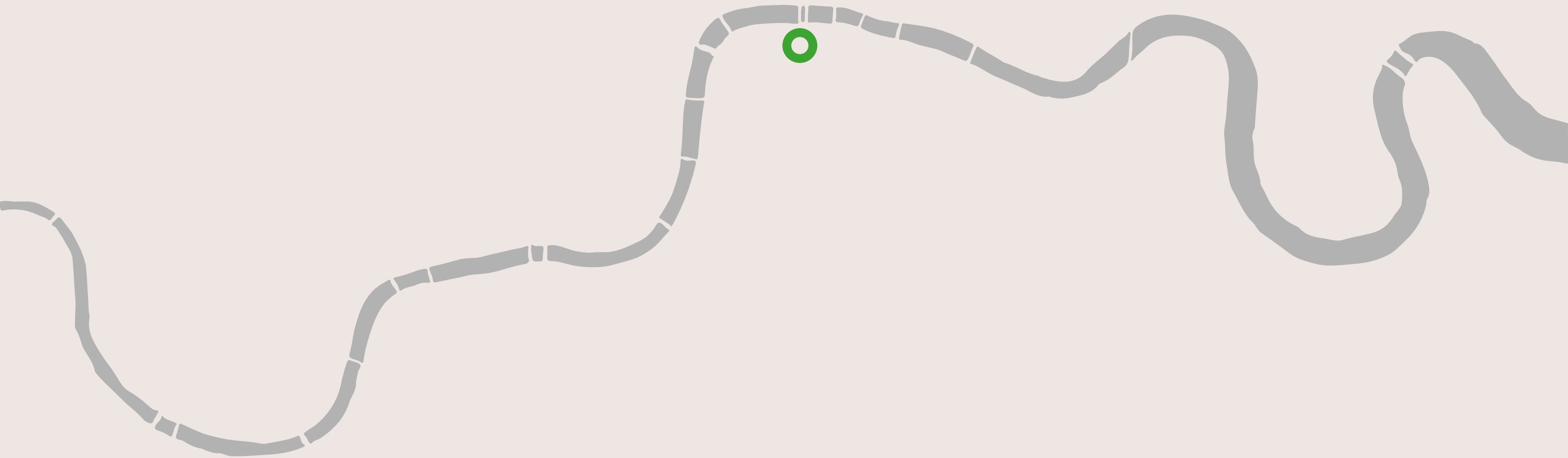




4.0.1 Podium and Public Realm

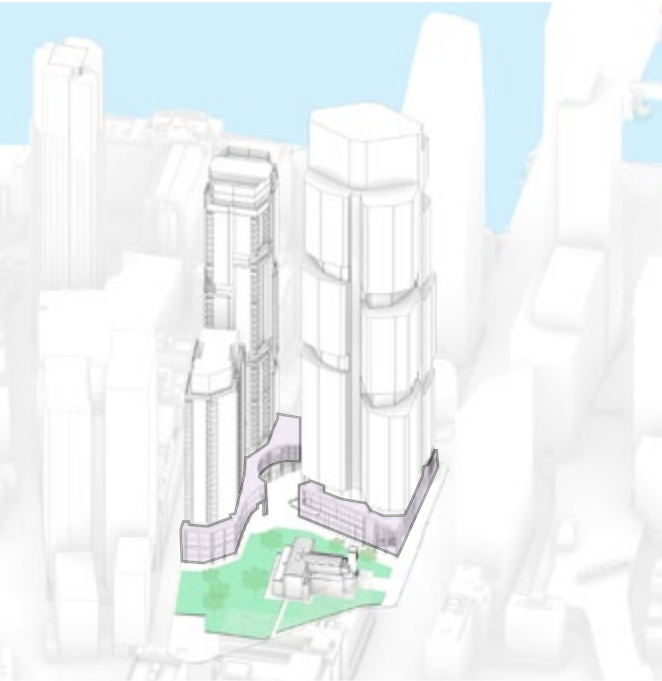
This chapter looks at the placemaking concept alongside the design development of the Podium and public realm.

Placemaking is the key to creating a vibrant and successful mixed-use scheme, that improves urban vitality and promotes people's health, happiness, and well-being.

Alongside the entrances and lobby areas for the Office, Stamford and Paris Buildings, the ground floor provides a range of retail, food and beverage and cultural spaces, which provide active frontages both with the central plaza ('the Rotunda') and also along Stamford Street and Blackfriars Road. The ground floor uses focus around the central Rotunda which is accessed by several pedestrian routes from the south, east and north of the Site.

Inspired by local history of the Rotunda Radicals (refer to Chapter 2), the Rotunda, introduces a modern interpretation of this civic gathering space back to Southwark, both through its shape and function. The public spaces and new routes through the Site have been designed to be a welcoming environment, featuring artwork and areas that could host events and pop-ups.

The design of the public realm will improve the quality of Blackfriars' streetscape, by creating a sustainable, active and accessible space with a rich mix of functions.



Left:
Podium highlighted in purple

Right:
Indicative Rotunda view looking north

4.0.2 Podium and Public Realm Design

A prerequisite to achieving a successful public realm is creating an inclusive environment where people feel comfortable and enjoy spending time, whilst participating in social activities; this helps to promote a civic sense of pride.

The design of the Podium combines inspiring architecture for living, working and playing, combining a wide range of uses. The Podium proposals include retail, food and beverage, office and residential amenity, culture and performance, affordable workspace, educational and other flexible uses. The intention is to create a valuable place that shares its benefits in the heart of Southwark and London more widely.

The design draws inspiration from the existing Site context and the rich local history, creating a purposeful, responsive design that engages with local communities and enhances connectivity through the Site and the local area.



Placemaking

Good urban design is inseparable from its surrounding economic and commercial forces. A successful public and urban realm establishes a foundation for a sustainable community. The proposed development would not only cultivate a prosperous development but also to respond to the needs of the wider neighbourhood.

The Podium and public realm have been developed to provide opportunities for existing and future communities to grow and engage with each other. This will be established through a variety of play spaces, spaces that could be used for public art installations, retail and leisure uses, and cultural and educational spaces , catering to multiple demographics of the local community.



Designing for People

A sense of place is the hallmark of good urban design. Psychological, social and cultural dimensions which transform the urban environment into liveable places, centres people at the heart of the design process. The length of time people spend in a public space is a key indicator of its success.

The design recognises that this is only partly attributed to its setting, and that physical properties, such as providing a range of activities and spaces are equally important. The Proposed Development will provide for the socioeconomic and environmental needs of a diverse mix of residents, employees and visitors.

Diversity and choice responds to local needs, providing a range of flexible spaces that can accommodate a variety of uses at different times of day and year.



Accessibility and Inclusive Design

A well-designed public realm can contribute significantly to the quality of the built environment and play a key role in the creation of sustainable, inclusive and liveable environments. The public realm would provide a clear and inclusive environment, suitable and safe for everyone, including people with disabilities, the elderly and children in pushchairs. The legibility of the Proposed Development would help orientate people without the need for elaborate signage and the provision of facilities will cater for the needs of all.

The form of the public realm integrates into the existing pedestrian and cycle routes around the Site to improve connectivity and place the public realm at the heart of the local community.



Variety of Spaces

Successful public spaces encourage interaction, stimulate civic participation, and can provide the focal point or the heart of an urban community. These need to be designed as centre stages on which the theatre of city life unfolds. Activities can be classified under two main types: activities which are necessary for everyday tasks such as access to buildings, and activities which are discretionary and include social and active participation. The use of the public realm can change during the course of a day, week and year. The design is taking into account this ever-changing scenario and seeks to provide a variety and a mix of spaces and active frontages throughout the proposed development. Flexible spaces for pop-ups have been considered alongside a variety of scales of retail units.

A variety of urban greening would be provided, creating variety to both its location and seasonal variation. A number of spaces that could be used for public art installations have also been identified and a public art strategy would be developed in this regard to complement the design.



Landscape

Movement of people, goods and vehicles is the lifeblood of the city. By designing neighbourhoods with strong circulation routes, combined with strategic designs for function, density, routes and public space we create healthy, vibrant streets.

The proposed public realm would knit into the existing pedestrian and cycle routes around the Site to improve connectivity and place the Proposed Development at the heart of the local community.



Architecture

Questions of urban form affect the function, feel and identity of the urban environment. An analysis of optimum scale, proximity and density help to define an area's success and resilience. Designs of public spaces within the Proposed Development are rooted in the belief that quality design can help create better places – places with local distinctiveness and identity.

Local context and street character will inform the Podium design, through the materiality and proportion to create an warm and inviting streetscape and front door to the proposal.

4.0.3 Podium and Public Realm Concept
Design Development

The design of the ground floor and Podium is centred upon the creation of a new public space (the Rotunda), forming the heart of the scheme, while the building itself becomes the connecting element of the project.

The process started by identifying the history of the Site, key elements of the surrounding context and the characteristics of Southwark. This founded several key design drivers, such as the formations of new routes, the central Rotunda and integration of 1 and 3-7 Stamford Street with the creation of Hatters Yard.

Developed alongside Space Syntax, multiple studies were undertaken to improve connectivity, pedestrian flows and to create new desirable routes and dwelling spaces, all of which informed the Podium's massing and shaped the proposed public realm (For further detail refer to Chapter 3.1).

The design process is non-linear and as the scheme progressed, new information, key challenges and constraints were revealed. In response to these, the team carried out extensive two and three-dimension studies.

The following images show a series of model studies carried out during the design process of the public realm and Podium.



This Page:
Above: 1:200 podium model exploring routes through the Site
Below: Podium programme and massing studies
Facing Page
Above: Ground Floor development of routes through the Site
Below: Architectural studies of the central space



Initial Design
The Podium and public realm has undergone a series of design iterations focused on the shape of the Rotunda, this space represents the convergence point of all new routes linking into the existing transport hubs, adjacent roads and highways. Following site analysis and Space Syntax's work (refer to Chapter 3.1), the Podium's form has been directly driven by these routes, lines of sight and optimisation of the public realm.



Developed Design
As the design developed options were reviewed to increase the size of the public realm and to create a focus at the heart of the scheme.

The central space gradually took a softer form, with a podium connecting the buildings together and creating a three-dimensional public realm. To maximise this multi-level experience, an interconnected journey between ground and the upper levels became a key concept in shaping the design.



Refined Design
Further reviews of movement and lines of sight allowed us to prioritise key routes. Particular care was given to creating a new generous route to the south of 1 and 3-7 Stamford Street (Hatters Yard). This route provides an important connection to Blackfriars Road while also helping to celebrate the listed building facade and create an extension to the Rotunda.

The Rotunda extends into an oval to maximise the public realm whilst providing a unified base to the three buildings above the Podium.



Studies were completed on how to create vertical gardens to be less cluttered at ground floor level.



A series of studies were carried out to create a focal stair to encourage vertical movement to these levels.



The design evolved to incorporate traditional English hedges and pocket spaces for gathering, socialising and leisure within the Podium terraces and also above the Podium, providing communal amenity space for the Paris Building and Stamford Building, and the Office Building ('the Rooftop Gardens').

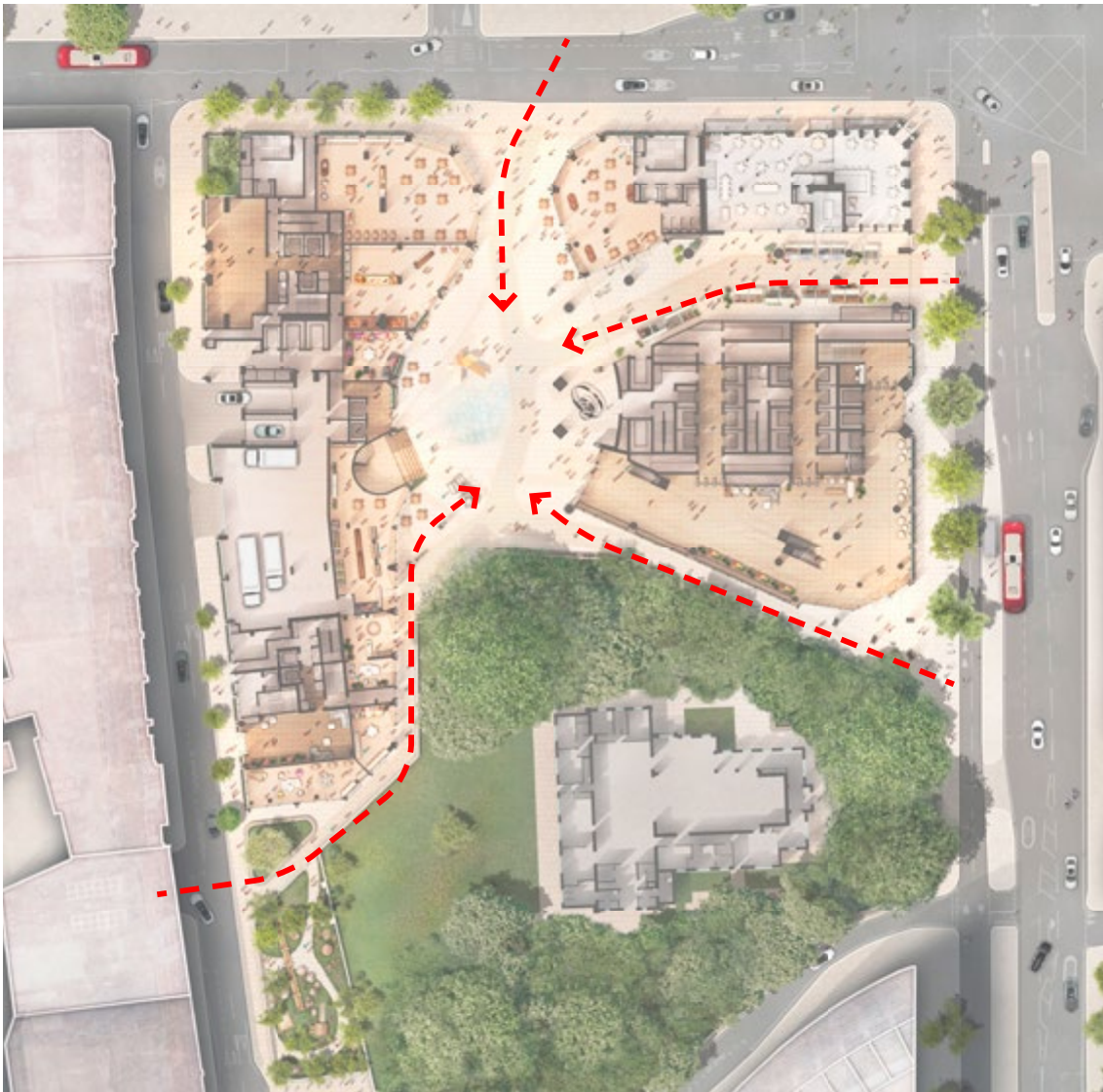
4.0.4 Podium and Public Realm Access

Design Development

Throughout the development and evolution of the public realm, the project team has actively sought to involve stakeholders such as the LBS, the GLA and TfL in the design process. This has helped to inform an inclusive and accessible design.

In addition, the scheme has incorporated the aspirations of the local community through feedback provided during the public consultation process and the comments received through the design panel review process. Further detail of public consultation is included in Chapter 3.0 and the 'Statement of Community Involvement' submitted with the applications.

The following is a breakdown of key design developments that enabled the project to have successful public realm and access strategy.



Accessibility

Following consultation with LBS, the GLA and TfL, and through public consultations there was a clear desire for pedestrian movement across the Site and for the Proposed Development to not add additional traffic into the existing road networks. Local residents were particularly keen for there to be no additional cars in the area. As such, and informed by the components of the allocation (Ref: NSP22) in the New Southwark Plan (2022), the following design moves were made:

- Prioritise pedestrian movements with new routes across the Site.
- A large cycle hub located on the cycle highway.
- Provide a car-free scheme (other than 3% blue badge bay parking for residents only and one car club parking space).
- A combined service yard and strategy alongside consolidated deliveries to minimise vehicle movements around the Site.



Streetscape

LBS and TfL want to improve the streetscape of the surrounding streets. Following workshops with LBS and TfL, different options for Paris Garden were investigated including pedestrianisation and shared surfaces. The Proposed Development would increase the footway width of Paris Garden to approximately double the existing width, providing a safe, clear route with space for planting.

Blackfriars Road and Stamford Street are both wide in dimension, but access and escape doors that form part of the Proposed Development have been recessed to maximise the street width. Trees have been provided with cycle stands located between them to maximise urban greening around the Site.

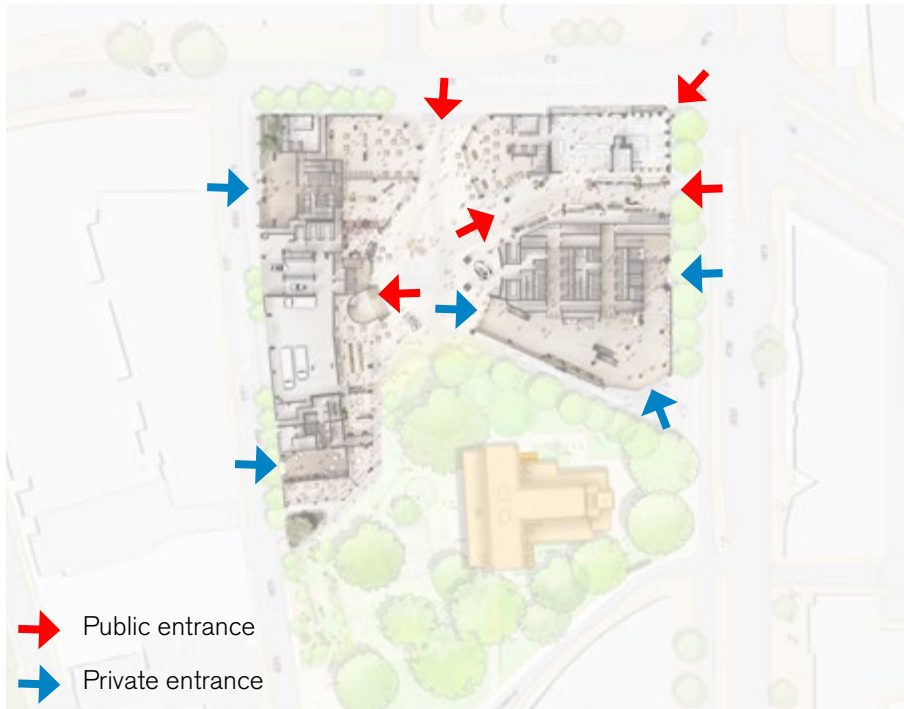
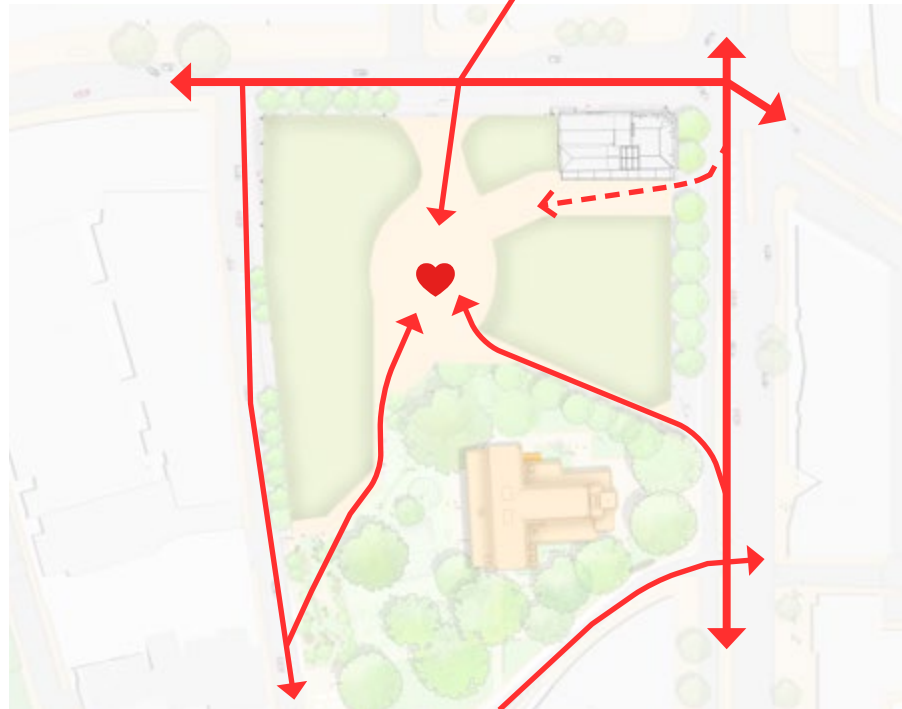
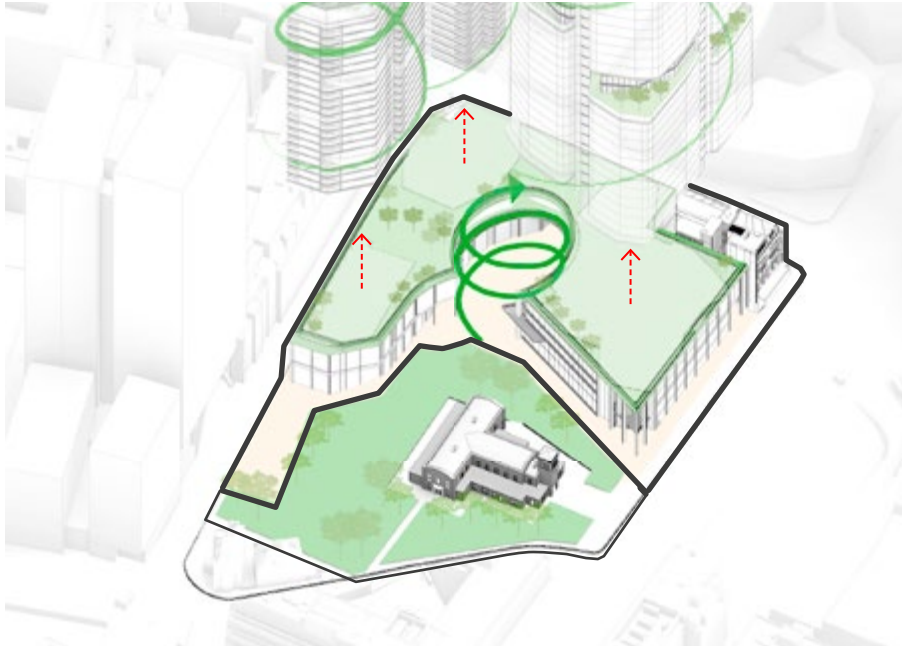
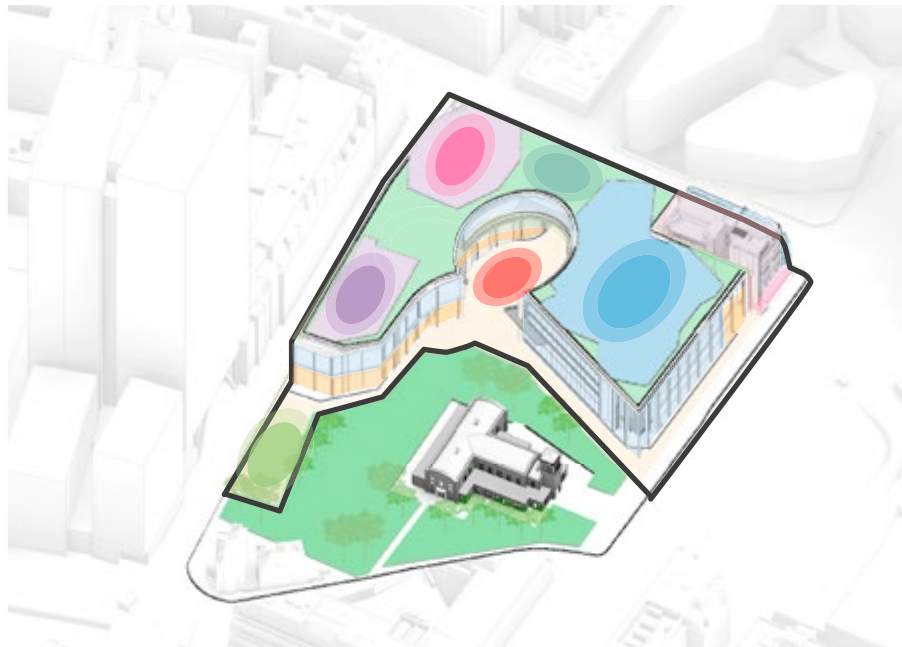
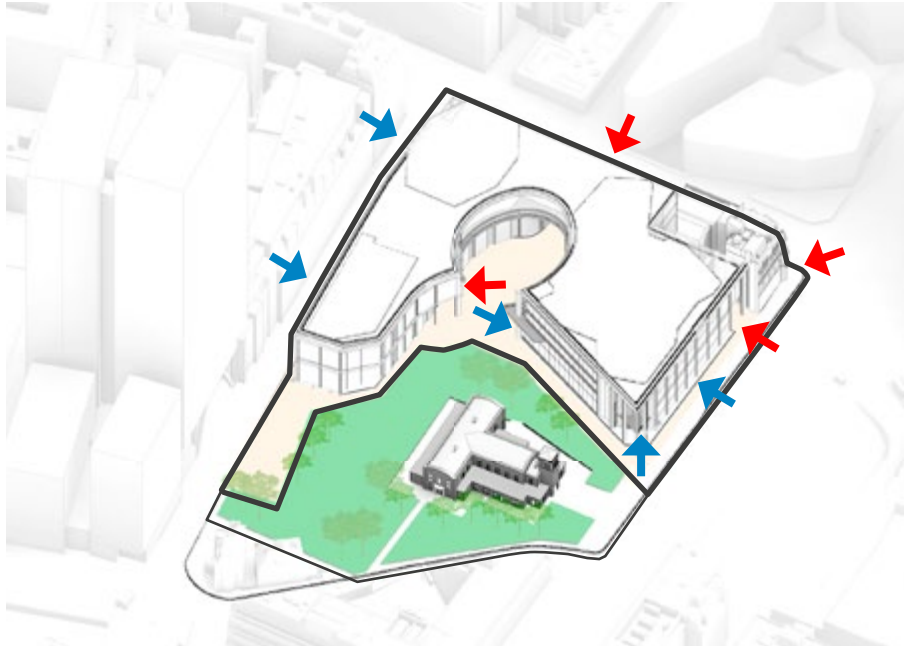
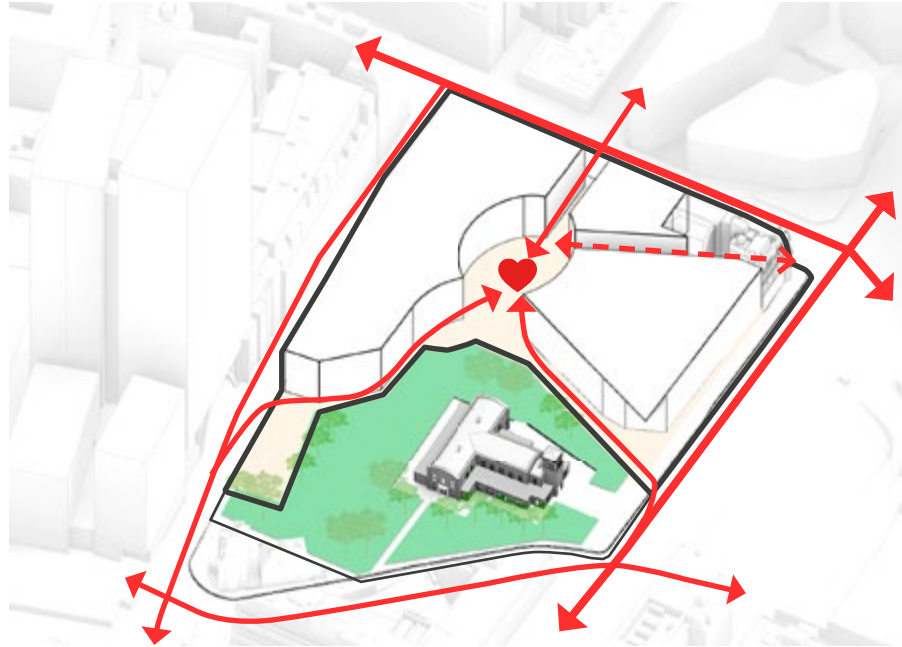
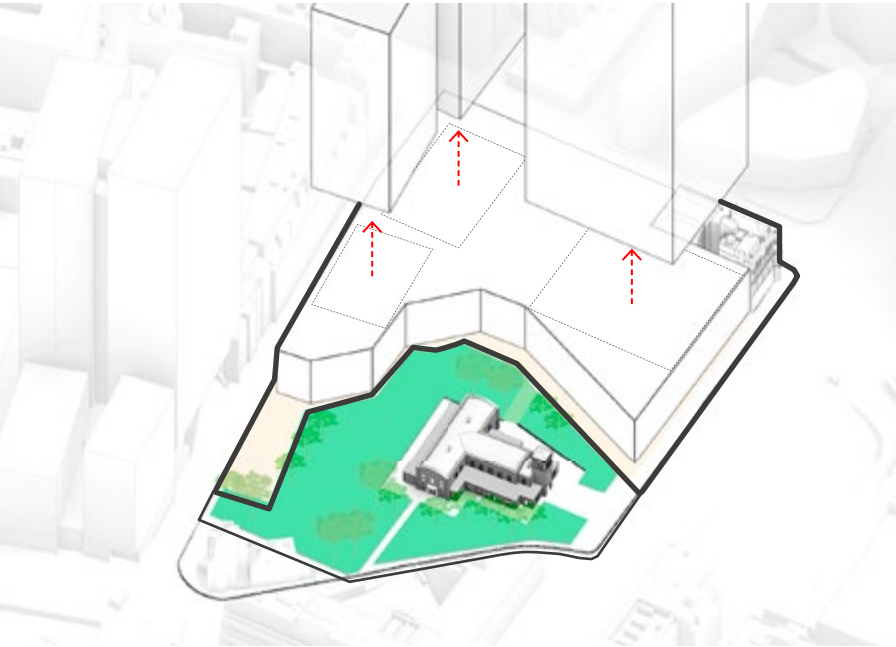


Hatters Yard

One of the key principles of the design evolution was to provide a new pedestrian link to the rear of the Mad Hatter Public House and 1 Stamford Street. This was principally to link through to the desire-lines across the Site and the wider network. It has enlivened and created a new 'discoverable' space which will enable a greater appreciation of the historic environment. Likewise, it may also provide opportunities for demountable stalls for local businesses to operate from, linking into the wider functions within the Proposed Development.

4.0.5 Podium Massing and Access
Design Development

1. Raised buildings to create a Podium
2. Enhancing pedestrian experience and public realm
3. Podium entrances
4. Combining multi-levels
5. Variety of uses and flexibility
6. Landscape greenery and unified language



Lifting the towers above the ground plane to create a unifying Podium enables a range of used to be accommodated on the lower levels which help activate the street fronts and new public realm.

Having lifted the towers above the Podium, the streetscape and pedestrian experience could be enhanced by creating new routes through the Site, connecting the Rotunda to the existing highways and routes, and repairing and enhancing the urban fabric of the site.

Wayfinding and positioning of front doors are crucial to the success of the Proposed Development. Whilst access to the Site is driven by pedestrian movement and desire lines, careful consideration also needed to be given to the building entrances.

The office entrance is located on Blackfriars Road benefitting from the connection to the local transport hubs and cycle highway, whilst the residential entrances are placed on the quieter, more residential street, Paris Garden.

The Podium and public realm forms the front door to the Proposed Development. The Podium is a multi-level building combining a variety of uses and accessible from the public realm.

The Podium encapsulates the essence of various local characters to create a holistic scheme integrated into its local vernacular. It is a social bridge between the different functions of the Proposed Development and a richly diverse destination for visitors.

The Podium comprises of ground plus three storeys which would delivery a variety of uses, providing a welcoming place to eat, drink, learn meet and gather. The Podium is intended to complement the public realm, aiming to create a new vibrant destination for Southwark.

Introducing landscape and greenery throughout the levels of the Podium creates a unified language and experience from the ground to the top of the building alongside opportunities for a wide range of activities, breakout and gathering spaces.

Right:
Indicative Rotunda view
looking south



