

16 Market Place South Shields

Design and Access Statement

Feb 2026

Studio **Stuart Palmer Architects**

Introduction

This Design and Access statement is in support of the detailed planning application to convert the former Wilko building on Market Place South Shields into a Gym and separate retail unit.

The building sits in the north west corner of the town centre and occupy's a prominent site on Market Place at the bottom end of King Street.

South Shields is a town with a rich and vibrant history, having been at the forefront of the industrial revolution helping to drive the economy of the North East of England and the UK for over 200 years.

The town itself occupies a strategic position between the river tyne, the historical heart of north east industry and the foreshore with its impressive beaches and tourist attractions.

Despite this the Town centre is facing the same challenges as others up and down the country. The retail landscape has changed fundamentally over the last decade, impacted by the rise of online shopping and reduced footfall on the high street which was accelerated by COVID-19 which acted as a catalyst for changing the way many of us work, commute and spend our free time.

The South Shields Town Centre Vision of 2023 sets out a framework for growth over the next 10 years.

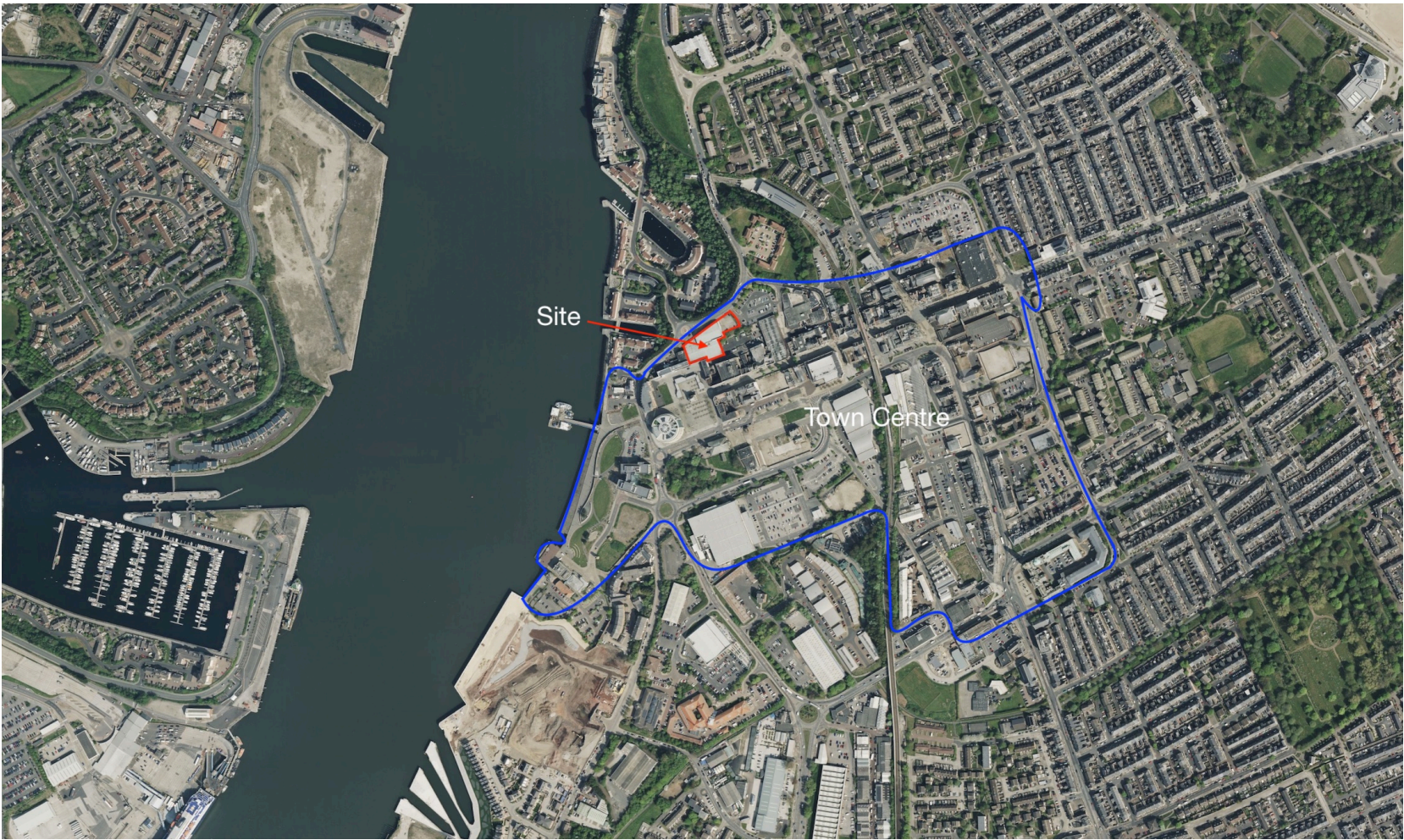


Fig.1 Aerial view showing the location of the former Wilko building within the town centre.

Underpinning the overarching vision are the strategic objectives which will allow it to be achieved.

- Diversifying the Town Centre
- Close working with local businesses and property owners
- Facilitating residential and commercial development
- Providing opportunities for local retailers

- Re-developing under utilised sites.
- Bringing empty properties and floor space back into use.
- Enhance public realm, green space and linkages.
- Attract funding and investment.

Proposal - The Town Centre Plan.

The proposed redevelopment of the former Wilko building reflects many of the objectives identified in the Town Centre Plan.

The previous retail operator occupied the whole of the building including the large ground floor retail area and first floor warehouse with its own dedicated loading bay.

In a bid to attract a more diverse range of tenant the existing building will be sub divided to create a range of retail / leisure spaces.

The proposed tenants that are looking at the building will create opportunities for neighbouring businesses and may facilitate and attract new commercial business into the town centre.

The former Wilko building is one of the largest retail units in the town centre and is more akin to a large out of town retail park. Given the decline in high street retail the sub division of the building will attract a more diverse tenant and hopefully bring the empty floor space back into use.

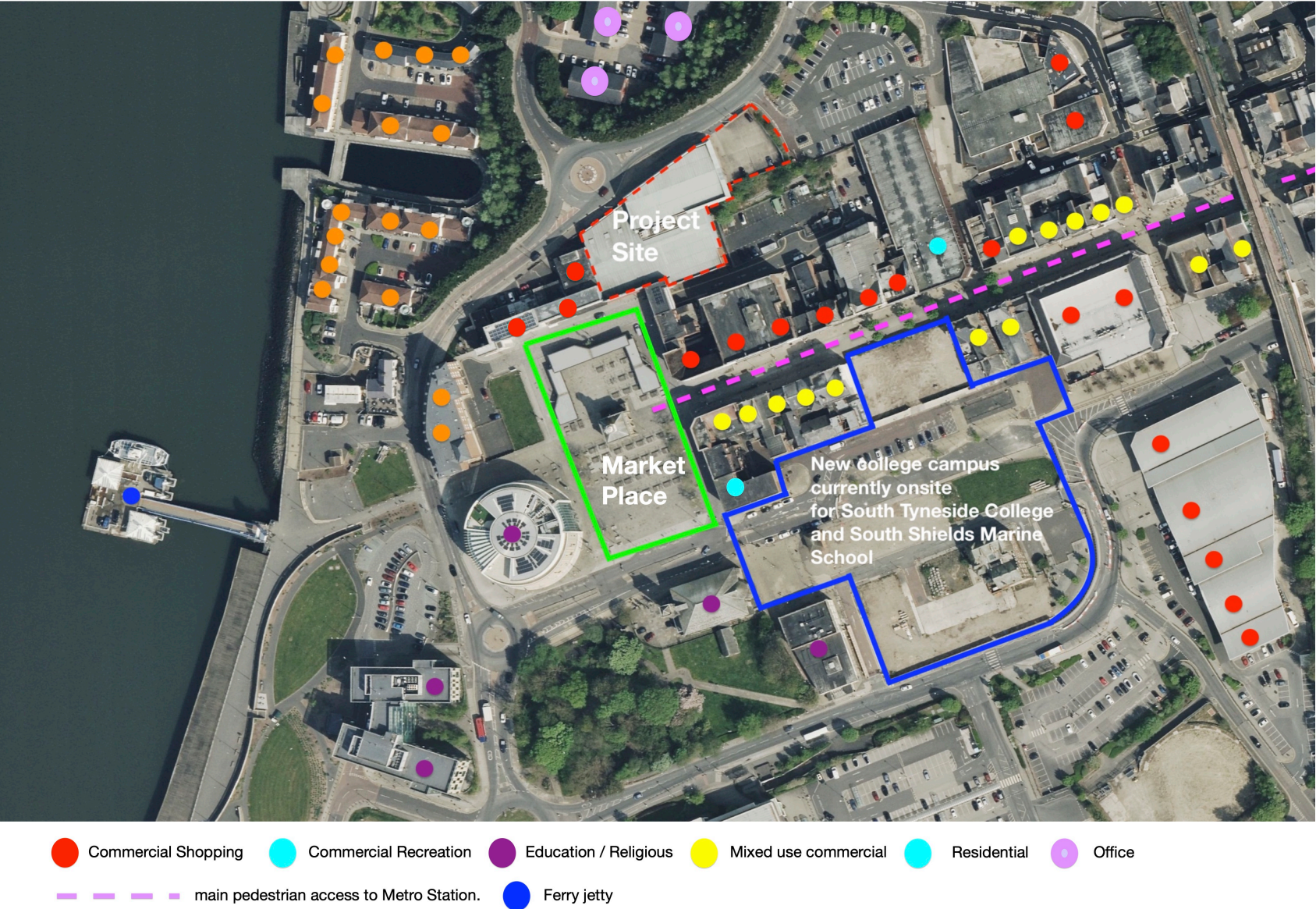


Fig.2 The Relationship between the site, Market Place, The new college currently onsite, and surrounding building uses

Proposal - Transport and Pedestrian Access.

The existing building sits on the edge of the town centre. River Drive defines the north west edge of the town centre and also provides easy vehicular access to the site, avoiding the need for visitor vehicles to enter the town centre.

Because the building also fronts Market Place it also has excellent public transport links including the metro train network which is 10 mins walk from the site up King Street.

In addition to the conventional methods of public transport the site is also 5 minutes walk from the passenger ferry terminal which connects North and South Shields, providing easy access for visitors from North Tyneside.

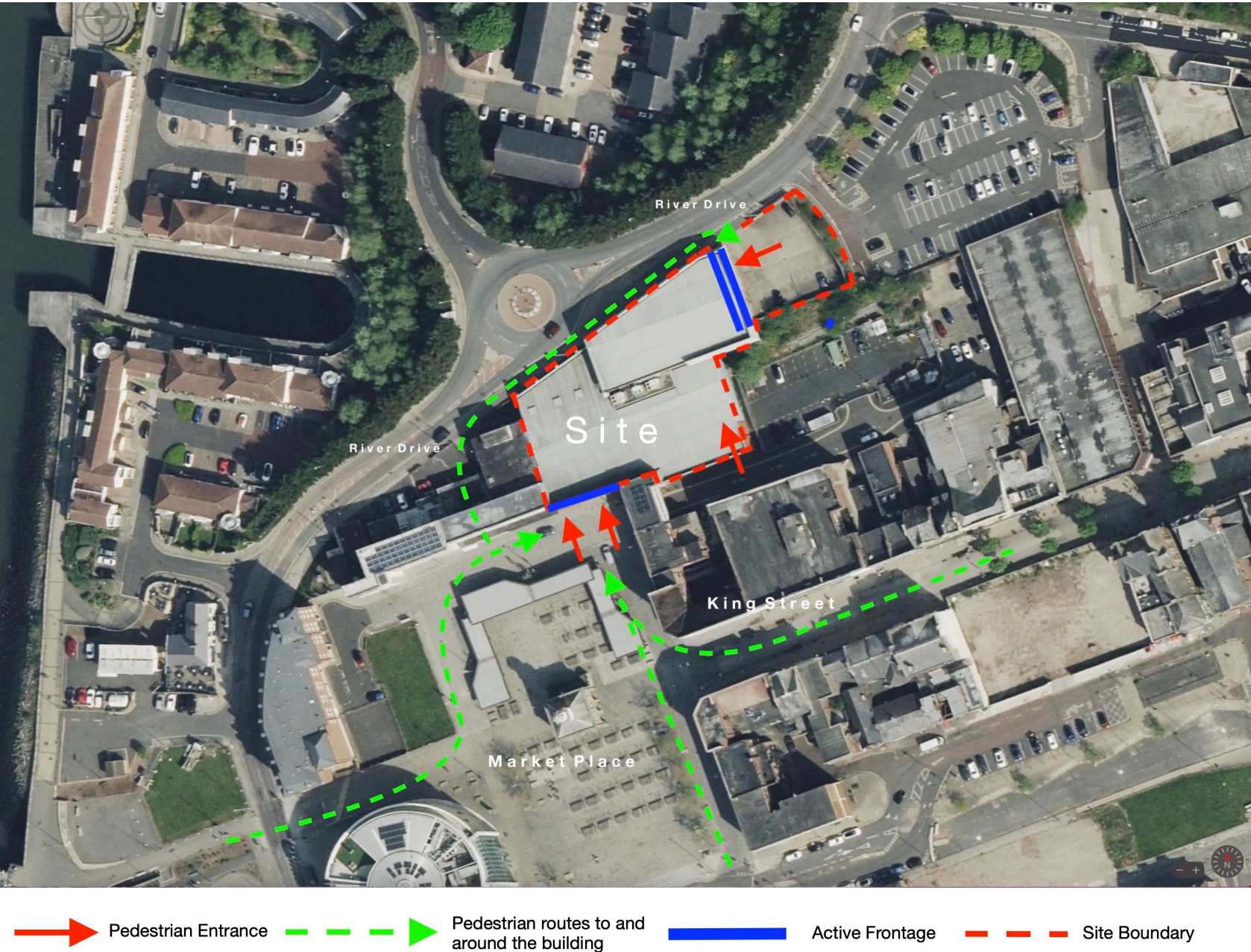


Fig.3 Pedestrian Access and Active Frontages

Photographs of Existing Building

Images 1 - 4 include a series of views of the upper floor warehouse showing its presence on Riverside Drive.

Image 1 shows the proposed access to the new carpark and gym entrance at first floor.

Image 3 shows how the building steps up Riverside Drive. The return on the mansard roof shows the extent of the first floor warehouse sitting above the main retail space below.

Image 5 and 6 show the extent of the existing retail space with its generous ceiling height. There is a significant service void above the existing ceiling level. In some places this void is in excess of 3 metres which can easily accommodate the proposed new mezzanine floor.



1. Approach on River Drive from the North East



2. View of the first Floor Loading bay elevation from The East.



3. Approach on River Drive from the South West.



4. Vehicle Access to the proposed new carpark.



5. Interior view of existing ground floor retail space



6. Interior view of existing ground floor retail space

Photographs of Existing Building

Images 1 - 4 include a series of views of the upper floor warehouse showing its presence on Riverside Drive.

Image 1 shows the proposed access to the new carpark and gym entrance at first floor.

Image 3 shows how the building steps up Riverside Drive. The return on the mansard roof shows the extent of the first floor warehouse sitting above the main retail space below.

Image 5 and 6 show the extent of the existing retail space with its generous ceiling height. There is a significant service void above the existing ceiling level. In some places this void is in excess of 3 metres which can easily accommodate the proposed new mezzanine floor.



7. First Floor Service yard Elevation.



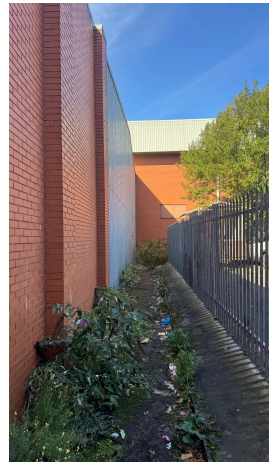
8. First Floor River Drive Elevation.



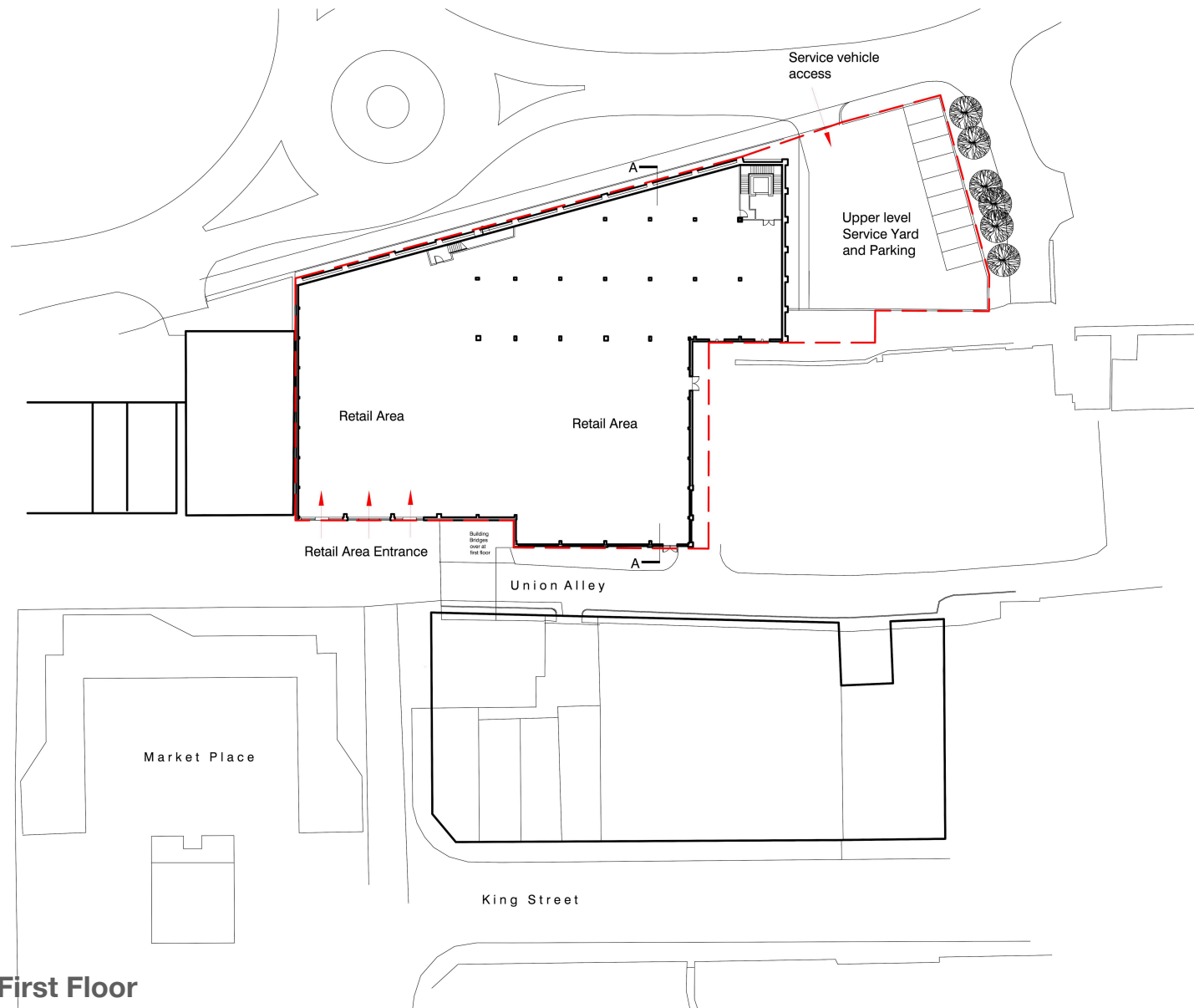
10. The Ground Floor Retail Shopfront



9. Ground Floor Retail Entrance to Market Place



11. Interior view of Existing First Floor Warehouse.



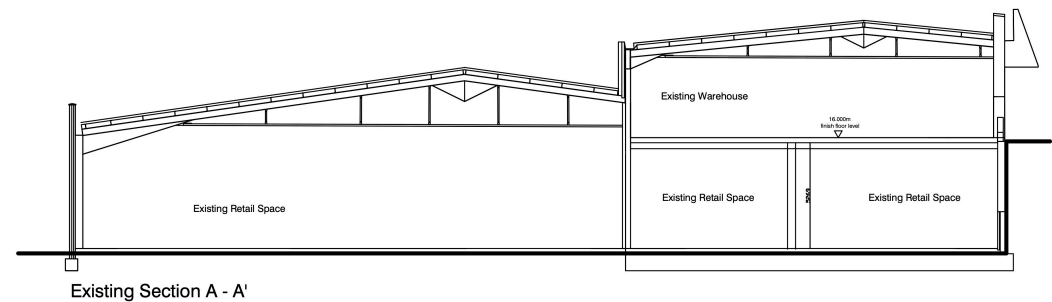
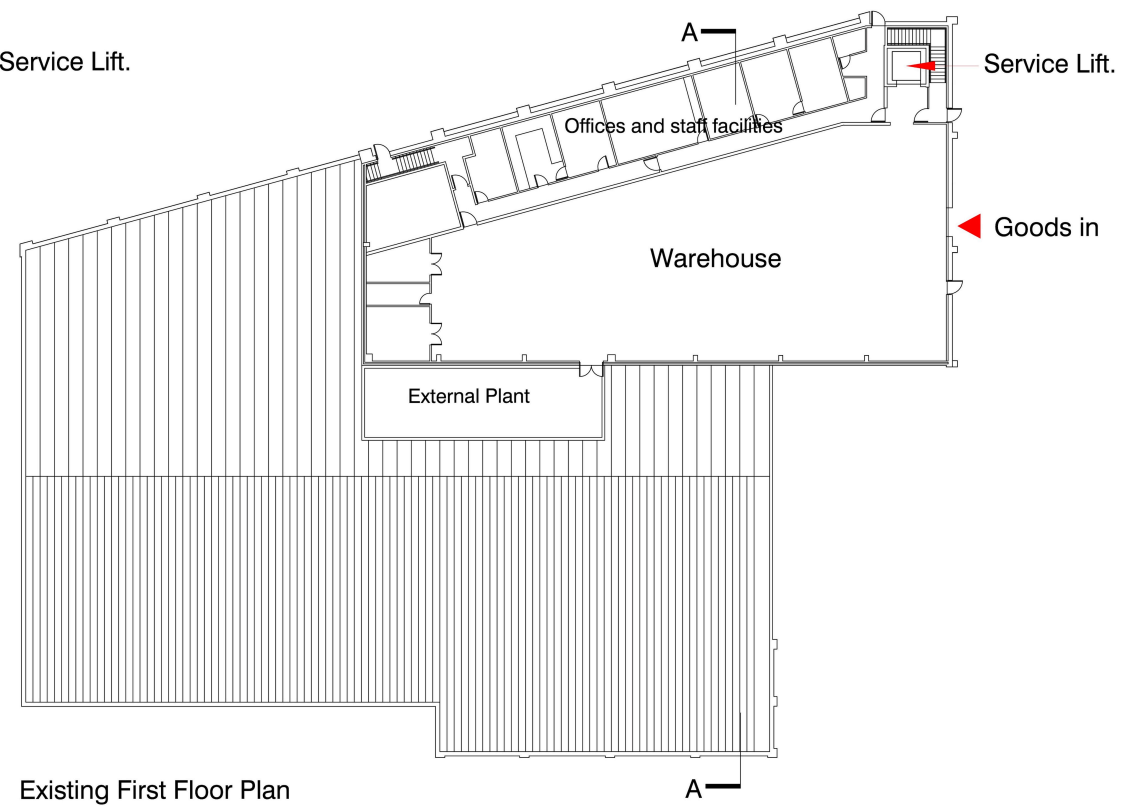
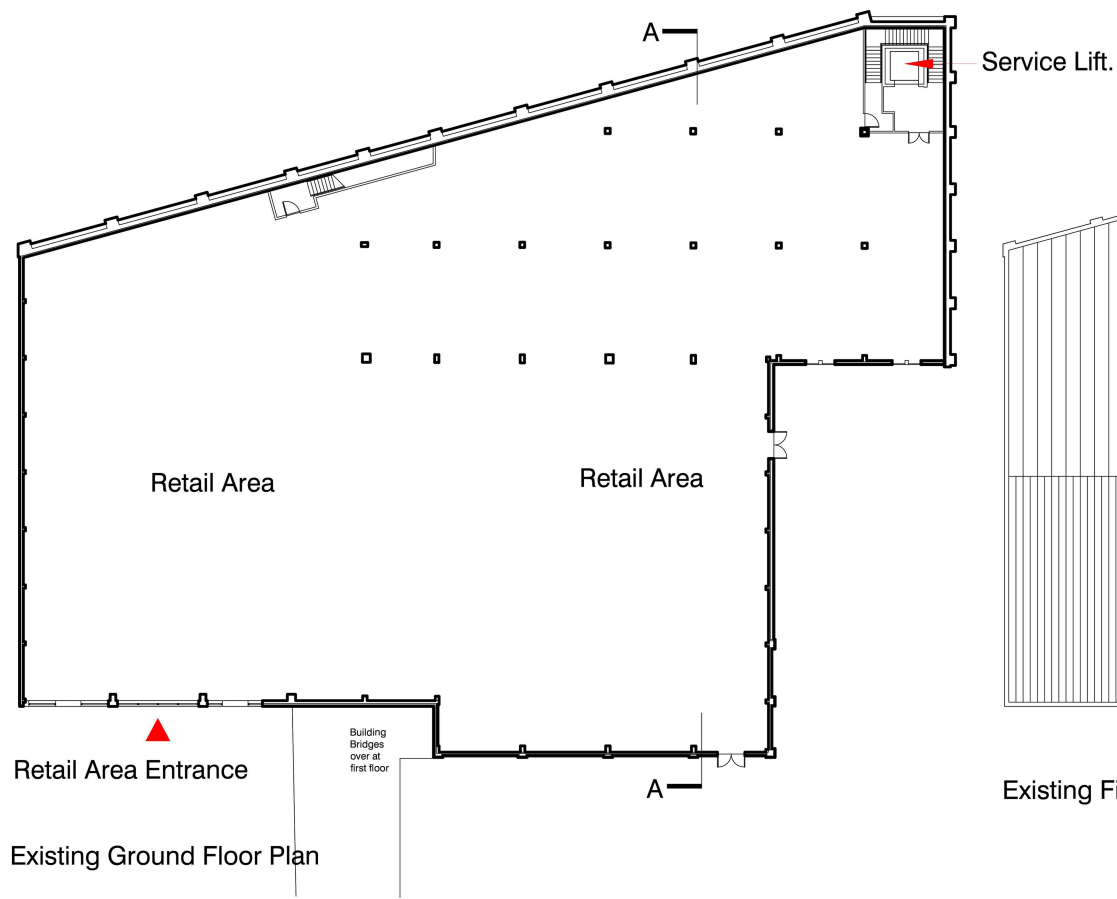
Existing Site Layout / First Floor

The existing building has two floors. A large open plan Retail space at ground floor can be accessed directly from Market Place and main retail street in South Shields, King Street.

The smaller first floor is a back up warehouse for the ground floor retail space, connected and serviced by a goods lift.

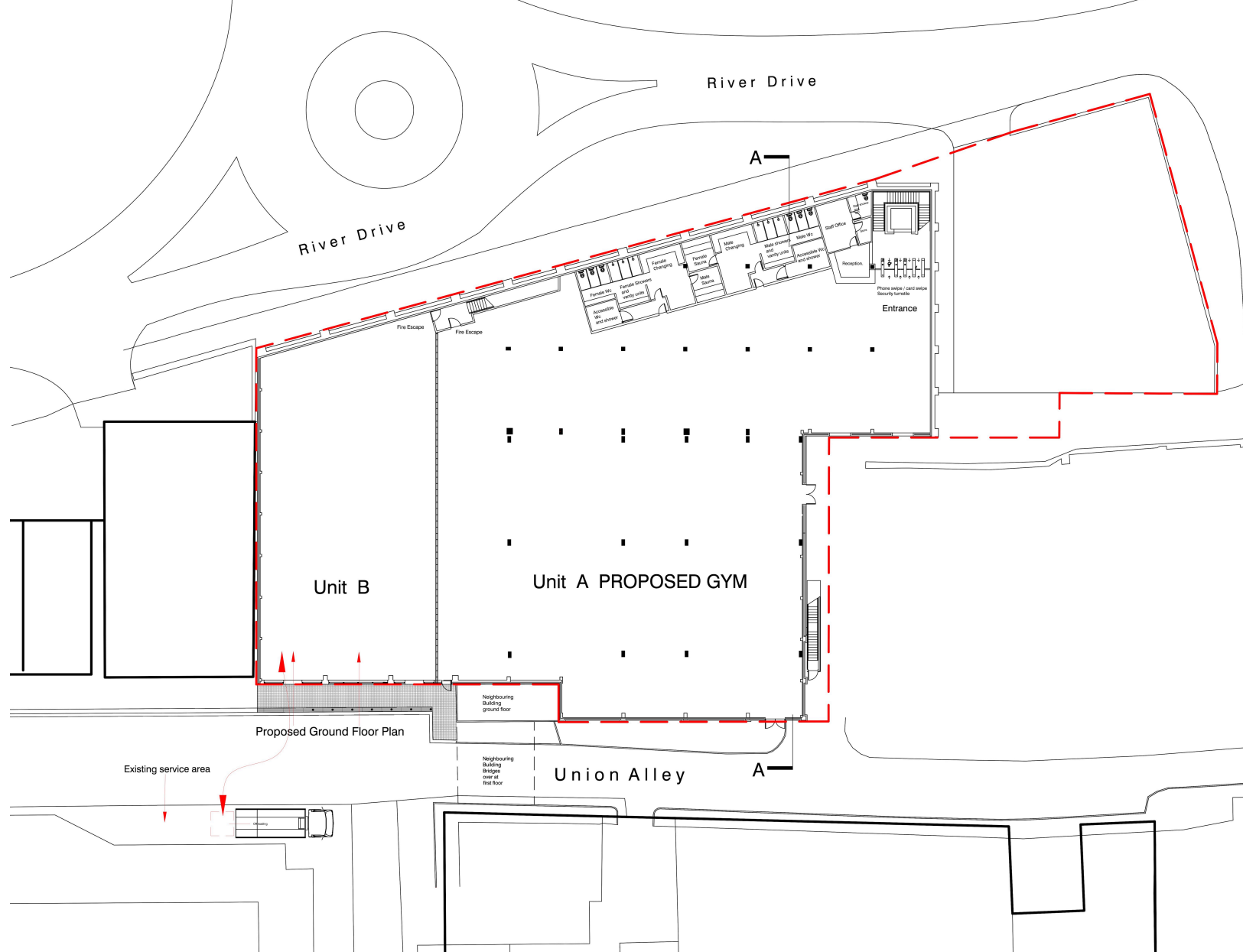
The warehouse is accessed from River Drive. There is a dedicated staff car park and service yard with an established access / egress onto Riverside Drive.

The warehouse was designed to accommodate a range of uses including conventional rental space such as office and retail as well as uses with heavier load requirements such as warehousing and car parking.



Existing Floor Plans and Section.

The ground floor retail area is a predominantly open plan column free space ideally suited to uses such as a gym. The section shows the relationship between the upper and lower floor. The maximum height in the lower floor is 8 metres below the roof ridge. The ground floor has an established retail frontage onto Market Place.



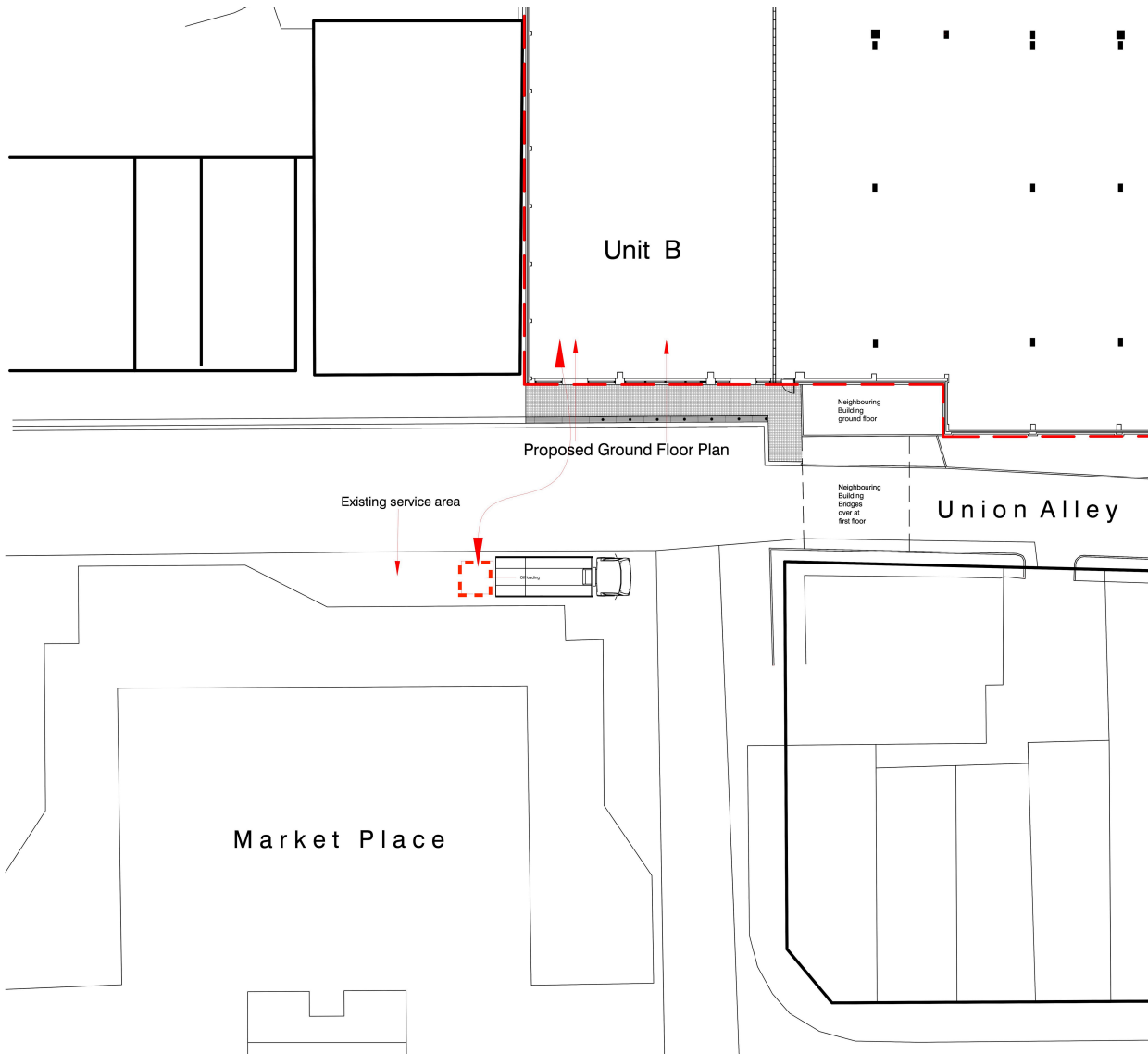
Proposed Ground Floor layout.

The proposed scheme includes sub dividing the ground floor into gym space and unit B retail space for rent.

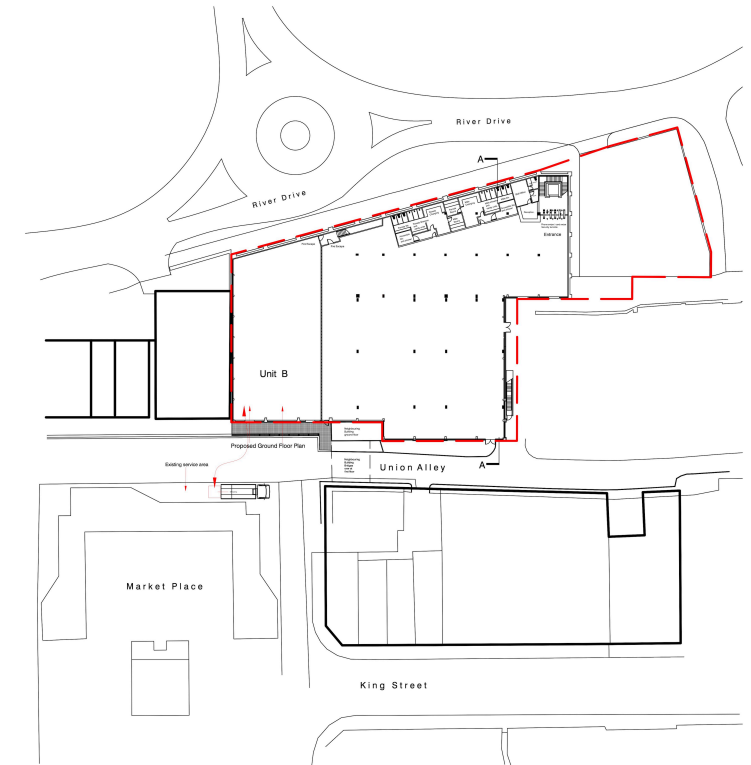
Access to unit B will be via the existing retail entrance onto Market Place. Access to the gym will be located at first floor next to the carpark.

Changing facilities, WC's and back up office space for the gym will be located at ground floor.

A set of new columns will be installed to support an additional parking level above the gym.



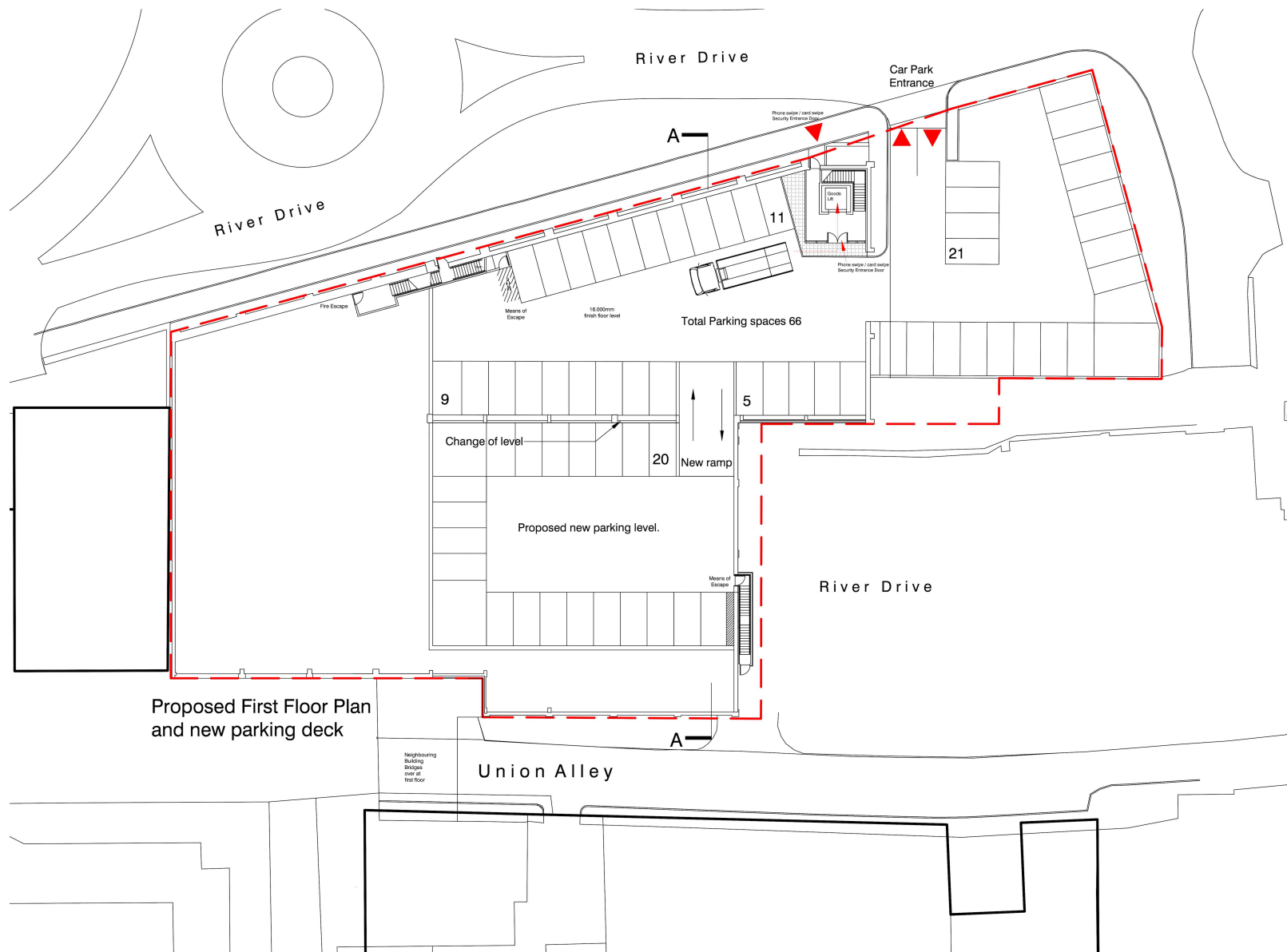
Dedicated Loading bay



Site Layout

Proposed Serving Strategy for Unit B

The plan shows the existing building retail frontage facing Market Place. There is a dedicated loading area for the twice weekly market opposite the retail frontage on Market Place. This area could be used to service unit B if it is let as a retail space.



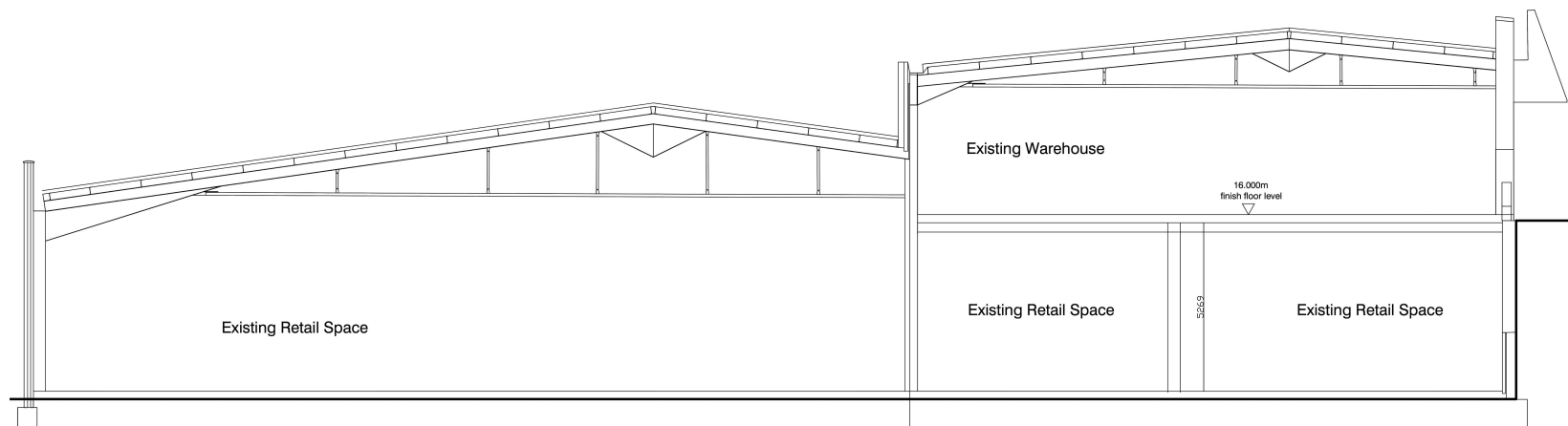
Proposed First Floor layout.

The first floor will provide car parking and the main entrance to the gym located adjacent to the carpark entrance on River Drive.

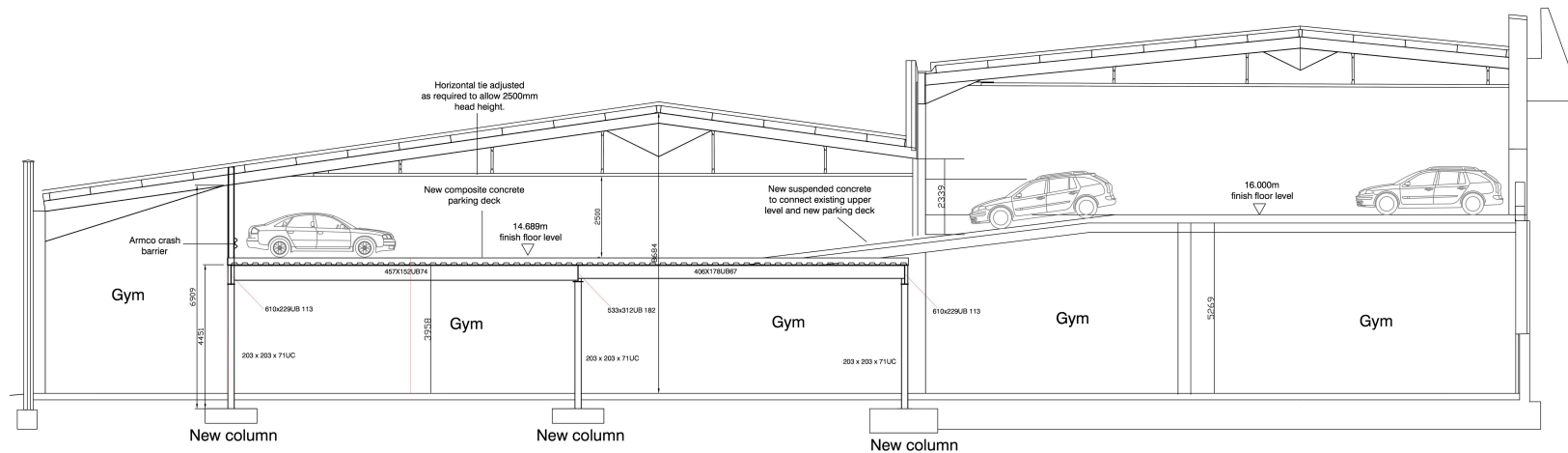
An additional mezzanine parking deck will be constructed within the existing building volume.

A new ramp will connect the new mezzanine area with the existing first floor.

The entrance to the carpark will be located in its existing location on River Drive.



Existing Section A - A'



Proposed Section A - A'

Existing and Proposed Sections.

The proposed section shows how the new mezzanine floor will be inserted into the existing building.

The new parking deck will be accede via a new ramp. The clear height below the new deck will be 3900mm which can easily accommodate the gym use.



The existing carpark / service yard entrance will be retained.



The existing mansard roof could support signage that will raise the profile of the site and new use.

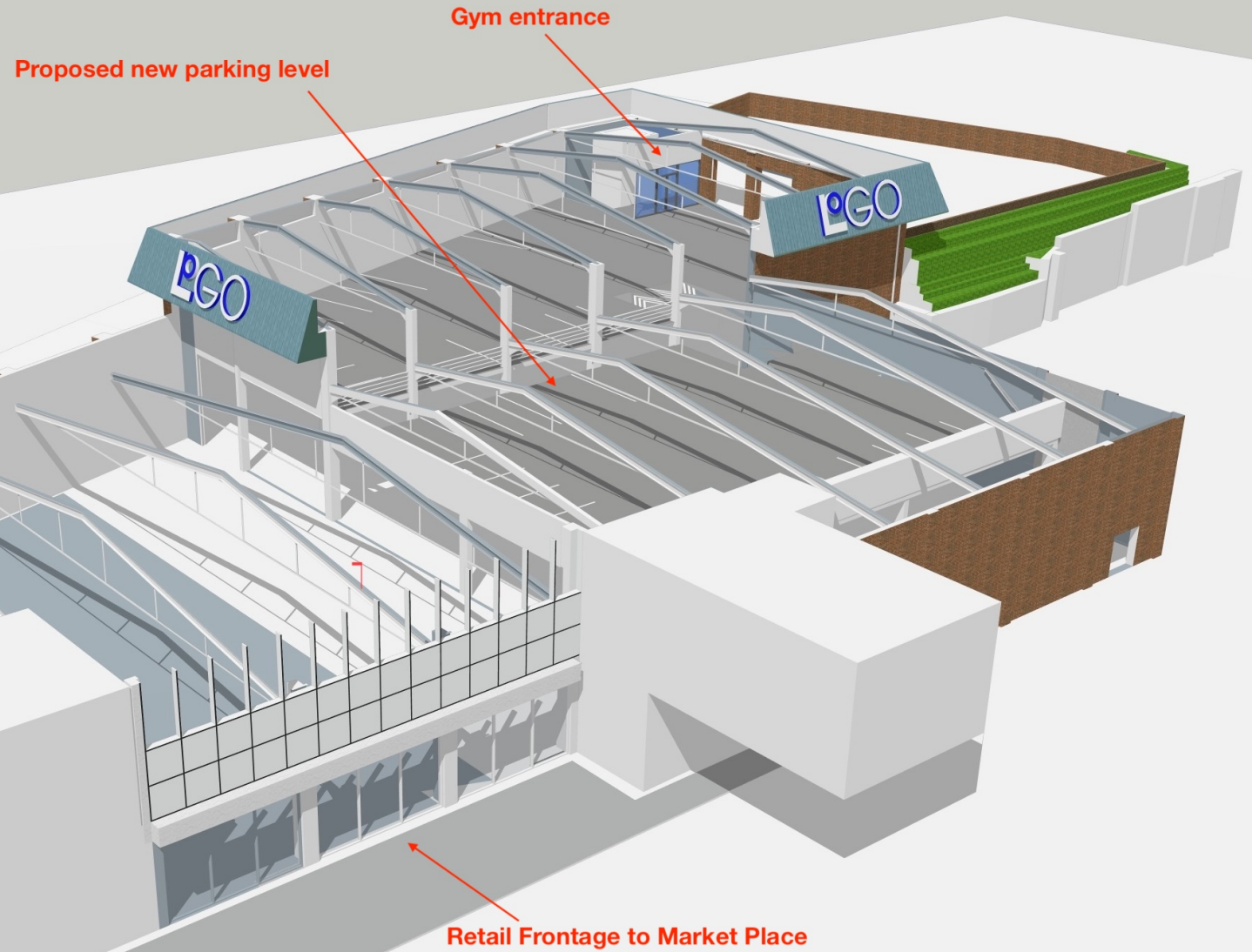
Proposed Building Visuals.

The mansard roof to the first floor could be utilised to support signage and branding for the new gym tenant. This will increase awareness of the new use on River Drive and long range views from further afield.

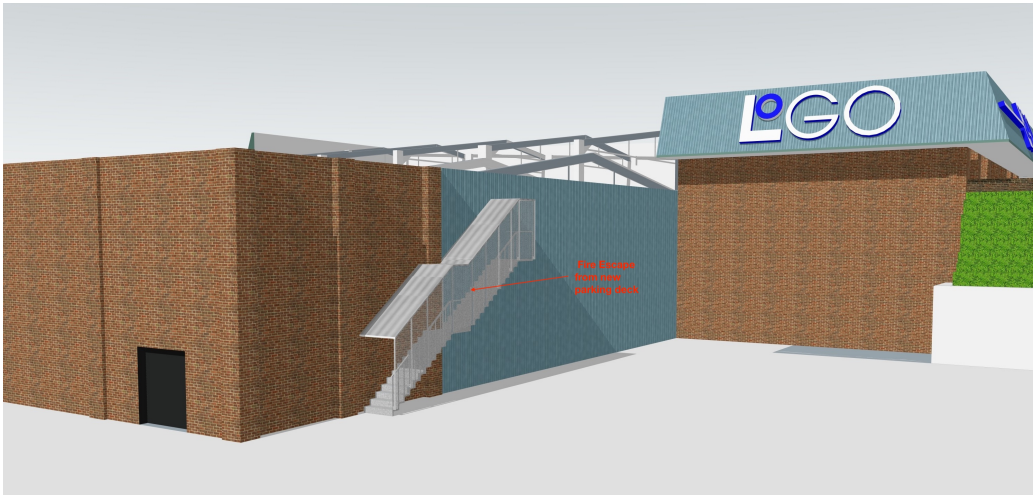


Proposed Building Visuals.

The axonometric shows how the proposed new floor can be inserted into the existing volume of the building between the ground and upper floor warehouse. The gym entrance will be located on the upper floor which will provide access to a staircase and lift.



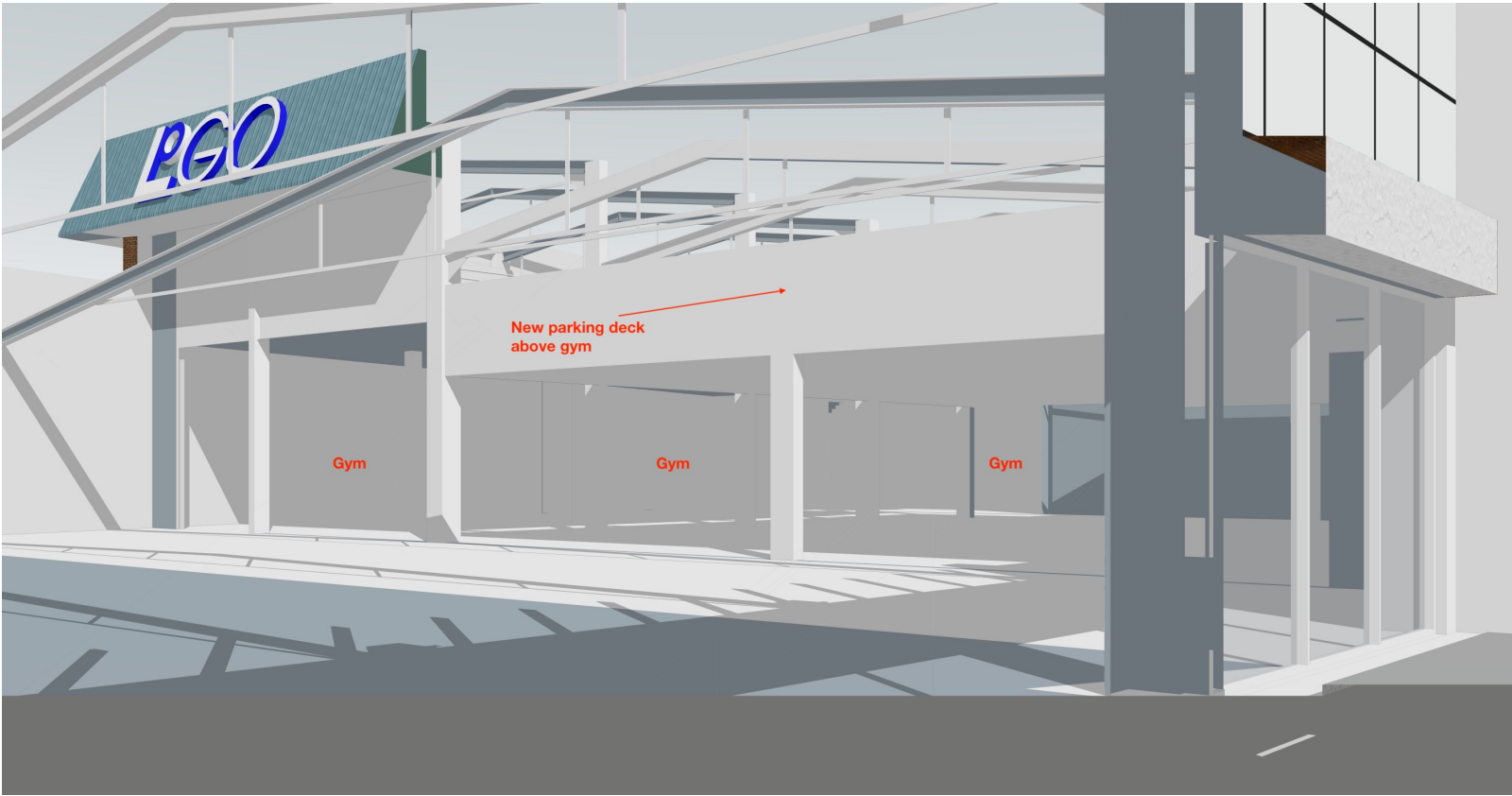
Axonometric showing the relationship between the new parking deck, existing first floor and proposed new gym entrance

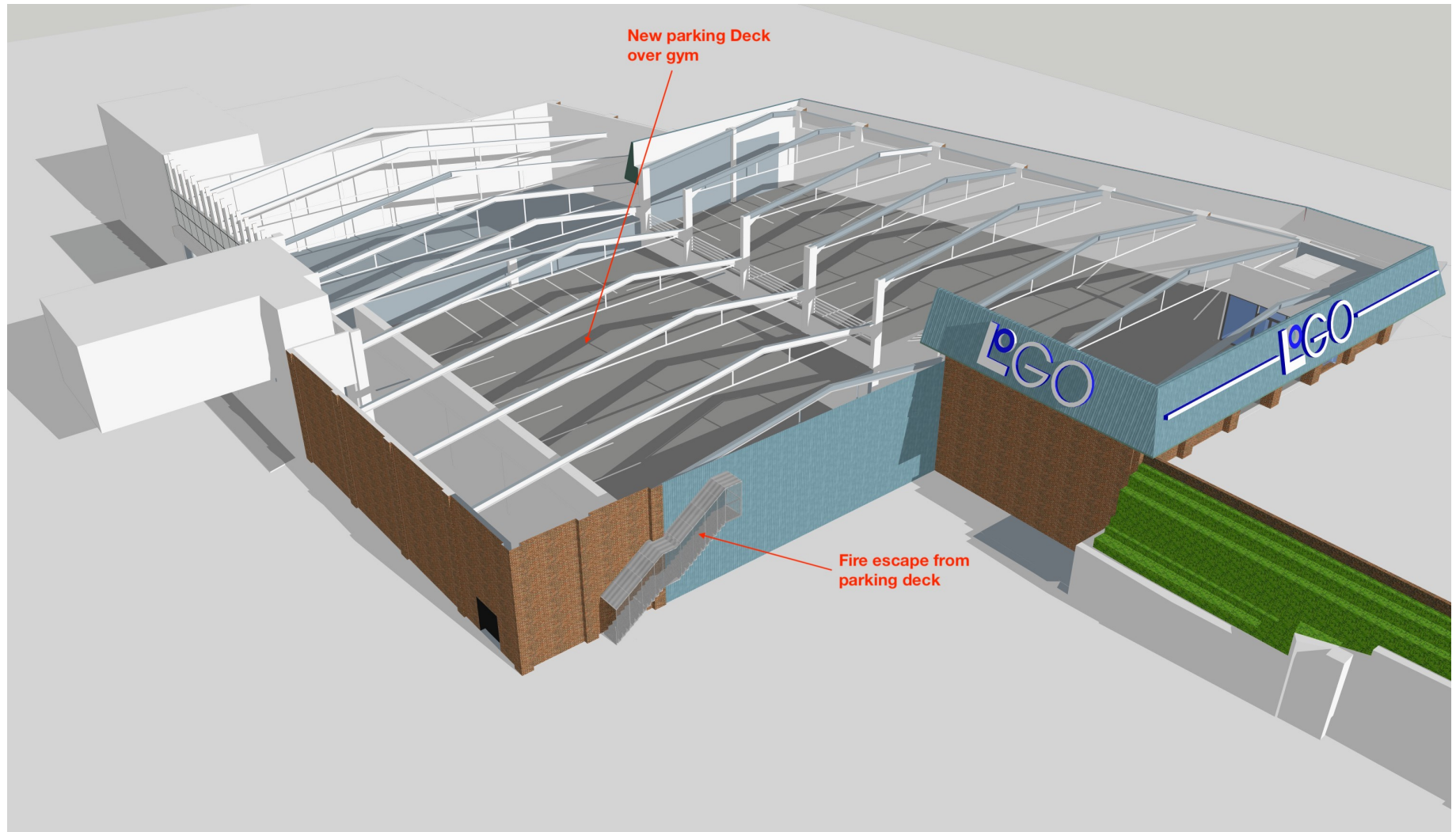


Proposed Building Visuals.

A new external staircase will provide a means of escape from the new parking deck, exiting onto Union Alley.

The construction of the deck will create a series interconnected spaces of differing height. None of the space will be below 3.5 metres high.





Proposed Building Visuals.

A new external staircase will provide a means of escape from the new parking deck, exiting onto Union Alley.

Project Summary

- **The building was originally constructed to accommodate a single large retail operator. In the current economic climate it is unlikely the the building would be let to a similar tenant.**
- **The proposal reflects the aspirations of the South Shields Town Centre Plan for the next 10 years**
- **The proposed gym use for the majority part of the building is complementary to other things happening in the city centre such as the new college currently being constructed on King Street.**
- **The proposed gym use will ensure that the site remains an employment site within the town centre. The use of the building as a gym may also attract complementary uses to adjacent empty retail space.**
- **The proposal includes subdividing the building into multiple tenants. A gym operator tenant has been secured for the largest unit in the building. It is likely that the additional units will be let to tenants looking for space adjacent to a gym.**
- **Alterations to the existing building will be minor and include the alteration to the access to the first floor warehouse and an additional single door for a fire escape to the lower ground area.**
- **Vehicle and pedestrian access to the building will remain in their existing positions. The gym and associated carpark will be will be accessed from River Drive via the existing parking and service yard access. Access to unit B will be via the existing retail frontage directly from Market Place.**

The proposal will bring back much needed activity and vitality to this end of King Street.