

04 Evaluation

Layout principles

Layout principles

The proposed scheme needs to respond to the existing context but also take into account the proposed changes to the Staples Corner west roundabout. This will not only affect the building line, but also the proposed landscaping and interface with the public realm.

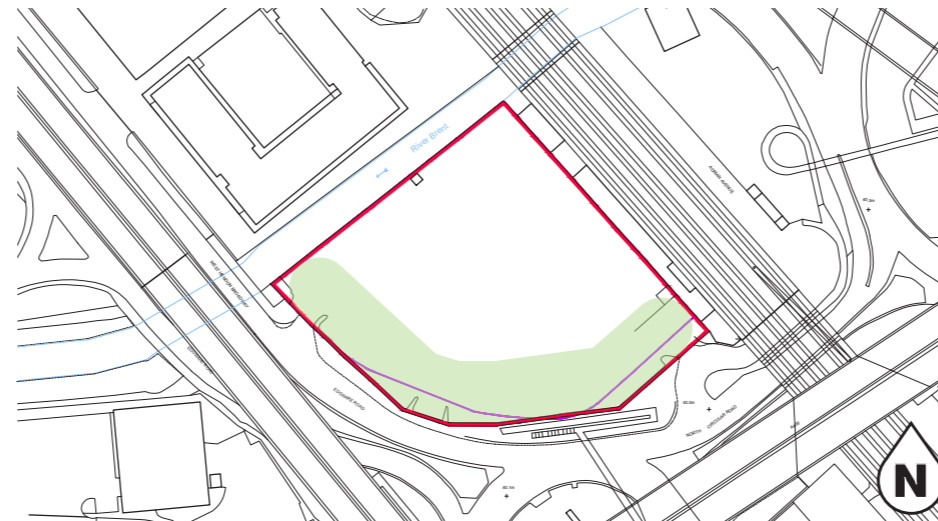
A minimum 8m landscaped buffer zone will be introduced along the river as part of the proposals to ensure the proposed scheme makes a positive contribution to the local natural environment.

In addition to the buffer to the River Brent, the scheme will also introduce soft landscaping along the main elevations, which will maximise biodiversity and create a much softer edge between the site and the existing uninviting, hard urban context.

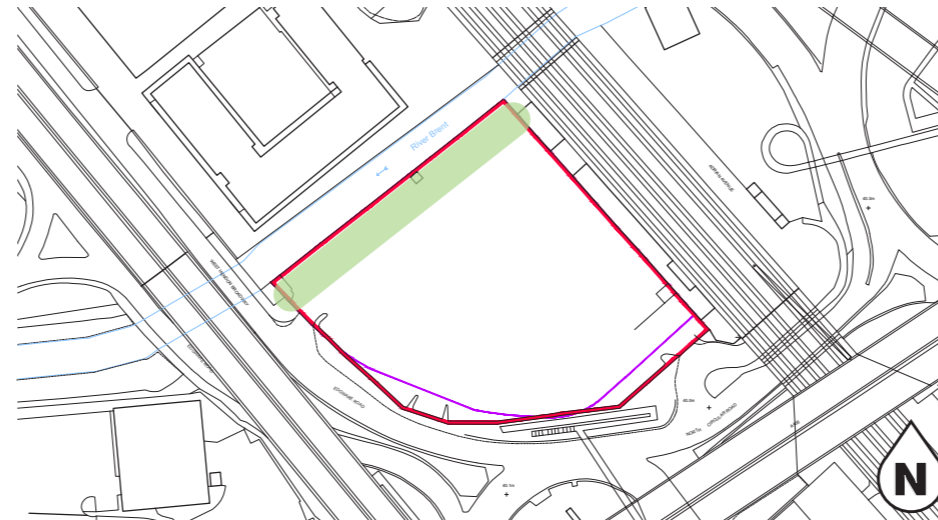
The service yard will be positioned in the least conspicuous part of the site and is proposed to be accessed from the east and the west, with the access points subject to minor alterations, but retained in their existing locations.

The massing will be positioned towards the south of the plot, to maximise its prominence in most of the views towards the site. With the massing in this position, the building will be exposed to views from most angles, and all elevations will need to be treated as primary frontages.

Apart from creating a visually interesting building from all perspectives, the elevations will need to incorporate active frontages at street level along the most open elevations. In tandem with the soft landscaping, this will help create a more welcoming environment along the pedestrian routes next to the site.



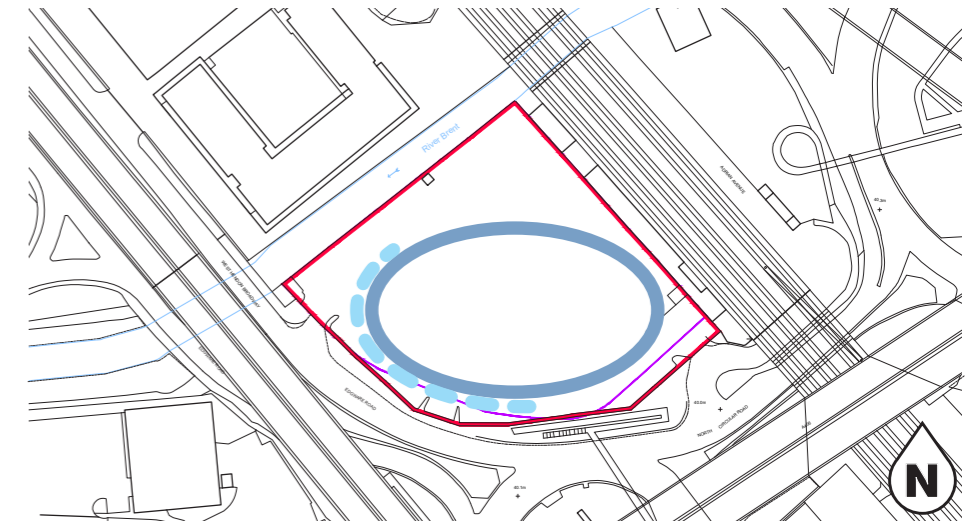
Improve the edge of the site to the local environment and maximise soft landscaping



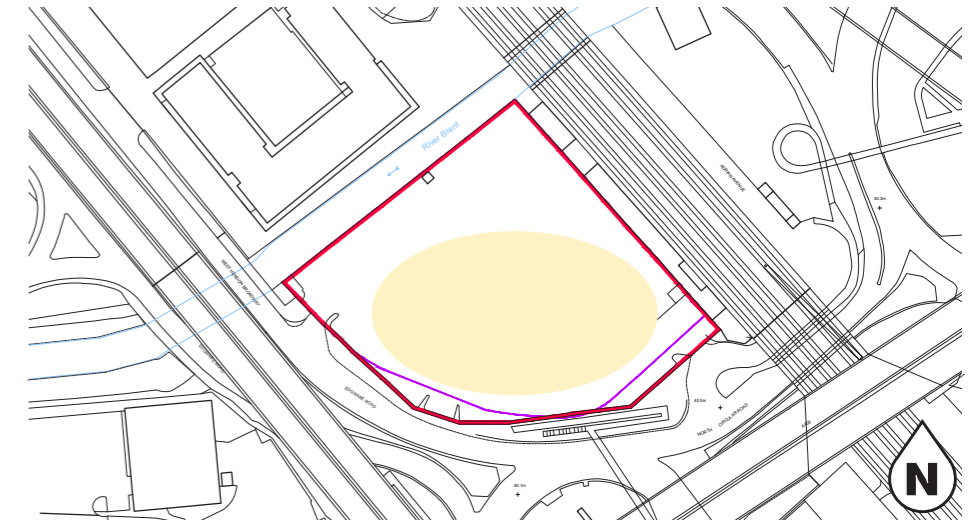
Introduce a landscaped buffer to River Brent



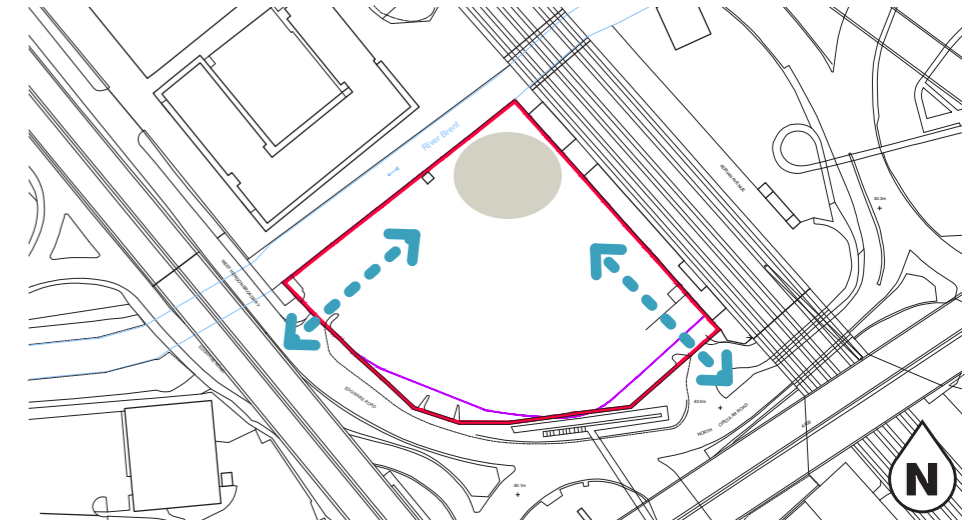
Create a scheme that works with the existing site boundary and the emerging context



Create high quality elevations to full perimeter and include active frontages to main elevations



Position the massing to address views into the site



Retain the location of both existing access points and position service area to the rear

04 Evaluation

Layout strategy

Layout strategy

Following the layout principles established above, the proposed building will comprise one volume positioned towards the south of the site, with a continuous elevational treatment ensuring it is understood as a coherent piece in the landscape, whichever vantage point it is seen from.

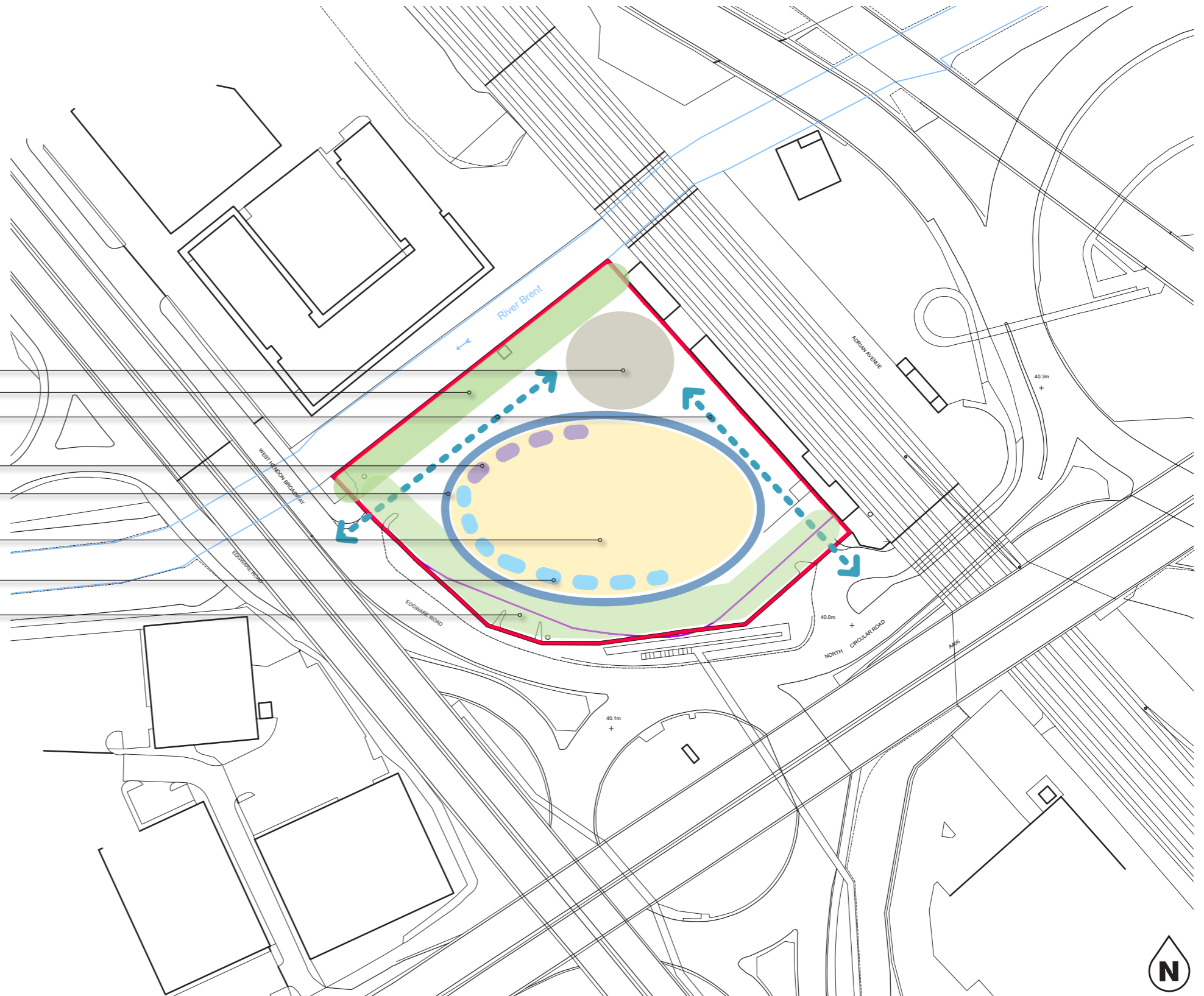
At street level, the design will be surrounded by soft landscaping along the primary elevations and the River Brent. This will balance the areas of hard landscaping required to achieve good access to the site and the service yard, situated to the rear of the plot.

The Vehicular access points will remain in similar positions to the existing ones, adjusted to suit the new building footprint.

Active frontages will be created along the south and southwest elevations with the introduction of flexi-offices at low level, whilst additional external activity will be provided with externally accessed units along the northwest elevations.

The landscaping scheme will be designed to suit both the existing and the emerging context.

- Service yard
- Buffer to River Brent
- Site access points retained as existing
- Externally accessed storage units
- High quality elevations to full perimeter
- Massing positioned in most prominent location
- Active frontages to primary elevations
- Extensive soft landscaping to soften interface with pedestrian environment



Proposed layout strategy diagram

05 Design Development

05 Design Development

Initial feasibility

Initial feasibility

From the initial feasibility stage, the importance of the relationship between the building and the Staples Corner west roundabout was taken into account. The building was oriented to address the main site frontages: Edgware Road and the roundabout.

In this first iteration, the service yard was positioned close to the Edgware Road access whilst the externally accessed units were positioned facing the railway tracks.

During internal design discussions, two main areas were highlighted as needing further review ahead of seeking formal pre-application advice:

- The position of the building sitting to tightly against the southern boundary, which didn't allow for a sufficiently strong soft landscaping scheme, which is crucially important to transform the existing harsh environment.
- The service yard sits in a too prominent position, bringing the more utilitarian element of the design too close to the Edgware Road frontage.

With these two key areas as the main elements for design refinement, the design team continued to develop the scheme towards a formal planning pre-application submission.



Initial feasibility site plan

05 Design Development

Planning pre-application stage

Planning pre-application stage

Ahead of the planning pre-application submission, the scheme was adjusted to resolve the issues highlighted in the initial site layout: a more robust soft landscaping scheme was designed and the service zone and loading area was moved away from the Edgware Road access point, to the less visible northern corner of the site.

As these changes were introduced, the footprint of the building changed to a diamond shape, which not only addresses the main elevations, but also the River Brent and the railway tracks, which, as previously mentioned in this document, provide dynamic views towards the site.

The flexi-offices are positioned to activate the most public site frontage, whilst the externally accessed units are positioned readily accessible from the Edgware Road site access.

Car parking is positioned towards the north with a small section of parking at the front of the site.

The scheme takes into account the revised ownership, if the CPO is implemented in the future, ensuring the site continues to work without any impact, including the retention of the majority of the soft landscaping.

In terms of appearance, the building is designed as two intersecting volumes in grey standing seam with the main elevations finished in multi-colour vertical strips creating visual interest and articulation.



Site plan at pre-application stage



Pre-application stage visual from Edgware Road southbound

05 Design Development

Planning officer's response

Planning Officer's response

During the planning pre-application meeting and formal written response, the LPA team confirmed that the site is located within the red line boundary of the outline planning permission (and its subsequent variation, planning reference F/04687/13) for the comprehensive redevelopment of the wider BXC area, but does not fall within an identified Development Zone or Building Zone identified in the approved parameter plans and framework documents.

The LPA team also confirmed the design team's understanding of the site being included under the compulsory purchase order (CPO) in order to ensure that approved highway works to 'Gateway junctions' in connection with the wider redevelopment of BXC could be undertaken.

Feedback summarise the various levels of policy (NPPF, London Plan, Development Plan Policy and emerging Local Plan) and how they relate to the proposals, to then outline the principle of light industrial alongside flexible office space is acceptable and aligns with the vision set out by the emerging Barnet Local Plan Policy GSS03.

The following design points were raised for the design team to consider as the scheme develops to planning submission:

- The hexagonal shape of the building is generally supported as it effectively addresses the surroundings, but a further distinction in height was suggested to break up the massing.
- It is suggested to position the taller volume so it addresses the roundabout as it would help define the gateway point.
- Further consideration should be given to the finish, animation, and activation of all elevations, as a number are currently stark.
- The public realm facing ground floor elevations are considered to be dark and inactive. Improvements should consider a lighter colour brick, more windows and feature brickwork, in addition to climbing plants to provide green relief. Building entrances to both the flexible office space and self-storage facilities should be better expressed and defined to aid wayfinding.
- The envelope treatment is considered to be too extrovert, contain excessive yellow and an overly busy sense of contrasting patterns. A pattern of earthy colours is suggested, to complement the river corridor setting and existing brickwork in the context.
- Although the office use positioning is supported, it could be better expressed to provide a more attractive and active frontage to the street.
- A sufficient landscaped buffer should be retained between the building and the street and any landscape proposals should account for the future envisaged road scheme.
- The northern site boundary which abuts the river Brent would benefit from woodland tree and flora planting to help establish a more ecological resilient green corridor from the Welsh Harp Local Nature Reserve (SSSI).
- The open façade of the building has the potential to be enhanced through the provision of green walls and planting of climber species and the option should also be explored in relation to the scheme's BNG and UGF score.

- To maximise the potential opportunity for habitat provision within the site, the proposed roofscape of the industrial unit could be designed to include either species rich green roofs or sedum roofs.
- Officers would suggest the boundary fence is aligned with the building line, rather than unattractively projecting around the front car parking area.
- There is still a need for significant improvement at the more detailed level to ensure a high standard of design quality in line with national and local design policies.

In addition to these design comments, feedback also outline the LPA's thoughts and requirements on biodiversity, BNG, UGF, which would have been taken into account during the development of the landscaping scheme by the landscape architect.

A number of highways comments were also received and have been discussed further with the borough's transport officer. The submitted scheme follows the design outlined during these discussions.

Additional feedback relating to environmental considerations, security and fire safety has also being taken into consideration by the design team during the development of this planning application.



Pre-application stage visual from the North Circular Road eastbound looking towards the site



Pre-application stage visual from Staples Corner west roundabout looking north towards the site

05 Design Development

Design precedents

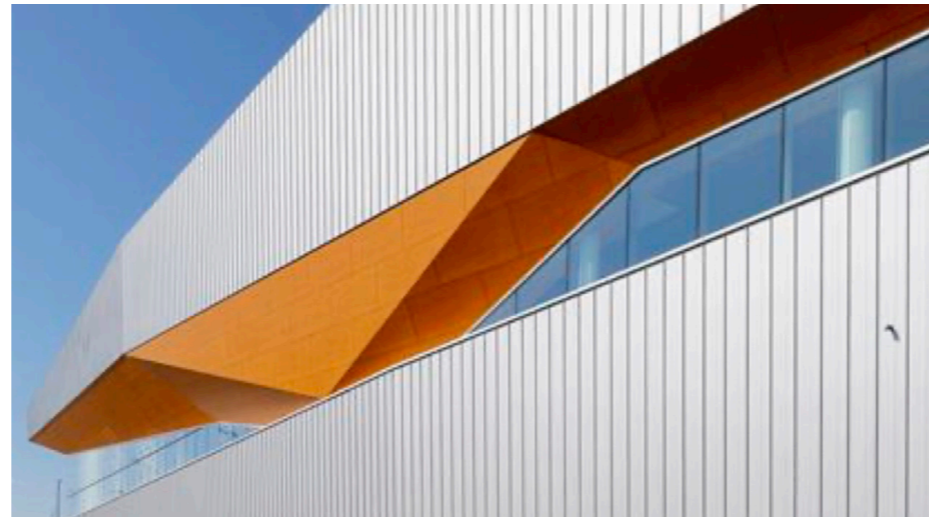
Design precedents

Considering the feedback received from the LPA, the design team decided that a different design approach would achieve a better response, rather than revising the initial design.

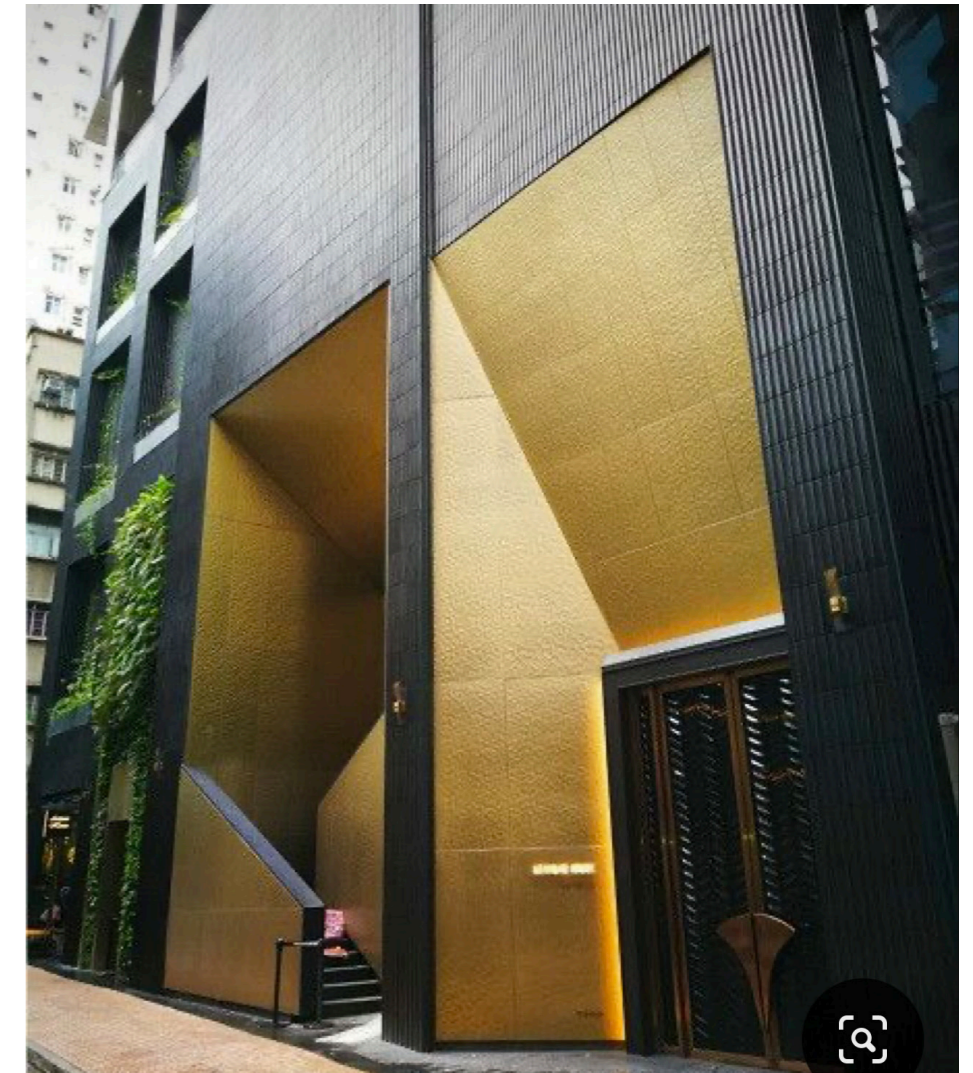
A more sculptural solution would create a stronger response and a more cohesive design, giving the building a comprehensive visual identity, whichever the viewpoint.

These precedents are variations of buildings designed with a continuous external skin which is then cut in key locations to introduce fenestration and reveal an inner skin, giving each building a very unique appearance.

The images on the right of the page show this same approach, but more localised around entrances.



A light grey building with a horizontal cut to introduce glazing and a colour highlight



Splayed cut-outs to highlight an entrance and stair access



A deep cut out to form the main entrance into the building



Rectangular bright yellow cut-outs forming balconies and a roof terrace



Splayed angular cut-out to highlight the frontage and main entrance

05 Design Development

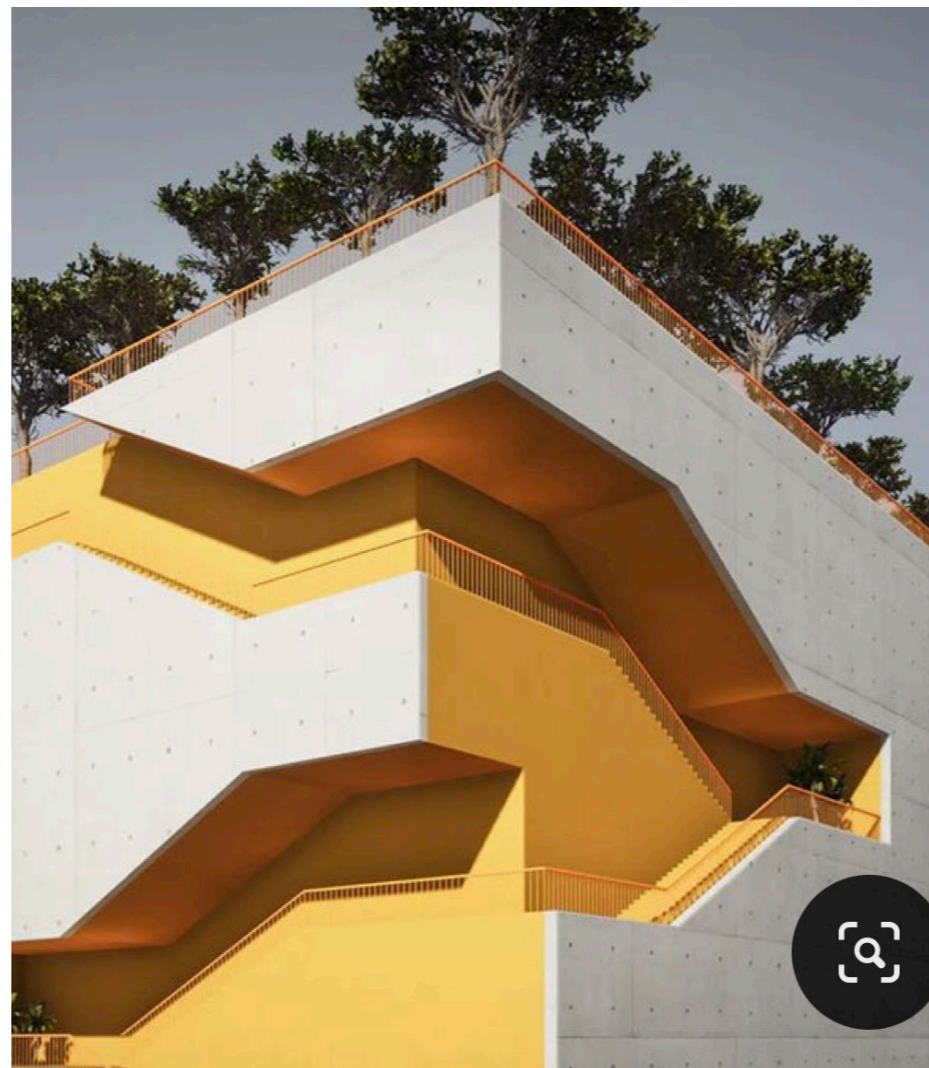
Design precedents

Design precedents

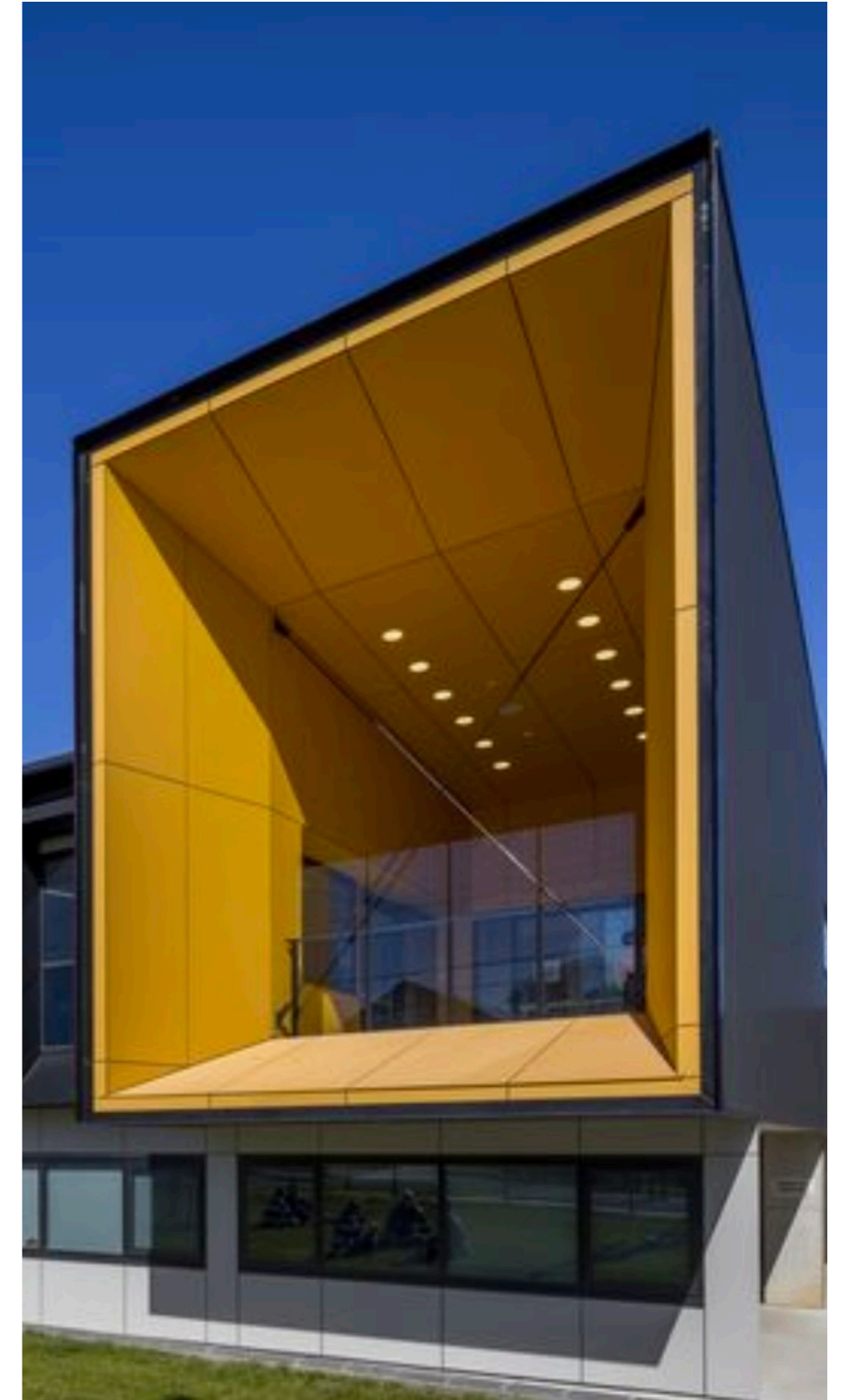
These precedents use the same design approach of cutting out part of the volume of the building to create opportunities to introduce a new use or feature. For example, a main shopfront and canopy in the first image, a stair access on the second image or a glazed opening on the third image.



A canopy and entrance expressed as a cut out of the building



A stair expressed as a cut out of the building



An opening expressed as a cut out of the building

05 Design Development

Design update during pre-application stage

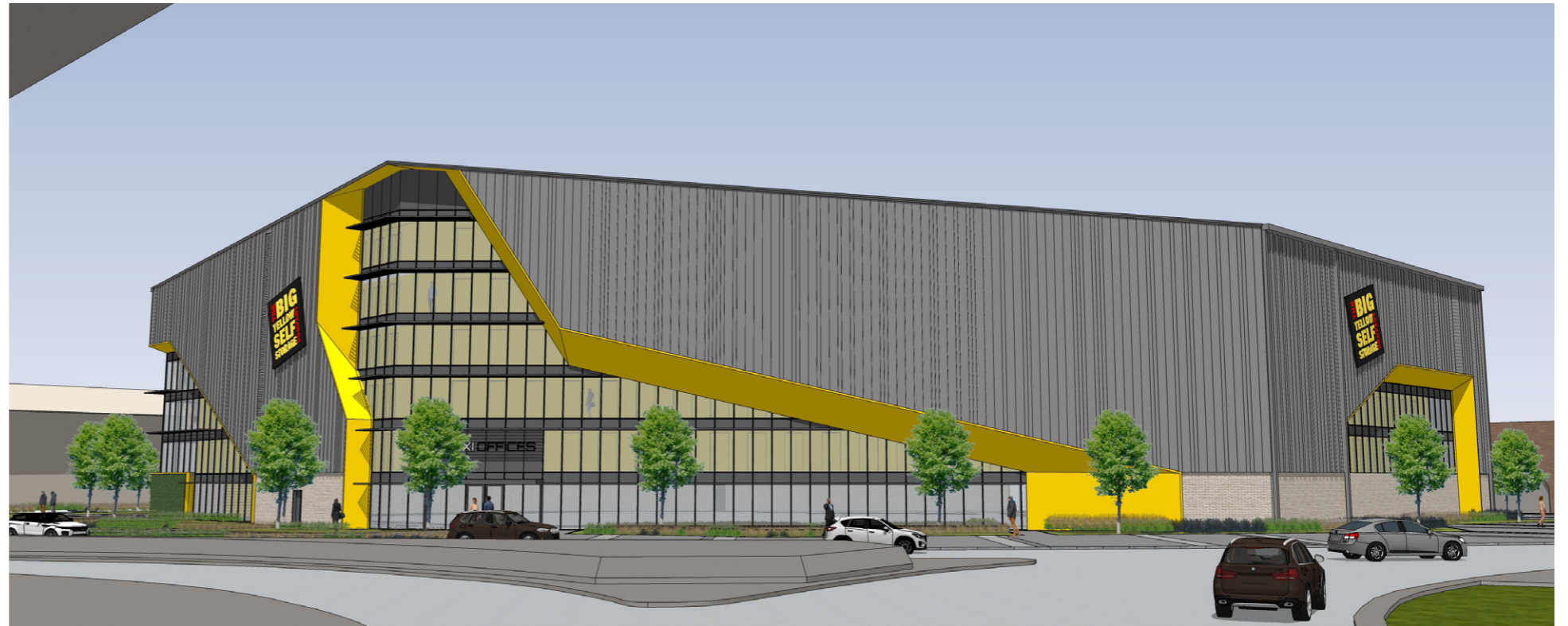
Design update during pre-application stage

Based on the previous design precedents, the design team created a new concept for the redevelopment to respond to the opportunities and constraints of the site in a way that also addresses the comments from the pre-application stage.

In a similar fashion to the precedent projects, the building is finished in a continuous solid external skin that is broken in key locations to allow the interior to shine through with glazing and coloured reveals. In this case, matching the Big Yellow Self Storage branding colour.

These images were submitted to the Case Officer and the new design approach was well received by the LPA team, subject to a number of refinements highlighted by the Principal Urban Designer:

- Good quality materiality and detailing is essential to realise the simple sculptural concept, guarding against the risk of the building appearing inappropriately economised and tawdry. High quality materials are needed offering tonal/patterned/perforated interest, e.g. patterned/ perforated metallic gold coloured cladding for the main/edge cladding might link to the companies branding, noting the bright yellow edges currently appear inappropriate.
- We like the strongly defined openings including large-scale interesting angles and chamfered reveals, though there is a need to further explore and refine detailed proposals.
- There is also a need to improve some of the edge finishing at ground level which currently appears weakly terminated, i.e. where strangely extending opening reveals into flush to wall elements which appears to contradict the cutout concept, and especially where interrupted.
- Options for the ground floor elevations should be explored to ensure these complement the main cladding and relieve large areas of dead frontage.
- Roof pitches are key to the sculptural design concept, though currently appear too subtle. Its advised pitches are increased contributing to a significantly emphasised building form. Ideally, angled wall plains (e.g. gradually projecting forward from the ground up) might also contribute to the sculptural nature of the building.
- We are concerned that the signage appears stuck on and contradicts the concept of high quality building in response to the gateway location and Brent Cross Masterplan vision. A more subtle and integral approach to branding is recommended such as seen on the Manchester Big Yellow Storage.



Revised design as seen from Staples Corner west roundabout



Revised design as seen from Edgware Road travelling southbound

06 Design Proposal

Addressing the pre-application comments

Addressing the pre-application comments

The comprehensive redesign in response to the comments received after the initial submission address all the concerns outlined during the first round of discussions:

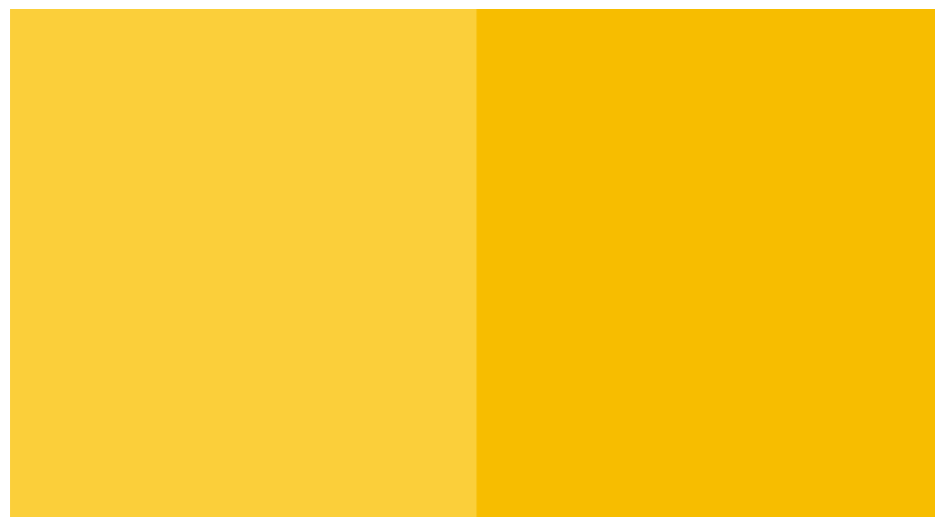
- The floor plate has been retained as it was accepted as a good solution to the site geometry and requirements.
- Instead of switching the taller volume to address the roundabout, the roof profile has been update so the massing reads as a single volume.
- The new design ensures that all elevations are activated and dynamic, whilst achieving a good level of distinction between principle and secondary elevations.
- The public realm facing ground floor elevations have been redesigned to achieve a much more active frontage along the pedestrian environment.
- The new materiality achieves a good balance between the external skin and the glazed elements and introduced yellow branding following a conceptually logical approach.
- The flexi-offices have been relocated to provide a more active frontage at street level.
- The landscape proposal has been redesigned, increasing the areas of soft landscaping and ensuring that most of it would be retained after the future road scheme is implemented.
- The soft landscaping scheme includes an 8m planting zone along the River Brent to establish an ecological corridor connecting the site to the Welsh Harp Local Reserve (SSSI).
- Green walls have been explored and are incorporated on the southeast elevation to locally enhance the soft landscaping scheme.
- Security fences have been coordinated with the landscaping scheme and are now less conspicuous and generally set back from the public realm.

As described under design development, the revised design was submitted to the LPA and generally well received, although as outlined previously, a number of further comments were made highlighting certain aspects of the design that were perceived to need further refinement.

To address these comments, a number of updates were made to the design:

- Further definition on materials changing the initially suggested earthy tones to black metallic finish for the main skin as suggested by officers. This is proposed in varying widths of standing seam cladding, creating a high level of interest and light/ shadow variation through the mixed panel widths and raised seams.
- Explored golden tones for the reveals, but reverted to solid yellow cladding as the strong distinction between the main metallic skin, the plain yellow and the glazing (which combines a degree of reflectivity and transparency) creates a much stronger visual effect. A non-standard yellow with a deeper and richer hue as been selected instead of the standard yellow.

- Further definition of the detailing of the yellow reveals and refinement of the weaker areas of the concept with slight angle variations and redesigns to strengthen the design.
- Proposed materials for the ground floor elevations revised to ensure they complement the main cladding and strengthen the design.
- Reviewed options to increase the roof pitch and angle out the walls, but reverted to the original overall massing as the hugely increased technical complexity of achieving the more unusual shape would only achieve a minor incremental gain in the visual interest of the building.
- Signage has been included in the visuals as it is an intrinsic part of the design, but advertising consent will be sought separately.



Standard BYSS branding colour left (RAL1018) and selected deeper yellow right (RAL1021)



Design update after planning pre-application discussions

06 Design Proposal

Use | Proposed site layout

Use

The majority of the building will be dedicated to self-storage (Class B8). Along the northwest elevation the ground floor storage units will be externally accessed.

The building will also incorporate flexi-office use (Class E(g)(i)) along the ground floor of the south and southwest elevations, which will provide active frontage and interest along the most transited areas of the public realm surrounding the site.

The self-storage space will be available to business and domestic customers, with the sizes of individual storage units providing extensive flexibility and varying depending on storage space requirements.

The flexi-office portion of the proposal is also designed with flexibility in mind, as affordable spaces well suited to start-ups, arts and crafts and small companies in need of flexibly let spaces and affordable prices. In many instances these customers combine their office space needs with additional storage within the main body of the building.

A customer reception area is positioned next to the loading area towards the rear of the site, providing a degree of active frontage towards the rear of the site, ensuring that this more private side of the building also provides a good level of interest.

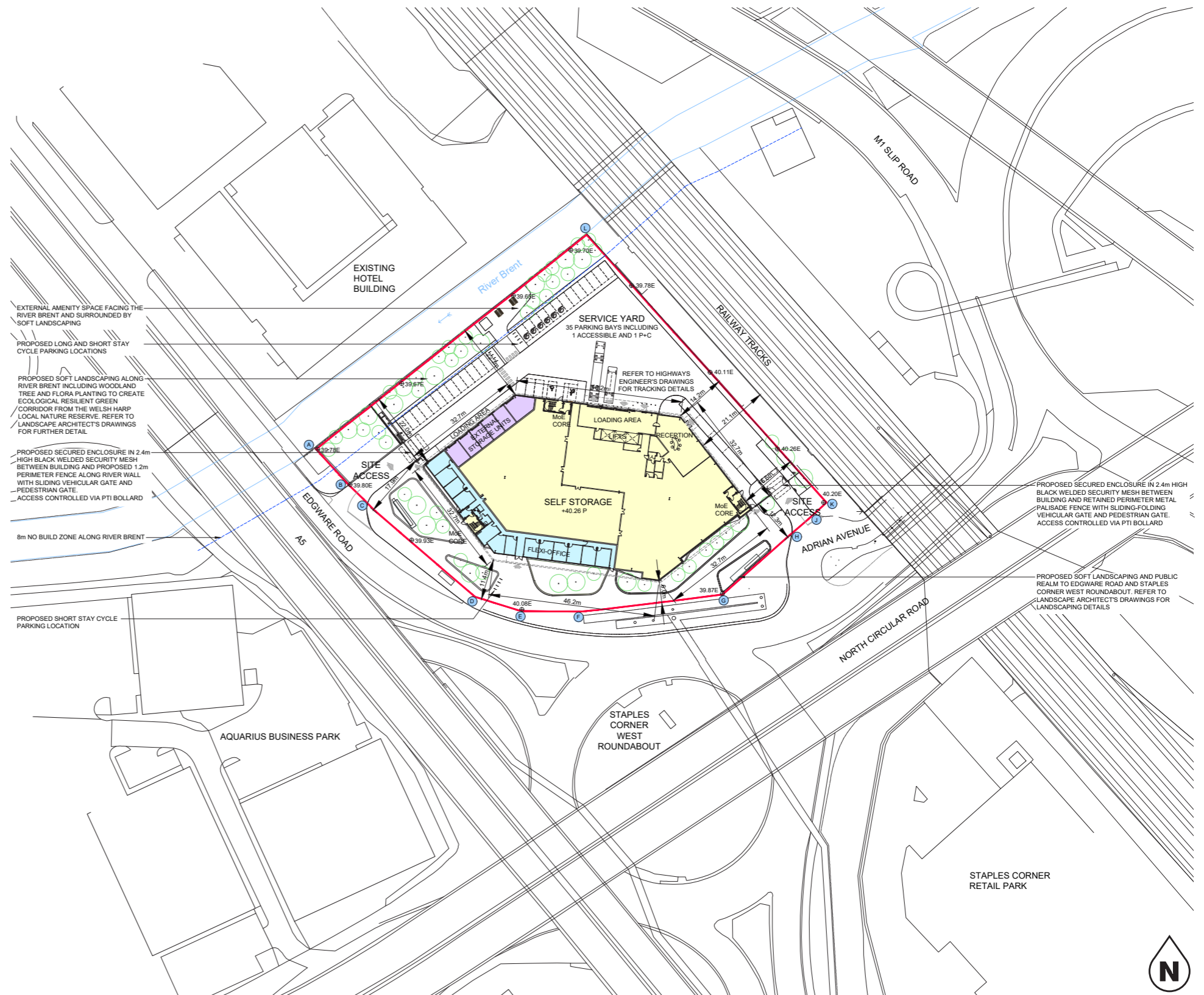
Additional ancillary accommodation (shower, toilets, utility area, staff kitchen and a manager's office) are proposed within the self storage building.

The service yard area will incorporate loading areas for the self-storage use, car parking, cycle parking and refuse stores.

The scheme also includes extensive public realm and soft landscaping that will transform the harsh environment of Staples Corner west roundabout into a greener, more pleasant and inviting space.

Finally, the verge of the River Brent is proposed to be transformed from hardstanding dedicated to parking to a green corridor that will enhance the biodiversity of the site and provide a better link to the Welsh Harp Local Nature Reserve (SSSI).

Proposed site layout



Proposed ground floor site plan

06 Design Proposal

Amount | Proposed plans

Amount

The proposed self-storage facility provides 2,430m² of permanent floor space (Gross Internal Area) at ground floor level and an additional 160m² (GIA) of permanent floor space for externally accessed storage units. This amounts to a total of 2,590m² GIA of self storage.

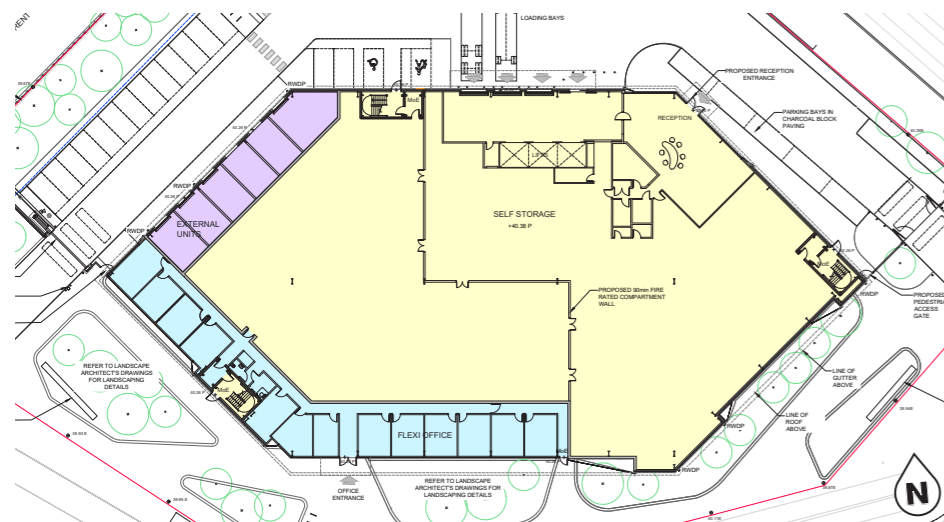
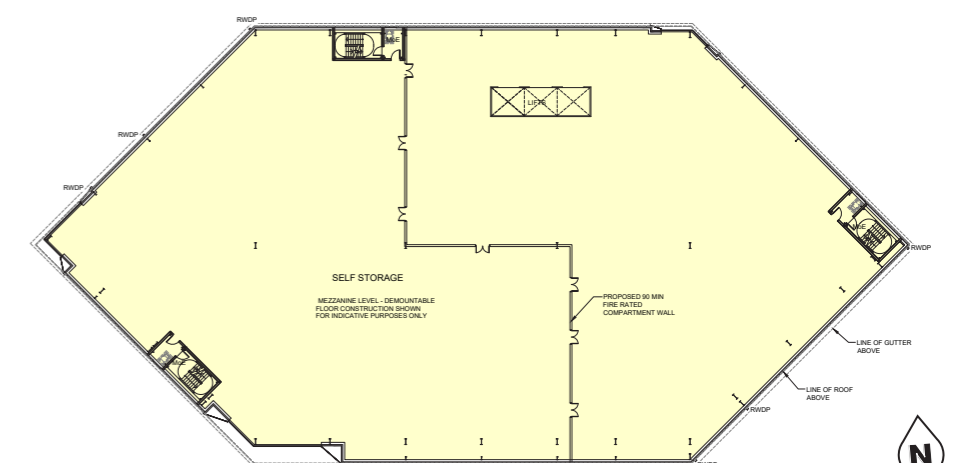
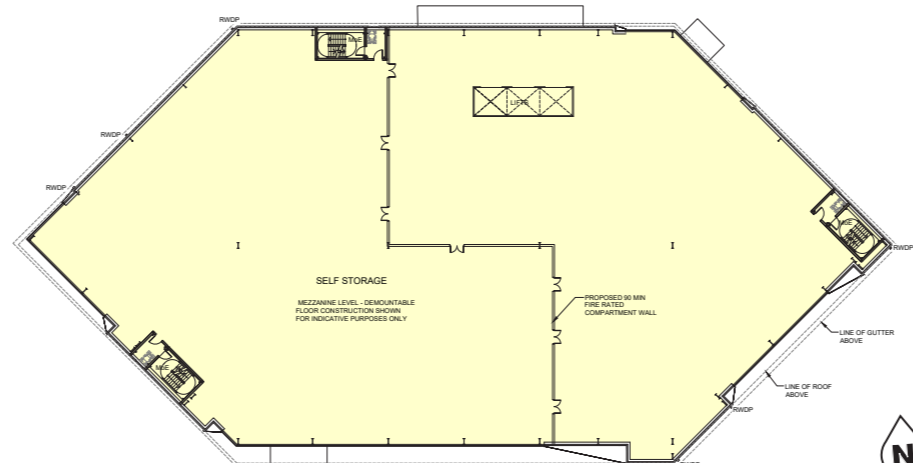
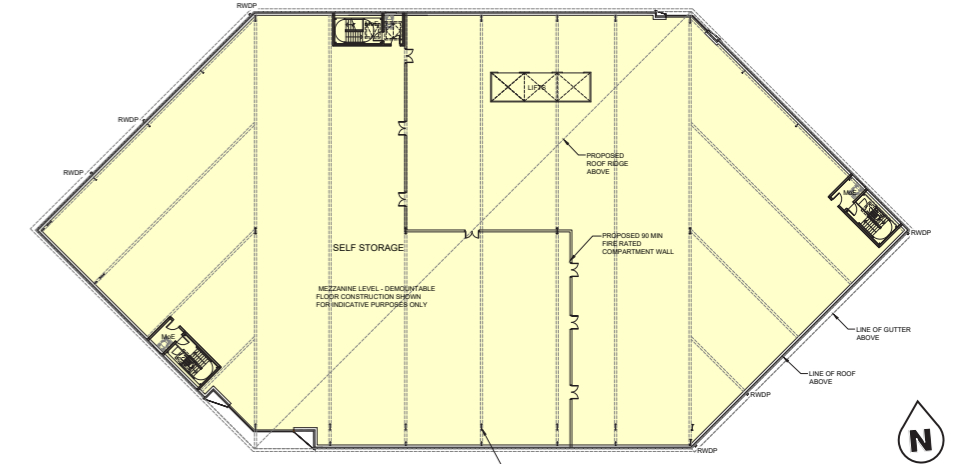
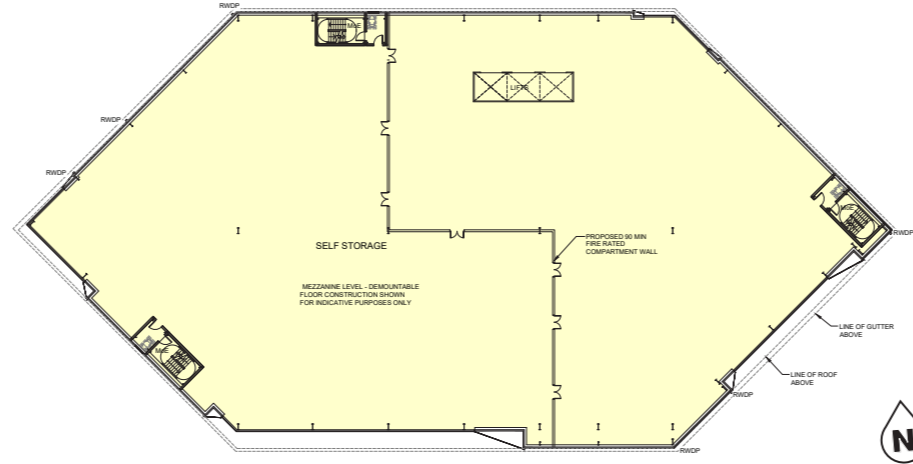
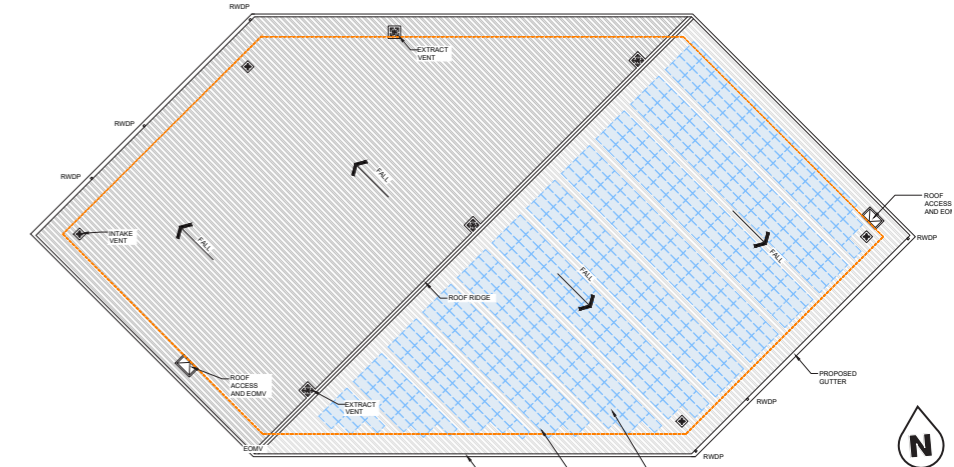
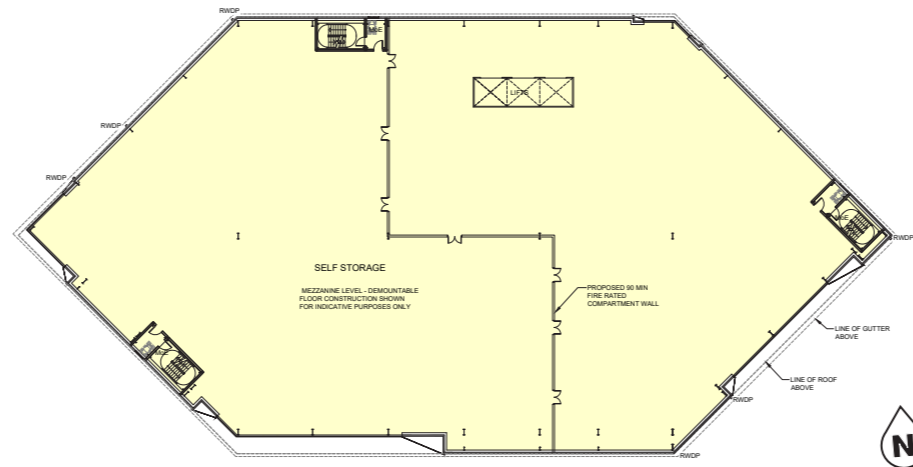
With the introduction of demountable mezzanines, there is potential to increase the total self storage floor area to 17,816m² GIA (including the externally accessed units).

The flexi-office adds an additional 378m² of permanent floor space of employment uses to the above GIA.

Cycle parking spaces are provided for short term and long term visitors. Covered and secured cycle parking, conveniently located, will be provided to encourage sustainable modes of transport. Six long-stay cycle parking spaces are provided for the self-storage portion of the scheme and another six long-stay cycle parking spaces for the flexi-office. All are located in the service yard. Eight short stay cycle parking spaces will also be provided, with four located near the permanent spaces and another four near the flexi-office building entrance.

Thirty five car parking spaces are provided, which is enough provision for the operational requirements of the facility. Accessible and parent and child parking will be located outside the main reception and active EVCPs will be provided for six parking bays, whilst passive provision will be built into the scheme to extend the EVCP infrastructure to the rest of car parking spaces in the future.

Proposed plans



06 Design Proposal

Scale & massing | Proposed elevations

Scale & massing

In addition to the direct relationship with the ground level surroundings, the unique relationship between the site and the surrounding elevated roads, pedestrian walkways and railway tracks has been taken into consideration from the early stages of design. As with the shape of the building, the massing has also taken into account how the proposed scheme would create an appropriate volume that complements and improves the built environment from all vantage points.

Both the island nature of the site and the elevated transport infrastructure provide the opportunity to introduce additional height and the positioning of the building towards the south of the plot ensures a good relationship with nearby buildings.

The massing is topped with a gable roof with eaves to the northwest and southeast. The gable roof in combination with the shape of the floor plate create a dynamic overall massing with the ridge level running southwest to northeast.

The eaves sit at a height just under 17m above ground floor level whilst the ridge rises to approximately 20.5m above ground floor level.

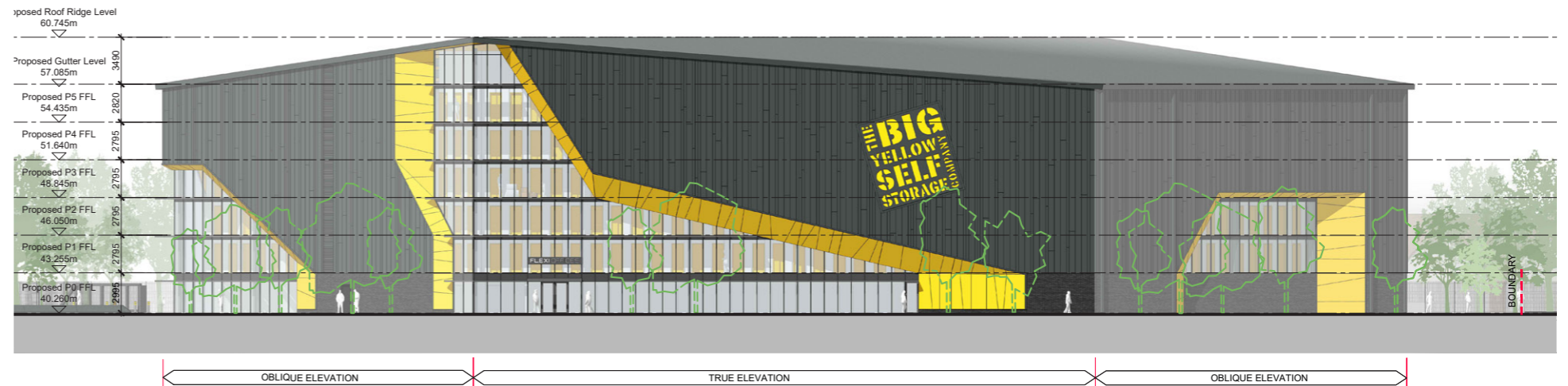
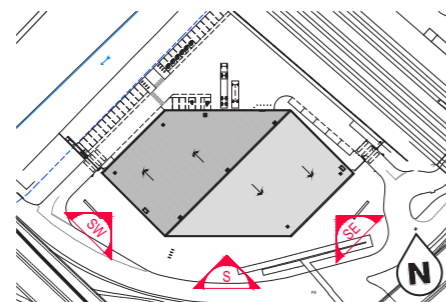
Proposed elevations

Conceptually, the building is designed as one single volume, which is carved out in key areas to introduce dynamism and activate the main frontages. Whilst the original volume is an opaque solid form, the areas carved out are transparent and display the internal parts of the building. The cut lines -the verge between solid and transparent- are expressed as yellow reveals, highlighting the dynamic nature of the design whilst introducing the Big Yellow Self Storage branding into the building.

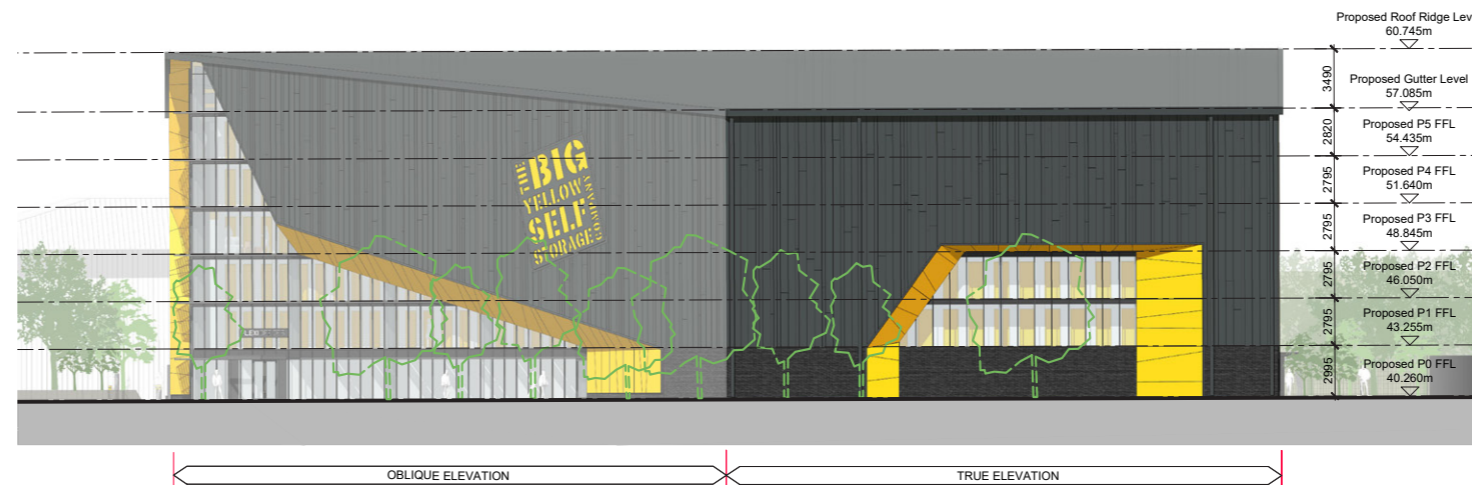
The base volume is finished in a built-up metal standing seam cladding system finished in a reflective black colour whilst the carved out portions are finished in curtain walling with clear glazing and dark opaque spandrel panels forming horizontal lines at mezzanine slab levels.

The yellow reveals will be finished in metal cladding.

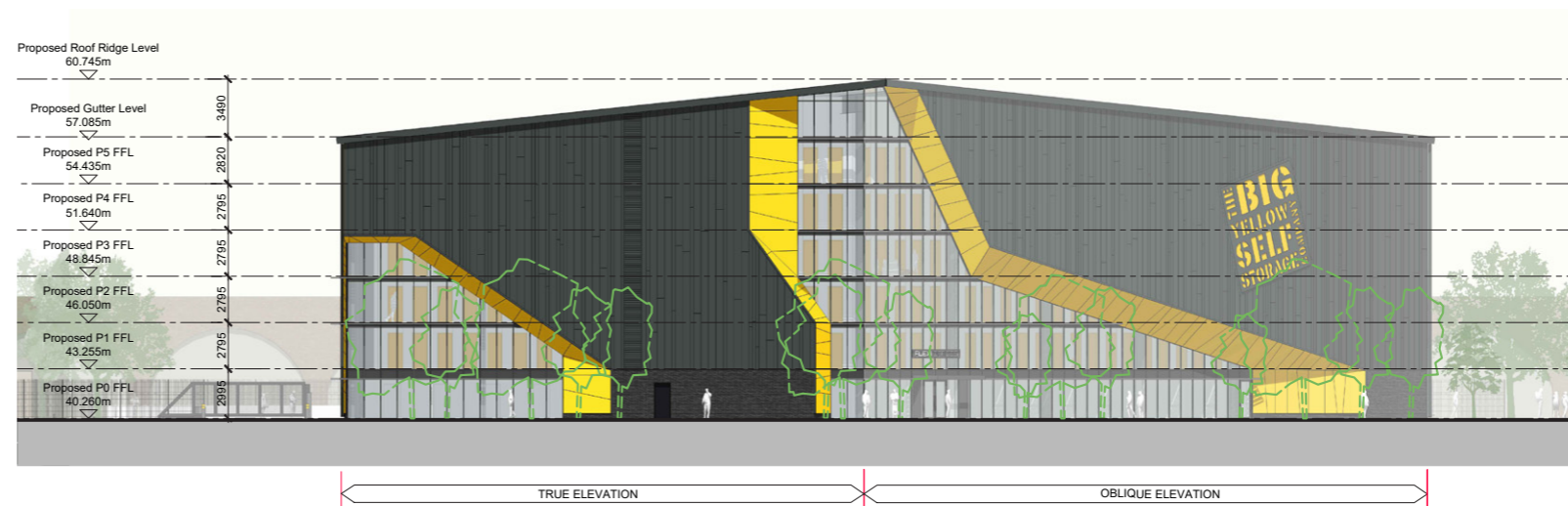
To ensure a robust perimeter at ground level, a brick plinth is introduced up to the first floor mezzanine level.



Proposed south elevation, facing Staples Corner West roundabout



Proposed southeast elevation



Proposed northeast elevation

06 Design Proposal

Proposed elevations

Proposed elevations

To ensure the concept is followed through, the detailed elements necessary for the correct functioning of the building are designed to coordinate with their surrounding materials. For example, roller shutters for the externally accessed units are proposed to coordinate with the brick plinth, whilst the smoke vents to means of escape will be coordinated with the main cladding material.

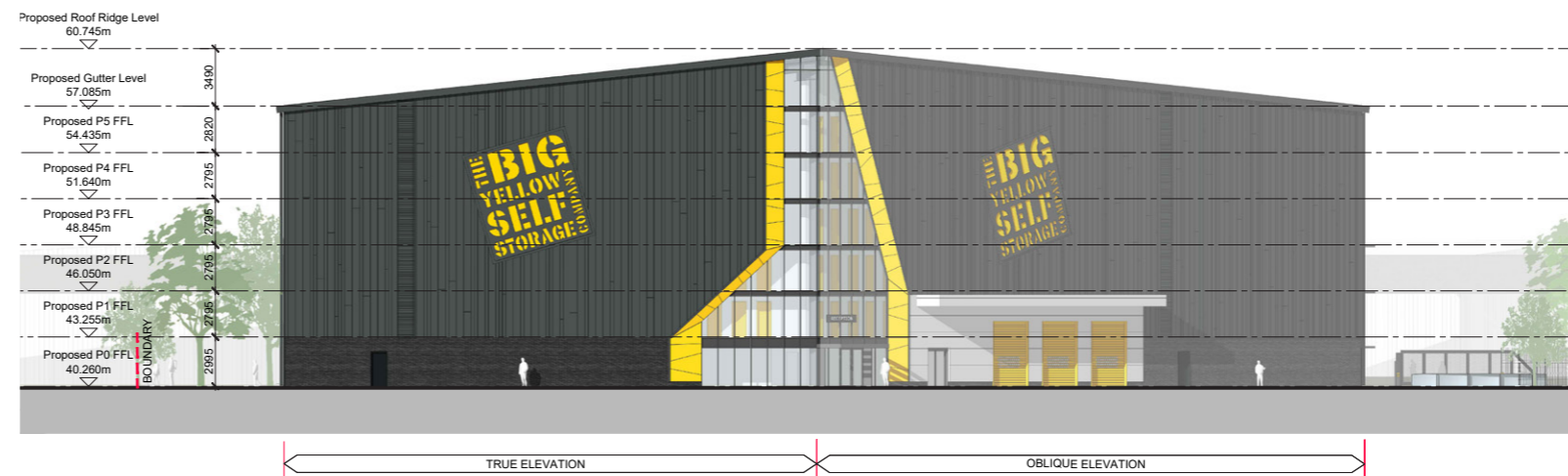
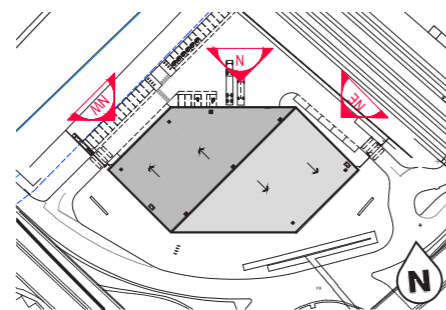
The only exception to this coordination is the loading area, which is designed to closely follow the standard Big Yellow portfolio design, ensuring customers benefit from a consistent approach and experience throughout the Big Yellow facilities, immediately recognising the key elements through which they access and interact with the building.



Proposed north elevation



Proposed northwest elevation



Proposed southwest elevation

06 Design Proposal

Materials

Materials

The proposed materials have been selected to ensure the initial concept follows through to the more detailed aspects of the design and that all materials coordinate well to produce a cohesive appearance whilst clearly differentiating the various elements of the design concept.

The main building skin is proposed in standing seam metal cladding arranged in two width variations. This variation in combination with the standing seam projecting from the natural face of the building, gives the outer skin a good level of texture and rhythm. The proposed colour for this material is a metallic black, as per the swatch included in this page.

The curtain walling is proposed in dark grey metal frames, combining full height clear glass and dark grey opaque spandrel panels at floor slabs. Horizontal solar shading colour coordinated with the glazing frames are introduced where required for solar control.

Where the building is cut open, the reveals are finished in polyester powder coated metal cladding in a deep yellow. The yellow reveals create a strong contrast with the outer skin which really emphasises the design concept.

The contact between the main outer skin and the ground is resolved with a dark grey brick plinth to ensure the ground level is robust and in line with the client's security requirements.

The loading area and associated canopy follow the standard design with white composite insulated metal cladding in microrib finish.

Finally, to strengthen the soft landscaping, ground planted climbers are introduced in key locations to create vertical green screens over the ground floor masonry. This creates a clear differentiation from the solid brick plinth and introduces additional visual interest at ground floor level.



Extract of proposed visual showing the standing seam metal cladding



Green wall screening from ground level planting



Dark grey curtain walling system with opaque glass spandrel panel



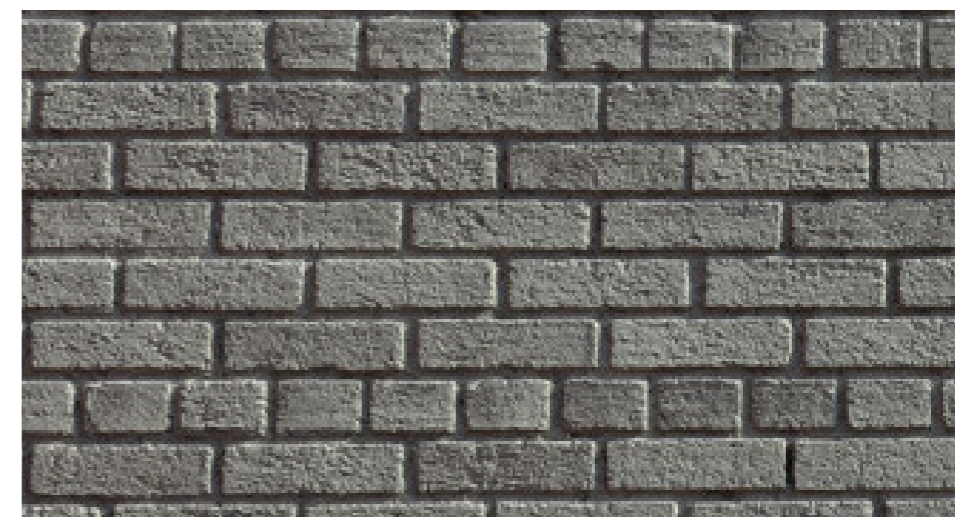
White composite insulated metal cladding to loading area



Photographic sample of Seren black, the proposed finish for the main external skin



Yellow metal rainscreen cassette cladding system (lighting indicative only, to be developed)



Dark grey brick plinth to complement main cladding