

05 LANDSCAPE & PUBLIC REALM

INTRODUCTION

Project Context

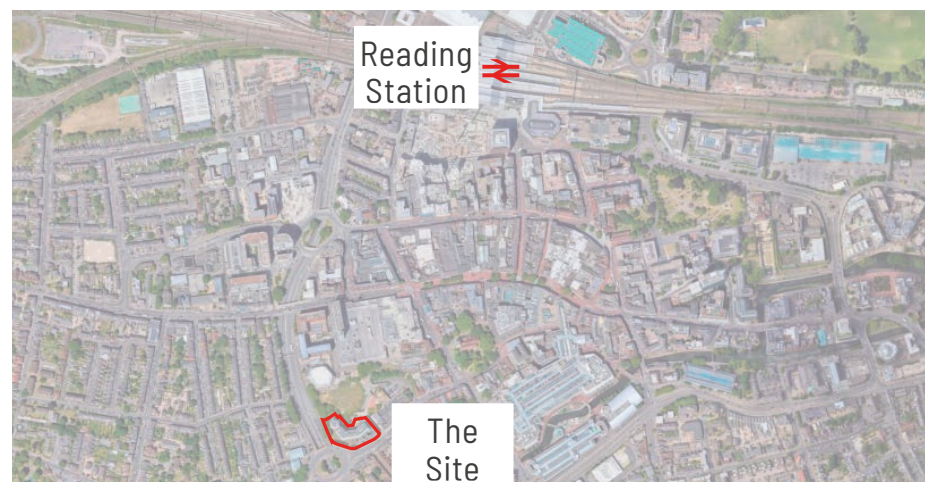
Exterior Architecture (ExA) have been appointed by S2Estates, to develop the landscape proposals for Flint Street, Reading, a residential-led scheme. ExA have worked closely in collaboration with JTP Architects and the wider project team to develop the strategic approach.

Purpose of the Section

This chapter sets out the landscape strategy for the various spaces that constitute the landscape scheme, the composition and design approach. This chapter should be read in conjunction with the associated application drawings and all other information submitted in support of the planning application.

Site Location

Flint Street is located at the corner of Castle Street and the A329 (IDR), approximately a 12 minute walk south of Reading Train Station. The site lies within Reading's 'West Side Major Opportunity Area' (2018) and the 'Minster Quarter' development framework masterplan (2018). Pedestrian access to the site is via Castle Street, Cusden Walk and San Francisco Libre Walk, with vehicular access via a service road off Castle Street.



Site Location



Site Location

LOCAL SITE CONTEXT

Local Site Context

Within 100 metres of the site, a range of community uses are present, all connected by the existing pedestrian pathway network, which links directly to the site. The site is located along the north west border of the Reading Council Conservation Area, and has significant views of the listed buildings along Castle Street. Additionally, vegetated corridors extend towards and integrate with the site, enhancing its connection to the surrounding landscape.

Refer to the Reading Borough Council 'Saint Mary's Butts Castle Street Conservation Area' map dated 04/08/2008 for additional information regarding the Conservation Area.

Legend

- - - Site boundary
- - - Existing pedestrian network
-  Reading Minster Church
-  St Mary's Church
-  Salvation Army Reading Central
-  The Hexagon Theatre
-  Broad Street Mall & car park
-  Reading Street Food Market
-  Magistrates' Court
- Listed buildings
- Existing vegetation



Surrounding Context

READING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STUDY

A thorough understanding of Reading's distinctive character is fundamental to shaping a design proposal that responds appropriately to its context. The town's identity is characterised by a rich interplay of heritage assets and contemporary development, a network of varied pedestrian streetscapes, and long-range views and vistas – often oriented towards key landmarks or framed by established vegetation – that contribute to its visual structure and sense of place.

This character study will directly inform the proposed design, ensuring it reinforces these defining qualities and integrates sensitively within Reading's evolving urban fabric.



A mix of Old and New

Reading's townscape blends historic character with modern development, where heritage elements peek through newer interventions and tell the story of a town evolving over centuries.

Contrasting Materials

- Modern brick, render, stone and concrete sit beside traditional white render, exposed timber and red clay tiles.
- Cobblestones appear in patches, surrounded by asphalt and concrete paving

Contrasting Forms

- Angular, geometric or box-like shapes oppose more irregular, asymmetrical silhouettes.

Contrasting Texture

- Smooth render and timber detailing contrast with rough aggregate and utilitarian surfaces.
- Ground textures vary between cobble, asphalt, and pebble concrete, adding tactile variety.



Vibrant Pedestrian Streets

Reading includes a variety of walkable pedestrian streets with active frontages that encourage social interactions.

Historic High Streets

- Framed by ornate red-brick Victorian buildings
- Narrow, enclosed feel with uniform red brick paving
- Lined with retail units, creating a traditional commercial atmosphere

Tree-Lined Boulevards

- Wide, open space with mature trees and seating
- Mix of high street shops and services
- Decorative bunting adds to a lively, welcoming setting

Intimate Side Streets

- Narrower, more informal in character
- Mix of older and newer buildings

READING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER STUDY



Long Views and Vistas

Views are layered and framed by vegetation, drawing the eye towards prominent buildings and creating a sense of depth.

Framing and Focus

- Trees and planting define view corridors
- Vegetation directs attention to key landmarks
- Natural framing adds clarity and visual structure

Focal Landmarks

- Views often end at historic or civic buildings
- Architectural features serve as orientation points
- Built forms contrast with the soft foreground

Depth and Movement

- Layering of elements creates visual interest
- Vistas unfold progressively, encouraging exploration
- Shifting views add rhythm and narrative to the townscape



Historic Buildings & Public Space Variety

Reading's town centre showcases a rich mix of historic buildings that shape its diverse and characterful public spaces.

Medieval Ecclesiastical

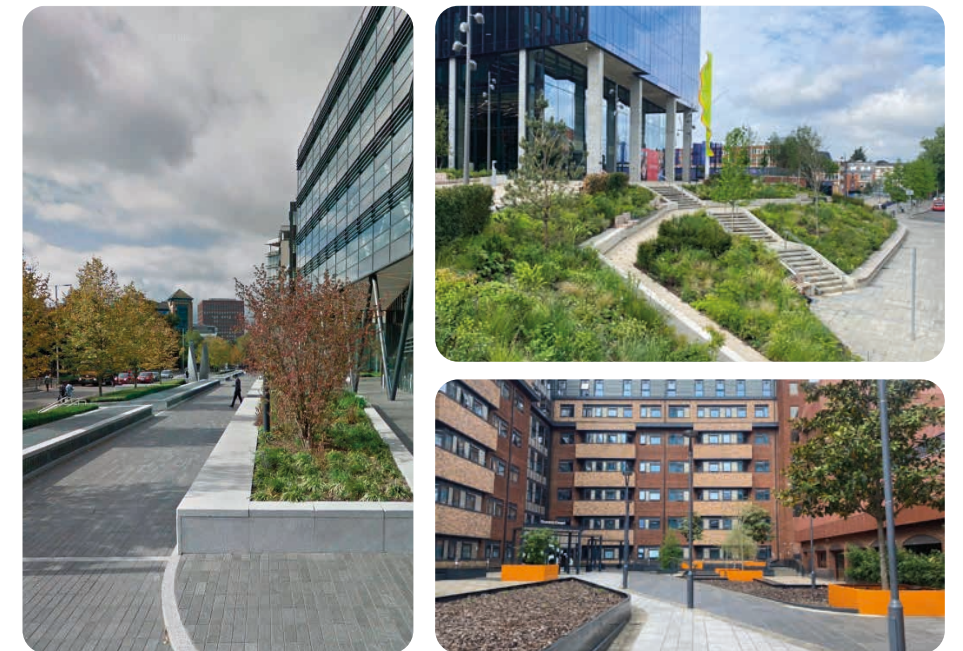
- Prominent single building entrance with limited passive surveillance
- Open forecourt allows clear views of churches and accommodate large gatherings, with seating set back.

Victorian Civic Grandeur

- Main entrance aligns with the street; secondary doors and ground-level windows enhance surveillance and connectivity.
- Formal square features linear seating, trees in hardstand, and flexible event space.

Tudor Domestic Vernacular

- Multiple doors and windows create strong street connectivity.
- Active frontages with limited public realm amenity.



Modern Public Realms

Reading's newer public spaces reflect a contemporary approach, with an emphasis on clean geometry, durable materials, and structured planting that balances function with visual clarity.

Form

- Strong linear layouts with long, straight edges.
- Regular, geometric shapes create a sense of order.
- Open sightlines maintained through minimal visual clutter.

Materials

- Hard, robust finishes in concrete and stone, predominantly in grey tones.
- Materials are selected for durability and low maintenance

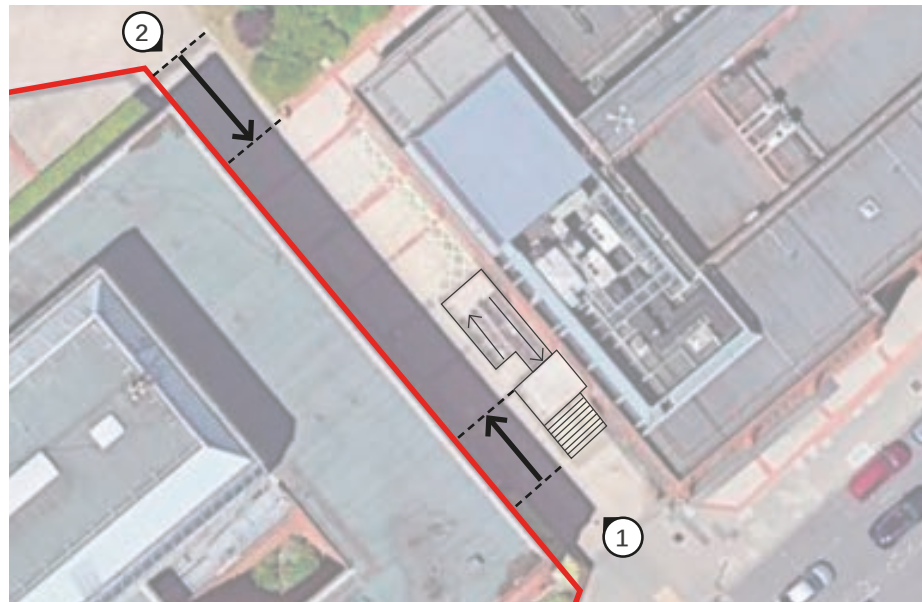
Vegetation

- Emphasis on tree planting.
- Low-growing planting ensures visibility and safety.

EXISTING SITE LEVELS

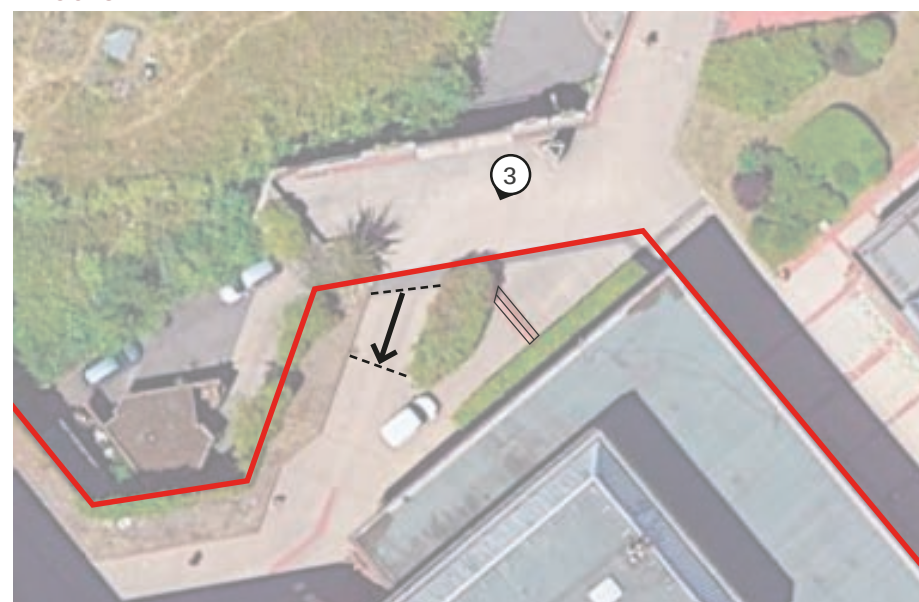
The existing site presents a number of level-related constraints, with notable changes in gradient across the boundaries. These conditions require careful consideration in the design of proposed finished levels to ensure accessibility, functionality, and the delivery of a high-quality public realm that responds sensitively to the site's surrounding topography.

Area 01



- The pedestrian pathway rises to meet existing ramps and steps providing access to the adjacent Magistrates' Court, a site identified for future redevelopment. A clear strategy is required to retain current access while avoiding constraints on future development potential.

Area 02

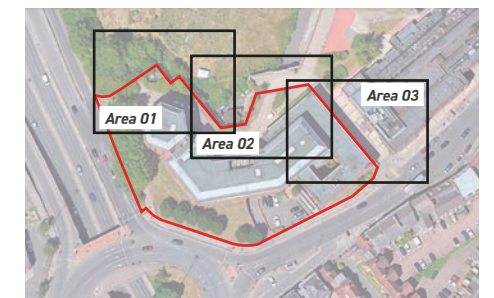


- The pedestrian pathway slopes down to the boundary on one side of the raised planter and connects via steps on the other. Proposed levels must ensure equitable, step-free access while tying into existing boundary levels to maintain connectivity with the wider pedestrian network.

Area 03



- The adjacent site, identified for future development, sits at a significantly lower level than the proposed site, with existing trees located along the shared boundary. Proposed levels in this area must be carefully designed to avoid constraining future development potential or impacting the retained trees.



Key Plan

KEY VIEWS & VISTAS

Sightline Opportunities

From street level within the site boundary, key views and vistas will be experienced by the public. These visual connections will be carefully considered in the design of the public realm to ensure they are acknowledged and enhanced.

- **View point 1: Reading Minister Church**
① Potential long view towards historic landmark.
- **View point 2: Historic Castle Street**
② Open vista of listed buildings along southern edge of Castle Street
(Identified as a significant view in the Reading Borough Council St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation Area Appraisal, March 2008)
- **View point 3: Almshouses**
③ Long view down open space running between parallel terraces
(Identified as a significant view in the Reading Borough Council St Mary's Butts / Castle Street Conservation Area Appraisal, March 2008)
- **View point 4: Cusden Walk**
④ Framed view towards modern commercial centre.
- **VIEW POINT 5:** Zone of visual sensitivity
- ⑤ **VIEW POINT 5:** Viewpoint description.



Contextual Views Plan

LANDSCAPE CONSTRAINTS

Key Landscape Constraints

The landscape design must address several key constraints. These include the presence of existing trees on site, connecting into the existing pedestrian pathway network, significant level changes / drops across the site, existing road noise, and large areas of public realm receiving limited sunlight. These factors have informed the design process and highlighted areas for appropriate design decisions.

Legend

- Site boundary
- All-day shade areas
- Low Sunlight areas
- Existing embankment
- Existing trees
- Significant level change / edge
- Noise impact from road
- Access point
- Vehicle access below
- Existing road
- Magistrates' Court
- Existing pedestrian
- Existing pedestrian crossing points
- On podium
- Existing residential areas



Constraints Diagram

LANDSCAPE OPPORTUNITIES

Key Landscape Opportunities

The site presents several key opportunities. The building arrangement allows for the design of pedestrian streets that improve connectivity within the existing pedestrian network. The site benefits from active street frontages with good sunlight levels, allowing for the development of an attractive and comfortable public realm. Additionally, under the existing trees, there is opportunity for the inclusion planting to increase the site biodiversity.

Legend

- Site boundary
- Sun path
- Good sunlight zone
- Key views
- Gateway node
- Future pedestrian movement
- Active frontage
- Public realm activation zone
- Opportunity for future connection
- Opportunity for planting
- Amenity opportunity
- Existing trees to be retained
- Potential spill-out space



Opportunities Diagram

PROPOSED VISION



Coachmakers Gateway

A welcoming threshold into Reading's town centre, honouring heritage, movement, and community. An urban landscape will blend heritage with modern sustainability, to create a timeless place of gathering and transition, marking the gateway to the heart of the town.

Heritage Craftsmanship

Movement, Transition & Connection

Urban Quarter Feel

Landscape & Public Realm

DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Three key design principles have been established to guide the design of the landscape and public realm



Historical Glimpses

Local Coachmakers

- Celebrate and reference the 19th century coach manufacturing workshop William Vincent Ltd that operated on part of the site from 1805 to 1899, through materials and forms

Preservation

- Maintaining existing open views and vistas of important historical sites and town landmarks

Town Character

- Integrating the language of layering vegetation and framing views
- Exploring the materiality of the townscape to create a material palette that complements and celebrates the surrounding historical features



Green Connections

Green infrastructure

- Protecting existing trees and green spaces
- Improving green links beyond the site boundary
- Implementing a strong green infrastructure to soften the public realm
- Creating connected canopies

Sustainable Urban Greening

- Providing seasonal variety and all year round interest
- Boosting onsite ecology and biodiversity
- Low maintenance plants to reduce water usage.

Combat Climate Change

- Unique and floristically diverse gardens, natural play features, ecology features
- Feature trees and species of significance that are climate resilient



Places for People

Pedestrian Friendly Connections

- Providing improved pedestrian connections to the wider town context
- Creating safe and easily traversible paths of travel
- Providing a range of legible, well lit and visually appealing spaces

People Orientated Spaces

- Providing spaces to rest and relax
- Allowing for immersion in nature

Support

- Furniture and seating areas to support a range of activities
- Space for community, groups, one-to-one
- Space for children with door-step and integrated play features
- Multigenerational communities

DESIGN LANGUAGE & FORM

Design Language & Form

The proposed design language and forms respond to both the site's historical context and its contemporary vision, creating a framework that anchors the proposal within the local identity while projecting a forward-looking character

Heritage



Coachmakers



Reading Mister Church

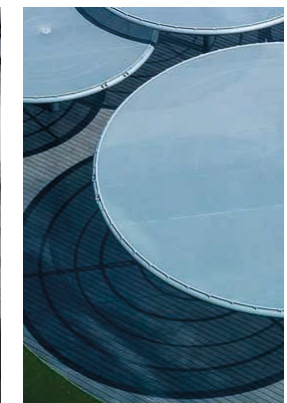
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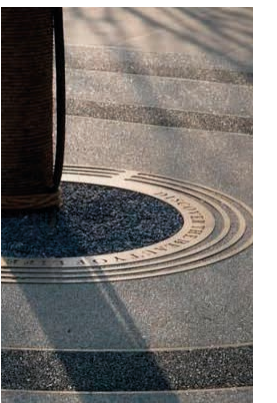
Paving details and patterns



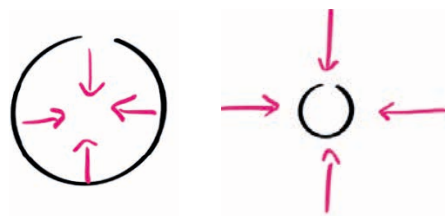
Furniture arrangements



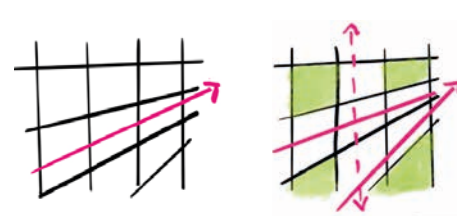
Fixture details



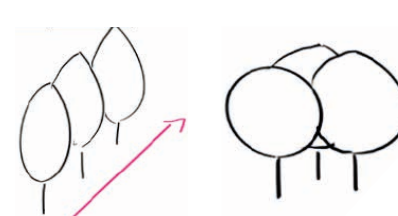
Shaping Movement & Transition



- Incorporation of focal points to support areas where welcoming and orientation are functions of the space
- The use of circular forms to define areas intended for gathering and socialising



- The use of a distorted grid pattern to define and orientate areas where way-finding, transition, and movement are identified as primary functions of the space



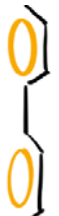
- The use of tree groves or rows to screen or guide where transition and movement are key spatial functions
- Strategic placement of marker trees to signal arrival points and support welcome and orientation functions



- The use of distorted or irregular edges to accommodate pocket seating areas, supporting functions of contemplation and relaxation within the space



- The use of asymmetric composition to establish spatial hierarchy in areas where transition and movement are key functions



- The use of distorted or non-linear routes to incorporate play in areas where it is a primary function of the space

CHARACTER AREAS

The site is divided into a series of Landscape character areas as a mechanism to distinguish between differing programmes of each part of the site. The character areas present an opportunity to create spatial variety in the public and private realm, and define areas of activities and/or character.

A structured palette of materials and planting will be used across the different character areas to provide differing characters but still create visual unity and a cohesive landscape design.

Castle Street

Responding to the setting of the conservation area through rhythmical tree planting that softens the building frontage and enhances the historic streetscape.

Cusden Walk

The potential to become an intimate side street, providing a locals cut-through from Castle Street

Coachmakers Gardens

Softening the hostile road edge to create a comfortable and inviting boundary that welcomes people in while protecting the development.

Flint Street

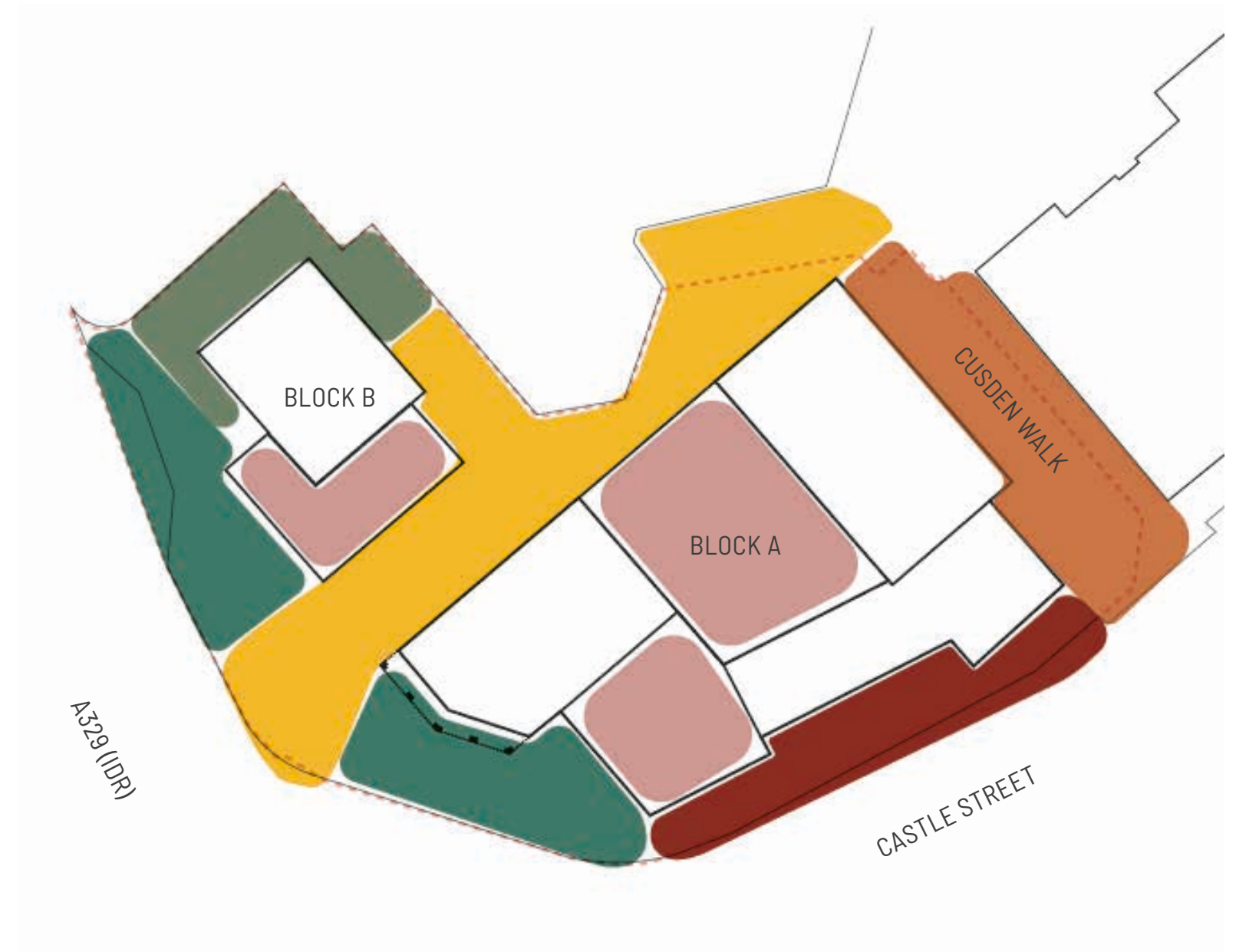
A lively and engaging pedestrian route that functions as a gateway to the town centre, while also encouraging people to pause, interact, and enjoy the space.

The Yard

A private outdoor residential amenity space that provides relaxation and respite

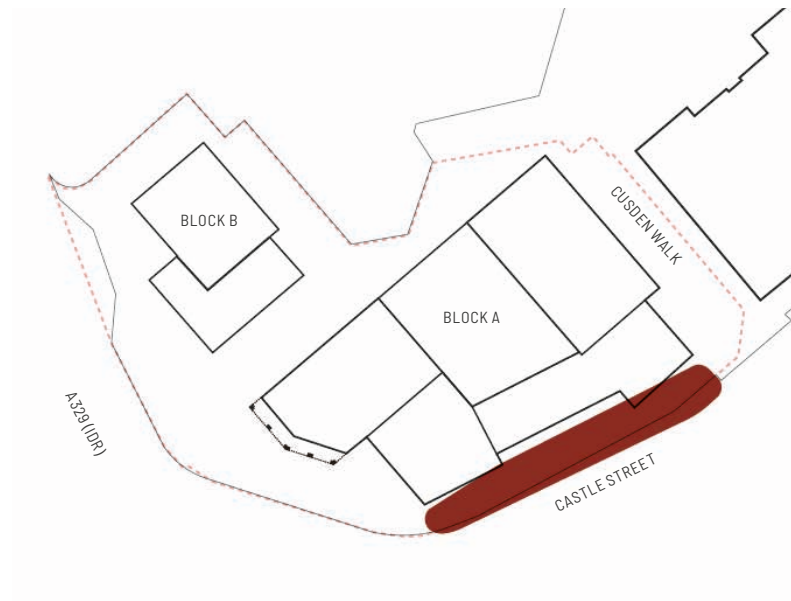
Coachmaker's Courtyards

An elevated outdoor residential amenity space encouraging recreation and social engagement



Character Areas Diagram

CHARACTER AREAS - CASTLE STREET



Key Plan

The Castle Street frontage forms a key transitional edge between the site and the surrounding conservation area. The proposed landscape design responds sensitively to this historic setting by introducing rhythmical tree planting that softens the building façade and enhances the streetscape character. This approach helps to mediate between the scale of the new development and the finer grain of the conservation area, reinforcing a sense of place while contributing to a greener, more welcoming public realm along Castle Street.



Greened street edge and protected lobby entrance space



Rhythmical tree planting

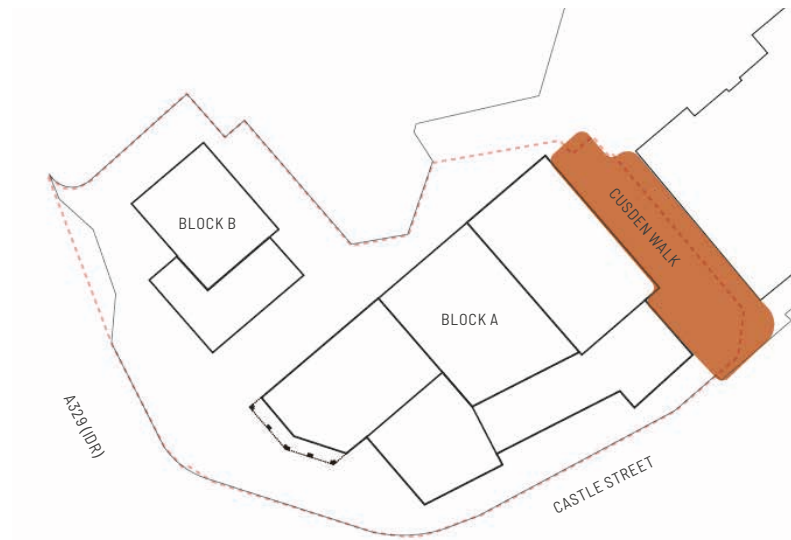


Comfortable waiting / greeting spaces



Defined building entrance

CHARACTER AREAS - CUSDEN WALK



Key Plan

Cusden Walk has the potential to evolve into an intimate side street, offering a local pedestrian link between Castle Street and the heart of Minster Quarter. The space will serve as a transitional threshold, providing a sense of arrival into the wider public realm while supporting everyday movement and local activity. There is opportunity to improve wayfinding beyond the red line boundary through marker / feature tree planting and the installation of bunting, aligning with the Reading town character. Garden beds and tree planting are to be located to frame commercial unit spill out spaces, maximise softening of the street, and in consideration of building accesses.



Intimate side street



Marker trees



Bunting

CHARACTER AREAS – COACHMAKERS GARDENS



Key Plan

The Coachmakers Garden areas form a generous green edge along the western boundary, designed to soften the impact of the adjacent road and create a comfortable, inviting threshold into the site. The gardens are positioned to retain and protect existing trees while enhancing opportunities for new tree planting, supporting the development of a connected green canopy. Diverse planting within these gardens will contribute to increased biodiversity and provide a resilient, attractive landscape buffer.



A green edge



Public Art opportunity

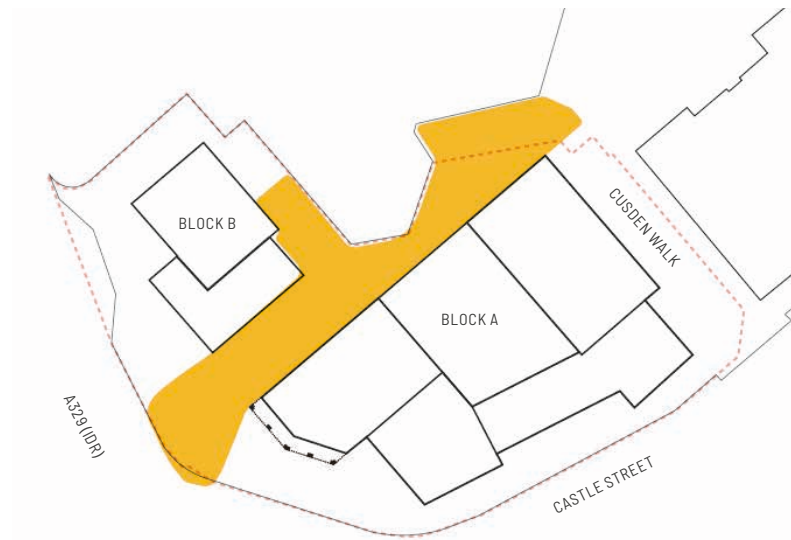


Plant species to support biodiversity



Connected tree canopy

CHARACTER AREAS - FLINT STREET



Key Plan

Flint Street is envisioned as a lively pedestrian route and gateway to the town centre, encouraging both movement and moments of pause. The public realm design takes inspiration from the geometry of a horse-drawn coach wheel, subtly guiding views towards Minster Church and reinforcing the site's historic narrative. Feature paving and wayfinding trees define a clear pedestrian route, weaving between active frontages and commercial spill-out spaces. Opportunities to reference heritage through paving patterns or street furniture further enrich the character, while small seating areas support social interaction, meeting points, and informal community gathering.



Activated and engaging pedestrian street



Protected spill out spaces

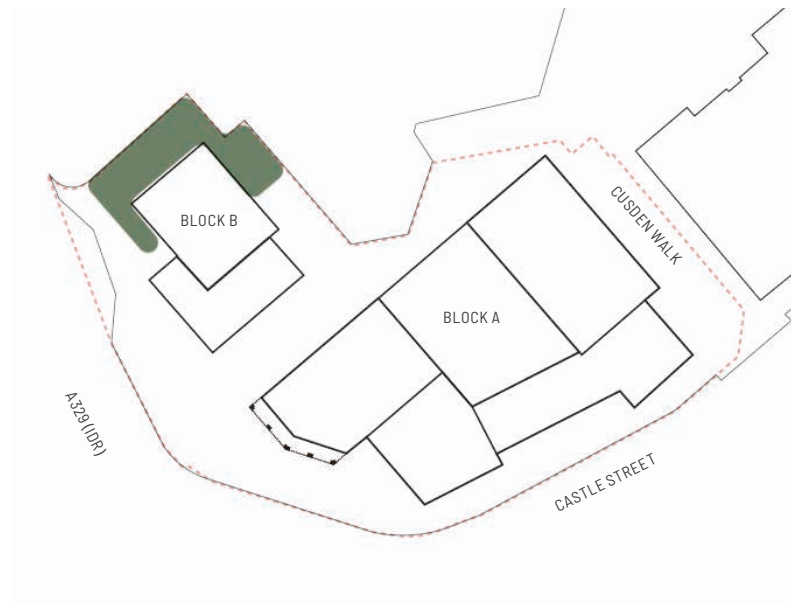


Wayfinding trees and paving details



Opportunity for references to the site history

CHARACTER AREAS – THE YARD



Key Plan

The Yard is a private residential amenity space offering a quiet, intimate setting for relaxation and respite, distinct from the surrounding public realm. Sheltered from public view, the space includes nature play elements beneath existing trees on the south-western edge, creating an informal and engaging environment for families. To the north, seating areas provide outlooks over the adjacent community garden, framed by existing mature trees that form a soft green buffer. A lower garden area offers flexible spill-out space, designed to create a functional yet secluded garden atmosphere.



Garden atmosphere



Nature play opportunities

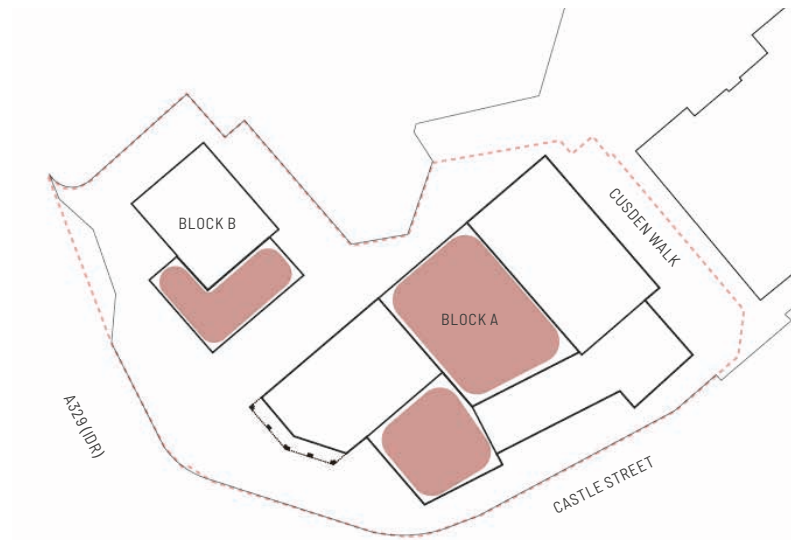


Amenity seating space



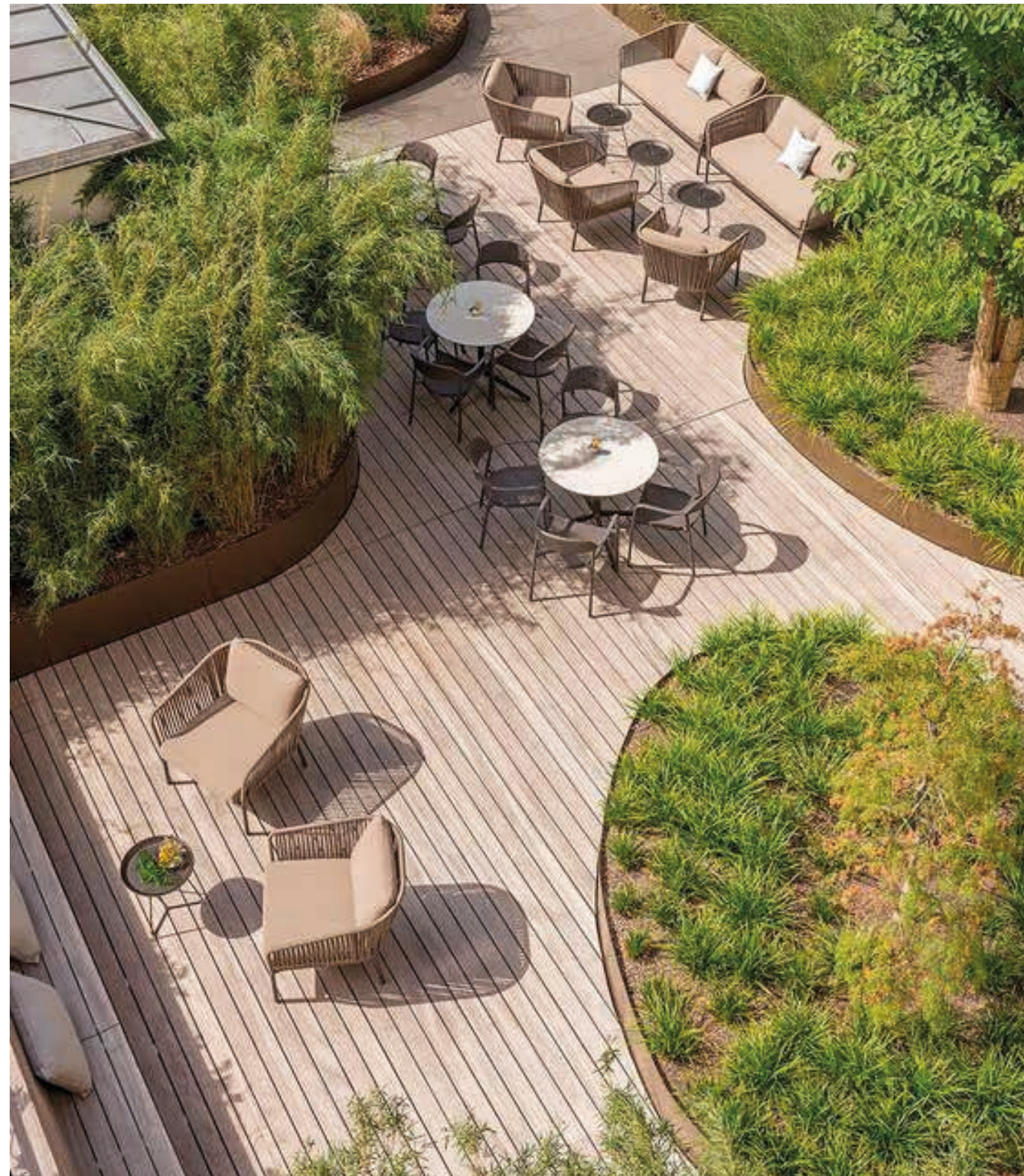
Outdoor flexible spill-out space

CHARACTER AREAS – COACHMAKERS COURTYARDS



Key Plan

Coach makers Courtyards are elevated residential amenity spaces designed to foster recreation, social interaction, and community connection. A series of outdoor seating areas accommodate both small and large groups, with family gathering spaces located near play opportunities for all ages. The layout reflects the geometry of the wider public realm, maintaining visual coherence and reinforcing key sightlines. Central marker trees anchor the spaces and continues the visual axis towards Reading Minster Church, while smaller seating areas provide quiet outlooks over the activated streetscape below.



Outdoor communal amenity seating areas



Buffered garden edges and integrated seating



Traditional play opportunity



Social play opportunities

PROPOSED ILLUSTRATIVE MASTERPLAN

An activated urban landscape with heritage elements reinterpreted to support newly defined public realm functions of movement, gathering, play and contemplation, creating spatial experiences that are both meaningful and functional.

- 1 Entry Arbour
- 2 Community gathering / seating space
- 3 Spill-out spaces
- 4 Play along the way
- 5 Feature/wayfinding trees
- 6 Level 01 residential podium
- 7 Level 06 residential podium
- 8 Level 12 residential podium
- 9 Ground floor residential outdoor amenity
- 10 Retained existing trees with proposed understory planting
- 11 Proposed tree planting
- 12 Feature paving to define central pedestrian route towards town centre
- 13 Paving to define residential lobby entrances
- 14 Opportunity for connection to future development
- 15 Indicative street trees and planting (subject to confirmation of underground services)
- 16 Public mural to building facade



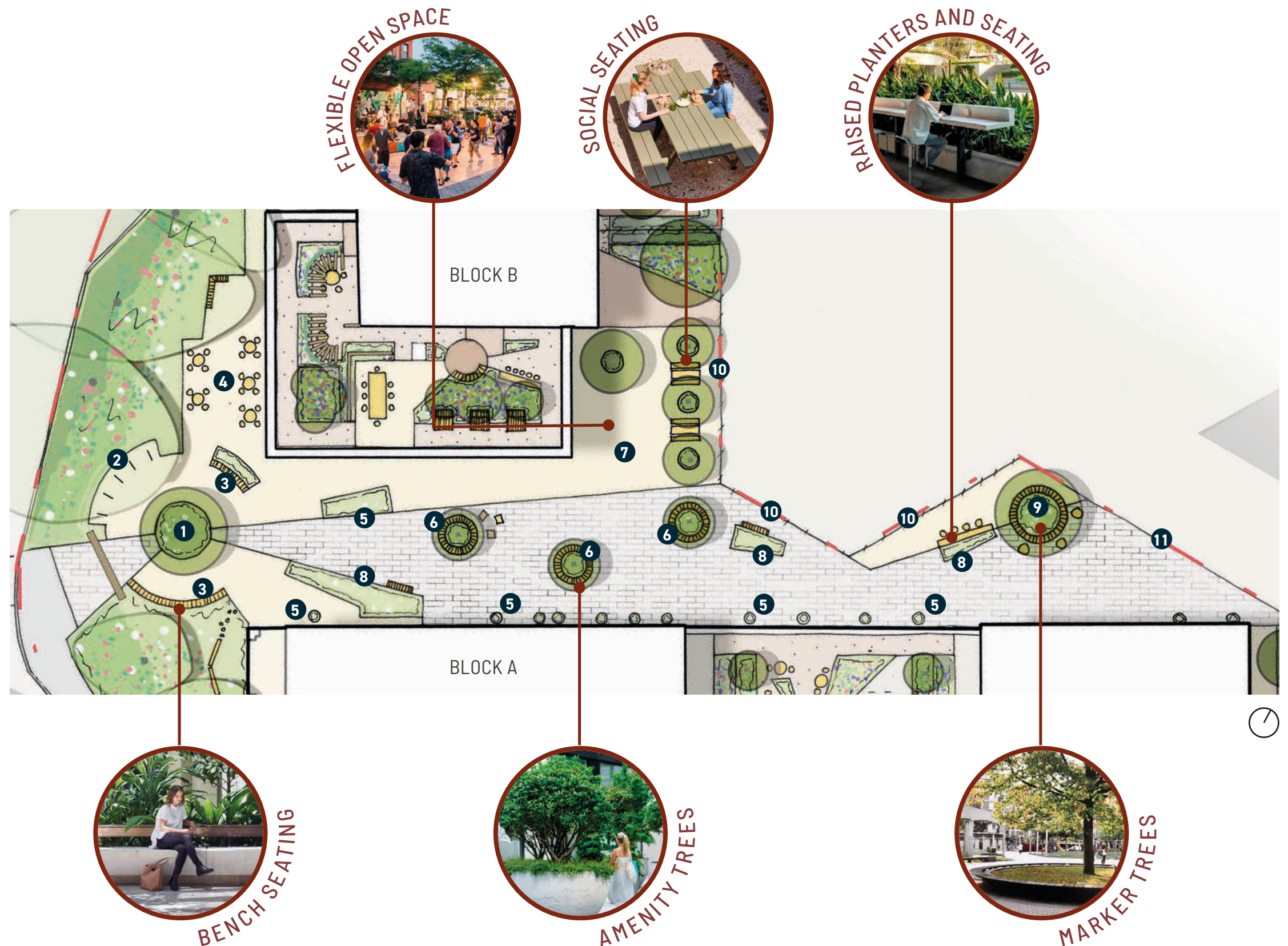
Illustrative Concept Masterplan

DETAIL AREA - FLINT STREET

- 1 Feature tree in natural ground to create a welcoming entrance to Flint Street
- 2 Cycle parking
- 3 Bench seating providing opportunity for meeting / waiting
- 4 Outdoor spill-out space for ground floor commercial units
- 5 Raised planters softening hardstand areas and assisting with wind mitigation
- 6 Amenity trees in raised planters with surrounding bench seating
- 7 Flexible open space, allowing for a range of pop-up activities (such as markets, food trucks, busking, community events)
- 8 Raised planters with integrated seating
- 9 Large raised planter with marker tree and integrated seating
- 10 Balustrade to edge of podium
- 11 Paving to tie in neatly with existing podium hardstand



Key Plan



DETAIL AREA - IDR ROUNABOUT

- 1 Entry arbour marking entrance to Flint Street and gateway towards the town centre
- 2 Existing trees to be retained and pollarded to allow proposed understory planting and successional tree planting
- 3 Play on the way balance trail through garden
- 4 Cycle parking
- 5 Proposed mural location to building facade
- 6 Cube seating to allow waiting / rest near pedestrian crossing and viewing of proposed mural
- 7 Proposed trees with understory planting framing mural and secondary entrance into the site

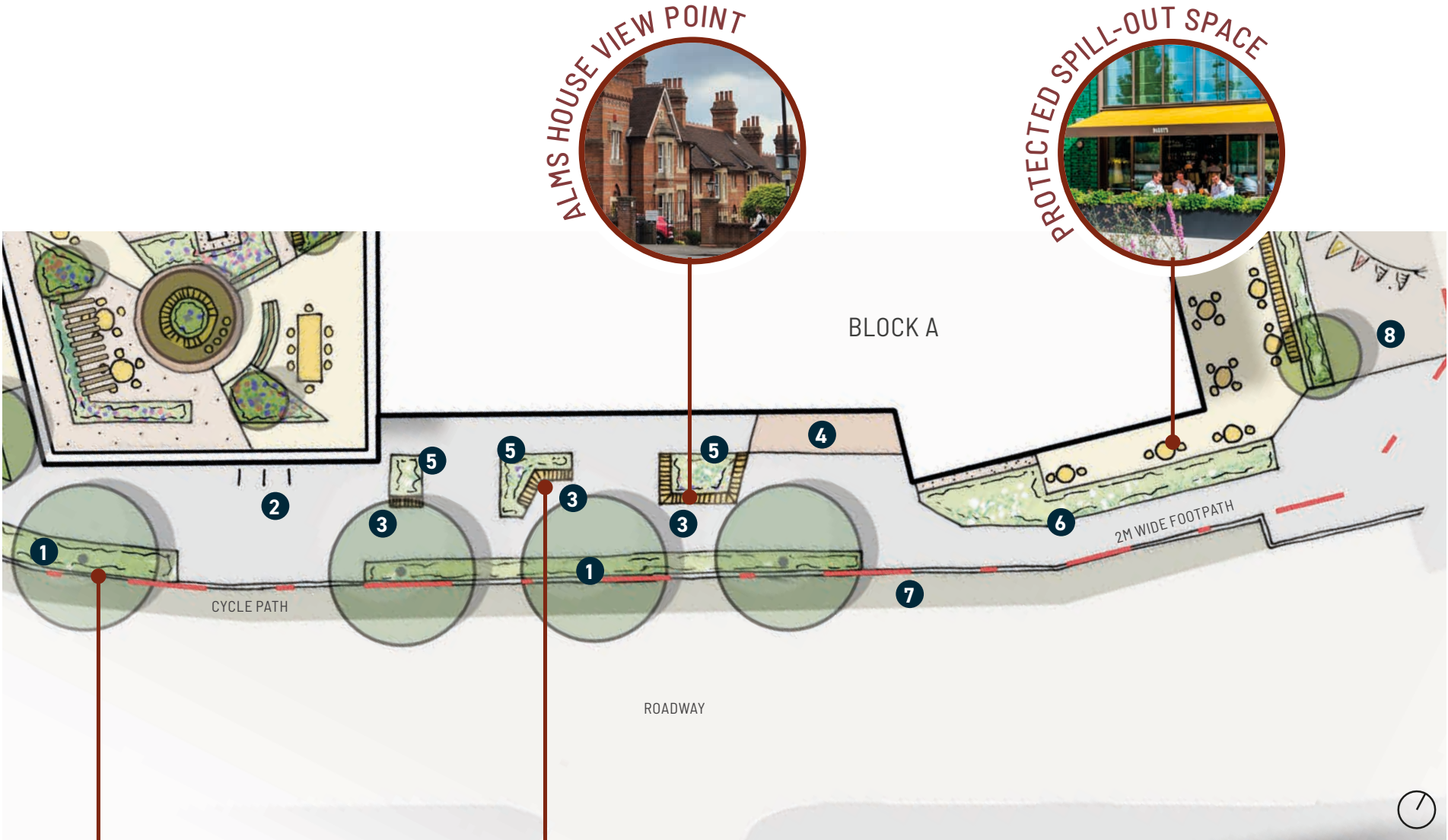


Key Plan



DETAIL AREA - CASTLE STREET

- 1 Proposed street trees with low level understory planting softening Castle Street and providing amenity. Trees positioned to frame views of the conservation area to the south
- 2 Proposed cycle parking
- 3 Bench seating, allowing rest opportunities and views of southern conservation area
- 4 Paving to define entrance to residential lobby
- 5 Amenity planting softening streetscape
- 6 Planting providing buffering of outdoor spill-out space from footpath and roadway
- 7 Future cycle path
- 8 New paving to Cusden Walk



Key Plan

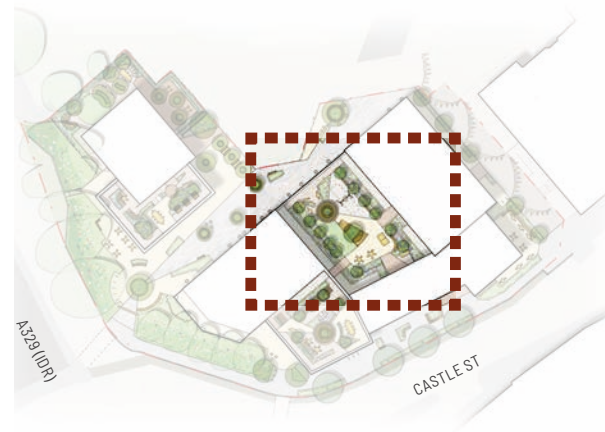
DETAIL AREA – GROUND FLOOR RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

- 1 Small seating space with arbour over, nestled in garden
- 2 Proposed amenity trees with understory planting
- 3 Synthetic turf area providing outdoor recreational opportunity
- 4 Balance play trail with balance beam and steppers
- 5 Large group outdoor dining zone with arbour
- 6 Decking area with amenity trees and outdoor moveable furniture
- 7 Hedge planting to boundary providing screening of adjacent property
- 8 Feature tree with understory planting to define entrance to residential lobby
- 9 3m high vertical screen to building corner providing wind mitigation



DETAIL AREA - LEVEL 01 PODIUM

- 1 Amenity trees in raised planters providing softening of communal terrace and buffering between private terraces and communal areas
- 2 Synthetic lawn area providing opportunity for outdoor recreation
- 3 Feature tree in raised planter with integrated seating
- 4 Moveable furniture allowing for small group gathering and observation of lower level public realm
- 5 Basket swing providing play opportunity
- 6 Large timber platform seating
- 7 Ping-pong table providing social play opportunity
- 8 Outdoor work-space with bar table bench and stools
- 9 Bench seating integrated with raised planters
- 10 Moveable outdoor furniture allowing for group gathering



Key Plan



BLOCK A