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1. Construction of ABC Factory, 1930
2. ABC factory viewed from Kentish Town Road
3. Aerial view of ABC Bakery 1960's

3 Site History

3.3 1980’s Grimshaw Development

In 1986 Nicholas Grimshaw & Partners submitted plans that comprised:

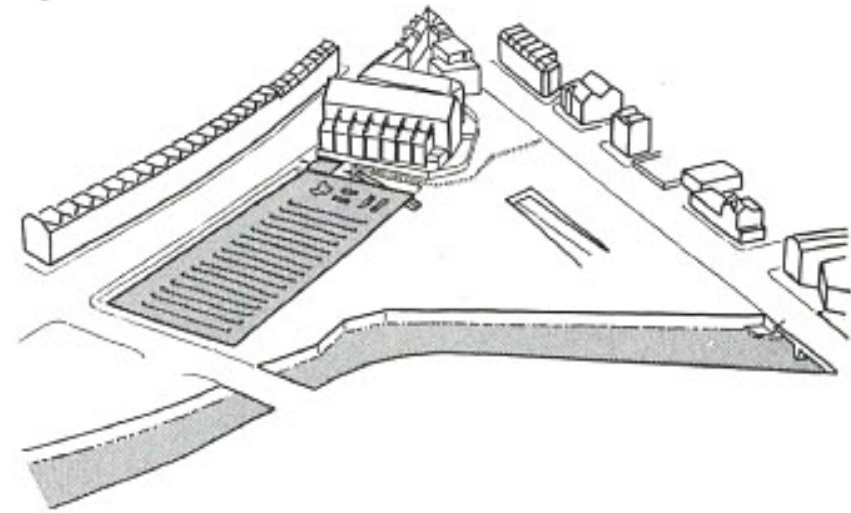
- A supermarket building on the Camden Road
- Two storeys of light industrial workshops along Kentish Town Road below which are parking, servicing and two lettable units (Grand Union House)
- A row of twelve homes on the canal side
- A vehicle and service area within the site giving access to basement car parking together with a landscaped pedestrian route through the site.

The scheme was completed in Autumn 1988.

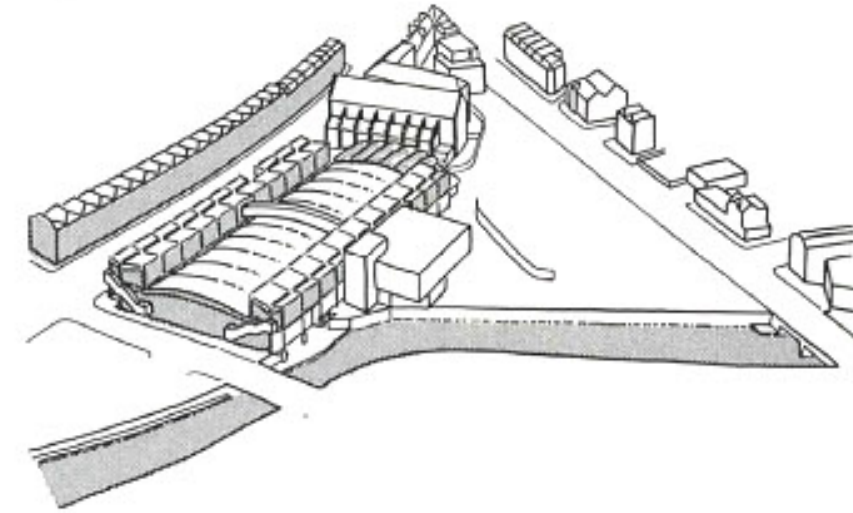
A dramatic High Tech structure spanning over a column-free space was the starting point of the supermarket design. The curved roof shape, the structural columns with ties and the large lattice beams which carry the first floor accommodation are all clearly expressed. The long elevation is punctuated at various points by staircases and other features. Arranging the ancillary accommodation in two 2-storey blocks over the main structural columns on the long sides of the store allowed all the necessary accommodation to be provided while at the same time increasing the buildings scale so that it has a greater urban presence on an important town centre corner.

The residential component of the development is equally expressive of a futuristic high-tech vision. Arranged over three floors, the homes present a bow fronts to the canal with large windows and balconies over an access pathway. The rear of the homes are completely blank to the Sainsbury’s car park save for small access doors to each utility room.

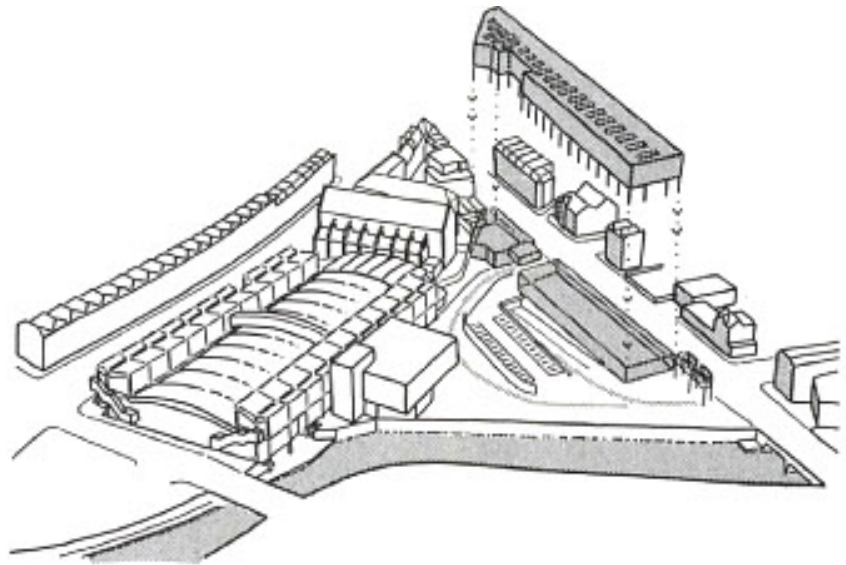
The workshop/office building forms the frontage on Kentish Town Road. A largely open floor plan with mezzanines spans across the site and is raised on concrete columns above a surface car park. It bridges the exit route to Kentish Town Road for the supermarket operations. Hence its first floor height is set by the requirements of an articulated lorry. Two small lettable units face the street.



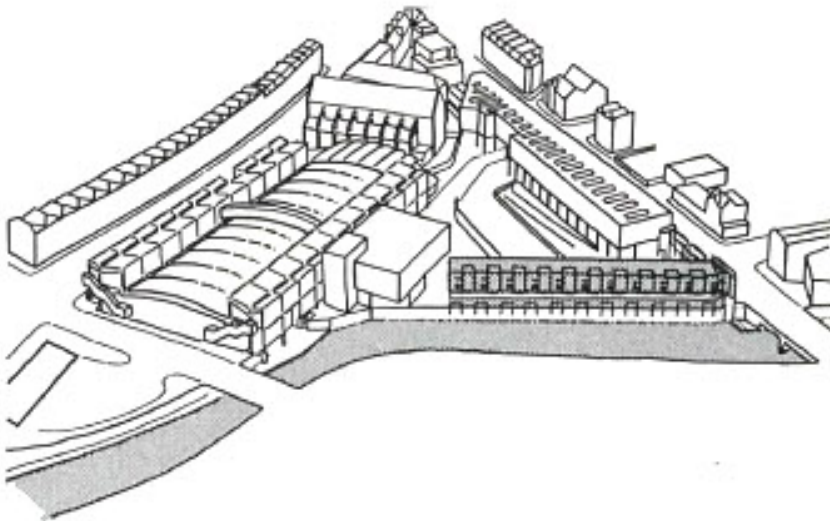
1. Sainsbury’s supermarket store configuration



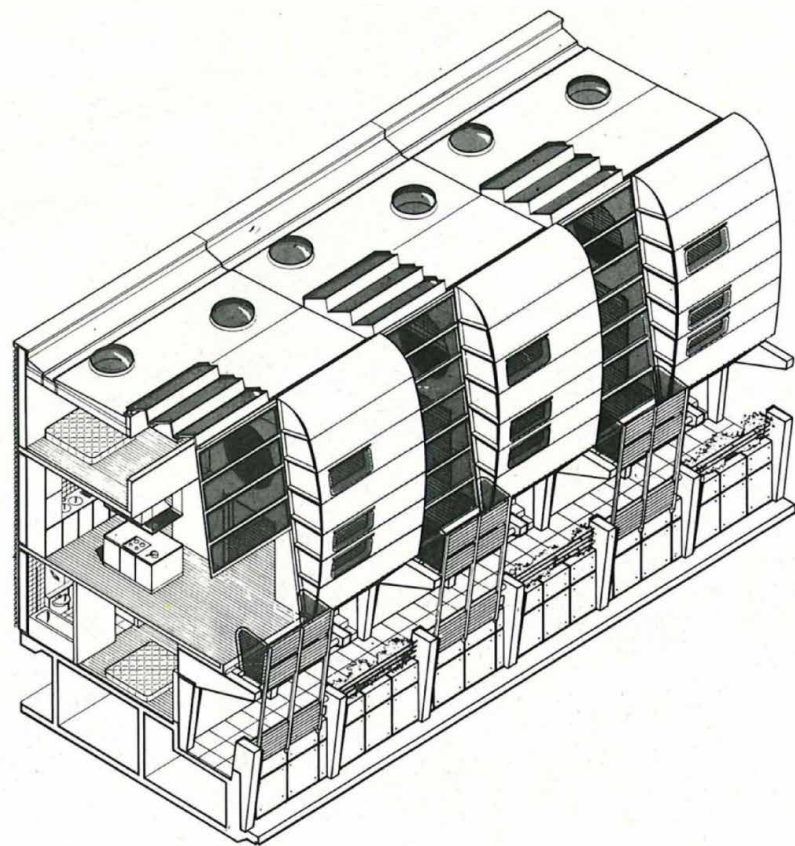
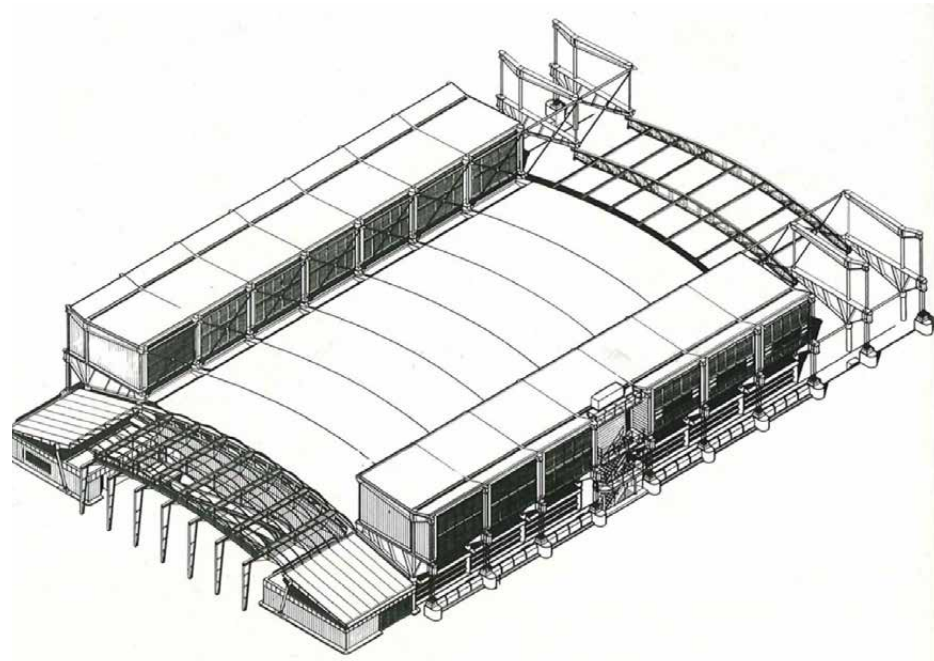
2. Sainsbury’s supermarket architecture adjacent to Camden Road



3 Grand Union House placement over parking and loading areas off Kentish Town Road



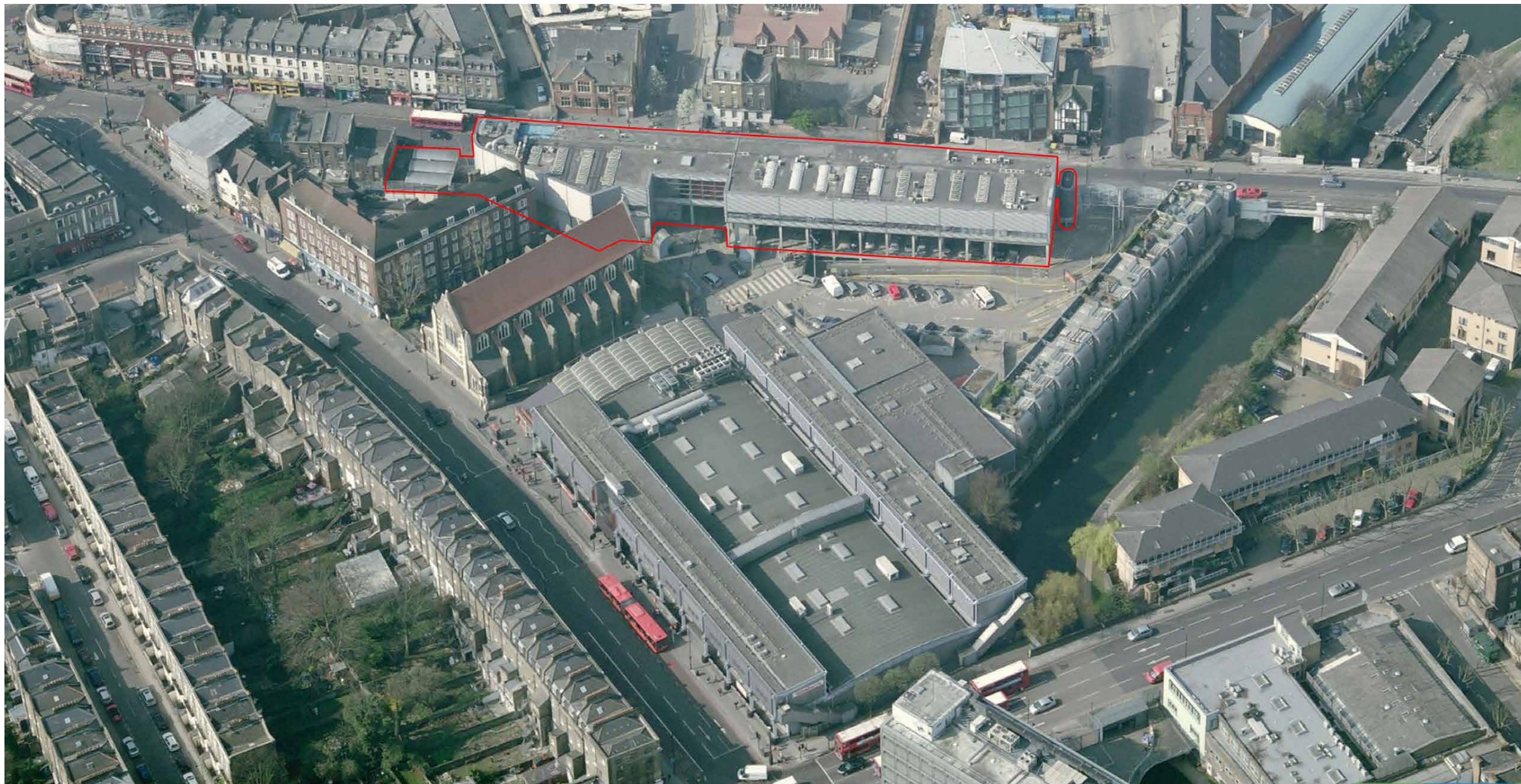
4 Grand Union Walk residential units located at the canal edge



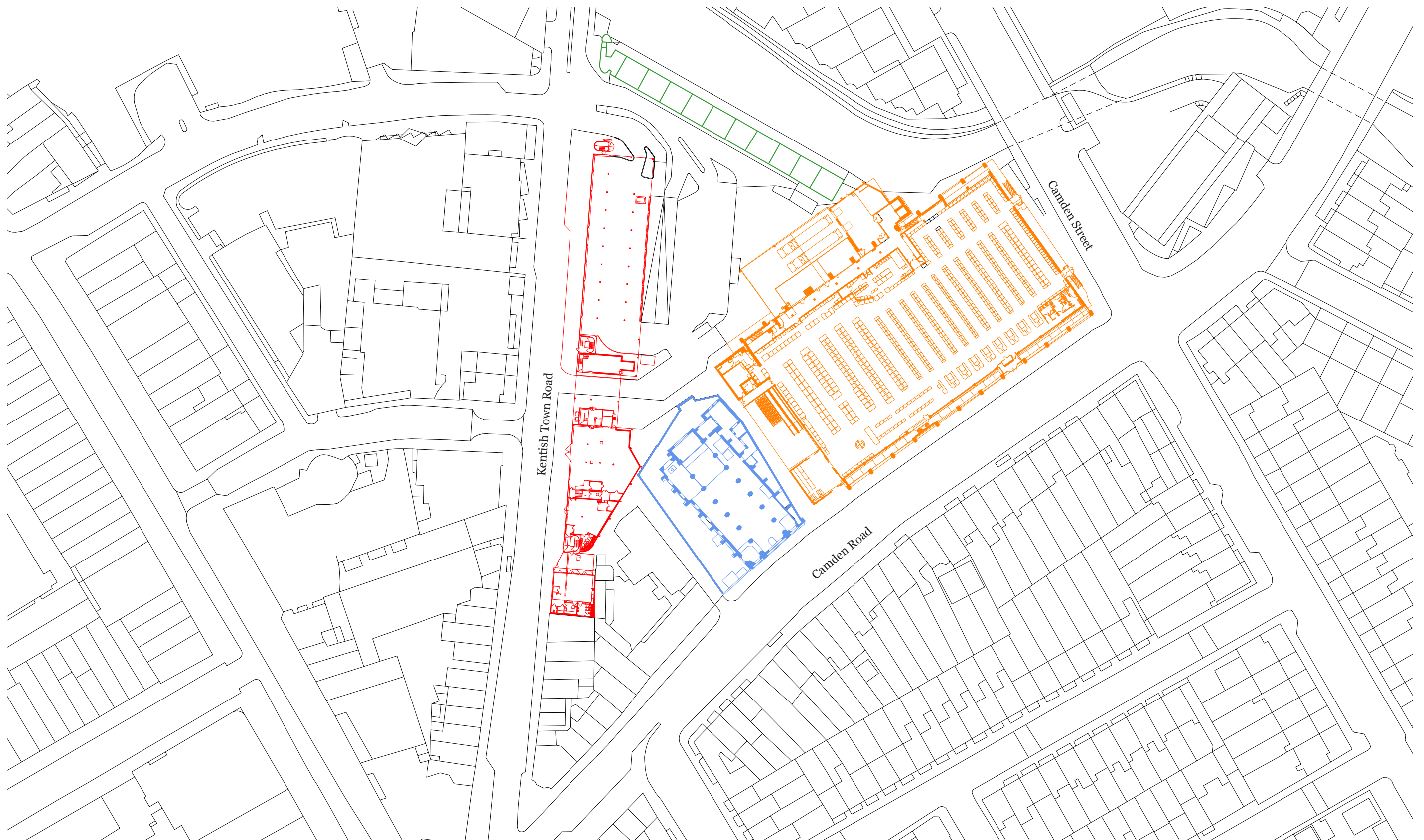
Above: Drawings and photographs of the 1980's Grimshaw designed for Sainsbury's
Below: Grand Union Walk Houses in Camden Town.

4 Current Site Condition

4.1 Current Condition



Aerial view of the site with Grand Union House highlighted in red.




Site plan (1:1000 @ A3)

■ Grand Union House - Camden Mixed Development Ltd

■ Grand Union Walk - Residential properties

■ Sainsbury's Super Store

■ St Michael's Church - Diocese of London

1:1000 

4 Current Site Condition

4.2 Existing building

The existing Grand Union House was designed as two concrete structures linked by a bridge at first floor. A continuous metal cladding envelopes all.

The northern structure includes two business units accessed at first floor that extend to mezzanine areas. These spaces are top lit from roof lights and have narrow ribbon windows on their western face. There is a small retail unit at ground floor that extends to a mezzanine level. Car parking is located at street level accessed from the Sainsbury’s car park. The car park currently provides parking for the Grand Union Walk residents and Grand Union House businesses. It has relatively recently been enclosed with metal fencing and gates to resist vandalism and anti-social behaviour.

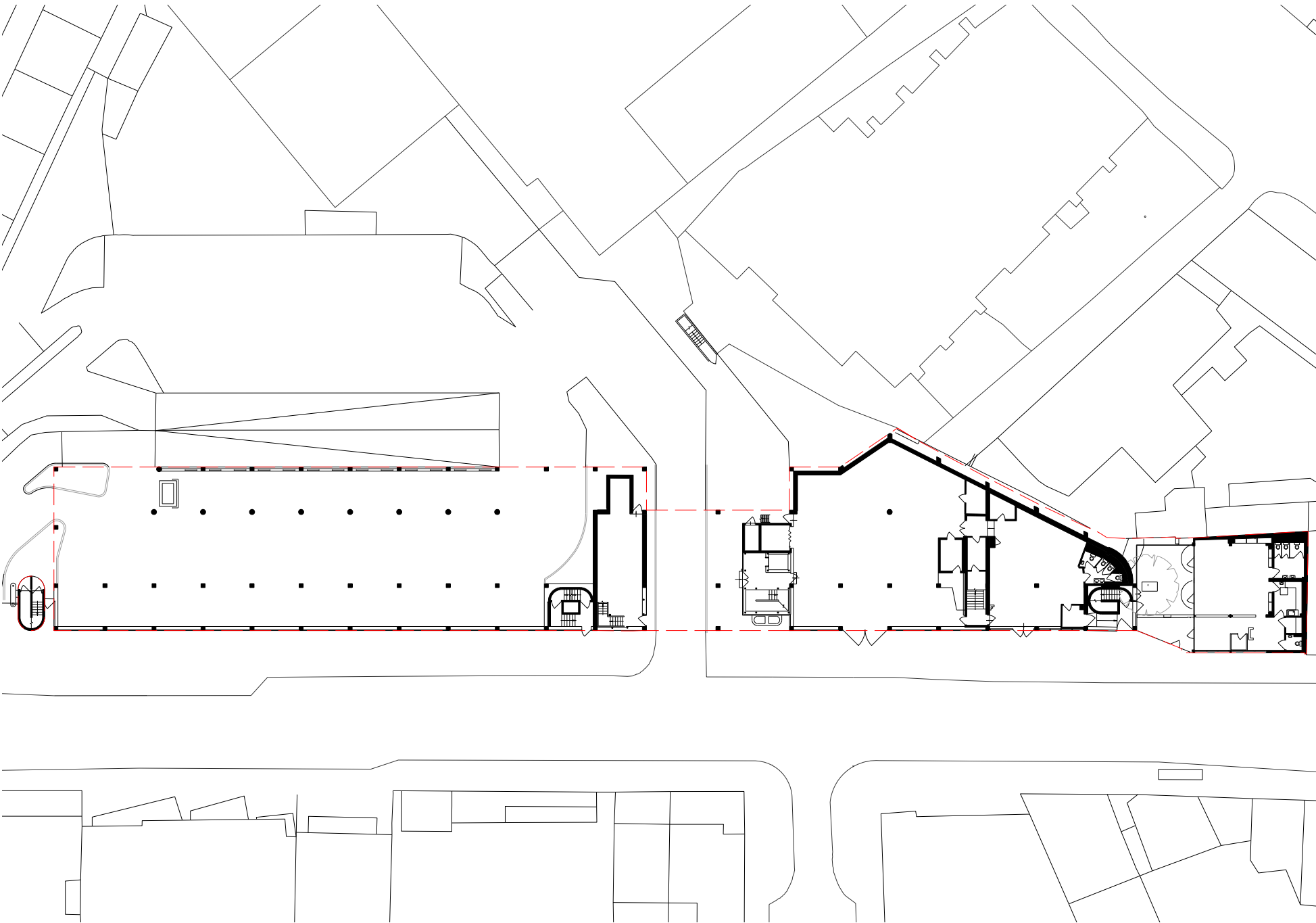
The southern structure consists of a single business unit at first floor and an A3 unit at ground level that extends to a mezzanine level. A loading dock is located at street level.

A glazed lobby provides access from the underpass to the first floor bridge by stair and lift and subsequently to the units. The bridge structure contains shared WC facilities at first floor level.

Much of the existing mechanical ventilation and heating services of the building are coming to the end of their working lives. The work space roof lights are heavily stained and leaking. Pigeon infestation continues to be a problem.

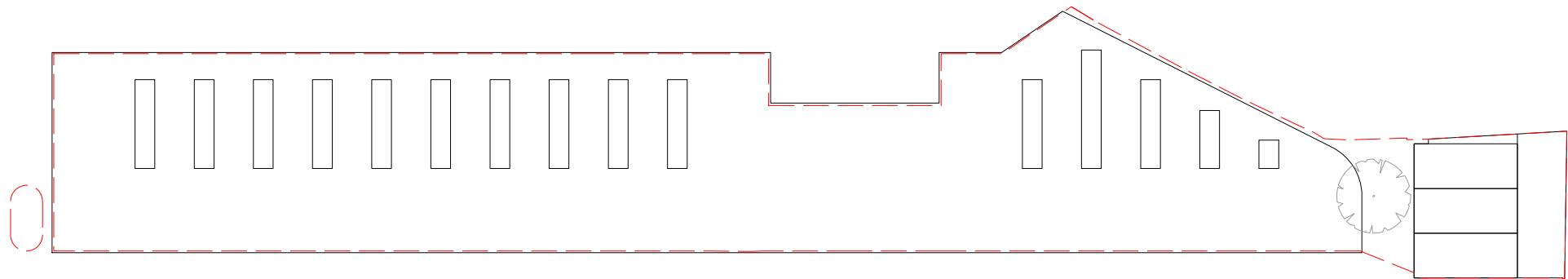
Land Use	Existing (GIA)
Office (Class B1)	2,807sqm
Retail/Retail Bar (Class A1/A4)	382qsm
Total	3,189sqm

Existing GUH areas

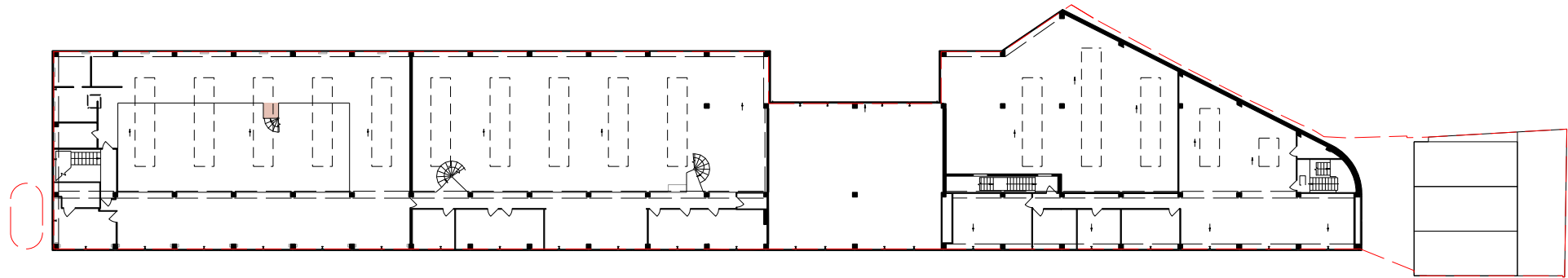


Above: Ground floor plan (00)

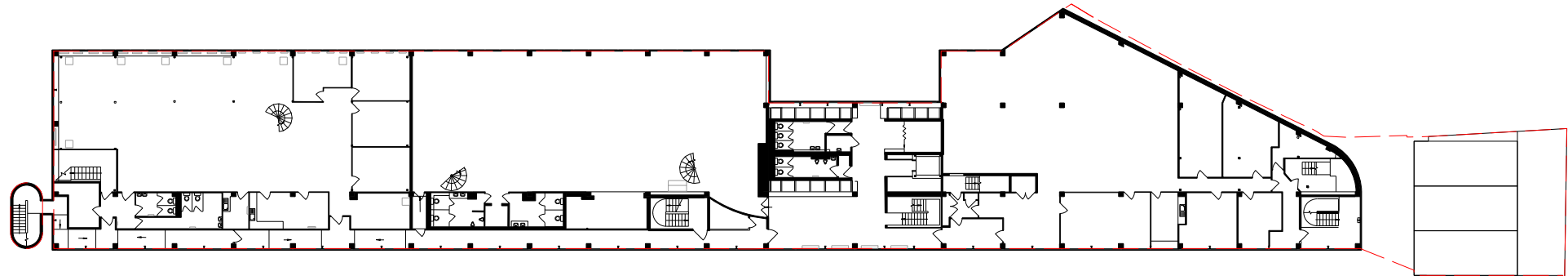
Roof plan (RF)



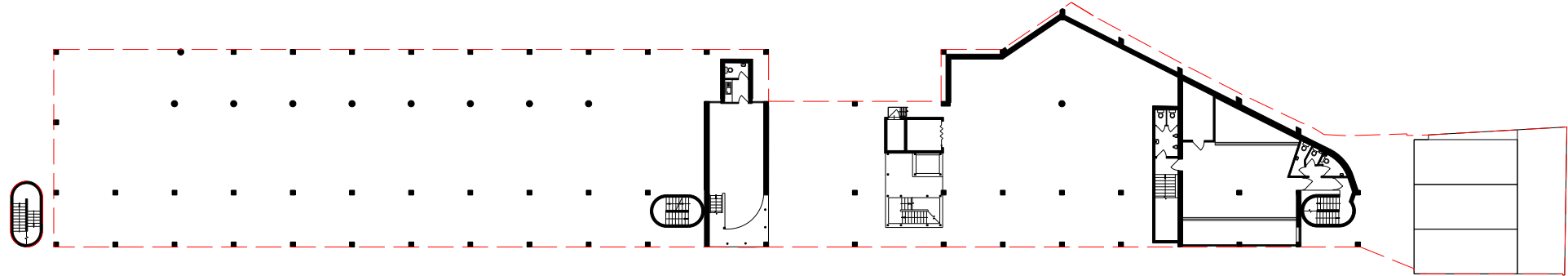
Second floor plan (o2)



First floor plan (o1)

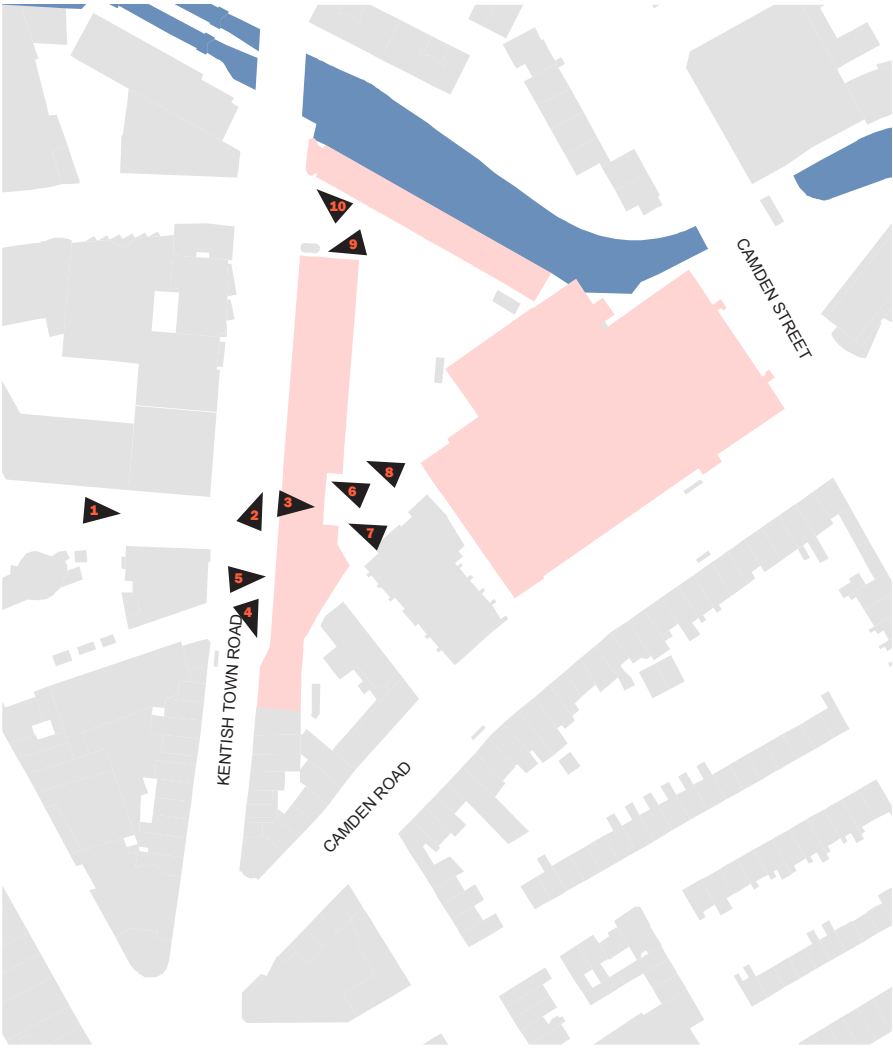


Ground Mezz (oM)



4 Current Site Condition

4.3 Existing urban realm



1 - Approach



2 - Inactive Frontage



6 - Antisocial Behavior



7 - Cramped

- 1. View from Buck St.
- 2. Looking North along Kentish Town Road.
- 3. Looking at undercroft of Grand Union House.
- 4. Inactive frontage on Kentish Town Road.
- 5. Hostile security measures along Kentish Town Road.
- 6. Corner of the Grand Union House undercroft.
- 7. Cramped pedestrian path in Sainsbury's yard.
- 8. Pedestrian experience in Sainsbury's yard.
- 9. Fence enclosing fire escape of Grand Union House.
- 10. Corner of Sainsbury's yard and Kentish Town Road.



3 - Dark undercroft



4 - Inactive Frontage



5 - Defensive



8 - Hostile



9 - Obsolete



10 - Vehicle focused

4 Current Site Condition

4.4 Qualities of the Existing Architecture

The ground floor of the building, forming the western edge of the Sainsbury’s store development is formed of an unchanging rhythm of concrete columns. These are all void at ground level north of Buck Street, where metal railings have been installed to protect the car park. The foreground of cars and tarmac dominates.

The floors above are clad in dark grey horizontally profiled metal sheeting. The openness of the site to the general public has allowed anti-social activity in many spaces at night. Rubbish, drug paraphernalia and human excrement are often present.

While it expresses some of the motifs of the high tech movement (i.e. a top-serviced, shed-like external envelope offering full flexibility with an open interior) it does not have the same finesse of the supermarket on Camden Road. The latter illustrates much more clearly some of the key characteristics of the High Tech style and embodies better the balance between engineering and architecture, function and representation.

Grand Union House is an example of a light industrial/office building of which there are numerous examples in England. It is not an example of a rare building type nor does it represent a nationally important nor localised industry. Although the scale and massing of the building vaguely relates to the surrounding townscape, the long elevation along Kentish Town Road appears monotonous and allows views into the Sainsbury’s service yard and parking area without engaging to solve the urbanistic concerns of the area. Pedestrian access through the site is limited and priority is given to vehicles and service deliver functions. It does not positively contribute to the Regents Canal Conservation Area.



Top left: View of Grand Union House along Kentish Town Road
Bottom left: Grand Union House viewed from Sainsbury’s parking yard
Right: Grand Union House facade on Kentish Town Road



Above: Existing view looking south along Kentish Town Road

4 Current Site Condition

4.5 Site Evaluation

The diagram opposite illustrates the challenging problems of the site.

Anti-Social Behaviour

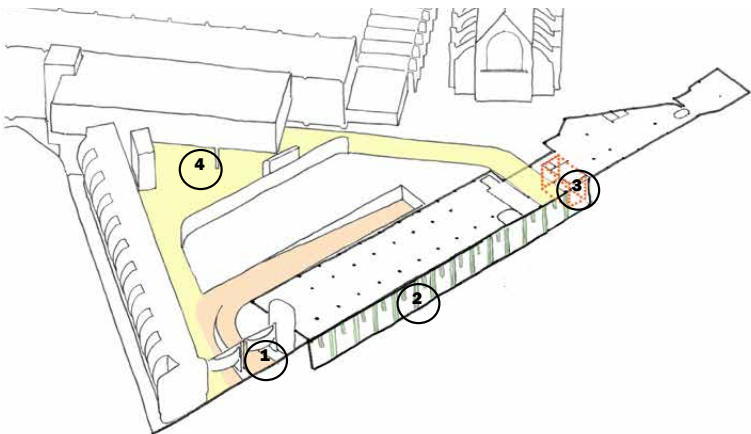
The current car park below Grand Union House provides no contribution to the street activity on Kentish Town Road. The vacancy of this area and its protection from views and overlooking has led to relentless anti-social behaviour that poses a safety threat to users of the car park, their property and the general public. The addition of new activities and passive overlooking at ground level all day could help this problem in an empathetic way.

The Quality of Public Realm

The quality of the public realm on Kentish Town Road is severely affected by the lack of activity beneath Grand Union House. The yard behind the building was designed to cater for and control vehicles only. It presents a hostile environment for pedestrians despite their natural need and desire to cross it to reach Camden Road. It represents a tantalising opportunity to present high quality public realm close to Camden’s town centre.

Site Operational Restrictions

The Sainsbury’s supermarket is a major town centre business that operates seven days a week. The business operation relies on multiple daily deliveries. Grand Union House straddles a vital exit for delivery vehicles and is adjacent to another. All other vehicular visits to Sainsbury’s, including cars, buses and taxis, also use the yard. The redevelopment of Grand Union House has carefully resolved a means by which the Sainsbury’s will not be disrupted.



- 1. Sainsbury’s customer parking
- 2. Existing ABC Bakery basement foundations
- 3. Existing sub-station
- 4. Sainsbury’s delivery logistics



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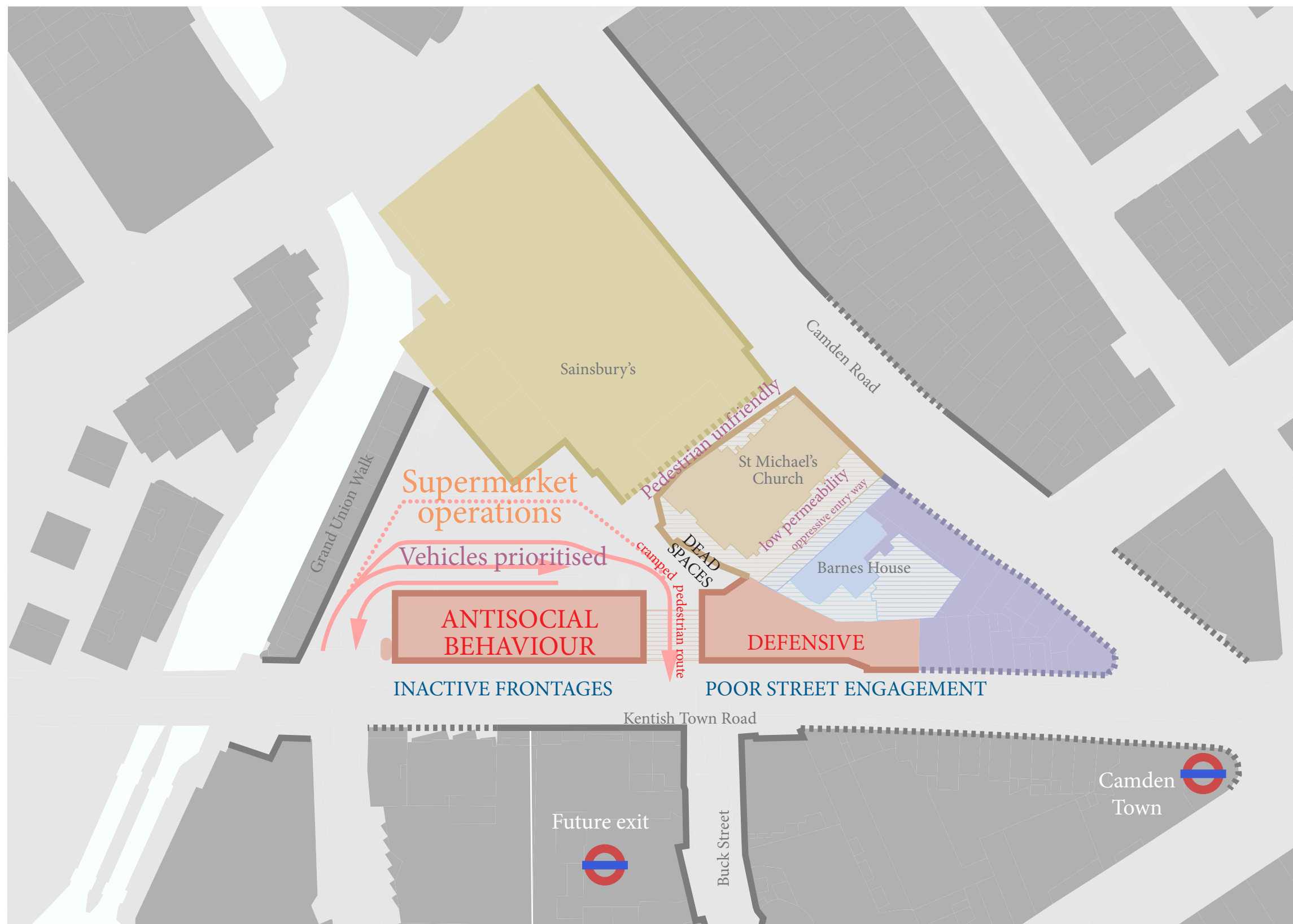
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Environmental influences diagram

5 Site Potential

5.1 Future Growth in Camden

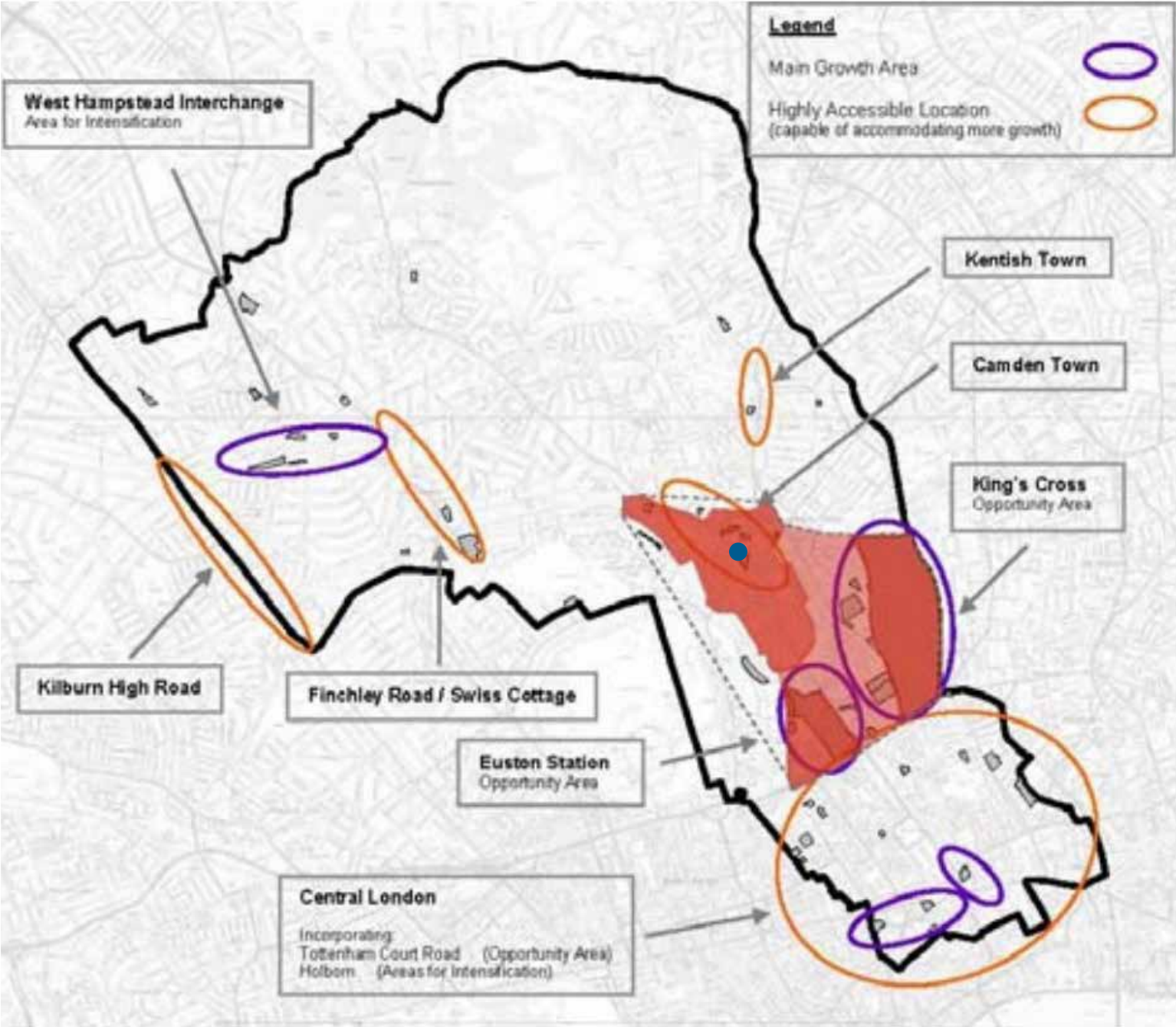
Camden Town’s commercial zone is currently heavily focused on visitor retail and youth-focused leisure activities. Camden needs accommodation for a range of other activities to balance its economy and service residents’ aspirations and needs. These include high value employment, a relevant retail offer and bars and restaurants for locals. The redevelopment of Grand Union House could act as a catalyst for change in Camden’s centre.

The local Council has identified that the creation of job opportunities and improving access to employment, particularly for local people, are key to the future success of Camden Town. Grand Union House will host yinnovative entrepreneurs who appreciate Camden’s spirit; challenging conventions and disrupting the status quo.

The centre of Camden is recognised as a priority for the Council’s Community Strategy. The town centre should become a successful and safe place with something for local people and visitors of all ages, without losing important aspects of its unique character.

Grand Union House has the potential to support these ambitions for Camden by:

- Supporting and promoting the creative industries sector in Camden Town.
- Contributing to the ideal mix of small, independent shops and a night-time economy of culture and entertainment .
- Improving the street environment and pedestrian movement.



● Grand Union House Site

The creative quarter in context of the London Borough of Camden
(Camden Town Unlimited, Towards a creative quater Kings Cross, Euston and Camden Town)