

STATION HILL
READING
PLOT F NEW STAIR

PIC E&F PROCO LLP

DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT
MAY 2026

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 OBJECTIVE

The application site comprises Plot F at Station Hill, Reading, an existing and fully constructed residential building forming part of the wider Station Hill Phase 1 development between Friar Street and Garrard Street. The building with 183 homes is occupied and benefits from an implemented planning permission, with all relevant conditions discharged. It is a Higher Risk Building, as defined by the Building Safety Act being 12 storeys above Friars Walk, (including ground floor) and 13 storeys above Garrard Street. It is registered with the Building Safety Regulator as HRB16267J2M6, Block F - Ebb & Flow, 12 Friars Walk, Reading, RG1 1DT.

Plot F is situated within a dense urban town centre context, characterised by a mix of residential, commercial and mixed-use development. The surrounding area includes recently completed and consented schemes. Of relevance to this application is the consented, but unconstructed, development at 35–39 Friar Street to the immediate east of the application site.

This planning application proposes the installation of an external second escape staircase close to the southeast corner of the building. As the building is already constructed and occupied, the proposal will enhance its existing fire safety provisions in response to changing regulatory expectations and best practice. This Design and Access Statement sets out the justification for the additional stair, the proposed design solution, and the key planning considerations associated with its implementation, including visual impact, relationship to neighbouring development, and effects on residential amenity. Overall, the purpose of the application is to secure planning permission for a safety-led intervention that improves means of escape while ensuring the development remains appropriate within its urban context.



Photograph of Plot F (Flow) taken from the northwest on Friars Walk.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.2 APPLICANT AND PROFESSIONAL TEAM

Applicant
PIC E&F PROPCO LLP

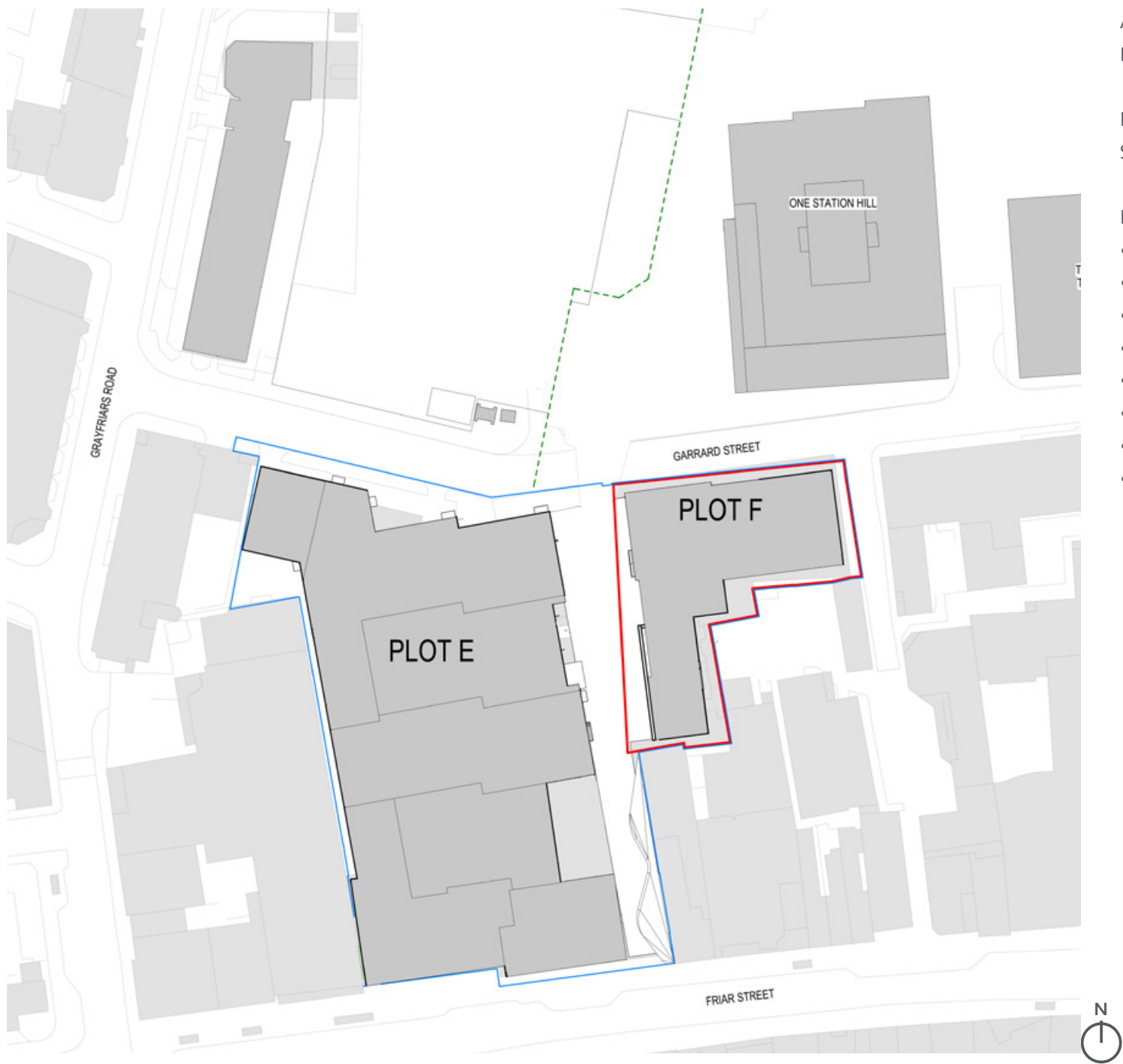
Development Manager
SH Reading (Phase 1) Limited

- Design Team
- Architects and Principal Designer: Arcadis
 - Structural Engineer: Ramboll
 - Fire and MEP Engineers: Hoare Lea
 - Daylight/Sunlight Assessment Consultant: GIA
 - Planning Consultants: DP9
 - Project Manager: Cast
 - Cost Consultancy: Cast
 - Construction Advice: Midgard

1.3 PLANNING POLICY

The proposal has been designed in keeping with local planning policy with particular attention being given to townscape and heritage issues. The design seeks to exploit the opportunities provided by the new stair to break up and add visual interest to the façade, whilst respecting the appearance of the approved and constructed design.

Planning policy is addressed in the Planning Statement.



Site location plan. Application site is outlined in red with the applicant's ownership boundary in blue.

2. THE SITE

2.1 LOCATION

The site is in central Reading, just southwest of the mainline station, between Friar Street and Garrard Street and overlooking Friars Walk.

It faces Friars Walk to the west and Garrard Street to the north. It overlooks a private carpark and Merchants Place to the south and east as well as the rear of properties on 30-39 Friar Street.

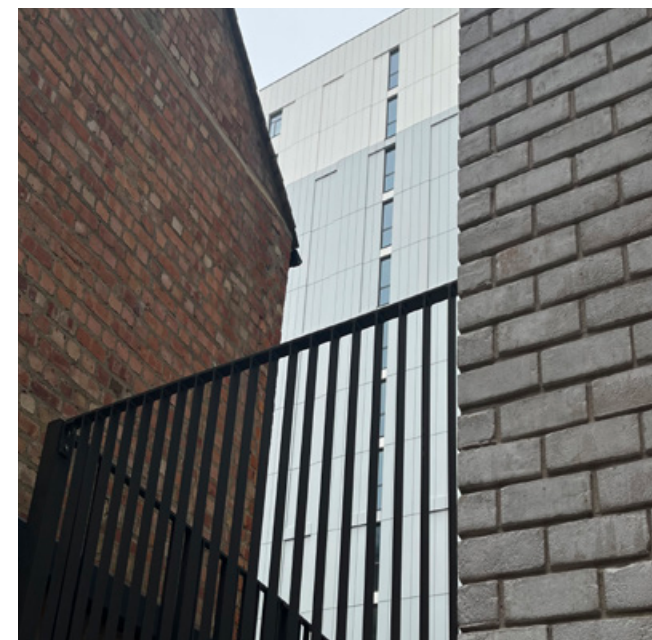
It is approximately 51.5m along Garrard Street and 43m along Friars Walk.

The site area is approximately 0.2ha. It is level along Friars Walk which is at a datum of +45.7AOD. This is also the level of the paved area to the southeast corner of the site where the stairs will be constructed. Garrard Street and Merchants Walk are at lower datum levels, with the Garrard Street being 39.2AOD close to the bridge that links Phase 1 and Phase 2 Station Hill.

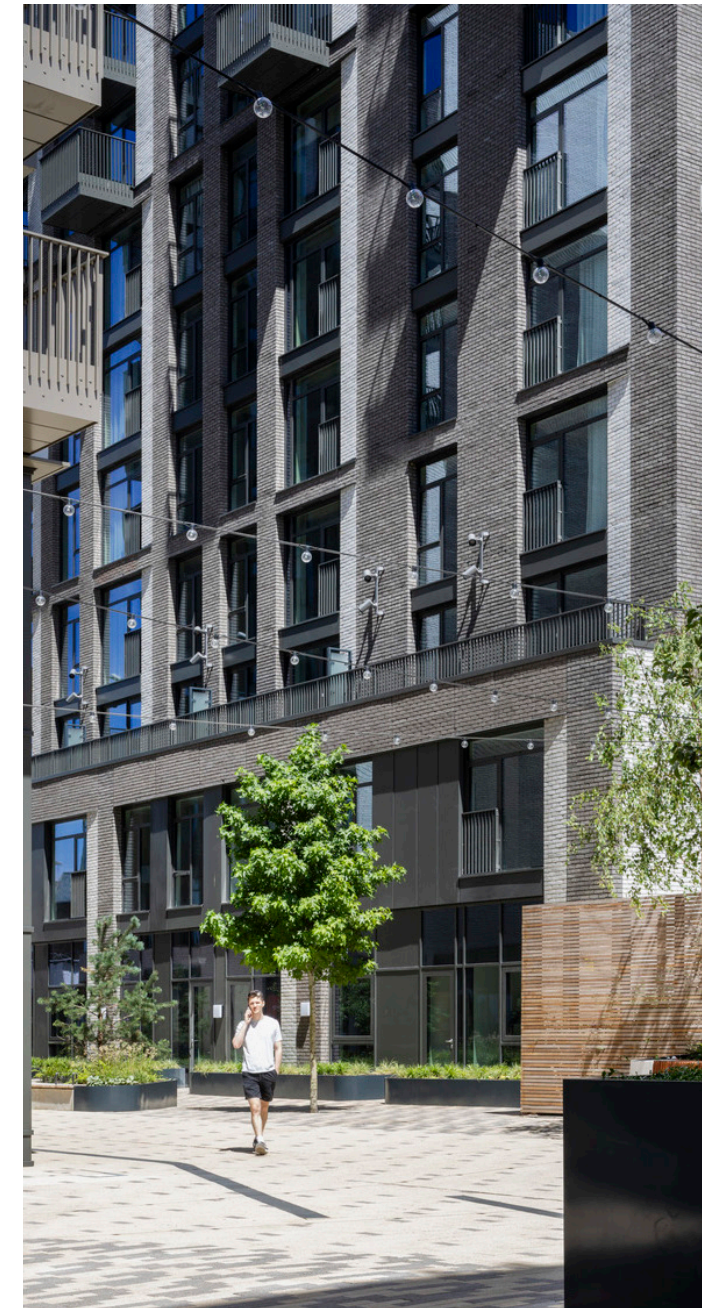
The main entrance to the building is from Friars Walk and there is a secondary entrance from Garrard Street, which also acts as the primary entrance for the fire services in the event of an emergency. The block is also accessible from lower ground and mezzanine levels in the podium, though secured and fire-controlled entrances.

There is an open walkway to the rear of the building (immediately to the east of the south leg) with direct and secured access to Merchants Place and to Friars Walk. The proposed stair will be located within this area.

The site is not in a conservation area, and the development will be not visible from any other conservation area. Likewise, it will not be visible from or impact on any listed buildings all of which are some distance from the site.



Above: Photograph of Plot F taken from Garrard Street. The application site will not be visible from Garrard Street. Below: Glimpse view of the east elevation of Plot F from north end of Merchants place. Further views from the west side of the street are shown in the following pages.



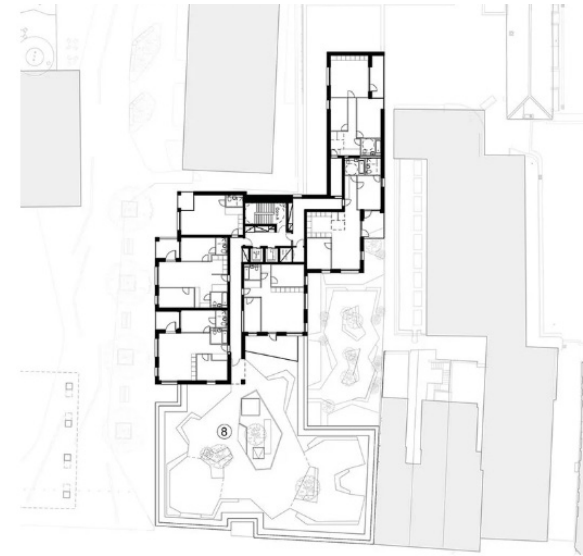
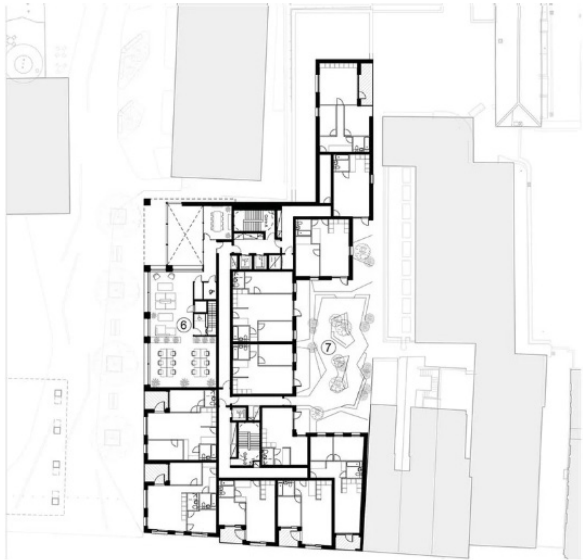
Above: Photograph of Plot F taken from Friars Walk. The proposal will be hidden behind the building when viewed from Friars Walk.

2.2
37-39 FRIAR STREET

Consent was granted in 2024 for the demolition of existing buildings, installation of basement and erection of part 7, part 11 storey mixed use building with 103 homes and Class E uses at 37-39 Friar Street. The proposed development abuts the application site along part of its eastern and southern boundaries. The north wing of the proposed building runs parallel to and at 7m from east elevation of Plot F (in accordance with commitments in Shaviram application’s Design & Access Statement). A bedroom and living room on floors 2-10 each have a single window that faces Plot F. The living rooms also have west facing windows.



Location of the consented Shaviram proposal (Credit Stafan Shaw Studio)



Proposed first and seventh floors of consented proposal. (Credit Stafan Shaw Studio)



Indicative section of through Plot F showing relationship with outline of consented Shaviram proposal.

3. THE EXISTING BUILDING

3.1 LAYOUT

Construction of Plot F, known as Flow, was completed in early 2024. It is L shaped in plan, with a taller 12 storey wing (above the Friars Walk level) facing Garrard Street, and an eleven-storey wing facing Friars Walk. It sits on a shared podium with Plot E (Ebb) which accommodates a ground and mezzanine car park, back of house facilities, cycle storage and mechanical and electrical plant. The podium also houses a smoke extract system from the carpark which exhausts to open air via a ground level louvre in the walkway between Plot F and the boundary to the site.

Plot F benefits the wider public and urban context with active frontage to Friar Street, provides a distinct urban and landscaped edge to Friar Street and Garrard Street, and creates a strong link from the station. The ground floor to Friars Walk accommodates the entrance, post rooms and amenity spaces.

The building’s lift core and stairs are located at the ‘elbow’ of the L with corridors t running east-west or north-south from the core. The east-west corridor is double loaded with apartments and the north-south

corridor, single loaded, with the corridor running along the eastern external wall. Plot F was designed to exceed the then current Building Regulations and associated guidance that were in place at the time the scheme was designed. The plans and the scheme constructed were reviewed by an Approved Building Inspector and the Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service. The scheme was subject to rigorous design development to ensure that it complied with all aspects of the regulations and best practice in relation to minimising the likelihood of fire, containing and suppressing fire and smoke spread and protecting life and property.

As noted above, Plot F has two wings serviced by a single central core at the 'elbow' of the building. This core is of fire resisting construction and has two lifts, and a stair. It provides a protected escape route from each floor to the outside of the building. It also allows and for fire services to safely reach the point of fire.

Once occupants have travelled downwards within the protected staircases, they are able to escape at grade. There are exits at lower ground level onto Garrard

When occupants have exited the building, they are then able to travel away from the building to a place of safety.

Sprinkler protection is provided to all the residential accommodation in line with the British Standard BS 9251:20124. An enhanced supply duration of 60 minutes is provided in line with recommendations from Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, as well as the duration requirements set out in the latest version of BS 9251:2021. Increasing the duration of the supply is considered to have a large benefit for the Fire and Rescue Service to mount an effective intervention, which is especially relevant in the upper storeys of a tall building.

The external walls of the building are constructed using only non-combustible materials and are finished in powder coated aluminium panels and brickwork.

Block F is therefore a fully compliant building, and the proposals will be an enhancement to the current compliant situation.



Above: Aerial view of proposed location of stair, indicated by red arrow. (Photograph taken during construction). Below: Amenity space at roof level. Location of top of stair indicated by arrow.

3. THE EXISTING BUILDING



Above: Photograph of existing elevation from proposed position of the stair.
Below: Photograph of the rear elevation of Plot F from the east side of Merchants Place. Stairs location highlighted by the arrow.



Existing ground floor plan.



Typical Upper Floor Plan, showing stair/lift core and corridors

4. PROPOSAL

4.1 DESIGN STRATEGY

The proposed design features an additional external staircase to the eastern elevation of Plot F, overlooking Merchants Place. This location ensures that the stairs:

- Is positioned in the least visible part of the site, when viewed from within the site and from surrounding areas.
- Has minimal or no impacts on neighbouring properties.
- Enhances the means of escape from the building.
- Is designed to be regulatory compliant with all parts meeting the latest guidance. Please see the fire engineer's statement submitted with this application.
- That the stair is safe and secure, being located within a publicly inaccessible area.
- Complementary in design and elevational treatment to the existing building.
- Enhances the existing east elevation by adding visual interest.

Options Considered

In developing and selecting the proposal alternative options were considered including:

- Constructing the new stairs within the building. This would have been extremely disruptive and reduced the number and mix of homes in the building, making it commercially unviable.
- Adding the stair to the south elevation of the north wing which would have been highly disruptive and very impactful on the amenity of residents and been more visible from the surroundings than the selected option.

Options were assessed against fire safety guidance, and this assessment confirmed the preferred option which is the subject of this planning application. It has additional benefits of:

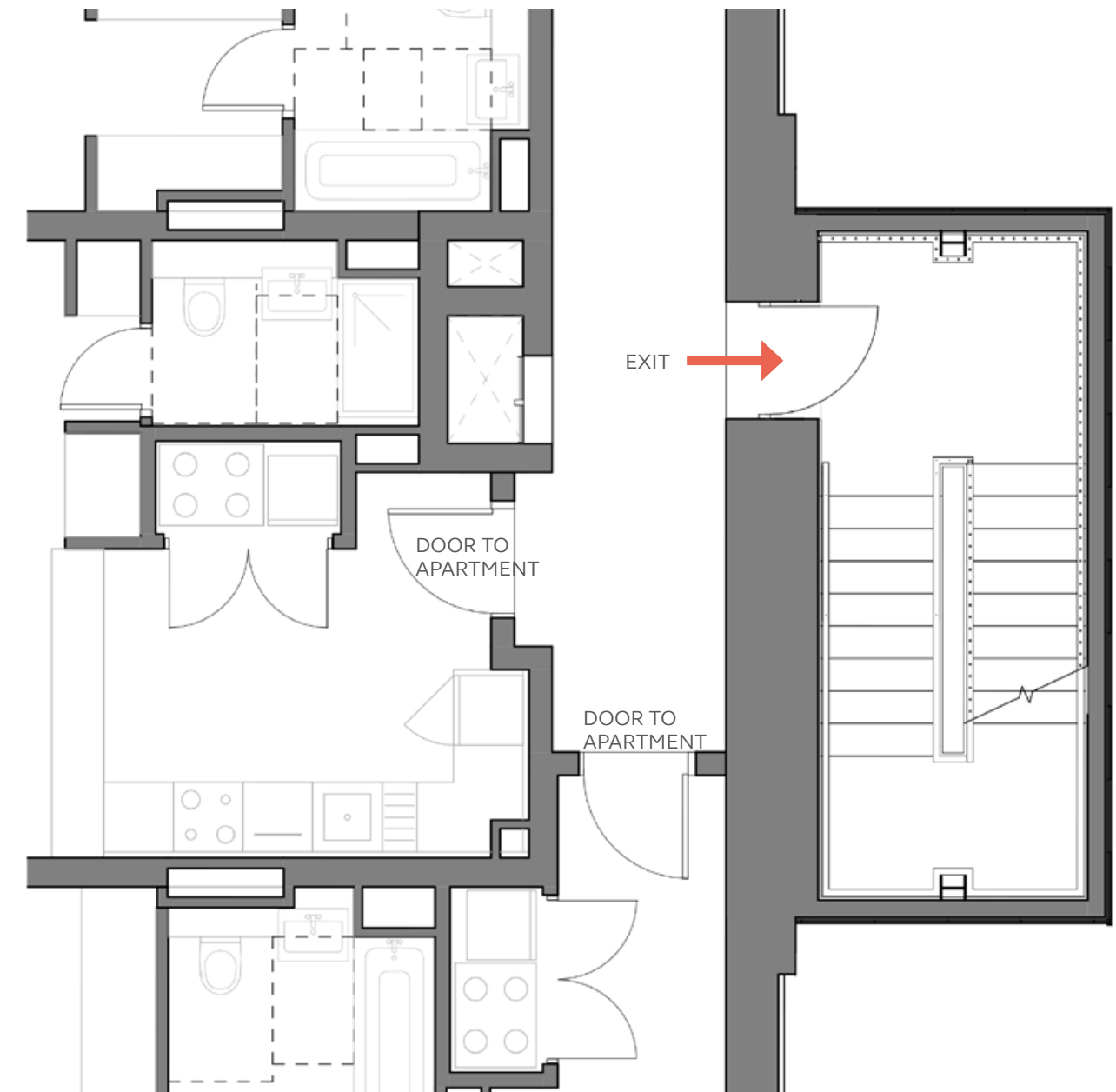
- Utilising an existing facade opening, slightly enlarged as the exit door from the corridors.
- Allows for alternative routes to safety at ground floor.

The proposed solution has also been assessed from a constructability perspective with Midgard, the building contractor for Phase 1. This has been done to ensure minimal disruption to residents during the works as well as ensuring the design will be regulatory compliant and buildable as the detail of the scheme is developed.

4.2 ACCESSIBILITY

All thresholds to the stair from the corridors will have level access.

The evacuation strategy for those in need of assistance is as the current strategy and is not impacted on by the proposals.



Proposed plan of a typical end of corridor, showing the new exit and stair.

4.3 LAYOUT

The stair is positioned to provide an enhanced exit from the southern corridor on each floor above first as well as the roof terrace.

The exit door from each corridor is positioned so that it is less than 7.5m from the end of the corridor whilst not being directly opposite the exit door from the apartment it faces.

The stair is planned so that the risers, thread, pitch and width of the stair and landings comply with regulations.

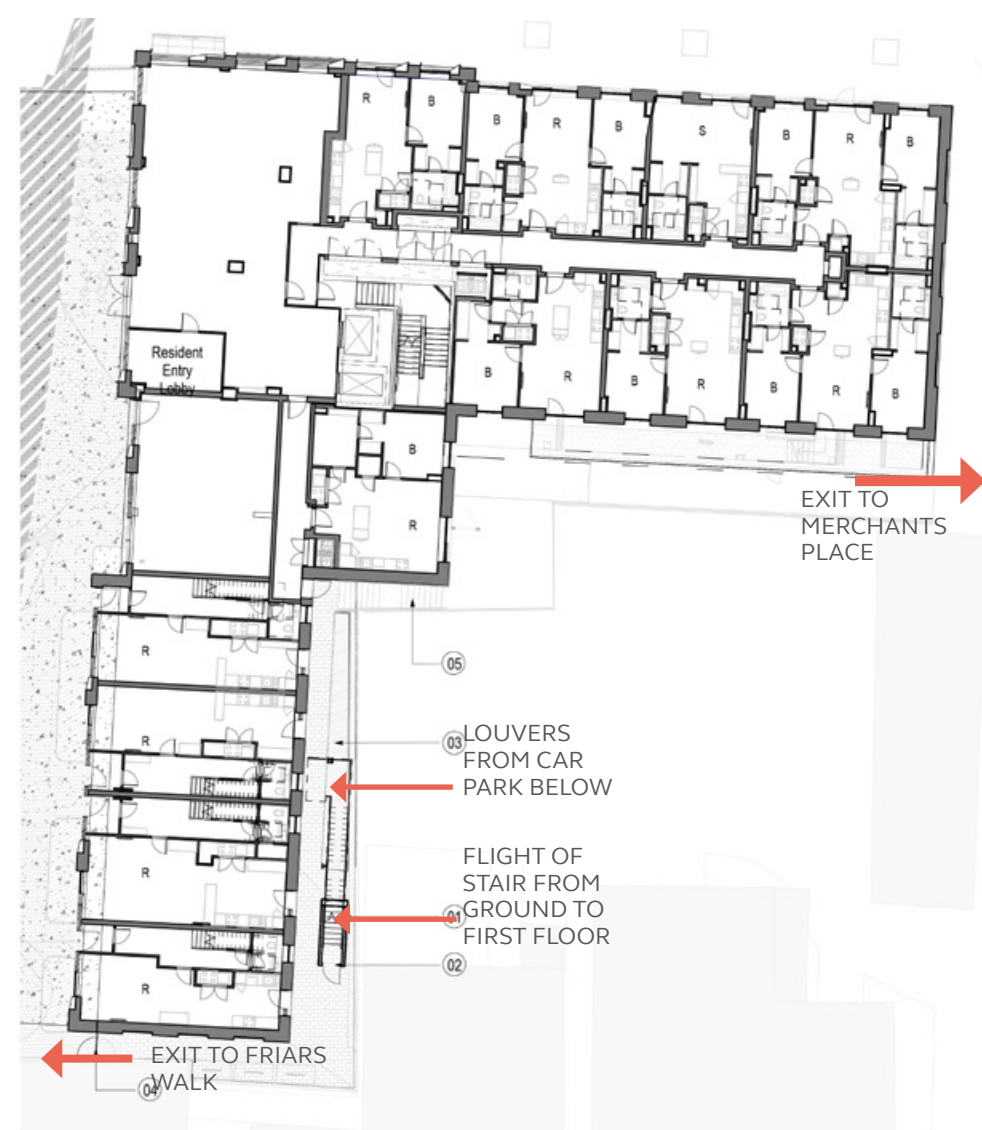
The lower level of the stair is set out so that it does not interfere with smoke exhausting from the car park beneath the podium in the event of a fire at that level.

The lower levels of the stairs (up to a minimum of 9m) are encased in 120-minute heat resisting construction to protect the stairs from hot smoke in the event of a fire in the car beneath the podium.

Above the 9m encasement, the end walls to the stair are also fire rated and the east wall has perforated cladding to enhance ventilation to the stairs.

This detailed setting out is in line with relevant regulatory guidance and the fire engineer's review.

The east elevation is within the site boundary and will be more than 4m from the face of the proposed development above first floor at 37-39 Friar Street.



Ground Floor Plan showing location of proposed stairs and exits from area.



Typical Upper Floor Plan showing location of proposed stairs and exist from corridor.

4. PROPOSAL

4.4 ARCHITECTURAL TREATMENT

The geometry of the stair enclosure is simple and elegant. It is in effect a box that sits off the building and raises its head above the parapet at roof level, visually breaking the parapet line and adding interest to the façade. The lower levels are held up on two elegant columns with the concealed structure tied back to the building at every landing level.

The stair is clad in a fire resisting cladding, in line with the latest regulations. This will be a sandwich panel of two layers of steel encasing insulation that provides fire resistant walls.

The panels are arranged vertically to match the existing walls and have metallic tones that tie into the current aesthetic. The colours will be:

- RAL 9010 Pure White
- RAL 7035 Light Grey
- RAL 7004 Signal Grey

Above 9m there is a requirement to provide ventilation to the stairs, and this will be provided though circular perforations in alternate panels to the east elevation. The stairs will be protected rain driven through these perforations by an internal line of louvers.



Render view of proposed stair from Merchants Walk

4.5
DESIGN SUMMARY

As noted above the visual impact of the scheme will be minimal and beneficial, breaking the parapet line of the eastern elevation and adding interest to it. The choice of material, finish and detailing will be complementary to the existing.

It will not affect residential amenity whilst giving residents the benefit of having an additional escape stair.

The scheme will have minimal impact on neighbouring buildings. Should the proposals for 37-39 Friar Street come to fruition it will also have minimal impact on that scheme as demonstrated in the rights-of-light report. In the event that the scheme is built the stairs will be concealed from any vantage point on Merchants Place.

4.6
AREAS

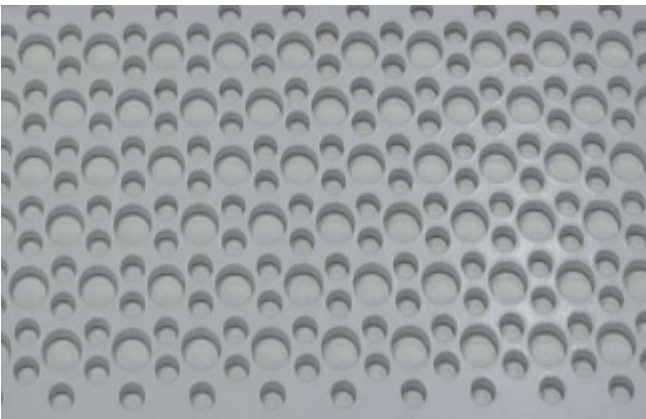
The site is located within the Core Strategy Area, the Reading Central Area Action Plan and the ‘Station/ River’ Opportunity Area. The Reading Station Area Framework positions the site within the wider Station Hill area, which is promoted for mixed-use redevelopment with a mix of residential, commercial, leisure and retail uses.

Level	GIA m²	GEA m²
Ground	3	5
First	15	19
Second to Roof 1	3	17
Total	166m²	209m²

4.7
CONCLUSION

The proposals set out in this DAS will enhance the safety of an already safe building with an additional, regulatory compliant means of escape stair. The design:

- Respects the consented scheme, with minimal impact to internal planning.
- Meets the quality aspirations of the Station Hill development.
- Is cognisant of the architecture of the building as constructed with cladding to the stairs that will blend with the architecture of the block.
- Minimises impact on the surroundings.
- Demonstrates on-going commitment to delivering a best-in-class build-to-rent



Indicative sample for perforated panel.

Left: Bay study of proposed east elevation showing:
1. Power coated aluminium panel to match those on existing elevation.
2. Joints in panels to align and match those on existing elevation.
3. Perforated panel with rain deflecting louvers behind.





