

6. LANDSCAPE PROPOSAL

6.1 LANDSCAPE DESIGN STATEMENT

Clarendon House sits at the south-east corner of Readings ring road and is a transition point between residential properties to the south and commercial and high rise residential towers to the north. The site is currently open to the busy junction of Watlington Street and Queens Road, exposing views of the car park and Grantley heights to passing traffic. The idea of closing the block and presenting a well-designed façade to the busy road, thus creating a quiet inner courtyard, is one that would improve both the quality of the streetscape and the amenity of the residential setting.

Central Reading currently suffers from a lack of green space and one of the key objectives is the creation of green pockets or corridors that enhance the amenity value. The proposed landscape for Reading Heights seeks to provide a green edge to the site through vertical planting elements and the potential enhancement of landscape at the south-east corner which lies outside the site boundary. It also proposes the creation of an inner courtyard garden that links the building entrance to Kennet Side and exploit the established pedestrian and cycle links to the town centre along the River Kennet.

Areas within the courtyard will further reduce the amount of surface water runoff from the site.

In addition to the landscape provided at ground level, green and brown roof areas at roof level will be provided in order to provide increased biodiversity and rainwater retention. Overall the scheme results in an increase of green spaces and a reduction in hard standing and the creation of rainwater attenuation areas within the courtyard will further reduce the amount of surface water runoff from the site.

The courtyard gardens seek to create an oasis of green that still accommodates the requirements of vehicle movement, refuse collections and cycle parking that is required for the development.

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6.2.1 SITE CONTEXT

WIDER CONTEXT AND CIRCULATION

The site, located at the junction of Watlington Street and Queens Road, is well connected to the town centre by car and by pedestrian and cycle routes. Whilst the majority of vehicles pass around the site in an anti-clockwise direction, the most prominent view of the development will be from cars travelling west along Queens Road. There are few green spaces along this route and the only significant green spaces in Reading are Forbury Gardens and Abbey Ruins to the north. There are a number of smaller pockets of green along the River Kennet and we would aim to enhance the geometry of our scheme to both physical and visually connect to the river corridor.

Legend:

Cycle Route



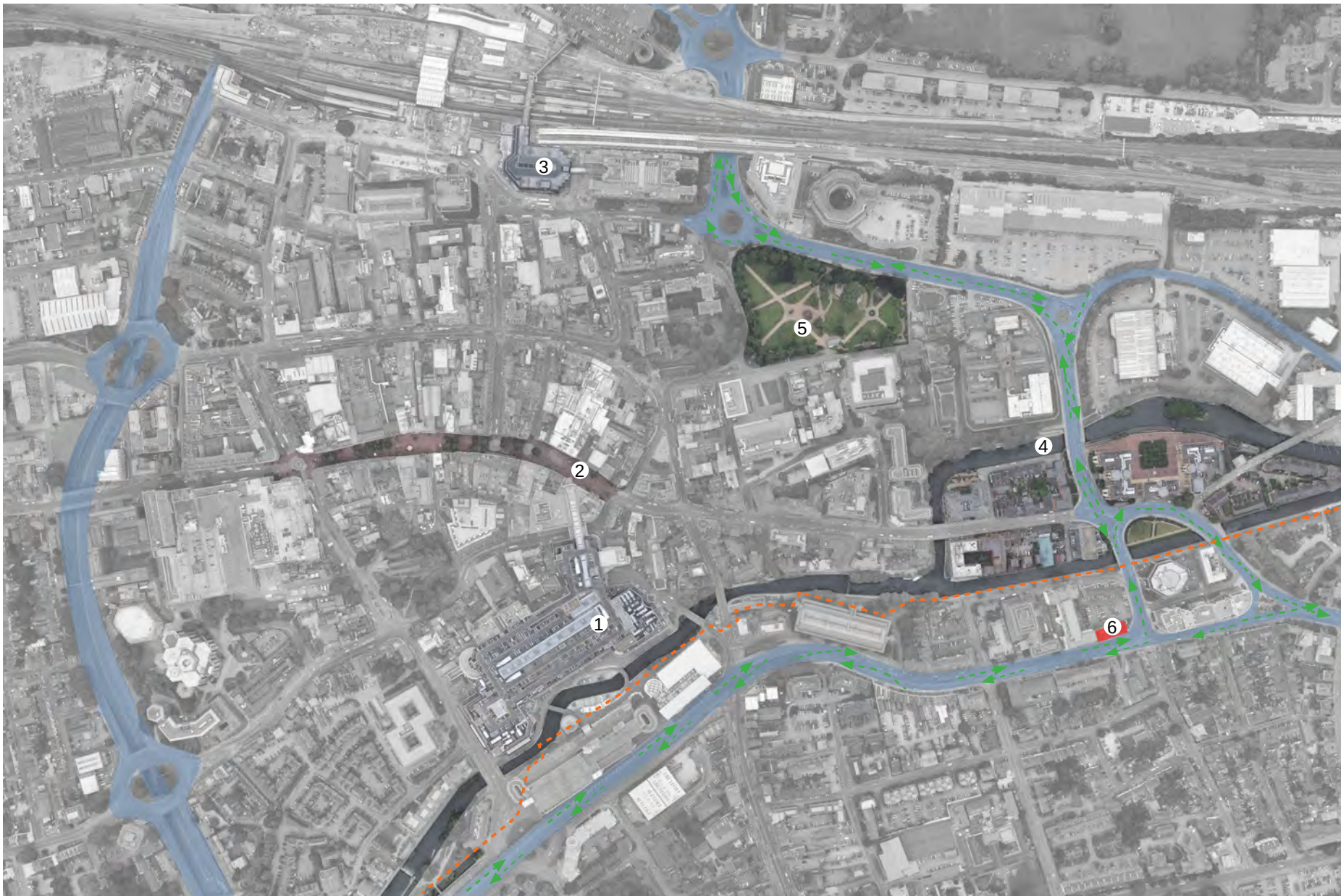
Vehicular Circulation



Ring Road



- 1. The Oracle
- 2. Broad Street
- 3. Reading Station
- 4. River Kennet
- 5. The Forbury Gardens and Abbey Ruins
- 6. Clarendon House



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6.2.2 SITE CONTEXT

LOCAL CONTEXT

The site sits between the character of the Eldon Square Conservation area to the south and the character of the River Kennet corridor to the north. Local context views have therefore focussed on the views from and of these two areas. The narrow streets and brick homes along the southern section of Watlington Street are contrasted by the tall buildings to the north of the river. Our aim is to create a new development that mediates between the two scales and provides a green frontage onto both Queens Way and Watlington street as a pause in the progression from small scale residential buildings to the south and large scale commercial buildings to the north.



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- 10. Prudential Reading
- 11. HM Revenue & Customs, Sapphire Plaza
- 12. Clarendon House
- 13. Wesley Church
- 14. Polish Roman Catholic Church



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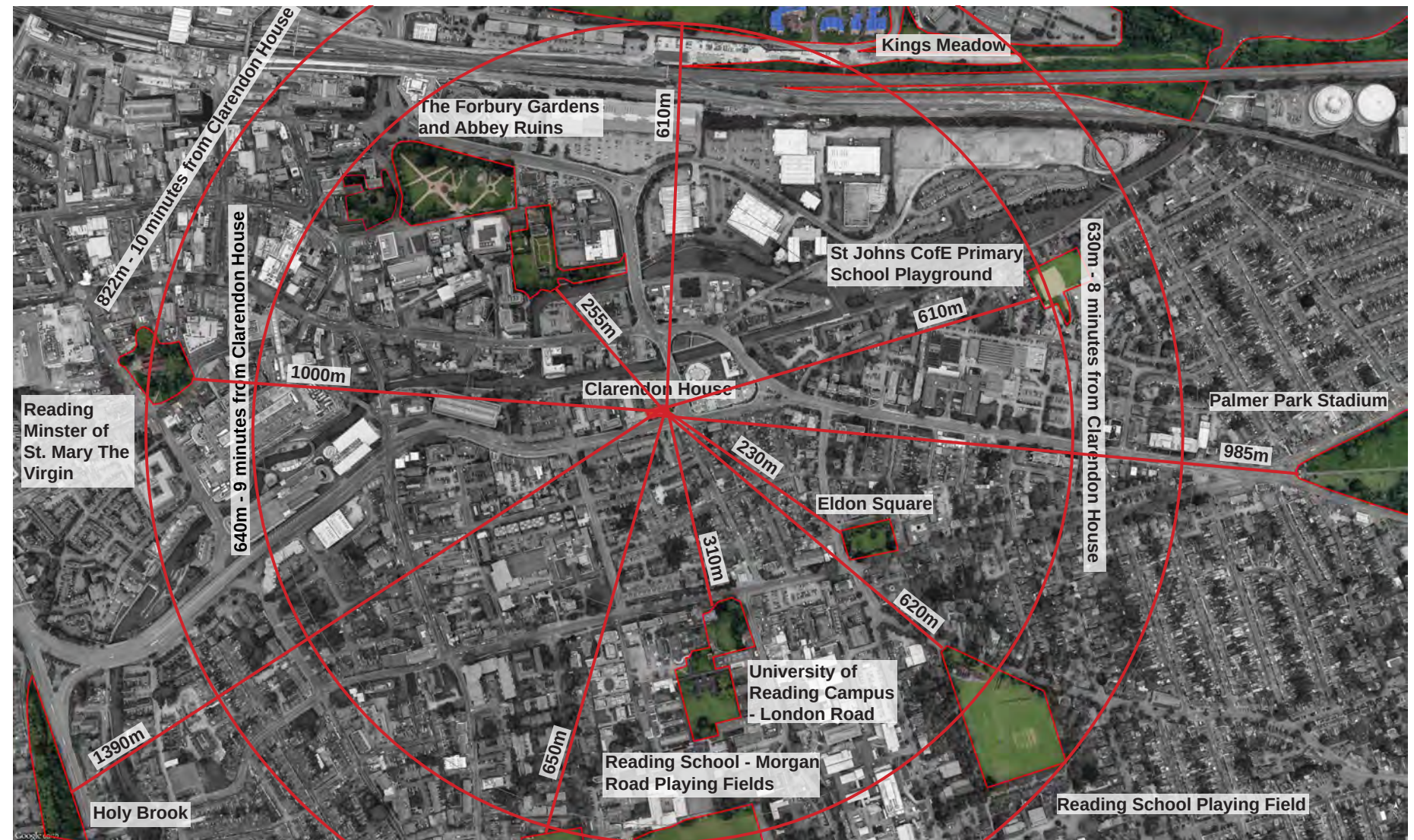
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6.2.3 SITE CONTEXT

GREEN SPACES

There are few green spaces in Reading town centre. The largest public open space is the Forbury Gardens and Abbey Ruins to the south east of the railway station. The nearest public open space is Eldon Square which is over 2km south-east of Clarendon House. The nearest playing fields to the site are around 650m to the south of the site around the University of Reading London Road Campus, including those on Morgan Road, Kendrick Road and Erleigh Road. The nearest equipped play space is 1km away at Palmer Park. Due to the lack of green space in reading our design seeks a compromise between parking space and amenity space in order to improve the visual outlook from residents in upper level apartments as well as defensible space for residents at ground floor level. The change in use from commercial to residential for Clarendon House requires an introduction of a green frontage both for better visual amenity to Queens Way and for improved privacy for ground floor apartments.



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6.2.4 SITE CONTEXT

CYCLE ROUTES

The site is well situated for cycle access, located on the junction of three major cycle corridors. The Town Centre Route provides car free access along the River Kennet to the Oracle Shopping Centre with routes continuing on to Reading Station via Broad Street. The South-East Reading and Wokingham route provide connection from the site to the south via Watlington Street and the East Reading and Woodley route provides links via Kings Road to the east. With the site being well situated for links to the town centre and railway stations, we have provided 48 covered spaces within the internal courtyard.

Legend:

East Reading & Woodley

Traffic Free Cycle Route

On Road Cycle Route

South-East Reading & Wokingham

Traffic Free Cycle Route

On Road Cycle Route

Linking Route

Traffic Free Cycle Route

On Road Cycle Route

Town Centre Route

Traffic Free Cycle Route

On Road Cycle Route

Site



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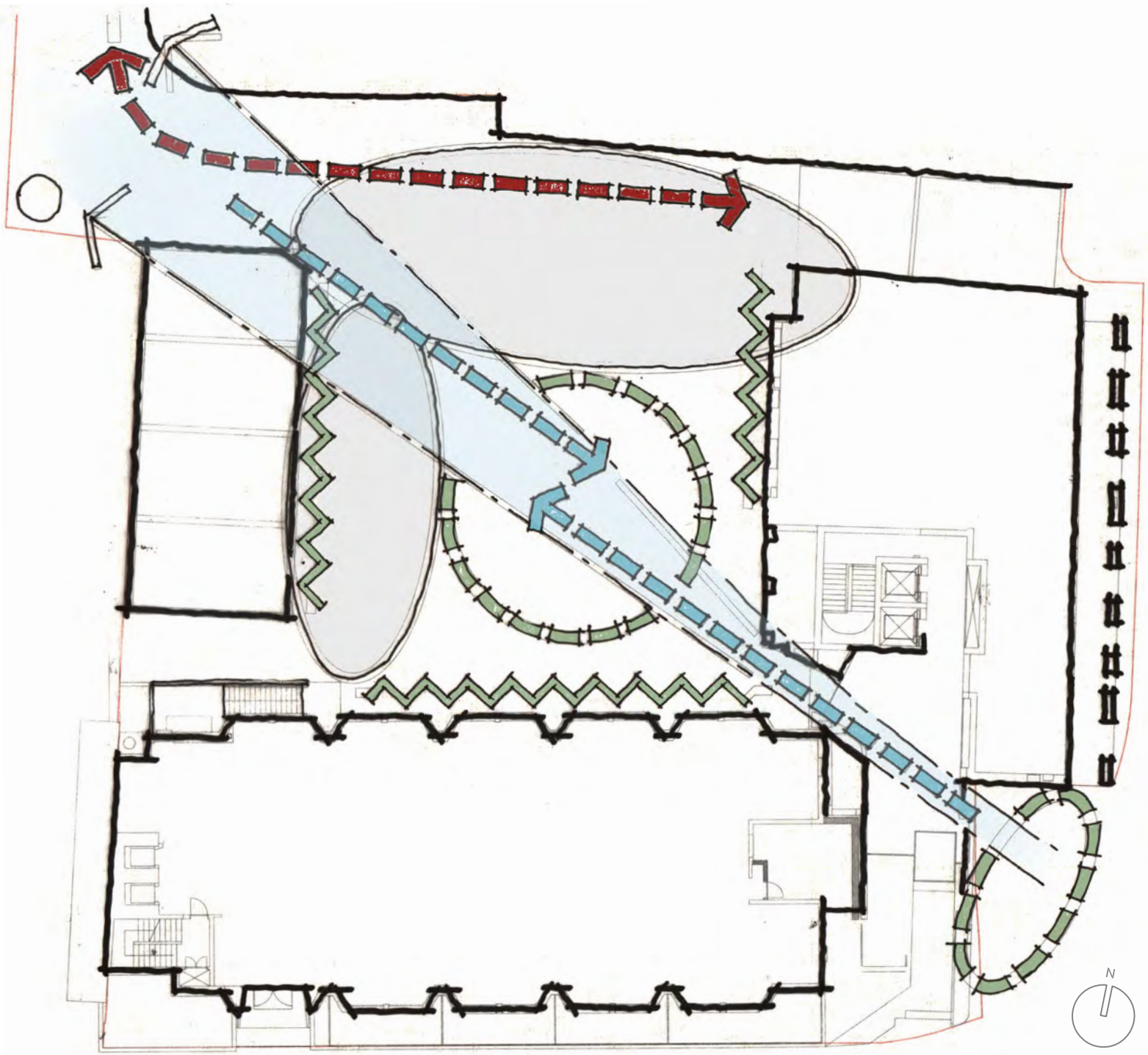
6.3.1 LANDSCAPE CONCEPT

SPATIAL ARRANGEMENT

The central courtyard provides a number of functions from parking and servicing to refuse collection. With so many competing uses the landscape could quite easily become an incoherent ensemble of and mix of materials and treatments. Our concept seeks to create a single unifying space in the centre that acts as an outdoor room, providing a degree of separation from parking and refuse collection points which have been sites around the courtyard's periphery. The dynamic of the space is based on a desire line from the building entrance to Kennet Side where a greener and more attractive pedestrian route exists. Although the route through the scheme from Queens Rd and Watlington Street only exists for residents, we have tried to continue the geometry and notional connection to Kennet Side onto the building frontage by continuing the line of trees to the south east corner of the site.

Legend:

-  Pedestrian Route
-  Garden
-  Defensible Space
-  Parking Spaces
-  Viewing Zone
-  Vehicular Zone

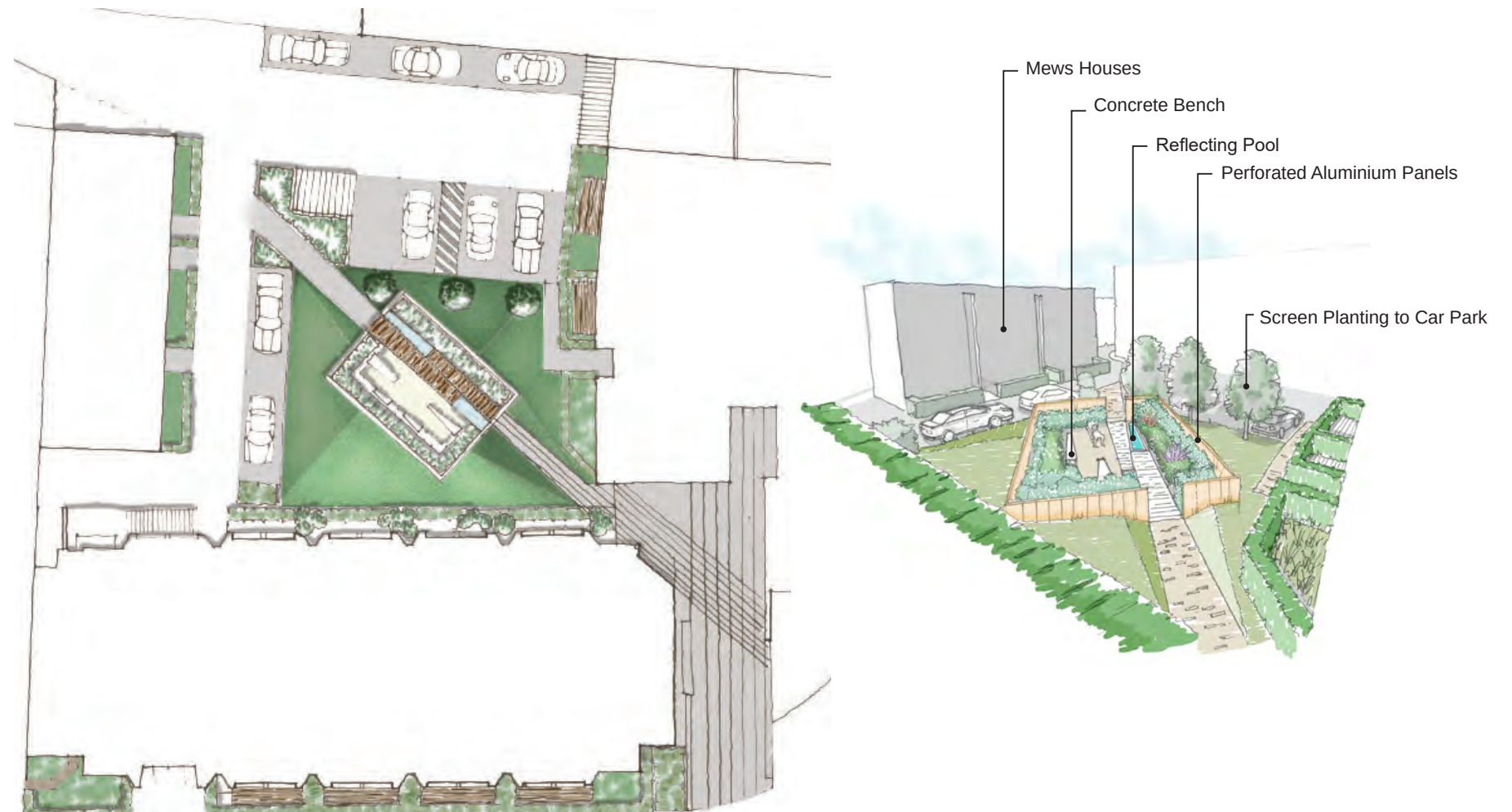


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6.3.2 LANDSCAPE CONCEPT

INITIAL CONCEPT

The initial concept is based on the enclosure of the central space and draws on the historic context of the biscuit tin, a means of providing a robust packaging for biscuits, which made the Huntley and Palmer brand world famous. Our take on the theme is to create a safe haven for residents that provides a separation from vehicles and residents front doors. Evergreen hedges would contain the central space which acts as a landing halfway between the floor level of the new residential building and the level of the mews buildings, a change of around 800mm. A water feature would provide a visual reminder of the sites connection with the River Kennet. Tree planting is seen as an important issue in Reading, and semi-mature trees would be used in the courtyard to provide a significant green asset as well as visually containment between the central space and Grantham Heights to the north.



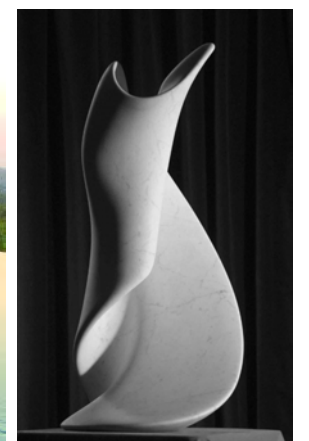
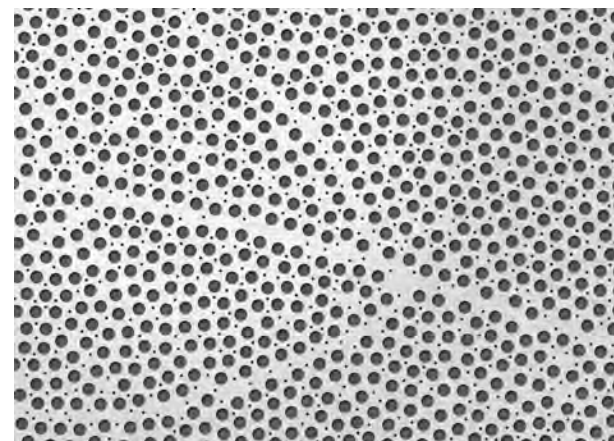
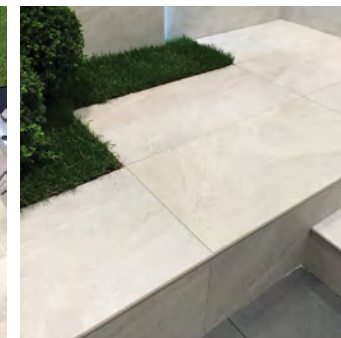
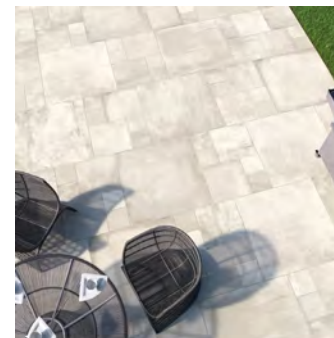
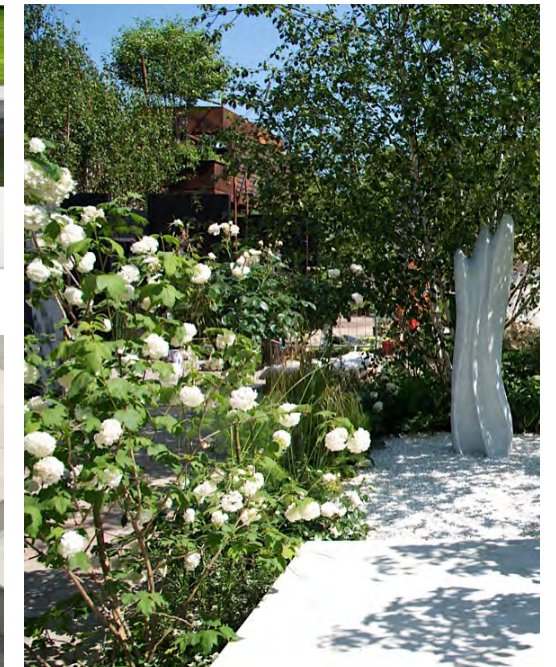
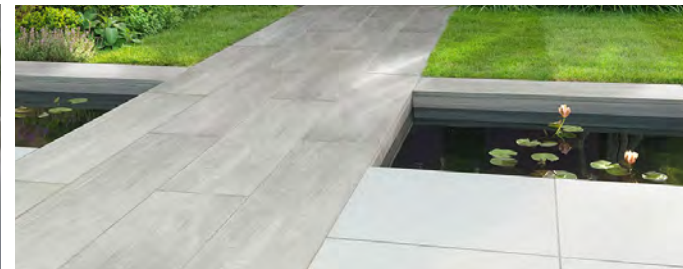
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6.3.3 LANDSCAPE CONCEPT

MOOD IMAGES

Light coloured materials will help to brighten the central space which will be in shadow for much of the year.

Materials such as ceramic paving or light grey granite have been considered within the central space while other areas would utilise a light-coloured concrete block paving for pathways. We would propose to incorporate one or two sculptural features as accents for the central space. Low level lighting would be provided to ensure that the space is safe to use at night whilst minimising light pollution.



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6.4.1 LANDSCAPE MASTERPLAN

AMENDED GROUND FLOOR MASTERPLAN

Legend:

1. Screen Planting to Car Park

2. Granite Block Paving

3. Reflecting Pool

4. Concrete Bench

5. Porcelain Paving

6. Hedge

7. Terraces

8. Planting



4. Style of bench



2. Paving materials



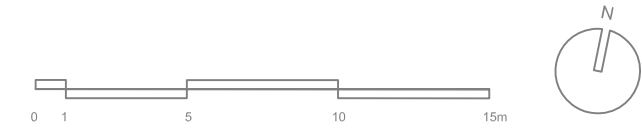
Installation art



6. Hedge Walls



8. Planting approach - layers of white



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6.4.1 LANDSCAPE MASTERPLAN

AMENDED GROUND FLOOR MASTERPLAN

Following the consultation process, concerns were raised in regards to lack of tree plantation on Queen's Road and Watlington Street frontages. In addition, the aluminium enclosure proposed around the central courtyard space perceived to be a safety risk because 1.5m high walls might prevent overlooking.

Additional detail was also requested for the cycle parking.

Covered cycle parking has been accommodated in the north east corner of the courtyard where they are easily accessed from the main residential buildings and the mews houses. The location provides easy access through the car park to the Kennet Side cycle route.

Planting of fastigate trees and shrubs along the Watlington Street frontage have been introduced to provide a buffer between residential apartments and the bridge abutment, creating small contained terraces at ground level.

Similarly, a hedge of 1.2m height has been introduced along the southern perimeter of Clarendon House in order to establish a buffer between the footpath and ground floor apartments whilst fastigate Birch trees also introduced to complement vertical recesses.

Planting of large columnar trees have been added at the western end of Clarendon House to establish vertical scale and to soften the edge of the building.

The final masterplan incorporates eight parking spaces, two of which are designated for disabled parking. All areas incorporate a minimum 1.5m deep defensible spaces in front of ground floor units with planting to provide screening.

The frontage areas incorporate fastigate trees to provide vertical green and the central courtyard space incorporates larger shade trees including Lime and Maple trees.

The south west corner of Clarendon House incorporates native shrub planting and if possible, we would extend this approach into the triangle of land at the south east corner of the site which is outside the site boundary.

Within the courtyard, shade tolerant native plant species will be used along the northern side of Clarendon House.

Vehicle parking and loading has been accommodated to the north and west of the central courtyard with provision for cars, cycles and motorbikes .

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6.4.3 VISUALISATION - COURTYARD



View into Central Courtyard

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6.4.4 VISUALISATION - KENNET SIDE ENTRANCE



View from Kennet Side Entrance

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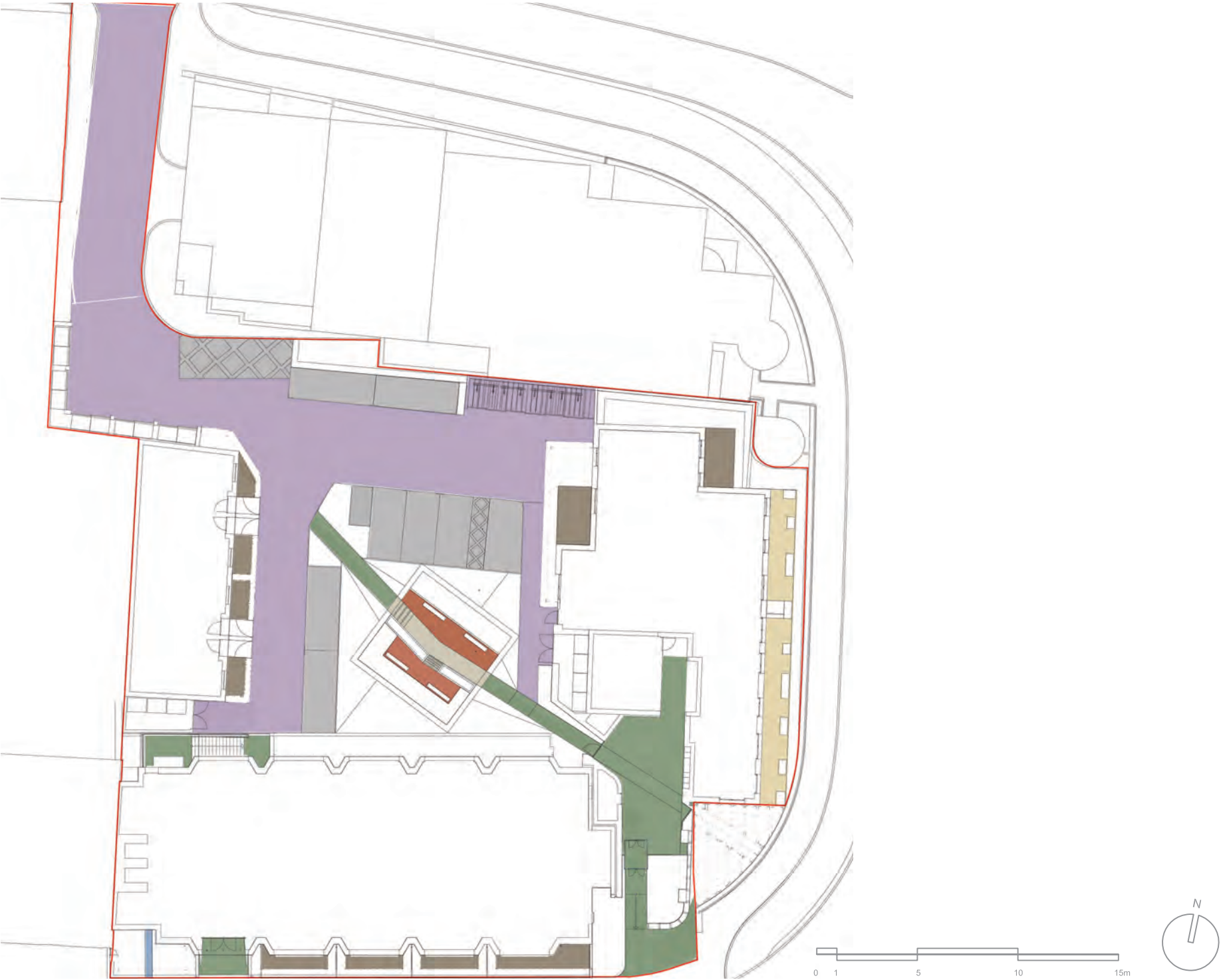
6.5.1 MATERIALS PALETTE

MATERIALS PALETTE

The materials proposed on this scheme can be divides into two types. Utilitarian paving has been provided for service areas of the courtyard and includes porous block paving for vehicular areas and service zones. Natural stone and concrete flags have been proposed for entrance areas and private terraces offer a mixture of either concrete slab paving or composite timber decking.

Legend:

- Composite Timber Decking, Brown
- Block Paving, Gray
- Block Paving, Silver-Gray
- Porcelain Paving, Gray
- Slab Paving, Buff
- Reclaimed Granite Setts, Light Gray
- Granite Linear Paving, Silver/Mid-gray
- Gravel Path

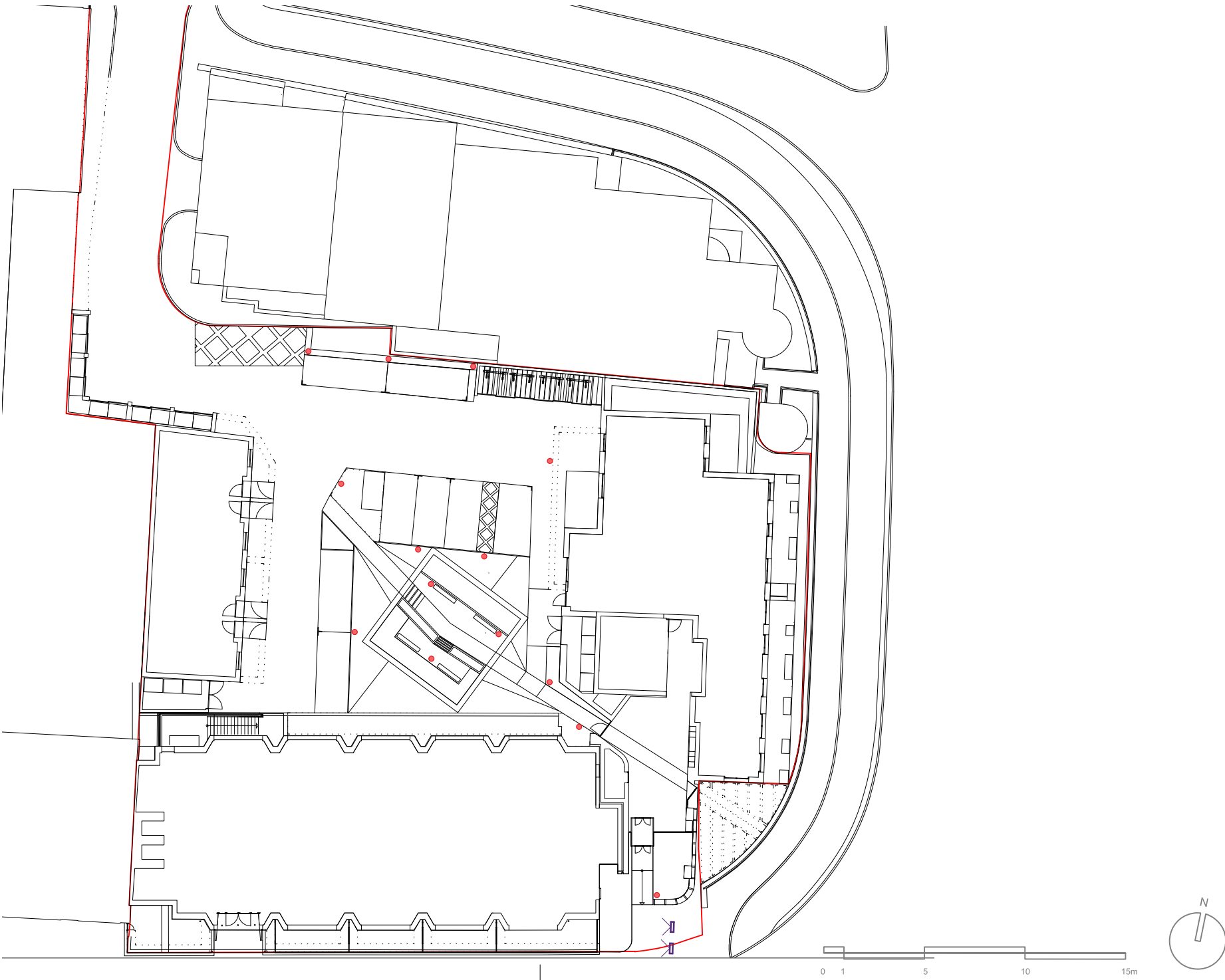


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6.5.2 MATERIALS PALETTE

LIGHTING PLAN

Low level lighting will be provided in order to light key routes and building entrances. On pathways, low bollard lighting will be provided with deflectors and lenses that direct light downwards to minimise light pollution. Lighting recessed into raised planters would be provided at the main entrance and this would similarly have internal lenses and deflectors to direct light downwards onto pathways. All lighting would comply with energy efficiency requirements and ensure sufficient lux levels on designated access routes.



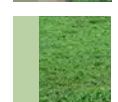
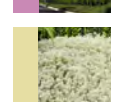
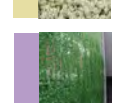
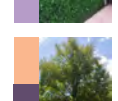
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6.6.1 PLANTING AND BIODIVERSITY

GROUND FLOOR PLANTING

Ground floor planting is designed to create a mixture of structural planting to define spaces and native shrub planting to improve the biodiversity credentials of the scheme. Ornamental planting is provided within the central courtyard space. Areas of lawn provide a contrast to the Yew hedging and accentuate the linear geometry of the courtyard. Shrub planting would be mainly evergreen to provide year round interest, and shade tolerant species would be used on the north side of Clarendon House and beneath the colonnade on the Watlington Street frontage.

Legend:

-  Hedge
-  Lawn
-  Green Facade
-  Shrubs
-  Climbers
-  Trees
 - Tilia cordata 'Greenspire'
 - Acer campestre 'Streetwise'
 - Betula pendula fastigiata
-  Note: Land in ownership of council.
Landscape shown for illustrative purposes.



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6.6.2 PLANTING AND BIODIVERSITY

ROOF LEVEL PLANTING

At the roof level we are proposing to incorporate two habitat typologies. A green roof typology would be provided on roofs which are overlooked by neighbouring residents. This would provide a combination of flowering succulent species such as sedums along with British native wildflower species that flower and set seed before dying down in late summer. This would then provide a combination of biodiversity, year-round green to the lower flat roof areas. The upper roof areas would be established as brown roof habitat zones, provide varying regimes of gravel and aggregate for burrowing insects as well as log piles for overwintering of beetles and invertebrates. No evidence has been found of bat activity within the building, either through observations or through evidence of bat droppings and we have therefore not carried out any detailed bat surveys. Nevertheless we feel the scheme would benefit from the provision of bird and bat boxes, and these would be best placed at roof level where they would be less prone to disturbance from humans and predators.

Legend:



Green Roof



Brown Roof



Containerised Plants



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