



Sovereign House
Draft Design Guidelines
September 2009



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1.0 Introduction & Site Location

The Sovereign House site is a key redevelopment opportunity in Tonbridge Town Centre (Figure 1). This 1.2 hectare site is centrally located close to the High Street and adjoins the Botany Stream. This site represents a significant opportunity to provide a vibrant mixed use town centre development that meets the highest standards of architectural, environmental and urban design excellence building on the continuing regeneration and renaissance of the town. It will be important for Sovereign House to be redeveloped as an integral part of the town centre. A mix of town centre activities including retail, offices, residential, open amenity space and car parking should be accommodated within a high quality urban environment.

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council aims to facilitate development through the production of these design guidelines and through actively engaging with potential developers. This planning brief should be read alongside the Town Centre Area Action Plan (TCAAP) (with specific reference to policy TCA11(j)) and the approved Master Plan for Tonbridge Town Centre (May 2006), which provides the foundation for the TCAAP.

The purpose of this document is to highlight the key site features and design parameters to be taken into account at the detailed design stage.

Applicants should discuss their emerging proposals with the planning authority at the earliest opportunity.

Site Location & Town Centre Context



Figure 1

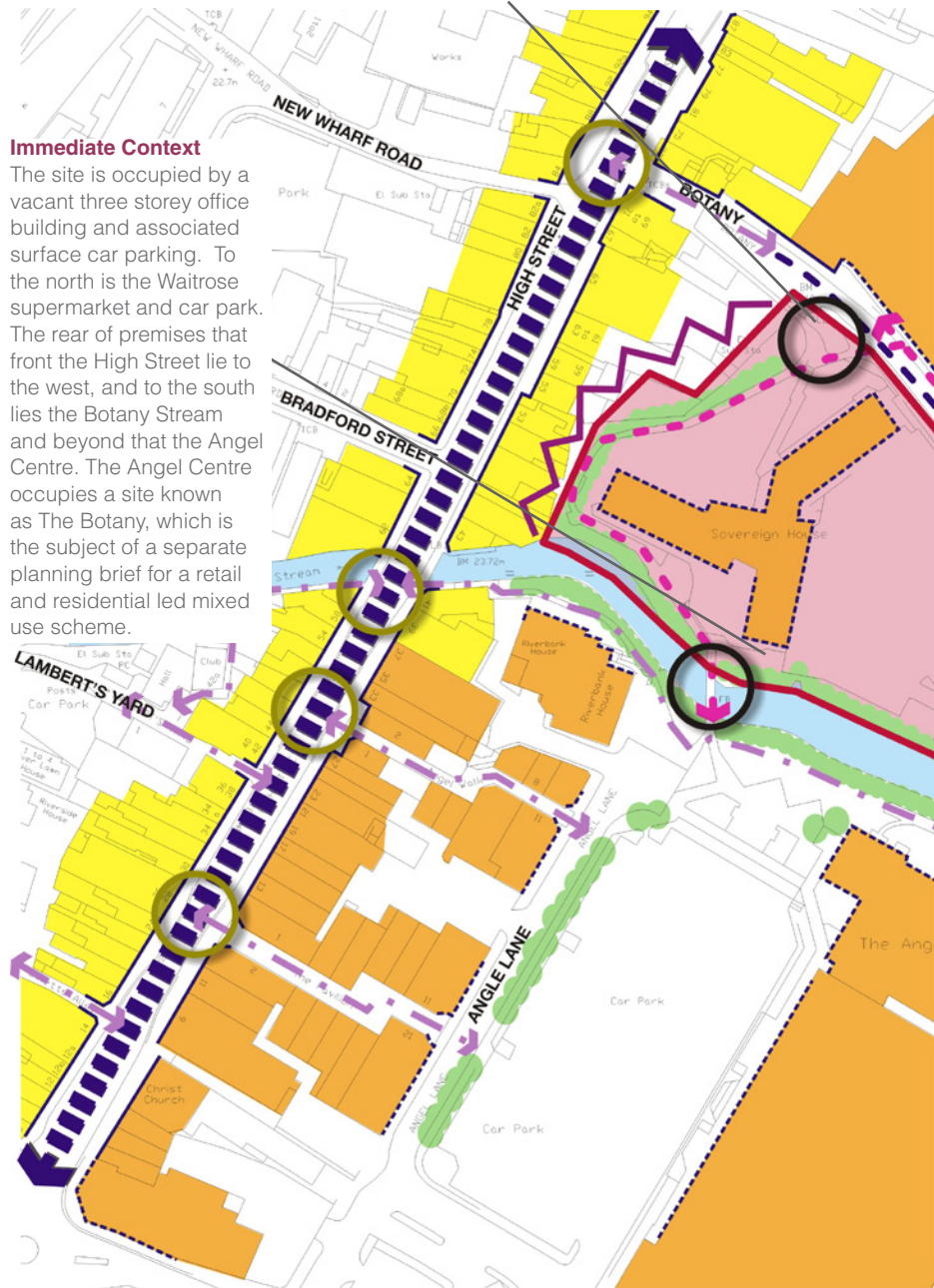
2.0 Site Features

The existing physical context, constraints and opportunities relating to the Sovereign House site are summarised on Figure 2. These will need to be accounted for as part of the re-development process.



Immediate Context

The site is occupied by a vacant three storey office building and associated surface car parking. To the north is the Waitrose supermarket and car park. The rear of premises that front the High Street lie to the west, and to the south lies the Botany Stream and beyond that the Angel Centre. The Angel Centre occupies a site known as The Botany, which is the subject of a separate planning brief for a retail and residential led mixed use scheme.



Pedestrian & Cycle Access

Pedestrian and cycle access on the north-eastern side is from Sovereign Way, and to the southern side access is via two footbridges that cross the Botany Stream. The first footbridge links Angel Lane to Sovereign Way via a public right of way which forms the site's western boundary. The second footbridge links Sovereign Way to Avenue du Puy.



Built Character

Tonbridge High Street is Victorian in scale and character. Historically the area has been predominated by three and four storey buildings, but in recent years consent has been granted for buildings of five and six storeys. In addition, the skyline is punctuated by several taller, slender structures, including Tonbridge School, and consent has recently been granted for a ten storey building at the River Centre. The area to the east of the site is occupied by industrial development, and to the south lies the Angel Centre and Sainsburys Supermarket which is surrounded by surface car parking.

Figure 2





Vehicle Access

Vehicular access to the site is currently from Sovereign Way only. There is no vehicular exit into the High Street from Sovereign Way.



Botany Stream

Botany Stream represents a constraint in terms of flooding. Careful regard will need to be paid to flooding and early discussions with the Environment Agency (EA) are encouraged. Residential accommodation at ground floor level will not be an appropriate development response because of flood risk and must therefore be accommodated at first floor level and above. As the site is brownfield it's redevelopment is considered acceptable by the EA.

- Boundary of Brief
- Vehicular Access
- Public Right of Way
- Strong Frontage
- Weak Frontage
- Strong Built Form
- Weak Built Form
- Water Corridor
- Node & Site Gateway
- Private Rear Elevations
- Primary Route
- Primary Route - Weak Frontage Dev.
- Node
- Pedestrian Access
- Pumping Station
- Existing Planting

Green Corridor

The Botany Stream corridor is a significant feature and part of the wider character of Tonbridge town centre. The stream is part of a larger corridor that runs from the western edge of Tonbridge through the town centre and on to the east. Vegetation contributes to the appearance of the corridor and together with the stream provides an important setting for development.



3.1 Reinforcing the Site Edges

The redevelopment of the site should deliver improvements to all its edges. The quality of the green link along Botany Stream needs to be improved. Currently, it appears unmanaged in parts and blocks views of the stream (See Figure 5). There is poor surveillance of areas along the water's edge. Generally the public realm is of a poor quality and points of connection to adjacent sites across the footbridges are poorly defined

Design objectives:

The green link running alongside Botany stream side of the site must be retained as an ecological corridor, and enhanced to function as a publicly accessible green space to provide a setting for development (See Figure 3). As part of the proposals a comprehensive landscape plan for the enhancement and management of this green corridor adjoining the site must be included.

Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council invite developers to discuss the re-routing of the right of way that runs along the western edge of the site. This should be rerouted through the site to establish a safer pedestrian route between Sovereign Way and the Botany Stream. A riverside path should be established along the southern edge of the site linking the existing bridging points across the Botany Stream in order to animate the stream frontage and give access to the new development. This path should be an integral part of the landscape plan for the green corridor and should have a minimum width of 4m.

New development must establish a traditional pattern of buildings fronting and defining streets and public spaces. (See Figure 4). The whole water's edge must be overlooked and positively animated by building entrances and balconies.

This will ensure passive surveillance and enhance safety along the public space (See Figure 5). Sovereign Way should be emphasised by a strong urban frontage which brings interest definition to the street. Access to the parking areas will be principally derived from Sovereign Way. Service access for small units and cafes will be through their front door. Bin stores, refuse and recycling areas must be discretely accommodated and gated.

The junctions of pedestrian routes, and of pedestrian routes and footbridges must be clearly defined by the built form. The narrow corner of the site where Sovereign Way meets the Botany Stream should accommodate an open space with children's play facilities.

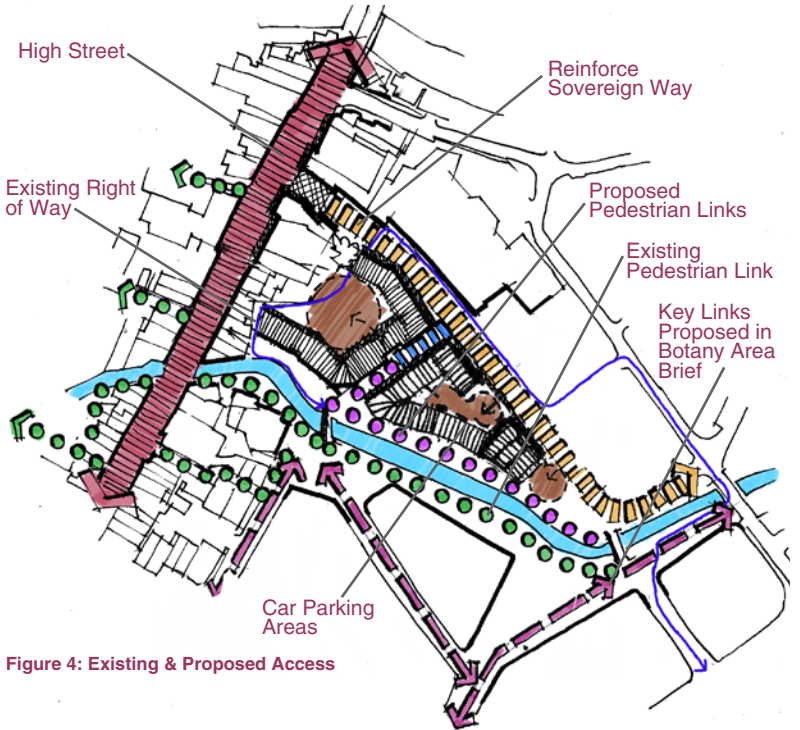


Figure 4: Existing & Proposed Access

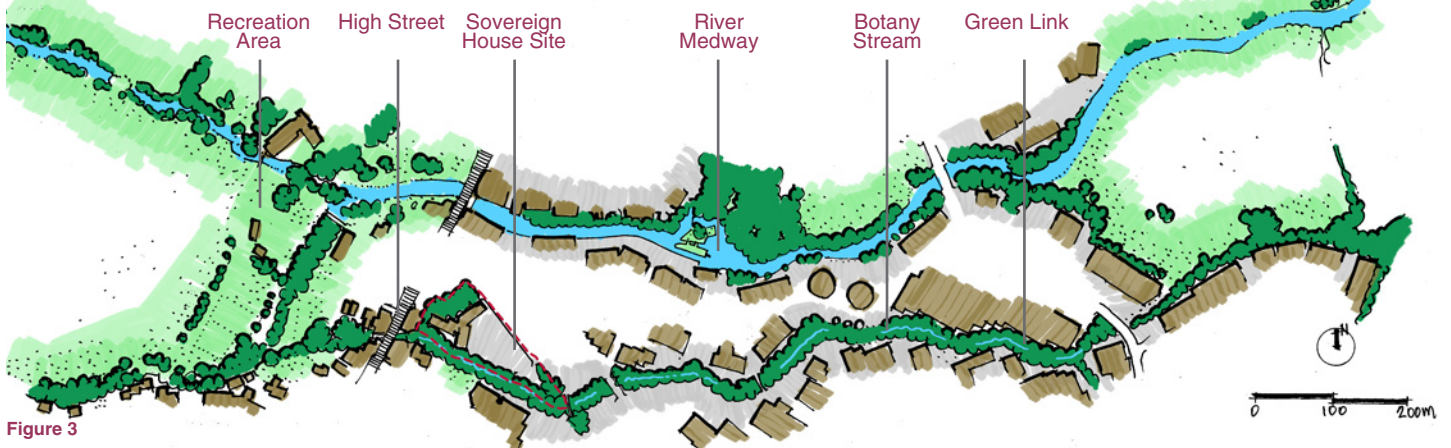


Figure 3



Figure 5: Green setting & surveillance along Botany Stream



Existing conditions along Botany Stream edge



Sovereign Way needs reinforcing

3.2 Site Layout Principles & Structure

The existing building on the site is free standing with no clear distinction between public front elevations and more private back elevations. A key design objective will be to ensure that development makes a clear distinction between publicly accessible front elevations which overlook streets and open spaces, and more private rear elevations where gardens, parking areas and servicing yards will be accommodated. A mix of uses should be accommodated within the site to contribute to the vitality and attractiveness of the town centre. The development is likely to be residential led but must also accommodate other public uses at ground floor level.

Design objectives

Two principle development blocks should be accommodated on the site with a new pedestrian street providing access between Sovereign Way and Botany Stream. In the western part of the site, the block should be configured to complete a perimeter block form, thus shielding the rear of the High Street from public view and access. A broadly triangular shape block will occupy the eastern part of the site. Both the blocks should provide frontages to Sovereign Way, Botany Stream and the new pedestrian street (See Figure 7).

Residential. Due to flooding issues, residential uses should be accommodated above the ground floor level. A mix of apartments should be provided which should all have access to either a private balcony or roof terrace.

Other acceptable uses. A mix of uses including A1 retail, A3 cafes and restaurants, and A4 bars should be accommodated at ground floor level overlooking adjoining streets, open spaces and the Botany Stream. Small scale commercial office space will also be an acceptable use.

Play space. A public open space at the south eastern corner of the site can visually link across to square proposed across stream in Botany Quarter. A play space should be accommodated here.

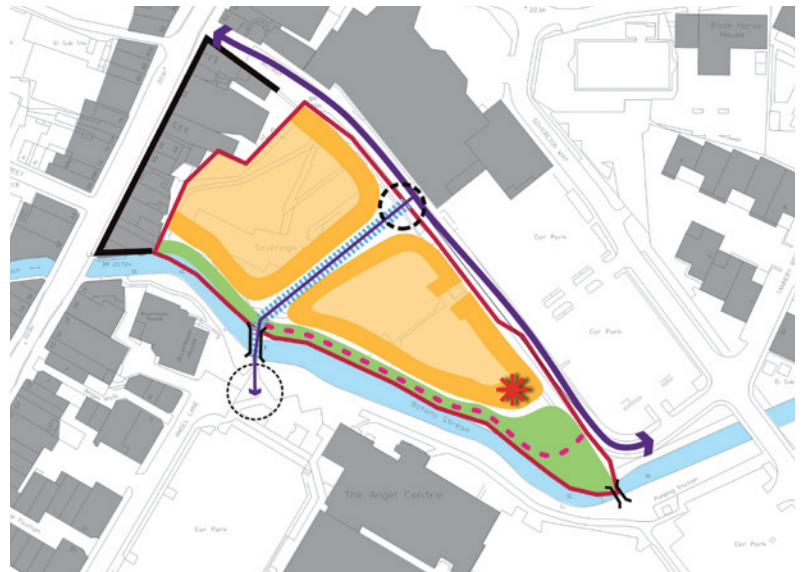


Figure 6: Key Development Components

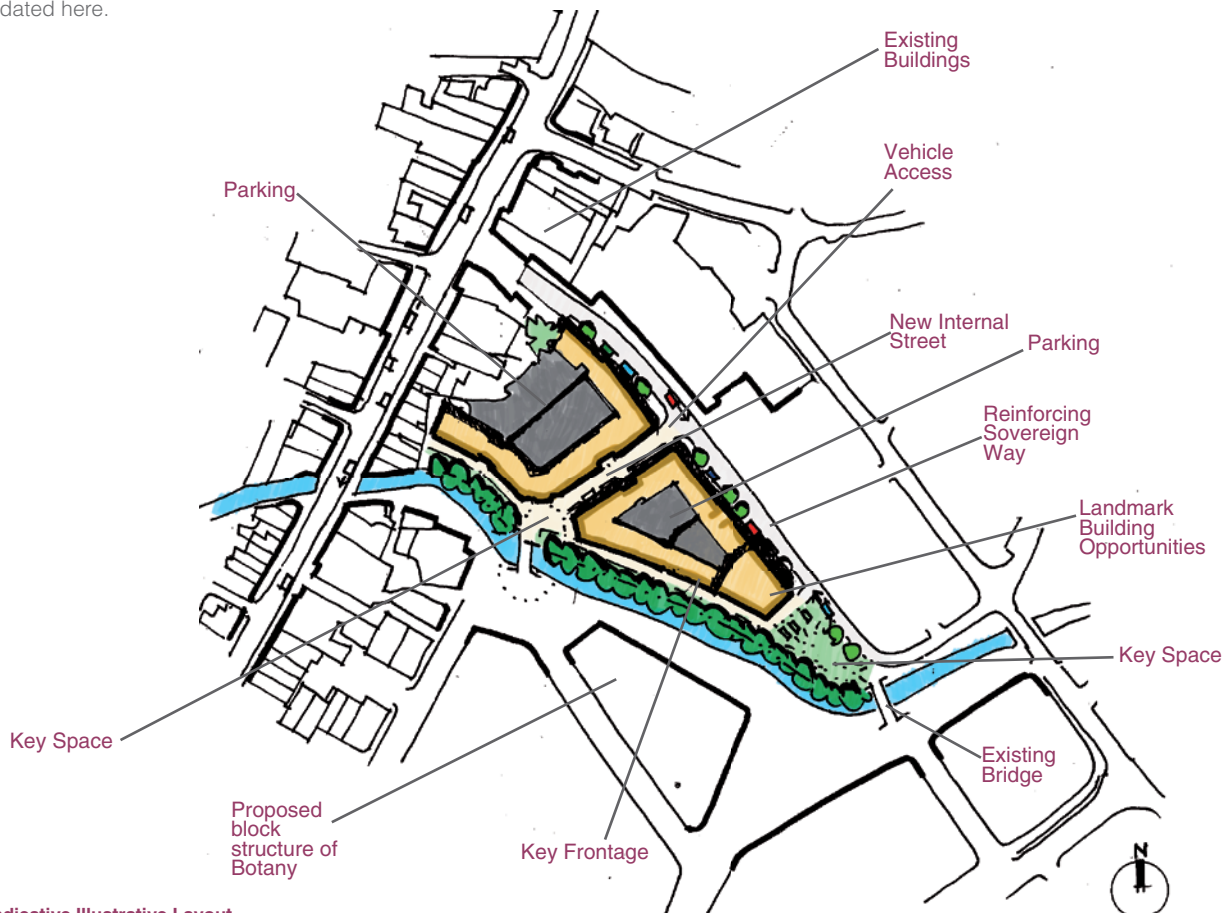
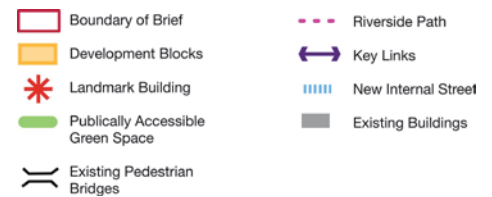


Figure 7: Indicative Illustrative Layout

3.3 Building Form

The built form should make a positive contribution to the quality and appeal of the town centre environment. It should be clearly recognisable as being of its time, whilst making reference to the local character of Tonbridge, through the palette of materials and colour for example

Design objectives

In light of the fact that the site is linear in form it is inevitable that any buildings will be formed in blocks that lie along an axis that runs east west between Sovereign Way and the Botany Stream. To avoid these blocks becoming monolithic horizontal features it is necessary to ensure that they are modulated in their height, set-back from the boundaries and relationship to lower floor non-residential elements. The combination of varied heights and visually varied elevations will allow, with the careful selection of materials, the buildings to be at once both an integrated whole whilst maintain a high level of visual interest.

The tower landmark building at the eastern end of the site will require particularly careful detailing to prevent it becoming an undifferentiated block. To this end features such as balconies and other expressive features should be incorporated into the design with the aim of reducing the visual mass of the structure. It is particularly important that in securing a focal point by way of a landmark building, that views from the conservation area and the environs of the Castle Grounds in particular are not adversely affected by an over-imposing structure and that the massing of the proposed tower needs to be of relatively slender proportions to reflect this important consideration.

The sketch design shown below is an illustrative expression of these concepts but is not a fully developed design outcome and should form the basis of a detailed design study based on the specifics of the scheme and should not be seen as a solution in its own right.

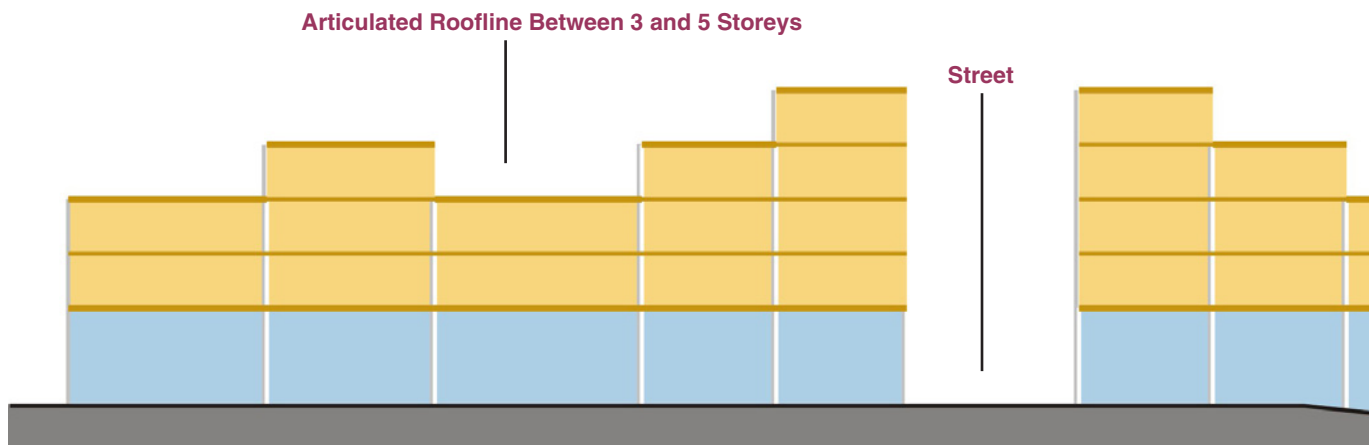


Figure 9: Elevational treatment along Botany Stream edge



Parking courts with tree planting accommodated within blocks



Car parking entrance discreetly accommodated into a corner building



Car parking discreetly accommodated within development blocks



Discrete entrances into Car Parks

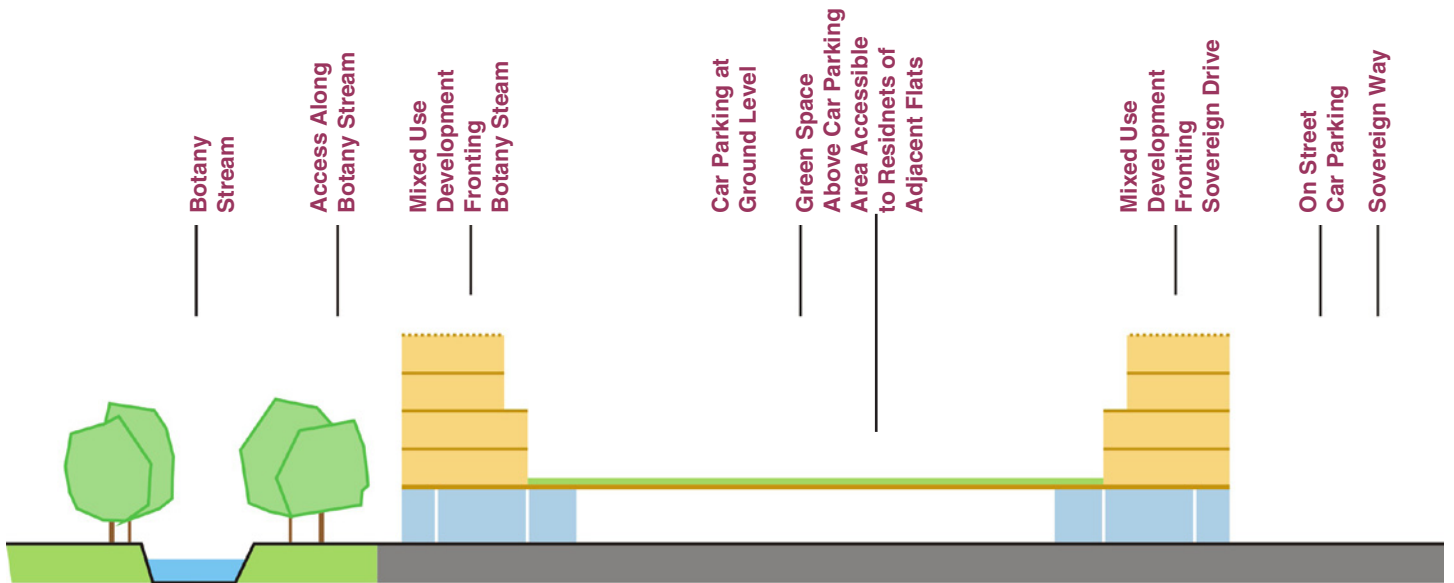
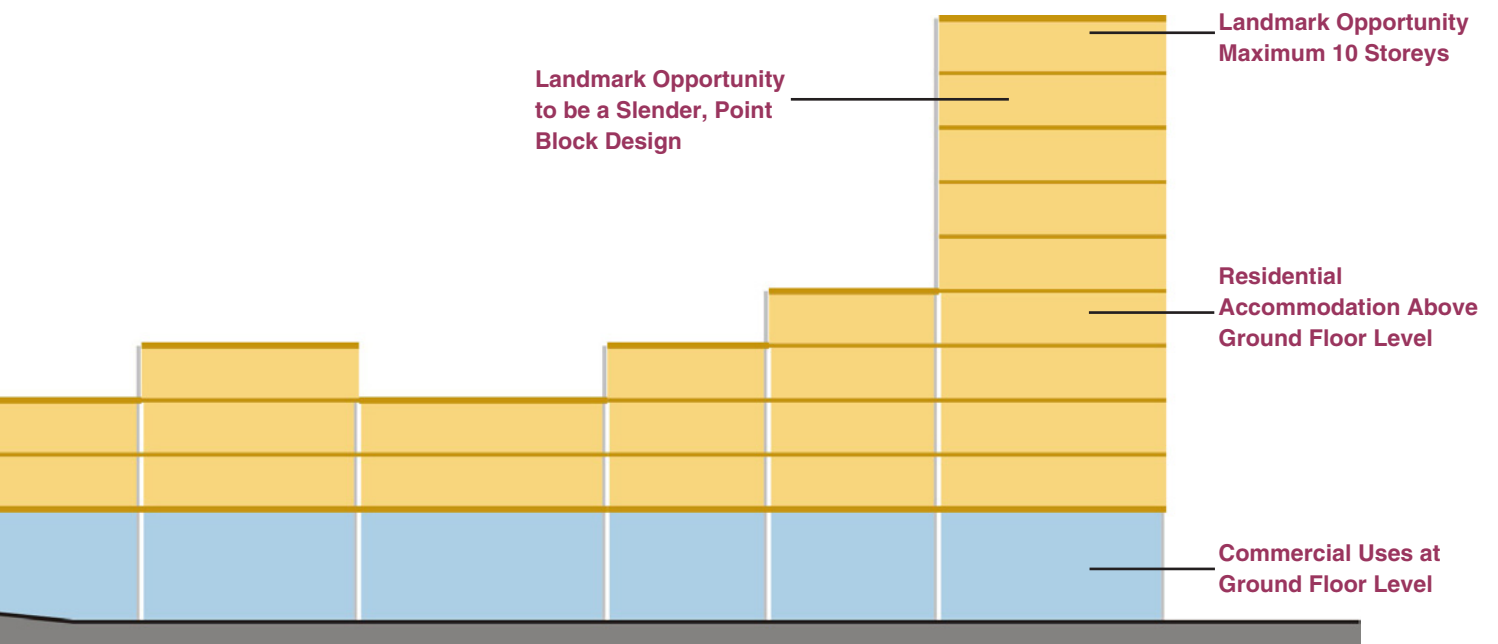


Figure 8: Section across sites Botany Stream & Sovereign Way edge



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