

3. DESIGN STRATEGY

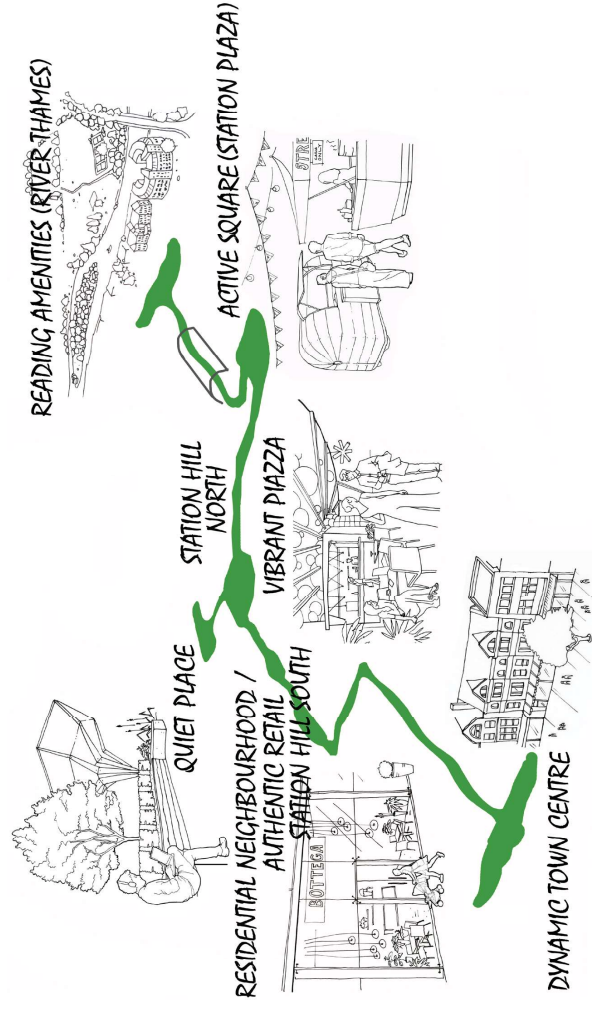


3.3 DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR STATION HILL

The design team has set itself a series of guideline principles for the layout of the Station Hill development as a whole and for its relationship to Reading town centre. As well as respecting the consented outline application, the proposals respond to planning policy and the Council's objectives for the town centre.

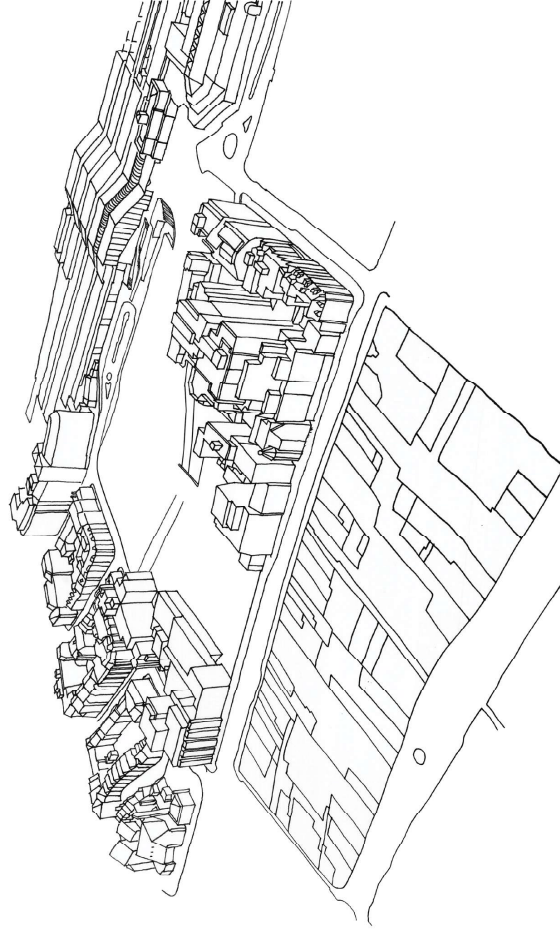
The Station Hill Project will:

1. Deliver a new, vibrant destination in Reading
2. Introduce new routes that link adjacent neighbourhoods
3. Create places of varied characters
4. Respond to the urban context
5. Increase permeability to the surrounding areas
6. Connect different levels in the surrounding areas through the use of a raised ground level
7. Respond to the different edge conditions of the site
8. Carefully consider massing and heights

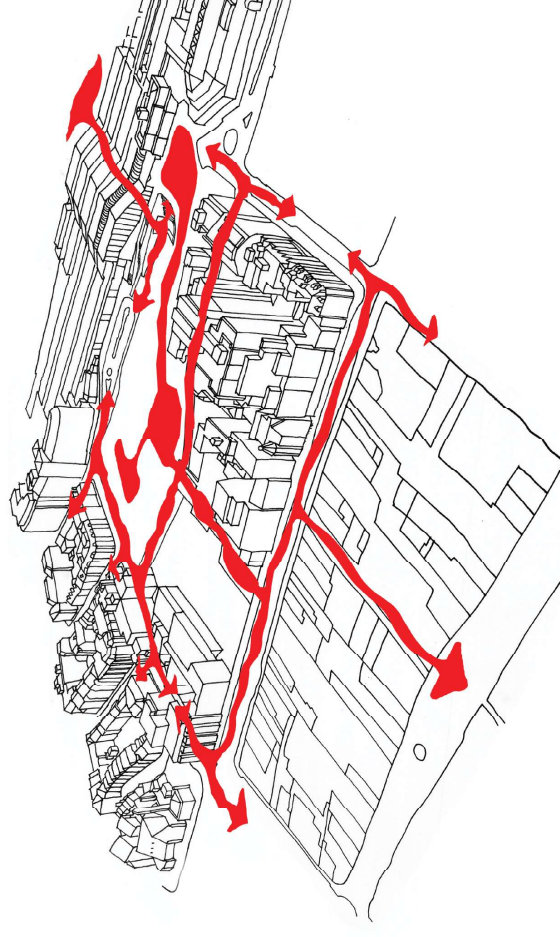


The proposal will create permeability and connectivity through the site and enrich the public realm

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Sketch view of the existing site from the south-east. It suffers from poor permeability and is disconnected from the surrounding public realm. The existing buildings have a dilapidated appearance and are of poor architectural quality. The combined effects of the poor user experience and low-quality architectural environment creates a place where few people choose to pass through or stay.



By enhancing connections and permeability and providing a public realm overlooked by high-quality architecture, the area can be transformed into a place that will be attractive and integrated into its surroundings.

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3.4 STRATEGY FOR PLOTS E & F

Working within the overall objectives for the entire Station Hill development, Plots E & F are organised and laid out to respond to the specific design requirements of a built-to-rent scheme and to create a great sense of neighbourhood and community by balancing the benefits of allocating Class E, Sui Generis, F.1, F.2 uses with shared residential amenity and high-quality apartments.

Working within the scope of the consented parameter plans the design strategy of Plots E & F is to:

- 1 Use the new north-south route as a space that creates an external character area that will be a new neighbourhood space.
- 2 Provide active frontages at Friar Street, Friars Walk and Garrard Street so that residents' daily experience is pleasant, safe, positive and memorable.
- 3 Maximise the resident experience by providing a central hub for management, interaction and a day-to-day entrance location.
- 4 Provide excellent amenity spaces that become additional living accommodation for residents, where they can socialise or interact or find a quiet space that is not within their home.

5. Create high-quality homes for rent that are well-planned, well-lit and optimise aspect and orientation. Maximise the useful space within each flat with a more open-plan layout.
6. To deliver 598 units for rent with a mix of studios, one-, two- and three-bed apartments, allocated in similar proportions across each of the blocks.
7. Use a limited palette of materials, construction typologies and details that respond to Reading's unique architectural identity. Design the buildings robustly so that they weather well, are attractive to residents and are easily maintained.



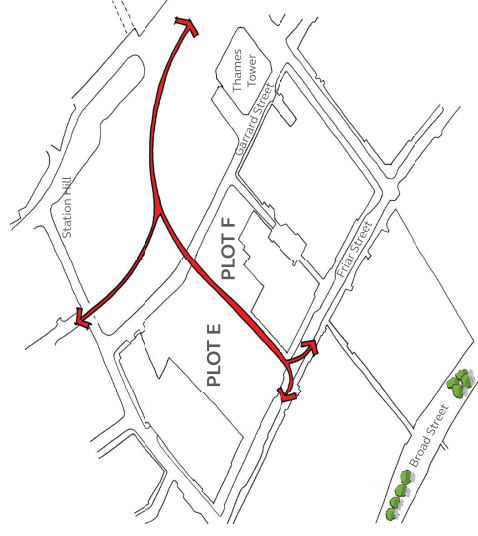
3.5 REVISED MASSING & PUBLIC REALM

The overarching objective of the proposed modifications to the Consented Outline Application is to create the highest quality residential development with excellent amenity spaces and an attractive and inviting public realm. The revised massing will deliver an enhanced Friars Walk that is level, enables more daylight penetration, with greater width and announcement of the public realm at its junction with Friar Street.

Key design developments include:

- Revised massing to meet the requirements of build-to-rent accommodation
- Two high-quality courtyards in Plot E
- A wider Friars Walk improving retail offer, resident and user experience
- An improved public realm at junction of Friar Street and Friars Walk

The following sequence of diagrams sets out the approach taken to achieve these objectives and demonstrates how the resultant massing evolved.



1 Well-connected and Integrated Public Realm

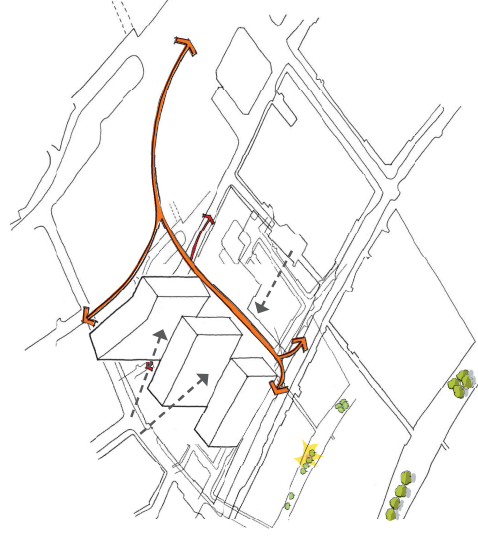
Plots and buildings are laid out to create the opportunity to deliver a high-quality and attractive public realm and to ensure that there is strong pedestrian permeability from the station to the town centre.



2 Active Frontage

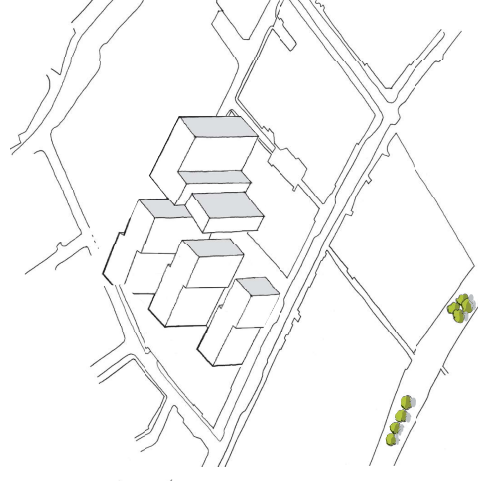
Plots E & F are laid out to ensure that the ground floors have active frontage facing on to key walking routes.

- Class E, Sui Generis, F1, F2
- Main entrance to the buildings



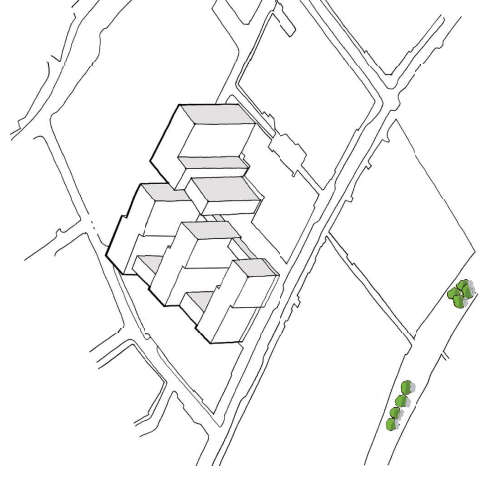
3 Light to Public Realm

The major legs of the building are set out to ensure that light reaches Friars Walk and that the new street has significant visibility of the sky. This will be a major public benefit over the 2015 consented scheme.



4 Block Massing

The buildings are massed to ensure that the public realm is legible and not overwhelmed by the scale of the building on Plot E. This less-overbearing arrangement provides a clear benefit to the public realm over the 2015 consented scheme.



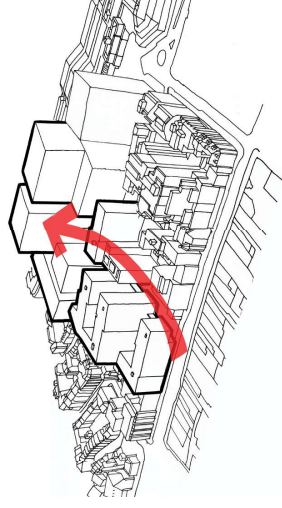
5 Block Massing Articulated

The blocks are articulated to comply with legal and neighbourly constraints and opportunities. This adds significant interest to the massing and allows for more creative architectural solutions to be brought forwards.

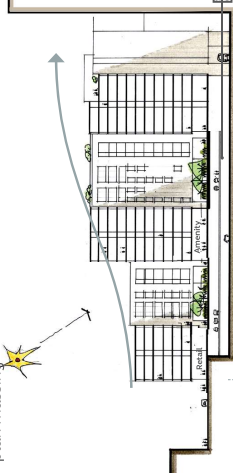
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The consented massing has been adjusted so that:

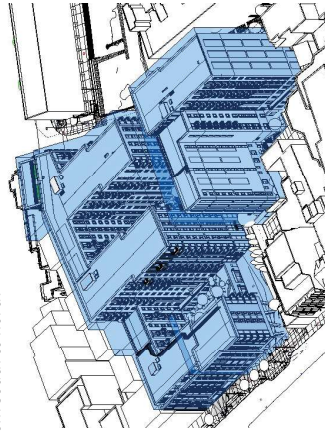
- Massing steps upwards from Friar Street to Garrard Street. It rises in compliance with the strategy set out in the consented Outline Planning Application for Plot E.
- The massing takes advantage of the profile of the site boundaries and other constraints and is articulated so that it has a good slenderness ratio and elegance of form;
- Corners are articulated to provide focal points as one approaches and walks through the site;
- The footprint of the building to Friars Walk is shifted to create variety, interest and places to dwell;
- The massing on Plots E & F sits within the consented outline parameter plans (with minor deviations);
- The proposed quantum of development will sit within the approved area of development across each of the use classes;
- The resulting form allows for active frontage to be maximised in line with the outline planning consent.



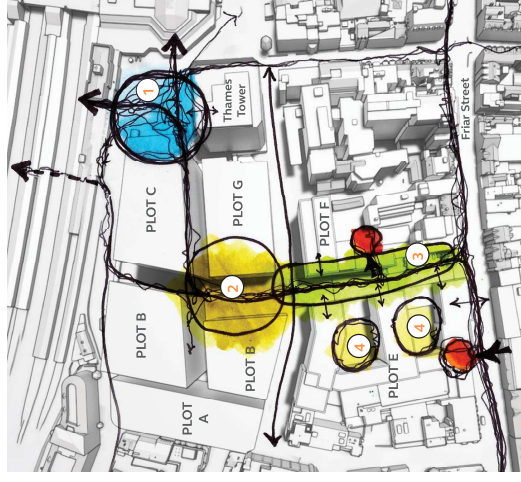
Proposed massing of the building rises from Friar Street towards Garrard Street in line with the illustrative parameter plan massing



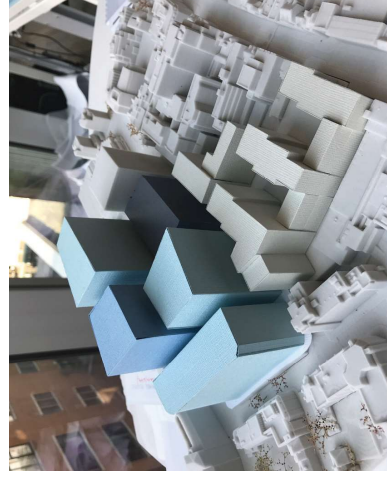
Sketch section through Plot E showing stepped up massing from south to north



Proposed massing is generally within Consented Parameter Envelope with minor breaches noted in Section 2



Early design development sketch plan showing how a sequence of spaces will create a varied and interesting public realm and high-quality residents' courtyard.



Working model showing scale of building in relation to north site parameters (development on Sainsbury's site omitted for clarity)

- 1 Major plaza to south of entrance of station
- 2 New public space within the heart of the development
- 3 Friars Walk, linking the new public realm on the northern site with Friar Street and the town centre
- 4 Shared space for residents at the heart of the development

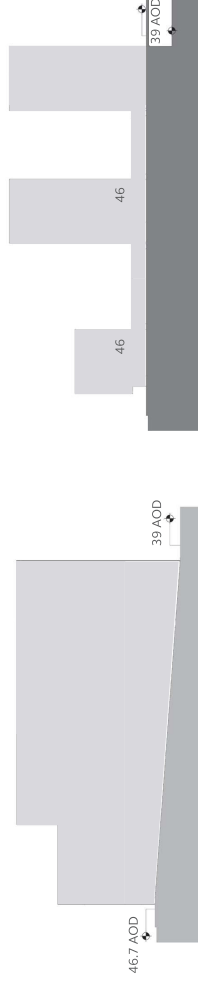
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3.6

A LEVEL FRIARS WALK

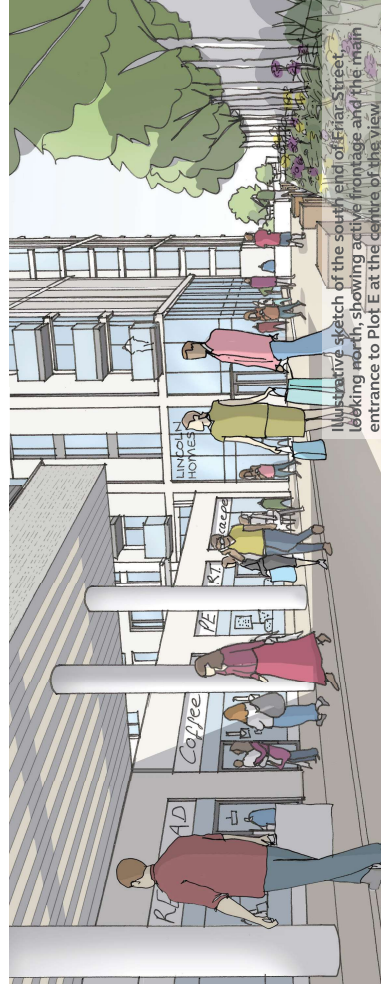
One of the key design objectives is to ensure that the site is and feels permeable, that connections are enhanced and that routes are overlooked by active frontage and sustainable uses. Following a detailed review and consultation with Reading Borough Council, the proposal for Friars Walk to be level from Friar Street to the northern boundary of the Plots E & F sites. This will allow for:

- Ease of movement through the site and in the future over a bridge onwards to Station Hill. Though this is a standalone application for Plots E and F, the scheme is being designed with so that it will be linked to the northern site via a new bridge. This will span Garrard Street.
- Access from Friars Walk to Garrard Street by a lift;
- A level threshold to the entire length of active frontage facing Friars Walk, thereby increasing the attractiveness of available space to a wider variety of Class E, Sui Generis, F.1, F.2 uses. This will support the sustainability and success of the retail offer facing the street;
- The elimination of complex ramping and steps that would make passing through Friars Walk a challenge for those with mobility issues and users with prams, buggies and cycles.



Section through the illustrative proposal for Friars Walk showing changes in level from Friar Street to Garrard Street, a slope of 1:13 which would be difficult to use for less-able people

Section through the currently proposed Friars Walk showing no change in level from Friar Street to Garrard Street



Successful neighbourhood streets are level and attractively landscaped, encouraging active frontage and 'opening up and occupation'

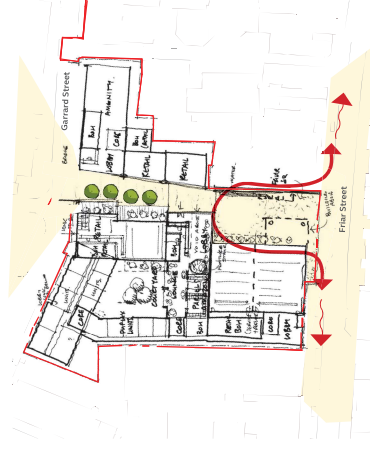
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3.7 CREATING AN ADDRESS & NEIGHBOURHOOD STREET

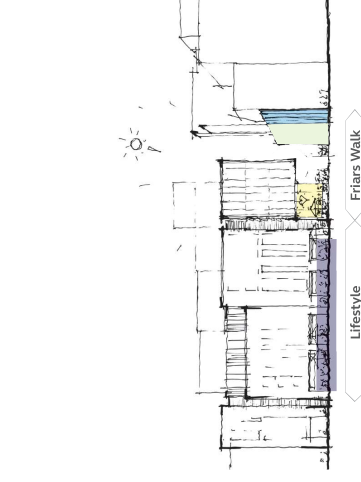
Successful Build to Rent developments have an identifiable entrance and a strong address. In terms of building organisation, the main entrance and associated management organisation, the main entrance and associated management hub for Plot E is located in the central finger of the block. This places it close to Friar Street as well as to the future access point from the north. It has a close and visible relationship to Plot F.

To ensure that the entrance is visible from Friar Street and that it has a sense of destination, Friars Walk is opened out at its junction with Friar Street to create a partially-covered, welcoming space. This will be attractive, publicly accessible and fronted by active uses. It will feel open and safe in contrast to more constrained and narrow routes. It is envisaged that it will have a neighbourhood feel with a mix of small, residential-focused retail units as well as cafés. It will be a place to sit and enjoy. It will be a new neighbourhood street that will be the southern gateway to the Station Hill development. This will be one of a sequence of spaces associated with the wider development and be the front door to more than 500 homes. It will be a meeting place for the community.

It is important to the success of the development that the junction of Friars Walk and Friar Street be visible from some distance and in both directions along Friar Street. On arrival at the junction, the 'front door' of the scheme should also be visible from the street. Accordingly, the building façades at ground and first floors are pulled back on their western edges to provide clear sight-lines and to create a safe and exciting neighbourhood space.



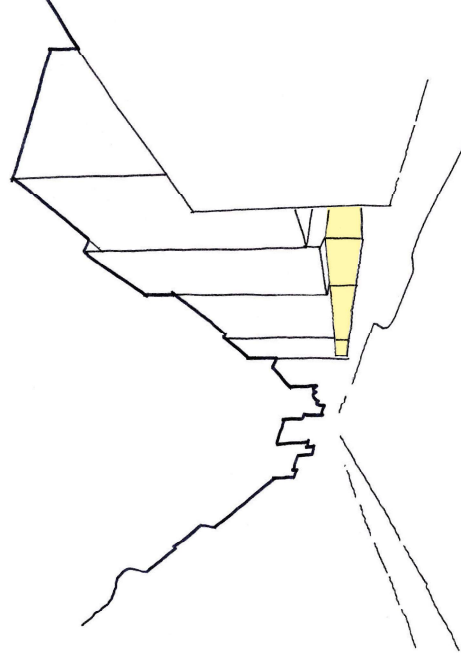
Early concept sketch exploring the potential for placemaking, active frontage and a high-quality residential entrance located on the cultural finger of Plot E



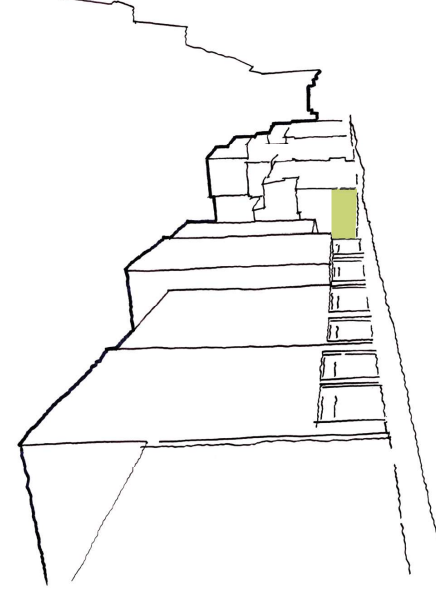
Early sketch of proposal showing the benefits of opening up Friars Walk to create an address



Early illustration of the new public space at the junction of Friar Street and Friars Walk with active frontage, high-quality public realm and visibility of the main entrance to Plot E



As its immediate neighbour to the east is forward from the face of the application site by 3m, a narrow opening to Friars Walk would be concealed on approaching from this direction. By widening Friars Walk at this point, the junction will be visible.



From the west the prominent blank flank wall of the neighbouring building acts as a poor landmark for the entrance to the development. By widening Friars Walk at ground and first floor levels and though careful landscaping the entrance will be more visible and attractive. It will act as the southern portal to the Station Hill development