

# WATLING GATE LOCAL STUDIES AND ARCHIVES

BRIEFING DOCUMENT AND  
FEASIBILITY DRAWINGS



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On behalf of,  
TRAFFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

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FIG. 1: ORIGINAL DINING ROOM - PHOTO CIRCA 2017

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

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This document has been prepared by OMI Architects on behalf of Trafford Borough Council to assist in initial briefing discussions with Trafford Council Local Studies and Archives Department. The aim is for these discussions to inform a new feasibility report assessing the viability of the Local Studies and Archives team occupying the building, and the implications of restoring the building from its current state of repair.

OMI Architects were appointed in January 2017 to undertake an options appraisal/ feasibility study into the restoration and redevelopment of Watling Gate, a grade II listed former residential property, which was formerly used as a children's nursery for approximately 60 years until its closure in 2003, and is situated in Newton Park, West Timperley.

This report examined the feasibility for the conversion of Watling Gate to create a 'Community Hub' incorporating a children's day nursery for 0-3 years age group, a community café, a bakery and providing meeting spaces for community groups and display space for art and heritage exhibits.



WATLING GATE IN IT'S HEYDAY

## 2.0 BACKGROUND

### BACKGROUND

Watling Gate was designed by Lt. Col. Newton after he visited numerous country houses in the surrounding area of Cheshire. The house was apparently designed in conjunction with a local architect named Bayley and it was constructed by Robert Carlyle of Manchester at a cost of £2,500 in 1905. The house follows the Edwin Lutyens school of architecture, an approach that inventively incorporates elements of traditional architectural styles into modern designs. Lt. Col. Newton was an antiquarian who much admired historic architecture and the local architecture of Cheshire and wanted to re-create some of these elements in his new home. A perfect example of this is the open hall or 'house place' of Watling Gate, an architectural feature that has been in existence since the Anglo-Saxon Period. An article from *The Studio*, published in 1910, describes the property thus:

*"Simplicity is the keynote of the design, and homely comfort with an entire absence of Bijou residence 'prettiness' has been the aim of the architects from first to last. Based upon the general lines suggested by many an old Cheshire homestead, the plain colour wash walls, and soft toned, grey flag-slates of the roof combine to produce a home which harmonizes admirably with its landscape environment"*

(Source: Watling Gate Conservation Statement, page 10. Kathryn Sather and Associates, October 2009.)

The house and surrounding gardens were bequeathed to Altrincham Council on Newton's death in 1937 and used as an art gallery and museum. Subsequently, the building operated as a nursery for over 60 years until it fell vacant in 2003. Although the conversions resulted in some internal alterations, the plan of the building has not undergone any substantial changes and many of the original timber features and detailing had been retained. However, left unoccupied the building has been subject to theft, vandalism and water ingress, which have led to partial collapses. Currently the building is in a dilapidated state with many of the original features at risk.

### 3.0 ANALYSIS AND OPPORTUNITY

#### ANALYSIS-SITE WIDE

The building is situated in a central position within Newton park. The park is well maintained and consists of open lawned areas with a good mix of mature deciduous trees which line the principle routes. The park is bounded on two sides by the backs of residential properties and on one side by a primary school (Park Road Academy). A small children's play area inhabits the edge of the park adjacent to the school and is well used. Sinderland Brook runs along the northern boundary of the site.

There are a number of pedestrian/cycle access points into the park (including the waymarked cycle route which runs along the northern edge) and because of this the park is used as a thoroughfare by local residents increasing the footfall that passes Watling Gate.

Vehicle access is provided by way of Frieston Road on the eastern boundary and Leys Road to the south (closest to the building). Leys Road terminates at the park but there is no turning head to allow vehicles to turn around.

A plot of land to the south of the Watling Gate building is partially separated by trees and whilst technically it forms part of the park it is not well defined. We understand that this is a separate building plot that was bequeathed by Lt Col. Newton along with the Watling Gate house and gardens and there remains potential for this to be sold off to contribute funds towards adapting Watling Gate for a new use.

The principal view of the house is from the end of Leys Road as you enter the park, however a small hedged garden to the south of the house that has become overgrown now obscures this view. A formal hedged garden to the immediate northwest of the house also obscures views of the house from the open aspect of the park.

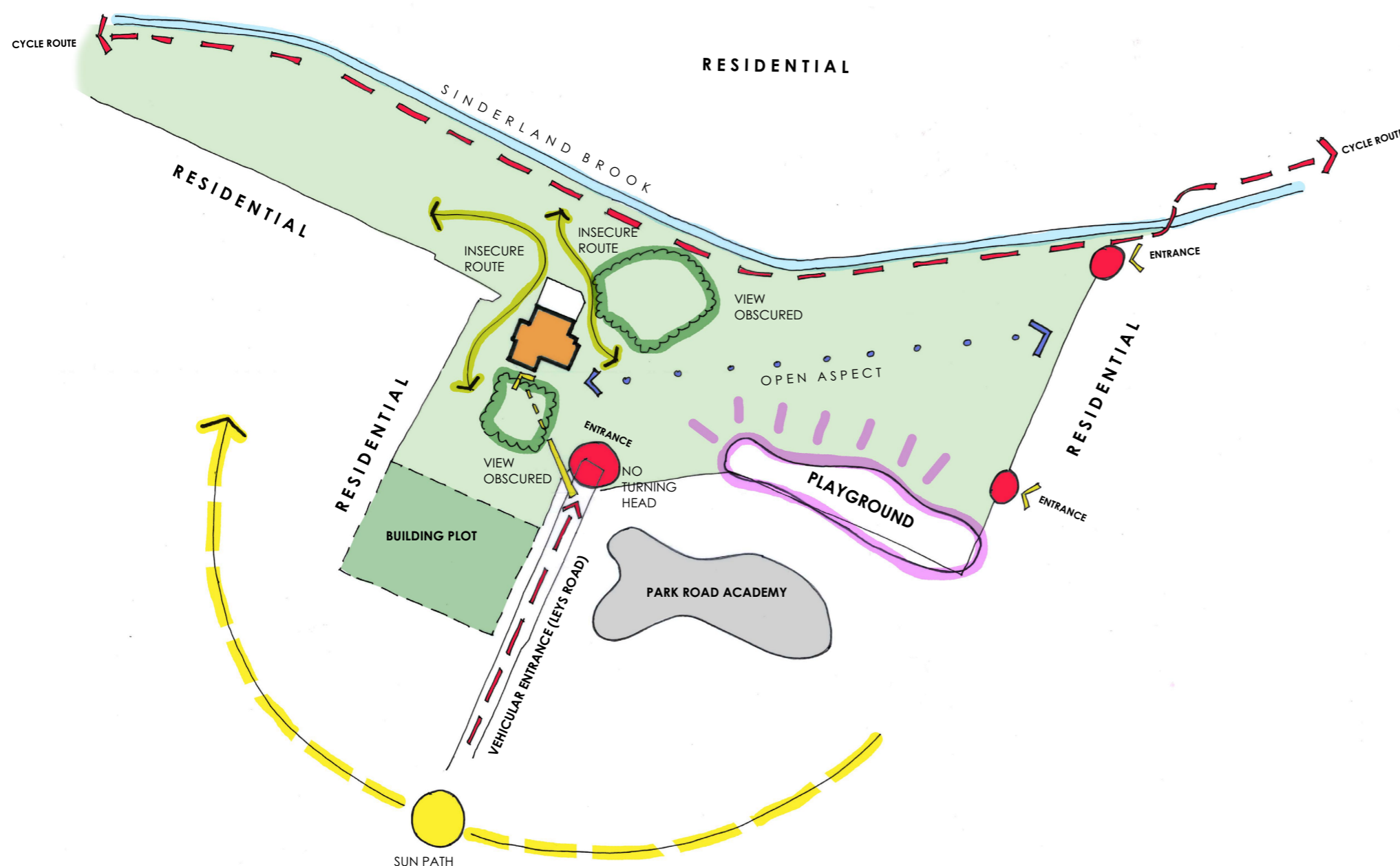


FIG. 3: CONTEXT ANALYSIS DIAGRAM

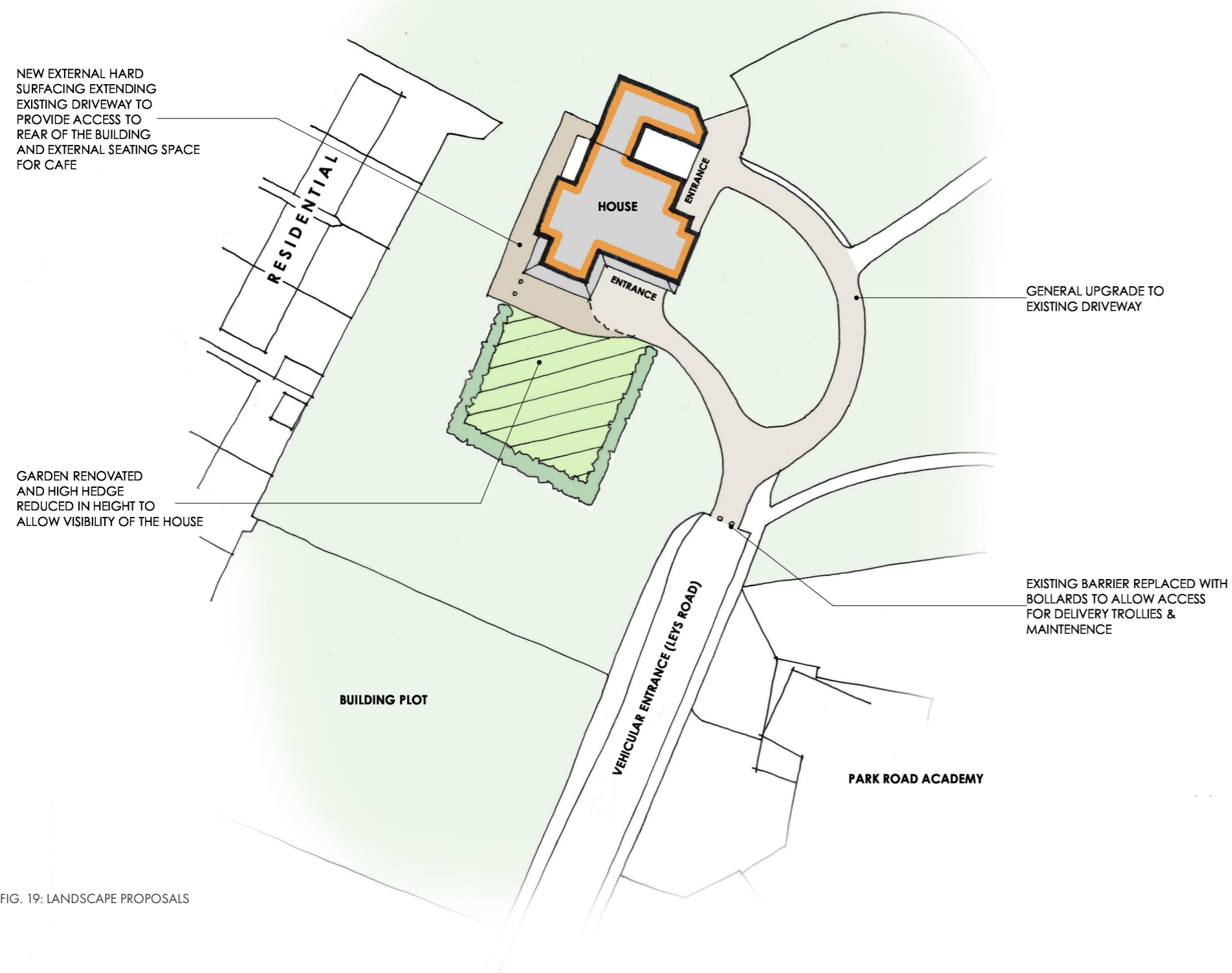


FIG. 19: LANDSCAPE PROPOSALS

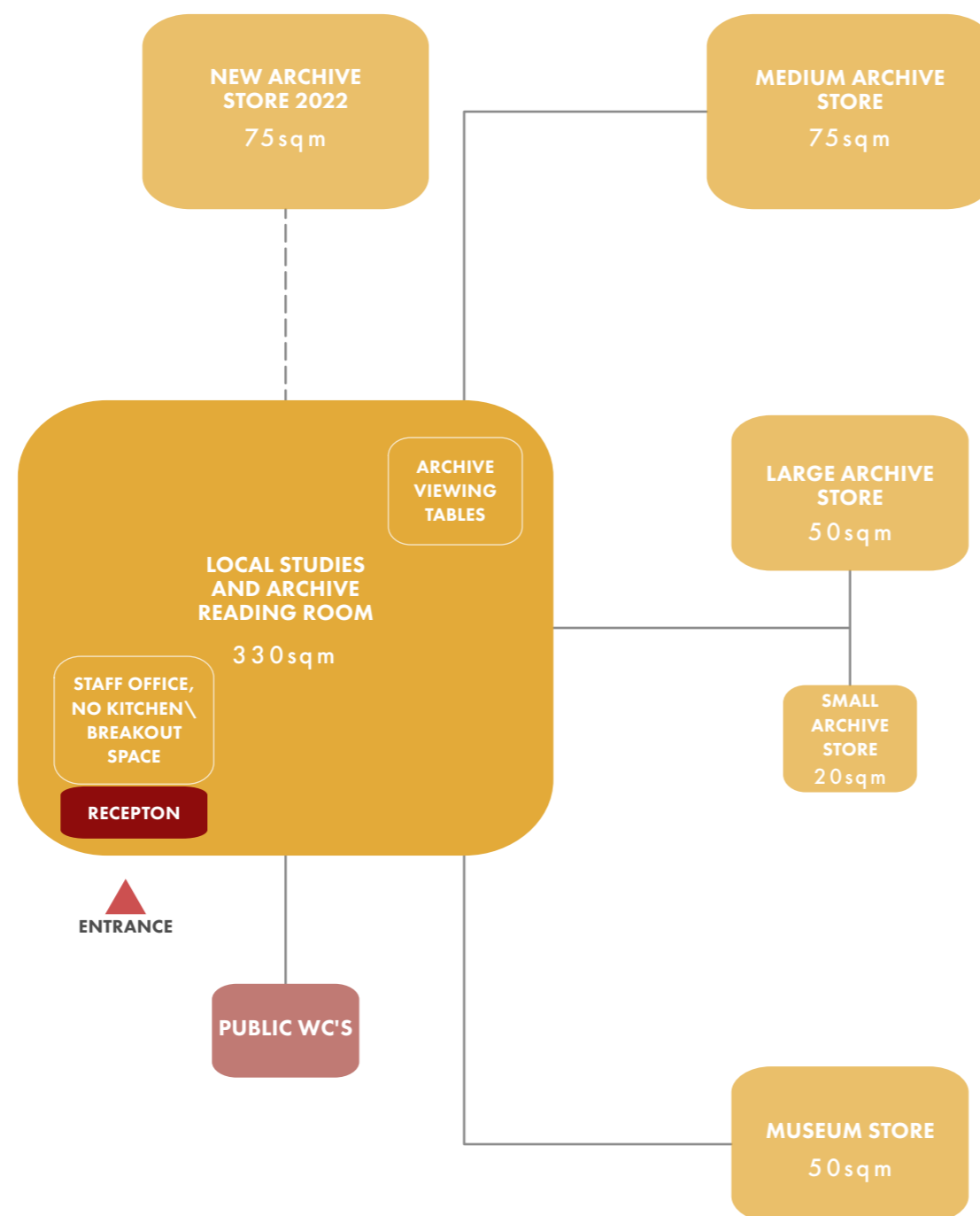
#### 4.0 LANDSCAPE OPPORTUNITIES

Potential landscape improvements could include;

- External paving to the perimeter of the building
- External cycle storage
- External refuse storage area to the rear of the building
- Improving/ replacing the vehicle barrier at the entrance to the park from Leys Road. (bollards may be a more appropriate option)
- Renovation of the small garden space to the immediate south of the house including the removal of high hedges that obscure the view of the house
- Extending the driveway to create more hard surfacing for café seating/ deliveries

## 5.0 RELATIONSHIP DIAGRAMS

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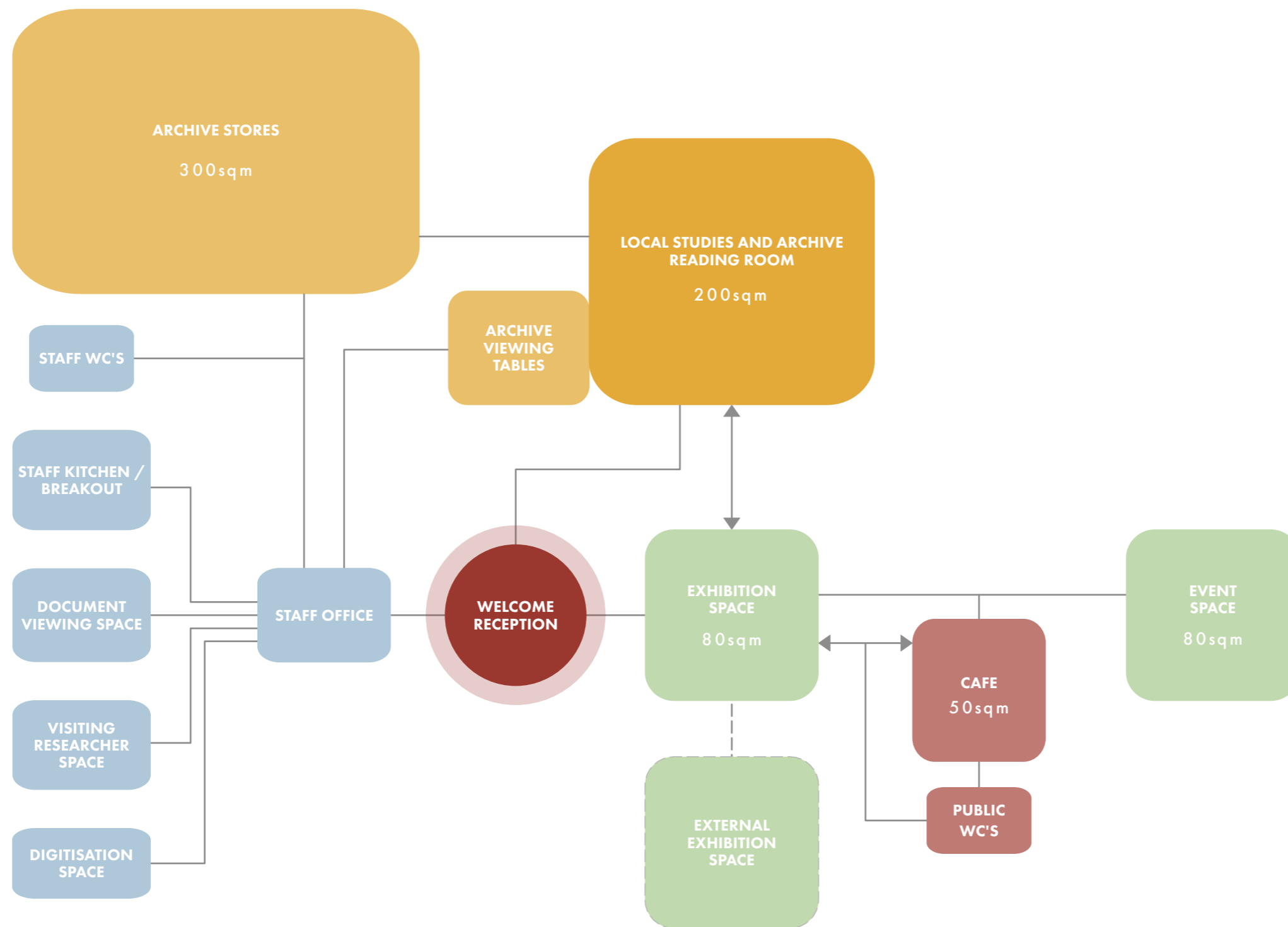
**APPROXIMATE AREAS:**

- PUBLIC READING ROOM: 300m<sup>2</sup>
- STAFF SPACES: 30m<sup>2</sup>
- ARCHIVE SPACES (INCLUDING NEW 2022 STORE): 270m<sup>2</sup>
- TOTAL: 600m<sup>2</sup>

**TMBC LOCAL STUDIES AND ARCHIVES**

DIAGRAM SHOWING EXISTING LOCAL STUDIES AND ARCHIVE FACILITIES AT SALE WATERSIDE





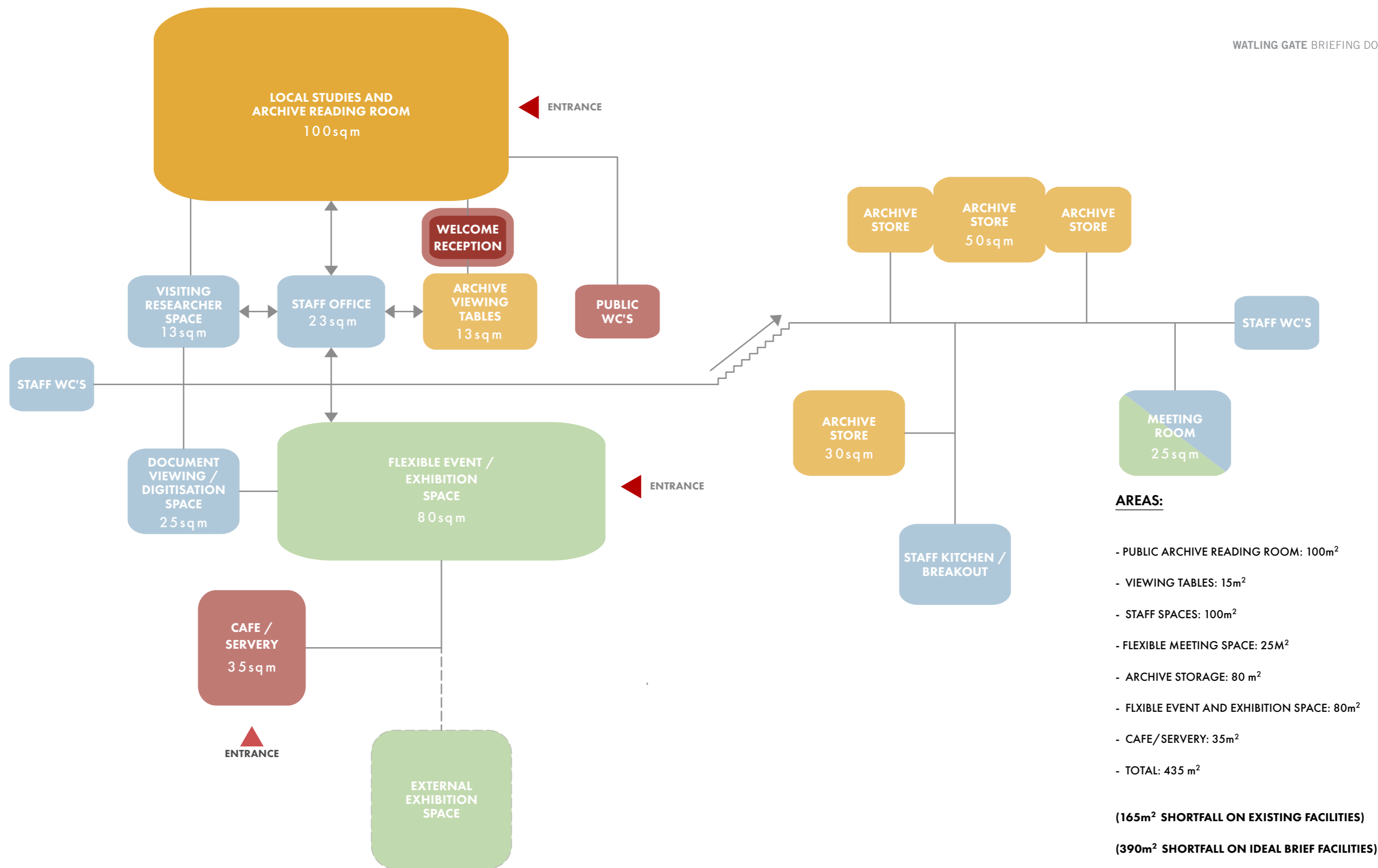
**AREAS:**

- PUBLIC ARCHIVE READING ROOM: 200m<sup>2</sup>
- VIEWING TABLES: 15m<sup>2</sup>
- STAFF SPACES: 100m<sup>2</sup>
- ARCHIVE STORAGE: 300m<sup>2</sup>
- EVENT AND EXHIBITION SPACE: 160m<sup>2</sup>
- CAFE/SERVERY: 50m<sup>2</sup>
- TOTAL: 825m<sup>2</sup>

**(225M<sup>2</sup> ADDITIONAL AREA COMPARED TO EXISTING FACILITIES)**

**TMBC LOCAL STUDIES AND ARCHIVES**

DIAGRAM SHOWING IDEALISED BRIEF FOR LOCAL STUDIES AND ARCHIVE FACILITIES



**TMBC LOCAL STUDIES AND ARCHIVES**

DIAGRAM SHOWING PROPOSED LOCAL STUDIES AND ARCHIVE FACILITIES AT WATLING GATE

## 6.0

## FEASIBILITY LAYOUT

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