FAIRFAX
WAYFINDING STRATEGY

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PLACE MARQUE

INTRODUCTION

THE FAIRFAX

This report sets out the proposed wayfinding strategy for The Fairfax, a new development within the Portugal Street East neighbourhood, part of Manchester's Piccadilly East Strategic Regeneration Framework (SRF). The strategy aims to establish a clear and coherent approach to navigation that supports the ongoing transformation of this emerging urban quarter. As the area continues to evolve into a connected, mixed-use neighbourhood, The Fairfax will play a key role in shaping how residents, visitors, and workers experience and move through the space.

The purpose of the strategy is to define how people understand and navigate The Fairfax and its relationship to the wider city context. It considers how users arrive, whether on foot, by bike, public transport, or vehicle, and how information can be delivered progressively. The approach prioritises accessibility, legibility, and character, ensuring that the wayfinding system not only performs a practical function but also contributes to the overall sense of place within Portugal Street East.

This document presents the findings of the site analysis and outlines the proposed wayfinding principles, hierarchy of information, and sign functions. It outlines how the strategy integrates with the public realm design developed by re-form landscape architects, aligning materials, finishes, and tone with the district's wider identity. Together, these provide the foundation for a cohesive and inclusive wayfinding system that reinforces The Fairfax's role as a key destination within Manchester's growing Piccadilly East neighbourhood.

PLACE MARQUE



ANALYSIS

LEGIBILITY STUDY

To develop a successful wayfinding strategy we must understand the journey each user makes, be it a first time visitor or regular user to the site; how they arrive, whether on foot, by cycle, or via public transport, and the routes and decisions they must navigate to reach their destination will ultimately define the strategy.

By mapping these journeys, we can identify key decision points, moments of uncertainty, and opportunities for orientation. Understanding these thresholds, where people enter, pause, or change direction, allows the strategy to provide legibility where it matters most. This process also highlights how the site connects into the wider Piccadilly SRF network, ensuring The Fairfax feels integrated within Manchester's urban fabric rather than an isolated destination.

This analysis provides an understanding as to how people intuitively move through the space, and by studying the environmental cues alongside user needs, we can shape a hierarchy of information that complements the architecture, supports accessibility, and reinforces The Fairfax's distinctive character within the city.

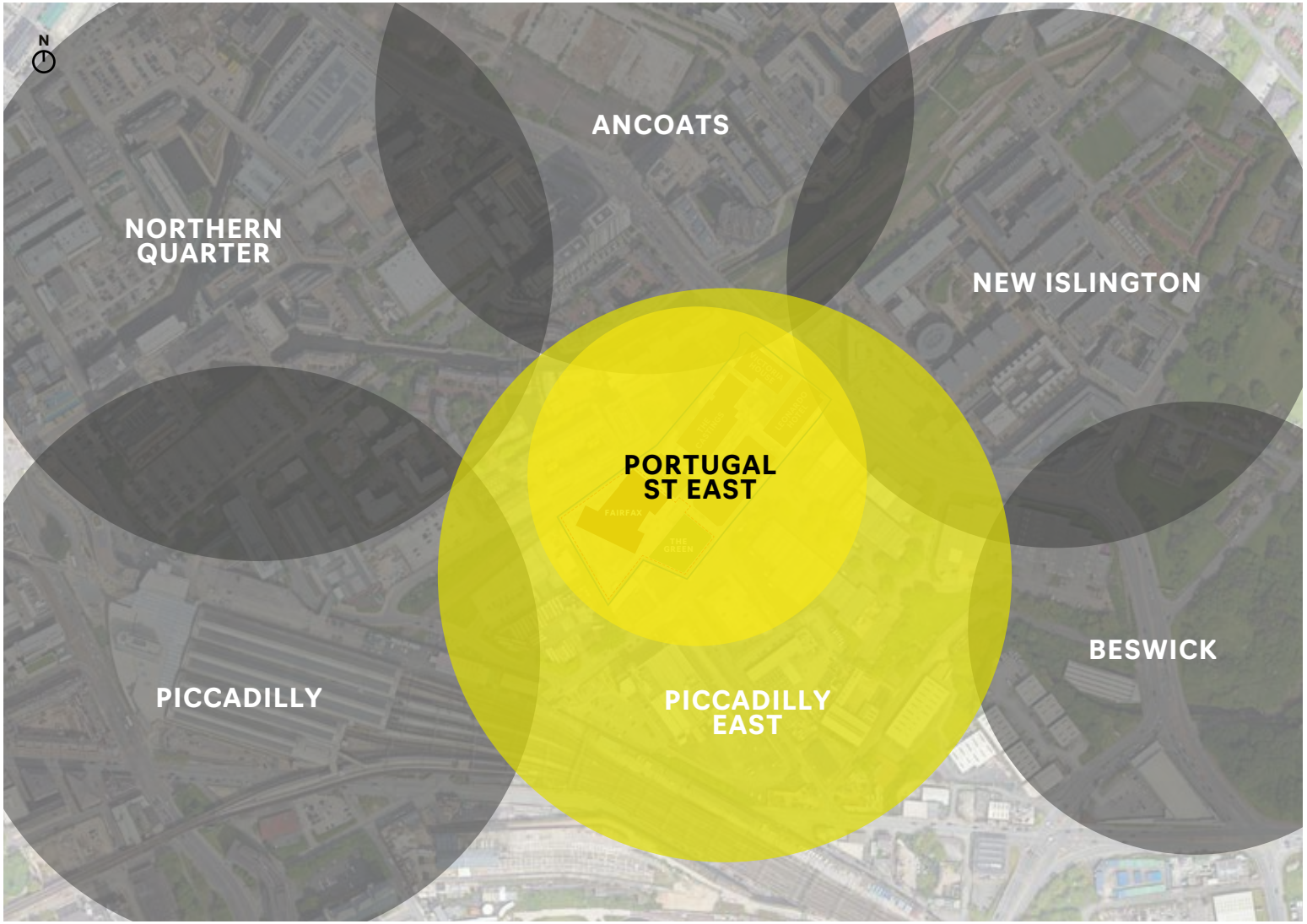


PLACE MARQUE

CONTEXT

Portugal Street East is an emerging neighbourhood within Manchester's Piccadilly East district, forming part of the wider regeneration area surrounding Piccadilly Station. This area is undergoing significant transformation, shifting from a largely underused industrial landscape into a vibrant, mixed-use quarter that blends residential, commercial, and community spaces. The development of Portugal Street East represents a key opportunity to reinforce this evolving identity, supporting the city's vision for a more connected, liveable, and sustainable urban environment.

As part of this transformation, the wayfinding strategy plays an essential role in promoting active travel and encouraging movement between Portugal Street East and surrounding neighbourhoods such as The Northern Quarter, Ancoats, Piccadilly, Mayfield, and the city centre. By supporting walking, cycling, and public transport use, the strategy helps residents and visitors navigate while contributing to a stronger sense of place.



KEY ARRIVAL POINTS

Train

If arriving by train, the nearest station to The Fairfax is Manchester Piccadilly, located just a five-minute walk from the site. Other nearby stations include Manchester Oxford Road (around a 20 minute walk) and Manchester Victoria (approximately 25 minutes on foot), offering convenient access from across the city and wider region.

Metrolink

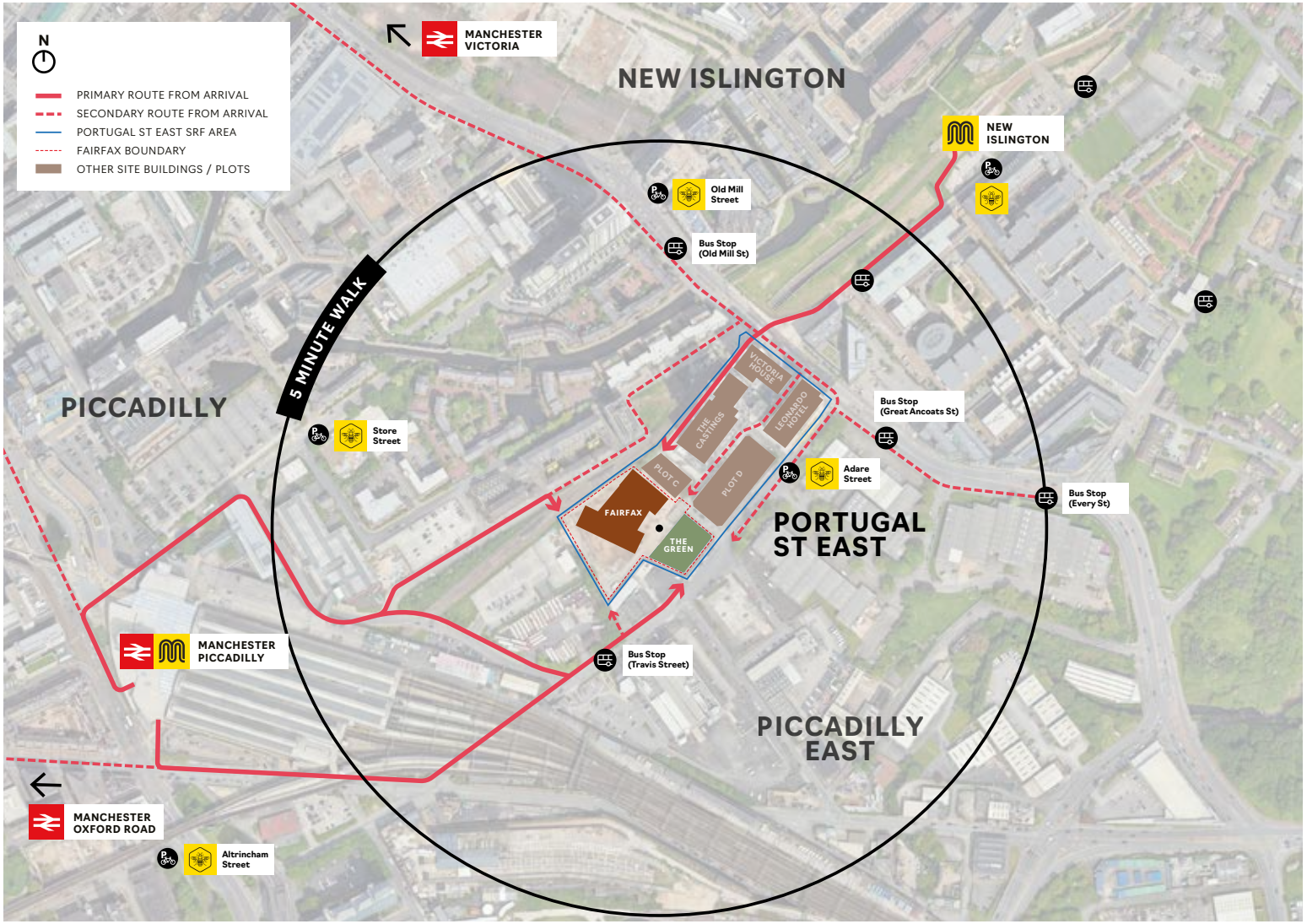
For those travelling by tram, the closest Metrolink stop is Piccadilly or New Islington, which are just over a five minute walk from The Fairfax.

Bus

The Fairfax is well served by a range of Bee Network bus routes operating along nearby Great Ancoats Street, Old Mill Street, Travis Street, and Fairfield Street. Services including the 147, 216, 219, 221, 230, and 231 provide regular connections to destinations such as the city centre, Ashton-under-Lyne, Didsbury, and Salford. Stops on Great Ancoats Street and Old Mill Street are only a short walk from the development, while those on Travis Street and Fairfield Street offer convenient links to Manchester Piccadilly Station and wider transport hubs.

Cycle

Active travel is supported around The Fairfax through the Bee Network's growing cycle infrastructure. Secure cycle parking will also be available. Bee Network cycle hire is available across the area, with docking stations located close to Piccadilly Station and along Adare Street, Old Mill Street and New Islington Metrolink stop, allowing convenient first and last mile connections.

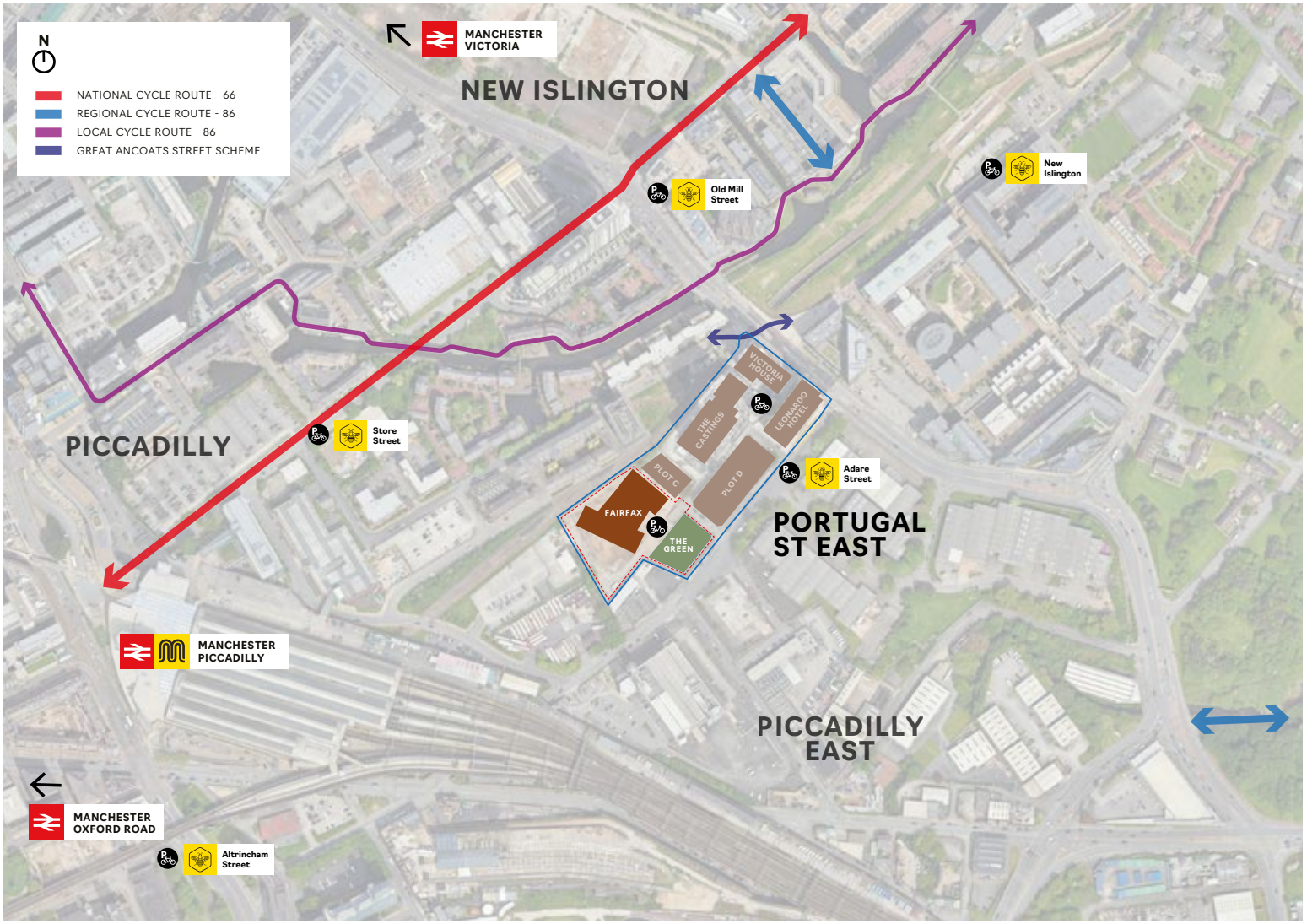


ANALYSIS
CYCLIST MOVEMENT

Cycle Routes
The are two main cycle routes which run parallel to the Portugal Street East site. One of these routes is the National Cycle Route 66 which is highlighted in **red** and the second is the local cycle path highlighted in **purple**. A new cycle path has also recently been added to Great Ancoats Street. This route helps to connect Ancoats, New Islington and the other surrounding neighbourhoods.

Bike Parking
There are bike racks available on site within the public realm. Private cycle parking will also be available for residents within The Fairfax.

Bee Network
As mentioned on the previous page, The Fairfax is in close proximity to several Bee Network cycle locations.



ANALYSIS

PUBLIC SPACES & DESTINATIONS

The Portugal Street East neighbourhood is being shaped by a growing network of high-quality public spaces that strengthen connections, encourage activity, and define the character of the area. Some elements of the public realm are already complete, such as the new square adjacent to The Castings and the Leonardo Hotel, which now serves as a key focal point and social hub for the district. These early interventions have set a strong precedent for design quality, accessibility, and material consistency across the wider masterplan.

The Fairfax will build on this framework by introducing new landscaped areas around the building, creating attractive green spaces that provide moments of pause and a sense of openness within the dense urban setting. These will not only enhance the daily experience for residents and visitors but also contribute to biodiversity and environmental resilience. To the south-east of the plot, a larger park space known as The Green is proposed, offering a new destination within the neighbourhood and extending the network of pedestrian routes that connect Portugal Street East to Piccadilly Station, Mayfield, and Ardwick. Together, these public spaces will form an integral part of the wayfinding strategy, acting as visual anchors, meeting points, and orientation cues that help people navigate and experience the area.

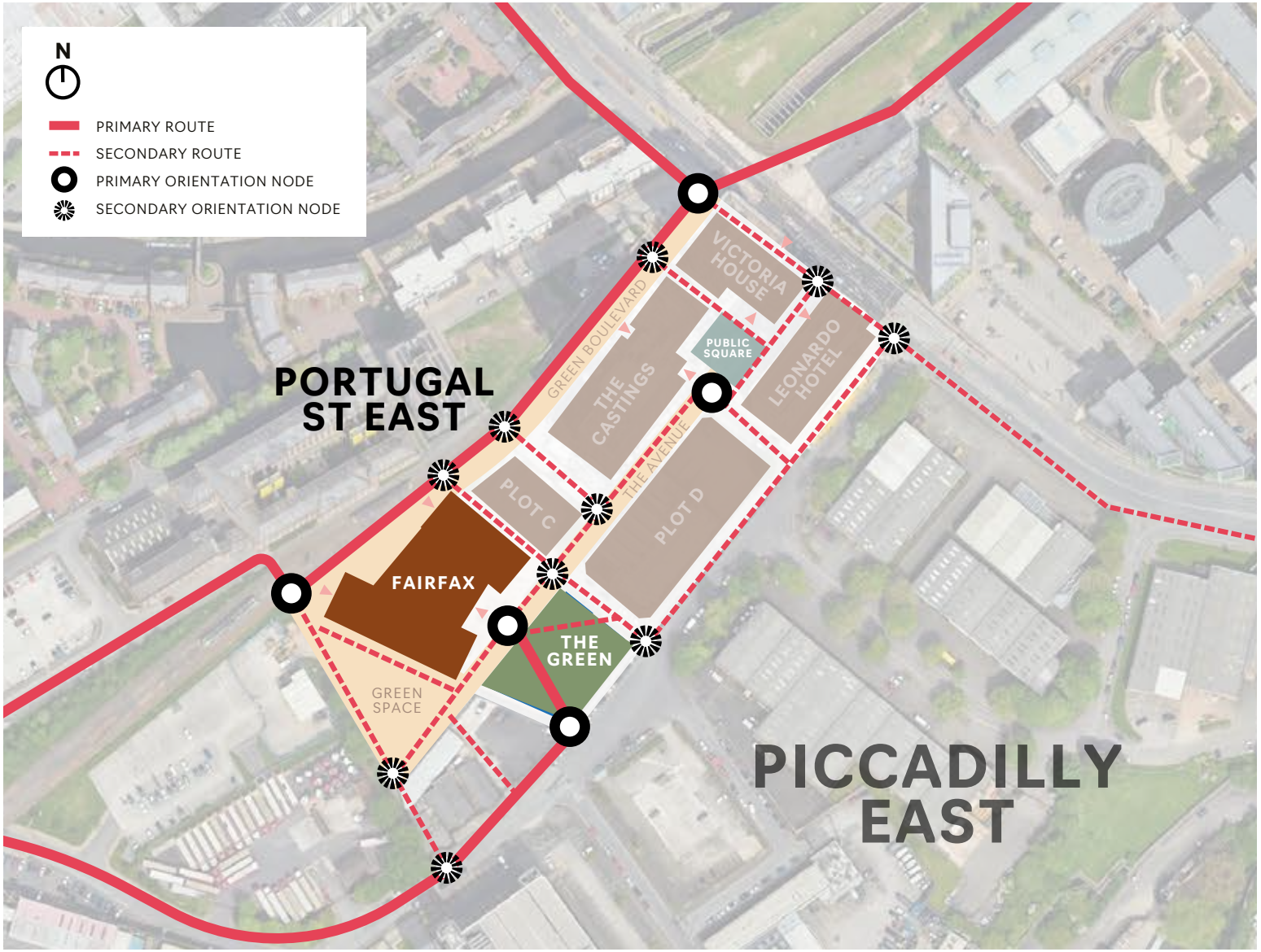


ANALYSIS

KEY ROUTES & ORIENTATION

The movement network around The Fairfax is defined by a combination of primary and secondary pedestrian and cycle routes that connect the development to the wider Portugal Street East neighbourhood and the city beyond. The plan opposite illustrates the main approach routes that users are likely to take when travelling to the site. Multiple points of arrival exist around the perimeter, each serving different modes of travel and levels of activity, and it will be important that these gateways are clearly defined through consistent signage, lighting, and landscape treatment.

Travis Street, Baird Street and Longacre Street form the key primary routes, accommodating both pedestrians and cyclists travelling between Piccadilly Station, Ancoats, and the emerging residential and commercial developments within Portugal Street East. Totem signage at key arrival / gateways should be designed to address both audiences, ensuring information is easily legible whether approached on foot or by bike. Secondary routes, such as those connecting to The Green and adjoining public spaces within the site, should be reinforced to guide users naturally towards entrances, open spaces, and key destinations within and around The Fairfax.



INFORMATION STRATEGY

Information Hierarchy

As The Fairfax will accommodate a mix of residents, visitors, and service users, it is important that information is presented in a clear and structured way. Since a sign cannot direct to every destination within the development, a hierarchy of information is required to ensure users receive the right level of guidance at the right time. Information should be progressively disclosed as people move from arrival to their final destination. At the city scale, visitors are first directed towards the wider Piccadilly East neighbourhood. Upon reaching the site boundary, signage should identify key gateways and direct users to main entrances and shared facilities. Once within the site, wayfinding becomes more specific, guiding users to individual buildings, amenities, and access points.

Character Areas & Zones

The Fairfax forms part of the wider Portugal Street East neighbourhood, an emerging district within Manchester's Piccadilly East regeneration area. As one of several developments contributing to the transformation of this part of the city, The Fairfax will sit within a connected network of streets, public spaces, and buildings that together define the character of the area. Rather than dividing The Fairfax itself into zones, it is more appropriate to consider the wider Portugal Street East masterplan as a collection of distinctive character areas shaped by their immediate surroundings, landscape, and urban function.

Defining these broader zones across Portugal Street East will help establish a clear spatial hierarchy and make the neighbourhood more legible as it continues to develop. Each area can be identified through consistent design cues such as materials, lighting, and planting, creating visual continuity while allowing each pocket of the neighbourhood to retain its own identity. The proposed wayfinding zones should therefore be informed by the overall masterplan and its emphasis on pedestrian connectivity and permeability, ensuring that The Fairfax integrates seamlessly into the wider movement network and contributes to a coherent sense of place across Portugal Street East.

Streets, paths and spaces

The network of streets, paths, and open spaces within Portugal Street East provides the essential framework for movement, orientation, and connectivity across the neighbourhood. These routes link developments to key destinations including Piccadilly Station, Ancoats, the Northern Quarter and Mayfield, supporting both everyday journeys and wider city connections. The quality and legibility of these spaces play a vital role in shaping how people experience the area, guiding movement naturally through clear sight lines, consistent paving treatments, and well-positioned lighting. As the masterplan evolves, establishing a coherent naming and signage strategy for streets and pedestrian routes will be important to ensure consistency for residents, visitors, and service users alike. These public realm elements should work seamlessly with the wayfinding system to create a cohesive and intuitive environment across the development.





INFORMATION STRATEGY

Progressive disclosure

Establishing a clear hierarchy of information is vital to the success of a wayfinding strategy. The objective is to present information progressively, ensuring users receive the right level of guidance at each stage of their journey without creating confusion or visual clutter.

As The Fairfax is part of the wider Portugal Street East neighbourhood, signage on approach should first reference Piccadilly East to situate the development within its broader urban context and reinforce a sense of place at the city scale. At the next level, as users reach the Portugal Street East boundary, signage should clearly identify the neighbourhood and mark its gateways, strengthening its identity and improving orientation. Within this framework, The Fairfax itself can then be introduced as a key destination, supported by consistent visual language that links the building to its surrounding context and the wider regeneration area.

Principle summary

1. Direct to quarter.
2. At quarter gateway direct to neighbourhood.
3. Once within a the neighbourhood direct to individual buildings and destinations.

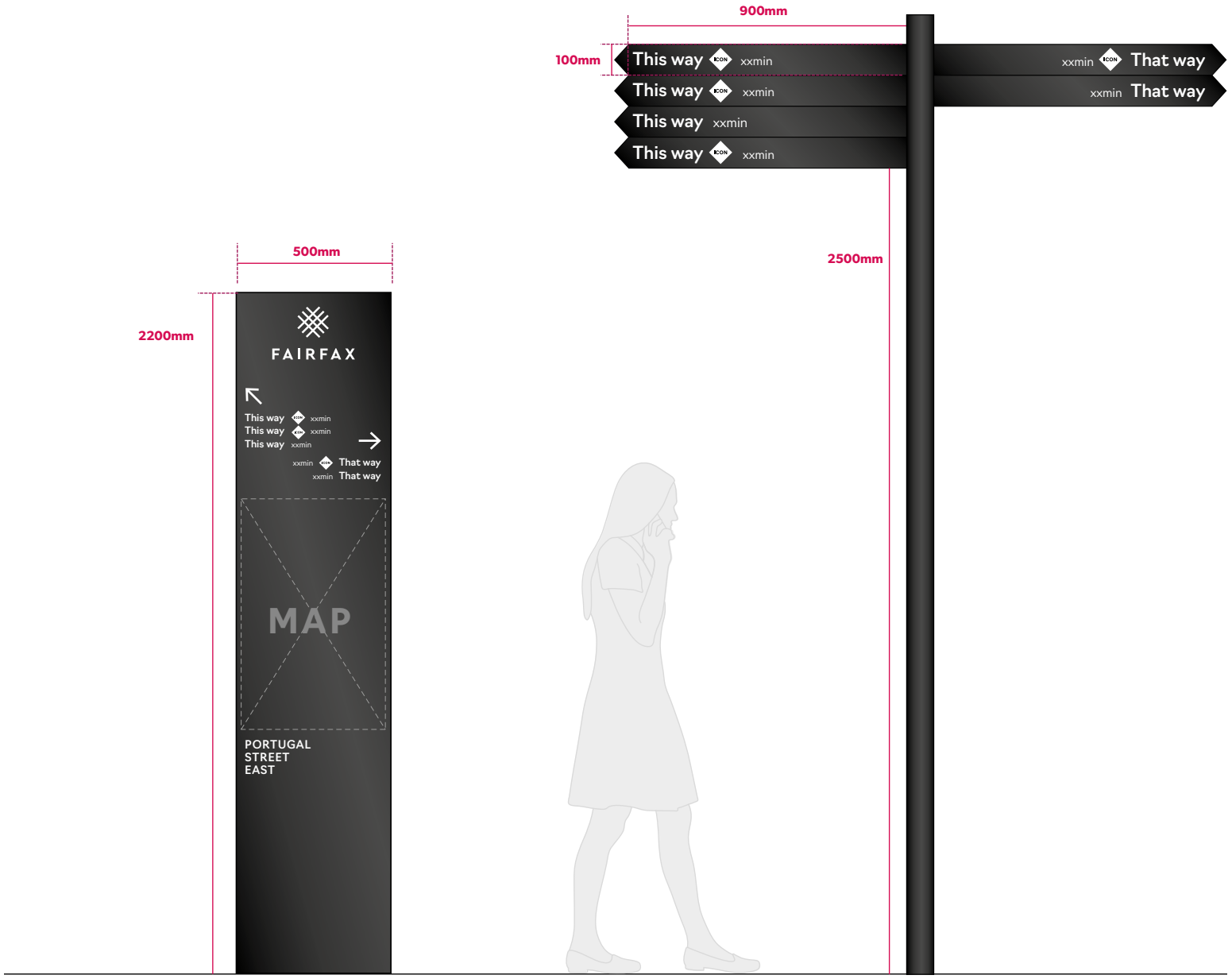
Outside Site	Site Boundary	Within Site
Piccadilly East	**Portugal Street East**	**Fairfax**
	Ancoats	**The Green**
	Northern Quarter	The Castings
	New Islington	Victoria House
	Beswick	Leonardo Hotel
	Ardwick	Plots - TBC
	Piccadilly	Public Realm areas
	Metrolink Stops	Cycle Parking
	Train Stations	
	Cycle Routes	

SIGN FUNCTIONS

Through our analysis we have established the types of signs that are required. The design of the signs, their look and feel will be developed as part of the next stage of delivery.

Gateway & Mapping Totem
Gateway signs highlight the key entrances to the site and create a sense of arrival. These signs should identify the name of the space and could also provide simple mapping of the neighbourhood.

Directional Fingerpost
Fingerpost signs help the user to navigate the space and direct them to their destination.



Drawing for indicative look and feel only
Branding TBC

GRAPHIC APPLICATION

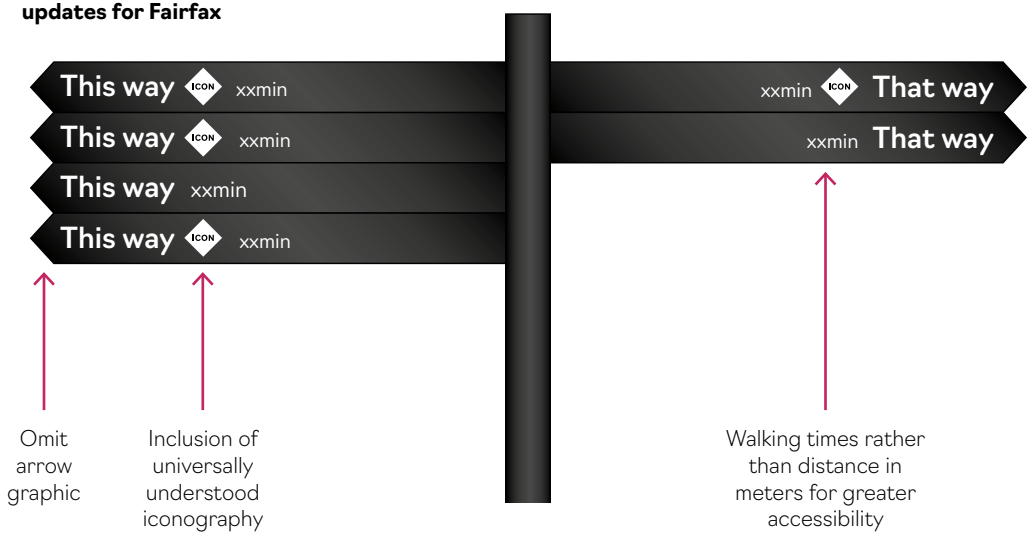
Existing Wayfinding Provision

The existing wayfinding provision within Portugal Street East currently consists of black powdercoated fingerposts and building name signs, featuring white text and logos that align with the district's contemporary material palette. This approach provides a simple and cohesive visual identity across the neighbourhood, ensuring a level of consistency between developments such as The Castings and the Leonardo Hotel. However, during our site visit it was noted that several fingerpost signs had been temporarily removed, so it is unclear whether updates or replacements have since been made. Despite this, the existing system establishes a useful foundation for orientation and branding within the area.

As the neighbourhood continues to evolve, there is an opportunity to refine and enhance the existing graphic application to improve legibility and accessibility. We recommend incorporating a universal icon set to support quick recognition and reduce reliance on text, as well as displaying walking times rather than distances in metres to make navigation more intuitive for all users. Additionally, it is suggested that directional arrows be removed from the finger panels, as the physical orientation of each finger already implies direction, and their removal will provide more space for useful information. These updates would align the system with best practice in urban wayfinding, ensuring it remains both functional and visually consistent as Portugal Street East continues to develop.

To note, the Castings wayfinding was implemented post completion.

Proposed graphical updates for Fairfax











MAPPING

Maps play a vital role in the wayfinding strategy by helping users understand the spatial layout of the neighbourhood and its relationship to the wider Piccadilly East area. A well designed map allows people to visualise their surroundings, recognise key landmarks and routes, and form a clear mental picture of how to move between destinations. By presenting information clearly and intuitively, maps enable users to plan their journeys effectively and provide a consistent visual reference throughout their visit.

We recommend that The Fairfax incorporates “heads up” mapping within its wayfinding system. This approach aligns the map with the user’s real world orientation, making it easier to interpret and reducing confusion. The mapping design should integrate essential information that supports both residents and visitors, including: key landmark elevations, wider connections, walking times, facilities, heritage routes and trails, information hierarchy, arrival points for all modes of transport, walking distance circles, “You Are Here” indicators, and internationally recognised icons supported by a clear, consistent key. This will ensure maps are accessible, legible, and contribute to a cohesive navigational experience across The Fairfax and the wider Portugal Street East development.



Example mapping precedent
Wellington Place, Leeds

ACCESSIBILITY

The wayfinding signage solution is designed to be legible and accessible, and there are a range of documents which offer suggestions as to how best to do this. These suggestions are guidance only and not statutory rules as the success of signage comes from a combination of different factors.

Key issues are things such as location, colour contrast, material, viewing distance, layout, etc and reference has been made to the Sign Design Guide and BS 8300:2009 where relevant..

June Fraser co-author of the Sign Design Guide states:

"There are four basic principles in sign design:

- *Signs should only be used when necessary*
- *Sign location should be part of the process of planning the environment*
- *Messages should be short simple and easily understood*
- *Signs should be consistent, using prescribed typefaces, colours and contrast"*

Making signage inclusive needs to consider a wide range of disabilities, from mobility issues, which requires that accessible routes are clearly shown, literacy issues such as non English speaking and people with learning difficulties, the use of internationally recognised icons aid navigational understanding, and more specifically people with a visual impairment, where many issues such as sign size, location and contrast are key factors. However, like other disabilities, visual impairment covers a wide range of sight loss conditions. The Sign Design Guide gives a good summary of the varieties of sight loss:

"Different eye conditions create different problems. Very few blind people see nothing at all. A minority can distinguish light but nothing else, some have no central vision; others have no side vision. Some see everything as a vague blur; others see a patchwork of blanks and defined areas."

Therefore inclusivity by its very nature has to accommodate a wide range of disabilities, and what works for one group will not be so good for others, so the solution will be a best compromise that considers the following range of issues:

- **Sign types**
- **Sign sizes**
- **Positioning**
- **Sign content hierarchy**
- **Iconography**
- **Typeface, size and layout**
- **Colour and contrast**
- **Illumination and glare**

Careful positioning of signage provides easier access and reduces potential hazards, particularly for people with visual impairments. Clearly defined routes should be planned for pedestrians. The use of tonal contrast and/or textural changes in sign hardware, logical grouping of street furniture, and effective lighting to define routes are effective ways to create accessibility friendly wayfinding.

Consideration has to be taken to avoid where possible placing signage where it causes problems for people with sight impairments or obstructs the passage of wheelchair users, if signage has to be located within access routes, they should be clearly identified, for example using contrasting colour and luminance with the background against which they will be seen.

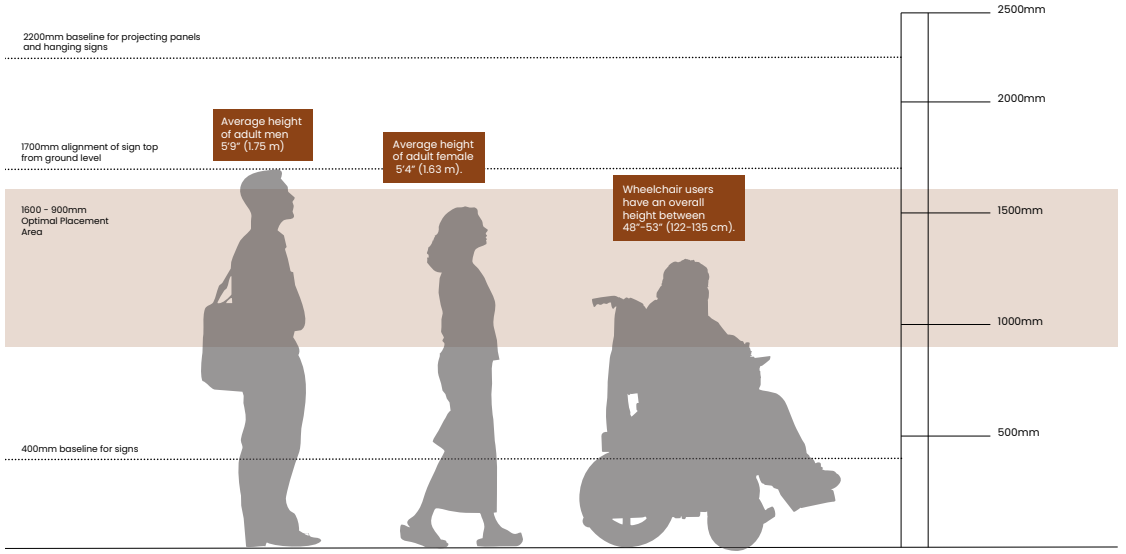
Free-standing posts or fingerposts within access routes should be no less than 2500mm to the base of the first projecting finger.

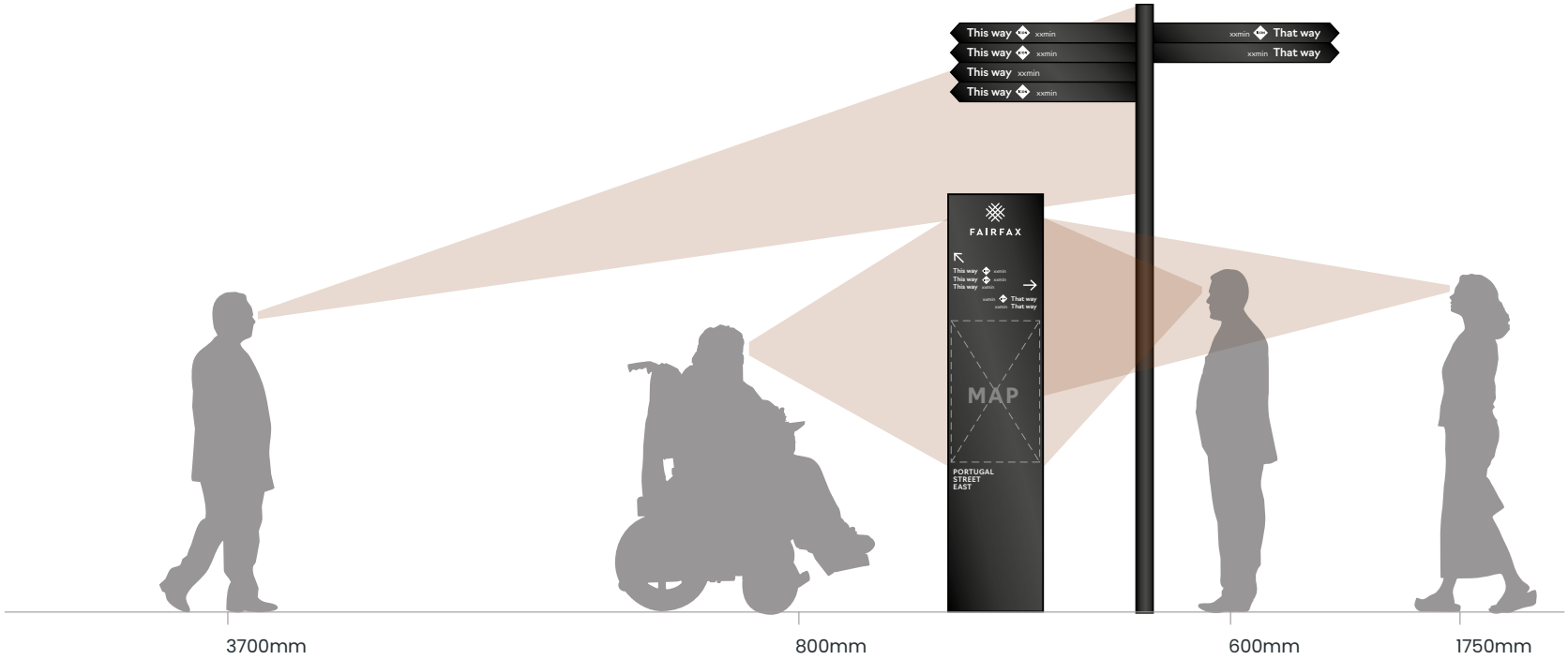
ACCESSIBILITY

The wayfinding strategy must take into account visitor needs, visibility and sight lines, available space, other signage nearby, health and safety, rights and permissions. The illustration below demonstrates what areas of a sign are likely to be visible from specific distances, what surrounding space is needed and what sight lines influence positioning.

Content should be positioned with all visitors in mind, whether they be standing or walking, tall or short, in a wheelchair or having impaired vision. You can't please everyone all the time but you can achieve a satisfactory compromise.

Viewing bands guide where content should be is positioned to be most effective. Critical information is positioned within the optimal placement area shown on the right, with secondary information can be positioned outside of this area such as interpretation artwork or branding.

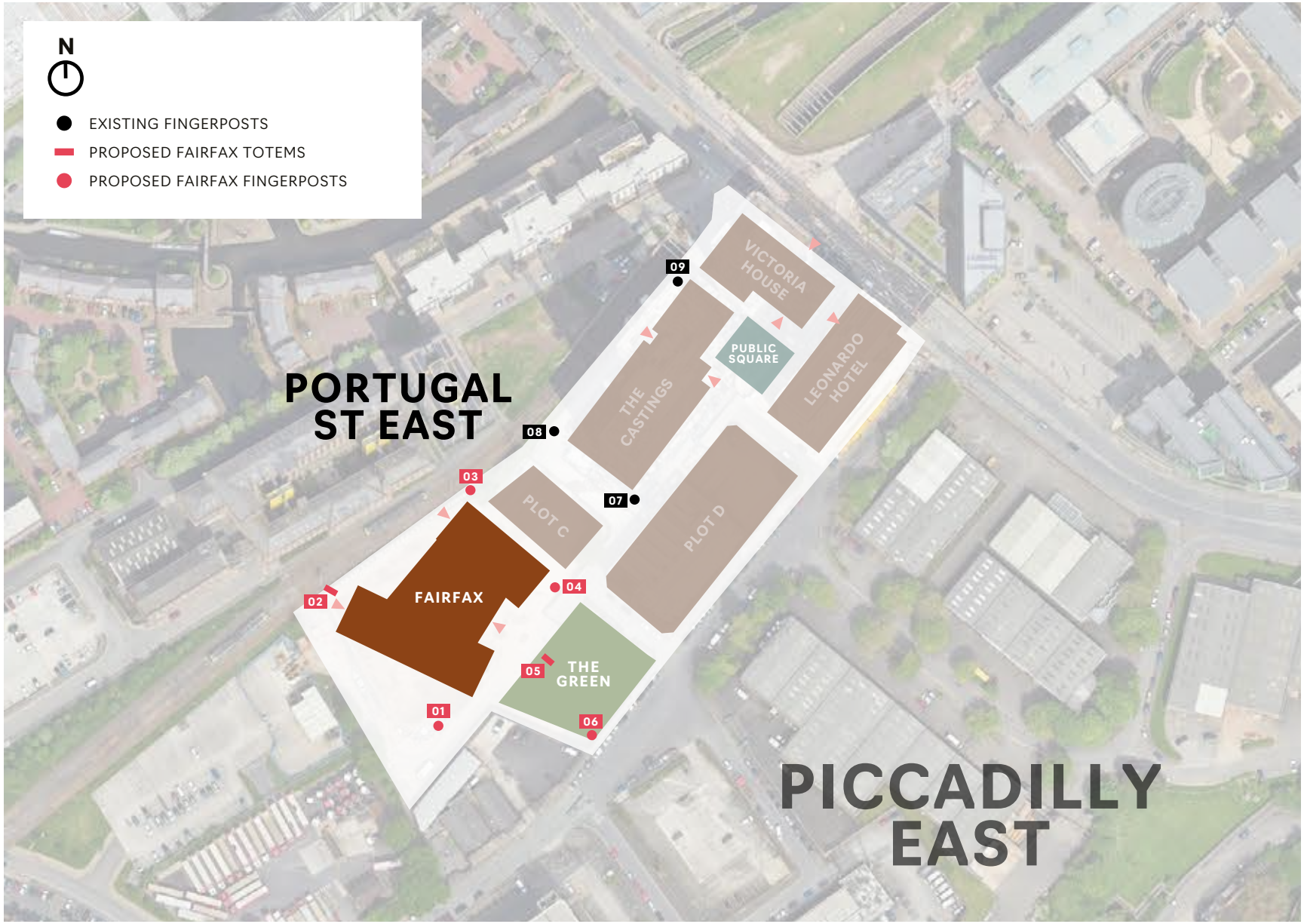




SIGN LOCATIONS

WIDER NEIGHBOURHOOD CONTEXT

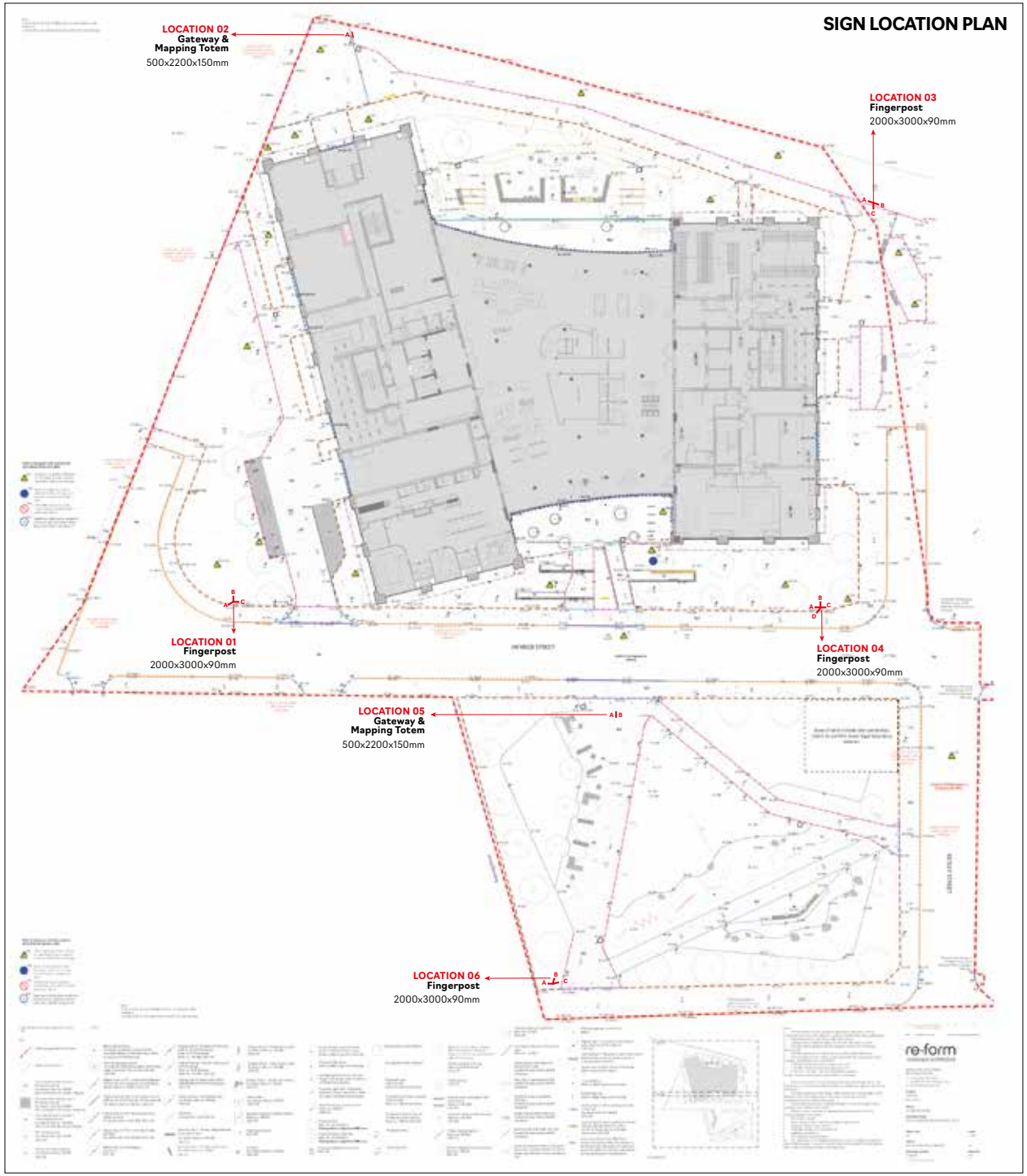
The plan here shows the proposed sign locations for The Fairfax and also suggested wayfinding for the overall site.



PLACE MARQUE

SIGN LOCATIONS

FAIRFAX WAYFINDING LOCATIONS



PLACE MARQUE

SIGN CONTENT

FAIRFAX WAYFINDING CONTENT

Location Ref.	Sign type	Sign Content		
Location 01	Fingerpost *(Max. 5 fingers destinations in one direction)*	**Direction A** Mayfield Ardwick	**Direction B** Piccadilly Station + Icons City Centre + Icons	**Direction C** Fairfax The Green The Castings Victoria House Leonardo Hotel
Location 02	Gateway & Mapping Totem	**Side A** **Topper** Fairfax ↑ The Castings Victoria House Leonardo Hotel New Islington Metrolink + Icon ← Piccadilly Station + Icons City Centre → Fairfax The Green + Icons **Map panel** **Base** Portugal Street East		
Location 03	Fingerpost *(Max. 5 fingers destinations in one direction)*	**Direction A** Piccadilly Station + Icons City Centre + Icons	**Direction B** The Castings Victoria House Leonardo Hotel New Islington Metrolink + Icon National Cycle Route 66	**Direction C** Fairfax The Green

FAIRFAX WAYFINDING CONTENT

Location Ref.	Sign type	Sign Content			
Location 04	**Fingerpost** *(Max. 5 fingers destinations in one direction)*	**Direction A** Fairfax	**Direction B** Piccadilly Station + Icons City Centre + Icons National Cycle Route 66	**Direction C** The Castings Victoria House Leonardo Hotel New Islington Metrolink + Icon Ancoats	**Direction D** The Green Mayfield
Location 05	**Gateway & Mapping Totem**	**Side A** **Topper** The Green ↑ The Castings Victoria House Leonardo Hotel New Islington Metrolink + Icon ← Fairfax → Mayfield Ardwick **Map panel** **Base** Portugal Street East	**Side B** **Topper** The Green ↗ Piccadilly Station + Icons City Centre + Icons → Fairfax ↖ Mayfield Ardwick **Map panel** **Base** Portugal Street East		
Location 06	**Fingerpost** *(Max. 5 fingers destinations in one direction)*	**Direction A** Piccadilly Station + Icons City Centre + Icons Mayfield Ardwick	**Direction B** Fairfax	**Direction C** The Castings Victoria House Leonardo Hotel New Islington Metrolink + Icon	



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