

5. Design Concept

5.1 Design Strategy

5.1.1 Philosophy

The proposed scheme is guided by a philosophy of continuity, craft and placemaking, building on the established success of earlier phases at Station Hill. The architecture seeks to stitch together Reading's historic town centre with the emerging Station Quarter.

Strong emphasis is placed on active frontages, generous public realm at podium and street level, and a clear hierarchy of base, middle and crown, ensuring the buildings contribute positively to the life of the city.

5.1.2 Appearance

The scheme adopts a refined contemporary language rooted in Reading's material heritage. Robust brick façades—expressed in light, red and darker tones—are articulated through vertical rhythm, carefully proportioned openings and the use of balconies and loggias to provide depth, animation and solar control.

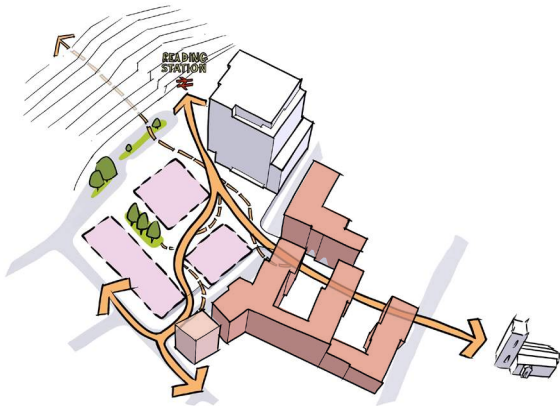
The base is more tactile and detailed to engage pedestrians, while the upper levels become calmer and more sculpted, with subtle changes in texture and detailing at the crown to create a distinctive skyline presence and clear wayfinding within the wider masterplan



5.1.3 Key Design Principles

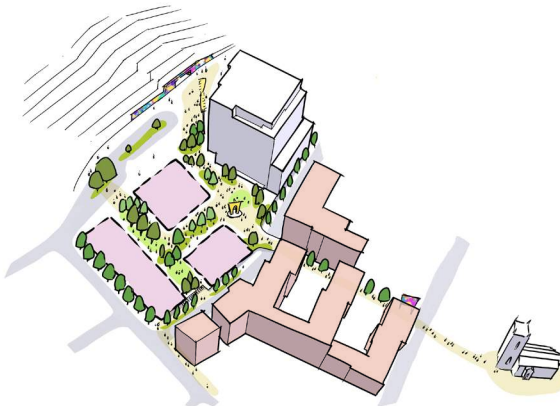
1. Connected Public Realm

The Station Hill Masterplan envisioned being driven by permeable public realm. Phase 3 further embeds this principle, creating a new pedestrian connection from Station Hill Square through to Garrard Street



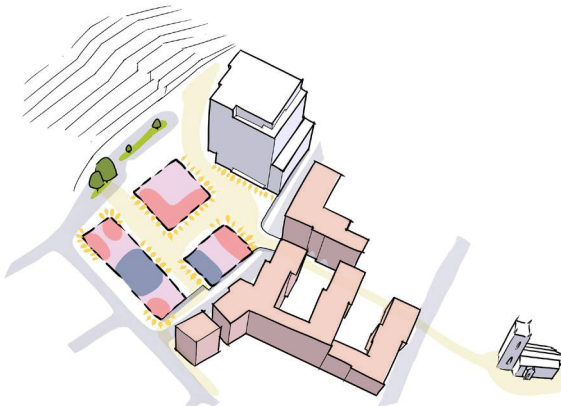
2. Landscape Led Placemaking

Phase 3 brings forwards Station Hill Gardens. Sitting between Plots, A, B and D this more secluded landscape approach includes interactive sculptural play area, sun lit lawns and an area to relax within the sheltered green environment.



3. Edge Activation

The street edges are activated with retail, food and beverage and everyday conveniences. Tenants will be carefully selected to compliment the existing offer within Phases 1 and 2 to support vibrancy and activity in the public realm.



4. Tall Station Area Cluster

At the northern extent of the site, the massing responds to the Station Area Framework through taller, lighter-toned residential and commercial elements; in alignment with the Outline Planning Permission, Plot A acts as the "Local Landmark" and, together with Plot D, adopts a scale, form and architectural character appropriate to the taller cluster.



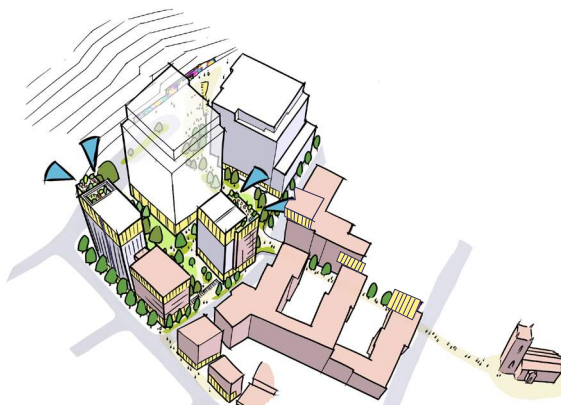
5. Transitional Street

To the south, Plot B and part of Plot D provide a transition between the taller northern cluster and the mid to lower-rise development of Phase 1. The scale, massing and architectural approach respond to this change in context and to the emerging north to south route towards Reading Minster.



6. Lanterns in the Sky

The overall strategy is to provide wayfinding aspects in the higher parts of the buildings (usually amenity spaces or differing details/ groupings of windows) that act as lanterns/beacons as you move from the south to the north towards the station. These are subtle wayfinding highlights which cumulate in the larger commercial buildings on Plot G and Plot C.



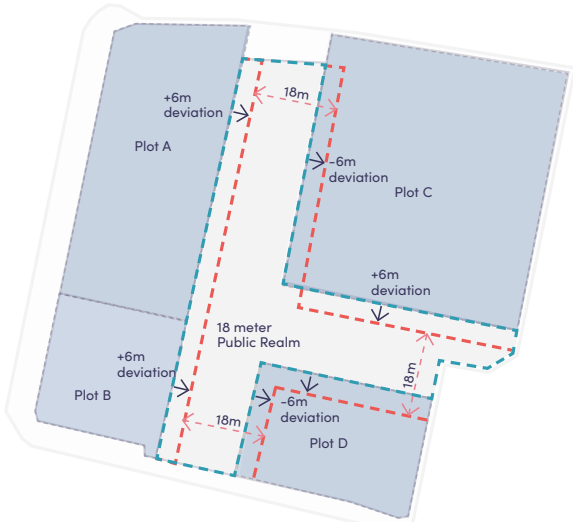
5.2 Masterplan

5.2.1 Revised Masterplan

The proposed masterplan for Station Hill Phase 3 reinforces the original outline vision of a coherent, high-density urban quarter that stitches together Reading Station, Friar Street and the wider town centre. The disposition of Plots AB and D sits firmly within the approved parameter plans and design code, maintaining prescribed heights, setbacks and separation distances while refining the illustrative schemes into a legible and permeable arrangement

Landscape is integral to this alignment, translating the outline public realm requirements into a rich sequence of civic and garden spaces. The minimum widths and extents of the plaza and podium-level public realm are safeguarded, while the “joining of the rivers” landscape concept is extended through Station Hill Gardens, Station Hill Square and connecting routes.

A key pedestrian route is introduced between Plots B and D, creating a generous, legible east-west connection that stitches Garrard Street to Station Hill Gardens and the wider plaza network. This route strengthens public permeability, draws activity into the heart of the scheme and allows the buildings to be experienced in the round, with landscape, architecture and movement working together to form a coherent and animated piece of Reading.



Plot A (Proposed RMA)

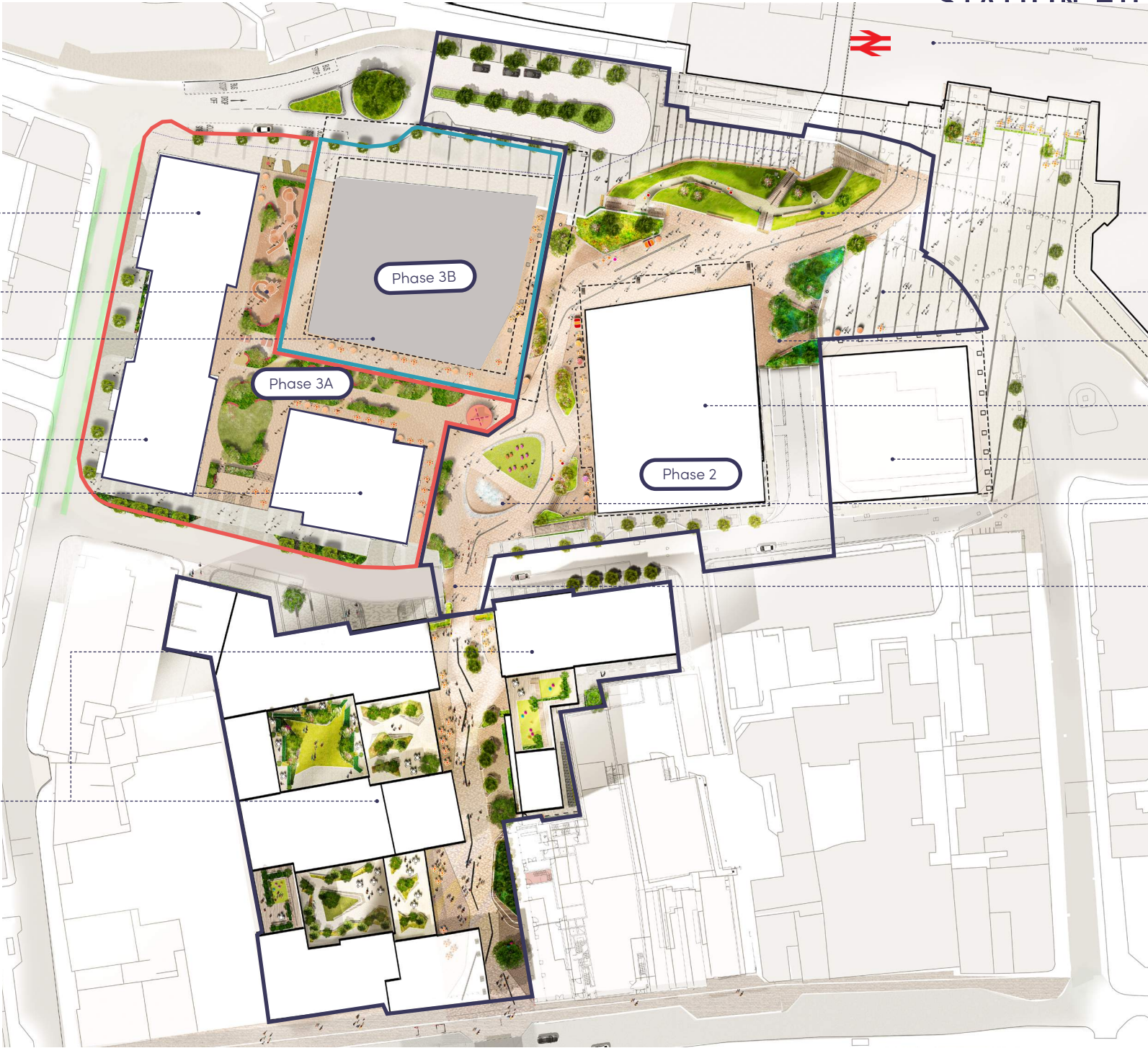
Station Hill Gardens

Illustrative Plot C building

Plot B (Proposed RMA)

Plot D (Proposed RMA)

Station Hill South (Completed)



- Phase 3A Application Boundary
- Phase 1 & 2 (Completed)
- Phase 3B

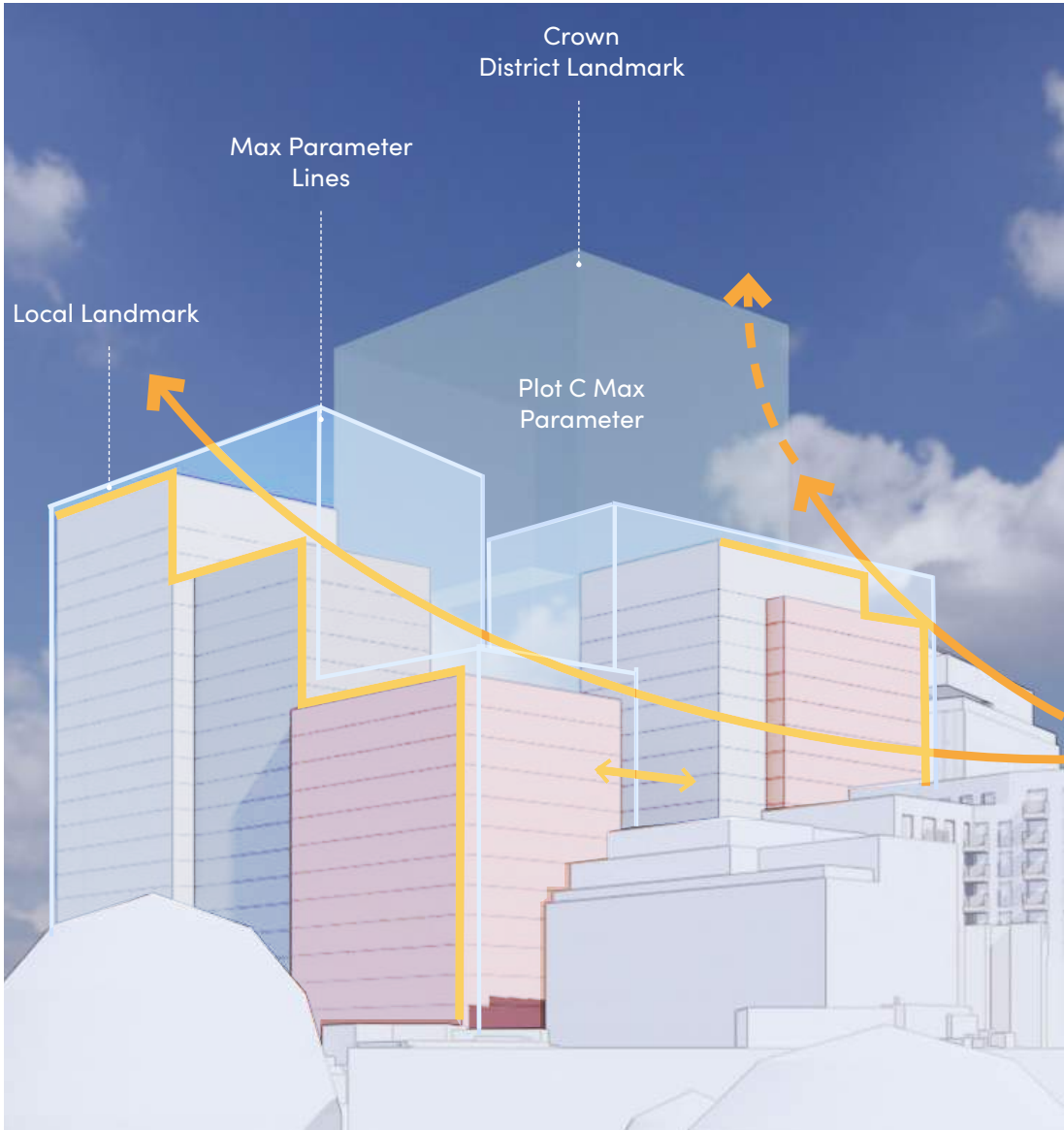
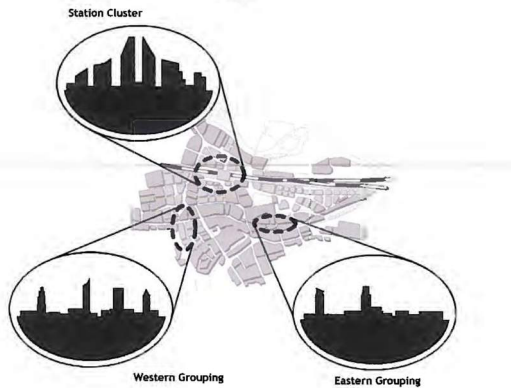
5.3 Massing

5.3.1 Massing Strategy – Plot A, B and D

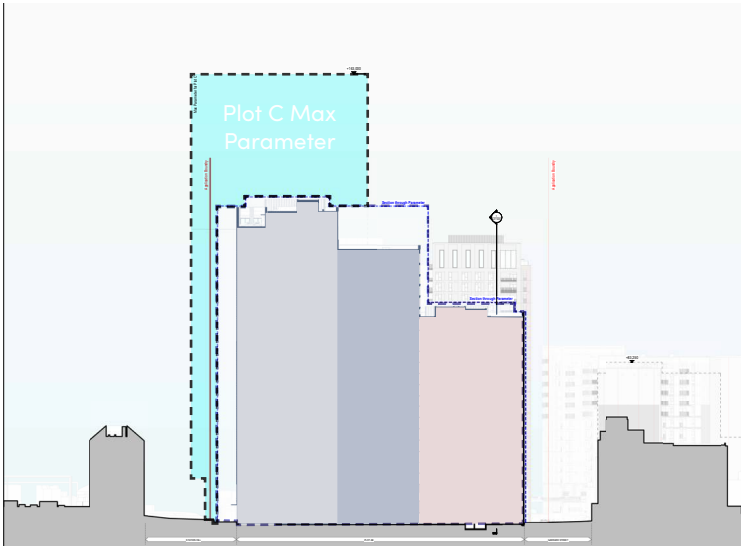
The massing strategy for the proposed scheme is derived from the Scenario 2 outline parameters and Scenario 2 Design Code, using a podium-and-tower composition to balance density, townscape integration, and residential quality. Plots AB and D are arranged as distinct vertical elements rising from a continuous activated podium, reinforcing legibility across the site while maintaining required separation distances.

Heights are carefully stepped, with the tallest elements positioned to the north and east to align with the wider Station Hill skyline and transition down toward Friar Street and surrounding lower-scale context. Building volumes deliberately set back within the approved parameters to avoid fully infilling the envelopes and to break down the overall massing.

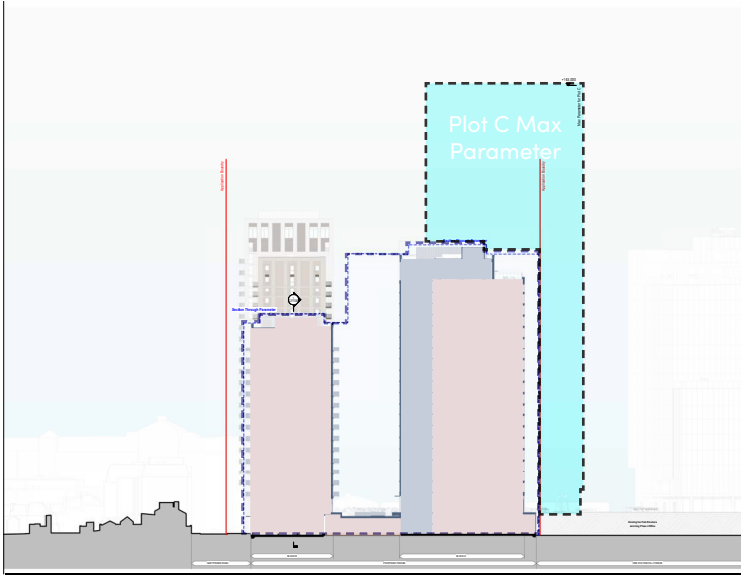
The overall form delivers a coherent family of buildings that read as part of a unified masterplan, while allowing each plot to function independently and have a distinct identity.



3D showing parameters



West elevation showing parameters

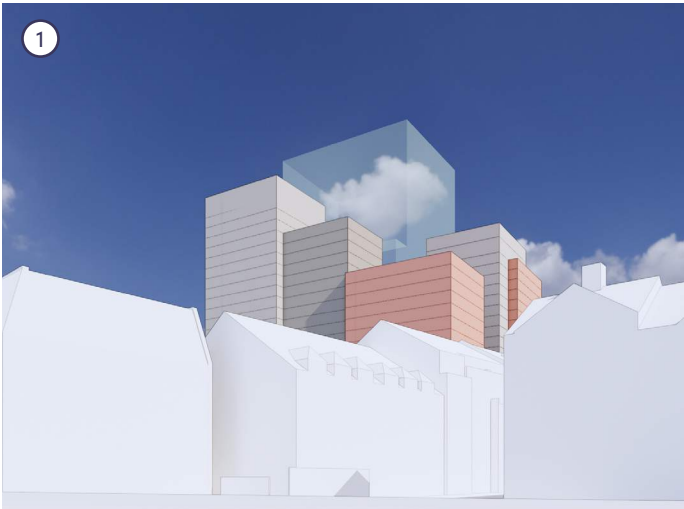
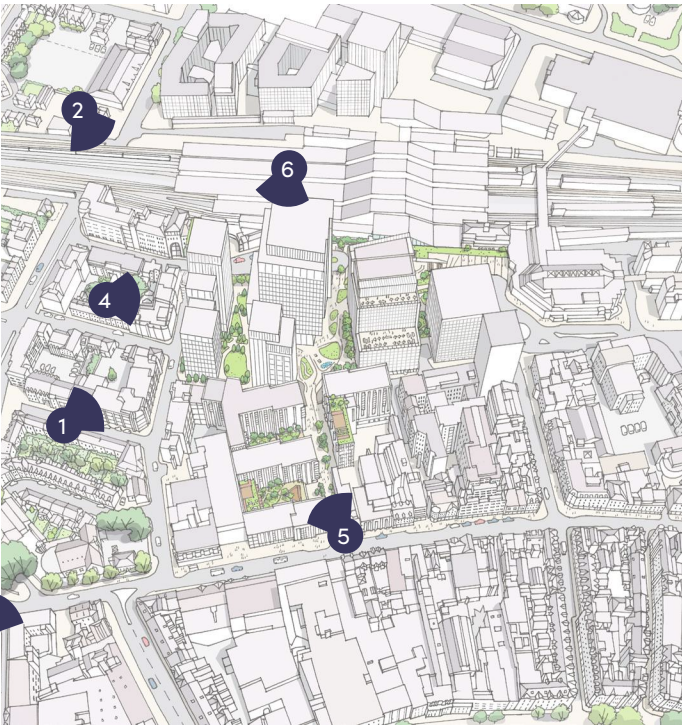


South elevation showing parameters

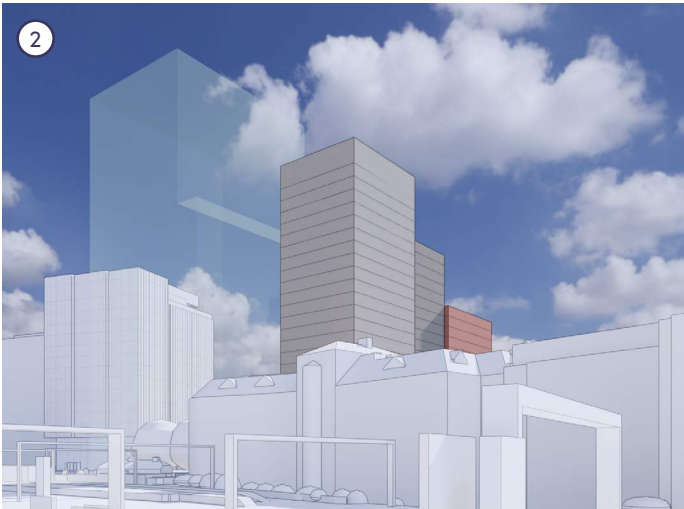
5.3.2 Massing Views

The design team acknowledges that the development will be a building of scale and significance, with impacts at both the local level and across the wider townscape. The following key vantage points have played a central role in shaping the scheme’s form, composition, and fenestration, allowing it to sit confidently and comfortably within Reading’s evolving skyline.

The translucent massing shown in the view is for illustrative purposes and not part of this RMA application.



From Vachel Road



From Reading Station



From Caversham Road



Front Elevational view of Plot A/B



From Greyfriars Walk



From Reading Station North Entrance

5.4 Use

5.4.1 Residential / Build-to-rent

As with Phase 1, the Build to Rent offering in Phase 3 will consist of amenity-led, high-service buildings. This shared private amenity for residents of Plots AB and D will be complemented by a vibrant mix of public uses at ground and street level, forming part of the wider placemaking strategy. The aim is to create an active and engaging environment for those living in, working at, and visiting Station Hill and the surrounding neighbourhood.

5.4.2 Class E (F&B/Retail)

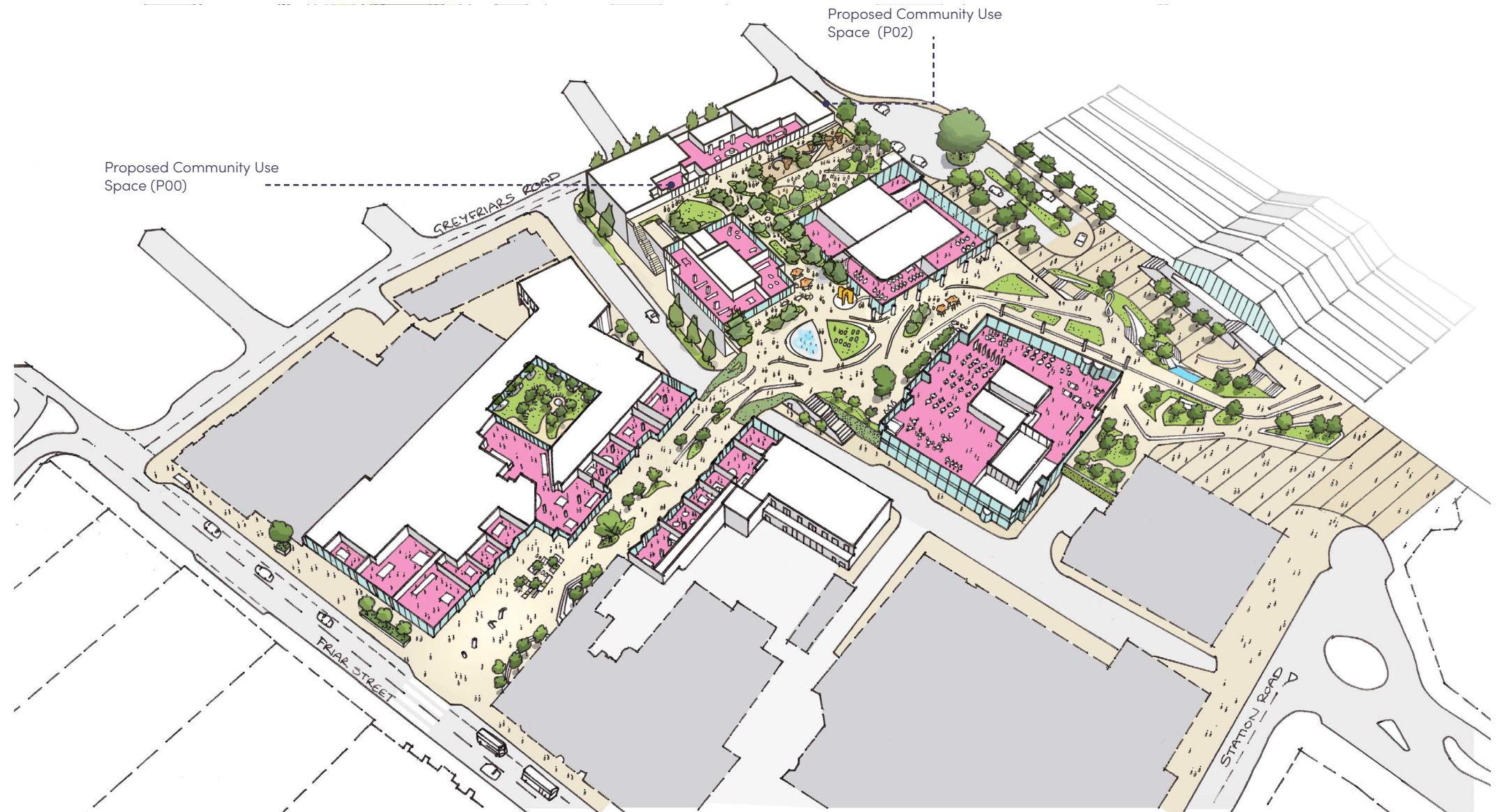
Food and beverage (F&B) and retail uses are strategically distributed around the scheme in line with the consented parameters and Design Code, reinforcing activity, permeability, and placemaking at ground and podium levels.

Key active frontages are focused on prominent corner locations, notably at Station Hill / Greyfriars Road and Greyfriars Road / Garrard Street, where commercial units are positioned to address desire lines, frame gateway views, and animate the most visible edges of the site.

In addition, a series of podium-level F&B and retail spaces are arranged around the central plaza to extend activity vertically and reinforce the pedestrian route linking Friar Street through Station Hill to the station. These plaza-level uses strengthen the continuity of active frontage, ensuring the heart of the scheme remains animated and legible throughout the day and evening.

5.4.3 Community

The scheme proposes the delivery of a 70 sqm community use space, together with publicly accessible toilets at podium or street level with Plot AB. This provision responds directly to the Section 106 obligations attached to the hybrid consent for Station Hill Phase 3. The community space is intended to be flexible in nature, capable of accommodating a range of local activities and events, and is located at podium level to ensure visibility, accessibility, and integration with the wider public realm.



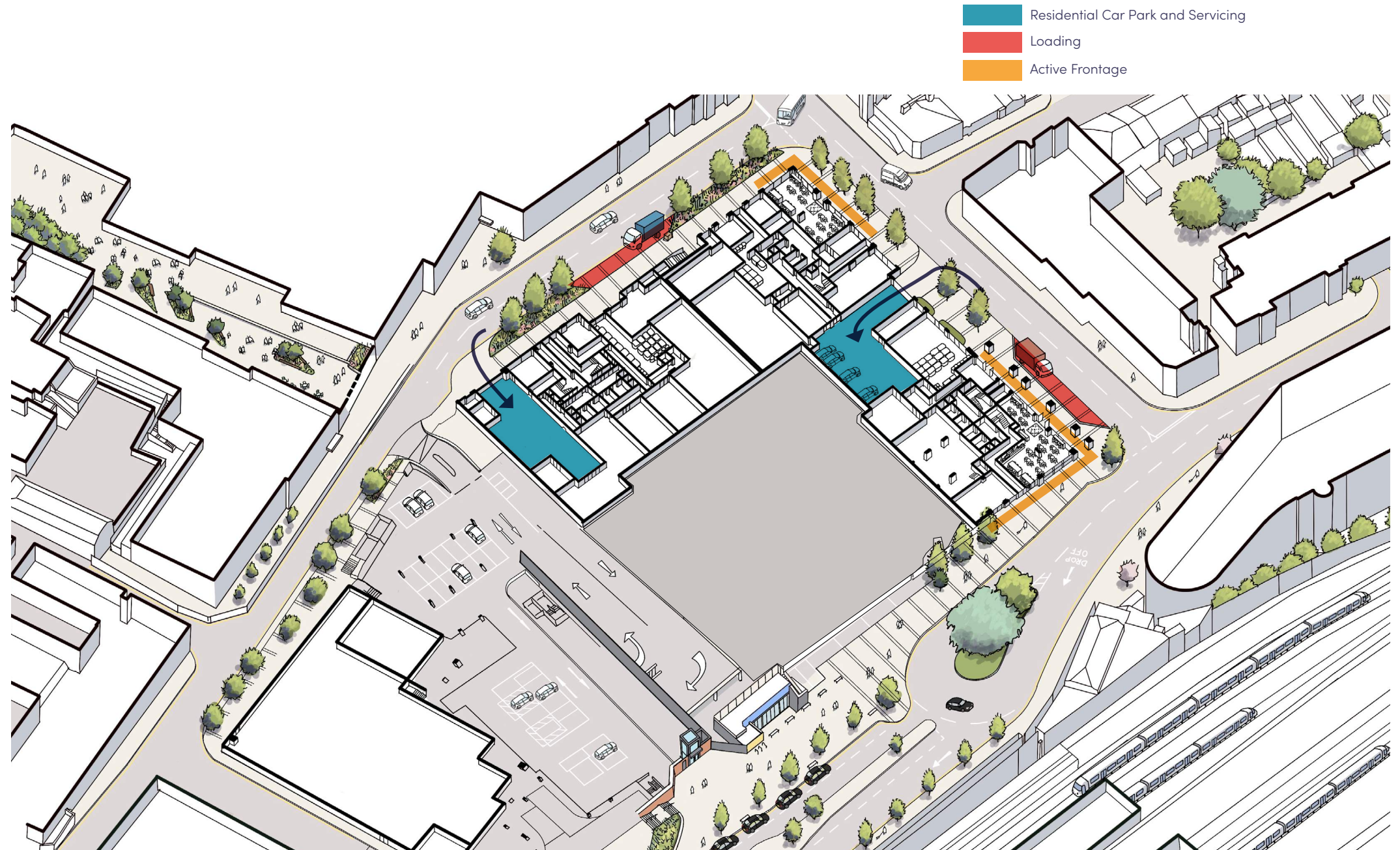
5.5 Layout

5.5.1 Vehicle Access

Given the highly accessible town-centre location of Station Hill, the residential parking strategy for Plots AB and D is intentionally very limited, with the proposed strategy aligning with local policy requirements. A total of four accessible parking spaces are provided within the undercroft parking beneath the residential buildings, with two spaces serving Plot AB and two serving Plot D. Additional Service bays are provided for deliveries and operations.

5.5.2 Active Frontage

The layout ensures that the key corner locations at Station Hill / Greyfriars Road and Greyfriars Road / Garrard Street are highly active and welcoming, in line with the Design Code and masterplan principles. While the distribution of frontage between individual uses has been refined to respond to operational requirements, the overall approach delivers a more vibrant and engaging street presence than previously envisaged, reinforcing the public realm ambitions of the wider Station Hill masterplan.

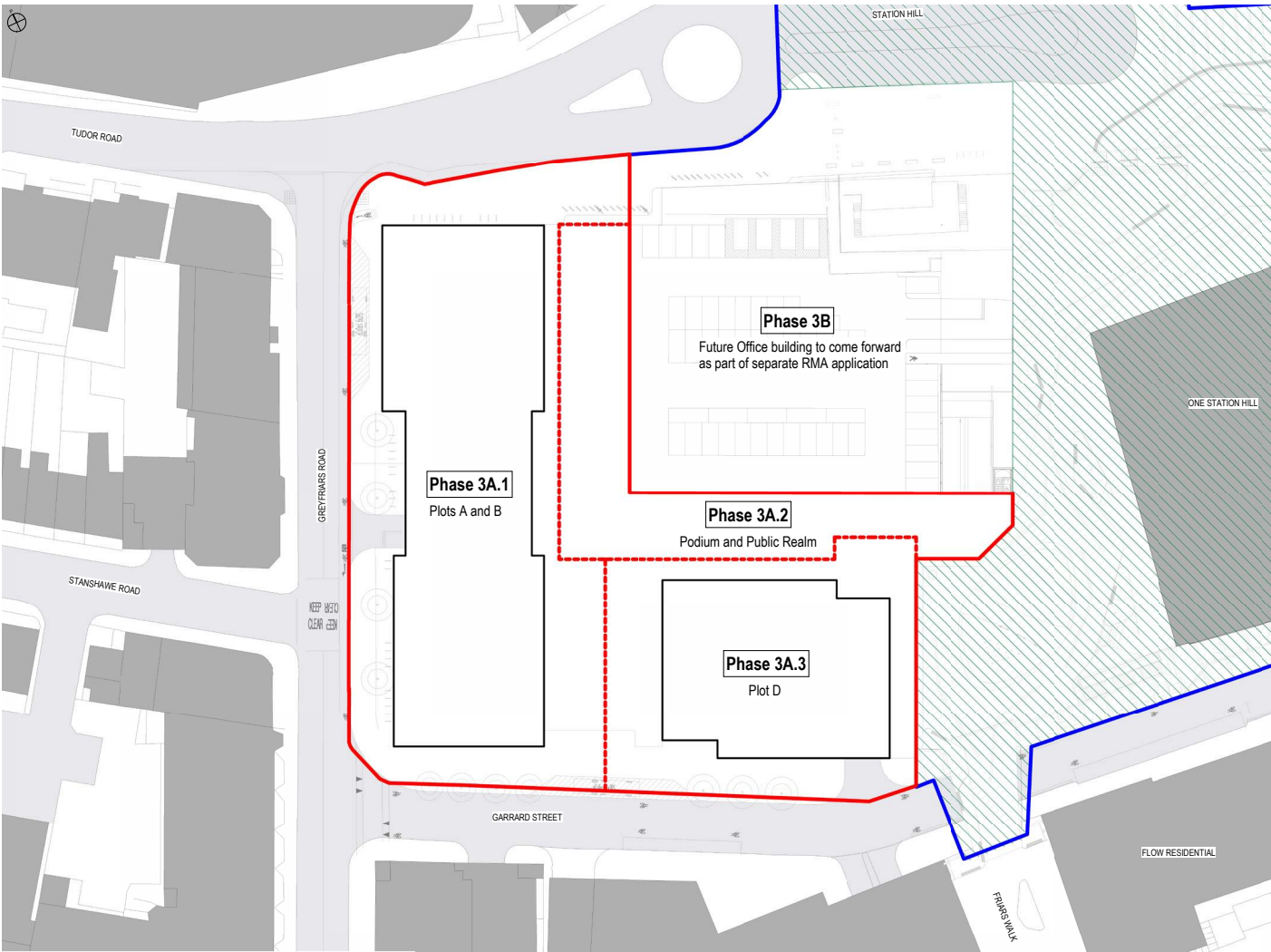


5.5.3 BSA Fire Strategy & Phasing

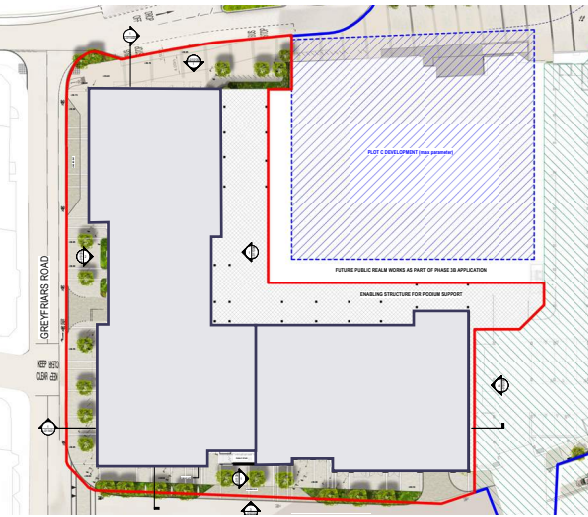
Extensive coordination was undertaken through Stages 1–3 to ensure full compliance with the Building Safety Act, the Gateway process and BS 9991:2024. As a result of this process, the design established a complete and unambiguous separation between Plots AB and D, enabling each plot to be submitted to the Building Safety Regulator and delivered independently. This separation is fully resolved in structural form, building fabric, and life-safety, servicing and operational systems, with no elements crossing the defined division line.

These requirements had a significant influence on the organisation of the podium levels, the configuration of the building footprints and the distribution of plant, back-of-house and life-safety systems. The resulting podium arrangement is necessarily complex and constrained, requiring careful optimisation of all shared interfaces. Through detailed coordination, these areas were rationalised to minimise their footprint, releasing frontage for active uses and safeguarding the future parking provision required for Plot C.

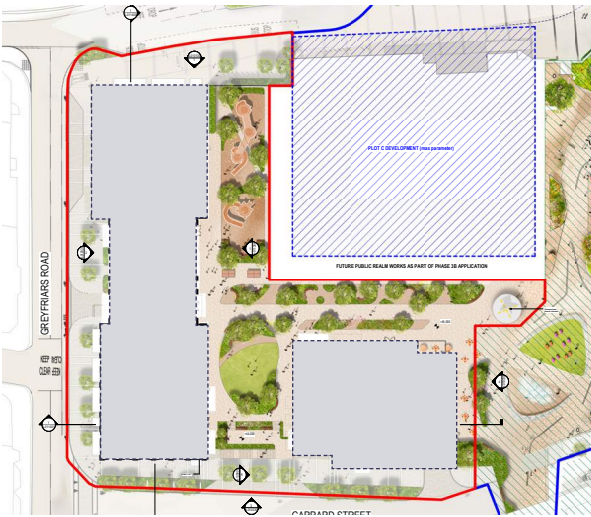
The Building Safety Act division lines established through this process define clear and legible plot extents, allowing the buildings to be delivered as discrete, self-contained elements within a coordinated and robust phasing strategy.



Phasing Diagram - Phase 3A



Street Level - Building Separation Lines



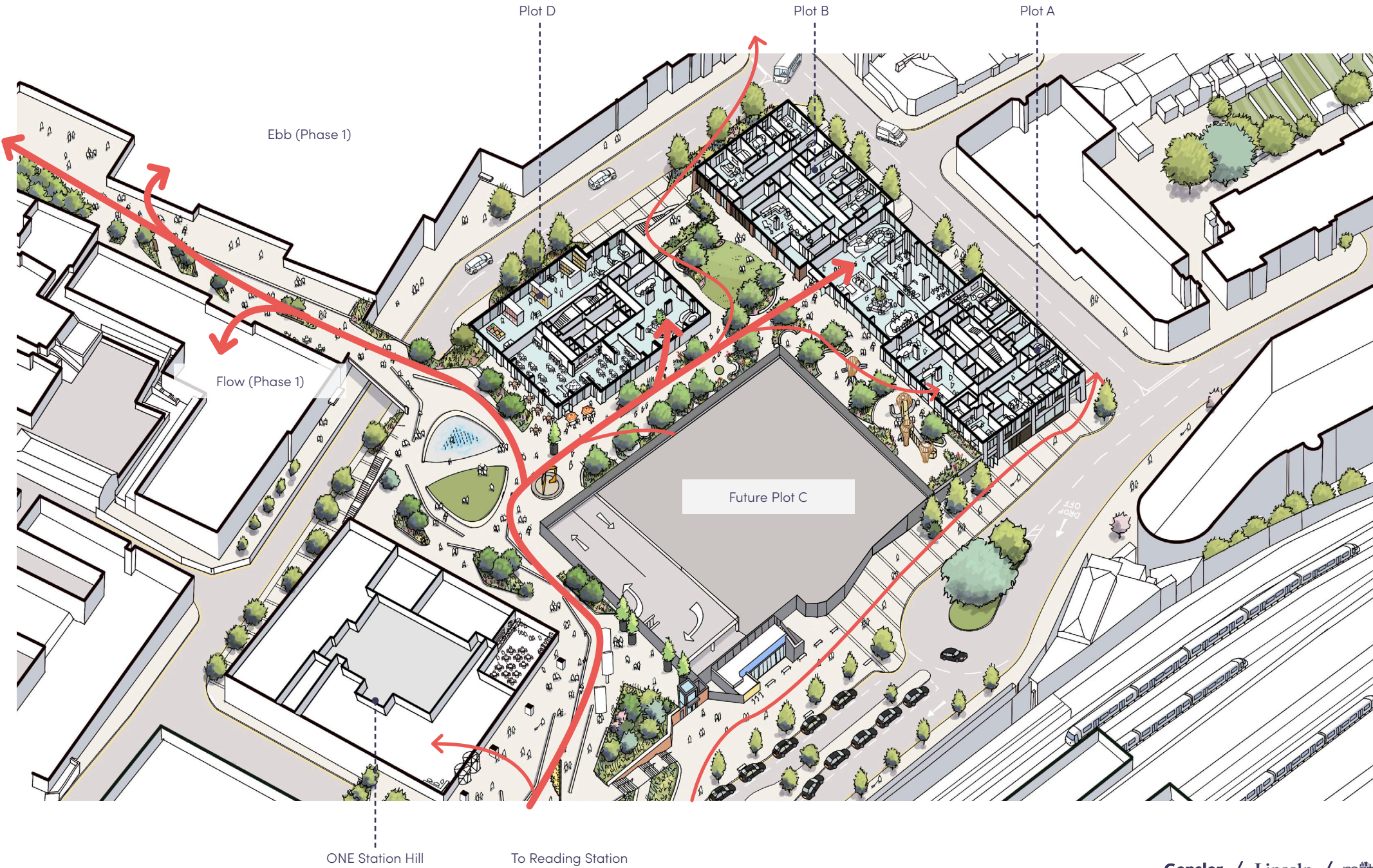
Podium Level and Upper levels - Building Separation Lines

5.5.4 Pedestrian Access

Pedestrian access has been carefully structured across both plaza level and street level to ensure legibility, inclusivity, and strong integration with the wider movement network of Station Hill.

The plaza level functions as the primary residential arrival, with clearly defined and generously proportioned entrances to the main lobbies of Plots AB and D. These entrances are aligned with the principal pedestrian desire lines through Station Hill Gardens, providing step-free access, clear wayfinding, and a strong visual relationship with the central public realm.

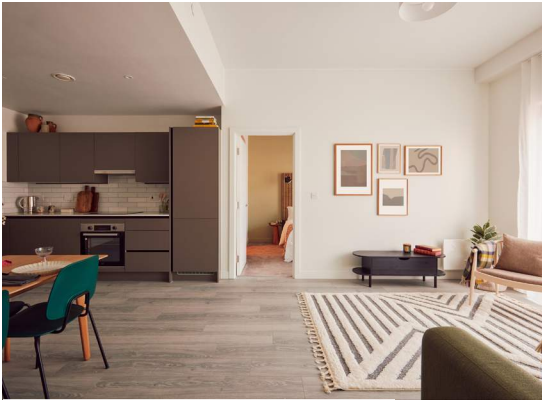
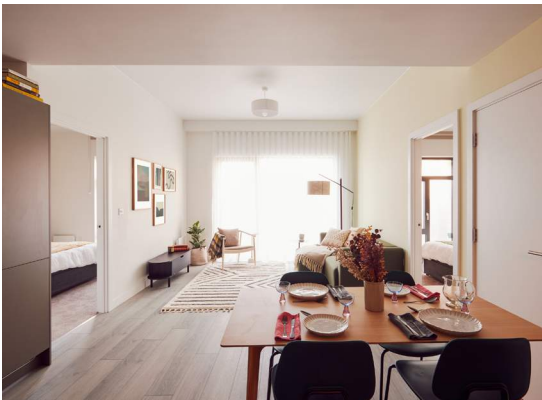
At street level, secondary entrances are provided on Greysfriars Road and Garrard Street to support permeability, convenience, and compliance with building safety requirements. These entrances are designed to integrate with active frontages, cycle routes, and footways, ensuring that pedestrian movement along surrounding streets remains continuous and animated.



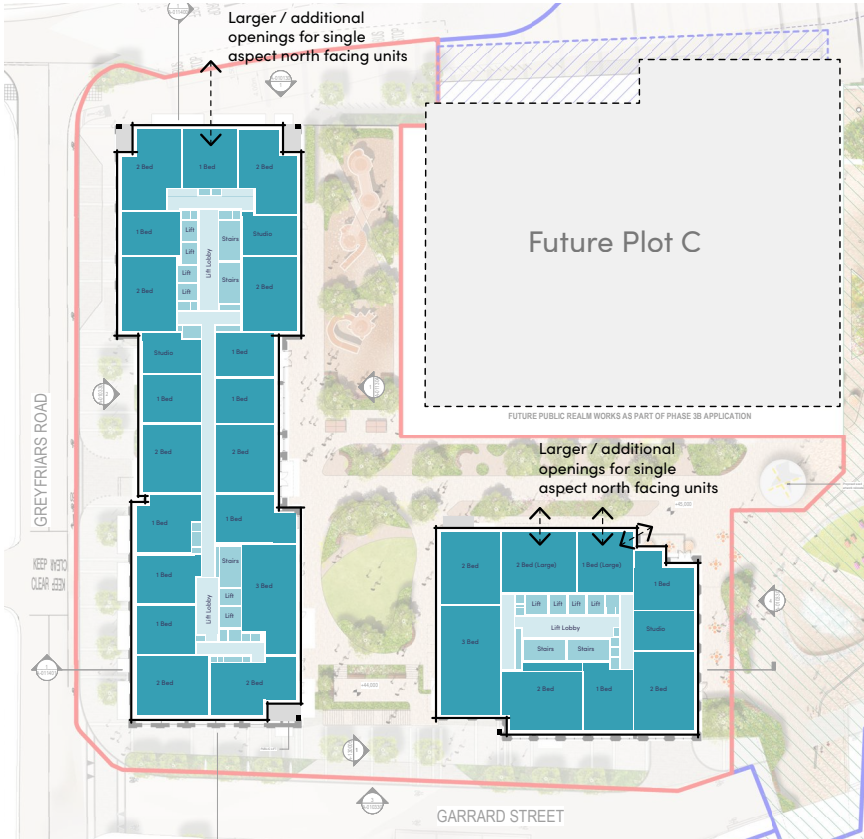
5.5.5 Residential Floor Layouts (Mid Level)

The typical residential floors are arranged around unit depths that optimise daylight, outlook, internal planning and net internal area. In the majority of units, the layouts are based on a typical depth of 7.8 metres, supporting a balanced mix of one, two and three bedroom homes with a range of aspect conditions. Long-reaching views are achieved above Level 5, enhancing both daylight and amenity value.

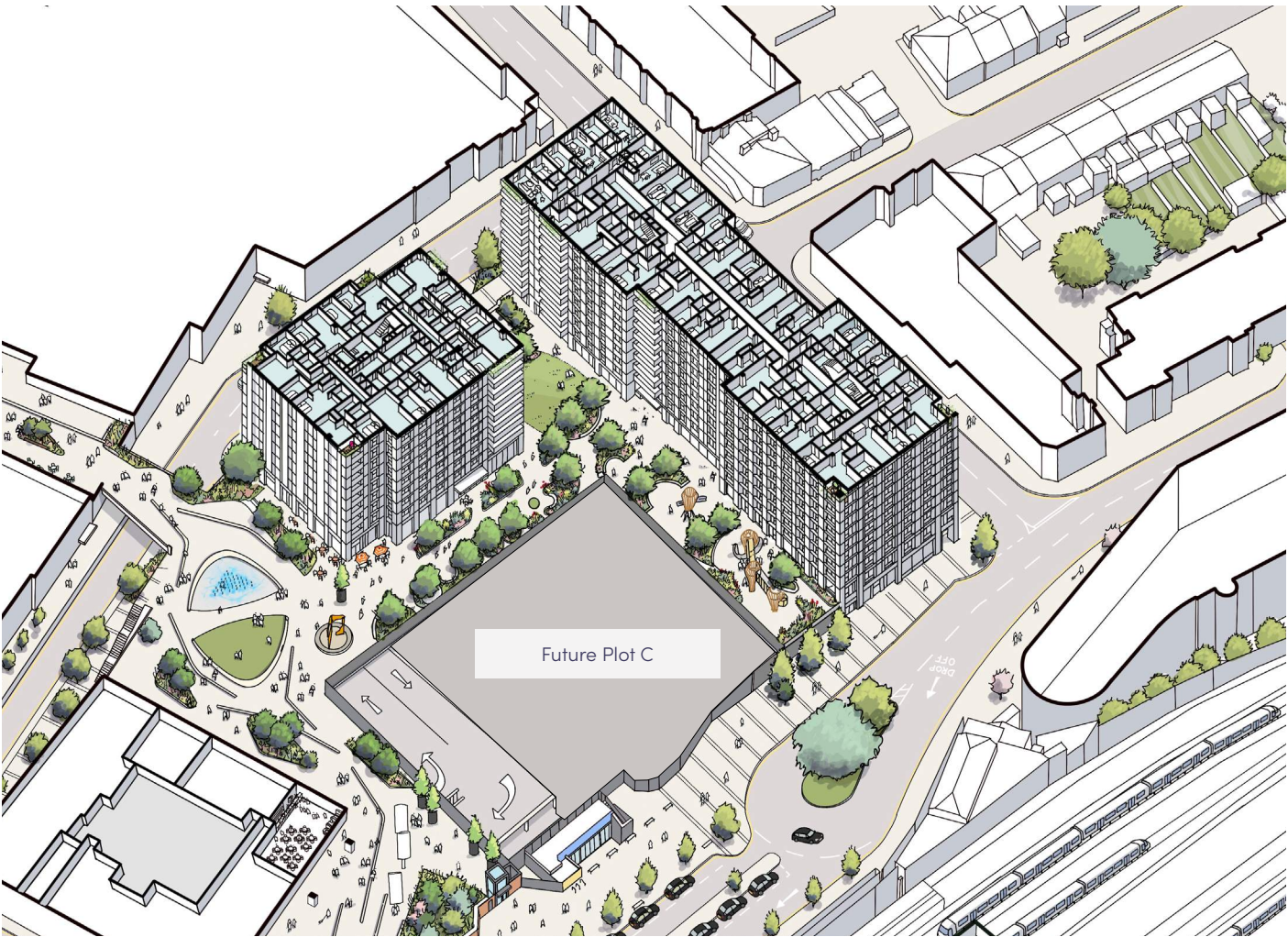
The residential floors are vertically stacked to simplify structural and services coordination and to ensure clear, repeatable layout logic across the building without compromises to ceiling heights or apartment organisation. The exception to this occurs in Plot D, where the three bedroom homes retain vertical continuity up to Level 7 before the mix transitions to a different arrangement on the upper floors to achieve a balance apartment mix for the entire building.



Apartment Design



Apartment Block Arrangement - Typical Level



3D of Typical floorplan

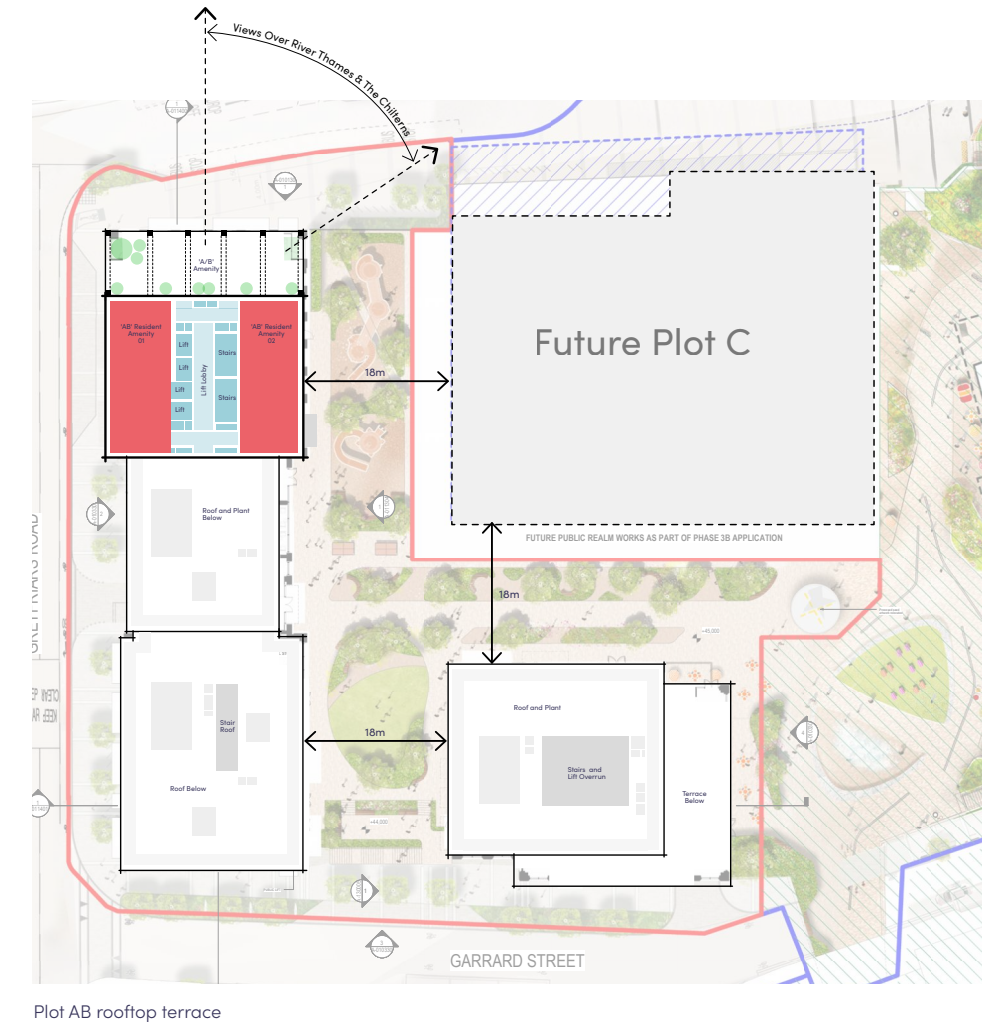
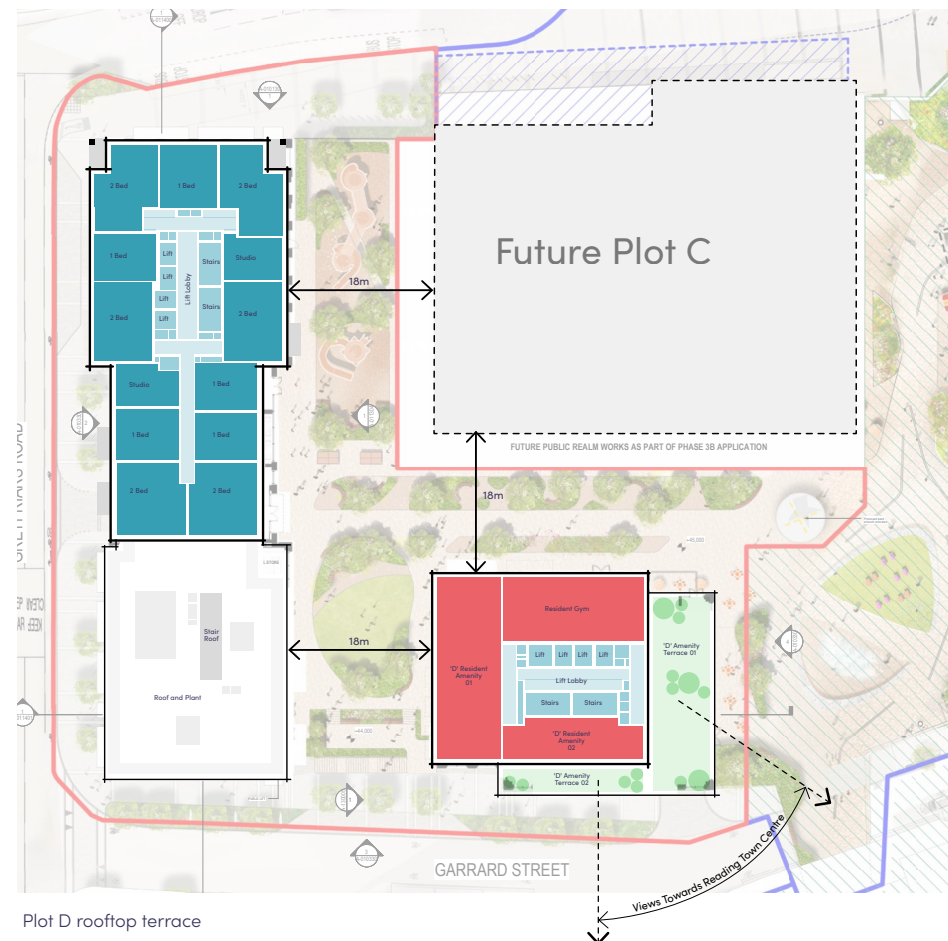
5.5.5 Residential Floor Layouts (Upper Level)

The upper amenity levels are conceived as elevated communal destinations that capitalise on the height and orientation of the buildings, offering residents generous shared lounges, work-from-home suites and wellness spaces directly connected to landscaped roof terraces. These terraces are designed as usable, well-proportioned external rooms in the sky—providing seating, planting, and sheltered zones—while framing long-range views toward Reading Station, the town centre skyline and the wider Thames Valley landscape.

By positioning amenity at upper levels, the scheme enhances the daily residential experience, promotes social interaction, and ensures that the best views are collectively shared rather than privatised.

Architecturally, the amenity floors are expressed through stepped massing that modulates the overall building form and establishes a clear hierarchy across Plots A, B and D. Taller elements terminate in more slender, articulated crowns, while intermediate setbacks create cascading terraces that visually reduce bulk and respond to the parameters.

This graduation in height—from the landmark northern volumes down toward the surrounding context—reinforces legibility within the masterplan and distinguishes primary, secondary and shoulder elements. The result is a coherent skyline composition where amenity levels both enrich the resident offer and play a critical role in breaking down mass, promoting outlook, and defining the identity of each building block.



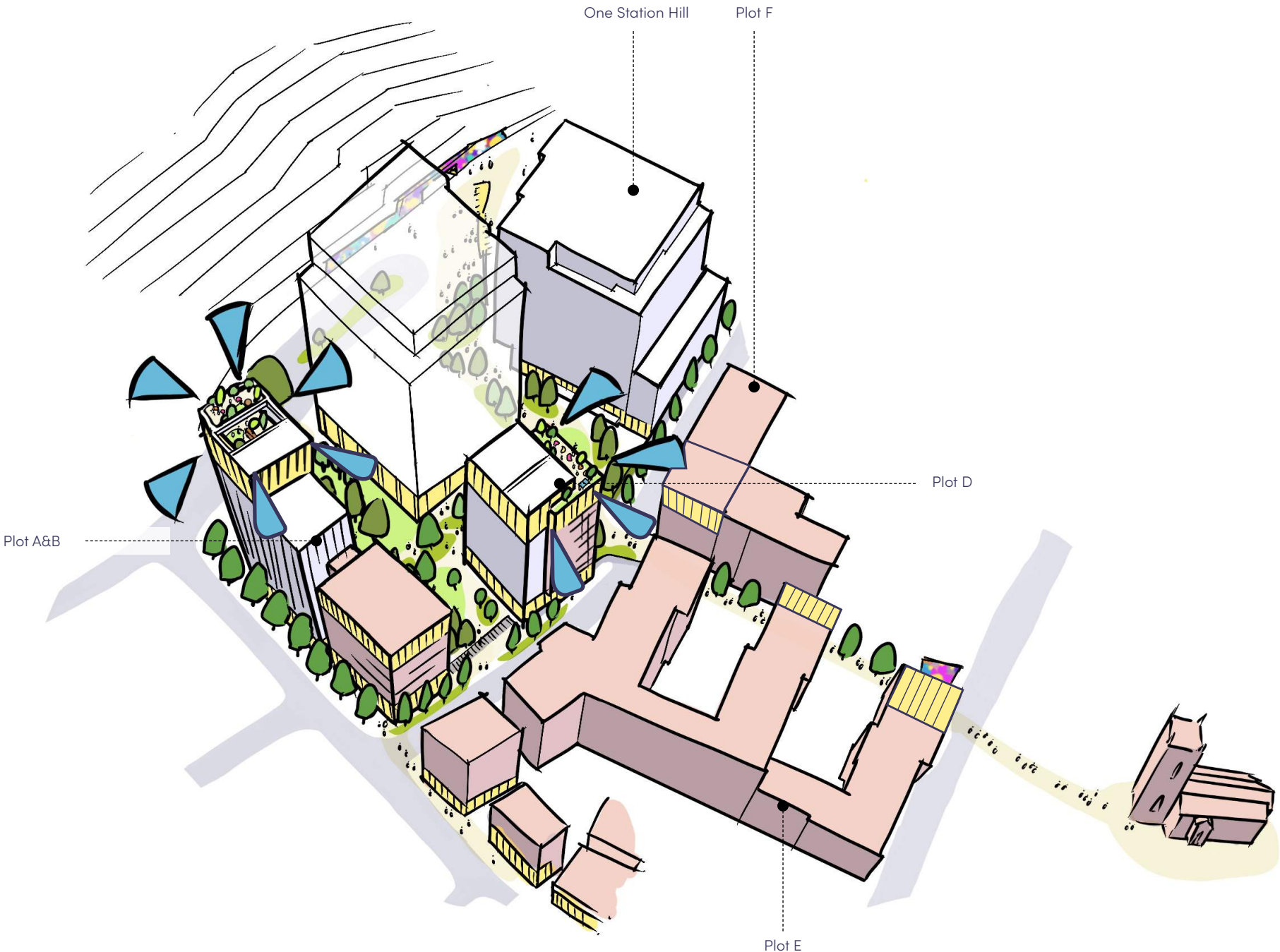
5.6 Appearance

5.6.1 Facade Concept

The façade concept is rooted in a clear hierarchy of base, middle and crown, responding to the Station Hill Design Code while reinforcing the buildings’ roles as prominent townscape elements within Station Hill. At street and podium level, the base is more expressive and tactile, using richer brickwork and greater material articulation to create visual interest at pedestrian scale and support active frontages. The middle elevations form the dominant body of the buildings and adopt a more regular, ordered rhythm, using consistent window proportions and balcony arrangements to express residential use while maintaining coherence across Plots AB and D.

The upper levels and crown are treated as lighter and more refined elements, subtly distinguishing the skyline through changes in detailing, setbacks, and material emphasis. Variations in brick tone draw on Reading’s historic palette while providing each plot with a distinct identity within a unified architectural language.

Balconies, window groupings, and vertical emphasis are used as key compositional tools, enhancing legibility, breaking down scale, and ensuring the façades respond both to close-range experience and longer-distance views across the town centre.



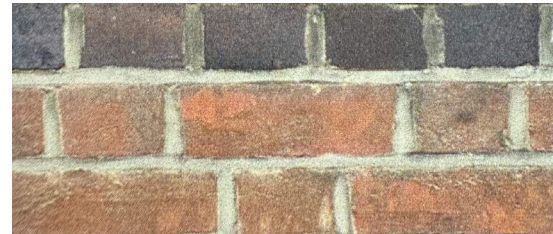
5.6 Appearance

5.6.2 Local Materials and Patterns

Studying Reading's historic brick façades, with their colours, bonds and patterns, has helped to contextualise the project while drawing from heritage and shaping a contemporary response for the city and its people.

Brick is the primary façade material proposed for this scheme, reflecting its long-standing association with the town's industrial and civic architecture. Variations in brick colour, tone, and bonding patterns draw directly from local precedents, allowing the façades to reference familiar textures and rhythms. This approach provides durability and permanence, while ensuring the buildings feel rooted in place rather than as standalone, generic forms.

Pattern and depth are further developed through changes in brick selection, the use of expressed lintels, and subtle modulation of reveals and balcony interfaces. These elements introduce richness and shadow at pedestrian level and help break down the scale of the elevations across their height.



5.6.3 Colours and Textures

Colour has been used deliberately to reinforce local identity while helping to articulate the massing and hierarchy of the buildings. The palette is drawn directly from the varied brick tones found across Reading, including warm reds, soft whites, buff tonal colours.

These colours represent the town's historic streets and industrial heritage, allowing the development to sit comfortably within its context while avoiding a uniform or monolithic appearance.

Lighter brick tones are concentrated on the taller building elements, giving them a more refined and civic character that allows them to read as landmark forms within the townscape, while darker and redder bricks provide depth, contrast, and a sense of solidity at key corners and lower storeys.



5.8 Design Summary

The scheme (Phase 3A) is conceived as a civic residential ensemble that completes the Station Hill masterplan through clarity of form, material richness and an animated relationship with the public realm. Its architecture balances urban intensity with legibility, using a composed massing strategy that steps and articulates to define streets, squares and gardens while contributing positively to the wider skyline.

A clear hierarchy of base, middle and crown gives the buildings a grounded presence at street level and a lighter, more expressive character as they rise, reinforcing their role as both backdrop and landmark within the city. Brick is employed as the primary material to root the architecture in Reading's heritage, while contemporary detailing, tonal variation and refined metal elements lend the scheme a confident, modern identity

