jmarchitects

Tony Wilson Place

Design & Access Statement

March 2025

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0.0 Introduction

Team Structure

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Executive Summary

The design and access statement has been prepared by jmarchitects, in support of the planning application for Tony Wilson Place for the redevelopment of the existing office building situated in the First Street complex between First Street, Tony Wilson Place and James Grigor Square.

The applicant wishes to replace the existing facade and refurbish the internal floors of the office space including a reconfiguration on Ground Floor space.

The purpose of this document is to illustrate the design process, concept, materiality, strategy and amenities of the proposed scheme.



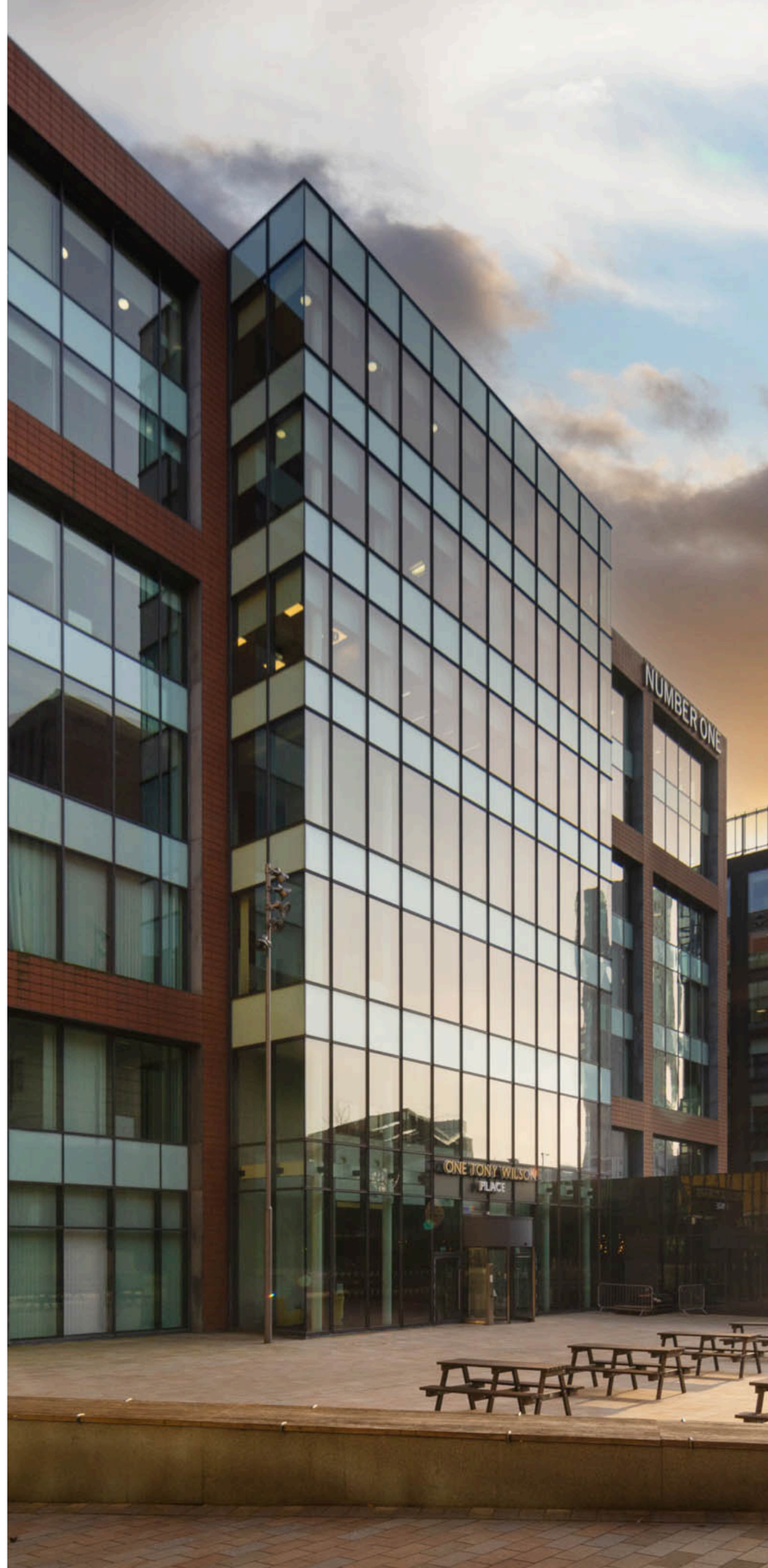
1.0 Project Description

Existing Site

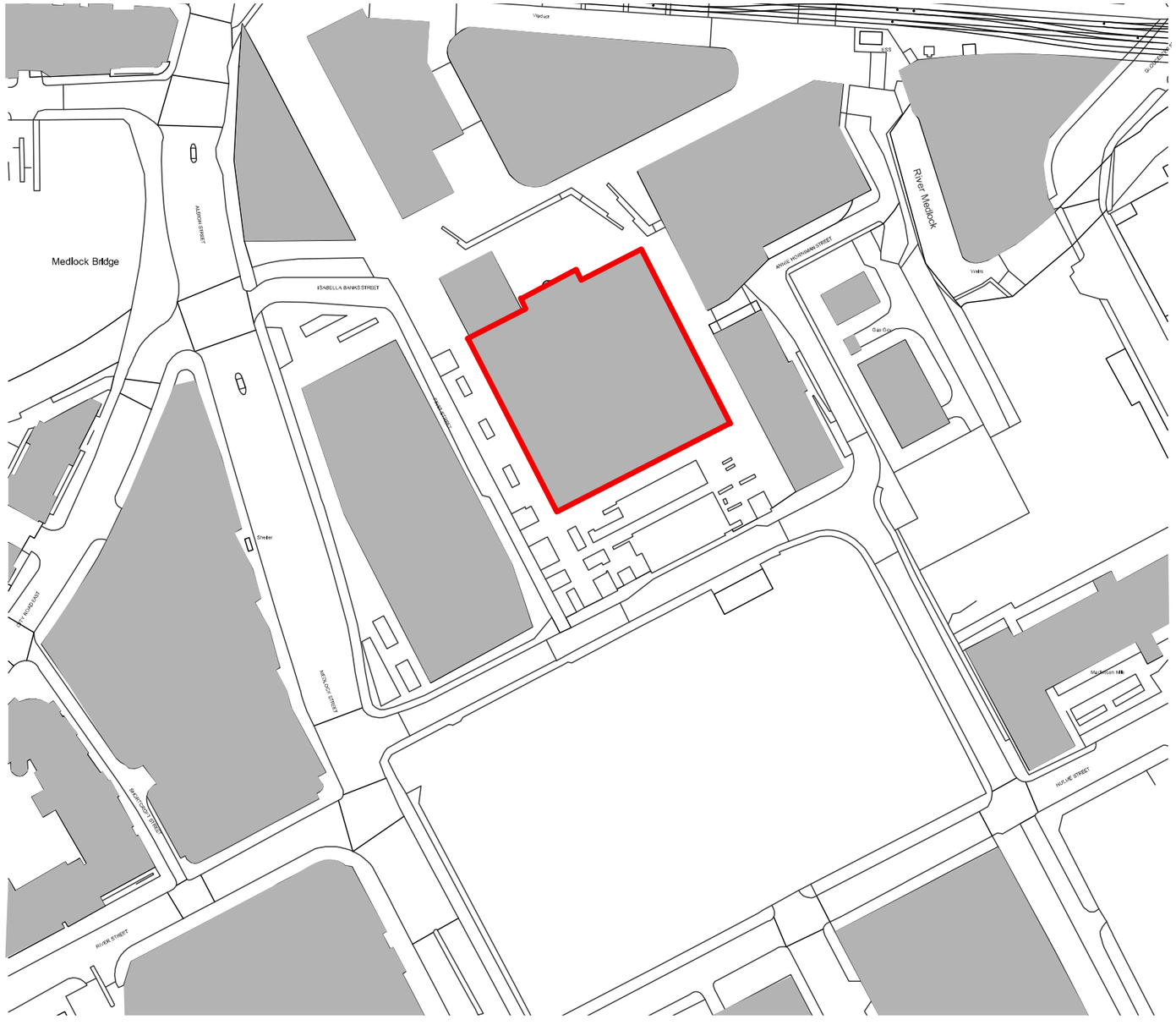
One Tony Wilson Place stands as a distinguished office building in the renowned and well-established First Street neighbourhood.

The building's owners, abrdn, recognize that the property has reached a pivotal stage in its lifecycle, where a comprehensive refurbishment and repositioning initiative is essential to unlock its full potential and elevate it to “best-in-class” status.

The building’s core fundamentals - thriving location, excellent transport links, large flexible floorplates, significant floor to soffit height, prominent glazed frontage to Tony Wilson Place, impressive atrium space and substantial space between adjacent buildings – mean it is well placed to evolve and adapt to the new benchmarks and advances in modern sustainable office workspace.

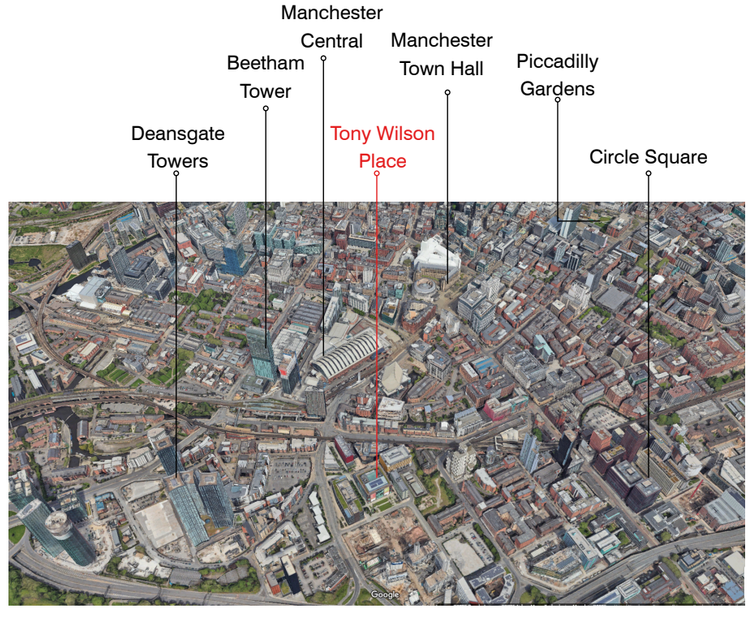


Site Location Plan

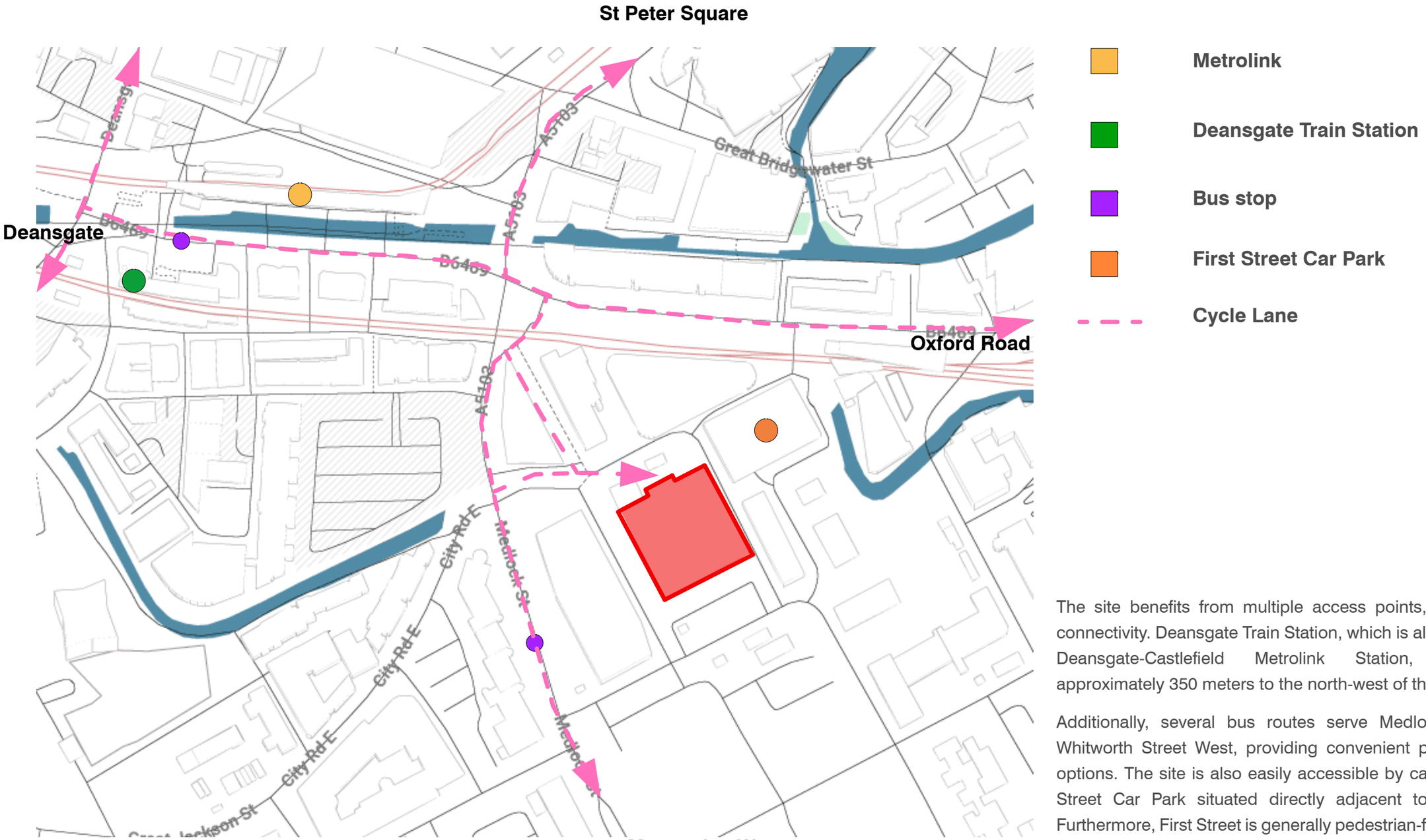


Tony Wilson Place is located on First Street and was the first building to exist on the plot. The building is now surrounded by HOME, VITA student Accommodation, Plot 8A, Innside Hotel and Junk Yard Golf Club and is in the centre piece of the First Street Masterplan.

The area has a mixture of different uses from offices and hospitality to student accommodation and residential. The development of First Street was predominantly to be commercially led in a highly beneficial location due to its ease of access.



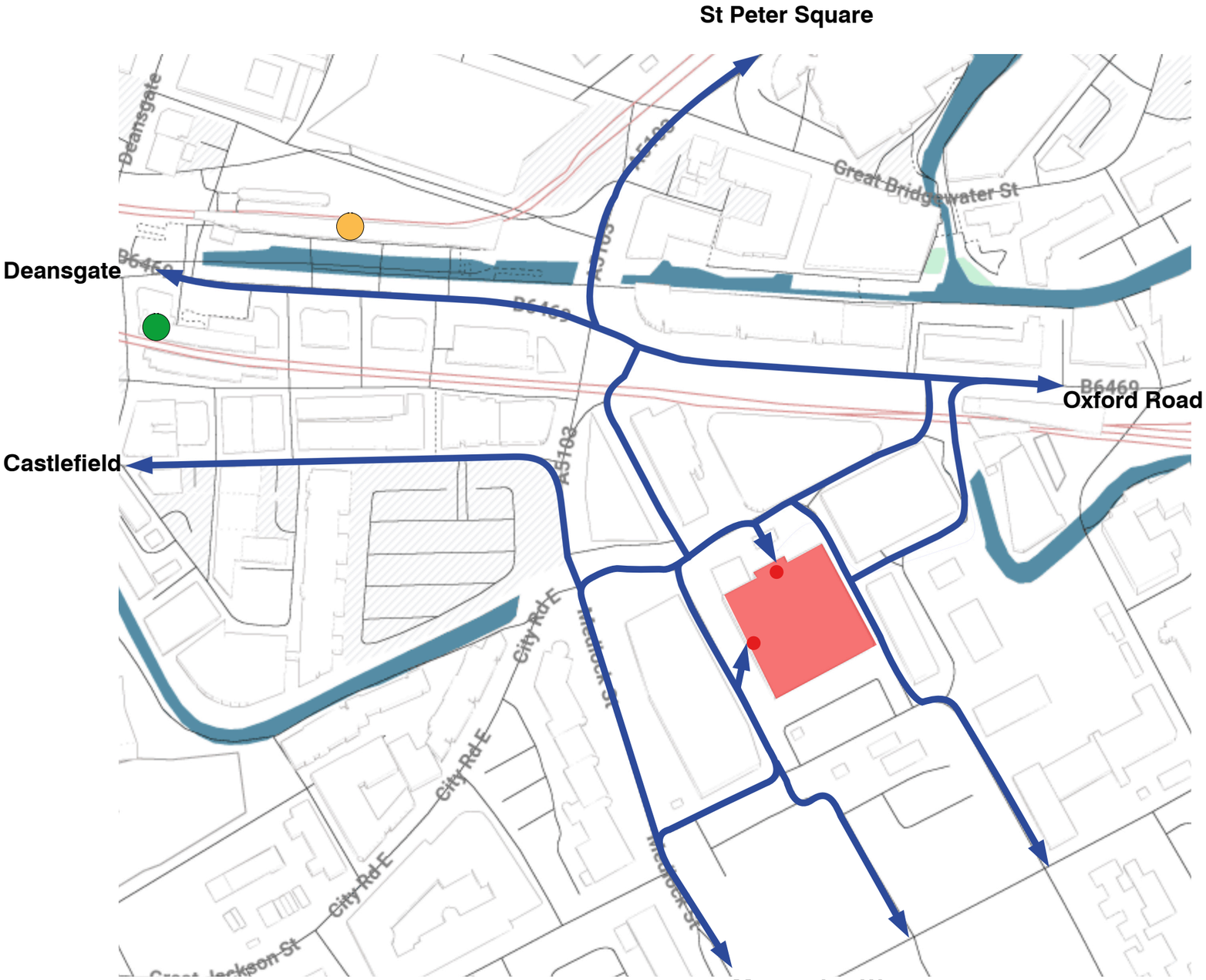
Primary Transport Routes



The site benefits from multiple access points, enhancing its connectivity. Deansgate Train Station, which is also linked to the Deansgate-Castlefield Metrolink Station, is located approximately 350 meters to the north-west of the site.

Additionally, several bus routes serve Medlock Street and Whitworth Street West, providing convenient public transport options. The site is also easily accessible by car, with the First Street Car Park situated directly adjacent to the property. Furthermore, First Street is generally pedestrian-friendly, offering straightforward access on foot.

Connectivity & Accessibility



© Image credit text 8pt

- Metrolink
- Deansgate Train Station
- Pedestrian route access
- Entrance Locations

This section provides an overview of the full site movement and connectivity routes. First Street is primarily a pedestrian route and is easily accessed through many routes. The site is positioned with direct access to Deansgate Train station and Metrolink. It is also located in a pedestrian friendly zone which makes it easy to navigate between Tony Wilson Place and the city's key commercial, cultural and leisure districts. The building has been designed to be inclusive with accessible entrances, ramps and lifts ensuring that all individuals can access easily the space. With First Street Masterplan being near its completion, Tony Wilson Place makes it a prime location for both business and leisure activities, providing easy access to public transport and the surrounding city infrastructure.

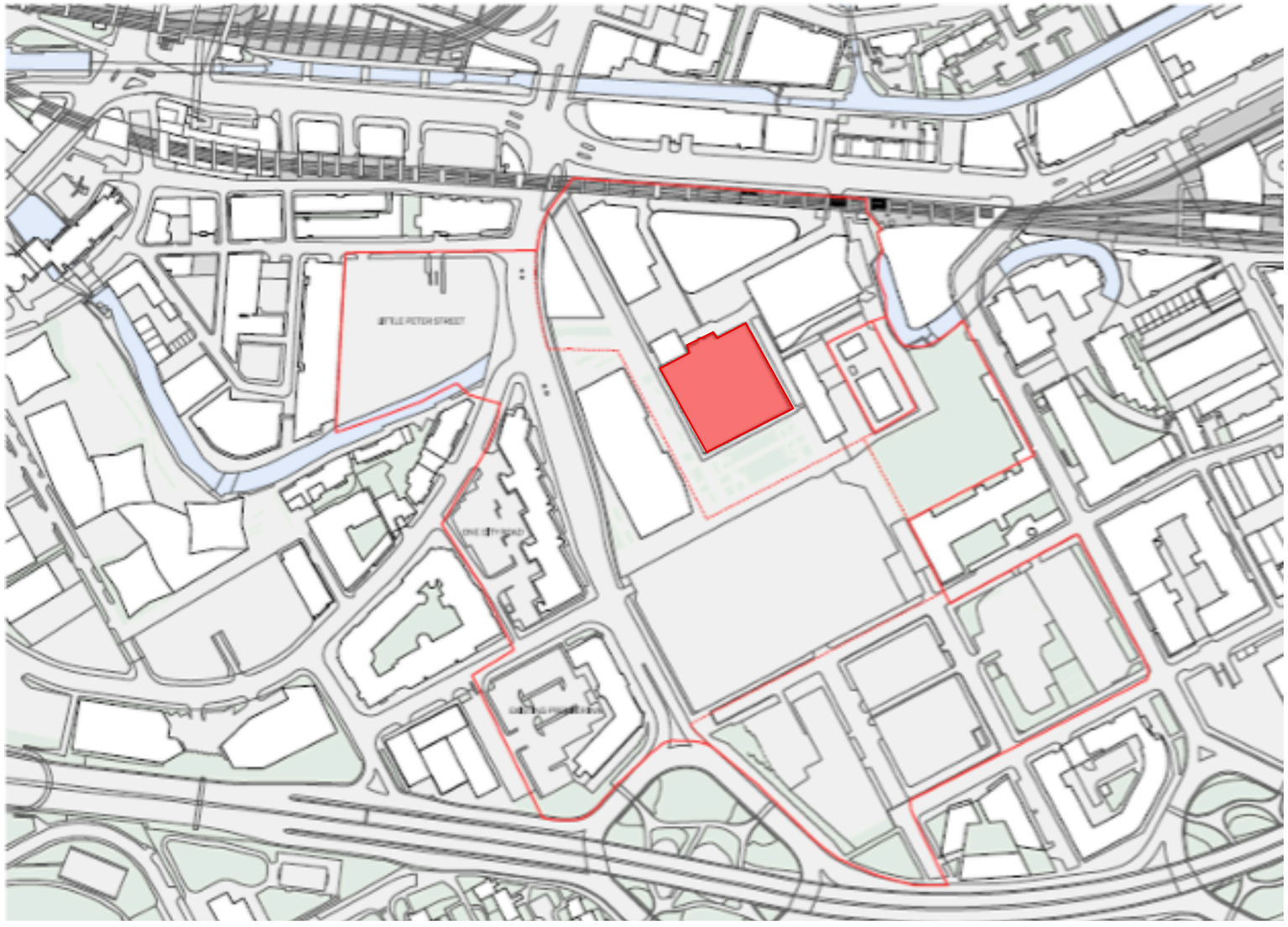
Masterplan

First Street

The development Framework of First Street Masterplan (Update 2020) quotes:

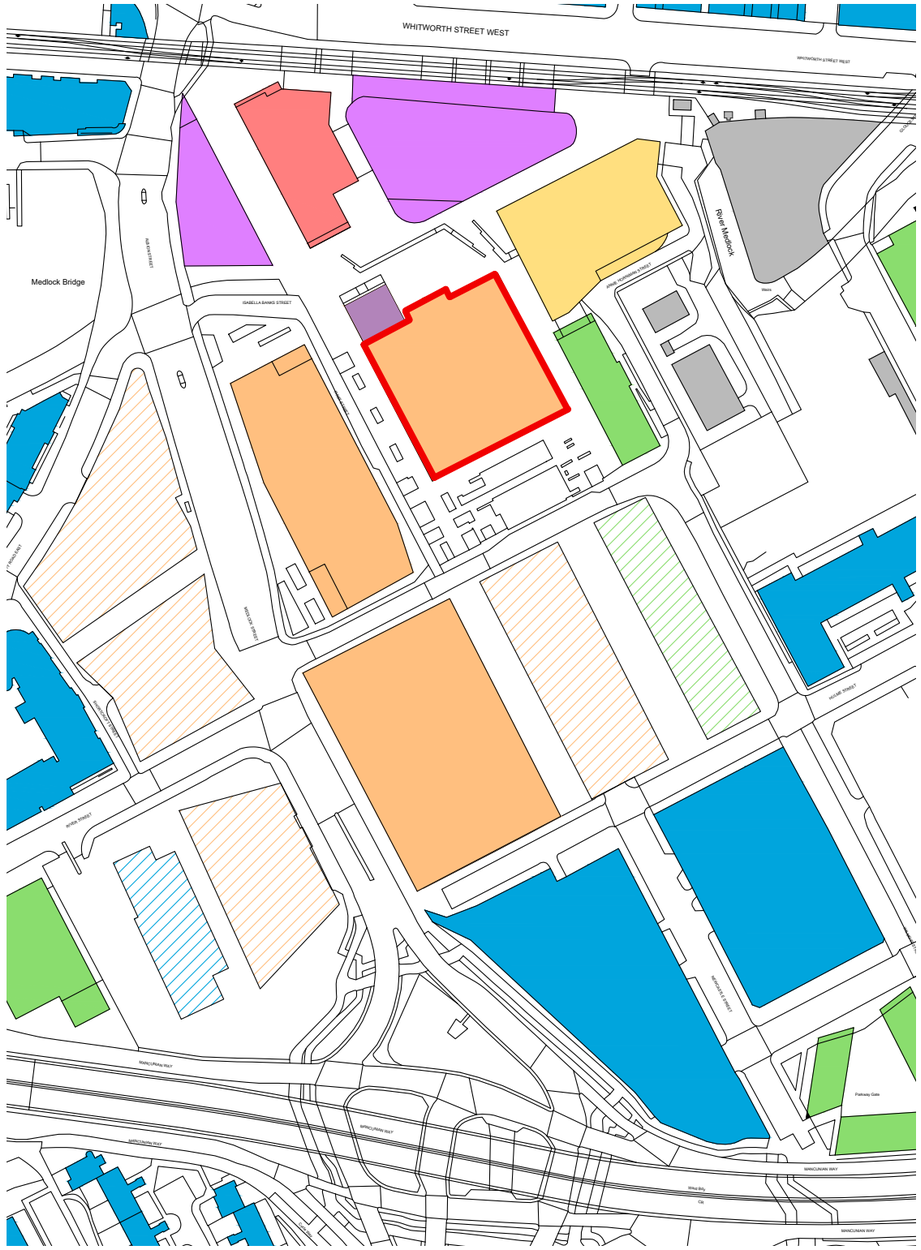
"First Street is now an established office location, demonstrating the success of its unique locational attributes and distinctive offer of large, flexible floorplate Grade A office floorspace. Lettings secured to-date have created a critical mass of quality occupiers, fuelling further demand and setting the conditions for exponential growth in the area."

Over the years there has been an increase demand in the market for grade A office space, however, due to the wear of the building internally and externally the tenancy has been reduced in Tony Wilson Place. Therefore a refurbishment with an improved building envelope along with Grade A office space will be beneficial for the development of the area as well as help to keep the high quality demand as anticipated in the Local Plan and the First Street Masterplan.



Site Context

Uses



Uses

- Hotel
- Retail & Leisure
- Commercial
- Residential
- Student Accommodation
- Industrial/Warehousing
- Future Development
- Existing Development

The area is mainly residential development and commercial. As can be seen from the cross hatch area there is an increased demand in the market for commercial spaces.

Context & Connections















	INNSiDE Hotel	Leisure
	Junk Yard Golf Club	Leisure
	8 First Street	Commercial
	HOME	Cultural
	Vita Student Accomodation	PBSA
	Gaswork/Car Park	Leisure

Building Context

The wider First Street architectural identity is shaped by its unique colour palette, with the colours used being bold and bright. These enhance the aesthetic appeal but also reinforce a cultural and artistic connection making the area a symbol of its surroundings. As Tony Wilson Place was the first building in the area, the size of building was at the time a statement to the area.

However, due to the expansion of First Street and the identity formed in the area, Tony Wilson Place now feels outdated and out of context. Due to its significant size within the area, the building could play a pivotal role in the impact it could have within the area once refurbished.

Sustainability

Below is a summary of the sustainability and environmental enhancements that will be achieved through this comprehensive refurbishment.

1. Minimum BREEAM Excellent Rating (Construction or Refurbishment and Fit Out)

2. Minimum of rating of EPC-A (for Refurbishments), up from current EPC D

3. Alignment with 2050 Net Zero Carbon commitment

4. Improve Thermal Performances by :

minimising internal heat generation through energy efficient design

passive ventilation

mechanical ventilation

active cooling systems (ensuring they are the lowest carbon options).

Improved U-values

5. Occupancy and daylight sensors, minimising unnecessary energy consumption.

6. Self- regulating devices to regulate the temperature in each room where heating/cooling is provided.

7. Computer-based automated systems that monitor and control all energy-related systems (Building Energy Management System)

8. New secure Bicycle Parking and end of trip facilities for building occupants

9. Adaptive Reuse and Circular economy

10. Increase Solar PV array from 49kWp to 84kWp

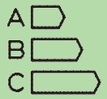
Re-Use of Existing Structure

BRE

Targeted Excellent BREEAM Rating

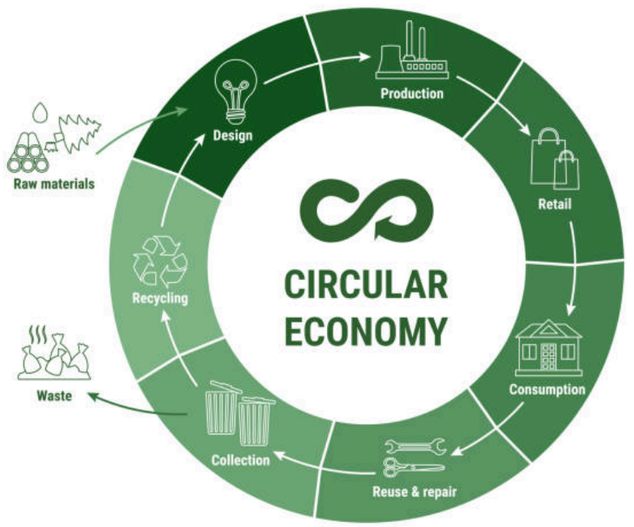
BRE

EPC-A



Air Source Heat Pumps



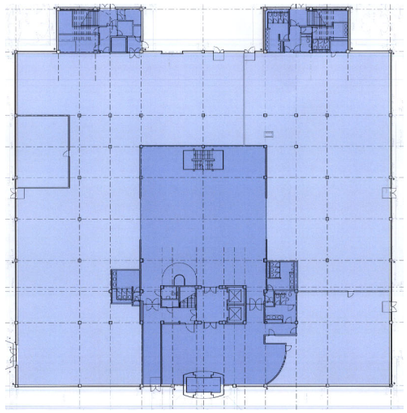


2.0 Project Research and Analysis

Site History

Inception

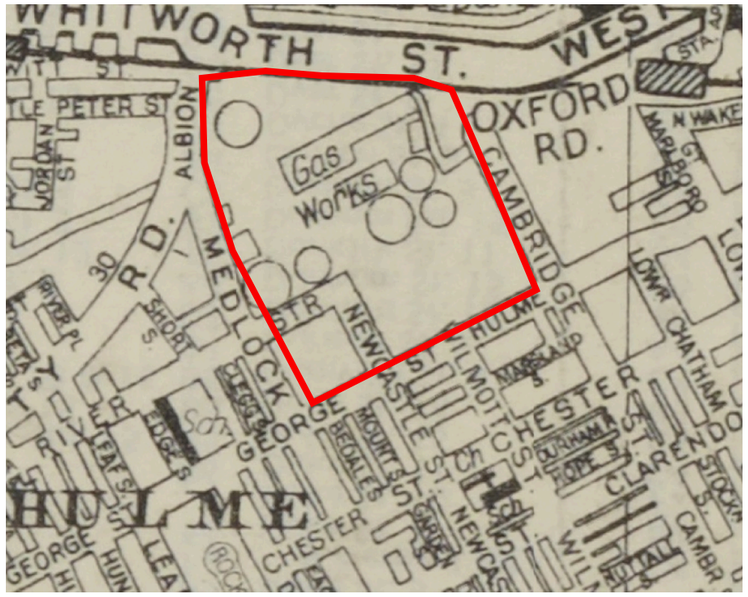
The site was home to the Gaythorn Gas Works from 1825 to 1929. In 1991/1992, an office building was erected for the British Council, constructed primarily of precast concrete units and featuring a central atrium. In 1997, British Telecomm leased the building. It underwent a major refurbishment in 2006/2007, further enhancing its structure and facilities.



Floor Plan (1992)



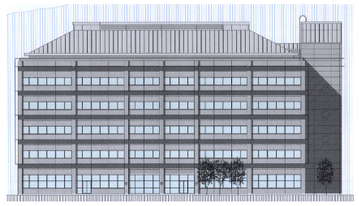
1992 Grand Island -British Council



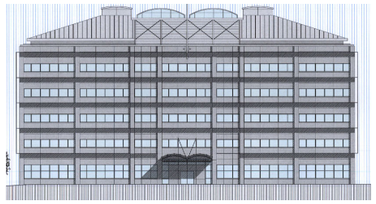
1960 Gasworks (Current First Street Complex)



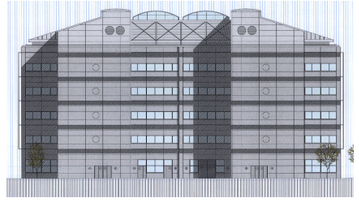
East Elevation



West Elevation



North Elevation



South Elevation

Site History

Refurbishment











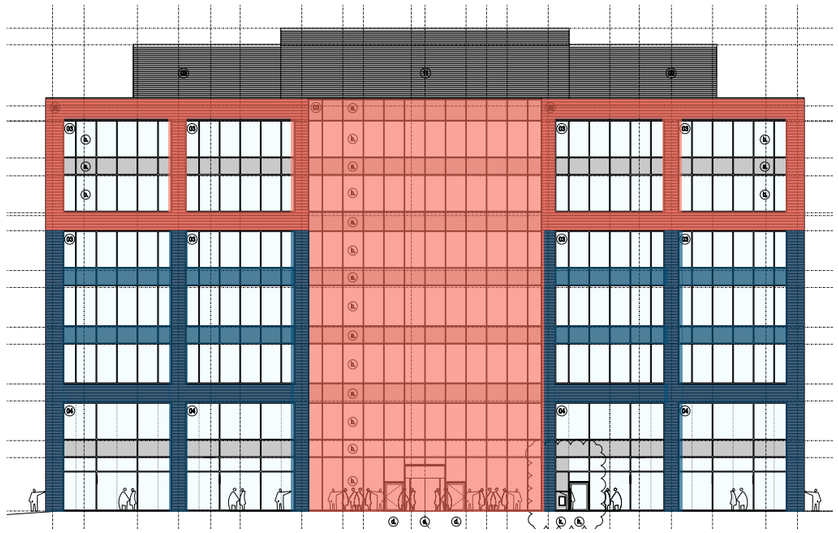
The building underwent a major refurbishment in 2006/2007, during which the original precast concrete structure was adapted and extended both horizontally and vertically. Steelwork was utilized to infill the rear corners, extend the front bay, and add two additional storeys above.

To transform the building aesthetically, curtain walling and terracotta tile cladding were incorporated into the design. This transformation of the once isolated building paved the way for the major redevelopment of the wider area, contributing to the masterplan we see today.

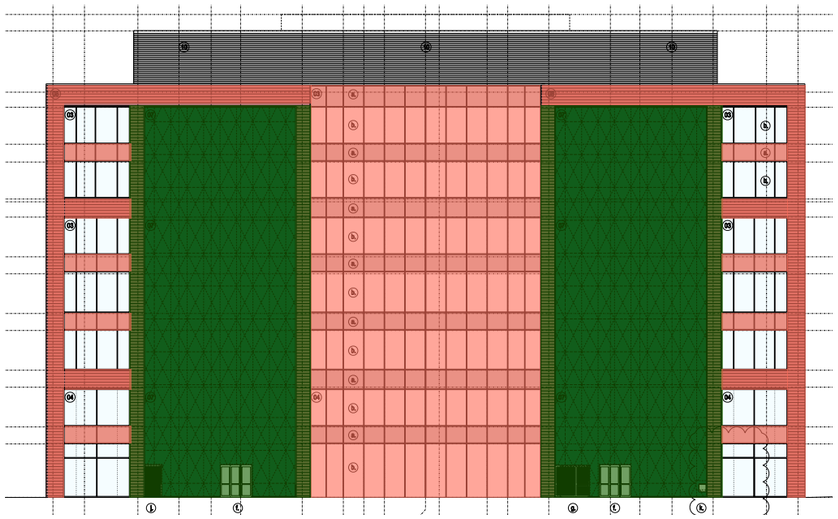
Existing Structure

Structural Composition

- Highlighting the mixture of existing structures used on the building
- Curtain wall system envelopes the structure with the terracotta supported off this



North Elevation



South Elevation

New Steel Frame

Adapted concrete/Steel hybrid frame

Original Precast Concrete Structure

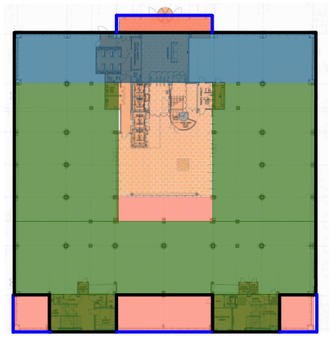


East Elevation



West Elevation

Plan Layout



Existing Building Outline

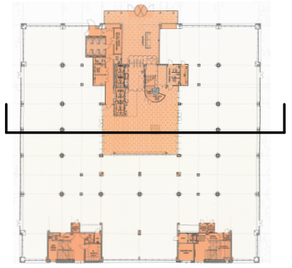
Refurbishment Outline

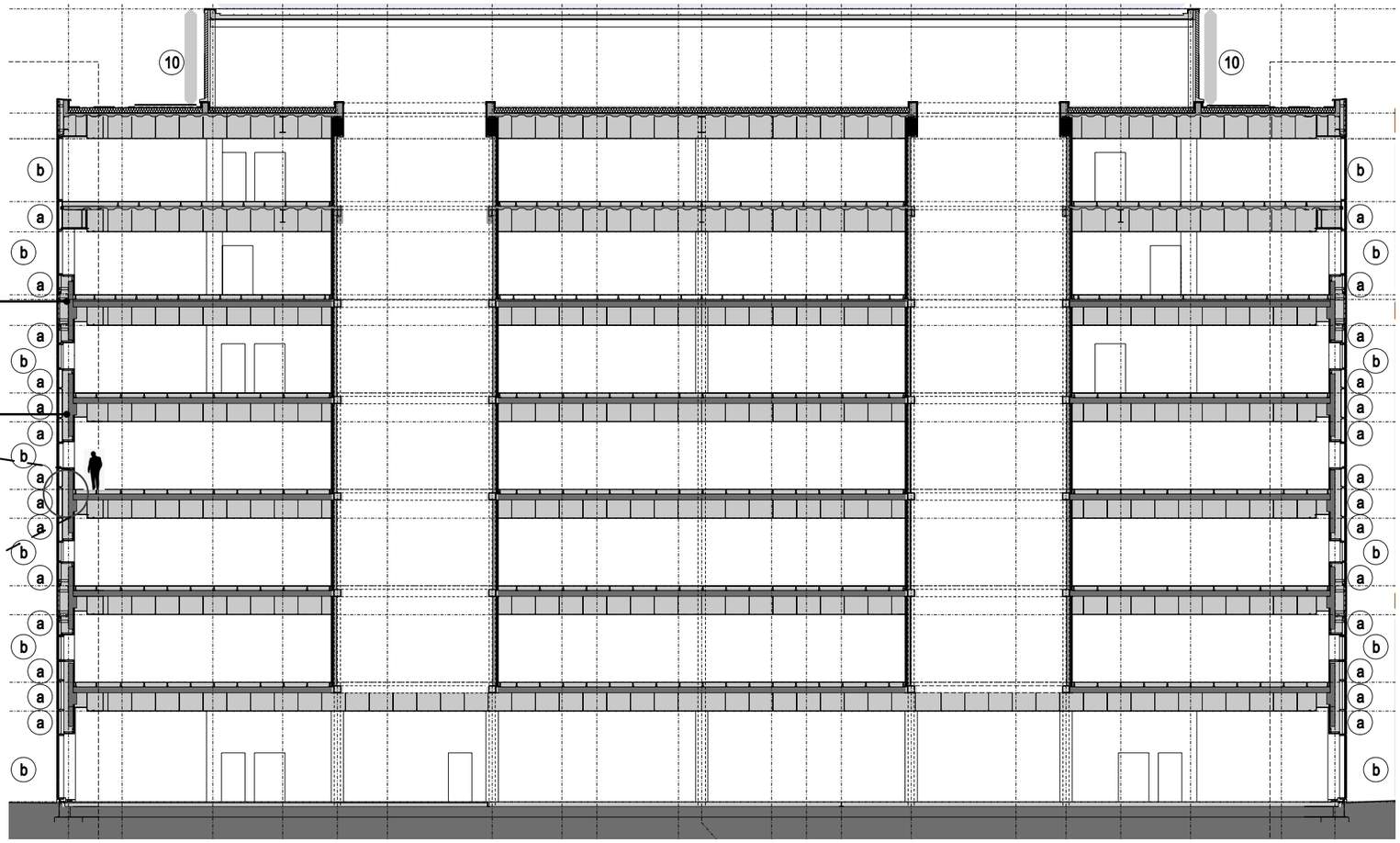
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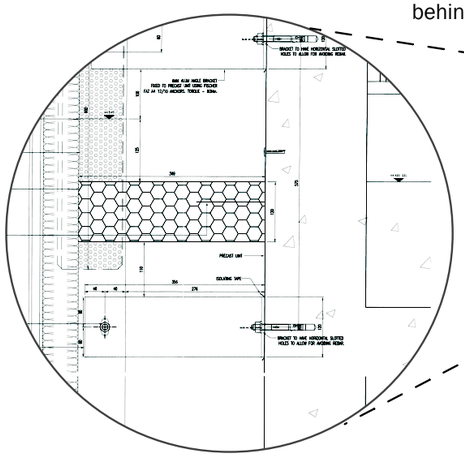
Structural Constraints

Concrete Upstands

The concrete upstands on the west and east elevations are essential to the building's structural stability and functionality. Their presence limits the ability to make significant alterations, as any changes could compromise the overall integrity. Modifying these elements would require careful consideration and could involve complex, costly engineering solutions to maintain the building’s safety and efficiency.







Current Status

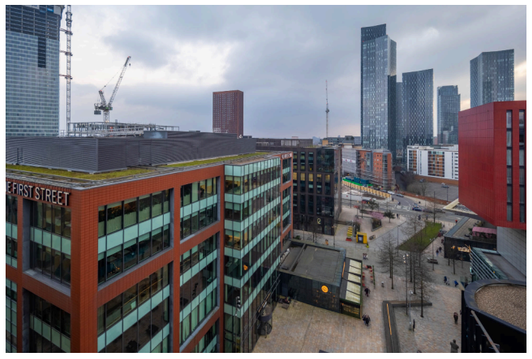
1 Tony Wilson Place is no longer an isolated building within its context, as the First Street masterplan has been almost fully realized following major developments in recent years. However, the building now appears outdated compared to its surroundings, highlighting the need for further updates. A market appraisal of the building has identified demand for smaller commercial units near the First Street Masterplan. As part of this, there is a proposal to repurpose some ground floor areas for other commercial uses, such as food and beverage establishments and smaller service-related businesses such as doctors and dentists, with direct front door access to these units. This type of sub-let would activate the building's external façade, add interest and appeal to the area, and encourage more people to visit First Street.













Surrounding Context

Site Condition Survey

External



Terracotta Tiles

Terracotta tiles are worn and discoloured.



Tile Surface

Terracotta tiles broken and chipped around the perimeter of the building.



Curtain Walling

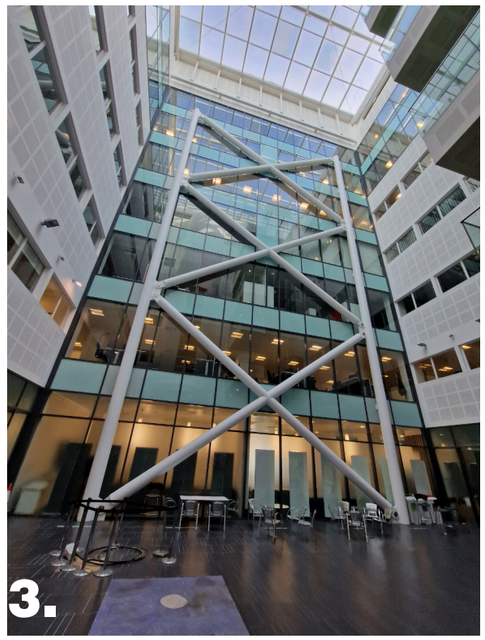
Cappings faded on curtain walling.

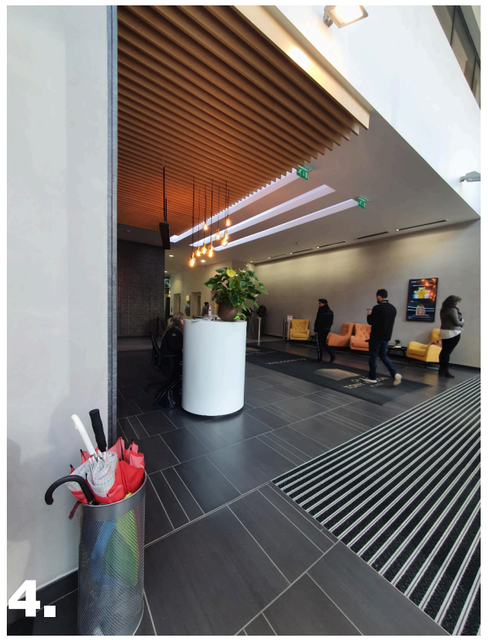
Site Condition Survey

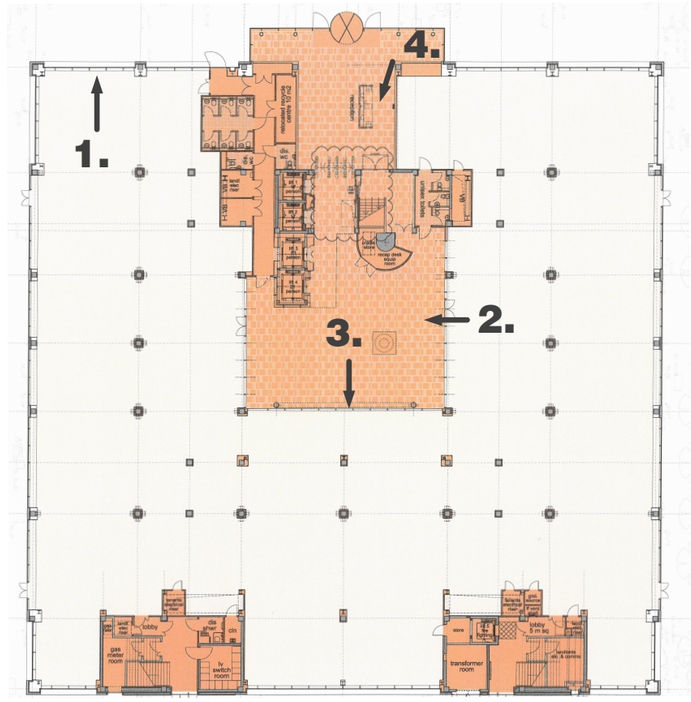
Internal











Internal Views

1. 3rd Floor Office Space facing North
2. 3rd Floor Office Space facing into Atrium
3. Atrium at Ground Floor
4. Entrance

Site Analysis

Contextual Palette

The bold and bright colours of the First Street masterplan give the area a unique image compared to the rest of the city. These colors not only enhance the aesthetic appeal but also reinforce the cultural and artistic connection, making the area a symbol of its surroundings.

Tony Wilson Place was a statement building in the area before the rest of the masterplan was constructed. However, the current building envelope appears dated, with faded window frames, stained and broken terracotta tiles, and outdated white spandrel glass. The colour palette visible in the aerial view reflects the various building finishes within the First Street Masterplan, with no two buildings using the same colour.

















iNNSIDE



GasWorks



No 8 First Street



HOME



Vita Student Accommodation



9A First Street



Pizza Express

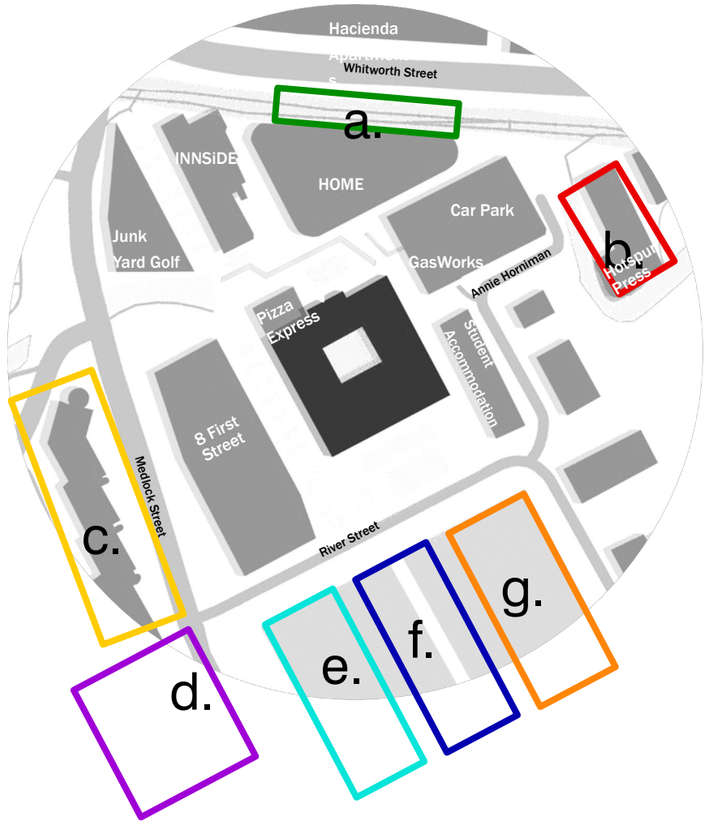


Junk Yard Golf Club



Site Analysis

Future Development



- Commercial Viaduct Regeneration
  Talent Development Centre
- Commerical/Residential
  Hotspur House
- Office Development
  One City Road
- Office Development
  One Medlock Street
- Office Development
  9A First Street
- Office Development/Residential
  10A First Street
- Social House Food Court &
  Student Accommodation
  House of Social









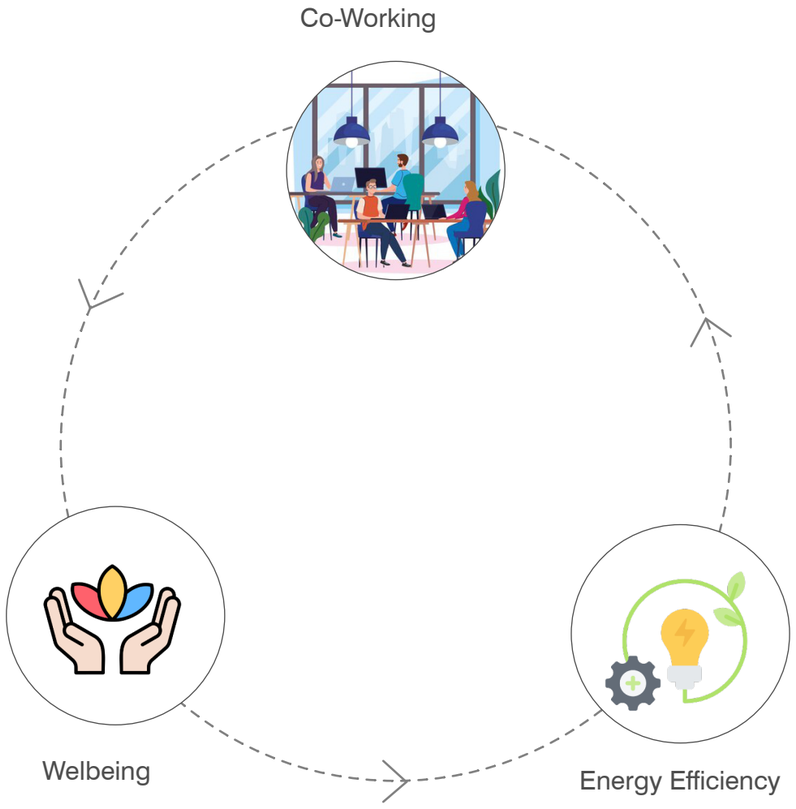






3.0 Design Process & Concept

Design Principles





The proposed design choices are thoughtfully aligned with the surrounding context of First Street, responding to the unique character and environment of the area. Following an extensive collaboration with MCC, it was determined that the replacement of the worn terracotta with high-quality, durable materials would significantly enhance and reinvigorate the building—an iconic pioneer of the First Street development.

The refurbishment will transform the building into Cat A office space, elevating its sustainability credentials by improving the thermal envelope and implementing an advanced energy management system to optimise energy efficiency. Aesthetically, the design will seamlessly integrate both externally and internally, achieving a refined architectural style through carefully selected materials.

The security strategy will be enhanced to ensure the safety and wellbeing of all occupiers. On the Ground Floor, dedicated spaces for social interaction will foster community engagement, extending the building's presence to the public and wider area. The design aims to cultivate a collaborative work environment, incorporating welfare and co-working spaces that cater to the diverse needs of all users, supporting both functionality and connectivity..

Design Principles

Materiality

The materials shown in the images are examples of the features, colours and details we want to express. The architectural language we are proposing is to emphasise the verticality of the building along with the aspiration to express a plinth structure and define the robustness at Ground Level which will help with physical deterioration by allowing it to withstand changes in the climate or future changes in use.



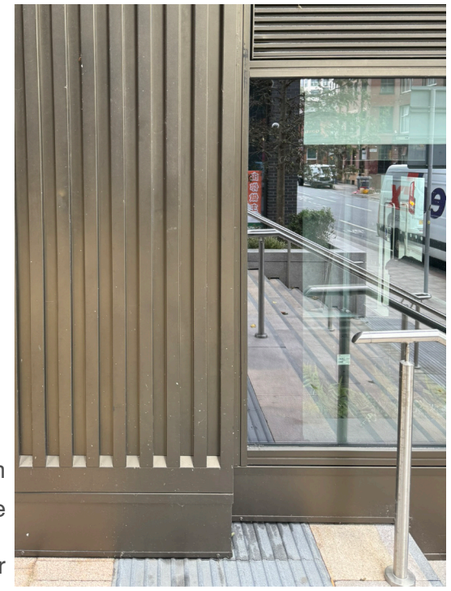
Black brick

Corner House, London



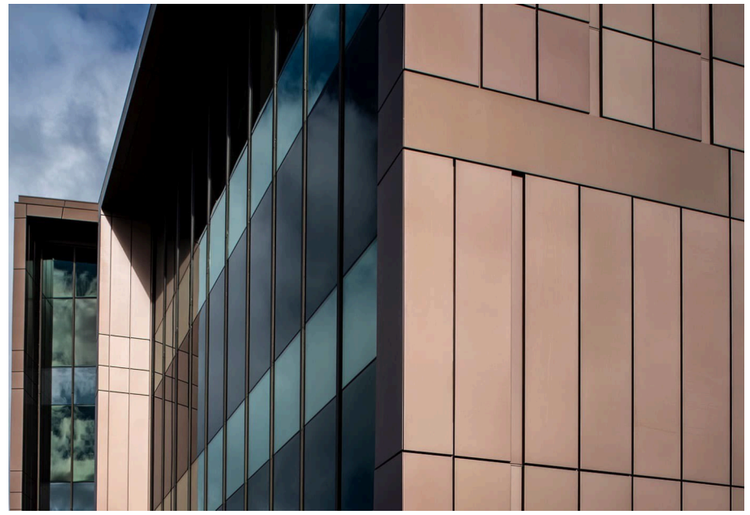


Umbra profile & Black brick texture



Ribbed anodised aluminium profile

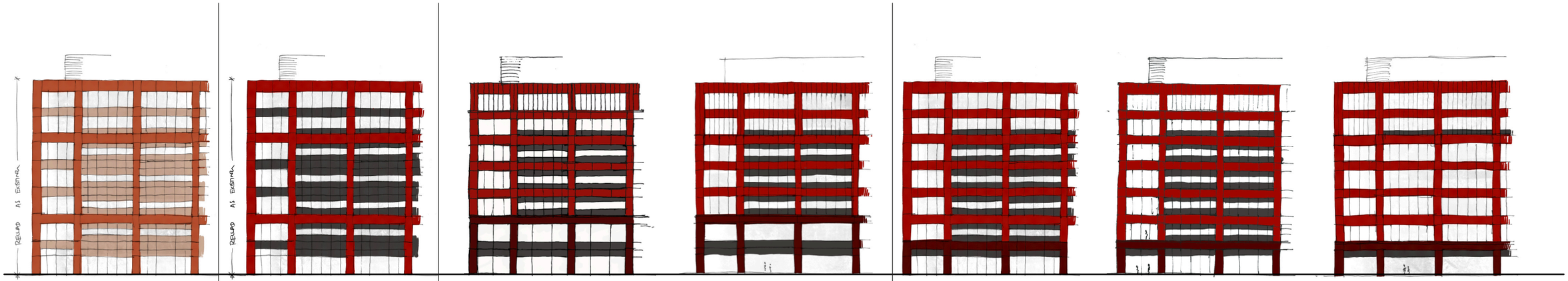
Circle Square, Manchester



Anodised Panel System

Design Principles

Elevational Framing



- Existing grid

- Existing grid
- Proposed colour

- New grid
- Proposed colour
- Double storey base
- Single storey top

- New grid
- Proposed colour
- Double storey base
- Double storey top

- New grid
- Proposed colour
- Single storey plinth

- New grid
- Proposed colour
- Single storey base
- Single storey top

- New grid
- Proposed colour
- Single storey base
- Double storey top

Development Study

The design concept process focuses on strengthening the overall aesthetic and structural integrity of the building. One of the primary goals is to enhance the existing cladding grid, emphasising the linear elements to create a cohesive and visually appealing façade.

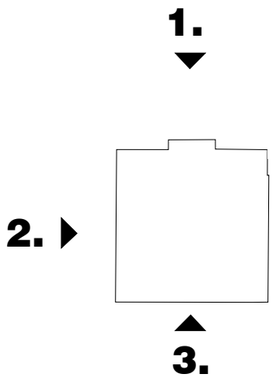
The design also aims to "ground" the building, balancing its base, middle, and top sections to create a harmonious and stable appearance.

The spandrel panels will remain but are to be carefully integrated, blending smoothly with the rest of the building to maintain a refined visual composition.

Additionally, the process seeks to enhance the building's image, ensuring it integrates seamlessly within its surrounding context. Ultimately, the goal is to create a destination building at the heart of First Street, one that attracts new tenants and establishes a strong presence within the area.

Design Evolution

Planning Engagement 01

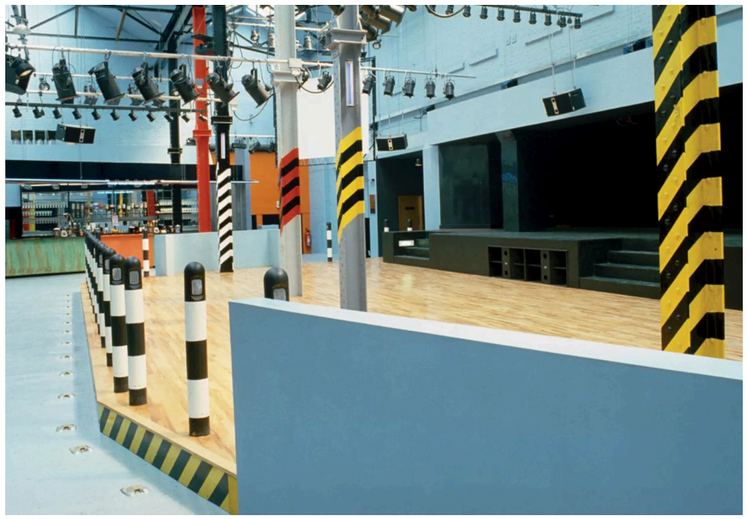


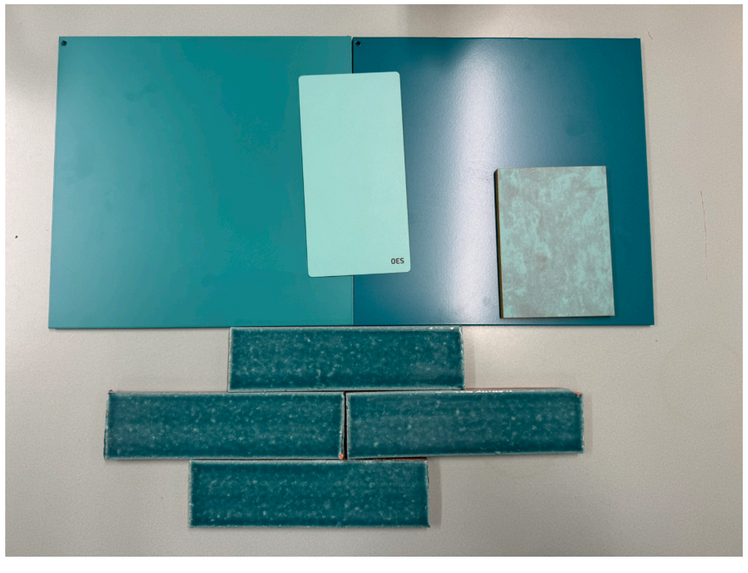
MCC Pre-Planning Engagement

Meeting 01

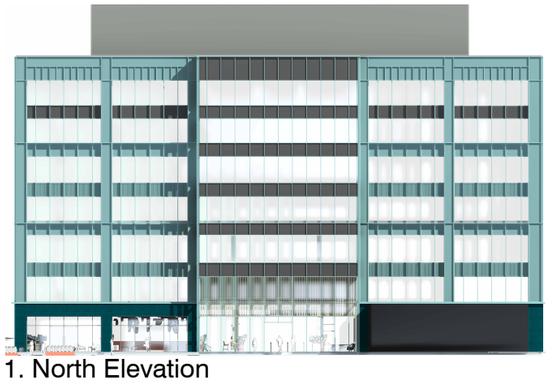
Our first meeting with MCC occurred in October 2024, with our original design taking into consideration the name of the building, Tony Wilson and connecting it back to his days with Hacienda. We analysed the interior colours used in the Hacienda which were designed by Ben Kelly. The unique blend of industrial look and feel mixed with light blues, plywood timbers and iconic hazard tape effect paint to columns was the colour palette we were looking for.

The interior colour palette of Hacienda in what looked like to be the colours used around First Street buildings and found that the only colour that was not used was the baby turquoise. The interiors. The bright and industrial colours expressed in the surrounding buildings provides an inspiration and a narrative reference to the Hacienda history which has helped us establish a tonal direction towards the preferred colour palette.





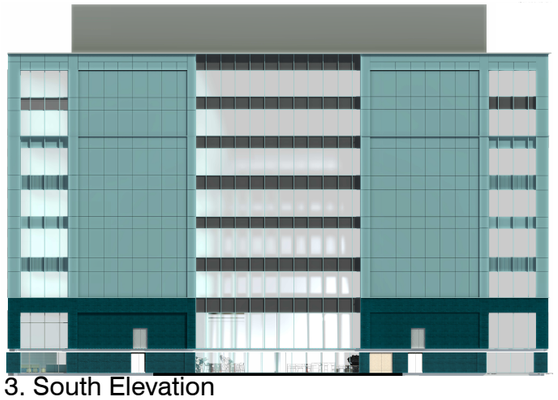




1. North Elevation



2. West Elevation



3. South Elevation

Design Evolution

Planning Engagement 02

MCC Pre-Planning Engagement

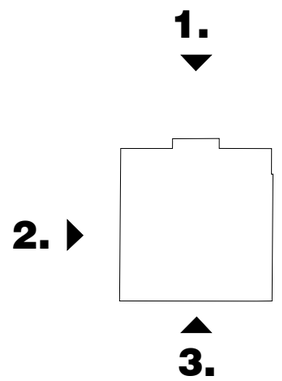
Meeting 02

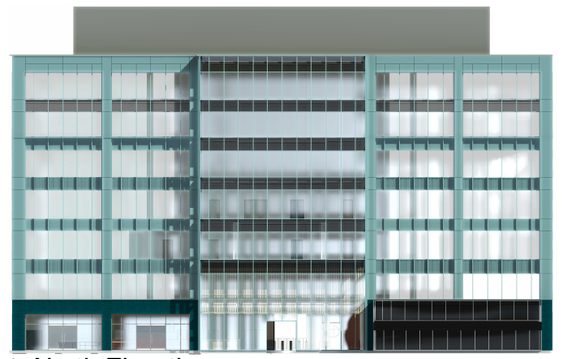
The second meeting with MCC took place in November 2024, where we revisited the design in light of the effects of shadows cast by the recessed columns and cost implications. It became apparent that the design was evolving into something more complex than originally envisaged, with the shadow play around the recesses detracting from the vibrancy of the façade. Additionally, the horizontal banding began to disrupt the cohesive appearance of the plinth. Another challenge arose with the recessed columns, as they significantly reduced the space available for insulation, which had an impact on the building's U-values targets.

To address these concerns, we revised the cladding details, opting for a flat panel approach. However, this solution created a lack of differentiation between the core and crown sections, so we introduced horizontal banding at level 5 to establish a clear separation. Despite these adjustments, MCC's feedback indicated concerns about the material quality, particularly regarding our suggestion to use PPC aluminium cladding, however, colour was not an issue.

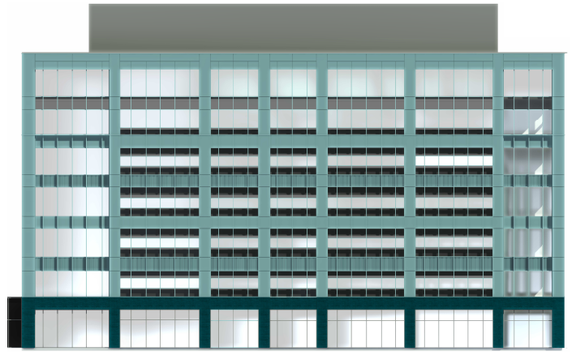




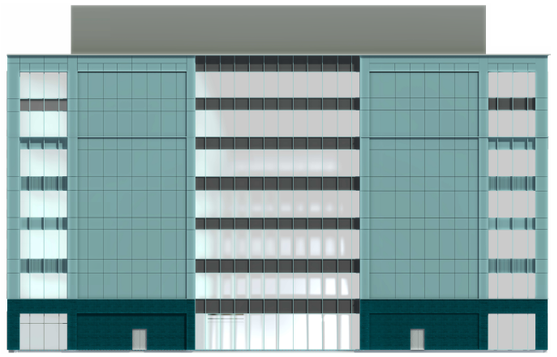




1. North Elevation



2. West Elevation



3. South Elevation

Design Evolution

Materiality & Colour

Factory Visit







Colour tone experiment



















We visited the anodizing factory to explore the available colour options, as the process inherently limits the range of hues. Given these constraints, we experimented with a variety of tones to identify those that would best suit Tony Wilson Place and help establish a unique identity for the building. This process allowed us to fine-tune the colour palette, ensuring the chosen shade would respond dynamically to different lighting conditions, as anodised aluminium reflects varying colours depending on the light. Through careful evaluation, we sought to achieve a harmonious balance, creating a façade that is both visually engaging and contextually sensitive.

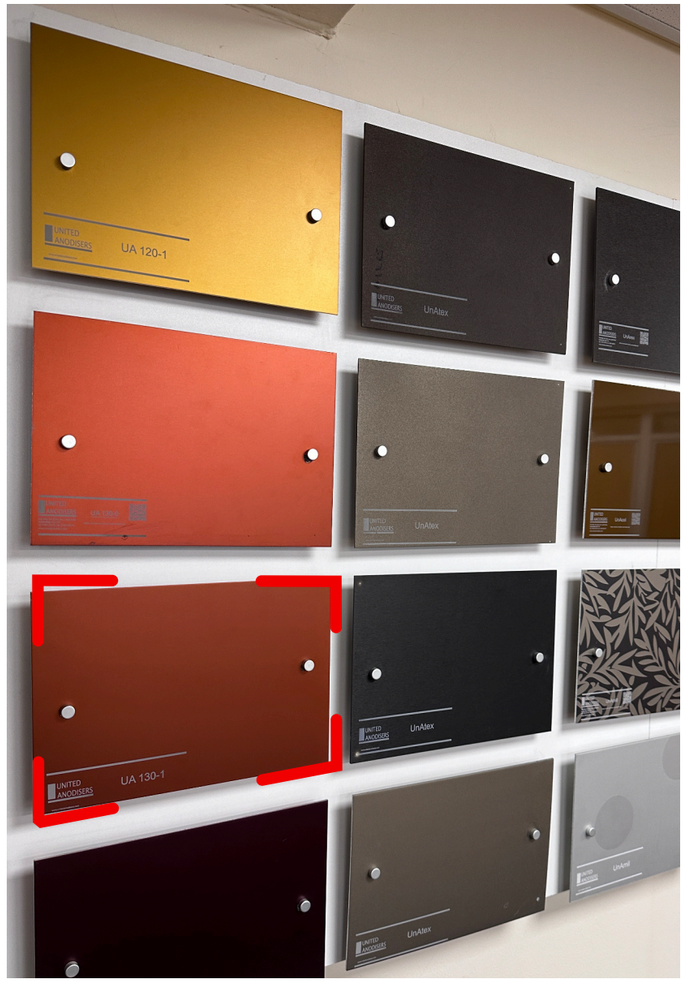
Design Evolution

Proposed Colour

After experimenting with various colour options, we chose a shade reminiscent of the existing terracotta, which we felt blended effortlessly into the context of First Street. This copper-toned hue was selected for its warmth and contextual relevance. The design colour provides a striking contrast to the yellow and black façades of the neighbouring buildings, ensuring that Tony Wilson Place stands out while remaining complementary to its surroundings. The chosen tone has been carefully curated to align with the character of the area, enhancing the site's existing elements and facilitating a seamless integration with the environment. To further elevate the building's aesthetic, the design features sharp aluminium detailing, paired with a high-quality anodised finish. This combination not only adds a refined sophistication to the external envelope but also plays a pivotal role in supporting the rebranding of TWP, giving the building a fresh and contemporary identity.



Comparison of existing terracotta with proposed anodised aluminium colour and the colour changes at different angles in sunlight.



Proposed Colour: Copper

Design Evolution

Elevational Framing

Verticality Exploration

We explored various options to see how we could emphasise the verticality of the structure whilst distinguishing the three primary elements:

- Plinth
- Core
- Crown



We explored options using both horizontal and vertical ribbed panels, however, this approach did not help with the building's verticality. Additionally, it was clear the banding at level 5 required a continuous flow around the entire structure



The vertical ribbing at the crown level appeared visually heavy in its upper sections, creating an impression that the building's core structure was insufficiently robust.



Continuous vertical ribbed at level 3 , level 5 and columns. Crown section with flat face anodised panel to stand out from the rest of the core structure of the building.



The vertical ribbed panels around the building failed to distinguish the core and crown areas, while the grey brickwork clashed with the surrounding context, drawing attention and contrasting too sharply with the neighbouring structures.



We tried to keep consistent the element of the verticality of the building however, this approach did not help distinguish the crown section.

Design Evolution

Planning Engagement 03

MCC Pre-Planning Engagement

Meeting 03

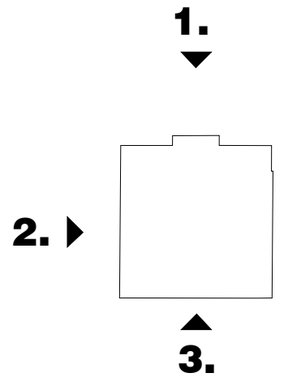
Our third informal meeting with the planning team aimed to incorporate their feedback and assess the feasibility of the proposed direction. The materials initially under consideration were ultimately deemed unsuitable due to concerns regarding their quality. Given the constraints of the existing building structure and load-bearing requirements, the cladding needed to be lightweight, which further narrowed our material choices. After thorough evaluation, anodised aluminium was selected as the most appropriate option. However, due to limitations in the colour range offered by United Anodisers, we needed to explore alternative colours, as the initial chosen shade was unavailable.

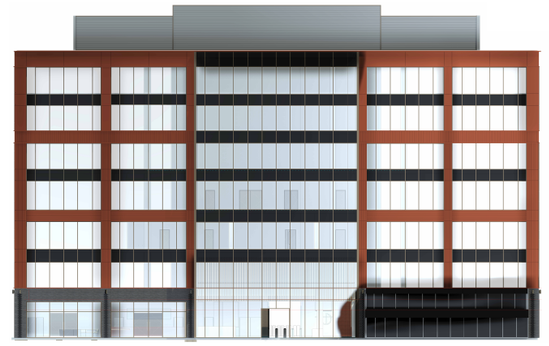
Tony Wilson Place required a distinct identity, standing apart from its surrounding buildings in terms of both finishes and materiality. The available blue anodised options were too vibrant and too closely aligned with the colours of the adjacent HOME building. After considering various options, we decided on a colour reminiscent of terracotta, which we felt blended seamlessly into the context of First Street. This copper-toned shade was selected for its warm, contextual appeal.

During the final presentation, the planners confirmed that the best approach would be to omit the crown element, while expressing approval of the plinth, which was considered a valuable addition to the building.

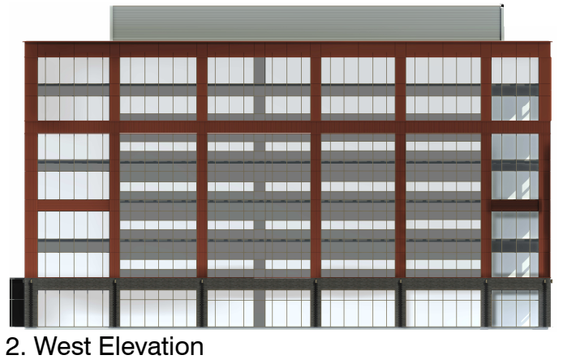




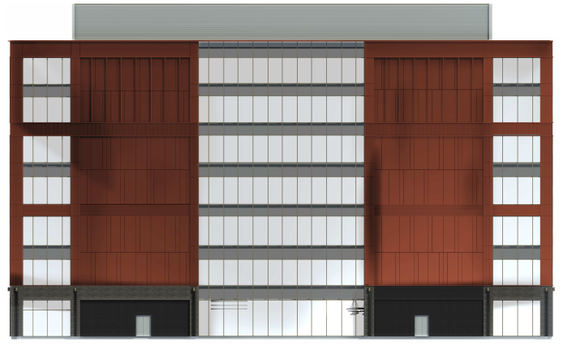




1. North Elevation



2. West Elevation



3. South Elevation

Materiality

External Cladding & Brick

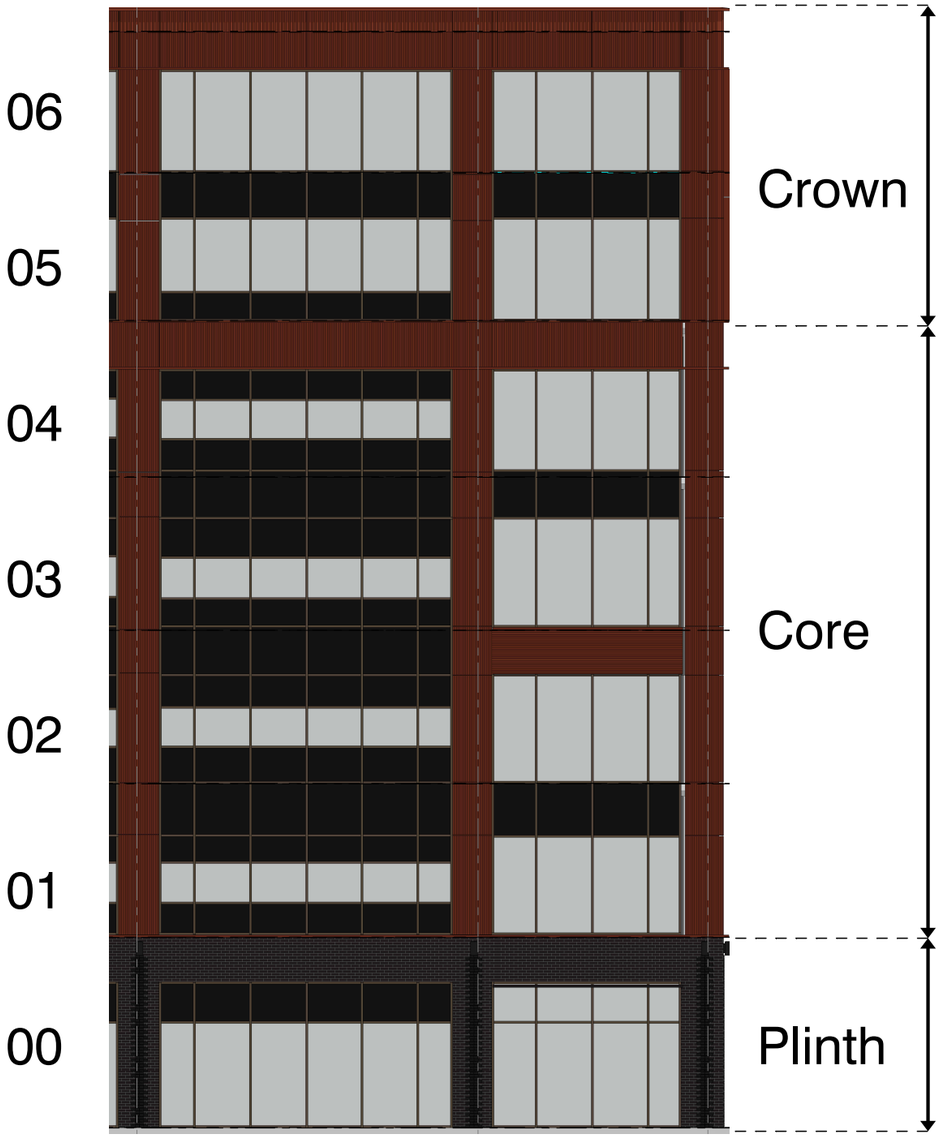


Anodised Metallic

contrast

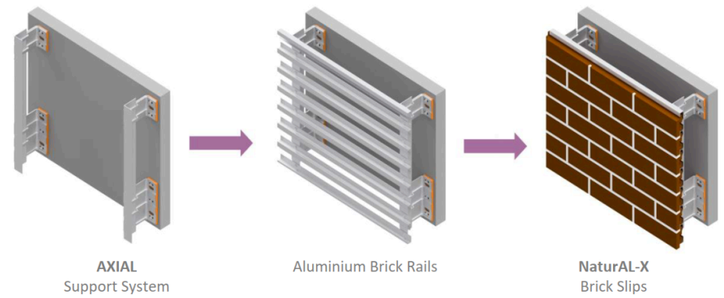
Matt





1st-6th Floor-Anodised Aluminium

- Anodised finish to contrast with brick plinth
- Copper shade anodised finish providing a contrast with the surrounding buildings.
- Minimal maintenance & maximum durability
- Lightweight for fixing to existing structure
- Protection from corrosion



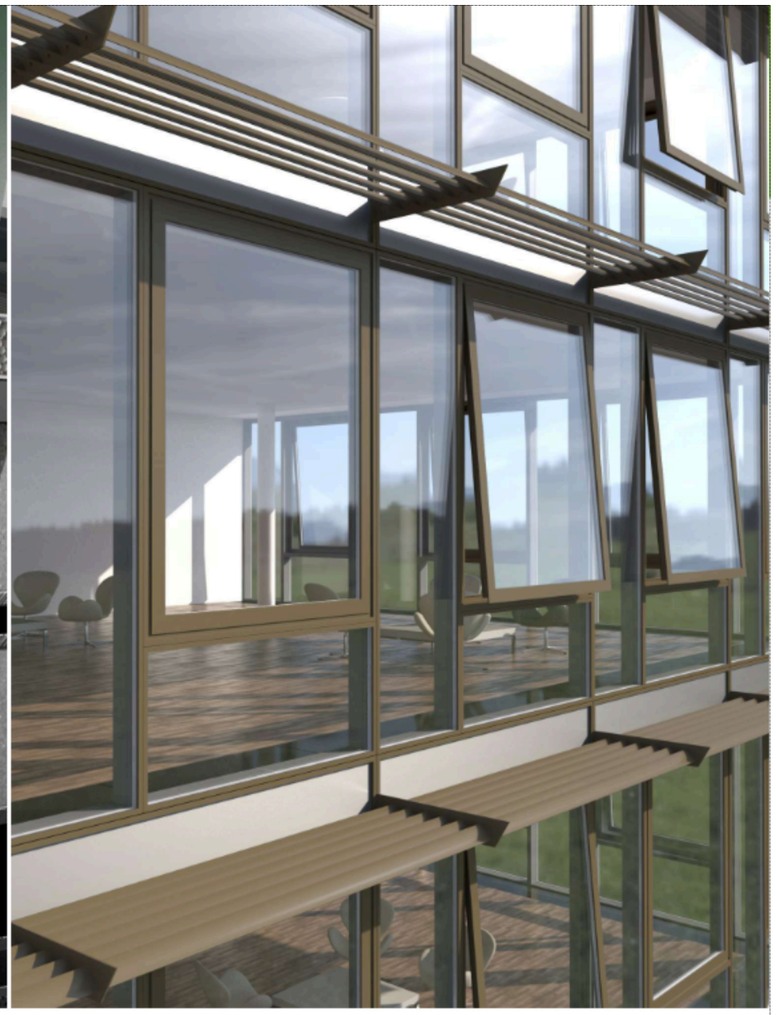
Brick Plinth

- Robust Material
- Human Scale Approach
- Matt brick slips
- Minimal maintenance
- Variety of lengths
- Lightweight for existing structure - 50% lighter than traditional
- No foundations needed

Materiality

Curtain Wall Cappings





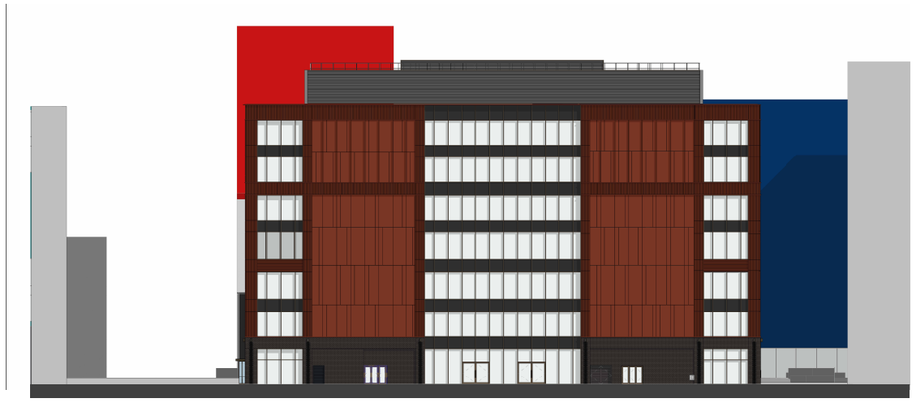


Bronze
Capping finish

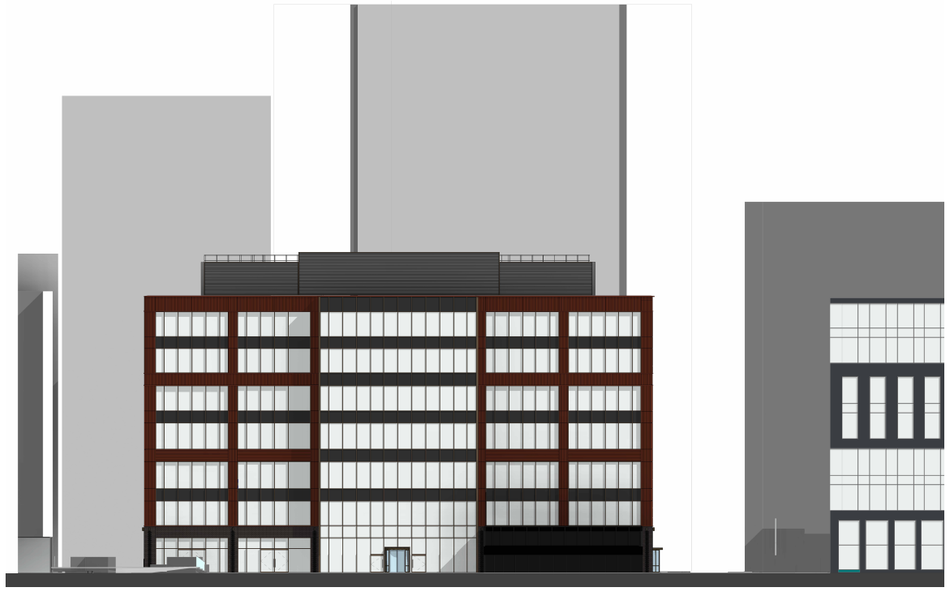
The existing cappings on the building have aged and appear outdated. While removal of the capping is necessary for the replacement of the spandrel panels, this presents an opportunity to enhance the aesthetic quality of the curtain wall system. By refining the design details, we can improve the overall visual appeal of the façade, ensuring a cohesive integration with the proposed brick and cladding materials. This approach will elevate the building's appearance and align it with the contemporary design intentions.

4.0 Design Proposal

Site Context



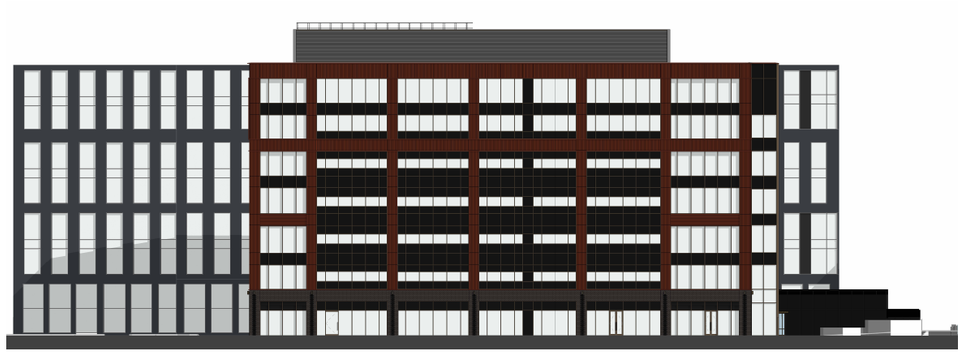
South Elevation



North Elevation



West Elevation

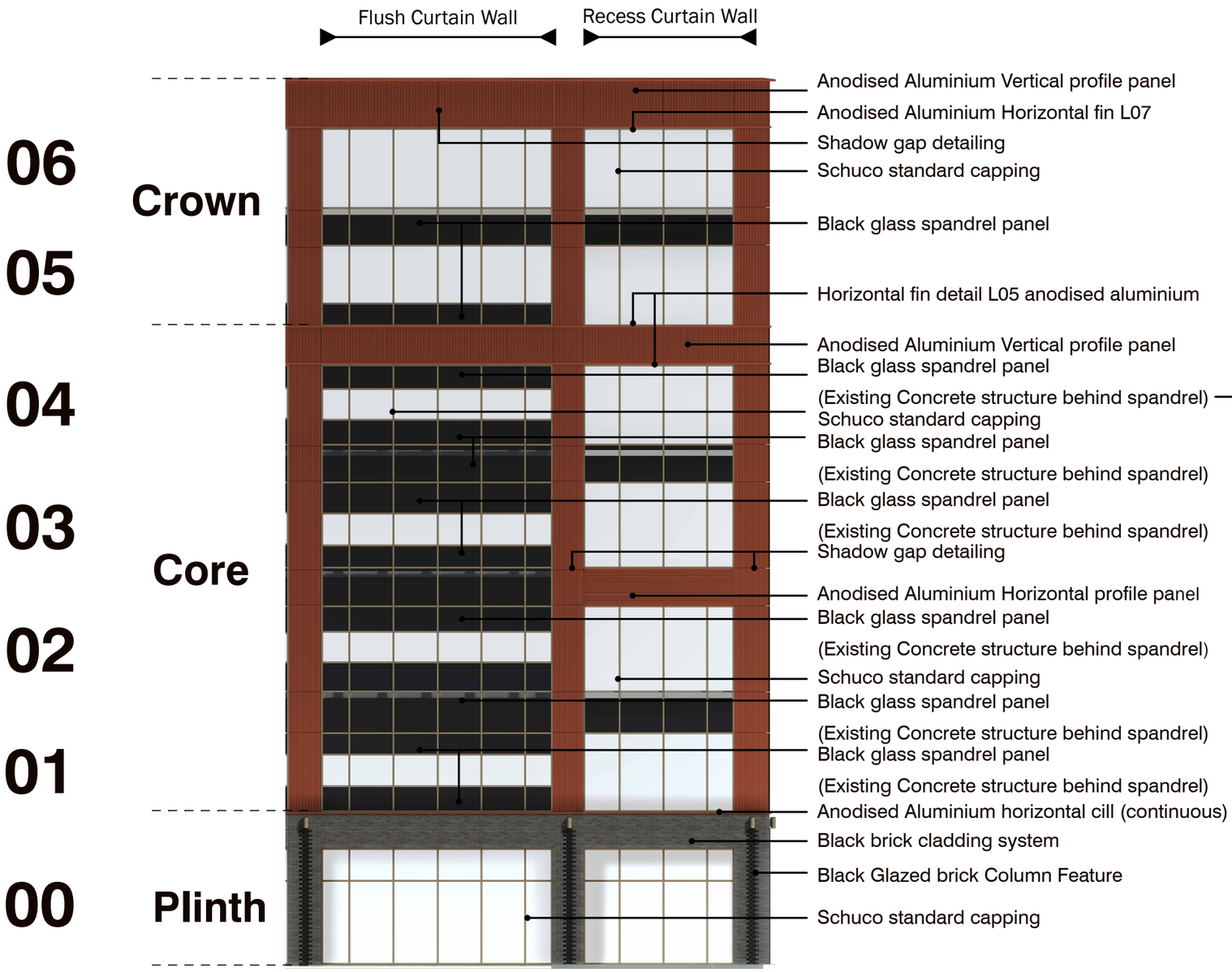


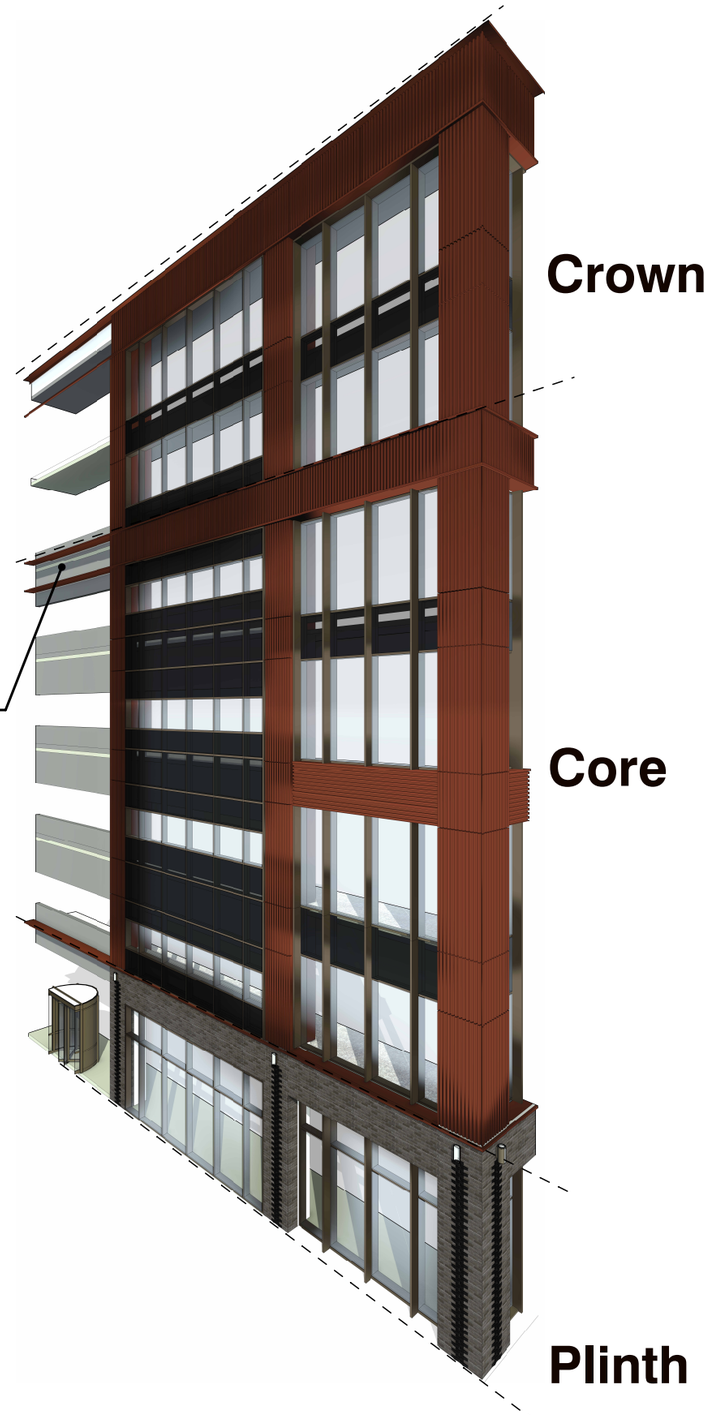
East Elevation



Facade Proposal

Typical Facade Bay Study

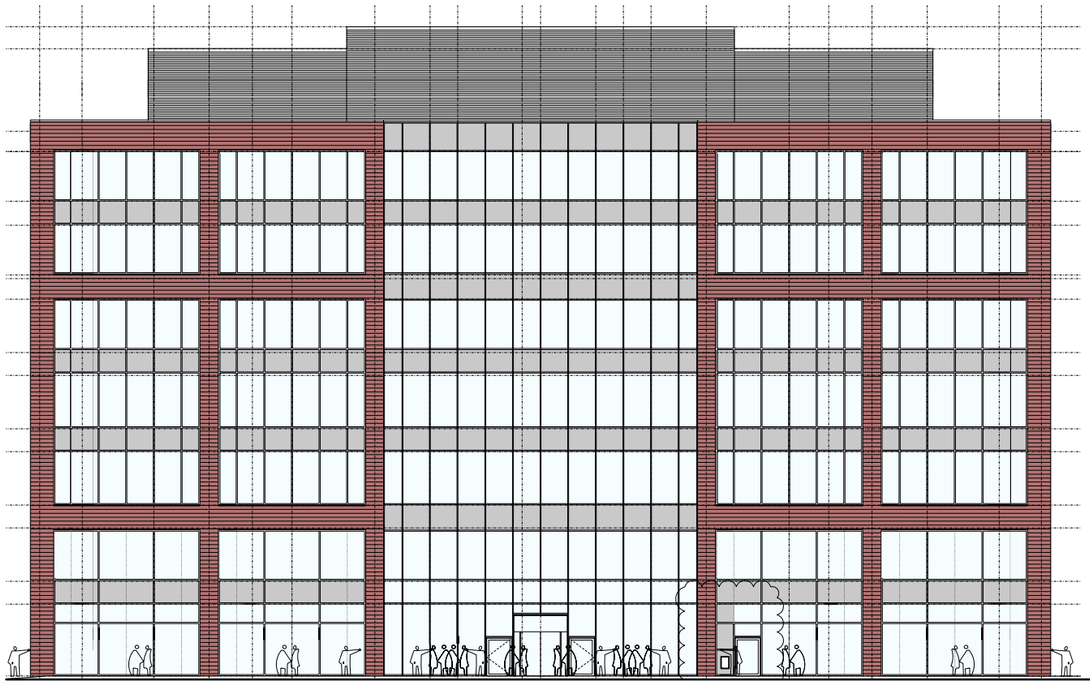




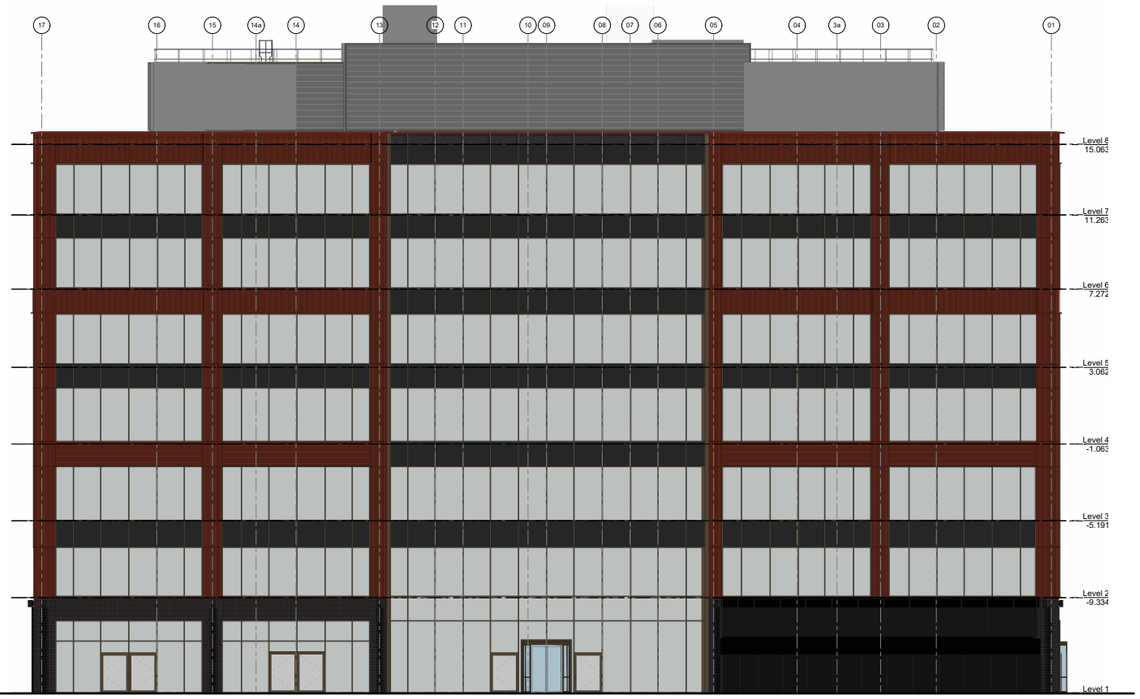
Elevations

North Elevation





Existing



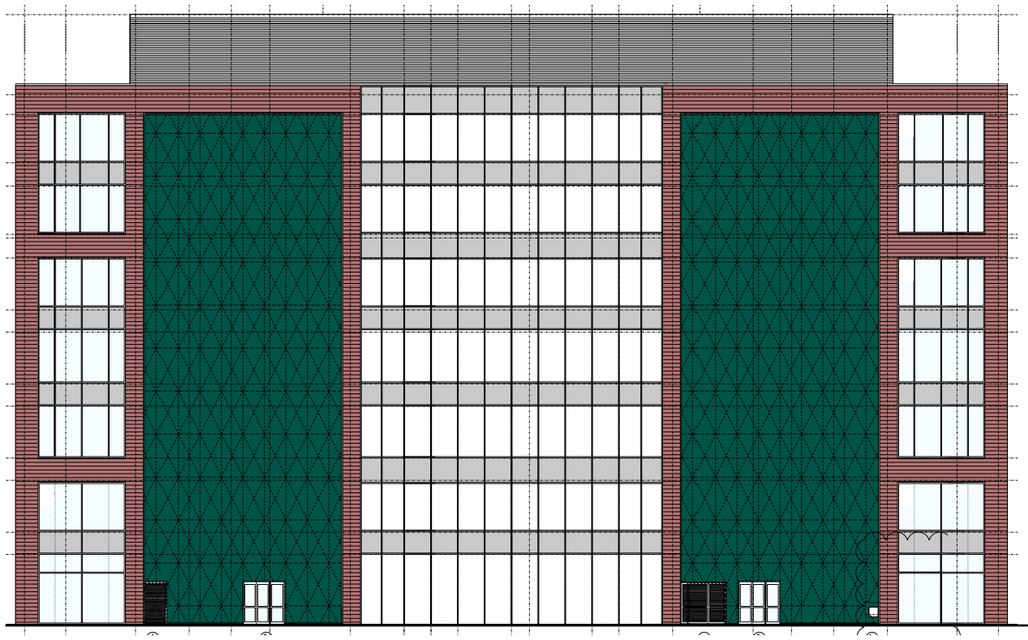
Proposed

The introduction of a brick plinth at Level 1 establishes a human scale, enhancing the building’s connection to its surroundings and clearly defining the transition between floor levels. Ribbed columns create a distinct vertical rhythm, accentuating the building's height, while horizontal ribbing at Level 3 emphasises the building’s horizontal elements, intermediate floors, including Levels 2, 4, and 6, incorporate horizontal detailing that highlights the central core, contributing to the overall architectural composition. Additionally, the banding at Level 5 visually separates the ‘crown’ of the structure, subtly altering the building's silhouette at its uppermost level.

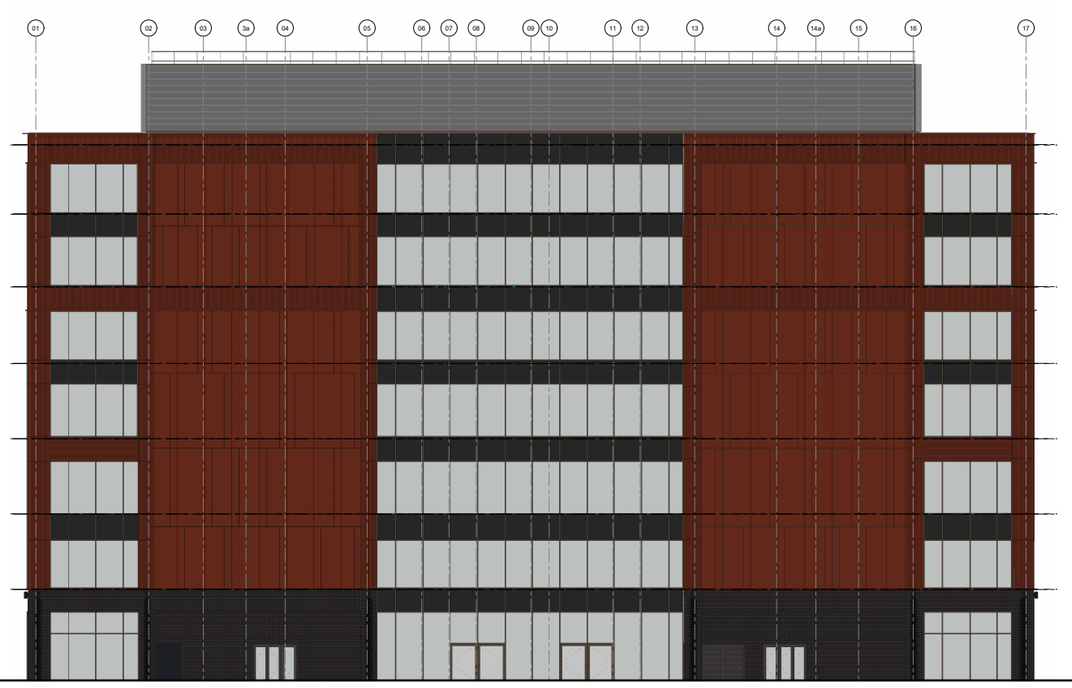
Elevations

South Elevation





Existing



Proposed

The central section of the elevations, originally made of plain concrete panels, required a design intervention to improve the facade's appearance. To address this, a distinctive panel pattern was introduced in the central core, significantly enhancing the south elevation. Additionally, the crown section at Level 5 was enhanced to strengthen the banding effect. Fins were incorporated into the central core to mirror the articulation of the curtain wall, unifying both the vertical and horizontal geometry across the building's periphery.

Elevations

East & West Elevations





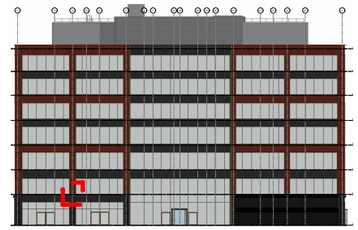
Existing



Proposed

The East and West elevations, with the exception of the building's corner areas, feature concrete upstands that restrict significant modifications to the facade. Behind the existing spandrel panels lie these concrete upstands, which limit design flexibility. As a solution, the current spandrel panels will be replaced with black spandrel panels to provide a more cohesive aesthetic. To maintain consistency across the building, a brick plinth will be introduced, along with corresponding banding at Level 5. Additionally, horizontal aluminium profiles will be applied exclusively at the corner junctions to enhance the architectural expression.

Plinth with Glazed Brick Feature



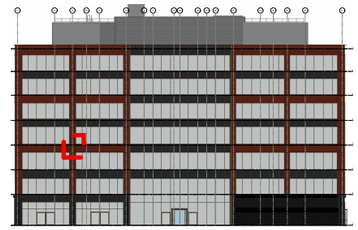
Brick plinth with an additional element feature added to the column to enhance the appearance of the building.

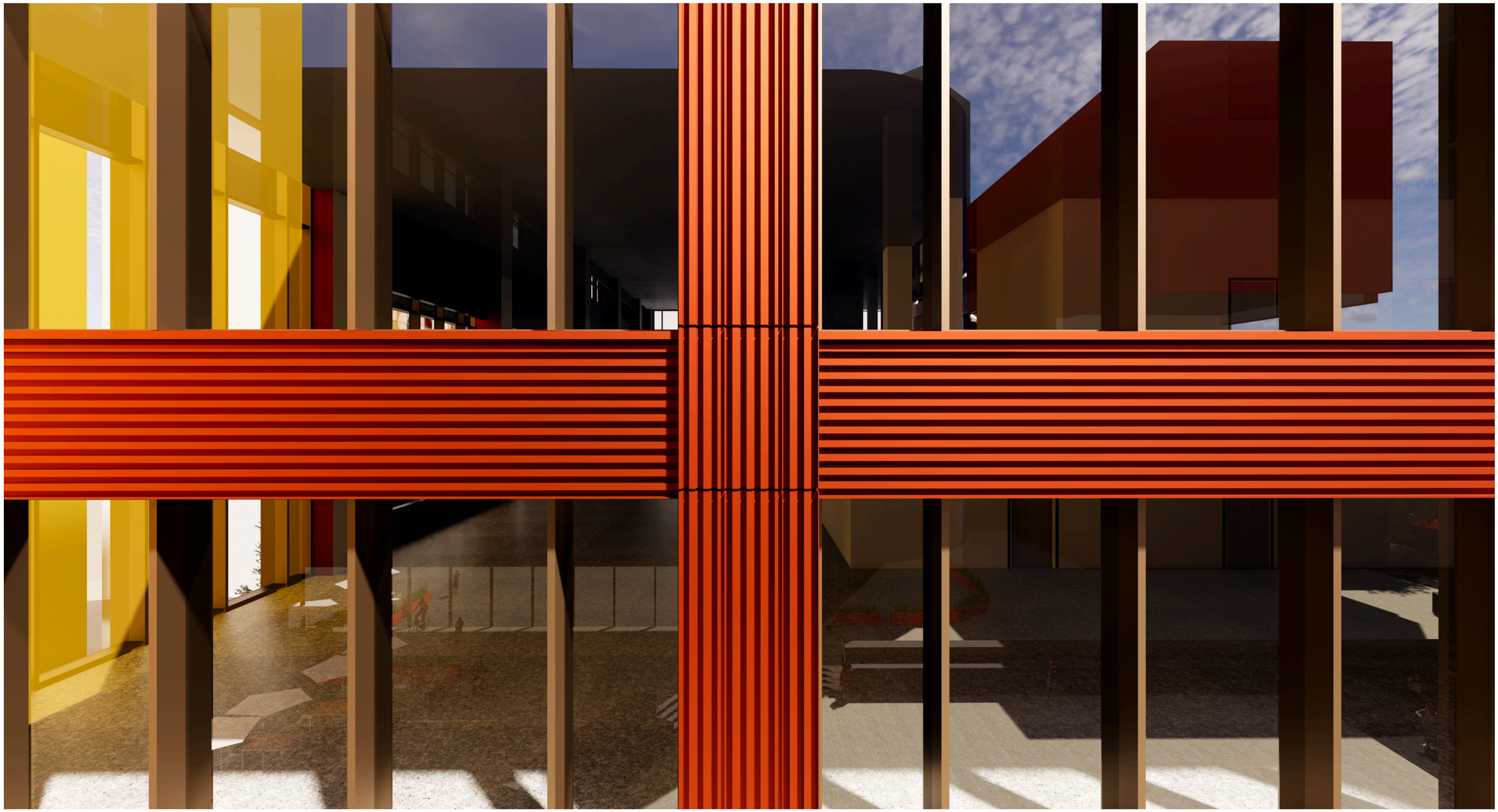


L03 Horizontal & Vertical Banding-North Elevation

Horizontal anodised ribbed aluminium profile to help separate from the

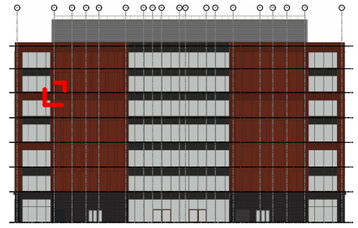
vertical element of the building.





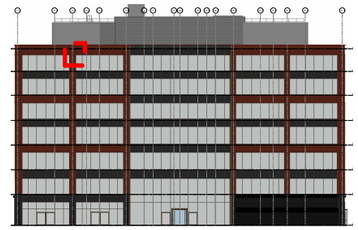
Level 05 Banding-South Elevation

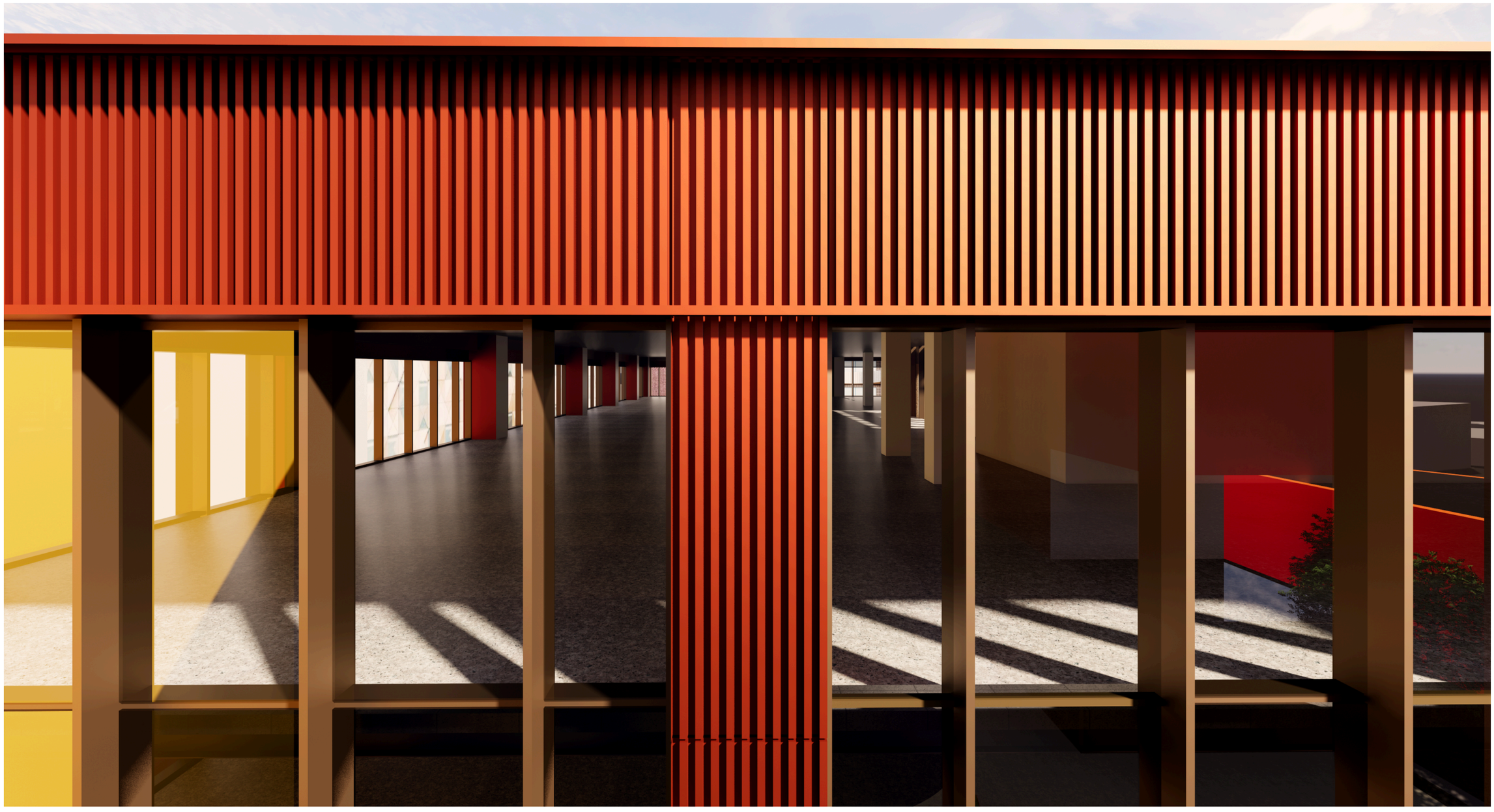
Vertical banding at Level 5 to distinguish the difference with the crown section.





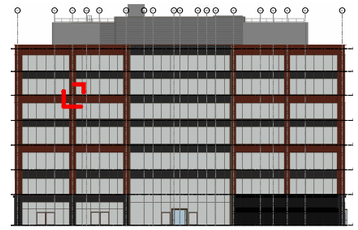
Level 07-North Elevation





Level 05 Banding-North Elevation

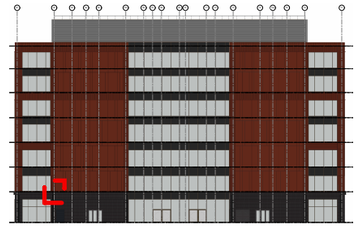
Core/Crown level detailing and banding at level 5.

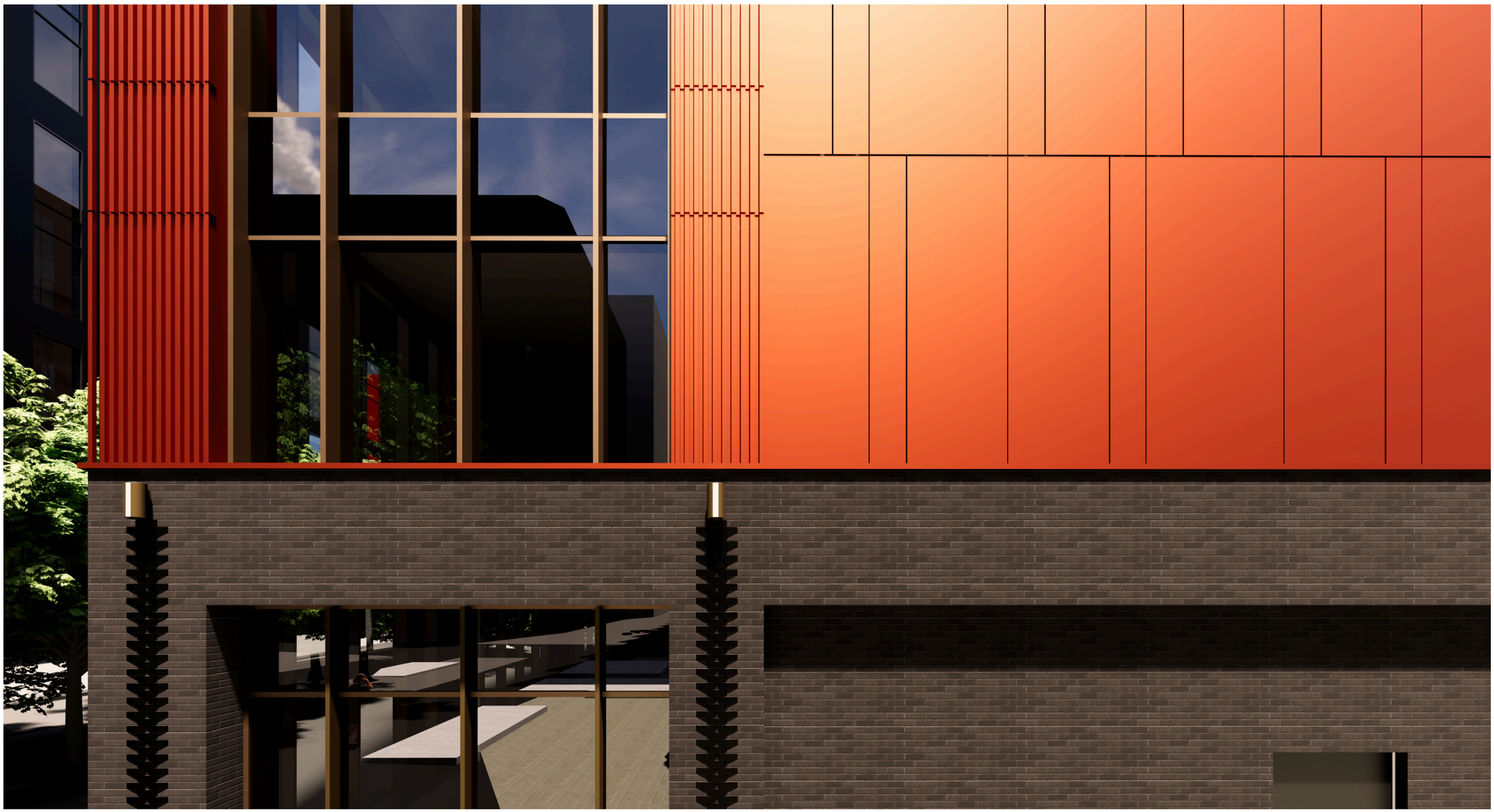




Plinth &Core-South Elevation

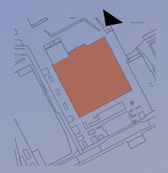
Plinth and vertical column detailing to the South Elevation.





North Elevation View

The North Elevation, as viewed from Gasworks, illustrates how the new colour scheme complements the surrounding architecture. The black brick harmonises with the neighbouring buildings, as all structures in the area feature a dark plinth, creating a cohesive visual connection within the context of the neighbourhood.



South Elevation






ONE
COFFEE SHOP
COFFEE SHOP
NO 1 TONY WILSON PLACE
ONE

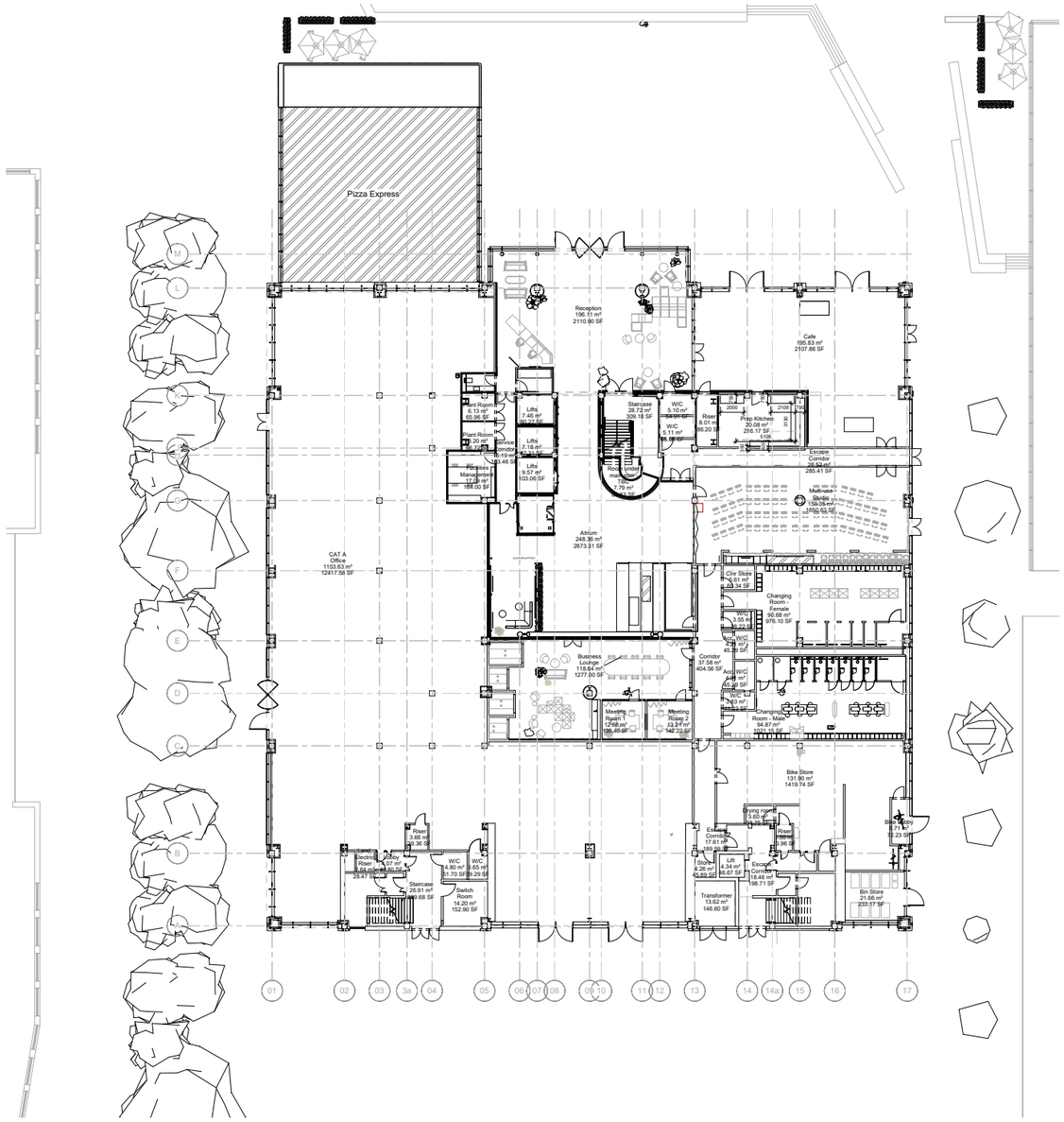
Proposed Floor Plan

Ground Floor

The Ground Floor will undergo a significant transformation to align with contemporary standards and user needs. The reception area will be upgraded, incorporating state-of-the-art security technologies to streamline foot traffic and enhance control. A new Café area will not only contribute to building revenue but also serve as a welcoming point for the public, promoting a sense of accessibility beyond just the building's primary users.

The addition of modern amenities, including a dedicated bike storage facility, will elevate the overall user experience by addressing practical needs. A versatile wellness space will be available, easily adaptable for seminars or meetings, promoting flexibility.

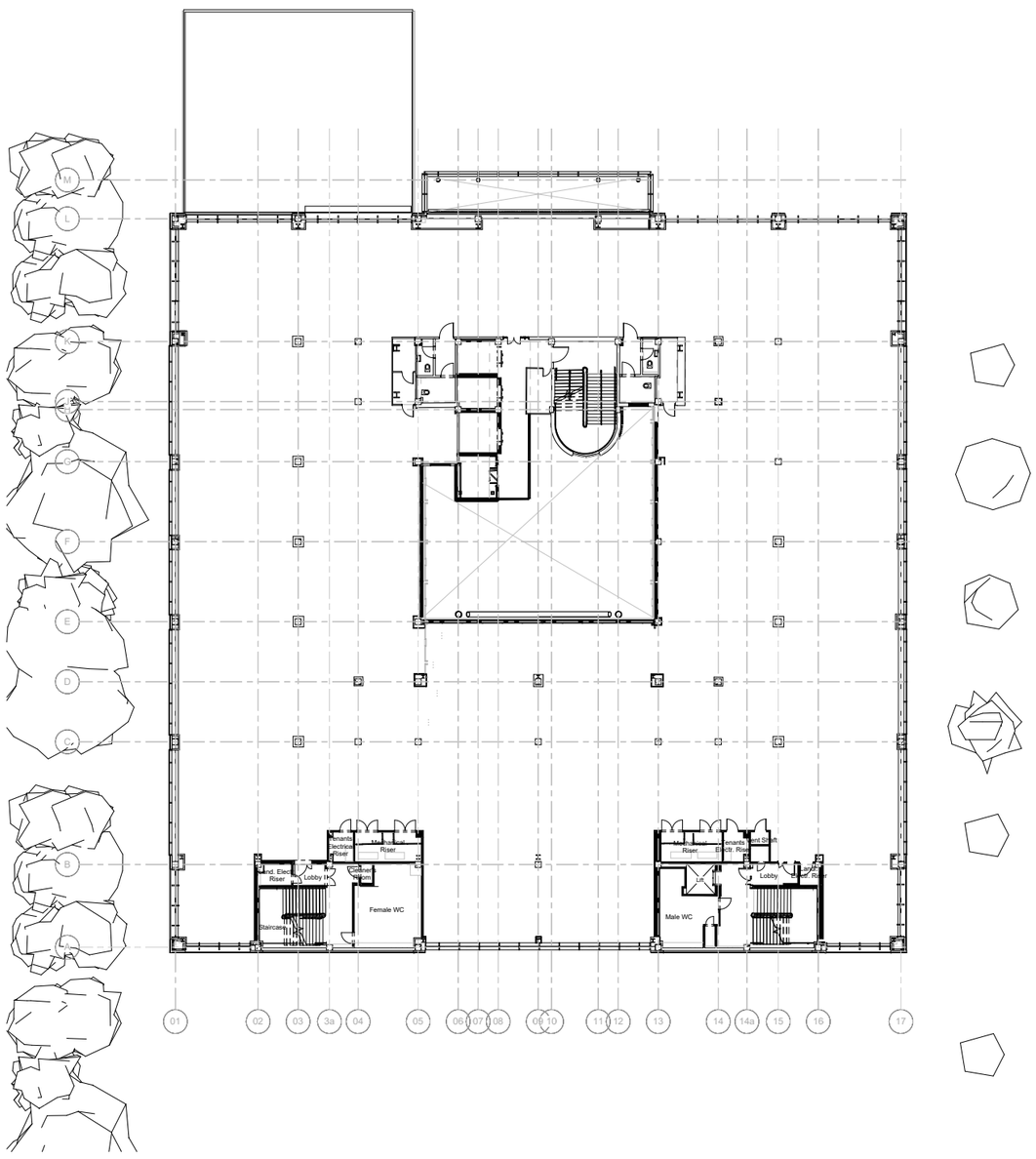
The central area will offer dynamic workspaces, including co-working zones and private meeting rooms that can be reserved, allowing for a range of professional engagements. The Atrium, designed as a vibrant social hub, will provide an ideal setting for coffee breaks, casual networking, or even presentations, with the potential for telescopic seating to support a variety of events. This cohesive, multifaceted environment will encourage both productivity and community engagement.



Proposed Floor Plan

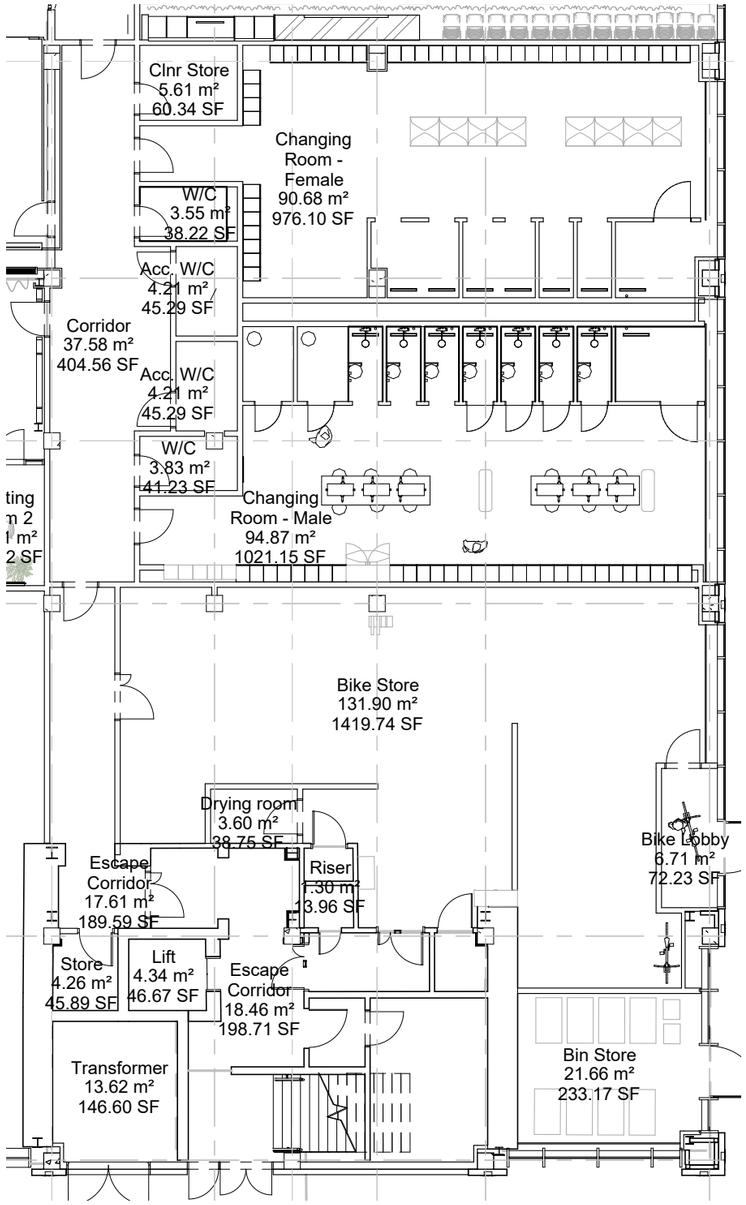
Typical Floor Plan

The upper floors will feature flexible, open-plan spaces that can be tailored to the individual preferences of users. Each floor will be designed to be easily subdivided into two distinct areas, providing versatility and accommodating multiple tenants or users as required. The central and rear cores will remain largely unchanged, though they will undergo selective upgrades, including improvements to the toilet facilities to enhance user comfort and functionality.



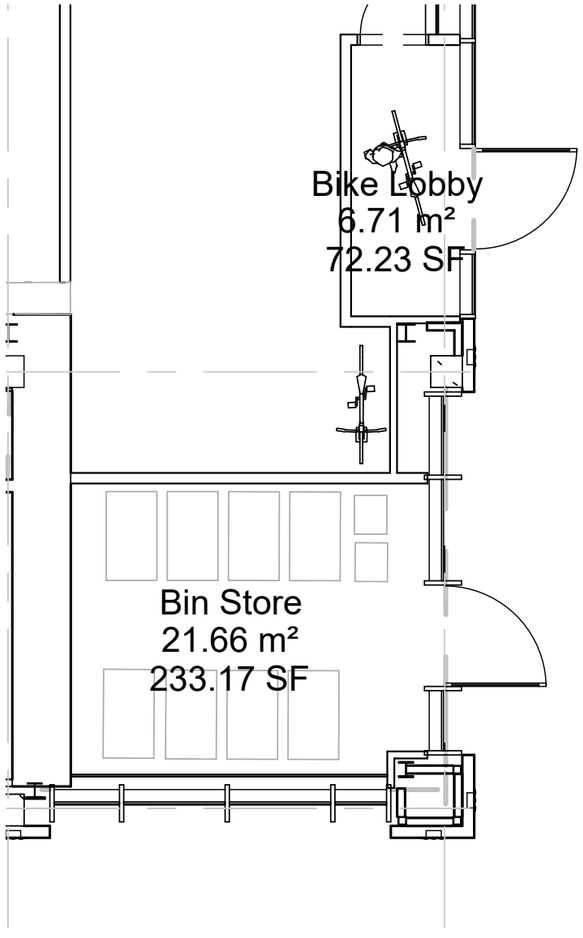
Bike Store & Changing Rooms

The changing rooms are designed with a modern, soothing aesthetic that enhances the user experience upon entering the space. Individual cubicles offer privacy, while the lockers provide secure storage for personal items, whether returning from a bike ride or in other scenarios. The bike storage area is equipped with advanced security features, ensuring restricted access exclusively for those requiring its use. Additionally, a dedicated dry room is included, offering a convenient solution for drying bike gear and clothing on rainy, cold days upon arrival.



Waste Management

Although waste management operations were previously handled offsite, we have incorporated a dedicated bin storage area within the building to streamline facilities management. Feedback from current building occupants indicates a need for approximately eight 1100L bins. With this in mind, we have designed a bin storage area within the existing space, ensuring it accommodates the required number of bins efficiently and discreetly.



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