

9

Site Proposals

9.1 Site Development Proposals



Introduction

The opportunity presented at New Rotterdam Wharf is to transform a single sided 'industrial estate' plot into a mixed use vibrant urban block, activated on all sides with new cultural, student use and commercial opportunity, all crucially connecting with the western tow-path of the Forth and Clyde Canal, bringing life and vitality to this amazing city centre asset.

The development strategy that has evolved for the site is to place the proposed new Scottish Opera rehearsal and support building between the existing Edington Street production studios and the canal towpath. A core circulation route through this new building will link a new canal-side entrance down into the existing production studio and to the existing entrance on Edington Street.

To the north and south, two student accommodation blocks (PBSA) are proposed, with stepping scales, effectively 'book ending' the site and providing activated frontages to all four corners of the plot. Pended access under each PBSA block provides access to two internal courtyards providing service and visitor access to the Scottish Opera building.

New broad feature steps at both the north and south ends of the site provide connection between the ends of Sawmillfield St and Corn Street, connecting up to the canal edge.

Approach to massing / design

The proposed development site sits between an area of industrial buildings and the historic setting of the Forth & Clyde Canal at Speirs Wharf. Although the site is set back from adjacent main roads, it has long distance visibility from certain parts of the city, primarily from the west of the Glasgow as you approach along the motorway.

Mirroring this, there are also long distance views from the site to the west of Glasgow due to the topography of the area.

The historic Speirs Wharf buildings have been a key consideration in the design of the proposed development, and these long distance views have influenced the massing design to date. The key move has been to maintain as much transparency and visibility through the site as possible, by articulating and shaping the development blocks to compliment these views.

The PBSA blocks on the North and South of the site have been articulated in plan to create wedge-shaped blocks, to help minimise the profile when viewed along the East-West axis.

The aim here is to retain visibility of the existing Speirs Wharf buildings from the West of the city, whilst maintaining good views from Speirs Wharf across the West of Glasgow.

Each PBSA block's footprint has also been staggered with an offset in the plan, to help break down the overall mass of the blocks. These staggered sections rise to different levels, where the side closest to the canal has been kept at a lower level, and the side facing the west of Glasgow rises taller.

The scale of the new Scottish Opera development has been kept to a minimum, with the bulk of the mass being tucked below the level of the canal towpath.

Two new pavilion buildings are proposed to rise two storeys above towpath level, reaching the approximate height of the existing treeline along the canal.

Development Summary

As previously described, the application is for a mixed use development across the site, containing the following components;

- Refurbishment and remodelling of the existing Scottish Opera Production Studios
- New build block for Scottish Opera containing rehearsal and performance spaces, headquarters office space and ancilliary support spaces
- A publicly accessible rooftop garden over the Scottish Opera new building
- Two PBSA blocks containing a total of 700 beds and associated support and amenity spaces
- Roof terraces to the PBSA blocks
- High quality public realm surrounding and within the development area

A summary of the areas of each component is attached, providing an analysis of the percentage split between PBSA development and other uses demonstrating the mixed use breakdown of the development proposals.

DEVELOPMENT AREA SCHEDULE

Scottish Opera

Existing Production Studio
 New Building
 Roof Garden
 Level 1 Courtyards (SO portion)

PBSA

North Block (406 beds)
 External Amenity (roof terrace)
 External Amenity (public realm)

South Block (294 beds)
 External Amenity (roof terraces)
 External Amenity (public realm)

Commercial
 Commercial unit

Other Public Realm

TOTALS

Floor Area GIFA (sqm)	External Amenity	
	Area (sqm)	Area (sqm)
5,400		
6,145		
		1,030
		480
16,040		
	270	
		694
12,260		
	270	
		1,049
365		
		954
40,210	540	4,207

Scottish Opera + Commercial GIFA	11,910	30%
PBSA GIFA	28,300	70%
Scottish Opera + Commercial GIFA + public realm	14,374	32%
PBSA GIFA + external amenity	30,583	68%



Inclusive design runs through all aspects of the development proposals.

Scottish Opera

As a cultural organisation who tour productions to a number of significant public buildings, Scottish Opera (SO) are constantly seeking improvements to their building and services in the context of equality legislation. Broadening engagement with opera and the creative activities that support the art form is a key driver for this capital development project to expand their facilities at New Rotterdam Wharf, thus helping to meet the stated aims of Scottish Opera's EDI policy.

The new facilities will better support all performers and staff and provide enhanced spaces from which Scottish Opera can deliver their Education and Outreach programme. The new facility will better reflect the values this important cultural organisation.

The ambition is that Scottish Opera can better support their existing activity which includes:

- The Dementia choir – supporting those with memory loss and / or reduced mobility
- Accessible and relaxed performances at the Theatre Royal and other touring venues.
- Baby O – workshops for the very young
- Education workshops with local schools
- Development of small-scale work to tour to smaller venues around Scotland.

During the development of the proposals key staff have been consulted to ensure that the proposal will address operational challenges currently faced in the existing buildings.

As the proposals develop further consultation will be held with both staff delivering the education programme and people with lived experience (disabled people, neurodiversity and older people) to explore how the new facilities can best support their Education and Outreach programme.

As stated in Scottish Opera's Business Plan 2022-23 and 2024-25, a key aim of the company is to

Establish a strategic basis for best practice Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) internally, including work with educational partners to develop and maintain a diverse talent pipeline for recruitment and personnel development across the organisation.

The development of a new facility to house all Scottish Operas activities onto a single site provides opportunity for the new facilities to meet best practice and provide an inclusive environment for all. This will enable Scottish Opera to better meet its obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

Purpose Built Student accommodation

The vision behind the PBSA blocks is to provide high quality student living close to the city centre that enables students to thrive. The ambition is to provide students with an 'unforgettable halls experience' to complement their education being provided by various institutions in the city.

Providing a 'home from home' experience, the housing provides a choice of both private and shared accommodation, including accessible rooms. Generous amenity and communal facilities include study and social spaces and an onsite laundry.

The blocks have been developed in close consultation with a student housing provider, utilising their knowledge and expertise in the sector to ensure that a range of student needs can be readily accommodated. The plans have been developed with adaptability in mind should the housing tenure mix change in the future.

Relevant legislation

The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. It replaced previous anti-discrimination laws with a single Act, making the law easier to understand and strengthening protection in some situations.

The Act is about access to services, facilities, employment and education - not building legislation - and the Act does not contain design guidance. Buildings cannot comply with the Act.

An initial access audit of the existing Scottish Opera buildings at Edington Street and Elmbank Crescent highlight access challenges. This is a useful tool for the Client to understand where physical improvements to their existing building can be made to assist them to meet their obligations under the Equality Act 2010.

Whilst the Building Regulations are statutory compliance, Code of Practice BS8399-parts 1 and 2:2018 offer guidance and recommendations. We recommend referencing the Code of Practice as this usually offers betterment to the building regulations.

'They all came away buzzing from excitement and were all singing opera on the way home in the bus. Please keep up your fantastic work of keeping music live, but more importantly bringing opportunities like this to the children who now have a memorable first experience of opera.'

Primary School Teacher

9.4 Community Benefit

The development of New Rotterdam Wharf provides many community benefits.

The quality of the new public realm and amenities will be a unique community resource. The development will be available to be enjoyed by the existing community and visitors from across the city.

The community benefits offered are numerous, and will include the following:

- Community spaces for activity, including voluntary groups and meeting space
- Enhanced relationship with primary education providers in North Glasgow via the Scottish Opera Education & Outreach programme delivered in the new Education Room
- Proposed café with enhanced views across Glasgow
- Public amenity spaces including accessible roof top garden and quality public realm at all corners of the site
- Improved access to and relationship with the canal and the western towpath including way finding and lighting
- The potential for ancillary commercial uses, including retail, health, or leisure.
- Shared amenity uses with the PBSA development, including gym and food offerings
- Performance spaces available for the city to utilise
- Recording facility available for the Scottish film and audio sector



The Concept

We chose to see the site as a deconstructed theatre with all its different spaces and components interlinked and sequenced to create a journey one would have when visiting Scottish Opera. As in any theatre, some spaces are programmed for public use and exposure and others are more hidden and less polished, but equally important. Each space, whilst having its unique function, performs an integral part of the overall experience that visitors are invited to discover.

The site is split into six typologies, including foyer, auditorium, café, wings, back of house and the gods. Working across different levels, they create spaces for everyday activities and public circulation as well as ensuring efficient & smooth function.

- Foyer

When arriving to the site from Edington Street, you are entering the beginning of the journey that will conclude once you reach the level of the towpath. Being adjacent to the more serviceable spaces outside the warehouse, the corner plazas offer a shared space that can be both social and inviting as well as functional.

- Back of House

No matter how you look at service area, it is not something that can be considered to be the most eye-pleasing part of any space. However, without functional and serviceable zones, we won't have the 'Front of House' type spaces to enjoy. Being located near public corner plazas and being overlooked by both PBSA units, service yards can become something that is considerate and practical at the same time.

- Wings

Not as private and hidden as back of house, these spaces are still predominantly functional and don't have as much visual appeal as other public areas of the theatre. That said, they are often overlooked by public and even explored on a rare occasion of a private function, which is what will happen in this instance as well.

-Auditorium

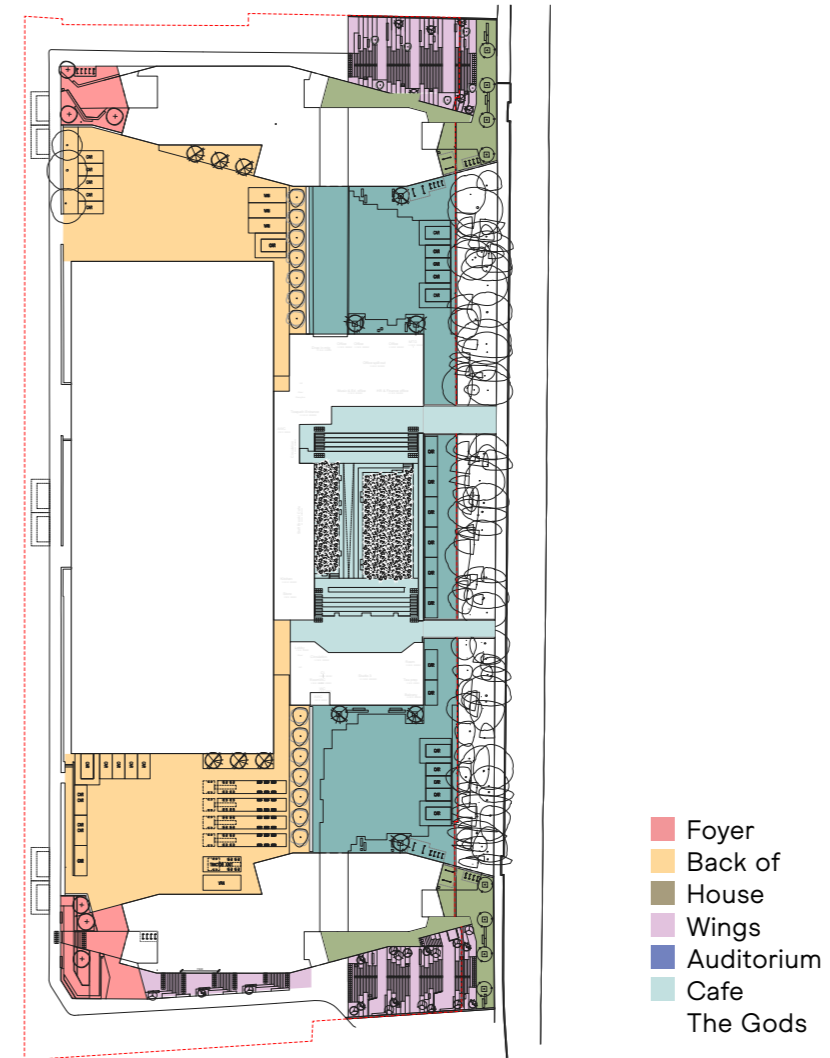
As you start ascending towards the towpath, you get a chance to discover new views and activities along the way. These steps are not just a tool to get from A to B, but inhabitable spaces offering views and spaces for activities to happen.

- Cafe

When one is too early to the performance or is on a pause between the acts, having a space to rest and unwind is very important. This is where most of the accidental meets will happen that can lead to life long friendships or even business deals. Located next to the stepped landscape, it offers an opportunity to create stopping spaces for permanent and temporary activities, connecting public to the students.

- The Gods

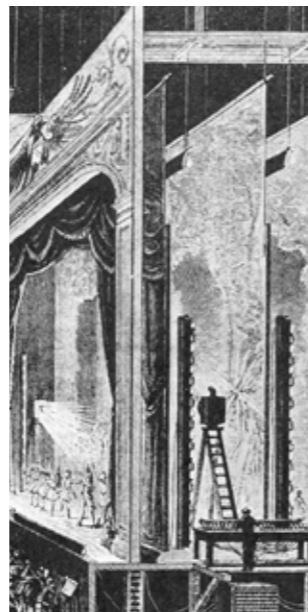
Sometimes it is the spaces we discover become the most precious for us to visit and remember. Offering unique views over Glasgow skyline, a hidden garden is nested in the urban setting with spaces to play, explore and recharge.



Foyer



Back of House



Wings



Auditorium



Cafe



The Gods

Top:
Diagram connecting the story to the public areas within the site

Bottom:
Theatrical scenes illustrating each element of the story

Hard & Soft Transition

The landscape proposals provide an attractive, functional and safe series of spaces which offer students and the local community an opportunity to engage with the environment at different scales.

The site sits on the boundary between Glasgow's urban edge and the nature corridor of the Forth & Clyde Canal (Glasgow Spur) landscape, becoming a point of shift between the two environmental conditions. This transition of urban and green themes run through the development, where to the west of the site there is a strong building frontage defining the urban edge which then bleeds through the site becoming less dominant and more integrated with soft landscape to the east. This is then further expressed in the more detailed scales of the individual plazas and courtyards across the site where 'urban' becomes hard landscape and 'green' becomes soft landscape. In the detail scale or materials scale the wider concept is realised in junctions between hard and soft landscape materials.

Urban and Green Transition: City scale

The site is where the urban sprawl of Glasgow streets meets the soft and calm setting of the Forth & Clyde Canal. This shift in external conditions forms the basis for the site's concept approach. The concept is picked up through all the scales of design throughout the site.

Hard and Soft Transition: Project scale

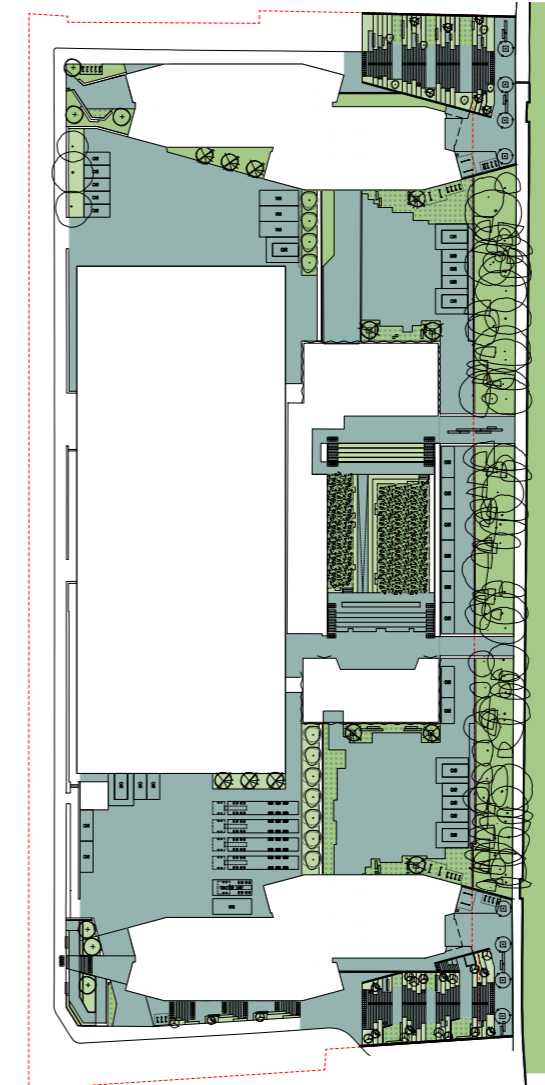
The site itself reinforces this concept with a strong transition from the hard edge of Edington Street to the soft edge to the green corridor of the canal landscape. As we progress from west to east, the external spaces shift from being predominantly hard and functional pieces of public realm that comply to existing urban conditions to being more soft, relaxed and playful, offering opportunities for people to gather and explore the nature around.

Paving and Planting Transition: Detail scale

The material palette gradually shifts from bustling hard landscaped plazas to the west towards quite garden and park characters of the canal edge. Underfoot the textures will change from 100% hard materials to a mix of hard and soft, while the density and quantity of planting increases around the eastern edges reinforcing the changing spatial characters.



City Scale:
Urban & Green
Transition



Project Scale:
Hard & Soft
Transition



Detail Scale:
Paving & Planting
Transition

Top:
Conceptual diagram of hard & soft transitions on the city scale

Middle:
Conceptual diagram of hard & soft transitions on the project scale

Bottom:
Conceptual diagram of hard & soft transitions on the detail scale



Forth & Clyde Canal

Sawmillfield Street

Edington Street

Corn Street



Landscape Proposal

Overview

Developing this site gives opportunity to provide an improved outlook and visual amenity, establish a biodiversity net gain on the site, and create a large public open space which is functional, adaptable and inclusive. The landscape proposals seek to maximise the area of open space within the development while providing a safe and attractive amenity for the residents. The site consists of a number of amenity spaces with private and public outlooks, creating opportunities for locals and visitors to the area. The walled garden is a hidden gem nested on top of the new Scottish Opera Rehearsal Building, which offers an inclusive and green setting with views across Glasgow's skyline.

The definition of public and private space is important in providing privacy to the new residences while offering accessible space to all. The landscape design is carefully considered to create a planted buffer zone to any parts of the buildings where privacy is required. Parking is mainly accommodated within functional areas of the site with an aim to maximise external areas outside PBSA and Scottish Opera amenity spaces. The boundary wall to the towpath will be partially screened with a freestanding green wall system to soften visual effect of the tall structure whilst respecting its historic significance.

Principles

During the development stages of the project, the following 10 landscape and public realm design principles have been set out:

1. To improve access and connections between Spier's Wharf and Oakbank areas.
2. To create a visual link between Forth & Clyde Canal Glasgow Spur Towpath and Glasgow cityscape.
3. To design external spaces that would be inclusive and accessible to different members of the local community.
4. To encourage sustainable transport choices through integration of bike ramps and variety of standard and non-standard bike stands across different levels.
5. To prioritise pedestrian and cyclist movement over cars and servicing through creation of shared and levelled surfaces.
6. To design a space that is flexible for hosting events and performances with provision of power and common fixing points for pavilions.
7. To enhance biodiversity net gain of the area with introduction of a variation of native tree and plant species across the development.
8. Create climate resilient environment through introduction of wider mix of species and resilient trees.
9. To design a scheme that integrates surface water management through introduction of rain gardens and porous surfaces.
10. To choose a low carbon approach through the use of locally source sustainable materials and natural materials that have a lower carbon manufacturing process.

Areas

The landscape proposal has been considered as an overarching strategy for the entire site, including areas for Scottish Opera and for PBSA. Due to topographic characteristics of the site and coordination with existing and proposed buildings, the following areas have been identified to form part of the landscape proposal:

- Corner Plazas at Edington Street (Level 0)
- Internal Courtyards set between new Scottish Opera Rehearsal Building and new PBSA blocks (Level 1)
- Stepped landscape areas, connecting top of Corn St and top of Sawmillfield Street to the towpath level
- PBSA plazas connecting to towpath (Level 3)
- Walled Garden and adjacent areas (Levels 3 & 4)
- Walled Garden and adjacent areas (Levels 3 & 4)
- PBSA Roof Terraces (Levels 10 & 13)

These areas will be described in more detail in the later sections of the report.

Left:

Illustrative masterplan showing design for the landscape & public realm areas of the site

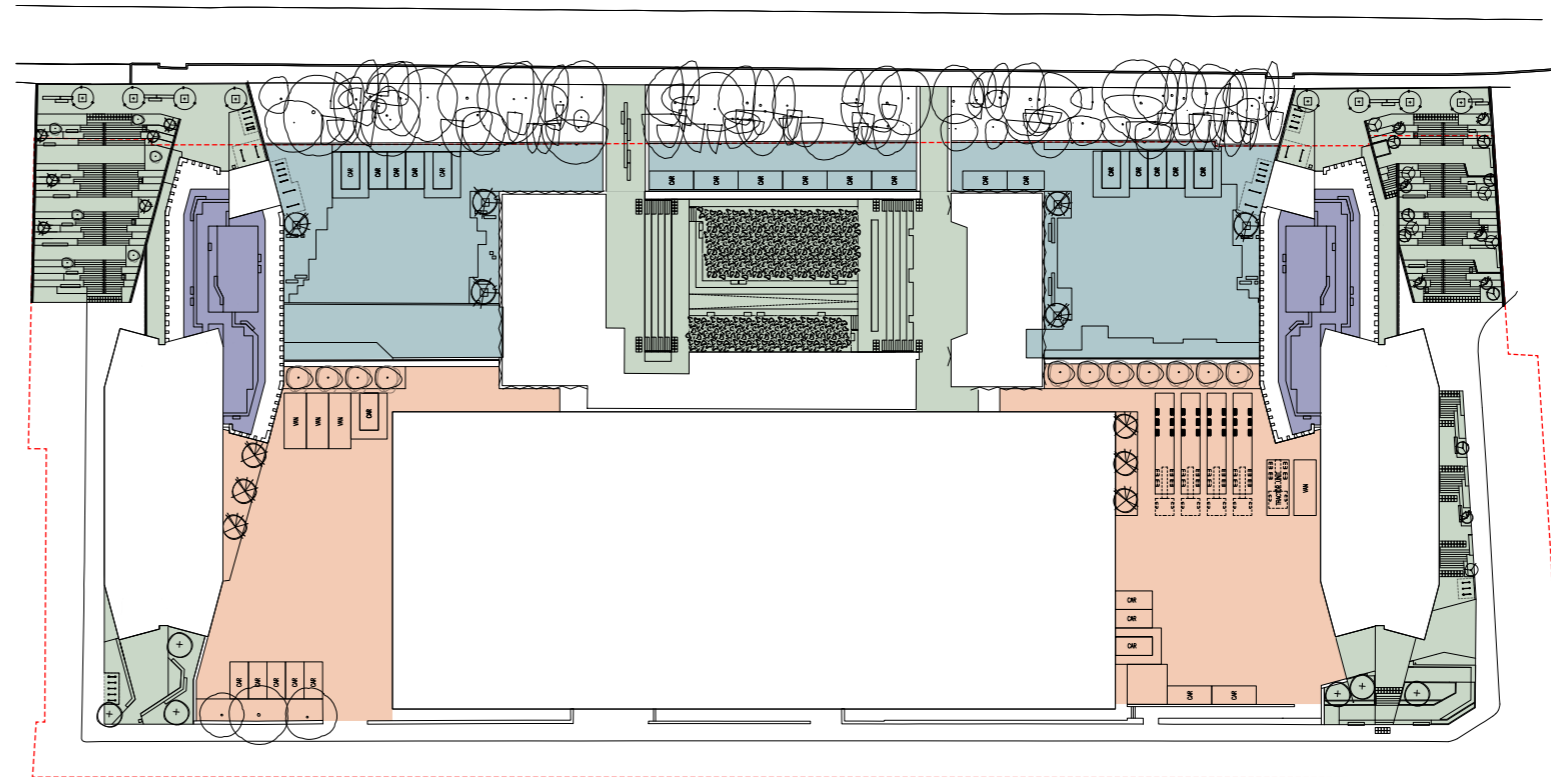
Open Space

The new public realm is designed in accordance with Glasgow's Open Space Strategy, aiming to add to the long-term vision of having living, healthy and resilient environment. Some of the key outcomes the proposal focuses on are:

- Open Space Access & Quality
- Setting & Amenity
- Views of the Public
- Walking & Cycling
- Enhancing Biodiversity
- Connecting Habitats

The project offers a range of open spaces, most of which are publicly accessible via the adjacent public footway or a towpath. All public open spaces are designed to encourage community engagements, offer platform for temporary and permanent amenities and activities, and facilitate connection between people and natural setting. The spaces vary in size and street furniture provision to best accommodate intended uses such as HGV access routes, spill-out areas for PBSA and SO buildings and any other.

There are 6 main areas of open spaces: Corner Plazas at Edington Street, Pend courtyards, North and South Landscape Steps, PBSA plazas at towpath level, Walled Garden and PBSA roof terraces. Detailed descriptions for each area can be found in later sections of the report. The precedent references shown on these pages are included to assist with visualising design intent and considerations and create a general feel for the overall scheme.



- Public
- Semi
- Public
- Service Private



Top:
Diagram showing distribution of the open space typology across the site

Left:
Precedent image for southwest corner plaza

Middle:
Precedent image for courtyard paving transition

Right:
Precedent image for north stepped landscape



Top left:
Precedent image for south stepped landscape

Top middle:
Precedent image for new bridges connecting to Walled Garden

Top right:
Precedent image for activated canal landscape

Bottom left:
Precedent image for north-west corner plaza

Bottom middle:
Precedent image for Walled Garden

Bottom right:
Precedent image for seating areas within courtyard landscape

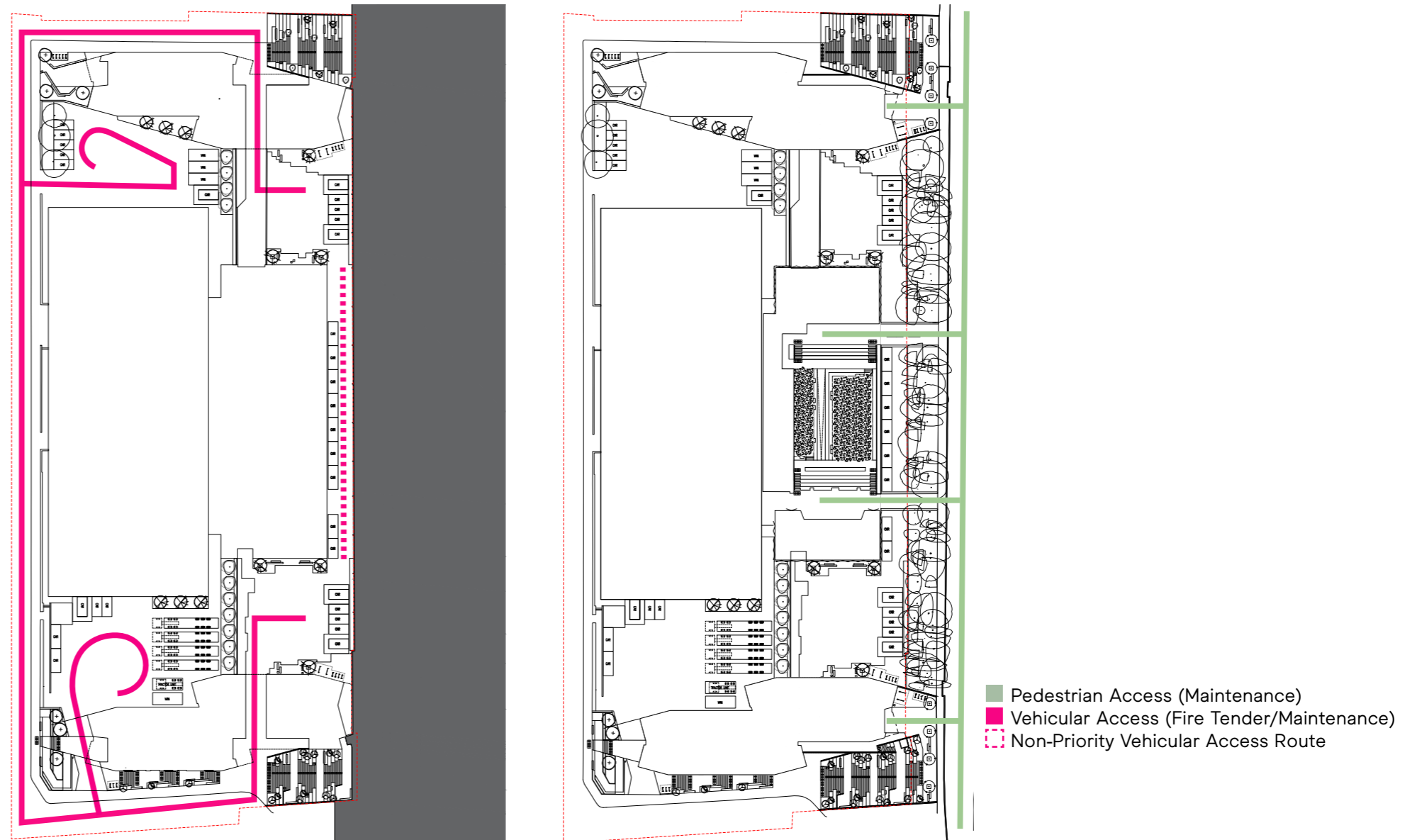


Servicing

The existing site arrangement is tailored to give priority to servicing and staff parking for the Scottish Opera warehouse building on the lower level and HGV parking on the intermediate level. Whilst the servicing of the new & existing buildings needs to remain, its role will become less dominant and more considered in relation to other factors such as pedestrian movement, new tree planting, cycle and car parking and spill-out areas adjacent to the buildings.

The lower courtyards at Level 0 will retain the predominant function of a service yard and will host all parking spaces for servicing vehicles. The landscape has been designed to allow for necessary manoeuvres of HGV and other servicing vehicles whilst adding areas of tree and soft planting to the perimeter to soften the hardstanding and improve visual appearance of the courtyards.

The upper courtyards at Level 1 will be designed to be predominantly spill-out spaces for PBSA blocks and new Scottish Opera Rehearsal Building whilst allowing for HGV overrun and turning. The surfacing will reflect that in creating more robust and durable areas in the centre where overrun is more likely to happen with softer areas to the perimeter. The upper courtyards will also be accessed by refuse vehicles at designated times. Due to overlapping functions of the upper courtyards, access of larger vehicles will need to be managed to avoid potential conflict with pedestrian movement and reduce health and safety risks.



Far left:
Servicing diagram for L0 and
L1

Left:
Servicing diagram for L3