

06 ARCHITECTURE

LEARNING FROM READING TOWN CENTRE

The architectural approach draws on the rich and varied character of Reading town centre, where historic fabric, contemporary interventions, and layered urban conditions coexist. The proposal takes cues from this context, embracing a mix of materials, forms, and architectural expressions that reflect the town's evolving identity. Through considered composition and detailing, the design seeks to balance continuity and contrast, creating a development that is both rooted in its context and responsive to its contemporary setting.



Mix

"The architectural details and materials should [...] respect the form and quality of the detailing and materials in areas local to the development site."

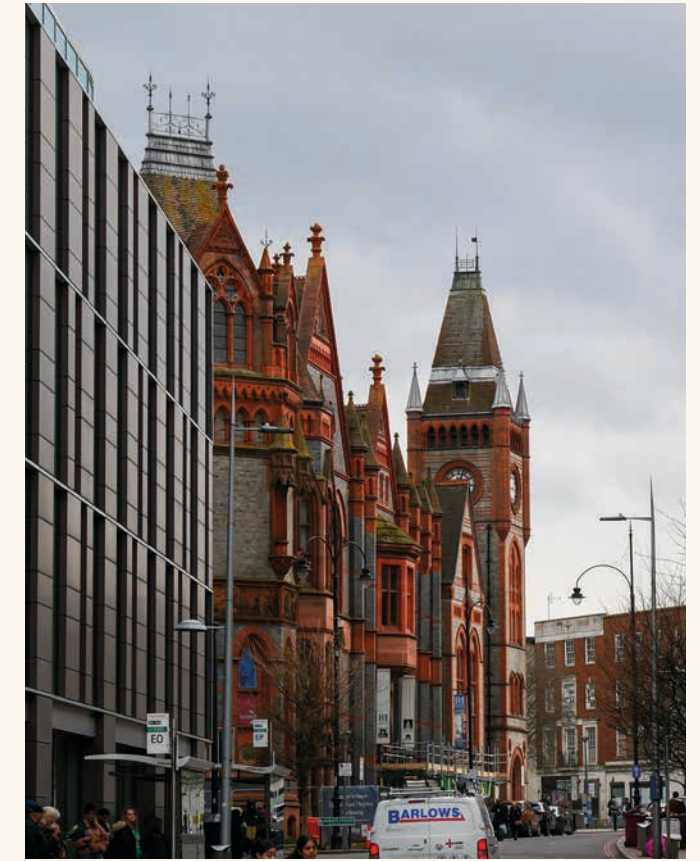
(5.3.4.d Reading Local Plan, Design in Central Reading)



Juxtaposition

"It is the juxtaposition with the high-density, often modern, context in which these areas are found that marks them out and makes them most worthy of retention"

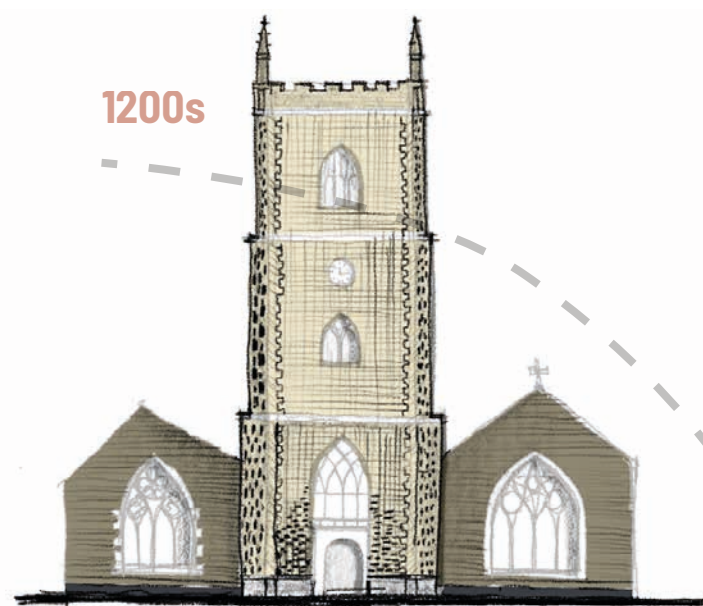
(5.3.33 Reading Local Plan, Terraced housing in Central Reading)



Heritage

"Reading's unique heritage will be at the heart of the town's identity and will be highly visible, valued and accessible by those who live in, work in or visit the town."

(4.2.2 Reading Local Plan, Heritage)



St Mary's Church

1200s

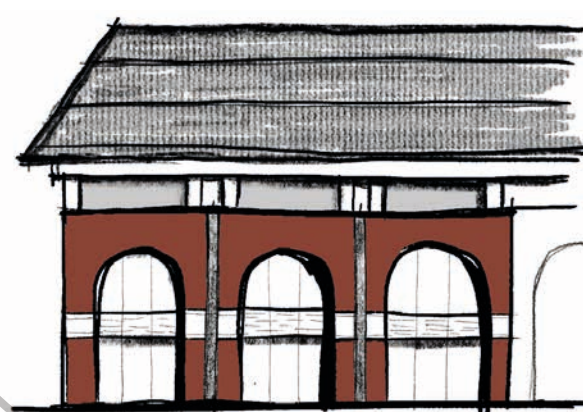


St Mary's Butts

15-1800s



Castle Street

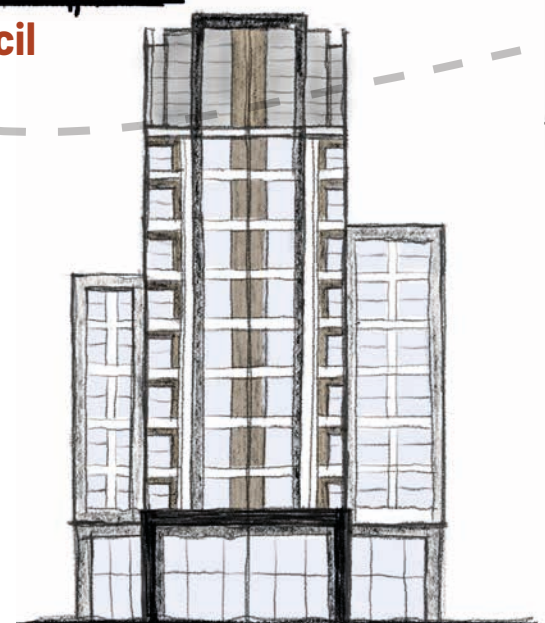


Borough Council

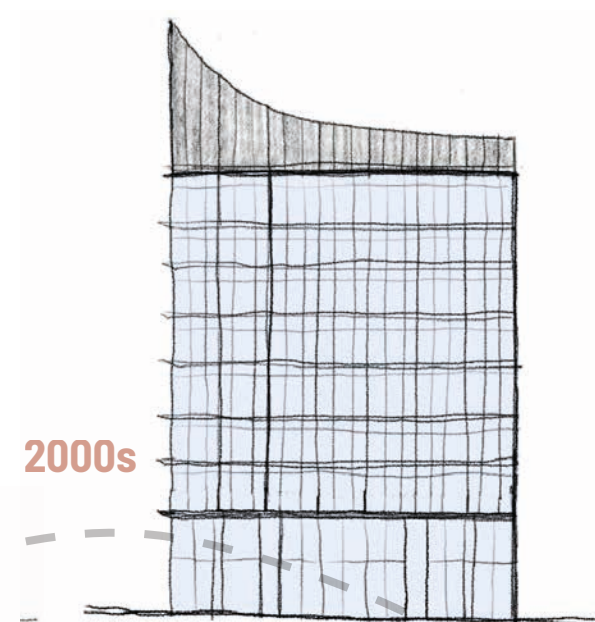
1900s



Celador Riverside House



Verto



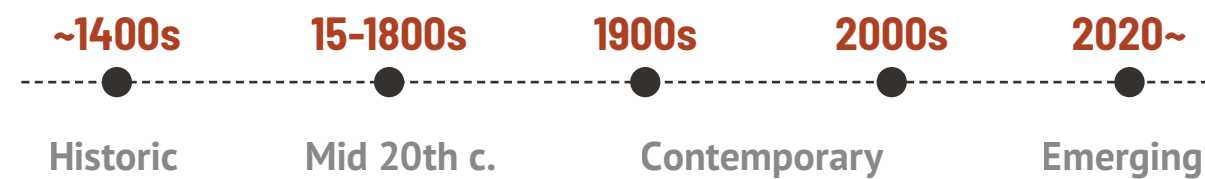
The Blade

2000s



Huntley Wharf

2020~



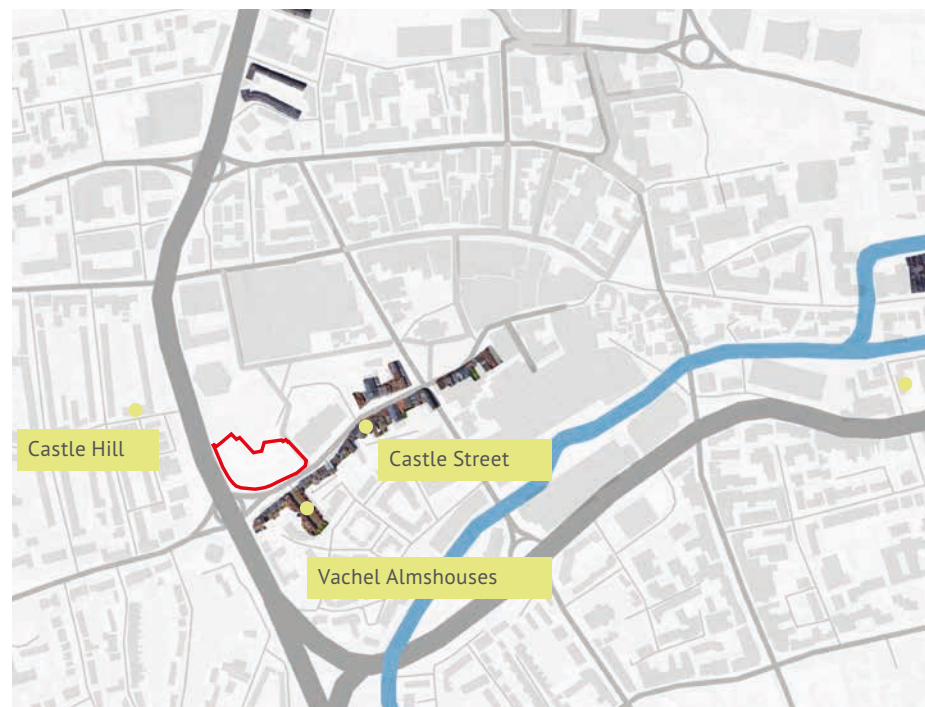
READING'S HISTORIC ARCHITECTURE



Castle Street is a residential conservation area adjacent to the site, which Reading Local Plan identifies to be treated with care. (5.4.16) It highlights design opportunity of this historic asset and seeks improvement that better relates to the conservation area.

Key Themes

- 2 to 3-storey low-rise and small footprint
- Small entities to form a single collective body
- Varied plot widths
- Two main structural systems (timber, masonry)
- Varied roofscape
- Myriad of window types and perforation sizes



Plot-based style variations



Red brick and stone Special corner feature



White and beige Regency style

15-1800s

Castle Street



Vachel Almshouses



Castle Hill



Architecture

TAKING NOTES FROM CASTLE STREET

The architectural approach draws directly from the character of Castle Street, where a consistent rhythm of narrow plot widths creates a fine-grain and legible frontage. This pattern is complemented by a rich palette of materials, including brick, stone, and render, alongside a variety of window proportions and detailing that contribute to the street’s distinct identity.

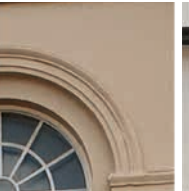
Plot Widths



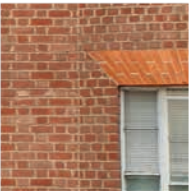
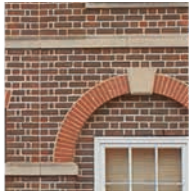
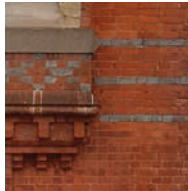
Materiality











Painted Brick

Grey Roof Tiles

Stone

Painted Stone

Clay

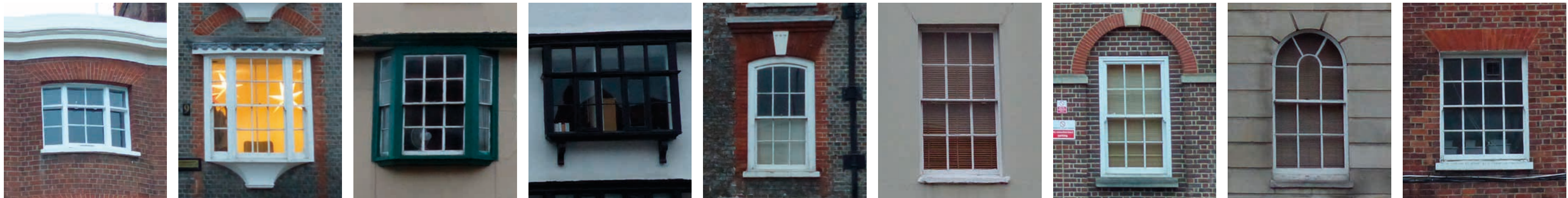
Painted Render

Buff Brick

Grey Brick

Red Brick

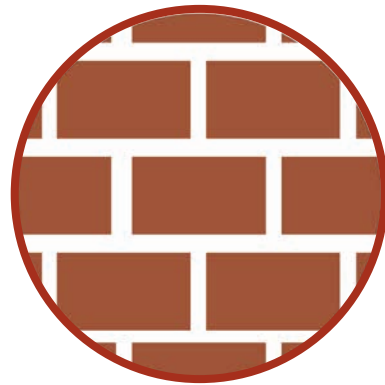
Windows



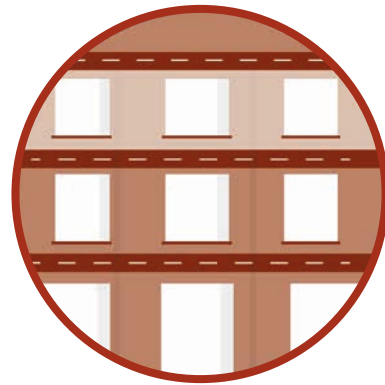
OUR DESIGN APPROACH



A Cohesive Family of Buildings



Robust Materials
Designed for longevity.



Horizontal Hierarchy
A clear base, middle and top responding to existing architecture



Avoidance of Full Height Windows
Orientation specific glazing ratios to limit overheating risk.



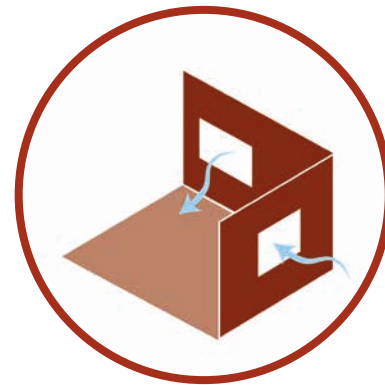
Limited Steps in Buildings
Improve form factor.



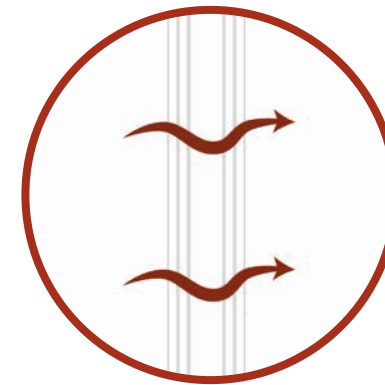
Stacked Dwellings
Reduce MEP diversions, reduce embodied carbon, simplify build and reduce maintenance.



Balconies & Window Reveals Provide Passive Shading
Provide shading which helps reduce overheating on southern orientations.



Dual Aspect Homes
Preference for larger dwellings as dual aspect to facilitate enhanced passive ventilation.



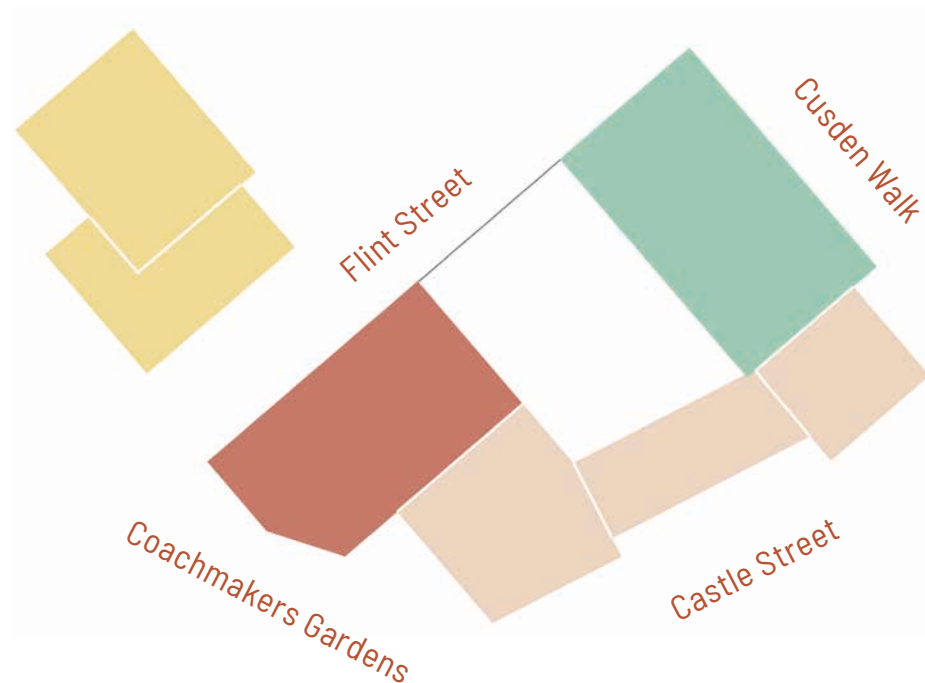
Enhanced Fabric U-Values
As part of a fabric first approach.



Flat Roofs
For rooftop amenity and PV provision.

A FAMILY OF BUILDINGS

The proposal is conceived as a family of buildings, each responding to its specific frontage and surrounding context while forming a coherent overall composition. Variations in height, form, and articulation reflect the different urban conditions across the site, from the more prominent edges to the finer grain of adjacent streets. This approach creates a balanced and legible townscape, where each building has its own identity while contributing to a unified architectural language.



Aerial drawing showing outlining typologies

READING'S CATALOGUE OF SHOPFRONTS

Reading's town centre is characterised by a rich and varied catalogue of shopfronts, where different periods, materials, and scales sit alongside one another to create a lively and distinctive street scene. From traditional painted timber fronts to more contemporary glazed interventions, this diversity contributes to the character and vibrancy of the high street. The proposal draws from this layered context, interpreting the rhythm, proportions, and material expression of local shopfronts to create active and engaging ground floor frontages.



Various shopfronts in Reading

SHOPFRONT STRATEGY

The shopfront strategy interprets the rhythm and detailing of Castle Street, combining traditional proportions with contemporary elements to create a cohesive and active ground floor frontage.



A contemporary take on Castle Street's column features which vertically split the glazed punched openings.

Horizontal transom forming a slimmer proportion to the top of the curtain walling.

Plinths at the base of each column creating a clear threshold between the vertical sawtooth brick detail and ground.



Stallrisers at the base of each curtain wall referencing the various styles of shopfronts along the High Street.

Contemporary and traditional combination of glazing coming to ground with half including stallrisers.



Curtain Walling for the lobbies break the architectural styles creating a clear distinction between uses.

Arched glazed opening to mark a key corner intersection Flint Street and Cusden Walk.

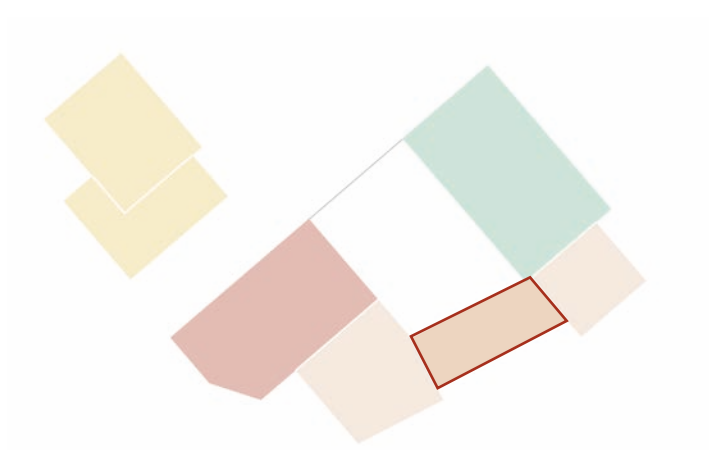
Fluted panels creating an additional element to the fascia panel which sits below.



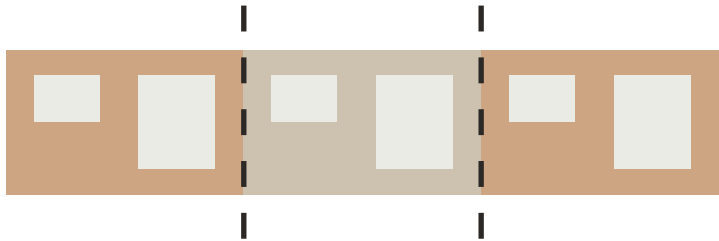
Curtain walling which comes to ground linking to some of the contemporary shopfronts along Castle Street.

Architecture

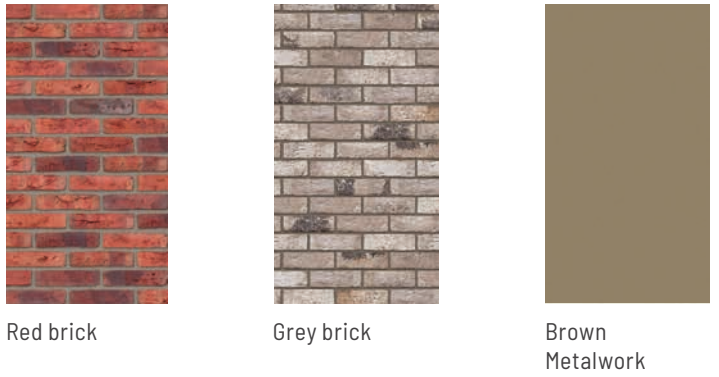
BLOCK A CASTLE STREET



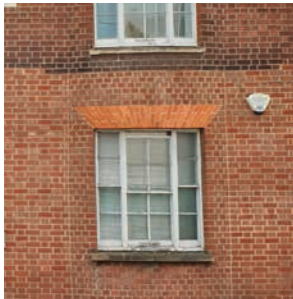
The Castle Street typology reflects the regular plot rhythm of adjacent frontages, using variations in brick tone and shadow gaps to create a finer grain. Contrasting brick detailing and framed ground floor openings respond to elements found in the surrounding context.



Finer grain and plot widths with repeating proportions observed along Castle Street.



Local Vernacular



Contrasting brick detailing and tone above window



Horizontal banding creating horizontal proportions

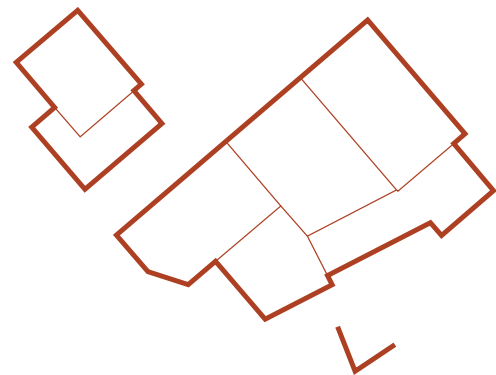


Framed contrasting openings



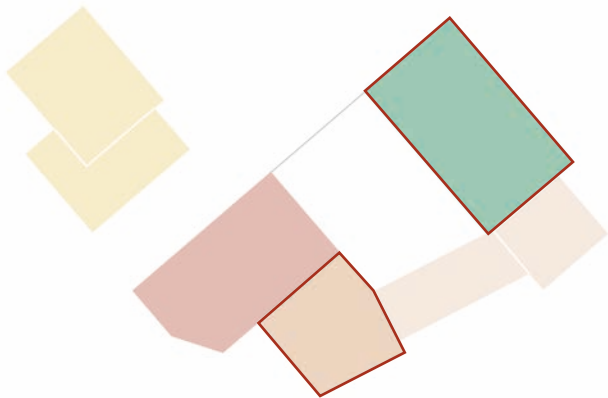
Architecture

BLOCK A CASTLE STREET

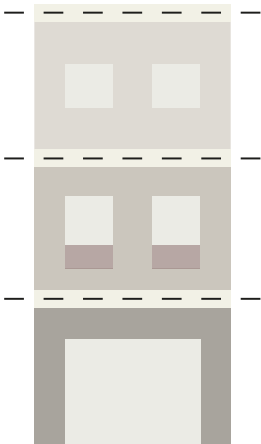


Architecture

BLOCK A CUSDEN WALK



Horizontal banding defines a clear base, middle, and top, establishing a strong hierarchy across the façade and framing window openings. At ground level, checkerboard brickwork introduces a vibrant texture that reflects the surrounding architectural character. Openings reduce in scale towards the upper levels, responding to the proportions of neighbouring buildings and reinforcing a coherent vertical hierarchy.



Grey brick Checkerboard brick Render Brown Metal



Indicative Bay Study

Local Vernacular

Top



Banding and smaller windows to define top floor

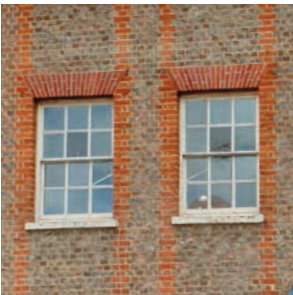


Banding details

Middle



Grey brick with vertical detailing

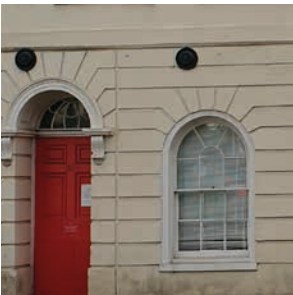


Vertical grouping of windows

Base

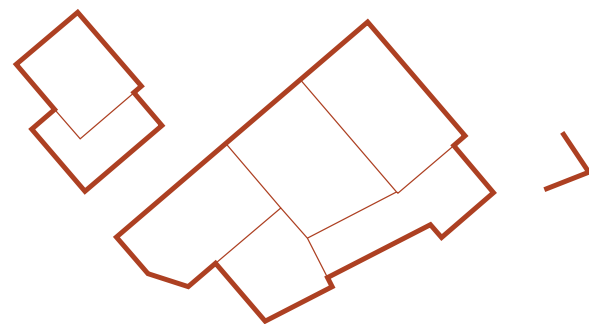


Checkerboard brickwork detailing



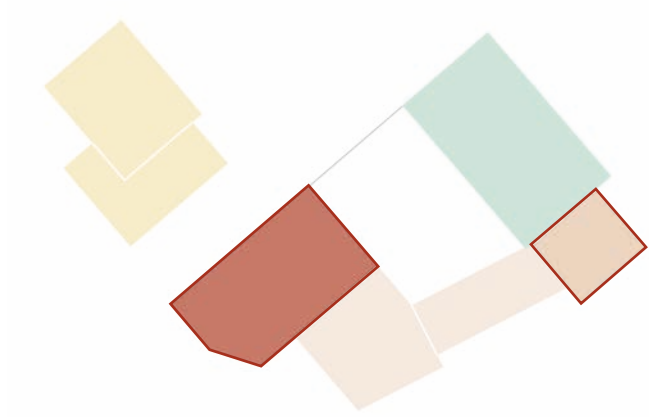
Detailing along the ground floor

Architecture
**BLOCK A
CUSDEN WALK**

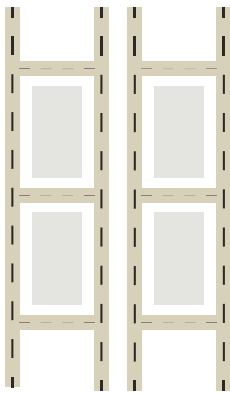


Architecture

BLOCK A
COACHMAKERS GARDENS



The Block A typology along Coachmakers Gardens forms a transition towards the Block B typology, adopting a vertical grouping approach complemented by horizontal detailing. At ground level, a colonnade is introduced with inset green fluted panels, creating a vibrant and inviting frontage that marks a clear gateway into the site.



White brick Buff brick Light Brown Metal Green Metal



Top

Middle

Base

Local Vernacular



Vertical and soldier brick detailing to group windows



Detailing at the top



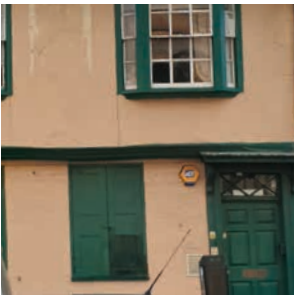
Buff tones and horizontal banding to break up facade



Vertical and soldier brick detailing to group windows



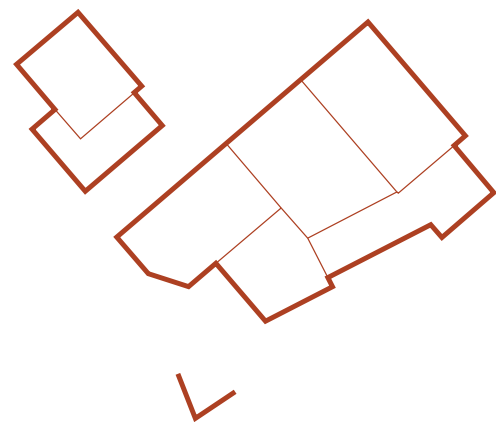
Green shopfront and windows



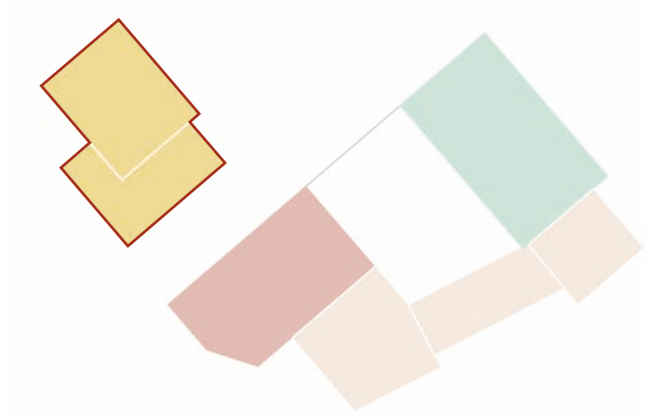
White contrasting base

Architecture

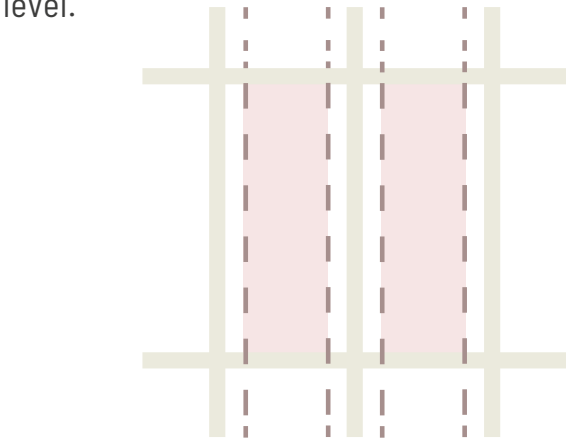
BLOCK A COACHMAKERS GARDENS



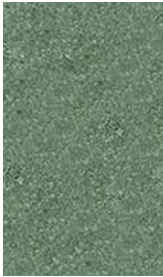
Architecture BLOCK B COACHMAKERS GARDENS



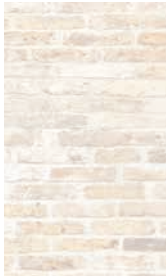
Block B introduces a contemporary architectural language, referencing surrounding buildings through a strong vertical frame and distinctive crown. A contrasting two-storey green base with sawtooth brick columns adds depth and character at ground level.



Vertically grouped windows set within a frame.



Green Base



Buff Brick



Brown Metalwork



Taller Element



Lower Shoulder

Local Vernacular



Expressed framing

Top



Vertical grouping

Middle



Material changel along the ground floor

Base

Architecture
**BLOCK B
COACHMAKERS
GARDENS**

