

ABBEY GATE, 57-75 KINGS RD

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT, OCTOBER 2018

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ABBHEY GATE
DESIGN AND ACCESS
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CONTENTS

1.0	INTRODUCTION	1
2.0	SITE CONTEXT	2
2.1	EXISTING SITE APPRAISAL	3
2.2	BUILDING APPRAISAL	4-6
3.0	SUMMARY OF PROPOSALS	7
4.0	PLANNING POLICY	8
5.0	PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN	9
5.1	PROPOSED BASEMENT PLAN	10
5.2	ELEVATION WORKS	11
5.3	TERRACE WORKS	12
6.0	ACCESS	13
7.0	CONCLUSION	13



Figure 1. Front Entrance Visual. Indicative signage shown – not part of this application

This Design and Access Statement describes the refurbishment of the building known as Abbey Gate. Abbey Gate is located next to The River Kennet on Kings Road in Reading, RG1 3AB. It should be read in conjunction with all documents submitted, including the planning statement produced by Turley.

The document contains analysis of the site and its surroundings, relevant planning policies, description of changes to the landscaping, facade and interior, and arrangements for access to the building.

The building consists of a basement, ground floor and four upper floors with a tiered terrace overlooking The River Kennet. Currently the building is not fully occupied and the client, MG Real Estate, is looking to invest funds into the regeneration of the site to bring to make to most of the riverside setting and bring the building up to the standard expected by modern office occupiers.

The proposal consists of external and internal alterations including improvements to the facade and refurbishment of the reception, terrace and office spaces. The terrace refurbishment also aims to make a more clear boundary between the public and private areas to avoid out of hours and unauthorised usage by the public and anti-social behaviour.

Abbey Gate is located on Kings Road in Reading, RG1 3AB. It has many amenities in it's immediate vicinity including a gym and several cafés. It is also a 13 minute walk way from Reading Train station, the main station of Berkshire with links towards London, Oxford, Birmingham and the West country.

There is a bus and coach stop adjacent to the building with regular services towards the centre of Reading and towards London.

Abbey Gate sits on a corner plot and benefits from a riverside location with a terrace to the Northern side of the building overlooking the Abbey ruins on the other side of the Kennet. A pedestrian public right of way passes by the Northern and Western side of the building with an access road forming the Eastern boundary and providing access to the basement car park.

There are a number of other office buildings in the immediate vicinity including the Blade, the White Building and Abbey Gardens.

— Site Boundary

- KEY
- 1

Remains of Abbey
- 2

The Forbury Gardens
- 3

Buzz Gym
- 4

Cafe/Restaurant
- 5

Bus Stop

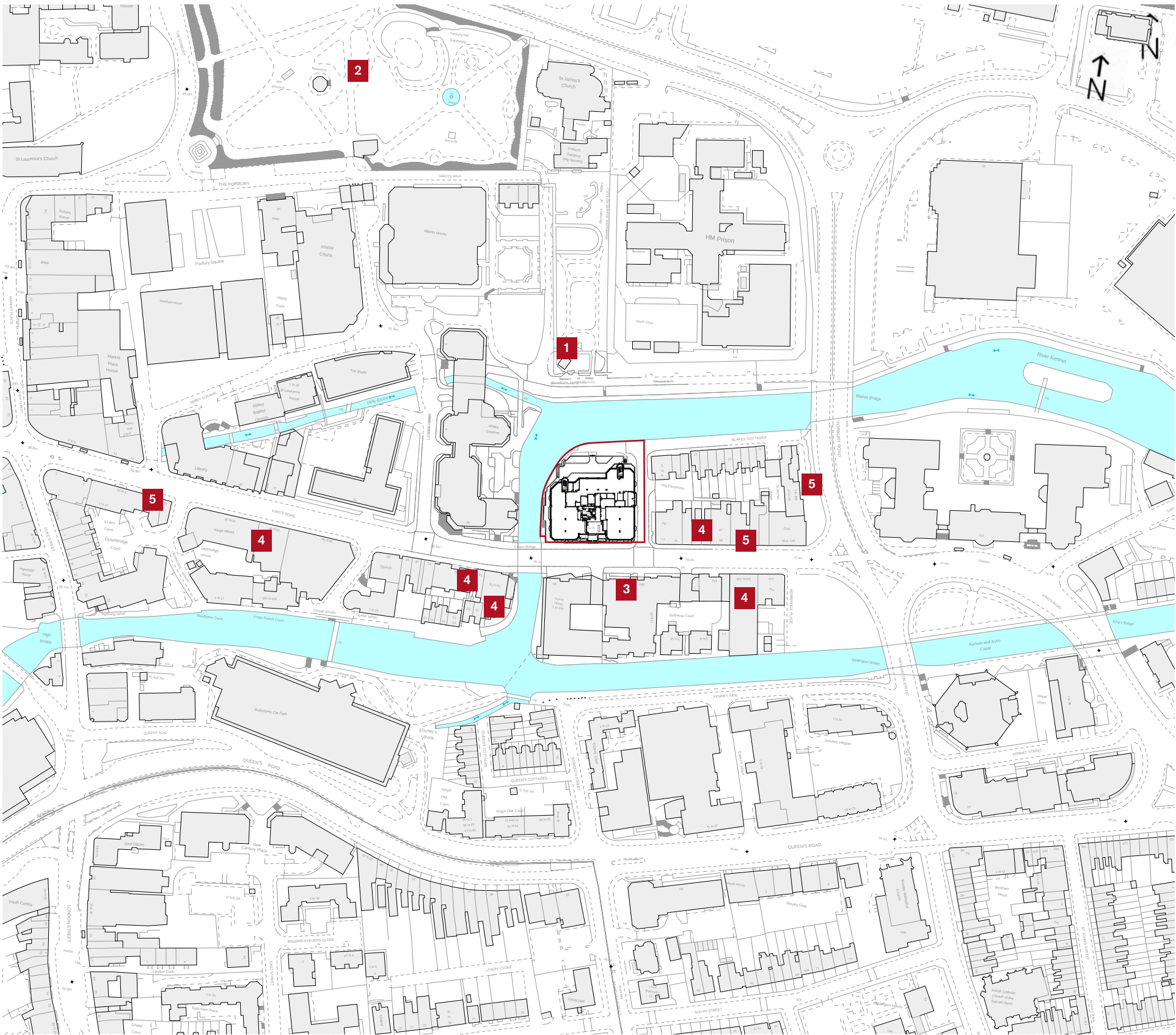


Figure 2. Master Plan, Kings Rd

EXISTING SITE APPRAISAL

Abbey Gate was built pre 1990 and is not listed. There have been various refurbishments to sections of the building, the last being in 2015 with the refurbishment of the second floor.

The existing building facade is red brick with faded white stone to the bay windows and white window sills around the third floor windows. There is dark grey cladding to the edge of the roof along with dark grey window frames. This geometry and colour pallet gives the building a 'dated' appearance.

The entrance canopy is small and undistinguished in comparison to the scale of the building and the building lacks identity and street presence.

The terrace is underused and does not fulfil the potential of a riverside property. The private terrace is under-used by the occupants due to poorly designed raised brick planting that enclose the area and block views towards the river. The lack of distinction between public and private space and it's enclosed nature also allow the potential for antisocial behaviour and loitering.

— Site Boundary

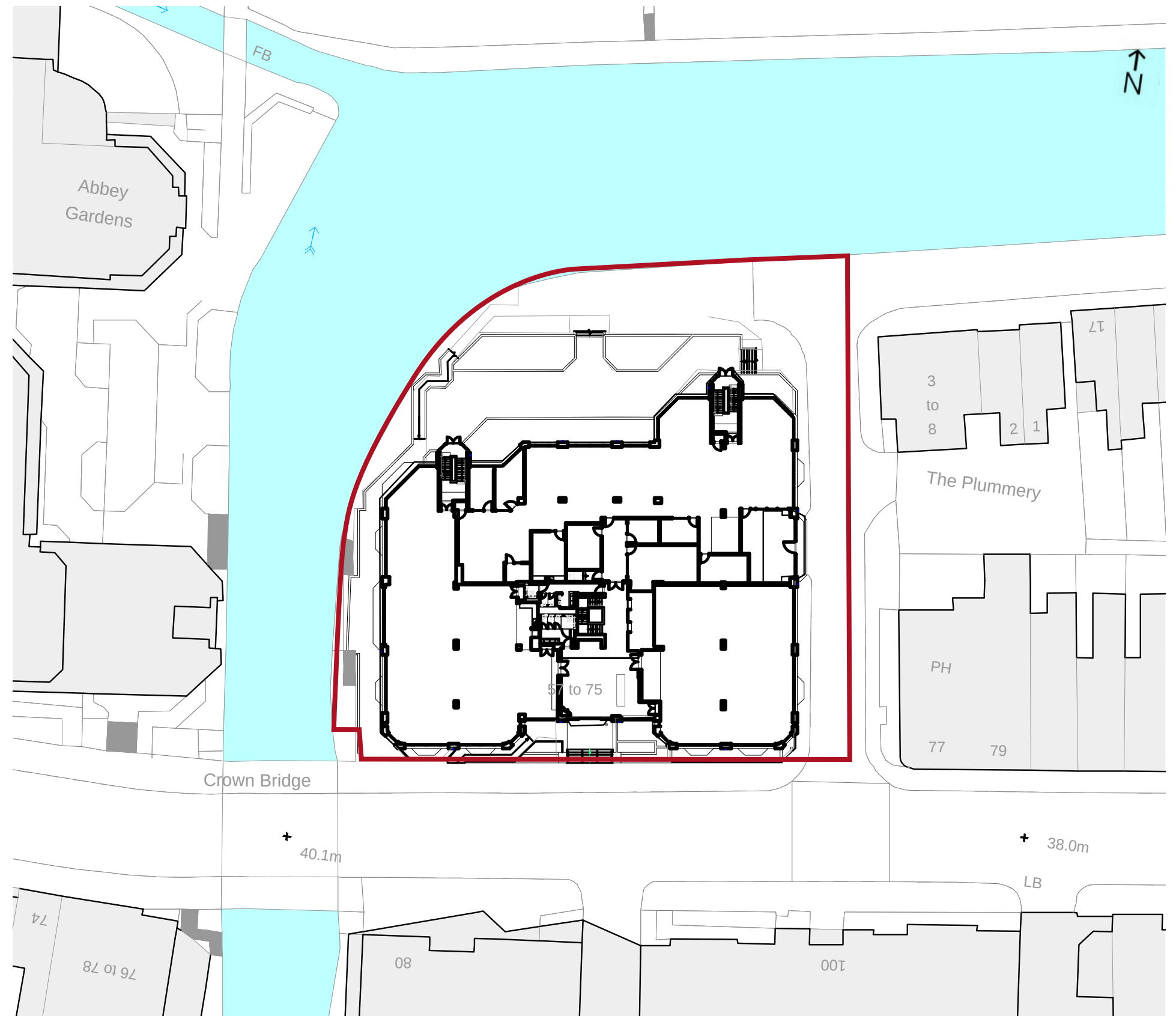


Figure 3. Existing Site Plan

The main entrance to the building is on the South side off Kings road and accessed via a set of paved steps and an access ramp. Automatic sliding doors under the canter-levered canopy provide access to the reception.

The car park is at basement level and is accessed from Duncan Place. The ground level falls away to the north meaning the car park is above ground on the north side of the building and is positioned below the raised terrace area.

There are currently 55 parking spaces and 12 cycle spaces in the basement.

Access into the building from the car park is via the main lift and stair core which extends to basement level. However there is a step up into the core from the car park and currently no DDA compliant ramp is provided.

Two fire escapes stair cases run down the North side of the building which lead to the terrace area. The terrace has two levels; both terraces are within the building ownership boundary however there is a public right of way through the lower terrace making this a publicly accessible area on the river front. The upper terrace is for the private use of the building occupants but there is currently no clear boundary creating confusion between public and private areas with misuse of the upper terrace often occurring. Two sets of steps and an pedestrian ramp currently link the spaces.

KEY

1

Remains of Abbey

2

Canopy

3

Reception

4

Cycle storage

5

Terrace

6

Lift

7

Stair Case

8

WCs

9

Fire escape

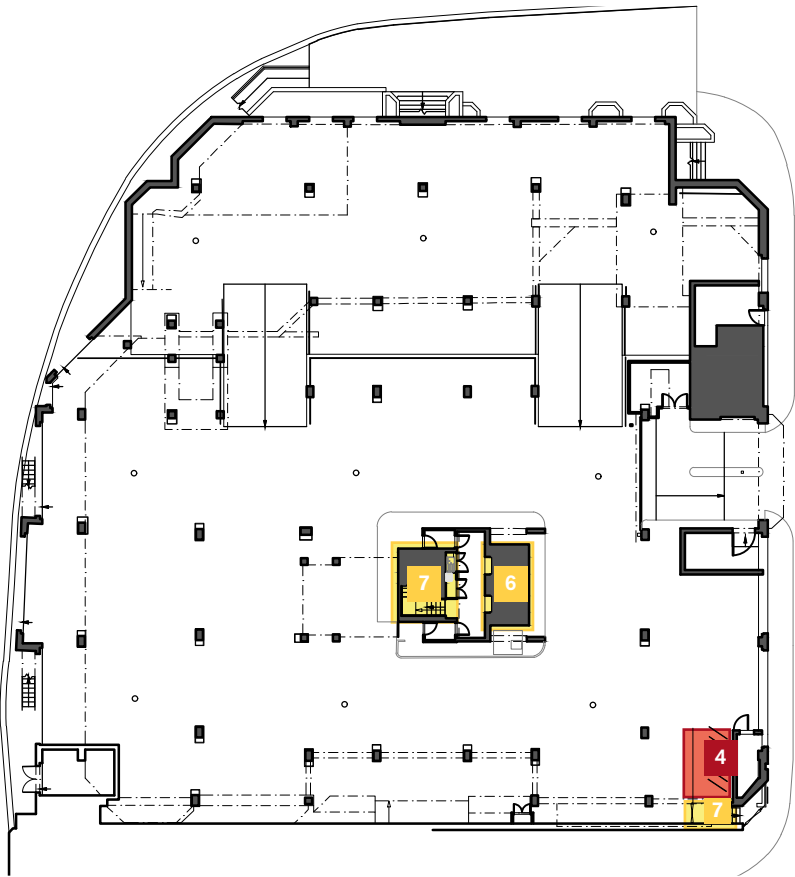


Figure 4. Existing Basement Plan

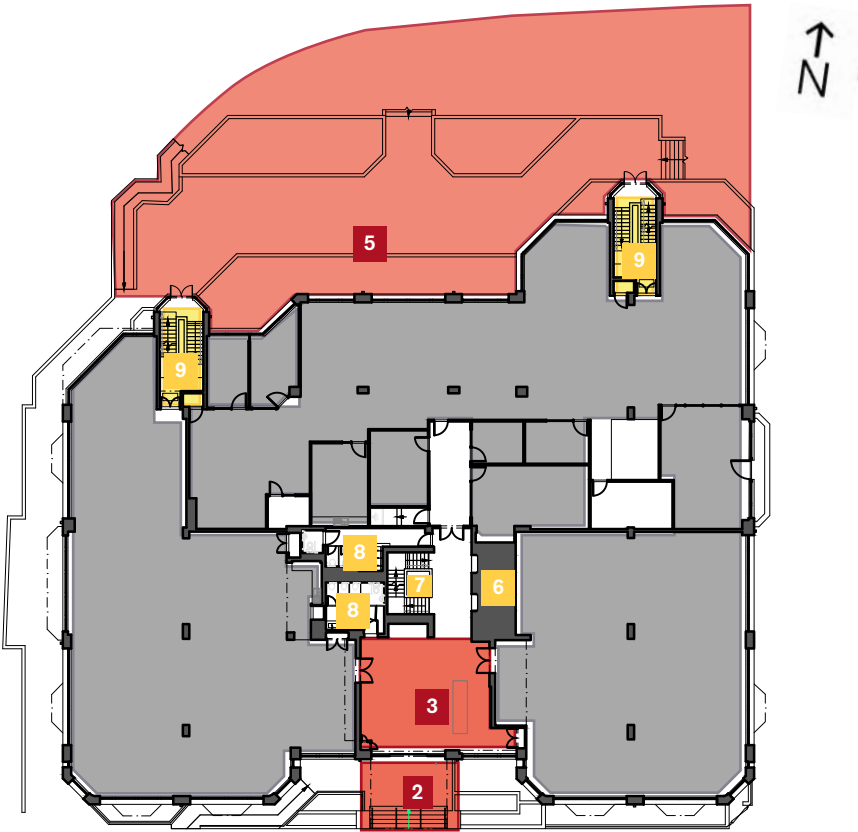


Figure 5. Existing Ground Floor Plan



Figure 6. Existing Terrace



Figure 7. Existing Front Façade



Figure 8. Existing West Façade

KEY

- 1 Canopy/Main Entrance
- 2 White Faded Cladding
- 3 Red Brick Planters
- 4 Small Signage
- 5 Dark Grey Window frames and cladding
- 6 Fire escape from basement
- 7 Dark grey soffit and fascias

The existing facade of Abby gate is weathered and the design outdated. The cladding to the oriel windows and the existing canopy is white and faded. There is very little signage to indicate the identity of the building.



Figure 10. Existing Front (South) Elevation



Figure 11. Concept Visuals: Approach from West (left), Reception informal seating, semi exposed ceiling office floor plate (right)

A number of changes will be made both externally and internally to rejuvenate the existing office building.

Externally the current dated facade will be brought up to date by refinishing the existing white cladding in dark grey, adding a new canopy and cladding to the corners of the building, and re planting/painting the existing planters. As well as this new power assisted reception doors will replace the existing ones with new glazing panels to the existing openings either side of the entrance.

The security of the upper terrace will be improved with the removal of the existing central stairs to the lower terrace and the replacement of the existing gates with new access control security gates. To improve the aesthetic qualities of the terrace new loose seating will be added along with stepped seating and integrated soft planting. As well as this some of the existing planters will be removed to improve sight lines to the river and reduce the number of enclosed spaces. Retained planters will be replanted and the existing brickwork is to be painted grey. A new lighting strategy is also to be introduced to improve the external environment and reduce opportunities for antisocial behaviour. A new shipping container store/meeting space is to be installed on the lower terrace.

The reception, common parts and offices will all be refurbished internally.

The access to the basement is proposed to be improved with replacement of the existing access ramp and a new shower block added as well as improved cycle storage.

Local Plan

13. The adopted Development Plan for the site currently comprises: the Reading Borough Local Development Framework, Core Strategy (adopted in January 2008), Central Area Action Plan (adopted in January 2009) and Sites and Detailed Policies Document (adopted in October 2012).

14. Policy CS1 of the Reading Core Strategy provides an overarching sustainability policy for all development, including refurbishments to existing building stock, which seeks to ensure consideration is given to the use of natural resources, energy efficiency and climate change. Other key policies contained within the Development Plan which relate to high quality design and are of relevant to the proposals are summarised below:

Policy CS7 of the Reading Core Strategy requires all development to be of a high design quality that maintains and enhances the character and appearance of the area in Reading in which it is located;

Policy RC5 of the Reading Central Area Action Plan identifies that development within Reading central area should achieve a distinctive high quality environment and should demonstrate that: development will build on and respect the existing grid layout structure of the central area, development will provide appropriate, well designed public spaces and other public realm, including squares, open spaces, streetscape, utilising high quality and well-maintained hard and soft landscape;

Policy DM4 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document states that development will not cause a significant detrimental impact to the living environment of existing or new residential properties, in terms of: privacy and overlooking, access to sunlight and daylight, visual dominance and overbearing effects of a development, noise and disturbance, artificial lighting, vibration, dust and fumes, smell or crime and safety;

Policy DM10 of the Sites and Detailed Policies Document refers to private and communal outdoor space and states that the design of outdoor areas will respect the size and character of other similar spaces in the vicinity, clearly identify whether they are private or communal spaces, ensure that they appropriately related to main entrances, enhance safety and the perception of safety for future residents and the general public, and not be compromised by the relationship of other buildings which may be detrimental in terms of overlooking, overbearing or overshadowing.

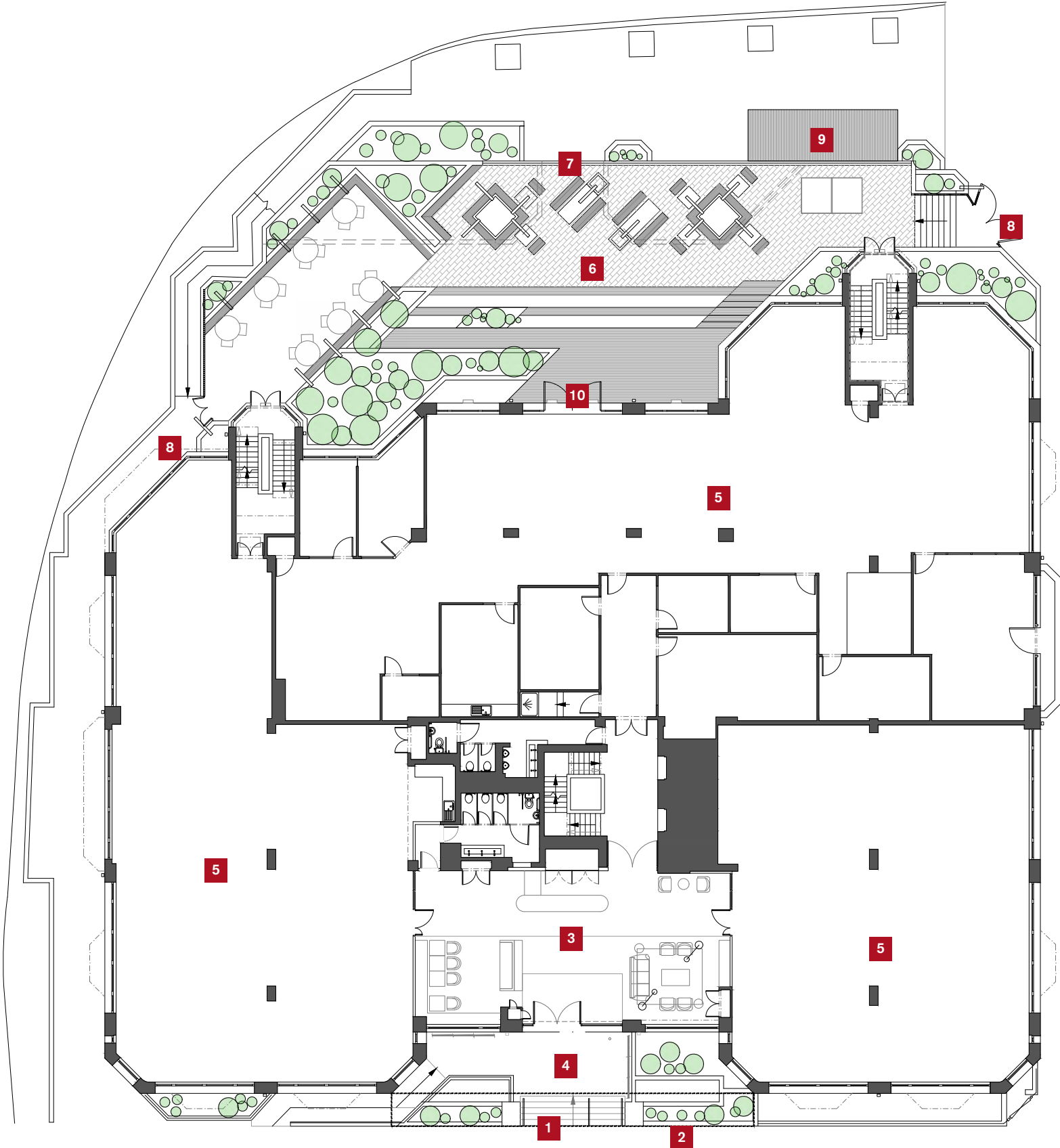
National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

15. The revised NPPF was published in July 2018 and sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied.

16. At the heart of the NPPF is the presumption in favour of sustainable development, which plans and decisions should apply (paragraph 11).

17. Of relevance to the proposals, paragraph 127 states that planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users.

PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR PLAN



A number of changes are proposed to be made to the ground floor to update the existing building.

Externally, the entrance is proposed to be refurbished with a new canopy stretching across the recessed entrance area. The walls underneath the canopy will be painted dark grey with a new lighting scheme. The existing entrance doors and glazing panels are proposed to be replaced. The terrace is to be refurbished with new seating and integrated landscaping. The existing planters are proposed to be re-planted and painted dark grey.

The security of the upper terrace is proposed to be improved with the replacement of the existing gates with access controlled gates and the removal of the existing stairs leading to the lower terrace.

The interior changes include refurbishment of the reception space, the core staircase and the office floor plates.

KEY

- 1 Existing canopy replaced
- 2 Planters re-planted a painted dark grey
- 3 Reception re-furbished and layout improved
- 4 Entrance area refurbished and lighting improved
- 5 Office floor plates refurbished
- 6 Terrace refurbished with new seating/landscaping
- 7 Existing stairs removed and wall made good
- 8 Existing gates replaced with new access control gates
- 9 Shipping container store/meeting room
- 10 Existing window replaced with new doors to terrace

Figure 12. Proposed Ground Floor Plan

4.3 PROPOSED BASEMENT PLAN

There are to be a number of changes to the basement with the intent of greatly improving the access to the building, the cycle facilities and to make the orientation of the space more clear to users creating a safer environment.

There is proposed to be a new DDA compliant ramp as well as an improved entrance lobby. A new shower block is to be added in the place of two car parking spaces with a locker room, accessible WC and shower and shower cubicles.

There is to be new vertical bike storage with painted signage marking out cycle storage area and to de-mark pedestrian/cycle areas from vehicle routes.

55 Existing Parking spaces

54 Proposed parking Spaces

12 Existing Cycle Spaces

38 Proposed Cycle Spaces

KEY

- 1 New shower block added (two parking spaces removed)
- 2 New cycle storage
- 3 New DDA compliant ramp
- 4 Entrance lobby re-formed and refurbished.
- 5 New locker room
- 6 New shower cubicles
- 7 New accessible shower and WC
- 8 Floor painted to de-mark pedestrian/cycle areas
- 9 Disabled car parking space

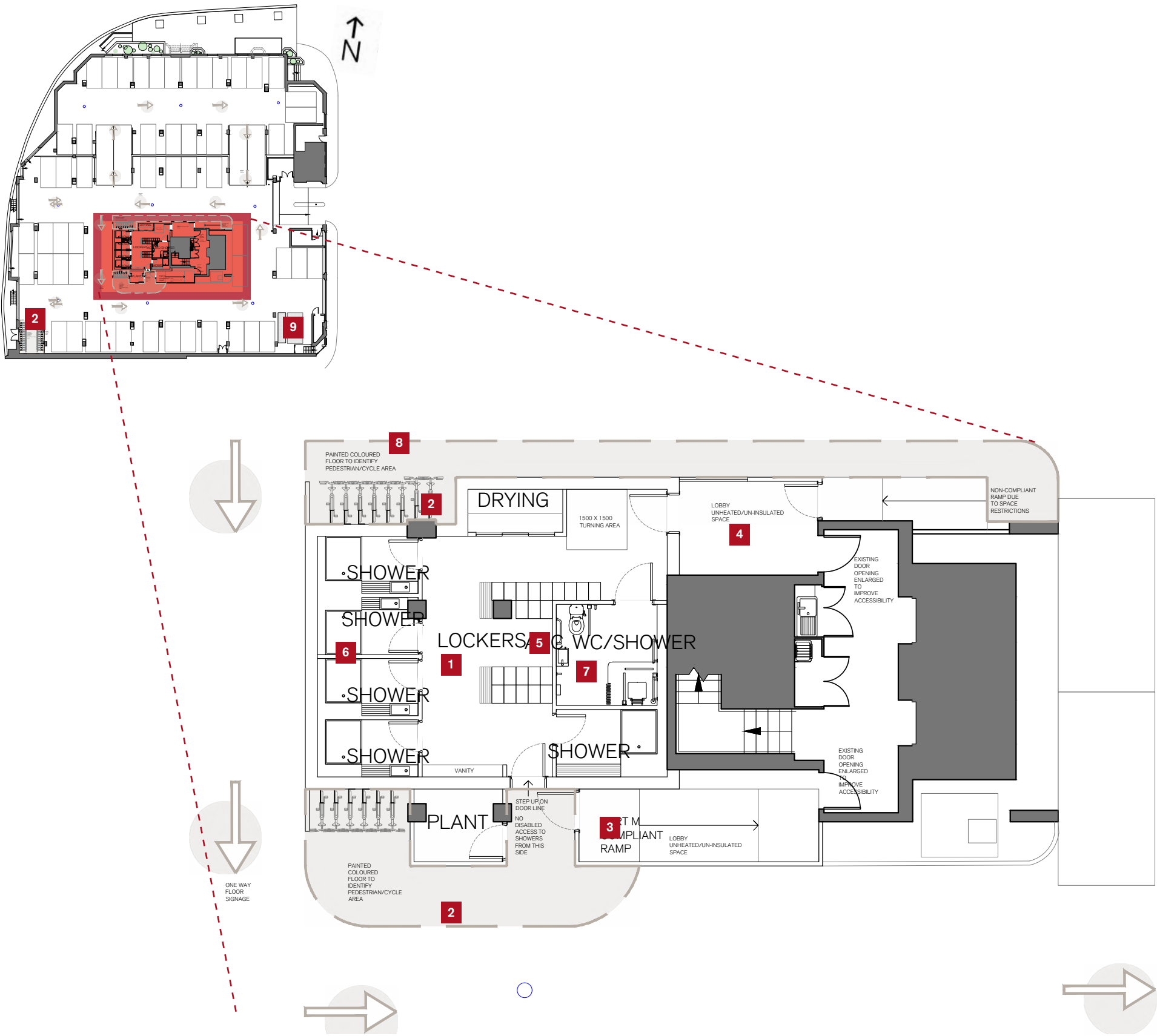


Figure 13. Proposed Basement Plan



Figure 14. Proposed North (front) Elevation

The renovations to the exterior of the building aim to bring the current outdated facade up to date by introducing more dark greys to the colour pallet and introducing a contrast of geometry and material with a longer and thinner canopy and mesh panelling. This along with a new lighting strategy for the entrance and new signage to the exterior aims to give the facade statement, identity and improve the street presence.

The existing dull and stained white cladding to the oriel windows is to be decorated in dark grey. The brick corners of the ground floor South (front) facade are to be painted in dark grey with mesh cladding above stretching to the third floor.

The new canopy with a tapered edge detail will stretch across the entrance recess. On either side of the reception entrance walkway there are to be mesh panels in the canopy which will allow natural light through and deter loitering and sheltering in these areas. The recessed brick walls underneath the canopy as well as the exterior planters are to be painted dark grey. The existing openings either side of the entrance are to be re-glazed and the reception door replaced.

KEY

- 1 New full width 'canopy' with tapered edge detail
- 2 Recessed LED lighting in canopy soffit
- 3 New glazing panels in existing openings with signage manifestation
- 4 New manual/power assisted doors and glazed side panels
- 5 Existing brick planters painted dark grey
- 6 New paving to existing steps
- 7 Existing brick entrance recesses painted dark grey
- 8 Decorate existing oriel window and balcony cladding dark grey
- 9 Existing Planters Re-planted
- 10 Skylights added on fourth floor above eye level
- 11 Existing brick on corners of south facade ground floor painted dark grey
- 12 Dark grey mesh cladding added to corners of south facade from the first floor upwards
- 13 New glazing to existing Western dormers - to match glazed dormers to North and West elevations.

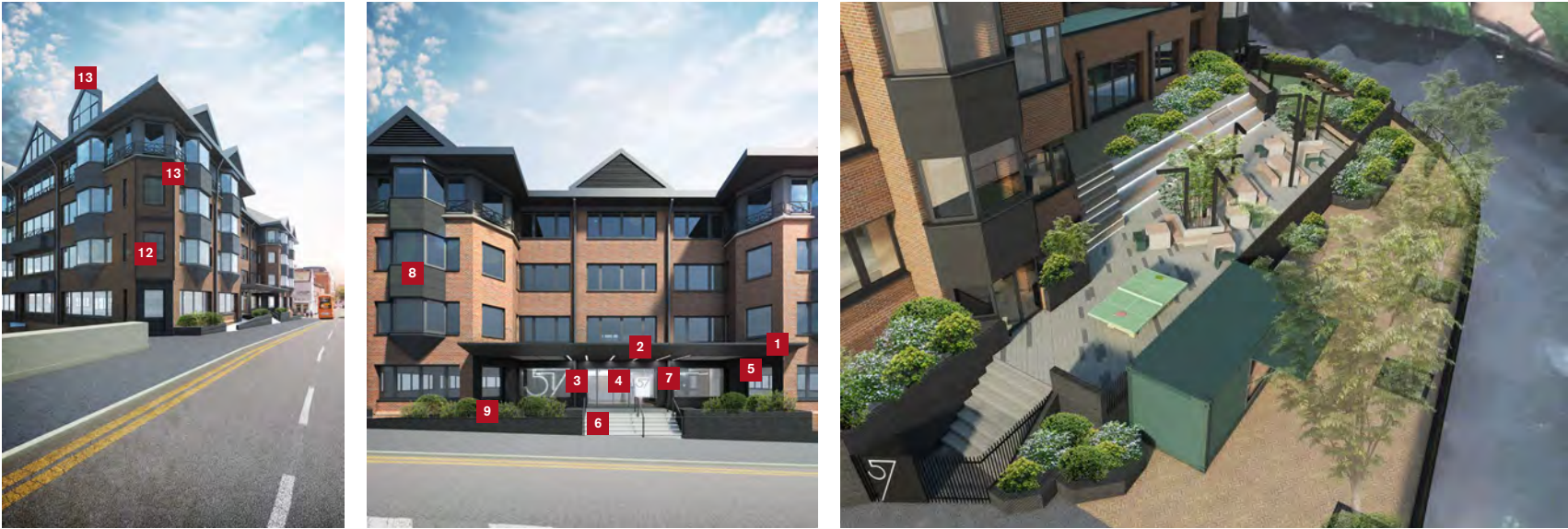


Figure 15. Concept Visuals: Approach from West (left), Front Facade, Terrace (right) Indicative signage shown – not part of this application