

Churchgate Centre Hitchin – Design Notes

Lyons Sleeman & Hoare Architects July 2013

1.0 Introduction

The following notes review the current state of the Churchgate centre and outline a strategy for the re-invigoration of the existing centre. Proposals are currently outline only but sufficient to establish a strategy that can transform the centre into one that is vibrant and successful whilst also fitting much more appropriately into the historic context of Hitchin conservation area, in which it lies.

2.0 The existing scheme

The Churchgate centre opened in 1974. At the time it was probably a better than average designed small shopping centre, with elevations to some degree reflecting the scale and materials of their context, particularly to the Market Place and Churchgate Walk; pitched roofs to these elevations also tempered the (then) contemporary style which includes exposed concrete floor slabs and columns. However, behind these facades there was no attempt to design to the character of the historic town centre of Hitchin. Rear elevations are treated as back of house, although open to the public realm, while the mall consists of bland one and two storey flat roofed buildings, solid canopies with exposed steel soffits and fluorescent lighting. The building is no longer appropriate for present day use and as it approaches forty years of age it is looking tired and a bit shabby.

The existing building use is for retail at ground level, retail storage at first floor and offices to the second floor block facing the Market Place. The office use is now redundant and unlet and the retail storage forms largely blank facades at first floor level. These elements therefore do not add to the vitality of the centre but rather add to the impression of a shopping centre in decline.

3.0 Proposals

3.1 Function

The proposals will change the centre from a single use development into a mixed development, incorporating residential units and leisure, including cinemas and restaurants. These additional uses will extend the active use of the centre beyond shopping hours and enhance the 'night time economy' of the whole town centre, while also forming active frontages to Churchgate Walk and towards the river Hiz. Proposed residential units will look out towards the Market Place, Churchgate Walk and Biggin Lane, as well as inwards to the retail arcade and a new public square relating to St Mary's Church, thus enlivening facades and providing natural surveillance to the public realm.

3.2 Design

The proposals consist of both the refurbishment of the existing centre, including the conversion of current storage and office space to residential use, and a new build extension to the east side. The extension will contain retail, restaurants, & cinemas. The design proposals are both 'forward looking', to provide contemporary uses and functionality, and creates buildings more appropriate to their historic context.

This will be achieved by the sensitive refurbishment of the existing centre and the new build extension that responds to the scale and architectural vocabulary of its neighbours, whilst material selection will also respond to its context.

Buildings will be designed to maximise sustainability whilst town centre living reduces reliance on private car use.

Public realm within the scheme proposals has been carefully considered, with the inclusion of a new public square, which pays respect to the existing St Mary's Church (Grade 1 Listed). The proposal also presents the Warners Almshouses (Building of Local Interest) with a key role as acting as a flanking 'gatehouse' building on entry from the east into this new public space.

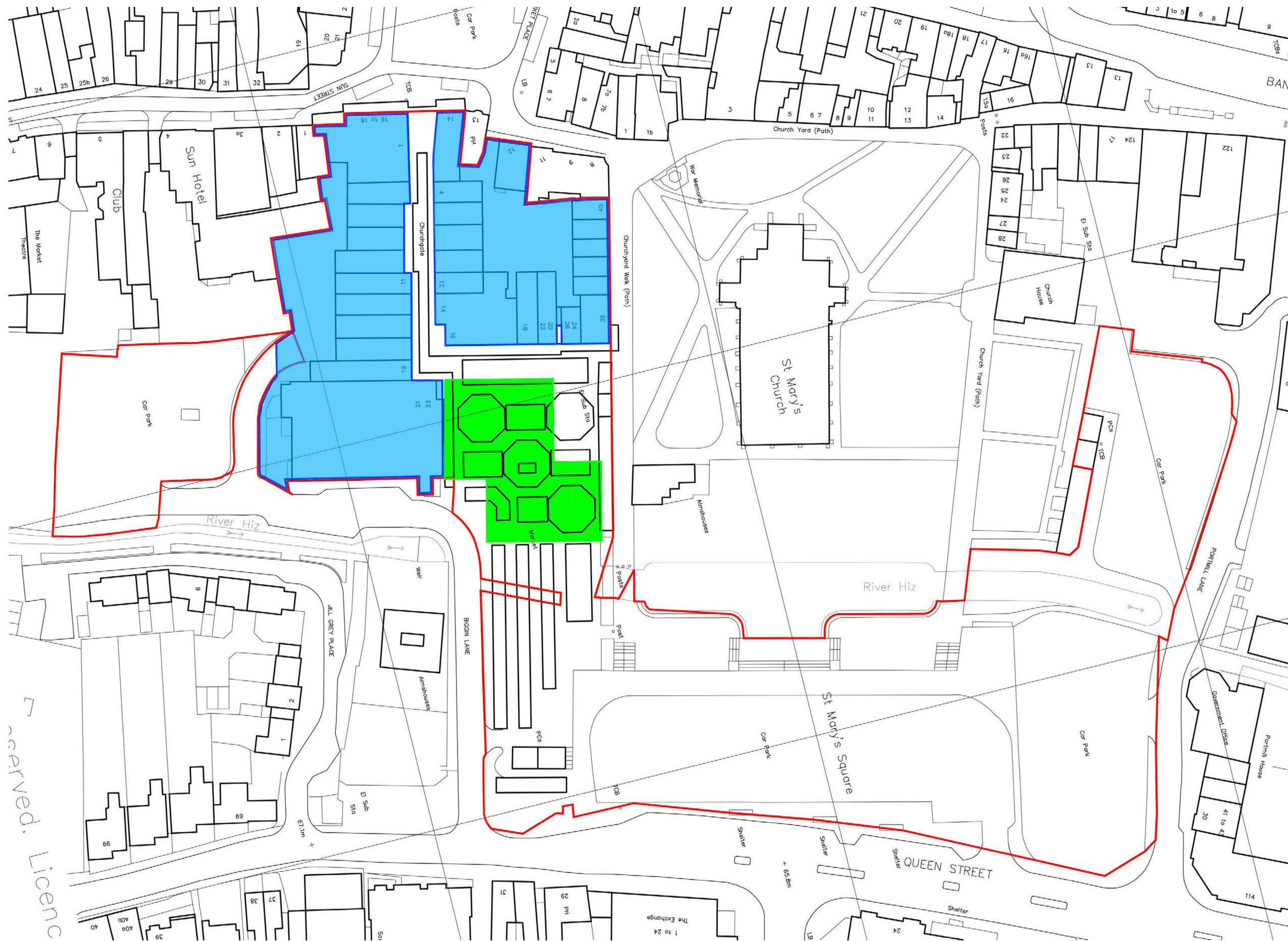
Other adjacent key buildings have also been considered within the proposals, with the restriction of the Block B building facing onto Churchyard Walk to no more than two and a half storeys (limiting impact on Grade II* Listed Building at no's. 8-12 Market Place) and with a direct footpath connection between the Warner Almshouses and The Biggin (Grade II* Listed).

Lease Plan

A vision for the redevelopment of Churchgate, Hitchin



Hammersmatch Developments Limited / June 2014

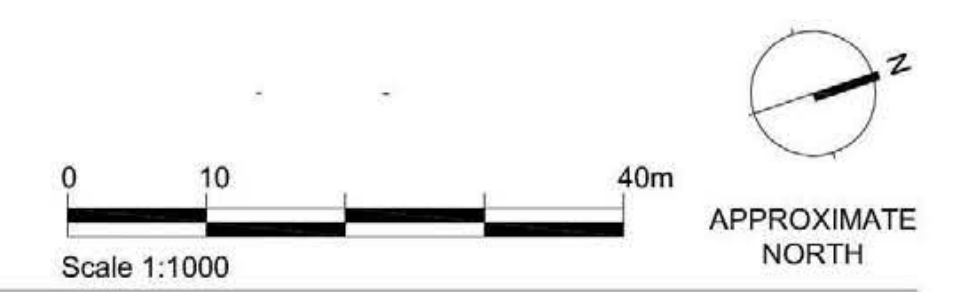


Key

- Council Land Ownership
2.20 ha
22041 SQ M
- Currently Leased by Hammersmatch
0.51 ha
5053 SQ M
- Additional Area Required A3/Cinema
0.120 ha
1199 SQ M

NOTE: ALL AREAS ARE APPROXIMATE

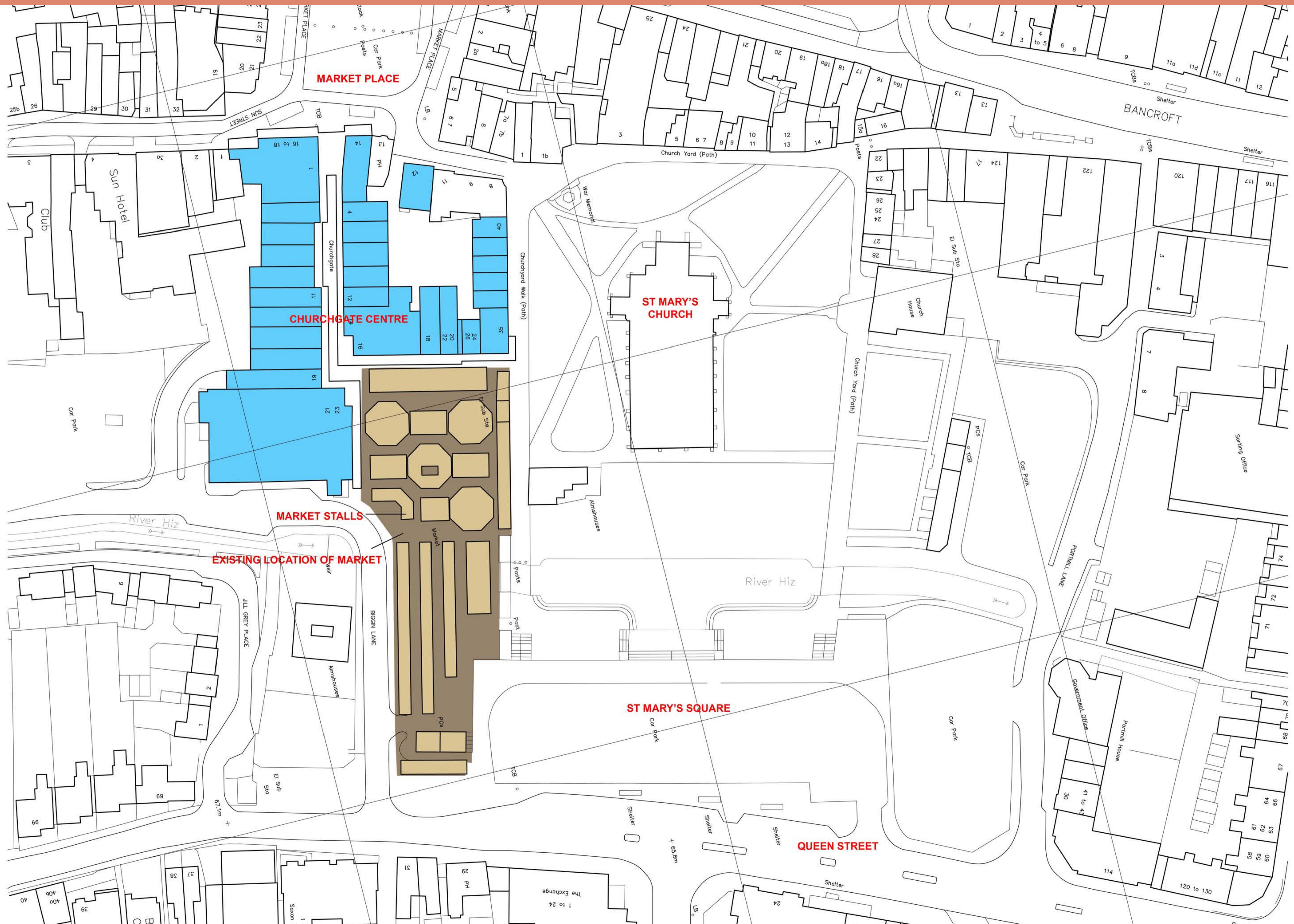
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Location Plan with Existing Market

A vision for the redevelopment of Churchgate, Hitchin

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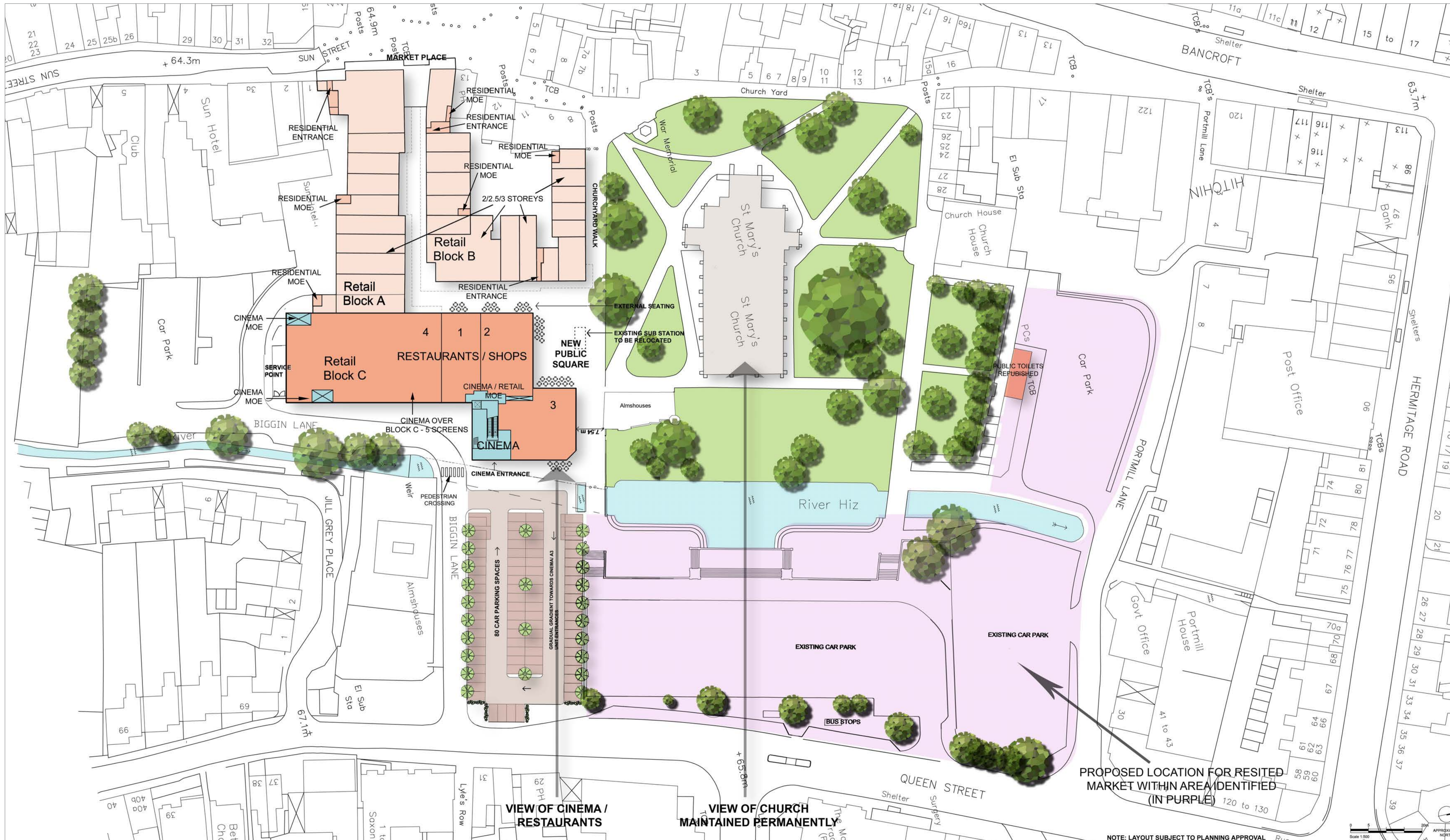


Proposed Site Plan / Ground Floor Plan

A vision for the redevelopment of Churchgate, Hitchin



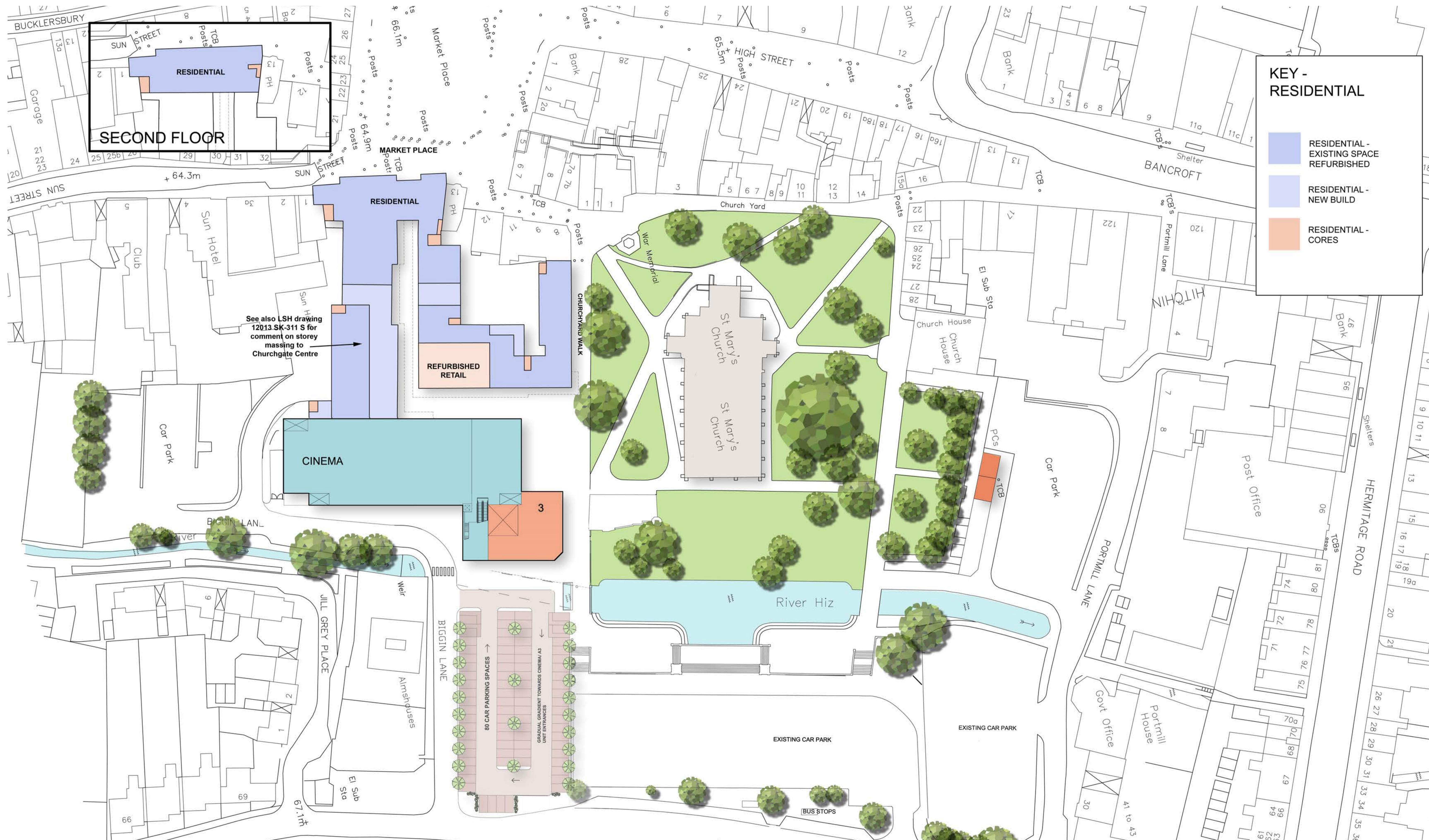
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Proposed First Floor Plan

A vision for the redevelopment of Churchgate, Hitchin

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Artists Impression / Churchgate Centre, Proposed Market Place Elevation

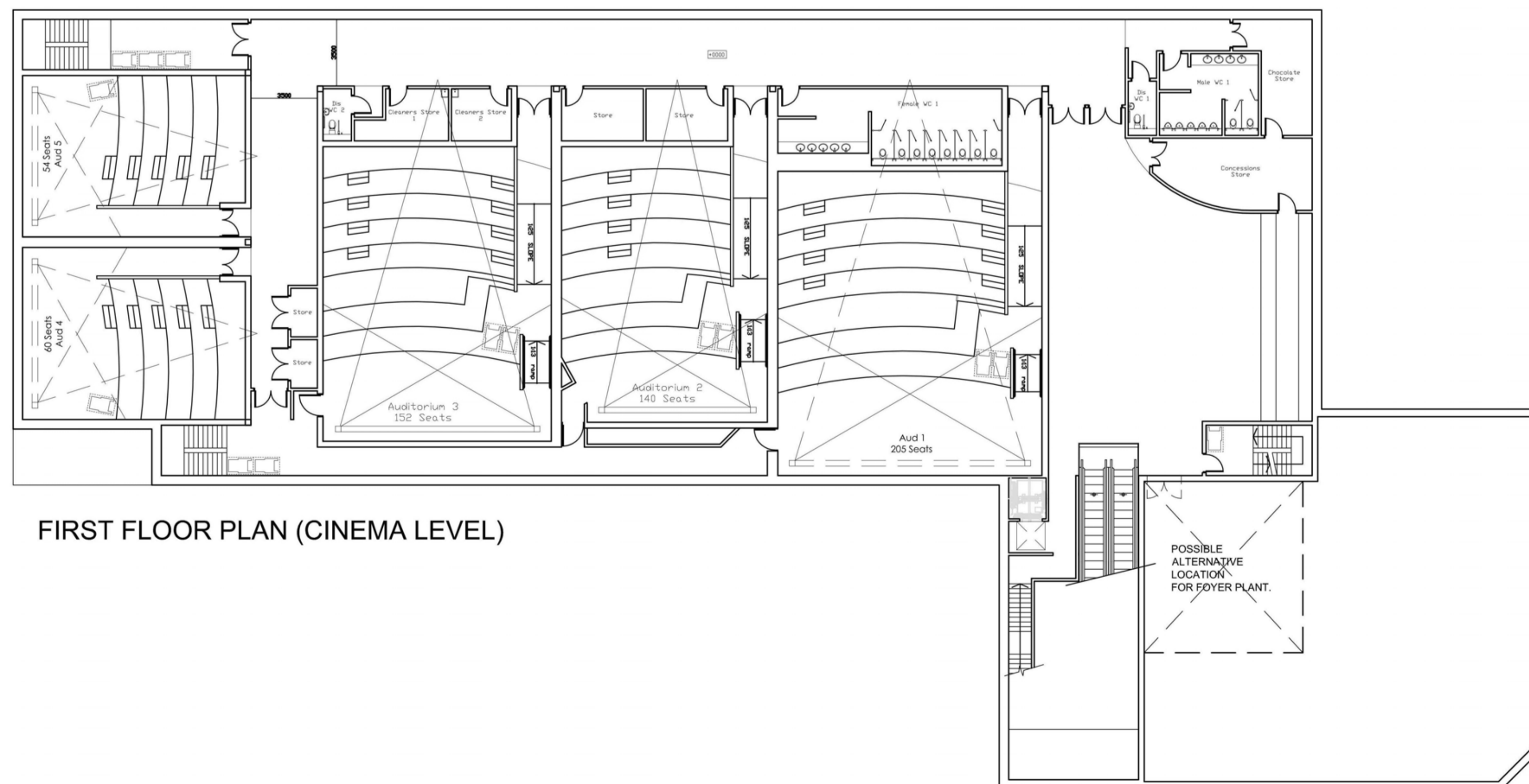
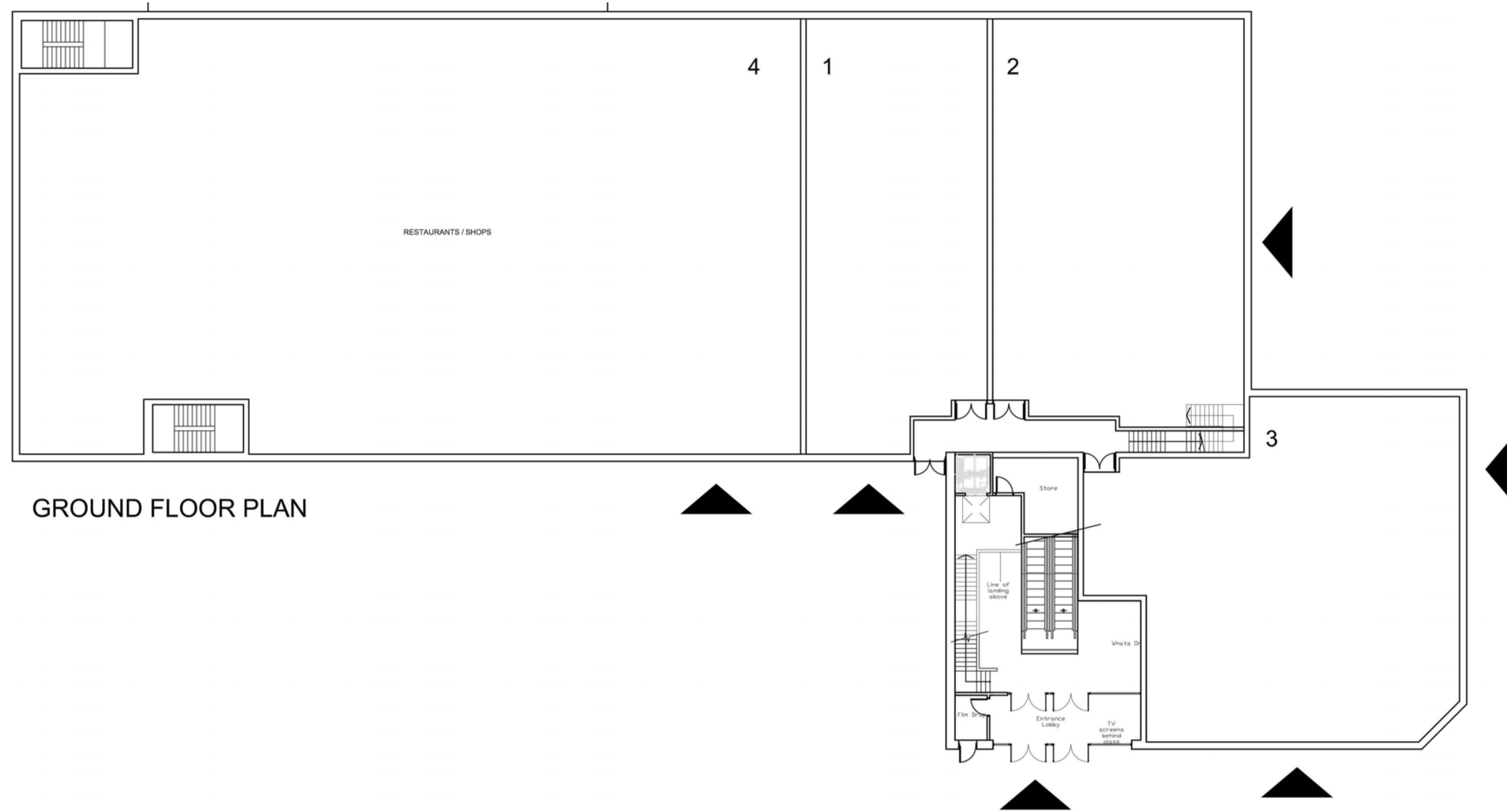
A vision for the redevelopment of Churchgate, Hitchin



Proposed Cinema Plans

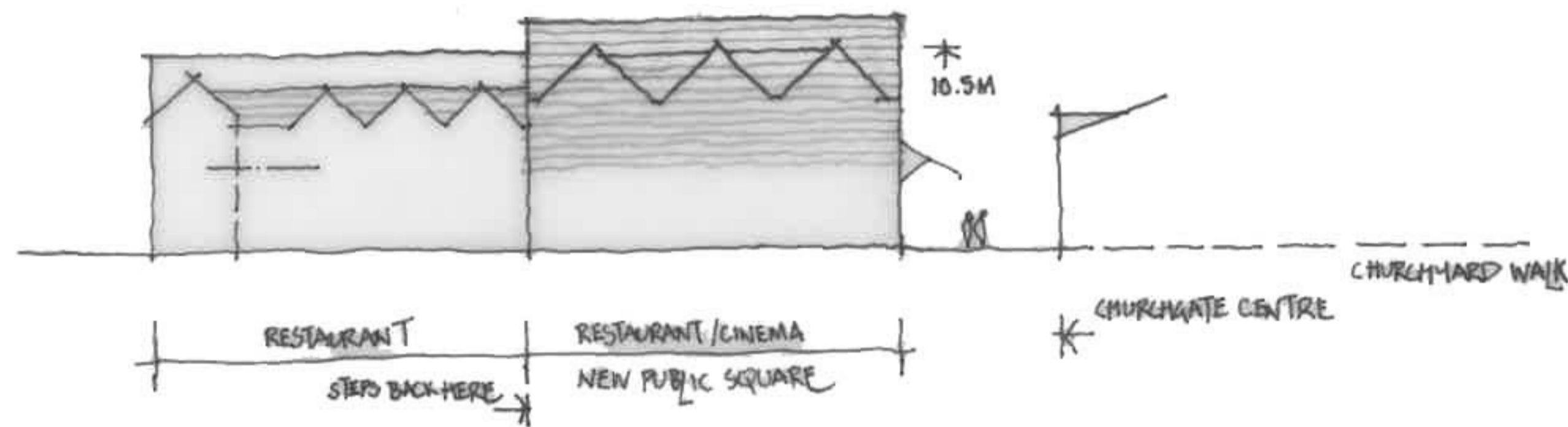
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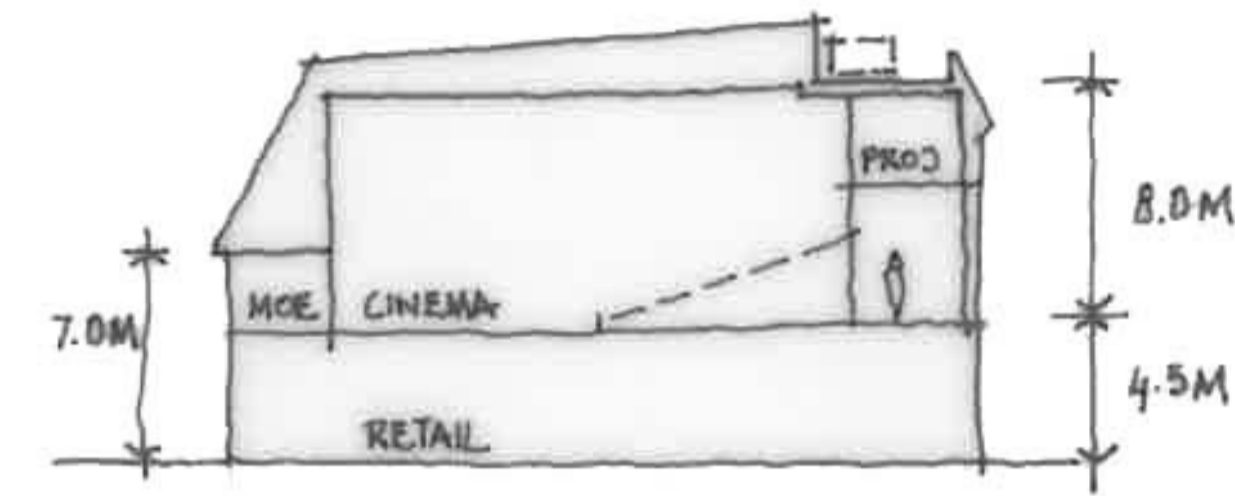


Cinema Sketch Massing Elevations

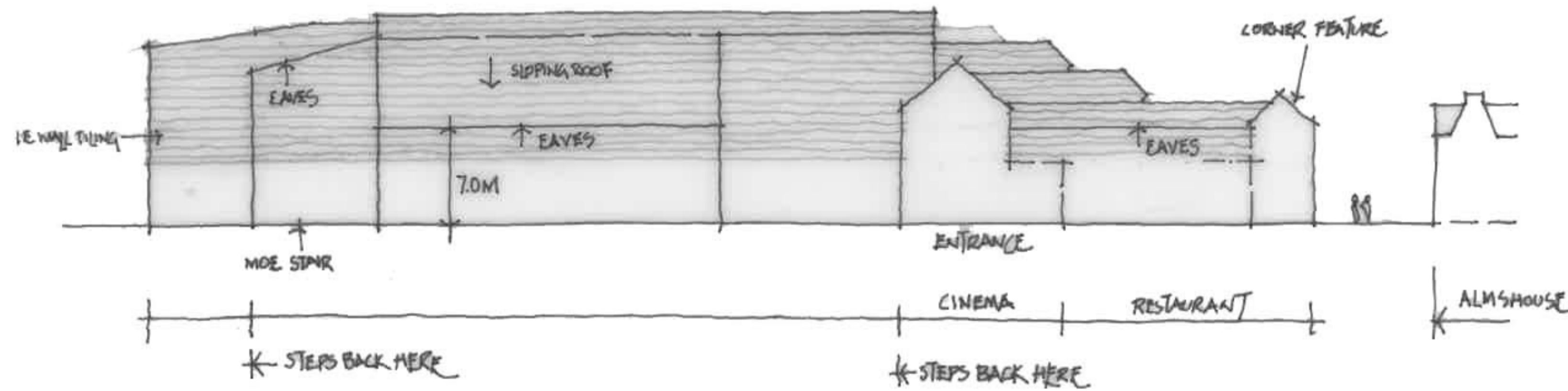
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NORTH ELEVATION



SECTION A-A



EAST ELEVATION (TOWARDS QUEEN STREET)

