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1. Vision for a Library and Learning Centre to Create a Vibrant Cultural Hub in the Heart of the City

To establish an outstanding and vibrant cultural hub which brings arts, culture, entertainment and education together in a showpiece library and learning centre. It will create a place that the community will be rightly proud of and where they feel they belong. It will be a home for creatives, for culture and for community and will emphasise the importance of learning and literacy to the county's future success.

Aims

- To provide access to information, resources, and services that promote personal growth, cultural enrichment and lifelong learning for all members of the community.
- To act as a counterpart to the transformational vision for a world class museum in the city centre
- To provide a multi-functional infrastructure that promotes skills, learning, enriching activities and education
- To create an opportunity to build sustainable partnerships across sectors and facilitate health and wellbeing initiatives
- To create a thriving and connected cultural hub open to collaboration and innovation.

Meeting the Vision

Maylord Orchards	The Shirehall Assembly Hall & Undercroft
The Maylord Orchards site offers a location in the city centre which can be repurposed to deliver a modern library service, providing lending and reference of written resources, as required by statute. As part of a broader approach to cluster cultural delivery within the complex, the library would relocate to Maylord Orchards and a new Learning Resource Centre would be created to support delivery of formal and informal education.	The Shirehall is a distinctly impressive iconic building, situated in the heart of the city centre, which has been identified as a potential site for a new state of the art library and learning centre. As part of the Town Centre investment plan and delivery of a world class museum at Broad Street, the current library would relocate to the Shirehall. Along with the nearby cathedral, this clustering of Herefords cultural

Maylord Orchards site has the potential to create a new reason to visit the precinct and can be designed with as much flexibility as possible to enable delivery of the universal library offer, including high speed and reliable fast Wi-Fi, alongside a children's library and moveable shelving that allows for the library to have a fresh look and configuration depending on how it is proposed to be used.

Since 2017 the national Universal Library Offers have significantly broadened the definition of a library service. These include support for Digital Literacy and for Health & Wellbeing, delivery of Cultural and Creative activities, supporting Skills & Employment and a Children's Promise to provide reading for pleasure, creative and digital opportunities to support learning and wellbeing. The potential to deliver enhanced services to support health and wellbeing, skills and business, digital literacy and education is clear but there are some compromises required by the site. The available floor space within Maylord Orchards will not accommodate every requirement from the start, but there is the possibility of room to grow the offer over time, as space becomes available or new partnerships are developed).

The majority of the funds available are allocated to the enabling works to make the necessary changes to the smaller retail units in order to create a coherent library and learning centre space. This leaves a more modest budget for the bespoke interior fit-out design and construction.

To create a library that can deliver fully against the ambition set by the Council to create a high impact showpiece library to complement the new world class museum would be difficult at

and heritage assets will create an inspirational visitor attraction for the city.

The Shirehall opened in 1817 in St Peter's Square as a home for the Council and the courts of justice in Hereford. Grade 2* listed and occupying a significant place in Herefordshire's heritage, the Shirehall stands on a prominent site (the former gaol house) in the city centre. The Assembly Hall was added in 1862 at the rear of the building. The Shirehall itself is no longer occupied and has been identified as a key strategic site, needing investment to bring it back into use.

The space proposed for the library and learning centre is the Assembly Hall and its Undercroft. This site combines the opportunity to create a state-of-the-art public library, with a modern, accessible learning centre. The Assembly Hall is a light and airy double height space with a stage at one end and backstage facilities (including a green room and basic facilities). The Undercroft comprises a series of separate spaces, a delivery room and an office. The Shirehall is listed, and it will be important to retain its original character as far as possible.

The lending, reference and children's library and the local history collection will be located in the grand Assembly Hall which will become a destination site in its own right.

the Maylord Orchards site because its location and character do not create the highly visible, destination venue that is an attractor in its own right.

There is reduced potential to deliver on the original intention of the scheme and provide a cultural hub within the city centre since a number of organisations initially identified to be co-located have revised their intended site. This leaves the library and learning centre as a stand-alone cultural offer within Maylord Orchards currently.

The library and learning centre within Maylord Orchards requires a portion of the space to be provided as a café facility to contribute to the revenue running costs which is also a constraint on the flexibility of the space.

Flexibly designed so that library fixtures (shelving, formal and informal seating and workspace) will be able to “dock” at the sides of the hall to enable larger scale events (such as cultural events careers fairs, craft exhibitions, film screenings or hackathons) to use the main space, the hall will become a multi-functional venue for creatives, for culture and for community. Up to 300 people can be accommodated theatre style in the space.

There is a requirement for a platform lift to enable full accessibility, including the stage and backstage area. This will also facilitate get-in and get-out of equipment for the full range of possible event uses. The “choir seating” at the back of the stage provides the potential to face an event in either direction, using the seating for audiences at smaller events or facing the main hall for events with larger attendance.

Since 2017 the national Universal Library Offers have significantly broadened the definition of a library service. These include support for Digital Literacy and for Health & Wellbeing, delivery of Cultural and Creative activities, supporting Skills & Employment and a Children’s Promise to provide reading for pleasure, creative and digital opportunities to support learning and wellbeing. While the Assembly Hall has ample space to enable exhibitions, events and activities (such as TED talks, business breakfasts, children’s rhyme-times, author talks, poetry readings, film screenings etc.), the Undercroft provides important space for informal learning and advice.

The spaces in the Undercroft are:

- The Welcome Space – level access into an open reception space with quick-pick stock and self-issue machines, Talk Community directory tablets, buggy storage and rotating display of materials linked to key topics (such as

	<p>mental health, climate change, Herefordshire Hoard)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maker Space – with digital technology including 3D printing, music production, digital sewing machines, game design etc. which can also be configured as a Training Room • Consultation Room – with individual booths for 121 advice on health, personal money management, business start-up and so on • Sensory Room – specially designed space for children and adults with disabilities • Delivery Room, stock sorting space and equipment store • Staff office space, toilets and kitchen <p>The library and learning centre can be operated independently of each other, so that evening classes can take place in the Undercroft without the need for the Assembly Hall to be staffed. If the Adult Education Service requires a room larger than the planned Maker Space/Training Room, then rooms are planned to be available for hire outside of the Library footprint.</p>
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2. Scope of Review of New Hereford Library and Learning Resource Centre Location

This document sets out the terms of a review of city centre locations for the new Library and Learning Resource Centre. The purpose of the review is to ensure the project makes the best possible contribution to delivering a modern library service, facilities to support learning, and the regeneration of Hereford City Centre. The review will be approached from the perspective of seeking the site with greatest potential opportunity for the library and learning centre to provide public benefit, while taking account of any related financial, reputational and operational risks.

Background

1. In 2020 government selected Hereford to be eligible to seek up to £25m of funding to support regeneration and enable economic growth. A Hereford Stronger Towns Partnership Board was formed which oversaw the development of a Town Investment Plan (TIP) through extensive local community engagement, and inviting people to put forward project proposals for submission to government in the Plan, subsequently securing £22.4m.
2. The Hereford TIP recognises the need to re-purpose and regenerate the city centre, realising significant opportunities in art, culture, heritage, tourism and learning. The agreed programme includes a major redevelopment of the Hereford Museum & Art Gallery which shares a building on Broad Street with the central library, requiring the library to relocate.
3. A complementary project to create a future-fit library and learning centre has been developed and this was planned to be situated in Maylord Orchards. This has been approved with Stronger Towns funding of £3m and £500k from the Council. The plan was to redesign units and the atrium of Maylord Orchards to form the library and learning resource centre.
4. However, a number of factors have changed since the original project was identified in 2020. The demand for retail/ commercial space in Maylord Orchards has remained relatively high, other Town Investment Plan projects that were originally due to be clustered with the library in Maylord Orchards to create a cultural hub (Rural Media Digital Culture Hub, Powerhouse and Encore) are now locating elsewhere, the draft Hereford City Masterplan has identified a wide range of future needs for strategically significant sites across the city centre, and alternative locations have become available for redevelopment.

5. A review of the proposed location has therefore been requested to ensure the library makes the optimum contribution to the Council's priorities for the city and outcomes for the project.

Scope of the Review

6. The review will consider available publicly-owned city centre locations to establish their feasibility and desirability in delivering the greatest impact against the set criteria as alternative sites for the new library and learning centre.
7. It will review sites in relation to
 - Strategic fit
 - Value for money
 - Financial Viability (including any aid implications)
 - Outcomes
 - Statutory Duty
 - Deliverability
 - Legal implications
 - Equality impact

Review Process

8. The review will be carried out by an officer team comprising lead representatives from the Project Management Office, and Library, Finance, Legal and Property services, following the below steps:
 1. Initial high level consideration of available sites to narrow down to deliverable options
 2. More detailed consideration of prioritised sites identified
 3. Consultation with Stronger Towns Board
 4. Consultation with stakeholders
 5. Review of financial and legal position
 6. Formulation of recommendations for decision
9. Sites in scope of the review are :
 - a) Blueschool House
 - b) Broad Street – Hereford Museum & Art Gallery (HMAG)
 - c) Franklin House
 - d) Friars Street – Museum Resource Learning Centre (MRLC)
 - e) Maylord Orchards – units originally proposed
 - f) Maylord Orchards – alternative units
 - g) The Shire Hall – the Undercroft and Assembly Hall
 - h) 8 St Owen Street
 - i) Town Hall & 10 St Owen Street
 - j) 33-35 Union Street
 - k) 43 Widemarsh Street
 - l) Churchill Gardens

Criteria for Review

Strategic Fit

The review will consider the potential for each of the sites identified to contribute to creating a more vibrant city centre - a compelling destination for residents and visitors and for investment and trade and to delivering the outcomes above. With the alignment to the strategic ambitions within:

Big Economic Plan

Town Investment Plan

City Masterplan

Health and Wellbeing strategy

The Stronger Towns Fund business case for the library and learning resource centre set key outcomes of:

- Improving perceptions of Hereford by residents, visitors and businesses
- Increasing visitors to arts, heritage and cultural events and venues
- Assisting new learners

Value for Money

Each of the potential options will be considered and ranked in terms of its value for money in delivering the anticipated outputs and outcomes of the project, including the ambitions of the Stronger Towns Fund business case to provide:

- More accessible and improved facilities for skills
- Increased skills responding to local need
- Upgraded or protected libraries
- Delivery of new public spaces
- Community non-accredited learning

Financial Viability

A financial assessment will interrogate the total costs estimated with each option including:

- Risk to existing grant funding already approved
- Irrecoverable costs incurred to date
- Capital requirements to bring the site into use as a city library and learning centre
- Ongoing revenue requirements for operating the site as a city library and learning centre
- Potential sources of future external grant funding
- Any opportunity cost arising (i.e. potential loss of income from any future alternative use that could be made of the facility)
- The impact of any proposal on the business case for other projects in the capital programme and Stronger Towns portfolio
- Return on investment

Outcomes

The review will consider the potential to deliver outcomes against:

- Meet the vision of the project
- Universal Library Offers on site
- Impact on the city with regeneration
- Tourism
- Health benefits

Meeting the Council's Statutory Duty

The review will therefore need to consider the suitability of each site for delivery of library services including, but not limited to, public access to lending and reference materials, and the timescales for mobilisation of a new facility.

Deliverability

Sites will be evaluated against:

- Projected timescales for delivery
- Any planning considerations and the scope of works required.
- Availability of the asset

Legal Implications

The review will establish the legal implications associated with the alternative options for location of the library and learning resource centre: contracts for works have already been let by the Council and funding agreements are in place. Any legal obligations arising at some sites from historic covenants or historic funding.

Equality Impact

The review will include an Equality Impact Assessment and analysis of user data collected by the service. It will evaluate the accessibility of the proposed locations in terms of access to the building and transport connectivity.

Stakeholder Consultation

The review will offer opportunities for stakeholders to be involved and engaged.

Specifically:

- Joint Action for Herefordshire Libraries (JAHL) group, representing library users
- Herefordshire Cultural Partnership
- NMite
- Internal service partners - Adult Education, Public Health and Economic Development teams
- Equality Compliance Manager
- Ward Member for Central Hereford
- Hereford City Council
- Hereford BID
- Stronger Towns Board
- Department for Culture, Media & Sport (DCMS)

Timescale and Reporting

The library will relocate as planned to a temporary location in mid-July to enable the Museum and Art Gallery redevelopment.

The key dates for the proposed review of its permanent future location are:

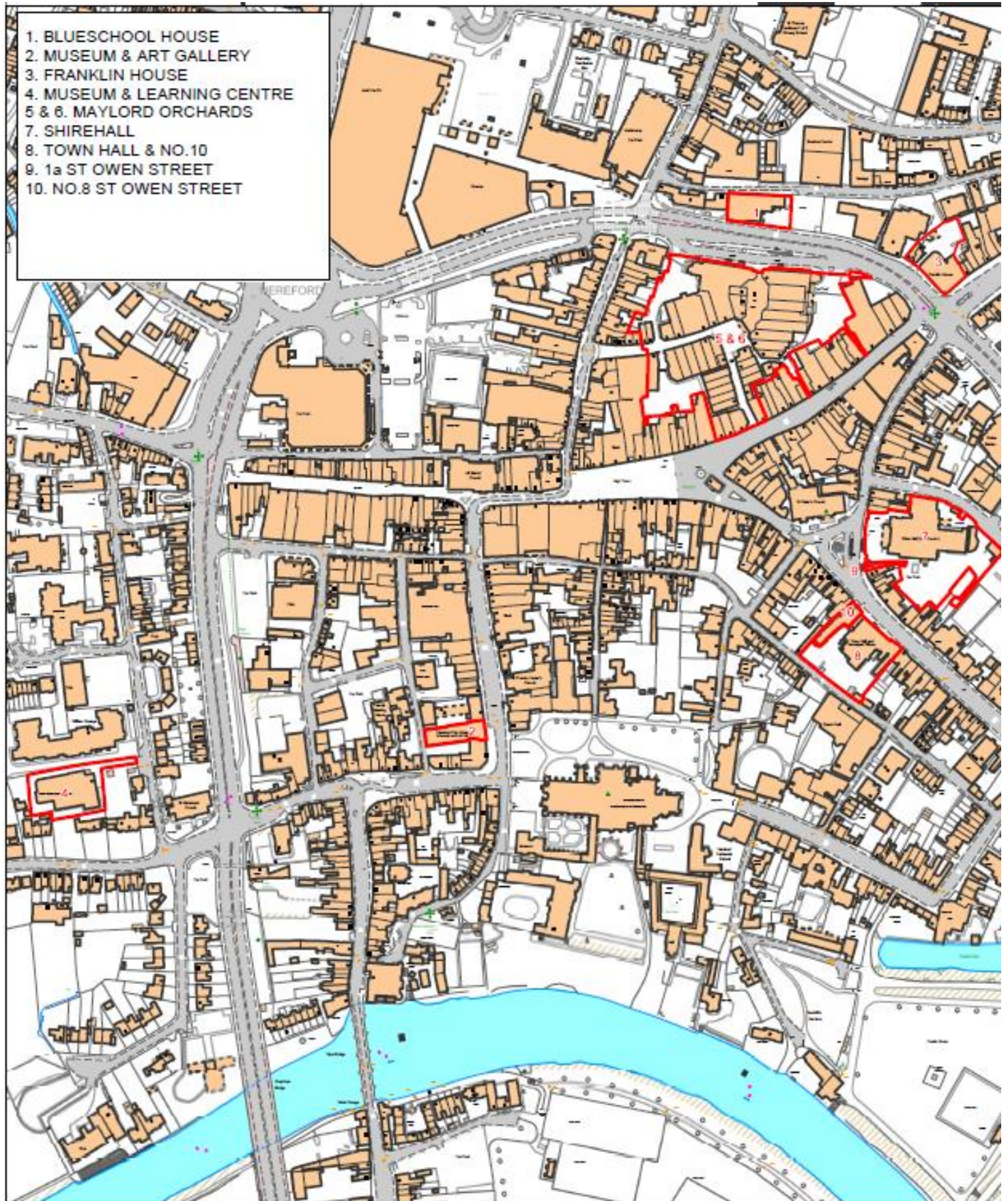
- 22 June 2023 review initiated and stakeholder consultation begins
 - 3-5 July 2023 draft reviewed and cabinet report finalised
 - 6 July 2023 Cabinet feeder meeting
 - 13 July 2023 papers sent out
 - 20 July 2023 for consideration and approval by Cabinet if required.
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- **Contact Officers:** Val Birchall, Interim Library Lead,
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Sue White, Programme Manager, susan.white2@herefordshire.gov.uk

3: High Level Review of Alternative Sites

High Level Feasibility Study												
		Site/Location										
Pass or Fail Questions	Answer Guide	Blueschool House, Blueschool Street, Hereford, HR1 2DU	Hereford Museum & Art Gallery, Broad Street, Hereford, HR4 9AU	Franklin House, Po Box 4, Hereford, Herefordshire, HR4 0XH	Fiars Street, Museum Resource Learning Centre (MLRC)	Units Originally Proposed, Maylord Orchards, Maylord St, Hereford, HR1 2DT	Undercroft and Assembly Hall, Shire Hall, Hereford HR1 2JB	Churchill House, Venn's Lane, Hereford, Herefordshire HR1 1DE	Town Hall and No10 St Owen Street	1a St Owen Street	No 8 St Owen Street	Alternative Units, Maylord Orchards Maylord St, Hereford, HR1 2DT Please see Sheet 3 'Alternative Site Review Maylord' of document
Is the building suitable to house a new library (Layout/Size)?	If 'No' Fail and discount this Site/Location	✓	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	
Can the site/location be made available for the project?	If 'No' Fail and discount this Site/Location	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	
Is the building currently accessible by all forms of transport?	If 'No' Fail and discount this Site/Location	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	
	Comments/Summary	Part of the site is currently leased out and therefore any opportunity under agreed terms to change this would not meet the relevant timeframes	The site/location is not a suitable size and with the new museum, insufficient space is available	Leased out to a partner-opportunities to utilise the site would not fall within required timeframes	The site/location is not a suitable size,	The site remains available as per original proposal but would reduce the available space.	The site is subject to major structural and infrastructure works requirement. Tenant in other part of building as advised that they are giving notice, making the site available for revised planning	Site/Location is not currently accessible by all forms of transport and in not directly in the City centre.	The site/location is not a suitable size,	The site/location is not a suitable size,	The site/location is not a suitable size,	

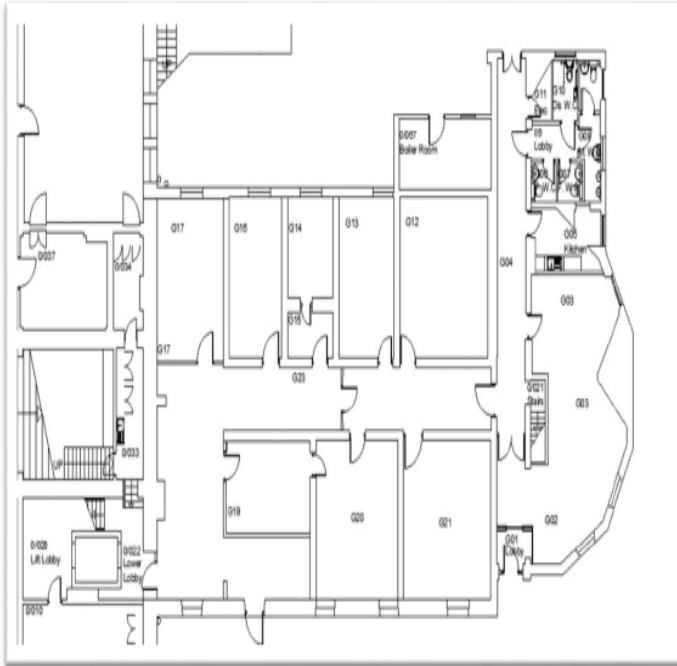
Additional Information which may be required for next stage of Evaluation	Answer Guide											
Does the site fit the Council Draft Strategic Ambitions	Simple Yes/ No or Not	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	
Is this property currently vacant	Applicable response to provide relevant detail	N	N	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	N	Y	
If tenanted can they be easily be relocated?		N	N/A	N	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N	N/A	N	
Is it considered to be free of Conservation Constraints (Internal)?		Y	N	Y	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	N	
Is it free of Commercial Viability/Interest from other uses?		N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	
Is the site available now?		N	N	N	N	Y	N	Y	N	N	N	
Are only minor enabling works required?		Y	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	Y	Y
Are there links for Public Transport?		Y	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y
Is there access to nearby parking?		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Is it free of any Legal constraints (Covenants)?		Y	N	Y	N	Y	Y	N	N	N	N	

4: Map showing location of alternative sites



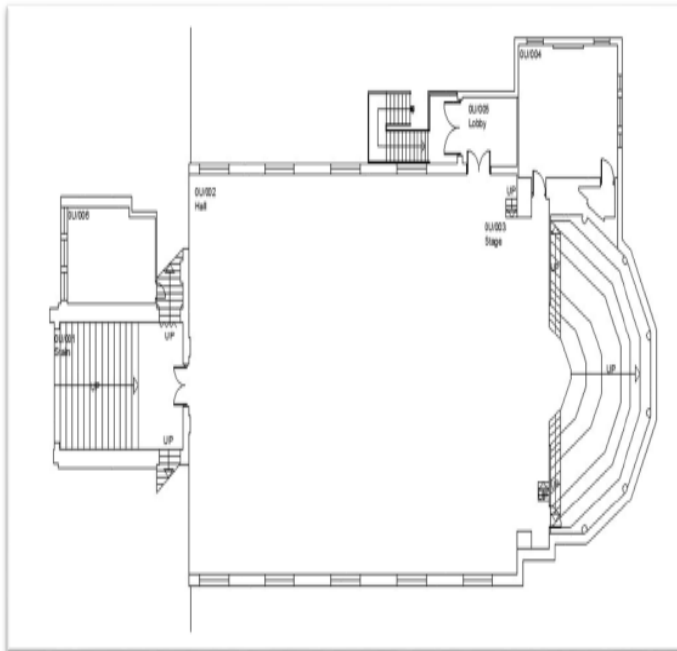
5: Floor plans Shirehall:

GROUND FLOOR

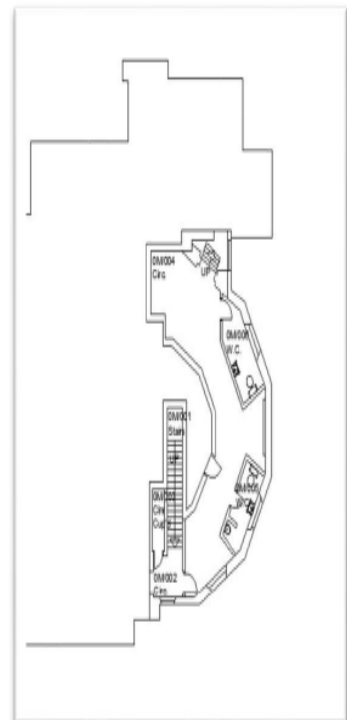


**SHIREHALL
Undercroft and Assembly Hall**

MAIN HALL - UPPER GROUND FLOOR



UNDER STAGE AREA



6: Ground Floor Plan Maylord Orchards

Existing Building: Maylord Orchard

3.2 / Existing Ground Floor Plan



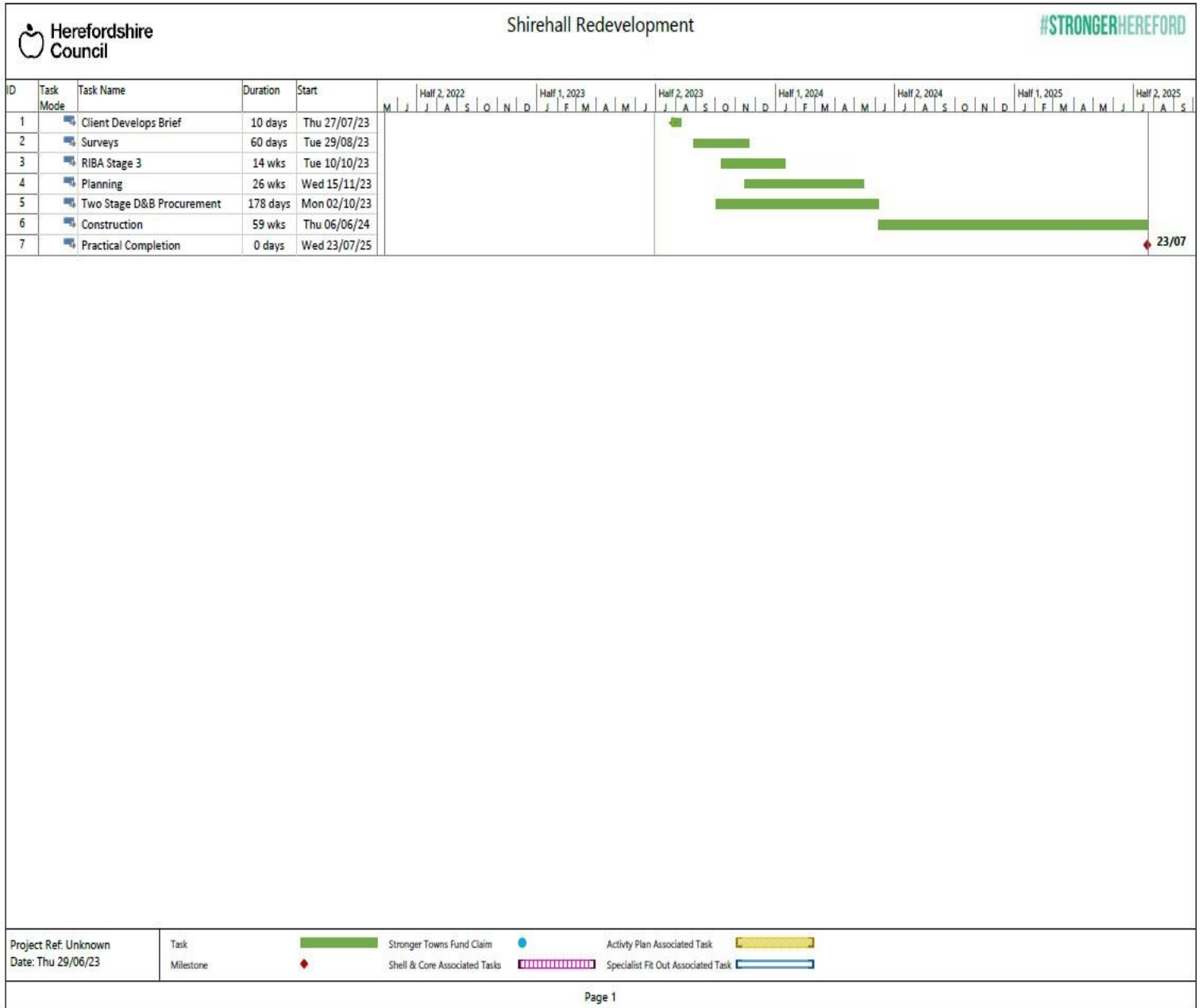
7: First Floor Plan Maylords Orchards

Existing Building: Maylord Orchard

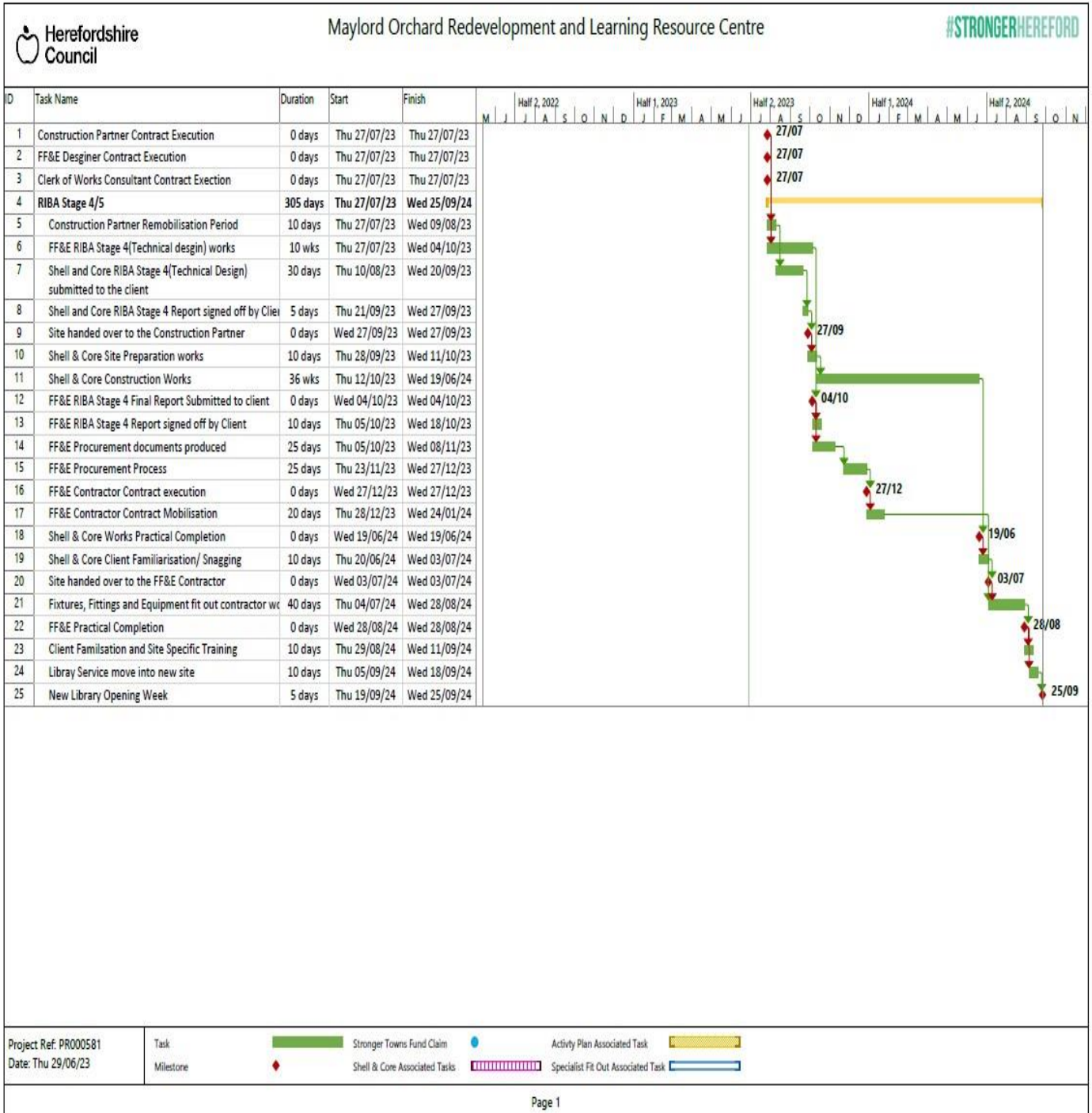
3.3 / Existing First Floor Plan



8: Shirehall High Level Feasibility



9: Maylord Programme



10: Cabinet Decision 22nd of June 2023

[Printed decision Review of New Hereford Library and Learning Resource Centre Location.pdf](#)
herefordshire.gov.uk