



st.martin's
Centre
Caversham

DESIGN STATEMENT

**BARTON
WILLMORE**

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01. Introduction

SITE AND CONTEXT

This document is submitted in support of a full planning application for 51 Church Street and Archway House (west), St Martin's Centre, Caversham.

This Design and Access Statement is intended to explain the design process behind the proposals and will outline the scheme and discuss how the proposals can be delivered alongside the wider regeneration works. The document will explain the existing uses of the site and functions which shape the overall development. The final scheme design will also be explained and illustrated, demonstrating the rationale behind the layout and architectural design.

BACKGROUND TO THE PROPOSALS

In March 2015 planning permission was granted under Application number 140997 for a wider scheme involving retail, leisure, residential, public realm, car park and landscape works and is currently being implemented on a phased basis. Phase 1b, which involved works to the shop fronts, canopies and public realm, has recently been completed.

This application therefore seeks a standalone planning permission for a new cinema consisting of the following:

- Ground floor feature entrance located adjacent existing access to offices with new lift and signage;
- First floor cinema with associated concierge and ticket sales area; and
- Second floor areas which form part of the gym will be allocated to the double height space for cinema screens.

The application will also embrace the vacant space in Archway House on the ground floor which will be a change of use to offices.

This document therefore considers the proposed development in light of both the existing and approved land uses.

Through a series of diagrams, photographs, sketches and drawings, the proposed architectural design evolution will be explained, which takes into account the site considerations and influences associated with its location within the District Centre whilst ensuring that the proposals respond to, and seamlessly integrate with, the consented proposals for the wider St Martin's Centre.



02. Assessment

SITE AND CONTEXT

This chapter provides a detailed description of the site and the surrounding area, as well as considering the constraints and opportunities which have influenced the scheme design.

THE SITE

The site lies within Caversham which is a second tier settlement within the Borough and is specifically within the designated District Centre boundary. The District Centre provides key local services and operates as an alternative shopping destination to Reading town centre.

The site itself comprises a Food store at ground floor and Gym/Office use at first floor and Gym uses at second floor.

Parking for the site (both staff and customers) is provided to the rear within the main St Martins Centre car park, accessed from Archway Road.

Areas that are within the envelope of the building also include uses for food store storage and staff facilities. These areas are outside of the application and will be retained as ancillary retail space for the food store.

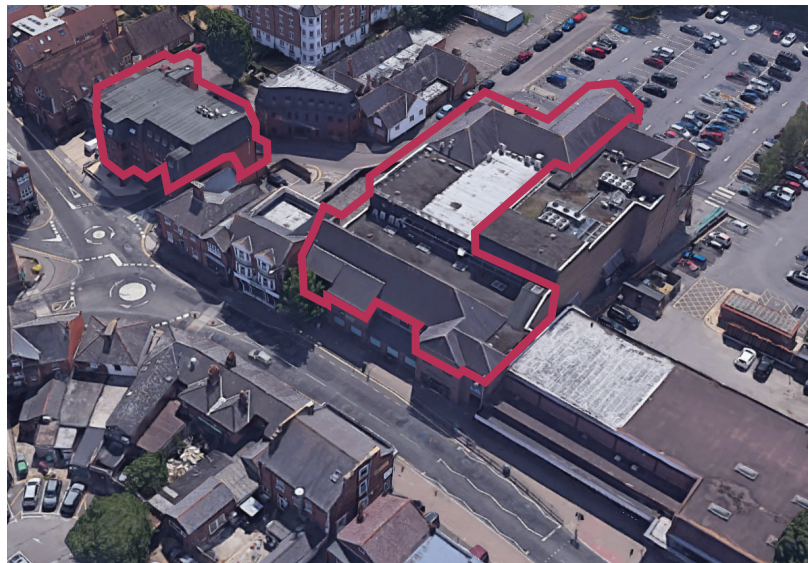


fig. 2 Site birds eye view

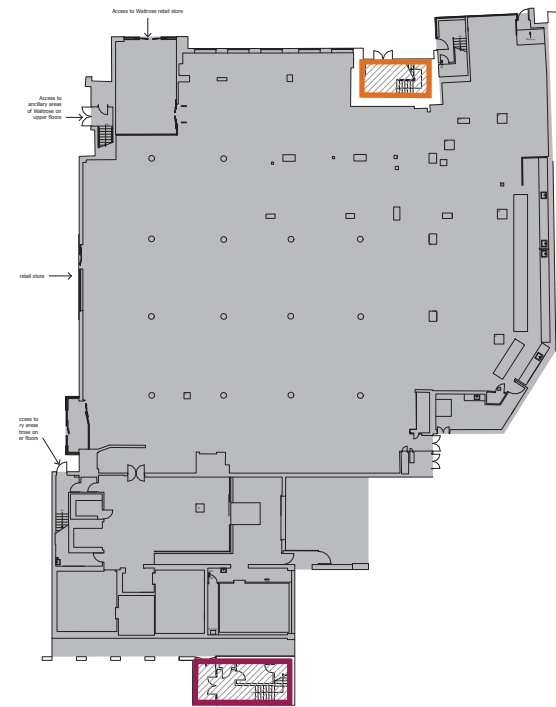


fig. 3 Existing Ground floor plan

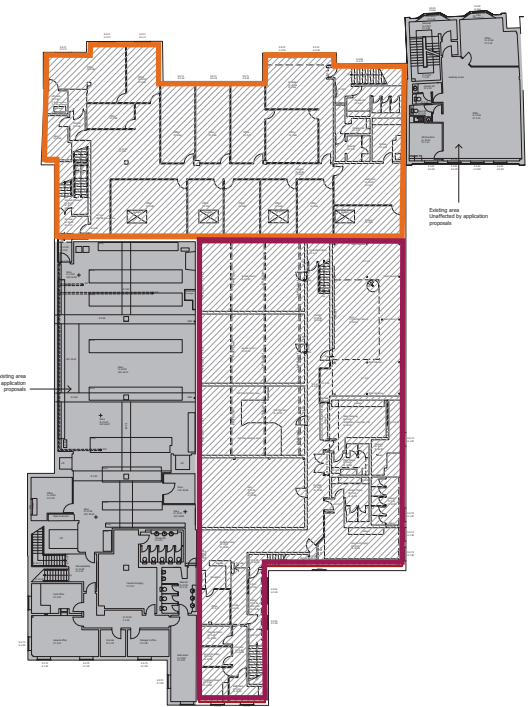


fig. 4 Existing First floor plan

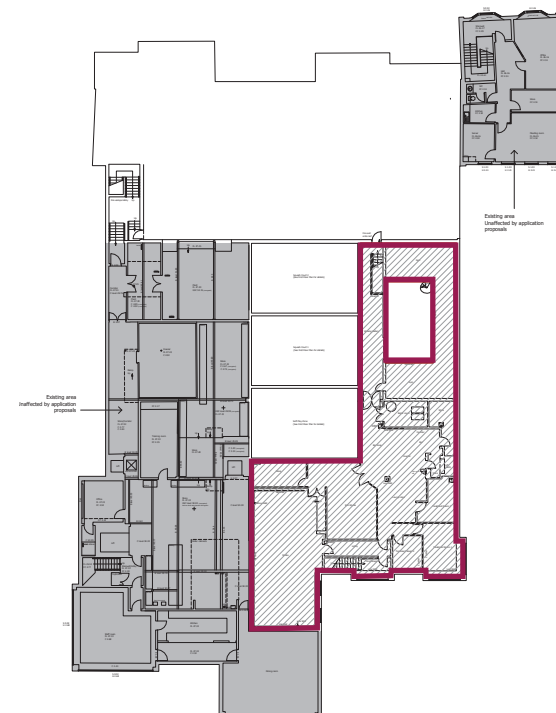


fig. 5 Existing Second floor plan

KEY	
	GYM
	OFFICE

02. Assessment

EXISTING CONTEXT

The site will be part of an existing building constructed from brick elevations within a pitched roof. The existing entity is currently a 3-storey building comprising a mix of units including a food store, and its ancillary retail located alongside an existing gym and separate self contained office accommodation to the front of the site. The application site consists of the Gym and existing office areas only.

The approach to the existing ground floor area forms a setback within the façade of the food store. A set of discrete double doors provide access to a stair to access the first floor offices which are currently in use by a solicitors practice. This first floor area faces out towards Church Street and the rear of this area is a contained area consisting of an existing gym and partial food store ancillary areas. The food store area will be retained as existing and is not affected in this application. An existing service lift and shared access stairs to the offices are located to the north-west and accessed via the existing food store walkway from the ground floor. The stair provision will be retained, and the existing service lift demolished.

Currently the gym access is provided from the rear of the site underneath the existing building colonnade. The existing stair leading to the first floor will be retained and generally no modifications are proposed apart from signage areas at high level.

An existing tree is located directly opposite the existing office entrance. The location of the tree is off-set towards the pavement and not directly mid-way along the pavement line. The location of the tree in its current position to a degree impedes access around the tree for pedestrians.

SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

The area surrounding the application site is characterised by retail and commercial premises, with a food store forming one end of the District Centre, connections leading through to the car park at the rear of the site are formed from the main High Street – Church Street via a precinct known as St Martins Square and then an open side entrance adjacent the existing food store.

Generally, the Centre dates to the 1960's which was constructed using traditional materials of its time; brick and timber cladding. The massing of the site generally follows the principles of low-level concrete frame and masonry load bearing structures.

The overall Caversham Centre forms a vibrant connect and destination point for locals. The uses dominated include retail, restaurants and cafés. Other surrounding uses to the north, east and west include a petrol filling station, Caversham Library, a social club, Church, offices estate agencies and educational establishments. In terms of overall architecture, no style dominates but the Library and Church form part of a collection of quality local buildings. The Centre however is dominated with brick in various styles and from the Library to the existing 1960's St Martin's Centre and is a material which seems to crystalize the Centre.

OPPORTUNITIES

The proposals will seek to develop the upper floors of the existing building comprising the gym and office areas and provide a new entrance along Church Street. Both front and rear elevations of the site are important aspects which will assist to influence the identity of the proposals. The opportunities to further enhance the existing predominantly brick building along this section of the Centre will not only seek to improve activity but also improve accessibility.



fig. 6 Church street proposed entrance frontage



fig. 7 Food store frontage on Church Street

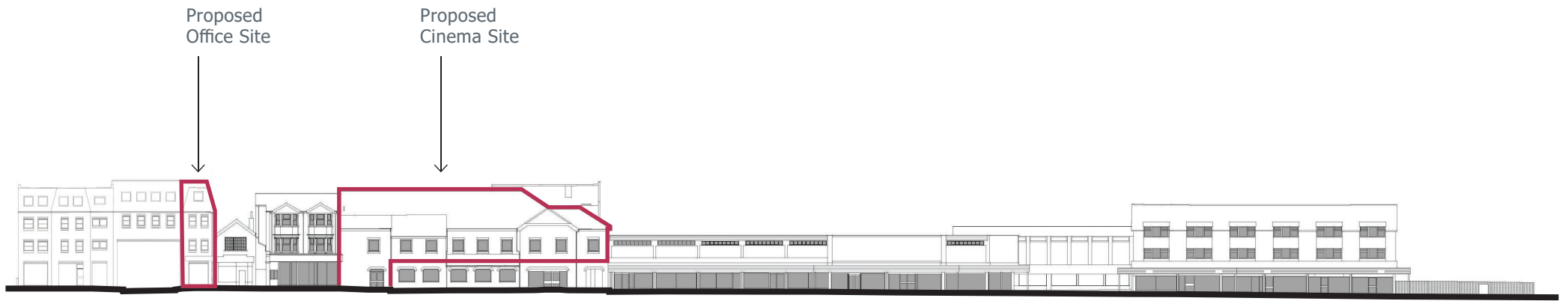


fig. 8 North Elevation - Church Street

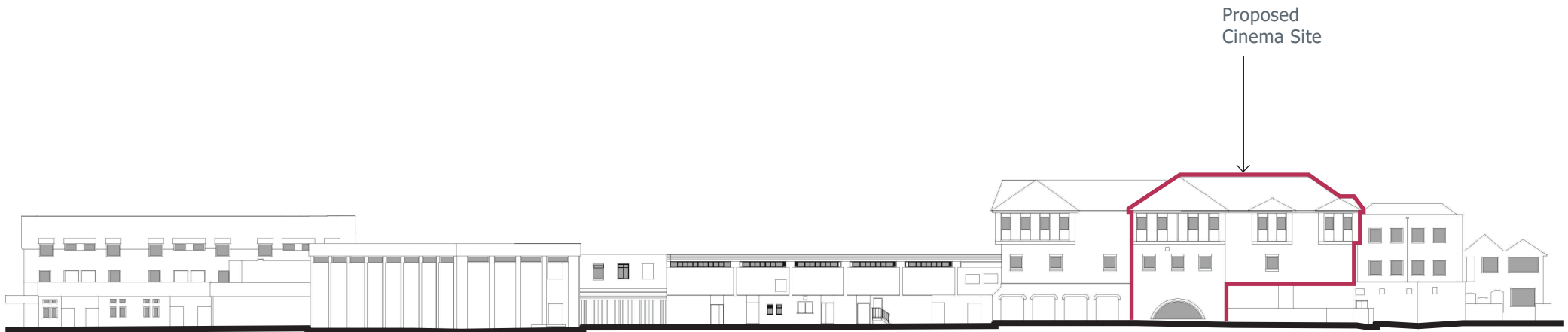


fig. 9 South Elevation - Abbotsmead Place



fig. 10 Existing Elevation



fig. 11 Extant Permission Elevation

03. Assessment

PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

Reading Local Plan (2019)

The Reading Local Plan was adopted in November 2019 and provides the design policies that have informed the proposals. The relevant policies are included below. A further planning policy assessment is included within the supporting Planning Statement.

CC6 – Accessibility and the intensity of development

The scale and density of development will be related to its level of accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport, to a range of services and facilities, with the densest and largest scale development taking place in the most accessible locations. Unless it can be demonstrated that the accessibility of a site is to be significantly upgraded, for example, by providing high quality pedestrian routes or providing access to good public transport services, any new development must be at a scale, density and intensity appropriate to that level of accessibility.

CC7 - Design and the public realm

All development must be of high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area of Reading in which it is located. The various components of development form, include:

- Layout: urban structure and urban grain; Landscape; Density and mix; Scale: height and massing; and Architectural detail and materials will be assessed to ensure that the development proposed makes a positive contribution to the following urban design objectives
- Character - a place with its own identity and sense of place
- Continuity and enclosure
- Quality of the public realm and provision of green infrastructure and landscaping
- Ease of movement and permeability
- Legibility - clear image and easy to understand
- Adaptability – capable of adaptation over time
- CC8 – Safeguarding Amenity

Development will not cause a detrimental impact on the living environment of existing residential properties or unacceptable living conditions for new residential properties, in terms of Privacy and overlooking; Access to sunlight and daylight; Visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development; Harm to outlook; Noise and disturbance; Artificial lighting; Vibration; Dust and fumes; Smell; Crime and safety.

The position of habitable rooms, windows and outdoor living spaces will be particularly important. Other aspects to which this policy applies will include matters such as hours of operation of businesses, and effects of traffic movements, particularly of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs).

EN14 - Individual trees, groups of trees, hedges and woodlands will be protected from damage or removal where they are of importance, and Reading's vegetation cover will be extended.

The quality of waterside vegetation will be maintained or enhanced. New development shall make provision for tree retention and planting within the application site, particularly on the street frontage, or off-site in appropriate situations, to improve the level of tree coverage within the Borough, to maintain and enhance the character and appearance of the area in which a site is located, to provide for biodiversity and to contribute to measures to reduce carbon and adapt to climate change.

Measures must be in place to ensure that these trees are adequately maintained.

Policy EN17 – Noise Generating Equipment

Where noise generating equipment is proposed, the noise source specific level (plant noise level) should be at least 10dBA below the existing background level as measured at the nearest noise sensitive receptor.

04. Design Response

This statement supports an application to replace an existing ground floor office entrance, first floor offices and first and second floor gym unit with a 3 screen cinema, entrance extension and associated concierge and tickets sales. The design response is discussed in this section. The main principles of the design relate to providing access to the upper levels of the building by utilising the existing entrance to the offices, maintaining the access from the rear of the site to provide a means of escape and conversion of the first floor and part second floor to provide workable layout for a cinema operator.

Overall the proposed cinema is considered in this location to be a use that will compliment the wider regeneration proposals and benefit the vitality the area. The proposed conversion of the gym is ideal for providing a large volume of space to locate cinema screens without further intervention to the existing building. Extensions to the building are limited to providing an entrance access only at ground floor which will contain a feature stair and a lift.

The height of the building measures 8.05m and projects approximately 1.2m in front of the existing office entrance. The principle of the form of the building proposes to align gently with the adjacent building with deliberate spacing creating a 'shadow gap'. The entrance will also form a similar detail with the building it serves.



fig. 12 Illustrative CGI

Existing Stair
to be used as
means of escape

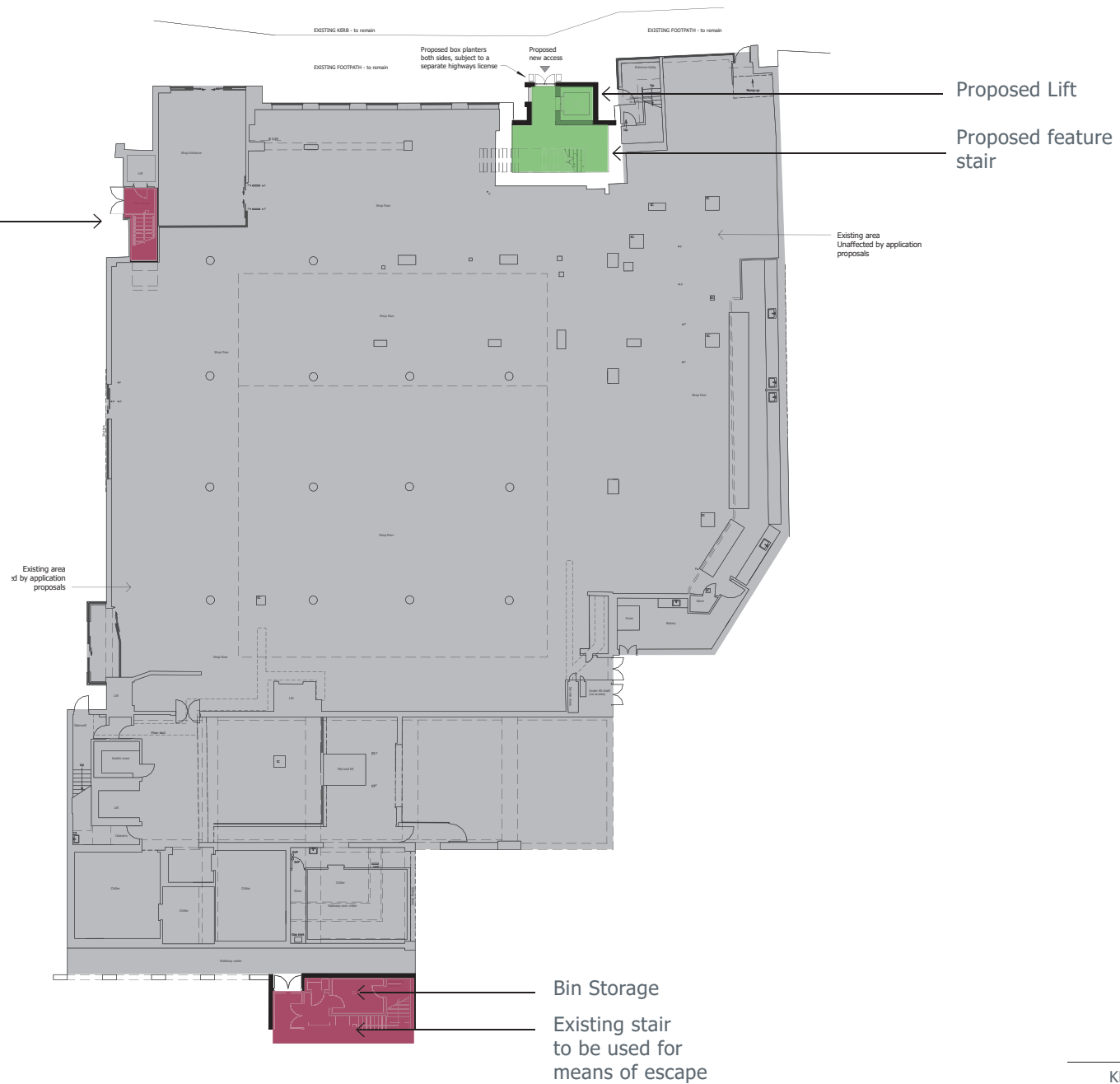


fig. 13 Proposed Ground Floor Plan

KEY	
■	Extended Area at Ground Floor level

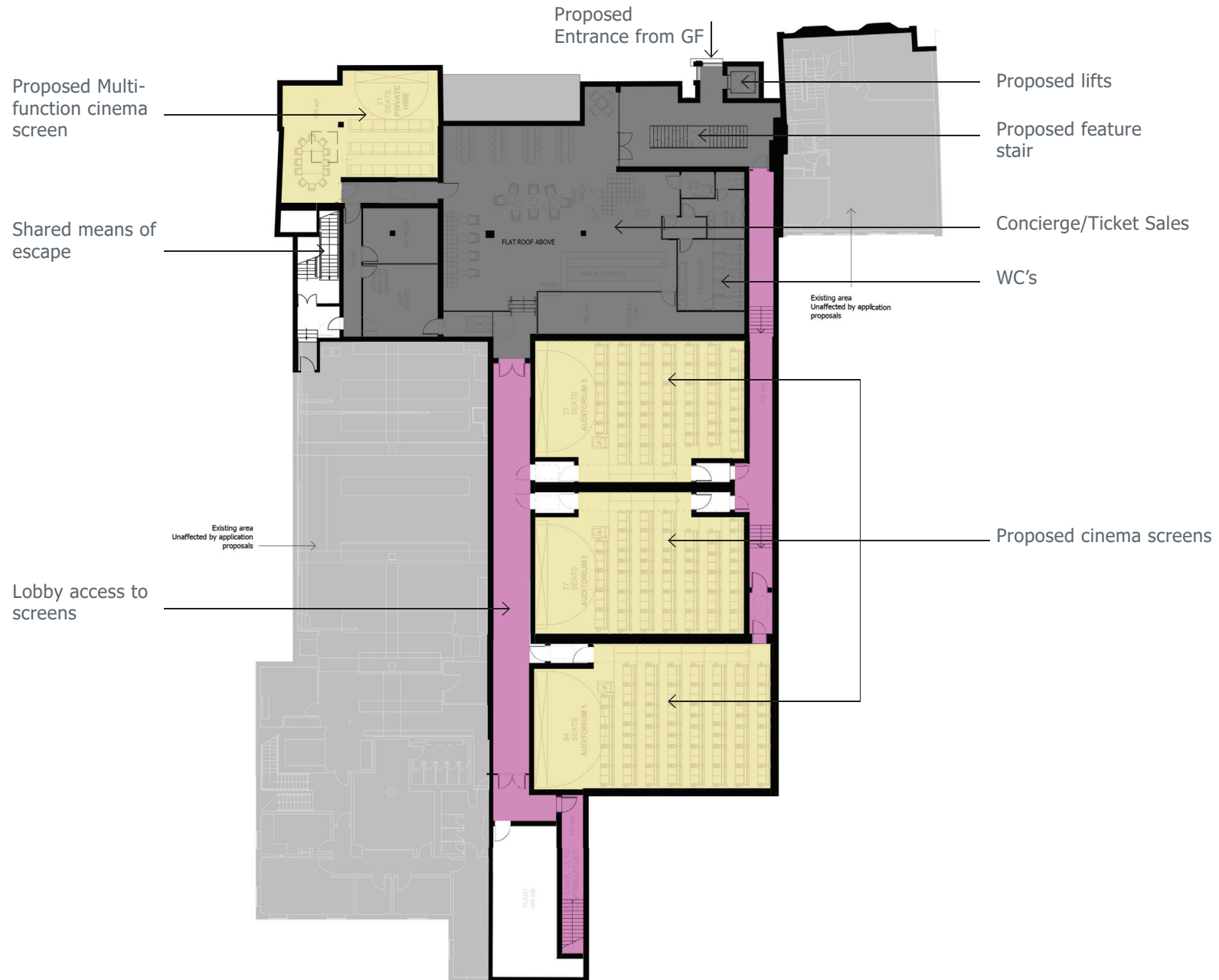


fig. 14 Proposed First Floor Plan

DESIGN AND LAYOUT

EXTERNAL ALTERATIONS

The new entrance to the Cinema has been proposed at ground floor fronting onto Church Street which will contain a feature stair and an access compliant lift. The extension measure approximately 4.6m x 2.4m and the arrangement allows for a clear visible approach for all visitors along Church Street. The benefits of enhancing the existing access approach of the office space provides a natural addition that will vitalise this part of the site that is currently hidden from view and set-back from the street.

INTERNAL PROPOSALS

The proposed new access leads customers into a public foyer space at first floor level which contains functions such as a bar, restaurant and ticket sales. WC facilities will also be provided in this front of house foyer space. There are further spaces associated with the function of the cinema like a kitchen, Back of House store, and a multi-function/private hire auditorium located within this entrance area. Towards the rear of the site there is an existing staircase which will be retained as a means of escape.

The cinema consists of three screens: Screen 1 has circa 77 seats, Screen 2 has circa 77 seats and Screen 3 has circa 94 seats. There will also be a multi-function screen and function room located to the north-west of the layout and will consist of approx 21 seats. The main auditoriums are arranged in a linear format which are entered in sequence after the public foyer approach on the first floor. A dedicated entrance/exit lobby allows access into each screen. Overall the screens are arranged to take account of the former gym's double height massing which currently spans from first floor to the second floor. The proposals will also take some of the former second floor area which works a mezzanine level and surround these double height spaces. The proposals however, have been designed to retain as much of the existing structure as possible and additional structure is limited to providing new plant to the roof directly above the screens. All proposed plant is located over the existing flat roof area.

The scheme has been developed to allow for the modern function of a 'boutique' cinema operation, where people will arrive in a foyer that contains complimentary activities consisting of food and beverage, ticket sales, general lounge spaces and seating areas to create a vibrant environment. Customers are then directed to the screens which, overall, forms the personalisation and customer service expected for this type of operation.

Use Class	Existing Area (m2)
Office B1 (a)	
Ground Floor	19.00
First Floor	520.6
Total	539.6
GYM (D2)	
Ground Floor	32.1
First Floor	637.0
Second Floor	369.6
Total	1038.7
Use Class	Proposed Area (m2)
Cinema (D2)	
Ground Floor	67.4
First Floor	1168.7
Total	1236.1

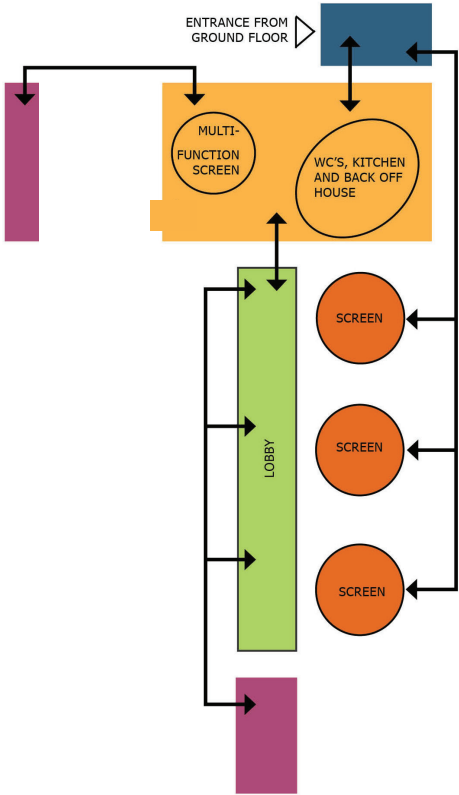


fig. 15 Entrance sequence layout diagram

Key

- Main Entrance
- Means of Escape
- Public Foyer/Ticket-sales
- Screens
- Areas subject to internal alterations
- Existing double height space
- Existing mezzanine and floor to be demolished to allow for double height space

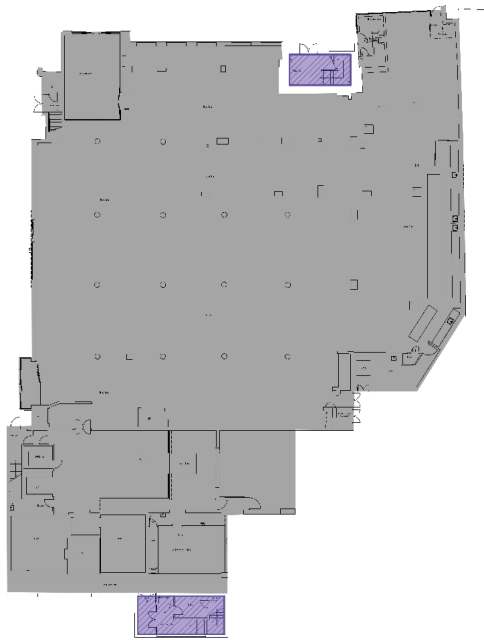


fig. 16 Existing Ground Floor Plan

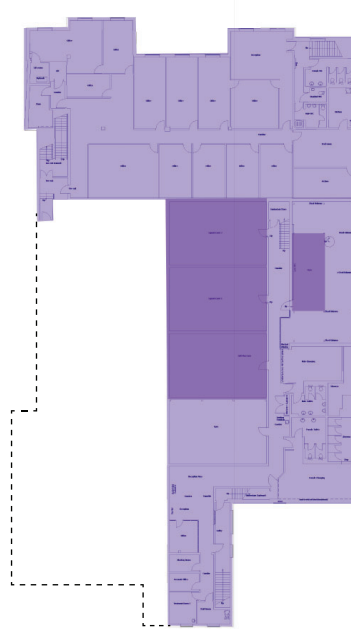


fig. 18 Existing First Floor Plan

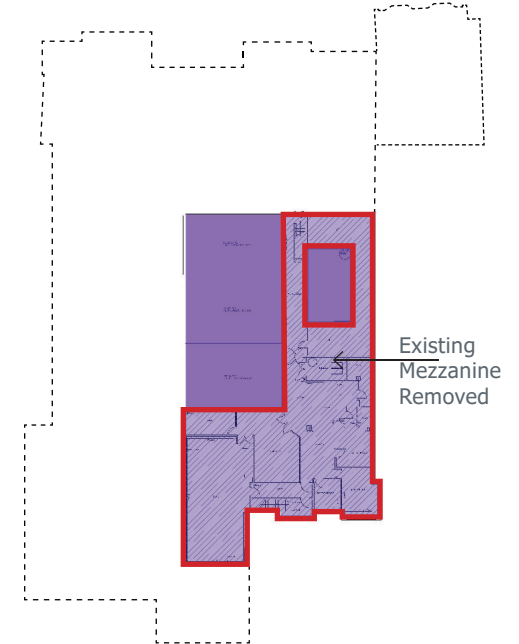


fig. 20 Existing Second Floor Plan

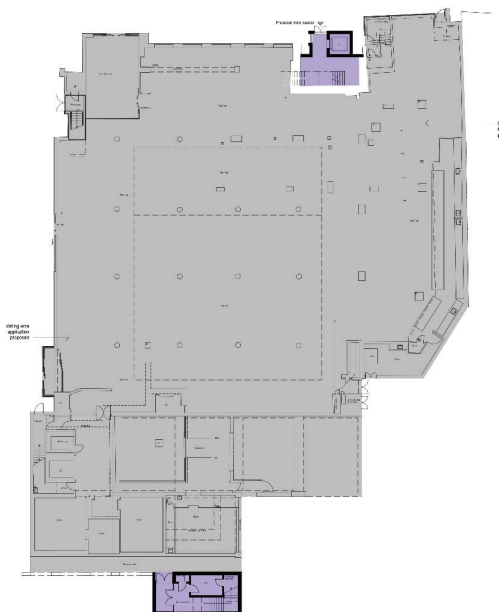


fig. 17 Proposed Ground Floor Plan

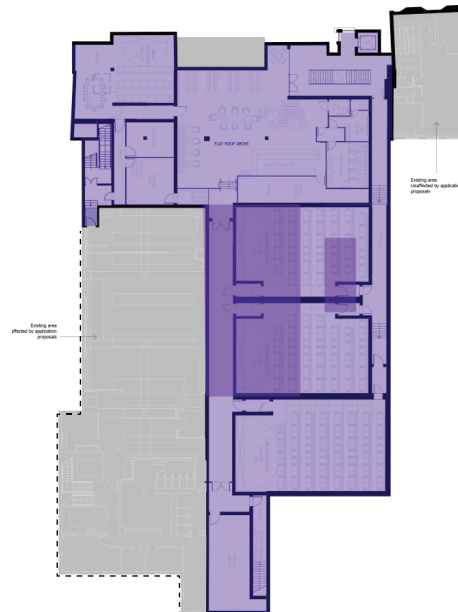


fig. 19 Proposed First Floor Plan

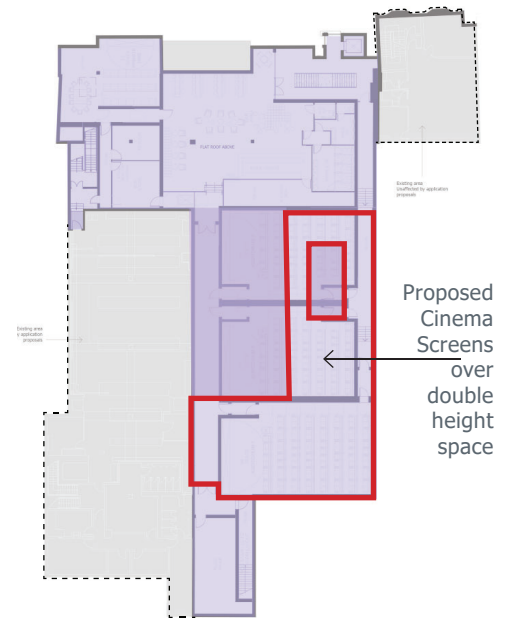


fig. 21 Proposed First to Second Floor Plan



E1 - Proposed Church Street Elevation

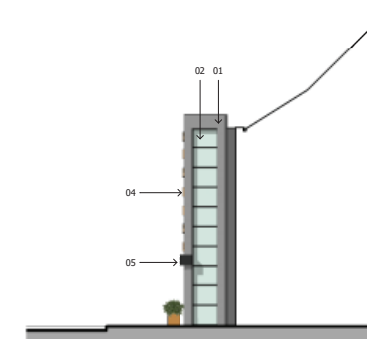


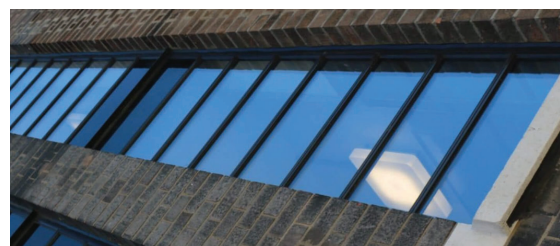
fig. 22 Proposed Church Street Elevation



Glazed brick
Black



Bronze lettering



Glazing / Grey anodized

KEY

- 01 Black glazed brickwork with dark grey mortar joints
- 02 Glazing – slim-line frames in anodised grey finish
- 03 Grey render applied over existing brickwork
- 04 Main signage – flat cut aluminium letters in anodised bronze finish
- 05 Grey PPC aluminium canopy finished in anodised grey
- 06 Existing brickwork
- 07 Additional signage zones

SCALE, BULK AND MASS

In scale terms, much of the proposed development retains the existing structure without any further alterations to the main mass of the building. The proposed entrance from Church Street, that projects out from ground to first floor, is the main addition being made to the façade. The entrance frontage will project from the existing building by approximately 1.2m and is located in the corner of two buildings. The overall height of the frontage is designed in proportion within an existing recess of the main existing brick building and is scaled efficiently to allow for minimum dimension of an access compliant lift and feature stair.

APPEARANCE/MATERIALS

The whole façade is harmonised with the continuity of the brick material currently found on the existing neighbouring buildings. To enhance the entrance and to make it easily identifiable we have made changes to the brick colour. Black brickwork is introduced to the proposed entrance to differentiate between building uses but also chosen to 'bridge' and neutralise the various brick types along the street. The introduction of glazing with black aluminium framing provides an enhanced facade which will open this area of the existing building and improve the frontage. The addition of signage will be controlled to allow a contrast with the black bricks and also aligns with the overall design principles of the Centre generally and the existing secured consent.

HIGHWAYS AND ACCESS

Some visitors to the application site will have access to the car park at the rear (which serves the whole of St Martins Centre) from Archway Road. As this is a local centre it is anticipated many visitors will walk to the site. Pedestrian access to the site can currently be obtained from Church Street. Access parking is located adjacent the rear stair of the building. Parking provision for the cinema use is further clarified within the transport statement.

LANDSCAPE

The new entrance to the Cinema is located fronting on to Church Street, providing pedestrians and visitors with clear way-marking to the entrance. Landscape design proposals indicate the relationship and interface with Church Street and the wider St Martin's Centre, which is considered as significant.

Proposals outside the application boundary include the location of street planters along Church Street. These planters are subject to ongoing negotiation with Reading Borough Council Officers. Planters will be timber in construction with a mix of shrub species for species diversity and visual amenity. Species selection will be appropriate to the public realm environment.

Proposals also include tree removal to facilitate entrance improvements and access to the cinema entrance and generally to the route to and from this part of the pavement. A considered tree planting mitigation will maximise advantages further along Church Street to ensure its long-term establishment and wider contribution to the street in line with the prospective of long-term improvements to the Centre as a whole.

Tree Survey:

There is an existing street tree located adjacent the proposed cinema entrance. Arborist Consultants (FLAC) have carried out a tree survey compliant with BS 5837:2012. A summary is included below for reference; Reference: Tree 1001

Common Name: Ornamental Apple

Height: 12m

Grade: B1

Provenance: Exotic

It is acknowledged the tree has some presence within the street, but is of moderate quality. It has asymmetry and restricted growth due to proximity with buildings and location within the pedestrian route. Good vitality in spite of restricted rooting environment. Basal suckers evident.

Design Response:

The tree's current location within the pavement is compromised by its below ground tree pit constraints, proximity to existing buildings and its location within the pavement. The tree can only be passed side by side adjacent the building where visibility is compromised. There is currently insufficient clearance between the tree and the road kerb. The cinema entrance projects from the existing building line to create an

improvement to the street scene and also facilitate accessibility into the building for all users. Landscape proposals recognise this and seek to remove the existing tree to facilitate improved legibility, way-marking an unobstructed circulation along the pavement in this location.

Mitigation:

A tree replacement strategy has been put in place and indicates the intent of the Client to mitigate any impact of the proposals with significant alternative tree planting. This proposal considers the visual benefit to the street in having a tree, pedestrian circulation, its long-term establishment, adequate soil rooting volume, species selection and procurement of the tree.

Tree species selection currently under consideration is:

Latin Name: Ginkgo biloba (Male plant only)

Common Name: Maidenhair Tree

Latin name: Acer campestre 'Elsrijk'

Common Name: Field Maple

The final species selection and specification will be agreed with the Tree Officer and a procurement inspection will be undertaken to secure the specified tree stock for the project. The tree pit detail will also be agreed with the Tree Officer and will utilise structural root cells, as approved and installed within St. Martins Square. Reference is made to the precedent set within St Martins Square, where tree selection, tree pit design and ultimate installation of the tree was to the highest standards as approved in conjunction with the Tree and Landscape Officers.

The proposed tree location is considered appropriate due to available unobstructed pavement width, overhead space to accommodate even canopy growth and the absence of utilities locations on drawn survey. It also does not compromise future refurbishment proposals.

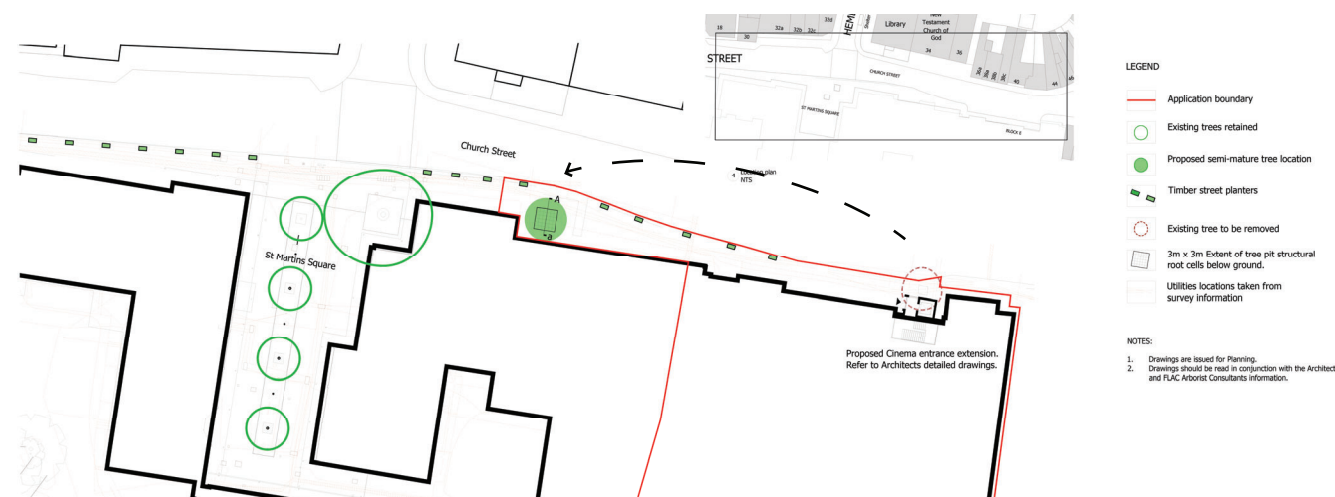


fig. 24 Tree mitigation strategy diagram

CONCLUSION

This design statement supports a planning application for a new cinema at 51 Church Street which focusses on the change of use of the existing B1(a) floorspace to Class D2 use, and associated internal alterations to the building to facilitate a new 3 screen cinema. External alterations are proposed to Church Street through a 11 sqm footprint extension which is considered to complement the street scene and provide a high quality entrance to the cinema on the upper floors. The extension is 9.2sqm (GIA) at ground floor level, replicated at first floor level. The overall GIA of the extension is 18.4sqm and GEA overall 22sqm for the entire entrance.

The proposals will retain and reuse the existing fabric of the building, whilst providing a positive outlook for the building that responds to both the existing character and the principles established through the extant permission. The new proposed entrance acts as a feature and gateway for visitors providing the District Centre with a vibrant new 'boutique' cinema.

A further change of use is proposed to the ground floor of 61 Church Street (Archway House) from Class A1 to B1(a) floorspace. No external alterations are proposed. Further details of this element of the proposal are included within the supporting planning statement.

**BARTON
WILLMORE**