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An options appraisal for four
additional sites for Sandwell
Archives
February 2022

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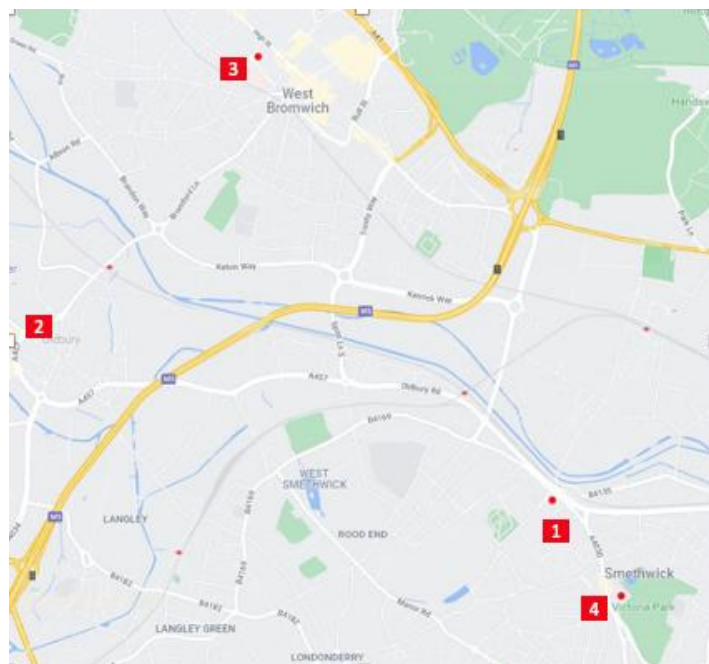
1. Introduction and methodology

1.1 Introduction

This report has been commissioned by Sandwell Council. Its purpose is to provide a high-level assessment of and construction cost for four sites for the development of new accommodation for Sandwell Archives. It is a successor report to that provided by Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan Associates in January 2021, which assessed 8 sites. Smethwick Library has been reassessed due to the presence of a culvert under the building being discovered.

The four sites that were assessed are

Option	Site	Street	Town	Postcode
1	Smethwick Library	High Street	Smethwick	B66 1AA
2	Sandwell Council House	Freeth Street	Oldbury	B69 3BY
3	Edward Street Car Park	Edwards Street	West Bromwich	B70 8NT
4	Smethwick Council House	High Street	Smethwick	B66 3NT





1.2 Methodology

This review comprised the following stages:

- A visit to each of the sites on 11 February 2022
- Analysis of each site against a variety of criteria as laid out in the January 2021 report
- The development of a very high-level construction cost for each site based on costings provided in the January 2021 report
- A final comparative assessment

This report is delivered by Elizabeth Oxborrow-Cowan, Consultant Archivist, and Mark Lewis, Architect. Unlike the previous report there has not been the involvement of a quantity surveyor. Instead appropriate 2021 costs have been conservatively inflated by 12.5%.

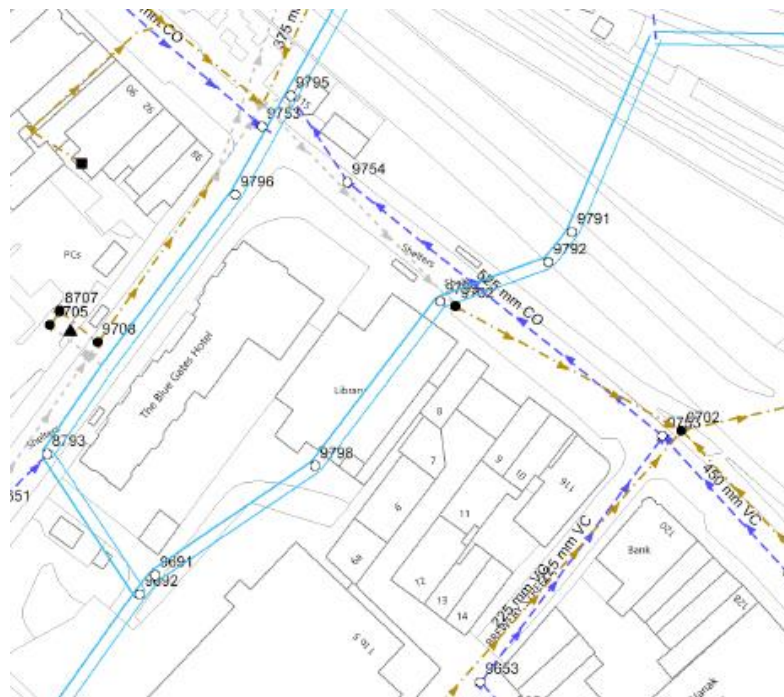
1.3 Notes on appraisal of options

The options have been developed to a RIBA 0 level of detail. This allows scores and costs to be estimated on a comparative rather than empirical basis. Costs and scores for each option are considered relative to each other and suitable to inform selection of a preferred site option. The preferred option will require further research, surveys, significant design development and stakeholder engagement at the next project stage to increase cost accuracy.

2. Assessments

2.1 Option 1 - Smethwick Library

This has been assessed again to take into account the recent finding of a culvert running underneath the building (as shown in the Severn Trent plan below).



2.1.1 Key Data

Site Address	Smethwick Library High Street Smethwick B66 1AA
Ownership	Council owned
Site Area (m²)	1,287m ² (including forecourt and service area to rear)
Floor Area (m²)	1,382m ² GIA
Site Type	Part demolition, part conversion and extension
Site Description	<p>Attractive and robust-looking gothic palazzo style Victorian former town hall, now the home of Sandwell's archive service, most of its collections, a local library and community spaces. The front portion is a good quality historic building of red brick with stone window embellishments, bracketed cornice and pediment. Its historic interiors have been harmed by insensitive building services and other low-quality adaptations. The rear portion seems to have been rebuilt (it was originally higher) and houses the public library and archive search room at ground level with collection storage in an unsuitable basement below. The existing structure is load bearing masonry with upper floors of light weight suspended timber. There is vehicle access from the rear.</p>
Listing	Built 1867. Locally listed.
Planning Policy	Within Smethwick Town Centre, High Street Conservation Area Seems to be within site identified for retail.
Area Character	Local town centre
Current Uses	Public library, archive service and community rooms
Neighbours	Shops – 2m Commercial warehousing – 2m Public house – 4m Substation – 36m
Car Parking	75m to Stony Lane public car park, which includes two accessible parking spaces There is one accessible parking space in front of the Victorian building
Public Transport	3m to 3 bus routes 100m to Smethwick Rolfe Street national rail

Flood Risk	Flooding by surface water in local area: HIGH risk (greater than 3.3%) Flooding from rivers and the sea: VERY LOW risk (less than 0.1%)
Environment	Urban
Other Comments	The original main entrance is not used because it is stepped. There is a modern ramped main entrance to the side, but this is not very attractive. The High Street is very congested offering little opportunity for additional accessible parking. Originally the rear portion was similar in height to the front portion, giving potential for a substantial new building to the rear.
Orientation	Site not ideally orientated for passive solar design

2.1.2 BS EN 16893 site hazard initial risk assessment

A good result in this assessment would be a low score

Site location risk	Risk level 1-5	Likelihood 1-5	Score Out of 25	Comments
Tunnels or viaducts	5	5	25	A culverted watercourse runs centrally below the length of the building. Severn Trent have been unable to confirm its age, condition or performance
Ground stability	3	3	9	Within coalfield consultation area. Not in coal mine high risk area. Further detailed investigation recommended
Flooding	5	5	25	Sunken rear yard liable to frequent surface water flooding would need to be addressed by new design
Risk from fire or explosion	3	2	6	Some risk from neighbours
Risk from pollutants or vibration	3	4	12	Pollution from nearby road traffic
Rodents and other pests	3	3	9	Some risk from neighbours

Site location risk	Risk level 1-5	Likelihood 1-5	Score Out of 25	Comments
Nuclear power plant and defence	1	1	1	
Other target establishments	2	1	2	Small risk from neighbours
Airports and flight paths	1	1	1	
HV power lines and substations	3	3	9	Substation on same block but not immediate neighbour
Indicative overall risk score			40%	

2.1.3 BS EN 16893 audit

A good result in this assessment would be a high score

Criteria	Scoring 0 = unacceptable, 1 = minimal, 3 = satisfactory, 5 = outstanding	
Low hazard level	0	Risk of flooding from surface water requires mitigation Presence of culvert of unknown condition, construction, or performance is a severe blight on the site
Expansion potential	1	Very limited expansion to rear
Self-containment	5	
Level floorplates	5	
	55%	

2.1.4 Comparison with spatial brief for new archive facility

- Can accommodate desired space brief

2.1.5 Development scope

- Partial demolition of existing building – approx. 962m² GIA
- Address local surface water flood risk: infill basement or raise new rear portion on piloti; include for stormwater attenuation system.



- New landscape to forecourt (60m²) with planting and seating, new stone steps and ramps to historic main entrance (or external platform lift), and new service area to rear (375m²)
- High quality conversion of approx. 342m² GIA of existing Victorian building in poor condition
- New 1,463m² GIA extension of medium material quality required in conservation area but behind existing building

2.1.6 Estimated development costs

Inflating the 2021 costs for Smethwick by an additional 12.5% i.e.:

	Low (£)	Medium (£)	High (£)
2022 - Inflated cost	7,875,000	9,112,500	11,362,500
Construction cost /m²	3,263	3,825	4,725

2.1.7 Suitability as a public service venue and site availability

The higher the score the more attractive the site as a public venue.

Factor	Description Smethwick Library	Score 0 = No 1 = minimal 3 = satisfactory, 5 = outstanding
Easily accessible from inside Sandwell	Next to A457, bus routes and 2 minutes from Smethwick Galton Bridge railway station Next to canal foot paths	5
Easily accessible from outside Sandwell	Accessible by railway from Birmingham 6 minutes' drive from the M5 30 minutes from Birmingham airport Next to canals	5
Location with good public profile	On Smethwick High Street so familiar location but not high profile	3
Close to other public attractions/services	Surrounded by shops and small businesses 15 min walk from Smethwick Heritage Centre Trust and Victoria Park 10 min walk from Nature Reserve Park 5 minute walk from Smethwick Youth & Community Centre 30 min walk/5 min drive to Thimblemill Library Numerous places of worship in close proximity	3



Factor	Description Smethwick Library	Score 0 =No 1 = minimal 3 = satisfactory, 5 = outstanding
Opportunities for collaborative working with neighbours	A range of community and heritage bodies e.g. schools, youth centre, police, medical centre	3
Welcoming environment	Familiar high street environment although major A road and railway detract from the attractiveness. Next to a public house.	3
Potential to be an attractive or intriguing destination	Façade and accommodation facing the street is attractive. New build behind provides opportunity to increase visual engagement	3
Opportunity for passive build	With new build at back but not with facade	3
Readily available for development	Would require movement of library service	3
<i>Total score</i>		<i>31</i>
% of actual score out of possible total score of 45		69%

2.2 Option 2 – Sandwell Council House, Oldbury



2.2.1 Architectural Appraisal

Sandwell Council house was viewed externally on 11/2/22 and diagrammatic floor plans reviewed.



The building appears to be of brick clad concrete frame construction built in the 1980/1990's. If constructed with general office floor loadings, it is unlikely to be able to accommodate mobile archive storage racking, without strengthening. Its windows, external walls, roofs and roof-lights would also need significant changes to provide the necessary thermal performance.

We understand the octagonal double-height council chamber (room 131) is being considered as a location for the archive. At approximately 200m² NIA this room is significantly smaller than the 1,805m² GIA needed to accommodate the archive facility. If both entire floors of the octagonal wing were available for the archive, it would offer just over 70% of the space needed.

2.2.2 Key Data

Site Address	Sandwell Council House Freeth Street Oldbury B69 3BD
Ownership	Council owned

2.2.3 Assessment

The visual inspection and data supplied demonstrated that this space is not suitable for an archive facility. We understand that there are also other demands for use of the space. Therefore, this site is deemed unsuitable for further analysis.

2.3 Option 3 – Edward Street Car Park, West Bromwich



2.3.1 Key Data

Site Address	Edward Street Car Park Edward Street West Bromwich B70 8NT (closest location)
Ownership	Council owned
Site Area (m²)	Approx 1,730m ²
Floor Area (m²)	N/A – current site is undeveloped
Site Type	Urban brownfield
Site Description	Slightly sloping surface car park. Indicative site shown on West Bromwich Town Centre Masterplan as allocated for a courtyard block of 3-4 storey low density housing
Listing	Not listed, but adjacent / near to 3 Grade II listed buildings: Ryland Memorial School of Art (1902), Town Hall (1874-5), and Central Public Library (1907)
Planning Policy	Within mixed-use area including: cultural, leisure, office, retail, cafes, bars, restaurants - refer to AAP policy WBPr10 Within High Street, West Bromwich Conservation Area
Area Character	Local town centre
Current Uses	Surface Car Park – approx. 70 car parking spaces
Neighbours	Civic – 11m Education – 14m Residential – 17m Cultural – 25m Western Power major substation – 27m Heath – 40m
Car Parking	0m to Edward Street public car park Consider creation of new accessible on street spaces and/or additional accessible spaces to the three spaces extant to the rear of Central Library
Public Transport	150m to 2 bus routes 150m to Lodge Road tram stop
Flood Risk	Flooding by surface water in local area: VERY LOW risk (less than 0.1%) Flooding from rivers and the sea: VERY LOW risk (less than 0.1%)
Environment	Urban

Other Comments	Not easily physically linked to library owing to intervening roadway. Further investigation into history of uses of the site would be needed to confirm contamination risk and potential for below ground obstructions - such as cellars from previous buildings on the site
Orientation	Potential for good solar orientation with public areas facing southwards on Edwards Street and repository to the north at the rear of the Town Hall

2.3.2 BS EN 16893 site hazard initial risk assessment

A good result in this assessment would be a low score

Site location risk	Risk level 1-5	Likelihood 1-5	Score Out of 25	Comments
Tunnels or viaducts	1	1	1	
Ground stability	4	5	20	Within coalfield consultation area and within 300m of former coal mining entry. Also within area of underground working. Further detailed investigation recommended. May increase foundation costs
Flooding	1	1	1	
Risk from fire or explosion	3	2	6	Some risk from neighbours
Risk from pollutants or vibration	3	4	12	Pollution from nearby road traffic
Rodents and other pests	3	3	9	Some risk from neighbours
Nuclear power plant and defence	1	1	1	
Other target establishments	3	2	6	Some risk from neighbours
Airports and flight paths	1	1	1	

Site location risk	Risk level 1-5	Likelihood 1-5	Score Out of 25	Comments
HV power lines and substations	3	3	9	Substation on same block but not immediate neighbour
Indicative overall risk score			26%	

2.3.3 BS EN 16893 audit

A good result in this assessment would be a high score

Criteria	Scoring 0 = unacceptable, 1 = minimal, 3 = satisfactory, 5 = outstanding	
Low hazard level	3	
Expansion potential	3	
Self-containment	5	
Level floorplates	5	
	80%	

2.3.4 Comparison with spatial brief for new archive facility

- Can accommodate desired space brief

2.3.5 Development scope

- High quality landscape scheme (800m²) would be required within conservation area to include service area to rear and two new accessible parking spaces
- New 1,805m² two or three-storey building of high material quality required in conservation area and immediately adjacent to listed buildings in important civic setting

2.3.6 Estimated development costs

Use same assumptions as Old Gas Showroom site, inflated by an additional 12.5% at least i.e.:

	Low £	Medium £	High £
2022 - 12.5% inflated cost	8,100,000	9,675,000	11,137,500
Construction cost /m²	3,038	3,713	4,275



2.3.7 Suitability as a public service venue and site availability

The higher the score the more attractive the site as a public venue.

Factor	Description	Score 0 = No 1 = minimal 3 = satisfactory 5 = outstanding
Easily accessible from inside Sandwell	3 minute walk from Lodge Street Tram stop and West Bromwich bus Station Located in the town centre	5
Easily accessible from outside Sandwell	Very good national road links and 3 minutes' drive from A41 Direct trains from Birmingham New Street	5
Location with good public profile	Town centre just off high street	3
Close to other public attractions/services	Parking available on site Next to hospital, library & townhall Hotels in close proximity Very close to central shopping district	5
Opportunities for collaborative working with neighbours	Close potential partners including library, Registrar, sixth form college, The Old House Museum, the Job Centre and Edward Street mental health hospital	5
Welcoming environment	Site surrounded by attractive historic buildings, residential accommodation and safe public thoroughfares Will be further enhanced by proposed development of Gas Showroom site	3
Potential to be an attractive or intriguing destination	A new build that will have to be sympathetic to surrounding listed architecture and fit in with wider plans for reimagining the town centre and possibly a local cultural quarter development - so space and drivers for an imaginative or attractive build	5



Factor	Description	Score 0 = No 1 = minimal 3 = satisfactory 5 = outstanding
Opportunity for passive build	A new build so the whole build could be passive	5
Readily available for development	Loss of current car parking space may be an issue	3
<i>Total score</i>		39
% of actual score out of possible total score of 45		87%

2.4 Option 4 – Smethwick Council House



2.4.1 Key Data

Site Address	Smethwick Council House (land to rear) High Street Smethwick B66 3NT
Ownership	Council owned
Site Area (m²)	3,570m ² (exc car park and embankment)
Floor Area (m²)	N/A – current site is undeveloped
Site Type	Suburban brownfield
Site Description	<p>Land to rear Smethwick Council House, formerly developed as offices annexed to the Council House, but now demolished. Part laid out as surface car park and rough ground.</p> <p>The Council House is a very attractive landmark building. The adjacent Victoria Park is attractive and well-used. Both offer an attractive setting and would lend prominence to the archive development.</p> <p>Severn Trent infrastructure building in north west corner and 'Canal Feeder' embankment feature to the north should be investigated to ascertain what risk (if any) these may be to the archive development. There is a small open air electrical substation on the western boundary.</p>
Listing	Smethwick Council House – Grade II (1905)
Planning Policy	<p>Land use allocated for long term housing</p> <p>Within Smethwick High Street and Crocketts Lane Conservation Area</p> <p>Within curtilage of listed building</p>
Area Character	Local town centre
Current Uses	Surface car park / disused rough ground
Neighbours	<p>Offices – 0m</p> <p>Residential – 20m</p> <p>Public park – 0m</p>
Car Parking	Potential for onsite parking
Public Transport	<p>150m to 2 bus routes</p> <p>700m to Smethwick Rolfe Street national rail</p>
Flood Risk	<p>Flooding by surface water in local area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> North east corner (slightly raised land) VERY LOW risk (less than 0.1%)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remainder of site (slightly lower land) LOW risk (between 0.1% and 1%) Flooding from rivers and the sea: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole site: VERY LOW risk (less than 0.1%)
Environment	Suburban
Other Comments	Connection with Victoria Park and nearby Heritage Centre offers great synergy with the archive development Some 2,000m ² surplus site area could be made available for other complementary or enabling development
Orientation	Potential for good solar orientation with public areas facing southwards towards Victoria Park and repository to the north at the rear of the Council House

2.4.2 BS EN 16893 site hazard initial risk assessment

A good result in this assessment would be a low score

Site location risk	Risk level 1-5	Likelihood 1-5	Score Out of 25	Comments
Tunnels or viaducts	1	1	1	
Ground stability	3	3	9	Within coalfield consultation area
Flooding	2	2	4	'LOW risk' part is within BS EN 16893 recommendation. Consider flood protection within design or use slightly higher land in north east corner. Potential risk from Severn Trent infrastructure building and 'Canal Feeder' require further investigation
Risk from fire or explosion	1	1	1	
Risk from pollutants or vibration	1	1	1	
Rodents and other pests	4	4	16	Adjacency to Park and lake

Site location risk	Risk level 1-5	Likelihood 1-5	Score Out of 25	Comments
Nuclear power plant and defence	1	1	1	
Other target establishments	2	1	2	Low risk from neighbours
Airports and flight paths	1	1	1	
HV power lines and substations	3	3	9	Some risk from substation on site
Indicative overall risk score			18%	

2.4.3 BS EN 16893 audit

A good result in this assessment would be a high score

Criteria	Scoring 0 = unacceptable, 1 = minimal, 3 = satisfactory, 5 = outstanding	
Low hazard level	3	Subject to risk assessment on Severn Trent infrastructure building and 'Canal Feeder'
Expansion potential	5	
Self-containment	5	
Level floorplates	5	
	90%	

2.4.4 Comparison with spatial brief for new archive facility

- Can accommodate desired space brief plus additional complementary or enabling development

2.4.5 Development scope

- High quality landscape scheme (700m²) would be required within conservation area to include service area to rear and two new accessible parking spaces
- New 1,805m² two-storey building of high material quality required in conservation area and immediately adjacent to listed buildings in important park-land setting



2.4.6 Estimated development costs

Using the same assumptions as the Old Gas Showroom site in the first report, inflated by an additional 12.5% i.e.:

	Low (£)	Medium (£)	High (£)
2022 - 12.5% inflated cost	8,100,000	9,675,000	11,137,500
Construction cost /m²	3,038	3,713	4,275

4.7 Suitability as a public service venue and site availability

The higher the score the more attractive the site as a public venue.

Factor	Description	Score 0 = No 1 = minimal 3 = satisfactory 5 = outstanding
Easily accessible from inside Sandwell	Central location on the A4030	5
Easily accessible from outside Sandwell	Good accessibility for various transport 20 minute walk to Smethwick Galton Bridge railway station 5 minutes' drive from the M5	5
Location with good public profile	Adjacent to the popular and attractive Victoria Park	5
Close to other public attractions/services	Very good proximities: Adjacent to the Park and Smethwick Heritage Centre. Adult and Children's Services and Housing in the Council House Restaurants and shops in the neighbourhood 15 min walk each to Thimblemill and Smethwick Library	5



Factor	Description	Score 0 = No 1 = minimal 3 = satisfactory 5 = outstanding
Opportunities for collaborative working with neighbours	Numerous potential partners close by including Smethwick Heritage Centre, Adult and Children's Services, Victoria Park, Shiregate Collegiate Academy, primary schools, places of worship and Thimblemill and Smethwick Libraries	5
Welcoming environment	An pleasant location being a safe residential and retail district with surrounding shops and restaurants as well as the attractive parkland and Council House building	5
Potential to be an attractive or intriguing destination	Parkland and the listed Council House provide opportunities for a very attractive civic space and facility	5
Opportunity for passive build	New build so entire building could be passive	5
Readily available for development	No other demands on the space known of at this time	5
<i>Total score</i>		<i>45</i>
<i>% of actual score out of possible total score of 45</i>		<i>100%</i>

5. Summary scores and assessment of options

	BS EN 16893 site hazard (lower score desirable)	BS EN 16893 audit (higher score desirable)	Public venue suitability (higher score desirable)	Construction cost – medium
<i>First Round Appraisal 2021 with original costs inflated by 12.5% to 2022 prices</i>				
Old Gas Showroom	22%	75%	100%	£9.7mn
Brasshouse Lane	27%	70%	82%	£8.4mn
Smethwick Library	36%	70%	69%	£9.1mn
Chances Glassworks	46%	60%	71%	£7.9mn
Highfields	14%	65%	82%	£10.4mn
Conjectural	N/A	80%	60%	£8mn
Second Round Appraisal 2022				
Smethwick Library	40%	55%	69%	£9.1mn
Sandwell Council House	-	-	-	-
Edward Street Car Park	26%	80%	87%	£9.7mn
Smethwick Council House	18%	90%	100%	£9.7mn

The summaries show that either Edward Street Car Park or Smethwick Council House would be very suitable sites. However, Smethwick Council House is the most suitable site of all the sites assessed in the two reports due to its size, attractive location, low risks and potential partners nearby. The culvert under Smethwick Library has significantly reduced its suitability as this would provide a very uncertain flood risk.



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