



Warwick District Council

# RIVERSIDE HOUSE DEVELOPMENT

July 2021

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## SECTION 1

# Introduction

**This brief has been through public consultation, which included several Question and Answer sessions for town centre groups, and an online survey for feedback on the brief, to which 49 members of the public responded. It has since been agreed by Cabinet, and updated to reflect comments made during the Cabinet meeting.**

**Warwick District Council owns the land at Riverside House, Milverton Hill, Leamington Spa, and it is currently used as the headquarters for Warwick District Council. The land is in close proximity to Leamington Spa town centre and the immediate surrounding area is predominantly residential, together providing excellent opportunities in terms of residential development on the site. The land is approximately 4.65 acres/1.88 hectares in area.**

**The land currently contains a large four storey office building totalling approx. 5,620 sq m NIA, occupied by 350 staff with staff parking for approximately 194 cars. Some parts of the building have been sub-let to other organisations due to the size of the site. The Covid-19 emergency has impacted the way in which the Council works to deliver services with greater flexible working. The Council is now looking to vacate the Riverside House site. Once the brief is agreed, it will enable a process to seek proposals to deliver the vision set out in this document.**

**Warwick District Council is committed to sustainable development that maximises benefits for the local community. Some key principles are being used to guide the future development of the site and these include the Council's ambition to be carbon neutral by 2025 and to facilitate de-carbonisation by local businesses, organisations and residents, in order for Warwick District to be as close to zero by 2030 as possible.**

## SECTION 2

# The Vision for the Riverside House site

The Council's aspirations for the future of the Riverside House site are to create a high quality development, incorporating exemplar design and build techniques. The development will be net zero carbon, providing good public access and connectivity to the town centre and surrounding green spaces, including via the existing Riverside Walk. It will be an environmentally friendly scheme that maximises the benefits for residents and the local community. It will be an inclusive development incorporating affordable housing in accordance with the policies of the Council's Local Plan.

## SECTION 3

# Objectives of the Brief

This brief sets out the Council's expectations for redevelopment of the Riverside House site. It will be used to enable the Council to select development proposals for the future development of the site, in line with the Council's vision. This Brief provides a guidance framework to enable appropriate development proposals to be considered.



## SECTION 4

# The Milverton Hill Area

Royal Leamington Spa is the largest town within the Warwick District area. The 2011 census identified a population of around 49,500 living in the town. Leamington has a rich heritage of regency buildings and is known as a popular centre as a place of work and as a place to live and visit. Royal Leamington Spa is a popular commuter town, with excellent transport links via road and rail, linking the town to London and Birmingham and the wider region, and this makes it an attractive location for business and residents alike.

The Milverton Hill site is set out on Plan 01. The site is 0.7 miles north of Leamington Spa train station and Warwick town centre is approximately 1.9 miles west of the site. The site is situated within a predominantly residential area to the west of Leamington Town centre. It is bounded by Milverton Hill to the north, with the rear elevations of dwellings in Church Hill and the front elevation of a house in Portland Place West facing the site from the opposite side of that street.

To the east the site is bounded by a terrace of Grade II listed buildings in Portland Place West, which are in residential use, and the Adelaide Road car park and adjacent club premises. The Riverside Walk and associated woodland alongside the River Leam adjoins the site to the south. A further public footpath runs along the western boundary of the site, and on the opposite side of this are the flats in Milverton Court and a house in Wilhelmina Close.



The car park within the site is ancillary to the existing office building, currently housing the headquarters for Warwick District Council. The existing office building is situated in the north-western quadrant of the site, fronting onto Milverton Hill. The building is set into the hillside and ranges between 2 and 4 storeys in height. There are two vehicular accesses into the site from Milverton Hill and a further access from the adjacent Adelaide Road car park.

The southern part of the site is situated within Flood Zones 2 and 3, which cover between a third and half of the site. A culverted watercourse runs under the existing car park, from Milverton Hill down to the River Leam. A small part of the south-eastern corner of the site is situated within the Leamington Spa Conservation Area. This takes in a triangular section of the site that measures approximately 20m x 30m x 35m. There are also a large number of trees on the site, many of which are subject to Tree Preservation Orders and these are set out on Plan 03.

The conservation area boundary then runs along the northern, eastern and southern boundaries of the site, such that much of the rest of the site immediately abuts the conservation area. Victoria Park is situated to the south of the site, on the opposite side of the River Leam. This forms part of a Grade II Registered Park and Garden (Spa Gardens). The Conservation Area plan is set out at Plan 02.

The boundary of the Registered Park and Garden runs along the northern bank of the river, which is approximately 25m to the south of the site.

## SECTION 5

# History of the site

Riverside House was built by Leamington Spa Building Society (subsequently Bradford & Bingley Building Society) on the Milverton Hill site in the late 1970/1980's and then acquired by Warwick District Council for use as its headquarters in the 1990's.

The size and nature of the building no longer make the existing use viable for continued use in the longer term. It is also the case that the building is now larger than the Council needs and it is expensive to run. Re-development of the brownfield site is therefore envisaged, and this was put forward through the local plan process. The site is allocated for housing development in the Local Plan, adopted in September 2017.

The total site area is 4.65 acres/1.88 hectares. However, the constraints plan indicates that approximately half of the land is subject to flood plain restrictions and only suitable for use as car parking. There are also a number of mature trees and other trees subject to Tree Preservation Orders on the site. These are set out on Plan 03.

### **Planning History: W/17/1701**

An outline planning permission for the demolition of the Riverside House building and the redevelopment of the site for residential development was granted on 17 April 2018; this allowed for the "demolition of Riverside House and the redevelopment of the site to provide a range of buildings from 2 - 6 storeys for up to 170 residential dwellings" (use class C3). Planning consent was limited for a term of 3 years, expiring on 16th April 2021. The application did not include any affordable housing opportunities and for a number of reasons the development did not proceed.





## SECTION 6

# Opportunities and Constraints

The key constraints and opportunities of the Riverside House site have been identified as follows:

### Key Constraints

The Riverside House site has a number of constraints, related to the topography of the site and its position in Leamington Spa and these are set out on the attached plans:

- The site is surrounded by Leamington Spa Conservation area (see Plan 02, p 22)
- Around 40% of the site is within the River Leam Flood Zones 2 & 3 (see Plan 04A and Plan 04B)
- Tree Preservation Orders on a number of trees on the site (see Plan 03)
- There is a culverted water course and sewer running under the site
- Neighbouring Grade II listed buildings
- Adjacent to Grade II registered Victoria Park Spa Gardens, future Commonwealth garden scheme and the Pump Room Gardens
- The existing Adelaide Bridge is a Grade II listed structure

## Key Opportunities

- Close proximity to the town centre of Royal Leamington Spa, and the local train station.
- Close proximity to Warwick and its historic centre.
- Prominent riverside location with potential to improve connectivity with the town centre
- Key opportunity to link the site's public realm to a pedestrian and cycling route along the riverside area increasing pedestrian/cycling connectivity for the local community
- An opportunity for redevelopment that reinforces the traditional plan of development in north Leamington which has the potential to better preserve the setting of designated heritage assets compared to the existing development on site
- Affordable housing provision in an area that is in close proximity to the town centre facilities and attractions and areas of natural green space
- An opportunity to lead the way with an exemplar, sustainable building and surrounding areas and to enhance and update the image of the site
- There is an opportunity to promote connectivity to green spaces and the Riverside walk area by incorporating a bridge into the design for the site



## SECTION 7

# Planning Policy Context

### National Policy and Context

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, updated in 2019) is the overarching framework for plan-making and decision making. As such, it is a material consideration in drafting this brief and in considering any subsequent planning applications on the Riverside House site.

The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) supports the interpretation of the NPPF, and the National Design Guide (updated 2021) guidance on 'good design'.



## Warwick District Local Plan 2011-2029

The key Local Plan policies to guide the layout and design of the Riverside House site are highlighted below. These are the ones which are considered should mainly guide the principles to be included in this development brief, though other policies may also be relevant even if not detailed here.

### Allocation

Policy DS11 ('Allocated Housing Sites') of the Warwick District Local Plan allocates Riverside House for housing development (allocation reference H14). This policy estimates that the Riverside House allocation might accommodate 100 dwellings, though actual delivery may vary from this subject to compliance with other applicable policies.

### Housing policies

**H2 Affordable Housing** – housing developments of 11+ dwellings must provide 40% affordable housing.

**H4 Housing mix** – the mix of market housing should contribute to a balance of house types across the district in accordance with the latest Strategic Housing Market Assessment.

### Design policies

**SC0 Sustainable Communities** – this policy sets out 12 design principles to be incorporated in any scheme, aimed at creating and sustaining strong communities. This includes integration with existing communities, layout, infrastructure, movement and access and climate change adaptation amongst others.

**BE1 Layout and Design** – seeks to ensure new development positively contributes to the character and quality of its environment, and includes 17 design principle which proposals should demonstrate conformity with.

**BE2 Developing Significant Housing Sites** – sets out that any scheme of over 200 dwellings, and/or which may have a significant impact on the character and appearance of an area should conform with a development brief, and sets out the principles to be incorporated into the development brief.

**BE3 Amenity** – seeks to protect the amenity of nearby residents and users, and ensure acceptable standards of amenity are provided for future occupiers.

### Transport

**TR1 Access and choice** – seeks to ensure highway safety and suitable access for a range of transport modes.

**TR3 Parking** – sets out car parking requirements

### Healthy, safe and inclusive communities

**HS1 Healthy, safe and inclusive communities** – this policy has a reasonably broad scope, but principles relating to walking and cycling movement, quality public realm, green space for recreation, and energy efficiency should translate into the development brief.

## Climate Change and flood risk

**CC1 Planning for Climate Change Adaptation** – seeks to utilise layout and orientation and other design tools to mitigate rising temperatures, incorporate green spaces and minimise vulnerability to flood risk.

### FW1 Reducing flood risk

## Historic Environment

**HE1 Designated Heritage Assets** - seeks to protect designated heritage assets and their settings.

**HE2 Conservation Areas** – includes a presumption in favour of the retention of unlisted buildings that make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of a Conservation Area.

## Natural Environment

**NE1 Green Infrastructure** – the Council will protect, enhance and restore the district's green infrastructure assets and strive for a healthy integrated network for the benefit of nature, people and the economy.

**NE3 Biodiversity** – sets out that new development will be permitted provided that it protects, enhances and/or restores habitat biodiversity.

## Royal Leamington Spa Neighbourhood Plan – adopted May 2021

The Royal Leamington Spa Neighbourhood Plan was produced by the Town Council in collaboration with the local community.

**RLS2 Housing Design** – encourages the use of higher environmental standards in building design and energy performance, and seeks Building for Life (or similar) to be utilised in the scheme development.

**RLS3 Conservation Areas** – sets out principles to be adopted for schemes within or near to a conservation area.

**RLS5 Housing mix and tenure** – seeks to respond to most up to date data, and to seek opportunities for detached and semi-detached family dwellings.

**RLS15 Canal and Riverside Development** – includes requirements for design principles including mitigating flood risk, and protecting or creating new access points to the riverside for walking and cycling.

## Warwick District Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs)

In addition to policies within the local plan, this development brief, and any subsequent planning applications will need to accord with relevant Supplementary Planning Documents. These include:

- Affordable Housing SPD (July 2020)
- Developer Contributions SPD (July 2020)
- Air Quality and Planning (January 2019)
- Public Open Space (April 2019)
- Parking Standards (June 2018)
- Residential Design Guide (June 2018)

## SECTION 8

# Sustainability

The Council is committed to promoting the principles of sustainability in any redevelopment of the Riverside House site.

The Council promotes the concept of keeping the environment and sustainability in mind throughout the design process through a sustainability strategy that integrates the approach to sustainable development, considering energy, SUDs water use, biodiversity, flood mitigation and landscape design elements. Understanding these principles from the outset enables a better base position for future sustainability targets.

Some of the key issues that will need to be considered using this strategy include orientation, massing and form and consideration of passive design principles including natural ventilation and daylighting. Consideration of materials being used in the build and energy and waste or recycling requirements need to be made.



## SECTION 9

# Development Principles

Assessment of the Milverton Hill site and application of the relevant planning policy context has informed the Council's set of development principles for the site. The principles must be read alongside all other planning policy information and the Local Plan. The development principles go beyond the relevant planning policy and embrace sustainability principles.

Redevelopment proposals must fit within the Local Plan for the area. New developments must make the best use of the land and positively relate to each other and enhance the surrounding area in terms of sustainability, landscaping and design.

There are a number of key guiding principles that need to underpin all development proposals and these are summarised below, followed by some further detail on key points:

- Ensuring that the housing development site is inclusive through the provision of affordable housing is critical; We expect 40% affordable housing in line with current Council policies set out in the Warwick District Local Plan
- The use of exemplar design and build techniques to provide an excellent quality scheme
- Maximising the amenities and benefits of the riverside site for residents and for the local community
- Encouraging connectivity between the site and the town centre and improving linkages along the riverbank walks and park areas, potentially including a bridge
- Consideration of massing and accessibility to the site to avoid current Tree Preservation Orders and the existing sewer
- Consideration of public realm opportunities
- Preservation of views to and around the Milverton Hill site
- Scale, massing and design to be in keeping with the Leamington Spa Conservation Area
- Scale, massing and design to respect the setting of the adjacent listed buildings



- The development needs to be net zero carbon in operation, certified and demonstrated when constructed and should incorporate renewable energy sources, such as including solar panels to power the heat pumps to meet all residual energy needs
- Consideration of car parking provision for residents
- Electric charging points will be required in line with the relevant standards, and in addition there is a need to be future ready ie have the infrastructure in place to enable future higher levels of electric vehicle use



## Sustainability Principles

- Delivery of a sustainable development that is net zero carbon in operation and aims to achieve net zero carbon in the construction of new buildings; at the very least minimising carbon emissions associated with building material and construction
- Buildings need to be constructed from sustainable materials wherever possible, in order to minimise carbon in building material, in particular, exploring opportunities to re-use the demolition materials
- Smart energy technology should be incorporated to enable intuitive low carbon operation of heating and energy
- Consideration needs to be given to whether recycling areas are communal or single use areas and sufficient space should be provided for refuse and recycling vehicles to enter and turn within the site. The minimum distances in the residential Design Guide for refuse and recycling storage and collection should be adhered to
- Sufficient secure covered cycle parking must be provided
- Water saving measures should be maximised, such as showers with the minimum flow rate and taps fitted with the limited flow rate aerator or spray ends
- An environmentally friendly scheme in order to preserve the area, retaining as many good quality trees as possible
- Capturing rainwater for use in communal areas to maintain the landscape
- Soft landscaping on site should be used to enhance habitat and promote biodiversity
- Hard landscaping will be done to have minimal environmental impact

Ensuring that the housing development site is inclusive through the provision of **affordable housing** is critical to any proposal; the Council expects 40% affordable housing to be provided in line with the current Council policies.

**Sustainability** must be central to any development proposal and proposals must demonstrate how they will mitigate climate change through the use of sustainable construction techniques, net zero carbon building design, renewable energy sources and water conservation measures.

As a sensitive site, adjacent to (and partly within) a conservation area, it will be important that the redevelopment is of a **high quality and locally distinctive design**. The rhythm of buildings, consistent detailing, local materials, boundary treatments and landscaping all contribute to the local distinctiveness in this location.

Careful consideration must be given to the appropriate massing of new buildings on the site. Massing will have a limit of 4 storeys along the Milverton Hill frontage and alongside the adjacent listed buildings in Portland Place West, with the fourth storey set back from the façade of the building such that it is not readily apparent in the street scene. There is then the potential for some variance further into the site, with massing stepping up to 5 storeys as the land drops down further away from Milverton Hill, to a maximum of 6 storeys for a small area in the centre of the site, well away from the site boundaries and not readily visible from outside of the site. At the rear of the listed buildings, the height should be limited to 2.5 storeys.



As well as respecting the character and appearance of the conservation area and the setting of the adjacent listed buildings, the massing should also give careful consideration to potential views from Victoria Park.

New development will need to work within the **known constraints** on the site (see section 5 above). These include the flood risk areas, the existing sewer and its easement and protected trees (see below).

The design, layout and landscaping of new development must create an **attractive, accessible, safe and appropriate living environment** for residents. They must protect, preserve and enhance where possible features of the historic and natural environment. Landscaping proposals must also maintain the views to and from the Milverton Hill area and promote the green space area and riverside location.

Public access into and through the site is important to the design, and might for example incorporate a footpath link to link Milverton Hill to the river and riverside walk areas.

Given the location of the site and the existing green space and play areas nearby, it is not expected to be necessary to provide a play area on this site. However, this may be delivered through an off-site contribution.

The design should encourage **pedestrian and cycle connectivity** between the site and the town centre and improve linkages along the riverbank walks and park areas, and providing a pedestrian/cycle link is a requirement of the design. Consideration should be given to promoting opportunities to add landscaping that joins up and preserves green spaces along the Riverside Walk and green park areas. The opportunity exists to create a pedestrian link via a new footbridge over the River Leam to link up the Riverside house site with the Riverside Walk and then Victoria Park. Proposals for the site should show how such a bridge and link can be provided.

**Car and other vehicle parking** provision on the site should follow the standards and policy approach as set out in the Council's Parking Standards SPD. It is noted that there are some exceptions to prescribed town centre parking requirements where they are justified, such as at the edge of town centre locations and where there are appropriate car sharing schemes in place. This document also sets out standards for the provision of electric charging points.

There are a number of **protected trees** on the site, covered by Tree Preservation Orders (TPO's). These are set out on Plan 03. Many of these trees are of a high quality, and are mature trees, planted during the 1800's. The remainder of the trees are lower quality, and less mature dating from the redevelopment of the site in the 1980's. It is important that proposals aim to retain the TPO trees on the site, in order to help to maintain a positive contribution to views to the site.

The layout should ensure that the living conditions of surrounding residents are protected, as well as providing a satisfactory living environment for future occupants. Any proposals should take account of the policies in the Residential Design Guide in this regard, include the 45-Degree Guideline, Distance Separation Standards and private amenity space standards.

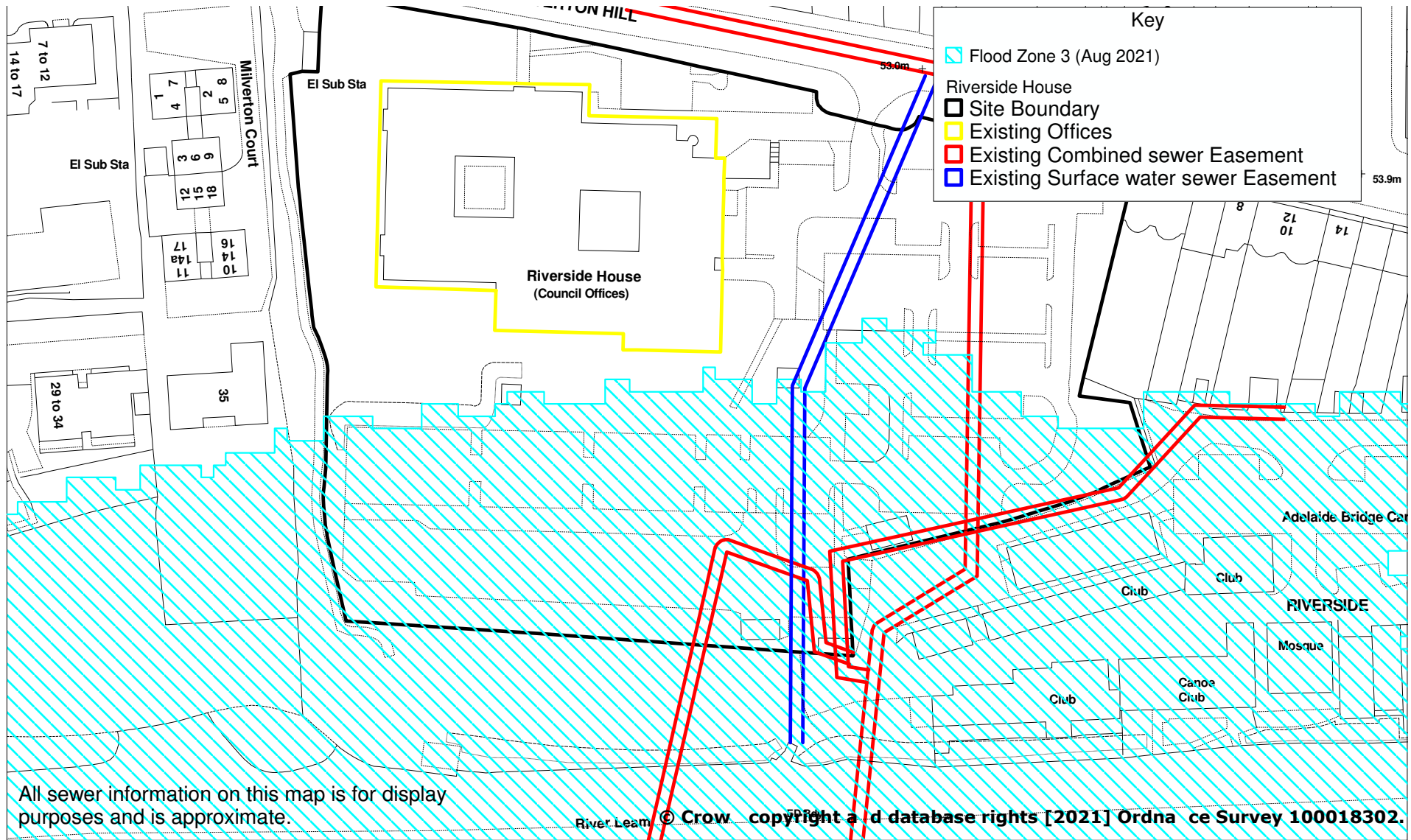
## SECTION 10

# Next Steps

The next steps are for the Council to decide upon options on how to enable the Development Brief to be delivered.



# PLAN 01 MILVERTON HILL – DEVELOPABLE AREA AND SEWER INFORMATION



# PLAN 02 CONSERVATION AREA PLAN



WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL

*Conservation Areas*


Leamington Spa

 Conservation Area Boundary.  
(DAP 6, 8 -10)

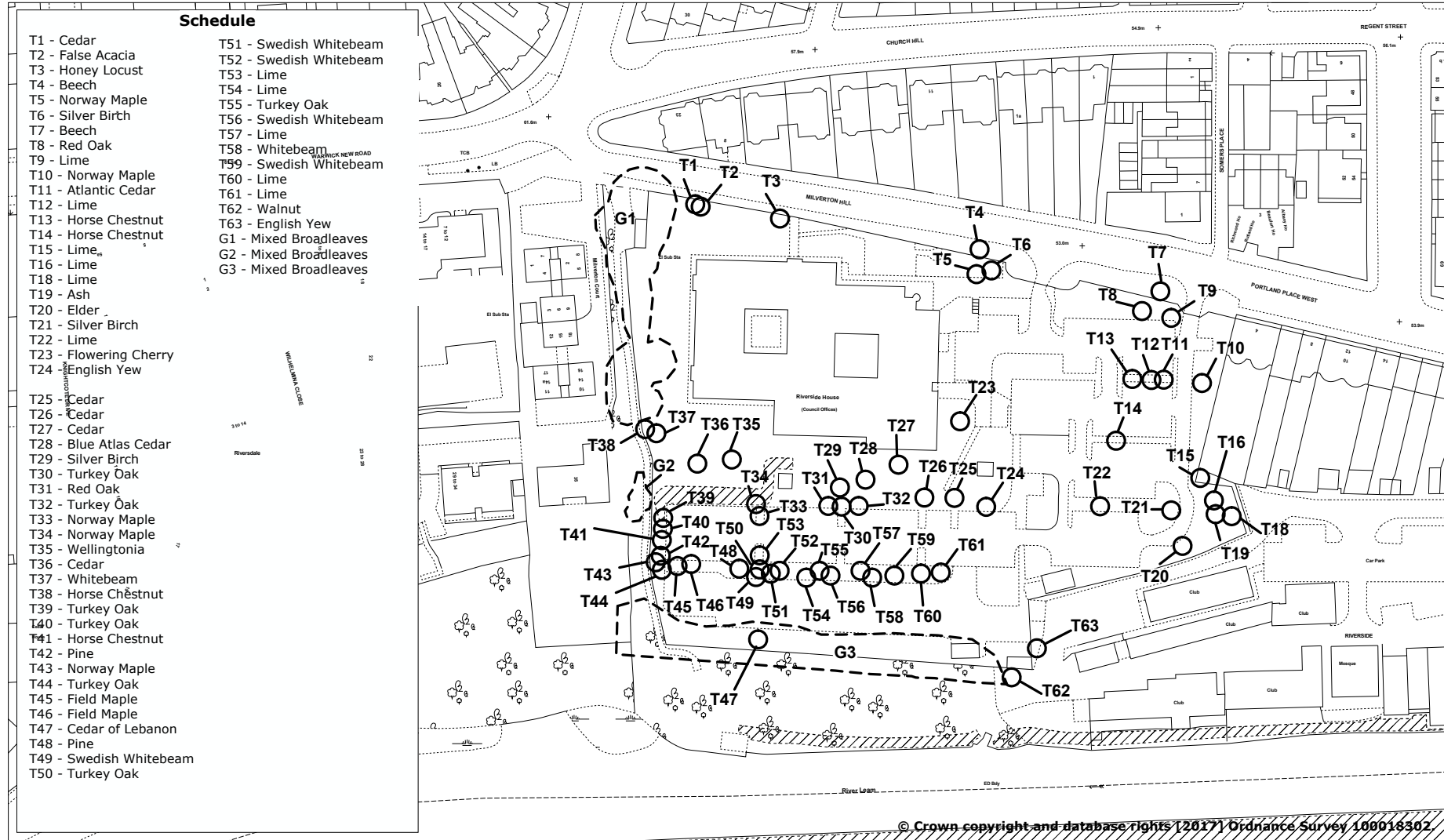
*Warwick District*  
Local Plan 1996 - 2011  
September 2007

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# PLAN 03 TREE PRESERVATION PLAN



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**Tree Preservation Order No. 543**  
Riverside House, Milverton Hill, Royal Leamington Spa.

**LOCATION PLAN**

OS Sheet Reference No. SP3165NW Map Centred (NGR): 431209 E , 265773 N

Development Services: P.O. Box 2178, Riverside House, Milverton Hill, Royal Leamington Spa

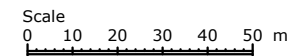
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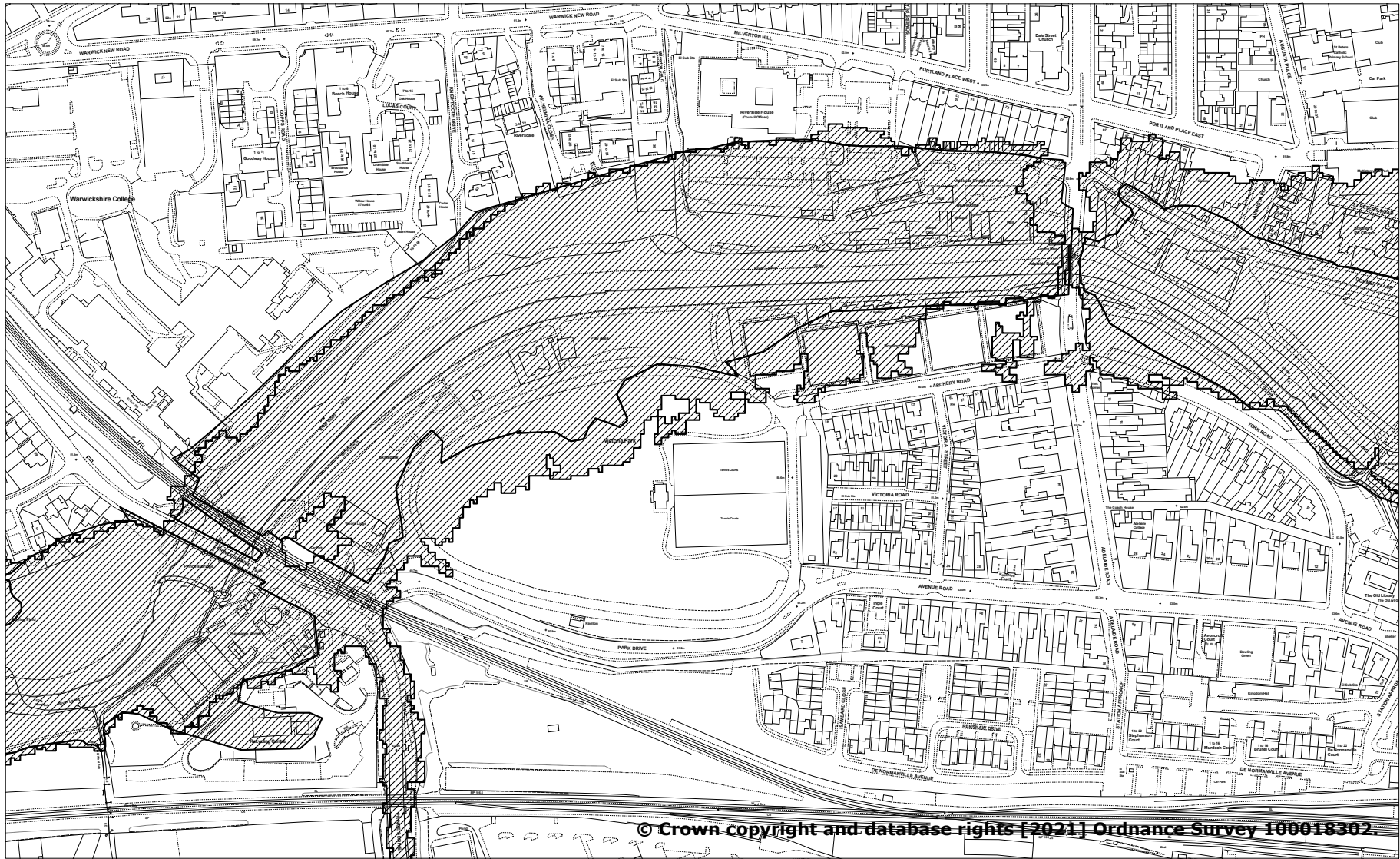
Date: 27/2/2018



File Number: TPO 543



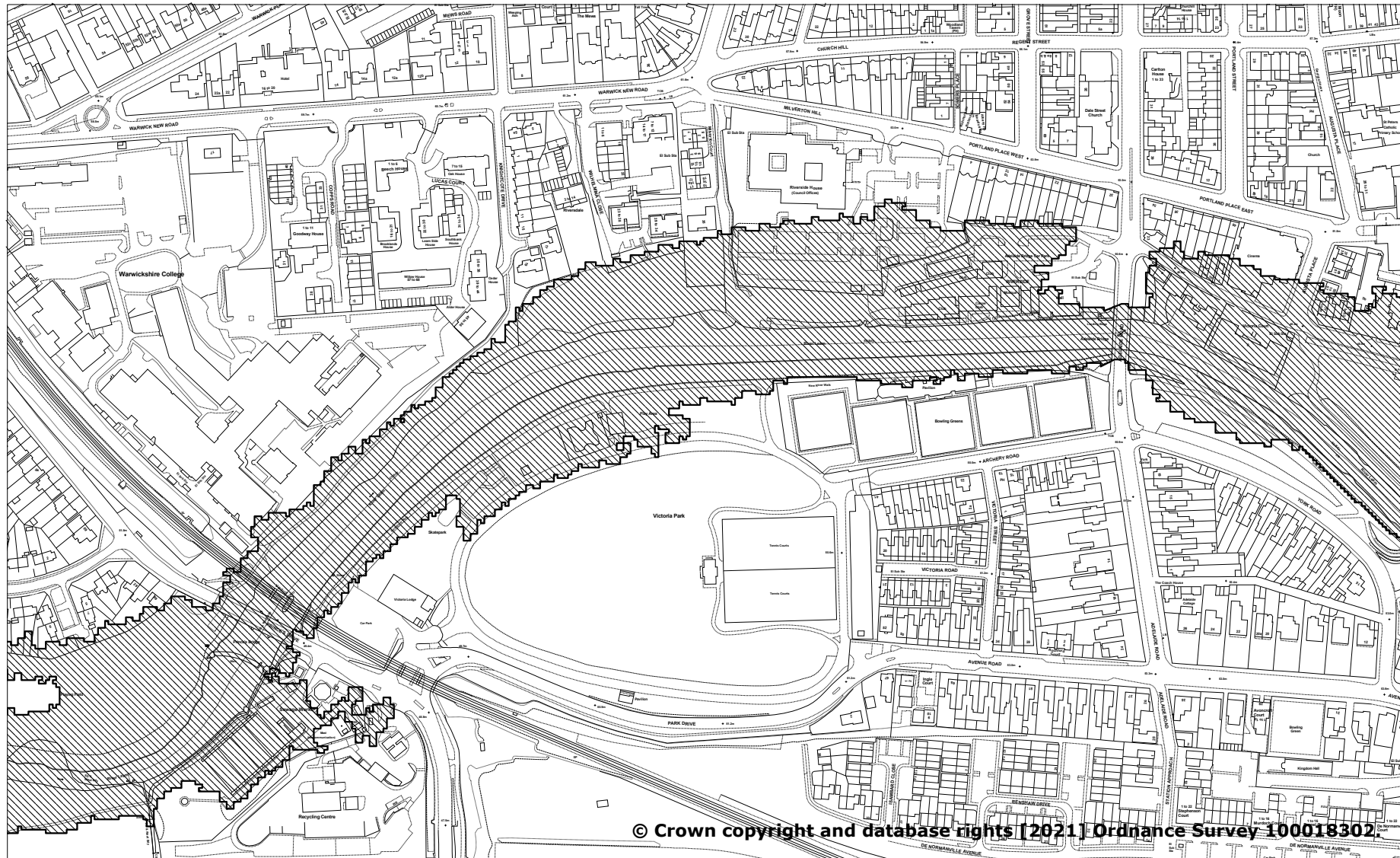


# PLAN 04A FLOOD ZONE 2 PLAN



 <p>WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL</p>	<p>Scale: 1:3500</p>	<p><b>Riverside House Flood Zone 2 - Feb 2021</b></p>	<p>Date: 16 June 2021</p>	<p>North</p>
<p>Riverside House, Milverton Hill, Royal Leamington Spa, Warwickshire. CV32 5HZ</p>			<p>Tel: 01926 410410</p>	

# PLAN 04B FLOOD ZONE 3 PLAN



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Scale: 1:3500

Riverside House, Milverton Hill, Royal Leamington Spa, Warwickshire. CV32 5HZ

## Riverside House Flood Zone 3 - Feb 2021

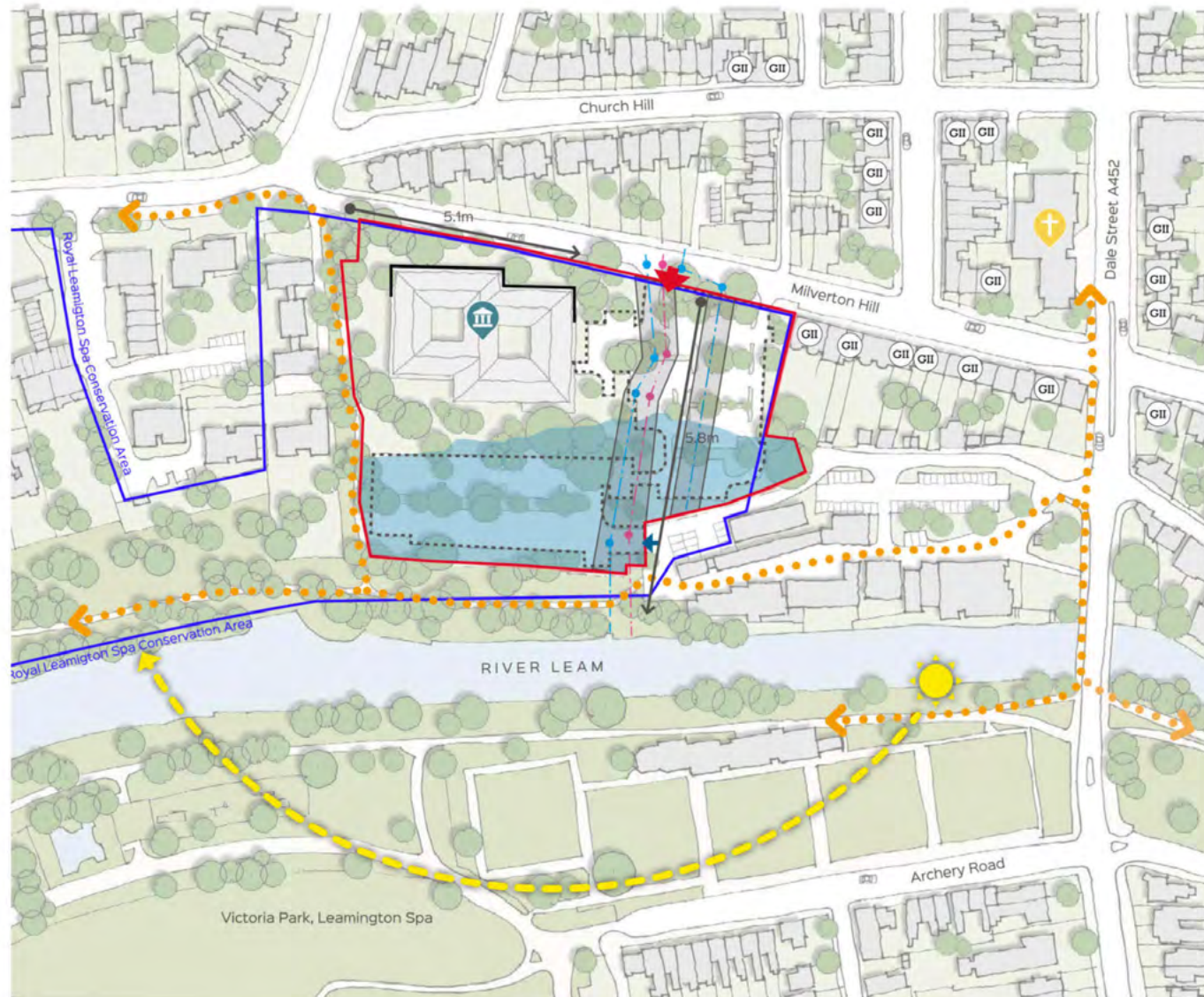
Date: 16 June 2021

Tel: 01926 410410



# PLAN 05 SITE ANALYSIS

## Site Analysis



- Warwick District Council
- Excessive parking zone
- Flood zone within site
- Main site access
- Secondary access
- Pedestrian path
- Sewer easement
- Poor frontage
- Change in level
- Methodist Church
- Grade II listed
- Conservation area boundary



**Warwick District Council  
Riverside House  
Milverton Hill  
Royal Leamington Spa  
CV32 5HZ**

