

3. Outline Planning Permission

3.1 Phase 3 Outline Planning Permission (2021)

The Outline Planning Permission for Station Hill Phase 3 establishes the overarching framework for the comprehensive redevelopment of Plots A, B, C and D. This is supported by a suite of approved Design and Access Statement, Parameter Plans, a Design Code and a Development Specification that together control land use, building heights, massing, plot relationships, active frontages and the delivery of public realm

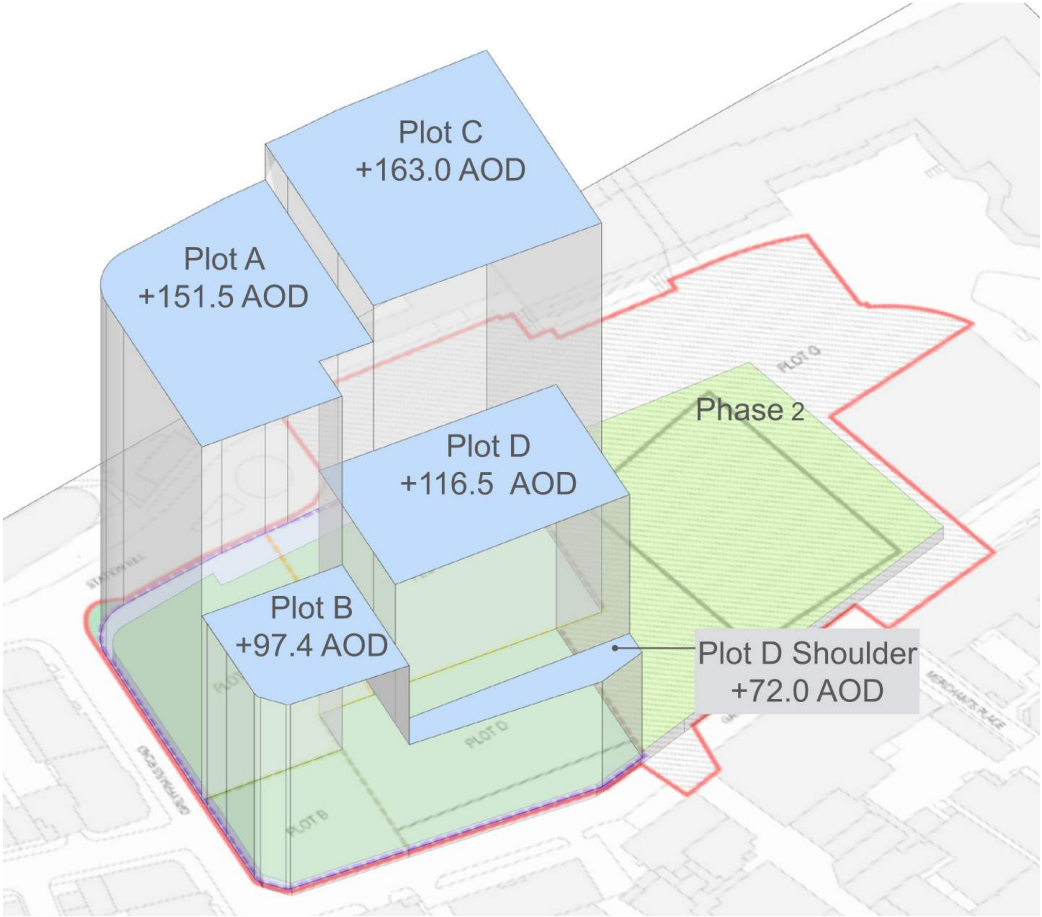
The outline consent is underpinned by a Section 106 Agreement securing key planning obligations to ensure that Phase 3 is delivered in a coordinated manner that completes the wider Station Hill masterplan. These agreements include:

- Affordable housing provision
- Public realm delivery and maintenance
- Transport and highways works
- Public art
- Financial contributions

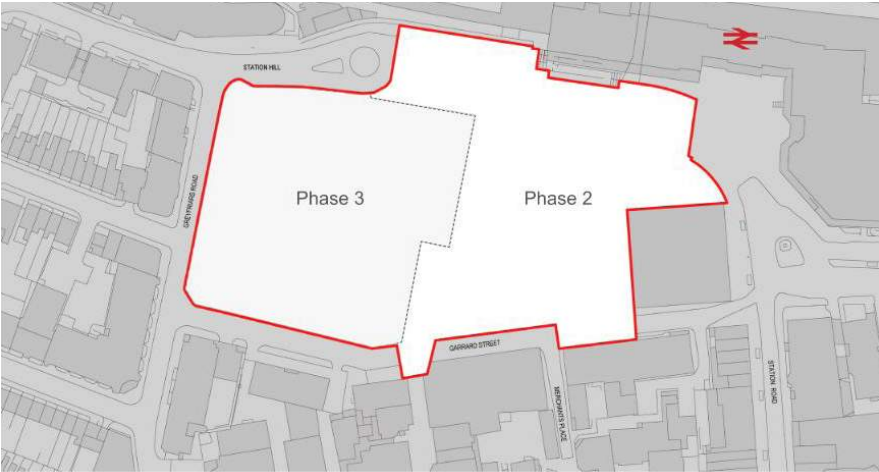
The Outline Planning Permission masterplan for Station Hill North establishes a flexible, parameter-led framework for the comprehensive redevelopment of the site through a hybrid planning application, with Phase 2 approved in detail and Phase 3 approved in outline, allowing future reserved matters applications to come forward within clearly defined controls.

The masterplan fixes the overall structure of development plots, maximum building envelopes, height hierarchy, land-use ranges, public realm, access, streets, basement extent and townscape strategy, while deliberately avoiding a single illustrative scheme so that different design responses can be accommodated over time.

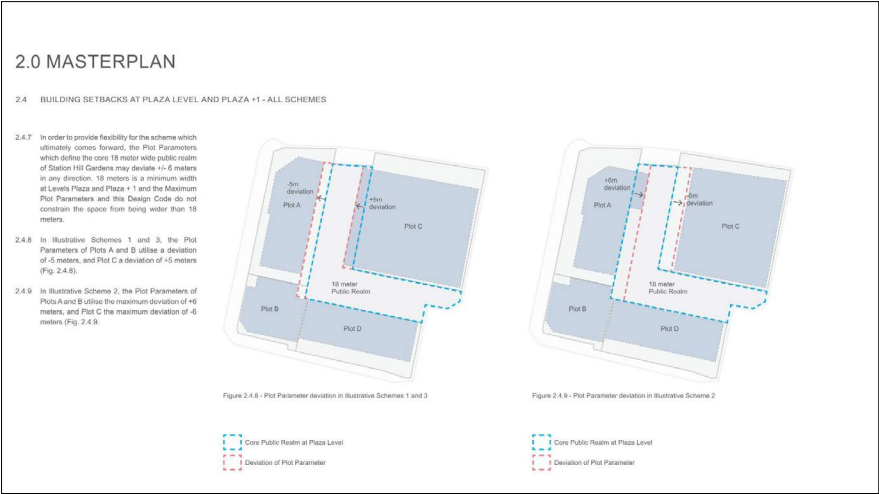
Phase 3 is organised into four principal plots (A–D) around an elevated, publicly accessible plaza and a series of connected streets and spaces, integrates a tall-building hierarchy with Plot C as the primary landmark, secures minimum public realm widths and building separations, and safeguards key connections to Station Hill, Greyfriars Road and Garrard Street



Approved Maximum Parameter Diagram – Refer to Approved DAS for Hybrid Planning Application 2019



Planning boundaries and phasing – Refer to Approved DAS for Hybrid Planning Application 2019



Buildable zones and setbacks

3.2 Two Parameter Options

The Outline Planning Permission was originally granted with a single set of Parameter Plans.

Following further design testing undertaken during 2025, the Applicant identified an opportunity to introduce limited flexibility to the approved parameters, while remaining within the scope of the Outline Planning Permission. In order to facilitate this, a Section 96A application was submitted to amend the approved Parameter Plans.

The Section 96A application introduced a second set of Parameter Plans, referred to as Scenario 2. For clarity and ease of reference, the originally approved Parameter Plans were, at that point, retrospectively referred to as Scenario 1, solely to distinguish them from the newly introduced Scenario 2.

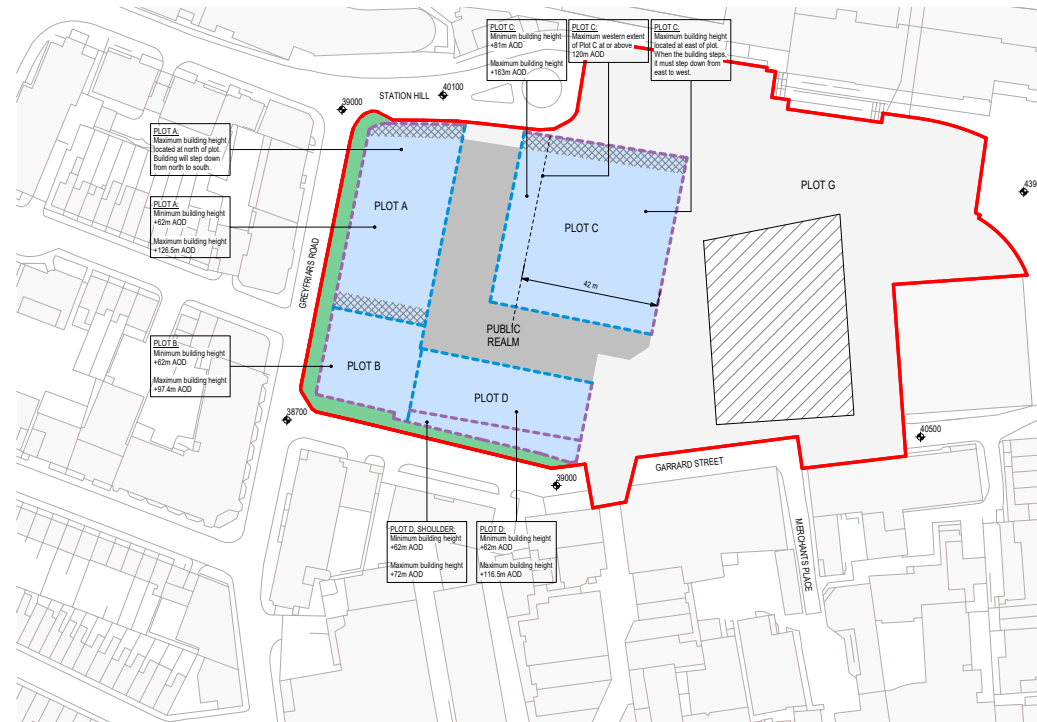
The Section 96A amendments were approved by Reading Borough Council in November 2025.

As a result, the Outline Planning Permission now comprises two alternative sets of Parameter Plans. Whilst both scenarios are very similar in overall quantum and disposition, they allow Phase 3 of the masterplan to be brought forward in slightly different ways. Each set of Parameter Plans is supported by its own Design Code, which establishes the design guidance and rules that future development must comply with as part of any subsequent Reserved Matters Applications.

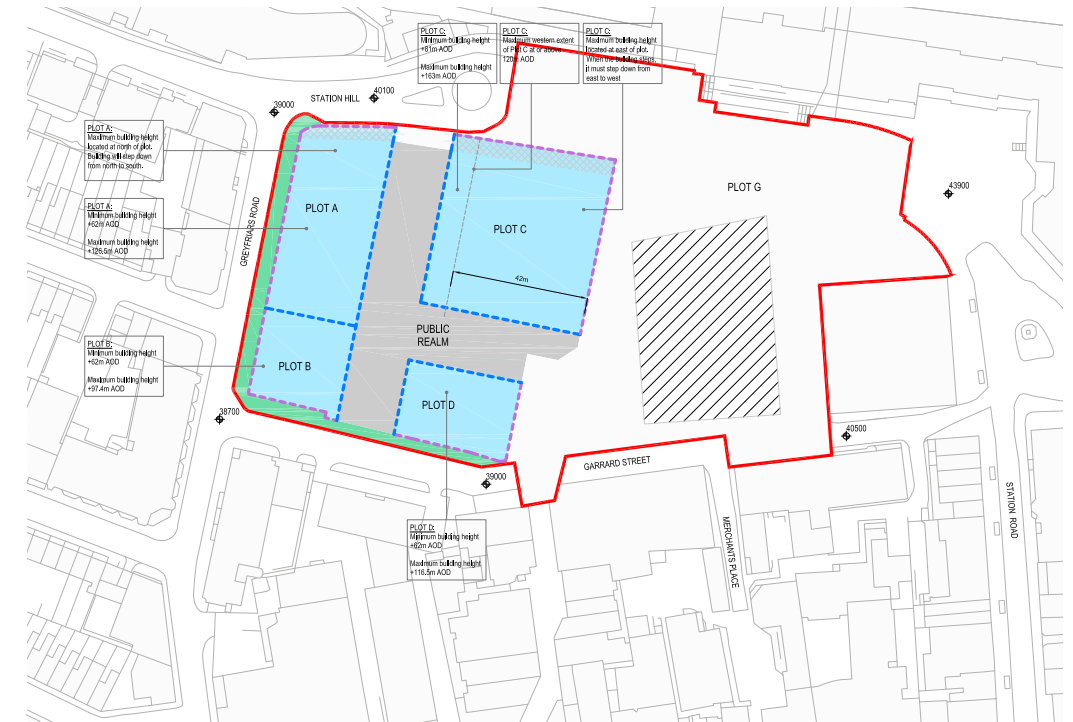
This application for Reserved Matters has followed the guidelines and parameters of Scenario 2. This includes the following key principles.

The key differences between Scenario 1 and Scenario 2 are as follows:

- Scenario 2 requires a gap between Plot B and Plot D, resulting in Plot D coming forward as a separate, slender building. This arrangement enables a new public connection between Station Plaza and Garrard Street.
- Scenario 2 requires Plots A and B to be articulated vertically rather than horizontally. The Design Code establishes a stepped reduction in massing from north to south across Plots A and B.
- Scenario 2 allows plant and lift overruns to exceed the maximum plot parameter height by up to 2.5 metres, provided sufficient setbacks from parapets are incorporated to ensure that visibility of plant from street level is avoided.



Parameter Plans and max AODs (Scenario 1)



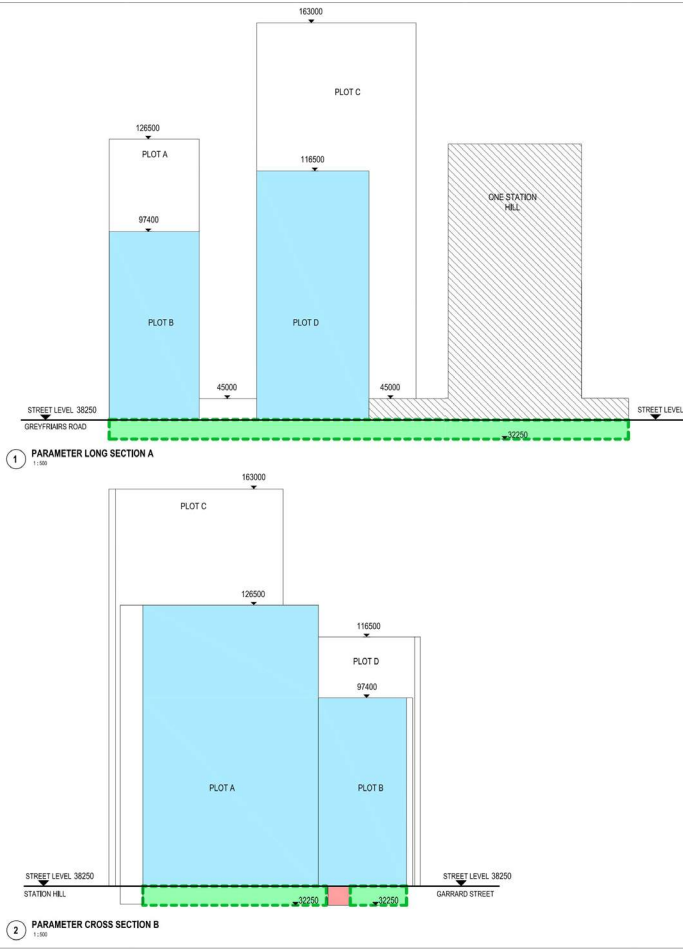
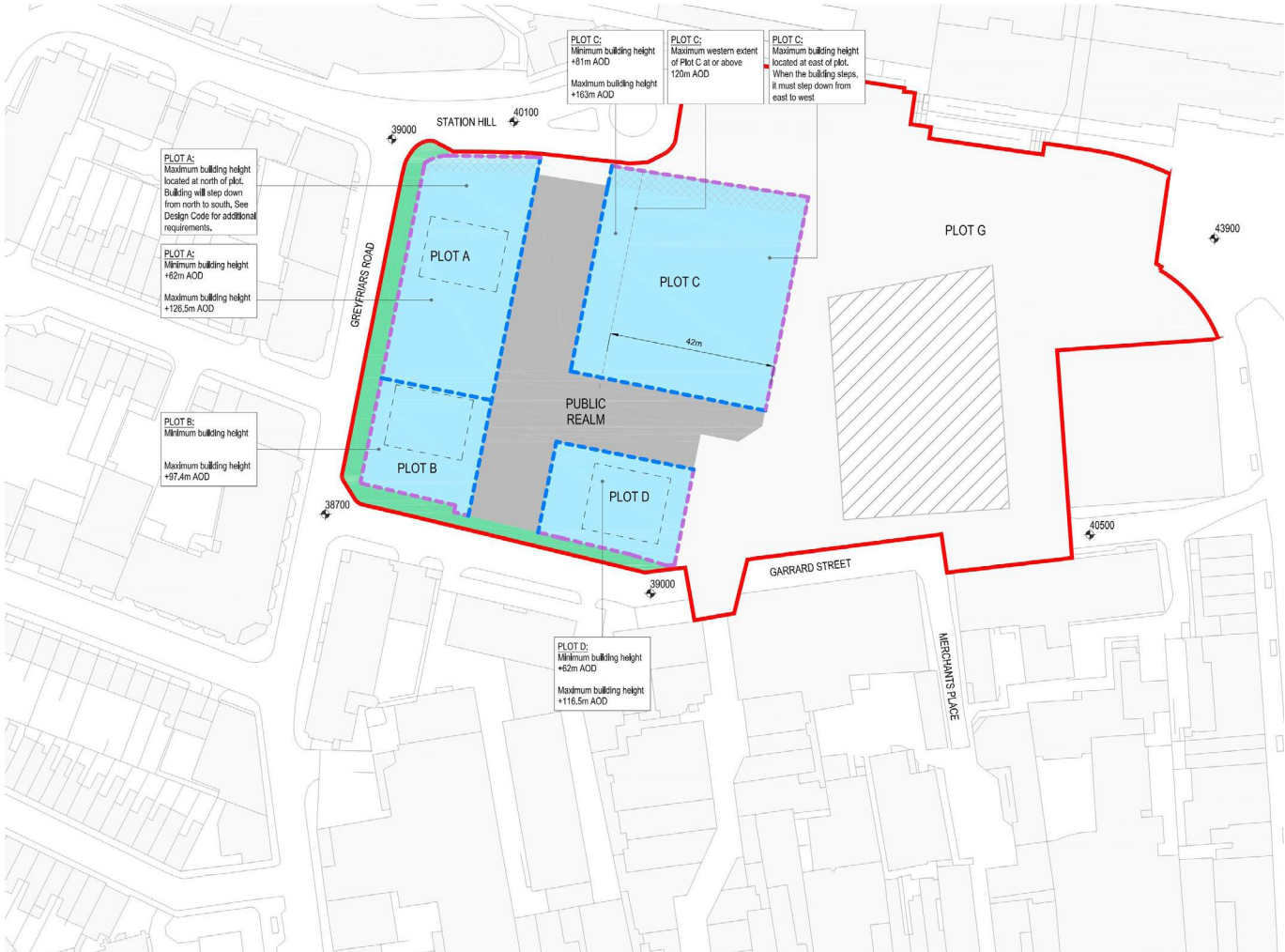
Parameter Plans and max AODs (Scenario 2)

3.3 Scenario 2 – Parameter Plans

The parameter plans define the fixed spatial and quantitative limits within which future reserved matters applications must be designed, providing a clear framework that secures the acceptability of the outline consent while allowing detailed design flexibility.

- They establish the maximum extents of development in terms of plot boundaries, building envelopes, heights, land use distribution, minimum distances between buildings, public realm configuration, access and servicing arrangements, and basement extents, ensuring that key principles tested at outline stage are not exceeded.

The parameter plans act as a control mechanism for subsequent detailed proposals, giving certainty to the local planning authority and stakeholders that future designs will remain compliant with the approved vision and assessed impacts of the scheme.



3.4 Design Code (2025 - Scenario 2)

3.4.1 Massing

The Design Code establishes a clear and legible massing hierarchy, with Plot C forming the tallest district landmark and the visual crown of the townscape, stepping down in height to Plot A as a local landmark and further to the lower-scale Plots B and D to respond sensitively to surrounding residential areas.

Buildings are required to read as distinct vertical elements, reinforced by mandatory gaps between plots and minimum height differences to prevent visual merging and to create slender forms and public connections.

Within individual plots, massing must be stepped and articulated rather than expressed as continuous flat façades, with controlled podium and plaza levels safeguarding a minimum 18m-wide core public realm and increasing separation at upper levels.

Buildings should be composed with a clear base, middle and top, using setbacks and modulation to manage scale, protect daylight and views, and ensure a positive contribution to streets, public spaces and the wider Reading townscape

3.4.2 Scale

The Design Code establishes building separation requirements that protect public realm quality, privacy and environmental performance by prioritising generous spacing at lower levels and controlled separation above.

A minimum 18m wide public realm must be maintained between facing façades at plaza and plaza + 1 levels, with flexibility to increase this distance where design or environmental factors demand, while deliberate gaps between buildings ensure taller elements read as distinct forms, support permeability and enable public connections.

Overall, this approach secures openness at the heart of the scheme, clear and legible building forms, and adaptable separation distances to deliver high-quality living and working environments.

3.4.3 Building Separation

Buildings are to be set apart to safeguard daylight, privacy, outlook and good microclimate conditions while also allowing a dense, legible urban form.

Separation distances vary by building use and height, with greater distances expected where residential accommodation faces other residential buildings, and more flexibility where commercial uses face each other.

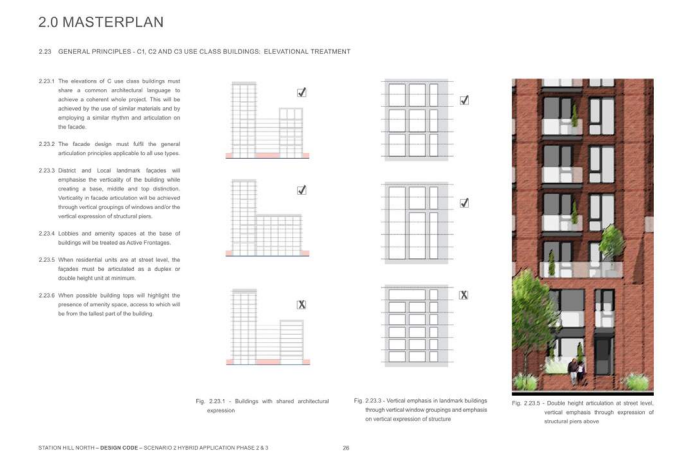
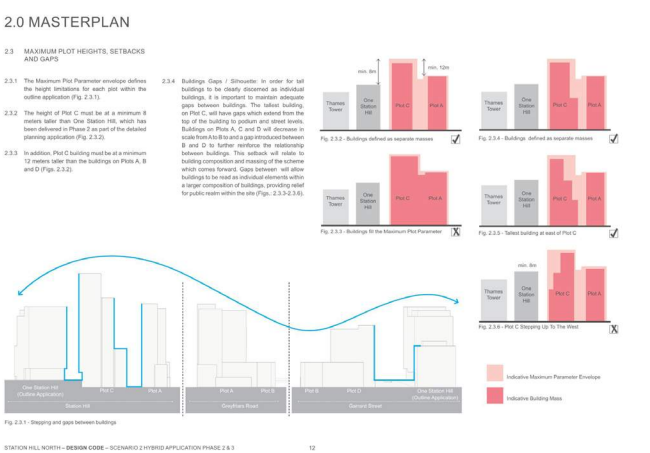
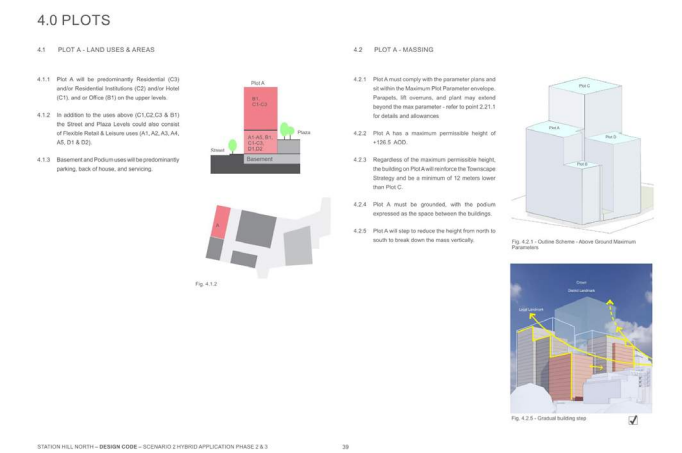
All layouts must demonstrate that the proposed separation achieves acceptable living conditions and townscape quality rather than relying solely on fixed numerical distances

3.4.4 Façades & Appearance

The façade requirements emphasise high-quality, well-articulated building elevations that respond to scale, use and context. Buildings are expected to express a clear base, middle and top, with active and visually permeable ground floors where they address streets, plazas and key routes.

Façade design should use vertical and horizontal articulation, recesses, set-backs and changes in material to reduce perceived bulk, break down massing and create legible, human-scaled frontages, while ensuring consistency and coherence across the wider development. Openings, balconies and façade elements are to be carefully proportioned and aligned to reinforce a strong architectural rhythm and provide visual interest at all levels

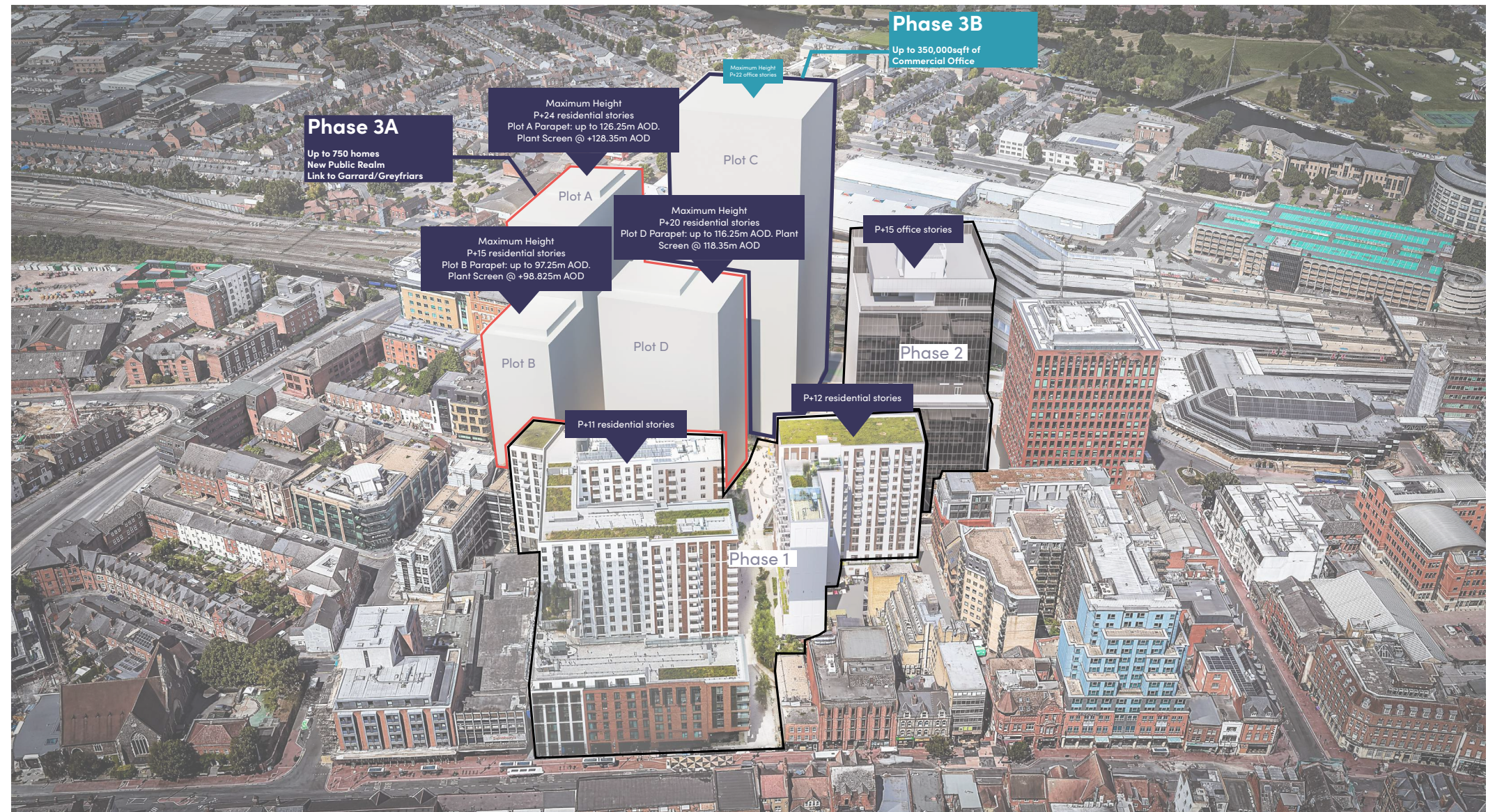
Materials, colours and textures should be coordinated across plots to achieve a unified identity, yet allow subtle variation to distinguish individual buildings. Detailing is to be carefully resolved, particularly at corners, entrances and rooflines, with integrated lighting, signage and servicing to avoid visual clutter.



3.5 Outline Permission Summary

This Outline permission for Phase 3 sets the framework for detailed design, including:

- The demolition of Xafinity House
- The position & distance between the buildings on the site
- The heights of buildings
- The areas to be landscaped as public realm
- Where active frontages (shops, cafés and entrances) should be located
- The minimum and maximum built areas for different uses (homes, offices, hotel, leisure, retail, parking)
- Maximum number of homes across the building plots



3.6 Reading's Policy and Strategy

Since the outline application was granted planning permission in 2021, there have been a number of additional strategies to the Reading town centre plan. We are aware of these documents and considering the impact that Phase 3 can have on these town centre strategies to ensure Station Hill is supporting the next decade of the council's aspiration.

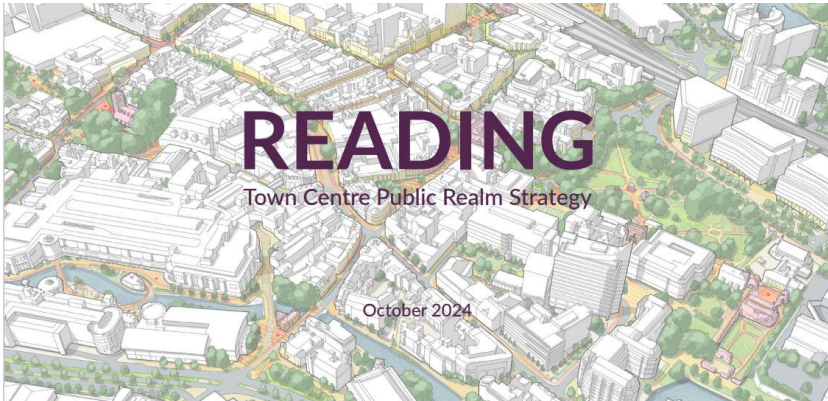
- Local Plan Partial Update (out for consultation)
- Reading Town Centre Public Realm Strategy
- Reading Transport Strategy

Need for New Homes in Reading

There is a pressing need for new homes in Reading. The housing target is increasing (as indicated below) and Station Hill Phase 3 can provide a big boost to local housing delivery on a truly sustainable site to help meet the growing local need.

- Adopted Local Plan (2019)= 689 homes per annum
- Partial Update (2024)= 825 homes per annum (+20%)
- New Standard Method Housing Need (December 2024)= 1,028 homes per annum (+49%)

Delivery of Phase 3 for new homes assists with Reading housing supply (5YHLS). It will also assist with the Reading Housing Delivery Test (HDT) score when built.



Meanwhile use enables the creation of better places and the testing of ideas and coming together of communities, whilst a more long term development is established. Vibrant interim uses will benefit existing shops, as well as the wider town centre, through increased footfall, bringing life back to the high street and making better use of resources overall.

Meanwhile use greatly increases the level of awareness of an areas to prospective tenants or owners, particularly if it provides a home for an eye-catching landscape or play project and encourages legacy planning for an areas future. Meanwhile use also improves community engagement and increases the prospect of future landscape and commercial uses in adjacent residential units. These can take a wide number of forms including:

- Activities:
- Art installations
 - Sports spaces / events
 - Food festivals / pop up restaurants / Markets
 - Mini festivals and community get together's
 - Performance spaces / outdoor cinema
- Physical changes:

