

CARTERS SITE
97A-117 CAVERSHAM ROAD
READING

For Bellway Homes,
Thames Valley

SEPTEMBER 2022



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Executive Summary

The Carters site on Caversham Road, Reading, has a distinctive history and has been a local retail destination until 2019 with the closure of the Carters Store, which had previously traded on this frontage for almost 200 years. The site is much deeper and incorporates a number of other uses in the yard to the rear, however its role as a busy commercial location has diminished and its future has become unsecure. This detailed Town Planning Application seeks to re-purpose this site, recognising its sustainable location, its failing commercial use, and its potential for positive regeneration.

This is a detailed Application which benefits form feedback at pre-applications stage with Officers and following a Design Review Panel session. Both provided detailed responses, but were broadly supportive of the ideas, concept, and approach.

This Design and Access Statement summarises our approach to the site, and the pre-application process and feedback we have been through. We have analysed the site and its context, recognising the extent of this ownership as part of a site Allocation for redevelopment. Our strategy is to set any proposals for this parcel within a master planned framework that can deliver the ambitions of the allocation, ensuring that we don't prejudice future development on those neighbouring sites.

This Application is prepared by RM_A Architects on behalf of Bellway Homes (Thames Valley), supported by specialist consultant input on key topics to ensure a comprehensive design approach that is well resolved and deliverable.

This application proposes a vision to regenerate this site, but also demonstrate how it might

connect seamlessly with neighbouring land that might come forward in due course

The proposal is wholly residential with 60 new homes, including family houses. These homes are designed to be of the highest standards to meet all local and national technical and design guidance

The site layout, form of buildings and their emerging character seeks to learn from the local area. Its pattern of narrow streets aligned with elegant and imposing red-brick buildings, form a recognisable urban grain and character.

This is a sustainable location and the design and specification of buildings seeks to minimise energy use, whilst appropriate sustainable technologies are proposed to limit impact and footprint.

In this location, close to the town centre and the station, reliance upon cars should be discouraged. Lower parking provision is proposed to encourage sustainable forms of transport.

Our key objective is to create a safe and accessible environment where crime and disorder or fear of crime does not undermine quality of life or community cohesion.



Aerial photo showing the site location in the wider context of this part of Reading. The site is conveniently and sustainably located for Station, and land southeast of our site and north of the station is Approved for comprehensive redevelopment meaning this whole area will change and become a new mixed-use neighbourhood.



Introduction

In 2021 RM_A Architects were commissioned by Bellway Thames Valley to prepare design ideas for the former Carters site, Caversham Road in Reading. This site has an important position in Reading, prominent in its current form in historic maps, and recognisable for the commercial uses on the site. However, these have now come to an end and the site needs to be re-modelled and re-purposed. Its sustainable location close to Reading town centre and the station demand a different use, and it is ideally situated for residential use, recognising the changing neighbourhoods to the east (the former post office site being redeveloped) and the existing pattern of small-scale residential homes immediately adjacent and to the west. The historic character and established pattern of those streets provide inspiration for the way this site can be replanned.

RM_A Architects specialise in the design and regeneration of Urban Brownfield sites. Our sensitive approach to problem solving will encompass all the key issues in the design process. Through over 40 years of practice, our experience in all building types has led to the evolution of an informed design approach.

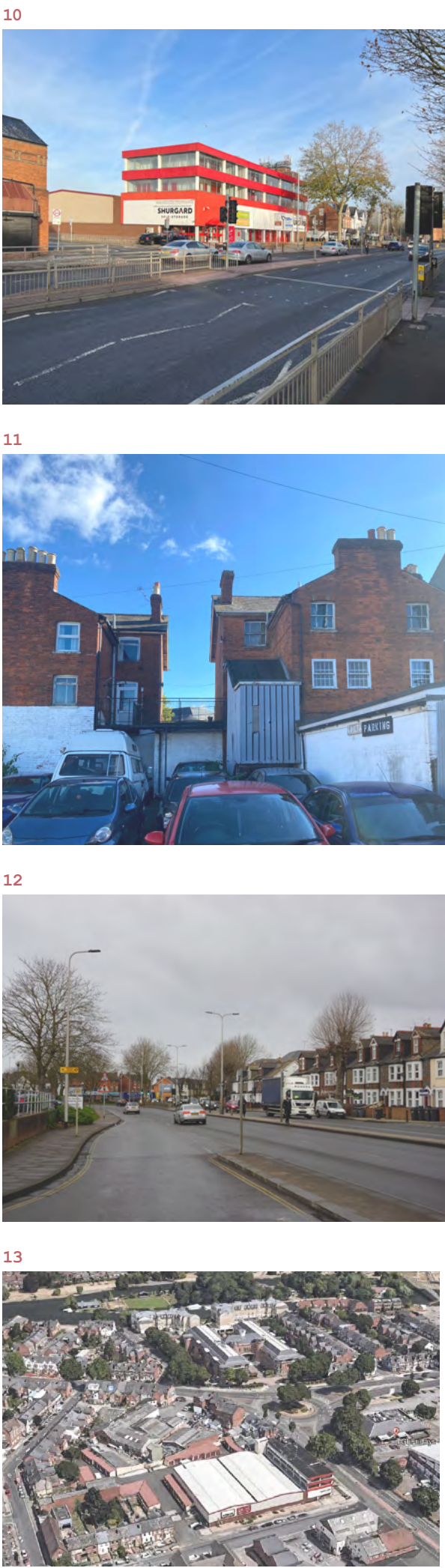
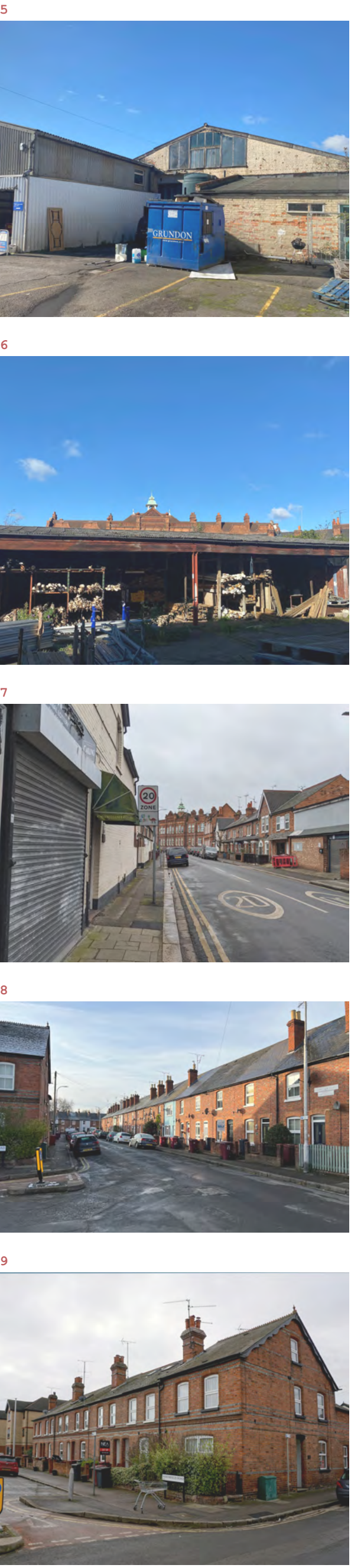
We are committed to core urban design principles when masterplanning. We nurture relationships with local authority planning departments and look to include them at an early stage in the design process. We establish the constraints and opportunities of our sites to generate a brief for development. We provide site specific solutions working within the constraints of contaminated sites, reclaimed land, listed buildings and conservation areas.

In this instance our approach at pre-applications stage has been to engage with officers and subsequently undertake a design review panel. These two key pre-application consultation stages have been valuable, positive, and reinforced the initial ideas. We have taken the detailed advice into this application demonstrating our commitment to working with officers to ensure this it's the best scheme for this site.

Most of this site is part of a broader allocation and whilst the process does not currently seek to deliver beyond the boundary of this parcel, we are keen to demonstrate how this might fit within a wider street pattern which demonstrates the routes, connections and built form that might later complete this area. Good Masterplanning seeks to blur ownerships in ensuring the final outcome is seamless, is coherent and legible, and contains ambition and optimism. At the same time a good Masterplan is designed recognising potential hurdles within this process, for example of the precarious nature of multiple ownerships, and therefore must be developed with an awareness of individual holdings. In that instance, time can become an important factor in delivery. Phased development is important and provided the framework established by the masterplan is secure, the full ambitions set out initially can be achieved.

Sustainability, energy efficiency and materials sourcing are key to our design approach. This site is well-located close to amenities and good public transport including Reading Station. Our aim is to create a group of new buildings of the highest quality, in design level of accommodation and sustainable ambitions.

1. View looking west, from the roundabout on Caversham Road, towards the frontage. His includes the 3 red brick buildings, and a further white building to the right.
2. View looking north from Caversham Road approach to the roundabout. The buildings beyond form part of an office park, and are generously proportioned extending to equivalent 4 storeys
3. Red brick terraced houses opposite and to the northeast of the site. These align Caversham Road. They display a strong rhythm including their gable-form dormers, and are predominantly red brick with dark brick detailing, typical of the area
4. Looking east from within the site, showing the tarmac forecourt, and some of the existing buildings
5. Existing shed within the site extending 1-2 equivalent storeys.
6. Open sheds typify the ad-hoc group of buildings on site
7. View looking southwest along Swansea Road. This is one of a number of similar residential streets which are parallel with the site. They are tightly flanked by terraced houses, but where the roads cranked the view is terminated - in this instance by the school which extends much taller. The character is typified by red brick, heavily detailed with dark black brick features and patterning.
8. Swansea Road extending further southwest, with examples of red brick terraces
9. Further terraced houses on Northfield Road, to the southwest, viewed from the junction with Swansea Road
10. Self-storage centre on Caversham Road - subject to an Approved significant regeneration project
11. View of the rear of two of the red brick properties forming the existing frontage to the site. These have been heavily adapted and modified given their use for retail for many years, so are significantly compromised.
12. View looking west towards the site from Vastern Road, showing further evidence of the rigorous terraces of houses on the long approaches, where the site will form the distinctive termination of the view.
13. Aerial View looking east across the site. The sheds in the foreground are outside the site, but form part of the allocation, with the site is beyond. This is made up of a number of existing sheds, and more significant existing properties on the Caversham Road frontage



Site Analysis

Physical Context and Boundaries

The site is a challenging shape, deep in plan with one of its narrower boundary edges towards Caversham Road. This is a prominent edge onto a busy Road. In visiting the site we have gained a good understanding of the existing situation and the character of the surroundings, including the emerging form of new development planned and under construction on nearby sites.

Existing buildings on site;
The existing uses on the site occupy a mix of industrial buildings, sheds and shelters. On the street frontage are more significant buildings of 3 storeys, whereas a majority of these industrial structures are typically 1-2 storeys (equivalent). There are no buildings on the site afforded any heritage protection, either locally or nationally. As a consequence, it is not required that these are to be kept.

North and West Boundary;
This is a private boundary which is to the rear of domestic scale houses on Swansea Road, and the flank/gable of the properties on Caversham Road. The houses on Swansea Road are generally 2 storeys with short yards and gardens which extend to the site edge. The houses are typical terraced properties, with off-shots extending from the rear of the house, meaning there are windows both close to the boundary, and set within the recesses of the off-shots. The existing boundary wall is tall, reflecting a level of security and separation between the residential uses and the current industrial operations on the site. This includes taller tree planting in some gardens to reinforce the sense of separation and screening. At the Northeast corner, the site meets the end gable of the 2-3 storey properties on Caversham Road. The existing property on the site forms a party wall with the neighbour, which would be revealed through development of this site.

Redevelopment is currently under construction immediately to the east. This is described later. This has a limited close connection with this site, but is generally facing away.

East Boundary;
This faces the principal public frontage onto Caversham Road. It is currently occupied by 4 existing 3 storey redbrick properties. Historically there was a fifth building, but this has been removed some time ago, breaking this group, to allow a site access to the yard behind. The northern-most property is terraced to the neighbours. Moving south this is followed by the break, and then 3 red-brick properties with pitched roofs. These displays some of the brick detailing typical of the area, but their ground floor treatment reflects a former retail use, and this heavily compromises the quality of the buildings and their frontage.

South Boundary;
The Site Allocation anticipates development towards the southwest, extending through the adjacent industrial sheds. In their current state these are anonymous buildings presenting yard and parking areas along this boundary. Redevelopment is currently under construction immediately to the east. This is described later. This has a limited close connection with this site, but is generally facing away.

Site Analysis
Historic Evolution

This set of historic plans illustrate the area from the late C19th through to the current context. This shows a growth from the centre of Reading out to the northwest during this period, with this site becoming defined and gradually evolving into the form we see today. Development in this direction, with the familiar principle Road network becoming established, connecting out along the path of the river as Reading gradually absorbed a number of nearby communities.



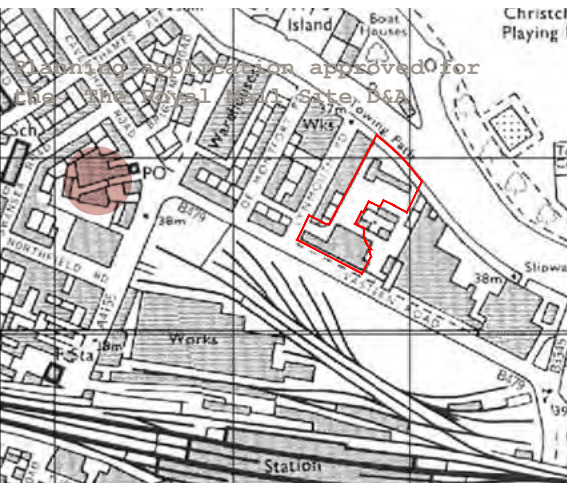
1882



1897



1910



1979

Caversham Road has been built, extending past the site towards the northeast. By the edge of this map its scale diminishes, however the width immediately adjacent to the site suggests it is planned to be a significant route. Caversham Road cranks around the site frontage, a form which is visible today, albeit with the roundabout managing traffic past this junction. There is no development on the site. This land, like many nearby, are open fields. An initial group of (likely) workshop buildings occupies the land immediately south, which is today north of Northfield Road, occupied by the large sheds which sit within this site allocation.

By this time, the importance of Caversham Road is more apparent, with the road defined on both sides by housing which remains today. Side streets around the site are beginning to be formed, part of Victorian Growth in this area, with some of the terraced houses being completed. The site is apparent amongst these ownerships, and the larger detached properties on the street frontage have been built, staggered around the bend. The yard to the rear includes some shed structures. Railway siding opposite to the east demonstrate how the growth for the railway station and the associated yards encouraged industry in this location.

By this time all the side streets are compete with terraced houses flanking both sides. The school on Swansea Road is also built and a major building in this area. The site shows greater intensification of workshops and shed to the rear, almost filling the plot.

By the 1970's the site reflects much of the current pattern of development. The various sheds and workshops are clear within the site, and similar uses extend to the north, beyond. The railway good sidings are still operating and so the use of many of the sheds and buildings in this area reflects this being a busy industrial and business location, supported by the streets of terraced houses beyond.



TODAY

- This site in its broad form has been visible throughout the urban expansion of Reading in this direction
- A history of industrial uses from the location around the Goods Yards created an identity of workshop and shed buildings, punctuated by streets of terraced houses. Places to live and work.
- The site established a distinct front and back - buildings addressing the street and a secondary group behind. The frontage has been eroded and fragmented over time - this is an opportunity to remodel the site with that same established character
- There is a clear pattern of streets which wrap around this site and which establish a recognisable form and pattern for new links here
- Moving the station and releasing nearby land for regeneration has been important to support a planned strategy for change here and in the next few years this area will change dramatically.

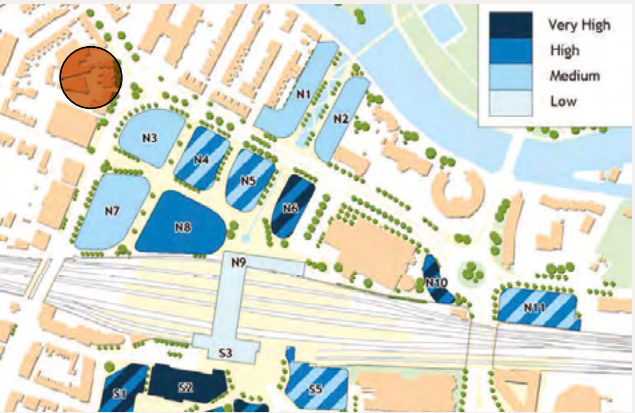
This shows the site today, focussing on the buildings immediately around. It is clear that much of the area and context remains the same, with the street patterns and buildings which form the boundaries reflecting the historic pattern and uses. The view shows how the frontage buildings have been compromised – the group of buildings having been fragmented by the loss of one of the buildings in order to create an access to the yard and sheds behind. This compromises the quality of the frontage, but does form an established point of access. This plan also shows how much of the site is developed and that there are some challenging existing relationships with neighbours.

Planning Context
Site allocation



Extract from the Reading Borough Local Plan Station/River Major Opportunity Area Strategy

- Sub Area Boundary
- - - - Major opportunity area
- Existing building
- Nearby sensitive location low rise residential
- Vehicle access point
- Key movement corridor(pedestrian and /or cycle)
- Activation of key routes and spaces with town centre uses
- Sub areas
- CR11f: West of Caversham Road



Extracts from Reading Station Area Framework Indicative appropriate densities for individual development plots Diagram



Extracts from Reading Station Area Framework Framework structure

- Major path /Pedestrian link
- Minor Path
- Public Space /square, important intersection and point of orientation (may not reflect exact shape shown)
- Water side footpath
- Development opportunity sites

The site is within the defined 'Reading Central Area' and most of the site extent forms part of the West of Caversham Road Allocated Development Site, which is a sub-area of the Station/River Major Opportunity Area. Extract from the Reading borough Council Proposals map below. The part of the site outside of the West of Caversham Road allocation are 97a-117 Caversham Road, which front onto the highway and adjacent land to the east of these buildings. The diagrams opposite are extracts from the policy maps, and the keys have been simplified just to reference those points directly relevant to this land parcel.

The West of Caversham Road allocation is confirmed in Reading Local Plan Policy CR11f.

This area will be developed for residential with on-site open space. Densities will be lower than elsewhere in the Station/ River area to reflect the proximity to low-rise residential areas, and the edge of the site nearest to the areas of terracing will require careful design treatment and respect the historic context of areas to the west. Development should take account of mitigation required as a result of a Flood Risk Assessment. Site size: 0.92 ha Indicative potential: 75-115 dwellings

CR11 : Station/River Major Opportunity Area

Key development points:

ii) Help facilitate greater pedestrian and cycle permeability, particularly on the key movement corridors.

iii) Provide developments that front onto and provide visual interest to existing and future pedestrian routes and open spaces;

vi) Give careful consideration to the areas of transition to low and medium density residential and conserve and, where possible, enhance listed buildings, conservation areas and historic gardens and their settings;

viii) Demonstrate that it is part of a comprehensive approach to its sub-area, which does not prevent neighbouring sites from fulfilling the aspirations of this policy, and which contributes towards the provision of policy requirements that benefit the whole area, such as open space

Key design points within the relevant policies state;

- The edge of the site nearest to the areas of terracing will require careful design treatment and respect the historic context of areas to the west.
- Development will build on and respect the existing grid layout structure of the central area, providing continuity and enclosure through appropriate relationships between buildings and spaces, and frontages that engage with the street at lower levels, and contributing towards enhanced ease of movement through and around the central area;
- Development should consider and, where possible, include ways of providing green infrastructure designed into the development, for instance through roof gardens, green walls and green roofs, to enhance the otherwise very urban environment;
- The architectural details and materials used in the central area should be high quality and respect the form and quality of the detailing and materials in areas local to the development site;
- Development should be designed with consideration of adjacent development sites, and should not prevent or cause unreasonable burdens on the future development of those sites.
- Dwellings will be provided with functional private or communal open space, including green space wherever possible, that allows for suitable sitting-out areas, children's play areas, home food production, green waste composting, refuse storage, general outdoor storage and drying space.
- Houses will be provided with private outdoor space whereas flats may be provided with communal outdoor space, balconies and/or roof gardens.
- On sites of 50 dwellings or more new provision will be sought. Development must ensure satisfactory provision of children's play areas and neighbourhood parks

Planning Context
Nearby Applications

The Royal Mail Site

- Masterplan for 370 new Homes and 28,000sq.m of Office Space
- Mixed use regeneration delivering upon the Policy Plan ambitions for growth north of the station
- High quality contemporary design
- An architectural response to both the context and materiality of the area, and a new and contemporary urban theme
- Greater permeability to encourage safe pedestrian movement through this area – reinforcing links with nearby roads including Northfield Road to the west and through to the river crossing to the north and station to the south
- Varied scale, exploring greater height at the heart of the site, but more sensitive scale (albeit 5-6 storeys) onto Caversham Road
- Distinct urban blocks
- Active ground floor mixing residential and commercial uses
- Clear distinction between residential architecture and more commercial scale office buildings
- Quality public realm

The Old Power Station Site

- A comprehensive residential proposal including generous public realm
- 209 new homes
- An important site to enhance the permeability of this are, forming a direct link from the river towards the station and town centre
- A group of distinctive new buildings led by their differing characters, addressing the river, a new public link, and Vastern Road
- Low parking levels (55 spaces, 26%)



Planning application approved
The Royal Mail Site D&A



Planning application approved
The Old Power Station

Urban Context Analysis
Local Character

This series of photos provide a clear illustration of the character of the local area, and the distinctive qualities of the buildings, their arrangement, form and materiality, which is celebrated here. The south side of Caversham Road, and the roads which extend from it and which surround the site were established during the late C19th. A significant number of the Victorian Properties which were built around that time remain, and whilst there has been some redevelopment, and change, the character of those buildings and streets remains apparent. There is no heritage or conservation protection however many of the details remain intact.



Caversham Road is typified by long terraces of 3 storey townhouse. The design promotes repetition and rhythm. The first view is diagonally opposite the site and these are a series of pairs of bay-windowed 3 storey properties, with top floor dormers set in steeply pitched roof. In this instance the form is highly regular and orthogonal with little detail. Some houses have been modified and painted/ rendered, but the predominance of red and grey brick remains, with some decoration around windows.

These houses are located on Caversham Road. Here the decoration is much greater, with a more ornamental patterning in the brickwork to the dormer and around the windows. These are in contrasting bricks mixing red, grey and cream brick detailing. Highly decorated arched doorways announce entrances.

These houses are on the northeast side of Caversham Road, opposite the site and extending away to the north. These are also 3 storey town houses, but carefully proportioned with the top floor dormer (in brick) forming a repetitive rhythm along the street. These houses are generally red brick, with banding at floor levels and contrast grey brick detailing around windows. Heavy lintels and arches decorate the windows and front door. The decoration extends to the timberwork on the verges of the dormer.

This view is looking west along Swansea Road, from the Caversham Road junction, immediately north of the site. This shows how there is great consistency in the materiality - the red brick being dominant, but being used in different ways with buildings of different scales. The mix of 2 and (equivalent) 3-4 storeys of the school work well, whilst the geometry of the roads is typical, with buildings terminating views.

This view is on the southern section of Swansea Road, looking at the western side. Further from Caversham Road, the scale drops and the detail reduces. These are simpler houses, with less modelling, and flatter elevations, perhaps worker's cottages unlike the more grand townhouses on Caversham Road. Decoration is generally in the brickwork (arches) but in a matching brick tone. The roof line is more defined, without the dormer details.

Urban Context Analysis
Layout and Road Network

- There are a series of residential roads that run from Caversham Road towards the Railway.
- These roads are narrow with buildings located right along the street edges with small front gardens.
- They are parallel to each other and change direction to get orthogonal to the main road network.



Urban Context Analysis
Form and Massing

- The area is a mix of building scale and massing
- On the northeast of the site, the properties have a domestic scale. It is mostly formed by terrace houses with pitch roofs.
- These roads are animated by a sequence of gable ends
- Towards the east the scale and massing of the building changes. This area is now occupied by industrial warehouses, but the area is part of the Reading Station Area requalification, which is showing medium-high rise buildings.

Character and appearance

Exploring the local area around this site reveals distinctive aspects of the local architecture and built form.

These characteristics reflect the Victorian period as most buildings remain unchanged throughout the history of the site.

Whilst Caversham Road has gradually increased in scale, and there are examples of recent change to the north and east, there remain a high number of the original terraces of 3-storey townhouses. Equally the side streets present similar terraces, mixing 2 and 3 storey houses. The palette mixes red and grey bricks – alternating the focal material with the decorative highlights, playing with the level of detail and frequently changing the amount of decoration. The gable or gabled dormer is common – again with different amounts of decoration. The streets display a predominance of domestic housing, however there are examples of the scale changing – for example some of the more significant three storey buildings close to the roundabout and on the frontage of this site, and the old school buildings on Swansea Road. Here there is a uniformity in materiality and character but at a much greater scale. The streets are tight and defined, and there changes in height amongst those buildings, but all of which sit comfortably together.

Materials mostly used in this area red brick, grey/brown brick, buff brick

- 1. Red brick with grey brick detailing
- 2. Red brick with grey brick detailing
- 3. Red brick with buff brick detailing
- 4. Grey/brown brick with red brick detailing

Features and details that repeat across the area

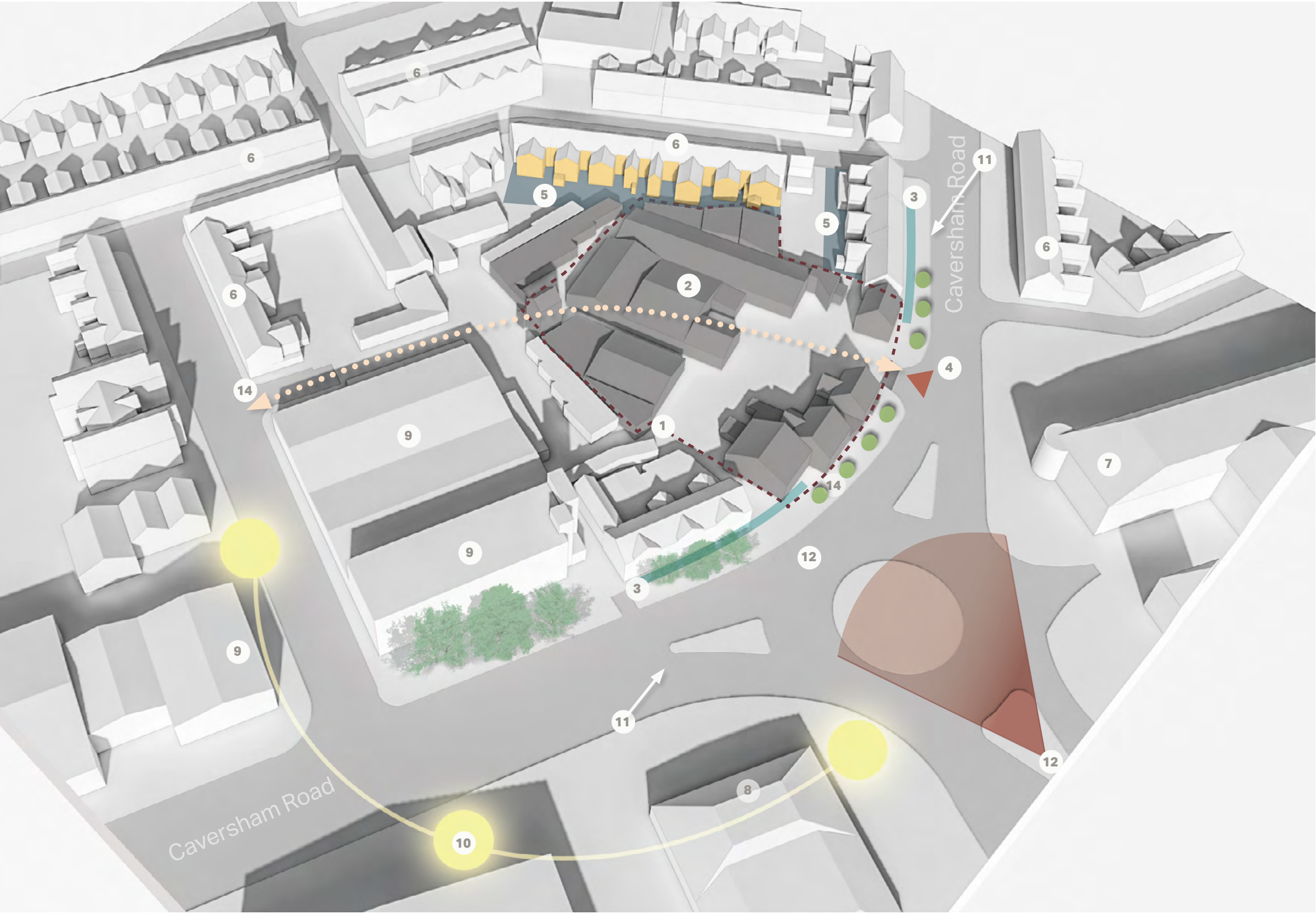
- A. Brick bonding at the storey levels
- B. Brick detailing to windows reveals
- C. Brick detailing on the gable
- D. Slate pitched roof
- E. Chimneys
- F. Sliding sash windows-vertical proportion
- G. Bay windows
- H. Elevation animated by a sequence of brick piers
- I. This rhythm continue at the top, with different shape of the parapet



MATERIALS



FEATURE AND DETAILS



Evaluation

The summary of our analysis of the site and context is important in establishing the character of our proposals. This is summarised in the following diagram. Through careful analysis we recognise that whilst the site has a number of constraints, the allocation demonstrates there is an ambition for positive changes and that the LPA see this site being developed. Our approach seeks to demonstrate a wider plan for this site and the additional land outside the ownership to the NW, showing how we might form a connected community in time, where this scheme enhances the links and routes and doesn't prejudice those boundaries.

These points are summarised in the following diagram.

- Site Constraints:
- 1. Site Boundary
 - 2. Existing buildings on site
 - 3. Established building line along Caversham Road
 - 4. Existing vehicular access to the site
 - 5. Existing neighbouring properties with back gardens and windows facing the site
 - 6. Domestic scale suburban housing
 - 7. Medium rise developments
 - 8. Reading station area framework: New future developments with medium/high rise
 - 9. Industrial buildings
 - 10. Sun path
- Opportunities to:
- 11. Improve the street frontage
 - 12. Create a new focal point approaching the site from Vastern Road
 - 13. Continue the tree line along the road
 - 14. New route to improve the permeability throughout the site

Pre-application with the LPA

A detailed pre-application submission was made to Reading Borough Council and an initial Scoping meeting held with officers on 1st April with the DRP on 17th May, and formal written response received. The cover letter provided a positive summary of the key issues demonstrating the Council's support for the approach, before providing a more detailed note which included some areas for further exploration, which have been the basis of the developed scheme forming this submission.

Key Summary points;

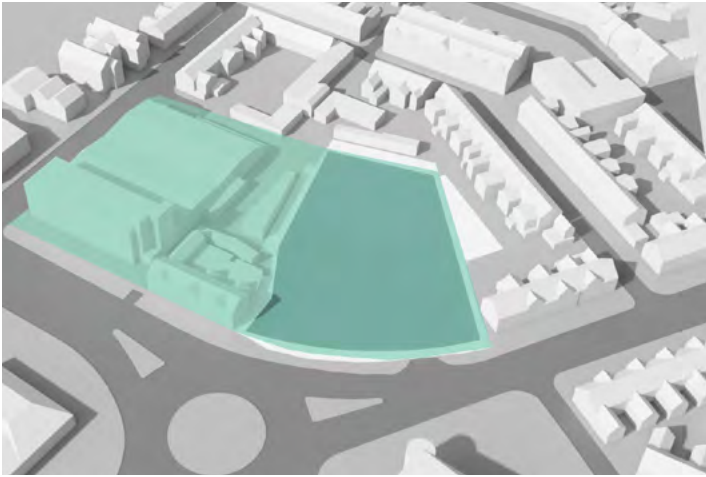
- The principle of the redevelopment of this site, and the proposed use for residential would be acceptable.
- There are some areas of the layout and overall design, which require some further development. This is to ensure that the site creates a suitable, landscaped, street frontage, that the overall scale of the houses accords with the scale of the existing terraces, and that there is a reducing scale across the site.
- It is considered that there needs to be more setting around Blocks C1 and C2 and a realignment of these Blocks to be more parallel to the street.
- The proposed scheme layout is considered to have satisfactorily addressed the need for this site, a part of the proposed allocation, to not prejudice the bringing forward of the remainder of the site at some future date, albeit at present the adjoining landowner has confirmed no immediate desire to relinquish the site for redevelopment.

Looking in more detail at the formal report, key points in relation to the design are set out below with a response on how these have been addressed within the application.



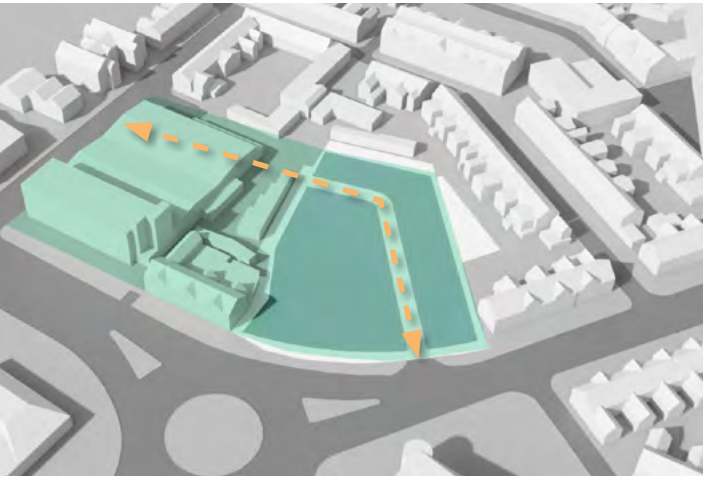
LPA RESPONSE AND DESIGN REVIEW RESPONSE	
Comment	Response
<i>The material submitted sets out a good study of the styles and materials within the immediate context and this is described as being characterised by long terraces of 3 storey town houses along Caversham Road, with dormers in pitched roofs, some with ornamental patterning to the brickwork, with evidence of red, grey and cream bricks. The terraces to the north and west are two-storey with simpler details and without dormers.</i>	Positive support for the strategy and the way this has been developed through careful contextual analysis – in particular the response on Caversham Road to tie this scheme to the neighbouring gables and pitched roof forms
<i>The scheme is presented with heights being stepped with the intention to respond to the scale of existing development. However, it is considered that the houses, albeit they do pick up on the detailing of gables and pitches with a regular rhythm, because of the height of these, are too dominant and the projecting gables appear too prominent.</i>	General support of the heights and the gradient of scale. The dominance of the houses at pre-app is noted and our design has evolved. Whilst these remain 3 storeys their form and roof profiles seeks to be more contextual and use that space within he loft to limit the impact of the houses on neighbours.
<i>[for block C] The DRP agreed that the transition in scale and proportions was not currently successful and suggested the need to revisit the proportions, possibly through the pairing of gables, and adjusting the proportions to create more modest terraced housing, which reflects the surrounding context.</i>	The form of block C has been developed and evaluated against the context. The concept seeks to place this block within the heart of the site as a focal point. That incorporates a more angular form and roofline, ensuring it sits comfortably alongside the more rigid pattern of gabled buildings.
<i>It is considered that there needs to be a better transition in scale from the frontage across the site, with the blocks behind being more subservient, and this would assist in creating a pleasant street frontage and relationship to the houses opposite.</i>	As noted above, the front building is most prominent – 4-storeys with pitched roof forms. Behind this stepping down to 3-4 storeys, then the houses at a visually smaller scale of 2.5-3 storeys, ensuring the rear buildings are more subservient.
<i>With respect to Blocks C1 and C2 these are not detailed in the submission, but in terms of their footprint it is considered that these would need to be smaller, particularly because of their relationship to the houses. They require more setting and there is rather a 'sea' of parking between the buildings.</i>	Blocks C1 and C2 (from pre-app) have been combined into a single block, C. This building has been re-planned to follow the pattern of the streets, more closely, overall enhancing the scale of open space around. To the rear there remains car parking, but this is in a private space, with landscaping which ensures it doesn't impact the quality of the scheme.
<i>A further reduction in car parking may be acceptable in this central sustainable location</i>	There is a balance between the viability and sales expectation for a sensible parking provision, and a desire to minimise parking in a sustainable location. We feel 50% is a fair position, explained further in the TA, and that where car parking is proposed it is discrete and doesn't impact the quality of the street scene. Structured landscape will limit opportunities for informal or unmanaged parking which would compromise the character of the scheme.
<i>[Block C] These blocks are shown with flat roofs, and the Panel considered that these seem the least resolved of the whole scheme. Additionally, the Panel raised an issue over the siting of the corner junction of these blocks and the street and that it appears rather awkward and under-utilised. It is suggested that the blocks are more aligned in parallel with the streets.</i>	The design if block C (now combined C1/c2) has a more interesting angular roof form. Likewise, the plan has addressed the Panel's comments about the plan geometry so that it better address the angles of the street, now being parallel to each street edge.
<i>The study of materials presented is considered to be well thought through and picks up on the dominant brick colours and patterns. The DRP suggested that the silver brick to the front elevation be continued to the ground to remove the plinth effect being created by the red brick at the ground floor.</i>	Positive support of the general palette of materials which has been developed further and more comprehensively throughout the whole site.

Urban Design Concept



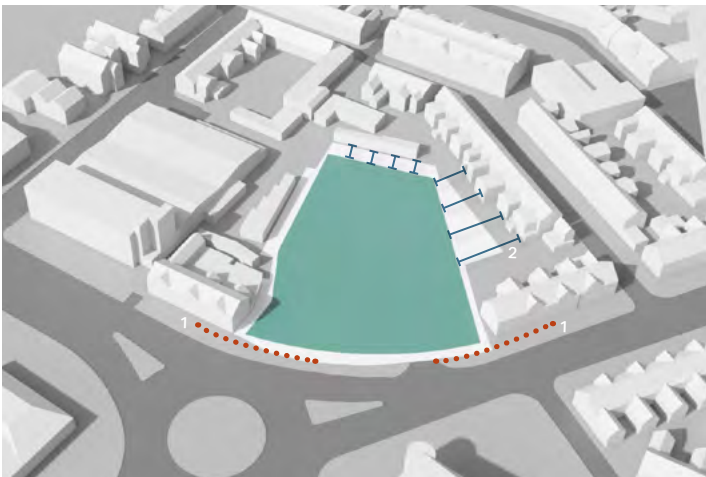
Development opportunity

- 1. The site allocation identifies a broader site for redevelopment, extending beyond our ownership. This diagram shows the wider site in the lighter tone, with our parcel in the darker tone.
- 2. The allocation presumes a comprehensive scheme, however whilst this may be phased, given the differing ownerships, it is important that the site is considered holistically.



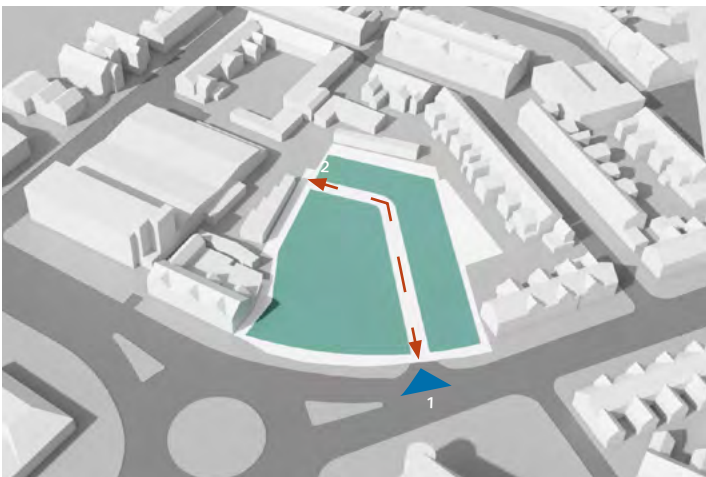
Improving the local road network

- 1. Creating permeability through the site, in a form that learns from the existing roads to the north and west, will normalise what is currently a closed, dense 'island'. This new roadway would link to the ambitions through the master planning of the royal mail site (linking to Northfield Road)
- 2. The road can be established within the initial parcel and extend through later when the adjacent land is available, increasing the development frontage which is important or good planning and layout, and for active frontages.



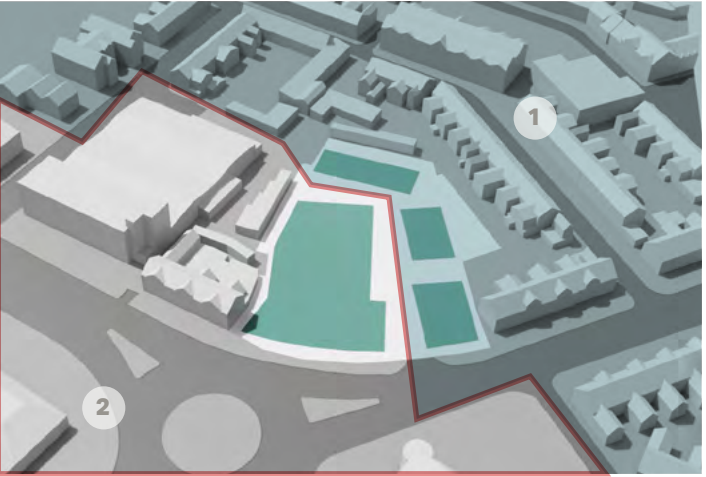
Defining the buildable area

- 1. The building line is parallel to Caversham Road and it is set back to be aligned with the neighbouring properties, reinforcing the existing street frontage.
- 2. The new scheme will sensibly relate with the neighbouring properties to preserve their privacy and avoid overlooking their back gardens.



Allowing good permeability throughout the site

- 1. The existing vehicular access is retained in its location.
- 2. There is an opportunity to improve the local permeability and create a connection to Northfield Road. This looks to minimise the vehicular traffic along Caversham Road and to tail in with the existing road partners.



Integrating into the surroundings

The access route separates the site in two parts.

- 1. The northern area addresses the transition with the domestic properties located on the north, characterized by small 2 storey terrace houses.
- 2. The southern part relates to the emerging context, composed mainly of medium-rise blocks of flats.



Site Arrangement

- 1. Private amenity is located along the north-west boundary to preserve the privacy of the adjacent properties.
- 2. The southern block is then carved to maximise aspects. This also allows to avoid north facing apartments and maximise the number of double aspect units, taking advantage of the site orientation.
- 3. The inner area provides most of the car parking, moving the dominance of cars across the site.



Stepping the heights to match the scale of the adjacent properties

- 1. The north-west blocks are lower to relate to the domestic character of the adjacent properties.
- 2. The blocks facing Caversham Road have a greater height to meet the scale of the emerging context composed by blocks of flats.
- 3. The massing drops down both on the North and the South end of the site to meet the scale of the neighbouring properties.



Continuing the sequence of gable ends

- 1. The properties along Caversham Road are characterised by pitched roofs and gable forms, that create a consistent rhythm on the street scene. The proposal takes clues from the immediate context, using pitched roofs and continuing the sequence of feature gables along the street frontage.
- 2. The new buildings along the new street have a similar repeating pattern as the existing roads nearby, with a sequence of gabled ends to each terraced house.
- 3. The simpler form of the central building gives the opportunity to introduce an angular roof form to play as a focal point within the heart of the site. Its footprint addresses the angles of the new streets, aligning to each street edge.

The Proposal

- 60 new homes
- A mix of 1-3bed apartments and 4bed houses
- 50% parking provision
- New public realm
- High quality design
- Sustainable design and energy strategy have been considered as part of the development of this design.
- The proposal looks to ensure an overall increase in biodiversity on the site, the net gain will be further developed during the design process.

Site Plan
1:500



The scheme creates high-quality new homes in a great location of the town centre. The street blocks address the street with a strong character of well proportioned rhythm of gables reflecting the order and repetition found on nearby houses. New buildings of the highest quality with a brick palette inspired by the red brick and grey detailing found in this area to create a contemporary response.



Building Heights and Aspect

The scheme recognises the surrounding context and proposes a group of building which have been carefully designed to work within that context. Whilst there is ambition for much taller buildings to the east, we do not feel this site is appropriate for great height. The DRP and Officers agreed with this approach.

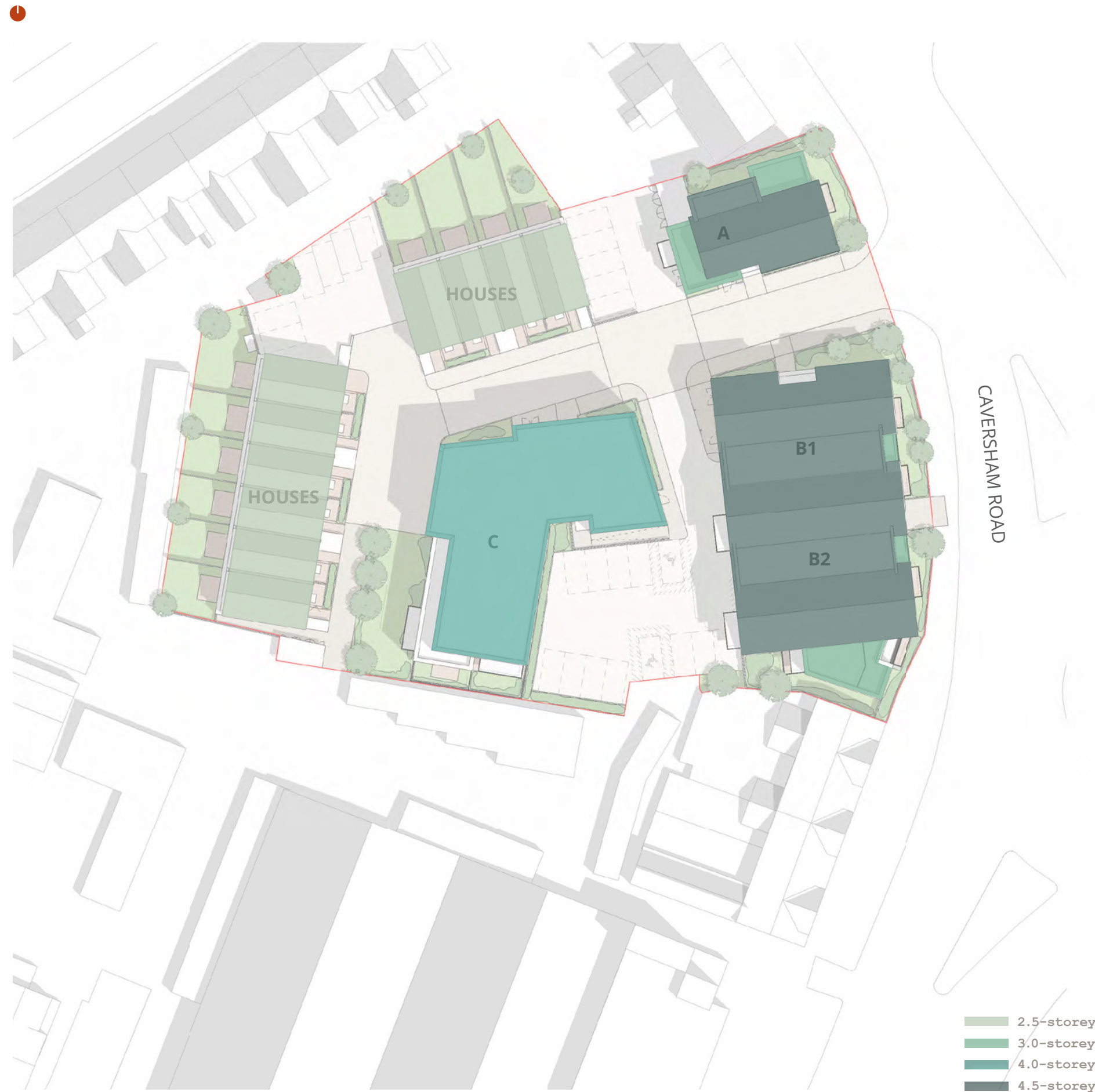
The layout is designed so that the blocks have been located responding to their local context and neighbouring sites. The development shows a transition of scale from the flatted blocks A,B and C at the south/east facing Caversham Road to the houses at the west/north towards the more domestic context of Swansea Road.

The scale of buildings are broadly consistent with those presented at pre-application stage. Officers did request further clarification regarding the relationship with the houses and those existing neighbours on Swansea Road. That area has developed, with the roofline of the new houses lowering. The relationship is covered further on the opposite page.

In order to propose homes of the highest quality, we are keen to ensure we maximise opportunities for dual aspect homes, to improve the internal environment. Therefore, the scheme has been designed to maintain a large number of dual aspect homes to benefit residents with

natural ventilation, natural daylight and variety of views. The layout reduces the number of single aspect homes and provides good orientation to enhance internal environments. The scheme proposes a high 77% of dual aspect homes across the whole site, with no solely north facing homes.

Heights Diagram
1:500



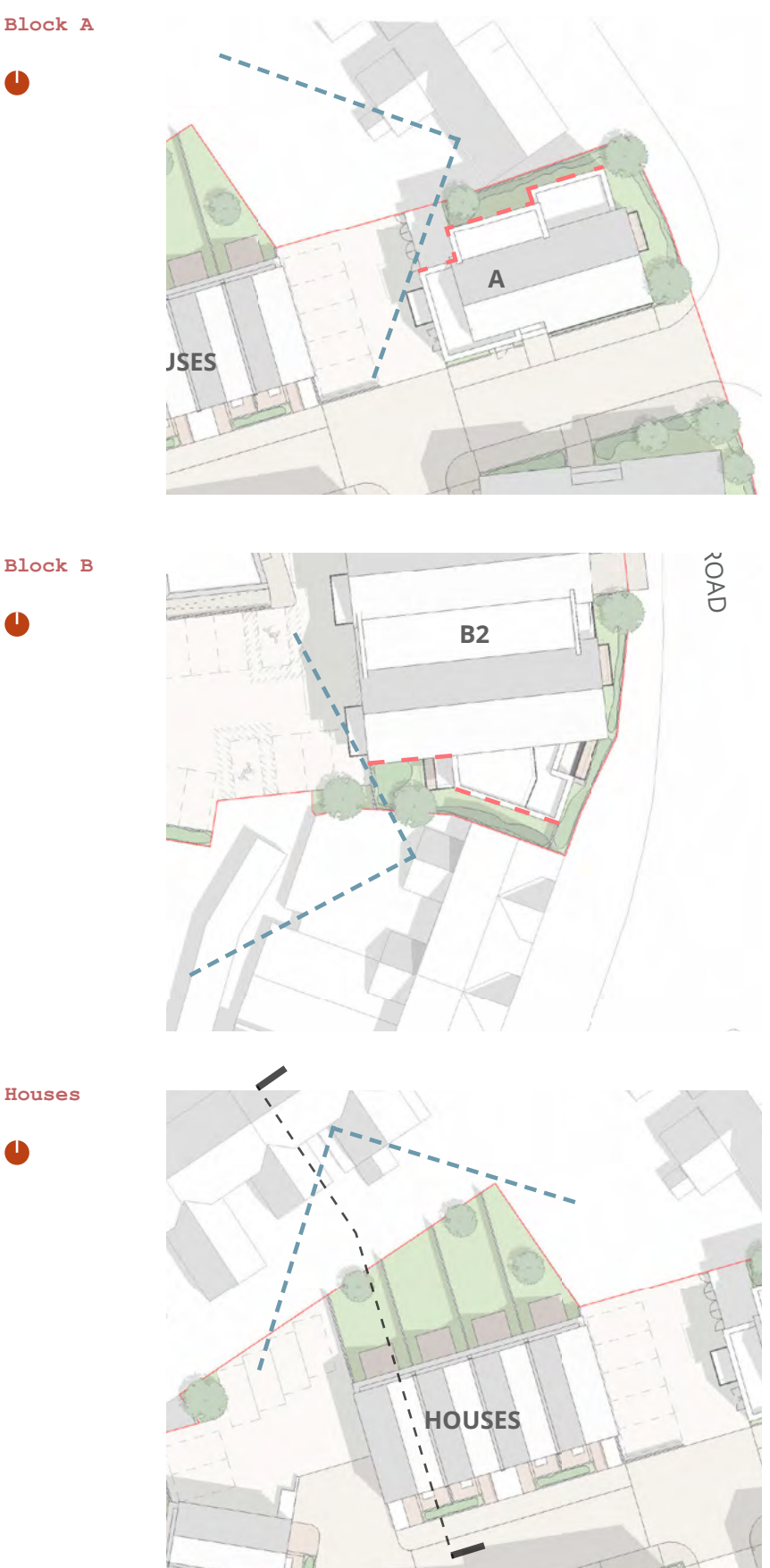
Privacy and Neighbours

In a few minor areas Officers sought clarification of the relationship between new and existing neighbours. This is important to protect the amenity and privacy of neighbours, to their daylight and to any sense of over-bearing from this change. The following diagrams describe a few particular instances where we have been careful to manage that relationship – specifically between the gables of the neighbours on Caversham Road and the flank of blocks B2 and A at either end of that frontage; and the relationship across the gardens of the houses on Swansea Road and the future short 4 house terrace within the proposed site.

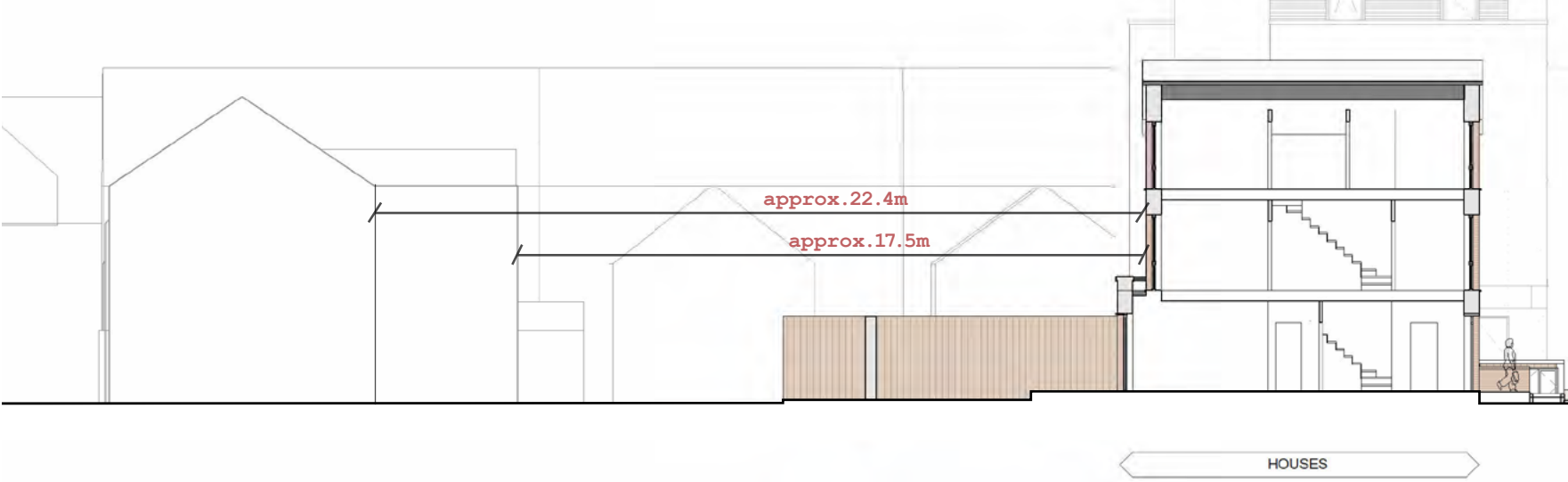
A and B
The top two diagrams show that the gable elements (lower to 3 storeys) have been angled, stepped off the boundary and pulled forward to minimise any sense of enclosure to any windows on the neighbouring properties. There are no gable windows to impact privacy. The relationship of the buildings is not always orthogonal, as the road curves, however the aspect from the existing window is maintained as shown.

Houses
We have reduced the height of the terraced houses from the pre-app. At that time they were fully 3 storey, with pitched roofs. The amended scheme shows a 2.5 storey height where the roof volume is utilised. We have examined the relationship with those neighbours and the following diagram shows that these properties are a minimum of 17.5m away, extending to 22.4. this is comparable with the prevailing character where back-to-back rear gardens separate existing houses by less than this (around 14.5m). Our approach is to respect that potential compromise in the position and height of the proposed building, and consider the context. Having 2.5 storey properties to the rear of 2 storey homes is normal – this area and others frequently shows buildings of differing heights, albeit of minimal difference.

Aspect
No habitable windows



Section of the northwest house with the neighbouring house no.52 Swansea Road
1:500



- Repeating plan for efficiency and to create an ordered elevation
- Top floor of the houses stepping back to diminish impact on 2-3 storey neighbours

Second Floor Plan
1:500



- Lower buildings falling away.
- Upper levels of block A reduced in footprint to set back from sensitive neighbours
- Similarly the top floor of B steps away from the southern boundary to ease the relationship with immediate neighbours

Third Floor Plan
1:500

