

Welcome to an exhibition of plans for the regeneration of the Torquay Debenhams site

Exciting plans are being drawn up to transform the site of the old Debenhams building (12-14 Strand) on Torquay Harbour.

We would very much like to know what you think about the proposals. Following your input we will finalise our plans and submit them to Torbay Council to seek their approval.

Thank you for looking at the current proposals. Please talk to members of the project team who can answer any questions and are keen to take onboard any comments.



Your opinions are important to us:

As residents of Torbay your views are key. You stand to gain the most from successful regeneration and the benefits that will come from improving the Harbour and surrounding area. Once you've had a look at the boards, we would welcome your feedback. The information here is available on the website <https://www.torbay.gov.uk/the-strand-redevelopment> which has a link to an online feedback form.



Debenhams Site Regeneration

Who We Are



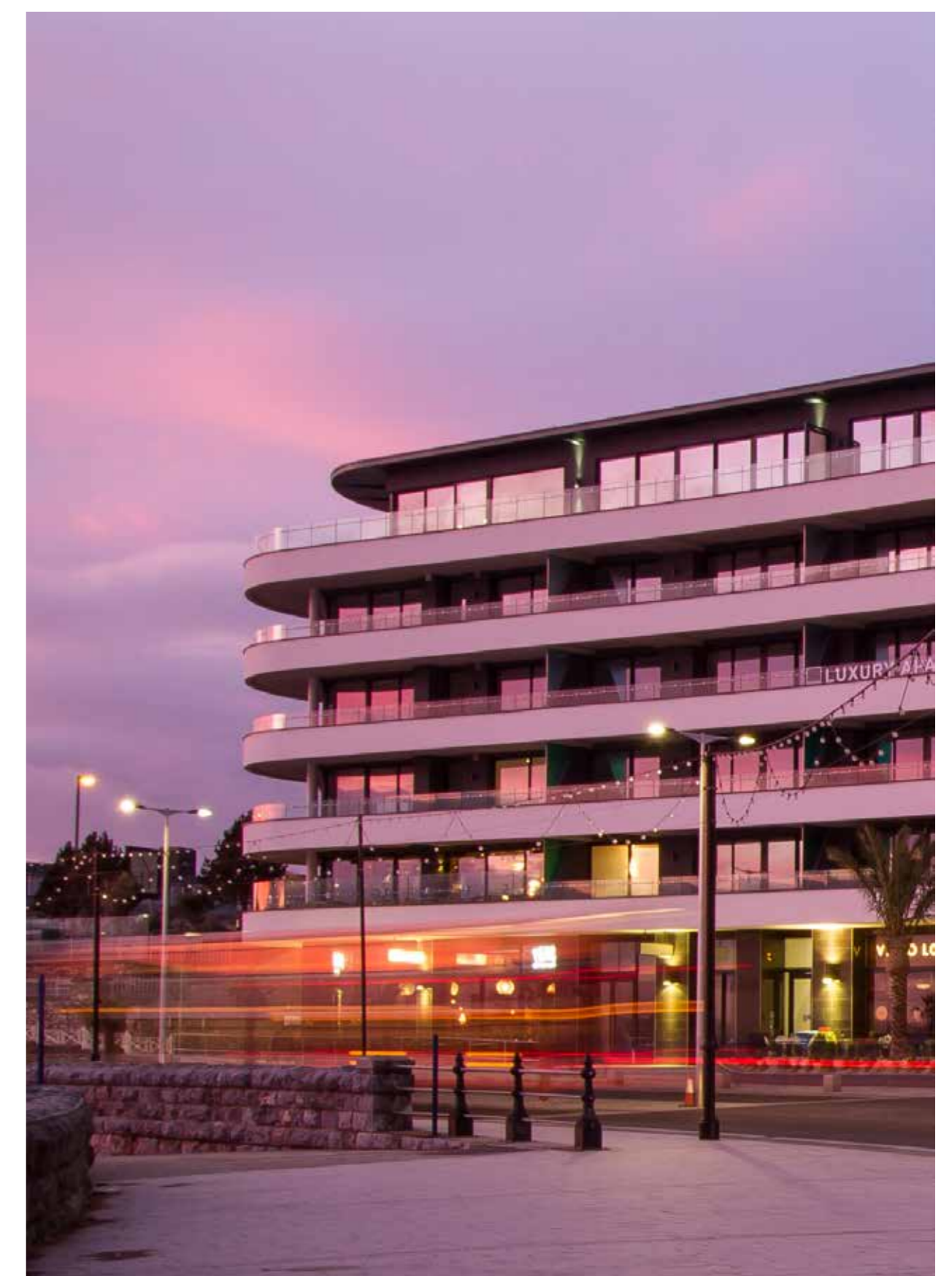
Proposal for the pedestrianisation of the Strand 2022



Location Plan

The site is being developed by Torbay Council as part of the strategy to rejuvenate the Town Centre and Harbour area.

Torbay Council acquired the site in May 2020, motivated by the desire to rejuvenate the Strand. Detailed feasibility work and consultation with councillors, and key stakeholders has informed the proposed uses and site. There is no requirement for developer profit and the freehold remains under Torbay Council ownership. This will help ensure that the main benefit goes back to the town.



Award winning Abbey Sands Development, Torquay

Design Team

Torbay Council has appointed nationally renowned experts to help bring this exciting project forwards.

Based in Torquay, architects Kay Elliott have worked on hotel and leisure projects around the globe from Salcombe to Sydney. Closer to home they designed the multi-award-winning Abbey Sands on Torquay seafront.

Consulting Engineers CASE have a proven track record across Torbay.

TDA Group is an award winning provider of property services, workspace management and affordable housing. TDA Group makes a real difference to people living and working in the South West.

With offices in Bristol, Stanstead and Nottingham Liz Lake Associates specialises in Public Realm design, making places for people.

B|D landscape architects are an award winning practice, who deliver amazing & resilient places for people.

Avalon Planning and Heritage is a boutique planning and heritage consultancy providing a fresh and innovative approach to development.



CASE Consultants
CIVIL AND STRUCTURAL ENGINEERS



Debenhams Site Regeneration Outline of Proposals



Indicative view



Appearance

The images here illustrate the external appearance of the scheme. While this is still being refined, the intention is to create an elevation that draws from the rhythm of the Harbour, encapsulates the square and makes the most of the sea views. It addresses the heights of adjacent and rear buildings whilst adding density and character to the site. The impressive brick Strand elevation changes to a neighbourhood scale on the inner elevations, picking up the rich and character-full surrounding harbour side.

1. Single story 19th century cottages extended. Low level kiosk use at street level connects between square and street and allows views over the top to terrace behind.
2. Steps and ramp up to piazza level. Flood defense.
3. Neighbourhood buildings, different typologies. narrow form, reflecting urban, maritime heritage. Echoes the shapes from the historical site.
4. The impressive Strand fronted building echoes the grander 19th century buildings to its right.
5. Existing canopy columns retained and converted to provide ambient street lighting.
6. Views to historic Terrace improved from The Strand.

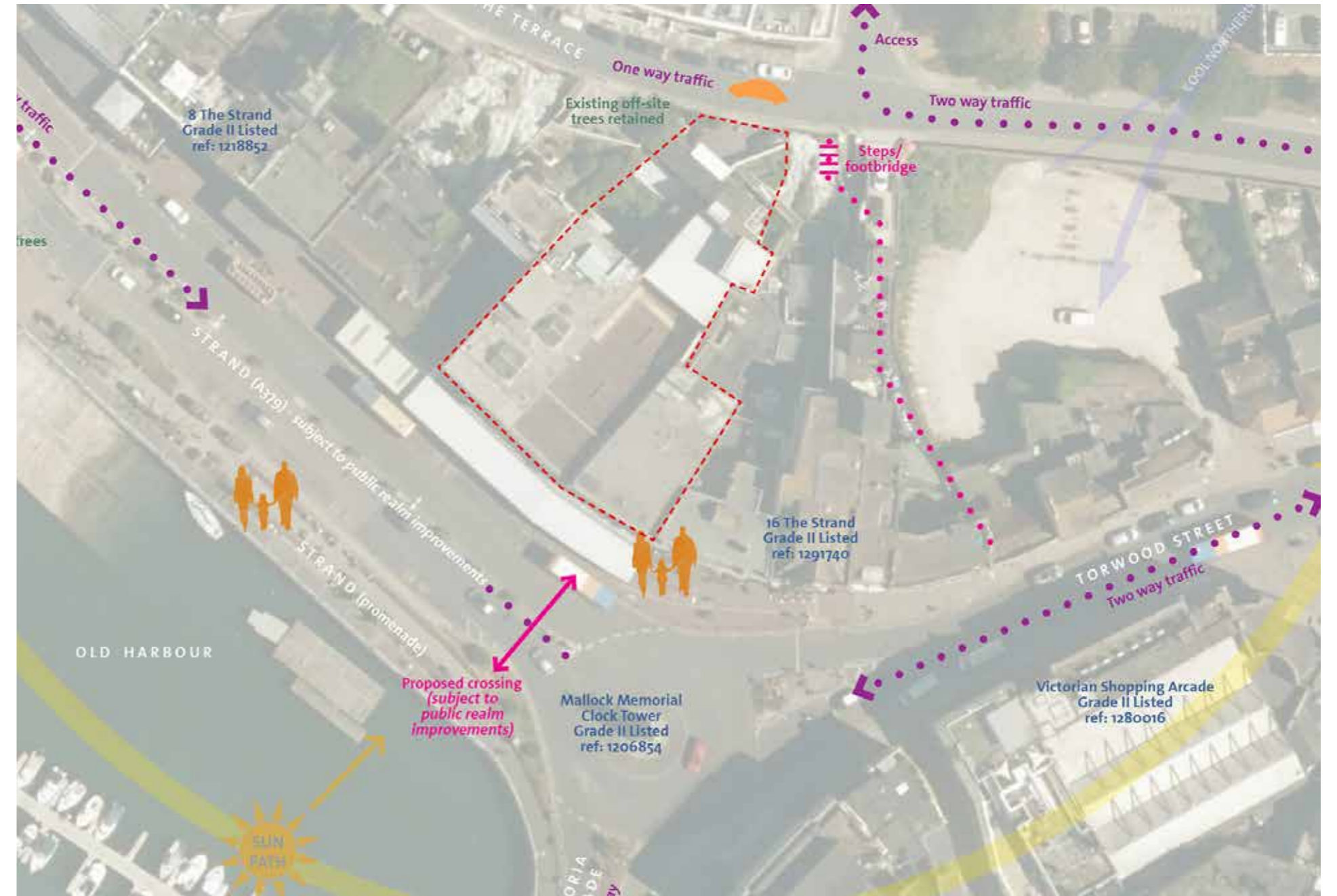


Street Elevation

Debenhams Site Regeneration Background - Currently



Above: View from road behind site across rooftops



Above: Site analysis diagram

The former Debenhams site is located in a prominent position along The Strand. Setback from the Harbour, for many years the site has been a key part of Torquay's retail and visitor offer.

The site has seen many changes over the years. A lack of investment over the recent decades, culminating in the closure of Debenhams in 2021 has led to the buildings on the site being outdated and in need of significant investment. There are a number of underlying issues;

- The fabric of the buildings are of very poor quality
- The ground floor is below the level needed to accommodate flood risk and climate change
- Detailed feasibility studies have demonstrated that adapting the existing buildings for alternative uses is not viable
- The current building has a very deep floor plan, with limited value for modern retail and unsuitable for residential conversion
- Access to the rear of the site is limited



The site is located within the Torquay Harbour Conservation Area and is adjacent to listed buildings, including The Terrace to the north.

Whilst the buildings are not of any architectural or historical value the canopy is noted in the conservation area appraisal as making a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area.

Today we present plans for the 21st century, which safeguard the sites heritage and embrace a fresh opportunity to improve the experience of The Strand for visitors to Torquay and residents alike.



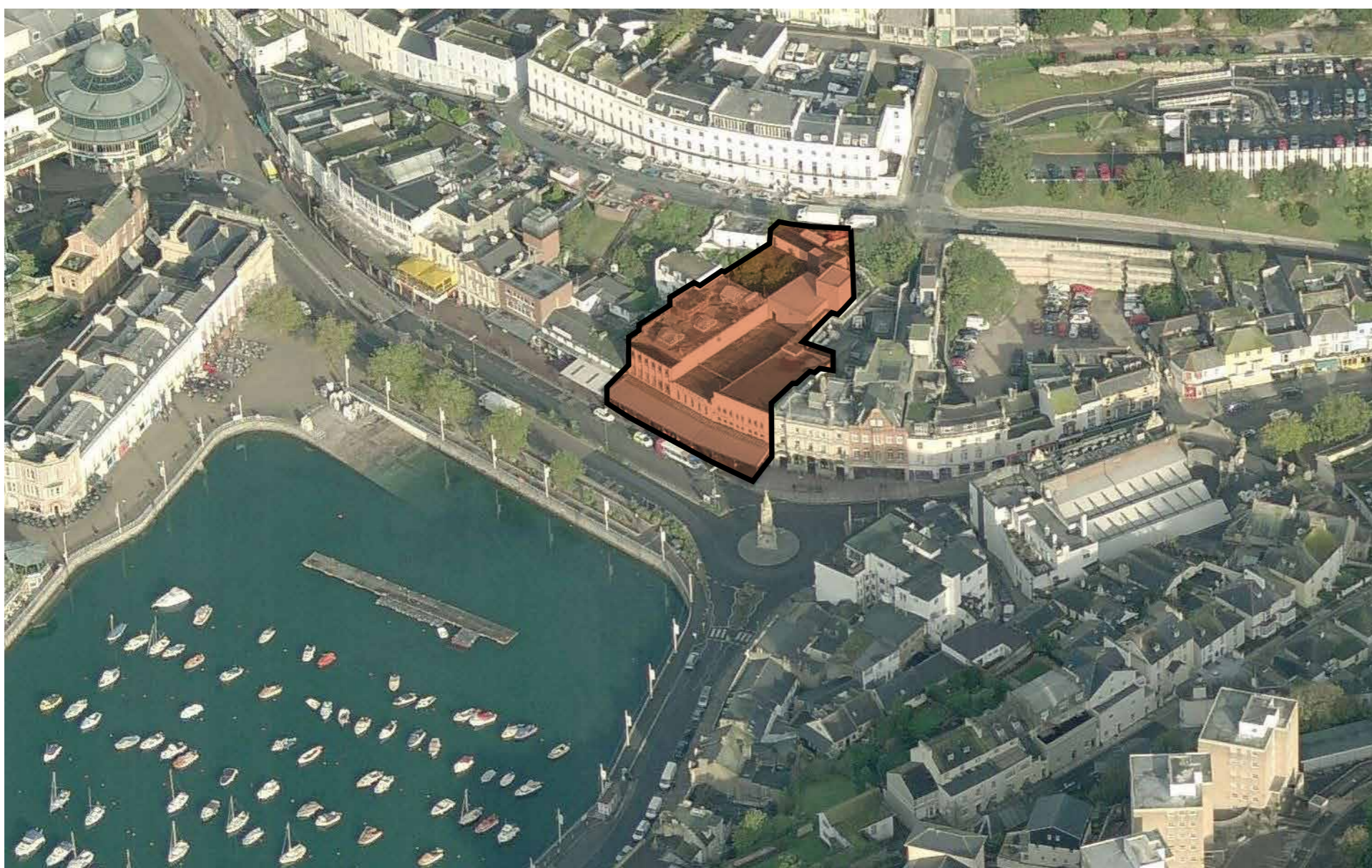
Above right: Photograph of flooding on The Strand in 2020. Image credit We Are South Devon
Above: Debenhams current elevation. Image credit Sanders Studio

Debenhams Site Regeneration

Torbay's Strand Ambitions

The Strand, one of the best urban public spaces in the Bay is about to become a more vibrant, healthier and better-connected space. A £2.2m scheme secured through the Town Deal will provide significant public realm improvements.

The Debenhams site is at the centre of this transformation. A cornerstone new investment, enhancing the improved public realm, enabling new businesses to open up, offering not only employment opportunities but more choice to residents and visitors.



Site on The Strand surrounded by listed and significant buildings. - Torbay Harbour Conservation Area

Once in a generation period of transformation

“For a long time we’ve talked about improving our town centres and public spaces, and now we’re at the point of our shared vision becoming a reality. By investing in and improving our town centres, we’re not only creating great places but we’re opening up more investment and employment opportunities.”

Cllr Swithin Long, Cabinet Member for Economic Regeneration, Tourism and Housing for Torbay Council

The planning policies include the following aims:

- Increase amount of Town Centre housing
- Improve retail, cafe and leisure offer
- Improve the quality of public spaces
- Create spaces for visitors and the public to relax and spend time
- Protect and enhance the heritage and cultural assets in the conservation area

The Torbay Local Plan

Torbay's Local Plan, adopted in 2015, sets the ambition to make the Town Centre and Harbour the key sub-regional retail and leisure destination (Policy SDT2). To achieve this developments should comprise a mixture of town centre uses and new homes. Expanding the quality of the retail offer, providing a wider mix of uses and delivering improved public spaces.

The Torquay Neighbourhood Plan

The 2019 Neighbourhood Plan for the town centre and harbour seeks to increase the amount of residential properties by increasing residential density, promoting increased residential use of upper floors and redeveloping redundant sites. This is understood to be a key element to job creation. The Community Aspirations detailed in the NP include Debenhams as a key potential development site. The Harbour area should have café, bars and restaurants creating a safe, al fresco experience in the summer months with good quality public space all year round.

Our plans to create a new public square, residential and leisure retail units on the Debenhams Site, will help Torbay meet the objectives of both local and national policies.



Image credit: Outside Dining by Michigan Municipal League. Creative Commons CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Debenhams Site Regeneration A Boost For Torquay

Our proposals adds to the public realm, creating a space for people to relax and enjoy the best of the English Riviera

The image right and the render below help illustrate the level of public realm improvements planned for the Strand.

Planned works include:

- Relocation of bus stop
- Reduction of highway to 2 lanes
- New pedestrian crossings
- Pedestriansation of clocktower

The redevelopment of the Debenhams site provides considerable additional benefit to the initial scheme. The treatment of the public realm improvements across both is consistent, so that the entire space will be experienced as one special environment for people to enjoy.



Above: Site location in relation to planned public realm improvements
Below: Render graphic showing improved pedestrian strand with existing Debenhams in background



Debenhams Site Regeneration Outline of Proposals

Given the unsuitability of the current building, it is intended that a new scheme is built. This provides an opportunity to address the constraints highlighted, achieve planning and strategic town goals and improve the visitor experience.

The current proposals include:

- New building within the existing party walls
- Raised ground level to combat flooding
- Access from terrace above
- New public realm
- Cafe restaurant and leisure units with alfresco seating
- Sea views
- Transition in height from The Strand to The Terrace above



Above: Landscape massing as seen from the Bay

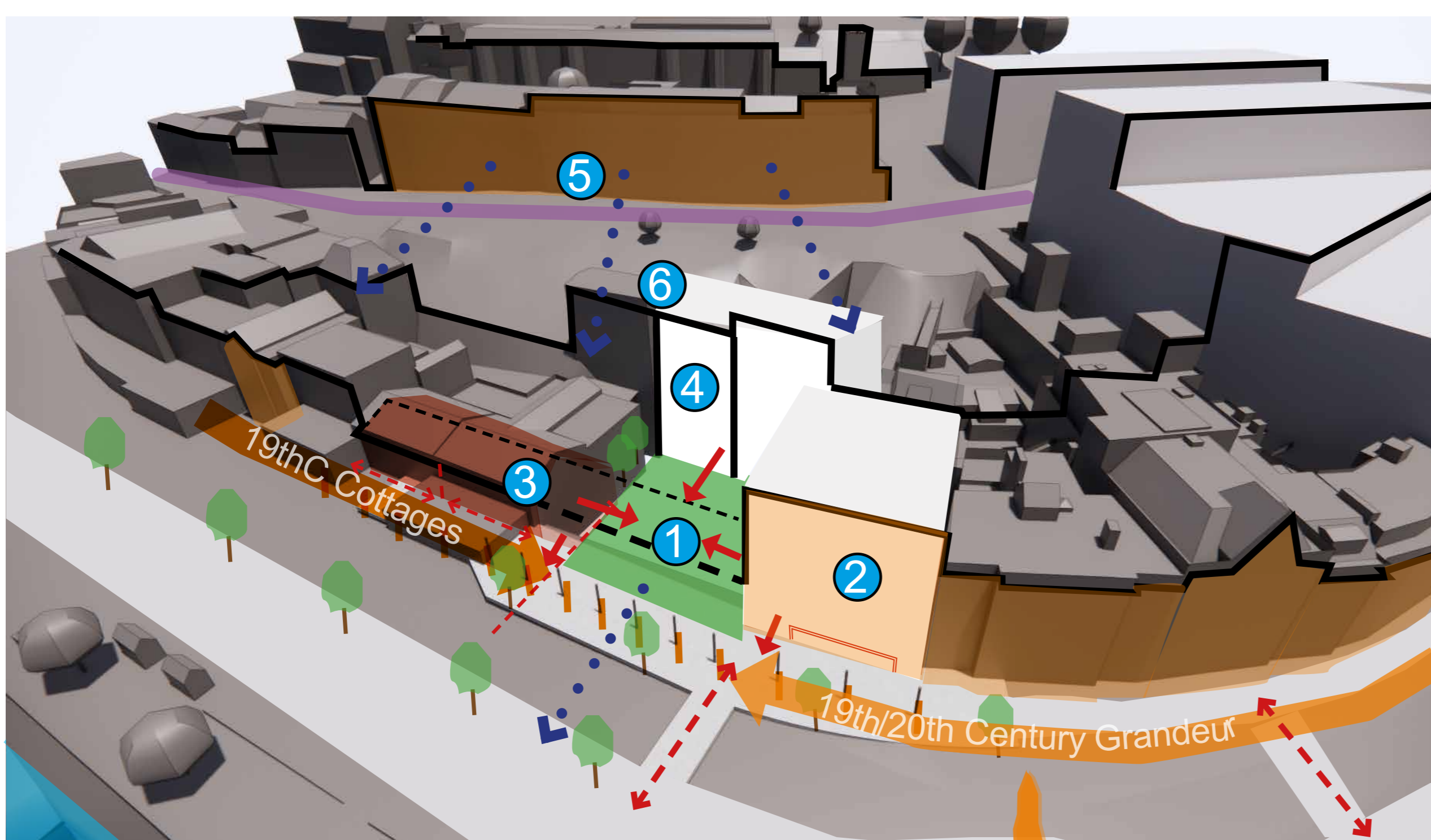
Existing Townscape

1. Narrow plot widths
2. Variation in heights
3. Eclectic styles
4. Layering of development
5. Listed building
6. Variation in roofscapes
7. Buildings at 90 degree relation created by the harbour shape
8. Buildings and landscape viewed through gaps and over roofs

Proposed Massing

1. New public square
2. Grand Strand building
3. Extended cottage line
4. Extended mid terrace line
5. Keep views to and from The Terrace
6. Height of residential block follows line of adjacent building

Stepped back within the site the proposal creates a way of allowing life into the deep area below the terrace. Whilst at the same time articulating the early 19th century cottages to the left and the grander 19th century buildings to the right. The square helps make sense of the variation on the Strand, in height and in type and creates a new focal point in relation to the newly rejuvenated Clock Tower.



Above: Massing model illustrating the main site elements

Debenhams Site Regeneration

Response to the climate emergency

In line with Torquay Council's goals for tackling the Climate Emergency, the strategic approach to the development is to reduce the overall consumption of energy, whilst using and supplying greener forms of energy.

An approach supported by investment and defined by the following energy hierarchy

Be Lean - Use Less Energy

Be Clean - Supply

Be Green - Use renewable Energy

A high environmental specification will be capped with an innovative Marine Source Heat Pump.

Be Lean

The energy strategy aims to firstly implement passive design and energy efficiency measures to reduce energy demand and CO₂ emissions. This includes:

- East west orientation to control passive solar gains
- Highly insulated building envelope
- Mechanical Ventilation Heat Recovery System
- LED lighting

Be Clean

The strategy includes the use of clean energy source technologies.

1. Electric Car Charging. Provided for all resident car spaces.
2. Significant investment in an innovative Marine Source Heat Pump, which will use the heat energy of the waters in Torbay to warm the building, driving down costs and environmental impact.

Be Green

Significant CO₂ savings are expected through the Be Lean and Be Clean measures. The impact on CO₂ reduction, from the Marine Source Heat Pump is huge. The potential for further renewable energy sources will be assessed.

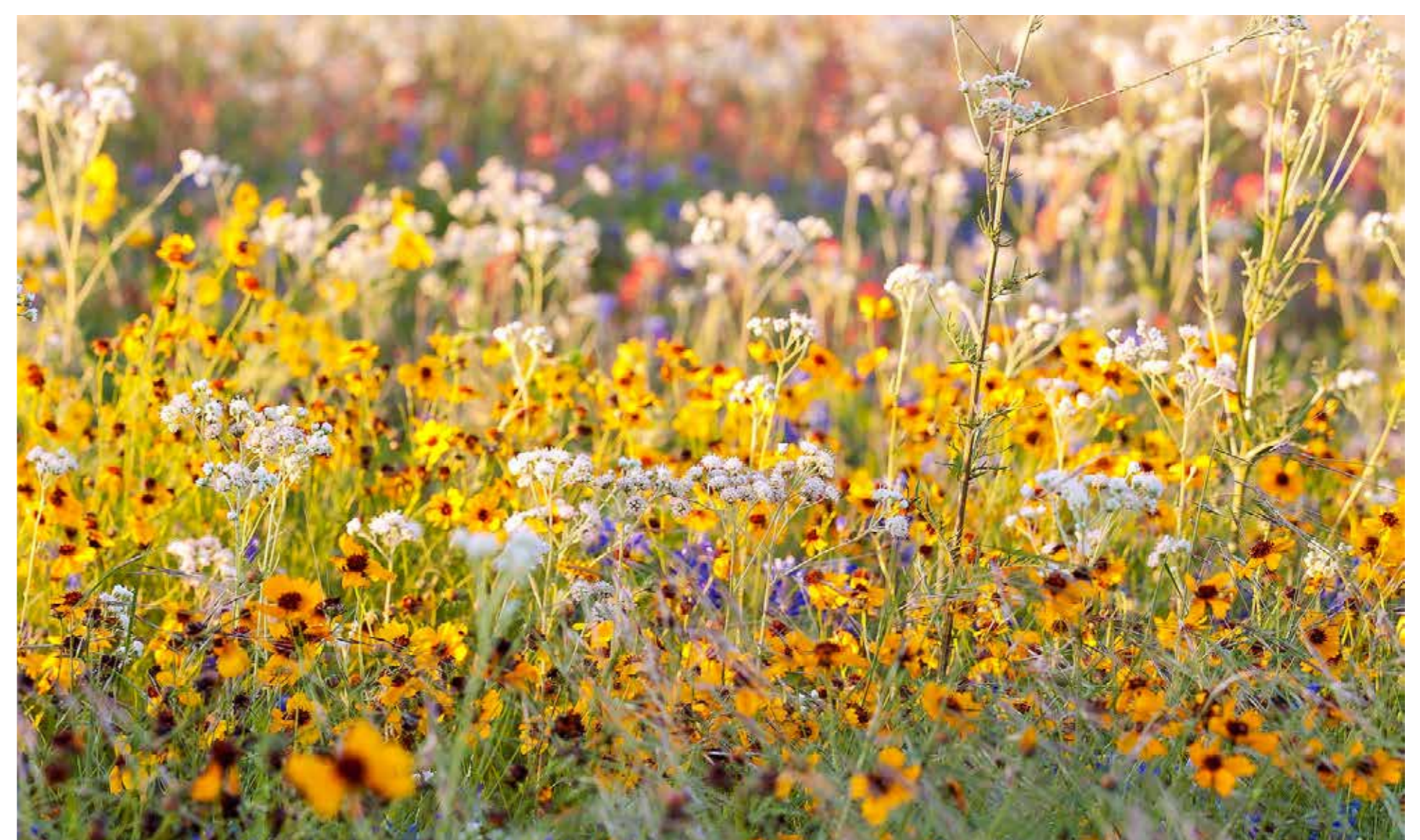


Image Credit: Wildflower field by George Thomas is marked with Creative Commons Licence CC BY-NC-ND 2.0.

Bio-diversity net gain

A planted biodiverse green roof is proposed above the rear building that will provide a diverse mix of wildflowers and habitats for wildlife.

The introduction of soft landscape to the otherwise hard landscape elements of the square and car park will provide an oasis for insects with opportunities for feeding and shelter.

Learning to be Green.

The environmental impact and energy performance for this development will be assessed and the findings made available to inform future Torbay developments. Supporting the council and partners to continue to tackle the Climate Emergency here in the South West.

Debenhams Site Regeneration Landscape

Hard and soft landscape strategy, creating an accessible and attractive space all year round. With the ability to adapt to changing uses.



The hard landscape strategy maximises the flexibility of the public square for outdoor seating, temporary events and seasonal shifts.

The paving reflects the new harbourside promenade at the south of The Strand with a mix of grey tones and pink hues.

The introduction of soft landscape and biodiverse green roof provide an oasis for insects, with opportunities for feeding and shelter.

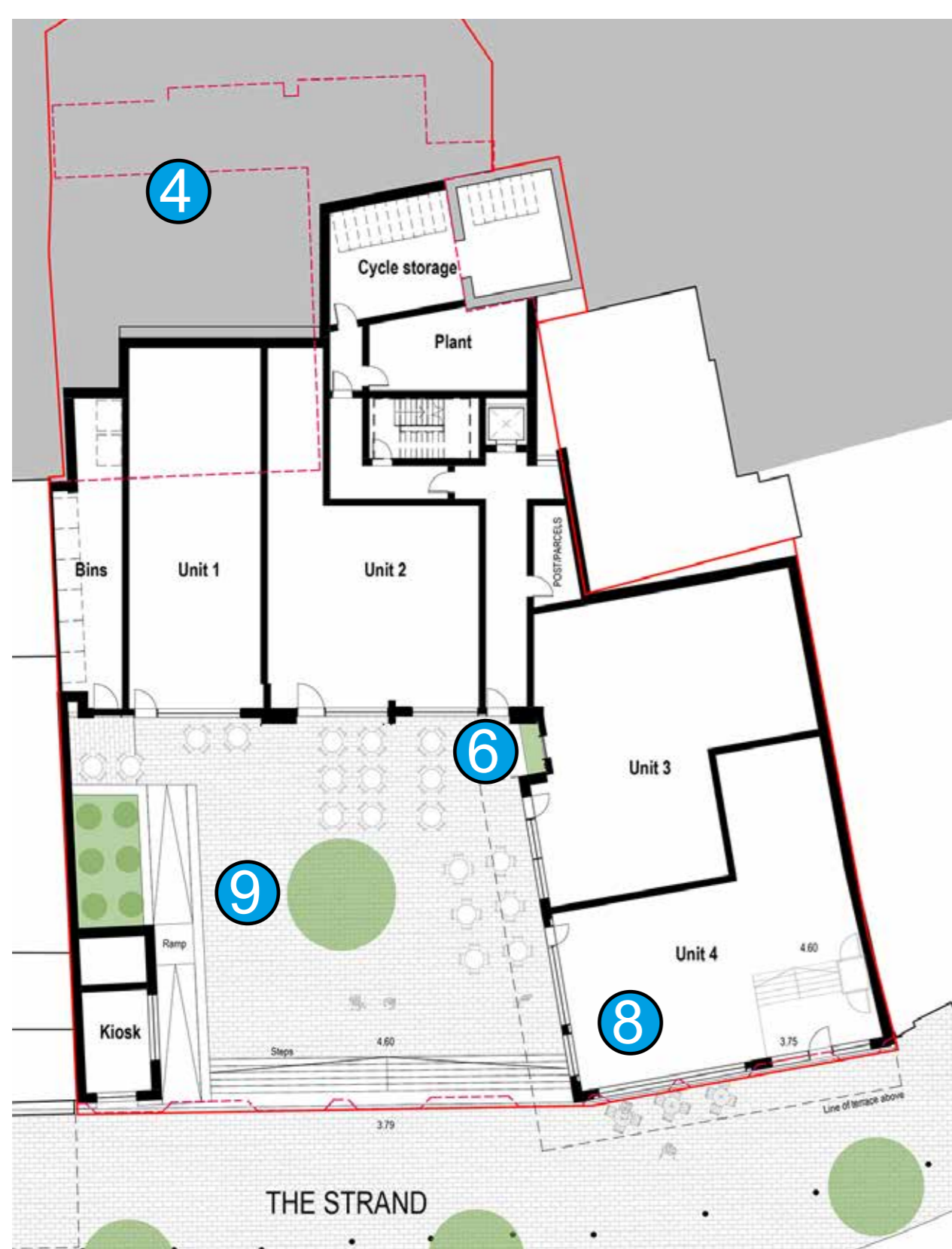
The tree *Ulmus* 'New Horizon' (to reflect the Elm historically planted at the western end of the Strand) is proposed for the centre of the square. New trees are also proposed to reinstate the line of trees that had historically been planted along The Strand.



Sketch of raised square with cafe seating and soft landscape elements.

Debenhams Site Regeneration Outline of Proposals

The proposal is for up to 5 ground floor leisure retail units with 16 apartments over 4 floors above.



Ground Floor.

Includes up to five leisure retail units with approximately 500m² of internal area in addition to external seating. Residents access and bike store.



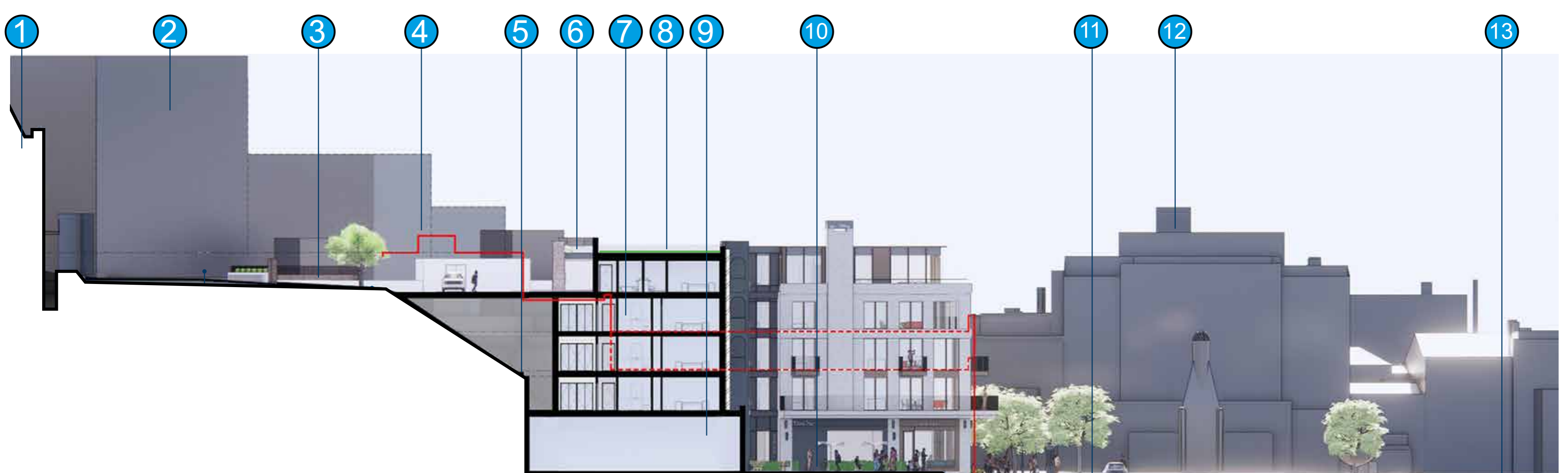
Residential Floors

Providing four number two bedroom apartments per floor with private terraces and harbour views.



Top Floor

Incorporates 16 parking spaces for residents, accessed from The Terrace, a residential bin store and north entrance to the apartments.



1. The Terrace

2. Hampton Hotel

3. Car parking

4. Existing building outline

5. Existing retaining wall

6. Residents entrance

7. Apartments

8. Green Roof

9. Commercial units

10. Public Square

11. The Strand

12. Former Queens Hotel

13. Harbour

Above: Cross section through The Terrace, proposed site and The Strand

Debenhams Site Regeneration Street Scene Character

The choice of materials will add to the character of the harbour area. Picking up historical threads with a contemporary focus on building performance and sustainability. The site is broken into two distinct elements.

The Strand Building for the 21st Century.

The Strand building speaks to the grandeur of Torquay as an influential Victorian tourist and cultural destination.

Vertically proportioned with high quality materials and beautifully detailed the building provides a contemporary and sensitively considered addition to the historic fabric of the harbourside.

Following the formal hierarchy of many of the C19th buildings and using elevational datums set by 15 Strand the details include:

A grand plinth storey (The Street) with cantilevered wrap around terrace providing weather protection to below
A middle storey (The Body) - with double height vertical windows and projecting balcony detail.

A top floor (The Crown) - facade recessed to create depth and conceal a full balcony.

Roofscape (Roof) - set back with change of materials and detailing.



Right Example materials
Below: Example building that have informed the design



Existing Canopy

Following feedback from Historic England we are proposing to remove the poor quality roofing material and roof structure of the canopy but retain the original canopy columns.

This allows us to re-introduce street trees and adapt the original columns for ambient street lighting marking a return to the historic character of the early 20thC.

We have also used the canopy as inspiration for designing and detailing the wrap around first floor terrace.

Debenhams Site Regeneration Street Scene Character

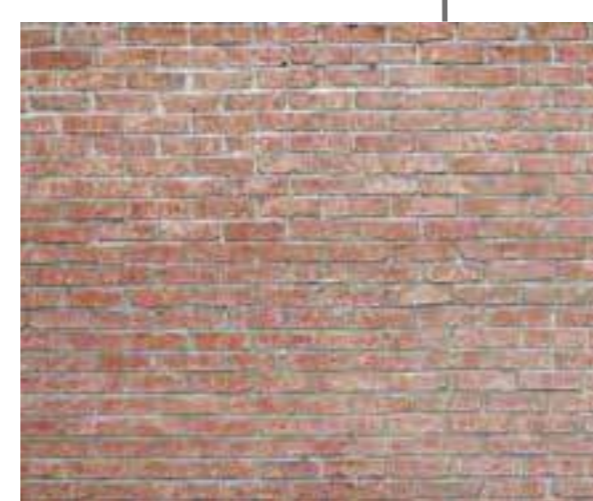
Key to the success of this scheme is the inclusion of town centre living. Here the proposal is to create a terrace of neighbourhood buildings facing into the square with apartments above and retail units or cafes below.

Neighbourhood Buildings

The design of narrow and eclectic frontages is a reflection on the vibrant character of the harbourside and a continuation of the existing residential building line behind 11 Strand.

The vertical proportions of the proposed elevations reflect those found around the harbour and historic Terrace to the rear.

A mixture of brick (inspired by victorian retaining walls on the site) and aluminium cladding (inspired by archways from original Art Nouveau bookshop) provide a high quality contemporary finish.



Right: Example materials
Below: Building precedents



Cottage Kiosk

A kiosk, white with slate roof is provided as a contemporary extension to 11 Strand. It will 'bookend' the square and create an active gable elevation to the 19thC cottages.



Debenhams Site Regeneration Outline of Proposals



Indicative view



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Street Elevation

Debenhams Site Regeneration Outline of Proposals



The view from the terrace looking out across the Harbour and a closer view of the Strand building



FAQs

1. Why cant you keep the existing building?

The existing building is not fit for purpose and does not comply with current building standards, including environmental performance and safety.

2. Are you removing the canopy?

Following feedback from Historic England we are proposing to remove the poor quality roofing material and roof structure of the canopy but retain the original canopy columns.

This change allows us to re-introduce street trees and adapt the original columns for ambient street lighting marking a return to the historic character of the late 19th/early 20th century.

We have also used the canopy as inspiration for designing and detailing the wrap around first floor terrace.

As the bus stop will be relocated and different uses are proposed at ground floor level we believe that these changes will create a better environment at street level whilst respecting the heritage of the canopy.

3. How tall are the new buildings?

At the front of the building the existing height is 16.48m, the new Strand Building in the same place is 18.9m, it then steps back and rises to 21.7m. At the rear the existing building is higher than the proposed at 22.5m.

4. Why cant we encourage a new Department store

Town centres are changing, large scale retail units are no longer viable. Travel, costs and shopping online are some of the factors that make that so. Instead progressive towns have the opportunity to include more town centre living, pop up events, smaller retailers and mixed use opportunities. Combined these make really attractive places to visit and spend time, as well as to live and invest.

5. Where will residents park?

Each apartment will have a single parking space and electric charge point accessed from the terrace.

Tell us what you think...

Now that you have had a chance to see our proposals, we'd like to know what you think about them.

Please fill in one of the feedback forms available online at <https://www.torbay.gov.uk/the-strand-redevelopment>, where a digital version of these proposals can be found.

Please let us know what you think by midnight 5th May 2022.

Once we have considered your views, we will submit our proposals to Torbay Council for consideration. Should approval be granted, we would want to move to the construction phase as quickly as possible, hopefully in 2023.

We'd like to thank you for your time today