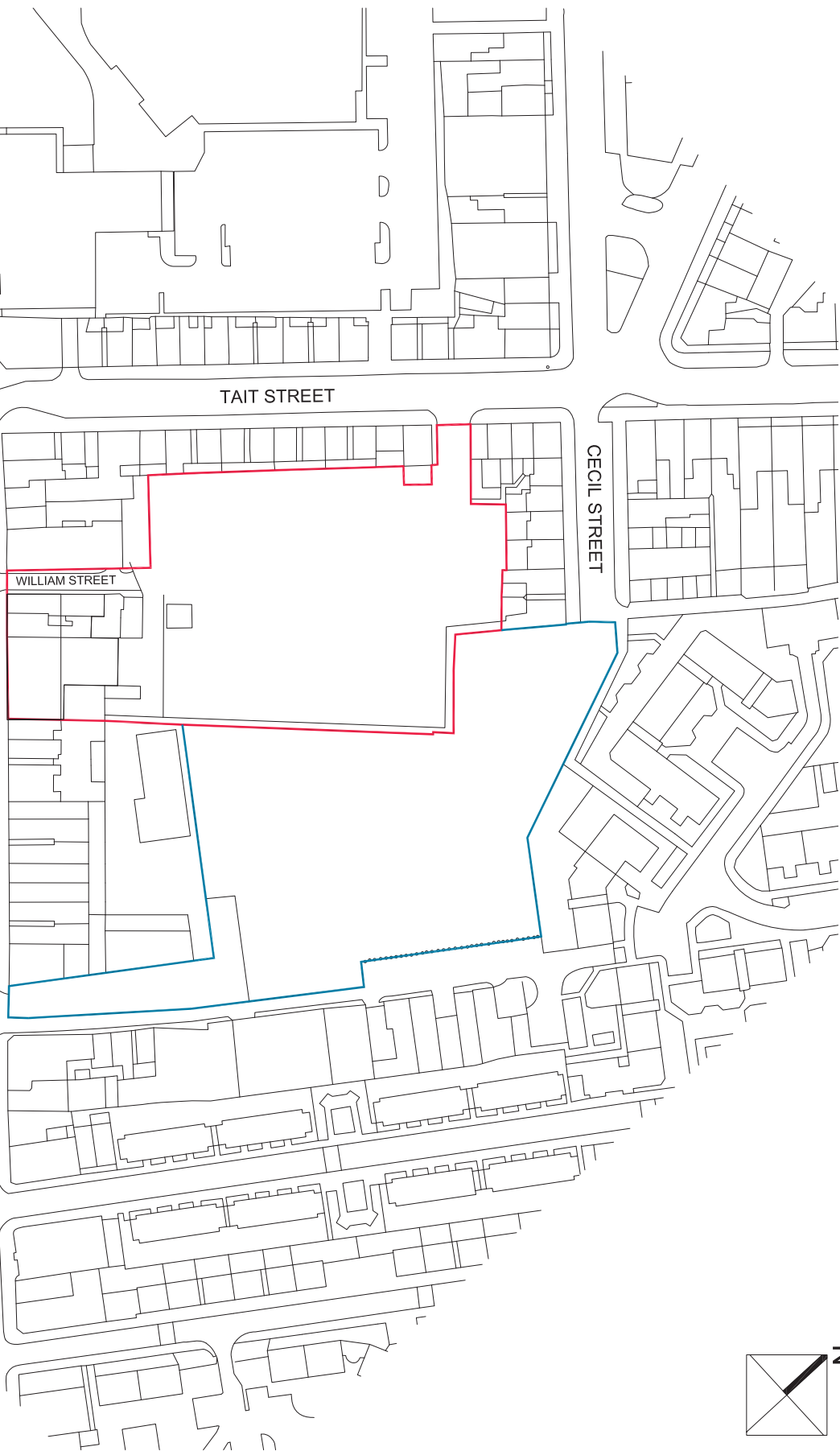
**Resources - N/a**

## Notes



Site Boundary  
0.58 Ha

Site within  
applicant's ownership



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Client  
**Eric Wright Construction**

Project  
**Cumbria County Council Office Building  
Carlisle**

Drawing  
**Site Boundary Plan**

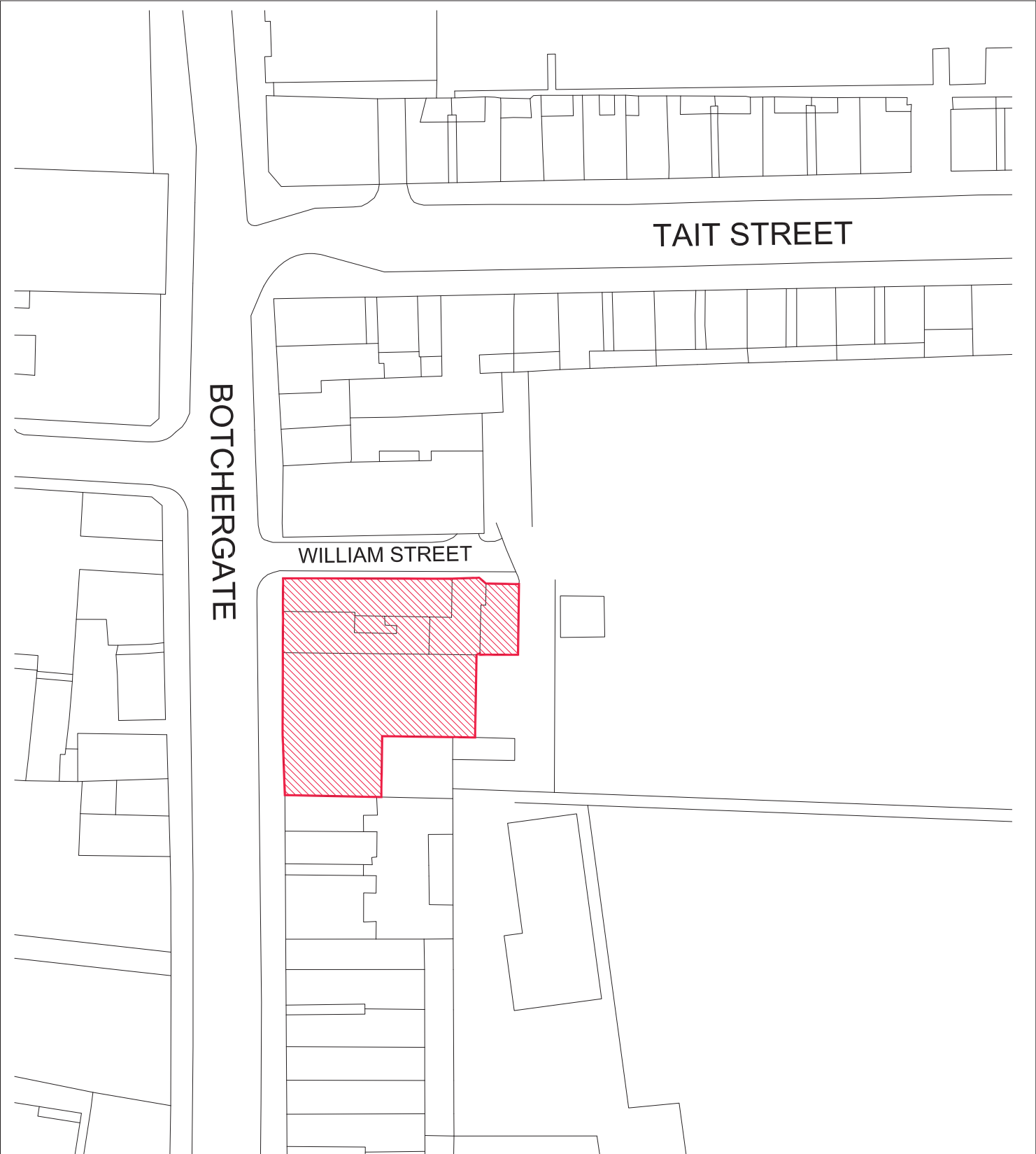
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Drawing number <b>PL001002</b>	Rev <b>-</b>	Issue status <b>PLANNING</b>

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Notes



Buildings to be demolished



Rev	Description	Date	Dr by	App by
original by				
TL		AUG 14		DM

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Client  
**Eric Wright Construction**

Project  
**Cumbria County Council Office Building  
Carlisle**

Drawings  
**Demolition Plan**

Product number <b>2013_01065_000</b>	Scale <b>1:500</b>	@A3
Drawing number <b>P1(00)003</b>	Rev <b>-</b>	Issue status <b>PLANNING</b>

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TAIT STREET

Residential access maintained

Residential access / parking maintained

95 Parking Spaces

CECIL STREET CAR PARK

Potential location for temporary substation subject to agreement with ENW

Commercial Unit Access Maintained

Pedestrian Access

Staff Entrance

Courtyard

Potential Pedestrian Access utilising existing ramp

WILLIAM STREET

Public Entrance

2 no Flag poles

Signage Plinth

BOTCHERGATE



## Notes

### Key



Semi Mature trees in landscaped island beds



80mm block paving to car park bays with linear contrasting colours separating each bay.



3 coat macadam surfacing to service vehicle routes. 2 coat macadam surfacing to remaining car park lanes



Ornamental planting and hedging defining areas and creating a visual screen to neighbouring property walls.



Ornamental shrub and grass planting



Public bench Seating



80mm block paving to perimeter of new office building.



Frontier Barriers with central island and communication link to main reception to Tait Street entrance.



Reinstatement of footpath to LHS of William Street. William Street to be designed as shared surface. Macadam to William Street



Reinstatement of Botchergate footpath with conservation paving or similar to LA Highways approval.

Rev	Description	Date	Dr	By	Appr
1	TL	AUG 2016	DM		



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client	Eric Wright Construction
project	Cumbria County Council Office Building Carlisle
drawing	Proposed Site Plan

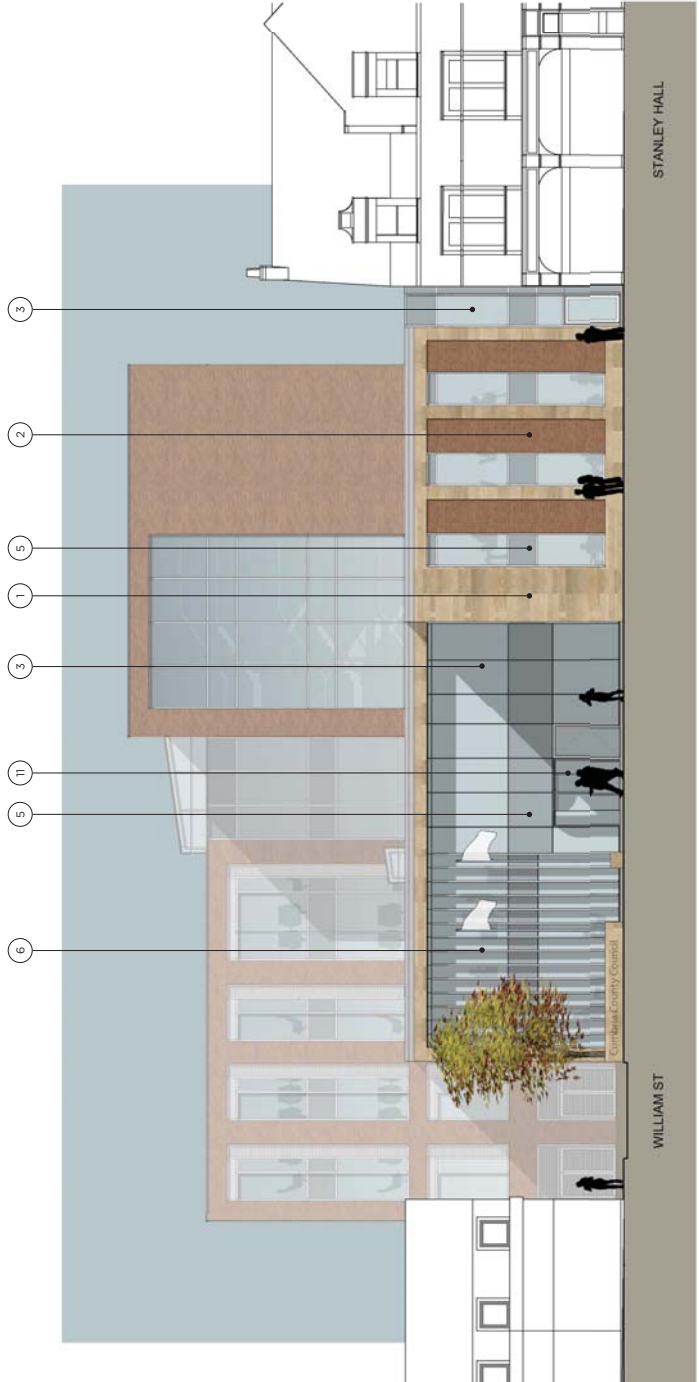
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drawing number	PL/00/004	date		status	PLANNING

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1 EAST Elevation  
1:100



2 SOUTH Elevation  
1:100

- 1. Natural stone cladding
- 2. Brick
- 3. Powder coated curtain wall with clear clazing
- 4. Aluminum cladding panel
- 5. Powder coated glass spandrel panel
- 6. Integrated powder coated aluminum fins
- 7. Metal louvre doors
- 8. Metal louvre plant screen
- 9. Glazed double doors
- 10. Glazed revolving doors
- 11. Glazed sliding doors
- 12. Powder coated aluminum powdercoated louvres
- 13. Integrated fixed aluminum powdercoated louvres

Rev

Client/Proj

Date

12 Mo. Appl. By

JB

2014.01.065.000

AUG 14

TL

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Client Name

Eric Wright Construction

Project

Cumbria County Council Office Building  
Carlisle

Drawing

Proposed Elevations (1 of 2)

Worksheet No.

2014.01.065.000

Scale

1:100

Project Number

2014.01.065.000

Revision

PL000010

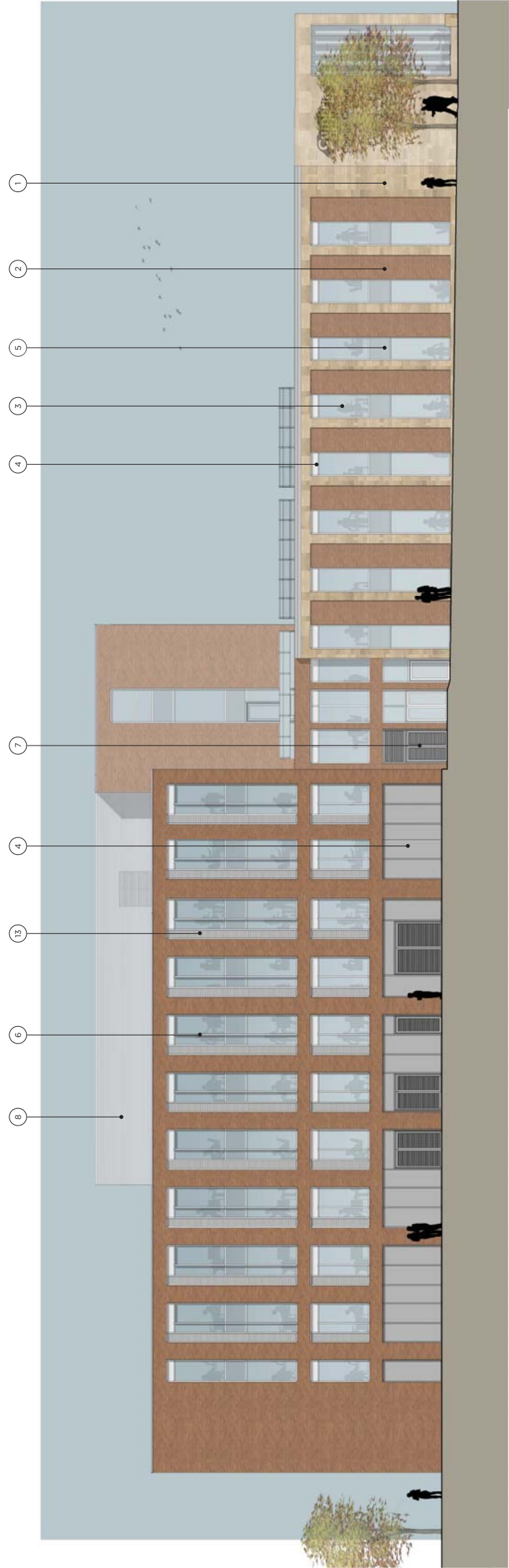
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PLANNING

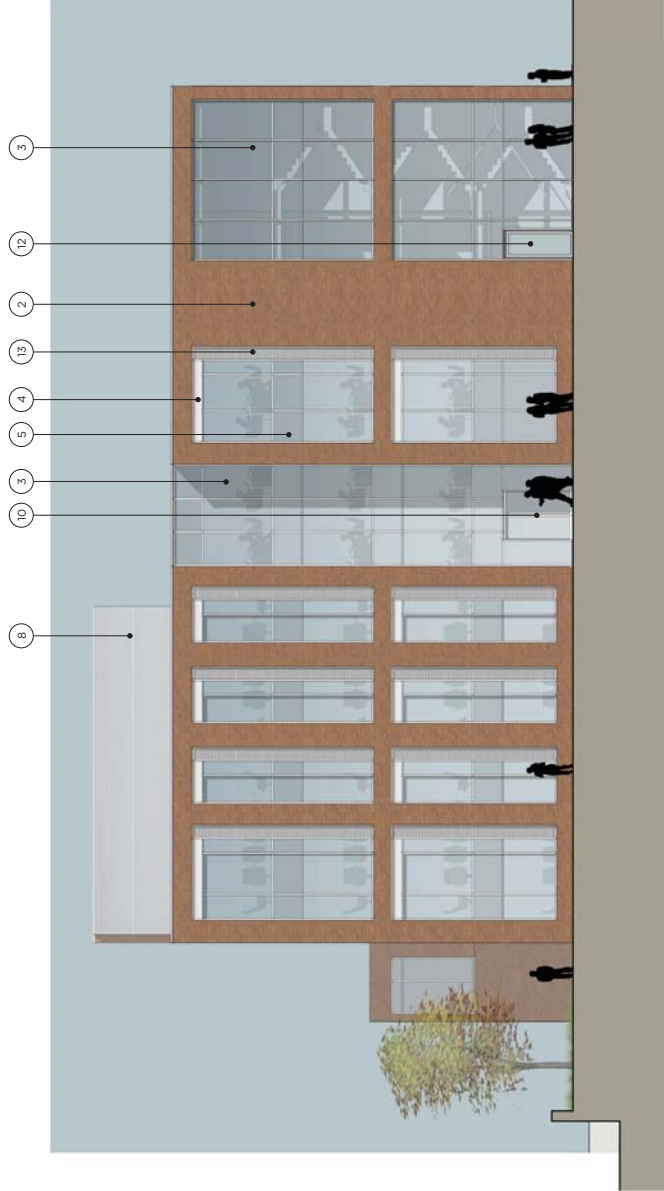
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1 WEST Elevation

1: 100



2 NORTH Elevation

1: 100

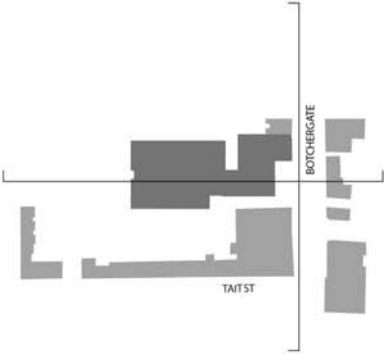
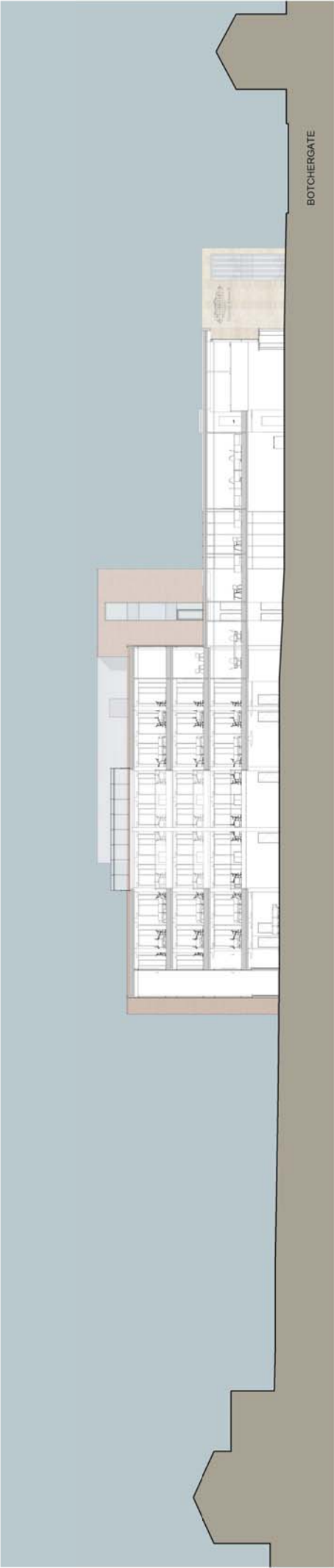
1. Natural stone cladding
2. Brick
3. Powder coated curtain wall with clear clazing
4. Aluminium cladding panel
5. Back painted glass spandrel panel
6. Integrated powder coated aluminium fins
7. Metal louvre plant screen
8. Metal louvre plant screen
9. Glazed double doors
10. Glazed sliding doors
11. Glazed revolving doors
12. Glazed single door
13. Integrated fixed aluminium powdercoated louvers

Rev	Description	Date	By	App'd By
JB		AUG 14	TL	

AR

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Client Name	Eric Wright Construction
Project	Cumbria County Council Office Building Carlisle
Drawing	Proposed Elevations (2 of 2)
Project No	2014.01065.000
Scale	1: 100
Sheet No	@A1
Project Name	PL000011
Project Date	PLANNING
Project Status	PLANNING
Project Location	13. The drawing is to be used in conjunction with all other drawings. All dimensions shall be taken from the centre of the building unless otherwise stated. The drawing is to be used in conjunction with all other drawings. All dimensions shall be taken from the centre of the building unless otherwise stated. The drawing is to be used in conjunction with all other drawings. All dimensions shall be taken from the centre of the building unless otherwise stated.



Rev	Description	Date	By	App'd By
JB	Initial Design	AUG 14	TL	



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Client Name	
Eric Wright Construction	
Project	
Cumbria County Council Office Building	
Carleton	
Drawing	
Contextual Section & Elevation	
Drawing No	
1: 200	
Scale	
1: 200	
Sheet No	
@A1	
Drawing Title	
PL000012	
Drawing Date	
2013.01.06	
Drawing No	
1: 200	
Sheet No	
@A1	
Drawing Title	
PL000012	
Drawing Date	
2013.01.06	

This drawing is to be used in conjunction with all other drawings. All drawings must be approved by the architect before construction. The architect is not responsible for any errors or omissions in this drawing. The architect is not responsible for any errors or omissions in this drawing. The architect is not responsible for any errors or omissions in this drawing.