



# DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

RADCLIFFE HOUSE  
HITCHIN

April 2026  
134-OP-PL-DAS

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opstead



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## CHAPTER 1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Opstead on behalf of Metric + Maker in support of a full planning application submitted to North Hertfordshire Council.

The application seeks consent for a carefully considered package of external alterations to Radcliffe House — a late-1980s office building set within The Priory estate in Hitchin, Hertfordshire.

The proposals represent a genuine opportunity to transform an underperforming, largely vacant office building into an attractive and high-quality asset — improving its appearance, performance, and amenity offer whilst remaining entirely sympathetic to its conservation area setting.

Prior approval consent is already in place for the conversion of Radcliffe House into 49 residential dwellings. The proposed external alterations have been specifically designed to serve both the current office use and the consented residential use, delivering improvements that are beneficial, durable and lasting regardless of occupation.

This document is to be read in conjunction with the following drawings which accompany this application for planning permission submitted to North Herts Council:

- 134-OP-PL-
- SP-A-101 - Site Location

SP-A-102 - Existing Site Plan

SP-A-103 - Proposed Site Plan

EP-A-001 - Existing Basement Plan

EP-A-002 - Existing Ground Floor Plan

EP-A-003 - Existing First Floor Plan

EP-A-004 - Existing Second Floor Plan

EP-A-005 - Existing Third Floor Plan

EP-A-006 - Existing Roof Plan

EP-A-007 - Existing Basement Plan - Ancillary Buildings

EP-A-008 - Existing Ground Floor Plan - Ancillary Buildings

EP-A-009 - Existing First Floor Plan - Ancillary Buildings

EP-A-010 - Existing Roof Plan - Ancillary Buildings

EE-A-001 - 008 - Existing Elevations and Sections

PP-A-101 - Proposed Basement Plan

PP-A-102 - Proposed Ground Floor Plan

PP-A-103 - Proposed First Floor Plan

PP-A-104 - Proposed Second Floor Plan

PP-A-105 - Proposed Third Floor Plan

PP-A-106 - Proposed Roof Plan

PP-A-107 - Proposed Basement Plan - Ancillary Buildings

PP-A-108 - Proposed Ground Floor Plan - Ancillary Buildings

PP-A-109 - Proposed First Floor Plan - Ancillary Buildings

PP-A-110 - Proposed Roof Plan - Ancillary Buildings

PE-A-101 - 108 - Proposed Elevations and Sections

Landscaping proposals are detailed in the accompanying Landscape Design Statement prepared by HTA.



## 1.2 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The vision for Radcliffe House and its associated ancillary buildings is to deliver a **high-quality, policy-led enhancement** to a prominent and well-established component of The Priory estate, securing its long-term future while making a positive and enduring contribution to its setting.

The application seeks consent for a carefully coordinated package of external alterations that responds directly to national and local planning objectives, including the National Planning Policy Framework's emphasis on achieving high-quality design, making the most effective use of previously developed land, and sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets through sensitive and well-judged change. **The proposals are contextual, proportionate, and design-led**, ensuring that the character and appearance of The Priory estate conservation area is preserved and, where possible, enhanced.

Radcliffe House already benefits from prior approval consent for the change of use from offices to 49 residential dwellings. The proposed alterations have therefore been specifically designed to operate successfully for both the existing office use and the approved residential use. This dual-purpose approach aligns strongly with planning policy objectives around adaptability, resilience and long-term sustainability, ensuring the building can respond flexibly to current and future demands without the need for piecemeal or use-specific interventions.

A central element of the proposals is the removal of surface-level car parking and its replacement with a high-quality landscape and terrace strategy. **This transformation will significantly enhance the setting of Radcliffe House**, replacing areas dominated by hardstanding with attractive, usable and people-focused external spaces. Importantly, all necessary car parking provision is retained within the existing basement, ensuring operational requirements are fully maintained while delivering a clear uplift to environmental quality and amenity value.

At Radcliffe House, the introduction of new ground-floor and roof-level terraces, alongside discreet roof-level dormer windows, **provides valuable private and communal amenity space that supports both office occupation and residential use**. These interventions are informed directly by local precedent and the established architectural language of The Priory estate, remaining clearly subordinate to the existing building form while delivering meaningful functional and experiential benefits. Decorative window bars and carefully concealed balustrades further refine the elevations and roofscape, enhancing character and safety through a calm, consistent and contextually appropriate design approach.

**The ancillary buildings are enhanced through complementary alterations**, including new terraces, additional roof windows and revised window and door openings. The removal of the existing link corridor allows all buildings to be read more clearly as independent structures, improving legibility across the estate while unlocking new amenity spaces. These interventions improve natural light, access and usability, supporting continued office use while also accommodating potential future residential conversion.

Overall, the proposals represent **a considered and policy-compliant opportunity to enhance Radcliffe House** and its associated buildings, reinforcing the quality, coherence and vitality of The Priory estate. Through sensitive architectural enhancement, landscape-led improvements and a clear commitment to dual-use adaptability, the scheme will ensure that Radcliffe House becomes a productive, **attractive and sustainable asset within the estate for the long term**.





## CHAPTER 2.0 SITE APPRAISAL

## 2.1 LOCATION + CONTEXT

Radcliffe House - the application site, outlined in red on Figure 2, is located in Hitchin to the south of the town centre (Figure 1), within the established and historically rich setting of The Priory estate. Radcliffe House forms one of a coordinated group of three office buildings developed during the 1980s and 1990s, alongside the neighbouring Pease House and Keynes House. Together, these buildings share a common architectural language, scale and period of development, creating a coherent and legible cluster within the estate.

The buildings benefit from strong and well-established access arrangements from both Old Charlton Road and Tilehouse Street, providing flexibility, resilience and ease of movement for occupants, visitors and servicing. This connectivity contributes to the site's long-term functionality while remaining discreet within its landscaped context.

To the west, the site is bounded by the A602, from which it is effectively screened by a dense and mature landscaped buffer that softens visual impact and enhances the sense of separation from the road. Old Charlton Road lies to the north, beyond which sits an established residential area, creating a clear and appropriate transition in land use. To the east and south, the site opens directly onto the extensive grounds of The Priory, benefitting from mature trees, grassland and the setting of the River Hiz. This landscape context provides a high-quality and tranquil environment that strongly influences the character and experience of the site.

The wider Priory estate, shown outlined in blue on the accompanying site location plan, is within the ownership of the applicant. This unified ownership enables a coordinated and considered approach to estate management and enhancement, ensuring that proposals for Radcliffe House are aligned with the long-term stewardship, quality and character of the estate as a whole.

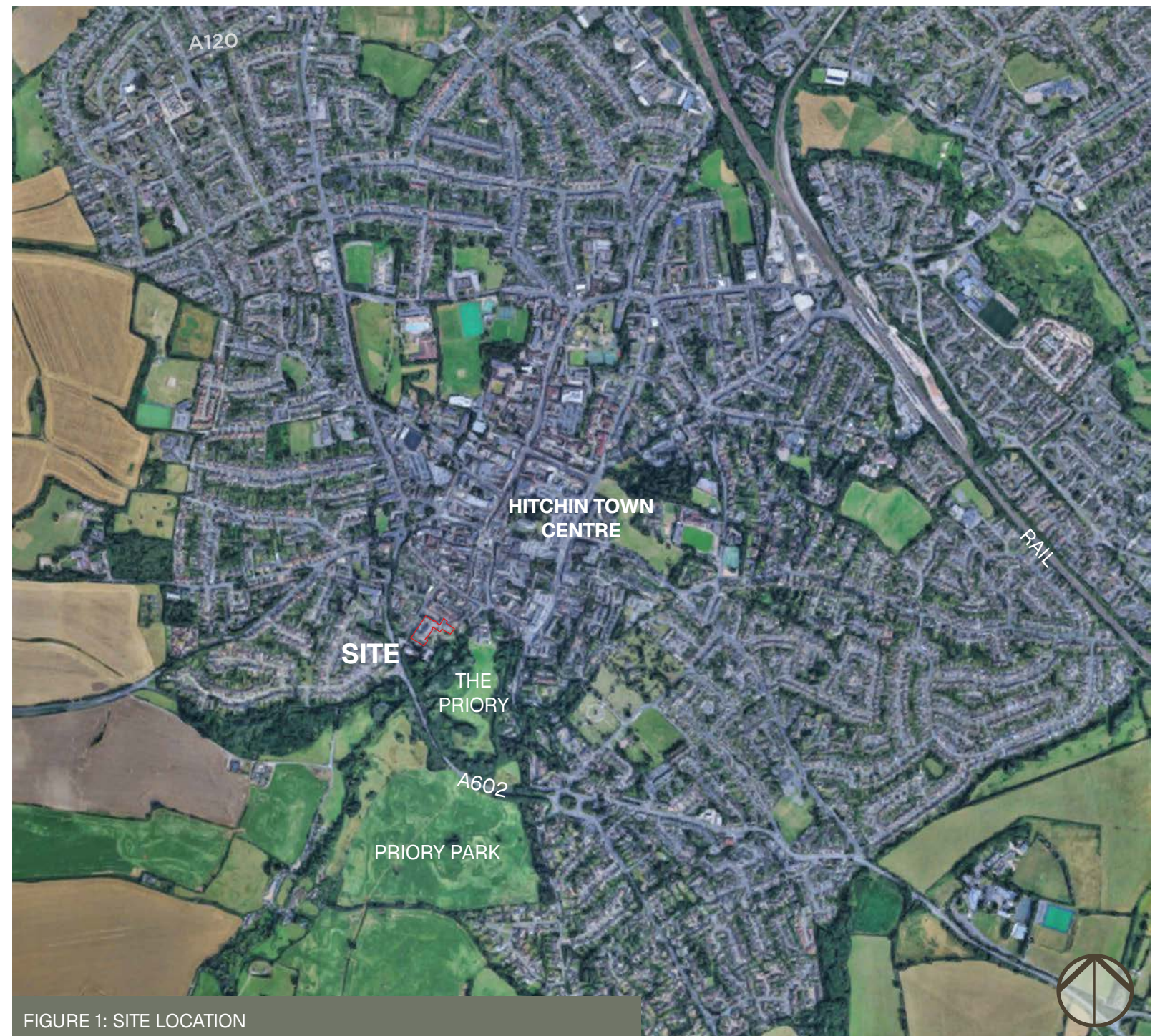


FIGURE 1: SITE LOCATION



FIGURE 2: AERIAL VIEW OF SITE

## 2.2 EXISTING BUILDINGS

The application site comprises Radcliffe House, a principal office building, together with two ancillary buildings that form part of its associated estate infrastructure. Collectively, these buildings contribute to a coherent and well-established cluster within The Priory estate.

Radcliffe House was constructed in the late 1980s and forms part of a trio of office buildings developed during this period, alongside the adjacent Pease House and Keynes House. All three buildings share a consistent architectural character, scale and material palette, reinforcing a unified and legible estate identity. The plan form of Radcliffe House is articulated into three clear components: north and south wings that project east and west from a central body. The central element is further emphasised by projecting bays to both the front and rear elevations, enriched with additional architectural detailing and formal stone porticos.

The building is predominantly three storeys in height and is unified by a series of mansard roofs. The central body features a steeper roof profile, crowned by a stone cupola which provides a strong focal point within the roofscape and enhances the building's presence within the estate. A partially submerged basement level accommodates car parking, accessed via a ramp at the north-west of the site. Perimeter ventilation grilles are visible at the base of the building, whilst a number of basement escape stairs are discreetly positioned around the building's perimeter. To the rear, a podium parking area is enclosed on three sides by the building, further reinforcing a sense of enclosure and estate organisation.

The principal façades are constructed in red brick, articulated with areas of corbelled detailing and horizontal brick and stone banding that provide depth and visual interest. Stone porticos clearly mark both the main entrance and a secondary access at the rear, lending formality and legibility to points of arrival. The roof structure is formed in steel and timber, finished with slate to the steeper vertical planes and lead standing seam to the shallower upper roof slopes. Between the central body and the projecting wings, the uppermost floor adopts a mansard form punctuated by box dormer windows, adding rhythm and articulation to the roofscape. Fenestration comprises white uPVC windows with stone cills, while black rainwater goods are consistently applied across all elevations. Roof access is provided via a series of discreetly located access doors set into the roof plane.

The principal entrance and primary frontage enjoy an attractive outlook across the landscaped grounds of The Priory and towards Pease House, reinforcing Radcliffe House's strong visual relationship with the wider estate. Reflecting its original office function, the building benefits from generous floor-to-ceiling heights and good levels of natural daylight, providing a flexible and high-quality internal environment. While the building is currently vacant, these inherent architectural and spatial qualities provide a strong foundation for its future enhancement and re-use.



## 2.2 EXISTING BUILDINGS

The photographs of the existing Radcliffe House 'main building'.



1 Building frontage - South east elevation



2 Building entrance - South east elevation



3 South east / west elevation, building corner



4 Rear podium parking court

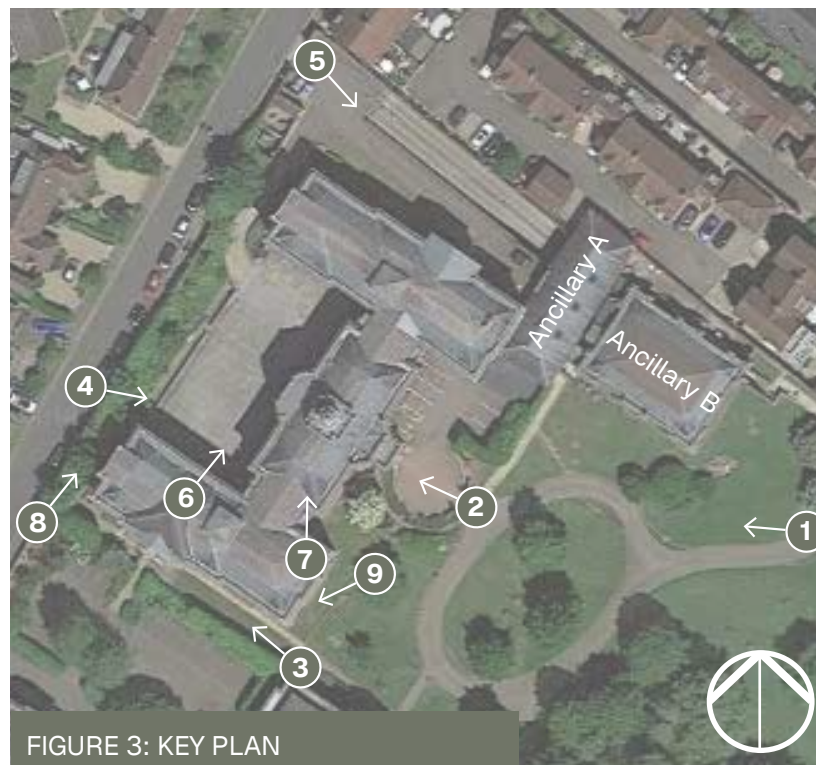


FIGURE 3: KEY PLAN



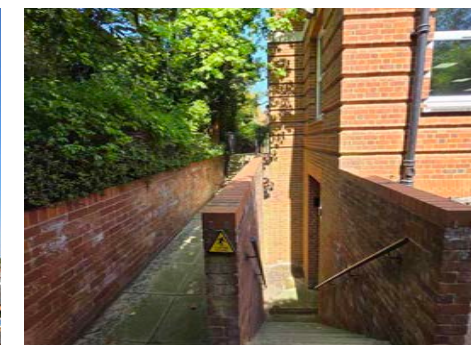
5 Basement access ramp



6 Rear parking court



7 Dormer window



8 Basement escape stair



9 Roof and access door

2.2 EXISTING BUILDINGS

The photographs of the existing Radcliffe House ‘ancillary buildings’.

The ancillary buildings associated with Radcliffe House were conceived as subsidiary structures, functioning historically as satellite additions that support the principal building. While clearly secondary in hierarchy, each exhibits its own distinctive architectural language, contributing variety and visual interest to the wider estate and demonstrating a considered approach to composition and function within a coherent ensemble.

Ancillary Building A is architecturally restrained in character, adopting a deliberately simplified palette of materials and detailing. The building is constructed in traditional red brickwork, largely unadorned save for the occasional use of brick headers that provide subtle articulation to the façades. This modest treatment is complemented by a pitched slate-tiled roof, reinforcing the utilitarian and functional nature of the building. Localised areas of slate hanging to the upper portions of the external walls introduce tonal variation and a degree of texture, softening the overall elevation composition. Openings are primarily utilitarian in form and detailing, reflecting the building’s ancillary role, while a limited number of roof windows are set discreetly within the roof slope, providing functional daylighting without disrupting the simple roofscape.

By contrast, Ancillary Building B exhibits a notably richer architectural expression, suggesting a higher status or more prominent role at the time of its construction. The building is characterised by an elevated level of craftsmanship and decorative detailing, including pronounced stone banding, cornice detailing, and ornamental finials that contribute to a more expressive and refined appearance. The brickwork is articulated through areas of ribbing, adding depth and shadow to the elevations, while windows and door openings are defined by tall, arched forms that introduce vertical emphasis and a sense of formality. Collectively, these elements establish a robust and visually confident façade, clearly distinguishing Ancillary Building B from its more modest counterpart.

Together, the ancillary buildings illustrate a deliberate architectural hierarchy and diversity of expression within the estate. Their contrasting characters not only reinforce their individual functions and historic roles but also enrich the architectural narrative of Radcliffe House and its setting, contributing positively to the overall significance and legibility of the Priory estate.



FIGURE 4: KEY PLAN



1 Ancillary Building A: North west elevation



2 Ancillary Building A: South west elevation



3 Ancillary Building A: South east elevation



4 Ancillary Building A: South east elevation



5 Ancillary Building B: South east elevation



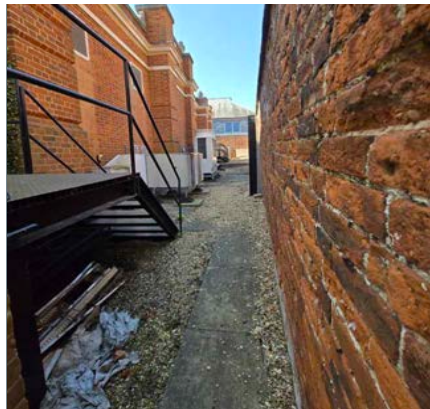
6 Ancillary Building B: South west elevation



7 Ancillary Building B: Stepped access to basement



8 Ancillary Building B: Stepped access to building



9 Ancillary Building B: Rear external space and boundary wall

## 2.3 PLANNING CONTEXT

The building currently benefits from prior approval consent for conversion to 49 residential dwellings, (Ref: 24/01669/PNMA) - demonstrating that the principle of residential use is firmly established and supported. The proposed external alterations build directly on this consent, adding value and quality to what will become an excellent residential address.

Crucially, each proposed alteration has been designed to function effectively under both the current office use and the future residential occupation, ensuring the proposals deliver benefits regardless of the timing of conversion.

## 2.4 ENVIRONMENTAL + ECOLOGICAL CONTEXT

The site falls within Flood Zone 1 — the lowest risk of fluvial flooding — and has been subject to a thorough Flood Risk Assessment by Water Environment. The ecological value of the site has been comprehensively assessed by MKA Ecology, with the proposals specifically designed to bring ecological enhancements. The landscaping proposals, prepared by HTA, further extend the quality and biodiversity value of the site's setting.

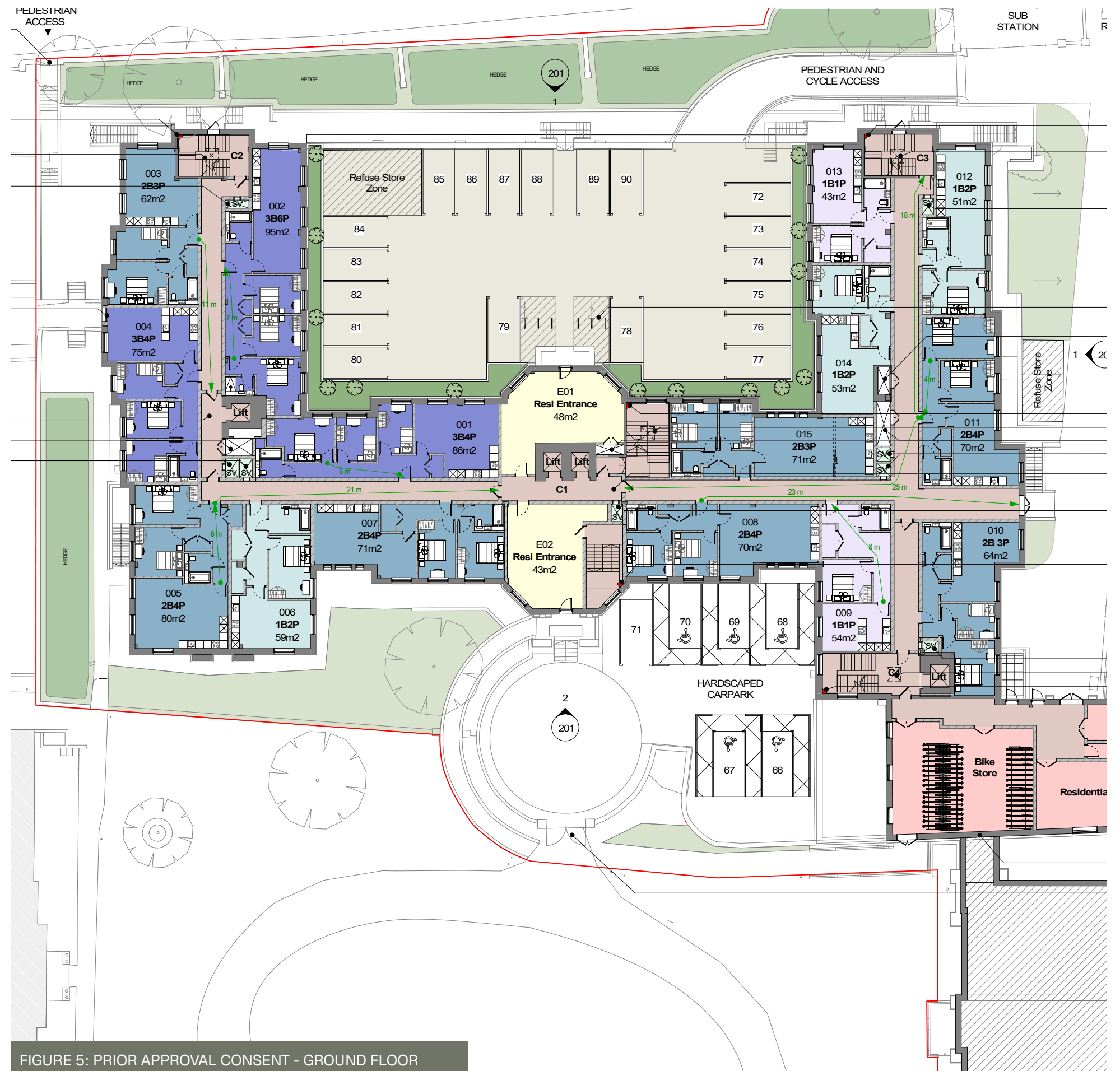


FIGURE 5: PRIOR APPROVAL CONSENT - GROUND FLOOR

2.5 CONSERVATION + HERITAGE

The application site lies within the Hitchin Conservation Area. Whilst Radcliffe House is not itself listed, the wider estate sits in the context of several significant heritage assets — most notably The Priory, a Grade I listed building of national importance, as well associated Grade II listed buildings within the estate and Grade II listed buildings along Tilehouse Street.

The proposed alterations have been developed with careful and sustained reference to the character of the conservation area, the setting of The Priory and the architectural language of the surrounding buildings. It is the considered view of the design team — supported by the accompanying Heritage Statement prepared by Planit Consulting — that the proposals will cause no harm whatsoever to the significance or setting of any heritage asset, and will in fact enhance the appearance of the building within its historic context.



Ribbon of Grade II Listed Buildings along Tilehouse Street



The Priory, Grade I Listed Building with associated Grade II Listed Buildings adjacent

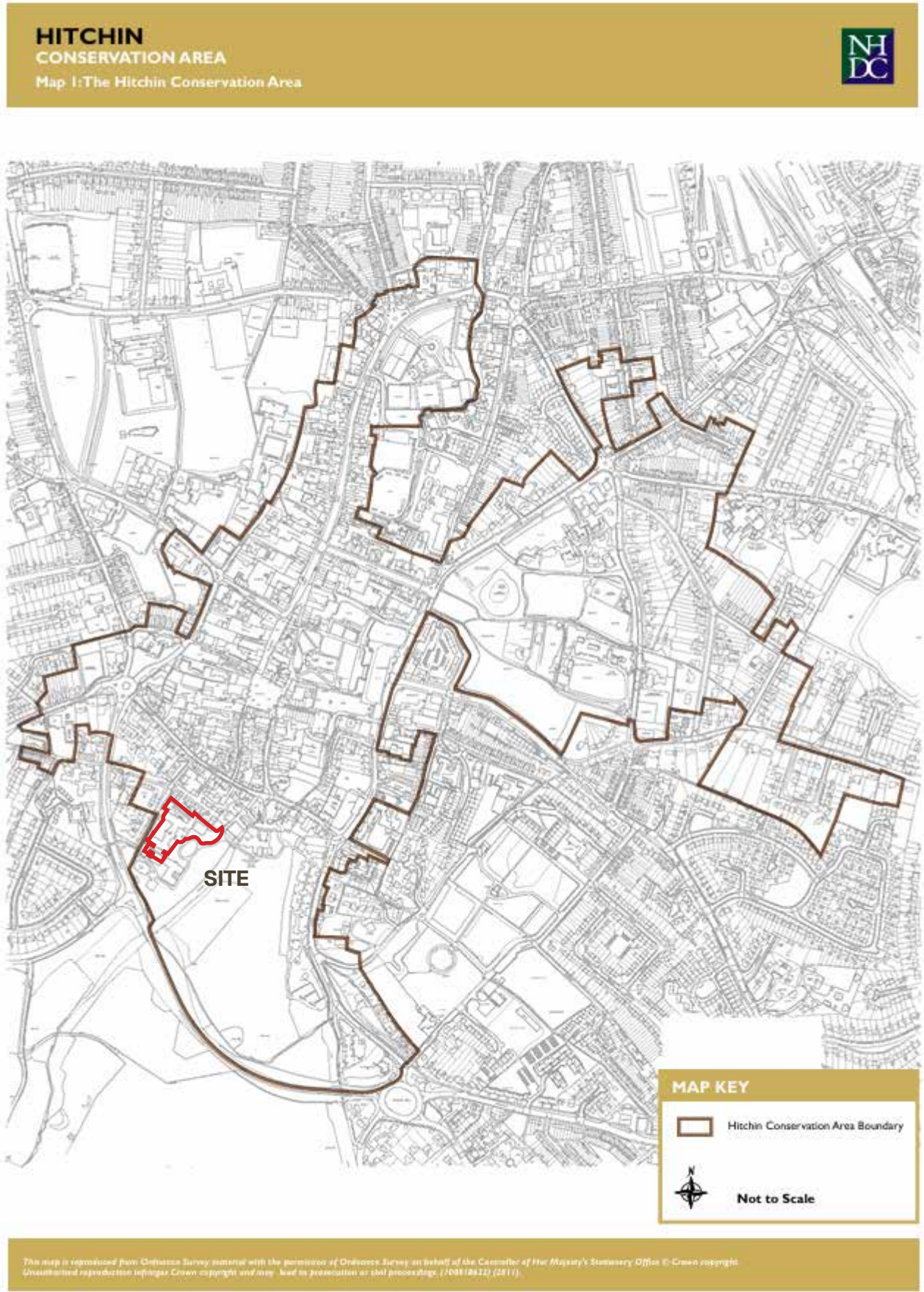


FIGURE 6: HITCHIN CONSERVATION AREA MAP

## **CHAPTER 3.0** DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

### 3.1 PROPOSED ALTERATIONS - MAIN BUILDING

The proposed alterations are presented separately for Radcliffe House and the ancillary buildings, reflecting the distinct nature and scale of works to each. Notwithstanding this separation, the proposals have been developed as a coordinated and holistic strategy, ensuring a consistent and coherent response across all buildings and the wider Priory estate.

#### 3.1.1 Removal of Surface Parking and Replacement with Landscaping and Terraces

Existing surface-level car parking areas (Fig. 7 and 8) will be removed in their entirety and replaced with a carefully designed landscape and terrace strategy (Fig. 9). This intervention represents a major uplift to the quality and character of the site, transforming areas currently dominated by hardstanding into attractive, usable and well-integrated external spaces. The proposed landscaping and terraces will significantly enhance the setting of the building, improve visual amenity and create a more welcoming and people-focused environment for occupants and visitors alike.

Car parking provision for the building will continue to be accommodated at basement level (Fig. 9), ensuring that operational and access requirements are fully maintained without compromising the quality of the external environment. Minor basement-level adjustments are proposed in relation to plant rooms, refuse storage and cycle parking. These are straightforward ancillary improvements that enhance functionality, sustainability and estate management, while having no material impact on the building's external appearance.

The removal of surface parking and its replacement with high-quality landscaping and new terrace areas is considered to be one of the most transformative and beneficial elements of the overall proposals. By prioritising landscape and amenity over hardstanding, the scheme delivers a clear improvement to the experience, appearance and long-term value of the estate. Further detail on the landscape design, materials and implementation is provided within the accompanying Landscape Drawings and Landscape Design Statement prepared by HTA



FIGURE 10: HTA ILLUSTRATION SHOWING LANDSCAPED CAR PARK



FIGURE 7: EXISTING PODIUM PARKING



FIGURE 8: EXISTING PARKING COURT

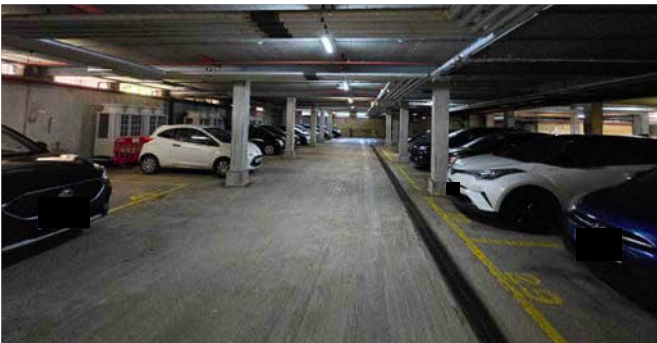


FIGURE 9: EXISTING BASEMENT PARKING

#### Heritage response

*“By replacing hard surfacing with a more refined landscape feature, the scheme improves the visual quality of the courtyard within the immediate setting of Radcliffe House. The approach to the proposed ancillary buildings incorporates layered planting and grouped tree forms to frame views and soften the building edges”.*

2.1 PROPOSED ALTERATIONS - MAIN BUILDING

New flat-roofed dormer windows are proposed at roof level to Radcliffe House as part of a carefully considered enhancement to the building’s roofscape and amenity offer. The design of the dormers has been directly informed by the scale, proportion and character of existing dormer windows within the local area (Fig. 11), ensuring that the additions respond positively to their context and reinforce the established architectural language of the estate.

The dormers adopt a restrained flat-roofed form, consistent with local precedent and comparable examples. Each incorporates full-height glazing and opening doors, creating well-proportioned openings that allow strong visual and physical connection between the internal accommodation and the roof-level terraces immediately beyond. Window and door frames are finished in a muted grey tone, selected specifically to sit comfortably against the surrounding slate mansard roof. This considered approach allows the dormers to visually recede, ensuring they are absorbed into the roofscape rather than appearing as prominent or competing additions. The colour and material strategy aligns with the wider palette used across the estate.

Private roof-level terrace areas are formed directly outside each dormer, providing high-quality external amenity space that significantly enhances the usability and enjoyment of the building without compromising its character. Careful attention has been given to the scale, spacing and proportions of the dormers to ensure they remain clearly subordinate to the existing roof form and do not materially alter the appearance of Radcliffe House when viewed from the public realm or across the Priory estate.

The accompanying visual illustrations (Fig. 12 and 13) demonstrates that views of the new dormers from ground level within the Priory grounds and from Old Charlton Road are limited and highly discreet. As such, the proposals introduce meaningful functional and amenity benefits while maintaining a calm, refined and contextually appropriate roofscape that preserves the building’s established presence within the estate.



FIGURE 11: EXISTING DORMERS AT THE PRIORY AND SURROUNDING

Heritage response

*“The new dormers are deliberately modest in scale, with clean detailing that complements the building’s late 20th century character. The design approach has been guided by the architectural language of the existing building, with the new openings adopting a traditional form and proportion.”*

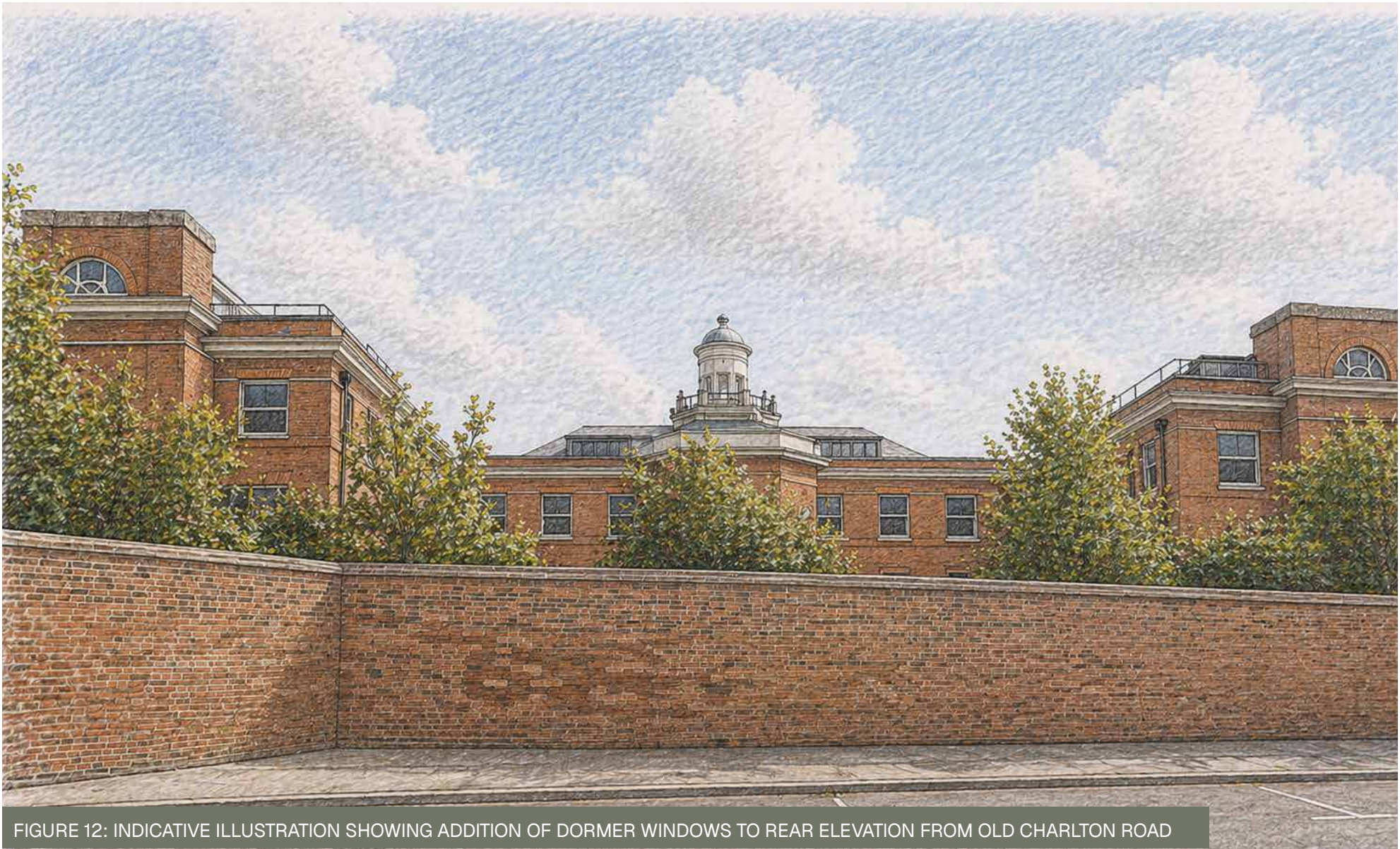


FIGURE 12: INDICATIVE ILLUSTRATION SHOWING ADDITION OF DORMER WINDOWS TO REAR ELEVATION FROM OLD CHARLTON ROAD



FIGURE 13: INDICATIVE ILLUSTRATION SHOWING ADDITION OF DORMER WINDOWS TO FRONT ELEVATION FROM THE ESTATE

### 3.1 PROPOSED ALTERATIONS - MAIN BUILDING (CONT.)

With the exception of a limited number of locations, the existing parapet walls provide the primary protective edge to the new roof-level terraces, allowing the original roof form and silhouette to be retained. Where new balustrades are required, these have been designed to be visually discreet and carefully positioned to minimise their presence within views across the estate.

The proposed metal balustrades will be fixed behind the existing roof parapet walls, ensuring they are largely screened from the public realm and surrounding vantage points. Their form, finish and detailing draw directly on established metalwork found locally and within The Priory estate, including existing balustrade railings. This ensures visual continuity, consistency of materials, and a refined architectural outcome that complements rather than competes with the host building.

#### 3.1.3 Window Bars to Existing Windows

Decorative window bars are proposed to be fitted to the existing windows of Radcliffe House (Fig. 14). This element follows the same measured and context-led design approach adopted elsewhere across the estate. The bars are informed by a recognised and recurring feature within the local built environment, ensuring the intervention is wholly appropriate to its setting (Fig. 15).

The bars will be integrated directly onto the existing windows to create a clean, well-resolved and visually robust detail. In addition to enhancing the architectural character and articulation of the elevations, they provide a clear functional benefit by improving security. This enhancement supports both the current office use and the future residential occupation of Radcliffe House, reinforcing the building's adaptability and long-term resilience.

**The discreet introduction of balustrades and the addition of decorative window bars deliver a considered balance of safety and architectural refinement.** By carefully positioning balustrades behind existing parapets and referencing local metalwork, the proposals maintain a calm and uncluttered roofscape while ensuring safe use of roof-level amenity space. The window bars further strengthen the building's visual character, drawing on local precedent to enhance façade quality. **Together, these measures contribute to a cohesive, contextually responsive upgrade that enhances usability and appearance without harm to the character of the building or the wider estate.**



FIGURE 14: EXISTING WINDOWS



FIGURE 15: EXISTING WINDOWS WITH WINDOW BARS AT THE PRIORY AND IN LOCAL AREA

3.1 PROPOSED ALTERATIONS - MAIN BUILDING [CONT.]

3.1.4 Ground Floor Terraces and Associated Door Alterations

New ground-floor terraces are proposed to serve Radcliffe House, introducing high-quality external amenity space that strengthens the relationship between the building and its landscaped setting. The form and configuration of the terraces vary in response to their position around the building, ensuring a site-specific and sensitive approach.

Along the courtyard elevation, the terraces are formed at the same level as the internal ground-floor accommodation, allowing direct, step-free access between the interior and the new outdoor spaces. This approach takes advantage of the natural alignment between internal floor levels and existing ground levels in this location, ensuring the courtyard terraces are fully accessible and inclusive for all occupants.

Along the external perimeter elevations, the terraces are designed as modest raised platforms, constructed in black metal to provide a clear and legible edge between the building and the surrounding landscape. From these raised terraces, stepped access is provided down to adjacent garden and new patio areas (Fig. 16), creating a graduated transition from built form to soft landscape. The balustrade design reflects the character, detailing and finish of metalwork found elsewhere within the local area and The Priory estate (Fig. 17), ensuring continuity and visual coherence.

Where level changes necessitate steps between terraces and garden areas, these will be designed fully in accordance with Part M of the Building Regulations. Careful attention will be given to step geometry, nosing contrast, handrail provision and surface finishes, ensuring safe, comfortable and dignified access that responds to the needs of all future occupants, including those with reduced mobility.

Access from the internal accommodation to all new terraces will be achieved by lowering the cill heights of selected existing windows to form new full-height door openings. This approach retains the established rhythm and proportions of the elevations while introducing a functional and visually sympathetic threshold between inside and outside.

Further detail on the design, materiality and planting associated with the ground-floor terraces is provided within the accompanying Landscape Drawings and Landscape Design Statement prepared by HTA.

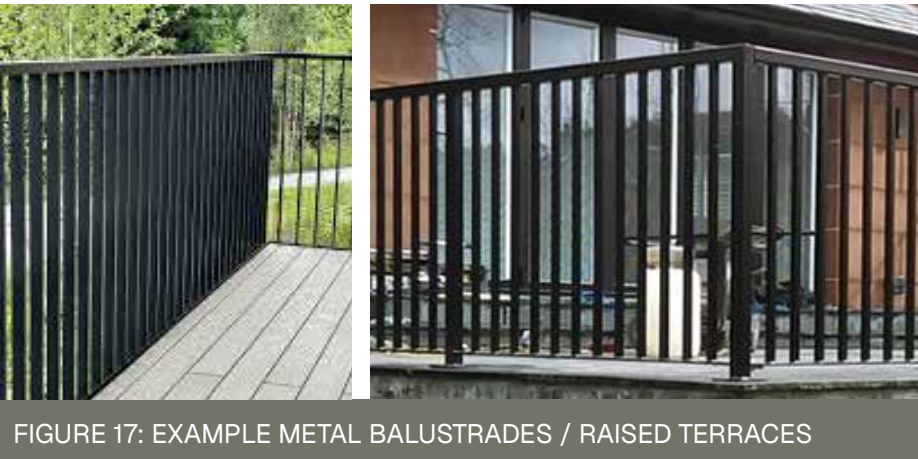


FIGURE 17: EXAMPLE METAL BALUSTRADES / RAISED TERRACES



FIGURE 16: HTA MASTERPLAN SHOWING NEW TERRACES TO GROUND FLOOR LEVEL

Landscape-led design

*The ground-floor terraces deliver a landscape-led enhancement that provides generous, accessible outdoor space, improving everyday amenity and wellbeing for building users. By carefully managing levels and incorporating sympathetic new door openings, the proposals strengthen the connection between the building and its setting while preserving architectural character and delivering a well-integrated improvement to the Priory estate*

3.2 PROPOSED ALTERATIONS - ANCILLARY BUILDINGS

3.2.1 Demolition of link building

The existing link corridor connecting the two ancillary buildings to Radcliffe House (Fig. 18) is proposed to be removed. This intervention allows the ancillary buildings to be read and function as independent structures, clarifying their identity and improving their relationship with the wider estate. The removal of the link is considered a positive and beneficial alteration, enhancing the setting of each building while unlocking greater flexibility for their future use and occupation.

The demolition also creates new external spaces between the buildings, which will be repurposed as usable amenity areas. These new spaces contribute to the overall improvement of the estate environment, replacing a utilitarian connection with more legible, attractive and people-focused external space.

3.2.2 Alterations to window and door openings

New window and door openings are proposed within the fabric of each ancillary building to improve natural light, ventilation and access. These openings strengthen the buildings’ connection to the newly created external spaces and provide direct access to the proposed terrace areas. The location, scale and proportions of all new openings have been carefully considered to ensure a sympathetic response to the existing character of each building.

Ancillary Building A will see existing high-level windows enlarged to form full-height doors and windows (Fig. 20), that adopt a heritage-style design. This approach intentionally departs from the white window treatment used elsewhere on the estate in response to the simpler architectural character and detailing of this building.

Ancillary Building B will replicate and extend its existing design language, with new window and door openings incorporating arched details to match the established openings (Fig. 21), ensuring visual consistency and architectural coherence.

3.2.3 New terraces

New terrace areas are proposed to each of the ancillary buildings, providing valuable private external amenity space for future occupants. The introduction of outdoor space represents a clear enhancement to the functionality, attractiveness and long-term usability of the buildings, both in their current use and in any future conversion scenario. The design and landscape treatment of these terraces aligns with the wider estate strategy, ensuring a cohesive and high-quality external environment.

Further detail is provided in the accompanying Landscape Drawings and Landscape Design Statement prepared by HTA.

3.2.4 Additional roof windows

Additional roof windows are proposed to each of the ancillary buildings. These have been selected to match the roof windows already present (Fig. 19), ensuring a consistent appearance and avoiding visual discord within the roofscape. The additional rooflights will further improve natural daylight penetration, enhancing internal quality and comfort for users without altering the character of the buildings.



FIGURE 18: EXISTING LINK, AND WINDOWS AND DOORS



FIGURE 19: EXISTING ROOF WINDOWS



FIGURE 20: INDICATIVE ILLUSTRATION OF ANCILLARY BUILDING A SHOWING ENLARGED OPENINGS AND TERRACES



FIGURE 21: INDICATIVE ILLUSTRATION OF ANCILLARY BUILDING B SHOWING ENLARGED OPENINGS AND TERRACES

Heritage-led design

*The proposals enhance the ancillary buildings by improving daylight, access and external amenity, while clearly defining each structure and strengthening its relationship with the surrounding landscape. The removal of the link building, introduction of new terraces and carefully designed openings deliver a more flexible, attractive and*

### 3.3 PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT + RATIONALE

The building is located within a well-established setting defined by a clear and recognisable architectural character. Dormer windows are a consistent feature of the local roofscape, and their form and materiality have directly informed the design approach to the proposed roof-level additions. Decorative window bars are likewise a familiar element of the surrounding built environment, and this local characteristic has been thoughtfully referenced to ensure the proposals sit comfortably and harmoniously within their context.

The proposed alterations have been shaped by a set of clear design principles, which align with and complement those applied to the related scheme across the wider estate:

#### Contextual Responsiveness

All alterations respond closely to the character, form and material palette of the existing buildings and their surroundings. Grey-finished dormer frames relate directly to the slate roof of Radcliffe House, decorative window bars draw on a recognised local feature, and new roof windows to the ancillary buildings match existing examples to maintain a consistent roofscape.

#### Estate-Wide Coherence

The proposals are conceived as part of a coordinated estate-wide approach, ensuring that improvements are cohesive and reinforce the quality of the estate as a whole rather than appearing piecemeal.

#### Enhancement of the External Environment

The removal of surface parking and its replacement with landscaping and terraces delivers a substantial improvement to the setting of Radcliffe House and the wider estate, while terraces to all three buildings significantly elevate the quality of the external amenity environment.

#### Dual-Use Benefits

Each element has been considered against both the current office use and the approved future residential use, ensuring enduring benefits regardless of occupation.

Quality of Amenity: Ground- and roof-level terraces to Radcliffe House, alongside ground-floor terraces serving the ancillary buildings, ensure all future occupants benefit from high-quality external amenity space.

#### Materiality and Finish

Black metal terrace structures and grey-finished dormer frames provide a restrained, contemporary palette that supports a consistent estate-wide design language.

#### Legibility and Independence

The removal of the link corridor enhances the clarity of each building as an independent structure and improves the quality of the spaces between them.

#### Performance and Access

New openings, improved fenestration and additional roof windows enhance natural light, ventilation and access, improving internal quality and comfort for future users.



#### Heritage response

*"The design approach has been guided by the architectural language of the existing building: the new openings adopt a predominantly traditional form and proportion, and the proposed rooflights are deliberately modest in scale...the external works and landscape approach enhance the building's immediate setting...the proposals have no impact on the significance of the Grade I and Grade II listed buildings."*

3.4 IMPACT ON HERITAGE ASSETS

The proposed alterations have been carefully developed in direct response to the established character of the existing buildings, the wider Priory estate and the surrounding local area. Through a restrained and context-led approach—drawing on local architectural features, materiality and scale—the proposals reinforce the building’s contribution to its setting rather than competing with it. It is therefore considered that the scheme results in no harm to designated or non-designated heritage assets, including the Hitchin Conservation Area, and will preserve the character and appearance of this sensitive setting.

Further detail is provided in the accompanying Heritage Statement prepared by Planit Consulting..

3.5 ACCESS

The existing site access arrangements for both vehicles and pedestrians will remain unchanged as part of the proposed conversion

3.5.1 To the building

3.5.1.1 Vehicles

Vehicular access to the site is currently taken from Old Charlton Road and Tilehouse Street, serving an existing on-site parking area used by office staff and visitors. Access is also provided from Old Charlton Road to basement car parking, via a ramp. The proposal does not involve any alteration to the existing access points or road layouts.

Refer to the accompanying Transport Statement, by i-Transport, for further detail.

3.5.1.2 Pedestrians

Pedestrian access to the building will continue to be taken from the existing principal entrance on Tilehouse Street, which will remain unchanged.

The existing main Radcliffe House building has a primary entrance lobby and additionally has secondary rear access / exit. The proposal does not introduce any new access points primary communal access points. There are also four existing exit points from the basement, which will remain.

To the ancillary buildings, the main access points will broadly remain as the existing, with a slight realignment of the entry point to Ancillary Building A, fronting Ancillary Building B. Additional access points will be added to Ancillary Building B.

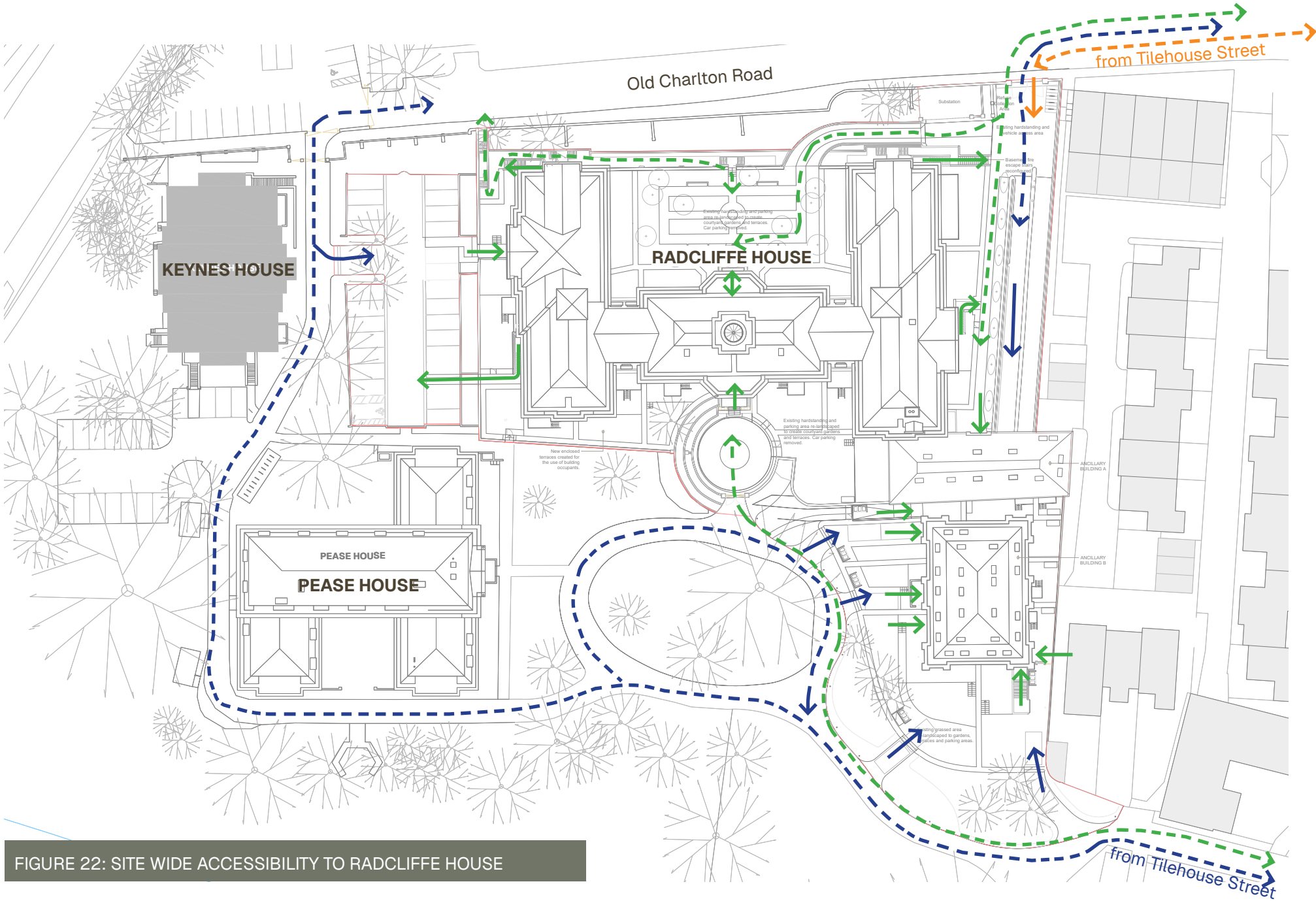


FIGURE 22: SITE WIDE ACCESSIBILITY TO RADCLIFFE HOUSE

| Legend:          | Route   | Access Point |
|------------------|---------|--------------|
| Cars / Emergency | ← - - - | ← ———        |
| Refuse Vehicle   | ← - - - | ← ———        |
| Pedestrians      | ← - - - | ← ———        |

3.5 ACCESS

3.5.2 Within the main building

Access and circulation within the main building will largely remain unchanged, with building occupants continuing to benefit from clear and convenient access to both lifts and stair cores. The proposed works therefore maintain the established movement patterns within the building, ensuring familiarity and ease of use for all users.

Changes to access between the main building and the ancillary buildings arise from the removal of an existing link corridor. As a result, the ancillary buildings will no longer be accessed internally from the main building and will instead be served via well-defined external access arrangements. This approach provides clarity of circulation while maintaining appropriate connectivity across the wider site. Access arrangements associated with the proposed alterations are described in more detail below.

3.5.2.1 Access to the Terraces

Ground floor terraces will be accessed directly from the interior of the building via the altered window and door openings described above, creating a strong and intuitive relationship between internal spaces and external amenity areas. Within the internal courtyard of the main building, the terraces are set at garden level, allowing for level and seamless access where possible.

Where changes in level occur between the internal floor level and the garden, a limited number of steps will be introduced as required. All steps will be designed in full accordance with the requirements of Part M of the Building Regulations. Due consideration has been given to the needs of all future occupants, including those with reduced mobility. Step geometry, handrails, guarding, surface textures, and contrasting nosings will be appropriately detailed to ensure safe, compliant, and inclusive access for all users.

3.5.2.2 Access to the Roof Level Terraces

Access to the roof-level terraces will be provided internally from within the main building. The internal layout has been designed to facilitate level access for future occupants, supporting ease of movement and inclusive use of these elevated amenity spaces.

3.5.2.3 Inclusive Design

Inclusive design principles have informed the proposed alterations throughout the scheme. External amenity spaces are provided at both ground-floor and roof level, offering a range of accessible environments for building users. The ground-floor terraces have been carefully designed to minimise the need for steps where level changes occur, promoting ease of access wherever feasible.

Where steps cannot be avoided, they will be designed and detailed in full accordance with Part M of the Building Regulations, with careful attention given to the needs of all users regardless of mobility. The design of access routes, thresholds, and transitions has been thoughtfully considered to reduce potential barriers and to deliver a dignified, equitable, and inclusive experience for all occupants and visitors.

Legend:

-  Main Access Points (existing)
-  Terrace / Garden Access (proposed)
-  Lift (for step-free access to upper floors)
-  Stairs (for access to upper floors)

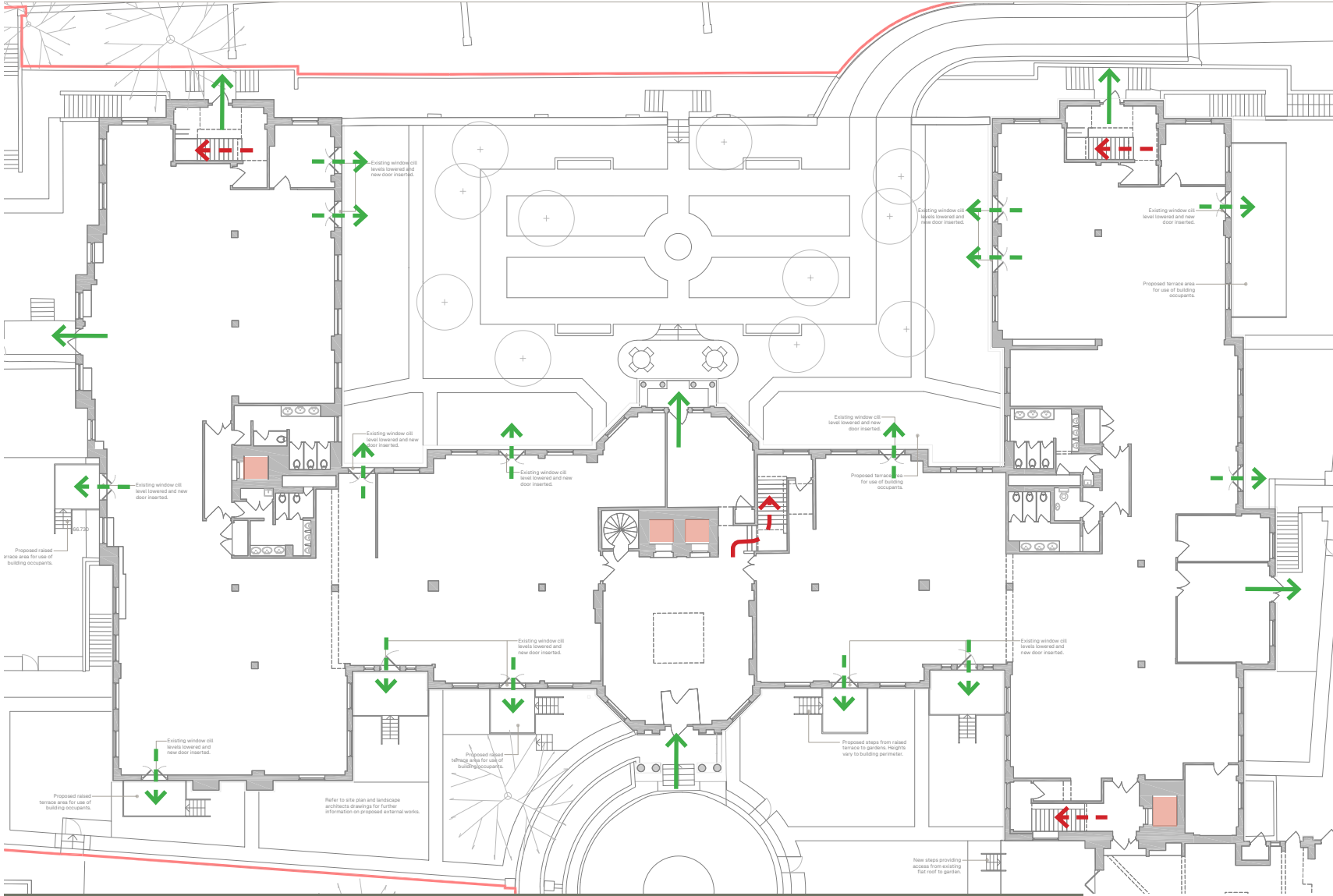


FIGURE 23: GROUND FLOOR ACCESS POINTS - MAIN BUILDING

3.5 ACCESS

3.5.3 Within the ancillary buildings

Access and circulation within the ancillary buildings will evolve as a result of removing the link corridor, which previously allowed both buildings to operate as satellite spaces to the main building. This change presents an opportunity to clearly define the function and identity of each ancillary building. Consequently, Ancillary Building B will operate independently and will be accessed exclusively via external entrances, rather than internally from the main building. The access arrangements associated with the proposed alterations are described in more detail below.

3.5.3.1 Access to Ancillary Building A

Ancillary Building A will continue to benefit from two external access points. Following the removal of the link block between Buildings A and B, the existing external entrance has been thoughtfully repositioned, and the associated external ramp extended, ensuring that step-free access is retained and enhanced.

Additional access points have been introduced to provide direct connections from the interior of the building to newly created terrace spaces. Due to surrounding ground levels, it has not been possible to achieve step-free access at all of these locations; therefore, steps are provided. These elements have been carefully designed in full accordance with the requirements of Part M of the Building Regulations. The design gives due consideration to the needs of all future occupants, including those with reduced mobility. Step geometry, handrails, guarding, surface finishes, and contrasting nosings will be appropriately specified to ensure safe, compliant, and inclusive access for all users.

3.5.3.2 Access to Ancillary Building B

With Ancillary Building B transitioning to a standalone building, the quantity and positioning of external access points have been comprehensively reviewed to support both its current office use and potential future uses, thereby maximising flexibility and long-term adaptability.

It is proposed to introduce two additional external access points along the primary frontage, improving legibility and ease of access. At the rear of the building, access arrangements will be rationalised to better serve new, improved terraced areas, enhancing the quality and usability of these external spaces.

Step-free access is provided wherever practicable; however, as with Ancillary Building A, surrounding ground levels mean this is not achievable in all locations. In such instances, steps will be installed and designed in accordance with Part M of the Building Regulations. Consistent with the approach across the site, careful consideration has been given to inclusive design principles, with appropriate detailing of step geometry, handrails, guarding, surface textures, and nosing contrast to ensure safe, accessible, and welcoming environments for all users.

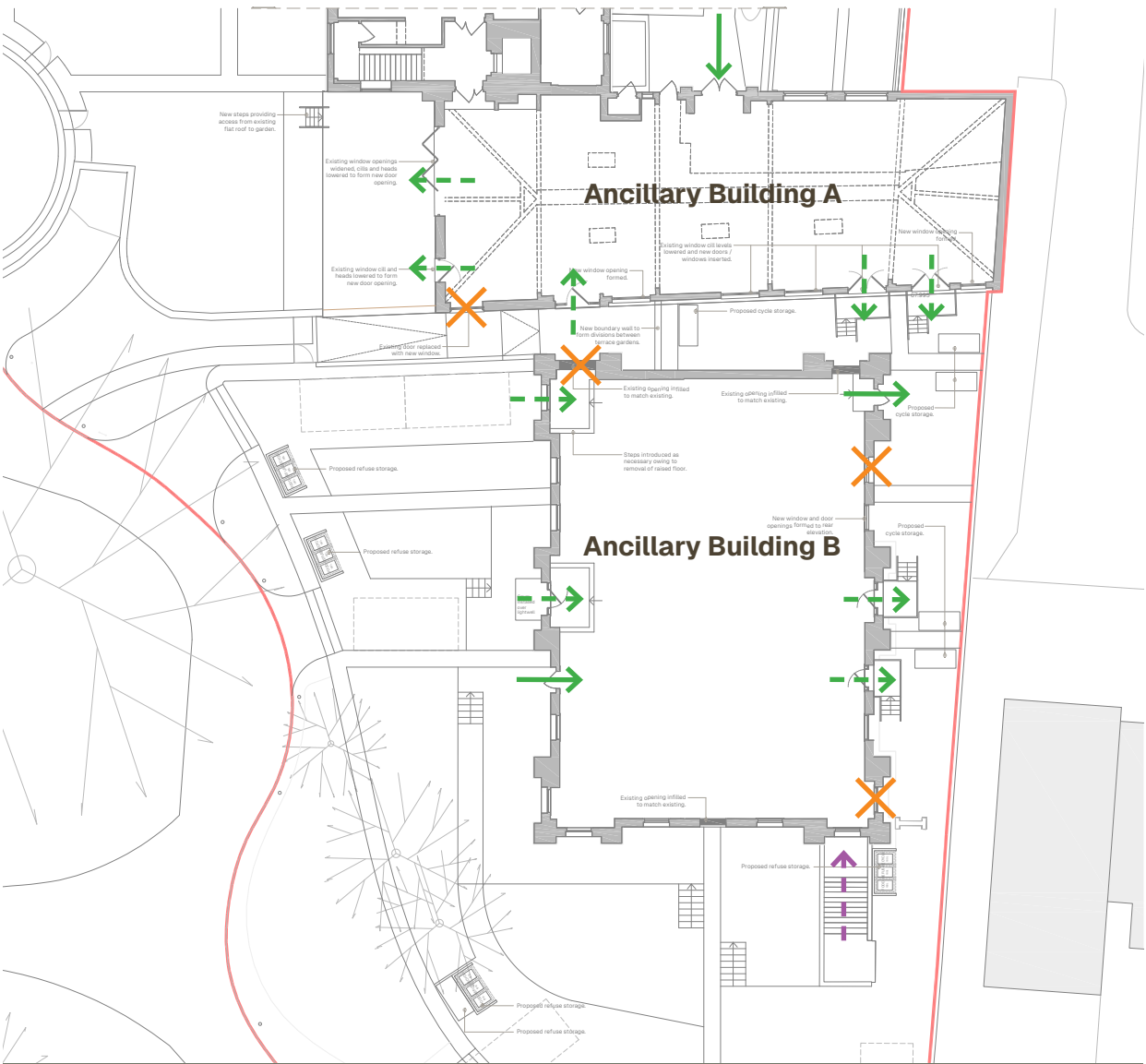


FIGURE 23: GROUND FLOOR ACCESS POINTS - ANCILLARY BUILDINGS

- Legend:**
- ← Main Access Points (existing)
  - ← - - - New Acces Point + Terrace / Garden Access (proposed)
  - ← - - - Stairs (for access to/from basement)
  - ✗ Existing access point extinguished

3.6 PARKING

Cars

The application site benefits from a well-established parking provision both immediately adjacent to Radcliffe House and across the wider Priory estate, which is capable of accommodating the existing office use as well as future residential occupation. Radcliffe House itself incorporates a basement car park providing 65 parking spaces (Fig. 27). Additional provision is currently available via a podium car park accommodating 22 spaces, together with a parking court to the front of the building providing a further 8 spaces (Fig. 29).

As part of a landscape-led approach to improving the quality and setting of the site, it is proposed to remove the ground-level parking court and podium car park and replace these areas with enhanced landscaping. In place of this provision, 7 new parking spaces will be provided around the ancillary buildings (Fig. 30), alongside 55 spaces retained within the basement—the slight reduction reflecting the introduction of additional plant rooms (Fig. 28). A further 3 surface spaces are provided to the south of Radcliffe House.

In total, the proposals maintain **65 car parking spaces** across the site, matching the existing overall provision while significantly improving the quality and appearance of the external environment. Further detail is provided in the accompanying Transport Statement prepared by i-Transport.

Cycles

Comprehensive cycle provision is made for both existing office users and future residential occupants, as well as visitors. Cycle parking is provided in accordance with, and in excess of, the minimum standards set out within the Council’s Vehicle Parking at New Developments Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) (2011).

Under the prior approval consent, provision for 100 cycle spaces within Ancillary Building A was confirmed, representing a level of provision well above current minimum requirements. The proposals now rationalise and enhance this provision, delivering a high-quality and well-distributed cycle parking strategy.

A total of 56 secure resident cycle spaces will be provided within the basement (Fig. 28) using double-tier racks, continuing to exceed the requirements for the 49 residential units approved under the prior approval consent. In addition, a further 46 visitor cycle spaces are provided within the basement.

Secure cycle storage is provided at the perimeter of both ancillary buildings through dedicated stores or lockers, each capable of accommodating two cycles (one for the resident and one for a visitor) (Fig. 39), designed in line with the example shown at Fig. 25. An additional 8 visitor spaces will be provided adjacent to Old Charlton Road by way of Sheffield stands.

In total, the proposals deliver 124 cycle spaces, supporting sustainable forms of travel while integrating cycle infrastructure discreetly and cohesively within the estate.

Further detail is provided in the accompanying Transport Statement prepared by i-Transport.

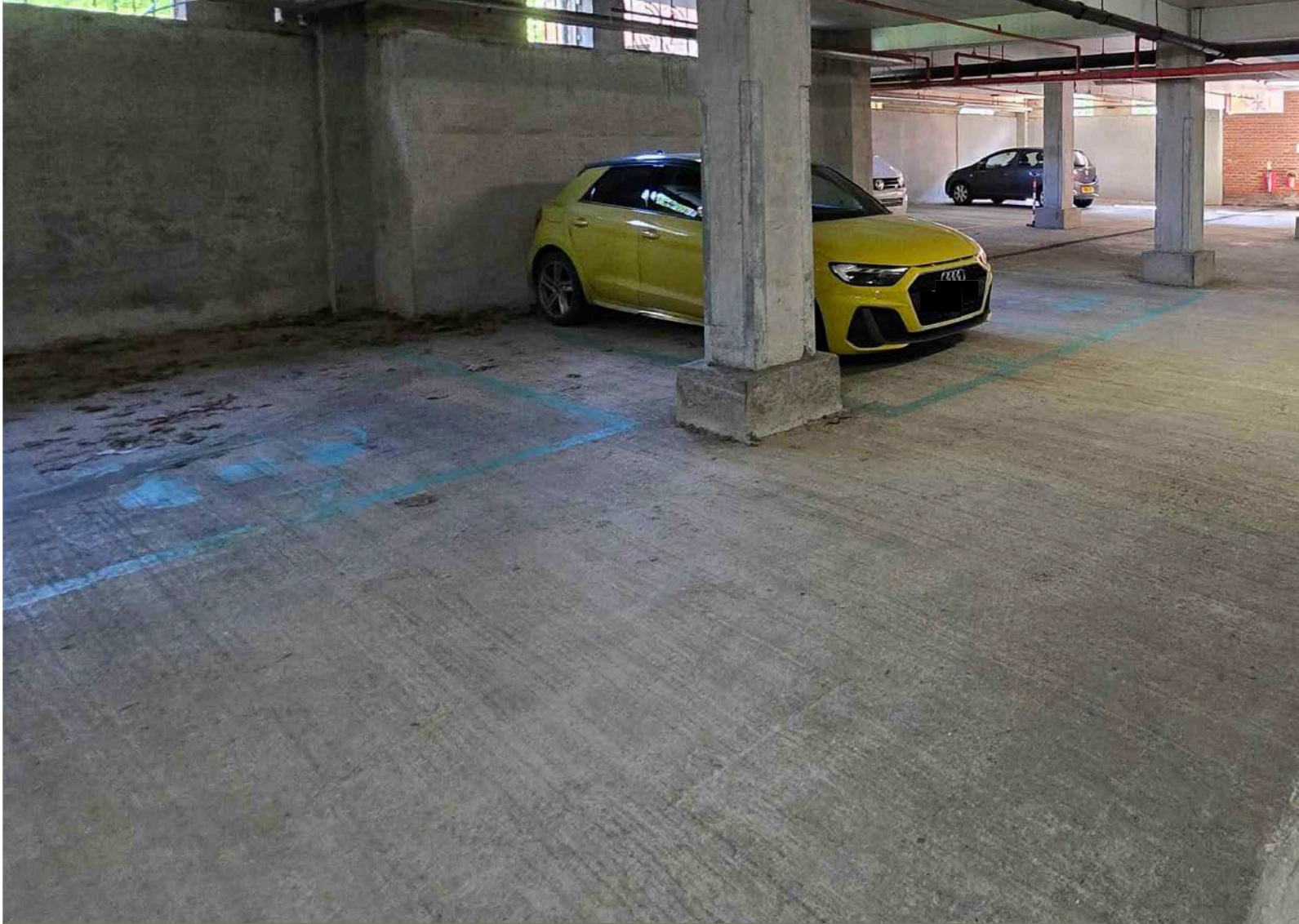


FIGURE 24: PRIORITISING THE EXISTING BASEMENT FOR CAR PARKING



FIGURE 25: EXAMPLE CYCLE STORES

Landscape transformation

*The removal of surface-level parking and its replacement with high-quality landscaping represents one of the most significant benefits of the scheme. By prioritising green space over hardstanding, the proposals significantly enhance the amenity of building occupants, create a more attractive and usable environment, and deliver a clear visual uplift across the wider Priory estate—reinforcing its landscaped character and long-term quality.*

3.7 SERVICING

The proposed alterations do not change the established servicing arrangements for the building, ensuring continuity and efficient operation.

Servicing and Deliveries

Servicing, deliveries and refuse collection will continue to operate via the existing access on Old Charlton Road, with Tilehouse Street providing additional servicing access. Both routes currently accommodate service vehicles associated with the office use and will remain fully suitable for ongoing operations. Access for emergency and service vehicles will remain clear and fully compliant with Building Regulations Part B (Fire Safety) and local highway standards. As such, the servicing arrangements remain unchanged and result in no material impact on highway safety or the operation of Old Charlton Road or Tilehouse Street.

Refuse and Recycling Storage

Refuse and recycling provision will continue to be accommodated within the site boundary, consistent with the existing approach. On collection days, bins will be managed by the building operator and transferred to the established holding area to the rear of Radcliffe House, conveniently positioned for kerbside collection from Old Charlton Road (Fig. 39).

For the main building, refuse storage will be provided within the basement (Fig. 28), while occupants of the ancillary buildings will utilise dedicated refuse storage areas, predominantly comprising wheelie-bin stores located close to each building (Fig. 26 and Fig. 30).

All refuse storage areas are designed to comply fully with North Hertfordshire Council’s waste management guidance, ensuring adequate capacity for both general and recyclable waste and supporting effective, well-managed day-to-day operation.

Storage capacity in total provided:

- Waste : 5no. 180 litre, 1no. 240 litre + 6no. 1,100 litre bins totalling 7,740 litres
- Dry Recycling : 5no. 180 litre, 1no. 360 litre + 6no. 1,100litre bins totalling 7,860 litres
- Fibre : 20no. 240 litre bins totalling 4,800 litres
- Food : 13no. 180 litre bins totalling 2,340 litres.

These are in excess of the requirements on the current office use and future residential use (under the Prior approval consent). Refer to the accompanying Transport Statement, by i-Transport, for further detail.



FIGURE 26: - EXAMPLE REFUSE STORE

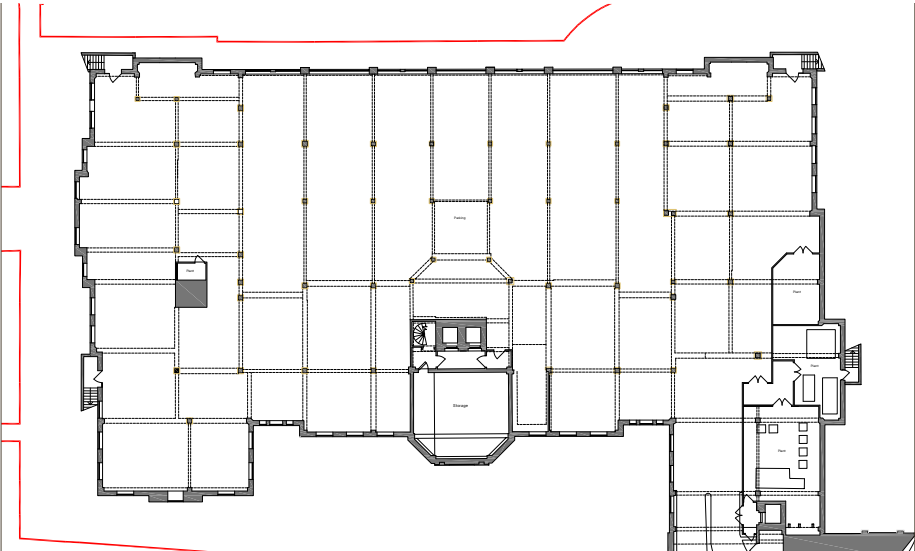


FIGURE 27: EXISTING BASEMENT

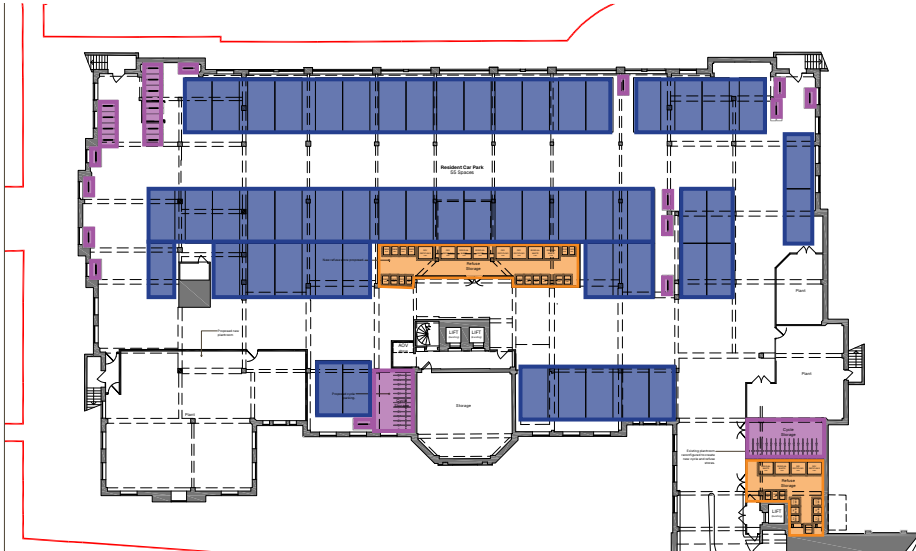


FIGURE 28: PROPOSED BASEMENT - PARKING, CYCLE AND REFUSE STORAGE PROVISIONS

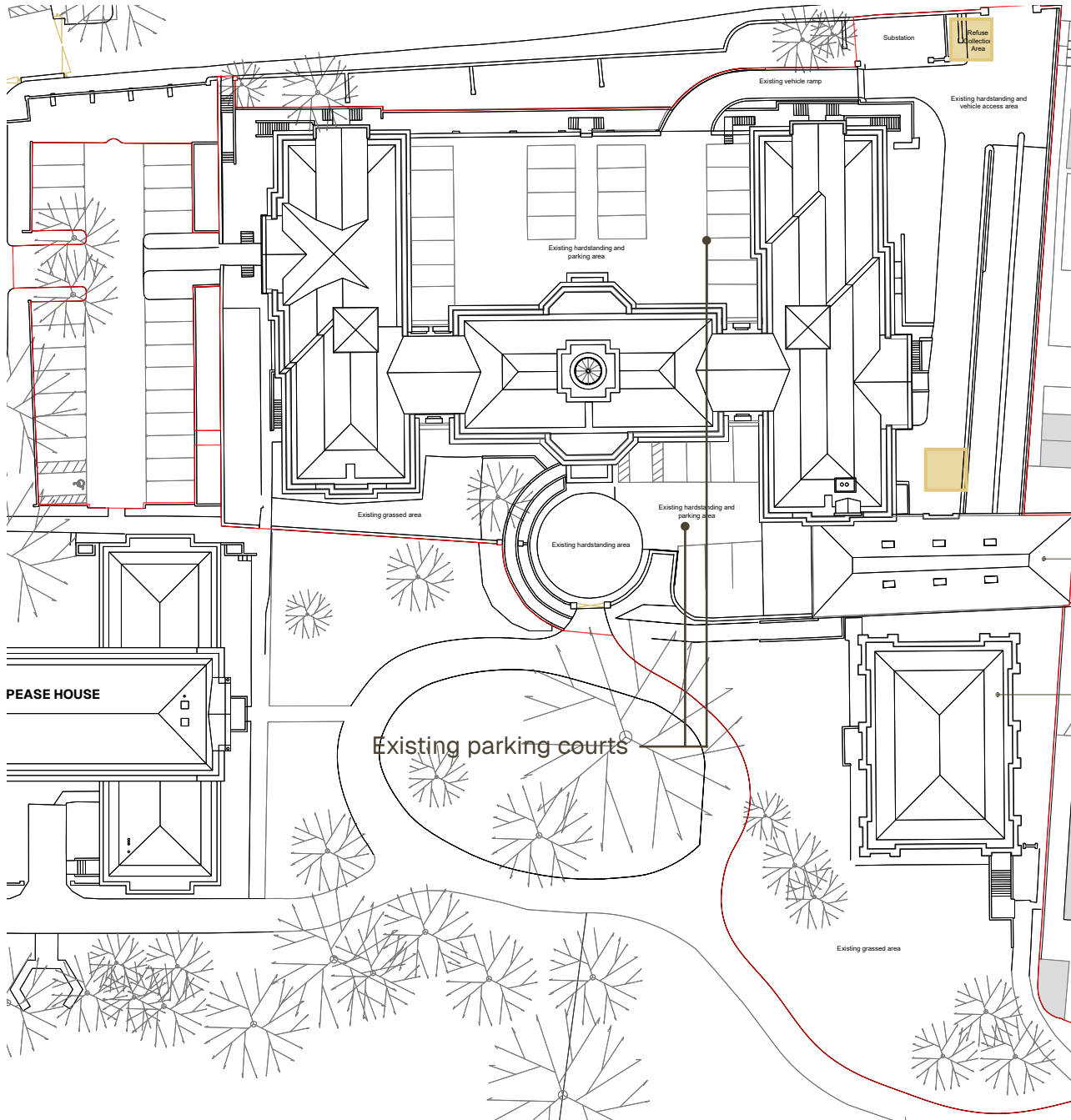


FIGURE 29: EXISTING GROUND FLOOR - CAR PARKING

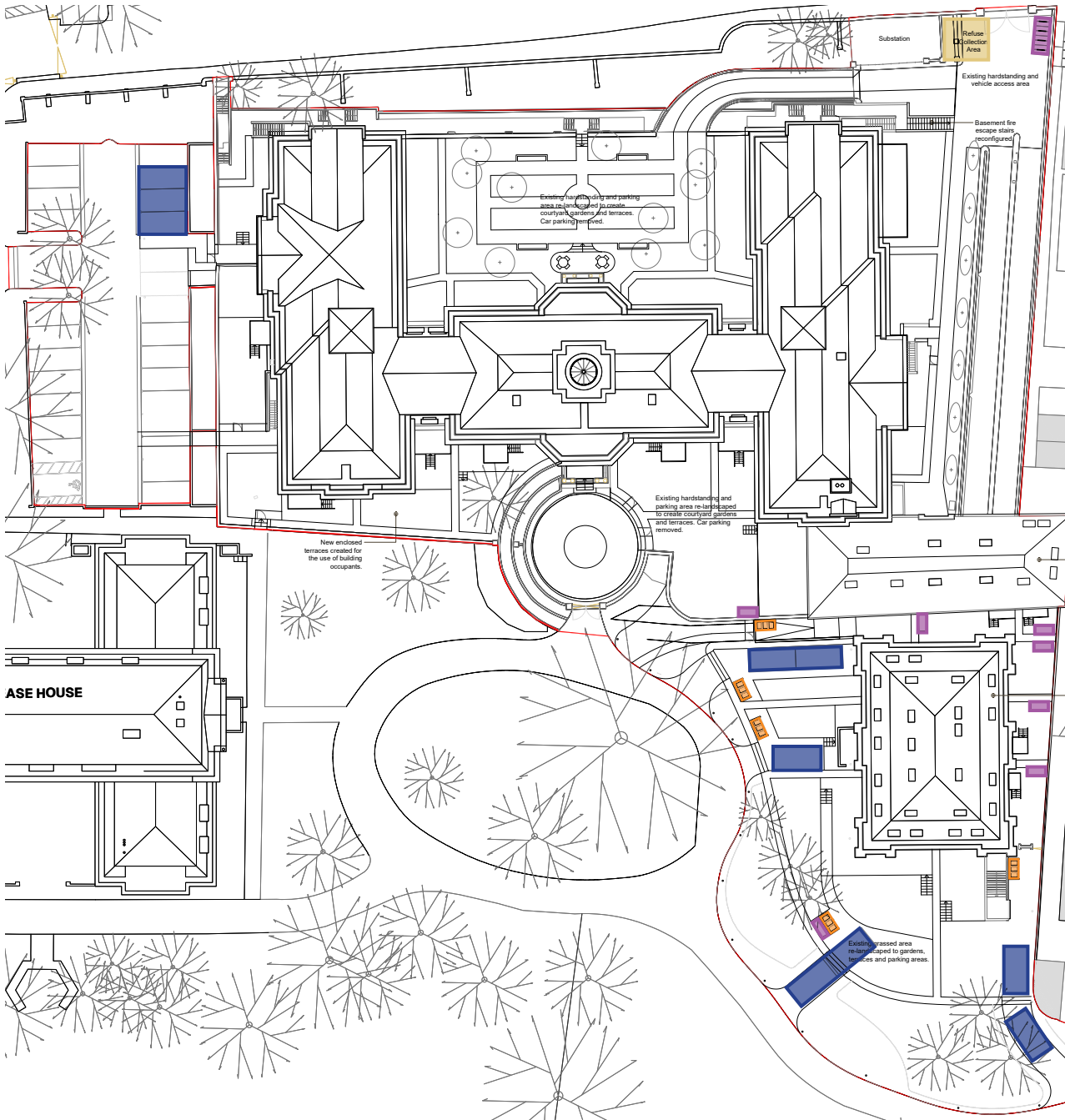


FIGURE 30: PROPOSED GROUND FLOOR - PARKING, CYCLE AND REFUSE STORAGE PROVISIONS

- Legend:**
- Car Parking
  - Cycle Parking
  - Refuse Storage
  - Refuse Holding Area

## **CHAPTER 4.0 CONCLUSION**

4.1 SUMMARY + KEY BENEFITS

This Design and Access Statement demonstrates that the proposed alterations to Radcliffe House and its two ancillary buildings comprise a carefully conceived, context-led and enhancement-focused scheme that will deliver clear and lasting benefits for the buildings, their users and the wider Priory estate.

For Radcliffe House, the proposals prioritise quality, amenity and landscape over hardstanding and car dominance. The removal of surface-level parking and its replacement with high-quality landscaping and terraces represents a significant improvement to the building’s setting, while retaining sufficient basement parking to meet operational needs. New ground-floor and roof-level terraces provide generous, accessible external amenity spaces, supported by inclusive design measures fully compliant with Part M of the Building Regulations. Roof-level dormer additions and decorative window bars are carefully detailed and informed by local precedent, enhancing architectural character while remaining visually calm and coherent within the estate.

For the ancillary buildings, the demolition of the link corridor clarifies their identity, improves legibility and unlocks new external spaces between buildings. New openings, terraces and roof windows significantly improve daylight, ventilation, access and amenity, transforming previously secondary structures into high-quality, flexible and attractive components of the estate. The consistent treatment of materials and detailing ensures these improvements remain integrated within the wider estate character.

Taken together, the proposals form a comprehensive and coherent package of works that aligns with the concurrent application for the wider estate. The emphasis on landscape-led design, amenity provision, inclusive access and architectural refinement demonstrates a scheme that places long-term quality, wellbeing and estate stewardship at its core.

The proposals accord fully with national and local planning policy, delivering high design quality, contextual responsiveness and inclusive design. No harm has been identified to the character of the area, neighbouring amenity or the Hitchin Conservation Area. On the contrary, the scheme will positively and substantively enhance the appearance, usability and environmental quality of Radcliffe House, the ancillary buildings and the estate as a whole.

From a heritage perspective, the proposals preserve the significance of the Conservation Area and the buildings’ contribution to it through a sensitive and proportionate design response.

In light of the above, it is respectfully submitted that the proposals represent a high-quality, policy-compliant and enhancement-led scheme that fully merits the grant of planning permission.

THE PROPOSALS FOR RADCLIFFE HOUSE PROVIDE THE FOLLOWING KEY BENEFITS:



Landscape-Led Enhancement of the Estate setting

- The removal of surface-level car parking and its replacement with high-quality landscaping and new terrace areas delivers a step-change improvement to the setting of Radcliffe House and the wider Priory estate.
- Hard-edged and vehicle-dominated spaces are transformed into greener, more coherent and people-focused environments that reinforce the estate’s landscaped character.
- New terraces and planting strengthen the relationship between buildings and landscape, improving visual amenity across the estate and creating a calmer, more attractive setting.
- The creation of new external spaces between the ancillary buildings, following the removal of the link corridor, further enhances legibility, openness and spatial quality.



Heritage + Character

- The proposals respond directly to the established character of Radcliffe House, the ancillary buildings and the wider estate, ensuring new elements are respectful, proportionate and well-integrated.
- Roof-level dormers, window bars and roof windows draw on local architectural precedent, reinforcing recognizable features within the Conservation Area and safeguarding the coherence of the roofscape.
- The demolition of the link corridor enhances the legibility and understanding of the ancillary buildings as individual historic components, improving their setting and contribution to the estate.
- Overall, the scheme preserves the character and appearance of the Hitchin Conservation Area and results in no harm to heritage assets, instead reinforcing the buildings’ positive contribution to their context.



Sustainability, Longevity and Responsible Investment

- A landscape-led reduction in above-ground parking promotes a more sustainable land-use approach while retaining basement parking to meet practical operational needs.
- New openings, roof windows and improved fenestration enhance natural daylight and ventilation, reducing reliance on artificial lighting and supporting healthier internal environments.
- Rationalisation of estate infrastructure, including servicing, parking and ancillary storage, reflects a long-term, robust approach to estate management and future adaptability. The consistent use of durable, high-quality materials and coordinated design solutions represents responsible investment in the long-term performance and resilience of the estate



Improved Amenity, Well-being + Inclusivity

- Generous ground- and roof-level terraces provide high-quality private and semi-private outdoor amenity across all buildings, significantly enhancing everyday experience and wellbeing.
- Step-free access to courtyard terraces, alongside carefully designed and Part M-compliant stepped routes elsewhere, ensures inclusive and dignified access for all users.
- The transformation of previously underused spaces into usable, landscaped amenity areas encourages outdoor use, social interaction and connection with nature.
- Improvements to daylight, ventilation, access and spatial clarity across the buildings support healthier, more flexible and more comfortable environments for both existing and future occupants.

## Conclusion

*The proposals deliver a highly beneficial, future-focused transformation of Radcliffe House and its setting, replacing underused and vehicle-dominated areas with high-quality landscape, generous amenity and refined architectural enhancements. Through a coherent, heritage-responsive and inclusive design approach, the scheme secures lasting environmental, social and visual benefits for building users and the wider Priory estate*



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