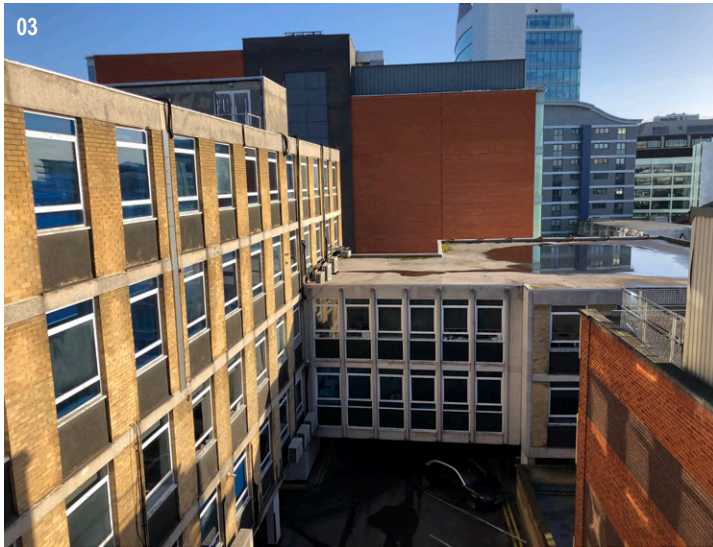
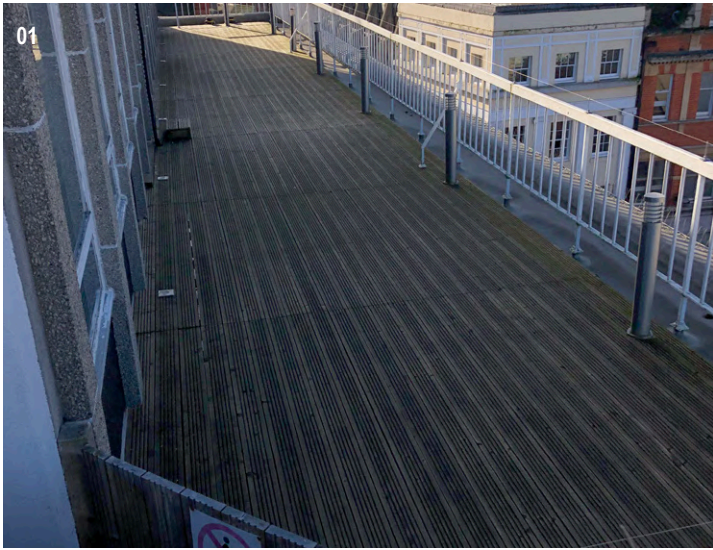


A feature of the existing building is the open terraces at roof level (01, 05 and 06, right). They offer attractive spaces with panoramic views across the town centre.

Within the heart of the site there is a parking deck as well as roof mounted building plant above ground floor uses (see 02 and 04).

As a combination of architectural elements, the existing building presents a disjointed collection of forms and uncoordinated overall appearance.



2.3 The design brief

The objective of the proposed works is to transform the interior of the building into a self contained apartment complex comprising homes and communal facilities for use by future residents. The building must meet current Building Regulations and contemporary best practice standards in terms of internal environment quality and ancillary facilities. This is required to help ensure a long term sustainable use of the building.

The approach

- A careful and strategic approach to the renovation and repurposing of the existing 1950's building aims to encapsulate the following key objectives:
- Retention of the existing structure minimising construction impacts to the environment
 - Providing much needed housing in line with Reading Council's Policy
 - Providing a good mixture of high quality homes & shared amenity space to the centre of Reading
 - Enhancing the character of the conservation area by upgrading the facade treatments

The operational brief

Tene living is a new UK brand based on an established international brand that offers accommodation opportunity to young professionals. Tene Living provides accommodation that is flexible and affordable that start from studios all the way up to 3 bedroom apartments.

As part of the offer, residents have access to central community based facilities including central living space, games room and dining facilities which change depending on location. The communal activities are often based at ground floor level to provide animation and activity at street level, and at roof level to benefit from the light, air and views. The intention in this location would be to make use of the multiple roof terraces to provide access to great outdoor space within the centre of Reading.

The offer is sustainably driven with the emphasis on the reuse of the building, minimising waste and reuse and creating a community with welfare at the heart. It provides an affordable and flexible range of accommodation to attract people to live in the centre of Reading.

Flexibility of space is key to delivering something that is appealing and appropriate for households attracted by the accessible location and self-contained nature of the host building. By creating this mix of units at varying sizes and offering amenities within the complex, it should attract a diverse community, predominantly young in profile, who will contribute to a buzzy vibe, use the amenities the town centre has to offer and be part of its continued success.

A bespoke design approach is adopted for each element in the complex in order to establish its own character and identity within its host town or city, with a design team that is hand-picked.



Above: Apartments and Communal social, living and dining spaces

Client requirements

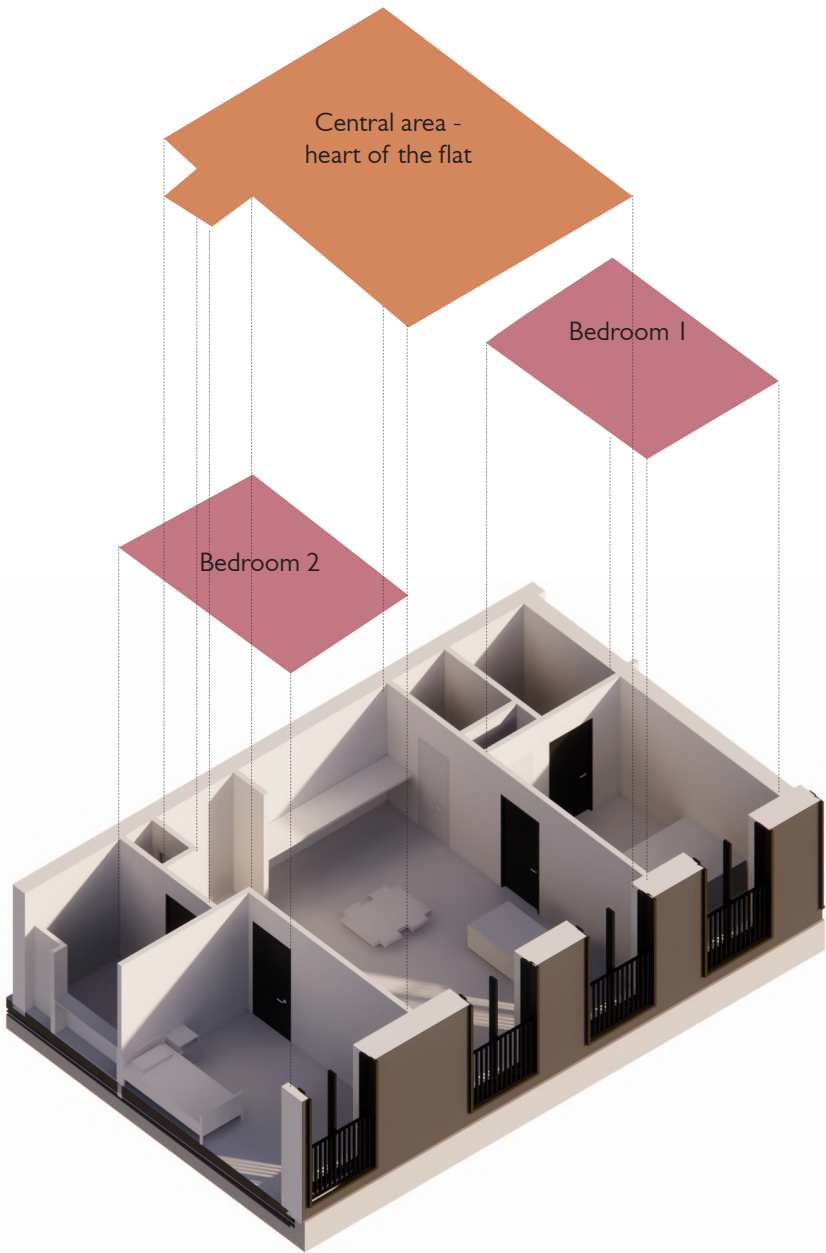
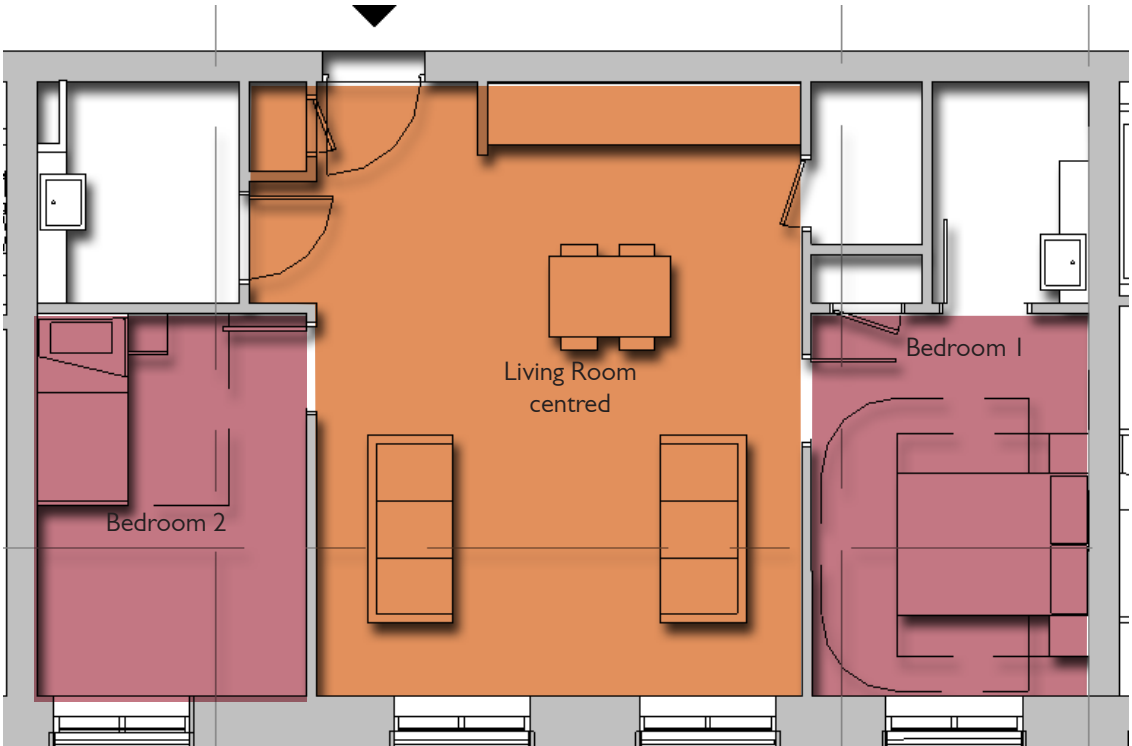
The proposed external works and additions to the building need to allow for the conversion of the existing office accommodation on the site to residential use, prior approval for which was secured on appeal in May 2022

The design strategy is to:

- explore scope for additions to the building to extend the residential offer and diversify the mix, including affordable units
- manage the overall design aesthetic and explore ways in which the character and history of the setting can be better protected and enhanced whilst retaining the existing structure
- provide communal areas for residents that includes high quality leisure space, entertainment areas and storage
- explore the distribution of units, landscaped amenity space and communal space across the site and the potential connections to street
- review the access needs of the current site and adopt a strategy that encourages more sustainable forms of travel to and from the building and step free access for mobility impaired residents
- provide a mixed, user controlled ventilation system - review heating and lighting installations and renewing outdated existing building plant where necessary
- renew building cores, install new lifts and stairs to serve the spread of apartments and the inclusion of accessible units

The diagram on the right gives an overview of the type of arrangement for new shared rental apartments

The proposals should align with the Council's strategic aims for Reading Town Centre and help to achieve the Council's primary objectives to promote town centre living in accessible locations.



2.4 Planning policy context

The design approach and brief have been led by a thorough site analysis and informed by an appraisal of the current planning policy context. This application has been prepared and submitted in light of pre-application discussions with Reading Borough Council, appraisal of draft proposals with the Design Review Panel and relevant engagement with stakeholders. Reflecting on comments during the pre-application process, the design of the scheme has altered to address comments received.

A full account of these discussions is included within the Planning Statement that accompanies this planning application. A summary of the key planning issues and relevant policy as they affect the design and access proposals is included here.

The Development Plan comprises the Local Plan (November 2019). On the adopted Proposals Map (November 2019), the site is allocated as a ‘site for Development’ (residential/office development with retail uses at ground floor) (Policy CR14e). It is also located within the: - Primary Shopping Area - Office Core - Central Core (Policy CR1);and - Proposed designated primary frontage (Policy CR7).

Of particular relevance to the proposals is Policy CR14e, which relates to the site specifically. It states:

‘Development for retail and related uses on ground floor with residential and/or offices on upper floors, designed to enhance contribution of site to Conservation Area. Possible pedestrian link between Market Place and Forbury Square/Abbey Square. Rear servicing and preservation of historic building line.

Development should:

- Enhance the Conservation Area and the setting of adjacent listed buildings;
- Reflect the prevailing height of Market Place;
- Take account of the high potential for archaeological significance;
- Address noise impacts on residential use; and
- Address air quality impacts on residential use.’

The proposals have been developed taking a positive and collaborative approach, designed to address the inherent constraints and opportunities presented by the site and its surroundings and in response to adopted policies contained within it the Development Plan.

It is a previously developed site with a high level of accessibility and within a main opportunity area for the town centre. The proposals have been robustly justified within the planning application content and suite of technical studies, none of which have identified adverse impacts.

Overall, the application accords with the adopted Local Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework, which support a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Summary of recent planning history

Ref: 200918 - Internal and external refurbishment works to existing office building, including alterations to building frontage on Market Place and

Abbey Square, roof extensions of between one and three storeys to existing building and five storey side extension to the north elevation to Abbey Square to provide a total 10, 921 sqm of new and refurbished B1 (a) office space with servicing from Abbey Square and retention of existing ground floor retail units on Market Place – Withdrawn

Ref: 210478 - Change of use of part of the ground floor, part basement, and upper floors from office use Class B1 (a) to C3, 144 studio apartments. Prior Notification under Class O, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 – Approval Granted on Appeal

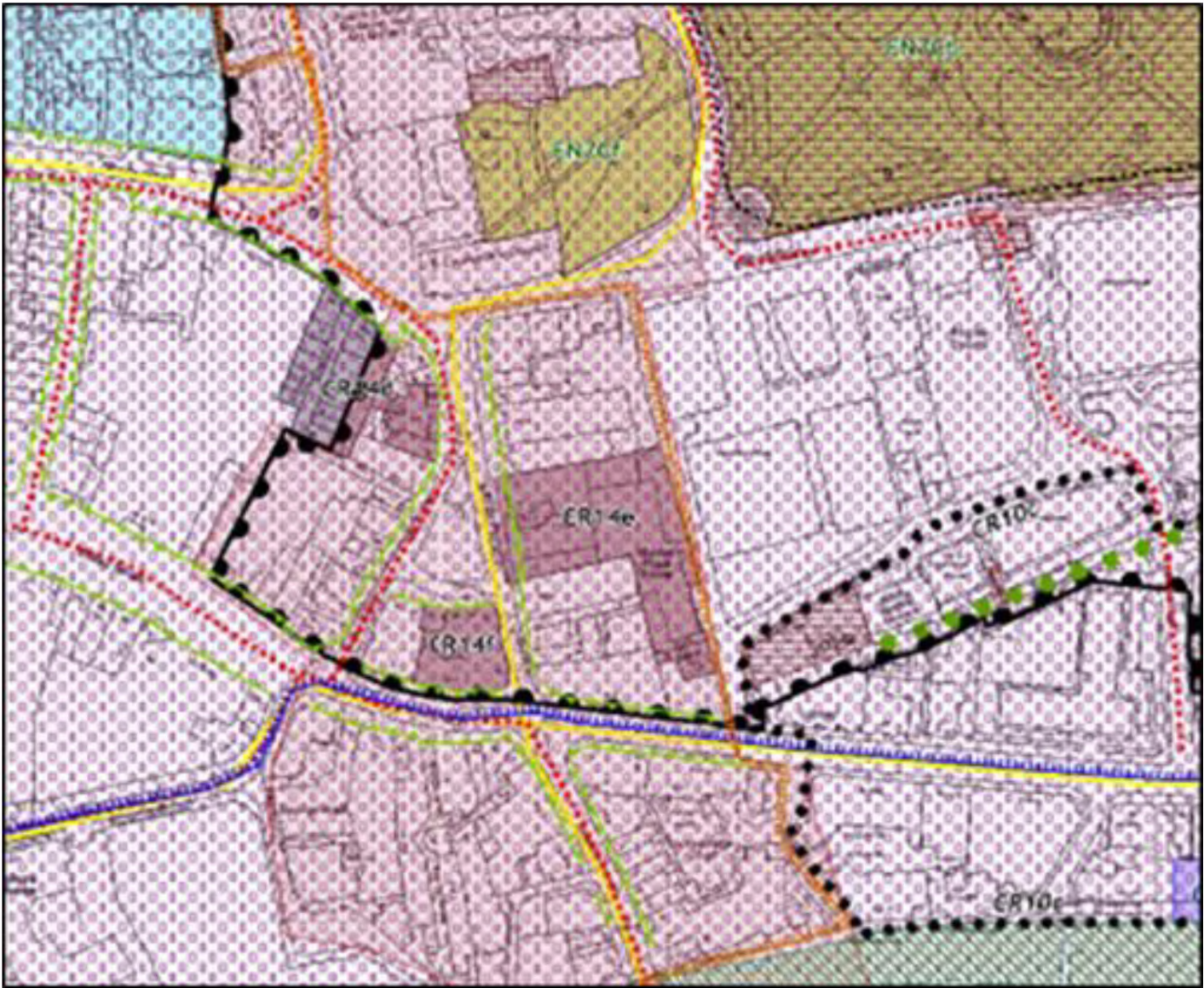
Ref: 210880 - Change of use of building Class B1(a) (offices) to C3 (dwelling houses) to comprise 100 dwellings. Prior notification under class O, Part

3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) – Prior Approval Refused

Ref: 211018 - Change of use of building Class B1 (a) (offices) to C3 (dwelling houses) to comprise 100 dwellings. Prior notification under class O, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended) – Prior Approval Refused

Ref: 211261 - Change of use of Soane Point from Class B1(a) (offices) to

C3 (dwelling houses) to comprise 93 Dwellings. Prior Notification under Class O, Part 3 of Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 – Prior Approval Given



Extract from Reading's Local Plan proposals map



2.5 Summary of site constraints & opportunities

The appraisal of the site and its context has helped identify a series of opportunities and constraints. Discussions with the Council and Design Review Panel, and other stakeholders have also informed our understanding and proposed design approach.

A summary of the site constraints and opportunities is described here and illustrated on the following page, with a series of recommendations for the design strategy to consider.

Landform, landscape & town structure
The site's location within the town centre is part of the historic core and on sloping ground near the river. This natural underlying landform is distinctive and presents challenges for the existing building which are inherited. The level difference across the site is a constraint to integration for the internal arrangement of the building and connection between basement, ground and upper floors. Circulation needs to be considered in three dimensions.

Development pattern & building form
The urban structure surrounding the site is mixed, but within this context is the most recognisably medieval part of the town centre's streets and spaces. In this unique position, the location benefits from the historic gathering space of Market Place.

In order to knit regeneration of the site back into the town centre, the proposals will need to sit harmoniously within this network of streets, maintain and support their continued prosperity and investigate ways in which the re-use of the site can contribute.

Movement & legibility
Wider issues of connection could be addressed by re-animating streets and forging new connections, introducing variety and an element of permeability.

Land use pattern
In terms of use mix, it will be important to retain a retail edge to the site on its western frontage (Market Place) and reanimate the eastern frontage to protect the quieter commercial character of those streets.

There would be scope for diversifying within the building and some of the previously more private aspects of its office use could be expressed differently to be more open and welcoming to help reinforce and animate spaces and streets around the site and improve the outlook from the building for future residents.

Conservation Area setting
The site location requires a development that builds on the positive aspects of urban form that remain directly adjacent to it. Its proximity to attractive and characterful parts of the town is a huge asset but it serves to emphasise the importance of unifying a disparate set of elements that are unsympathetic to overall historic character.

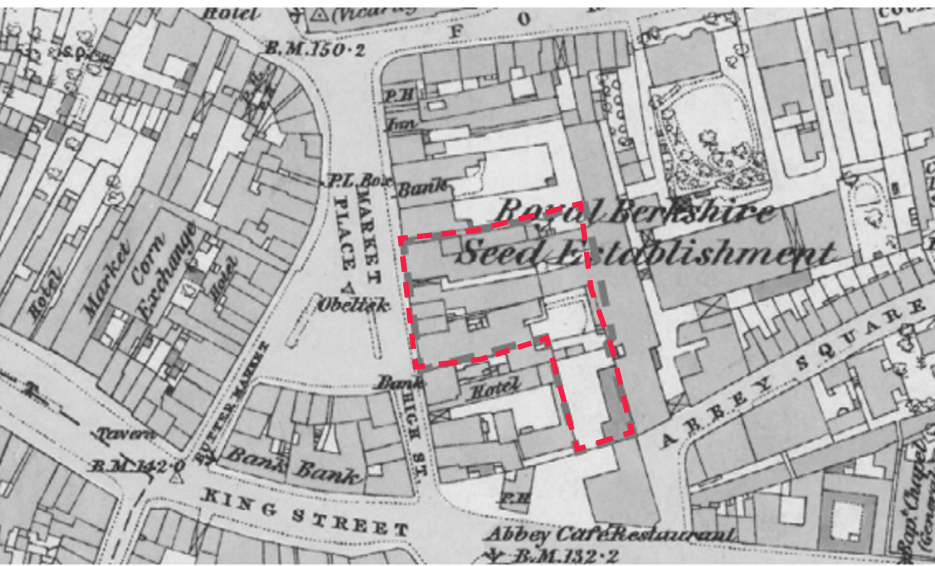
The varied type and character of buildings in the historic context do not offer a strong architectural template or typology to follow. The urban design cues from context are more strongly heritage driven and development needs to protect and enhance the key characteristics that define Reading today.

This would suggest that the protection of the urban fabric and street frontages will be important to get right, more intensity and activity at the heart of the site and efforts to reflect a new aesthetic more in-tune with the finer grain traditional appearance of historic buildings around it.

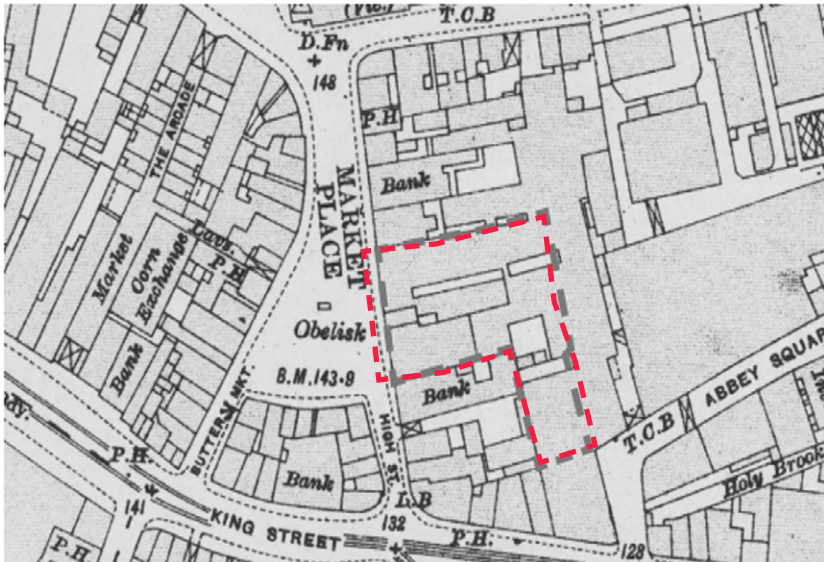
Townscape character & quality
A variety of architectural styles, building types, ages, layouts, plot widths, detailing and materials exist within streets surrounding the site. From our study of the heritage assets in the vicinity and the character of the Conservation Area, we understand that building variety is a key aspect explaining heritage significance too.

Bearing in mind the current condition of the site and its negative impact upon its setting, there are significant opportunities to deliver transformational benefits to enhance the local townscape context. Key viewpoints from surrounding streets can be used to consider how best to exploit these.

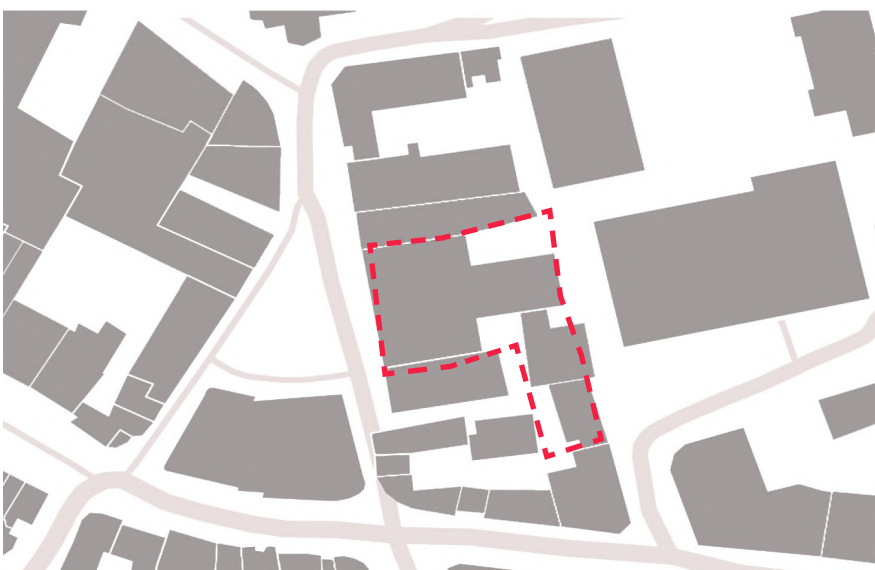
With the repurposing of the office space into residential, acknowledging noise & air quality constraints will ensure an appropriate amenity for future residents. Understanding these specialist requirements will allow the delivery of high quality living spaces, alongside shared areas within the marketplace setting.



Street Pattern 1875: Mediaval Square with Seed Company dominating Abbey Square



Street Pattern 1935: Between Abbey Square and Forbury Gardens - almost entirely growing houses /warehouses



Street Pattern 2022: Between Abbey Square and Forbury Gardens a new route opens up



FORBURY GARDENS

Opportunity for secondary access to Forbury Gardens

Opportunities for increased mass

ABBEY SQUARE

Key views from surroundings

Break down the facade's horizontality to reflect historic grain of surroundings

Jackson Corner Development

Enhanced active street frontage

Enhance conservation area with new facade

Retained & improved access to Market Place

Key views from surroundings

Key views from surroundings

BUTTER MARKET

BROAD STREET

2.5 Pre Application Consultations

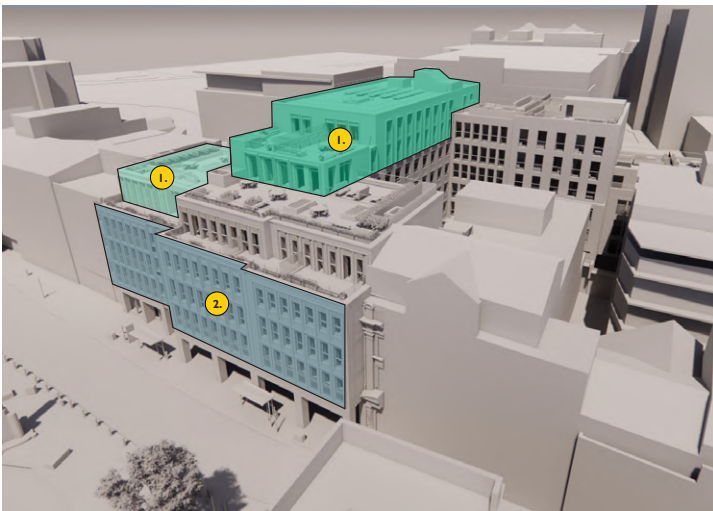
The following discussions have been held with the Council and various advisory bodies

- Pre-App meeting 1 held November 2021
- Pre-App meeting 2 held February 2022
- Presentation to the local Design Review Panel (DRP) in May 2022.
- Presentation to the Reading CAAC advisory Group in May 2022
- Online Public Consultation event July 2022

At the first pre-app meeting the Council provided feedback in relation to retaining of the building, the setting of the building within the Market Place / London Street Conservation Area, the external façade treatment, the scale and massing of the upwards extensions, the unit mix, the possibility of a pedestrian link through the site, and the impact of the proposals on amenity of nearby residents.

In response to the feedback from the first scheme, the design team brought forward a radically different approach to the design of the facades at the second Pre-App meeting, particularly to that facing market square, and tweaked the massing of the building to address all comments from the officers.

This approach was received more favourably by the officers and a detailed summary of the responses to this second pre-app meeting are given in Section 3.9 of the design and access statement.



Left: The key elements of the proposals are additional mass adding floors above the existing and a new facade to Market Place

03 Design proposals

3.1 Design approach

The primary purpose of the works is to extend the building and refresh the exterior appearance of the frontages facing the conservation area to create a more unified whole. The site already has the benefit of prior approval for conversion to residential units. A multi-discipline team has put together these proposals.

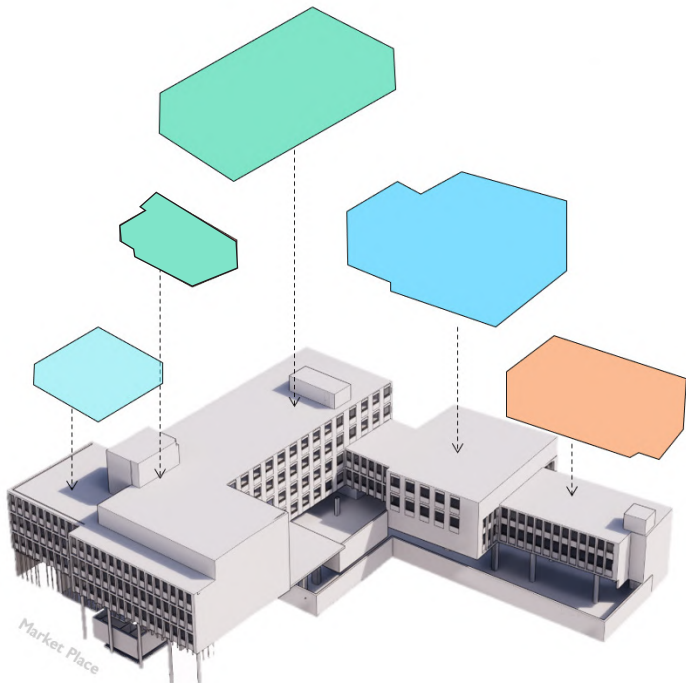
The proposed works involve the following:

- Revealing and reconnecting the ‘campus’ of blocks on site - unifying a disparate collection of building elements with a connected series of residential floors, extended at roof level, and creating new amenity space both internally and externally using available roof space
- Reconfigure circulation - improve floor to floor ease of movement, reconnect the upper floors with street level, animate the street with active and legible arrival points front and back . Create scope for ‘accessible’ residential units at key locations on upper floors
- Review scope for more space - identify areas of the existing building that are not contributing usable space, examine the building’s contribution to the spaces around it and consider how adding to or removing existing elements might positively contribute
- New aesthetic informed by history - inspired by the history of the setting, find a suitable contemporary approach, within the simplicity and honesty of the original structure, to better relate to the public spaces around the building. Review any additions and alterations in reference to key views from its surroundings
- Sympathetic palette of new materials - choose new materials that are locally distinctive, letting the character of the area and its history be the foreground

The remainder of this section is devoted to a more detailed description of the design proposals, the proposed finishes and lastly of the technical aspects of services and other interventions.

An appraisal of the proposals against relevant planning policies is included in the Planning Statement that accompanies the planning application.

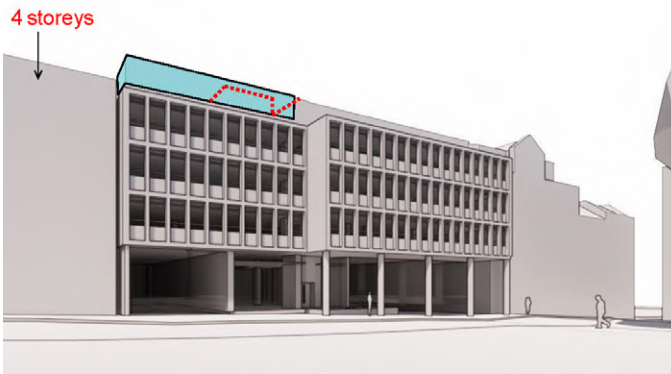
I. Additional Massing



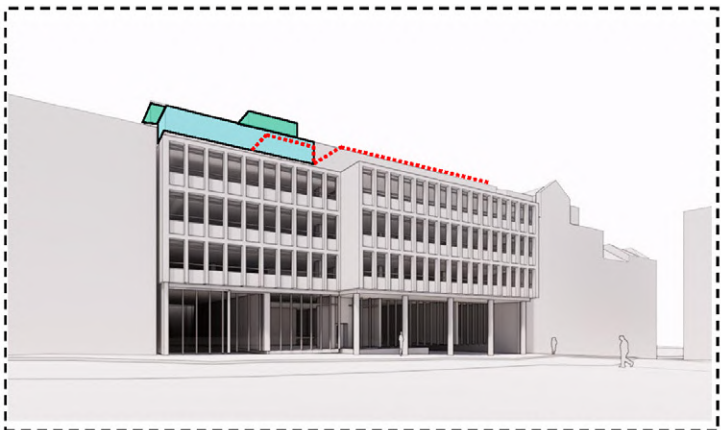
Design Approach Summary



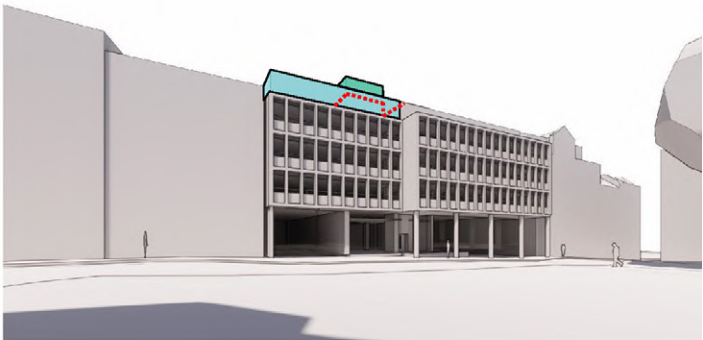
Right: Summary of the key elements of the proposed design approach and the development studies undertaken by the design team
Opposite page: Summary of the final design



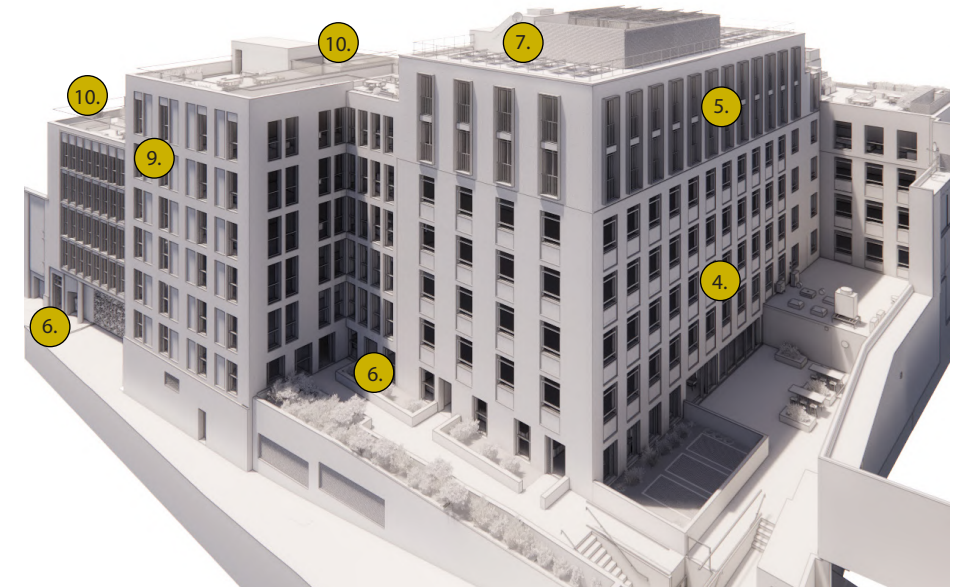
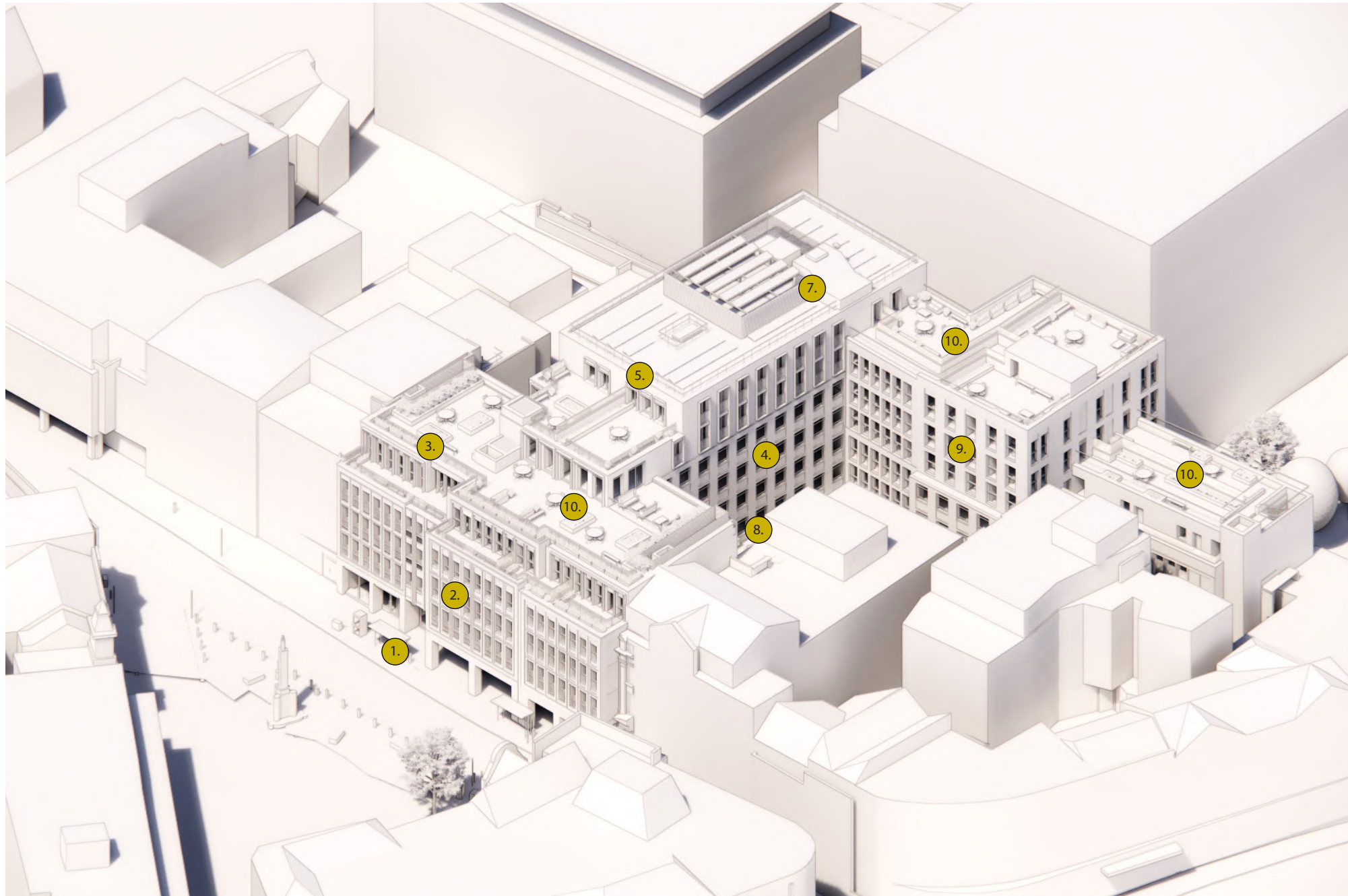
Massing Study 1



Massing Study 2



Massing Study 3



1) At ground level, fronting Market Place, the existing dentist surgery and Tesco store to be retained whilst improving the new residential entrance foyer's presence on the street

2) New architectural facade treatment bringing the different elements together in visual terms

3) 1 storey addition set back from Market Place at 4th floor level over the northern part of the Market Place frontage,

4) Existing office building to be converted into 144 new residential homes

5) A two storey addition to the Rear block facing the inner courtyard that is not visible from Market Place

6) Creation of more prominent entrances on the eastern elevation (rear) including the conversion of existing car parking at ground level to shared residential amenity space (access to basement parking is retained at lower level)

7) Internal circulation within the building rationalised to accommodate a new fire fighting core linking access between ground floor social hub and upper floor residential homes

8) Existing outdoor courtyard in the centre of the site to be retained and landscaped with direct connection to the adjoining communal areas

9) A part two and part three storey addition to the rear block to create a continuous integrated frontage on the eastern edge of the site

10) A network of landscaped roof terraces created to improve the amenity offer for residents.

3.2 Layout and residential mix

The site is just over 0.25 hectares in size and occupied by a single building comprising a number of apparnet blocks. Examples of the existing floorplans are shown below.

The limitations of the existing layout are evident, with a dominance at lower ground level by non-active frontage on Abbey Square and the amount of space devoted to car parking and other ancillary uses. At upper floor level there is compartmentalised office space with poor internal circulation.

The existing uses are:

- Offices - occupying all floors, but with a footprint at ground level that is limited to the main entrance on Market Place, a secondary (service) entrance on Abbey Square and connecting block through the centre of the site
- Retail - a Tesco Metro store currently occupies the unit fronting Market place at street level to the south of the office entrance and reception. It remains in place as part of these proposals
- Dental Surgery - this occupies the Market Place frontage north of the office entrance and reception. It is retained under the proposals
- Car parking - a part undercroft and part basement car park is accessed from the Abbey Square frontage. The proposals result in the retention of 20 car parking spaces, including 3 DDA spaces for the use of the residents.

A schedule of existing and authorised uses is shown on the right.

The proposals will result in an overall increase in floorspace of 3,596sqm (GIA) resulting in 38 dwellings.

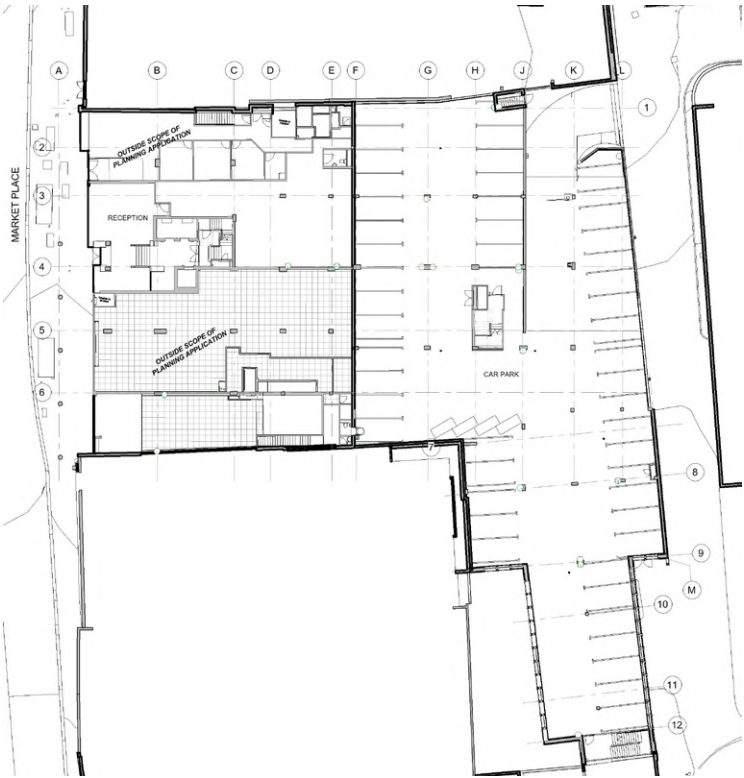
The additional area is split between 11 affordable homes and separate entrance from Abbey Square, and 27 market homes with associated shared internal facilities and external terraces.

The 38 new homes comply with the nationally prescribed minimum space standards and all homes have access to shared external amenity space. The design of the apartments minimises north facing single aspect units and provides as many corner units with dual aspect as possible.

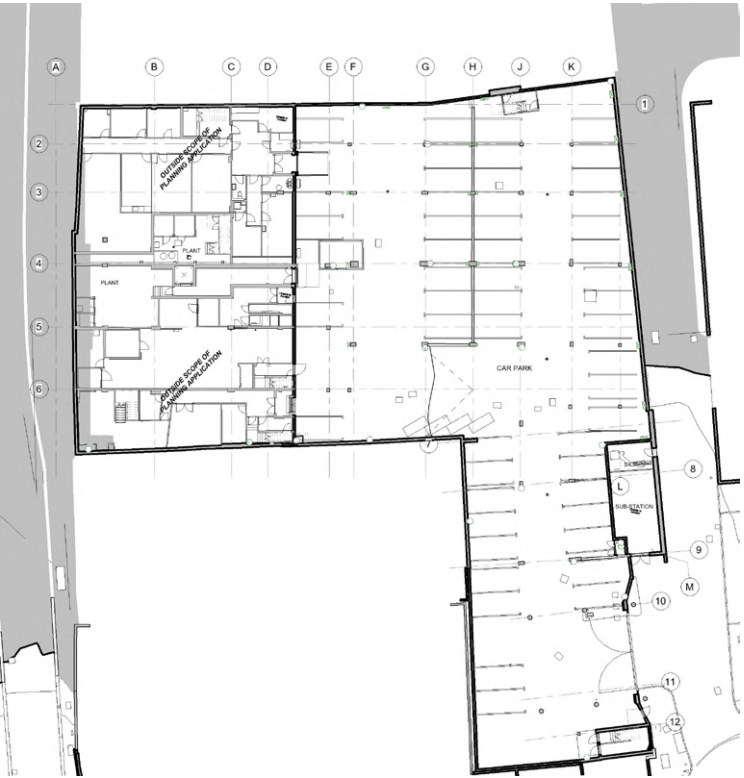
Proposed Area Schedule

Floors	Existing		Proposed Additional Massing					
	GIA		GEA		GIA		NIA	
	sqm	sqft	sqm	sqft	sqm	sqft	sqm	sqft
Basement	82	883	0	0	0	0	0	0
Ground & Podium	318	3,423	1,287	13,853	1,144	12,314	789	8,493
First	1,641	17,664	0	0	0	0	0	0
Second	1,445	15,554	228	2,454	160	1,722	125	1,346
Third	1,098	11,819	591	6,362	465	5,005	394	4,241
Fourth	828	8,913	522	5,619	473	5,091	414	4,456
Fifth			994	10,699	909	9,784	689	7,416
Sixth			491	5,285	445	4,790	349	3,757
Seventh - Roof								
Totals:	5,412	58,255	4,113	44,272	3,596	38,707	2,760	29,709

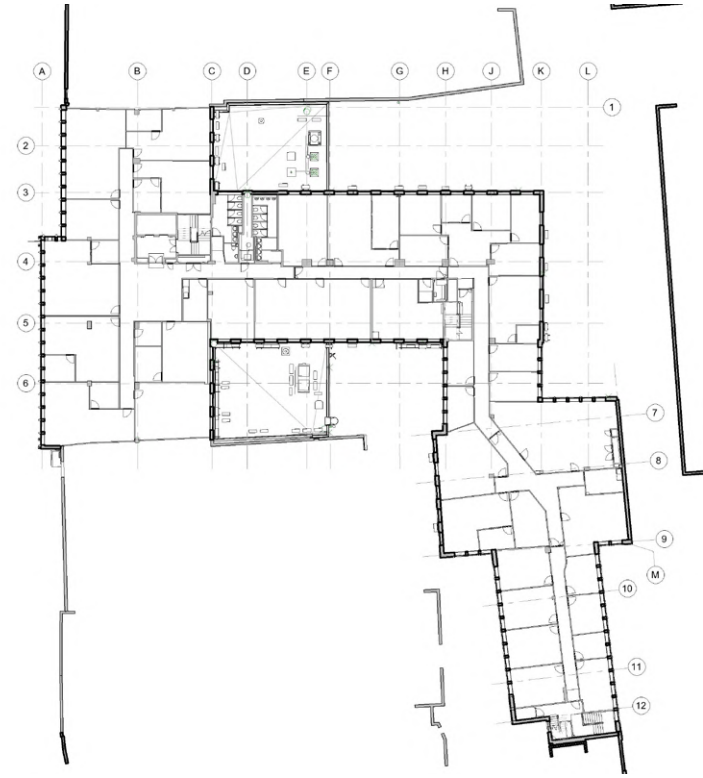
Podium level (existing ground in Market Place)



Basement level (existing ground in Abbey Square)



Existing office floor layout (Level 2)



Entrances

The amount and location of floorspace for retail, dentist surgery and authorised residential conversion uses does not change, however the amount of ancillary space for car parking and other operational floorspace is altered.

The diagram on the right shows the relationship of uses at street level.

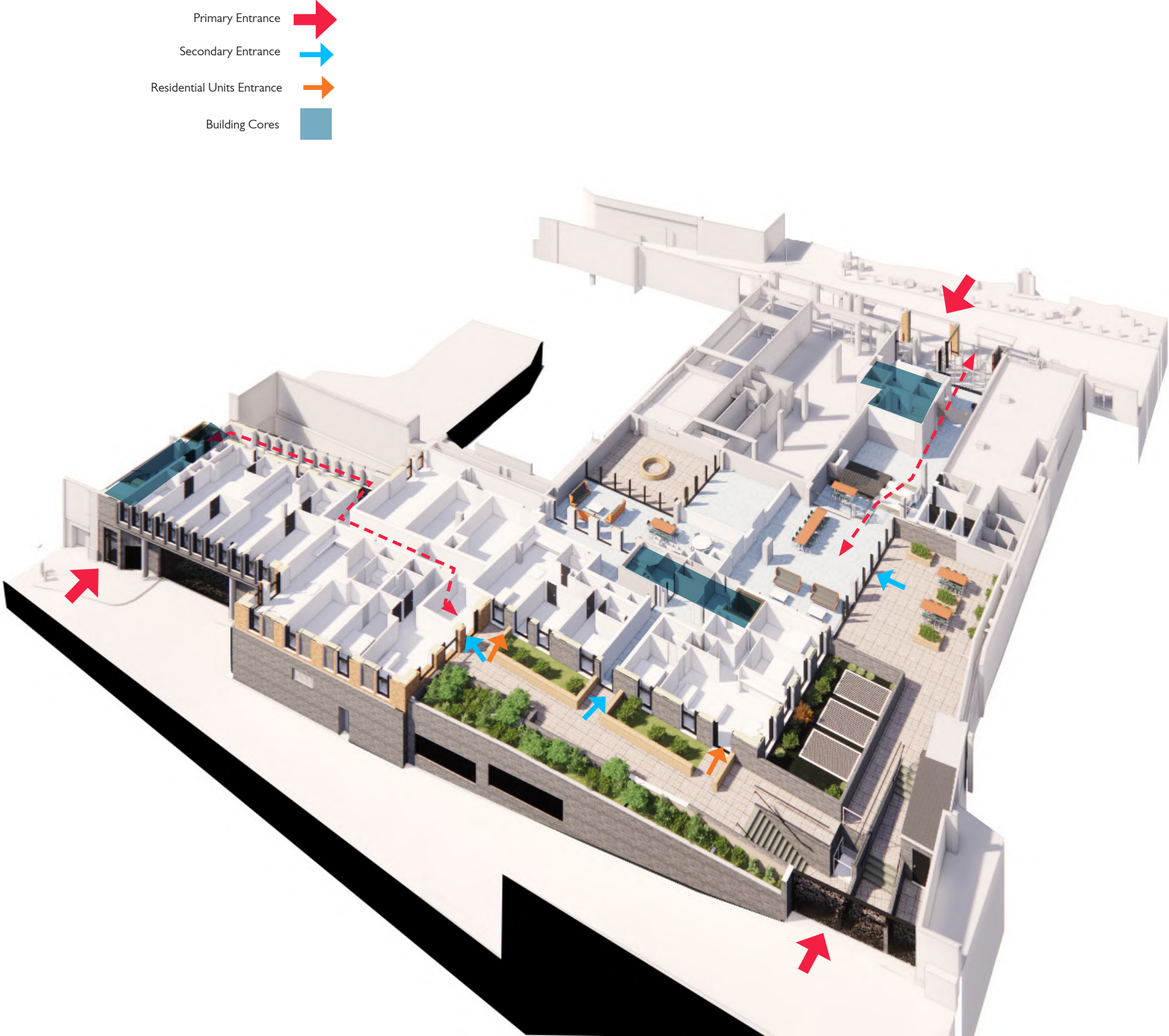
The residential foyer area on Market Square is doubled in width and becomes more prominent. It links through a central communal space at the heart of the building to a secondary entrance connecting with Abbey Square.

There is a new entrance to the affordable housing on Abbey Square which ensures the vibrabcy of the frontage of the square through out the course of the day and evening. The current upper deck of car parking space is given over to new dwellings, making a much larger presence for active frontage facing Abbey Square than currently exists.

The circulation strategy (see 3.3 and Access Statement) then introduces vertical connection between floors.



This page, right: ground floor layout explaining the distribution of uses at street level
Above: vertical distribution of uses throughout the building shown in section



3.3 Layout and circulation

The design proposals for circulation are as follows:

1 - Orientation and active frontages – the streets and spaces surrounding the site will be animated in order to protect their function, vibrancy and commercial viability

2 - Building entrances, exits and communal spaces – footfall is spread around the building perimeter to allow activity to provide its own passive surveillance and security. The entrance to the main residential accommodation will be from the enlarged entrance on Market Place Square and a new entrance on Abbey Square. The entrance to the affordable accommodation is either through a new entrance on Abbey Square or direct into the upper ground floor apartments

3 - Managing traffic – the network of roads around the site will be used as existing to maintain their function and pattern of use, to enhance or strengthen existing connections and manage the reduced vehicle traffic generated by the development in an environmentally sustainable way

4 - Amenity space within the development – residents will be provided with a connection to natural spaces for their use, health and wellbeing. There will be both internal and external shared amenity space at ground level floor to bring the residents together and provide an attractive outlook. The existing high level outlook across the town, which is an attractive feature of the building currently, will be protected and enhanced with a series of upper level shared and private terraces for the residents of the building to enjoy.

5 - Ensuring privacy and minimising general disturbance – the development proposals are sited within an existing business community that enjoys amenities and levels of light, air quality, ambient noise and privacy that will be respected. Particular care has been given to protecting the outlook of the new residents at Jacksons Corner where the new apartments have an outlook to Abbey Square only.



Internal re-organisation of space

For the residential element of the scheme the primary vertical circulation access at Core A will be retained but a new secondary lift will be added in the heart of the scheme to the secondary Core B to provide firefighting access and better circulation for residents. Each element or block will have a sense of its own identity.

The diagram on the right shows how the two cores are linked through the central communal amenity spaces at ground level, which will become the social and meeting place of the new residential community.

A new lift is provided in Core C which forms the vertical circulation for the residents of the affordable accommodation.

Market Place connection

The reorganisation of internal circulation presents an opportunity for the building to have a better and more interactive relationship with the street.

The proposals will result in the residential entrance location becoming more prominent which allows the proposed socialising spaces to have a direct connection to the street and through out on to Abbey Square. This creates a more pleasant welcome experience for the residents and their guests and provides a new more interactive visual relationship with the street from within the building.

Abbey Square connection

The proposals will help transform the and reanimate this frontage with additional height and a residential presence facing the public square.

The new entrance to the affordable accommodation site from the east, provides animation to the Abbey Square elevation. Combined with the proposed alterations to the new gate way into the loading bay and the enhacement to the treatment of the ground floor materials and louvres, it will all help to improve the feel of this elevation.

The link through the building from the residential element of the scheme provides some level of permeability to the building.

Far right: Internal re-organisation at ground level

Right: The building's presence on the street will be enhanced by the proposals, with clearer and more welcoming points of entry



Basement floor

The basement floor will be reformatted and partly re-purposed to provide new facilities for:

- (1) cyclists facilities accessed from Abbey Square.
- (2) new plant rooms including sprinkler tank rooms and electrical incoming rooms
- (3) Storage space for the residents
- (4) retained loading bay space for the non-residential units
- (5) A new refuse collection points for the new homes.
- (6) 20 carparking spaces are retained for the new residents at this level to meet Reading planning policy, including 3 Accessible places with 3 EV charging points.

Residential units within existing floors

The existing compartmentalised office layout is to be converted to residential use, providing 144 studio apartments. These have been approved under a seperate application.

Residential units within proposed additional floors

38 new residential units are to be created within additional floors to be added to the building and conversion of an existing car park podium level. The diagram on the right illustrates where the additional units are located in relation to the existing building.

New building stair and lift cores will serve all upper floor. These link back to ground level through the central communal spaces, but also offer a connection to upper floor communal spaces and outdoor shared amenity space at roof level.

The change in circulation this establishes means that amenity provision can be evenly distributed throughout the building, but always accessible from lift and stair cores.

- Affotrdable Accommodation - - - - -
- Primary Entrance ->
- Secondary Entrance ->
- Residential Units Entrance ->



Lower Ground Floor Plan