

**Application for Planning Permission**[click here for case file](#)

Reference	PA/20/01480
Site	Global Switch House, 3 Nutmeg Lane, London, E14 2AX
Ward	Poplar
Proposal	Construction of 10 storey power station unit and goods lift between existing stairwells on east facade of the existing Data Centre building. Addition of rooftop chiller units with screening on north east corner of the building.
Summary Recommendation	Grant planning permission with conditions.
Applicant	Global Switch
Architect/agent	AECOM
Case Officer	Victoria Coelho
Key dates	- Application registered as valid on 18/09/2020 - Public consultation finished on 13/10/2020

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Global Switch House is an existing data centre located on the eastern side of Nutmeg Lane in Poplar Ward. The surrounding area is mainly occupied by office buildings and data centres and there is a hotel to the immediate north of the site.

Global Switch House occupies a site of approximately 1 hectare and is an existing data centre of 10 storeys that has been in use since 2003. It occupies a site within a wider data centre campus and is bounded by private estate roads on all sides.

The proposals comprise a 10-storey power station unit and goods lift to be located between existing stairwells on the east façade of the existing Data Centre building, rooftop chiller units with screening to the north east corner of the building which would replace the existing roof mounted cooling equipment in that location and the reconfiguration of the existing basement to accommodate a water treatment plant to contain approximately 290m³ of water.

The height, massing and design of the extension are considered to appropriately respond to the host building and the local context. Although, of significant height, given the location of the proposed extension within an existing stairwell on the building, it would not impede upon views.

This application has been considered against the Council's approved planning policies contained in the London Borough of the Tower Hamlets Local Plan 2031 (January 2020) as well as the London Plan (2016), the National Planning Policy Framework and all other material considerations. Officers have also considered the application against the Draft London Plan (2019) as this carries substantial weight.

Officers recommend the proposed development be granted planning permission.

1. SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 1.1 Global Switch House is located on the eastern side of Nutmeg Lane in Blackwall in the Docklands area of Tower Hamlets. The surrounding area is mainly occupied by office buildings, and data centres. A travel lodge hotel is located to the immediate north of the site which has an Outline consent for demolition and replacement with a data centre.
- 1.2 Global Switch House occupies a site of approximately 1 hectare and is an existing data centre that has been in use since 2003. It occupies a site within a wider data centre campus and is bounded by private estate roads on all sides.
- 1.3 The site is located in the Blackwell Archaeological Priority Area which has the potential to contain Neolithic remains, medieval and post-medieval industrial remains and palaeoenvironmental and geoarchaeological deposits.
- 1.4 The site is located within the following designations, Blackwell Cluster Tall Building Zone. Blackwell Local Employment Location.

2. PROPOSAL

- 2.1 Planning permission is sought for the construction of an extension to the existing Global Switch data centre to allow Global Switch to meet increased demand for data centre capacity through power-intensifying the existing facility from 821W/m² to 2000W/m². The proposed new power station will feed the power-intensified floors and provide generators to supply power in case of an emergency operations scenario when power is interrupted, as well as provide more efficient water-cooled chillers and hybrid heat rejection units on the roof of the existing facility to serve the newly fitted data halls.
- 2.2 The proposals comprises a 10-storey power station unit and goods lift to be located between existing stairwells on the east façade of the existing Data Centre building, comprising 2,540sqm GFA to a maximum height of 66.63 metres above ordnance datum (AOD), including piled foundations to a depth of 45m. This will house emergency generators on each floor excluding ground level (sixteen generators in total over eight floors) to power the data centre in the event of an interruption to power. The proposed floorspace will not be 'occupied' floorspace, and will not accommodate staff other than for periodic maintenance and testing of equipment.
- 2.3 The proposals also comprises the addition of rooftop chiller units with screening to the north east corner of the building which would replace the existing roof mounted cooling equipment in that location; this is necessary to prevent the overheating of the additional power units. These will have a maximum height of 64.82m AOD and will not exceed the existing roof height of 66.65 AOD.
- 2.4 In addition, the reconfiguration of the existing basement to accommodate a water treatment plant to contain approximately 290m³ of water is proposed.

3. RELEVANT PLANNING HISTORY

3.1 PA/00/00076; Granted 19/04/2001

Erection of a 10 storey building for use as a data centre with ancillary offices, switch centre and technical and engineering operational support facilities, car parking at ground floor level (accessed from Rosemary Drive) and 4 retail units fronting Saffron Avenue, together with external landscaping.

3.2 PA/07/02722; Granted 05/02/2008

Installation of 3no. additional roof mounted chiller units and 4no. additional Diesel Rotary Uninterrupted Power Supply units (DRUPS) at roof level, together with installation of new sound attenuation measures on six existing DRUPS units.

3.3 PA/06/02196; Granted 29/01/2007

Installation of 3 new roof mounted chiller units and 4 new Diesel Rotary Uninterrupted Power Supply units (DRUPS) at roof level.

3.4 PA/10/00632; Granted 17/05/2011

External alterations including installation of three new diesel generators at roof level, installation of four new low level air conditioning units at roof level, installation of two new external access stairs at roof level and installation of new matching grey louvres at ground floor level into blank panels.

3.5 PA/11/01461; Granted 23/08/2011

External alterations including construction of three raised platforms and installation of 28 condensers at roof plant level.

3.6 PA/13/00231; Granted 04/04/2013

Replacement of 12 existing chiller units with 12 new chiller units at roof level, including 12 new small vases.

4. PUBLICITY AND ENGAGEMENT

4.1 The applicant sought formal pre-application advice from the Council in February 2020.

4.2 Surrounding occupiers were notified by post and a site notice displayed. Press notice was also published. No consultation responses were received.

5. CONSULTATION RESPONSES

EXTERNAL CONSULTEES

5.1 Greater London Authority

At the time of writing a Stage 1 response from the GLA has not been received, although validation and receipt of a referral was received on 18/09/2020 with a response due 6 weeks from this date (03/11/2020).

5.2 Environment Agency

No objection subject to informatives.

5.3 Historic England

No objection.

5.4 Historic England – Archaeology

No Archaeological Requirement.

5.5 **London City Airport**

No objection subject to conditions.

5.6 **London Fire & Emergency Planning Authority**

No comments to date.

5.7 **NATS**

No objection.

5.8 **National Grid**

No comments to date.

5.9 **Thames Water**

No objection subject to conditions.

5.10 **Transport for London**

No comments to make.

INTERNAL CONSULTEES

5.11 **LBTH Environmental Health (Air Quality)**

The following queries on the air quality impact assessment by AECOM for the additional generator were raised:

- It is noted 2017 DEFRA background maps have been used. Any reason why 2018 maps were not used
- Was a model verification undertaken.
- The IAQM position statement "Assessment of Air Quality Impacts from Combustion Plant with Limited-hours of Operation" states "When considering the long term impacts it is good practice to consider whether the sum of the process contribution and the Defra 'mapped' background concentration is sufficient when calculating the predicted environmental concentration. This approach may not be always be representative of existing ambient concentrations of pollutants (i.e. the baseline concentration), particularly in urban environments where traffic emissions may be significant". Have they taken this into account.

The additional generator will require an environmental permit from the Environment Agency. It is noted there is already a permit for existing generators and that a variation of the permit will be required from the EA.

A Demolition/Construction Environmental Management & Logistics Plan should be secured via condition.

Officer comment: The applicant provided further clarifications, to which LBTH Air Quality raised no objection.

5.12 **LBTH Environmental Health (Contaminated Land)**

Based on the number of GAC exceedances in made ground, surface waters and ground water, DQRA will be required and further ground gas monitoring. Full details should be secured via condition.

5.13 LBTH Environmental Health (Noise and Vibration)

No comments to date.

5.14 LBTH Energy Efficient and Sustainability

The development proposals include an extension for provision of additional floor area for servers and plant equipment to serve the existing data centre. The proposals as presented within the submitted energy strategy identify that new plant equipment will improve the overall efficiency of the existing development and will not increase the energy footprint of the data centre. As the proposals do not increase the energy use of the scheme the sustainable development team has no objections to the data centre extension in this specific instance.

Given the nature of the proposals is an extension to an existing building it is not considered that adopted policies for net zero carbon or BREEAM are applicable in this instance.

5.15 LBTH Surface Water Run Off

No comments to date.

5.16 LBTH Waste

No comments to date.

5.17 LBTH Transportation & Highways

No comments to date.

5.18 LBTH Employment and Enterprise

The developer should exercise best endeavours to ensure that 20% of the construction phase workforce will be local residents of Tower Hamlets. The Economic Development Service will support the developer in achieving this target through providing suitable candidates through the Workpath Job Brokerage Service.

To ensure local businesses benefit from this development we expect that 20% goods/services procured during the construction phase should be achieved by businesses in Tower Hamlets. The Economic Development Service will support the developer to achieve their target through ensuring they work closely with the council's Enterprise team to access the approved list of local businesses.

The Council will seek to secure a financial contribution of £0.00 to support and/or provide the training and skills needs of local residents in accessing the job opportunities created through the construction phase of all new development. This contribution will be used by the Council to provide and procure the support necessary for local people who have been out of employment and/or do not have the skills set required for the jobs created.

6. RELEVANT PLANNING POLICIES AND DOCUMENTS

6.1 Legislation requires that decisions on planning applications must be taken in accordance with the Development Plan unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise.

6.2 In this case the Development Plan comprises:

- The London Plan 2016 (LP)
- Tower Hamlets Local Plan 2031

6.3 The key development plan policies relevant to the proposal are:

Land Use - (*local employment location*)

- Local Plan policies - D.EMP3
- London Plan policies – LP3.14, LP4.2

Design and Heritage - (*layout, townscape, massing, heights and appearance, materials, heritage*)

- Local Plan policies - S.DH1, S.DH3,
- London Plan policies – LP7.1 - 7.8

Amenity - (*privacy, outlook, daylight and sunlight, noise, construction impacts*)

- Local Plan policies - D.DH8
- London Plan policies – LP7.6, LP 7.14, LP7.15

Transport - (*sustainable transport, highway safety, car and cycle parking, servicing*)

- Local Plan policies - S.TR1, D.TR2, D.TR3 D.TR4
- London Plan policies – LP 6.1, LP6.3, LP6.5- LP6.13

Environment - (*energy efficiency, air quality, Thames Water and contaminated land*)

- Local Plan policies – S.SG2, S.ES1, D.ES7, D.ES2, D.ES9, D.ES4, D.ES7, D.ES8
- London Plan policies – LP3.2, LP5.1 - 5.15, LP5.21, LP7.14, LP7.19, LP7.21,

6.1 Other policy and guidance documents relevant to the proposal are:

- National Planning Policy Framework (2019)
- National Planning Practice Guidance (updated 2019)
- LP Draft New London Plan (2018)

7. PLANNING ASSESSMENT

7.1 The key issues raised by the proposed development are:

- i. Land Use
- ii. Design & Heritage
- iii. Neighbour Amenity
- iv. Transport
- v. Environment
- vi. Infrastructure
- vii. Local Finance Considerations
- viii. Equalities and Human Rights

Land Use

Development in a Local Employment Location

- 7.2 The site is located within an area that is concentrated with data centres which support the needs of Canary Wharf and the City of London. The London Plan acknowledges that data centres can contribute towards employment opportunities for Londoners.
- 7.3 The site is located within a Local Employment Location (LEL), Policy D.EMP3 of the Tower Hamlets Local Plan (2020) states that development should not result in the net loss of viable employment floor space except where evidence is provided of active marketing over a continuous period of 24 months or it is demonstrated that the site is genuinely unsuitable for continued employment and that the benefits of alternative uses would outweigh the benefits of employment use. In this instance, the proposals would not result in any net loss of employment floorspace.
- 7.4 The provision of additional floorspace to the existing building is in compliance with the relevant policies, and is consistent with the strategic aims of the site.

Design & Heritage

- 7.5 Policy S.DH3 requires development to preserve, or where appropriate, enhance the borough designated heritage assets.
- 7.6 Although Global Switch house is not a designated heritage asset, to the West of the site is East India Dock House, which is Grade II* Listed. Given that the extension is proposed to the east elevation away from this building, it does not give rise to concerns in terms of the setting of the listed building.
- 7.7 The proposed extension would not result in harm to the special architectural or historic interest of the Grade II* listed building or its setting in compliance with the relevant policies, including the NPPF.
- 7.8 Policy S.DH1 requires development to meet the highest standards of design. Subject to the submission of detailed information in terms of the design and materiality, the erection of an extension in this location is supported in principle in terms of design. This is due to its positioning within two existing bays, that it projects no higher than the existing building and the context of the surrounding area which comprises other data centres and modern buildings.
- 7.9 The detailed design of the extension is in keeping with the existing, modern building and the wider context. It will read as a subordinate addition.
- 7.10 The proposed extension is in compliance with the relevant policies, and acceptable in terms of design.

Rooftop Chillers

- 7.11 The proposal includes chiller units to the roof of the building located on the northeast corner. The units will be lower than the existing roof plant and not visible from ground floor level. Although they may be visible in some longer views such as from the hotel to the north of the site, this is acceptable given the existing context of the site.

Archaeology

- 7.12 Whilst the site is located in the Blackwell Archaeological Priority Area which has the potential to contain Neolithic remains, medieval and post-medieval industrial remains and palaeoenvironmental and geoarchaeological deposits, GLAAS have confirmed that there are no archaeological requirements and therefore the proposal would accord with policy S.DH3 of the Local Plan (2020)

Neighbour Amenity

- 7.13 Development Plan policies seek to protect neighbour amenity safeguarding privacy, not creating allowing unacceptable levels of noise and ensuring acceptable daylight and sunlight conditions.

The proposed extension would not give rise to any amenity concerns, given that it is recessed within two existing bays, would be no taller than the existing building and in the absence of any residential buildings within the immediate vicinity. Furthermore, given that there are no residential units within the immediate vicinity and the site being predominately surrounded by data centres there are no concerns raised in respect to any additional noise generated from the extension.

Construction Impacts

- 7.14 Demolition and construction activities are likely to cause some additional noise and disturbance, additional traffic generation and dust. In accordance with relevant Development Plan policies, a number of conditions are recommended to minimise these impacts. These will control working hours and require the approval and implementation of Construction Environmental Management and Logistics Plan.

Transport

- 7.15 Development Plan policies promote sustainable modes of travel and limit car parking to essential user needs. They also seek to secure safe and appropriate servicing.
- 7.16 The proposed extension does not include, or require any additional cycle parking, car parking or delivery and servicing. The existing arrangement associated with the data centre will be maintained, which is acceptable.

Environment

Energy and Sustainability

- 7.17 At a national level, the National Planning Policy Framework sets out that planning plays a key role in delivering reductions to greenhouse gas emissions, minimising vulnerability and providing resilience to climate change. The NPPF also notes that planning supports the delivery of renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure. At a strategic level, the climate change policies as set out in Chapter 5 of the London Plan 2016 and the Tower Hamlets Local Plan (D.ES7) collectively require developments to make the fullest contribution to the mitigation and adaptation to climate change and to minimise carbon dioxide emissions.
- 7.18 Policy SI2 of the emerging London Plan requires major development to be net zero-carbon. This means reducing carbon dioxide emissions from construction and operation, and

minimising both annual and peak energy demand in accordance with the following energy hierarchy.

- Use Less Energy (Be Lean);
- Supply Energy Efficiently (Be Clean); and
- Use Renewable Energy (Be Green)

- 7.19 Policy D.ES7 includes the requirement for non-residential developments to be zero carbon with a minimum of 45% reduction in regulated carbon dioxide with the remainder to be offset with cash payment in lieu.
- 7.20 The development proposals include an extension for provision of additional floor area for servers and plant equipment to serve the existing data centre. The proposals as presented within the submitted energy strategy identify that new plant equipment will improve the overall efficiency of the existing development and will not increase the energy footprint of the data centre. As the proposals do not increase the energy use of the scheme the sustainable development team has no objections to the data centre extension in this specific instance.
- 7.21 Given the nature of the proposals is an extension to an existing building it is not considered that adopted policies for net zero carbon or BREEAM are applicable in this instance.

Air Quality

- 7.22 Policy D.ES2 of the Local Plan (2020) and policy 7.14 of the London Plan (2016) require major developments to be accompanied by an assessment which demonstrates that the proposed uses are acceptable and show how development would prevent or reduce air pollution.
- 7.23 The application is accompanied by an Air Quality Assessment which seeks to demonstrate compliance with Development Plan policies. Environmental Health Officers consider the balance of the assessment acceptable.
- 7.24 It is noted that the additional generator will require an environmental permit from the Environment Agency. There is already a permit for existing generators and that a variation of the permit will be required from the EA. The applicant is reminded of this via an informative.
- 7.25 In addition, the Air Quality Officer recommends that a Demolition/Construction Environmental Management & Logistics Plan should be secured via condition.

Land Contamination

- 7.26 The application has been reviewed by the Council's Environmental Health Land Contamination officer and subject to standard conditions, the proposals are acceptable from a land contamination perspective and any contamination that is identified can be satisfactorily dealt with.

Flood Risk and Drainage

- 7.27 Local Plan policies D.ES4 and D.ES5 seek to manage flood risk and encourage the use of Sustainable Urban Drainage within new developments.
- 7.28 The proposed development will result in a 'less vulnerable' use as defined by Table 2 of the Planning Practice Guidance: Flood Risk and Coastal Change within Flood Zone 3a. In line with Table 3, this use class is considered appropriate within Flood Zone 3 providing an adequate Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) is undertaken and demonstrates that the development will not be at an unacceptable risk of flooding and will not increase flood risk elsewhere.
- 7.29 The application site is located within Flood Zone 3a and is protected by the Thames Tidal flood defences up to a 1 in 1000 (0.1%) chance in any year flood event. The most recent Environment Agency breach hazard modelling study shows the site to be outside of the areas impacted by flooding if there was to be a breach in the defences or they

were to be overtopped. The Environment Agency therefore consider the development to be at a low risk of tidal and fluvial flooding.

Infrastructure Impact

- 7.30 The development would not be liable for CIL or Mayoral CIL.
- 7.31 Development Plan policies seek financial contributions to be secured by way of planning obligations to offset the likely impacts of the proposed development on local services and infrastructure. Given that the floorspace provided by the development relates to plant and machinery, the space does not fall within the definition of 'use able' and as such the NIA of the development is 0. Therefore, no financial contributions are sought.

Human Rights & Equalities

- 7.32 The proposal does not raise any unique human rights or equalities implications. The balance between individual rights and the wider public interest has been carefully considered and officers consider it to be acceptable.
- 7.33 The proposed development would not result in adverse impacts upon equality or social cohesion.

8. RECOMMENDATION

- 8.1 That subject to any direction by the Mayor of London, **conditional planning permission is GRANTED** subject to the prior completion of a legal agreement to secure the following planning obligations:

8.2 Financial obligations

- a. No financial obligations are required.

8.3 Non-financial obligations:

- a. Access to employment
- 20% local procurement
 - 20% local labour in construction
 - Construction phase apprenticeships
- b. Transport matters:
- Compliance with Considerate Constructors Scheme

- 8.4 That the Corporate Director of Place is delegated the power to negotiate the legal agreement. If within three months of the resolution the legal agreement has not been completed, the Corporate Director for Place is delegated power to refuse planning permission.

- 8.5 That the Corporate Director of Place is delegated the power to impose conditions and informatives to address the following matters:

8.6 Planning Conditions

Compliance

1. 3 years deadline for commencement of development.
2. Development in accordance with approved plans.
3. Restrictions on demolition and construction activities:
 - a. All works in accordance with Tower Hamlets Code of Construction Practice;
 - b. Standard hours of construction and demolition;
 - c. Air quality standards for construction machinery;
 - d. Ground-borne vibration limits; and
 - e. Noise pollution limits.

Pre-commencement

The inclusion of the following pre-commencement conditions has been agreed in principle with the applicants, subject to detailed wording

4. Construction Environmental Management Plan and Construction Logistics Plan (in consultation with TfL):
 - a. Site manager's contact details and complain procedure;
 - b. Dust and dirt control measures
 - c. Measures to maintain the site in tidy condition, disposal of waste
 - d. Recycling/disposition of waste from demolition and excavation
 - e. Safe ingress and egress for construction vehicles;
 - f. Numbers and timings of vehicle movements and access routes;
 - g. Parking of vehicles for site operatives and visitors;
 - h. Travel Plan for construction workers;
 - i. Location and size of site offices, welfare and toilet facilities;
 - j. Erection and maintenance of security hoardings;
 - k. Measures to ensure that pedestrian and cycle access past the site is safe and not unduly obstructed; and
 - l. Measures to minimise risks to pedestrians and cyclists, including but not restricted to accreditation of the Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme (FORS) and use of banksmen for supervision of vehicular ingress and egress.
5. Land Contamination Remediation Scheme (subject to post completion verification).
6. Cranes – construction methodology.
7. Piling Method Statement
8. Water Network Infrastructure

Pre-superstructure works

9. Details of external facing materials

8.7 Informatives

1. Permission subject to legal agreement.
2. EA Permits and variations
3. Thames Water Proximity to Assets

APPENDIX 1

LIST OF APPLICATION PLANS AND DRAWINGS FOR APPROVAL

Site Location Plan	GSL-ACM-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00000 Rev P00
Existing Basement GA	GSL-ACM-ZZ-B1-DR-A-00001 Rev P00
Existing Ground Floor GA	GSL-ACM-ZZ-00-DR-A-00002 Rev P00
Existing Upper Floor GA	GSL-ACM-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00003 Rev P00
Existing Roof GA	GSL-ACM-ZZ-RF-DR-A-00004 Rev P00
Existing East Elevation	GSL-ACM-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00005 Rev P00
Existing North Elevation	GSL-ACM-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00006 Rev P00
Existing South Elevation	GSL-ACM-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00007 Rev P00
Existing West Elevation	GSL-ACM-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-00008 Rev P00
Ground Level Visuals	GSL-ACM-ZZ-XX-DR-A-00010 Rev P00
Ground Level Visuals	GSL-ACM-ZZ-XX-DR-A-00011 Rev P00
Aerial Visuals	GSL-ACM-ZZ-XX-DR-A-00012 Rev P00
View from DLR	GSL-ACM-ZZ-XX-DR-A-00013 Rev P00
Proposed Basement Plan	GSL-ACM-ZZ-B1-DR-A-00001 Rev P00
Proposed Ground Floor	GSL-ACM-ZZ-GF-DR-A-00002 Rev P00
Proposed Typical Upper Floor Plan	GSL-ACM-ZZ-XX-DR-A-00003 Rev P00
Proposed Roof Plan	GSL-ACM-ZZ-RF-DR-A-00004 Rev P00
Proposed East Elevation	GSL-ACM-ZZ-XX-DR-A-00005 Rev P00
Proposed North Elevation	GSL-ACM-ZZ-XX-DR-A-00006 Rev P00
Proposed West Elevation	GSL-ACM-ZZ-XX-DR-A-00007 Rev P00
Proposed South Elevation	GSL-ACM-ZZ-XX-DR-A-00008 Rev P00
Proposed Section	GSL-ACM-ZZ-XX-DR-A-00009 Rev P00

Other application documents

Planning, Design & Access Statement, including Sustainability Assessment
Geotechnical and Geo-environmental Ground Conditions Report
Archaeological Technical Note
Energy Statement
Air Quality Impact Assessment
Plant Noise Assessment

APPENDIX 2

SELECTION OF APPLICATION PLANS AND IMAGES

Ariel 3D Visual



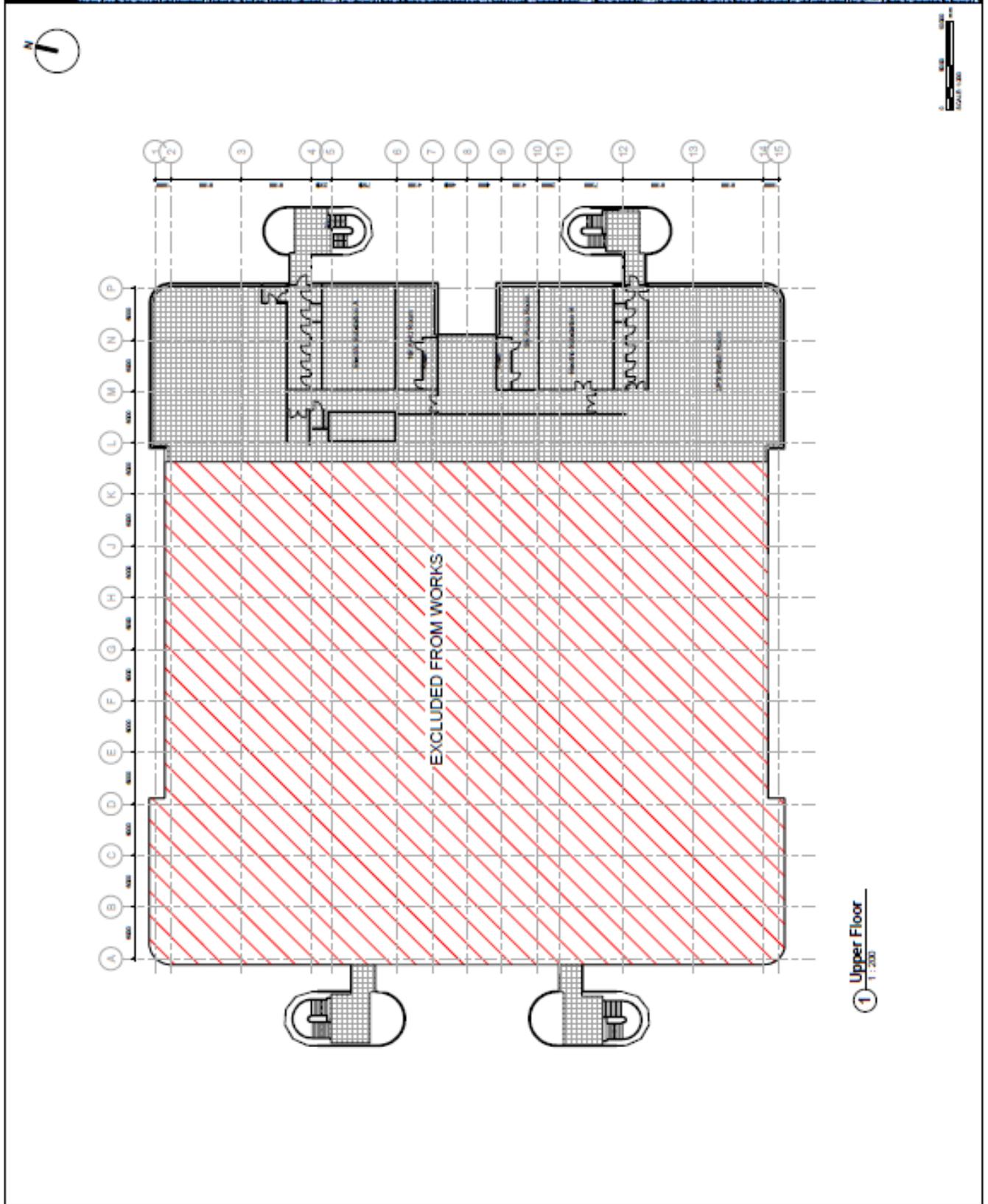
EXISTING

From the corner of Rosemary Drive and Coriander Avenue



PROPOSED

EXISTING GROUND FLOOR PLAN



EXCLUDED FROM WORKS

1 Upper Floor
1:200

Proposed Ground Floor Plan

AECOM

Project
GS LONE

Client
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Notes
ALL DRAWING INFORMATION OF EXISTING
ELEMENTS IS BASED ON RECORDS AS SUPPLIED
AND IS NOT TO BE TAKEN AS A GUARANTEE
OR WARRANTY OF ACCURACY OR COMPLETENESS
OF INFORMATION.

Scale/Description

Key Plan	
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Purpose of Issue
For Planning Approval
Project Number
00503038

