

St.martin's Centre Caversham

ARCHWAY HOUSE

DESIGN STATEMENT

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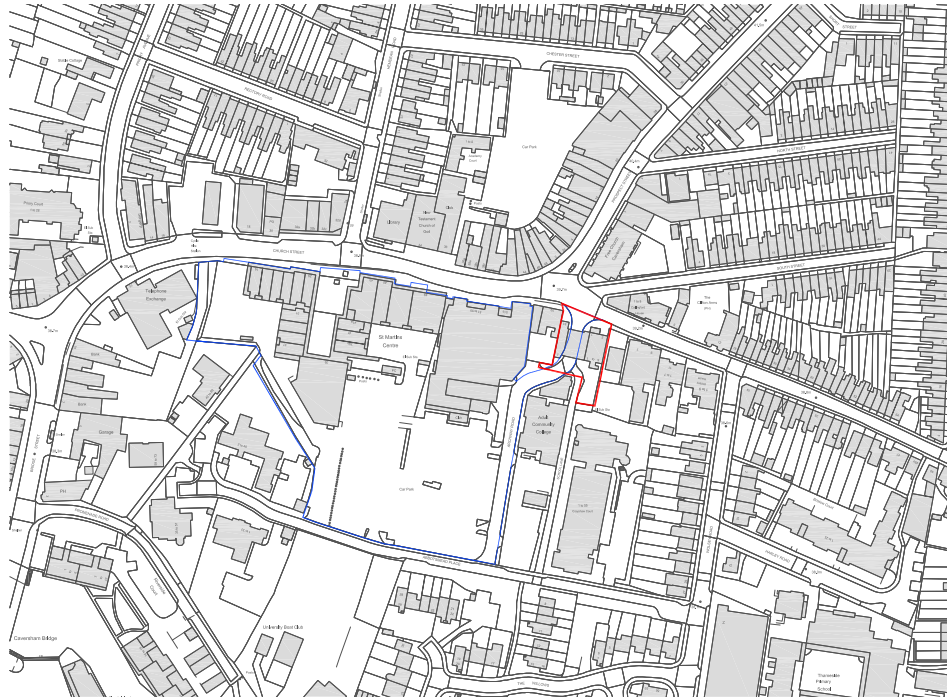
1.

INTRODUCTION

Background:

The applicant is proposing to refurbish Archway house with a new elevation design to the north, internal reconfiguration and refurbishment to the offices and update the ground floor frontages and further landscape enhancements in St Martin's Centre. St Martin's Centre is situated in the heart of Caversham, Reading. This is part of a wider regeneration plan for the centre aiming to create an updated and vibrant centre. Archway forms a key approach/vista from Prospect Street and the main entrance to St Martin's Centre Car park. These proposed enhancements are designed to provide increased presence and legibility of Archway House along this key elevation and important junction facing Prospect Street and Gosbrook Road.

The site plan here denotes the application site for Archway House in red. The blue line illustrates the original approved planning application for St Martin's Centre (Reference 140997).

**Site Location and Description:**

Caversham is an area within Reading that has managed to retain its distinct identity and 'village' character. It contains a variety of shops and services along its historic high street which also includes architecturally significant building like the Library and Caversham Baptist Church and West Memorial Hall. The site is located to the south east of Gosbrook Road and merging junctions of Prospect Street and Church Street.



2.

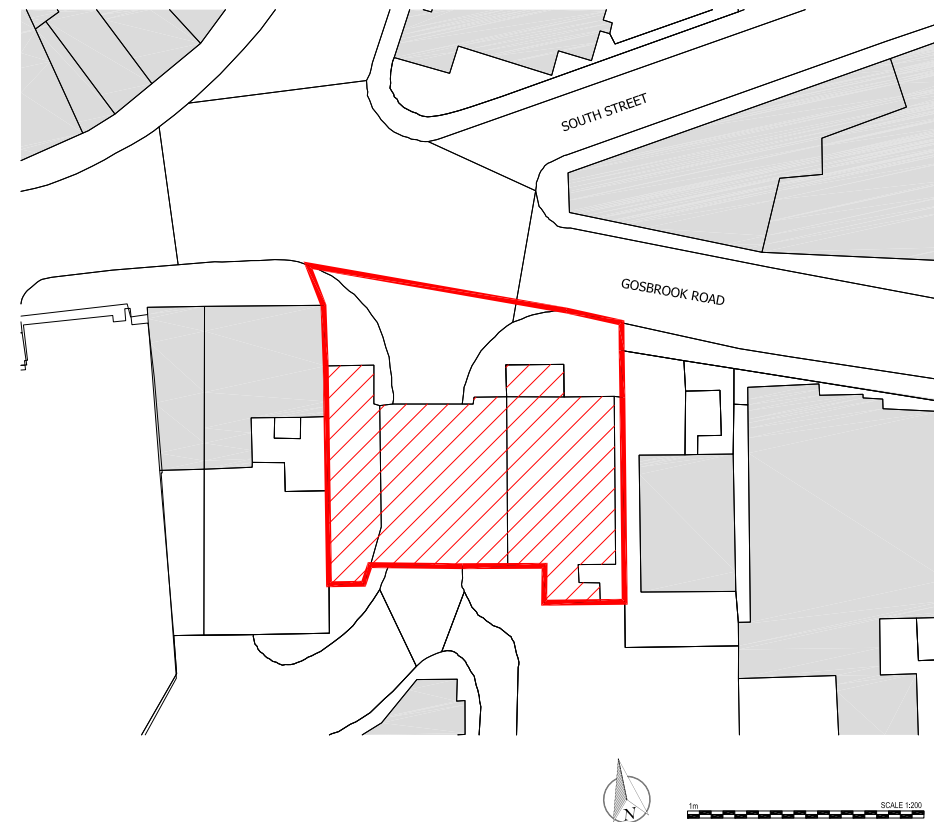
ASSESSMENT OF CONTEXT

Site Opportunities:

- Close in proximity to St Martin's Centre
- Close to high quality examples of architecture and there are a variety of buildings from different ages.
- Close to a large number of green parks and the River Thames.
- Archway House forms an important entrance to the whole centre at a key junction.
- Creation of new and improved active frontages and expanding the overall design ethos of the proposed centre refurbishment.
- Pedestrian access and Public Realm along Archway can be enhanced

Site Constraints:

- The entrance to Archway House offices currently face the rear of the building with limited visibility as opposed to the upper floors which Church Street.
- The design is dated and of poor design quality.
- Block acts like a gateway to St Martin's Centre Car parking with limited visibility. There is limited appeal as a main entrance to the centre/car park.
- There is limited light to the existing offices facing north at the junction of Gosbrook Road.
- Access to main ground floor uses is not fully compliant to Part M regulations.
- The existing retail shops lack beneficial frontage and fail to enhance the overall street scene.



EVALUATION AND EVOLUTION

Option 1

This design reviewed the ground floor and upper levels of the block. The original windows on the central and east side of the north façade were retained. Towards the west side larger windows were proposed and the proportions were maintained as per the original windows, blending with the original building. Larger glazing was also introduced at the ground floor to the entrances of units 61a and 61b. Canopies were proposed over the main entrances to increase presence and animate the facades.

The option was a subtle intervention which required further review of the upper levels, particularly for the offices and the above Archway. Unit 61b was setback and required further review to bring this part of the building and blend in with the street scene.



A review of the frontages from Gosbrook Road and Prospect Street was undertaken based on the following principles:

- To provide a viable entrance to Unit 61a from Church Street rather than along Archway.
- Provide signage opportunity for the main Car park with St Martin's Centre branding.
- Increase the prominence of unit 61b.
- Review upper office levels and frontages to the office.

Option 2

The proposal explored increased glazing to the upper elevations by proposing larger glazing with window proportions relating to the existing windows. Dormer style windows were proposed with architectural surround details matching a selection of materials from the main St Martin's Centre scheme. The introduction of the glazing will allow increased daylighting into the offices, relate to scale and provide increased presence along this important junction.

The new windows were detailed with copper coloured surrounds, as well as a canopy over the central Car park entrance. On the east side unit 61b would be enhanced with a feature canopy designed to the similar proportions to the canopy along St Martin's Centre. The feature would allow tenant signage to be applied along the fascia and to unify both parts of the units. The public realm along Archway under the unit provided opportunities for planting and landscape enhancements.

This option, and in particular the windows to the upper levels, was reviewed further as the amount of glazing and works to execute the proposal was considered extensive.

Option 3

This design retained the larger windows on the north above Unit 61a. However, the Dormer style windows were omitted. New windows above Archway House are proposed in a rectangular format which are arranged in proportion to the existing windows along the north east. Both entrances on the east side to unit 61b were extended forward in this option. A single portal style canopy framed the entrances with opportunities for signage.

The option was further reviewed to refine unit 61a and the public realm/access in front. The scheme also looked into landscape opportunities in front of unit 61a along Church Street and street scape.



4.

ENHANCED SCHEME

The final proposed design refined principles of option 3. The frontages to unit 61b were retained and the canopy designed to project above the entrances.

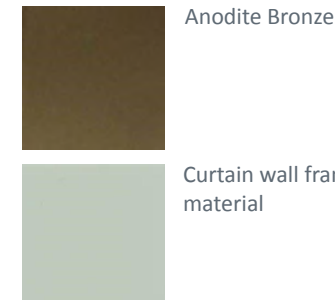
The design provides the opportunity for an increased street presence and unifies the unit with higher quality shop-fronts and materials.

Architectural details around the windows on the first floor offices surrounding full height glazing give this part of Archway House the ability to present itself as a key entrance along a prominent junction. Whilst providing functional features to assist improved access from Church Street, improved doors and level access, unit 61a and 61b now work as part of St Martin's Centre's overall design concepts and utilises

opportunities as a gateway to the centre. Landscape enhancements along Archway under the building promotes pedestrian access from this part of the site.

Materials

The chosen materials will blend new elements with existing. The colour of the window system has been chosen to match St Martin's Centres grey and green tones. The bronze details provide subtle contrasts similar and evident in the high quality buildings in this location.



Key

- 1 Proposed canopy over entrance
- 2 Anodite Bronze window surrounds/detailing
- 3 Proposed larger windows
- 4 Proposed wider windows
- 5 Centre Branded signage
- 6 Proposed unit 61b entrance.
- 7 Proposed canopy over entrance
- 8 Proposed planting along Archway

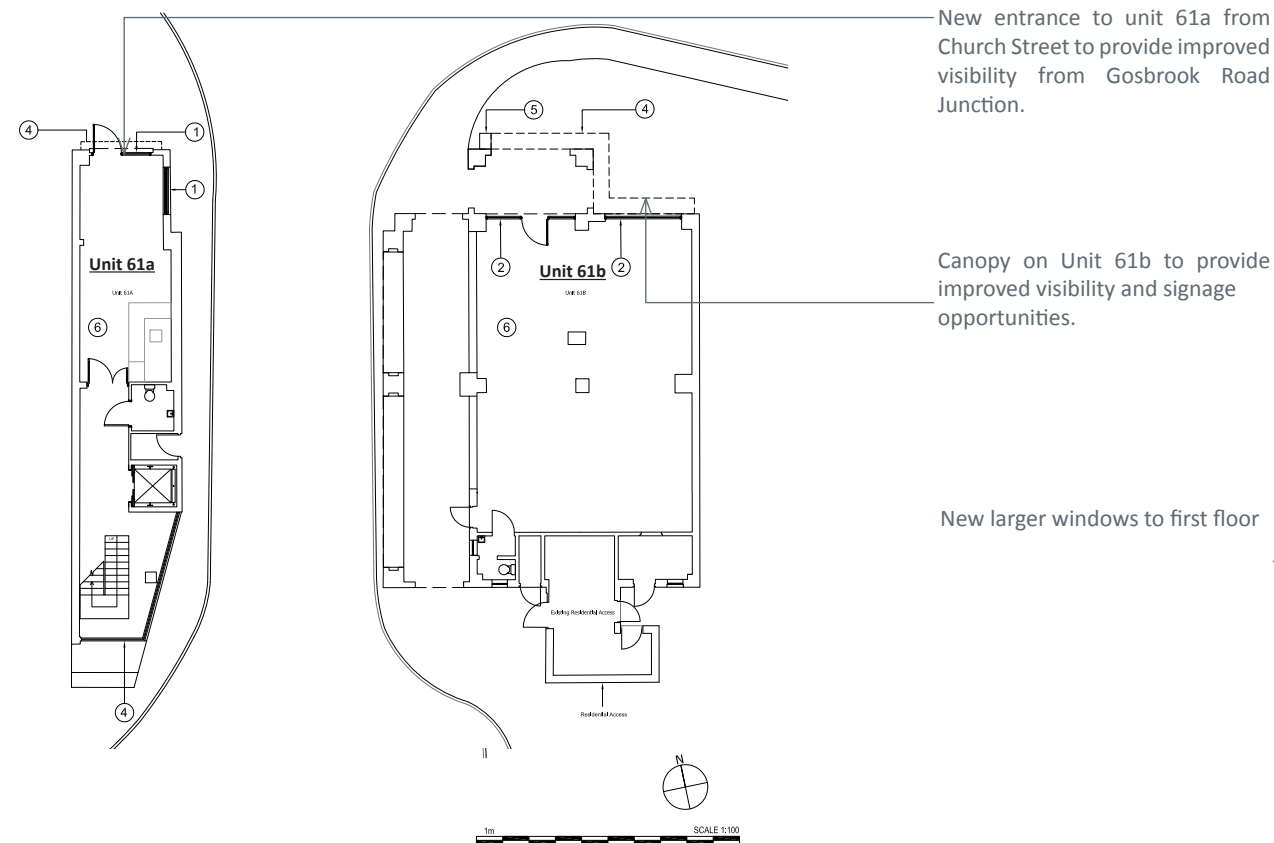


Layout - Unit 61a

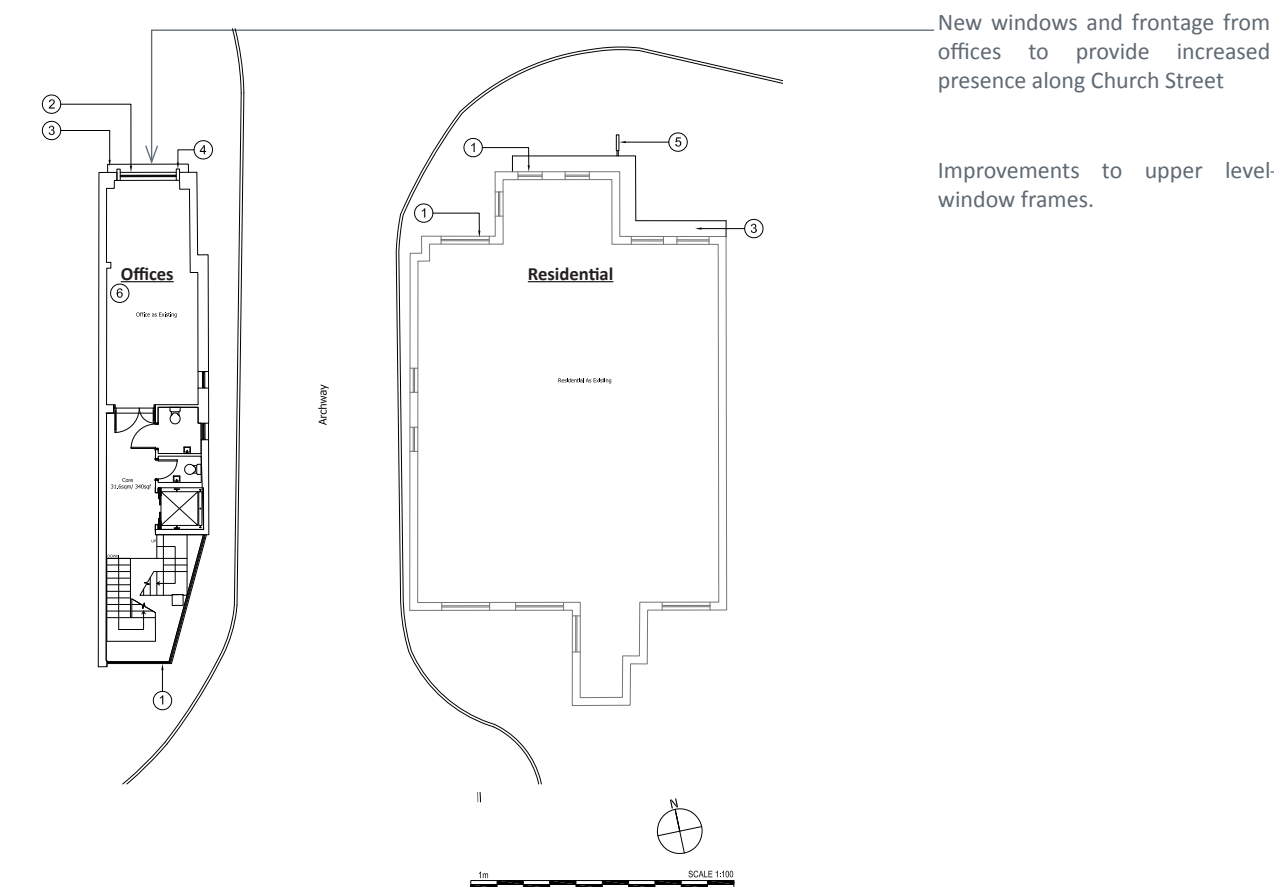
Access to unit 61a was a key part of the design proposals. Providing an improved access into the unit from Church Street rather than the existing discrete side access was central to the access strategy. This allows the internal reconfiguration strategy to be flexible.

Layout - Unit 61b

This unit in layout terms has been retained as currently configured. However the space in front of the unit which currently presents itself with level changes has been further reviewed. The space in front now allows enhanced landscape and public realm opportunities which will be a positive addition to this area which is currently detached from the site. The surface treatments and planting will assist to enhance the unit's street presence from this part of the site.

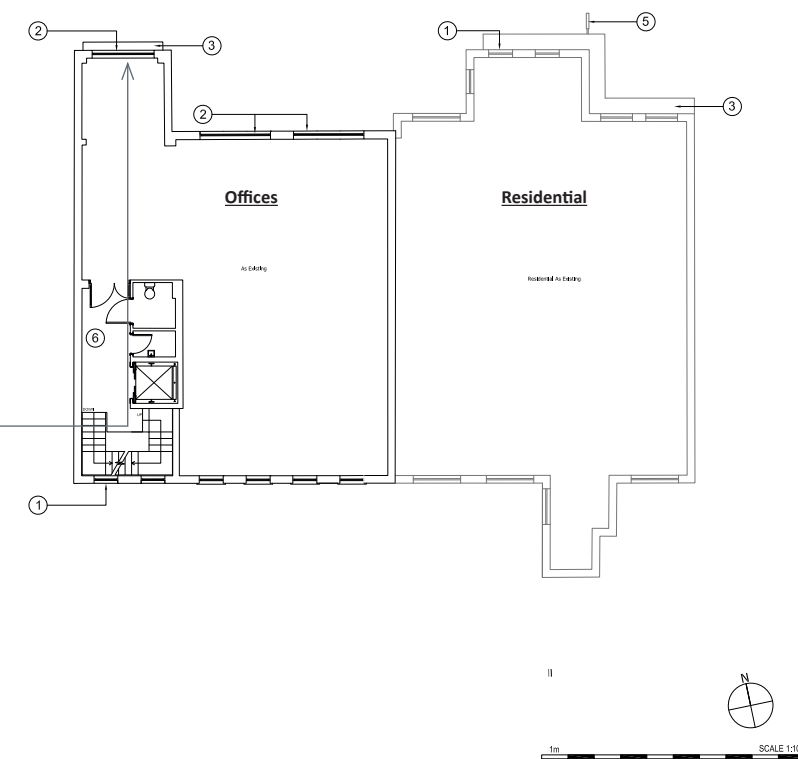


Ground Floor

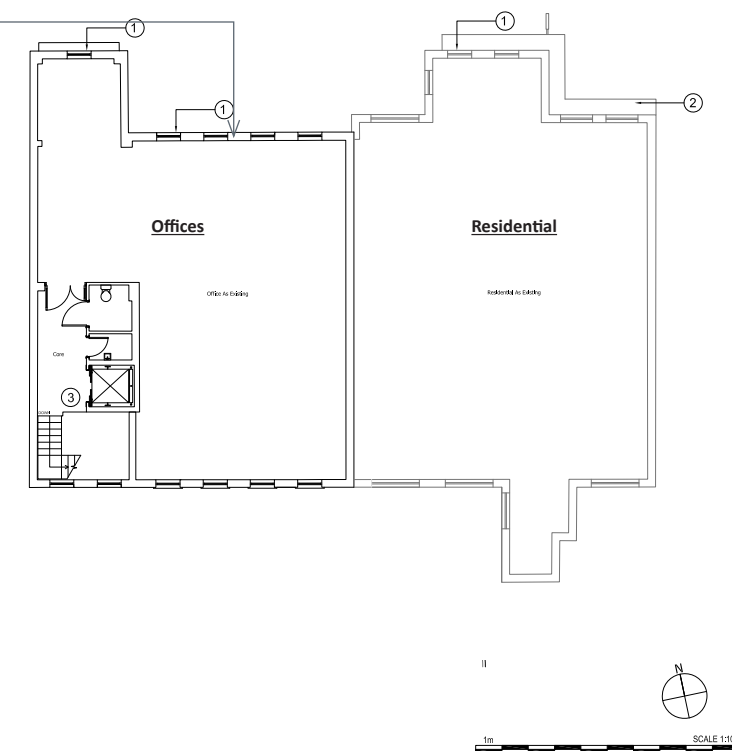


First Floor

JUNE 2017



Second Floor



Third Floor

JUNE 2017

5.

LANDSCAPE

Proposals

The landscape scheme is a simple intervention that improves the perception of Archway House from its street frontage. Contributing positively to the animation and active frontage of the street is a primary goal of the architectural alterations. As such the landscape seeks to follow this lead.

Soft Landscape

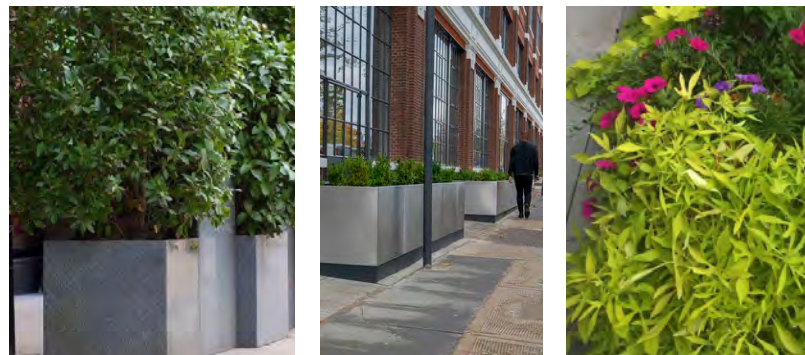
Soft landscape comes in the form of raised planters, constructed in either steel or GRP. Render colours will be complimentary to the architecture. Plant species will be selected appropriate to their location, as some planters in particular are under the colonnade, which is in partial shade for long periods of the day.

A solitary street tree was considered, but adequate and functional space could not be allocated. This was due to future canopy conflict with the building elevation, conflict with building entrances and adequate space for a tree pit without conflicting with the pedestrian footpath and vehicle clear line of sight.

Hard Landscape

The choice of paving materials will interface with the public pavement, so selection of materials will be undertaken in conjunction with the local authority design guidance for material, finish and colour. There is an opportunity to integrate multiple street frontages with an improved paved surface along the client ownership boundary.

The boundary definition will be in the form of a stainless steel barrier system. This will contain an area of flexible seating and define a clearer pedestrian demise in front of the premises. It also discourages unwarranted car parking in front of the premises, further improving the functionality of the space. High quality materials are specified and a design quality must be reached that befits the improved architectural façade and the desired image for Caversham High Street.



Movable planters with structural, shade tolerant & flowering plants.



Stainless steel bollard and rail system.



Flexible seating animating the street scene.