

1.2 SITE CONTEXT

1.2.3 TOWN CENTRE - URBAN GRAIN

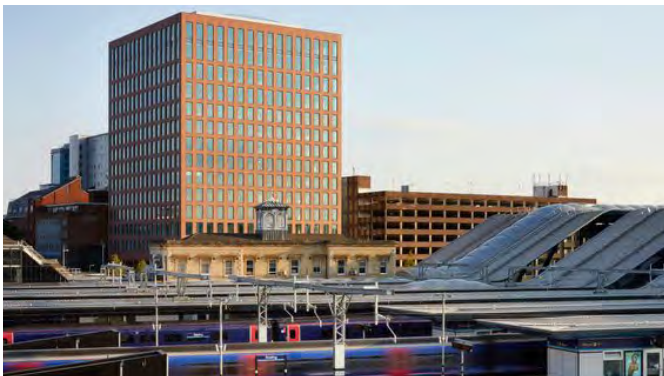
The urban grain of Reading's town centre reflects its historic development with close, relatively narrow frontages to deep plots. These plots have been transformed and in-filled over time with many plots consolidated to accommodate a range of larger uses, notably retail. The narrow alleys and lanes that still cut into these plots testify to its history of access and changing uses. These preserved routes add a rich texture to the town in terms of connectivity, use and grain.

The urban grain gradually increases in height north of Friars Walk with the Novotel rising to 14 storeys, and the refurbished Thames Tower to 15 storeys. The Council has set policy objectives for higher buildings within the Station Hill planning framework areas.

The application site sits within this framework and the larger building plots follow Reading's ambition to deliver taller buildings in this area.



Historic image of Station Hill showing the now demolished Western Tower



View of Thames Tower, the NCP and the new station in the foreground.

1.2.4 CONSERVATION AREAS & LISTED BUILDINGS

Important historic areas and urban fabric within the town centre have been recognised in conservation area designations. None of these areas lie within or adjacent to the application site. The closest to Station Hill is Market Place and London Street, St Mary's Butts.

There is a small scattering of nationally listed buildings within the vicinity of the site.

Greyfriars Church, originally built in 1311 and Grade I-listed, is the most complete surviving example of Franciscan Architecture in England, according to Historic England.

Reading Town Hall, another significant building, built in 1876 and designed by Alfred Waterhouse, one of the 19th century's leading British architects.

The Church of St Laurence, another Grade I-listed building, is located to the east of the site and is significant for its association with the Abbey.

The Three Guineas, facing onto Station Hill Square, is a Grade II-listed building by Isambard Kingdom Brunel. It was built in 1840 as the central railway ticket office.



St. Laurence's Church



Greyfriars Church



Reading Town Hall



The Three Guineas



Adjacent conservation areas Market Place/London St St Mary's Butts/Castle St



Nationally listed buildings Grade I Grade II

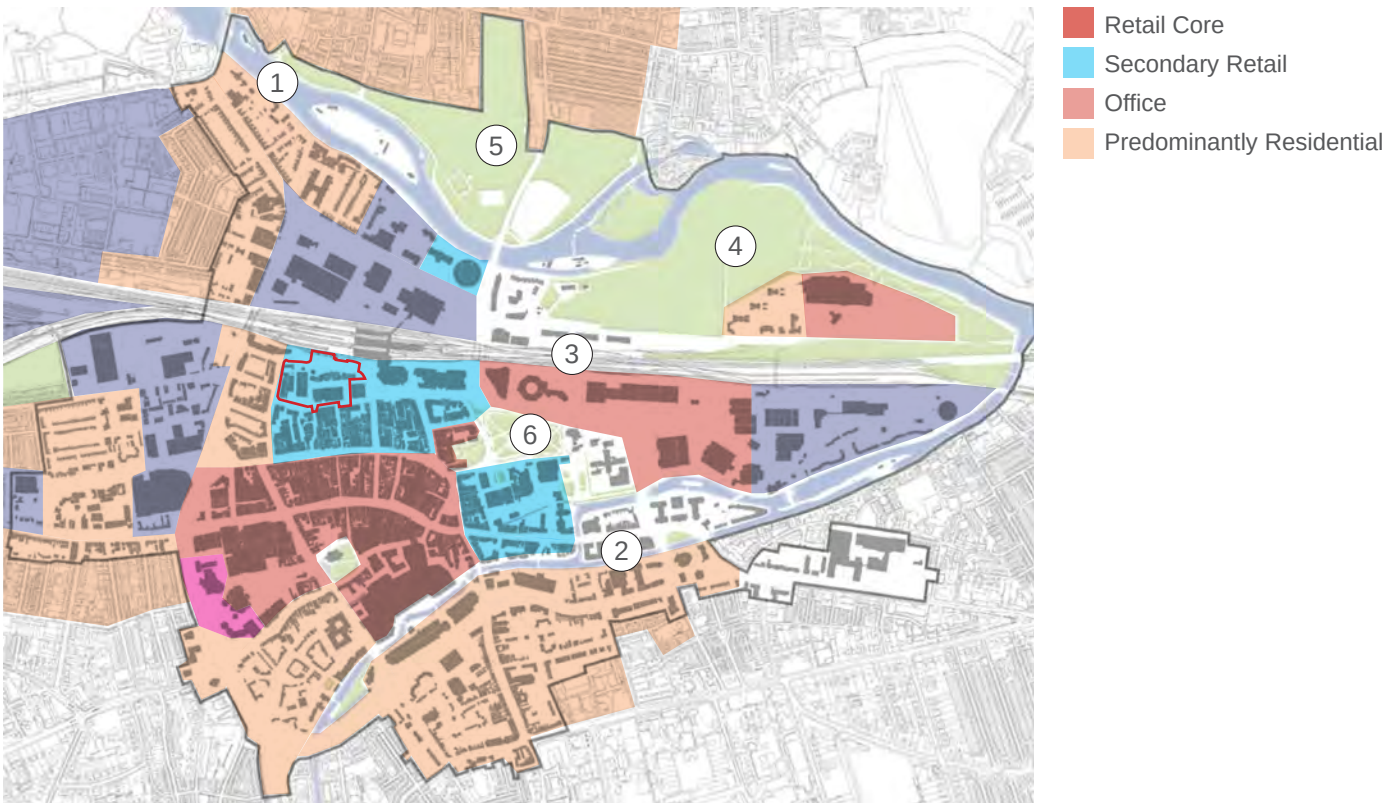
1.2 SITE CONTEXT

1.2.5 TOWN CENTRE – USES

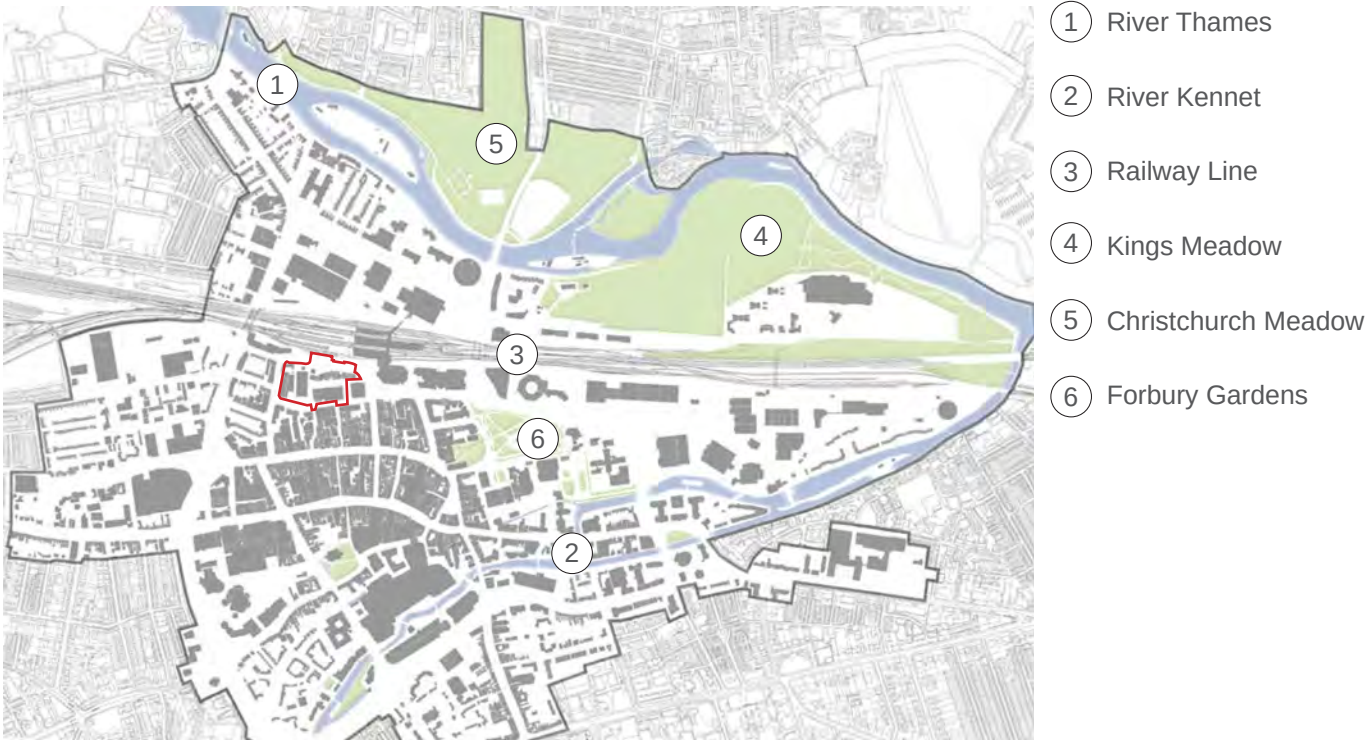
The area close to the station is dominated by commercial, retail, and car park uses. Small scale retail establishments line the north-south streets between the site and the established Broad Street commercial area, and continue to the south leading to The Oracle Centre. To the north of the railway sits a large retail park on Vastern Road. The area to the west of the site, west of Caversham Road, is predominantly residential terraced housing interspersed with community uses. The streets immediately surrounding to the site have commercial uses with a mix of office and retail and some residential accommodation. There are large civic uses to the south-west of the site with the Town Hall at the east end of Friar Street.

There are major outdoor recreational and amenity spaces to the north of the railway at Kings Meadow, which lies on the south bank of the Thames and on the north bank of the river at Christchurch Meadow. Both of these large parks are a 10 to 15 minutes walk from the site and have paths that skirt the river. Forbury Gardens, a more urban park, is at the east end of Friar Street and is less than a 10 minute walk from the site. These spaces are part of the residential amenity offer for all residents within Reading town centre.

There are no water features on the site and the closest watercourses are the River Thames to the north, and the River Kennet to the south. The Environment Agency’s floodplain map confirms that the site is not within an area at potential flood risk.



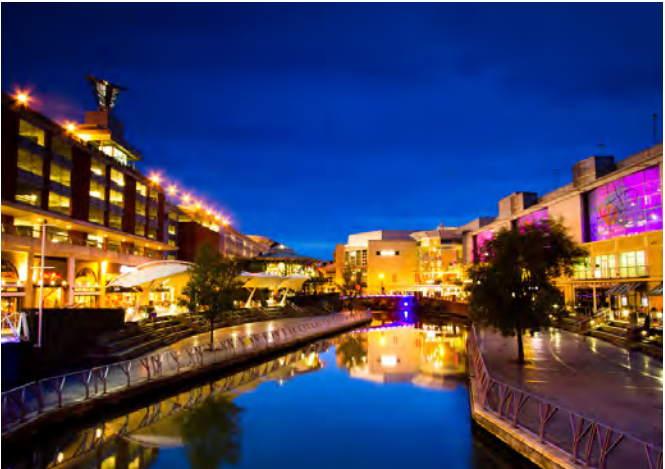
Indicative town centre uses



Indicative recreational open spaces



Historic view of central Reading showing earlier industrial nature of the area



The Oracle Centre along the River Kennet with outdoor areas for food and beverage offers



View of Thames Path leading to Kings Meadow

1.2 SITE CONTEXT

1.2.6 TOWN CENTRE – CHARACTER

The architecture of central Reading is dominated by late-Victorian and early-20th century buildings. Though there are many examples of later structures, the urban form, scale, grain and architecture of that era provided the context for subsequent development and set the character of the town centre.

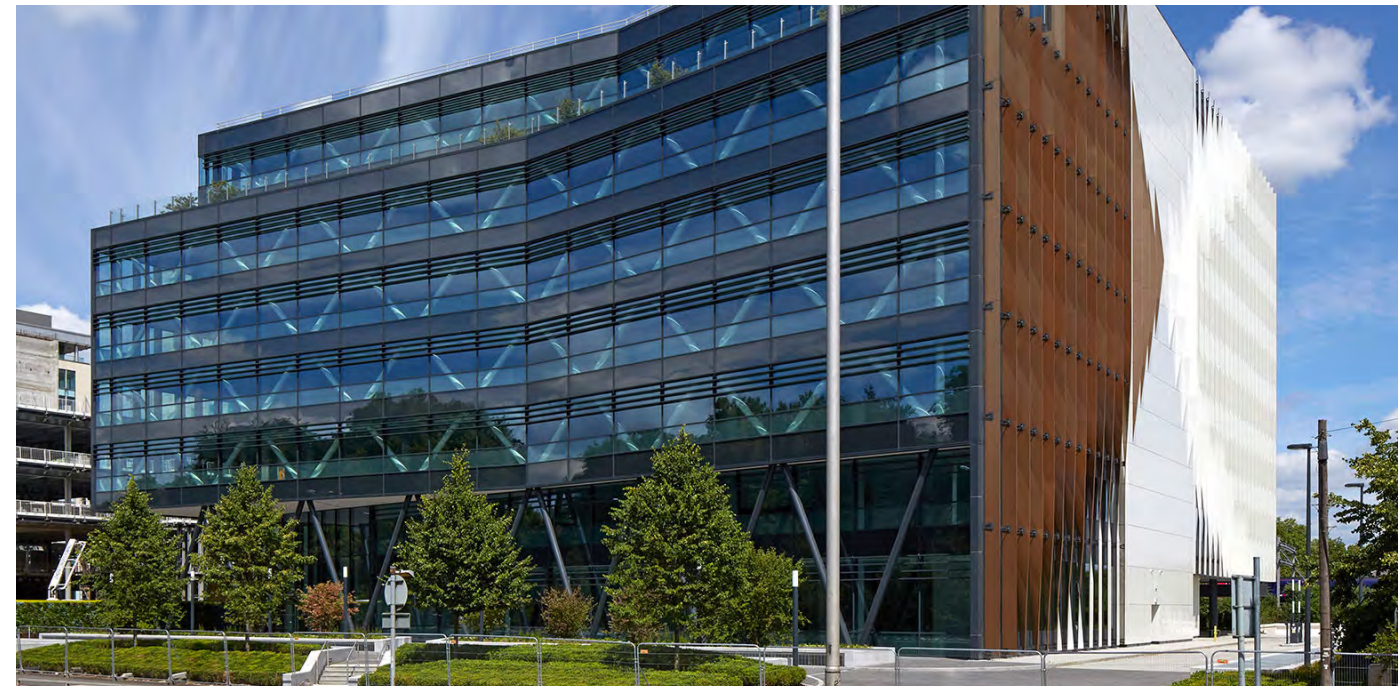
The retained architecture of that period reflects the status of Reading as a prosperous town. It is modest in scale, and relatively fine in grain. Building materiality is dominated by bricks of deep orange-reds, silver-greys and yellow buff. These colours are frequently used together in contrasting patterns, horizontal coursing and vertical framing. Terracotta is used to decorate and embellish with framing devices, pediments and arches to doorways and windows.

The cumulative impact of the orange-red brick, terracotta, the decorative motifs on modestly scaled buildings contribute to Readings identity. Some of these design queues influenced the facade language developed for the residential buildings in Phase 1. A similar direction will be adopted for the residential buildings in Phase 3.

Reading also has a number of mid to high rise office developments that sit east of the train station. The buildings are characterised by their modern glass facades. The Blade, also known as Abbey Mill House, is a high-rise glass office building and the tallest building in Reading. Forbury Place, Reading's newest urban business district sits east of Vastern Road and is characterised by mid to high rise glass office buildings.



The Oracle overlooking the River Kennet



Forbury Place, glazed facades



The Town Hall: use of red and grey brick



Sackville Street off Greyfriars Road



Roofscape on Queen Victoria Street



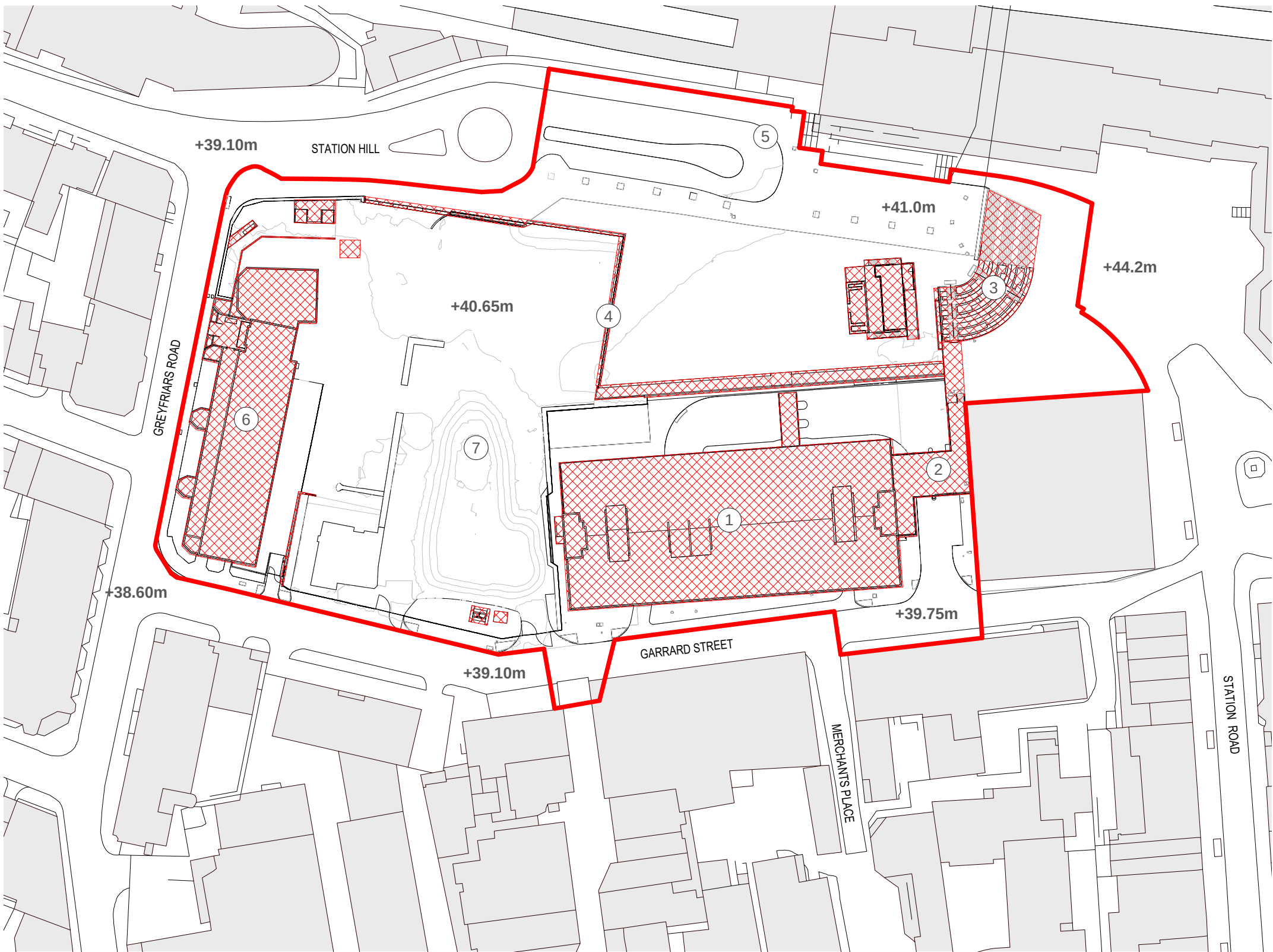
The Blade

1.2 SITE CONTEXT

1.2.7 EXISTING SITE COMPONENTS – TO BE DEMOLISHED

To deliver the North Site a number of buildings and structures will be demolished or redeveloped. These include:

- ① The NCP building will be demolished and the site cleared. One Station Hill will occupy its place.
- ② The existing deck that connects Thames Tower and the NCP will be demolished. This includes the supporting columns and the steps and platform lift that connect it with Station Plaza.
- ③ The Station Square curved auditorium steps will be partially removed and replaced with a new extended deck that connects the station entrance with the new development.
- ④ The existing hoarding line and retaining wall.
- ⑤ The existing taxi rank on Station Hill will be reconfigured to allow for the new Pocket Park. The taxi rank will be enlarged.
- ⑥ Xafinity House is to be demolished.
- ⑦ Ground to be cleared and levelled to allow for temporary events and parking during the interim period.



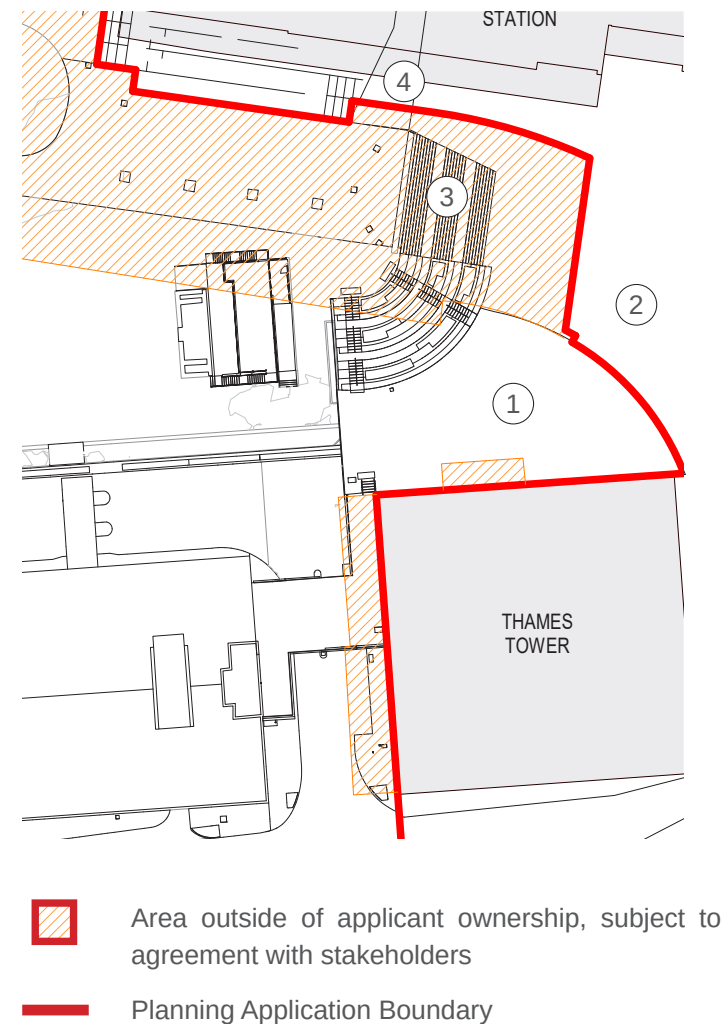
-  Demolition zone
-  Planning Application Boundary

Existing site conditions

1.2 SITE CONTEXT

1.2.8 EXISTING SITE COMPONENTS – TO BE RETAINED

- ① There is an existing undercroft below Station Square that sits within the demise of the North Site. The space was originally part of the previous shopping centre and was later use as a nightclub. As part of the delivery of the North Site it is envisaged that this space will be retained and converted into a series of landlord plant rooms. No structural modifications are anticipated.
- ② There is an existing connection from the undercroft to the area underneath the existing deck of Station Square
- ③ The Station Square steps that connect Station Plaza with Station Hill will be partly demolished or reconfigured.
- ④ The existing tunnel is currently a pedestrian only footpath that connects Station Hill with Caversham and the River Thames. The tunnel sits outside the planning application site.



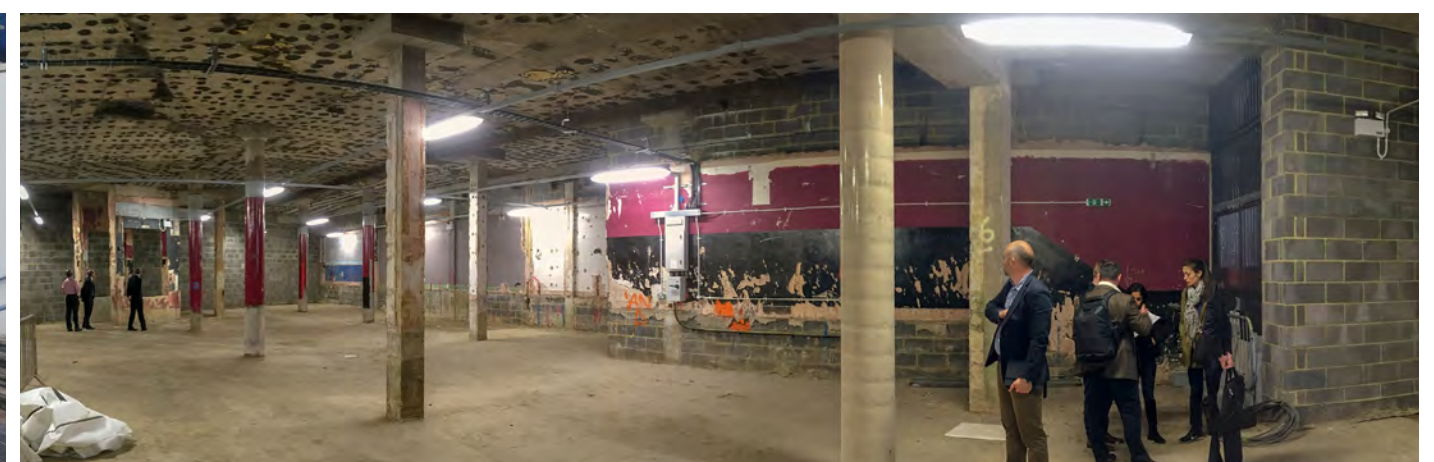
① View of the existing straight and curved auditorium steps – the sections of the straight steps indicated may be retained



② Panoramic view of the undercroft space below Station Square



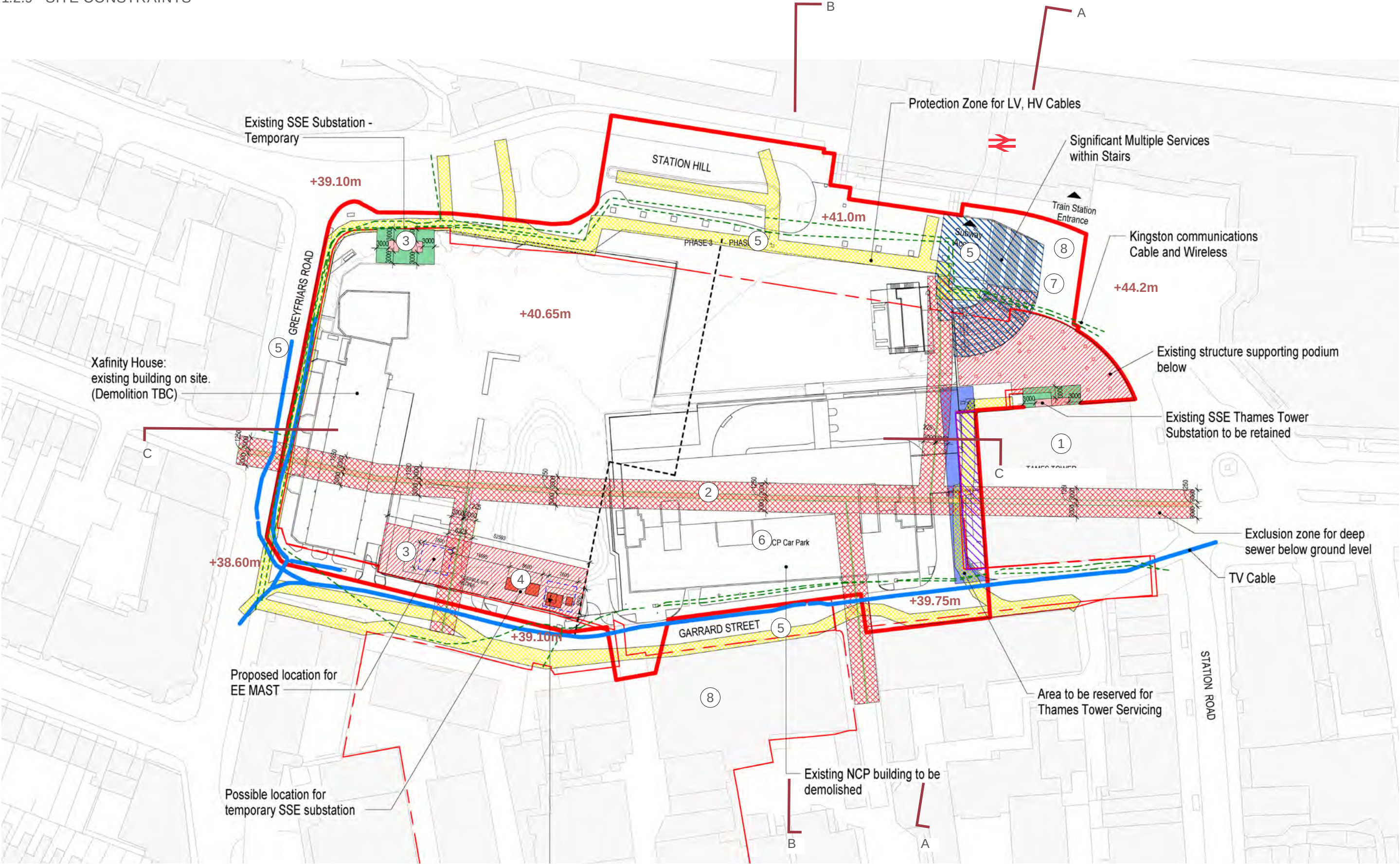
④ Tunnel entrance



③ Panoramic view of the undercroft space (previous nightclub)

1.2 SITE CONTEXT

1.2.9 SITE CONSTRAINTS



1.2 SITE CONTEXT

① Thames Tower

The Thames Tower Framework Agreement summarises key constraints that Station Hill North will need to comply with. The constraints relate to service access and fire escape requirements for Thames Tower

② Sewer

A Victorian sewer runs east to west across the site. The sewer is in working condition and the assumption is that the sewer will be maintained in its current location and the two southern spurs will be replaced. The proposals will take into consideration a 3-meter construction easement zone north and south of the centre line of the sewer. The sewer and easement zone limit the extent of the lowest basement level as well as the location of structural elements of the podium and buildings above.

③ Substations

Existing substations and temporary substations from Phase 1 will be relocated to new locations within the podium as part of Phase 2. These require street access and therefore will be located along the street facades.

④ Temporary Masts

Temporary masts are located in the Phase 3 site and negotiations are ongoing to either relocate the current telecommunications services or remove the masts completely. The temporary mast locations should not affect the Phase 2 podium design, but could affect any interim uses at the current location.

⑤ Existing Utilities

Existing utilities particularly those near the northeast corner of the site may restrict the design of the Pocket Park. Access to these utilities will need to be maintained. The current strategy aims to avoid any disruption to these utilities but relocation may be necessary where new structure is required for the extended plaza deck around the station entrance.

⑥ Below Ground Obstruction

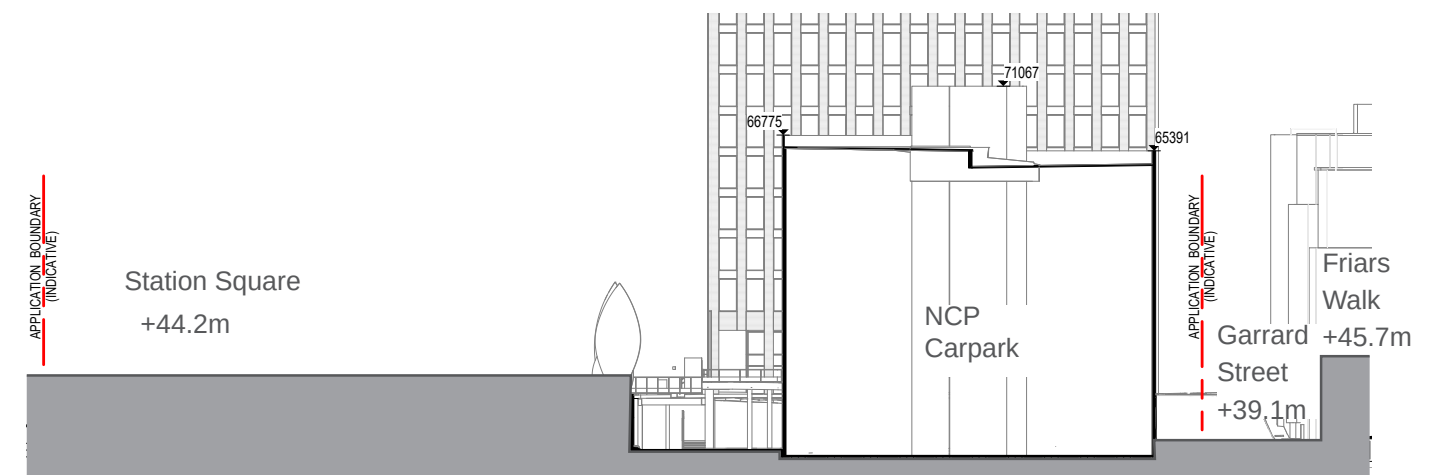
Various below ground obstructions including existing building foundations may complicate the excavation process.

⑦ Network Rail Demised Room Access

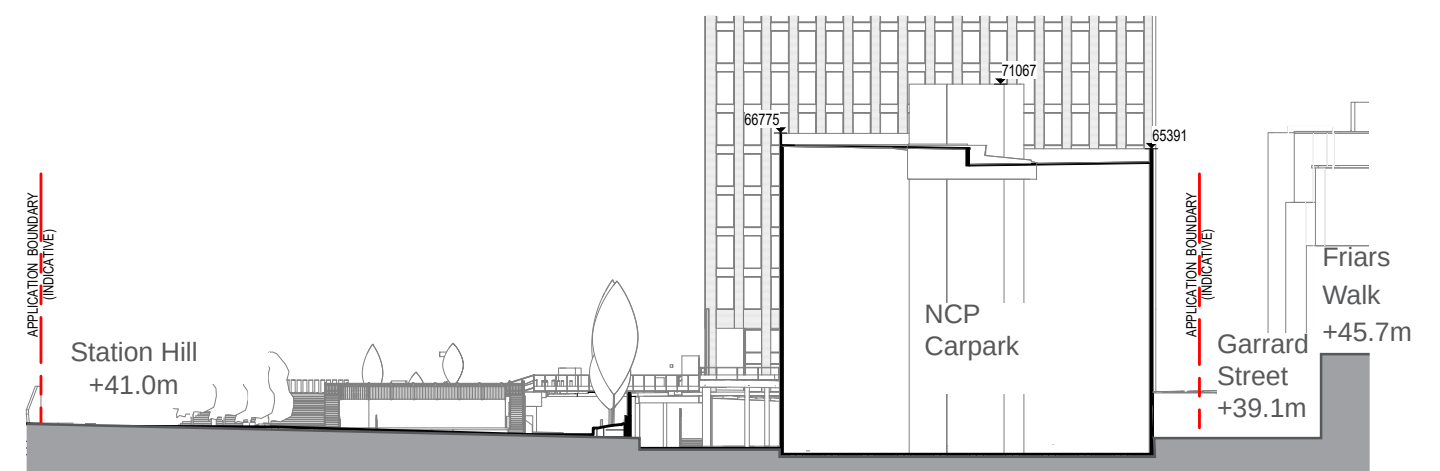
There is an existing Network Rail demised room to the northeast of the undercroft area north of Thames Tower. Access from the existing Thames Tower service yard exists and is maintained in the Phase 2 design.

⑧ Levels

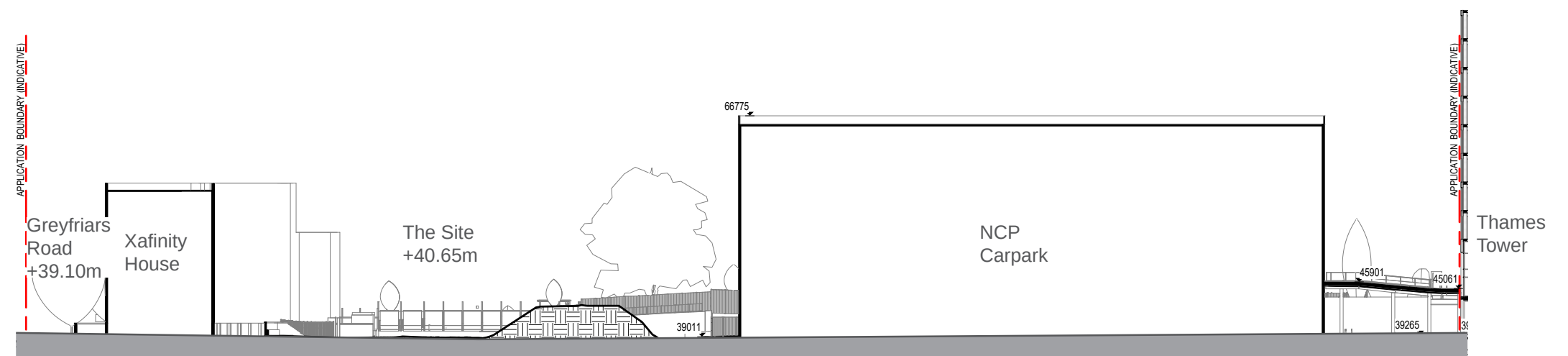
There is a level difference between Station Square and Friars Walk of approximately 1.5m which will be mitigated with a gradual slope. There is an approximately 4 meter level difference between Station Square and Station Hill. This difference will be mitigated by lifts, steps and a sloped park at the north of Phase 2.



Section A - through Station Square, NCP and Garrard Street



Section B - through Station Hill and Garrard Street

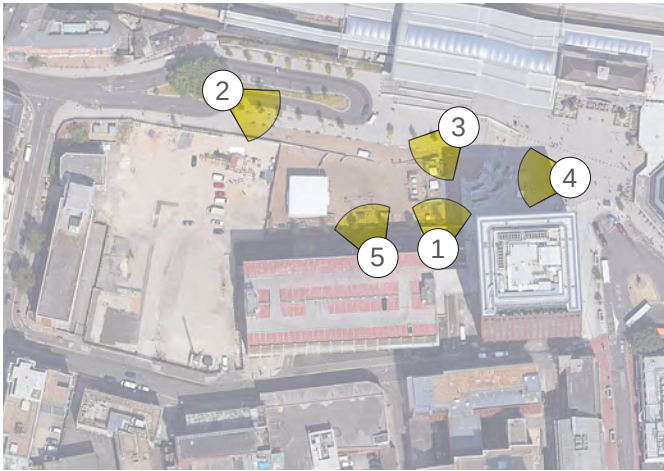


Section C - Greyfriars Road to Thames Tower

1.2 SITE CONTEXT

1.2.10 LOCAL CONTEXT – STATION HILL

To the north of the site is Station Hill which has undergone recent redevelopment to create a new bus interchange and taxi ranks.



① View from the roof of the NCP looking down on Reading Station, the tunnel, and Station Square



② Station Hill drop off and taxi rank



③ View from the tunnel



④ View of Station Hill from the auditorium steps



⑤ View from the NCP looking down on Station Hill and the taxi rank

1.2 SITE CONTEXT

1.2.11 LOCAL CONTEXT – GREYFRIARS ROAD & GARRARD STREET

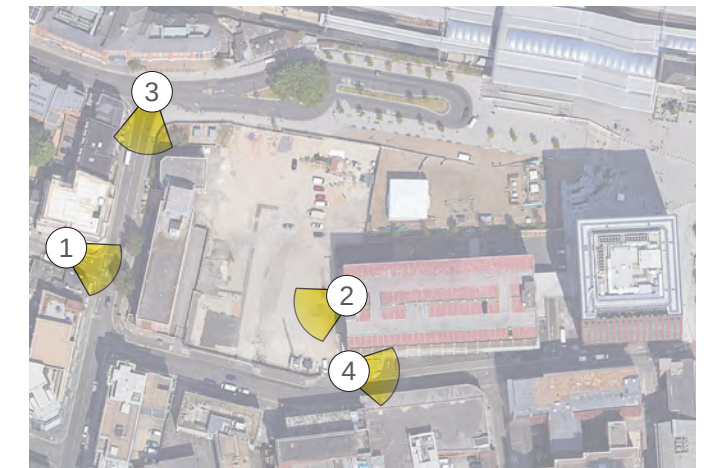


① View from Stanshawe Road looking east to Xafinity house

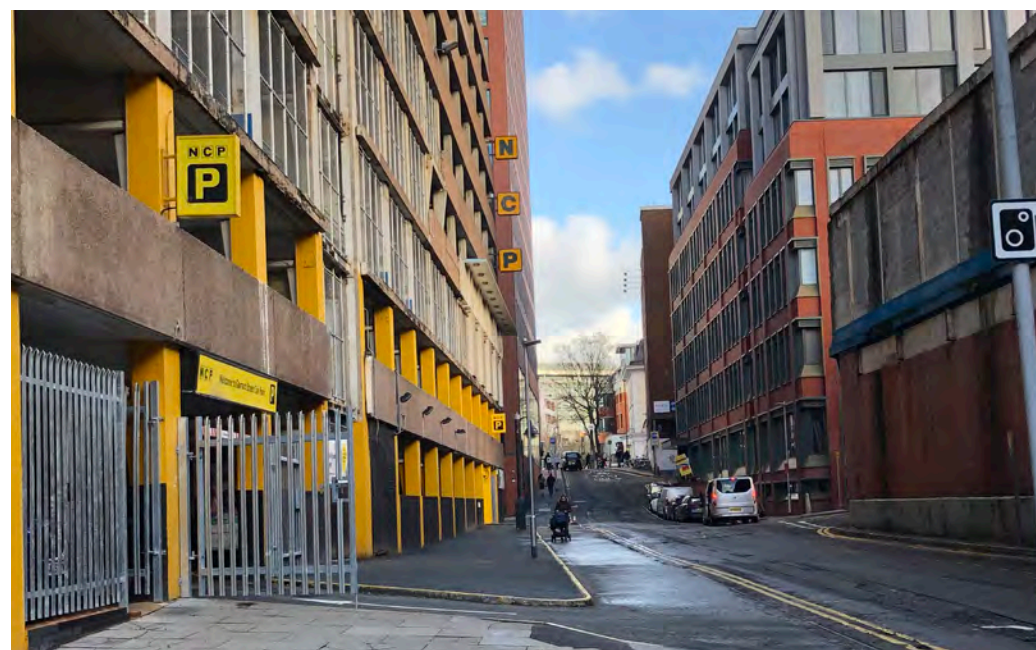


② Aerial view from the NCP looking west towards Xafinity House

Greyfriars Road, the western boundary of the site, is lined with low to medium scale residential and office buildings. Garrard Street to the south of the site is currently in transition and dominated by hoarding lines and buildings with inactive frontages such as the NCP.



③ View from Station Hill looking south on Greyfriars Road



④ View looking east on Garrard Street with NCP at left

1.2 SITE CONTEXT

1.2.12 PLANNING HISTORY

The recent history of the site is a period of transition. The decline of mid-20th century uses was followed by a series of redevelopment proposals which as of yet are unrealised. A summary of this recent history is as follows:

Western Tower and the NCP

The most recent development visible on the site dates to the mid 20th century and included the now demolished Western Tower, the NCP multi-story car park and Xafinity House. The tallest building in the development was Western Tower.

Station Hill 1 and 2 (SH1 - SH2)

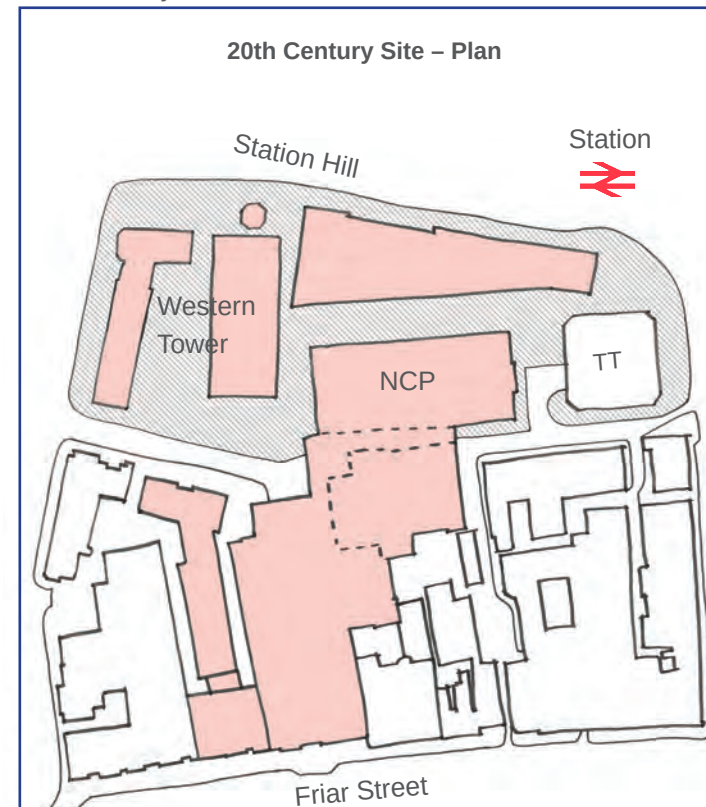
Outline permission for the mixed-use regeneration scheme referred to as Station Hill 1 received a resolution to grant planning permission in 2008. The application was withdrawn and a subsequent application, referred to as Station Hill 2, was granted permission in October 2011. SH2 proposed an approximately +169m AOD high-rise tower.

Station Hill 3 (SH3)

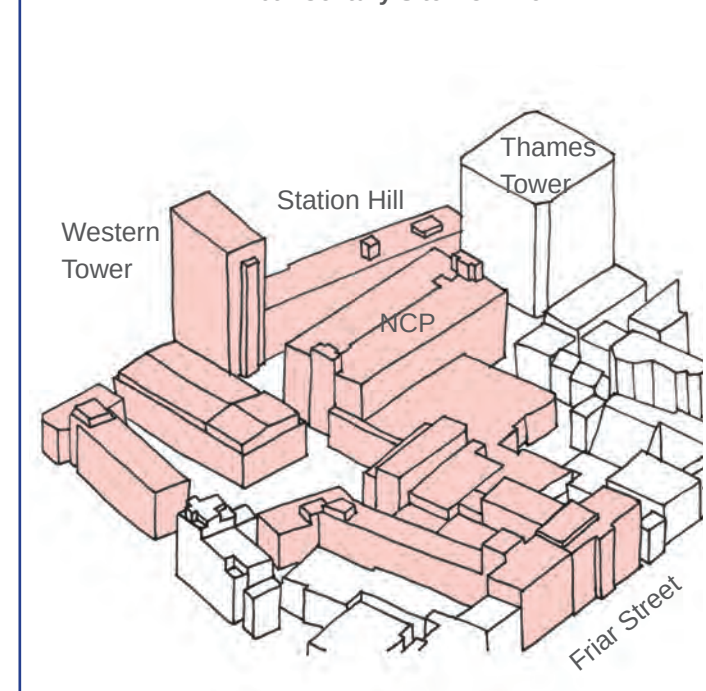
An outline planning permission was granted in January 2015 for the redevelopment of the whole of Station Hill with office retail, leisure and residential uses and associated infrastructure and public realm. In terms of building heights, SH3 consisted of a lower, denser arrangement of buildings. The highest proposed tower was +128m AOD. Some potential areas for improvement on the scheme include the following:

- Increase building heights to decrease density at ground level;
- Increase proportion of open space to built space
- Improve accessibility and movement through the site by limiting grade changes
- Consider greater activation of Garrard Street by redevelopment of the NCP
- Develop clear, visible north south connections activated by generous public realm

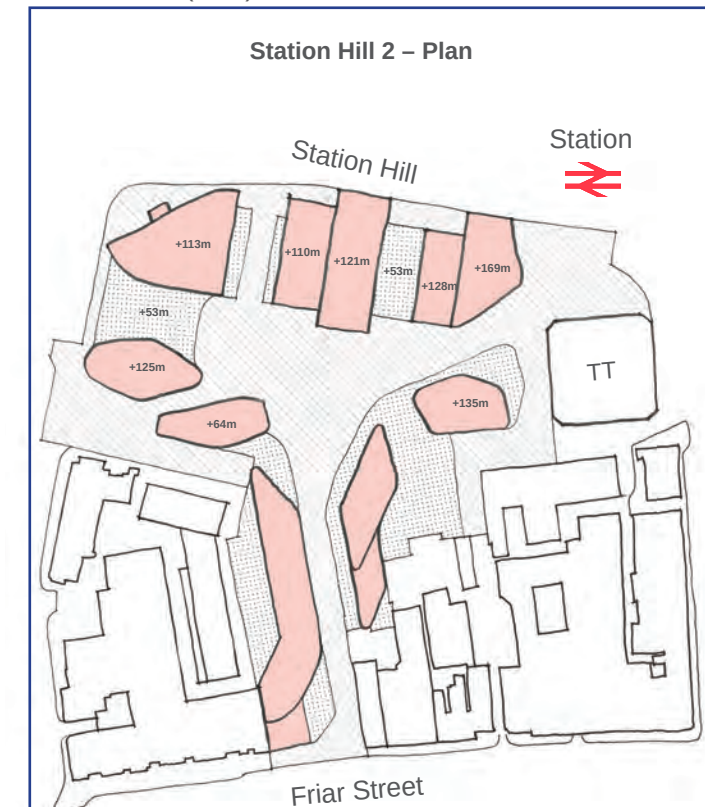
20th Century Site



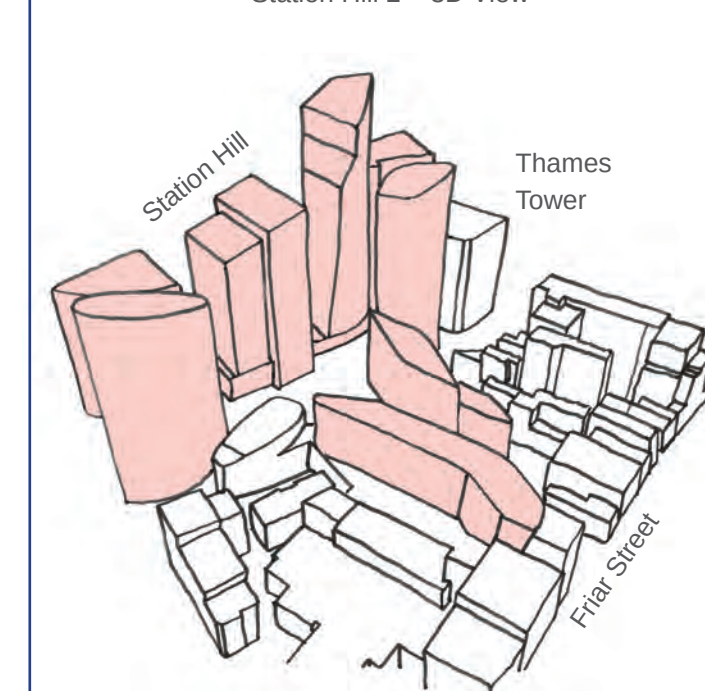
20th Century Site - 3D View



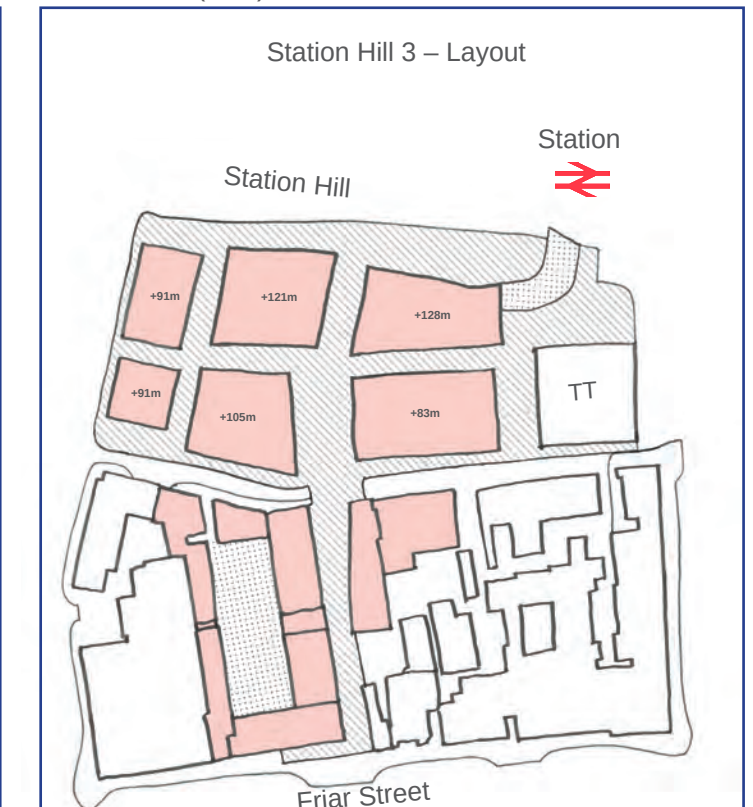
Station Hill 2 (SH2)



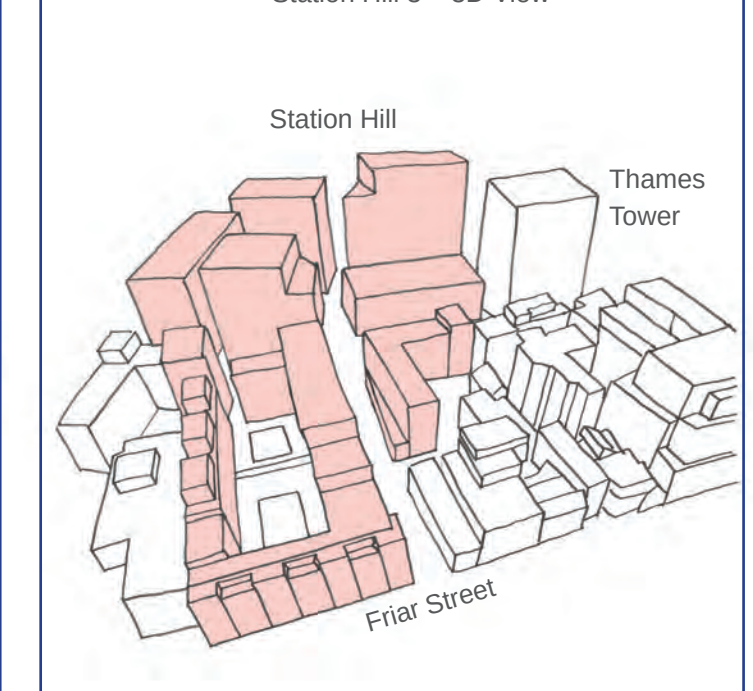
Station Hill 2 - 3D View



Station Hill 3 (SH3)



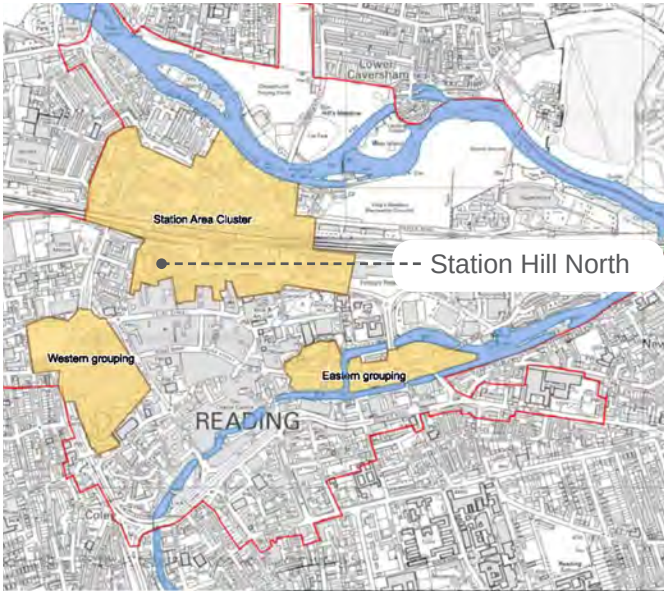
Station Hill 3 - 3D View



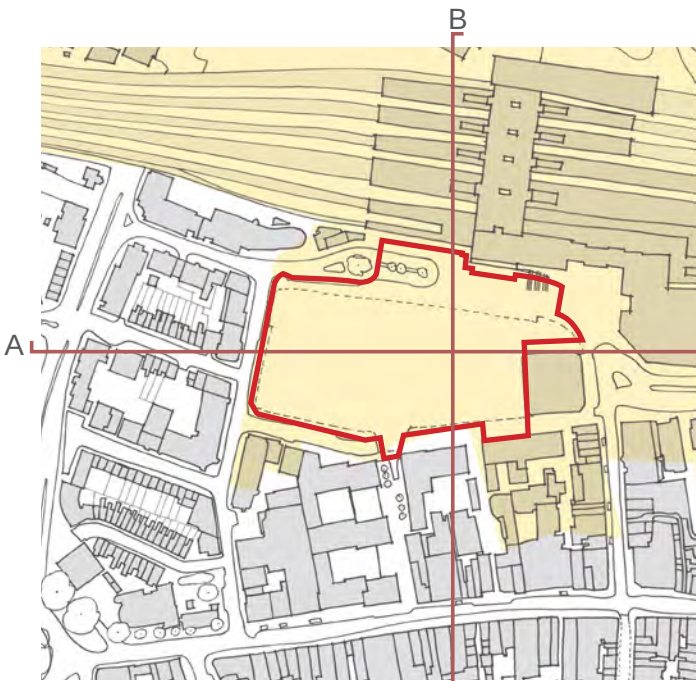
1.2 SITE CONTEXT

1.2.13 PLANNING FRAMEWORK

The 'Reading Tall Building Strategy' includes the Station Hill North site. It calls for buildings up to 160m high with the highest cluster earmarked to sit within the application site. Currently, the tallest building in Reading is The Blade.

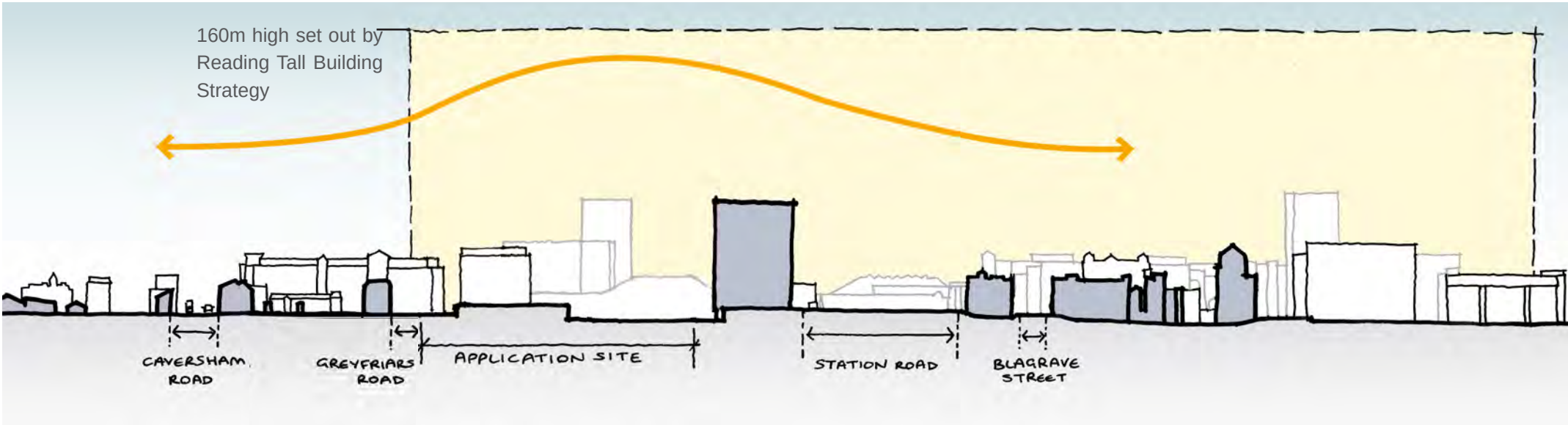


Reading Tall Building Strategy - Tall Building Groupings

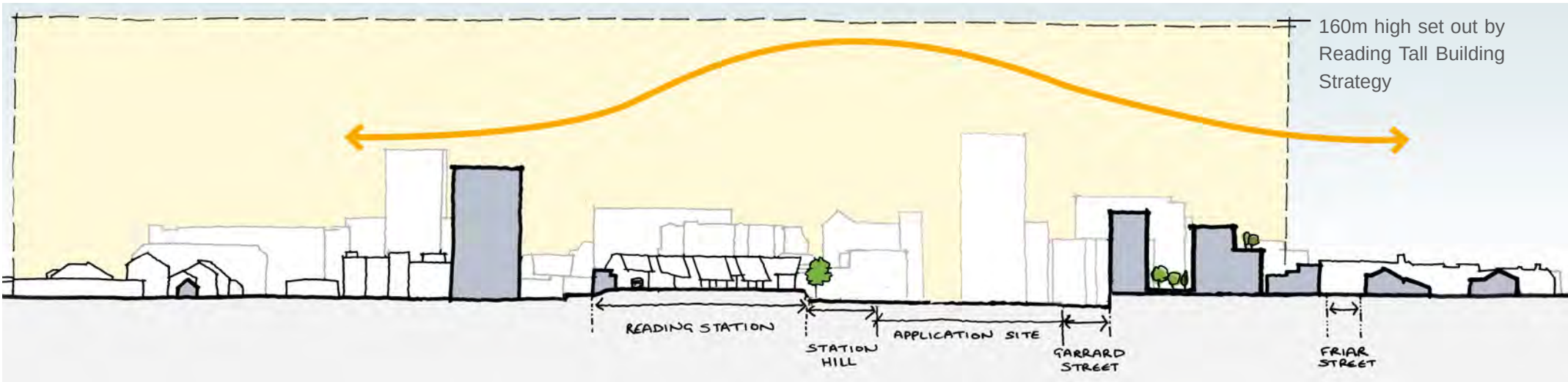


Station Hill North within the Station Area Cluster

- Station Area Cluster
- Station Hill North



East-West Section A– heights as described in the Reading Tall Building Strategy



North-South Section B – heights as described in the Reading Tall Building Strategy

1.3

MASTERPLAN PRINCIPLES

1.3 MASTERPLAN PRINCIPLES

1.3.1 READING IS CHANGING

Reading's townscape is changing with a number of high-rise developments emerging around Reading Station. In accordance with the 'Reading Station Area Framework' and 'The Reading Tall Building Strategy', the Station Hill North Site should signify the importance of its proximity to the station and position as the front door to Reading with significant yet appropriately-scaled tall buildings

List of approved schemes around the site:

- ① Broad Street North/Broad Street Mall Redevelopment [Ref: 182137]
- ② Land between Weldale Street and Chatham Street, Reading [Ref: 170326]
- ③ Garrard House 30 Garrard Street, Reading [Ref: 160328]
- ④ 29-35 Station Road, Reading [Ref: 101247]
- ⑤ Bristol and West Arcade, Market Place, Reading [Ref: 180358]
- ⑥ Reading Metropolitan, Former Sorting Office Caversham Road/ Vastern Road, Reading [Ref: 11/00276/OUT]
- ⑦ Former Coopers BMW site, Napier Road / Kings Meadow Road, Reading [Ref: 162166]

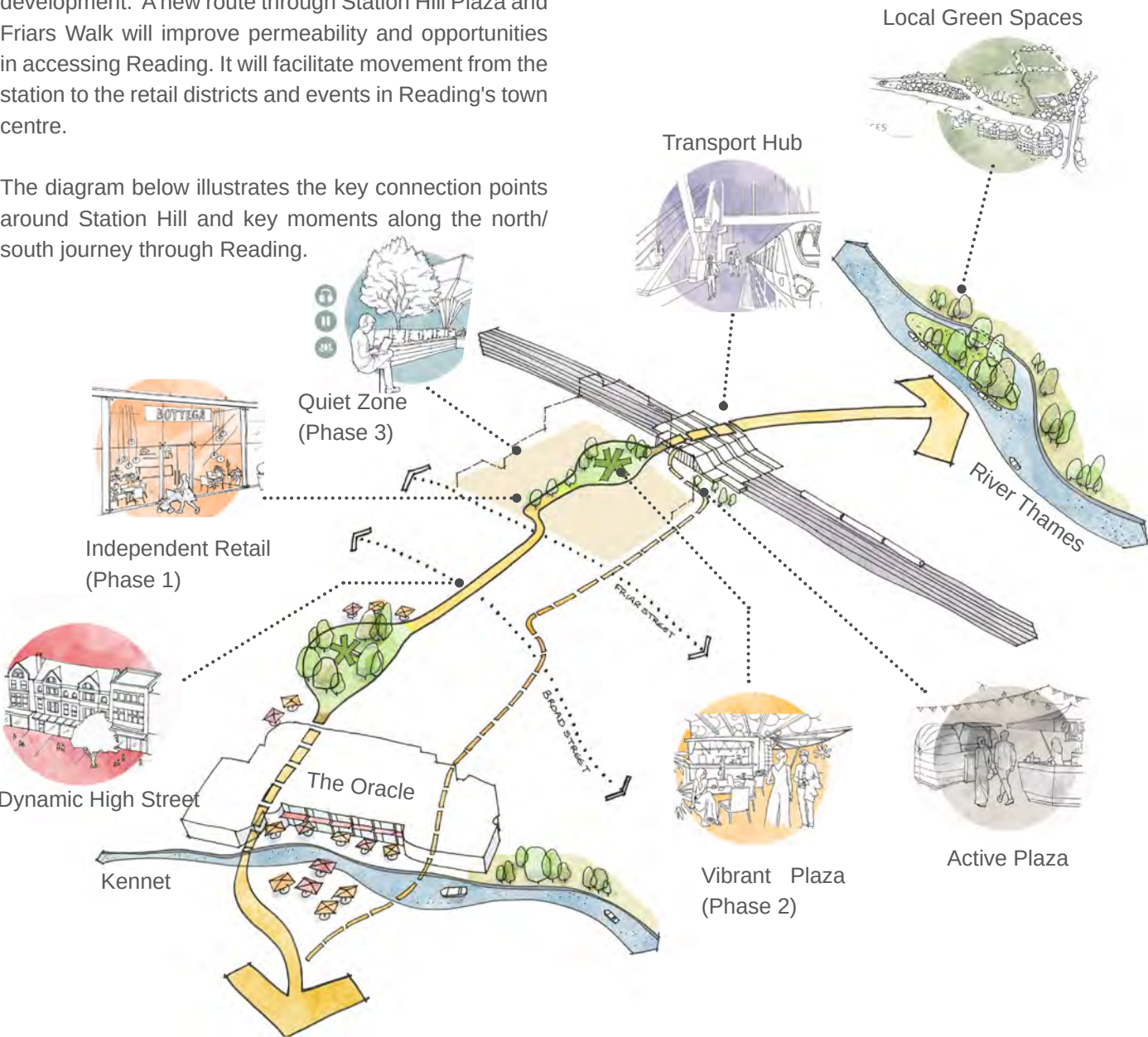


1.3.2 DESIGN DRIVERS

Connecting to Reading

Station Hill North occupies a significant location in Reading with its adjacency to Reading Station and along an important north / south pedestrian path through Reading. A key design driver is to develop the masterplan to provide an active 'front door' for Reading from the Station and to make movement for all users, pedestrians and cyclists, as seamless as possible into and through the development. A new route through Station Hill Plaza and Friars Walk will improve permeability and opportunities in accessing Reading. It will facilitate movement from the station to the retail districts and events in Reading's town centre.

The diagram below illustrates the key connection points around Station Hill and key moments along the north/south journey through Reading.

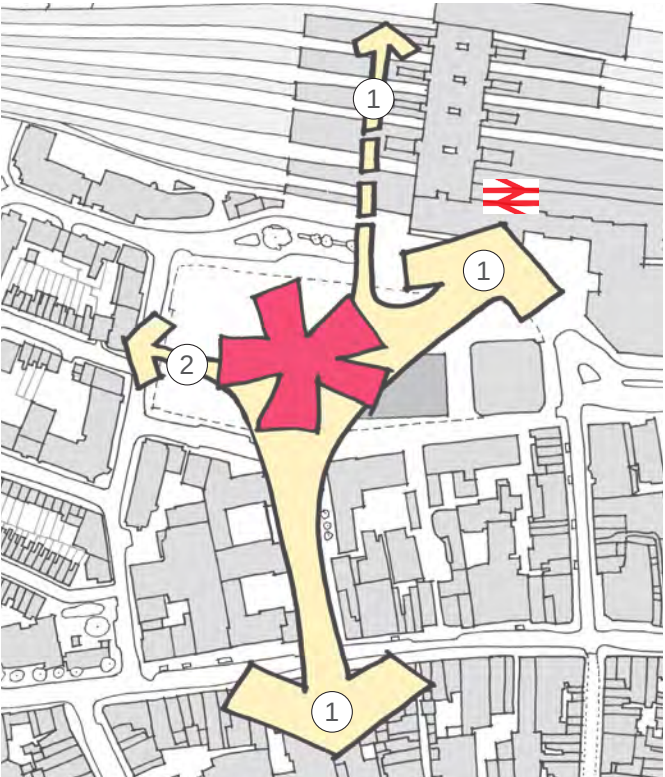


Key Routes

Making Station Hill North easily accessible whilst facilitating connections through the site is a key design goal of the project. This will be achieved by creating key routes including:

- ① A new, accessible route from Reading Station at the north to Friars Walk and the town centre beyond;
- ② A new route from the heart of the project east to Greyfriars Road, connecting new public realm with enlivened streetscape.

Connectivity through the site benefits both Reading and Station Hill with extended accessible paths and increased activation of its public realm and amenity spaces.



Key Routes

Open Spaces

The key routes through the site will be enhanced with open spaces with landscape areas and indoor and outdoor amenities.

These spaces or 'character areas' will vary in design based on their intended usage, from active public plazas to quiet spaces for relaxation. These enhancements along the routes bring activation to the area and encourage increased usage.

In addition to day to day activities such as dining and retail, the development will actively promote events and activities to animate the public realm and engage the community.



Green Star Symbol Open Space Character Areas

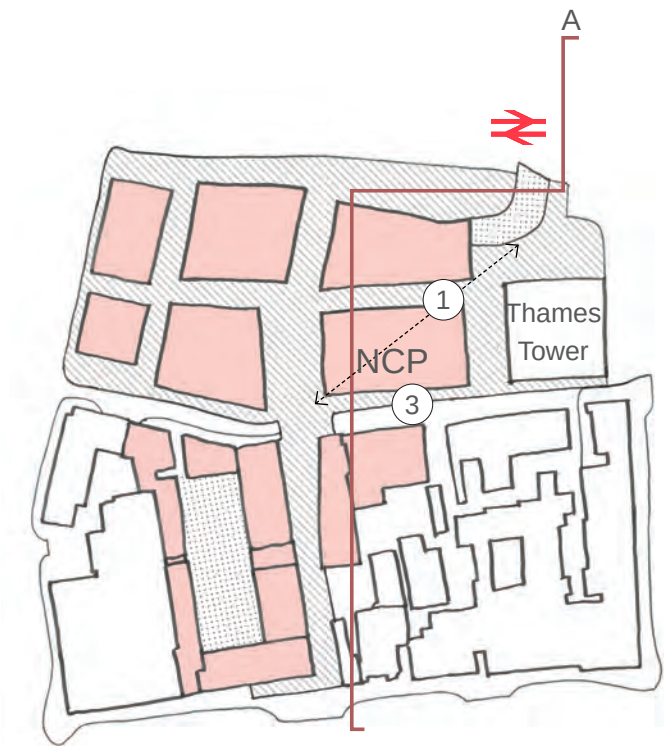
Open Spaces

1.3 MASTERPLAN PRINCIPLES

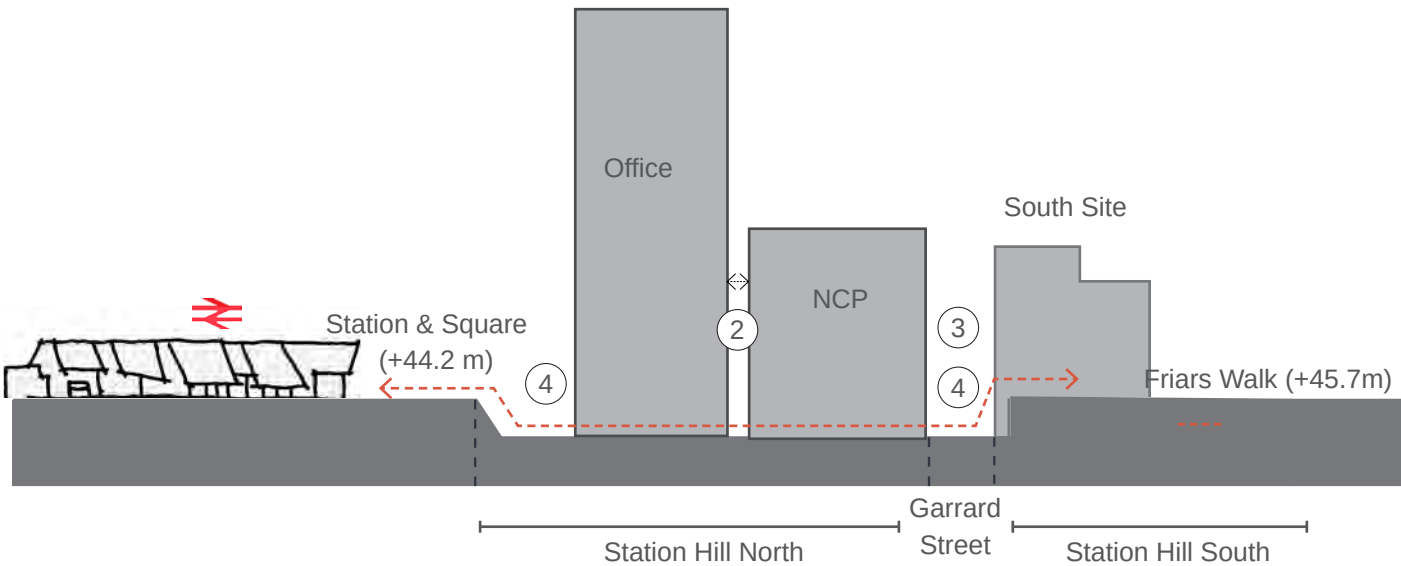
Re-imagining the Site

The current NCP carpark location and massing is the source of significant constraints to achieving the masterplan principles outlined in this DAS. A few of these constraints are as follows:

- ① Its location results in a building configuration that blocks the most direct path from the station to Friars Walk and Reading town centre beyond
- ② It reduces the area of open space between buildings, affecting daylighting and building outlook
- ③ Its south frontage is along Garrard Street which reduces the possibility for active frontages which would improve the streetscape
- ④ Continued utilisation of the NCP results in public realm at Garrard Street level, significantly lower than the Station entry and Friars Walk. These dramatic level differences eliminate the possibility of uninterrupted, easily accessible routes across the site



Consented Scheme constraints related to NCP location

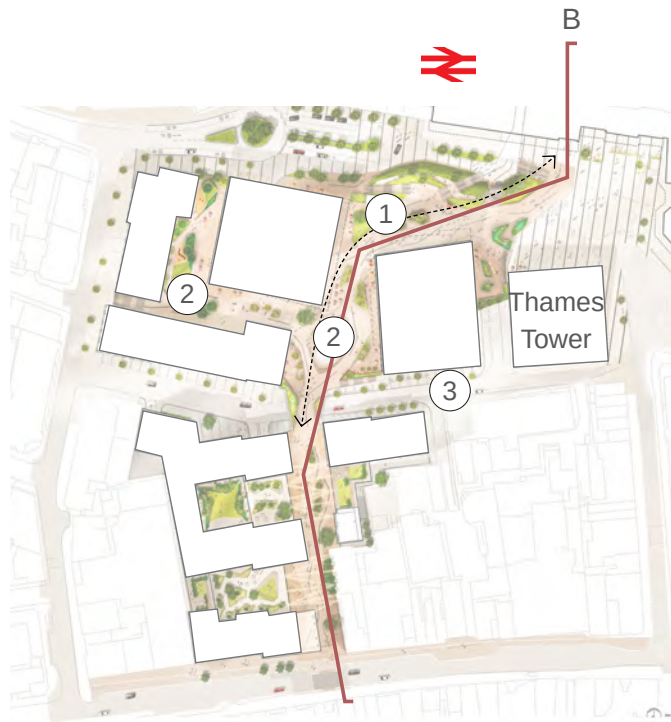


Site Section (A): Consented Scheme with NCP carpark
↔ Path across site with level changes

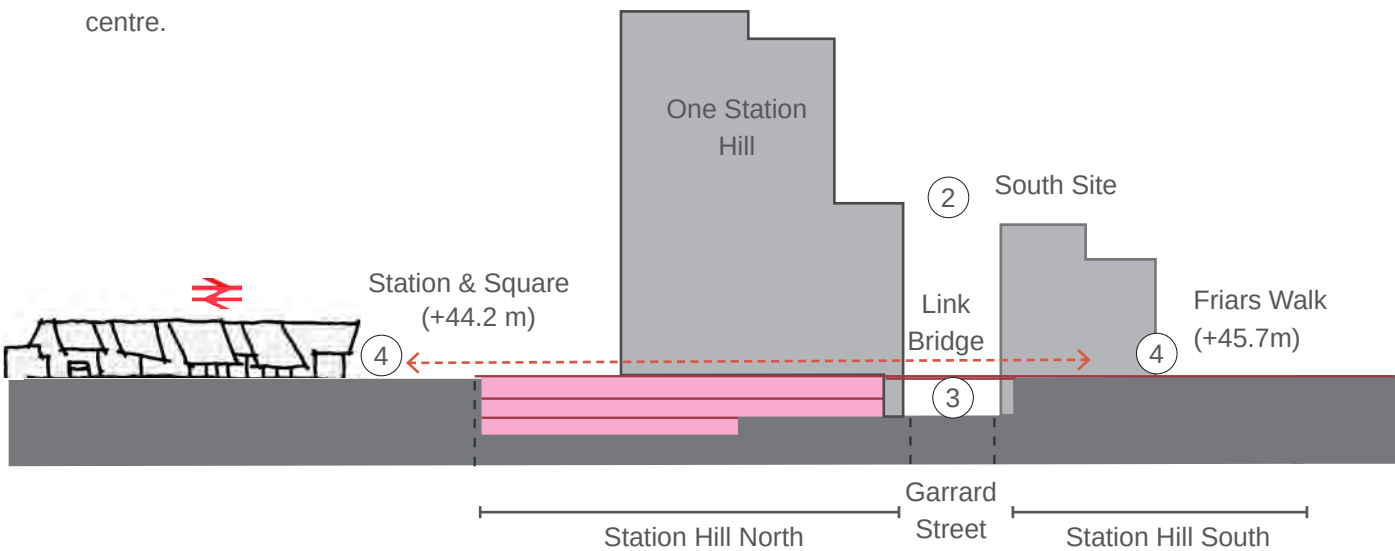
Benefits of the Podium

The demolition of the NCP carpark and introduction of a podium, the upper level of which aligns with the station entrance to the north and Friars Walk to the south, eliminates the constraints related to maintaining the NCP carpark:

- ① A more direct path will connect Reading Station to Friars Walk and Reading town centre beyond with minimal level change.
- ② With less above grade space used for parking, more area can be utilised for open space and amenities with the added benefit of bringing more daylight and improved outlook to the above podium buildings.
- ③ Replacing the multi-storey carpark with an active, commercial building that wraps the podium edge and comes to street level improves public realm and safety along Garrard Street.
- ④ The podium level brings the primary activity level of the project in line with the station access level and Friars Walk, creating an accessible, easily navigable path from the station to Reading town centre.



Proposed masterplan with demolition of NCP carpark



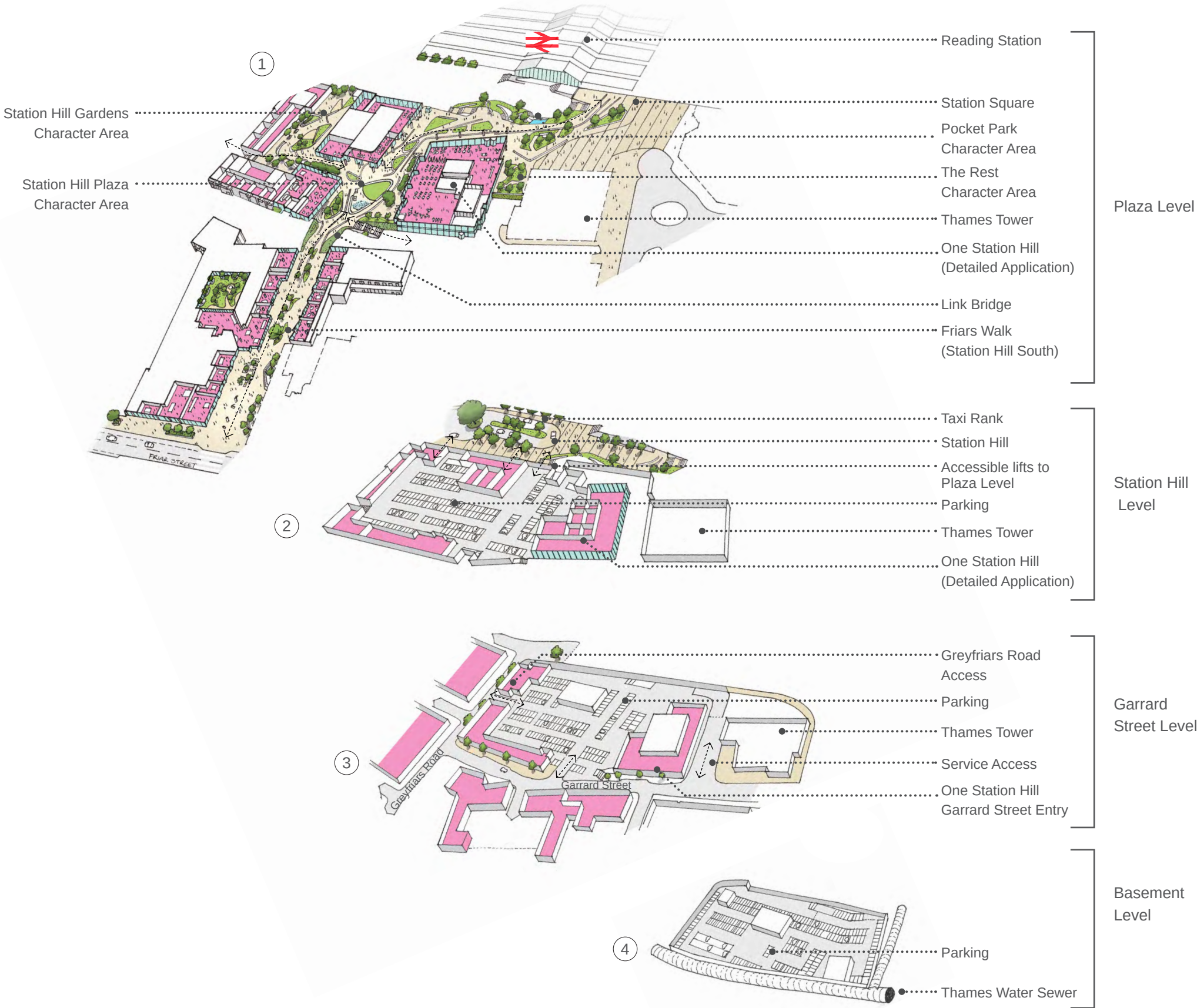
Site Section (B) without NCP carpark
↔ Path across site with podium in place
Proposed podium and partial basement levels

1.3 MASTERPLAN PRINCIPLES

Podium Composition

A solution to the constraints related to the NCP carpark comes with the introduction of podium levels for parking and services across the north site. Introducing a podium level aligned with Station Square at the north and Friars Walk to the south creates a new, accessible public realm seamlessly connecting the station with Friars Walk and Reading town centre beyond. Confining parking to podium levels reduces the density of above grade development, affording more space for public amenities and landscaping. The introduction of the podium also allows for off-street servicing of the project from Garrard Street, freeing Station Hill from constraints of service vehicle access.

- ① Plaza Level with accessible north/south route and public amenity spaces
- ② Station Hill Level with direct access to north podium buildings and parking. Public lifts connect this level to Plaza Level
- ③ Garrard Street Level with parking, cycle and service access
- ④ Basement Level with parking and building services

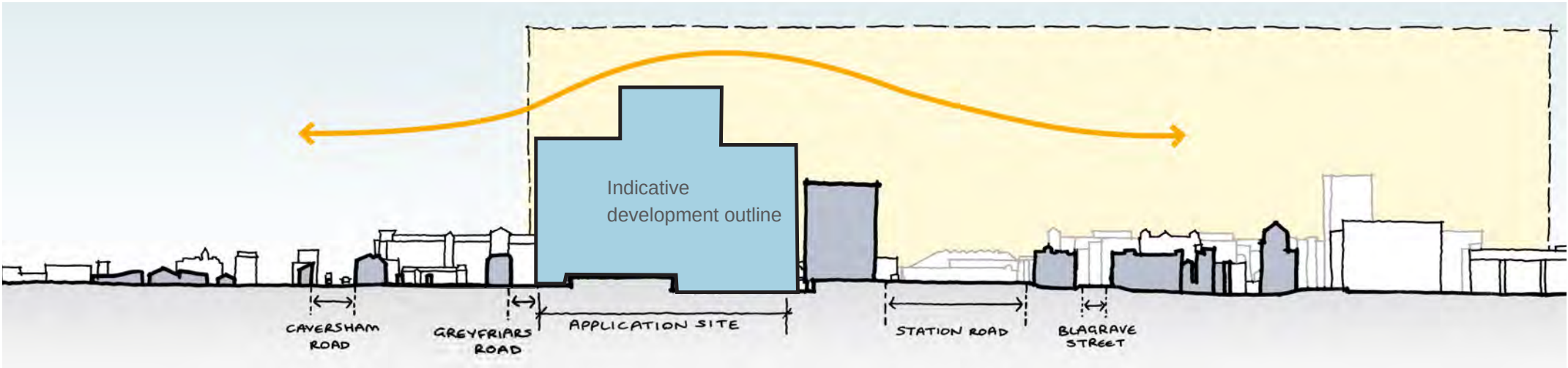


1.3 MASTERPLAN PRINCIPLES

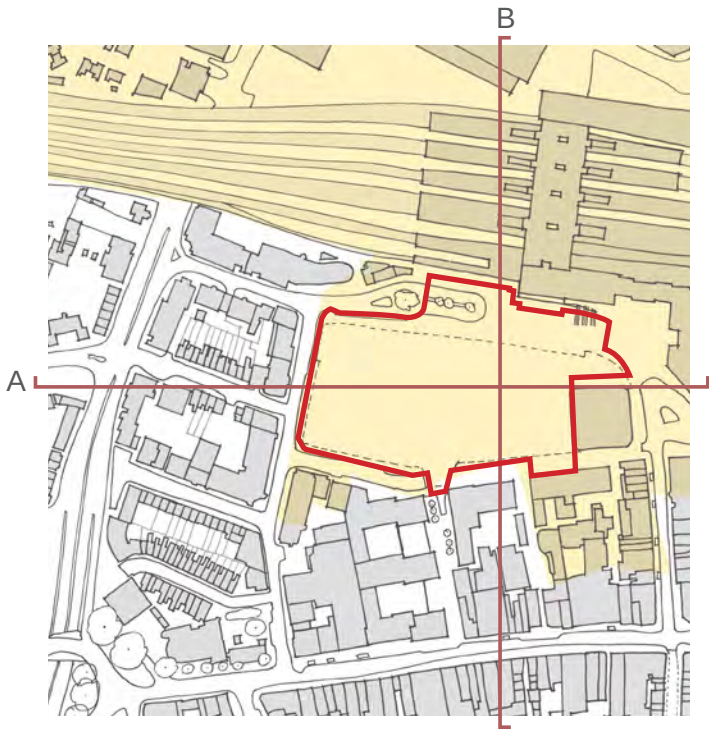
Massing

The proposed building heights align with the townscape vision expressed in the Reading Tall Building Strategy and Reading Station Area Framework.

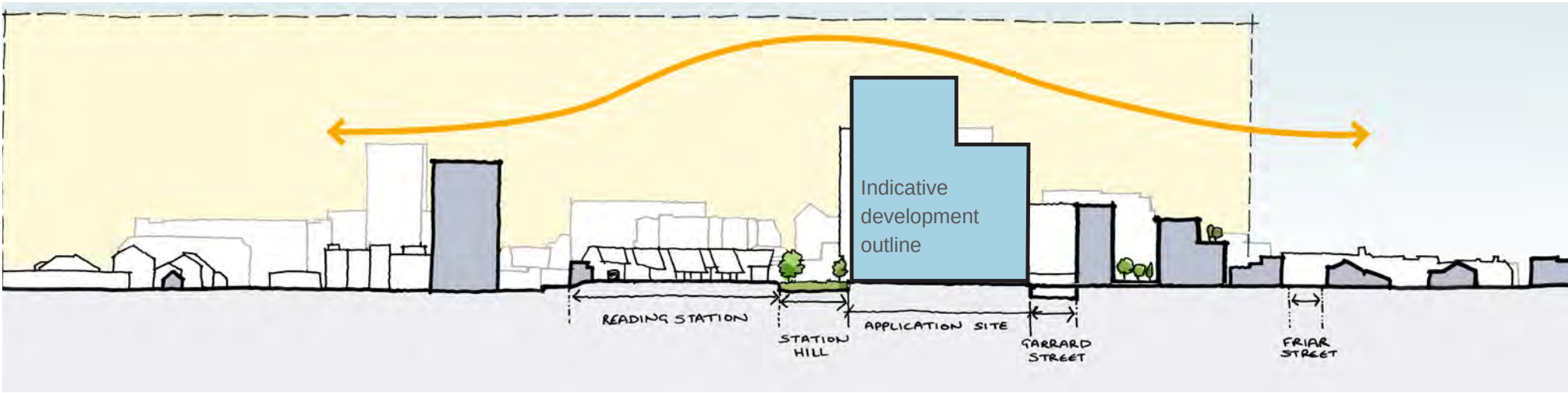
The design intent is that the tallest building will be located at the centre of the site (Plot C) with massing stepping down towards the southern site.



East/West Section A – the proposal within the Tall Building Strategy



Station Hill North within the Station Area Cluster



North/South Section B – the proposal within the Tall Building Strategy

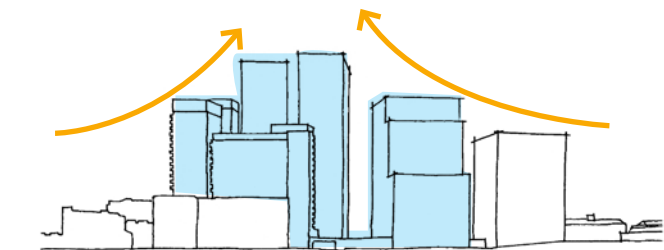
- Station Area Cluster
- Station Hill North

1.3 MASTERPLAN PRINCIPLES

Architecture

The buildings are designed to create a series of activation points along Friars Walk culminating in the two office towers as beacons for the development. This massing also relates to Reading's townscape vision with buildings stepping up toward the centre of the site.

The architecture of the residential blocks will relate to that of the residential buildings of Phase 1 in their material palette. A consistent though not identical use of materials will bring consistency to the project without becoming monotonous.



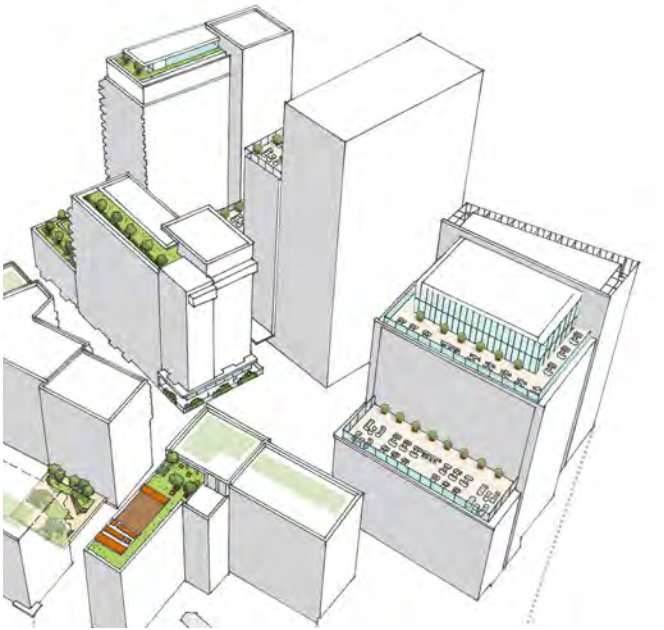
Diagrammatic massing with Station Hill North / South relationship

Visible Activation

The vision for a series of activation points is realised through the introduction of activated roof terraces. For office buildings these relate to office amenities or areas associated with feature floors.

Residential buildings will have upper level amenity spaces providing common use areas such as lounges, fitness uses or group gathering spaces.

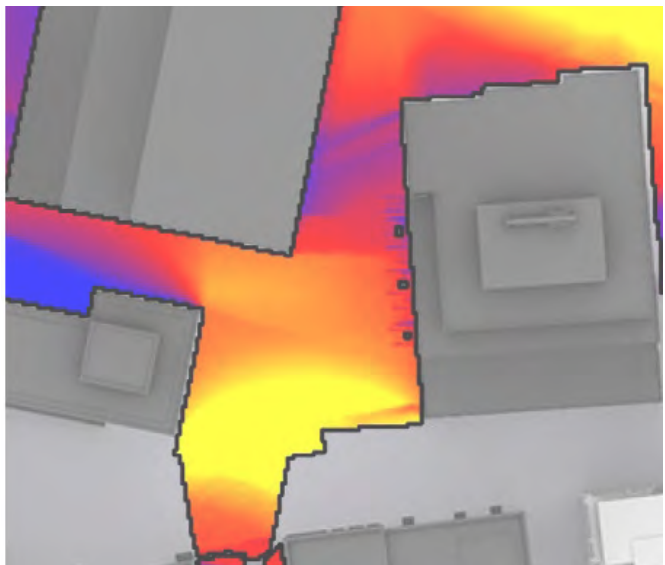
The upper level uses will feature panoramic views across Reading and the Thames Valley beyond.



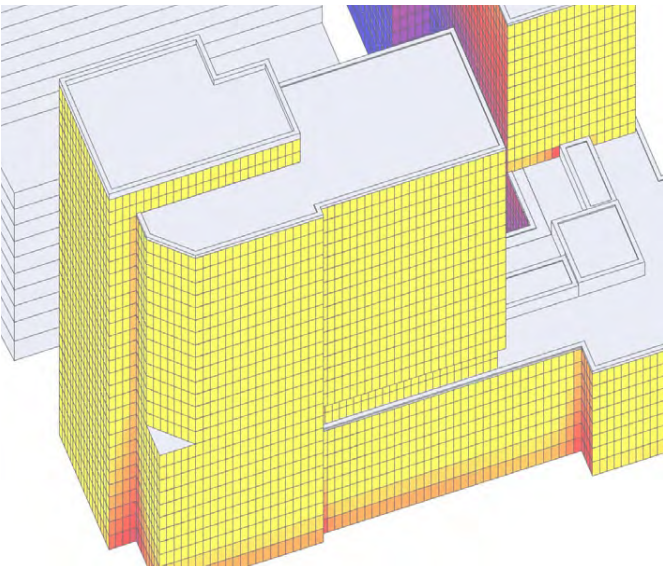
Building Massing with potential roof top activation

Massing and Daylighting

The project massing should allow adequate daylighting to the new public realm for people living and working at Station Hill. Incorporating open spaces also ensures that building occupants receive adequate daylight levels. Several massing options were tested and variations developed to ensure this principle is achieved.



Daylight analysis to public amenity areas



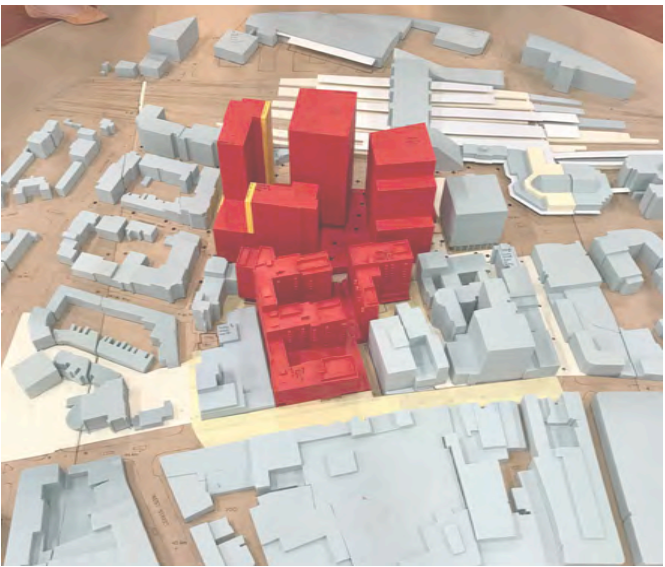
Daylight analysis to building facades

Massing and Wind

The height of buildings destined for the Station Hill North site required careful consideration of factors affecting local wind conditions to ensure that safe conditions exist around the site. The building massing and site landscaping reflect the implementation of strategies to mitigate wind effects associated with the development.



Wind analysis for public realm areas



Wind tunnel test of massing scheme

1.3 MASTERPLAN PRINCIPLES

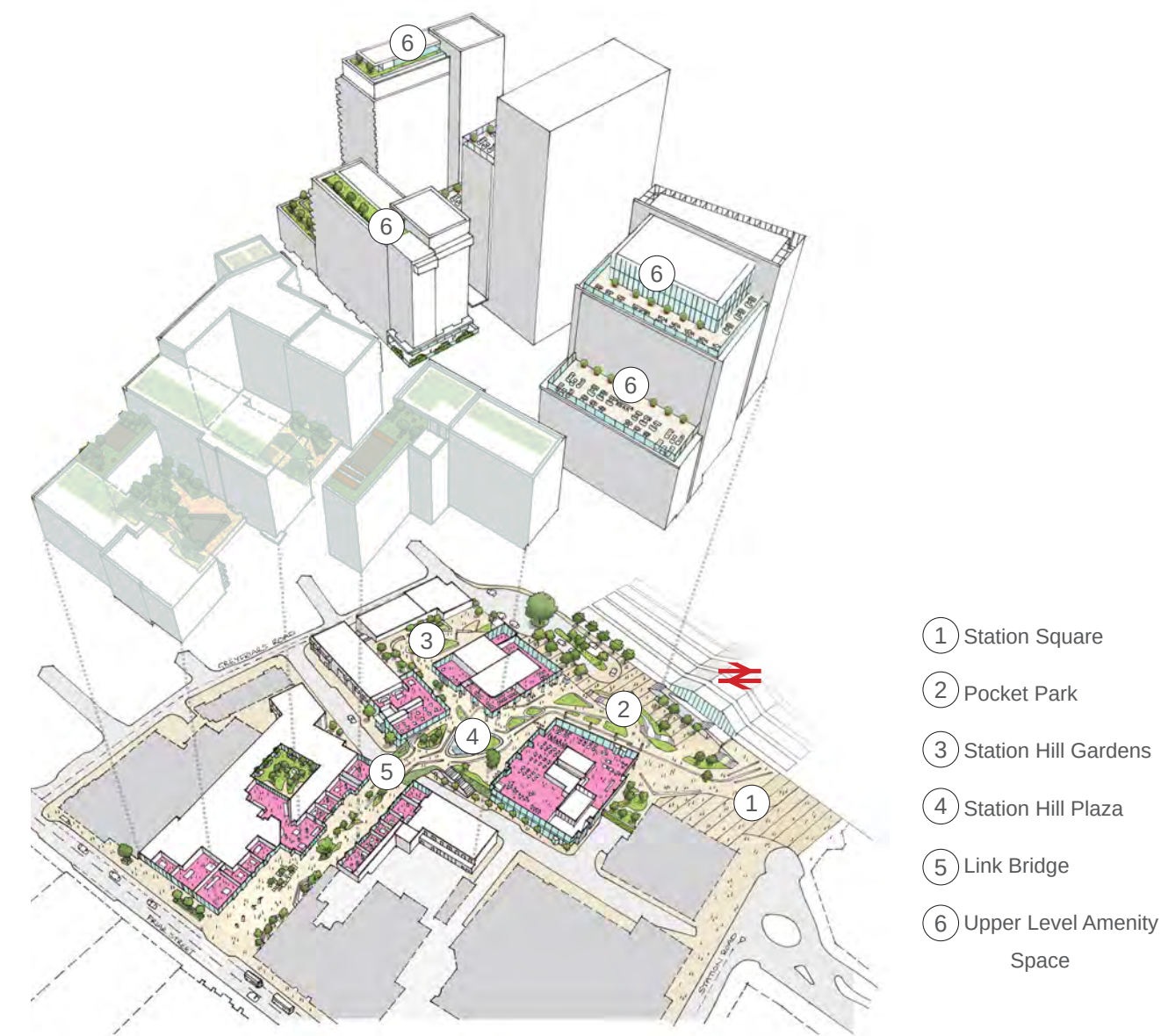
1.3.3 ASSEMBLING THE PLACE

Character Spaces

Implementation of the key masterplan principles outlined in the previous pages results in a project with clearly defined, accessible routes and multi-level activation. The buildings are organised to maximise daylighting and minimise negative wind effects whilst achieving Reading's townscape vision. One Station Hill and the Illustrative Phase 3 scheme create a framework for connecting Reading Station to the town centre as well as providing a vibrant experience at Station Hill.

Station Hill North Massing

The massing diagram below illustrates the setting of One Station Hill (the Detailed Application) and the Illustrative (Outline Application) on the north site. Station Hill Plaza at centre serves as the focal point of the project with a variety of public realm and amenities located across the site. The following pages indicate the principles of site access and activation that are anticipated for the completed north site.



Station Hill North massing and activation Station Hill North Massing



Station Hill North Massing