SHINFIELD PARK

Historic Building Recording

Prepared by Stantec

December 2025

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Prepared by:

Stantec's Archaeology and Heritage Team

Project Number:

333101463

Stantec

Contents

Figures

Executive Summary

Stantec were commissioned by Wrenbridge (FRELD Reading) LLP ('hereafter the Client') to undertake a programme of Historic Building Recording of the property known as Shinfield Park, Reading. This programme of works was carried out in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (Stantec 2025) approved by the Wokingham Borough Council Conservation Officer.

Shinfield Park was the subject of a planning application for redevelopment, which included the demolition of the existing building (App ref. 250415). Permission in Principle was also granted in 2025 for the demolition of the buildings within the Site (App ref. 250188). Through discussion with Wokingham Borough Council, it was agreed that a programme of Historic Building Recording would be undertaken in advance of demolition, with an appropriately worded condition attached to the redevelopment application.

Within Shinfield Park, the principal building and focus of this building recording is a late 20th century former commercial office block with two levels of underground car parking and plant rooms. Known as Shire Hall, it was originally built as the headquarters for Berkshire County Council. Shire Hall is not nationally designated or identified as a Locally Listed Building by Wokingham Borough Council. This document presents a record of the building as it stood in May 2025. Demolition work commenced in September 2025.

The Historic Building Recording archive, including a copy of the final report will be sent for deposition with Berkshire Archives, if accepting. The digital archive will be deposited in a Trusted Digital Repository – the Archaeological Data Service (ADS).

Stantec wish to express their gratitude to the advisors, local and national heritage societies, and the various data depositories whose assistance and resources greatly informed this study. Special thanks are extended to former and existing Council officers for their input, guidance and support throughout the project, and to former staff of Foster Wheeler / Wood for their valuable contributions and collaboration.

1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 A Historic Building Recording was carried out by Stantec in advance of the demolition of Shinfield Park (SU 72845 69045; Figure 1; hereafter the Site).

1.1.2 Within Shinfield Park, the principal building comprises a 1980's former commercial office building known as Shire Hall. Shire Hall, in its early iteration, was accessible to the public, but since 1999 was in private ownership as offices. The building is not subject to any statutory designations, nor is it identified on the Council's adopted Local List. However, given its former civic use, it is deemed to have a low level of heritage interest which warrants its recording

1.1.3 In February 2025 an application was submitted to Wokingham Borough Council (App ref. 250415) for redevelopment of the Site, following an earlier permission in principle approval for the demolition of Shire Hall (App ref. 250188). As demolition was due to commence prior to determination, it was concluded with the Wokingham Borough Council Conservation Officer that the Historic Building Recording programme would be delivered as follows:

- Submission of the Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI; Stantec 2025) whilst the application remained live to expedite the process and reduce timescales. This was completed in May 2025;
- Undertaking of the Historic Building Recording (drawn and photographic record) prior to demolition commencing. On-site work was undertaken on 20 and 22 May 2025; and
- Completion, finalisation and delivery of the written record and archive no later than 6 months following commencement of development.

1.1.4 In October 2025 the application was approved with the following condition (25):

- The drawn record of the Historic Building Recording must be carried out in accordance with the Written Scheme of Investigation dated April 2025 hereby approved.
- The report detailing the results of the Historic Building Record, shall be submitted to, and approved by the Local Planning Authority, in writing no later than 6 months following commencement of development (excluding demolition).
- Reason: In the interests of preserving records of the built environment. Relevant policy: TB26 of the MDD Local Plan 2014 and the NPPF.

1.1.5 This report has been prepared in accordance with Historic England specifications in Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice (HE, 2016) and other applicable standards and guidance (CIFA 2014; DoE 2010; EH 1991; EH 2014; EH 2008 and EH 2005).

1.2 Scope and Layout

1.2.1 The investigation corresponds to a 'Level 2' historic building recording, as defined in Historic England 'Understanding Historic Buildings: A Guide to Good Recording Practice' (2016), focusing specifically on the Shire Hall building itself.

1.2.2 A Level 2 recording is a descriptive record, it may be made for a building which is judged not to require any fuller record, or it may serve to gather data for a wider project. In this case the Level 2 record will present conclusions regarding the building's material and use but will not discuss in detail the evidence on which these conclusions are based. A broad range of standard sources have been consulted, and we have used the drawings provided by the

architects and utilised detailed photography due to the nature of the features, and overall character of the Site, being recorded.

1.2.3 The main body of this report should be read in conjunction with the appendices which comprise the OASIS form, floor plans, photograph record (catalogue, register and location plan) and WSI.

1.2.4 All information and imagery reproduced in this report is subject to appropriate copyright and licencing agreement.

1.2.5 The project archive, including a copy of the final report is currently being compiled, indexed, and will be sent for deposition with Berkshire Archives, if accepting. The digital archive will be deposited in a Trusted Digital Repository – the ADS.

1.3 Authorship

1.3.1 This report has been prepared by the Archaeology and Heritage Team at Stantec UK Limited. The team has a wealth of experience working across a wide variety of heritage projects throughout Berkshire and Wokingham and the UK. The team has specialist knowledge of heritage policy and legislation and brings together a mix of experiences from previous roles in both the public and private sectors. The team is experienced in undertaking detailed heritage assessments and recordings in connection with proposals affecting a variety of heritage assets and their settings. Within the team are several built heritage specialists who inputting into undertaking and delivering this survey.

1.4 Consultation

1.4.1 Consultation with Wokingham Borough Council and the local Conservation Officer have been undertaken in connection with the wider redevelopment application. This report will be formally submitted to the LPA following initial review by the Conservation Officer.

Stantec	Wrenbridge (FRELD	**Shinfield Park, Shinfield Road, Shinfield, RG2 9FW** **Historic Building Recording** Figure 1: Site Location		1:5,000 @ A3	Date: 16/04/2025
				Drawn: ELT	Checked: LK
				Figure 01	Rev A

2 Methodology and Sources

2.1 Research Aims

2.1.1 The specific project aims of the Historic Building Recording were defined fully in the site-specific Written Scheme of Investigation produced by Stantec (May 2025). The aim of this level 2 recording is to provide a descriptive record of the Site and to discuss a systemic account of its origins, development and use. The Historic Building Recording had the main following components:

- To undertake a comprehensive photographic record of the Site, including interior and exterior, where this could be safely delivered;
- To investigate, analyse and describe the Site, with the aim of elucidating use and history, and record and analyse the resulting evidence for this history using applicable archaeological methods;
- To make a descriptive record in its present condition, by means of photography, with the use of existing scale drawings to be supplied by the developer; and
- To report the results in suitable form, publish a summary and register the report through the Historic England OASIS form, Berkshire Historic Environment Record and Wokingham Borough Council.

2.2 Survey Methodology

2.2.1 The programme of Historic Building Recording was undertaken in accordance with the relevant Historic England and Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) guidance. The methodology employed for the programme is outlined in the WSI (Appendix F), with a summary provided below for context.

2.2.2 The on-site survey was undertaken by Stantec's Archaeology and Heritage Team, comprising Emma McKeown (Heritage Planner), Emily Taylor (ACIfA, Senior Heritage Planner) and Harry Clarke (MCIfA, Heritage Planning Associate Director) on 20 and 22 May 2025.

2.2.3 A survey of available documentary and cartographic sources was made to inform understanding regarding the historic, design concept and development of the Site. Visits were made to Berkshire Archives and Historic England Archives. Readily available information online was also consulted including the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) collection. Sources for photography reproduced in this report are provided in the References section.

2.2.4 Non-intrusive physical investigation of the Site was carried out prior to demolition. This aspect of the investigation aimed at elucidating significant details regarding fabric, function, or the elements, methods/order of construction and development.

2.2.5 The scope of the project also included a photographic survey of Shire Hall. The Client made available plan and elevation drawings in PDF format. Stantec checked these on Site for completeness and accuracy. Any omissions were added to the drawings by Stantec, by hand annotation on-site, and with appropriate software on report compilation. The drawings were annotated conforming to the Historic England guidance for presentation of a historic building survey.

2.2.6 Photographs were taken using a 12-megapixel high-definition digital camera to produce a comprehensive photographic record, including views to give an overall impression of its appearance and setting. Only a selected number of the photographs taken on-site have been presented in this report. All photographs taken on-site will be archived. A catalogue and list comprising their description and unique archive identifier, along with the digital image file name is included in the archive and the appendices of this report.

2.2.7 An appropriate level of documentary archive research was also carried out to give an account of the history and development of the Site to inform a Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment produced by Stantec (HEDBA; January 2025) to inform the application for redevelopment of Shinfield Park. This information was utilised as part of the Historic Building Recording. Documentary sources, alongside other material, were consulted for evidence of construction, modification and activities undertaken in the Site throughout its use.

2.2.8 No contingency work was required or undertaken.

2.3 Conditions

2.3.1 The Site was not in active use during the on-site survey works; the Site is understood to have been vacant from summer 2024 onward. All existing services, including power, were not in operation at the time of the recording; portable lighting was used where natural lighting was not considered sufficient for recording. This is not considered to have hindered the recording.

2.3.2 Upon arrival it was noted that the majority of the interior of Shire Hall had been subject to soft strip of internal elements and a limited level of demolition works. All internal fixtures, furnishings and fabrics had been removed. The building was recorded in the condition present at the time of survey, with reference made in this report to its earlier internal appearance. This information has been provided by the Client and from available online sources.

2.4 Previous Assessment

2.4.1 Previous research and assessments have been reviewed in relation to the Site within this report with due acknowledgement. Most notably, by Wood (n.d.) and Chetwoods (2024) who produced a set of drawings for the building and redevelopment application.

2.5 Promotion & Ownership

2.5.1 This report will be promoted and circulated to relevant stakeholders for comment. Furthermore, the finalised report will be logged in the UK historic environment sector's OASIS database and ADS along with other site investigation reports associated with the Site.

2.6 Identifiers & Nomenclature

2.6.1 A comparison of the modern plans with archival material shows that whilst there has been some changes, the basic layout of the complex remains the same. For ease, Stantec has utilised the codes assigned by Wood to each Pavilion to enable a consistent descriptive record. Discrepancies were identified in the Chetwoods drawings, causing some confusion on-site. Wood's drawings have therefore been utilised for the purpose of the building recording description and layout label.

2.6.2 Nomenclature used to describe elements of the Site are detailed below:

- The Administrative Block – most of the building which forms the focus, including the Pavilions. This housed the former office space, reception and central circulation points hereafter referred to as Central Cores.
- The Plant Area – the southwestern extent of the building located on the Basement, Sub-Basement and Ground Floor levels with associated service yard and loading bay.
- The Civic Suite – positioned at the southeastern end of the building, connected with the Administrative Block by a glazed-link corridor. This contained the former Council Chamber with members offices.
- Basement Car Parks – the two car parks located beneath the complex which form part of the structure (Basement and Sub-Basement levels). Car parks above ground level are

discussed more generally in relation to their contribution, through form and appearance, to the surrounds of the building.

- The nomenclature and Pavilion codes are illustrated on the plans in Appendix B.

3 Background Information

3.1 Location

3.1.1 The Site is located on the edge of Reading, approximately 1.6km northeast of the M4 Junction. The route of the M4 runs roughly northeast to southwest, at its closest approx. 120m to the south/southeast. On the south side of the M4 is the Thames Valley Science Park and Shinfield Studios. The Site is bounded by Whitley Wood Lane and the B3270 to the east and dense woodland (Nores Hill Wood) to the southwest, west and northwest. These areas form local wildlife sites and ancient woodland. The surroundings of the Site, beyond the vegetation, are characterised by residential development.

3.1.2 The Site's character and appearance it characterised by its function use. It is dominated by Shire Hall, around which the hard and soft landscaping is set out. Access is afforded via the east; this principal entrance increases in height from southeast to northwest, before connecting with a roundabout. The road continues in a west / southwest direction, running around the perimeter of the building, terminating at the entry / exist points associated with the Basement Car Parks. A former three-storey rectilinear building was present to the north / northwest of Shire Hall (with associated car parking); this has since been dismantled and the area is characterised by hard surface. The hard landscaping in the east of the Site is characterised by tarmac associated with roads and a large car park. Soft landscaping throughout the Site comprises decorative planting and amenity grass, notably surrounding Shire Hall, car parks and on the roundabout.

3.1.3 The topography of the Site falls from 76m AOD along the northern boundary to 67m AOD at the southern corner. The change in elevation is accommodated through varying the floor levels of the existing building and through the use of battered retaining walls to provide platforms for the sections of the building.

3.2 Previous Work

3.2.1 In 2025 Stantec produced a Historic Environment Desk-Based Assessment (HEDBA) to inform planning application 250415. This assessed both the archaeological potential and heritage interest of the Site. No further work is known to have been undertaken.

3.3 Civic Architecture Context

3.3.1 The term 'civic centre' arose during the inter-war period for modern complexes which combined council offices with other public buildings. They were often established around a specific plan: either centred on a courtyard, a single-range of plan or a group plan where different elements are separate but linked together. During this period social, economic, and political developments led to an increase in homogeneity of architectural design and there was a rise in local authorities and developers laying claim to individuality, distinct identity and upper superiority based on the rhetoric of civic pride.

3.3.2 Civic architecture dating from the mid to late 20th century, is often associated with the architectural style of 'brutalist' or 'brutalism' and is characterised by large scale buildings constructed of exposed concrete. A strong emphasis is placed on expressing external elevations and the overall design was used to communicate strength and functionality. Post-war civic architecture is often deliberately designed with open planning and subtle spatial effects and the municipal image in the twentieth century was associated with grandeur.

3.3.3 Civic architecture can also be associated with grand town halls and other public buildings and places, although these tend to be much more formal and ornate in architectural style and appearance. These buildings also tend to pre-date structures like Shire Hall.

3.4 Heritage Designations

3.4.1 Shire Hall is not subject to any statutory designations, nor it is identified on the Local List.

3.5 Significance

3.5.1 Shire Hall is representative of brutalist civic architecture. It is not of an early date and the overall design and appearance, and surviving plan/layout and construction, do not feature innovation, architectural quality or rarity. Work undertaken by Stantec has not identified any features of particular architectural merit or popular inclusivity which would elevate the overall interests of the building. Although the building is certainly of a style and confidence representative of its time, it is not of special architectural interest in its own right. Its historic interest derives from its function and association, although this has been compromised by the decline and vacancy of the building, and is not legible within the landscape today.

3.6 Function

3.6.1 Shire Hall illustrates the historic development of Reading / Wokingham, and the post war investment in local government. It had a civic and administrative function in use as the council offices. It converted to a commercial premises following the Local Government Act of 1992 and relocation of the councils to new premises in 1998. Of the commercial units, it is most known for its associated with the global engineering company Foster Wheeler, later known as Amec Foster Wheeler, which subsequently became Wood Group. Since 2024 Shire Hall had been vacant following the relocation of Wood Group to Green Park.

4 Historical Background

4.1 Early development

4.1.1 Settlement activity in this area dates to the prehistoric period, with the earliest known evidence dating from the Palaeolithic and Mesolithic periods onward. This landscape would have been attractive to early communities due to the abundance of natural resources, and the archaeological record suggests prehistoric settlement is likely to have been homogenous and single phase, a short tenure, reflecting the continued movement through the landscape. The area continued to be exploited into the late prehistoric and Roman period, with the landscape characterised by small scale settlement, field systems and iron production. It formed part of the agricultural hinterlands associated with the urban centre at Silchester.

4.1.2 During the medieval period the area formed part of the Hundred of Charldon. Held by the crown, the settlement's composition comprised 15 households, one mill, five fisheries and lands of meadow and wood. Place name evidence suggests Shinfield derives from *Selignefelle* which comprises a personal name, reference to open country (i.e. arable land) and a collective of people. The place name is therefore suggested to mean 'open land of the family or followers of a man called Sciene' and a medieval manor known as Old Shinfield Manor belonging to Henry VIII is suggested to have been located either to the north or east of the Site.

4.1.3 The area continued as a rural settlement associated with agricultural activity and marshland into the post-medieval period. During this period technological innovation and the agricultural revolution altered the landscape, with the closure of open fields and development of farmsteads. Cartographic material demonstrates Shinfield Park as parliamentary enclosures, arable fields and part of a woodland, held under several different ownerships including Mrs Rolden, Mr Pickeril and Mrs Beaver.

4.1.4 During the 18th century Shinfield Lodge, a Grade II Listed Building (List Entry 1319127) was constructed to the north of the Site. It comprised a mansion house, with private driveway, kitchen gardens, farm complex, landscaped decorative gardens and associated cottages. The wider estate encompassed part of the Site. Shinfield Lodge estate was subsequently subdivided and sold in the 20th century.

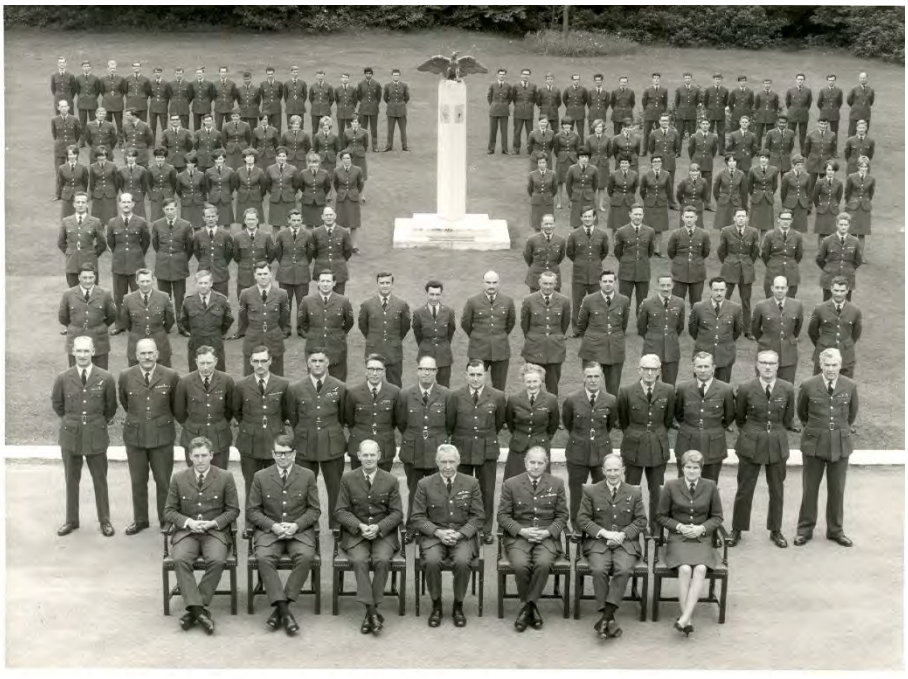
4.2 RAF Training Command

4.2.1 Following its use as agricultural land and part of Shinfield Lodge estate, in January 1940 the Site was occupied by the RAF's Unit Headquarters (HQ) of Training Command (formed in 1936 following reorganisation of the Air Force) who moved from Market Drayton. The HQ was responsible for facilitating and directing aircrew training and Shinfield Lodge became part of 'Site 1, South Camp' providing administrative capacity. A camp was established, serviced by access roads and barracks. The Site remained in this use until the 1970s.

Photograph 1 HQFTC RAF Shinfield Park Main Entrance

Photograph 2 RAF Shinfield Park

Photograph 3 Shinfield Park Camp Entrance



Photograph 4 Shinfield Park Troops

4.3 Berkshire County Council

4.3.1 Berkshire County Council, also known as the County Council of the Royal County of Berkshire, was the local authority for Berkshire in England. It was created in 1889 under the Local Government Act 1888, with Reading supplanting Abingdon as the official county town. In 1894 a tier of rural and urban district councils was created below the county councils together with 185 civil parishes, most comprising parish councils. There were adjustments to the County boundaries in the late 19th and 20th centuries. Local government was reformed in 1974 under the Local Government Act 1972.

4.3.2 The administrative county of Berkshire was abolished and a new non-metropolitan county of Berkshire created instead. The lower tier of local government was reformed at the same time. Prior to 1974 it had comprised numerous boroughs, urban districts and rural districts. After 1974 the lower tier within the county as reformed comprised six non-metropolitan districts: Bracknell (renamed Bracknell Forest in 1988),Newbury, Reading, Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead, and Wokingham. The Local Government Act 1992 allowed for local government to be reorganised into single-tier authorities which perform both the functions of a district council and a county council. In 1998 Berkshire County Council was abolished following the recommendations of the Banham Review, with the six existing district councils becoming unitary authorities: Bracknell Forest, West Berkshire (renamed from Newbury District Council), Reading, Slough, Windsor and Maidenhead, and Wokingham.

Photograph 5. Berkshire County Council Coat of Arms from 1961-1974

4.4 Council Offices

4.4.1 Throughout most of the 20th century, the administration of Berkshire County Council was undertaken in the town centre across a total of 19 separate buildings, including Shire Hall (built in 1911), now known at the Roseate Reading Hotel, and the Assize Courts. These housed 1,400 staff. A new county headquarters had been planned since the 1960s. The new headquarters was proposed on land adjacent to Shire Hall, Forbury Gardens, and an architectural competition was held in 1963 to implement the scheme. The Site was abandoned following refusal of a development permit from the Government for this location.

4.4.2 By 1970 the Council were looking again for new premises due to the poor conditions of extant buildings, rising population in the county and new powers and duties such as social services following the Local Government Act of 1972. Twelve sites were identified for the Council's new headquarters, with the Site, an area comprising 24 acres, considered to have more advantages than those located within the town centre. Ten acres were identified for development with the remainder to be retained as woodland and green space. The land was, by this time, surplus to the Ministry of Defence (MoD) in September 1972. Shinfield Grove, adjacent to the Site, was purchased in November 1972 to preserve the surrounding woodland.

4.4.3 A planning inquiry was held on the 5-6 June 1973 with an outline planning application for the headquarters called in for decision by the Secretary of State. No objections were made and consent granted enabling construction to commence.

4.5 The Build

4.5.1 Shire Hall was designed by the Berkshire County Council Architect Team comprising Richard Paul (County Architect), Charles Lawrence (Project Architect and Assistant County Architect), Alan Adamson (Deputy Team Architect), David Murray (Chief Architect), Len Timbury (Project Architect), David Randall (Principal Landscape Architect) and Jim Stephens (Chief Engineer for Services). Armand Safier and Partners were the Structural Engineers.

4.5.2 The design and construction of the building was overseen by an Officers' Working Group. This group produced a series of reports associated with the build (Report 1-3); these documents were reviewed at the Royal Berkshire Archives.

4.6 Design Principles

4.6.1 The preliminary brief to the architect is understood to have included the following requirements:

- The materials and specification employed would be designed to last the lifetime of the building to limit economical maintenance, replacement expenditure and running costs.
- The building would provide facilities and accommodation for Council Members.
- Accommodation would be designed for 2,000 staff, with space for a further 500 and working areas need to be produced in consideration with Department of Environment.
- Excluding all Council Chiefs and Deputies, all officers would be accommodated in open plan landscaped offices with social facilities and public transport to / from site.
- The guiding criteria for the design comprised:
- Maximum flexibility in plan form to cope with organisational change occurring throughout the lifetime of the building combined with maximum efficiency.
- To create a humble and pleasant environment.
- To create a building that integrates successfully with the external environment.
- Externally, guiding principles comprised:
- A high-rise would not be acceptable given the 'rural and domestic' scale and character of the surrounding context.
- The volume of accommodation should be broken down into smaller units to create an intimate feel that relates to the general shape and contours of the surrounding environment which reduce in height as the building rises.
- The building should have 'dignity and restraint' reflecting its civic function and use but avoid visual cliches with the previous Town Hall. It should reflect the 'forward looking policies of the Council.
- Materials comprise stone aggregate precast concrete panels to reduce / avoid maintenance and azured coloured double-glazed windows.
- The proportions of windows to solid walls is determined by the design parameters set with air conditioning and visual amenity.

- To prevent solar gain, the wall units above each window will project.
- Roofs will comprise copper, lead or other sheet metal sloping from central point in a series of facets – this was designed for visual impact and maintenance.
- Internally, guiding principles comprised:
- Polished slate, stone, concrete, wood strip, vinyl, tile or carpet for floor finishes,
- Exposed masonry, faced masonry, painted masonry, wall fabric, laminates, tile or wood for wall finishes. Wall baffles were implemented in plant rooms for acoustic reasons,
- Hardwood or laminate for doors with metal for lifts with the main entrance comprising toughened glass in a metal frame,
- Integrated lighting, fire and air conditioning in the ceilings.
- Landscaping proposals included:
- Rehabilitation of woodland.
- Small lake in the southwest – catchment for rainwater and reservoir for the Fire Brigade.
- Natural landscaping comprising grassed areas, judicious trees and shrub planting.
- Surface parking will be landscaped to reduce visual impact.
- Hard landscaping areas to the northeast and southeast of the building would comprise paving slabs, granite setts and brick paving acting as the entrance terraces with planting area for shrubs or flowers.
- Access roads will utilise the existing site levels to reduce visibility from the office.
- Attractive internal courtyards.

4.7 Design Concept

- The design concept for the building was formed of the following key aspects:
- Landscaped Offices – these were proposed from the First Floor for a maximum of five floors and contained within a series of Pavilions surrounded by two vertical cores with interlinking spaces between;
- Pavilions – unequal-sided isogonal convex octagons. This was based on a study of existing offices and concluded to provide the maximum clear dimensions for a satisfactory human environment. Each pavilion was proposed to provide a space for 100 workstations. The stagged position of the pavilions was a deliberate design choice to facilitate the ratio of workstation to external views. The proportion of the wall containing window was proposed to vary from between 50 to 75% of the circumference;
- Core Areas (Central Cores) – these were intended to comprise the staircases and lifts with the space developed as central circulation points from which the Pavilions extended. Shared facilities proposed in these areas were to include combined reception / mail and document handling / stationary distribution rooms with vertical conveyor system that links the Ground Floor reproduction and documentary handling areas and conference rooms. Other share facilities proposed included conference rooms accommodating up to 40 people with the option of being subdivided, interview rooms intended to hold 4-6 people, specialist stores and rooms for photography and model making, and toilets, cloaks and locker space for Council employees.

- Technology – a computer area was proposed on the First or Second Floor in the northern most Pavilion in close proximity to Treasurer's Department.

- Staff Amenity Apace – this was proposed to be located on the First Floor in the southwestern part of the building overlooking an open part of the building with external terrace, recreational area (coffee lounge, bar, billiards and table tennis room). These areas were separated by sliding screens and doors facilitating use outside of normal office hours. The kitchen was located to the rear of the building, serving the cafeteria and waitress dining room.

- Ancillary Ground Floor Use – comprising a reading / quiet room, library, TV & radio room, sauna, hairdresser, shop and banking facilities. First Aid was located adjacent to the main entrance.

- Interlinking Spaces – these were intended to contain either cellular offices with additional open landscaped office area or staff amenity areas for rest / refreshment.

- Fire Safety – measures include the addition of staircases in each Pavilion to accompany the Central Cores.

- Members' Accommodation – this was proposed in the Civic Suite and formed of the Council Chamber, Committee Rooms, Press Rooms and Members' Accommodation. The projecting wing contained the Chairman and Vice-Chairman's suites, accessed via a glazed enclosed link and the landscaped courtyard. Sliding partitions were used to allow the subdivision of space in this area, and two rooms contained facilities for audio / visual display including film projection.

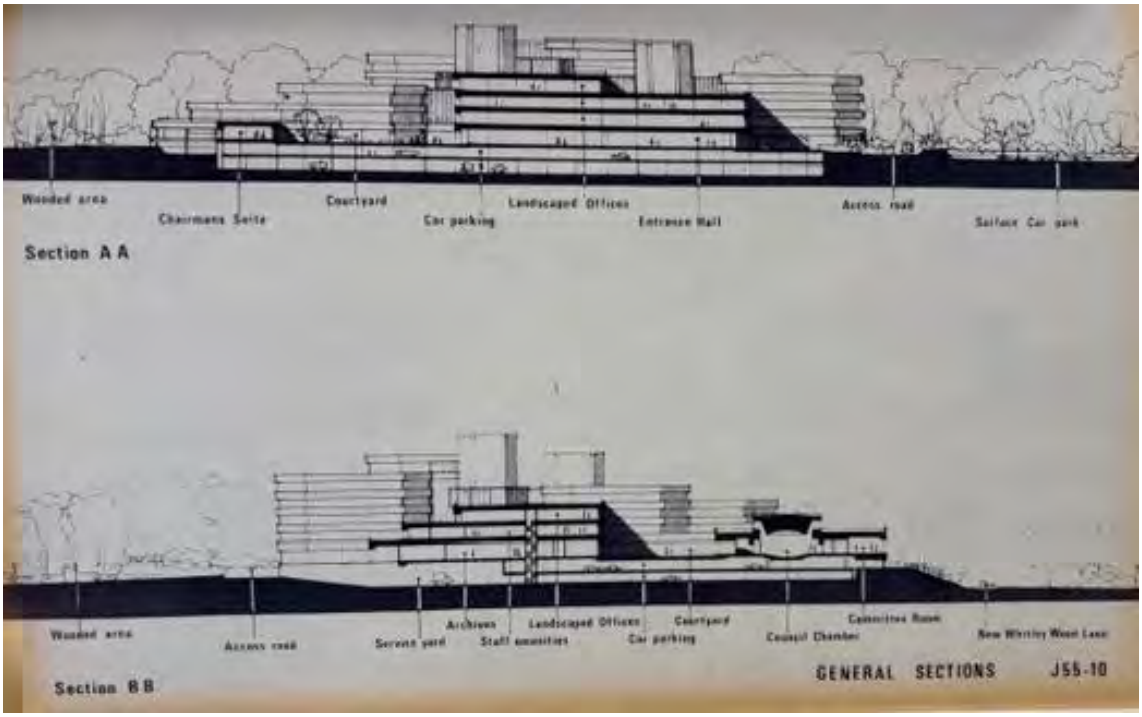
- Service / Storage Areas – included facilities for vehicular loading / off-loading for the Library, Consumer Projection and Road Safety Department.

- Main Entrance Hall – located on the Ground Floor and accessed from the Visitor Car Park, this connects to both cores and Council Chambers / Committee Rooms. The overall intention was to facilitate a controlled direction of visitor flow through the building.

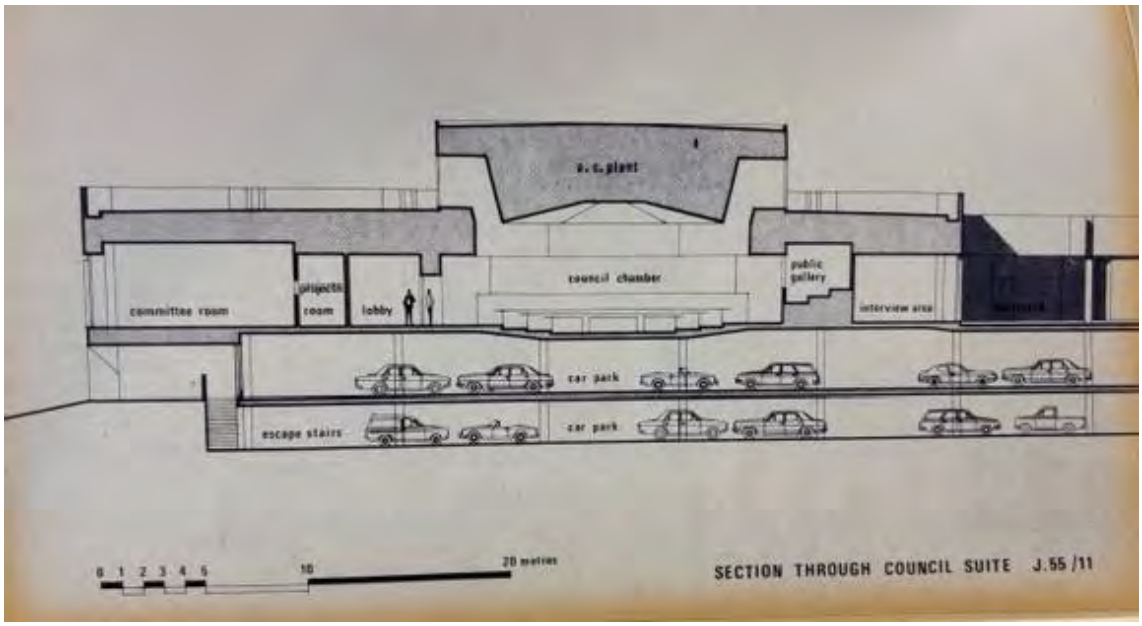
Photograph 6. Shire Hall Model

Photograph 7. Photograph of Proposed Shire Hall Model

Photograph 8. Photograph of Proposed Shire Hall Model



Photograph 9. Proposed Shire Hall Section



Photograph 10 Proposed Shire Hall Section

4.8 Timetables

4.8.1 In July 1973, a report including the construction cost estimate was made to the Shadow Council on the scheme. Between August 1973 and January 1974 working drawings were developed with tendering for the construction programme commencing in early 1974. Contracts were to be completed by spring 1974 with work commencing in 1975. Although it was estimated work would be completed by 1978, it continued until 1980.

4.9 Building Contractor

4.9.1 Sir John Laing Construction were appointed as the building contractor for the Site. Established in Carlisle in 1848, John Laing and Son (later Sir John Laing Construction Ltd and presently Laing O'Rouke) developed from a small building firm into one of the country's largest contractors. It was listed on the London Stock Exchange in 1953 and the company worked on several sizeable and notable post-war infrastructure projects including the M1 motorway, Sizewell B nuclear power station and the construction of Coventry Cathedral, where they first worked with Sir Basil Spence (Gerard 2020).

4.9.2 Laing's South London Region were responsible for the construction of Shire Hall, with Ernie Crater acting as Laing's Project Manager. The building contract was initially awarded for £17.5 million and increased by a further £800,000 throughout the duration of the construction programme The contract lasted 55 months.

4.10 Construction

4.10.1 Construction work commenced in early 1976 and photographs record the erection of temporary offices for Laing on the Site. Signage installed identified Charles Weiss and Partners as the Consulting Structural Engineers and the Royal County of Berkshire Department of Architecture as the Architects.

4.10.2 Significant groundworks and regrading were undertaken to facilitate the build, including the initial excavation of 36,000m^3. To inform the foundation strategy, geotechnical investigations were conducted in August- September 1972 with the excavation of 26 boreholes. These concluded that the superficial deposits were unsuitable for heavily loaded foundations and a foundation strategy comprising piling into the bedrock would be required.

4.10.3 A floor slab of reinforced concrete spanned the columns based on a square grid, with the column grid system was continued through the basement levels. Concrete mullions were then erected to form the vertical framing. It is understood that the construction of the structure required the pouring of the columns in careful layers. To achieve this the on-site team used a ¼ in full-height Perspex shutter on one side of the column to provide control. This was later disbanded as skill grew and there was the revolution that the finish through the Perspex was different to that experienced by the naked eye. It has been termed a 'real lesson in concrete technology'. Photographs from May 1976 record the foundation works being undertaken, with photographs from February 1977 recording the construction of the octagonal pavilions and towers, with basement levels present. Due to the scale of the project, a concrete batching plant was set up on-site. Whilst elements of the structure were constructed off-site, some elements were finished under site conditions particularly where compaction was concerned.

Photograph 11 Shire Hall Under Construction

4.10.4 Following the construction of the frame, the concrete panels were inserted. The concrete panels were used to clad the outside of the building. The concrete panels were pre-cast, with all other concrete components thought to have been cast in-situ including the floor slabs. They were installed using a revolving gantry crane mounted on the roof of each pavilion connected by a circulated railway constructed on the roof. Internally, panels of brown engineering brick were attached to the concrete on the exterior and interior surfaces, both for aesthetic reasons and to create the subdivision of spaces including the fire escape staircases between each floor.

4.10.5 By April 1977 construction had reached the third-floor and final floors by July 1977. The concrete panel cladding continued to be installed from July into November 1977. Following the erection of the vertical framing and fitting of the concrete panels, the windows subsequently installed.

4.10.6 By April 1978 the construction of the building structure was nearing completion with photographs from 9 May 1978 commemorating the topping out ceremony with the last pour of concrete concluded by Councillor Richard Watt, Chairman of Berkshire County Council, on this date. Subsequent photographs from June and August 1978 record the terrace and steps overlooking the M4, creation of the access road to the northeast, formal courtyard garden north of the Council Chamber (comprising a pond and raised beds constructed of concrete) and internal construction, including the installation of ductwork in the ceiling. The electrical distribution system was installed followed by a suspended ceiling. The access road extending around the southeast of the building was built between 1979 and 1980, with further landscaping work extending into October 1980.The Basement Car Parks and building were completed by October 1980.

4.10.7 Externally the terrace areas were characterised by hard landscaping, with plant beds and ponds constructed of concrete and decorative pebbles. The roofscape accessible to users of the building was tiled. The ground excavated as part of the initial foundation work was landscaped to create the grassed banks surrounding the building and two ornamental pools, also designed to accommodate for stormwater during periods of heavy rain.

4.10.8 On 17 October a ceremony took place between Laing and Berkshire County Council involving the transfer of the certificate of practical completion. The building received a mixed reception from council members and construction workers. A group portrait from October 1980 records part of the team associated with the build, comprising from left to right back row John Lewendon, Dave Page, Phil Harrington, Ian Knight, Tommy Kingston, Peter Springer, Alan Munre. Third row: Peter Turner, John Kitchen, Fred Richardson, Les Hunt, Joe Discipline, Terry Hughes, Brian Loader, Mickey Ballard. Second row: Joe Muranski, Barry Young, Ernie Carter, Vic Radjenovic, Henry Chandler, Con Zamojein. Front row: Frank Morris, Josh Thomas, Fiona MacPherson, Stan Sobczak, Ken Vokins, Ken Lovem Dick Pyper. This is just a selection of individuals involved in the programme.

Photograph 12. Group Photograph of Construction Workers

Photograph 13. Shire Hall Under Construction

4.11 Internal Fabric

4.11.1 The internal fit of the building commenced in the late 1970s and was completed by 1982.

4.11.2 The photographic record relating to the food service area / restaurant in the Administrative Block records a suspended ceiling with hardwood finish, tile wall and floor finish and modernist style with open flexible spaces for zones for dining and serving. The overall finish focused on functionality. Within the accompanying dining room, brightly colour carpet with rows of freestanding tables with padded chairs characterised the space. The suspended hardwood finish ceiling extended into this area, with a built-in fluorescent lighting system and a neutral wall palette.

4.11.3 Office space in the Administrative Block was characterised as open-plan with freestanding desks and screens used to subdivide the space into designated working areas. Plants were present throughout the building. Flooring comprised carpeting with suspended timber ceiling with built-in fluorescent lighting. The fire escape staircases in the Pavilions featured exposed brickwork and carpeted floor, with metal handrails and lighting behind decorative wooden panels. The associated door openings for the office space comprised laminate with full-height transparent panel.

4.11.4 The Council Chamber in the Civic Suite featured a generic layout comprising a horseshoe layout with staggered built-in seating including council, staff, speaker podium and audience areas. Speakers, displays and glass screens surrounded the space; beyond the screens were galleries fitted with hardwood panelling and fixed tiered seating facing the chamber.

4.11.5 The waiting area, located in the Central Core of the Administrative Block, was characterised by exposed brickwork and a suspended ceiling, with triangular coffered centres implemented for the lighting and air conditioning system.

4.12 Finances

4.12.1 Shire Hall was designed to cost £8 million to build. A cost plan in 1973 estimated specific elements to comprise £1,412,660 for the substructure; £245,970 for the frame; £1,240,870 for the upper floors; £566,640 for the roofs; £763,770 for the external walls; £778,390 for the internal walls; £60,380 for the stairs; £276,750 for fixtures and fittings; £20,540 for sanitary fittings; £3,770,1000 for heating, electrical and ventilation; special services £370,640 and external works £727,878. It was considered that Shire Hall would effectively ‘pay for itself’ from the outset and costs spent would be recovered throughout its duration of use.

4.12.2 Capital expenditure was initially estimated in June 1973 to comprise £13,194 for site, buildings, furniture etc.; £627,000 for county design and other staff costs; £140,000 for consultant and specialist costs; £36,000 for other costs. These costs included the purchase of the Site for £394,000 from the Ministry of Defence but not land from The Grove. Unsurprisingly, the estimated amount was inadequately forecasted, with capital expenditure increasing by 17.5% between 1972 and 1973 alone. The final cost of the project building was £27.5 million. This compares to £3.25 million for Sunderland Civic Centre and £5 million for Newcastle Civic Centre, both built by Laing in the 1960-1970s.

4.12.3 It was anticipated that the sale of offices and land owned by Berkshire County Council would equate to £5.75 million in 1972 (or £9.3 million in 1978) which could be used towards the construction of the new offices. It was anticipated that should space be leased, a rental income of £120,000 per annum could be achieved. This money was intended to offset part of the cost of the build, with a loan secured for the rest.

4.13 Design Changes

4.13.1 Archival records indicate that the building was originally designed to be occupied by 1,600 staff in 1978, and by 1988 fully occupied. Documentary records at the Royal Berkshire Archives also highlight that the potential for leasing unused office accommodation externally

was identified during its construction, with proposed accommodation space accommodating up to 400 people (at 100 person per pavilion floor) with shared central common areas for a period of 8-10 years.

4.13.2 Newspaper articles from 1980 highlight the expenditure associated with construction and the governmental changes resulting in the reduction in resources for Berkshire County Council and its proposed complex. Decreasing resources and increasing costs is suggested to have resulted in the loss of two proposed floors of the pavilions, removed from the design in 1975, and advertisement of space for rent. To generate income, a Pavilion is understood to have been let to Foster Wheeler thus impacting upon the proposed layout of the Council reducing the overall open character and spatial quality.

4.13.3 Oral sources also indicate that the financial implications of the project resulted in the application of alternative cheaper materials, including those used for the suspended floors, resulting in those installed being non-compliant with performance expectations of the workforce based in the building.

4.14 Grand Opening

4.14.1 On 2 April 1982 the completed Shire Hall was opened by Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Philip. Black and white photography captures the sense of drama of the building and excitement of the day, with the photographs (alongside those from the construction phase) forming part of the John Laing Photographic Collection. The official opening was attended by 5,000 local school children, recorded in the photographs lining the terraced areas and streets, and meeting the Royal Family. Lewis Moss, Chairman of Berkshire County Council was also in attendance.

Photograph 14. Opening Ceremony

4.15 Civic Use

4.15.1 Between 1980 and 1981 the whole of Berkshire County Council, including the Record Office, moved to Shire Hall. A modern Records Office was established to manage the administrative records of the Council, and this coincided with a move towards a paperless office and digital central filing system. The electronic transport system called Telefit was installed in parts of Shire Hall to deliver files and return them to the Records Centre. A microfilming unit was also set up in the building to provide digital copies of records. The County Archivist at the time, Amanda Arrowsmith, described it as having 'ample free car parking' and a 'restaurant open to visitors for means and snacks'. A mini-shop was also present in Shire Hall, known as Shire Kabin and opening hours varied depending on demand. It is understood to have been closed on Monday mornings but open on a Thursday until 9pm. The Searchroom, offices and workrooms subsequently moved to a larger space in Shire Hall in 1991. Previously located in the rear of the building, they moved to the front. This new area was separate from the strongrooms.

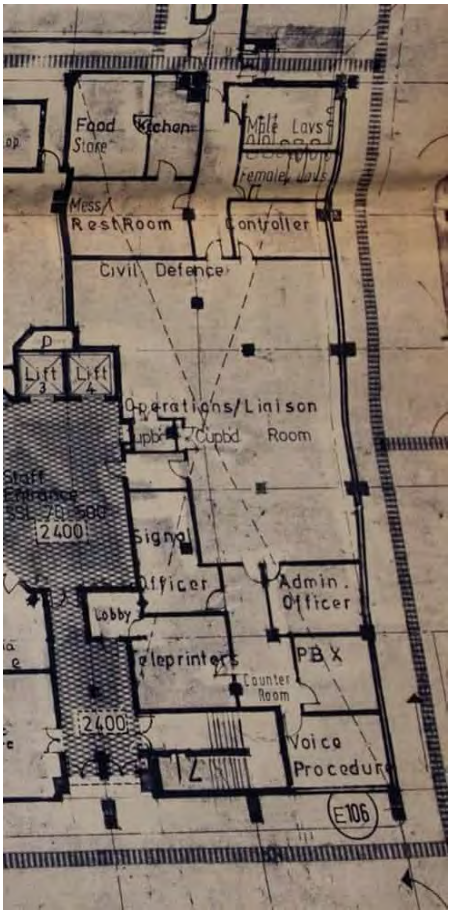
4.15.2 Within Shire Hall, a purpose-built emergency control bunker was installed in the basement and was used as emergency control centre for the County throughout the Cold War. The bunker became the home of the Civil Defence Country Control, replacing the control previously housed at Easthampstead Park, located on the edge of Bracknell, which was held by Berkshire County Council during the post-war period. The cellars of the building on the park had been converted to become the Civil Defence Sub-County Control for Bracknell and East Berskhire before being upgraded in 1968 for County Control. Following the construction of Shire Hall, Easthampstead Park became the Berkshire County Standby and Bracknell Council Control.

Photograph 15. Shire Hall in the late 20th Century

Photograph 16. Former Interior Appearance

Photograph 17. Former Interior Appearance

Photograph 18. Former Plant Room Door



Photograph 19. Former Emergency Bunker Layout

4.16 Commercial Use

4.16.1 Shire Hall was intended to be the council office for Berkshire County Council; it was built to last. However, following a review by the Local Government Commission and the subsequent Government transfer of responsibilities and subdivision of the County Council to unitary authorities, Berkshire County Council was abolished in 1998. Shire Hall therefore became surplus to requirements.

4.16.2 Following the loss of its civic use, Shire Hall was occupied as commercial premises by several businesses, notably Foster Wheeler, a Swiss global engineering conglomerate from 1998, which was acquired by AMEC plc in 2014 to form Amec Foster Wheeler, and later acquires and merged into Wood Group in October 2017. Its acquisition by Foster Wheeler caused disruption to the archive service situated in the building, with access restrictions. The archive service relocated to its present location in Reading town centre during this period.

4.16.3 In March 2000 Foster Wheeler had full control of Shire Hall and it was operation as their UK headquarters. Oral sources also suggest that Foster Wheeler was responsible for the implemented wallpaper and panelling throughout the building to screen the exposed brickwork. In 2006 a smaller, temporary modular office block was constructed to accommodate the office workforce. This was situated to the north of the building and was demolished in 2025.

5 Building Record

5.1 Key Construction Equipment

5.1.1 To facilitate the build, the architects and construction team were responsible for the development of a bespoke machine that would enable lifting and positioning of the cladding panels across the building. The need for bespoke machinery was driven by the requirement for flexibility and to prevent obstacles in the working and open circulation space at ground level. It was constructed by the Central Plant Engineering services of John Laing Construction and Armand Safier and Partners was responsible for the design of the supporting concrete beam ring.

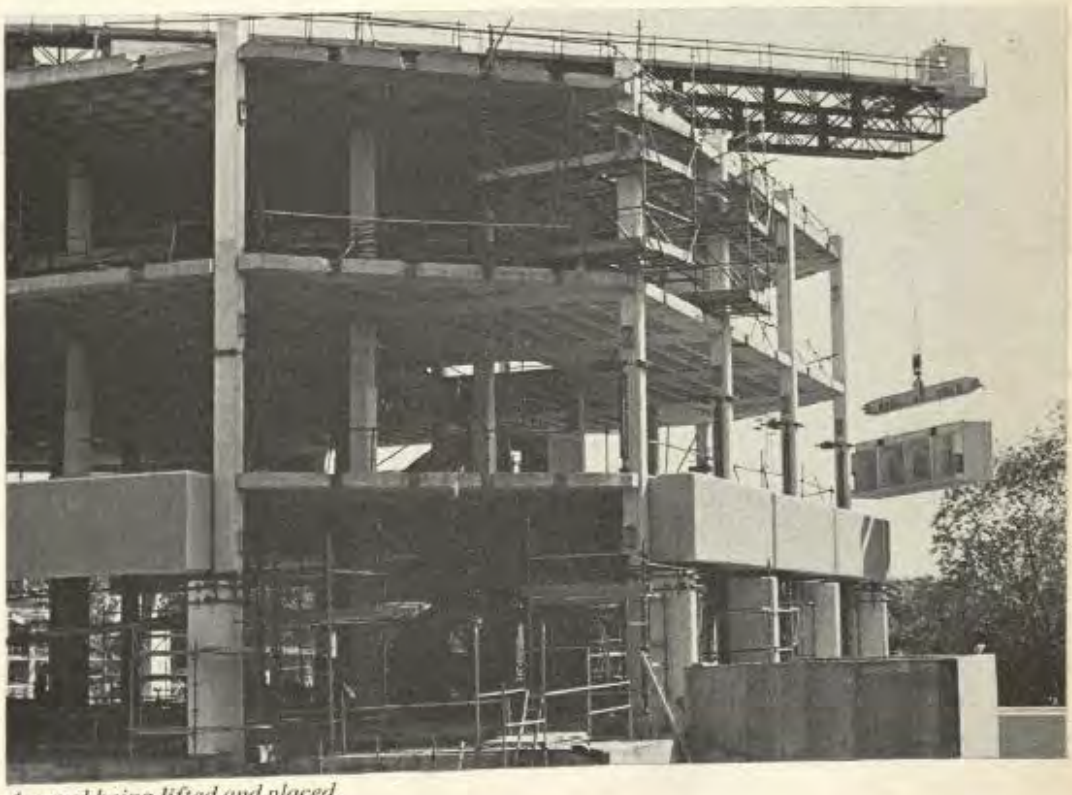
5.1.2 The revolving gantry crane was designed to be dismantled and re-erected on each pavilion roof as required. It was formed of a Bailey bridge panel placer (Bailey bridge structure positioned on a fixed Bailey panel bridge) with concrete ring beam and circular rail track 23m in diameter. The Bailey panel bridge straddled the bodies to form a slewing carriage with the top section positioned on launch rollers forming the transversing gantry. The lifting gear, winch and hoist motors were adapted from tower crane components. The front rocking rollers were specifically designed to accommodate the weight of the cladding panels, and a cab was present at the end of the transversing gantry with counterbalancing provided by concrete weights.

5.1.3 The panel placer was fixed to a central pivot bolted to the slab over column tops. This ensured it was able to withstand lifting the concrete cladding panels and the reinforced concrete ring beam spanned the internal columns to take the vertical and horizontal loads.

5.1.4 Safe working loads were identified at 24 tonnes with a maximum panel weight of 22.5 tonnes. The lifting beam weighed 1.5 tonnes with a maximum working radius of 24m. Overall the total weight was 105 tonnes with stability of 1.5 to 1 in service conditions.

5.1.5 The gantry operated at a hoisting speed of 7.2m per minute and maximum transversing trolley and slewing speeds were 11.43m per minute and 0.28 rpm.

The Bailey bridge panel placer and concrete ring beam used for lifting the cladding panels.



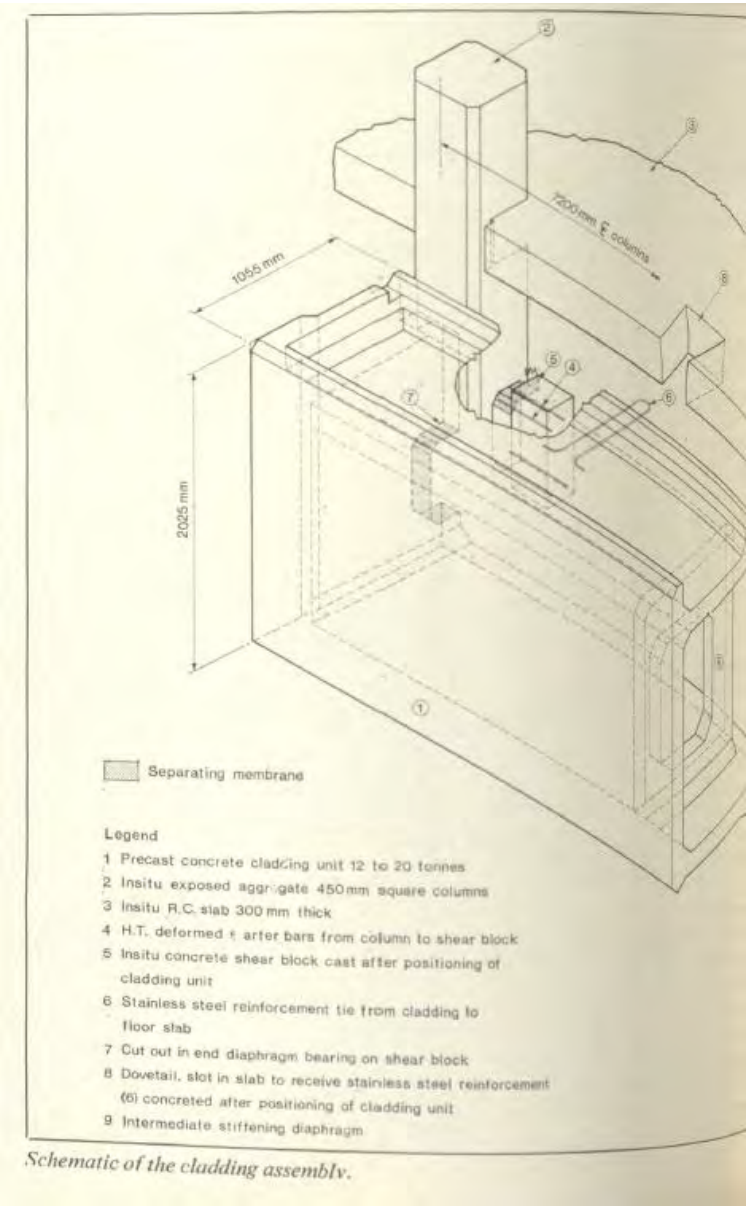
A panel being lifted and placed.

Photograph 20. Shire Hall Under Construction

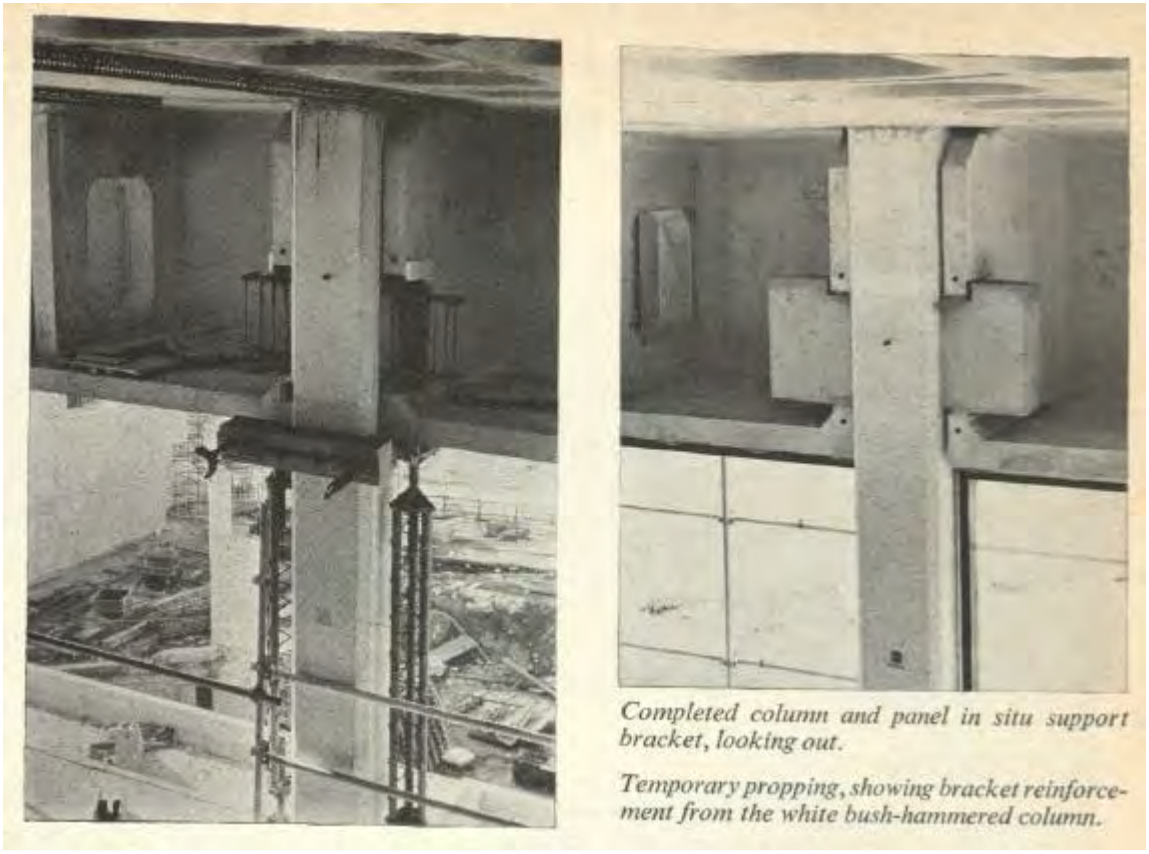
5.2 Form & Materials

5.2.1 Shire Hall was set within landscaped grounds from which views out across the M4 were afforded. The presence of green vegetation had since enclosed the Site, restricting visibility beyond the boundaries from within. The surrounding landscape design was a result of the deep excavations required for its foundations, meaning that the building appears 'built into' a landscape of varying topography. Through its position and scale, coupled with the overall horizontal emphasis of the core centres, it was visible above the treeline and was an identifiable feature from the surrounding townscape.

5.2.2 The building was constructed of reinforced concrete slabs supported on external and internal columns, with large precast full bay concrete cladding. It was built on a square grid of 7.2m with 450mm bush hammered columns. Fixing procedures were designed in-situ to avoid close tolerances and they embodied high tensile deformed starter bars from column to in-situ concrete shear blocks cast after the panel has been positioned and held temporarily by tie bars. A dovetail joint through a slot in the 300mm thick slab force was created for the stainless-steel reinforcement bracket and was concreted in.



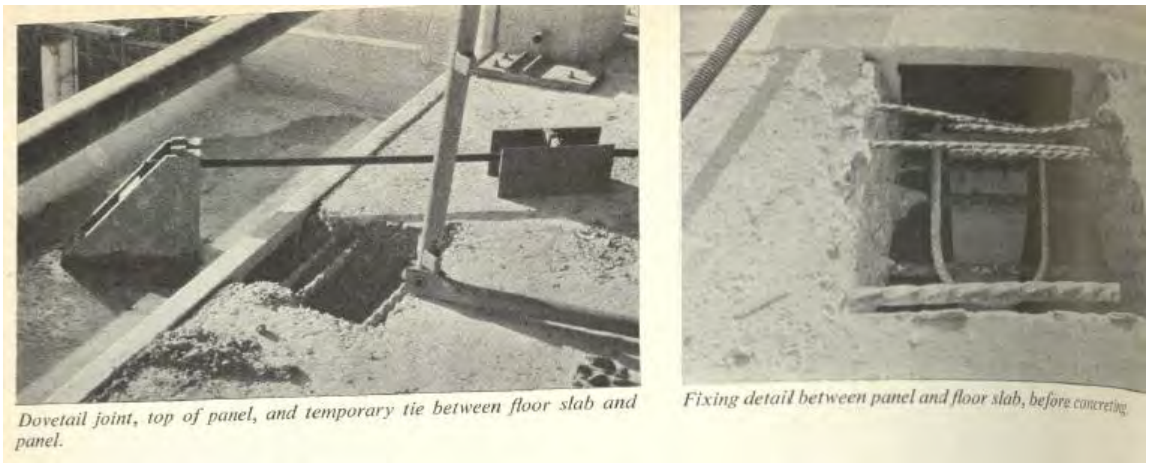
Photograph 21. Construction Methodology



Completed column and panel in situ support bracket, looking out.

Temporary propping, showing bracket reinforcement from the white bush-hammered column.

Photograph 22. Construction Methodology



Dovetail joint, top of panel, and temporary tie between floor slab and panel.

Fixing detail between panel and floor slab, before concreting.

Photograph 23. Construction Methodology

5.2.3 The exterior of Shire Hall was defined by its Brutalist architectural style comprising raw concrete and bold geometric forms, with heavy angular shapes and blocky facades that contribute to the design appearance conveying strength and functionality. It is designed around the Bürolandschaft principle, a movement in open plan office space planning using irregular geometric and organic circulation patterns which increased in prominence post-World War II.

5.2.4 Materials comprised Cornish granite aggregate and Leemore sand with the cladding constructed of Cornish granite aggregate and white cement. Both the in-situ columns and precast units were built using Grade 30F concrete with Snowcrete cement and Leemore Sand with Carnsew silver grey selected Cornish granite in a single-sized aggregate of 20mm and Cornmix P4 additive. The water-cement ratio was 0.6 with standard deviation at 4.5-5. In total

the volume of concrete involved was in the region of 40,000m^3, with the majority mixed on-site via a Benford PB40 type batching plant capable of 25m^3/hr.

5.2.5 The precast cladding units were manufactured by Dean Jesmond and Co Ltd at their Feltham site and were chosen to deliver a factory-type consistency finish in a timely manner to avoid the need for external scaffolding. In total, 639 precast cladding units were used, each weighing twelve tonnes. The corner units weighed 20 tonnes. The Central Cores had a reinforced concrete frame clad on the upper floors with similar but smaller panels to those used on the pavilions.

5.2.6 Windows comprised full height, bronze tinted, double-glazed windows in a dark anodised aluminium frame.

5.2.7 Roofs were multi-pitched, constructed of timber and colour finished aluminium on chipboard. On the Central Cores the roofs were waterproofed by asphalt and finished with insulation and concrete paving slabs.

5.2.8 A requirement of the design form was focused on keeping energy use to the absolute minimum. This was delivered through a sophisticated heat recovery plant system, double-glazed windows, insultation and the deliberate design decision to overhang the concrete panels to act as shade during the summer months removing the demand for ventilation and cooling. The air handling system was also deliberately designed at Shire Hall to reuse circulated air and therefore reduce associated running costs. Associated distribution points throughout the building were located in both the windows and ceilings.

5.2.9 Shire Hall was formed of four key elements, which despite the subsequent conversion for commercial use, remained legible and readable in the building's planned form. The elements interconnect to create the existing footprint which is a defining characteristic of the building's design.

- In plan, the Administrative Block comprises the six unequal-sided octagonal Pavilions grouped in clusters of three around the two Central Cores. The Pavilions measured approximately 14.5 and 19m in height (above ground level) and measured approx. 32.4m in diameter. The Central Cores are four to five storeys in height, making them the tallest structures on the complex. The remainder of the building in the north is three-storeys in height, and two-storeys in height to the south. Roofs were typically flat from which there are impressive views across Reading.

- The Basement Car Parks comprise two levels present below the Administrative Block and they form part of the concrete structure with Central Cores extending to these levels and structural frame running throughout. Entry into the Sub-Basement was via the access road to the southeast and exist to the northwest. As expected, the footprint of the basement levels extends beyond that present above ground. The exterior of the Basement Car Parks comprises the retaining wall which extends around the perimeter of the building. This measured up to 6.5m in height and was supported by buttressed columns at regular intervals.

- The Plant Area forms part of the southwestern extent of Shire Hall located on the Basement, Sub-Basement and Ground Floor levels. A double-height service yard and loading bay is located on the Sub-Basement Level. This is accessed via a separate service route extending around the northwest side of the building. At Ground Floor level is a service car park. Plant was also present on the rooftop of the building and comprised water storage tanks, air system infrastructure and equipment associated with the lifts.

- The Civic Suite forms the southeastern extent of the building and includes the former Council Chamber. Single-storey in height, it is situated above the basement level which is exposed externally in this location due to the changing topography / levels in the Site. The Civic Centre is also octagonal in shape, although it features a different arrangement to the remaining pavilions on-site and has a protruding arm extending northwest to connect with the Plant Area. It also comprises a large footprint and is linked to the Administrative Block

via a single-storey glazed link. The space between the Administrative Block and Civic Suite was developed into an enclosed courtyard with raised pond and planting beds.

- The intersection point between the Administrative Block is the two Central Core structures linking the octagonal Pavilions and the three-level podium. The Central Cores in the building formed part of the principal floorplan and flow of movement throughout the building. The cores are octagonal in character, with symmetrical design comprising four lift shafts openings, although only three have lifts located within these spaces. The lifts have a 60ft drop shaft, and were in situ at the time of survey completion. Accompanying the lifts are principal staircases connecting the Basements to Fourth Floor.

- The First, Second and Third Floor were designed to a similar plan, allowing for the creation of open plan office space around the central two cores, with additional individual staircase (fire escape staircase) for each Pavilion. Internally the Second and Third Floor reflect the same layout, whereas the First Floor differs in the southern Pavilion to incorporate the former kitchen (canteen).

- The Pavilions (fire escape) staircases are of matching design constructed of concrete with solid banister and wooden handrail. This design is continued throughout the building, with the staircase connecting with the floor above and below throughout the Pavilion.

- Within the Basement was a former emergency control purpose-built bunker which historically comprised offices, storerooms and toilets. The bunker was later used for storage and plant resulting in the removal of any earlier features.

- Internally the building was both open plan and enclosed, the latter deriving from a series of cellular storage and water closets arranged round the lift shafts. Rooms and spaces in the building where formerly associated with the following uses:

    - Ancillary / Circulation (i.e. lobbies, corridors, stairs and lift shafts, landings, stores, equipment / plant rooms and entrance hall).

    - Staff / Admin Spaces (i.e. offices, staff rooms, bathrooms, conference / interview rooms).

    - Kitching / Dining.

    - Technology (i.e. specialist technical accommodation).

    - External areas (i.e. covered areas, open space, central pond).

    - Other (i.e. loading bays, bunker, boiler / AC rooms).

5.2.10 Overall, the internal office space measures a minimum size of 37,404 sqft and 287,719 sqft (total size). This is formed of:

- Ground Floor – 105,756 sqft.

- First Floor – 65,498 sqft.

- Second Floor – 79,061 sqft.

- Third Floor – 37,404 sqft.

5.3 Former Internal Layout & Use

5.3.1 Entry to the building was afforded via the northeast elevation, through a primary doorway, into a large reception / lobby with waiting room and welfare facilities. Public access was afforded via a corridor along the southern side of the building, to the protruding wing which comprised

the Civic Suite with associated committee rooms and facilities. A secondary access was also afforded via the glazed link through the landscaped terrace. The southern extent of the Ground Floor comprised private space, used for the Members' Association,

5.3.2 The western extent of the building was in private use, with spaces in use as exhibition and display space, information library and staff recreation and storage rooms, printing and publishing and for mail storage and sorting. A shop, sauna and hairdresser were also present in this part of the building.

5.3.3 The First Floor comprised an open-plan office workspace, with the southwestern extent in use as the cafeteria and kitchen. Smaller rooms surrounding the cores were used for stores, interview rooms, welfare facilities and strong rooms.

5.3.4 The Second Floor was in use as open-plan office workspace centred on the central cores. The function and layout of space surrounding the cores was largely consistent throughout. The southwestern pavilion was subdivided for use as the archives; temporary stud walls were used to create the internal arrangement comprising a series of smaller rooms used for the public search room, exhibition, store, repair and office.

5.3.5 The Third Floor was entirely in use as landscaped office space. As Pavilion A, D and F does not extend beyond the Second Floor, the layout of space surrounding the southernmost Central Core is restricted with that to the south forming part of the roofscape.

5.3.6 The Fourth Floor and Fifth Floor are located within the Central Cores, and were used as functional space as storage and lift motor rooms.

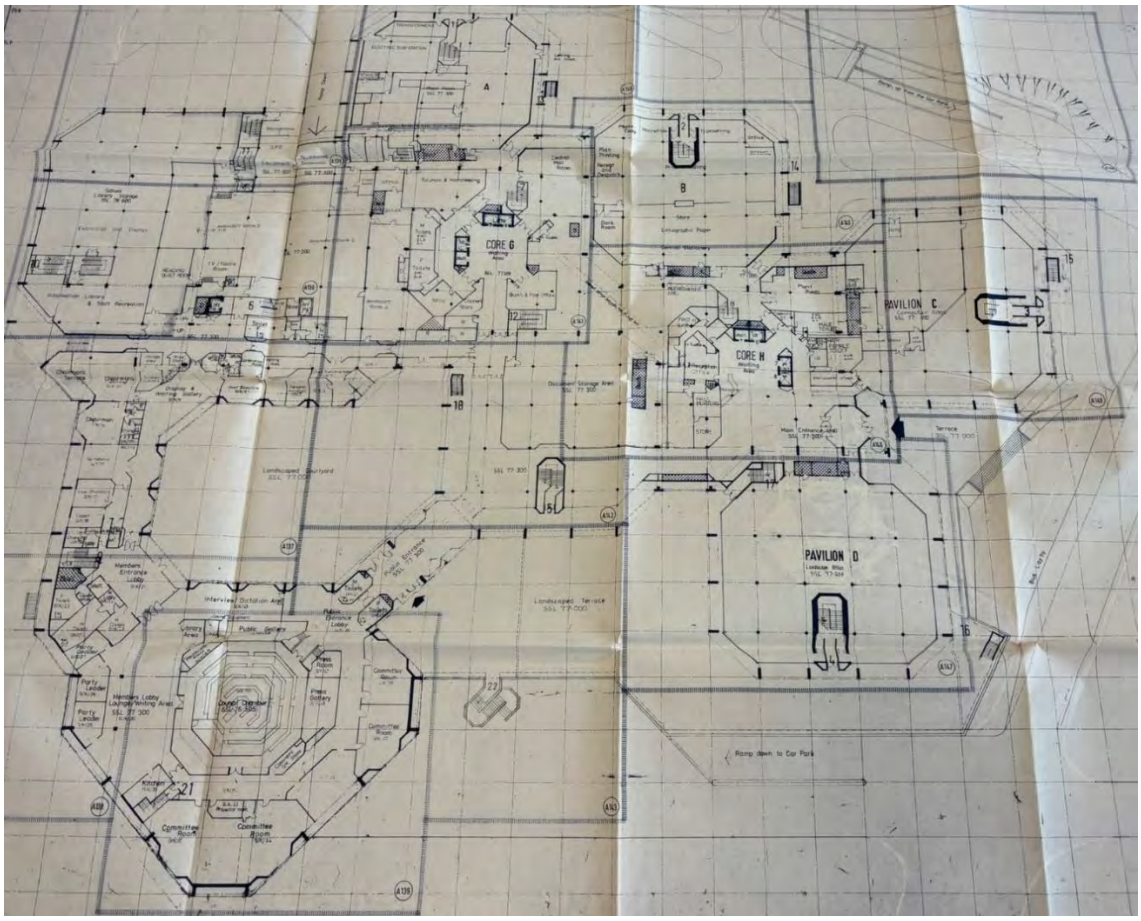
5.3.7 Both Basement Car Parks were formed predominately of car parking, with the space surrounding the northern core utilised for storage and plant rooms. The southern extent of the building was used for service and loading, with the area subdivided into several smaller rooms used for store and plant. Larger rooms were used as the library and document stores. A number of these rooms were open from sub-basement to basement level as depicted on the floor opens. The height is understood to have been required for plant / infrastructure. The Basement Car Parks were for Council use; they were not open to the public. Fire safety infrastructure was stored in the Basement Car Park.

5.3.8 A review of the historic and existing floor plans demonstrates that the building underwent a degree of alteration and change to facilitate its continued use. The exact date / time of these changes was unable to be determined as part of the research undertaken but were likely implemented following departure of the Council from the building. The changes comprised a reorganisation of the reception on the Ground Floor to provide a structured and controlled entrance, with turnstiles and immediate front desk. The Civic Suite was developed for commercial use, although the overall floor plan and circulation remained extant, with this space used for conferences.

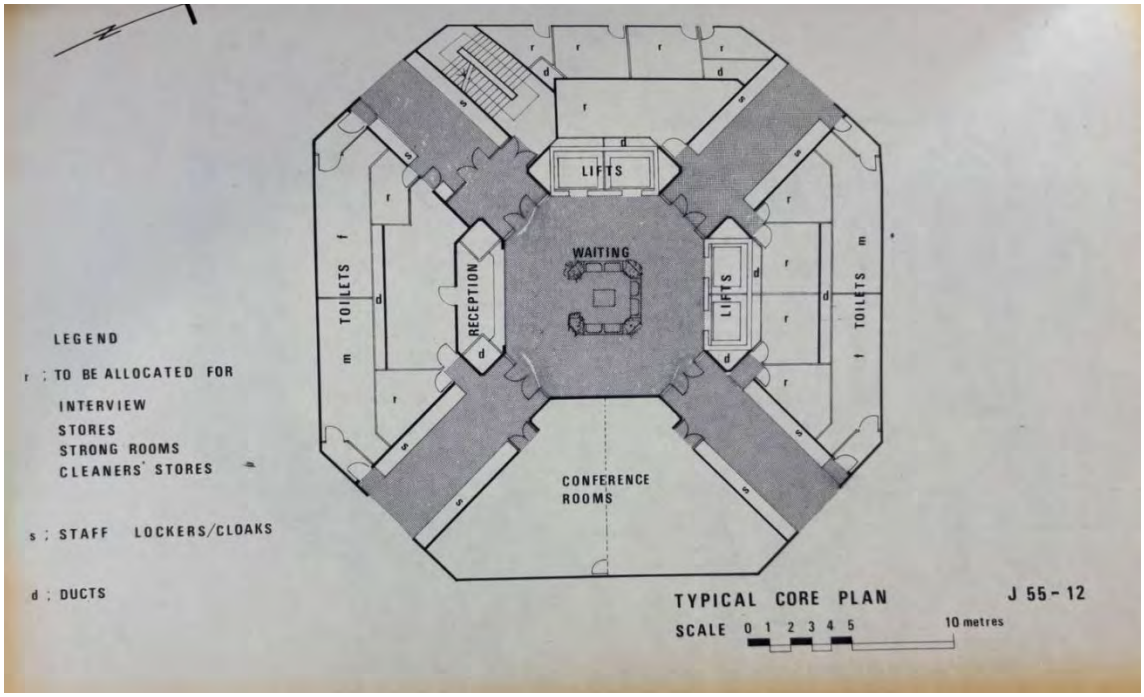
5.3.9 Whilst the First and Second Floor remained in use as office space, the former open office layout was subdivided to create corridors and 'pods' subdivided for departments / teams in the centre, with private office space located around the exterior of the pavilions. The southern extent of the First Floor in 2018 remained in use as kitchen and restaurant, with a fitness suite where former recreational space was located.

5.3.10 The open office space on the Third Floor has been entirely subdivided into private office space, with open space restricted to centre of Pavilion B.

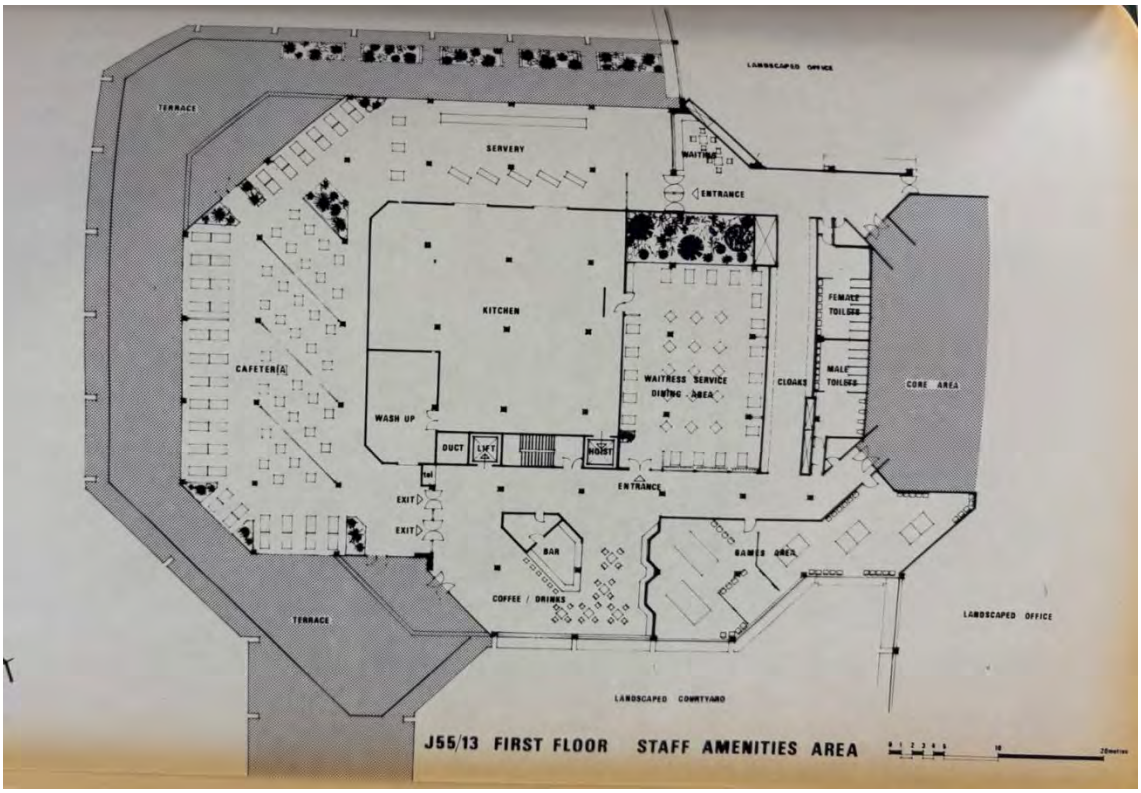
5.3.11 There appears to have been limited alteration in the Basement Car Parks.



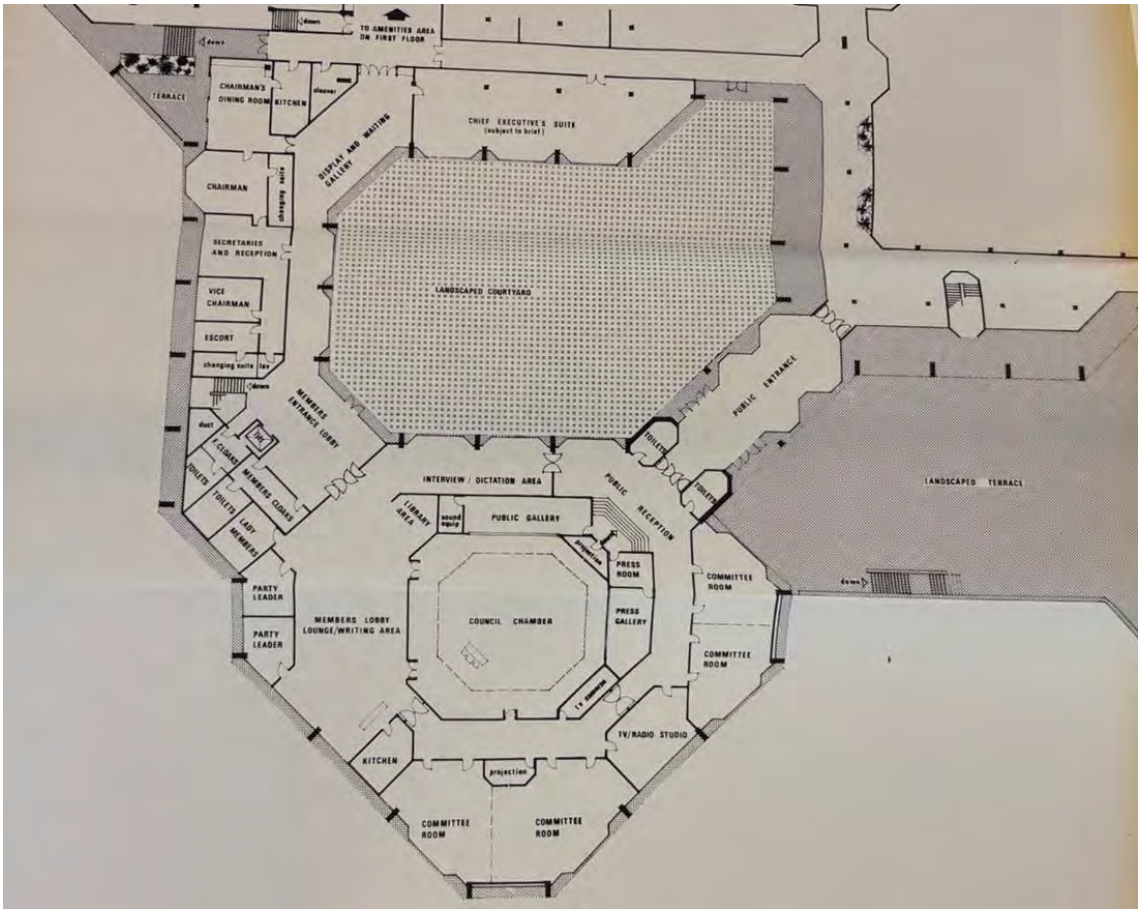
Photograph 24. Proposed Ground Floor Layout



Photograph 25. Proposed Central Core Layout



Photograph 26. Proposed Canteen Layout



Photograph 27. Proposed Civic Suite Layout

5.4 Drawn Record

5.4.1 The drawn record comprises annotated architects' drawings of each floor. Inaccuracies identified, and highlighted by annotations of the drawings, related to:

- Recent works undertaken in the building, including the part removal of internal subdividing walls; and
- Incorrect floor plans provided by Chetwoods for the pavilions on the Third Floor. The floor plans provided by Wood are correct.

5.4.2 The dimensions of which were checked on site to ensure accuracy. No inaccuracies were identified.

5.4.3 Copies of the drawings are found in **Appendix 4.**

5.5 Building Condition

5.5.1 The overall external condition of the building was reasonable, although some demolition work had commenced creating openings on the northwest façade.

5.5.2 Internally much of the building had been subject to soft strip and removal of fabric, fixtures and fittings. The structural frame of the building was exposed in places, with the floor plan altered through the removal of subdividing walls. Services had been terminated but the associated infrastructure remained partially intact.

5.6 Exterior

5.6.1 Shire Hall was positioned within a gently sloping hill facing towards the M4. The undulating terrain and gradual incline is incorporated into the building layout, with the main Entrance Level and Ground Floor aligned with the upper ground of the slope. The lower levels, comprising the Basement and Sub-Basement (and service zone) is cut into the hillside, utilising the natural gradient to partially submerge the structure. The Basement level is visible from lower (downhill) locations and contributes to the imposing impression of the building. When viewed from the upper approach located to the north, the structure appears lower in profile and more discrete.

5.6.2 Through its position, Shire Hall formed part of the horizon of Reading. Near distance glimpsed to open views were available from the Public Right of Way SHIN10, the B3270, Whitley Wood Lane and properties on the southern edge of the Shinfield Park residential area. Long distance views of the upper extents of Shire Hall were available from residences on the southern edge of Reading and from locations within the agricultural landscape to the south. Medium distance views of Shire Hall were generally obscured by the wooded and built up surroundings, although views are available from the north-western edge of Shinfield and open land to the south of the Site.

Photograph 28. Example Visuals of Shire Hall from around Reading

5.6.3 Its impression as part of the horizon was achieved through the landscaping and positioning of the taller aspects of the complex on the highest point of the hill with it used as a natural plinth from which the building merges. Contributing to the Brutalist style, this contrasted with the horizontal sprawl of the building which creates a dynamic relationship between both the architecture and natural environment. The building was designed to be imposing but sits low on the horizon through the horizontal emphasis created by the bands of concrete and recessed windows which span the length of the pavilions. The lines of the panels and windows contrasted with the transverse sloping stairs and ramps associated with the terrace.

5.6.4 The building was formed of a reinforced in-situ concrete frame which extended from the Sub-Basement through to Third Floor. The concrete columns supporting the upper stories were angular, with the Ground Floor setback within the structural frame. The building was set on a brown brick plinth which features slated vents which form part of the air conditioning system. Buttresses were present along these retaining walls and steps leading from ground level to Basement were constructed of concrete with metal handrails.

Photograph 29. Retaining Wall and Plinth

5.6.5 The external walls were constructed of precast concrete cladding panels with brushed texture, typical of Brutalist architecture. They were arranged in horizontal bands with solid precast panels at the floor and parapet levels, with full height ribbon glazing forming continuous horizontal layers across the elevations.

5.6.6 The Pavilions were set at equal intervals connected by narrow link corridors and service blocks. These contributed to the modular appearance of the building. The Pavilions comprised low-rise octagonal boxes of alternating smooth-texture concrete fascia and horizontal aluminium-framed glazing set flush in the concrete grid. They were identical on all elevations (fronts) without variation. The glazing was tinted preventing transparency, and incorporated deep vertical lines through rectangular windows extending the full width of the opening on each elevation of the pavilion and central core. It comprised six windowpanes per bay, with an additional two on the return for the corner bays. The windows were divided by the concrete fascias, and their placement accorded with each floor level internally in the pavilion. The corner concrete fascias had a chamfered element and projecting mullions articulated the panel joins and visually subdivided the elevations into regular bays. They interspersed the window bands and formed part of the building's overall concrete structural frame. The proportions of the fenestration were no doubt intended to be pleasing and were deliberately designed to contribute to the Brutalist architectural appearance.

Photograph 30. Illustrative View of Pavilion

5.6.7 Each Pavilion comprised a three-part horizontal stratigraphy comprising Ground Floor which is characterised by glazing setback within the concrete frame providing structural expressional a visual plinth and red brickwork. The First to Third Floors are characterised by the continuous windows framed by the narrow concrete panels. The Pavilions terminate at the roofline which is characterised by a concrete parapet concealing a flat roof.

5.6.8 The recessed links between the Pavilions are distinguishable due to the size of the fenestration and panelling which is of a smaller volume than that present on the pavilions.

5.6.9 The Civic Suite was set apart from the Pavilions, connected to Pavilion E by a single height glazed link. The glazed link formed a projecting arm connecting with the northwest side of the Civic Suite. It was connected to the service / plant area in the southwest by a second projecting link corridor forming the southern extent of the building. Both the Civic Suite and this linking corridor were single storey in height, with exposed basement level and retaining wall. Although separated from the main body of the building (the Administrative Block), the Chamber formed an integral part of the complex. Whilst it could be described as subtly positioned in relation to the whole complex and building footprint, it formed an important focal point with associated main forecourt to the north which emphasised its former ceremonial and functional role. It is polygonal in plan and reflected a horizontal low-mass rise situated on a structural concrete frame. Whilst presenting double-height in form, the Ground Floor formed the exposed basement level which featured a stepped back curtain wall interspersed by access doors and large louvered grills used for mechanical ventilation. The external walls were clad in the concrete panels used across the complex with horizontal tinted glazing. The roof was hidden behind a concrete parapet with pyramidal roof lantern, with vertical emphasis to the vertical glazing which was angled towards the apex. The glazed link corridor with metal frame was accessed on both sides by single height double-doors. Adjacent to the door on the east elevation, situated approx. 150cm from the Ground Floor, was a metal sign inscribed with the following detail. The placement of this sign is deliberate given the function of this area as the Civic Suite.

Photograph 31. Extant Civic Suite Signage

5.6.10 Principal entry was afforded via the northeast elevation, setback behind a broad forecourt which opens to reveal the central core and flanking pavilions. This elevation featured a slightly recessed bay, with glazed curtain walling demarcating the principal entrance. The ground wall consists of red brick.

5.6.11 The eastern elevation of the Administrative Block allowed for the radial geometry of the building to be experienced and appreciated, with the two octagonal Pavilions presenting angled elevations to the surrounding environs. This elevation also encompassed the adjoining Civic Suite and the jointing between the Pavilions and the connecting Central Cores was expression through expansion joints and recessed bays.

5.6.12 The southern elevation of the Administrative Block was more visually prominent due to the sloping location, with the building visible in a three-storey volume with exposed basement. The retaining concrete and brick walls and stair cores were expressed with minimal ornamentation and the hard expression of the building contrasted with the landscaped ponds and open lawns which provided an element of softening against the heavy material palette of the building.

5.6.13 The western elevation of the Administrative Block comprised the exposed flanks of three interlinked octagonal pavilions, connected via recessed structure links to a central circulation and service spine. There was no formal approach on this site, with the Cost Engineer Road leading to the Plant Area in the southwest. The Plant Area was located adjacent to the southmost pavilion where the building footprint began to descend along the west facing slope. Two-storey in height and partially recessed into the landscape, this area of the building was low rise and rectilinear, with flat roof and functional character, and set back from the building line creating a stepped rear edge. Externally this area had a service yard with metal louvered doors of dark colour palette with powder-coated finish for plant ventilation, access hatches and screened delivery bays.

Photograph 32. Illustrative View of Plant Area

5.6.14 The Centre Cores were vertical shafts that rise above the lower connected parts (office space of the Administrative Block) to serve the upper floors. The Cores housed the vertical circulation including the lifts and service risers. As they extended beyond the pavilions and linked walkways, they formed prominent vertical elements that breaks the roofline. Octagonal in character, the exterior comprised large rectilinear concrete panels; the concrete panels on the short diagonal were smaller in size and connected by glazed links which extend the full length of the building on the two storey tower. Ventilation grills sat above the glazing on the single storey tower, with both comprising a concrete parapet and flat roof. The towers were located within a roof terrace, with designated walkway demarcated by metal railings painted blue.

Photograph 33. Illustrative View of Central Core

Photograph 34. Illustrative View of Central Core

Photograph 35. Illustrative View of Entrance

5.7 Access & Courtyards

5.7.1 The access points and courtyards were an important part of the design concept. The various points of entry also served to emphasis the role of the civic centre as a municipal hub central to the town, even though in reality it is located on the periphery of Reading. The principal access provided a key flow of movement into / from the building during its commercial use, with the southeastern courtyard a former formal entrance into the Civic Suite.

5.7.2 The forecourt in the northeast comprised two levels and was demarcated from the courtyard extending around the perimeter of the building by a difference in materials. The forecourt comprised concrete tiles of varying size set out providing a direct link from the car park in the east to main entrance. Access between the two levels was afforded by a central single short flight staircase with concrete steps, brick balustrades topped with concrete tiles and freestanding tubular metal railings. Metal fencing aligned the upper forecourt. The difference in levels accounted for the building's plinth, visible as a low-level horizontal base layer / retaining wall in this location. This area comprised decorative planting beds and step-free access, with paving slabs to the south of the stairs.

5.7.3 The courtyard extended from the entrance of the building around its southeastern elevation to connect with the Civic Suite. This area was characterised by red brick set in a herringbone layout lined with a header bond pattern. Around the edges of the courtyard was a half-height brick wall topped with a tubular metal railing painted blue. The brick wall formed part of the upper storey of the building's brown brick plinth which was appreciable in its entirety from the lower level.

Photograph 36. Illustrative View of Civic Suite Exterior

5.7.4 Directly opposite the entrance to the Civic Suite was a single flight straight staircase, positioned offset from the centre of the courtyard, providing access to the lower storey, entrance to the basement car park and landscaped grounds. The balustrade was formed of solid concrete panels, which accord with those used on the building, with metal tubal handrails pained blue. The risers, nosing, stringer and landings comprised brick. Similar materials and layout continued on the lower terrace, with a louvred vents projecting from ground level.

5.7.5 Hardstanding continued around the south of the building to large, landscaped ponds and grounds.

5.7.6 There was one internal courtyard located in the southeast extent of the Site, enclosed by the Civic Suite and its projecting links. This area was characterised by a central geometrically designed raised pond finished with bricks in sailor course and concrete. The courtyard was paved with brick and pebble paver. Decorative planting once characterised this area; at the time of survey, it was overgrown.

Photograph 37. Illustrative View of Civic Suite Exterior

Photograph 38. Illustrative View of Civic Suite Courtyard

5.8 Roof Space

5.8.1 Accessible roof space was present on the Third Floor above the two storey Pavilions. Plant was enclosed by half-height metal railings and comprised former equipment associated with

air conditioning. Surface finish comprised square concrete tiling. This area is unlikely to have been publicly accessed and therefore the attention to detail is limited.

5.8.2 The flat roof of the building on the Second Floor was intended to provide additional recreational space associated with the former canteen. It was paved with square concrete tiles and comprised seating, pergolas and raised decorative beds.

Photograph 39. Illustrative View of Second Floor Roof Space

5.8.3 No access was afforded to the roof of the Civic Suite.

5.9 Interior Structure

5.9.1 The supporting square columns throughout the building formed a regimented layout. Within the pavilions, the supporting concrete column formed a grid system of 4x4.

5.10 Materials

5.10.1 Internally the building was characterised by exposed concrete floors and coffered concrete ceilings. Wall materials comprised both red, brown and grey brickwork, painted white brickwork and concrete breezeblock. Above existing door openings were concrete lintels.

5.10.2 The colour profile of the brickwork varied around the external walls of the Pavilion (fire escape) staircases and Central Cores with the difference demonstrative of the areas historically exposed and covered during the building's uses. The brown brick set on a red brick plinth was originally intended to be the surface treatment finish, in keeping with the Brutalist style, with all other brickwork and wall material subject to wall coverings. The presence of dot and dab plaster is also indicative of where wall coverings were present.

5.10.3 A diamond pattern brickwork of lighter brick observed around the Central Cores and on the pavilion staircases is likely the result of the practical use of available construction materials rather than an intentional decorative feature. As the building originally comprised suspended ceiling, through which the services ran, this suggests that this upper part of the walls was not a priority in terms of aesthetic considerations. The presence of these elements allows for a

clear distinction of where the ceiling was suspended to. Painting on the structural columns also demonstrates the heights of the suspended floors and ceilings.

5.10.4 The difference in brickwork and addition of a second lintel above existing internal openings also indicates a change during either construction or operation of the building, with the lowering of the suspended ceiling.

Photograph 40. Illustrative View of Dot and Dab Plaster

Photograph 41. Illustrative View of Brickwork

5.11 Services

5.11.1 Throughout the building, evidence of former and in situ services was present, including drainage channels in the concrete floor slab, metal ductwork openings on internal walls, and associated pipework, wiring and ductwork suspended from the ceiling. It is understood that ceiling voids were implemented to facilitate the running of associated infrastructure as well as supporting the air and lighting system.

Photograph 42. Illustrative View of Suspended Ceiling

5.12 Administrative Block - Ground Floor

5.12.1 The main entrance into the building was located on the Ground Floor of the northeast elevation, providing access into a main foyer and reception area via a central rotating door. Formerly the reception space would have comprised a welcome desk with turnstiles controlling access into the remainder of the building. The reception extended on both sides around the central reception desk, with associated rooms to the rear, to the northmost central core. Around the core were a series of rooms for various functions, with visitors' toilets directly accessed off the central core to the north. This area survived as a series of large open spaces, characterised by exposed concrete structure frame. This supported the weight of the building and was visible throughout.

5.12.2 The remainder of the Ground Floor was characterised by open space. A large service opening was present in Pavilion B, with exposed steel beam and concrete lintel.

5.12.3 Except for within the Civic Suite, no temporary stud partition walls survived on the Ground Floor.

Photograph 43. Illustrative View of Ground Floor

Photograph 44. View of Service Opening

5.13 Administrative Block - First Floor

5.13.1 The First Floor was formed of an enormous open space office extending throughout the entire floor area, except for the southern extent. It is understood to have been previous divided by partitions and booths which had been removed by the time of the survey.

5.13.2 The windows extended outward from the interior and typically comprise a range of 3x3, with the central window of smaller scale thus resulting in a squarer shape. The windows were set within a metal framework; no ironmongery was present. Window cills were supported by three vertical metal supports per window and the internal panelling had been removed so the vacuum created by the window cill was visible.

5.13.3 The northern Central Core was of a similar floor plan to the Ground Floor, except for a series of rooms on the north / northwest side which historically were subdivided to former a series of smaller spaces and toilets. The ceiling of the core remained in tack, featuring an embossed octagonal design, within which the lighting system was located. The layout of the Central Core in the south reflected a similar layout to the succeeding floors, with the surrounding space compartmentalised to form smaller rooms and toilets. Most of the fabric has been removed.

5.13.4 The southern extent of the First Floor was utilised as the kitchen (canteen), indicated by the presence of glazed ceramic tiles along the internal walls associated with the kitchen space and dining area. The colour palette was varied ranging from white and grey to green, terracotta and brown. The tiles along the western wall of Pavilion L are abstract in design. Within the canteen and kitchen areas, the ceramic tiles were terracotta throughout. A protruding staircase was present on the west elevation of Pavilion L providing access to the Ground Floor as well as the roof terrace. Comprising a glazed partition with double-door accompanied by modern fire exist signage, this was not accessed for safety reasons but comprises a lino floor and plastic blue handrail.

Photograph 45. Illustrative View of Canteen Tiles

Photograph 46. Illustrative View of Canteen Tiles

5.13.5 To the rear of the former kitchen (canteen) was an enclosed lightwell / courtyard with full height glazing on the east elevation. The remaining external walls are characterised by slated vents, glazed brown tiles and brickwork capped with a concrete panel, and the courtyard is paved with brick. Wooden square planters and wooden slate benches were present.

5.14 Administrative Block - Second Floor

5.14.1 The Second Floor was designed to reflect the layout of the preceding floor, with the southern extent utilised as part of the office space. Historically subdivided, internal partitions had been removed resulting in a large cavernous open space interspersed by supporting square columns. The fabric on this floor reflected the preceding, with no additional material identified as part of the survey. The remains of the suspended ceiling fixings were visible on this floor. A roof terrace was provided in the south; no railing was present around this space suggesting it is unlikely to have been publicly accessible during building operation.

Photograph 47. Illustrative View of former Office Space

5.15 Third Floor

5.15.1 The third was in much the same condition and character as the preceding, with a roof terrace present in the south and southwest. Suspended pipework was extent in the ceiling void and modern toilet basins were stored for removal on this floor.

5.16 Administrative Block - Fourth and Fifth Floors

5.16.1 The Fourth and Fifth Floors were located within the Central Cores, with only the southwest tower two storey in height. Both contained a spiral staircase connecting the floors with the office space on the Third Floor.

5.16.2 In the northeast tower, the space was subdivided into three areas, comprising a lift motor room, stairwell and open space. The ceiling comprised both solid concrete and coffered concrete with hanging strip fluorescent lighting and ductwork both hanging and passing through the concrete floor. Metal shelfing and modern radiators were present in the open space.

5.16.3 In contrast to that in the northeast, the southwest tower was compartmentalised further to create office space using temporary lightweight partition walls and a suspended tile ceiling with built in louvered troffer lights and air conditioning system. Modern radiators and single wooden office doors with a vision panel were present. The Fifth Floor comprised a lift motor room, with hatch for uninstalled lift surviving in situ. Large supporting steel beams part extended across the ceiling. Equipment associated with the lifts comprised drive motor and generator, controller, disconnect switches and other auxiliary components.

Photograph 48. Illustrative View of Lift Motor Room

Photograph 49. Illustrative View of Missing Lift Shaft

5.17 Civic Suite

5.17.1 The Civic Suite was demarcated from the remainder of the building internally by the glazed link. The external perimeter of the Suite was characterised by the subdivision of space on the east and south side to create smaller individual rooms. Stud partition walls separated the space with three quarter height glazing panels used for light. A suspended floor was present in this area along with column radiators. Louvered troffer lights were present both in in-situ suspended ceilings (with fluorescent) and stored on the floor following removal. The in-situ suspended ceiling featured a grid system with ceiling tiles interspersed with air ventilation and fire safety systems. Several types of doors were present in the Civic Suite, including single office wooden doors and glazed partition double doors with transom in a metal frame. Both column and modern radiators were present in the Civic Suite.

5.17.2 The Civic Suite's core comprised the former council chamber which featured an unequal octagonal footprint with shorter corners, with both suspended floor and suspended tile ceiling. Projecting infrastructure and openings for speakers, projector and screen were present in the exterior walls with former public viewing gallery to the north and west. The main entrance was from the north which linked directly with entry funnelled through the glazed link, with secondary access afforded to the east and south.

Photograph 50. Illustrative View of Stud Walling surviving in the Civic Suite

Photograph 51. Illustrative View of the former Council Chamber

5.18 Plant Area

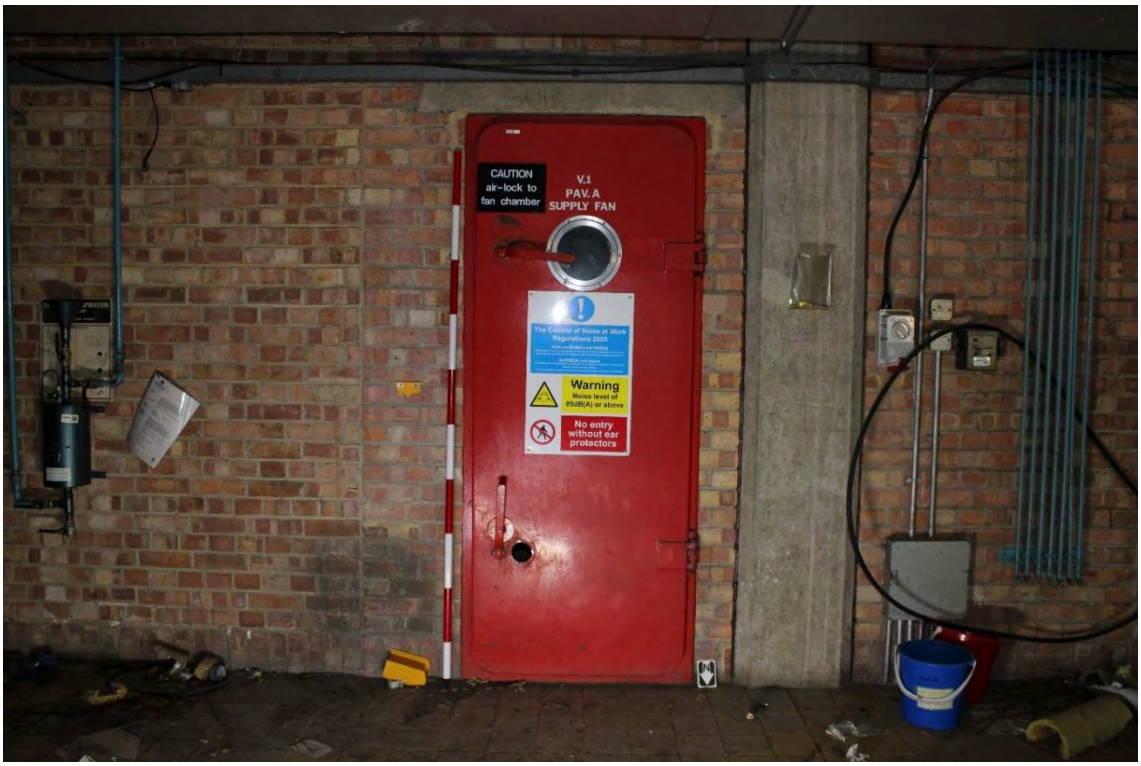
5.18.1 The plant / service area was located over the Basement and Sub-Basement levels in the southwestern extent of the building. It was centred around an enclosed loading bay on the Basement level with raised walkway constructed of concrete. The space surrounding the enclosed loading bay was subdivided into a series of rooms. Most associated infrastructure had been removed.

5.18.2 Floor levels differed in the southwestern extent of the building on the Ground Floor, accommodating for the Plant Area. Part of Pavilion A was also open from the Basement level to Ground Floor to accommodate plant.

5.18.3 Plant present was associated with:

- Air conditioning with these rooms comprising insulated panels and air locked metal bunker doors with external metal hinges and a round porthole at head height.
- Water and heating with large tanks and associated pipework, including the gas supply and instruction information attached to the exposed brickwork walls.
- Ventilation equipment including plant, soft baffles and associated ductwork.
- A storage room contained drive belts.
- Electrical equipment associated with the former telecoms including the private branch exchange (PBC) phone system.

Photograph 52. Illustrative View of the Plant Area



Photograph 53. Illustrative View of Plant Area Door

Photograph 54. Illustrative View of the PBC

5.19 Basement Car Parks

5.19.1 The Basement and Sub-Basement featured a series of storage and plant rooms in the southwest, with the remainder in use as sub-terranean car parks. The car parks were designed to provide parking for approx. 700 cars and constructed of the same materials to the same design as the remainder of the complex. There were two gated ramped vehicle entrances on each floor, one from east and one from the west. Each entrance featured associated direction signage, barriers and unmanned ticket machines. Throughout the floors signage demarcated designated spaces. Secure bicycle storage and plant comprising transformers, sub-stations, generators and diesel were present.

5.19.2 From the Basement a series of single flight staircases provided access to the terraces and Ground Floor.

Photograph 55. Illustrative View of the Basement Car Parks

5.20 Internal Circulation

5.20.1 The Central Core shafts were of octagonal footprint with shorter corners and comprise the central lifts and staircases. These areas also comprised the central bathroom facilities, although this infrastructure had since been removed and the space characterised by exposed concrete breezeblocks. On the upper floors the ceiling was suspended and featured a mass-produced octagonal relief with short corners. Fluorescent tube strip lighting was located on the inside perimeter with indents likely associated with air conditioning positioned centrally.

Photograph 56. Illustrative View of the Central Core Ceiling

5.20.2 Each Pavilion stairwell comprised an elongated octagonal with shorter edges plan. On the Ground Floor, the landing connects with external secondary access. On the First to Third Floors, internal access was afforded by a low level stepped double door opening, with central circular emergency light. The landing and staircase was constructed of concrete, with metal stair treads, brick balustrade and tubular metal handrail. In some locations, the balustrade was finished in white with a wooden handrail and raised metal tubular handrail inserted to increase the height of the balustrade.

Photograph 57. Illustrative View of the Pavilion (Fire Escape) Staircase

5.20.3 The stairwell in the Central Core tower (H) comprised a metal spire staircase with metal balustrade and circular metal balustrade 1m high.

5.20.4 Emergency escape stairwells extending from Ground Floor to Basement around the perimeter of the building were more utilitarian and functional in character, with the stairwell painted white, the steps concrete and the metal tubular handrail painted blue. The staircase was approx. 1.6m in length.

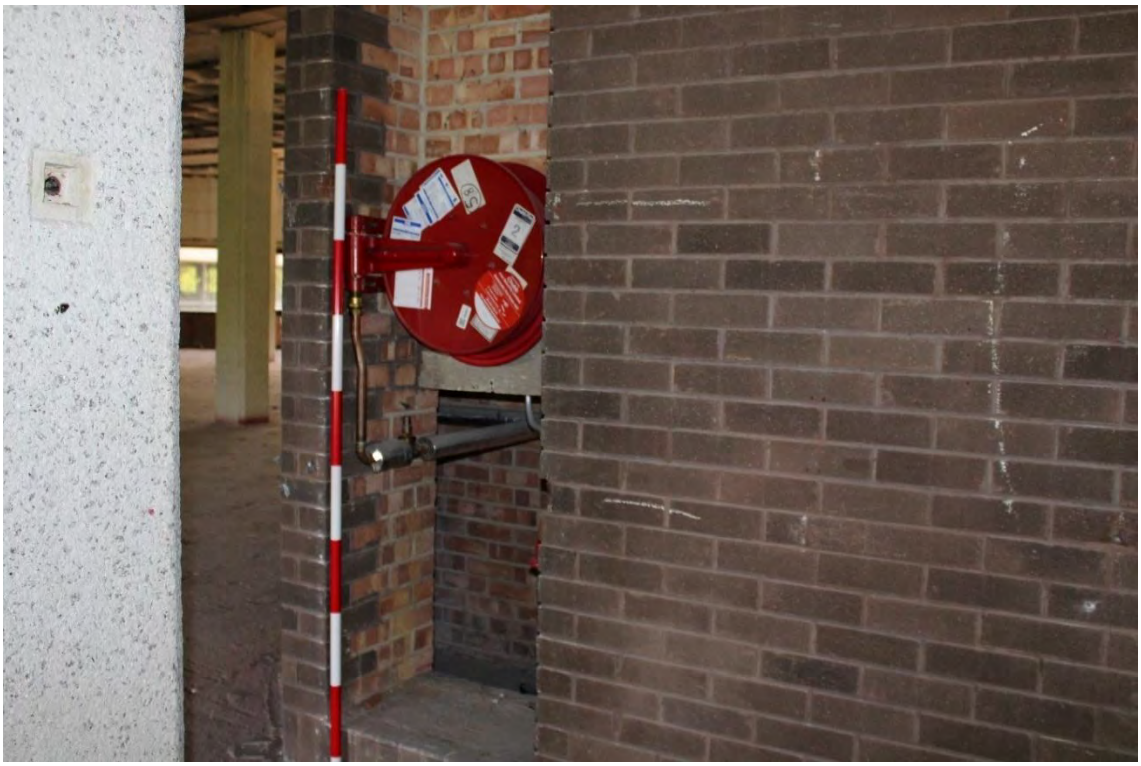
5.20.5 Lifts remained in-situ in the Central Cores at the time of survey. These comprised paired passenger lifts constructed of stainless steel with automatic central doors. The lifts were accompanied by rectangular panels with the call button in the centre. The uninstalled lift shaft comprised a vertical shaft which formed part of the symmetrical layout of the lifts. There was no lift mechanism, cab or associated control equipment. The absence of evidence such as structural reinforcements or lift call button recesses support the provision that this was never installed. Whilst the lift void was constructed, it was enclosed on each floor level, indicating that the decision to not install was likely made during the build phase. The space on each floor was empty at the time of survey. A goods (platform) lift was in situ in Pavilion F, built in red brick. It would have been used to facilitate inter-departmental communication accounting for the change in levels in this area. A single flight staircase constructed of concrete accompanied it.

Photograph 58. Illustrative View of the Lifts

5.21 Ancillary

5.21.1 In-situ fire equipment comprised a full height squared-splayed opening which held the firehose comprising reel and pivot in each Pavilion (fire escape) staircase. Within the Basement there was a designated fire safety point comprising firehose and reel nestled into the brick wall with accompanying fire extinguisher and two fire buckets.

5.21.2 No sign of the former internal plaque which commemorated the opening of the building was identified during the recording.



Photograph 59. Illustrative View of the Fire Equipment

Photograph 60. Illustrative View of the Fire Equipment

6 Building Demolition

6.1.1 In September 2025 demolition of Shire Hall commenced, and the work is due for completion by the end of the year. The following photographs have been provided by the Client documenting the progress of the demolition works at the time of writing.

The following photos illustrate demolition process in October 2025.

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7.2 Catalogues / Data Repositories

- Berkshire Archaeology Historic Environment Record

- Berkshire Council
- Historic England Archives
- John Laing Collection
- Reading Library Local Studies
- Reading Civic Society
- Reading Museum
- Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)
- Surrey History Centre
- The Royal Berkshire Archives
- West Berkshire Council
- West Berkshire Historic Environment Record
- Wokingham Borough Council

A.1 OASIS Form

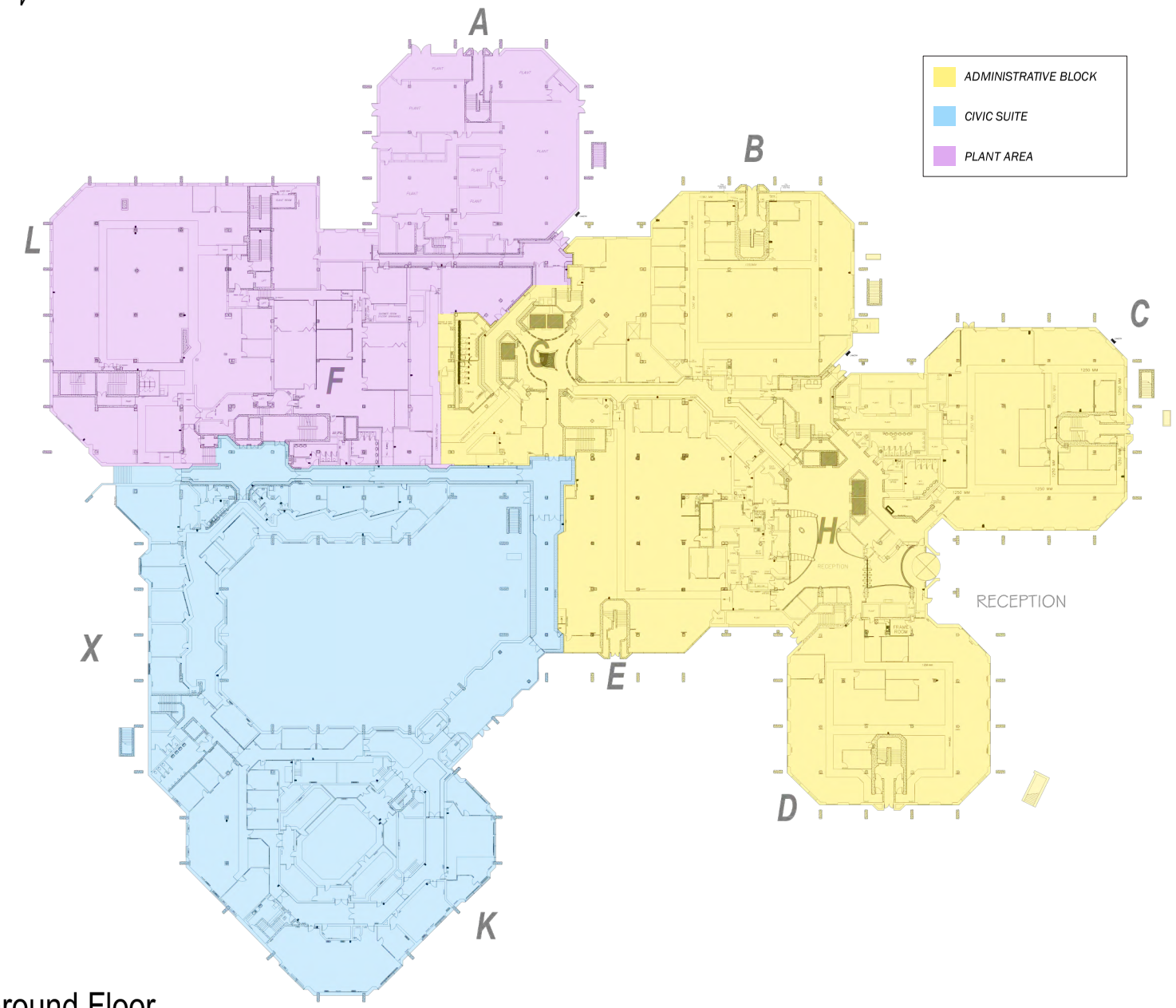
OASIS Summary for stantecu2-533993

OASIS ID (UID)	stantecu2-533993
Project Name	Shinfield Park Historic Building Recording
Sitename	Shinfield Park
Sitecode	333101463
Project Identifier(s)	Shinfield Park, Shinfield
Activity type	Descriptive Buildings Record (level 2)
Planning Id	250415
Reason For Investigation	Planning: Post determination
Organisation Responsible for work	Stantec UK
Project Dates	20-May-2025 - 31-Dec-2025
Location	Shinfield Park NGR : SU 72845 69045 LL : 51.41575215515693, -0.953889951754324 12 Fig : 472845,169045
Administrative Areas	Country : England County/Local Authority : Wokingham Local Authority District : Wokingham Parish : Shinfield
Project Methodology	Level 2 Building Recording of Shire Hall in line with Historic England guidance. Photographic, written and drawn record. Archival research.
Project Results	The primary aim of the historic building recording was to create a descriptive record providing an account of the building’s form, function, date and sequence of development. The report will form part of Reading's archival records relating to former brutalist buildings.
Keywords	Town Hall - Late 20th Century - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Civic Centre - Late 20th Century - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Commercial Office - 21st Century - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Office - Late 20th Century - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types Local Government Office - Late 20th Century - FISH Thesaurus of Monument Types
Funder	Private or public corporation Wrenbridge
HER	Berkshire Archaeology HER - unRev - STANDARD
Person Responsible for work	Emily Taylor
HER Identifiers	
Archives	

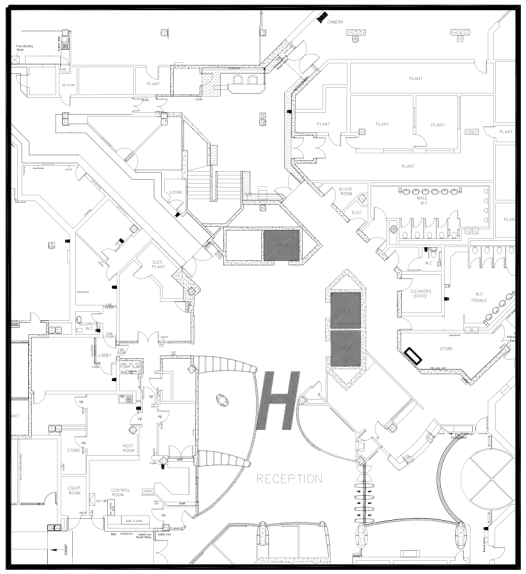
Report generated on: 20 Jan 2026, 12:04

A.2 Floor Plans

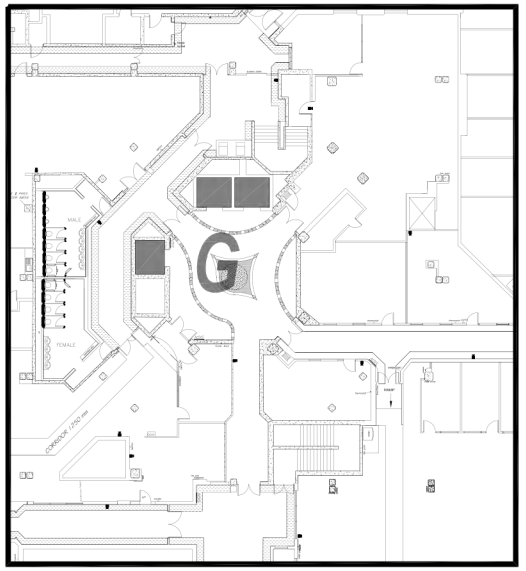
NORTH



CORE H



CORE G



Ground Floor

wood.

Shinfield Park,Reading ,RG2 9FW

FM SERVICES