

Assael

D&AS

Waterfront Square / Reading
Design & Access Statement Addendum

1.0 **Introduction**

- 1.1 The purpose of this document
- 1.2 Proposed amendments
- 1.3 Description of development
- 1.4 The professional team

2.0 **Design process**

- 2.1 Post submission consultation process
- 2.2 Post feedback design studies

3.0 **Design response**

- 3.1 Summary of key changes
- 3.2 Summary of proposals
- 3.3 Layout
- 3.4 Elevation changes
- 3.5 Materials
- 3.6 Appearance
- 3.7 The corner building
- 3.8 The Edge buildings
- 3.9 Norman Place elevation
- 3.10 Visualisations

4.0 **Landscape**

- 4.1 Existing trees - Survey summary
- 4.2 Tree removal, retention & proposed tree planting
- 4.3 Proposed tree strategy
- 4.4 Connected tree pits
- 4.5 Proposed trees and pumping appliance access
- 4.6 Proposed trees (River edge) - Successional strategy
- 4.7 Proposed trees (River edge) - Successional strategy
- 4.8 Proposed trees (Vastern Road)
- 4.9 Proposed trees (Vastern Road) - Tree pit and utility coordination
- 4.10 Proposed trees (Vastern Road) - Footpath and clearance zones
- 4.11 Softscape strategy
- 4.12 Green and brown roof strategy

5.0 **Conclusion**

- 5.1 Conclusion

1.0 Introduction

Design process

Design response

Landscape

Conclusion

1.1 The purpose of this document

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Assael Architecture for Packaged Living and Bridges Fund Management. The purpose of this document is to set out the proposed amendments to the proposals for the demolition of existing office and substation buildings and development of a residential-led mixed use scheme (hereafter ‘the site’).

A planning application for the development of the site was submitted to Reading Borough Council (RBC) in July 2024 (PL/24/0958), from here on referred to as the ‘Original Proposed Development’. Further amendments to the design have been requested by the local planning authority and the Design South East (D:SE) review panel.

1.2 Proposed amendments

Following discussions with RBC and feedback from the D:SE panel, the Applicant has sought to review the scheme and as a result the following amendments have been made:

- Reduction in units from 254 dwellings (15 x studios, 105 x 1 bed, 116 x 2 bed, 15 x 3 bed) and 268 sqm commercial floorspace to 236 dwellings (22 x studios, 92 x 1 bed, 110 x 2 bed, 12 x 3 bed) and 246 sqm (GEA) commercial floorspace
- Ground floor - Norman Place increased by 1m in width. Access to car park improved, public square increased in size
- Second to Seventh Floor - Block A1 reduced by 1m width with consequent increase to podium area. Core layouts updated to reflect changes to massing.
- Fifth to Seventh Floor - Chamfer introduced to Block A1. Core layouts updated to reflect changes to massing.
- Seventh floor - Block A1 reduced by 1 storey.
- Eighth Floor - Block B2 reduced in length with consequent increase in accessible roof terrace (50% larger)
- Brick parapets replaced with railings
- Block B1 amended through an increase in the variety of materials and tones to break up the Norman Place elevation
- Block B1 - increased fluting detail provided to top floors of main block and metal detail added to window heads to visually enhance the crown of the building
- Throughout - additional checkerboard detail added to window heads
- Blocks A1 and A2 - greater detail provided to lower edge buildings on the river frontage to provide greater contrast with floors above.

1.3 Description of development

Demolition of existing office and substation buildings and residential-led site redevelopment within 1-11 storey buildings comprising residential (Class C3) and ground floor commercial uses (Class E), together with various associated works including replacement pedestrian and vehicle access routes, car/cycle parking, hard and soft landscaping and a public open space adjacent to the river.

1.4 The professional team

Client
Packaged Living

Funder
Bridges

Architect
Assael Architecture

Planning consultant
Opus Works

Heritage & townscape consultant
Lichfields

Transport consultant & flood risk assessment
Stantec

Cost consultant
Arcadis

MEP, M&E VT, and accoustic consultant
Hoare Lea

Daylight consultant
GIA

Landscape architect
Assael Exteriors

Civil and structure consultant
Hexa Consulting

Sustainability consultant
Element

Ecology consultant
TEP Ecology

Archeology consultant
Oxford Archaeology

Air quality consultant
Hydrock

Building control consultant
Sweco

Fire engineer
Mars Fire Engineering



Introduction

2.0 Design process

Design response

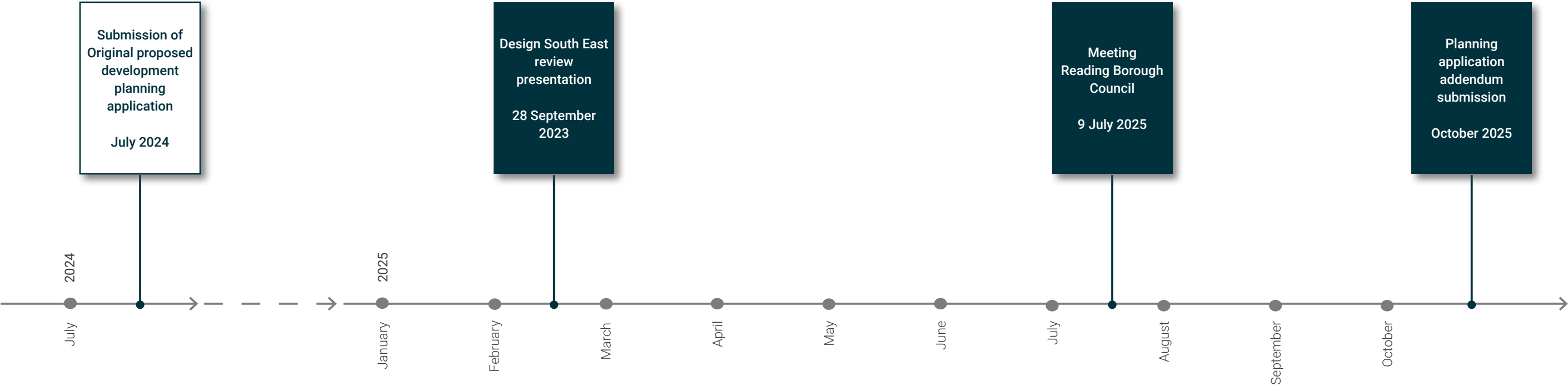
Landscape

Conclusion

2.1 Post submission consultation process

Following submission of the Original Proposed Development in July 2024, the applicant team have continued to engage with officers at RBC and the Design South East review panel. Engagement with local stakeholder groups has also continued, including Reading Civic Society and CADRA.

This design process and response sections identify the key areas in which the consultation process has informed the amendments to the design and demonstrates the key changes that have led to the Amended proposed development.



2.1.1 Design South East review panel (28/02/2025)

A post submission Design South East review panel presentation was held in early 2025. The original proposed development was presented and feedback received.

A summary of the feedback can be found opposite.



Visualisations of the original proposed development

2.1.2 Summary of Design South East feedback

Site layout and footprint.

- The panel previously recommended that the design team look in depth at the context and the pattern of streets from the river to the town. The design team have chosen instead to refine aspects the previous approach, and whilst some of the changes have had a positive impact on the scheme, the more fundamental changes needed to create a more contextually sensitive proposal have not been made. For example, the introduction of other typologies such as townhouses could enrich the scheme by creating a streetscape.
- The widening of Norman Place and the increase in separation from Thames Court was welcomed as it was felt that they enable this route to be more generous and legible and no longer feel like an alleyway. The ground floor units, with street entrances, also help animate this streetscape.
- From the studies presented, the panel felt it that the main courtyard garden will not receive sufficient sunlight. The kitchen garden rooftop space should not be considered as a compensation for this; the courtyard must provide useful amenity

Form, scale and massing

- The panel noted an improvement to scale and massing. The southern elevations to Vastern Road are generally successful and the breaking down of the form into a family of blocks is positive. The three elements work well at the urban scale and in relation to the road
- It was felt that the west facing elevation of the 'green block' is less successful and the lack of a break prevents light from the southwest from entering the courtyard. A break in the form would admit light into the central space and help to break down the scale of this elevation. This would also allow the 'green block' to become a more distinctive landmark
- Further consideration should be given to further the modelling of the form to benefit residents and the quality of the courtyard. For example, the judicious removal of some units and could improve daylighting in the central courtyard
- The footprint depth of the residential blocks, which is currently shown at 17/18 metres, is being driven by the extensive use of double-loaded residential corridors. The design team should explore how a reduction in the depth of some or all of the wings will improve the layouts of the apartments and enable the overall massing to be reduced in bulk. This in turn could make a more generous courtyard space.
- Moving away from corridor-driven layouts to clustered arrangements of flats around lift cores (akin to a Mansion Block) would allow the depth of the blocks to be reduced to 15/16 metres and enable more dual aspect flats
- The panel noted that, if double-loaded corridors are used, a different, narrower apartment typology could be used at the top three or four levels to create a setback around the courtyard elevations. This pulling back would allow more light into the courtyard space

Materials and detailing

- The material colour palette was commended as an effective response to the context. The light-coloured material proposed in the interior of the courtyard was also felt to be an appropriate choice that will help reflect light into this space

- The panel felt that the north facing elevation was not yet successful. Whilst the gable ends appear to be similar in character, their different footprint geometries suggest they should be different. The panel suggested this could be achieved by using a different material or by having the western leg responding to the context of Thames Court and the eastern leg responding to the Thames Water building
- The parapets around the higher level terraces appear heavy and consideration could be given to these being perforated so that the parapets read more as a terminating cornice than a dense band, or reduced in height and a simple, metalwork balustrade used
- The panel noted that the application of fluting to the southern elevation was distinctive but not resolved. They suggested that consideration should be given to reversing the hierarchy of the fluting so that it is wider at the lower level and narrower at the top, to make the block appear less top heavy

Key recommendations

- Adopt a more contextually and environmentally response to massing, evolving a solution that maximises sunlight penetration into the central courtyard space and improves daylight levels in the single-aspect residential units facing it.
- Break the western flank of the building to allow more light into the central courtyard space and improve the elevation.
- Reconfigure the floorplates and vertical circulation to reduce the need for double stacked corridors and to reduce the mass of the blocks.
- Enable the western wing, along the river frontage, to step down to the height of Thames Court.
- Amend the formal delineation of the cycle route to encourage cyclists to use the Norman Place carriageway.
- Refine the northern elevation that faces the Thames to acknowledge the different characters of the eastern and western wings

2.2 Post feedback design studies

Following feedback from the post-submission Design South East (D:SE) panel presentation and feedback from Officers, a series of design studies were carried out, which explored several ways in which the massing and layout could be amended to respond to the feedback.

2.2.1 Officer feedback

The options set out below were presented to RBC Officers at a meeting on 9 July 2025. It was felt that the proposed options did not go far enough to address the feedback and further amendments were requested.

The key points to address were:

- Break down the length of block B1 by reducing the massing at the upper floors
- Reducing the width of blocks A1 and B2 to provide more space along Norman Place and across the residents podium garden

- Refine the footprint of block A1, through use of a chamfered massing to reduce the width of the building further when viewed from the river
- Increase the width of the podium
- Increase the width of the footpath along Norman Place
- Develop and enhance the architectural character

As submitted	Design study 1	Design study 2	Design study 3	Design study 4
254 homes	242 / 236 homes	247 / 241 homes	245 homes	244 homes
	The D:SE panel suggested exploring an option where the standard block arrangement was replaced by a series of connected mansion blocks, each with a small number of homes per floor clustered around the core. This option resulted in thinner blocks, which in turn created a larger podium space; however, the number of cores increased, which complicated the access arrangements and contradicted the principles of a BtR scheme, where residents have access to spaces throughout the building.	The narrower blocks produced by the 'mansion style' option resulted in a wider podium and a modest reduction in the massing, both of which positively contributed to the appearance and quality of the scheme. Design study 2 looked at how these positives could be retained whilst retaining the central corridor access arrangement.	Although the narrower blocks improved the massing, when viewed from the river. The D:SE and Officers both suggested reducing the perceived massing of building A1 from the river and building B1 when viewed from Vastern Road. Study 3 looked to address this feedback by chamfering these blocks to slim down the massing and shorten the length of the elevations. This move also contributed positively to the massing of the building.	The final study combined the chamfered massing with the narrower blocks, resulting in a massing that was both reduced and more broken down.
				
				

Introduction

Design process

3.0 Design response

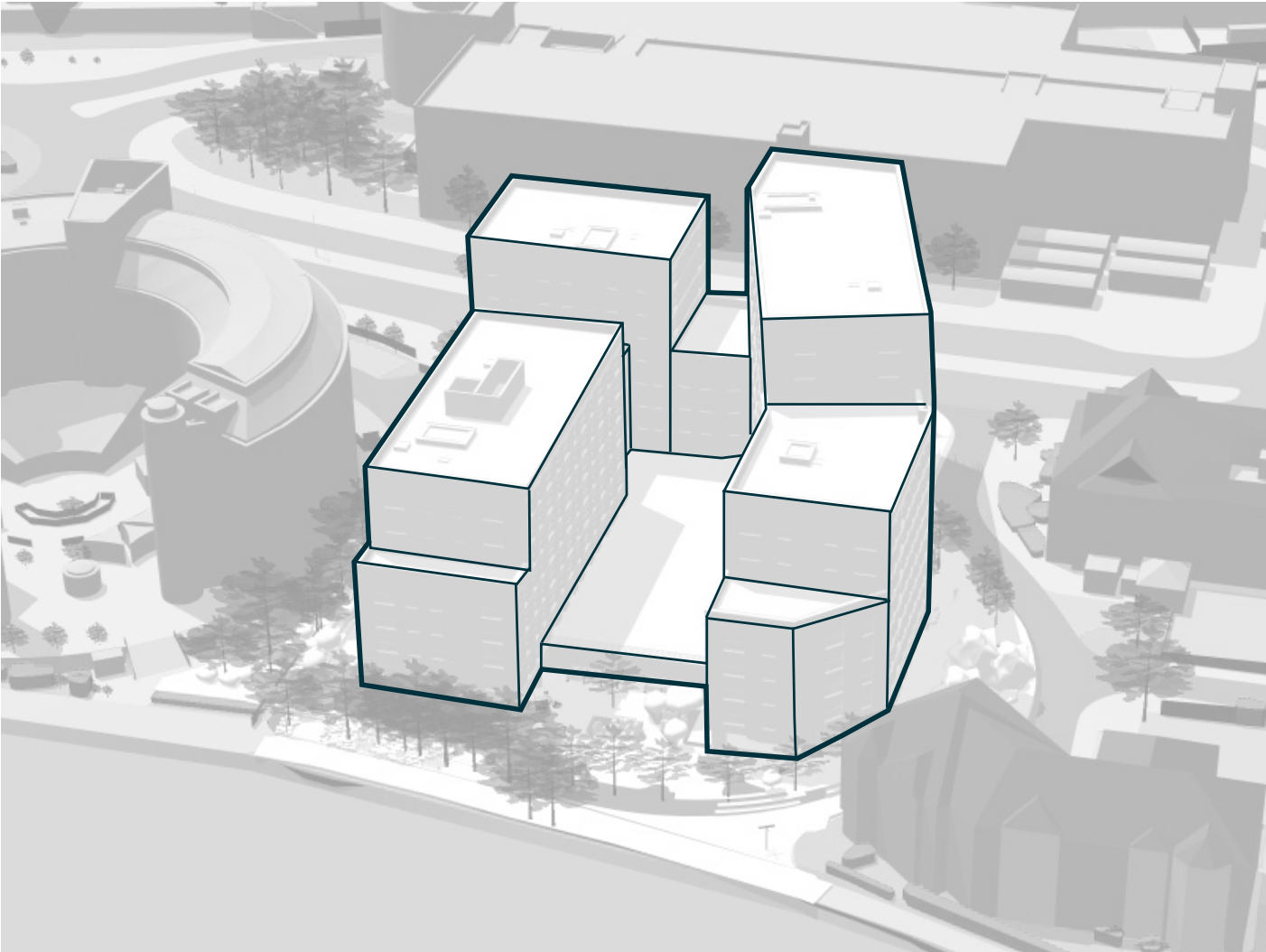
Landscape

Conclusion

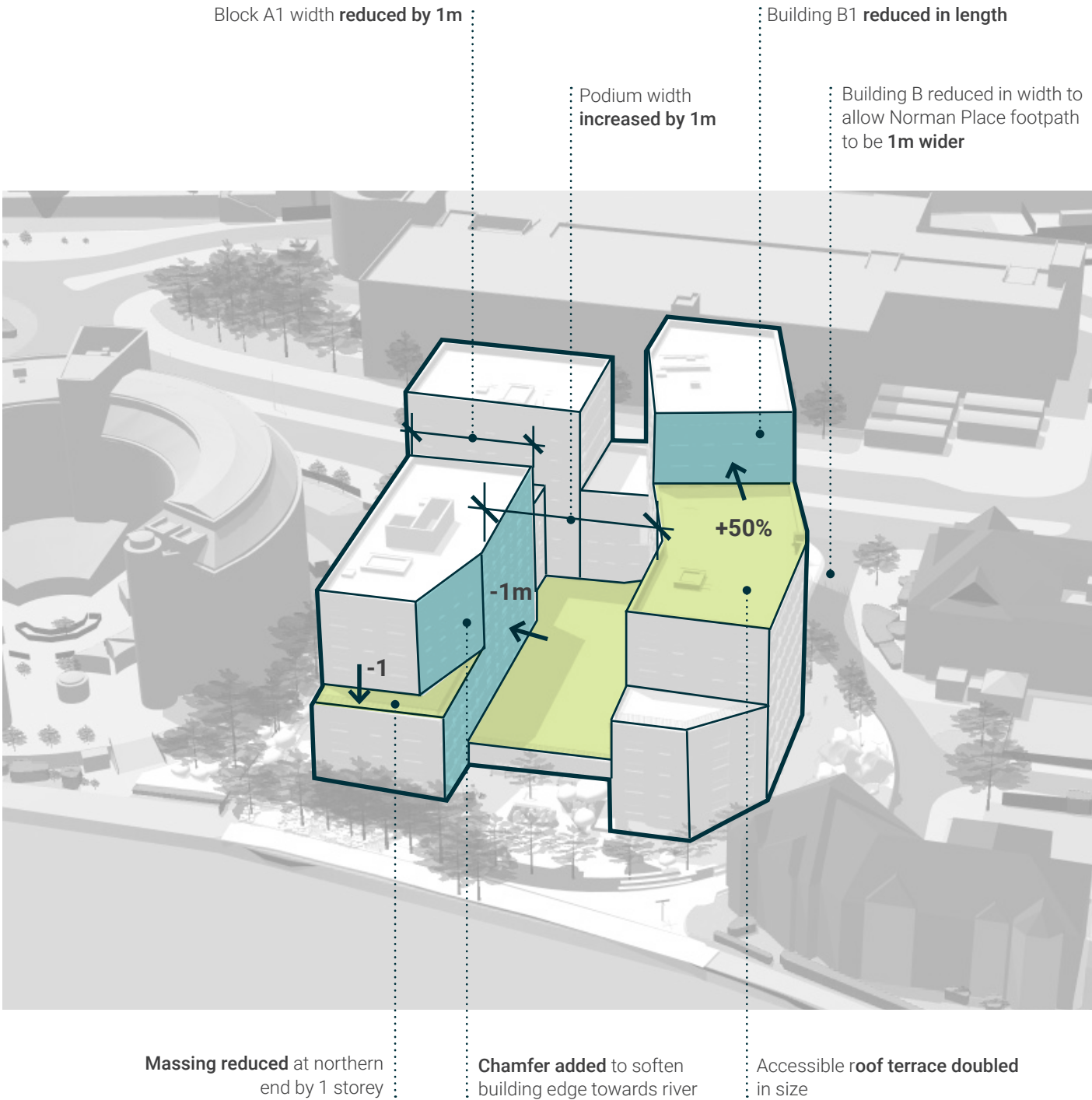
3.1 Summary of key changes

Following RBC Officers feedback, further refinements have been made to the massing and layout of the scheme, all of which positively contribute to the layout massing and appearance of the scheme.

Original proposed development



Amended proposed development



3.2 Summary of proposals

A summary of key figures and how they have changed are as follows:

Original proposed development

254 homes

15	Studios	(7 %)
105	1 beds	(41 %)
116	2 beds	(46 %)
15	3 beds	(6 %)

14,539 sq m	156,502 sq ft	Net Internal Area
21,549 sq m	231,955 sq ft	Gross Internal Area
23,349 sq m	251,331 sq ft	Gross External Area
(Including 508 sqm GIA residents internal amenity space)		

Accessibility

5%	Part M4(3) homes
95%	Part M4(2) homes
5%	Accessible cycle spaces

Commercial

268 sq m	2,885 sq ft	Gross Internal Area
277 sq m	2,990 sq ft	Gross External Area

Car parking provision

18	Spaces within podium (of which 8 are accessible bays)
----	---

Cycle parking

136	Long stay residential spaces
14	Visitor spaces

Amended proposed development

236 homes

21	Studios	(9 %)
93	1 beds	(39 %)
110	2 beds	(47 %)
12	3 beds	(5 %)

13,298 sq m	143,149 sq ft	Net Internal Area
18,776 sq m	202,113 sq ft	Gross Internal Area
20,390 sq m	218,063 sq ft	Gross External Area

Residents shared amenity

459 sq m	4,941 sq ft	Gross Internal Area
----------	-------------	---------------------

Accessibility

5%	Part M4(3) homes
95%	Part M4(2) homes
5%	Accessible cycle spaces

Commercial

236.1 sq m	2,542 sq ft	Gross Internal Area
246 sq m	2,648 sq ft	Gross External Area

Car parking provision

18	Spaces within podium (of which 8 are accessible bays)
----	---

Cycle parking

124	Long stay residential spaces
14	Visitor spaces

3.3 Layout

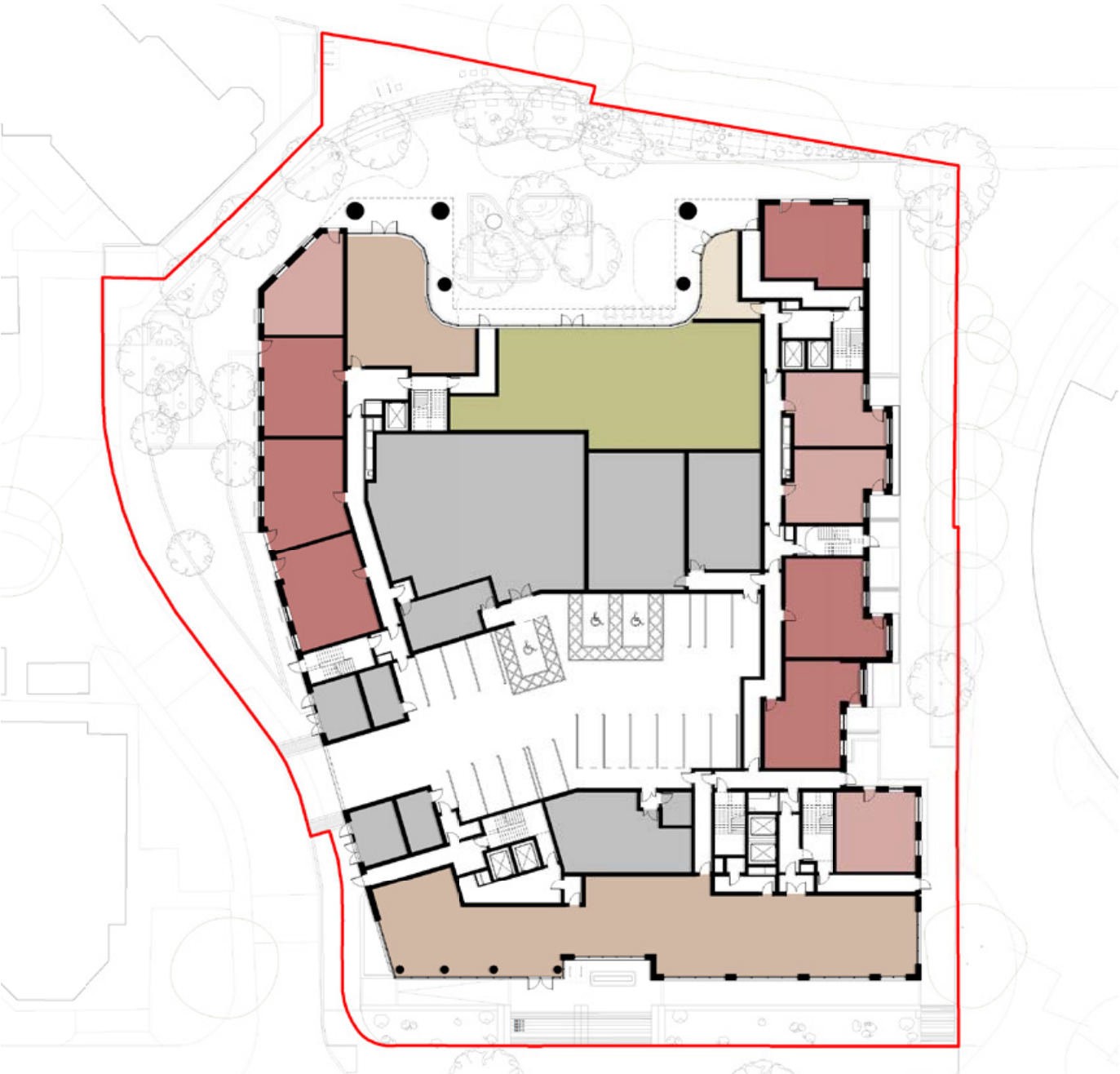
In response to the feedback received at the D:SE review meeting and from Officers at RBC, the following amendments have been made to the layouts:

3.3.1 Ground floor

- 1. Building B1 set back at ground by 1m along Norman Place
- 2. Car park access improved
- 3. Cores redesigned to reflect latest fire regulations
- 4. Mix of homes amended to reflect changes to building cores and new building line

Key			
	Commercial Space		Amenity Space
	Entrance Lobby		Plant/ancillary
	Studio apartment		1 Bed apartment
	2 Bed apartment		3 Bed apartment

Original proposed development



Amended proposed development



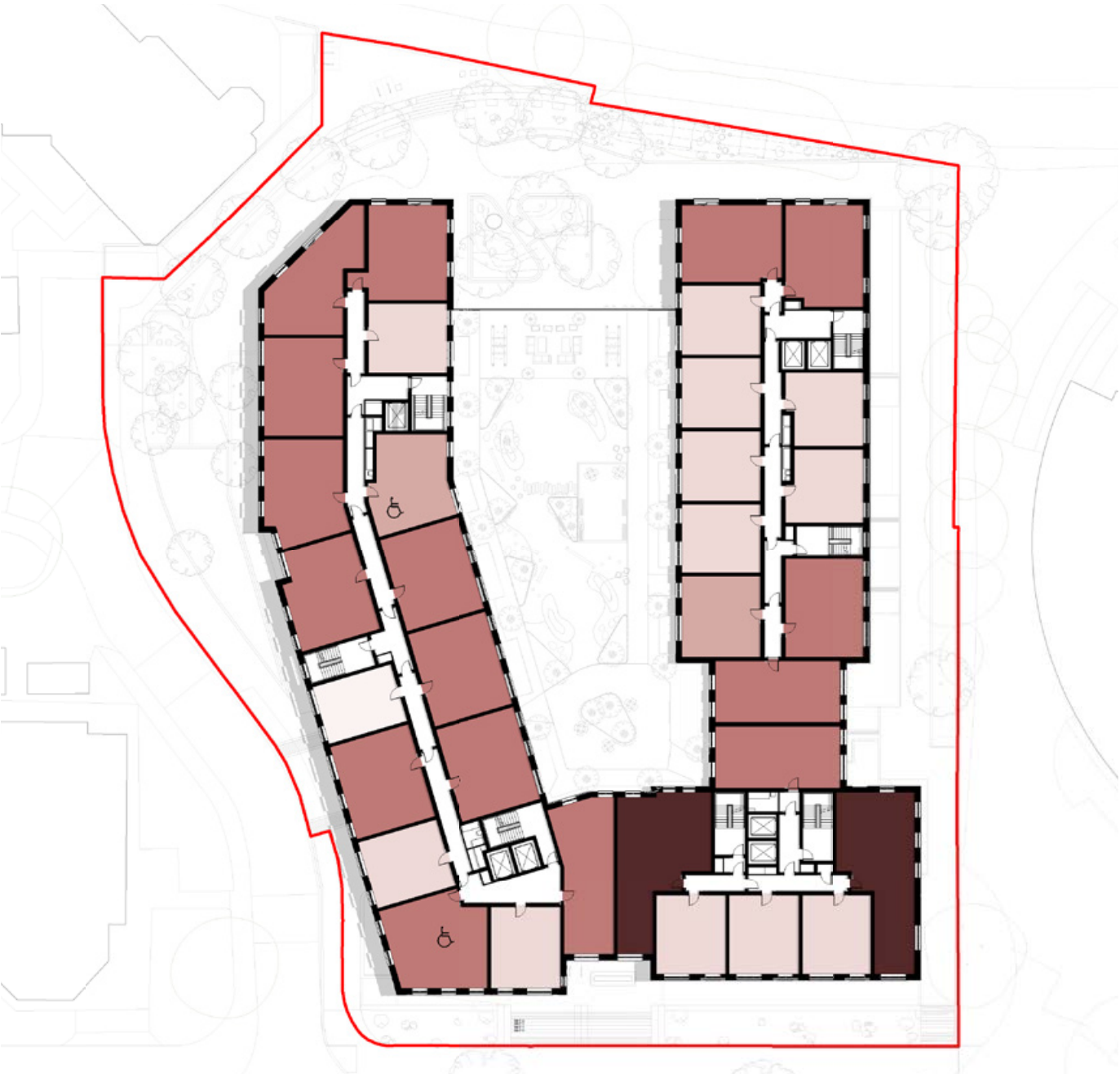
3.3.2 Second to fourth floor

- 1. Building A1 reduced in width by 1m
- 2. Podium increased in width by 1m
- 3. Mix of homes updated
- 4. Cores redesigned to reflect latest fire regulations

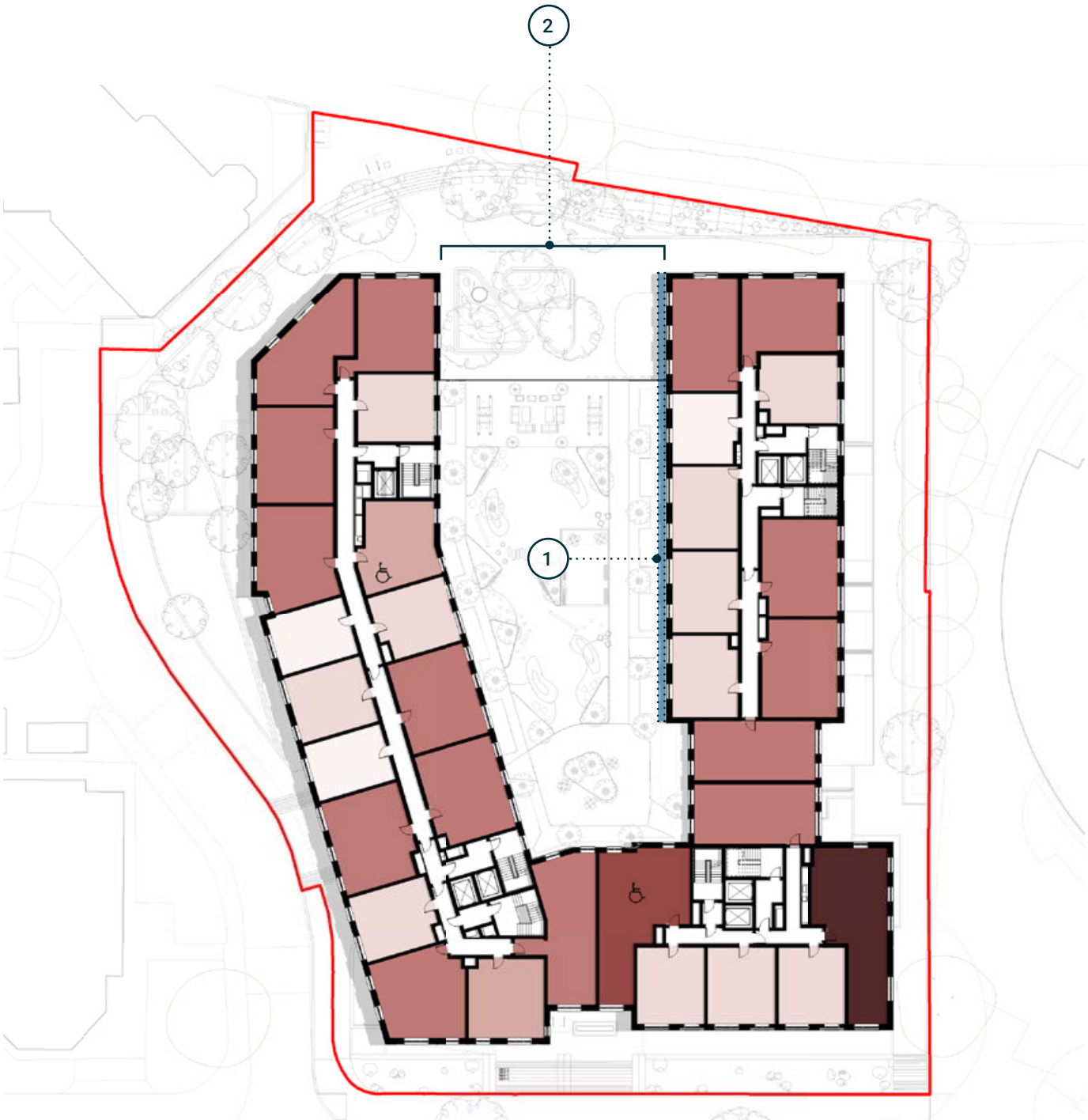
Key

Commercial Space	Amenity Space	Entrance Lobby	Plant/ancillary
Studio apartment	1 Bed apartment	2 Bed apartment	3 Bed apartment

Original proposed development



Amended proposed development



3.3.3 Fifth to seventh floor

- 1. Building A1 chamfered at upper floors
- 2. Mix of homes updated
- 3. Cores redesigned to reflect latest fire regulations

Key

Commercial Space	Amenity Space	Entrance Lobby	Plant/ancillary
Studio apartment	1 Bed apartment	2 Bed apartment	3 Bed apartment

Original proposed development



Amended proposed development

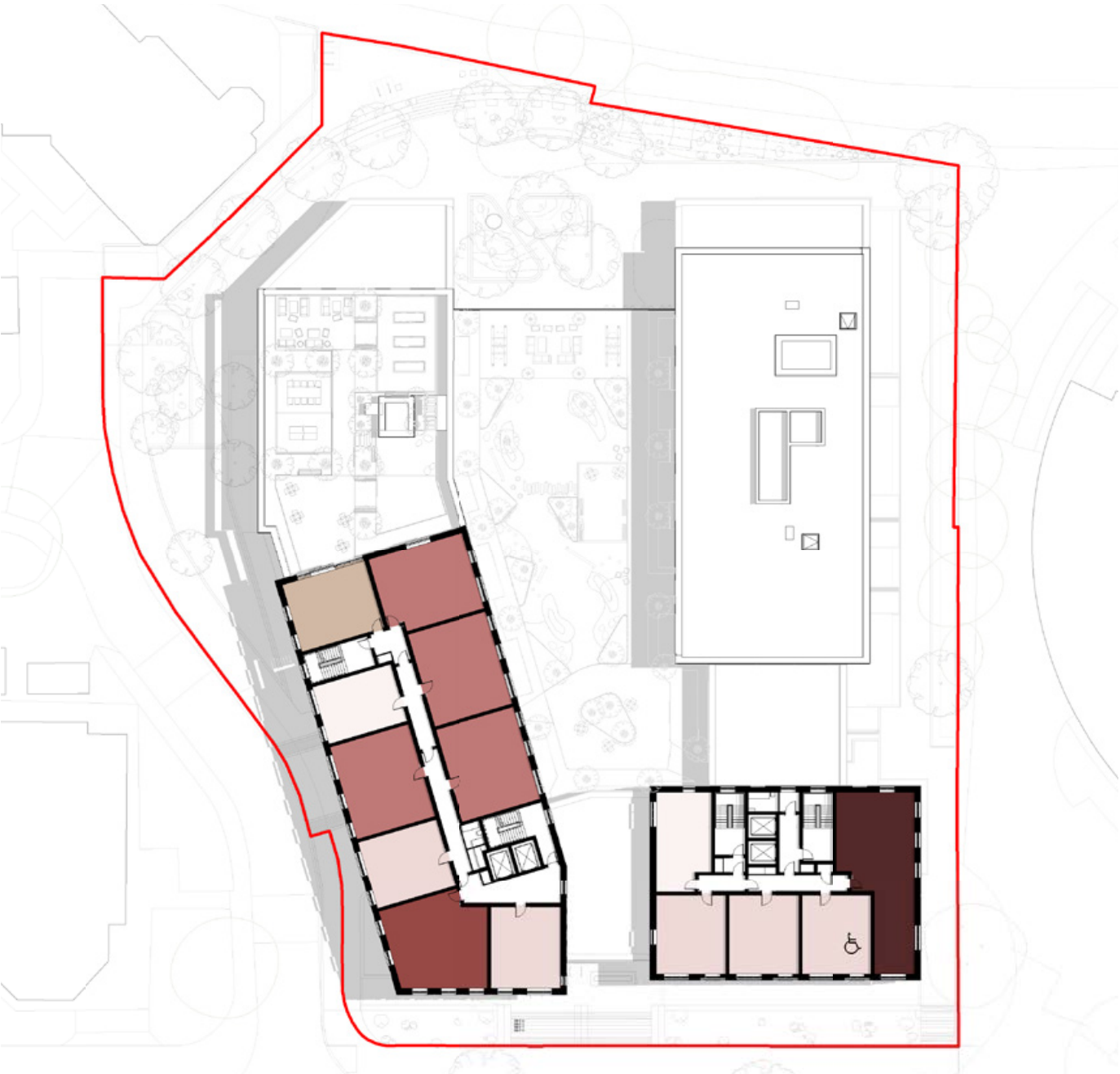


3.3.4 Eighth floor

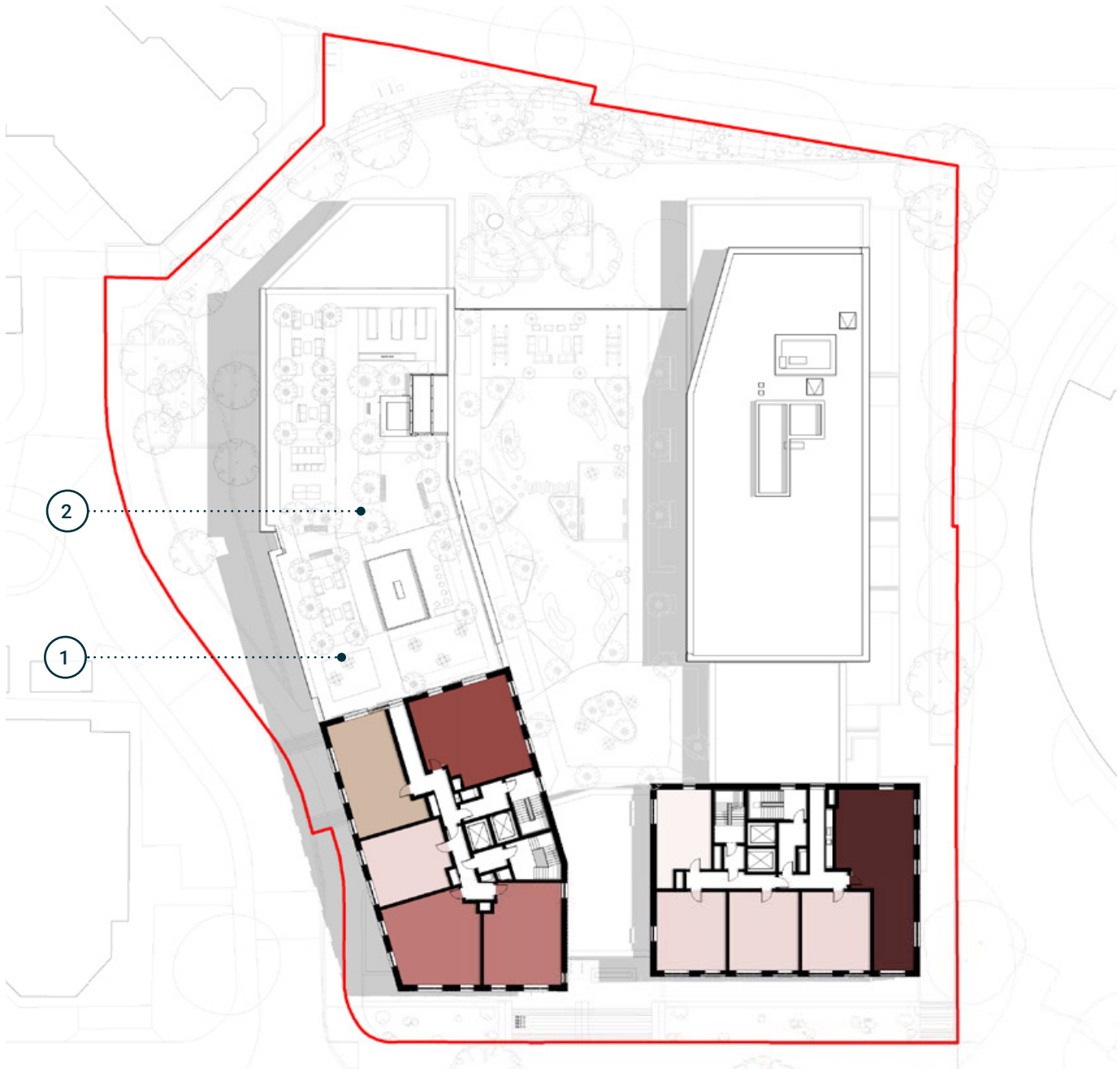
- 1. Building B1 floorplate reduced in length at upper floors
- 2. Area of accessible roof terrace increased
- 3. Mix of homes updated
- 4. Cores redesigned to reflect latest fire regulations

Key			
	Commercial Space		Amenity Space
	Entrance Lobby		Plant/ancillary
	Studio apartment		1 Bed apartment
	2 Bed apartment		3 Bed apartment

Original proposed development



Amended proposed development



3.4 Elevation changes

The changes to the layout and massing have resulted in changes to the appearance of the buildings, including:

- 1. Amendments to the brick colours where the design has changed
- 2. The introduction of brick pattern details between the windows
- 3. Changes to the scale of the fluting to the green concrete panels on building B1

These changes are set out over the following pages.

Original proposed development



3.4.1 Norman Place (West elevation)

- 1. Area of dark grey brick increased
- 2. Patterned brick detailing between windows
- 3. Size of fluting pattern in concrete panels amended to have larger scale at lower levels, smaller scale at upper floors
- 4. Brick parapets replaced with railing
- 5. Cantilever introduced to increase width of Norman Place
- 6. Window pattern updated to reflect changes to layout

Amended proposed development



3.4.2 Vastern Road (South elevation)

- 1. Size of fluting pattern in concrete panels amended to have larger scale at lower levels, smaller scale at upper floors
- 2. Cantilever introduced to increase width of Norman Place
- 3. Window pattern updated to reflect changes to layout

Original proposed development



Amended proposed development



3.4.3 Vastern Road (South elevation)

- 1. Size of fluting pattern in concrete panels amended to have larger scale at lower levels, smaller scale at upper floors
- 2. Chamfer added to building A1 to reduce width of building
- 3. Patterned brick detailing between windows
- 4. Brick parapets replaced with railing
- 5. Northern part of block A1 reduced in height by 1 storey
- 6. Window pattern updated to reflect changes to layout

Original proposed development



Amended proposed development



3.4.4 Courtyard Elevation (A1 West elevation)

- 1. Northern part of block A1 reduced in height by 1 storey
- 2. Chamfer added to building A1 to reduce width of building
- 3. Patterned brick detailing between windows
- 4. Brick parapets replaced with railing
- 5. Window pattern updated to reflect changes to layout

Original proposed development



Amended proposed development



3.5 Materials

The material palette remains the same as the original proposed development
Materials have been chosen using the following principles:

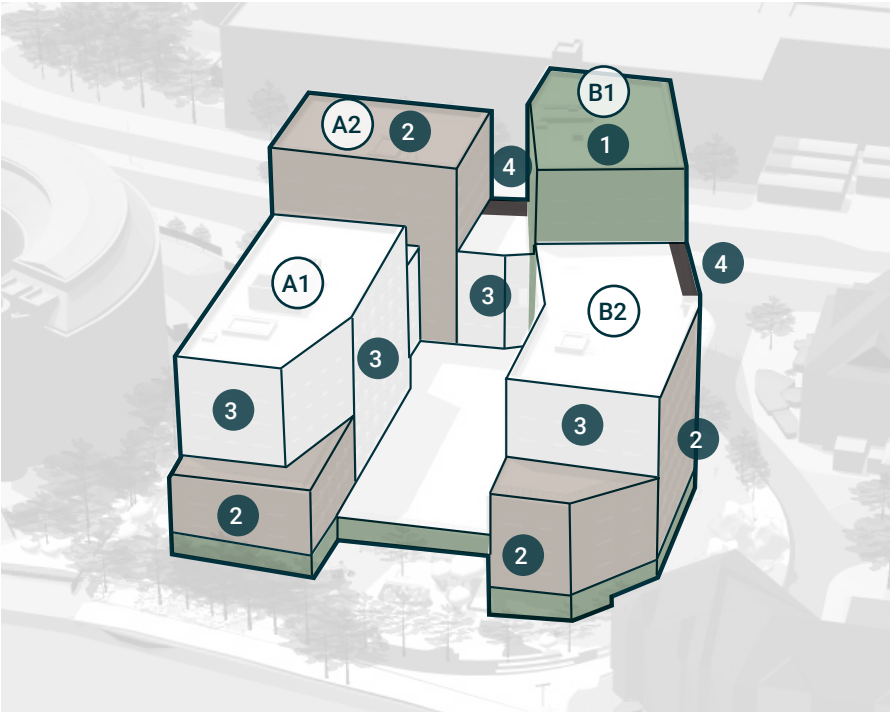
- Materials and details that reflect the character of the area
- Predominantly brick facade in complimentary tones
- Tactile materials and details at locations with human interaction
- Robust, high quality and hard wearing materials that will stand the test of time

Although the materials are the same as previously proposed, the distribution of tones has been amended to reflect the changes in massing and to help break down the blocks.

The diagram below shows how materials are distributed across site. The outer faces of blocks A1 and B2 are clad in a light grey brick, which wraps around the lower portions of each block facing the river. The podium faces are clad in white brick, creating a sense of lightness across the podium.

Dark brick is used in the link blocks, which separate the brick facades from the concrete facades of block B1.

The green coloured concrete that clads Block B1 and the plinth unifies the blocks and extends the softer greener riverine landscape of the northern edge of the site, south towards Vastern Road. The use of this distinct material also helps to create a Marker on the corner of Vastern Road and Norman Place, helping to clearly identify the national cycle route and pedestrian route that links Vastern Road to the river.



Aerial massing view showing the distribution if material colours across the site



Photos showing examples of the proposed material palette

3.6 Appearance

The buildings have been divided into two typologies:

The corner building: block B1, which is the taller element of the proposal and is situated on the key intersection of Norman Place and Vastern Road.

Edge buildings: the remaining buildings that edge the site.

3.7 The corner building

The corner building is the tallest and most visible point of the proposals and its articulation has been carefully considered to create a refined and ordered facade with a clear rhythm of windows and banding across every second floor to help define the scale and proportion of the building.

Articulation is provided through the use of fluted concrete panels at two different scales, which reference the gentle ripples of the river and create a richness and depth to the façades and helping to create a distinctive marker at the corner of the site.

The building has a clear hierarchy, with a distinct base, middle and top. The base is defined through large glazed openings, with a flat concrete band defining the cantilever of the building above.

The middle, or body of the building has double fluted piers, with a slender band defining every second floor and flat concrete panel linking the intermediate window, giving building a vertical emphasis.

The top three floors, which crown the building, have a change in scale of the fluted piers, with each pier comprising 4 fluted sections, rather than the two shown on the floors below. This creates a clear distinction to the upper part of the facades, which is further defined through the use of dark metal panels that link the windows vertically.



Precedent studies showing examples of green profiled concrete and grey bricks



3D view of the corner of Vastern Road and Norman Place



Excerpt of the facade showing the change in scale of the fluted piers, where the body of the building meets the crown



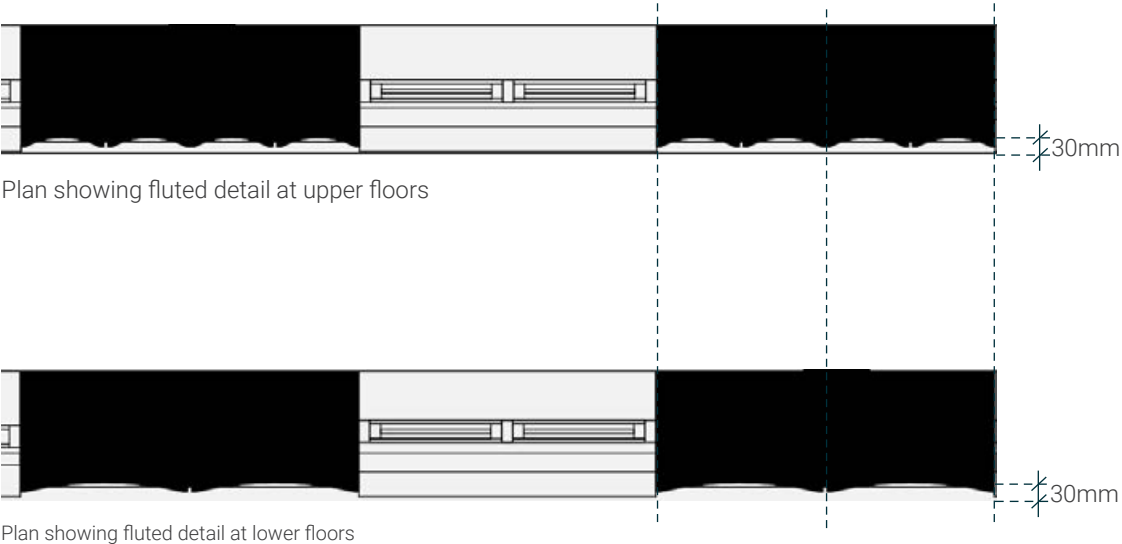
Key: Block B1/2 West Facade

3.7.1 The corner building in detail

30mm deep fluted sections within the panels that change in scale across the building create depth and interest to the facade. The graduated scale of fluted panels reinforces rhythm and hierarchy across the façade.

Horizontal banding groups floors together and enhances the play of light and shadow on the fluted panels and a fluted crown detail provides a distinctive, elegant termination to the building

Dark grey metalwork to the windows and railings creates a cohesive architectural language, visually tying the development together.



3.8 The Edge buildings

The edge buildings are clad in grey brick as a reference to one of the predominant materials in Reading and a distinctive 'checkerboard' pattern spans between the windows, drawing on the pattern formed by the use of flemish bond brickwork in the facades of houses in the local area.

The courtyard facing elevations , and part of each facade facing the river are clad in paler white brick that will help to reflect natural light, brightening the courtyard as well as creating distinction between the buildings across the site.

The Edge buildings have a calm and ordered rhythm of piers, bands and openings. At the base, green concrete creates a visually contrasting grounding with a tactile finish that ties the Edge and Corner buildings together.



Example of brick checkerboard pattern, De Montfort Rd.



3D view of the north west corner of block A1 showing the overlapping of the grey and white brick buildings



Key: Block A1 West Facade

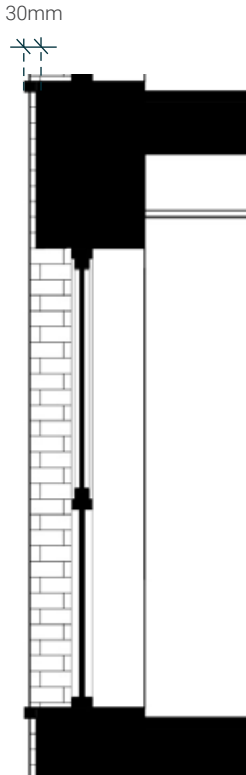
3.8.1 The corner building in detail

A brick panel, recessed from the predominant facade line by 30mm, links the windows vertically. This panel incorporates a ‘checkerboard’ flemish bond detail for subtle tonal changes and references to the local architecture.

The brick pattern is formed through the use of alternating white and grey bricks that appear as a tonally darker panel on the white brick clad facades or a tonally lighter panel on the grey brick facades, increasing the contrast between detailed panels and the predominant facade finish and providing depth and visual interest.



Close up elevation of window detail



Section through window



3.9 Norman Place elevation

Norman Place presents the most varied facade, with a collection of interlinked buildings with varied tones and heights lining the street. A consistent green coloured concrete plinth ties all the buildings together and expressed breaks formed through the use of metal cladding and a recess from the predominant facade line create distinction between forms.

Where Edge buildings meet the Corner building, a darker grey brick is used on the block either side of the Corner building to further emphasis the change.



Key: Block B1/2 West Facade



3D view of the Norman Place facade