

# Design & Access Statement

House of Fraser  
The Oracle  
Reading

Berkshire / RG1 2AS

Project. 2216

URB-OR A3 90 01-D01

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# Introduction

This Design & Access Statement has been prepared on behalf of The Oracle Shopping Centre Limited. The document is submitted to Reading Borough Council as part of an application for the subdivision, change of use, and reconfiguration of the House of Fraser Unit, The Oracle Shopping Centre, Reading. The application proposes the following:



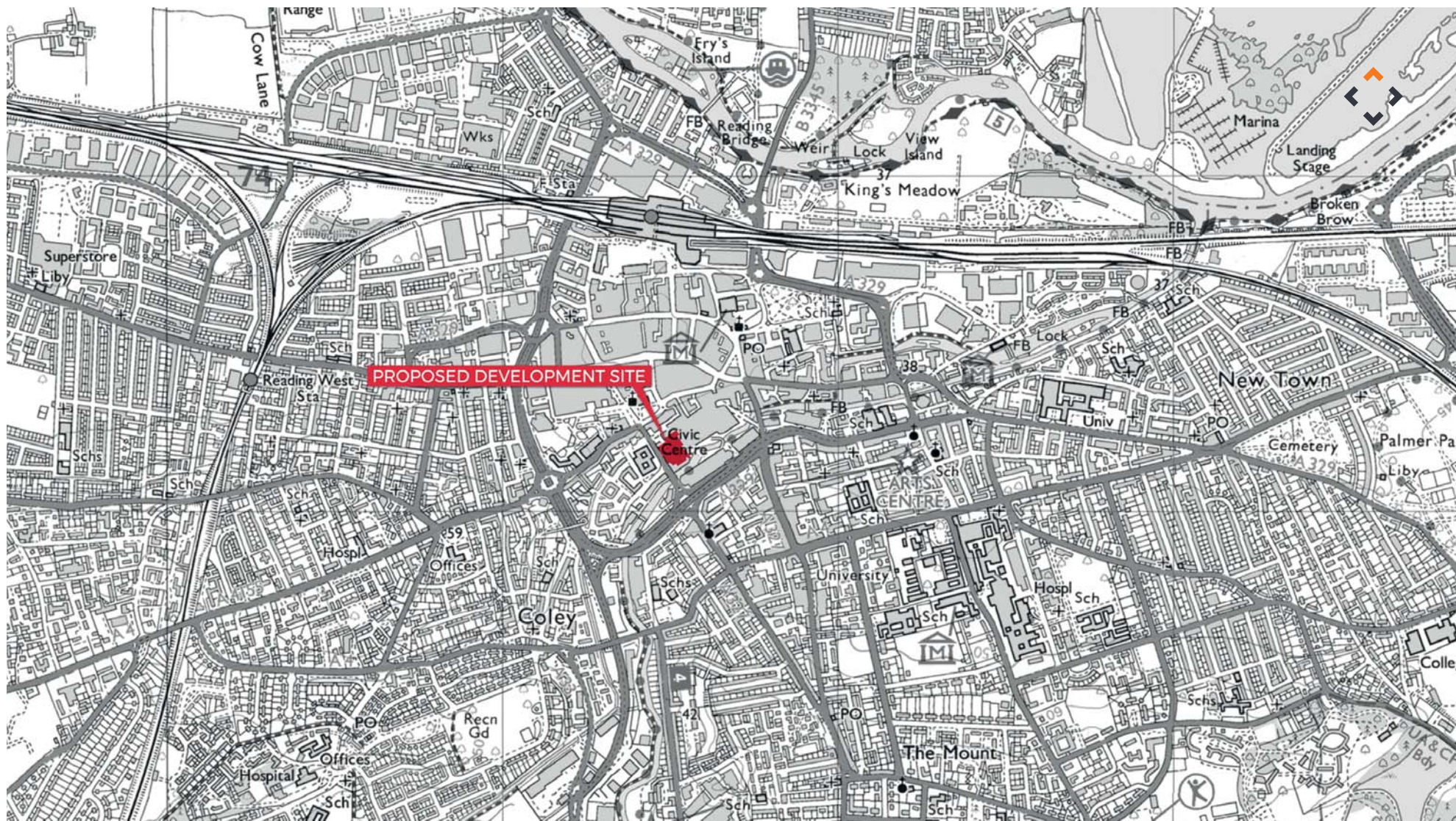
Subdivision of three-storey retail unit (Class A1) and change of use to form: 1 x flexible retail/restaurant/bar unit (Class A1/A3/A4); 1 x flexible retail/restaurant unit (Class A1/A3) and 1 x assembly and leisure unit (Class D2) at Riverside level; 1 x retail unit (Class A1) and 1 x assembly and leisure unit (Class D2) at lower ground level; 1 x retail unit (Class A1) at upper ground level, together with alterations to the Riverside frontage and associated plant, car parking and external alterations at car park levels.

These proposals will create usable and attractive space to attract new operators into the centre, and help to repair inactive sections of the Riverside facade, by enhancing the retail, leisure and food offer available.

This document should be read in conjunction with the additional supporting information prepared and submitted as part of this formal application.



↗ Existing internal entrance



📍 Ordnance Survey map highlighting the location of House of Fraser, The Oracle, Reading (image courtesy of Microsoft)

# Location

The existing House of Fraser is located within the south west of The Oracle Shopping Centre. The centre itself lies to the south of the main Reading shopping area with strong connections to Broad Street and the wider Town Centre area.

The unit's northern and eastern edges of the store are primarily within the shopping centre. The southern and western boundaries are defined by the Riverside (River Kennet) and Bridge Street respectively.

## History

The first Phase of The Oracle was developed and opened in September 1999 with the Riverside restaurants, pubs, car park and cinema forming Phase 2 opening in November the same year. Phase 3 was opened in May 2000 and created an important direct link between the centre and Broad Street.

The House of Fraser Unit formed Part of Phase 1 of the scheme and the retailer has been in occupation for the duration.

The centre currently has over 12 million visitors each year, with well over 800,000 square foot of retail floorspace, forming a key part of Reading Town Centre's retail offer.

## Conservation area

The Centre itself does not lie within any conservation areas, however the western end of the centre lies on the boundary of the St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation area.

In addition, Seven Bridges House, 19 Bridge Street, is a Grade II listed Georgian 2 Storey Villa which lies within the ownership of The

Oracle and is currently leased as an Office. The building is in close proximity to the proposed development site.



📍 Seven Bridges House, Grade II listed building in close proximity to the site

## Access

The existing store predominantly faces inwards over its three levels, with its main access off the Riverside entrance rotunda at Riverside Level and from the end of Holy Brook Mall at Lower and Upper Ground Floor. A small restaurant concession has an external entrance onto the Riverside area. The majority of users enter the store from within the centre. There is also a small staff entrance directly off Bridge Street.

Visitors coming by car have two choices, the rooftop Holy Brook Car Park which sits on top of the centre or the much larger Riverside Multi Storey Car Park. Users of the Holy Brook Car Park are able to

directly access the House of Fraser unit via an entrance escalator and lift atrium, which takes users down into the store.

The Holy Brook Car Park is accessed via Bridge Street whilst the Riverside MSCP is accessed via Mill Lane. Riverside car park users have a direct pedestrian link to the centre via a link bridge over the River Kennet and can enter the centre via the rotunda entrance or circulate the Riverside area.

The existing House of Fraser is presently serviced via the main centre service yard area, which sits at Riverside level and is fully enclosed by the building. The Service Yard is accessed via Bridge Street and is one way, with its exit onto Yield Hall Place.



📍 Birdseye view showing the specific location of the proposed development (image courtesy of Microsoft)

# Existing Site

The House of Fraser Unit sits as an Anchor Store at the south western end of the centre. The northern and eastern sides are within the centre. The southern edge of unit presents itself onto the Riverside and the River Kennet which form the main centre external public realm of the centre. Restaurants line the southern edge of the main centre facing onto the northern bank of the River Kennet. On the opposite bank the Cinema and Riverside car park with restaurant units along its base, work with two podium restaurant buildings, activating the southern bank of the River, generating thriving day and evening activity.

The western edge of the building faces onto Bridge Street which is a primary bus route. Opposite House of Fraser is the Reading Civic Centre which houses Reading Borough Council. To the south west of the building a 7-storey residential building announces the start of a series of residential buildings that line the northern and southern banks of the River Kennet westwards.

To the north west of the House of Fraser the centre wraps around the aforementioned Seven Bridges House and then makes way for the St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Area which is a mix of public houses, residential and small shops and businesses.

Due to the topography of the site, the Riverside Level of the unit is approximately a metre and a half below the level of the Riverside Public Realm. As you move around the building onto Bridge Street the levels rise further meaning that there is a level difference of approximately 2m between the street level and the internal floor level along this façade. As Riverside moves to the east the levels change up then down to the level of the centre's rotunda entrance.

## Façade generally

The main façade consists of reconstituted stone panels up to the top of the main retail floors. At roof level the car park is set well back from the façade, however both the Riverside and Bridge Street side of the building have large external plant areas. These are shielded by large 4m high plant screens which are set back from the main building line to visually reduce the massing of the building.

## Riverside façade

The Riverside façade of the House of Fraser Unit consists of two key elements. The first is the glazed 'pop out'. This is a strong architectural presence on the Riverside and was designed to break up the overall façade of a large retail unit and give interest and activity to the façade. The pop out has a large projecting canopy which sits at the Lower Ground Floor Level, with the intention to allow visibility into the retail unit. Unfortunately, the pop out's original intent has been lost with wall space for goods taking precedence over retaining and providing visibility into the unit.

The pop out itself forms a colonnade along the Riverside with a series of windows following the rigour of the pop out structure. One of these windows forms an entrance for the restaurant concession which sits within the store. Due to the building's internal levels and how they relate to the external levels the colonnade is unfortunately is low in height, and due to its inactivity doesn't feel like an inviting space to dwell.

The Riverside façade of the House of Fraser Unit bookmarks the end of the Riverside public realm and although it is part of the Oracle Ownership, its lack of activity creates a dead link back to Bridge

Street, with users only passing between the main public realm and Bridge Street rather than dwelling. It is a missed opportunity for this element of the Riverside.

The second element of the Riverside Façade is the corner 'splay'. The splay consists of full height glazing from ground to parapet level and, as with the pop out, was designed to provide interest and visible activity into the anchor store. Unfortunately, it is dominated by chunky curtain walling and the glazing is broken down into multiple panels which detract from this. This corner has more activity due to its proximity to the bridge, but as with the main façade users pass it by.



⬆ The corner 'splay' element consists of full height glazing



⬆ The 'pop out' element forms a colonnade along the Riverside



⬆ The Riverside public realm fails to encourage users to dwell

## Bridge Street façade

The Bridge Street façade is also broken into two main elements. The southern two thirds of the facade follow the same vernacular as the Riverside Façade and has a similar pop out. This pop out had the same intent as Riverside and consists of the same architectural language with the main pop out extending from Lower Ground Floor level and forming a colonnade below. As previously mentioned, the increase in level difference between the internal level and the street level has resulted in the shopfront within the colonnade area being relatively low in height.

Unfortunately, it suffers from the same fate as the Riverside façade with inactivity and low colonnade. The pedestrian usage of the public realm along this façade differs from the Riverside. It is not a main pedestrian route and as a result has lower footfall, with users crossing to the civic centre or travelling directly to the Castle Street Area. The close proximity to a busy road also means that users are less likely to dwell.

As with the Riverside façade there is little internal activity visible. The lower level windows under the colonnade are covered with vinyl and block views into the building. The glazing of the upper level pop out has also been covered as the internal space is currently utilised for storage.

At the northern end of the façade and as part of the original building design, a small Georgian style façade was created around the staff entrance for House of Fraser. It is considered that this is in response to the adjacent listed Seven Bridges House and an attempt at transitioning the street scene from large shopping centre to smaller scale residential. The façade is formed of ashlar stone with feature reconstituted stone detailing, well-proportioned

windows are in place at Riverside and Lower Ground Floor Level, however these have been covered over with graphics at street level and internal film at Lower Ground Floor. Its return façade is stone form in two structural bays but turns to brickwork as it enters into a tertiary parking/loading area.



↑ The staff entrance has been constructed in a Georgian style



📍 The colonnade is in closed proximity to the main road



📍 The Bridge Street façade also includes a 'pop out' feature

## Public realm

The existing public realm is particularly high quality, with improvements made as part of the Comptoir Libanais restaurant scheme in 2016/2017. Along the Riverside, the hard landscaping is constructed predominantly of red/grey block paving with feature banding formed of red block paviours, breaking the paving into sections in tune with the structural regularity of the building façade.

Outside of the canopy, between its edge and the river bank, the route is a protected fire tender access and is kept clear of any obstruction that might prevent emergency access. Along the river's edge there are a series of trees planted along the same banding pattern. There are also a series of planters that provide greenery to the river edge.



↑ Parts of the soft landscape have suffered during the hot summer



↑ Hard landscape is constructed from red/grey block paving

The same block paving material and language continues around to the Bridge Street public realm. This area is more utilitarian with the presence of a taxi/bus stop directly on the corner of the building. There are no features of interest along this area of public realm reflective of its nature as a route to another destination.

## Scale

Generally, the proposals do not seek to extend the existing retail or increase or adapt the height of the existing Riverside or Bridge Street façades. There will be no fundamental changes to the massing or envelope of the existing built form other than the proposed removal of the Riverside pop out.

Overall, the proposals seek to reconfigure the existing floorspace into more efficient, practical floorspace with the objective of

increasing visitation for the benefit of Riverside; The Oracle and wider town centre.

The design of the proposals, particularly along Riverside will need to respond to the scale of the adjacent properties and context that it sits within, working within the constraints of the existing building.



Plant areas are shielded by 4m high plant screens which are set back from the building line



Existing Yield Hall Mall West (LG) entrance



Existing Town Mall West (UG) entrance



Public space to the north-east of the site



Existing entrance via Holy Brook car park

# Site Analysis

## Site constraints

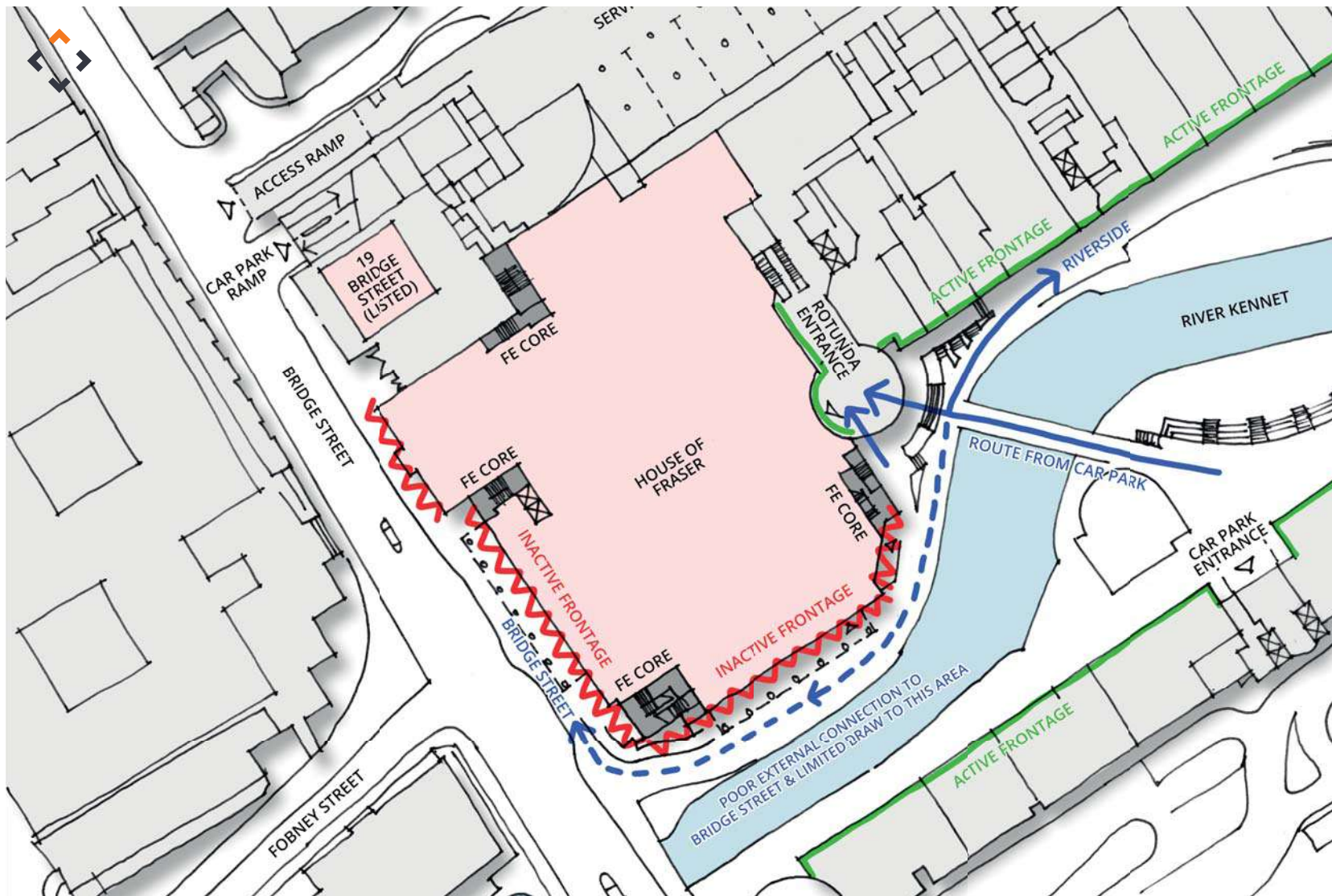
The existing House of Fraser footprint, its integration within The Oracle and the local context create a number of constraints to consider.

The primary issue is the inactive frontage onto the Riverside. At present the existing pop out, and the shopfront panels below provide no visibility into the unit, as the glass has reflective film and is also blocked with vinyl at both ground level and higher up. Although there are two entrances into the restaurant concession at Riverside level, these are very much secondary and do not present a key access point into the building.

As a result, the Riverside public realm at this side of the centre is underutilised, and a dead area is formed in comparison to the more active public realm along the river to the east. This element of the public realm is treated solely as a connection to and from Bridge Street.

Whilst a large section of the building's façade faces onto Bridge Street, this is very much a secondary façade to the scheme. Although Bridge Street itself is a key bus route both into and out of the town centre from the south, and also provides access for the Holy Brook Car Park and service yard, it is not an active street from a pedestrian perspective. There is little activity provided by any of the buildings as you travel north along the road from the Mill Lane roundabout. Opposite the HOF unit, the Civic offices generates the most pedestrian movements, however smaller scale activity is not present until you reach the St Mary's Butts / Castle Street area and its combination of smaller shops, businesses, bars and restaurants.

The main challenge along this façade is the change in levels between the street and the internal finished floor of the unit. The change in levels also exists along the Riverside façade however the difference between the two is greater along Bridge Street as the road and public realm rises. Creating new entrances along this façade would be challenging and users may be put off by having to traverse steps, preferring entrances which are easier to navigate.



Site constraints diagram

## Site opportunities

In response to the existing constraints a number of opportunities have been explored.

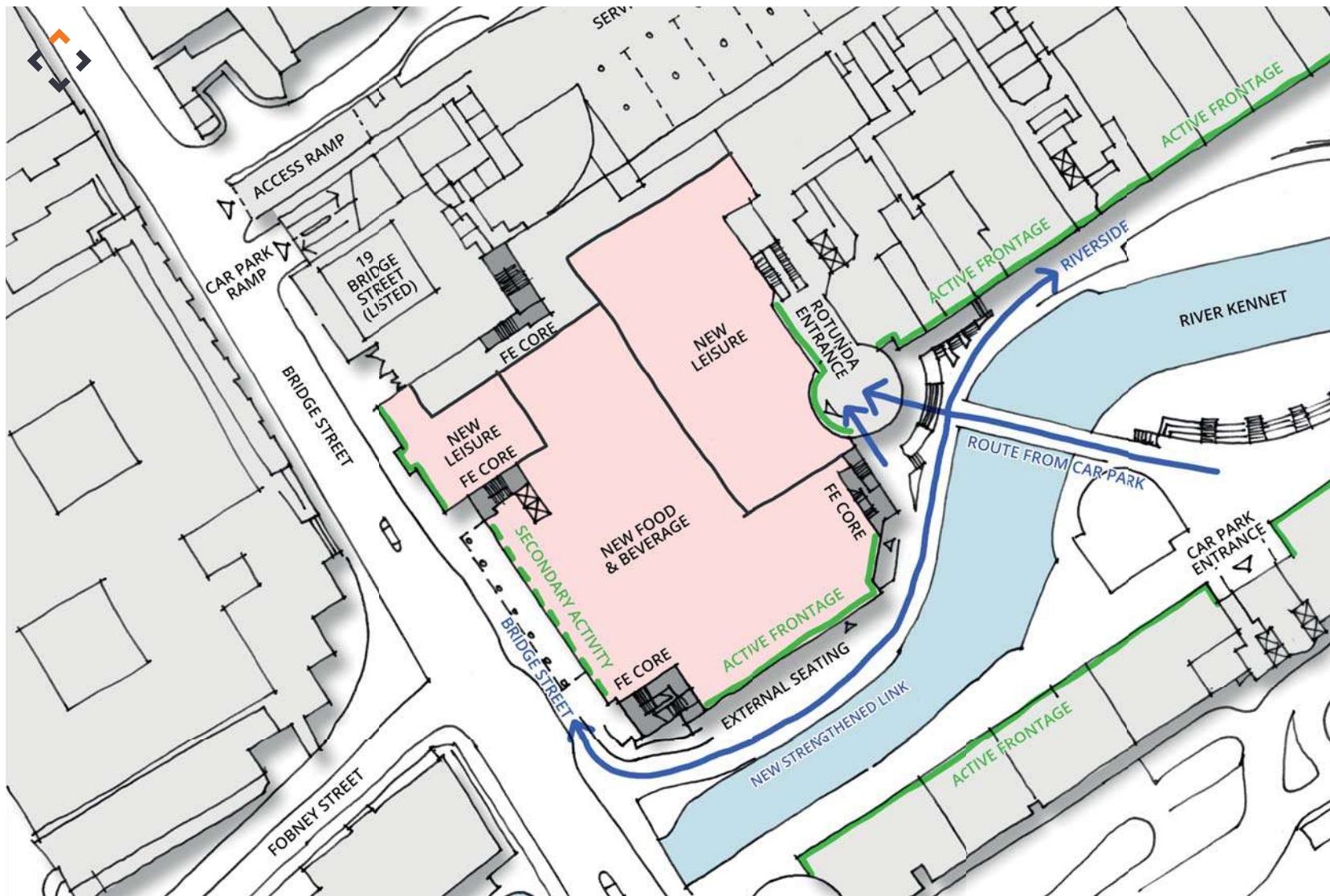
The overarching key principle is to activate the Riverside façade of the House of Fraser unit, achieved through considering how the existing unit could be reconfigured to create units that face outwards onto the Riverside rather than inwards into the centre.

In the changing and challenging economic environment, the need for large volumes of retail floorspace is dwindling, and there are few retail operators that would take this space in its entirety. Therefore, there is a need to develop a scheme that repurpose this space, incorporating uses that reflect the evolution of shopping centres to provide a mix of activities and destinations. Alongside elements of Retail, Leisure and Food & Drink should also be accommodated to complement and strengthen the existing Riverside day and evening offer.

By creating new units which face onto this inactive element of the Riverside, users will be encouraged to remain in the locale, given the opportunity to extend their dwell time with leisure and food/drink.

The change in levels from street level to the internal Riverside finished floor level makes this particularly difficult for the majority of the façade, particularly beneath the existing pop out box. The existing House of Fraser unit staff entrance to the left-hand side of the façade does however present a better opportunity to activate through the creation of a smaller unit, as there is an established entrance already.

There is definitely an opportunity to improve upon the visual activity of this façade. The covering vinyl applied to the glazing at both street level and the pop out windows above will be removed, with incoming tenants encouraged to keep these windows clear of obstruction, allowing activity within the units to be seen from the street.



Site opportunities diagram

# Design Development

## Development options

Following the initial analysis of the unit and its context, a series of options on how to subdivide the existing floorspace were explored. These options also explored the incorporation of alternative uses into the centre. These options considered how the existing retail space could be reconfigured and repurposed, responding to the internal mall, the Riverside and Bridge Street. One of the important factors was the provision of adequate servicing access to all new units.

The alternative uses considered reflect the changing market and are uses that complement both the centre and the wider town centre context.

Opportunities to remove or reconfigure the existing fire escape cores were also explored in order to increase and maximise the new and active frontage created.

The diagrams shown on these two pages show initial thoughts on what differing levels of reconfiguration can be achieved in order to influence how the proposals should develop further.

## Servicing

One of the key influences on the success of this scheme is developing a successful servicing strategy that balances the needs of the retailers and the centre.

At present the House of Fraser Unit is serviced via the main service yard from the rear of the unit. Due to the configuration of the centre this is via a small single point section of the building footprint. Subdividing the existing floorspace into multiple units

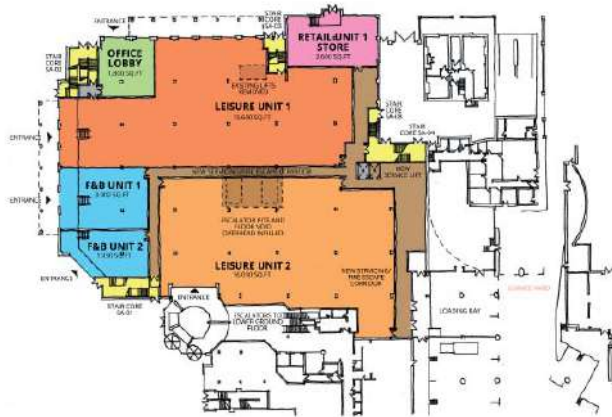


↑ Repurposing section

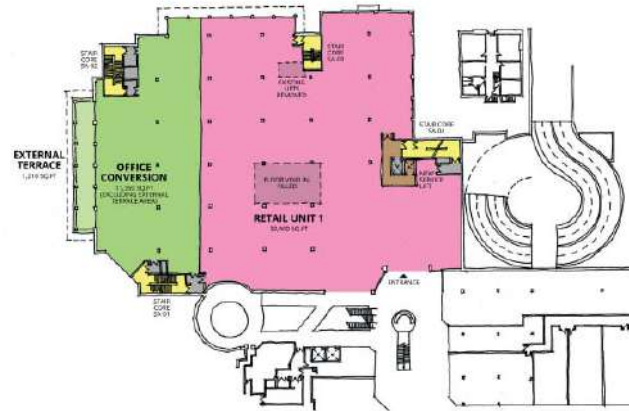
requires a differing servicing infrastructure reliant on the single point of entry, as there are no other locations from which servicing can take place. New servicing routes both horizontally and vertically will be required and it is important these routes do not compromise any of the existing units or the new proposed units.

The servicing impact of the proposals is explored further within the transport section of this document and with the associated Transport Note prepared by Watermans Transport.

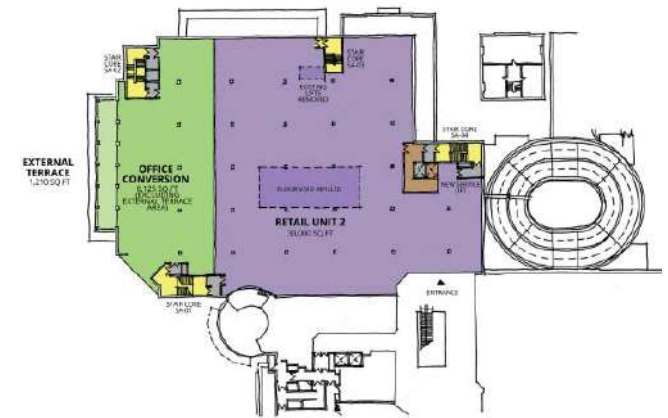
The diagrams shown on these two pages show initial thoughts on what differing levels of reconfiguration can be achieved in order to influence how the proposals should develop further.



Development Option 1 - Riverside



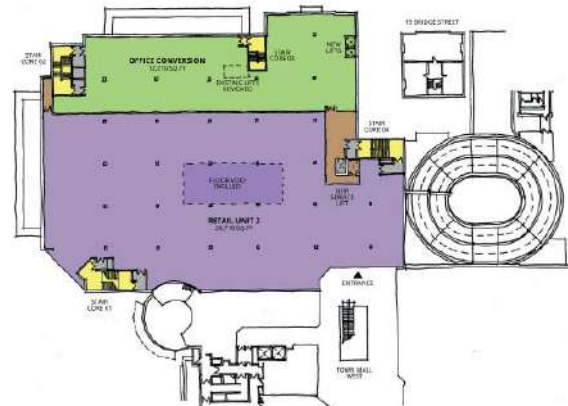
Development Option 1 - Lower Ground Floor



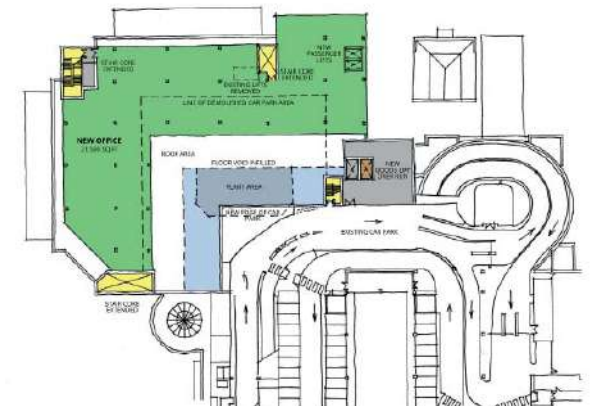
Development Option 1 - Upper Ground Floor



Development Option 2 - Riverside



Development Option 2 - Upper Ground Floor



Development Option 2 - Car Parking Level 1

## Developed plan proposals

Following a process of investigating the existing building, and its integration within the centre, along with ongoing discussions with interested tenant parties and the applicant, the subdivision plans have been developed in detail into the scheme presented as part of this application.

### Riverside level

At lower ground the existing floorspace will be predominantly carved into two main elements. The main focus will be a new Food Hall Unit which faces onto the Riverside. This unit (R22) will have use class A1/A3/A4 and is considered as a destination food offer, consisting of a number of small specialist food vendors arranged around a communal seating area, this is likely to be supplemented by a bar providing drink options. Internally a new D2 leisure unit (R25) will be created accessed from the Riverside level from within the Entrance Rotunda.

On the corner facing the Riverside, an entrance space will be created for a new D2 leisure unit (R24) at Lower Ground Floor. This space will incorporate lifts, stairs and escalators to access the upper level.

The existing finish floor level of the Riverside level is predominantly 1.5m below the public realm level along the Riverside, and so the entrance to R24 will be built up to street level in order to provide a level threshold. In the Food Hall unit, the floor level will remain with the new incoming tenant dealing with the change in entrance level as part of their proposed tenant fitout.

In the position of the House of Fraser staff entrance on Bridge Street, a new smaller A1/A3 unit (R23), will be created to assist with activating the facade. It is hoped the smaller unit will present itself as a good opportunity for a café or coffee operator, with good links to the residential and council offices opposite. Alongside this unit space will be created for a new electrical substation which will face onto the

parking area adjacent 19 Bridge Street. A new incoming gas room will be located adjacent to this.

The remainder of the floorspace will be reconfigured to create new service / fire escape corridors accessing each of the new units and originating from the existing service yard. The remaining space will be carved into new Remote Storage Units for the centre or tenant use as well as an internal refuse storage area.

### Lower ground floor

At lower ground the floorspace is split into two new units. Unit R24 will be a new D2 unit accessed via the Riverside entrance lobby mentioned in the previous section. The adjacent Unit (L43) will remain as A1 retail use accessed via the main mall as per the existing floorspace. A new service corridor will be formed around the north west corner of the building to service both units.

At this level the existing Riverside pop-out will be removed to provide a new flush façade onto the Riverside. This new glazing will provide key visual presence for the Leisure operator that will occupy this unit.

For this application the new façade works on the Riverside will be delivered as part of the shell works, however internally the final design of the shopfronts will be the responsibility of each individual tenant.

### Upper ground floor

At upper ground, a large proportion of the existing retail floorspace will remain as A1 retail (U48) however it has been reconfigured to suit the requirements of potential retailers. On its own the unit is larger than required for the vast majority of contemporary retailers and so a section of the floorspace has been carved off on the Bridge Street side of the building as Remote Storage. The entrance position of the unit remains as before at the end of Town Mall West.

### Level 1 & 2 parking (roof)

Above the House of Fraser Unit sits two levels of car park forming part of the Holy Brook Car Park over the centre. The existing House of Fraser access atrium which provides direct access down to the retail levels via escalator will be demolished with the existing openings infilled. Similarly, the existing lifts will also be removed and the lift housing demolished.

Over the two levels the infilled void will be utilised to provide an additional 16 parking spaces configured to suit the existing car park layout.

At present the existing House of Fraser plant is split between two large double height plant areas on the Riverside and Bridge Street sides of the building which sit between the building edge and the car park. The existing plant will be removed in its entirety and new risers will be formed from the newly formed units accessing this plant space. The existing plant deck structure will be reconfigured to suit. A further plant area will be created for Retail Unit U48 in the position of the former lift lobby, with a riser formed through the parking level below.

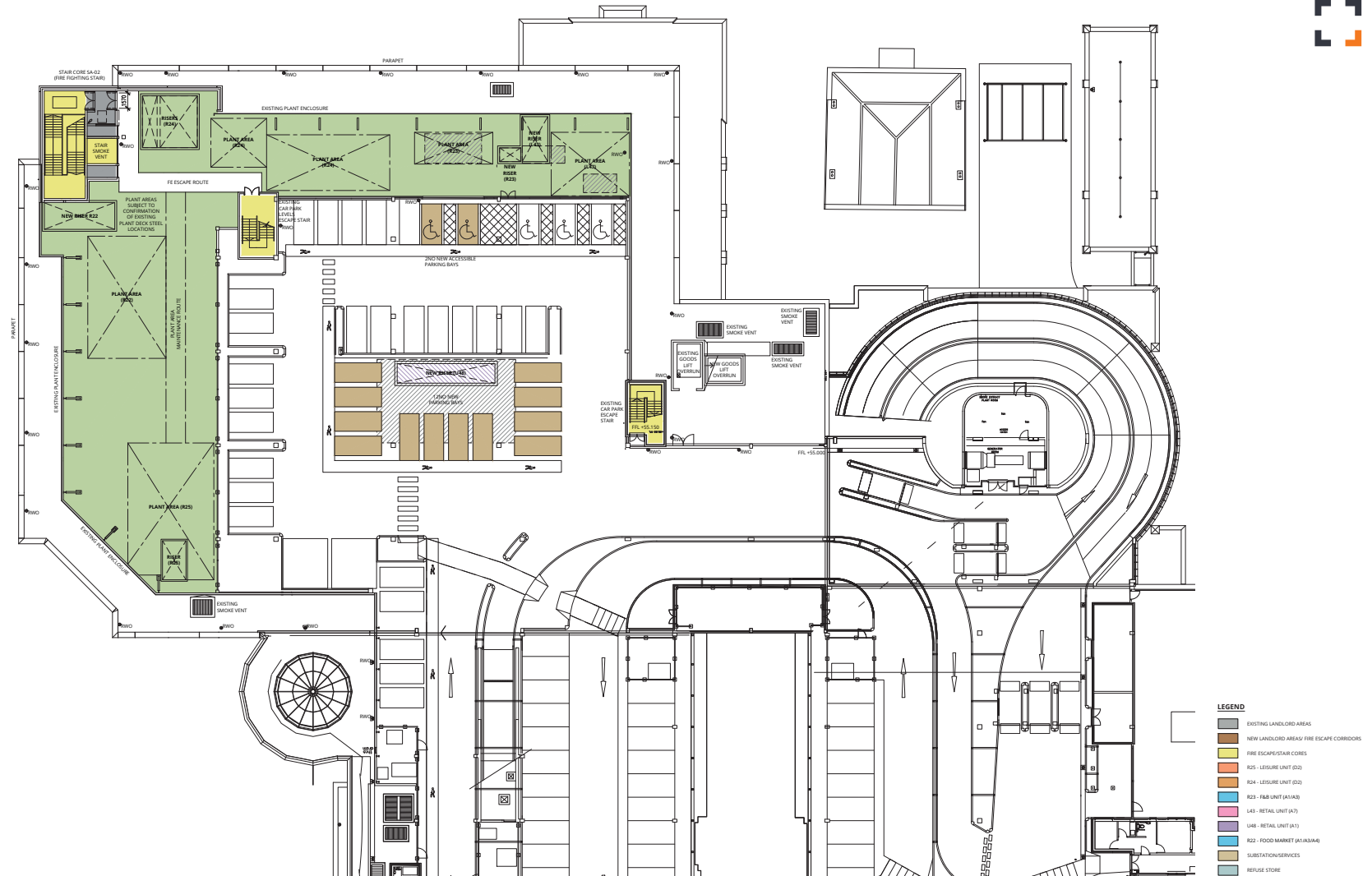
Presently the existing perimeter of the plant areas is enclosed with a 4m high plant screen meaning that they are not visible from the surrounding areas. Any new plant will be hidden below this ridge line. Tenants will be encouraged to double stack their plant to keep the plant areas as constrained as possible however it is unlikely that the plant will be higher than the existing plant screens and it will not, therefore, be visible from ground level.







↑ Upper ground floor proposed plan



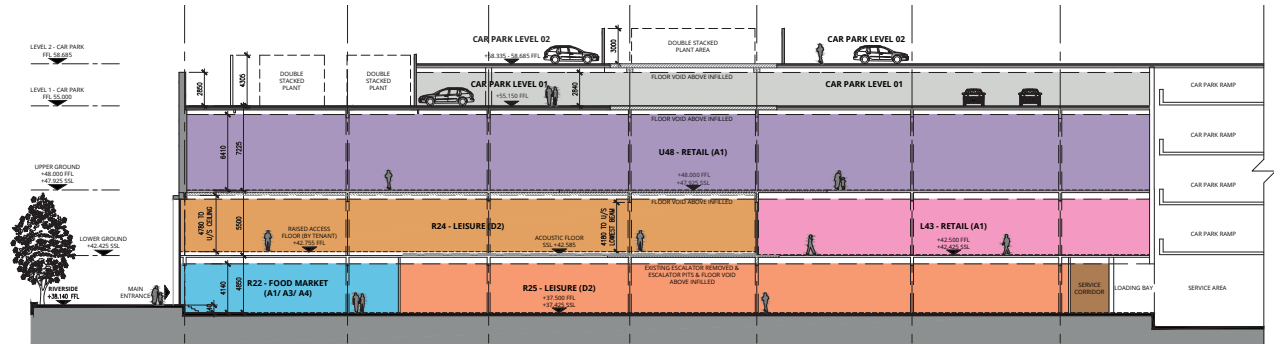
↑ Parking level 1 proposed plan

## Sections

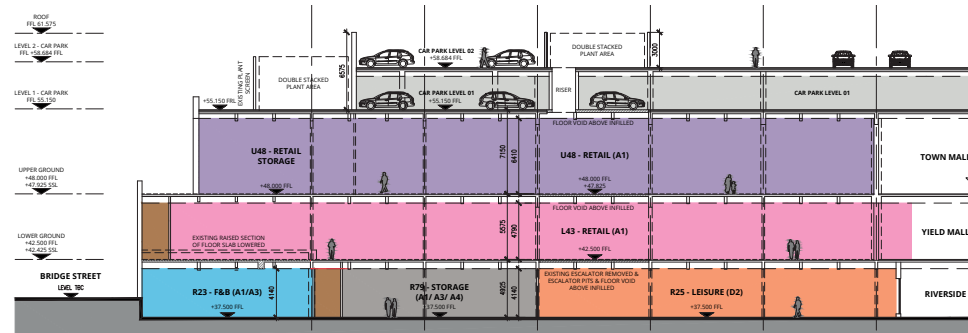
These sections indicate the complexity of the redeveloped floorspace, in relation to both the centre inside and the external street level. They show how the proposed new retail and leisure units will integrate into the mall and how the new Food hall and Leisure units will be presented onto the Riverside and Bridge Street.



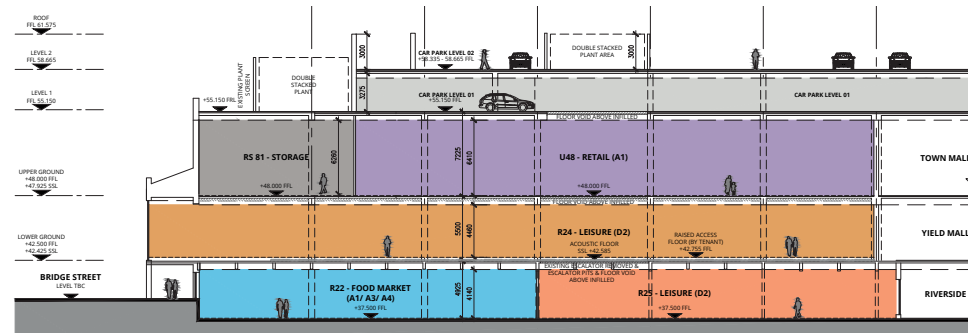
Key Plan



Section A-A



Section B-B



Section C-C

- LEGEND**
- EXISTING LANDLORED AREAS
  - NEW LANDLORED AREAS/ FIRE ESCAPE CORRIDORS
  - FIRE ESCAPE STAIR CORES
  - R25 - LEISURE UNIT (D2)
  - R24 - LEISURE UNIT (D2)
  - R23 - F&B UNIT (A1/A3)
  - L43 - RETAIL UNIT (A1)
  - U48 - RETAIL UNIT (A1)
  - R22 - FOOD MARKET (A1/A3/A4)
  - SUBSTATIONS/SERVICES
  - REFUSE STORE

The following section details the elevational design proposals to be read in conjunction with the plan details in the previous section.

## Riverside façade

As identified previously the Riverside façade is highly important given its presence on the Riverside area and will require consideration to ensure the proposals are of a high design quality.

At present the existing pop out box and the heavy curtain walling on the building splay do little to allow visibility into the building, and as such the façade is inactive. At street level the existing entrances into the restaurant concession do help to give some activity to the street scene but there is little to draw users along this element of the riverside.

On the Riverside façade there are two key elements to the proposals, the removal of the pop out and the removal of the corner splay glazing, allowing them to be replaced with devices which will give greater visual presence to the leisure operators, food hall and retailers at all levels and seek to repair the street scene, drawing further along the riverside.

## Pop out box

Once removed, it is proposed to replace the pop out box with a new glazed façade within the existing opening on the line of the main building envelope. Doing this will allow the external space to be opened up and made visibly more welcoming. The new glazing will be surrounded by a main projected portal with the area within broken up into sections by columns which follow the rigour of the building grid and the panel sizes of the reconstituted stone façade over. At Riverside level a new recessed main entrance will be formed within the two central bays, with the two bays either side incorporating sliding/folding doors which can be opened up in the warmer months, creating inside/outside space for the food hall.

Above these another section of full height glazing will be installed at lower ground floor level giving greater visibility into the unit and from within the unit out onto the Riverside. Between the glazing panels, the existing structure and floor edge will be masked with decorative cladding panels. A signage zone has been indicated for the incoming tenant to install their own branded signage.

## Splay

As advised, it is proposed to remove the existing heavy curtain walling in its entirety. In its place a surround will be formed with full height structural glazing installed from top to bottom. At slab edge and over existing structure glazing panels will be installed however these will be opaque to hide the structure behind. The glazing will run over all three levels of the building and provide clear visibility into the Leisure Unit and Retail Unit over.

At street level a projecting portal will be formed, announcing the entrance position of the new Leisure unit. A new set of sliding entrance doors will be provided. Above this will be the tenant's proposed signage zone, and the tenant will be encouraged to use individual illuminated letter signage to give a greater appeal. The clear frameless glazing will allow good visibility to the lobby area within and the incoming tenant will be encouraged to make the most of this space and provide key visual identity.

The scale of the proposals for the Riverside façade generally match those already present, however deliver a solution that has a greater benefit to the street scene and public realm. The proposals respond to the vigour of the façade lines and structural bays, giving it a consistent vigour.

## Bridge Street

As the layout of the proposed scheme demands a greater presence into the shopping centre or onto the Riverside public realm, the units also naturally face onto Bridge Street. This means that the Bridge

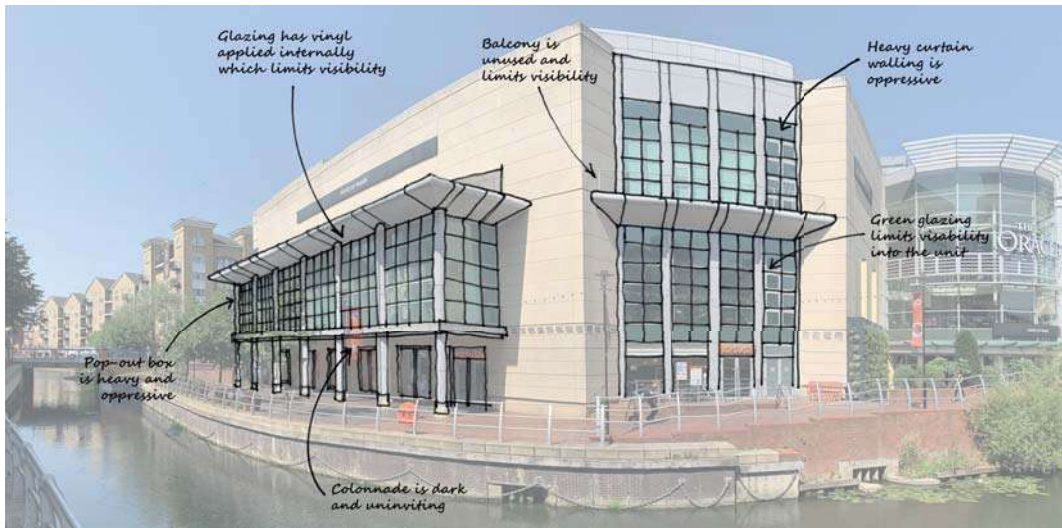
Street facade, will continue to remain a secondary one. Therefore, there are no proposals to remove the Pop Out box on Bridge Street.

As discussed earlier in the document there are a number of factors which would limit the success of creating an entrance into the Food Hall unit or creating external seating to that unit, predominantly the large change in level from the street to the internal floor level. In addition, it is likely that due to the footprint of the unit this side of the building will be used to position each of the food operators within, therefore the main focus is onto the Riverside.

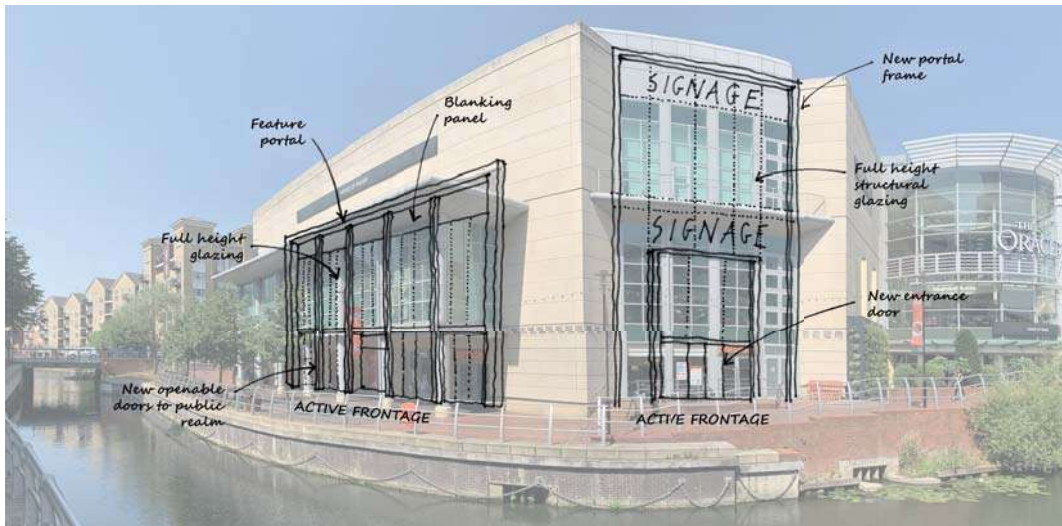
To alleviate the lack of activity along this extent of elevation, the future occupiers of the Food Hall at Riverside Level and the Leisure Unit at Lower Ground Floor will be encouraged to allow their façade glazing to remain open internally and allow views into the unit. Should their internal fitout requirements place back of house areas alongside these windows, the tenant's will be encouraged to form displays that provide visual excitement on the currently visually inactive façade.

At the left-hand side of the elevation, the proposed catering/retail unit in the position of the current House of Fraser staff entrance, creates a better opportunity to provide some activity to Bridge Street. Again, any tenant will be made to keep glazing clear, and there is the opportunity (subject to the granting of licenses) to provide small area of external seating. This unit sits well within the scheme virtually opposite the main entrance to the Local Authority Office the other side of Bridge Street.

The only exception to this will be the far-left window of this façade, as this sits in front of current incoming mains gas room which is to be retained. As a result, the window will need to remain blanked. Any future tenant will be encouraged to apply vinyl to these windows in keeping with their branding and signage requirements. At first floor level these windows unfortunately back onto a proposed service corridor and so will remain blanked off.



↑ As existing



↑ As proposed



📍 CGI View - Riverside



📍 CGI View - Bridge Street

## Materials

Generally, the design proposals utilise a simple palette of contemporary materials reflecting the recognisable architectural language of The Oracle, and in particular the Riverside façade. The images to the right give examples of these materials used within the existing centre context.

The key materials used within the development include:

- Retained Recon Stone Panels
- Powder coated Steel / Aluminium Clad 'Portals'
- Decorative cladding infill.
- Double Glazed Frameless structural glazing
- Powdercoated Curtain Walling System

## External seating

In order to further activate the street scene of the Riverside, provision has been made for the Food hall occupiers to have external seating areas outside of their demise, following the principles set already along the Riverside. This will be provided within the area formerly occupied by the pop out box and its supporting structure. The external seating will allow the operator to spill out onto the public realm and help to provide activity throughout the course of the day and into the evening.

The Riverside Public Realm is under the control of The Oracle; however, the curtilage of the external seating areas will be controlled to avoid conflict with the existing fire tender access route which should be maintained at all time. For external seating along the Riverside the land is within Hammerson's ownership and so licenses are granted within their lease agreement.

A further section of external seating is proposed outside of the smaller A3 unit along Bridge Street. As this is Highways land licenses will need to be obtained by the tenant from the Local Authority to suit their requirements.

## Soft landscaping

Following feedback during the Pre-Application process, it was highlighted that there was a desire to see the existing planting areas made good, and the poor condition planting replaced. As such we have developed proposals to rejuvenate the existing planting. This includes the planting area adjacent the river, the existing Corten steel planters and the planters adjacent the building.

The planting strategy is focussed on creating an attractive softening, complimenting the build for, with evergreen plants to form texture and structure, and hardy perennials, deciduous shrubs and grasses to form season effect in blossom and/or foliage cover.

To supplement this, it is proposed that the food hall operator be encouraged to incorporate some form of live planting following a similar planting scheme, around their external seating enclosures on the Riverside, bringing an additional element of greenery into the scheme.

## Trees

Concerns were also highlighted over the condition of the existing trees which sit within tree planters along the River back edge. It is proposed to retain these trees, subject to confirmation of their condition, undertaking works to improve their condition and future growth through reviewing the existing tree pits, replacing them if required.

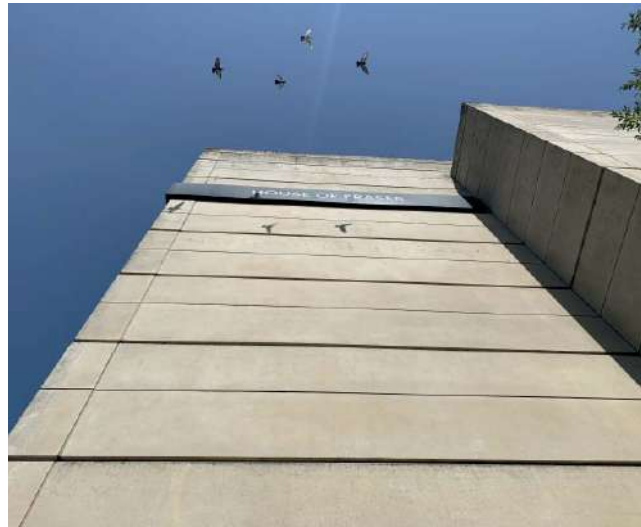
There is 1 No tree which sits in close proximity to the building and the existing pop out box. It is not proposed to remove this tree, however care and attention will need to be made to protect it following the construction works and beyond. The methodology for the protection of the trees will be set out within the Construction Management Plan.

## Hard landscaping

Generally, there are no proposals to alter the existing hard landscaping, other than regrading locally around proposed entrance points to the new units, and to make good where the existing pop out box has been removed on Riverside.



📌 Ashlar Stone



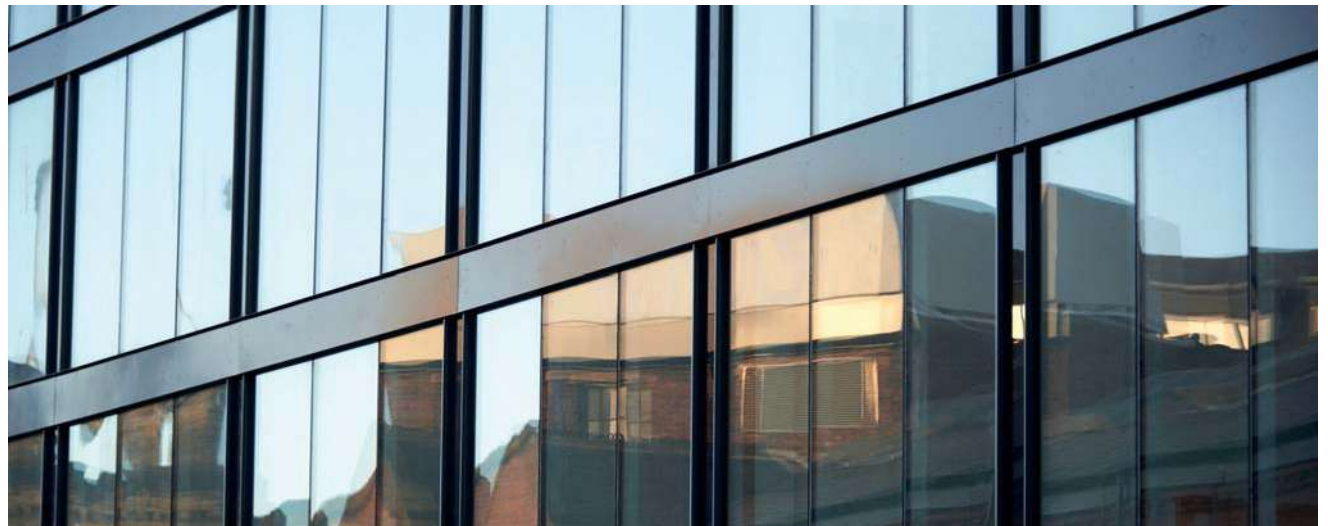
📌 Recon Stone



📌 Decorative Cladding



📌 Structural Glazing



📌 Curtain Walling



📌 Planters



📌 Pinus Mugo 'Mops' & Euonymus 'Emerald'n'gold'



📌 Hydrangea 'Annabelle' & Echinops Retro



📌 Shrub & Grass Beds



📌 Acer Palmatum 'Atropurpureum' & Calamagrostis 'Karl Foerster'



📌 Sasa Kurilensis



◆ Proposed public realm enhancements

# Architectural Lighting

As the night time economy is a key part of the Riverside area it would be appropriate that an appropriate level of lighting is provided to the updated building façade to highlight the building and draw attention to the evening activity of the proposed uses.

The lighting proposals are focused predominantly on the Riverside Façade, specifically the new glazing in the position of the removed pop out box and the splay. The lighting has been developed to highlight these two key focal points, and give greater prominence to this element of the centre which has previously been low key and not a true advertisement for the large shopping centre within.

It is envisaged that the internal illumination of the new Leisure and Food & Drink uses will also spill out onto the Riverside. Giving prominence and during the evening time operational hours. This will create a welcoming and active environment for those moving around the centre during the evening.

The lighting scheme is aimed to create a grazing effect to main structure, and to contribute attraction for the public entering the building and passing by. On the Riverside façade the proposals utilise linear white LED strips to form lighting portals around each structural bay of the new glazing creating a regular lighting pattern. On the splay a similar approach is used with the LED lighting strips installed around the perimeter of the glazing the full height of the building.

The LED strips are to be installed recessed within the proposed cladding so that they will not be noticeable during the day.

The lighting will be controlled via a photocell and astronomical time-clock, which will activate the lighting once the light levels drop below a predetermined level. It is envisaged that the full lighting scheme will be activated at dusk.

Façade feature lighting shall be RGBW colour changing with associated control to enable the client to change the colour of the external appearance season dependant i.e. red on Valentine's Day or at Christmas for example. The external lighting shall be photocell and time clock controlled via a multi-channel digital and programmable 24-hour 7-day 365 day/year programmer with override. All cabling shall be housed within rigid steel galvanised conduit systems and painted to the Architects RAL colour to match aesthetically the façade and/or elevation detail.

The existing column lighting along the riverside public realm shall be retained and reused. No further enhancement of this lighting is proposed.



📍 CGI View - Riverside at night

# Transport

The proposed scheme described in the previous pages has two main transport impacts, namely on servicing and on parking. The principles as to how these impacts will be managed are explored within the following pages. Further detailed analysis is provided within the accompanying Transport Note submitted as part of this application.

## Servicing

Presently the House of Fraser unit is serviced from the main service yard beneath the centre and accessed via Bridge Street. The service yard is one-way exiting onto Yield Hall Place. At present the unit is allocated three service bays and receives deliveries on a regular basis within the permitted servicing hours. The service yard is large and well managed.

The proposals to convert House of Fraser into a number of Retail, Leisure, and Food & Drink units will require a reconfiguration of the overall servicing provision and strategy to this area of the centre. At present only a single servicing access point exists entering the unit, this will need to be adapted to provide access to all the new units.

All the newly formed units will be serviced from the 3No existing bays, with goods being transported to each unit. At present there is a single goods lift which sits within the HOF demise. It is proposed that the existing lift is refurbished or replaced dependant on its condition. This will be installed within the existing lift shaft.

In order to provide additional capacity and provide a backup provision, a new service lift is to be installed in a position adjacent to the existing lift. Both of these lifts are able to access all three levels of the building, and new service corridors are laid out connecting the units to the lift locations.

Within the service yard the main service yard level is below the Finish Floor Level of the retail / leisure units and so service vehicles are able to reverse up to the loading platform and move good directly from their trailers, and directly into units, or up into the service lifts.

## Car parking

These proposals include the creation of a small amount of additional parking spaces which will add a modest increase to the overall parking capacity.

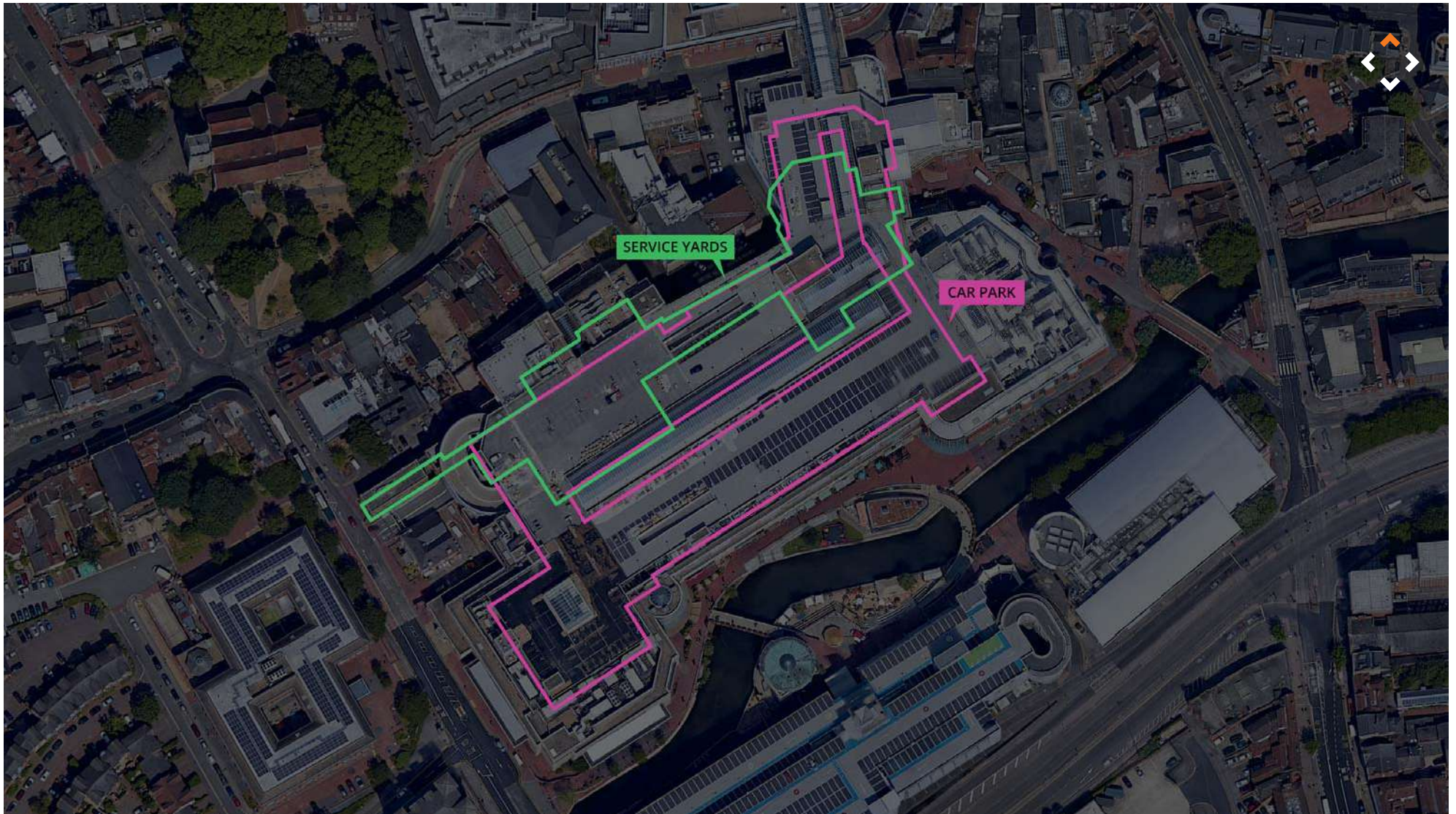
The proposals will create an additional 16 spaces overall within the existing constraints of the centre car park, and do not seek to alter the existing arrangements for entering and exiting the Holy Brook car park. The spaces provided are standard spaces. As required, we will also provide an additional 2No Electric Vehicle charging point, which will be located adjacent the existing car park EV bays within the Holy Brook Car Park. The proposals will not alter the existing traffic management strategies already established by the centre.

The Transport Statement submitted as part of this application, details the servicing arrangements and provides the necessary technical support.

## Cycle parking

Generally, as detailed in the Transport Statement the centre has a large number of existing cycle parking spaces which at present are underutilised. It has been calculated that in peak times these spaces will be sufficient to cover the calculated demand.

However, in order to ensure there is cycle parking provision close to the development area we are proposing to install an additional 10 cycle spaces alongside the existing cycle parking provision on Bridge Street.



📍 Aerial photo overlay with car park and service yards

# Sustainability

Hammerson are a market leader in sustainability and work consistently to improve the environmental and social impact of their shopping centres, through their Positive Places Strategy. Hammerson's sustainability vision is to create retail destinations that deliver net positive impacts economically, socially and environmentally. Positive Places is their strategy for making that happen. In 2017 their sustainability vision became even more ambitious, with a bold new objective to become net positive for carbon, resource use, water and socioeconomic impacts by 2030. This will include impacts from both landlord and tenant-controlled areas and also our development and fit-out impacts.



↑ Green wall located on the Riverside façade

To deliver on this bold objective, Hammerson have to design, build and manage retail destinations in a way that is good for the communities in which they operate; for those they employ; and for our environment. All whilst ensuring they provide a robust and thriving economic environment for customers and investors. Tenants

are expected to adopt a best practice approach to both fit-out and operation of their unit to contribute towards this net positive objective. As a minimum each Tenant is expected to meet the requirements set out in the Hammerson Sustainability Statement Checklist, and detailed within the centre Fit Out Technical Guide.

As part of the application a Sustainability Statement has been prepared by Envision and provides a key summary of the key sustainability initiatives and how these are to be implemented within the refurbishment and change of use for the existing House of Fraser Unit.

The statement details the main considerations of the scheme in line with Reading Borough Council's and National Planning Policy. In this section we provide high level input into the key design considerations.

## Social aspirations

One of the key objectives of these proposals is reactivating the Riverside façade and improving, where possible, the activity of the Bridge Street façade, which otherwise have a negative impact on the street scene. By creating a new Food Hall unit and Leisure Unit which faces onto Riverside, a new draw can be created to this end of the riverside public realm, providing further facilities for the use of visitors and residents alike.

The additional units will supplement the already thriving day and evening economy, with the new Food & Drink and Leisure uses supplementing those already present and attracting visitors across a wide age range. One of the key elements of Hammerson's Net Positive Vision is for developments to have a positive social impact. Therefore, it has

a strong record of working in collaboration with our contractors, tenants and key stakeholders to maximise local employment opportunities.

The centre management team have a robust relationship with Reading Job Centre Plus and continue to work in partnership to secure employment for those living in the local community. Recent activity includes attending recruitment fairs and workshops with job seekers, matching to available positions within the centre.

During the process of developing the project, Contractors will be required to sign up to the Hammerson Supplier Code of Conduct which includes requirements on bribery, corruption of modern slavery. Once the contract is awarded the contractor will be required to engage with the Council and Department of Work and Pensions to identify future on site construction employment, training and apprenticeship opportunities during the construction process.

At the completion of the project the Hammerson's Community Manager will engage with incoming tenants to understand their recruitment needs, their current and future vacancies and processes. If there is sufficient requirement, Hammerson will also organise a recruitment fair within the Oracle providing a platform for tenants to showcase their employment opportunities.

## Environmental aspirations

In order to develop environmental aspirations for a project, consideration must be made of the key factors such as material choice, waste generation, energy efficiency and land use and ecology.

The proposals themselves are a prime example of the benefits of reusing and repurposing existing buildings to generate new development, without drawing on greenfield or undeveloped sites. Whilst not a derelict building, the existing House of Fraser is currently not fulfilling its potential as part of the development and its future is uncertain, therefore plans must be put in place to protect both its and the centre's future.

## Material choice

The usage and selection of materials is also important. Consideration will be made to where materials are sourced from, with materials such as timber being either 100% FSC or PEFC certified from licensed sources, and non-timber materials compliant to ISO 14001 or BES 6001 to ensure they are produced or sourced sustainably. Where possible materials or elements of the building fabric will be BRE Green Guide rated A or A+. Where possible and suitable materials will also be sourced locally to reduce the carbon footprint of delivery and transportation requirements.

Alternatives to highly processed materials shall be considered to reduce the embodied carbon within the development. If possible and suitable, materials with high recycled content will be procured.

All specified materials will be durable, maintainable, and fully recyclable to avoid generating unnecessary waste throughout the lifecycle of the development. Contractors should accurately prepare themselves and ensure that the correct amounts of materials are procured to avoid generating waste within the scheme.

## Energy

The scheme design will carefully consider its energy consumption and is explored further within the submitted Sustainability Statement. We aim to deliver a development that is in accordance, as far as is practical, with the best practice principles of sustainable development and the scheme has been designed to positively contribute to the long term objectives of environmental protection and resource management.

The strategy, which is further explained in the statement includes:

- Efficient building services, achieved and secured through the tenant retail delivery process
- Highly efficient LED lighting mandated throughout
- Heat Pumps with adequate controls
- Heat recovery for supply and extract
- Enhanced thermal values for the new glazed areas
- Direct electric hot water provision (or gas-fired if tenant required)
- Application of Hammerson's metering specification

## Waste

Hammerson pride themselves in reducing the amount of waste generated during both development and during the day to day operation of the centre. Targets will be set to minimise the waste generated during the construction, with the intention to divert as much construction and demolition waste as possible away from landfill and an emphasis on the recycling and reuse of materials either within the scheme itself or elsewhere.

Waste reduction also applies to the waste generated by the centre and tenants during the day to day operation of the development.

As such spaces have been provided within the proposals to accommodate sufficient bins to allow the separation and streaming of recyclable waste.

The life cycle of the buildings should and will be considered during their design and construction. Materials and construction methods will be employed that allow materials removed during maintenance or at the end of the building's life to be taken away and recycled.

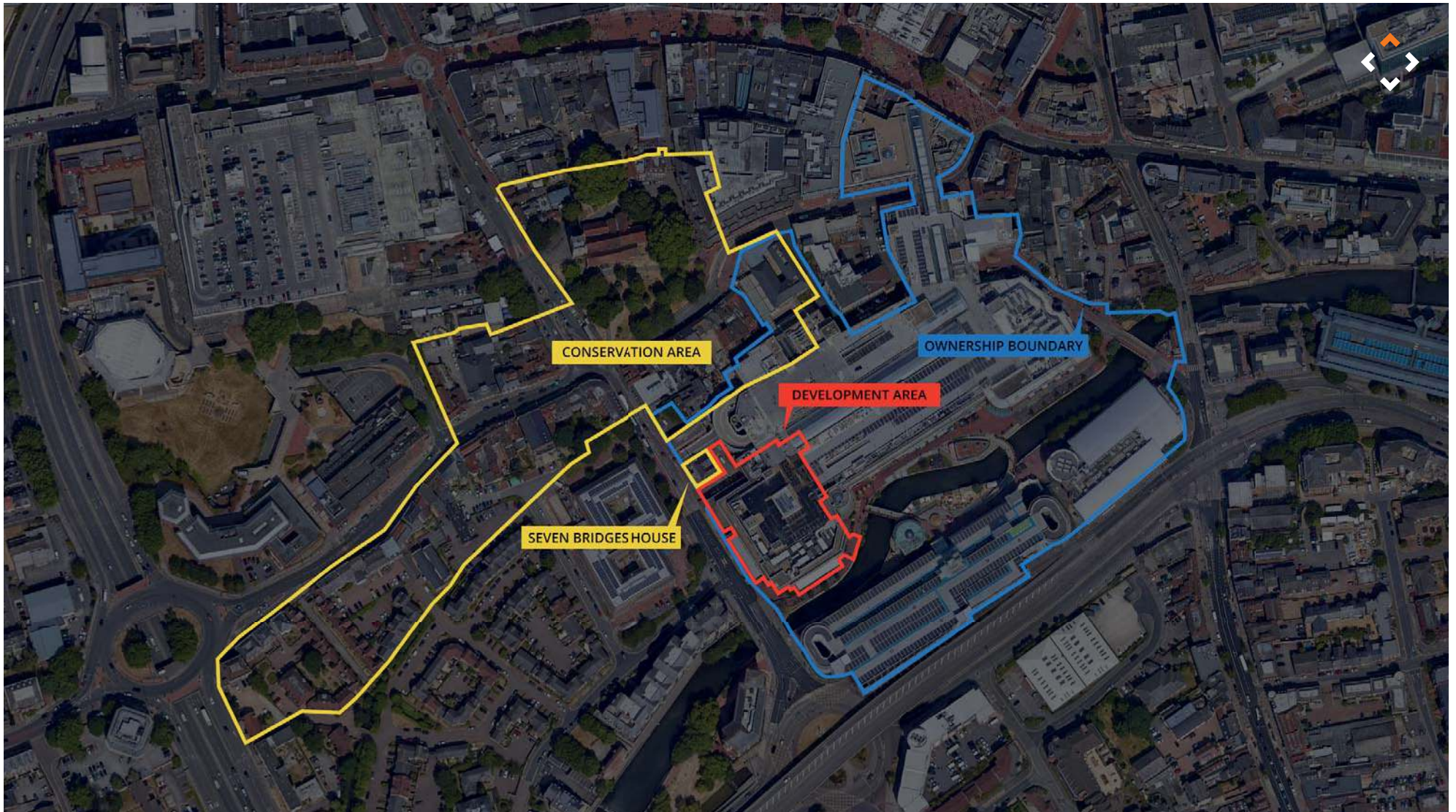
The requirements for tenant's treatment of waste both from construction processes and day to day operation are set out within the centre Fit Out Technical Guide.

## Construction management

It is anticipated that a Construction Management Plan will be conditioned. This document sets out the key principles of the development and clearly defines the constraints posed to the development. This document provides the key information which any contractor will need to consider when planning and undertaking the construction works in the context of a busy operational shopping centre and a town centre.

Contractors must also ensure that they fully engage with the centre management team and local users/residents to develop good working relationships. They must have due care to the impact the construction works will have on the immediate and local area and work to resolve any issues quickly and efficiently.

# Heritage Statement



📍 St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation Area

# Heritage Statement

This Heritage Statement has been researched and prepared by Urban Edge Architecture and is included as part of this Design & Access Statement with regard to the proposal to reconfigure the existing House of Fraser as part of The Oracle Shopping Centre, Reading. This statement focuses mainly on the proposed works and its proximity to the St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation area, and its adjacency to the Grade II listed building, Seven Bridges House. The study site discussed is shown edged red within the figure opposite.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states at paragraph 189 that:



'In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance.'

As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which

*development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.*

*In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance'.*

This Heritage Statement fulfils these information requirements by providing an assessment of the built heritage assets which are located in the vicinity of the study site and an assessment of the impact of the proposed development upon them.

## Historical development

The study site sites lies in close proximity to the St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation Area, and this statement takes reference from the Reading Borough Council's St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation Character Appraisal (March, 2008).

The St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation Area lies to the north west of the development site, and is recognised as being the 'original core and market place of the town' before the advent of Reading Abbey in 1121 changed the centre of the town's gravity and its market place to the western end of Friar Street. Reading developed rapidly in the Medieval period, based on the manufacture of woollen cloth, leather goods and silk weaving. Its location on the crossing of major land routes and the proximity to the River Kennet and the River Thames helped encourage this.

It is a reasonable claim that St Mary's Butts is the oldest part of Reading, dating back to Saxon times. The current street pattern dates from the Medieval period, and the area takes its name from the range local men were lawfully obliged to practice archery. One of the main buildings within the area is St Mary's Church sitting on the main cross roads.

The Oracle Centre itself was named after 'The Oracle' which was a place of work for the poor, and was located at 15 Gun Street. The building existed until 1850 and was one of the entrances into the centre sits in this location.



↑ The Oracle Workhouse

Reading grew from the lowest point at which the River Kennet could be crossed, which seems to be the bottom of today's Bridge Street, and the main road from the south entered St Mary's Butts from this direction.

### Listed building

To the north west of the development site and south of the conservation area lies the Grade II listed Seven Bridges House (19 Bridge Street – Listing Ref SU7147473198). A 2 storey early 19th century Georgian Villa, this building is currently used as office accommodation.



📍 Seven Bridges House, 19 Bridge Street

### Key views

Within the context of the development one of the key views out of the conservation area is to / from St Mary's Church to the south

along Bridge Street towards St Giles' Church, although this is restricted by the Inner Distribution Road, similarly there is a key view into the Conservation area to the south up Bridge Street to St Mary's Church, however this is foreshortened by the closeness of buildings on its boundary.

### Activities and uses

The area is defined as a mixed-use commercial area, with some residential properties, both in individual buildings and above ground floor uses. It has a high occupancy level and this has helped the routine maintenance of the area.

### Architectural character

The Character Appraisal contains buildings from the 16th century onwards, with a large section of these being from the late 18th and 19th century. Newer developments have respected the design, scale and materials of the original buildings, and have not had a negative impact on the special architectural interest of the Conservation area.

The buildings in the Conservation area are generally constructed of brick, which is a prominent material in Reading's architecture and there are plenty of good examples of good quality brickwork throughout the conservation area. As a material it was popular in the 18th and 19th century and was readily available.

### Impact of the proposed development

The Oracle, and in turn the development site sits in close proximity to the St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conversation Area, however its close proximity would suggest that it has some influence on the

area. Indeed, the Conservation Area Appraisal states that the centre, to some extent, dominates the area.

However, the closest potential influence the development has on the Conservation Area is on the key view into the area along Bridge Street. We can however confirm that the proposals do not in any way, shape or form propose to alter these views. With all works taking place within the existing building envelope, and the scale and the massing of the building remaining the same.

On Riverside, the proposed façade works are sufficiently detached from the conservation area, as to not have an impact on it.

### Conclusion

This statement has considered the both St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation area and the Grade II listed Seven Bridge House, reviewing the impact the proposed redevelopment of the House of Fraser store will have on these. The primary consideration being proposed works along Bridge Street and the Riverside façade.

It is considered that because the works do not seek to change or alter the scale of the building on Bridge Street, and the proposed façade works are limited primarily to the Riverside façade, there will be no harm to the significance of the Conservation Area. It is hoped that these proposals help to promote the conservation area and the important buildings within it, by drawing visitors into and through the area.

# Bibliography

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National Planning Policy Framework. London.

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