



Pease House Hitchin Priory

Metric + Maker

**Landscape Design
Statement**

April 2026

HTA Design



Client	Metric + Maker
Project name	Hitchin Priory
Project code	MAM-HPL-050

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Revision	Description	Author(s)	Date
-	Issued For Client Sign-off	SHS	31.03.26
A	Issued For Planning	SHS	10.04.26
B	Issued For Planning	SHS	15.04.26
C	Issued For Planning	SHS	16.04.26
D	Issued For Planning	SHS	23.04.26

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Site context

1.1 Site Context

Overview

Hitchin Priory Estate

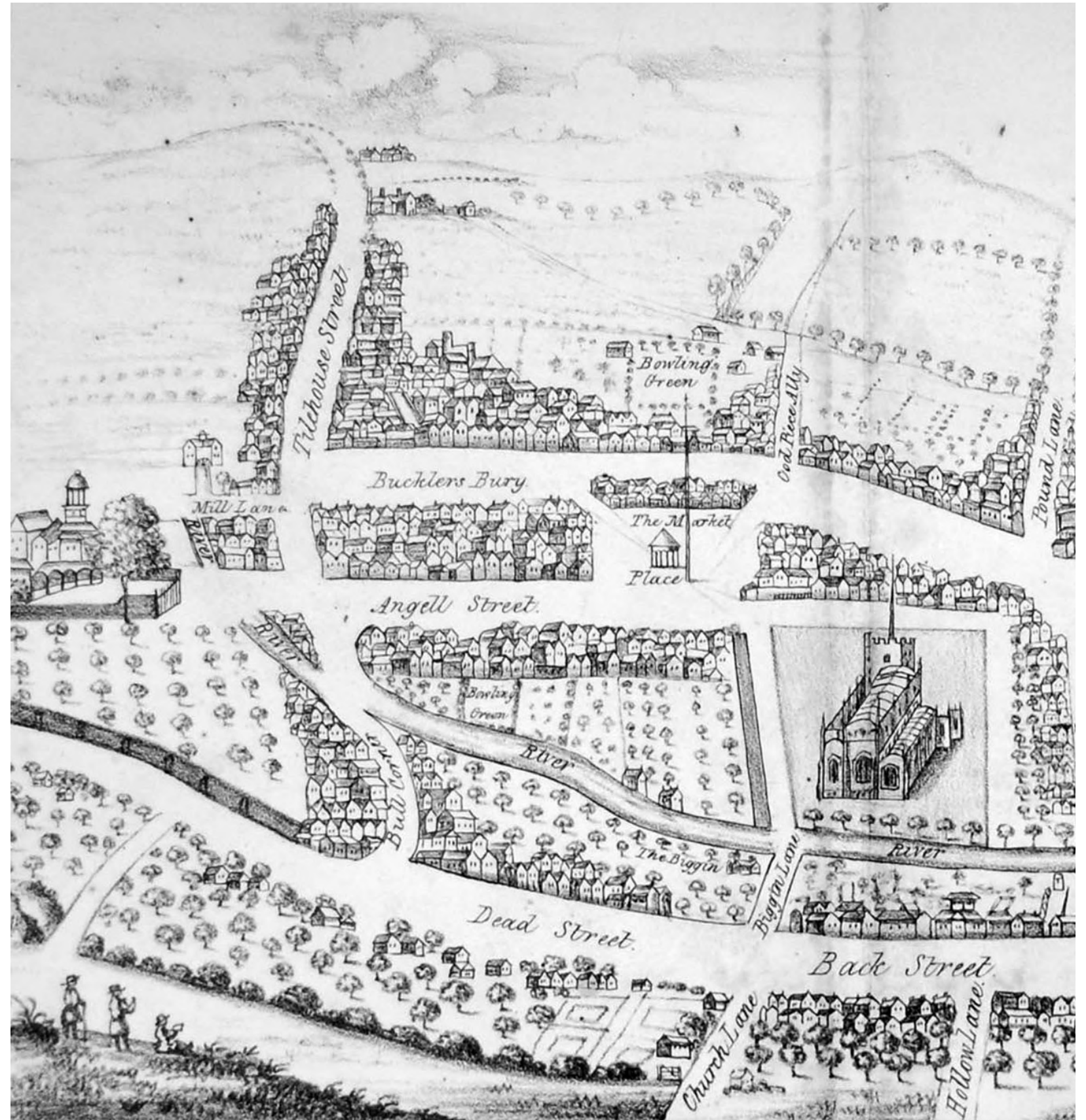
Hitchin Priory is a historic estate with roots dating back to the medieval period. Originally founded around 1317 as a Carmelite friary, with grounds extending over the area known today as Priory Park, the friary was disbanded following the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 1530s and the estate granted to Sir Richard Radcliffe for use as a private residence.

Over the centuries, the building evolved architecturally, blending its medieval origins with later Tudor and Victorian additions. Its structure reflects changing tastes and uses, shifting from a monastic complex to a country house. In the 20th century, the Priory was repurposed for institutional and hospitality uses, including functioning as a school and later as a hotel and event venue.

Today, Hitchin Priory stands as a symbol of England's layered history, illustrating the transition from religious to secular land ownership. Its preserved architecture and landscaped grounds provide insight into centuries of social, political, and cultural change, making it an important heritage site in Hertfordshire.



OS Map of Hitchin, 1851 showing the historical layout and relationship between Hitchin Priory [1], the Kitchen Gardens [2], and the wider Priory Park grounds [3]



Plan of Hitchin c. 1700, showing St Mary's Church (centre right) and Hitchin Priory (far left) Hertfordshire, by Sir Henry Chauncy

1.2 Landscape Characters

Historic Landscape References



Overall Landscape Characters Diagram

Landscape Characters

- Picturesque Treed Gateway:
Based on the original tree belt between Hitchin Priory and the Kitchen Garden area - Refer to the Historic Landscape References Diagram.
- Garden Forecourt:
Based on the original open landscape character directly adjacent the Kitchen Garden - Refer to the Historic Landscape References Diagram.
- Open Riverfront:
Based on the original open landscape character of the River Hiz waterfront - Refer to the Historic Landscape References Diagram.
- Italian Terraces - Based on the lost Italian Garden designed by Walter Sarel - Refer to the Historic Landscape References Diagram.
- Woodland Fringe - Based on the existing modern landscape character.



Historic Landscape References Diagram

1.3 Existing Condition

Opportunities and Constraints

Pease House - Overview

Built in 1987 by National Mutual Life as intended offices, Pease House is one of three blocks situated within part of the original Kitchen Garden footprint. At the time of construction, some original trees were retained and new planting introduced to create an attractive park-like garden character between the offices and the river.

Existing Condition

While the park-like character around Pease House remains and can still be interpreted, the overall landscape setting is lacking in habitat value and colour / seasonal interest. The current experience of the landscape is utilitarian and relatively sterile.

Opportunities

- Enhance garden character setting of the existing building through new ornamental planting to complement existing landscape features.
- Existing mature trees and climbing planting anchors new planting improvements with an established landscape structure.
- Diversify existing habitats to improve biodiversity and increase ecosystem resilience.
- Improve experience of the River Hiz and waterfront areas.

Constraints

- Built structures.
- Existing mature trees and root protection areas.
- Ecology.
- Existing topography.
- Location relative to watercourse.
- Heritage and Conservation Area setting.

Existing Condition - Site Photographs



Approach to Pease House from Radcliffe House



Existing open courtyard with boundary walls



Existing route between Pease House and the River Hiz



Relationship between Pease House and existing car park (former Italian Garden)



2

Landscape Design Proposals

2.1 Design Proposal

Landscape Masterplan

Overview

The landscape proposals will build upon the existing garden character of the site, enhancing the arrival experience with new ornamental planting, flowering meadows and sweeping lawns. Landscape structure is maintained through existing mature trees, complemented with a new backdrop of hedges to frame private gardens to the front and rear building elevations, as well as within the existing open courtyard.

Proposed Improvements

- 1** Improved main entrance with planting
- 2** Proposed planting to building thresholds
- 3** Sweeping lawns with wildflower meadow fringe
- 4** Private gardens / terraces with varied hard and soft landscape treatments
- 5** Hedge boundaries to private amenity areas
- 6** Existing trees retained
- 7** Proposed lighting
- 8** Cycle parking (visitor)
- 9** Secure cycle store with green screen and roof
- 10** Secure refuse store with green screen and roof
- 11** Existing refuse store removed and area returned to planting
- 12** Proposed brick walls to divert surface water
- 13** Re-aligned footpath towards main entrance



Landscape General Arrangement Plan

2.2 Design Proposal

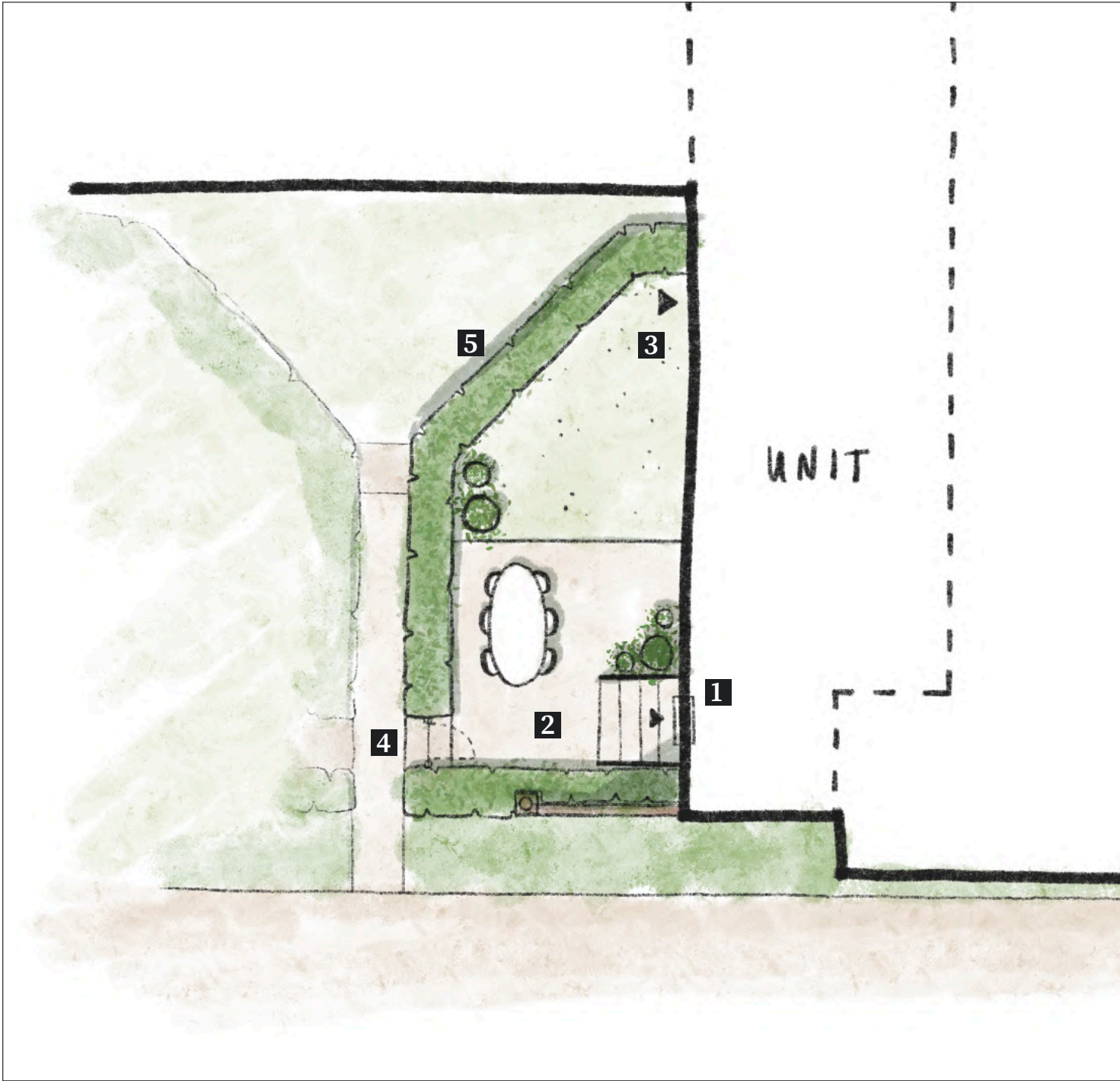
Individual Garden Spaces - Design Study

Individual Garden Spaces

Areas for private amenity will be created with a variety of hard and soft landscaping as required to suit existing constraints.

The designs concentrate on generosity of space, privacy / screening, and accessibility through introducing informal pathways and direct access to public-facing areas where possible.

Creating a consistent language of hedge boundaries across the estate strengthens the garden character of the site overall, and plays a key role in shaping its new identity.



Individual Garden Spaces - Design Study

Precedent Images



1 Stepped access from building entrance



2 Permeable hard surface to patios



3 Informal access within gardens



4 Proposed access as needed



5 Hedge boundaries to provide screening



3

Landscape Strategies

3.1 Landscape Strategies

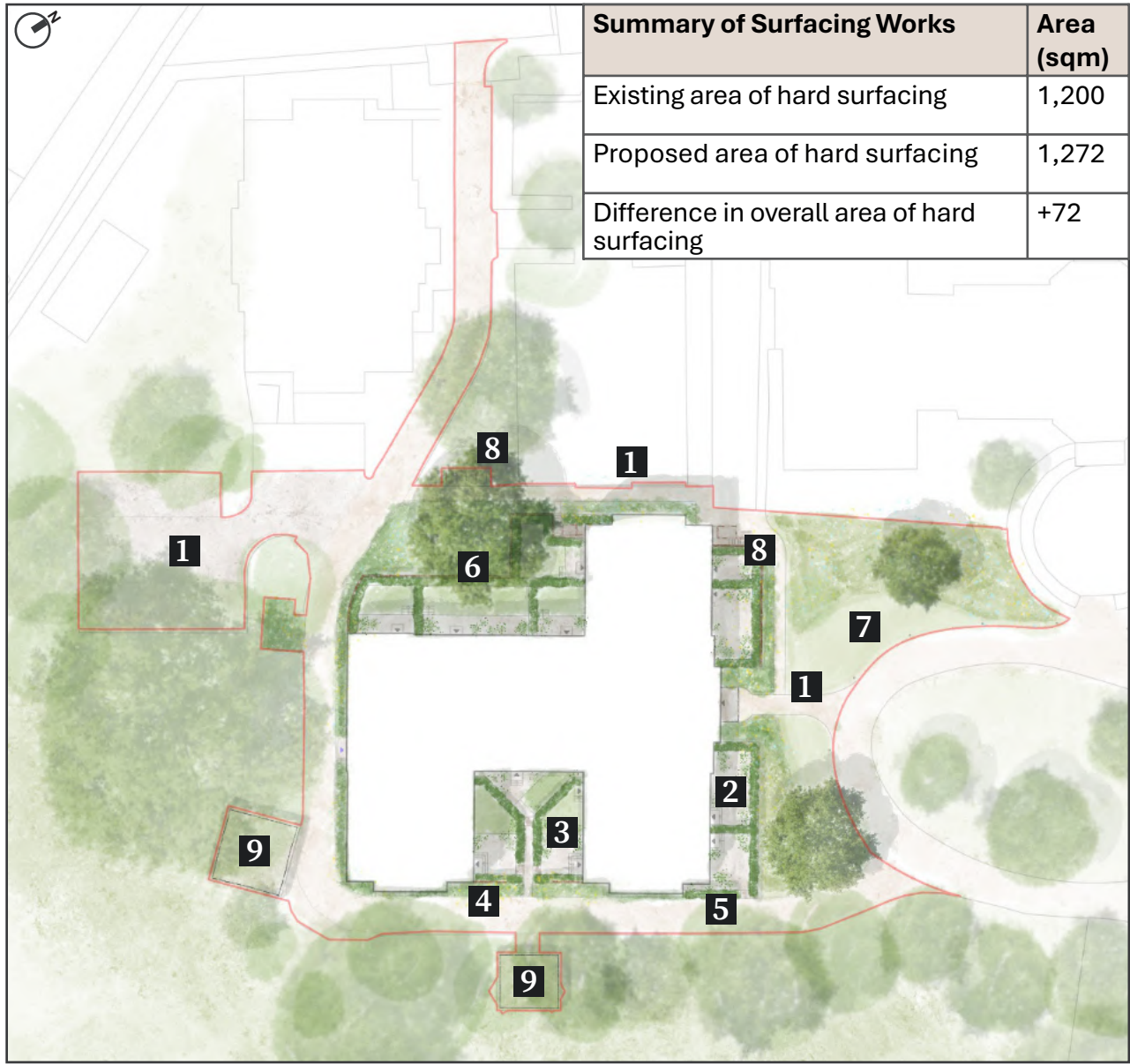
Hard Landscape - Surfaces, Boundaries & Furniture

Surfaces, Boundaries & Furniture

The proposed hard landscape palette is guided by four key objectives:

- To be simple and coherent, retaining existing materials in good condition where feasible
- To promote accessibility for all
- To support connectivity through clear legibility
- To be robust and fit for purpose

The selection of materials—including their type, colour, and texture—will play a crucial role in tying into the site’s character and identity, while ensuring a cohesive response to the existing architectural language.



Hard Landscape Diagram

Precedent Images



1 Gravel surface dressing



2 Permeable hard surface to patios



3 Informal access within gardens



4 Existing boundary treatments retained and upgraded as needed



5 Proposed access to private gardens as needed



6 Proposed boundary treatments to private gardens as needed



7 Proposed flexible furniture



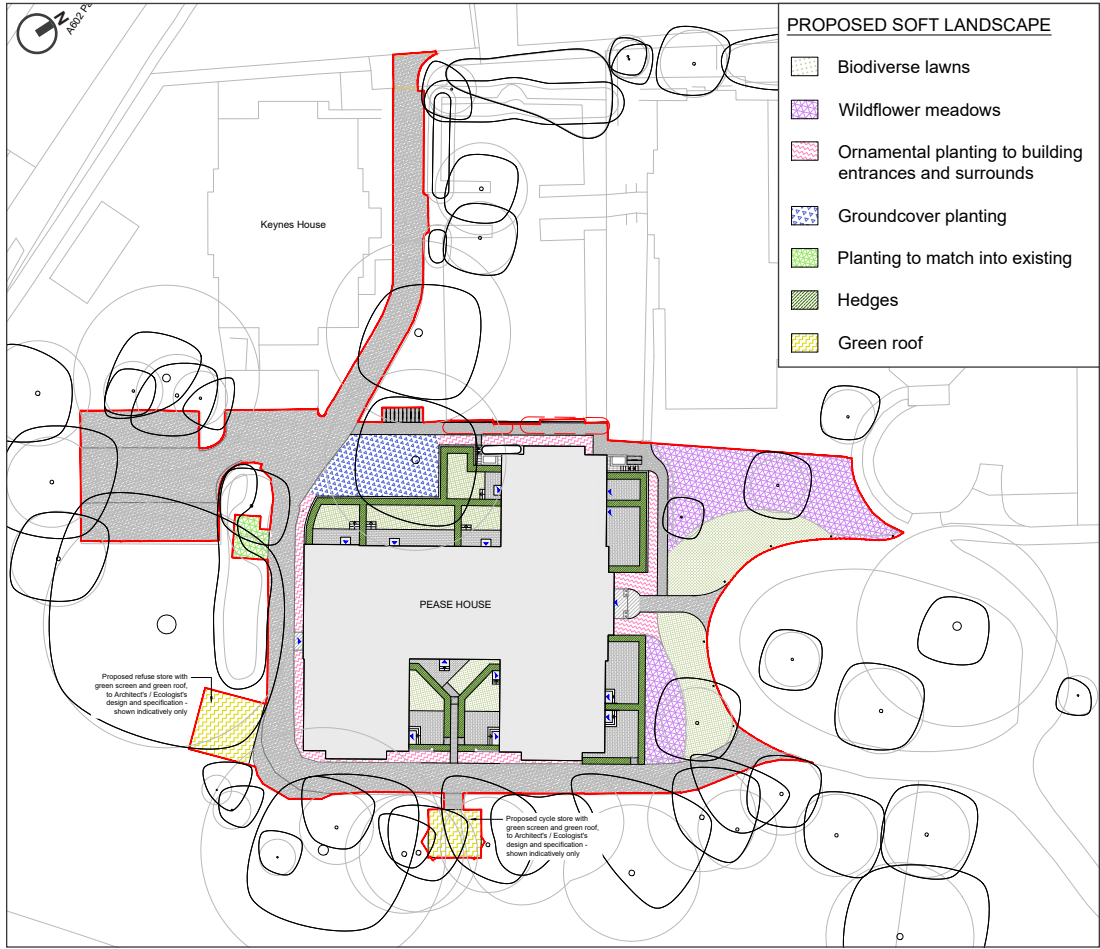
8 Proposed cycle parking



9 Proposed refuse and cycle storage with green roof

3.2 Landscape Strategies

Soft Landscape and Biodiversity Net Gain



Planting Typologies Diagram

Overview

The soft landscape strategy promotes climate-resilient and biodiverse planting, carefully tailored to the site’s varied microclimates.

The approach is designed to provide seasonal interest, ecological value, and long-term adaptability in response to changing environmental conditions.

The proposals achieve a Biodiversity Net Gain of 18.88% (Habitat units) and 34.03% (Hedgerow units). Refer to BNG Report prepared by the project Ecologist:

[Biodiversity Net Gain Plan - Pease House, The Priory, Hitchin]

Planting Typology	Area (sqm)
Biodiverse lawns	322
Wildflower meadows	281
Ornamental planting to building entrances and surrounds	130
Groundcover planting	102
Planting to match into existing	20
Hedges	108
Green roof	95

Precedent Images



Sweeping lawns to estate entrance



Hedge boundaries to private gardens



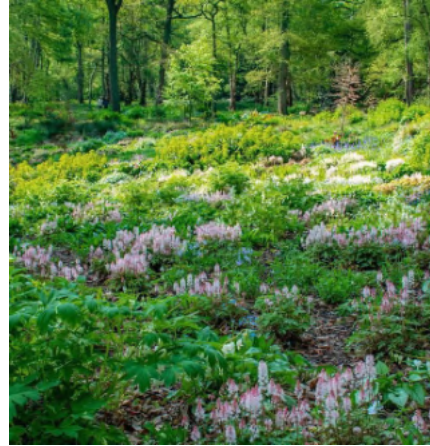
Wildflower meadow planting



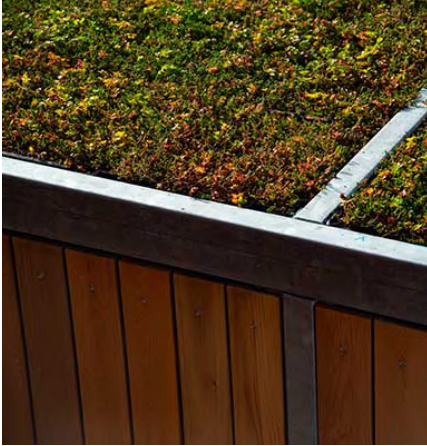
Ornamental planting to building entrances



Example of climbing planting to soften buildings



Groundcover planting



Green roof

3.3 Landscape Strategies

Biodiversity Enhancements

Overview

Following the issue of the National Planning Policy Framework, all planning decisions should aim to maintain and enhance, restore or add to biodiversity and geological conservation interests.

Ecological enhancements should aim to deliver biodiversity gains for the proposed development site.

There are opportunities for biodiversity enhancements to be made across the site in the form of the following:

- Planting of native British species where possible
- Enhancement of existing habitats e.g. lawns
- Provision of deadwood features for invertebrates and reptiles
- Bird and bat boxes
- Hedgehog holes

For detailed overview of recommendations for biodiversity enhancements - refer to Preliminary Ecological Appraisal prepared by the project Ecologist:

[MKA Ecology Ltd - 262012 - Pease House, The Priory, Hitchin - Preliminary Ecological Appraisal 2.0]

Precedent Images



Example of insect hotel within wildflower meadow



Example of tree-mounted bird box



Example of hedgehog hole within boundary treatment



Example of deadwood ecological feature

3.4 Landscape Strategies

Soft Landscape - Trees

Overview

The soft landscape strategy promotes climate-resilient and biodiverse planting, carefully tailored to the site’s varied microclimates.

The approach is designed to provide seasonal interest, ecological value, and long-term adaptability in response to changing environmental conditions.

Refer to Arboricultural Impact Assessment & Method Statement prepared by the project Arboriculturalist:

[BHA_7394A_AIAAMS Pease House, Hitchin_IM_April2026]

Summary of Tree Works	
Number of trees within site boundary	4
Number of trees adjacent to site boundary	21
Number of trees to be retained	4
Number of trees to be removed	0
Number of hedges to be removed	2

Existing Trees - Retentions and Removals

- Existing trees / hedges retained
- Existing hedges removed



Tree Retentions and Removals Diagram

3.5 Landscape Strategies

Flood Mitigation and Drainage

Flood Mitigation

The proposed landscaping of the site is not presently at risk of river flooding from the River Hiz. The proposed cycle store, at the southeastern boundary of the site closest to the River Hiz is only at risk when climate change is considered for the 1 in 1000 year flood event (Flood Zone 2).

The site is shown to potentially be at risk of catchment surface water flooding. However, the Environment Agency mapping does not accurately represent this risk. The surface water flood risk mapping was generated without considering the existing protection provided by the brick walls along the Old Charlton Road and wider business part boundaries, which would limit catchment surface water from entering the site off Old Charlton Road.

Two potential routes for surface water to flood the site were identified, including an off-site gated pedestrian archway as part of the Radcliffe House, for which a passive flood mitigation work was approved for a previous application. Surface water flooding is expected to flow onto the site via the driveway access to the car park off Old Charlton Road. This surface water will flow down towards and around Pease House.

To prevent surface water flooding ponding up against the Pease House, passive flood mitigation measures are proposed through the introduction of low walls set away from the north-western and north-eastern sides of the building. These walls will ensure that the catchment surface water flooding will continue to flow around Pease House, reducing the risk of external ponding and/or internal flooding of the building.

The proposed walls will be constructed under the supervision of a suitable qualified and experienced arboriculturalist to avoid adversely affecting the RPA of the adjacent tree. Details of the wall can be secured by way of planning conditions if required.

The proposed landscaping will not increase the flood risk to Pease House or surrounding properties, and the current access and egress from Pease House will remain unchanged by the proposals.

Drainage

A sustainable surface water drainage strategy will need to be prepared to support the proposed development, to mitigate the proposed increase in drainage surfaces across the site. The surface water drainage of the proposed new hardstanding surfaces will likely connect to the existing drainage of the site. As such, the drainage strategy may need to make changes to the existing drainage.

Refer to full Flood Risk Assessment:
[25079-FRA-TN-02 P01 (FRA Landscape)]

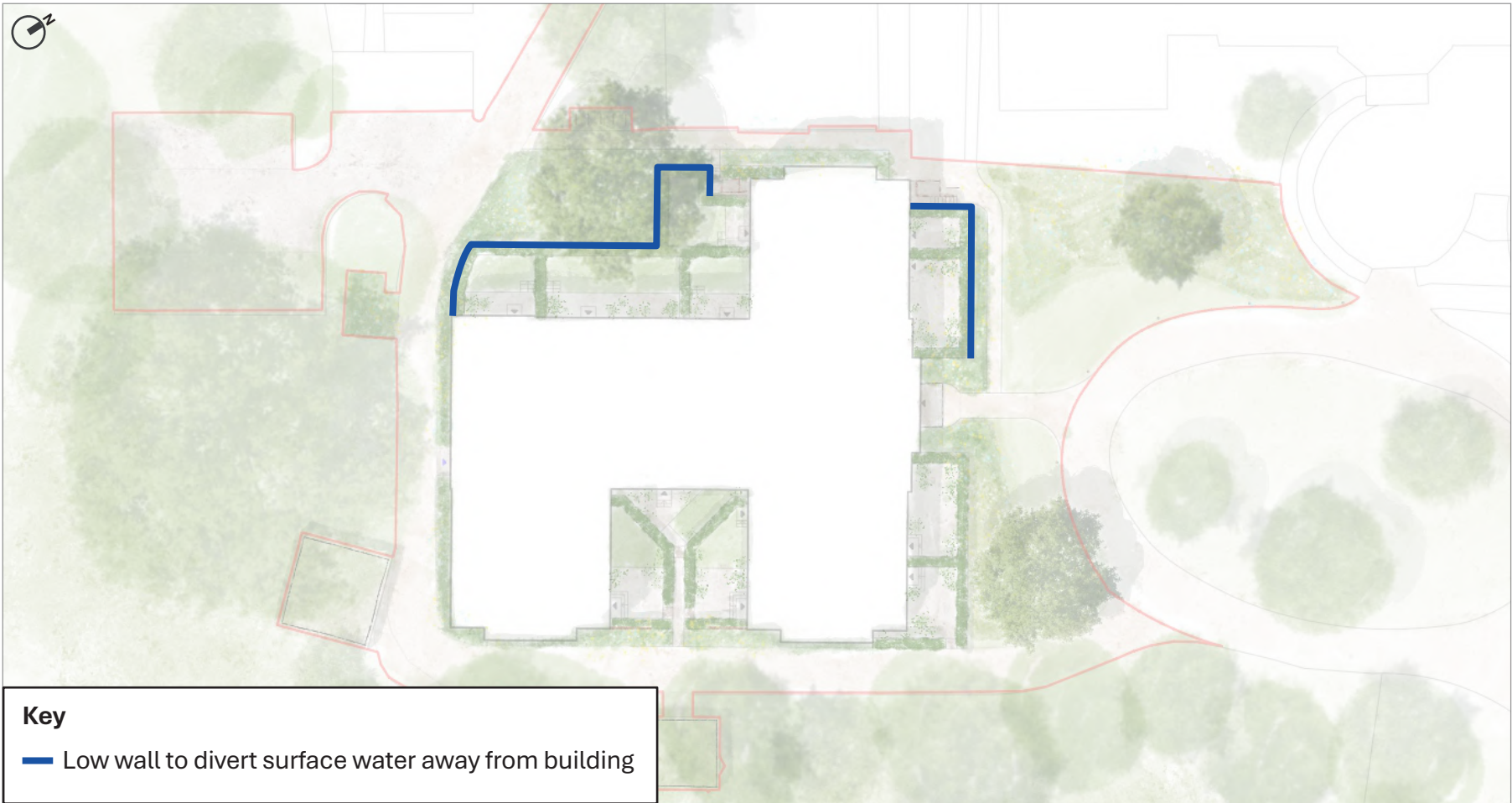
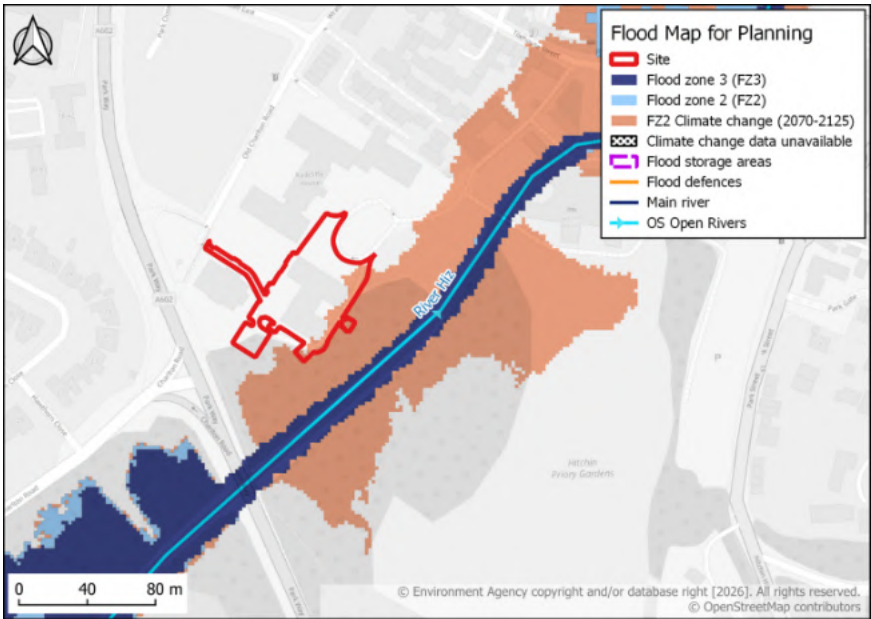
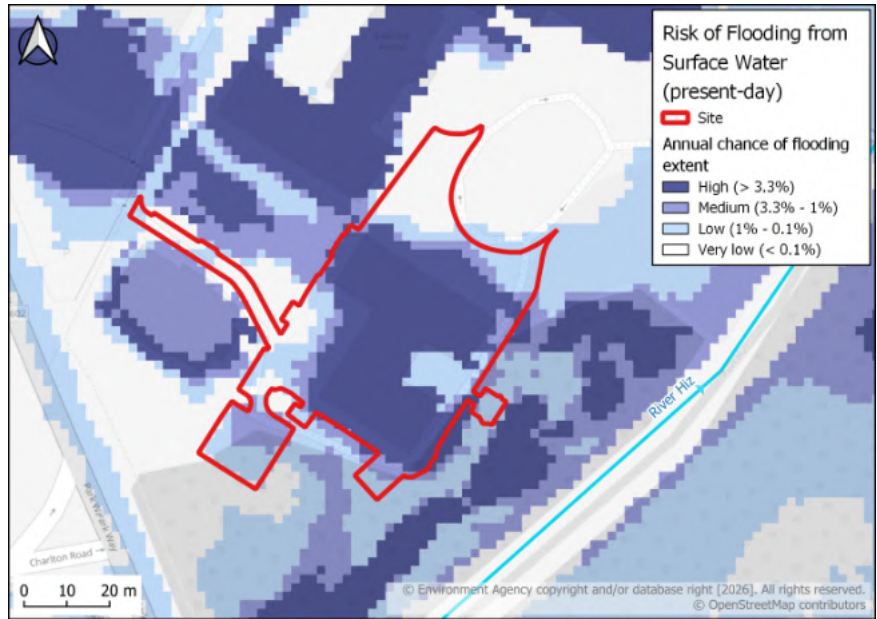


Diagram - Indicative location of low walls to divert surface water away from Pease House



Flood Map for Planning



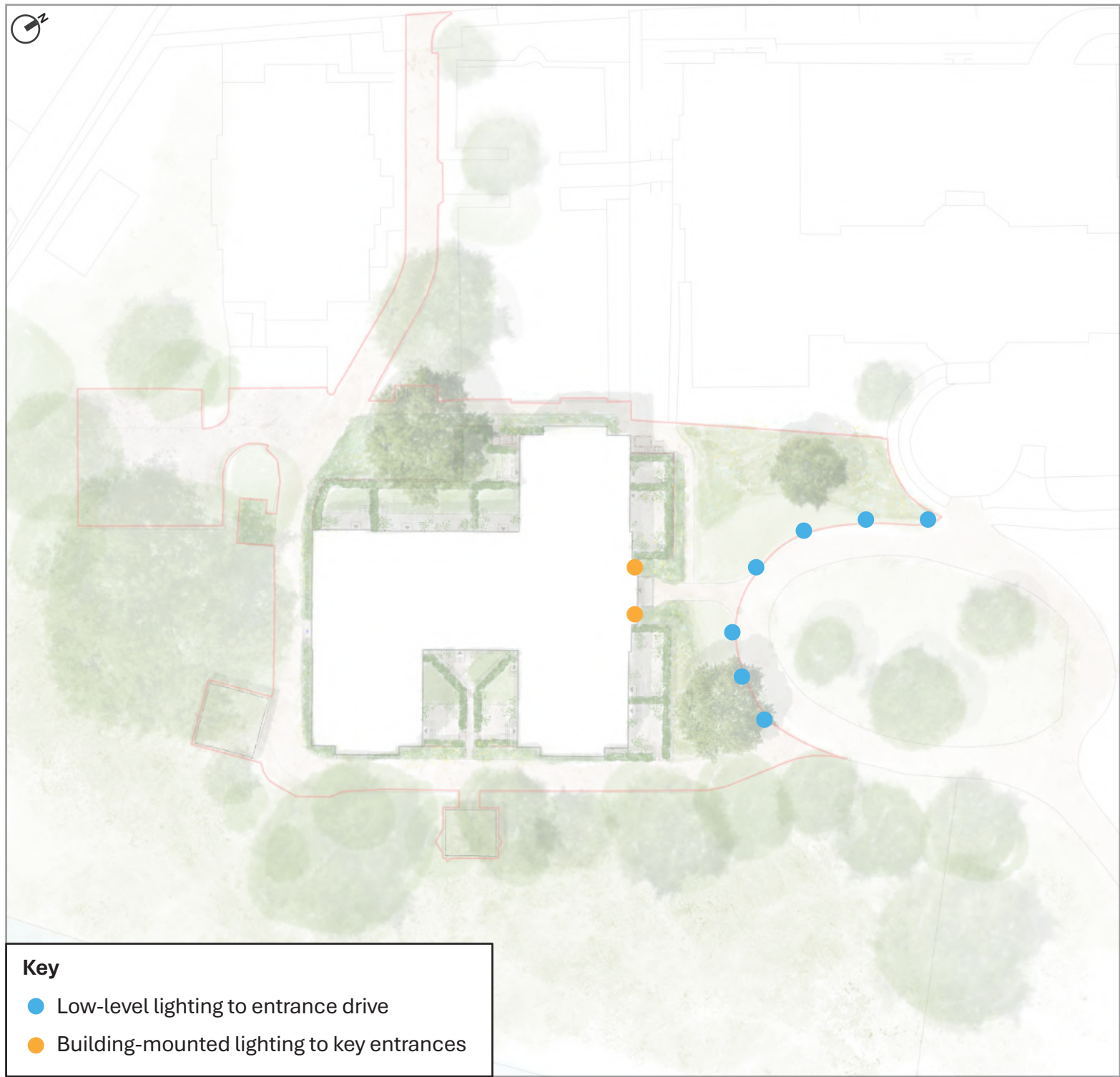
Risk of Flooding from Surface Water (present-day)

3.6 Landscape Strategies

Lighting

Proposed Lighting

The lighting strategy is designed to enhance key landscape spaces, creating a human-scale, pedestrian-friendly environment that encourages safe and comfortable use of outdoor spaces throughout the year. All fittings will be durable and easy to maintain, and a sensitive lighting control approach will help to minimise impacts on wildlife (the detailed lighting design will receive input from the project ecologist).



Proposed Lighting Diagram

Precedent Images



Lighting to highlight building entrances



Low-level lighting to entrance drive



Examples of evening activation



4

Summary

4.1 Summary

Summary

The landscape proposals for Pease House at Hitchin Priory seek to enhance the existing parkland setting by transforming a currently functional and visually limited setting into a high-quality, biodiverse, and historically responsive environment.

The design retains the established structure of mature trees while introducing ornamental planting, wildflower meadows, and sweeping lawns to increase seasonal interest and ecological value.

Key features include an improved main entrance with enhanced planting, re-aligned pedestrian routes, and new planting at building thresholds to soften the existing architecture. Private garden terraces are created at the front, rear, and within the courtyard, showcasing a mix of hard and soft landscaping treatments, with consistent hedge boundaries to provide privacy and unify the site.

The proposals also incorporate permeable surfaces, flexible furniture, and low-level lighting to improve accessibility, safety, and usability. A simple and sensitive hard landscaping palette is introduced, with a focus on accessibility while maintaining durability and coherence with the existing architecture. Environmental strategies include significant biodiversity net gain, climate-resilient planting, and sustainable drainage and flood mitigation measures.

Overall, the improvements will create a more attractive, ecologically rich, and functional landscape that enhances resident experience, strengthens historical character, and increases environmental value.



Illustrative sketch visual - View of Pease House main entrance

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