

4.9 Height & massing

The composition of buildings incorporate a gradual step down from Vastern Road to the river. The taller building on Vastern Road rises to a maximum height of 11 storeys ensuring visibility in the urban landscape. Building heights to the east align with Clearwater Court and create a sense of enclosure to the residents courtyard. The buildings decrease in height stepping down to the river and Thames Court emphasising a more intimate scale along the waterfront.

Taller corner building

Building height subservient to corner building

Recessive link building

Height in line with Clearwater Court

Height stepping down to the river



Surrounding context

In the wider context the heights step up from 2-5 storeys on river to 20-30 storey in a cluster around Reading Station. The proposal sits comfortably within the surrounding context of a series of mid rise buildings of between 6-12 storeys. On Vastern Road heights vary dramatically from 2 storey town houses up to Thames Quarter at 23 storeys. The proposed building heights are in line with the consented scheme for 55 Vastern Road and step down towards the river responding to the local townscape context.

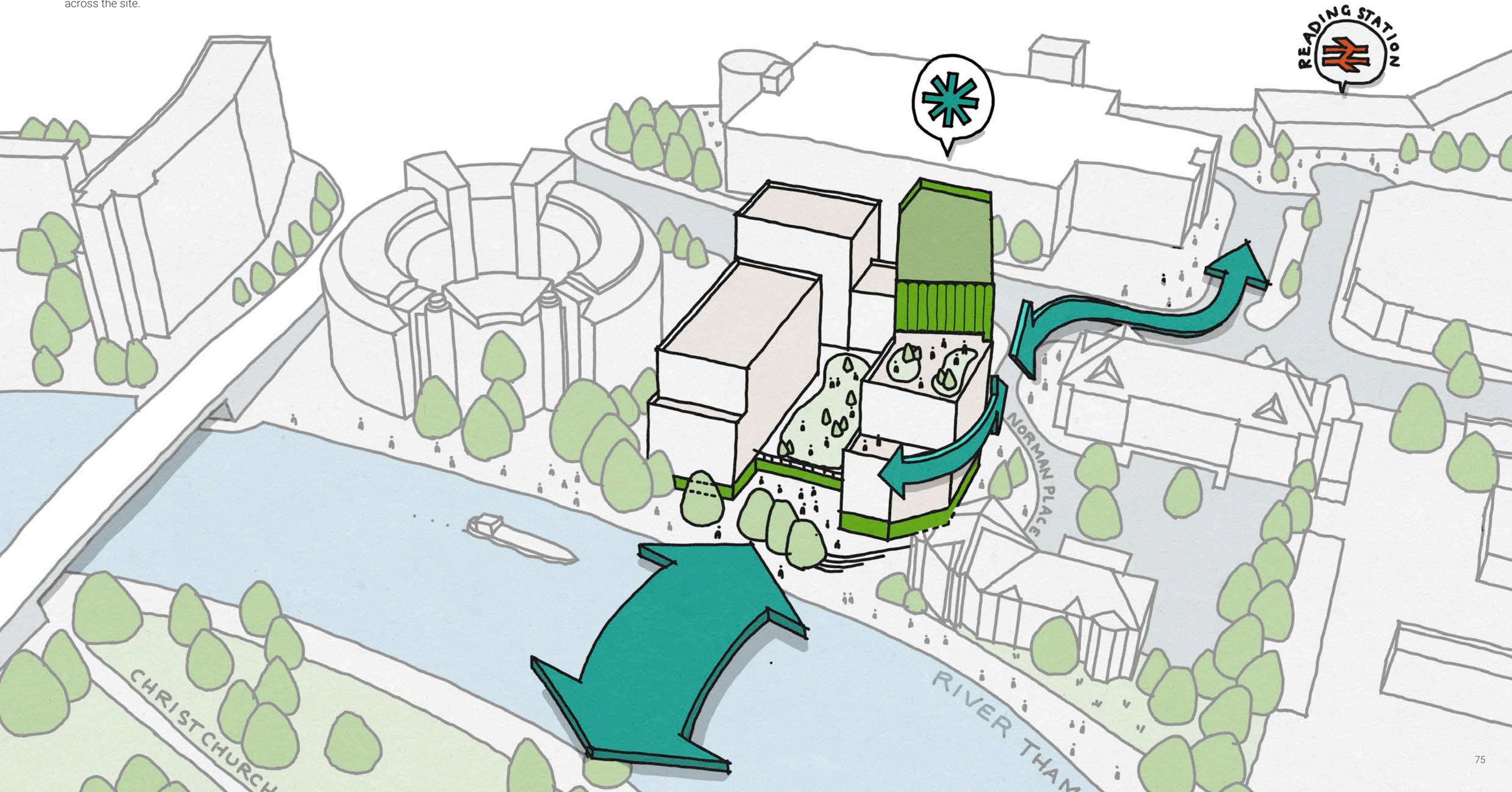


4.10 Appearance and materials

4.11 Concept

The proposal has been developed to reflect the character of the area as well as the sites position as a transition between the harder Vastern Road and softer rivers edge.

The materials and details have been developed to extend the landscape of the river and Christchurch Meadows through to Vastern Road, emphasising the route between the Centre of Reading and the River. The taller green building on the corner of Vastern Road and Norman Place acts as a marker for the wider area and the green base, new landscape and public realm work together to extend the riverine landscape across the site.



4.12.7 River influence

The river influence extends through to the material tones and building details. The gentle curve of the river and the ripples formed by the waters movement have been used to influence the curves of the glazing to the commercial spaces at ground floor on the public square, as well as the profile of the cladding panels used on the taller building, where scalloped panels are used to represent these curves, adding interest a richness to the facade.

The material palette also takes inspiration from the river as well as the wider area with tones influenced by the subtle greens and greys of the river, creating a seamless visual connection between the building and its surroundings. This design approach ensures that the building blends organically with the riverside landscape, promoting a sense of tranquillity on the riverside.



4.12.8 Materials

Following careful analysis of the local area, a material palette has been developed that responds to the proposals unique location between the river and the wider town centre area. A palette of grey and white brick references Reading's history in brick making and the use of grey brick throughout the area and green concrete provides a contrast in texture and scale, creating a visual connection between the river and town centre.

The material palette has been chosen using the following principles:

- A palette of materials that reflect the character of the area
- A predominantly brick facade in complimentary tones
- Tactile materials and details at locations with human interaction
- Robust, high quality and hard wearing materials that will stand the test of time



Green concrete



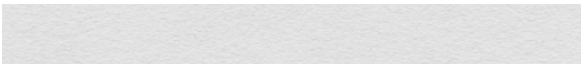
Grey brick



White brick



Dark grey / brown brick



Accent material - Pale concrete



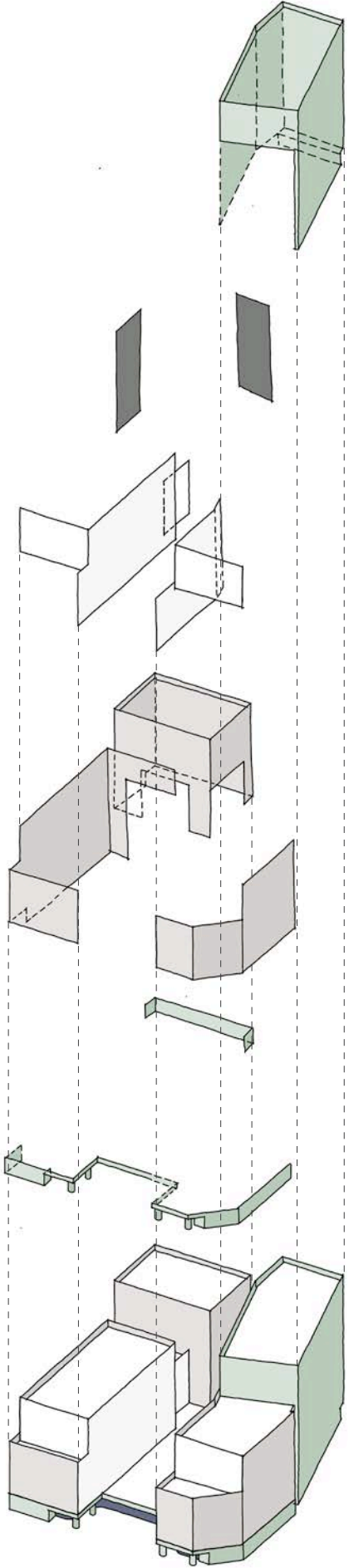
Dark grey metalwork



Aerial visualisation showing the building in context with tones that tie in to the local area



Precedent studies showing examples of green profiled concrete and grey bricks



Green concrete panels

Fluted green concrete panels clad building B1, creating a point of difference and visible marker at the corner of Norman Place and Vastern Road

Dark grey / brown brick

Dark grey / brown brick lines the public faces of the lower link buildings, creating a recessive element that provides a break between buildings

White brick

White brick is used on the courtyard faces of buildings A1 and B2, providing a lighter tone to the residents gardens

Grey brick

Grey brick is used to clad the outer facades of buildings A1, A3 and B2. Still light in tone this brick references the traditional Reading grey found throughout the area.

Green concrete

Green concrete lines the plinth, creating a visual link between the Riverside and Vastern Road.

Viewed together the materials form a cohesive palette with differences in detail scale and texture creating the appearance of a cluster of buildings

4.13 Architectural language

The architectural language has been developed and refined throughout the design process, resulting in a cohesive yet distinct family of buildings. This language employs a consistent set of architectural details and principles, applied across three different styles to create a cohesive collection of buildings.

The following design principles are consistently applied across all buildings to ensure a harmonious architectural expression:

- **Generous Full-Height Windows:** Maximizing natural light and views out, and provide a contemporary appearance to the buildings
- **Horizontal Banding:** Consistent banding to help break up the facade and provide interest and depth
- **Expressed Piers:** To help ground the buildings
- **Consistent Materiality:** Using a carefully selected palette of materials to maintain a cohesive family of buildings



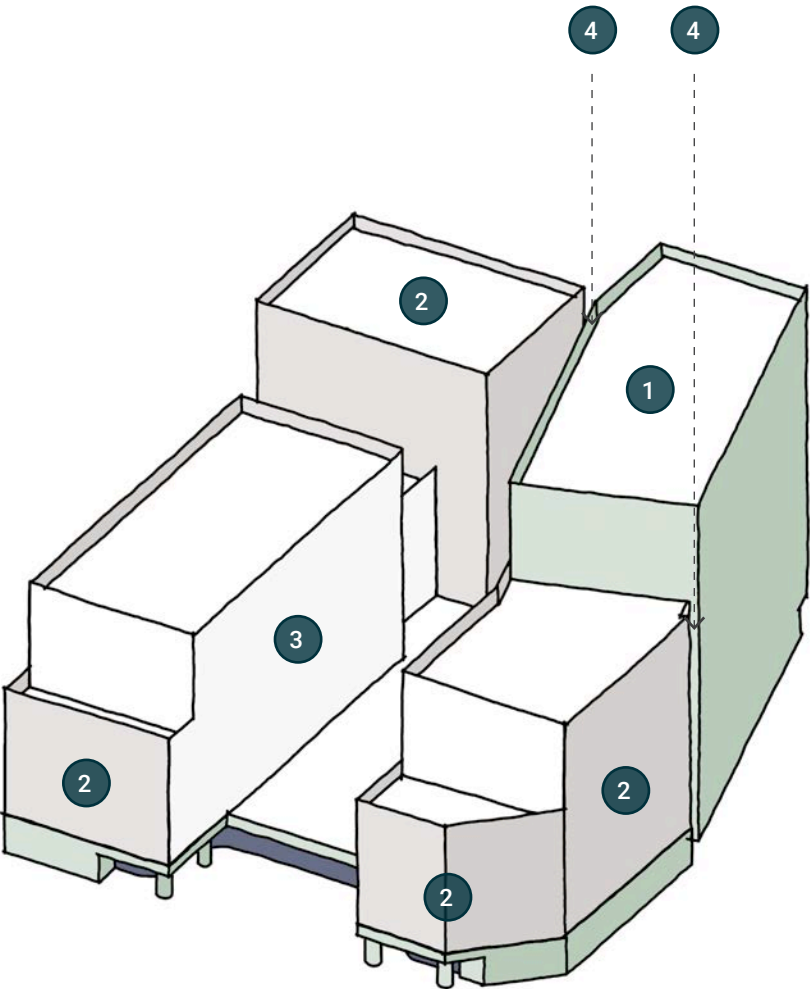
1 Corner building

The corner building features green concrete and fluted panels to make a distinctive and visually striking marker at the corner of Vastern Road and Norman Place, signalling the route to the river.



2 Edge buildings

Edge buildings are clad in Grey brick and offer a complimentary but varied architectural language. White brick details and a delicate stone band bring a lightness to the elevations giving the facades definition and variety.



3 Courtyard façades

The courtyard facing elevations offer a striped back architectural language of simple punched openings. White brick brings a lightness and simplicity to these facades, helping to provide a feeling of calm within the courtyard.



4 Link buildings

The darker recessive link buildings are lower in height and designed to create distinct breaks between the buildings.

Key axo diagram of proposed architectural languages

4.13.1 Corner building

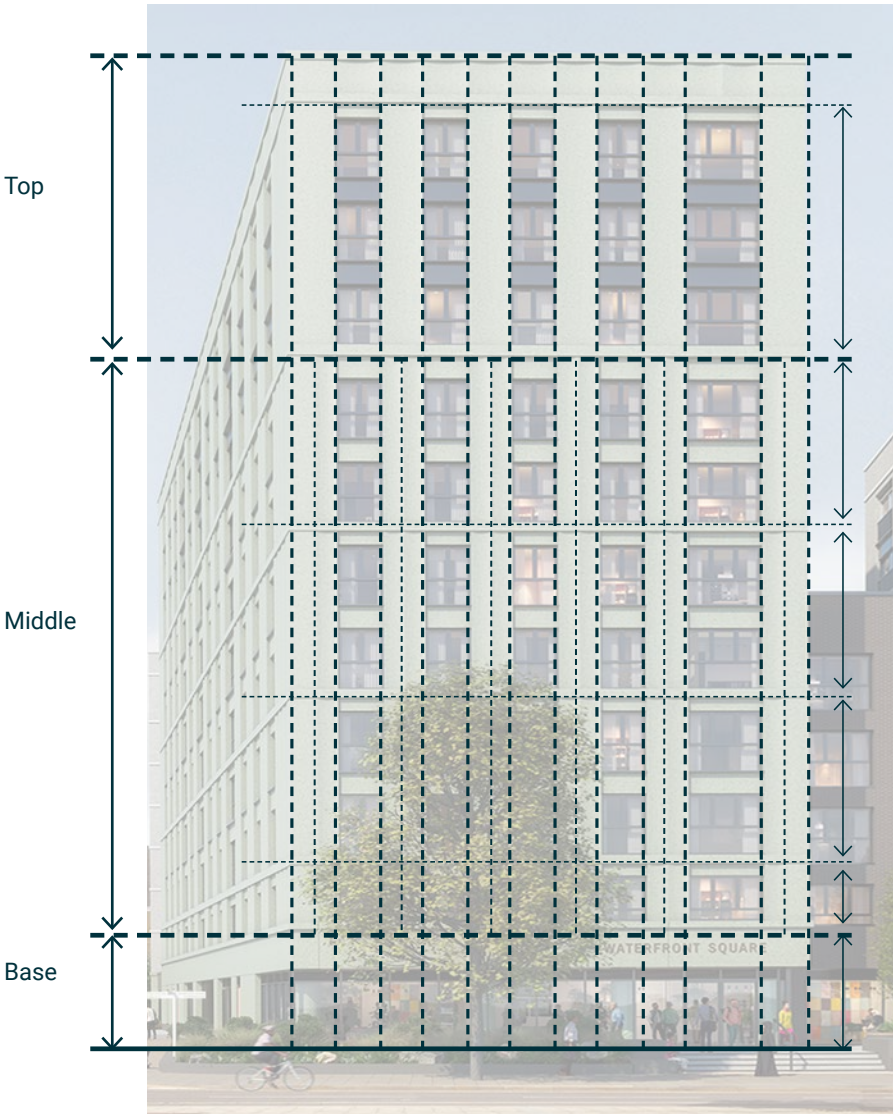
The articulation of the corner building has been carefully considered with grouped windows and banding across every second floor in order to help define the scale and proportion of the building.

Fluted concrete panels are used at two different scales, referencing the gentle ripples of the river and creating a richness, and depth to the façades.

The building has a clear hierarchy, with a clear base, middle and top. The base is defined through large glazed openings, and a flat concrete band that is in contrast to the fluted panels above.

The middle of the building is defined with double fluted panels, with a slender band defining every second floor.

The top three floors of the building show a change in scale of the fluted panels. The larger fluting reflects a lightness and change in fluidity that can also be said to reflect the changing nature of the river. The crown is further defined by the linking of the windows.



South elevation showing building order

Top floors grouped to crown the building

Metal spandrel panel

Single scalloped panels to the top three floors



Double scalloped panels to the mid section

Mid section groups floors in two

Slender horizontal bands

Strong green concrete base

Full height glazing



Corner building bay study



View north along Vastern Road

4.13.3 Edge buildings

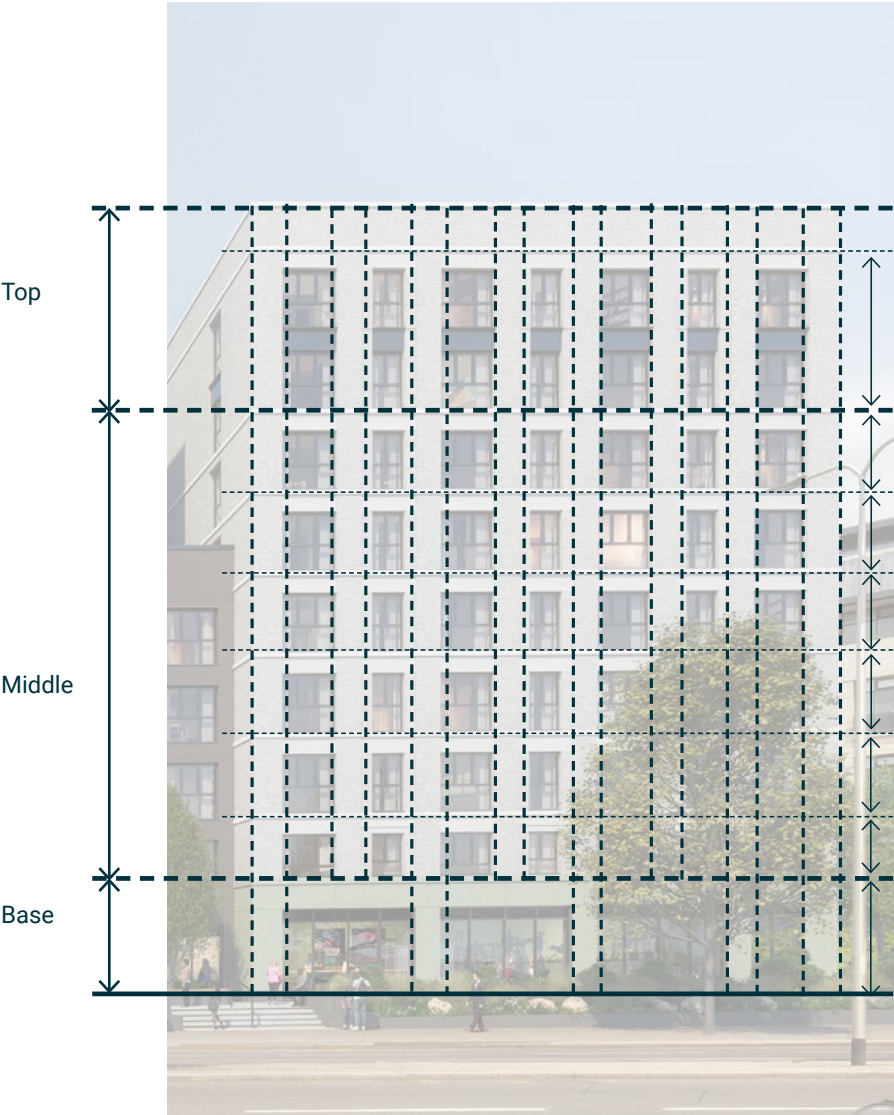
The edge buildings are clad in grey brick as a reference to one of the predominant materials in Reading and to help them sit harmoniously with the neighbouring buildings, which are also in lighter tones.

The buildings have a clear hierarchy with a defined top, middle and base with a calm and ordered rhythm of piers, bands and openings.

At the base, green concrete creates a visually distinctive grounding with a tactile finish.

The body of the buildings are clad in grey brick with white brick details at the head of the windows and light concrete bands at each floor, reflecting the scale of the buildings. A regular rhythm of expressed piers gives order to the facades.

The crown is defined by a double height expression with linked windows with a clearly defined parapet above.



South elevation showing building order

Top floors grouped to crown the building

Metal spandrel panel

Punched openings

White brick lintel detail (soldier course with stretcher bond above)

Slender horizontal bands

Strong green concrete base

Full height glazing



South facade bay study



View south across River Thames



Aerial view towards the site



View into the Waterfront Square

4.14 Townscape and visual impact

The following viewpoints have been put forward by Lichfields and Reading Borough Council to test the building form and massing from long and short range views. The number of views has been refined through discussions with Reading Borough Council and forms the basis for the Townscape Visual Impact and Heritage assessments, please refer to these reports for further details.

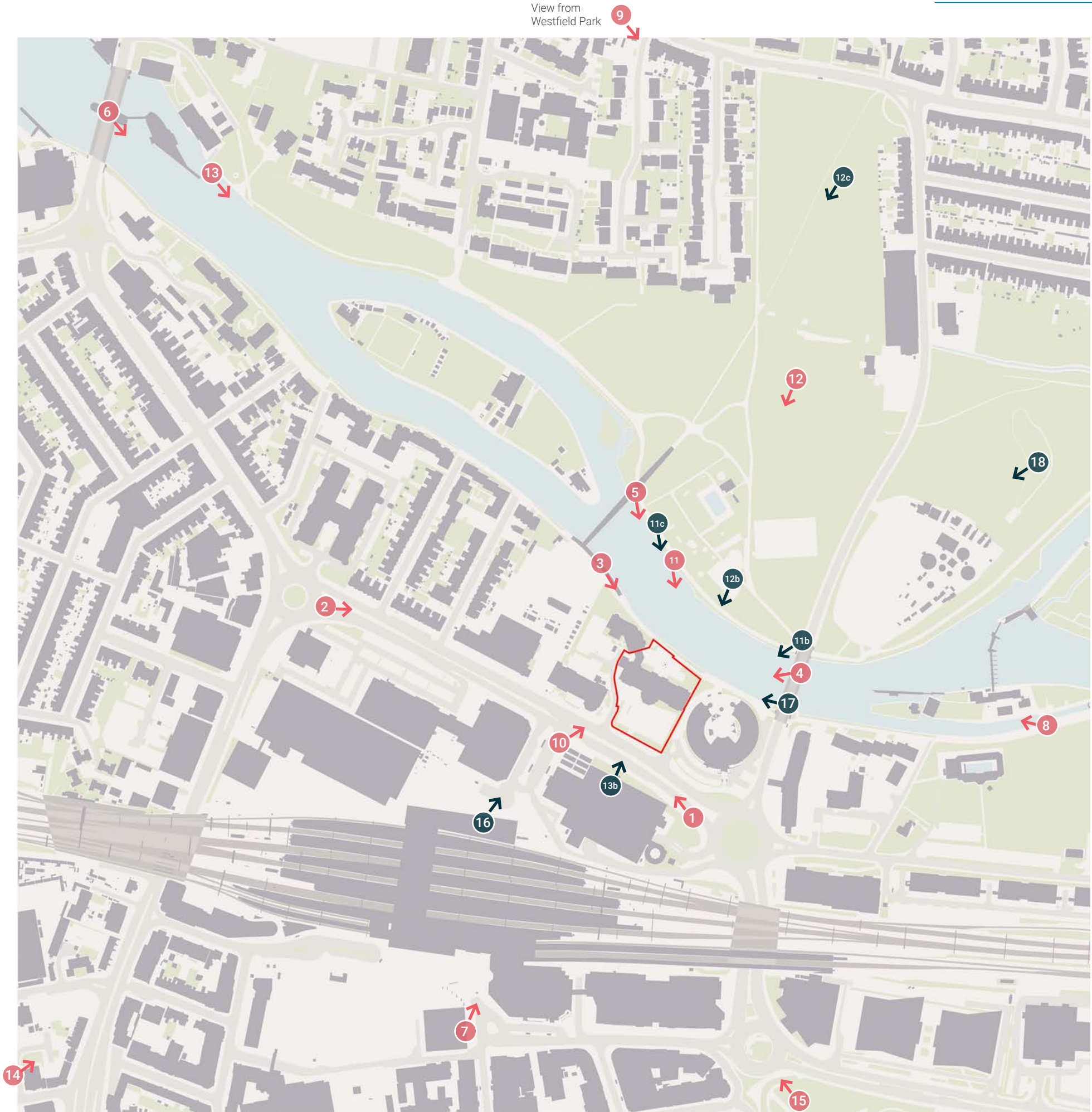
Key

The site

Views proposed to be included within visual assessment

Illustrative material provided

View from
McIlroy Park



4.15 Townscape and visual impact views

View 1 - From Vastern Road, looking north west



Existing view



Proposed view

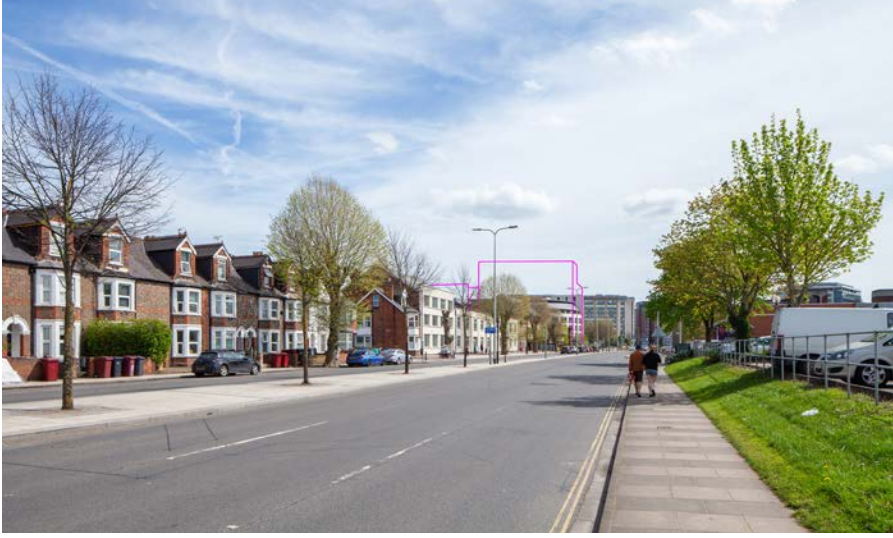


Proposed cumulative view

View 2 - From Vastern Road, looking north west



Existing view



Proposed view



Proposed cumulative view

View 3 - From Thames Path looking south east



Existing view



Proposed view

View 4 - From Reading bridge



Existing view



Proposed view



Proposed cumulative view

View 5 - From Christchurch bridge



Existing view



Proposed view



Proposed cumulative view

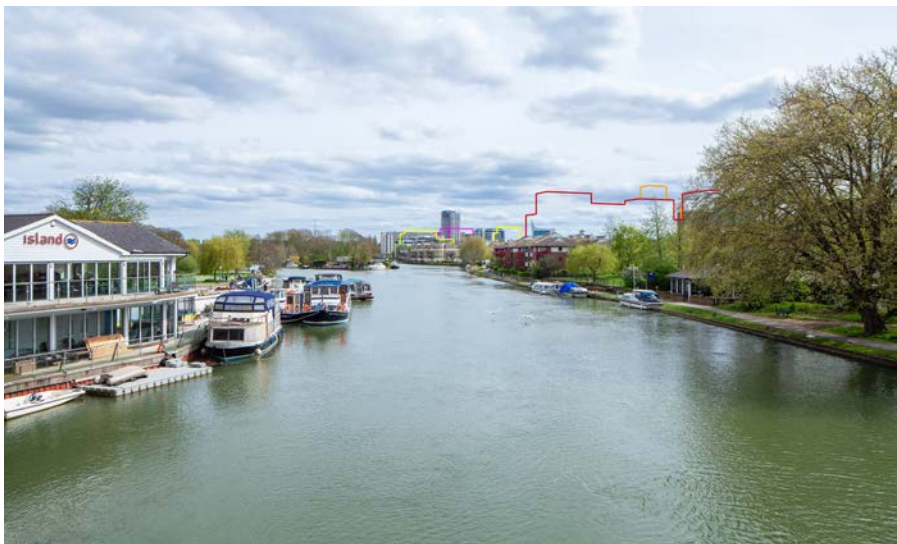
View 6 - From Caversham bridge



Existing view



Proposed view



Proposed cumulative view

View 7 - View from Station Road



Existing view



Proposed view



Proposed cumulative view

View 8 - View from Thames Path



Existing view



Proposed view



Proposed cumulative view

View 9 - View from Balmore Walk



Existing view



Proposed view



Proposed cumulative view

View 10 - View from Vastern Road / Trooper Potts Way



Existing view



Proposed view

View 11 - View from Christchurch meadows footpath



Existing view



Proposed view



Proposed cumulative view

View 11b - View from Christchurch meadows footpath



Existing view



Proposed view (ILLUSTRATIVE ONLY)



Proposed cumulative view (ILLUSTRATIVE ONLY)

View 11c - View from Christchurch meadows footpath



Existing view



Proposed view



Proposed cumulative view

View 12 - View from Christchurch meadows



Existing view



Proposed view



Proposed cumulative view

View 12b - View from Christchurch meadow



Existing view



Proposed view (ILLUSTRATIVE ONLY)



Proposed cumulative view (ILLUSTRATIVE ONLY)

View 12c - View from Christchurch meadow



Existing view



Proposed view (ILLUSTRATIVE ONLY)



Proposed cumulative view (ILLUSTRATIVE ONLY)

View 13 - View from Caversham war memorial



Existing view



Proposed view



Proposed cumulative view

View 14 - View from Mcllroy Park



Existing view



Proposed view



Proposed cumulative view

View 15 - View from Forbury Gardens Park



Existing view



Proposed view

View 16 - View from Reading Station



Existing view



Proposed view (ILLUSTRATIVE ONLY)



Proposed cumulative view (ILLUSTRATIVE ONLY)

View 17- View from Thames Path



Existing view



Proposed view (ILLUSTRATIVE ONLY)



Proposed cumulative view (ILLUSTRATIVE ONLY)

View 18 - View from Hills Meadow



Existing view



Proposed view (ILLUSTRATIVE ONLY)



Introduction

Context

Design process

Design response

5.0 Landscape proposals

Access

Appendices

5.1 Site analysis

5.1.1 Landscape designations

The adjacent diagram illustrates the key landscape designations and policy areas that surround the development site. These include:

- The River Thames which forms part of a Major Landscape Feature and Area of Identified Biodiversity Interest
- A generous amount of local green space and public open spaces surround the site, these are mainly located along the northern edge of the River Thames
- There is a good cycle network around Reading with an existing route along the western boundary of the development site
- National cycle route 05 also runs along the Thames, running west and east to the north of the site

Key:

Development Site

Historic parks or garden (Policy EN1)

Major landscape features (Policy EN13)

Area of identified biodiversity interest (Policy EN12)

Local green space and public open space (Policy EN7)

Existing or proposed green links (Policy EN12)

Cycle routes (Policy TR4)

National cycle route 5 - Thames Valley & Shakespear Cycleway



Map identifying landscape designations surrounding the site

5.2 Site analysis

5.2.1 Access to local open space

The site is within walking distance to a diverse range of high-quality open spaces and natural landscapes ranging from the Thames River corridor, the popular Christchurch Meadow with its playgrounds and playing fields, the historic Forbury Gardens, and wooded nature havens such View Island.

These open spaces are tranquil in character, particularly those that run alongside the Thames. They provide a sanctuary from the busy urban life of the town centre, and provide spaces for relaxation, recreation and connection with nature.

The adjacent diagram illustrates walking distances from the site to areas of public open space. Some key points to note include:

- The site has direct access to the River Thames within 100m
- By foot and bicycle, the site is accessible to a number of significant areas of local open space, such as Christchurch meadow, King's Meadow and Hill's Meadow
- Readings National Rail and the Elizabeth Line stations are located approximately 2 minutes walk
- Along the southern edge of the Thames and immediately surrounding the site there is a notable lack of quality public open space. This also applies to the core of the Centre



Diagram illustrating the location of public open space

Key:

- Site
- Train station
- Allotments
- Public open space



Christchurch Meadow Park



King's Meadow



Forbury Gardens



View Island