

## **2 EXAMINATION OF ALTERNATIVES**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores the alternatives considered for the proposed scheme, the site criteria set by the client and the reasons for choosing the site for the proposed development. The design objectives, client vision and alternative configurations examined during the design process are also presented.

The author of this chapter is Rob Keane, Architect B Arch MRIBA RIBA Managing Director of Reddy Architecture and Urbanism with 25 years' experience in practice. In this period Rob has contributed to and provided reports for EIAR/EIAs including the State's first successful Strategic Housing Development (SHD) application and over 13 large scale mixed use projects – including the original SHD application for this site (Reg Ref: 306569-20), mixed use development totalling 41,000m<sup>2</sup>, mixed use development, Heuston South Quarter, Dublin 8 (110,000m<sup>2</sup> mixed use development), Connolly Station Quarter, Dublin 1 (65,000m<sup>2</sup> mixed use development), Herberton Dublin 8, (60,000m<sup>2</sup> mixed use development), UCD Student Residences – (65,000m<sup>2</sup>) all of which are relevant to this project.

### **2.2 Do-nothing**

The site is located on the River Liffey, directly opposite and to the North of Heuston Station with significant frontage onto Parkgate Street. The lands are comprised of a derelict former 2 storey dwelling, a large former warehouse building and several outbuildings which are ancillary to the warehouse use. There is vehicular access and limited on site car parking to serve the premises. The site is impermeable to the public currently and there is no public access to the river.

The Site currently contains a consented masterplan which consists of 2 x blocks arranged around a central courtyard and includes 321 apartments and commercial uses. This application deals with the final piece of the overall masterplan for the site called Block A.

Proposed Block A sits at the eastern apex of the site facing the city and Heuston Station. This is one of the most important plots in central Dublin. If the development were not to proceed, some commercial use is likely to continue. However, to do nothing would leave the overall masterplan for the site unfinished and the site underdeveloped.

It is not practicable to complete the consented scheme (ABP-306569-20, Blocks B & C) without a further grant of permission for development that resolves the eastern elevation of Block B2, at the site of proposed Block A.

A 'do nothing' scenario in respect of proposed Block A would be an undesirable planning and environmental outcome, in particular from an optimum site regeneration and a landscape and visual impact perspective, at this pivotal, gateway site.

## 2.3 Choice of Site Location

The site was purchased by Ruirside Development due to its location adjacent to the largest transportation interchange hub in the city, and the site also being capable of supporting a significant and landmark residential-led mixed use scheme.

The site stands at a unique location, that experiences significant movement in the city. The Liffey watercourse flows east and is tidal here, the Sean Heuston bridge caters for Luas and pedestrians north to south, the adjacent Frank Sherwin bridge caters for traffic moving north and the Quay roads parallel the Liffey's movement.

Directly opposite and to the North lies Heuston Station, the largest transportation interchange hub in the city, a place of arrival and departure for thousands every day.

Its location and aspect on the River Liffey and the special character of structures on the site such as the continuous cut stone wall to the northern boundary, the circular turret at the sites apex and the formal stone archway onto Parkgate Street also identify it as a development site of unique character in the city.

## 2.4 Design Strategy

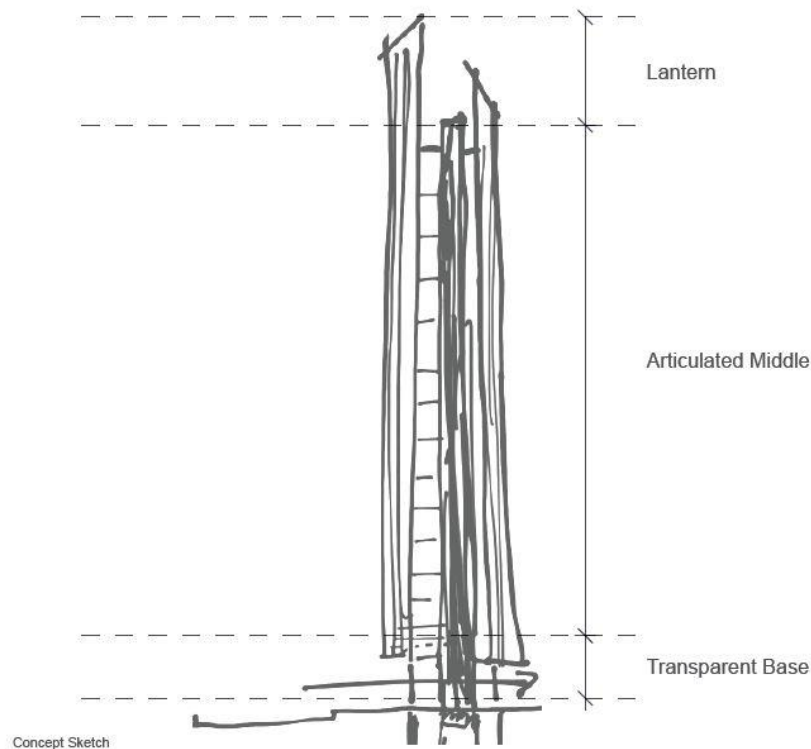
In considering a response to the brief the initial inspiration was the site itself and its prominence next to Heuston Station and at the apex of a triangular site facing the city with wide space all around it including the River Liffey, Luas Line, The Quays and Croppies Memorial Park.

The design of proposed Block A responds to the triangular nature of the site, by creating a building of three blades which create amazing view up the River Liffey, to Heuston Station and Phoenix Park. The three blades were then curved to subtly pick up on the curve of the river and Parkgate St to the north.

From this point we defined the building vertically by its transparent base, articulated middle and 'lantern' top. The solid façade is lifted over the quay wall to give a clear separation when viewed from Heuston Station and to give the building maximum transparency at the base, as well as creating a generous open appearance when viewed from ground level.

We then looked at creating an abstract middle with a play of solid to void using a 440mm depth granite mix reconstituted stone. This will create a play of light on the various angles across the façade. This articulated middle also creates a legible pattern and scale when read in conjunction with the surrounding context.

The top of the tower is then expressed as a 'lantern'. This is done by projecting the façade blades to varying heights from 5m to 11m giving the tower a crown which changes appearance when viewed from different points in the city.



**Figure 2.1:** Showing concept for tower.

In developing the design, full cognisance was taken of the national and local planning policies, providing a landmark building sited within a high quality public realm to become a highly desirable destination to live, work and visit. This accords with the policy objectives under the Dublin City Development Plan and National Planning Policy. Furthermore, the criteria referred to in SDRA 7, and in particular, objectives 1 and 5 being:

*“1. To develop a new urban gateway character area focused on the transport node of Heuston Station with world class public transport interchange facilities, vibrant economic activities, a high-quality destination to live, work and socialise in, a public realm and architectural designs of exceptional high standard and a gateway to major historic, cultural and recreational attractions of Dublin City.”*

*“5. To incorporate mix-use in appropriate ratios in order to generate urban intensity and animation. This will require the major uses of residential and office to be complemented by components of culture, retail and service elements.”*

*“7. As a western counterpoint to the Docklands, to consider mid-rise or taller buildings (above 50m / 16-storeys), subject to maintaining a coherent skyline and protecting key views and vistas. Two particular sites are identified for tall buildings, but consideration is not limited to these specific sites.”*

The vision for SRDA7 is expressed as follows:

*“To create a coherent and vibrant quarter of the city that captures the public imagination with high quality services, development, design and public spaces that consolidate and improve the existing strengths of the area.”*

Planning Permission was granted on the site in 2006 for a mixed use development by Dublin City Council, however this decision was overturned when the planning permission was refused following an appeal to An Bord Pleanála. The more recently consented scheme (ABP-306569-20, Blocks B & C) consists of two blocks arranged around a central courtyard and includes 321 apartments and commercial uses.

In composing a new design for Block A within the overall masterplan, the design strategy has taken cognisance of the reasons for the previous planning refusal as well as being informed by a comprehensive review of the site, its context, setting in the city and relationship with the River.

## **2.5 Layout and Design**

The overall layout of the proposed development is informed by the consented scheme ABP-306569-20. The redesign of proposed Block A has been developed in consultation with the Planning Department of Dublin City Council.

Details of consultations with Dublin City Council and An Bord Pleanála are outlined in **Chapter 1, Introduction**.

Proposed Block A comprises a 30-storey residential building (c.14,364 sq m gfa), including 198no. BTR residential apartments and ancillary amenities, a café/restaurant, replacement office floor area (at its interface with consented Block B2), and associated tie-in works, located in the eastern apex of the site subject of otherwise consented development under ABP-306569-20.

### **2.5.1 Design Approach – Base**

The arrangement of the ground floor plan responds to the direction of travel from the city. The residents' entrance and lounge are the first entrance facing East. This creates a focal point to the scheme as pedestrians move through the pocket garden on the main approach. The courtyard to the west forms part of the public offering of the masterplan. By opening the whole of this façade, the building looks to achieve continuous activity to the space, with visibility through from Parkgate Street all the way out the Liffey.

The core, back of house and ancillary spaces at the base have been minimised as much as possible carving them into a space that reduces street frontage and maximises active frontage.

### **2.5.2 Design Approach – Middle**

The 'typical floor' is arranged around a rationalised symmetrical core that houses all the necessary servicing, transportation, and fire safety in the plan.

The plan then opens up to three important views by opening the solid façade to create picture windows directed to the views. The apartments facing east have been enhanced with winter gardens with a direct view up the River Liffey to the city centre.

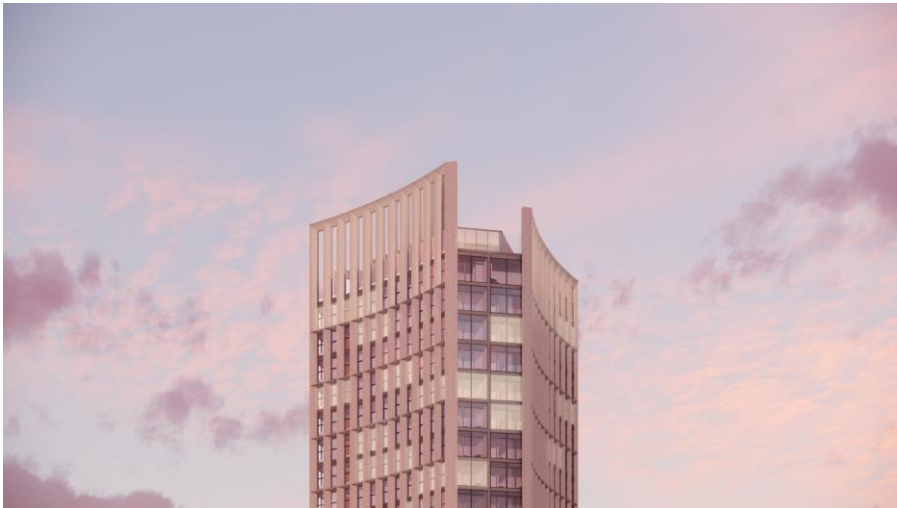
The curved façade features a rigorous grid with full height openings to gain maximum daylight into the apartments. The triangular nature of the plan also allows for the maximising the dual aspect to reach 77% across the tower.



**Figure 2.2:** Showing the curtain wall glazing

### **2.5.3 Design Approach – Top**

The top of the building features a distinct crown which consists of extending the vertical façade upwards at different heights creating a visual that changes depending on the viewer's position. The result is a 'lantern' or crown top to the building creating a landmark recognisable as a totem in the city.



**Figure 2.3:** Showing the crown

## 2.6 Alternative Designs Considered.

In accordance with the EIA Directives and Article 94, Schedule 6, paragraph 1(d) of the Planning and Development Regulations 2001, as amended, this section outlines a brief description of the reasonable alternatives (for example in terms of project design, technology, location, size and scale) studied for the Parkgate Street lands, which are relevant to the proposed project and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects.

### 2.6.1 Initial Massing Options.

The massing options respond to the constraints of the site, and surrounds. Starting from the triangular nature of the eastern apex of the site subject of the otherwise consented scheme (ABP-306569-20), initial massing options were then tested, presented and discarded as the scheme evolved over time.

The triangular nature of the building plan was considered the most successful in terms of creating a tower that looked slender from all sides and created a plan that allowed for majority dual aspect apartments.

Evolving this concept further, massing options were identified, each of which was weighed against the overall aspiration and concept of the scheme with consideration on how each option could respond to the top, middle and base.

Massing option two was chosen for its elegant curvature and response to the sweeping nature of Parkgate street. It also successfully softens the middle of the building and allows for a playful dynamic at the top of the tower with the various plane heights.

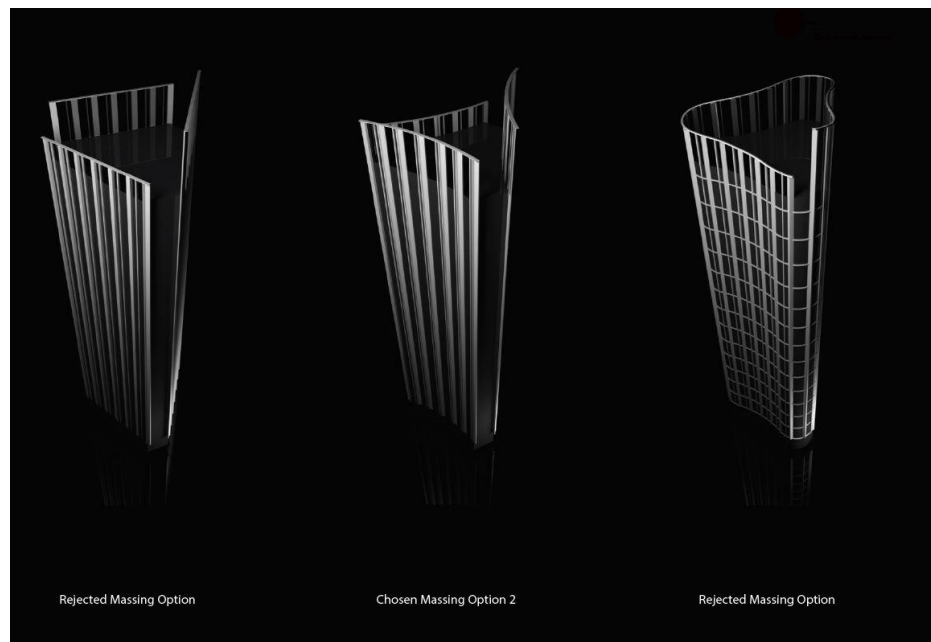


Figure 2.4: Showing early massing options considered

## 2.6.2 Design / Façade Development.

The proposed façade is a result of a number of design iterations and options which were tested based on a number of criteria namely :

- **Site Constraints**

Responding to the triangular nature of the apex of the site and the shape of Parkgate St to the north, the façade is formed by three curved planes, open at each end. The curve responded to the shape of Parkgate St and the plan of the consented scheme as it meets the tower. Each option was considered against the original aspiration of the transparent base, articulated middle and lantern top.

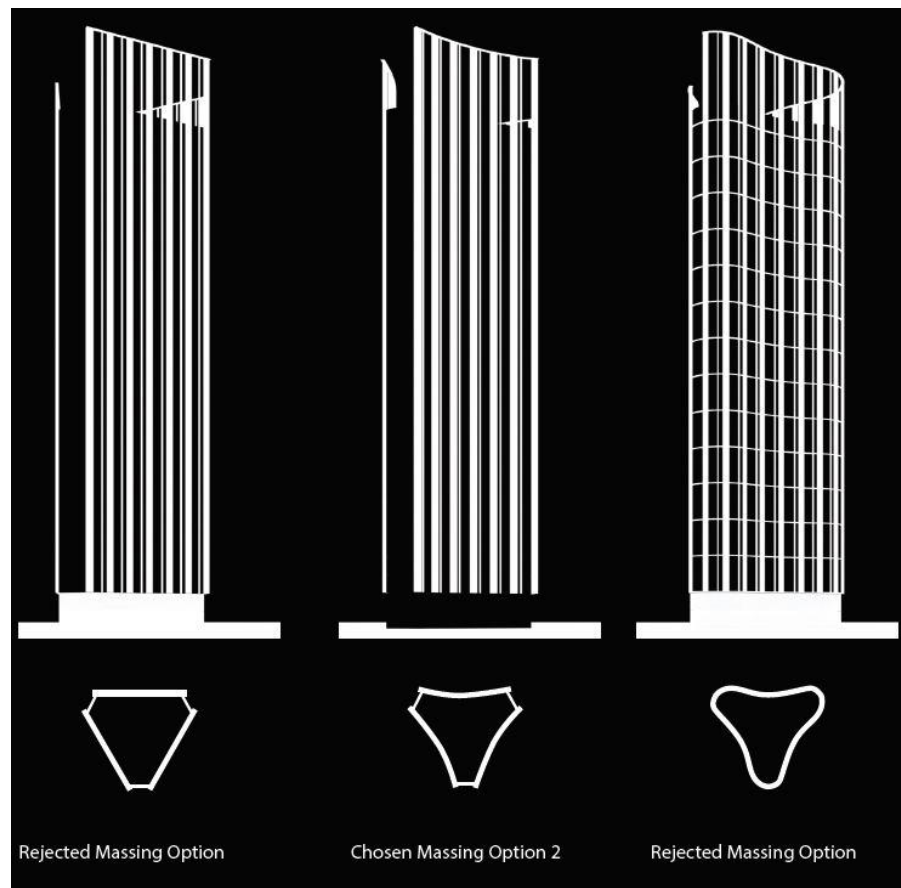


Figure 2.5: Showing massing options.

- **Order**

The ordering of the fenestration along the façade was considered in terms of aesthetics and quality of daylight and sunlight into the apartments. The result of which is to create an ordered façade that creates a rhythm of repeating windows which allow for quality daylight into each apartment.

**2.6.3 Interaction with the River Wall**

The consented scheme includes a walkway between the river wall and the tower. The design intent of the consented scheme (ABP-306569-20) is to create openings in the wall to allow more light into the public plaza and spaces behind the wall.

As part of the design of proposed Block A a number of options were considered to compliment the interaction of the proposed tower and the consented river walk and the River Wall. The manner in which the river wall is braced against proposed Block A will be as per the consented scheme (ABP-306569-20) in so far as it affects the river wall. The lateral restraints will however land somewhat differently on the façade of the revised tower design.

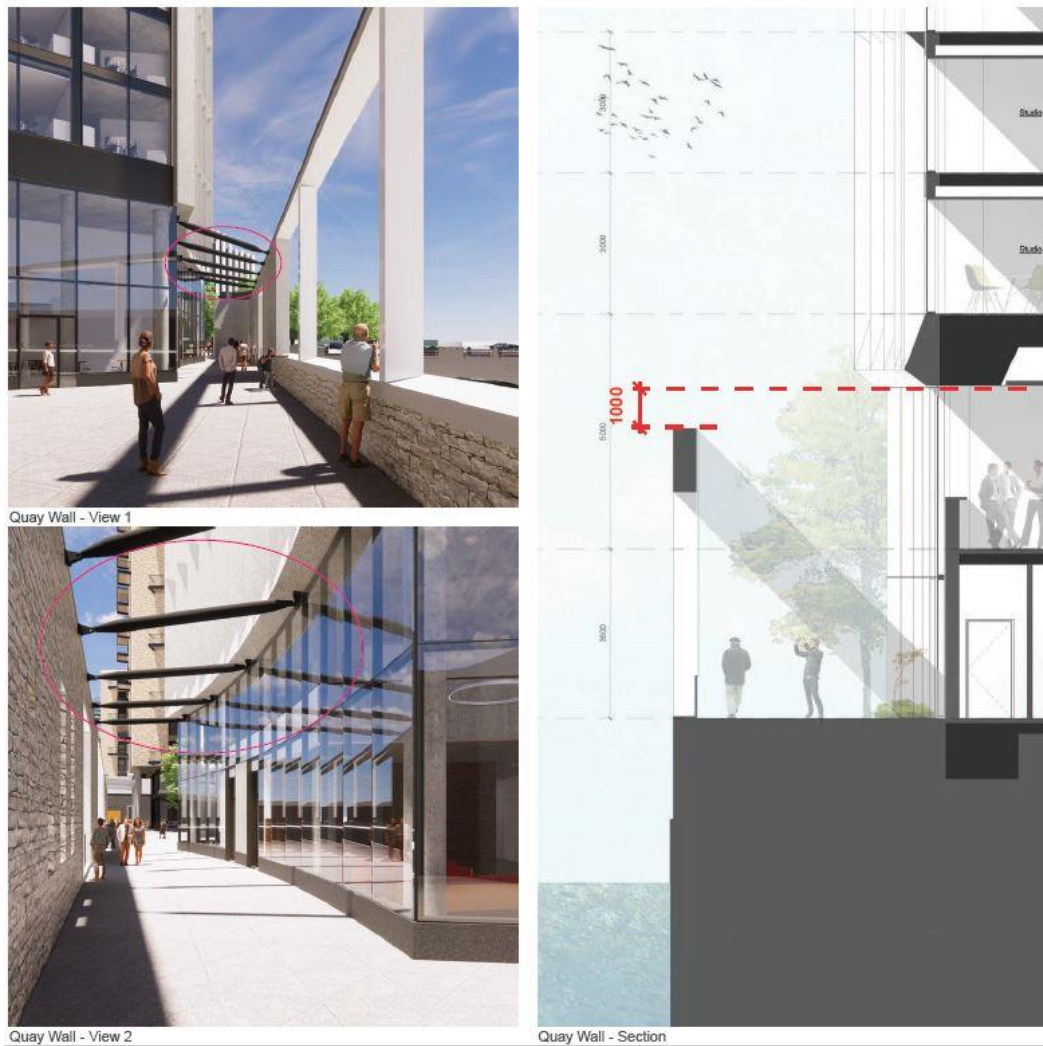


Figure 2.6: Showing connection to Quay Wall

**2.6.4 Ground plane mix and location of uses**

A key design consideration has been the activation of the ground floor. The arrangement of the ground floor creates a focal point to the scheme allowing for a transparent base with a mix of uses between Food + Beverage and the residents foyer and lounge area.



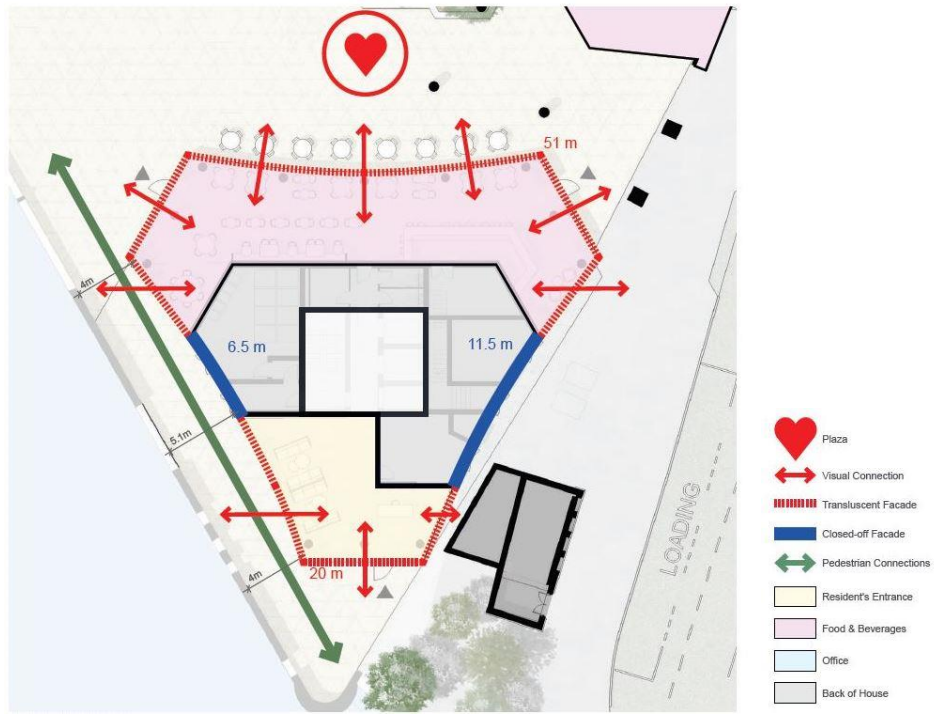


Figure 2.7: Showing approach to the base of tower.

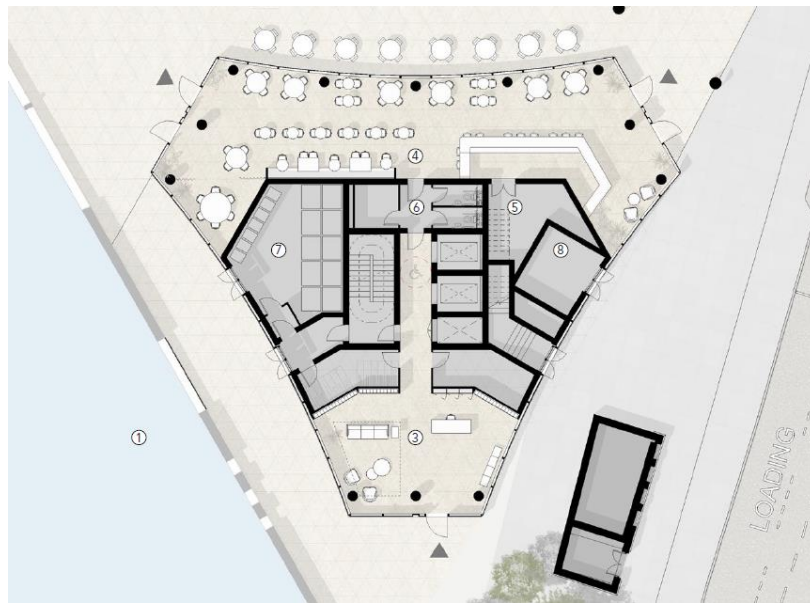


Figure 2.8: Early Design Option for the Ground Floor



Outdoor Space - Cinema Use



Outdoor Space - Market Use

**Figure 2.9:** Potential Cultural Use in the Plaza – Daytime Markets/ Night time Amenity

## Final Design

When first looking at the proposed site for the Parkgate Street Tower inspiration was initially drawn by its prominence, both in terms of its proximity to Heuston Station but also the fact that it is the apex of a triangular site with wide spaces all around it. This prominence is then amplified by its position on the River Liffey creating one of the most important building plots in Dublin.

The triangular nature of the site then further informed the building design, offsetting each of the three facades to create a building of three blades extending to differing heights with open corners that would create amazing views up and down the Liffey and north to The Phoenix Park. Each of the three façades is arched, picking up on the bend of the river and the road, allowing this to subtly determine the plan form.

The buildings top, middle and bottom are then defined. The masonry façade is lifted above the river wall, giving a clear separation between the existing wall and the articulated middle sitting over the transparent glazed base of the proposed tower, when viewed from Heuston Station. This removed the appearance of columns at ground level giving the building the sense of maximum transparency at ground level, and visually separating old and new. This also offers a generous open appearance to both Parkgate Street to the north east, the proposed plaza to the south west and river walk inside the river wall to the south.

An abstract masonry middle to the building is created, that is defined by a 440mm depth granite mix reconstituted stone. This will create a play of light on the varying angles to the façade, and also give the building a familial quality when read in the context of Heuston Station to the south and the Four Courts to the North.

The top of the tower was then created by extending the façade blades up to varying heights from 4.6m to 8.6m, giving the tower an evocative crown with a changing appearance when viewed from different points around the city.

The building's internal arrangement has been developed to create 77% dual aspect, giving the majority of the apartments great light and maximising the amazing views surrounding the site.

In terms of amenity space the tower offers the following:

- A 223m<sup>2</sup> café/restaurant located at ground floor with access from Parkgate Street and the consented public realm, with views onto the river at the most prominent and accessible location of the scheme to the east, west and south;
- Proposed ancillary internal (c.384 sq m) and external (c.255 sq m) residents' private communal amenity areas and facilities, including ground floor reception/concierge area, lounge bars at mezzanine and 9<sup>th</sup> floors and rooftop garden.
- Access to other public and private amenity areas within the consented scheme ABP-306569-20.

The proposed tower also resolves the interface with the consented office building B2.

## 2.7 Response to refusal of previous application

Comments received for the previously submitted tower (ref ABP-306569-20) were taken into consideration and addressed as part of the new design.

The current design aims for cohesion and legibility: the pure form based on a concave triangle plan responds to the geometry used by the masterplan with one simple gesture and replicates it on the other two facades. Clear and carefully designed separation from the interconnected office building was important for distinguishing the tower in the immediate views.

The current proposal is a great example of a modern residential tower: its character is not determined by huge surfaces of curtain walling characteristic of office towers, but is rather defined by deep and sculptural precast masonry elements. Individually tilted windows add variety to the façade and suggest residential programme inside. Glazed, chamfered corners exhibit proud, modern, high-end living interiors and suggest the living patterns of the inhabitants, especially when interior lighting glows in the evenings.

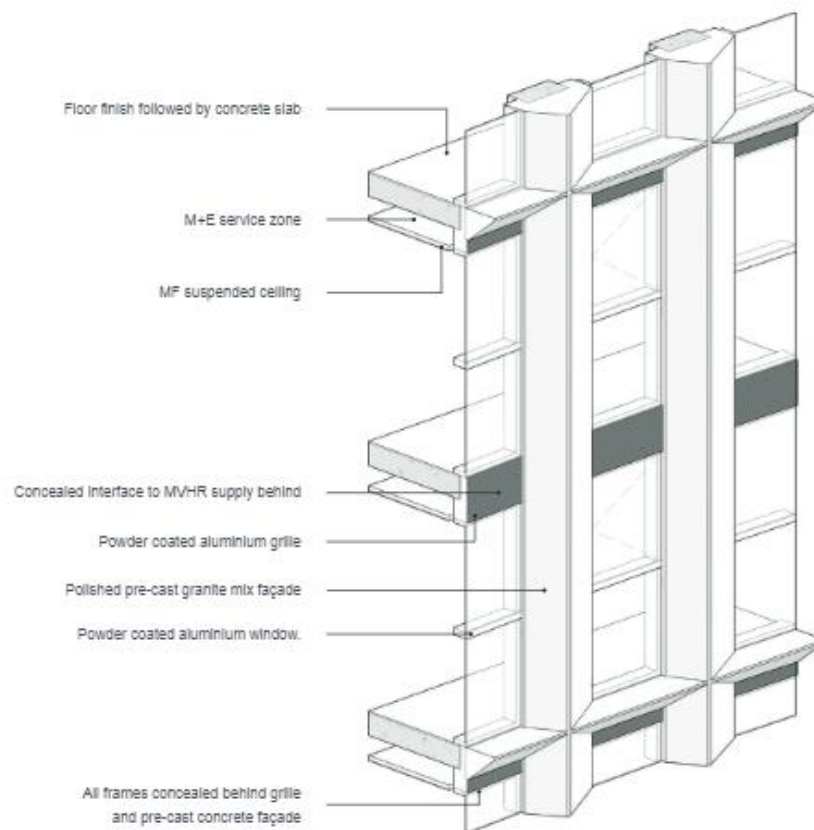
The chosen materials are of a high quality, befitting the prominence of the building in the cityscape. The detailing of the tower has been taken to a construction level in order to demonstrate the high quality that can be achieved in the finished building.

The slenderness of the tower was maintained and enhanced by the glowing crown and the proportions of the windows and chamfered corners. The main objective behind the new tower design is to create an exceptional, beautiful, refined and elegant modern building appropriate for Dublin's unique cityscape.

In order to achieve that, the tower is created with three simple elements:

- Translucent base - to create large areas of active frontage
- Articulated middle - to create reference to the surrounding historic architecture and establish quality of the design
- Lantern Top - to create a landmark image of the building

The design and positioning of the original tower had successfully addressed the tower's position in relation to the view corridor between the City Quays and the Wellington Monument. This is enhanced in the proposed development.



**Figure 2.10:** Façade Detail

## 2.8 Conclusion

The design of the proposed development has been influenced by the site's unique riverside setting, its built heritage and pivotal gateway location within the city. The built form, including the height and massing, has been created following an extensive design process. Careful attention to materiality has further resulted in a distinctive and attractive scheme.

This application addresses the issues raised in the partially permitted scheme (ref ABP-306569-20), whereby the principle of the tower was accepted but a different approach to materiality and design was required.

The tower is designed to a very detailed level with high quality materials to produce a landmark building.