

03 Context Analysis

Emerging context

Emerging context

The local context is undergoing radical redevelopment with the Brent Cross Cricklewood programme creating a new town centre just 500m east from the site, which will provide 6,700 new homes with associated green spaces, community uses, leisure, retail and business uses. This new town centre will be linked to Central London with a new train station, Brent Cross West, set to open in autumn 2023.

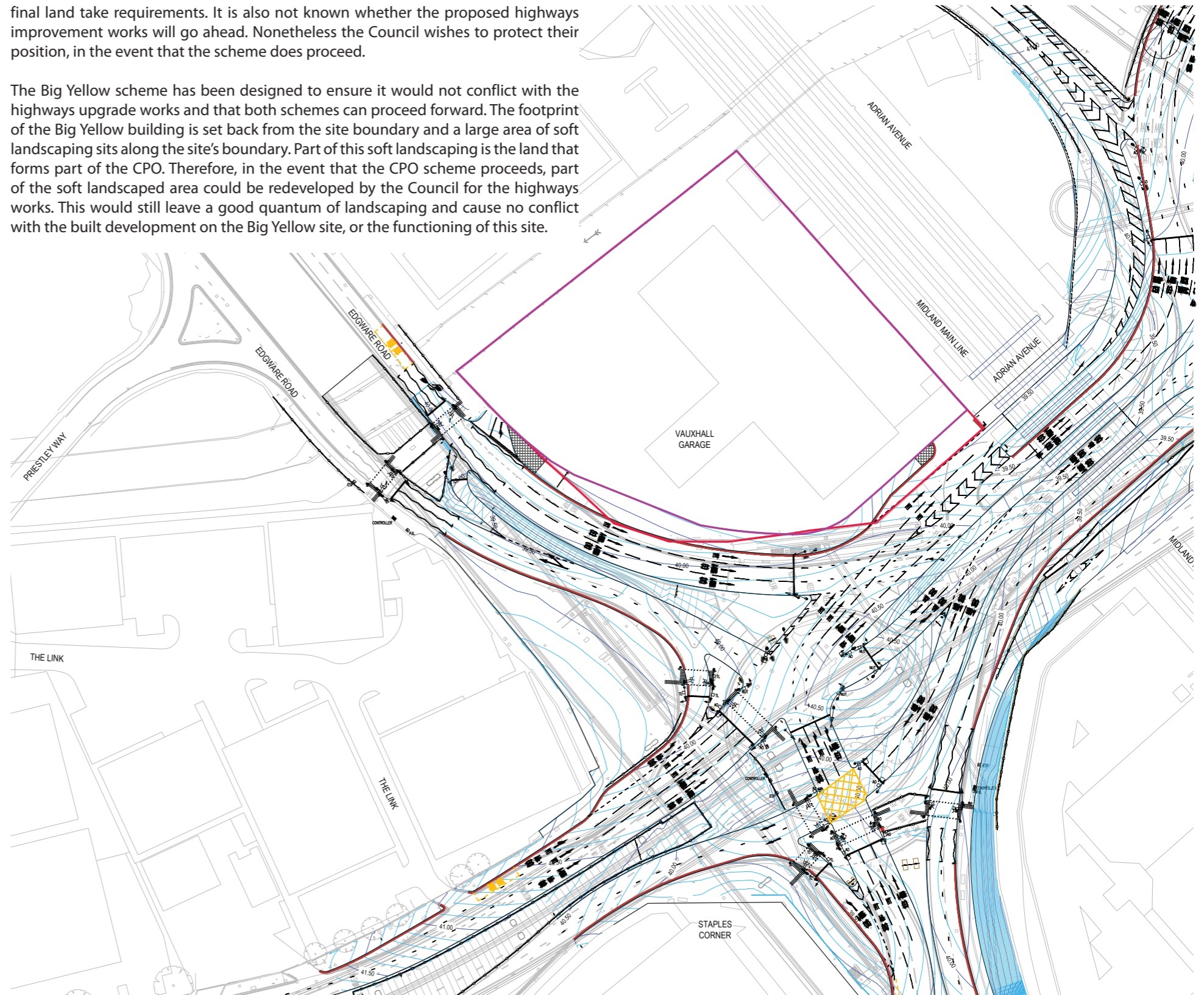
The extract of the interactive map below highlights the areas that are being transformed as part of and in association with the programme.

A number of highways works are proposed in association with the wider redevelopment. Of these, the most significant is the proposed transformation of Staples Corner West roundabout, highlighted below in light blue and shown in detail in the adjacent highways works extract. These changes would redefine the site boundary along its southwest and southeast sections.

The entire application site forms part of a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO), The London Borough of Barnet (Brent Cross Cricklewood) Compulsory Purchase Order (No.1) 2015. The Order was confirmed by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government on 7th December 2017. The land was included in the CPO as highways improvements were proposed at Staples Corner. Whilst the entire application site is subject to the CPO, only a small strip of land fronting the application site is required to facilitate the highways upgrade works. The remainder of the site is not needed. A Notice to Treat was served in connection with the CPO in 2021. A Notice of Entry has not been served, as the detailed design of the scheme in the vicinity of the application site is not yet settled and therefore neither are the

final land take requirements. It is also not known whether the proposed highways improvement works will go ahead. Nonetheless the Council wishes to protect their position, in the event that the scheme does proceed.

The Big Yellow scheme has been designed to ensure it would not conflict with the highways upgrade works and that both schemes can proceed forward. The footprint of the Big Yellow building is set back from the site boundary and a large area of soft landscaping sits along the site's boundary. Part of this soft landscaping is the land that forms part of the CPO. Therefore, in the event that the CPO scheme proceeds, part of the soft landscaped area could be redeveloped by the Council for the highways works. This would still leave a good quantum of landscaping and cause no conflict with the built development on the Big Yellow site, or the functioning of this site.



Proposed alterations to Staples Corner West roundabout



Extract of Brent Cross Cricklewood interactive map - transformingbx.co.uk

04 Evaluation

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Site description as existing

Site description as existing

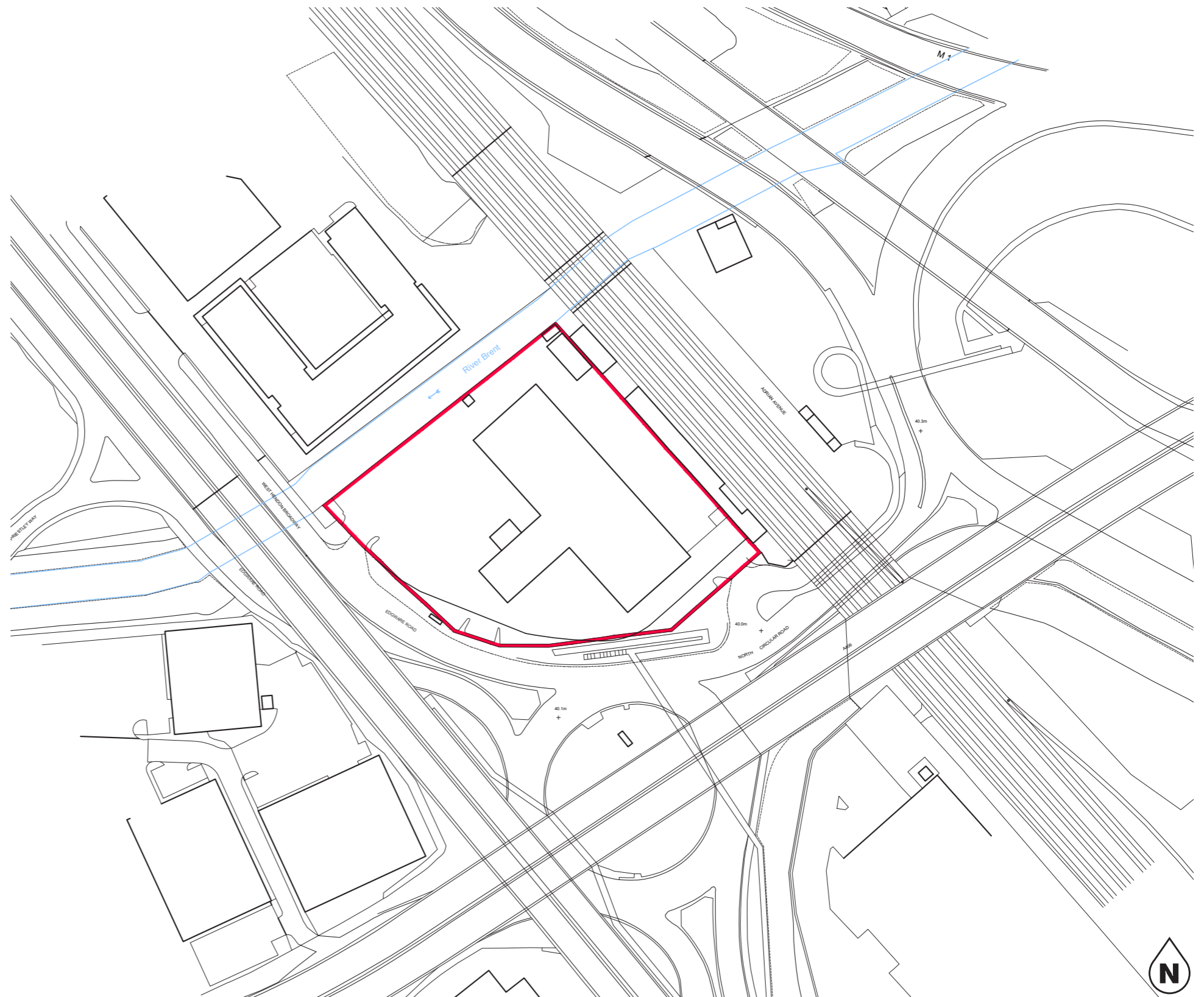
The site is currently occupied by a Renault and Dacia car dealership. It extends to 0.84ha and is mostly dedicated to surface car parking for vehicle display purposes, which means it is generally underutilised and provides minor employment opportunities.

The existing building sits centred on the site and the majority of its footprint is formed by a single storey shed oriented parallel to the railway tracks (southeast to northwest). A second volume sits perpendicular, approximately centred along the main shed and extending to the west, towards Edgware Road. This block is two storeys high and opens to the south with a feature glazed corner used for vehicle display.

Along the boundaries shared with highways, the perimeter is generally defined by a low level concrete plinth and a metal railing. This boundary treatment is discontinued at both site access points, to the west from Edgware Road and to the southeast from the local access to Adrian Avenue from the North Circular Road.

The remaining boundaries, to the railway and the River Brent are finished in metal palisade fencing, prioritising security along these less visible site edges.

In terms of surfacing, the site is covered on hardstanding almost in its entirety. The only areas of soft landscaping are the tree feature along the west elevation and a small soft landscaped islands next to the site entrances.



Existing site plan

04 Evaluation

Site approach & Street scene

Site approach & Street scene

Being in such a prominent position next to an important junction in the regional and national network, the site is visible from several approaches. However, given the complex road infrastructure, with wide carriageways and elevated road sections, when approaching the site along the approaches to Staples Corner west roundabout, the site comes into view from relatively close proximity. The only exception to this is the southbound approach along Edgware Road, as seen in image 2.

The street scene is visually dominated by the elevated road infrastructure, which makes the area less inviting to pedestrians. The raised roadways, not only have a detrimental visual impact on the area, but as vehicles travel at high speeds along these, the environment becomes very noisy.

At street level, the wide use of concrete and hardstanding finishes, combined with the general lack of soft landscaping, contribute to the poor quality and uninviting street scene.

It is clear that achieving a low maintenance environment has been a priority in the area, but this has come at the cost of creating an inclusive environment or even a sense of place that enhances the character of the area.



Eastbound approach along North Circular Road - Google street view



Westbound approach along North Circular Road - Google street view



Google satellite view key map



Southbound approach along Edgware Road - Google street view



Northbound approach along Edgware Road - Google street view

04 Evaluation

Site approach & Street scene

Site approach & Street scene

As vehicles get closer to the roundabout, the site comes more clearly into view.

It takes up a high proportion of the visual field on the southbound and westbound approaches and it starts to become apparent on the eastbound and northbound approaches as well. From these directions it has less visual impact due to the presence in the foreground of raised elements of the road network.

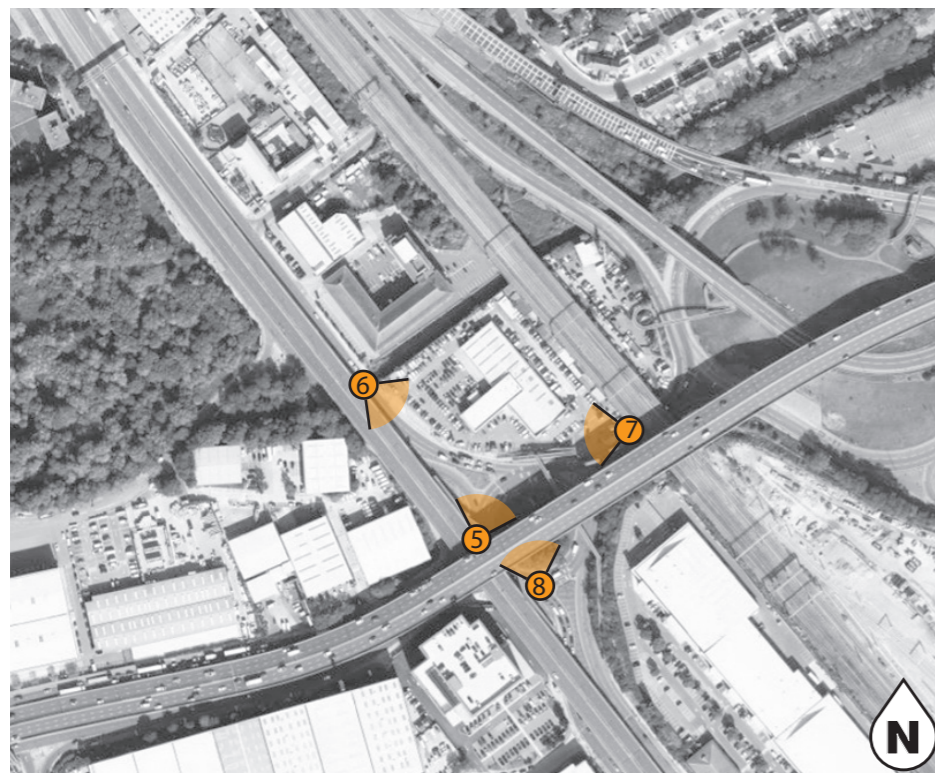
The soft landscaping in the roundabout becomes apparent in these closer views, but it is still clearly lacking and of poor quality.



Eastbound approach to Staples Corner west roundabout - Google street view



Westbound approach to Staples Corner west roundabout



Google satellite view key map



Southbound approach to Staples Corner west roundabout



Northbound approach to Staples Corner west roundabout - Google street view

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Site approach & Street scene

Site approach & Street scene

The raised carriageways provide additional vantage points from which the site is also visible. Although these views are not relevant in terms of street scene, the site is visually prominent along these routes.

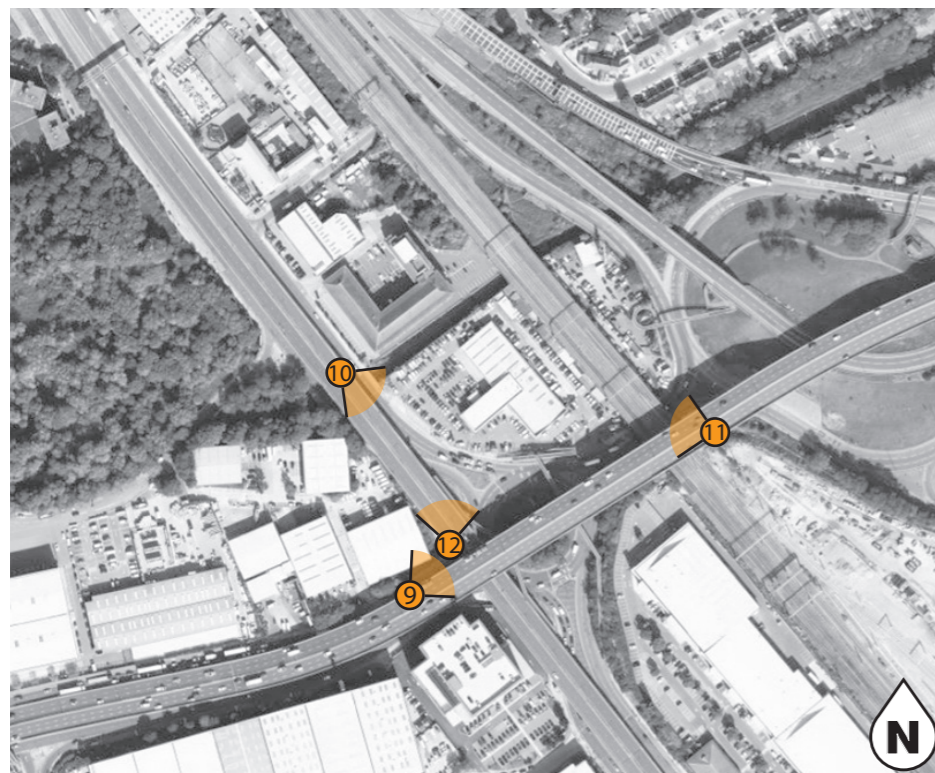
This slightly unique condition of the site context introduces additional design parameters as it adds unusual perspectives that will need to be taken into account during design development to ensure the visual prominence of the site from these routes is appropriately addressed.



Eastbound along the raised section of the North Circular Road - Google street view



Westbound along the raised section of the North Circular Road - Google street view



Google satellite view key map



Southbound along the raised section of Edgware Road - Google street view



Northbound along the raised section of Edgware Road - Google street view

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Site approach & Street scene

Site approach & Street scene

In a similar way to the raised carriageways, a number of raised pedestrian links provide additional vantage points towards the site. The site is not equally prominent from all of them, but depending on the final scale and configuration of the proposed scheme, these views might need to be taken into account as well.

Finally, the raised railway tracks directly east to the site will provide further vantage points from passing trains. Like with the raised roads, these views will be mostly in motion and at relatively high speed, but the site will sit very prominently in most of them, and this creates good conditions to introduce a visual landmark to create an anchor point along the various journeys passing by the site.



Additional vantage point from pedestrian bridge



Google satellite view key map



Additional vantage point from pedestrian bridge



Additional vantage points from passing trains - Google aerial view

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Site photos

Site photos

One of the key characteristics highlighted by the site photos is the lack of greenery, which is emphasised by the vast majority of the site being finished in basic and utilitarian tarmac.

The site perimeter incorporates a pea gravel margin between the perimeter parking and the site boundary, which is likely to have been originally intended as a soft landscaped feature, but was removed to minimise maintenance needs. The lack of care and poor maintenance regime is evident, particularly in site photos 3 and 5.

Site photo 5 also highlights the poor relationship to the river and how this boundary is simply treated as a vulnerable edge, finished with metal palisade fencing, following the treatment along the interface with the business units under the railway arches shown in site photo 4.

The view of the river from Edgware Road shown on photo 1 further highlights the hard boundary treatment which, seeing from the outside, creates a complete physical but also visual separation between the site and the river.

Finally, photo 6 highlights the predominance of tarmac and hard surfaces on site and how much the pedestrian environment is relegated to a secondary role.



River Brent running along the northwest site boundary



Northeast boundary: metal palisade fencing



Southwest boundary treatment: low concrete wall with metal railing and posts



Northwest boundary: metal palisade fencing and lack of soft landscaping



Obsolete soft landscape bed covered in gravel and south boundary treatment



Existing north entrance into the building



Google satellite view key map

04 Evaluation

Site analysis | Topography and flooding

Site analysis

As highlighted in the site analysis diagram one of the key characteristics of the site is the openness to the Staples Corner west roundabout and Edgware Road. The position of the plot directly north from the roundabout creates a continuous frontage from southwest to southeast. Similarly, although not to the same extent, as the site sits adjacent the River Brent, the northwest boundary is also quite open.

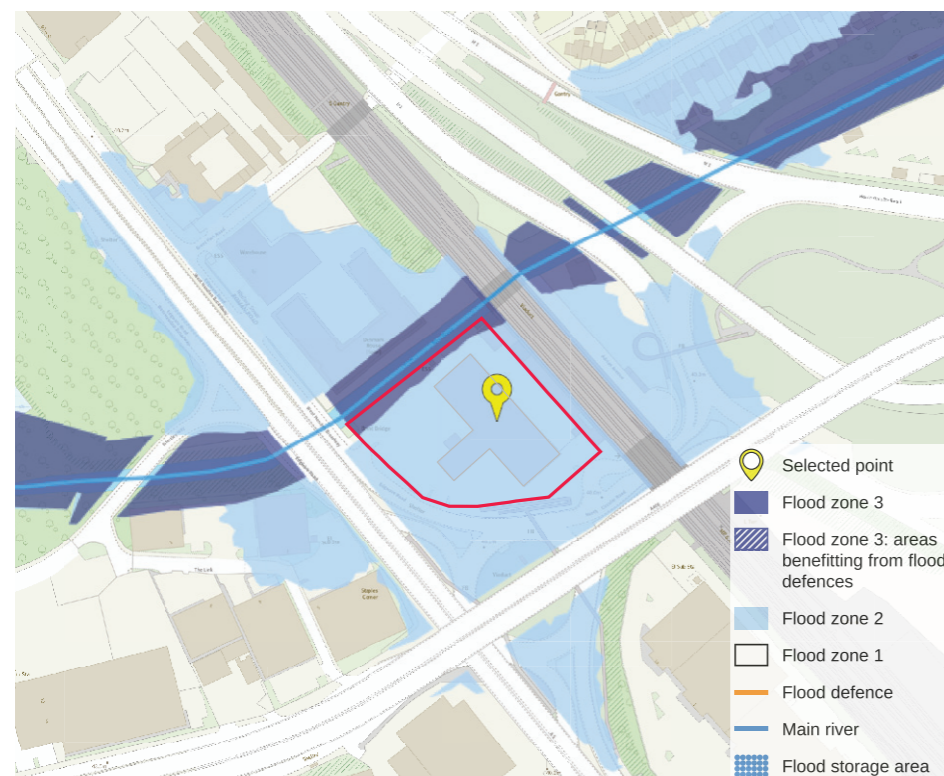
Another important characteristic of the site context is the high number of raised transport infrastructure. The pedestrian bridges, motorways and railway tracks create a large number of additional vantage points, perspectives and dynamic views towards the site.

The site has two vehicular access points, one sitting near the west corner of the site and the second one near the east corner. Both provide in and out movement.

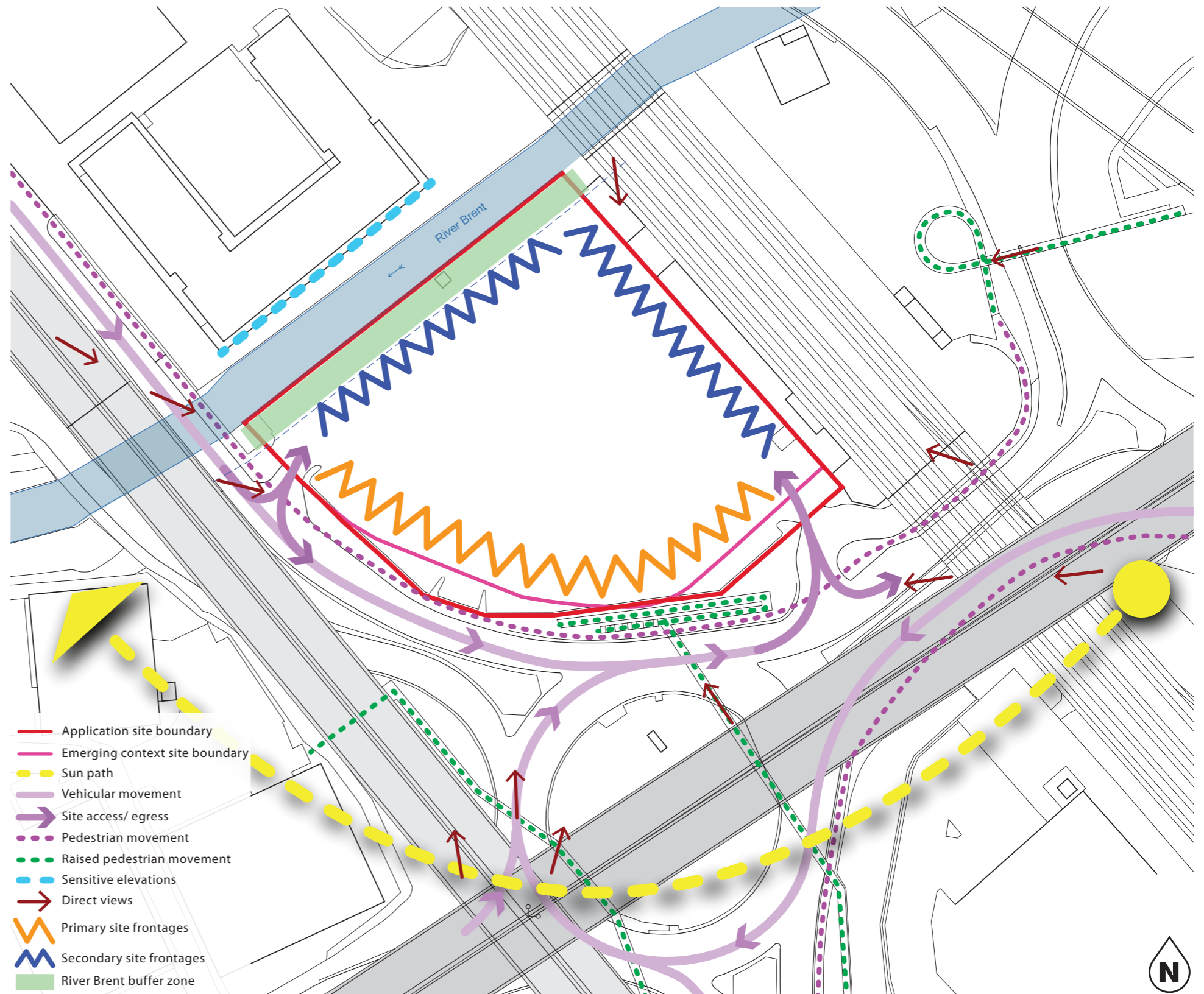
Topography and Flooding

Most of the site is in flood zone 2 and has a medium probability of flooding from the River Brent, with a small portion of the site along the edge of the river falling in flood zone 3.

A flood risk assessment (FRA) accompanies the planning application and describes the proposed measures that will be implemented as part of the design to deal with the risk of flooding.



Environment agency flood map extract



Site analysis diagram

04 Evaluation

Opportunities & constraints | Evaluation

Opportunities & constraints

The redevelopment of the site provides a number of important opportunities.

Of these, the most important is ensuring the proposed redevelopment optimises the site and maximises its contribution to employment uses in the local area, creating direct and indirect jobs in close proximity to Brent Cross Town.

The self storage facility would provide conveniently located flexible opportunities for ancillary storage and office space for local start-ups, independent professionals and SMEs.

The number of vantage points from the nearby road and railway networks could be seen as a potential constraint as the site becomes an island, visible from all angles, but it also provides an opportunity to create a design that responds to this unique context much better than the existing building.

Linked to the above, the prominence of the site is an opportunity to create a statement building that could become a gateway into the area and a landmark in the journeys along the regional infrastructure.

The redevelopment also provides an opportunity to transform the site so it makes a positive contribution to the local environment, introducing green infrastructure and increasing its biodiversity, which would in turn have a positive contribution on the health and wellbeing of customers, staff and passers by.

The proximity of the River Brent, and the potential flooding risk is the most significant constraint associated with the site and its context. This will need to be mitigated as part of the design.

The proposed changes to the road network introduces an additional constraint as they modify the site boundary, reducing it along the west, south and east boundaries.

Evaluation

Redevelopment proposals could create a landmark building in a highly visible site, located in an important regional infrastructure junction, which is also a key point of access into Brent Cross Town, a significant redevelopment that will hugely transform the area.

The redevelopment could ensure the site is transformed to suit the scale and level of ambition of Brent Cross Town, providing additional employment land and associated employment opportunities for local residents.

Finally, as part of the redevelopment, the site could be transformed to radically improve its environmental contribution through sustainable design and maximising biodiversity.



Aerial view of Brent Cross Town masterplan - brentcrosstown.co.uk