



Reading
Borough Council



gleeds^G

Reading Borough Council Wensley Road : New Build & Estate Improvements Phase 2

Coley Rise Refurbishment :
Design & Access Statement

April 2021



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Reading Borough Council Wensley Road : New Build & Estate Improvements Phase 2

Coley Rise Refurbishment : Design & Access Statement

April 2021

1.1 Introduction

The Borough of Reading is faced with significant challenges with regard to its council housing. Demand for genuinely affordable homes is increasing at a time when sale prices and rent levels are beyond the means of the average resident.

The Council is committed to delivering over 5,000 new homes in the period of 2016-2026. Approximately 500 dwellings per annum from 2016 to 2026, in accordance with the spatial strategy set out in the Reading Borough Council Core Strategy Document.

Alongside the commitment to provide new homes, Reading Borough Council is dedicated to ensuring that the existing homes owned and managed by the local authority are of a high quality, meet the changing needs of the residents, provide safe and welcome places to live.

Since declaring a climate change emergency in 2019, Reading Borough Council have mapped out an ambitious strategy to make significant environmental improvements to all of the existing homes.

This will make a significant contribution to the councils' objective of achieving net zero carbon by 2030 but will also provide tangible benefits for existing residents' in terms of quality of living and reduction of energy bills.

1.2 Purpose of the Report

This report has been prepared by HTA Design LLP in partnership with Gleeds, on behalf of Reading Borough Council. The aim of the document is to illustrate the site analysis, consultation and design development process that has been undertaken to inform the refurbishment proposals for Coley Park Flats, which are being submitted for planning approval.

The refurbishment of the three existing 15 storey buildings is proposed as the second phase of the Wensley Road regeneration projects. The planning application for the first regeneration phase, Wensley Road phase 1 (ref:20012) received approval at committee in August 2020 and the final planning decision confirmed in December 2020.

The phase 1 schemes includes a new masterplan including reconfigured parking areas and streets, a reimagined central green space and play facilities, along with 46 affordable homes, designed to achieve net zero carbon.

To deliver a coherent and consistent vision for the whole the Wensley Road site, the same design team have been involved with both phases of the regeneration design, ensuring consistent communication and engagement with RBC Councillors, the on-site RBC housing Team and local residents.

This document responds to the requirements of the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) Order 2015 for most planning applications to be accompanied by a Design and Access Statement. It has been structured in accordance with Communities and Local Government "Guidance on information requirements and validation" (March 2010) and CABE (2006) guidance.



Artists' impression of 193 Wensley Court & 205 Riversley >>>

1.3 Wensley Road Regeneration

Phase 1 - New homes & Landscaping (Approved Ref:20012)

- ① 3 Bedroom Houses
- ② 4 Bedroom Houses
- ③ Apartment Building
- ④ 5 -11 year old's play area
- ⑤ Under 5's play area
- ⑥ Outdoor gym
- ⑦ Relocated Bus Stop
- ⑧ Reconfigured Parking & Streets

Phase 2 - Existing Homes Improvements

- ① New Entrances
- ② Improved Refuse & Recycling Facilities
- ③ Replacement of all windows & external wall materials
- ④ New landscaping around the existing homes
- ⑤ Increased Cycle Storage

Ongoing & Future Works

- ① Community Hub
- ② Improved & New Equipment & Facilities at Courage Park
- ③ Replacement garages



1.3 Wensley Road Regeneration

Key Principles

- Taking a holistic approach to placemaking
- Providing affordable and low energy homes for new and existing residents
- Supporting active and sustainable lifestyles
- Improving green connections & biodiversity
- Creating a cohesive community

Phase 1: New Homes & Landscaping

Phase 1 of the Wensley Road regeneration and estate improvements was granted planning permission at committee in August 2020, and the final planning decision was issued in December 2020, planning application reference 20012.

The approved scheme included:

- 46 Affordable homes (Net Zero Carbon):
 - 26 x 3 Bedroom Terrace Houses
 - 2 x 4 Bedroom Detached Houses
 - 8 x 1 Bedroom Flats
 - 10 x 2 Bedroom Flats
- 230 Parking Bays to serve the existing and proposed dwellings.
- A redesigned and expanded central green space including play facilities for a range of ages.

During the phase 1 planning application process a number of design amendments were made in coordination with the relevant planning officers. Discussions and decisions made during this period regarding locations of cycle storage, tree planting numbers and waste management arrangements have informed the phase 2 proposals.

Phase 2: Existing Homes Refurbishments

The consultation process carried out in advance of the phase 1 planning applications reinforced the importance of delivering improvements to the existing homes as part of an overall regeneration vision, as well as identifying the key issues of the existing residents.

Based on the residents feedback, and in close coordination with the RBC Property Services and RBC housing teams, the refurbishment scope has been expanded and refined.

The phase 1 masterplan was designed carefully to allow for the improvements works to existing homes, whilst ensuring that the existing buildings could function as they do currently throughout the construction work of both phases.

Ongoing & Future Works

Sprinkler & Fire Alarm System

Between October 2019 and June 2021, RBC are installing a new sprinkler and fire alarm system to the existing homes. This includes sprinklers to each of the 267 existing flats, as well as sprinklers and fire alarm system to the communal areas.

Replacement Garages

RBC have committed to re-providing the existing garages being removed as part of the Wensley Road phase 1 works, across two sites within the Coley Estate. Planning applications for each site were submitted in early February.

Courage Park Improvements

RBC Parks are planning a series of improvements to nearby Courage Park, including improved access, lighting and play facilities, which will be informed by local community engagement.

Community Liaison Hub

In place of the current housing management office within Riversley Court, the brief for new standalone 'hub' to serve both the new and existing homes on the Wensley Road regeneration site is currently being developed. A separate planning application will be submitted.

Family Sized Homes



Generous Private & Public Amenity



New Streets



Natural play for all ages



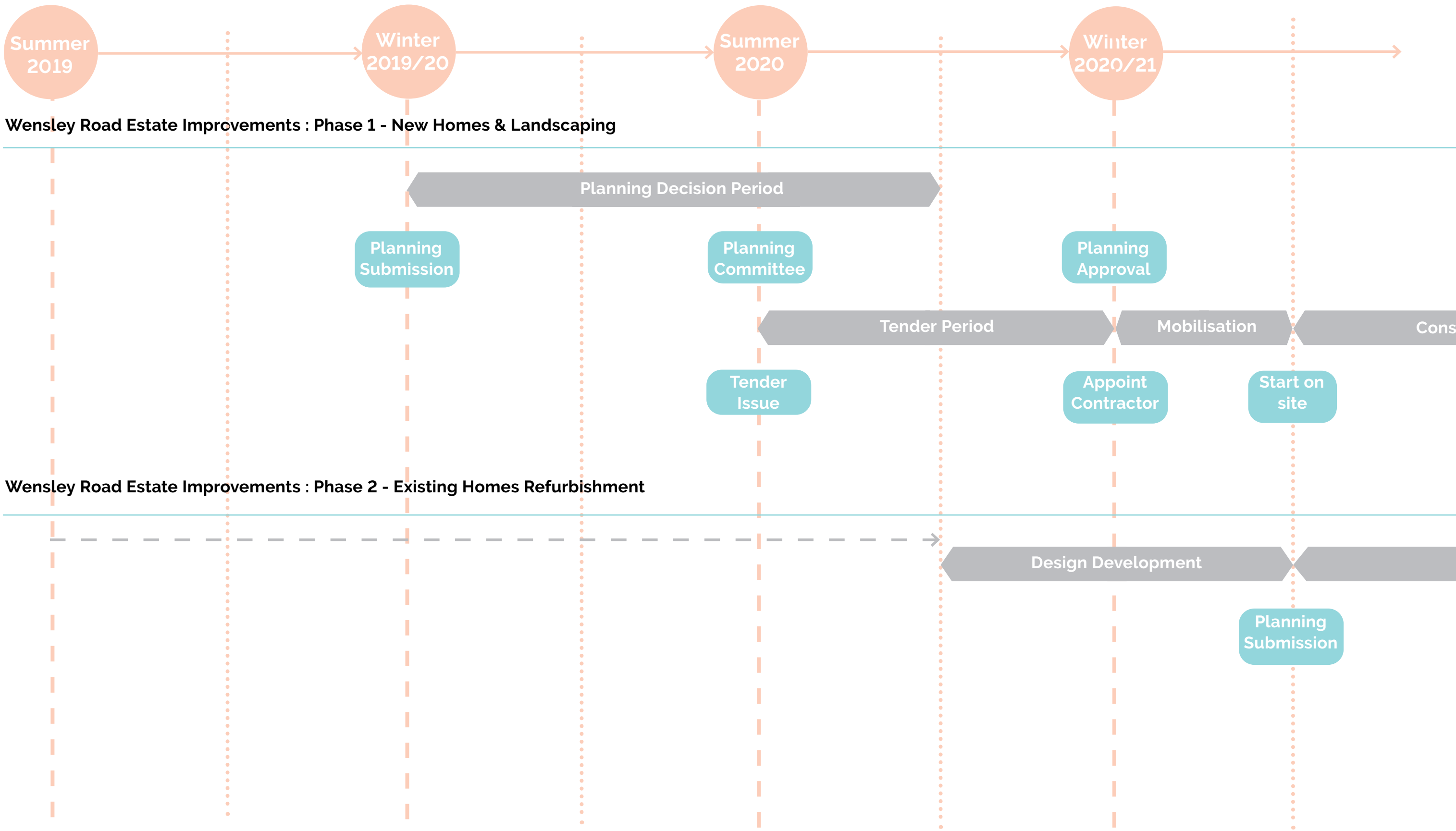
Mix of apartment types



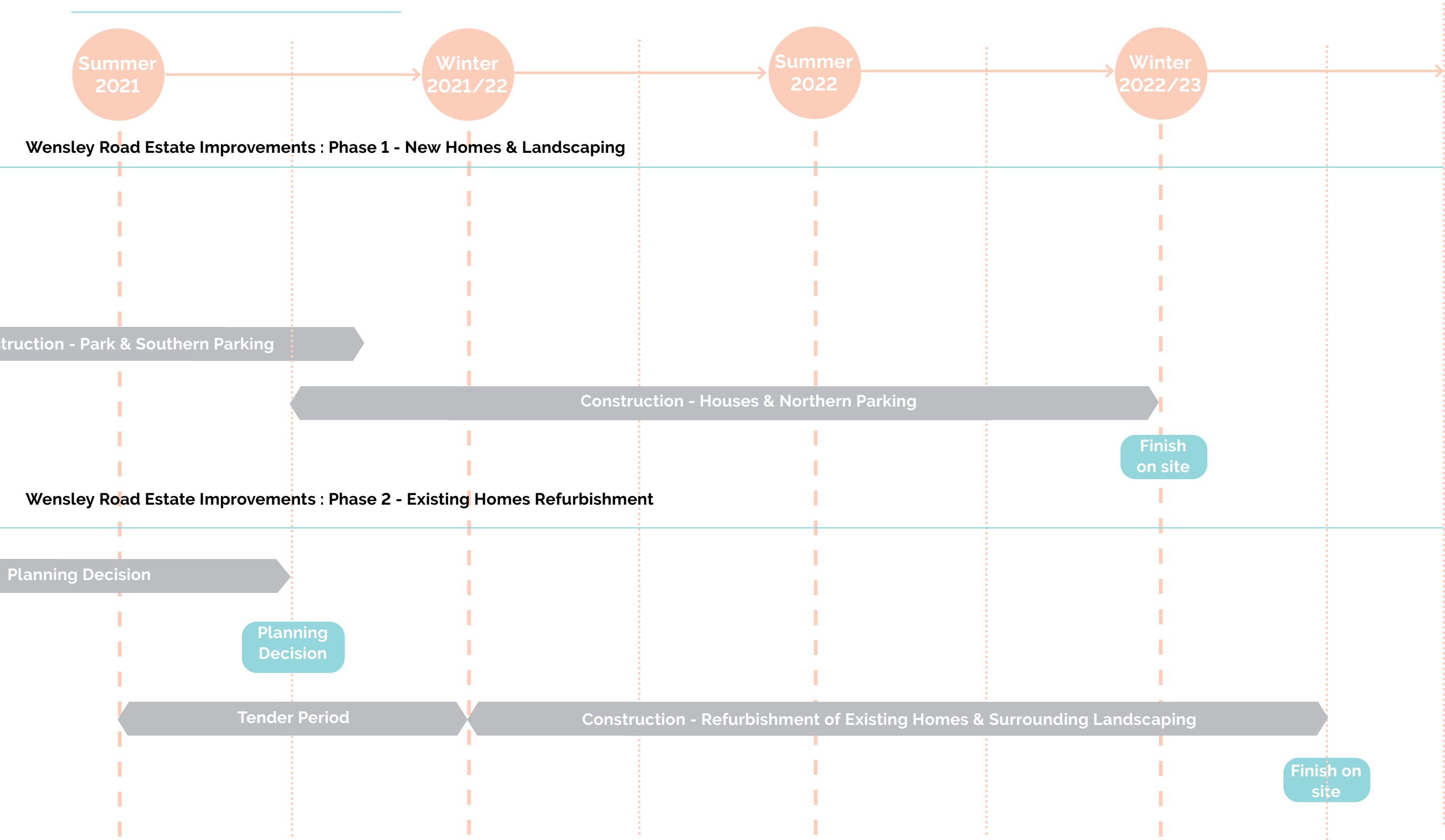
Enhanced Planting & Biodiversity



1.4 Regeneration Timeline



1.4 Regeneration Timeline



1.5 Project Description

The brief for the phase 2 existing homes refurbishments has been developed to combine a range of complimentary improvement works. These are intended to enhance the aesthetic appearance of the existing buildings, reduce energy bills for existing residents, support sustainable behaviours such as cycling and recycling, as well as facilitate improved ongoing maintenance and extend the building life span.

Reconfigured & Refurbished Entrance Areas

Main Entrances

Extended and renovated external and internal main entrance areas, including new entrance doors, door entry system, floor and wall finishes.

Means of Escape

New ground floor lobby to combine ground floor means of escape, new external fire escape stairs and fire escape doors.

External Fabric Improvements

Walls

Removal and replacement of the existing wall covering material with high-quality, non-combustible external wall insulation, with a robust brick finish at lower levels and a high quality render finish to upper floors.

Windows

Removal and replacement of existing windows, with high performance triple glazed inward opening windows, in line with the phase 1 specification.

Staircores

Installation of a new full-height glazing within the staircores, incorporating automatic opening vents.

Roof

Replacement of all roof covering, with improved insulation and a durable, long-lasting covering.

Refuse & Recycling Strategy

Internal Refuse Stores

Extended and improved internal refuse, recycling and food waste storage area, removing the need for externally stored bins.

Refuse chutes

The installation of a new three-way refuse chute with integrated smart systems to facilitate improved ongoing management.

Communications strategy

Imaginative communications strategy to encourage positive behaviours around recycling.

Communal Amenity Space & Landscaping Improvements

Communal Amenity Space

Communal areas designed for imaginative and flexible use for all ages.

Increased Tree Planting

Provision of in excess of 70 new semi-mature trees to reprove a portion of the trees removed as part of the phase 1 proposals.

Enhanced Privacy Buffer

Simple landscape treatments to create a greater sense of privacy for ground floor flats, without compromising safety.

Increased Cycle storage provision

New safe and accessible external cycle stores for individuals and families, that are integrated within the landscape design.

New Building Signage

On all three of the buildings new signage at the main entrances and at high level is proposed to create a clear visual distinction between the three buildings at street level and from view points further a field. This will form part of the overall Wensley Road wayfinding strategy.

Artists' impression of 203 Irving Court »



1.6 Project Objectives

Regeneration & Refurbishment Values

HTA Design recognises the hugely significant benefits of sustainable regeneration of existing housing estates and high-quality refurbishment of homes within them.

Over the last 40 years, HTA has delivered a wide range of successful estate regeneration schemes for a range of local authorities.

This has been achieved through an experienced multidisciplinary team and a continual commitment to community engagement, social and environmental sustainability.

The Wensley Road site is a significant area within the Coley Estate that holds great importance for many of the local residents. The Coley Park Flats have provide homes for a huge number of residents, as well as been a prominent visual landmark for over 60 years.

Therefore, the regeneration of the whole site and the refurbishment existing homes themselves, will not only have an impact upon the existing and neighbouring residents but the wider Coley estate.

The refurbishment of the existing buildings provides an opportunity to give the Coley Park Flats a new lease of life. Through enhancing the visual appearance and character of the buildings, as well as delivering sustainable modernisation through a fabric first approach, the aim is to create renewed sense of pride and positive identity for the Coley Parks Flats and their residents.

Character

Coley Park Flats were an example of pioneering early 1960s design, and the quality of the original construction and the overall internal layout is still evident and successful today. However, through subsequent required improvements to the external fabric, the character of the buildings created by the original materials and details has been lost.

A key aim of the refurbishment is to re-instate the character that the buildings once had whilst using a palette of materials and details that create coherence and synergy with the character of the new homes being constructed as part of phase 1.



Hastings House, Woolwich

Sustainability

A key motivation for the refurbishment of the Coley Park Flats is to provide existing residents with energy efficient, sustainable homes comparable with the zero-carbon, new-build homes being delivered as part of phase 1 of the regeneration.

Taking such radical, sustainable steps is far more challenging when working with existing buildings. However by providing sustainable homes for the future, through refurbishment rather than re-building has the hugely important environmental benefit of making significant savings in terms of the embodied carbon, in comparison with new build construction.

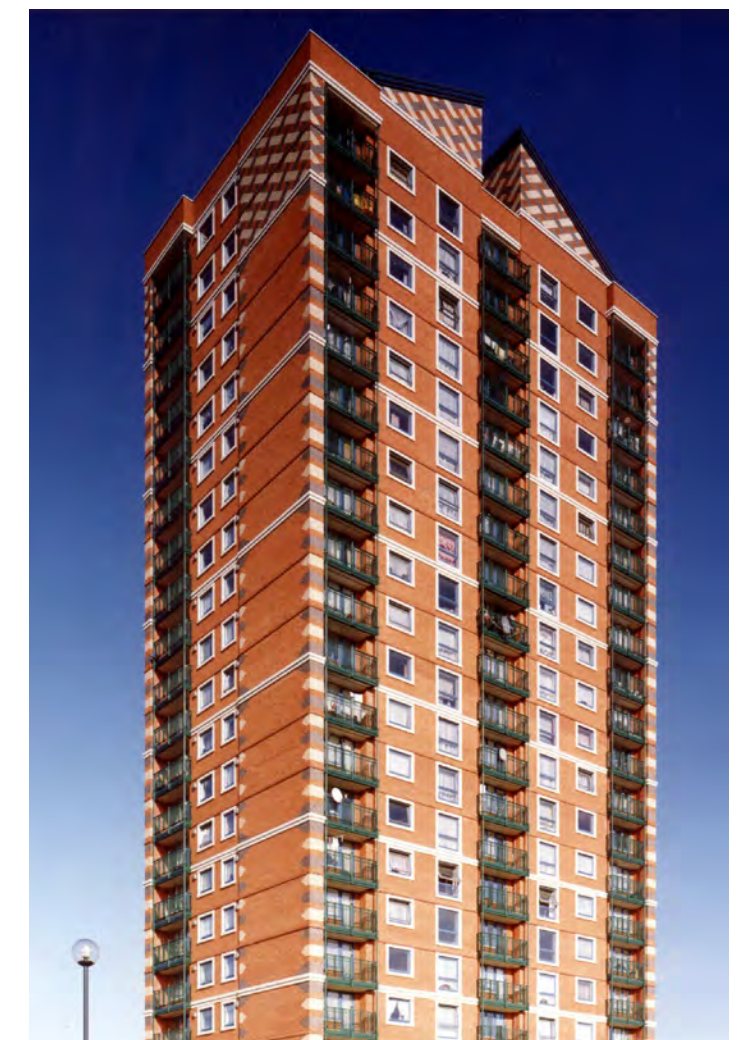


Sutton Estate, Clapham

Identity

Whilst many of the residents within the local community still feel incredibly proud to be from Coley, unfortunately some negative connotations have developed around the Coley Park Flats.

The whole regeneration of the site will transform the Wensley Road site into a destination, with the central play area in particular attracting residents from the wider area. As key landmarks, it is essential that the proposed improvements to the three existing building contribute and add to the positive sense of identity for the area.



Northwood Tower, Waltham Forest

1.7 Proposed Sites

The proposed development area being submitted for planning approval consists of three sites, 193 Wensley Court, 203 Irving Court and 205 Riversley Court.

The red line boundary for each of the three sites contains the existing building, perimeter buffer zone and associated external area designated for landscape improvements.

Each of the blocks contains 89 flats and the majority of these are affordable housing, owned and maintained by Reading Borough Council. The three proposed development sites and the whole the surrounding phase 1 application site is within Reading Borough Council Ownership.

Analysis of the existing buildings and sites, as well as the wider context, has been essential to progressing the design proposals. A greater understanding of the existing sites and buildings has been greatly aided by the consultation process with local residents and local Council members', as well frequent workshops with on-site RBC Housing and Property services teams.

Further information is included within the subsequent sections of the report.

Site Areas

195 Wensley Court Site
Red line Area - 0.158ha
Existing Dwellings - 89

203 Irving Court Site
Red line Area - 0.192ha
Existing Dwellings - 89

205 Riversley Court Site
Red line Area - 0.112ha
Existing Dwellings - 89

Total Application Area - 0.462ha

Total Existing Dwellings - 267

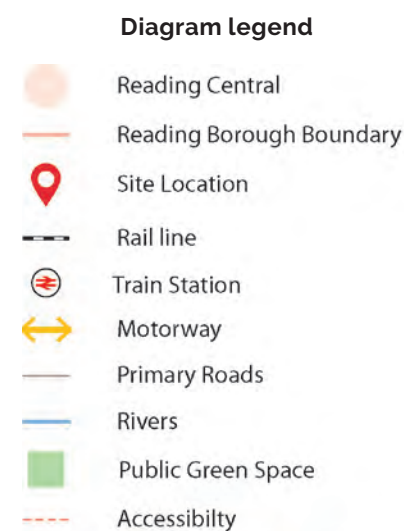


2.1 Reading Context

Coley Park flats are located to the south west of Reading Town centre, within the ward of Minister. They are easily accessible from Reading Town Centre and Reading Central Railway Station via public transport, with the number 11 bronze bus running from the train station to the Coley Park estate. The town centre can be reached on foot within 30-40 minutes and Reading West Train Station can also be reached within a 30- minute walk.

The A33 provides direct vehicular connection to the city centre to the north and the M4 to the south. Within the immediate vicinity of the site are a number of amenities including Coley Park Community Centre, Royal Berkshire Independent Hospital, as well as a number of local shops and schools.

A number of recreation and green spaces are in close proximity to the site. These include Coley Park located 5-10 minutes' walk to the east of the site and Courage Park, which can be accessed via a pedestrian footpath, just to the north-west of the site. Coley Park allotments are situated only 200-300m east of the site, off Lesford Road and to the south are footpaths to Holy Brook, connecting to the wider Fobney meadow nature reserve.



2.2 Neighbourhood Context

Local Amenities

About 600m east of Coley Park flats, along Wensley Road are local amenities such as shops, and a post office Wensley Road also has the local Coley Park Community Centre, and The Berkshire Independent Hospital.

St Mary and All Saints Primary School is about 400m east of the site with Birch Copse Southcote Primary School accessible to the west via a footbridge over the train line. The closest secondary schools are Blessed Hugh Faringdon Catholic School and the Wren School, located to the North-West off Bath Road approximately 25-30min walking distance

The open space of Courage Park is just to the North, only a few minutes away from existing homes and Coley Recreation Ground which contains children's play and sports facilities is to the east, approximately 10-15 minutes walk away.

 Site Location

 Primary Roads

 Secondary Roads

 Tertiary Roads

 Rivers / Brooks

 Accessibility

 Community Centre

 Heath Care Service

 Primary School & Nursery

 School Property

 Commercial Outlet

 Commercial District

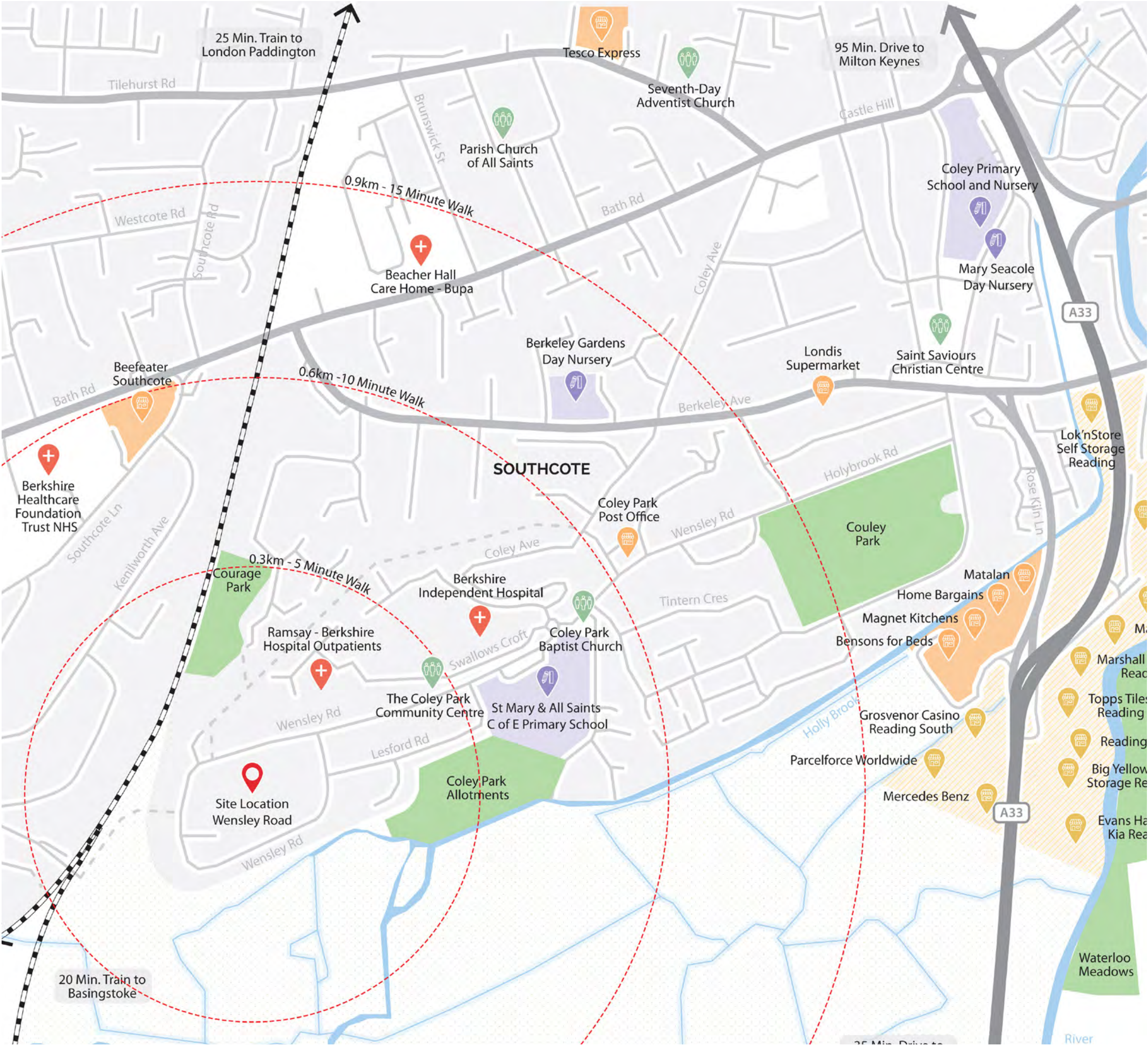
 Shopping Outlet

 Shopping District

 Public Green Space

 Residential

 Wetlands



Location Context - NTS

2.3 Existing Sites

The proposed development area consists of three sites, each containing one of the three existing 15 storey buildings, 193 Wensley Court, 203 Irving Court and 205 Wensley Court.

The red line boundary for each of the sites had been defined during the development of the phase 1 masterplan, to ensure that sufficient space was allowed for the desired future improvements, including an area for landscaping enhancements.

193 Wensley Court

The existing main entrance is currently accessed from a footway at the edge of a parking court and is recessed from the main building façade providing a wide, covered area. Adjacent to the main entrance, are doors to the internal refuse store, which are for maintenance access only.

Directly in front of the doors are two external 1100litre general waste bins for residents' use. Approximately 25m to the north-west of the main entrance, four 1100litre recycling bins are situated within a partial height timber enclosure, which is in a poor state of repair.

On the north elevation metal fire escape stairs connects to a footpath, which leads round to the parking court. On the south elevation there are two means of escape directly next to one another, which lead to a foot path and the parking court.

A tarmac footpath runs the full length of the west elevation where the main entrance is situated with a perimeter zone of coloured tarmac (approximately 1m wide) and knee-high railing provides a buffer zone to the ground floor windows. To the north, east and south elevation a utility lawn comes all the way up to the facades.

203 Irving Court

The main entrance to Irving court is located on the east elevation and is accessed from a footpath that runs the length of the existing parking court. It is a mirror image of Wensley Court entrance arrangement and similarly has a wide recessed area in front of the entrance door.

Two 1100litre general waste bins for resident's use are located directly in front the refuse store doors, and four 1100litre recycle bins area in the south-east corner of the parking court, 26m from the main entrance .

On the south side, the fire escape stairs terminate on a narrow footpath leading to the parking court and to the north elevation, two neighbouring fire escape doors lead out to a footpath running east-west across the site.

Similar to Wensley court, a coloured tarmac buffer zone with knee-high railing runs along the front elevation, with lawn up to the north, east and south elevations.

205 Riversley Court

A ground floor extension to Riversley court was built in the early 1990s to accommodate an office for the RBC Housing team and concierge desk, which is no longer in use. As a result, the entrance to Riversley court is narrower than Wensley and Irving court and no longer beneath an under-croft.

The curved façade of the extension creates a more distinct separation between the main entrance and the general waste refuse areas, where again two 1100litre bins are located. Similar to the other two buildings, the recycling bins are located within the parking court, 36m away from the main entrance doors.

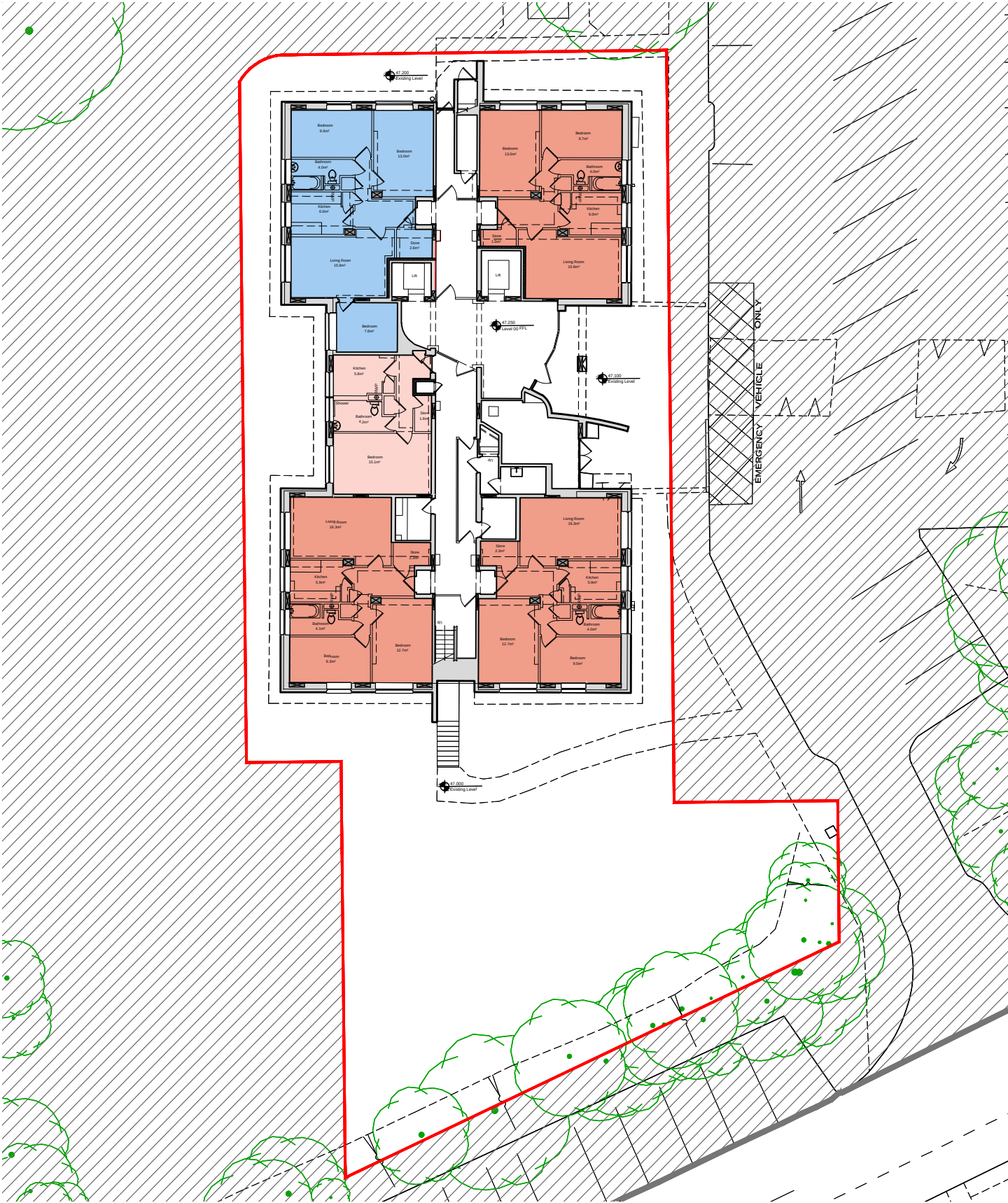
On the north elevation, first escape stairs lead to the east-west foot path across the site. To the east a large area of utility lawn extends from the façade to Wensley Road. This continues round to the south of the building however the ground levels begin to fall more steeply.

Similar to Wensley court, two adjacent fire escape doors are located on the south elevation, with a narrow footpath leading back to the parking court.



193 Wensley Court - Existing Plan

2.3 Existing Sites



203 Irving Court - Existing Plan



205 Riversley Court - Existing Plan

2.4 Existing Site Photos

Key External Features

Facades

In 1993, all three of the blocks were rendered with a dark grey colour at ground floor and lighter grey above. During this renovation the windows were also replaced with uPVC framed windows.

There are three different window types, all of which are the same height (1270mm approx.) with cills 850mm approx. above the floor level.

Entrances

The towers were originally constructed with recessed entrances, featuring a glazed curving wall and entrance door beneath an undercroft. This is still the entrance arrangement for Wensley and Irving Court, however the entrance of Riversley Court was extended in the early 1990s to include a concierge office.

Refuse & Recycling Areas

An internal refuse store adjacent to the entrance of each block contains a refuse bin at the base of the refuse chute. Externally 2 x 1100 litre general waste bins are located adjacent to each block entrance and 4 x 1100 litre recycling bins within each parking court.

There are communal recycling bins to the east of Riversley Court, which will be replaced and relocated as part of the phase 1 works.

Fire Escapes

Fire escapes are located on both the north and south elevation of each of the three blocks. On both Wensley and Riversley Court the northern escape is from the half landing level between ground and first floor, exiting on to external escape stairs. The southern fire escape from these blocks exits at ground level.

Cycle Stores

Currently there is a bank of four-cycle lockers for each of the blocks. As part of the phase 1 proposals, these will be relocated to be in closer proximity to each of the existing buildings.



Wensley Court - West 'Front' Elevation



Wensley Court - Recessed Entrance



Riversley Court - Entrance Extension (constructed 1993)

2.4 Existing Site Photos



Wensley Court - General Waste Area



Irving Court - Main Entrance and General Waste Area



Riversley Court - Ground Floor Fire Escape



Communal Recycling Area - To be relocated



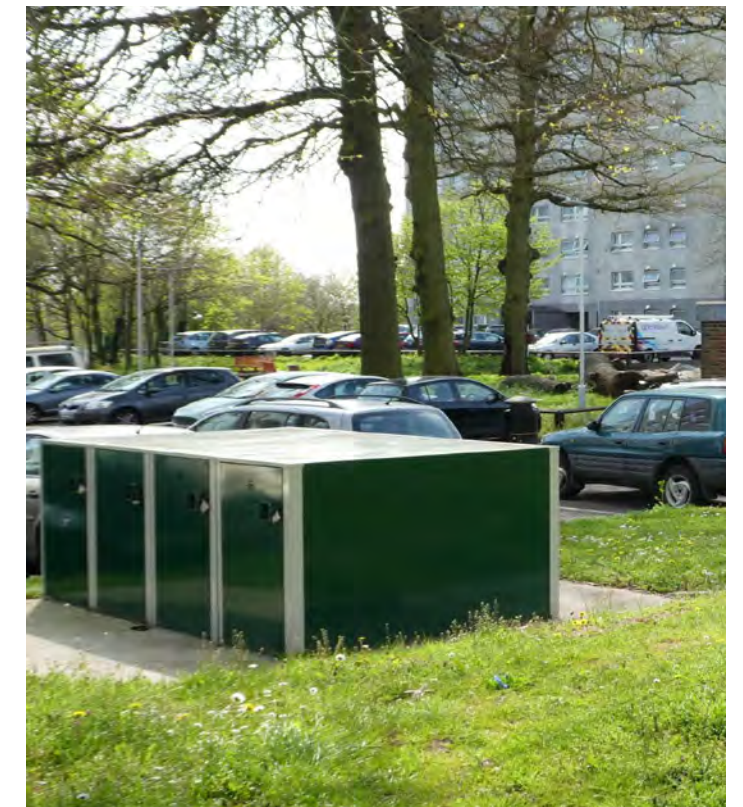
Riversley Court - General Waste Area



Wensley Court - Recycling Area



Riversley Court - First Floor Fire Escape



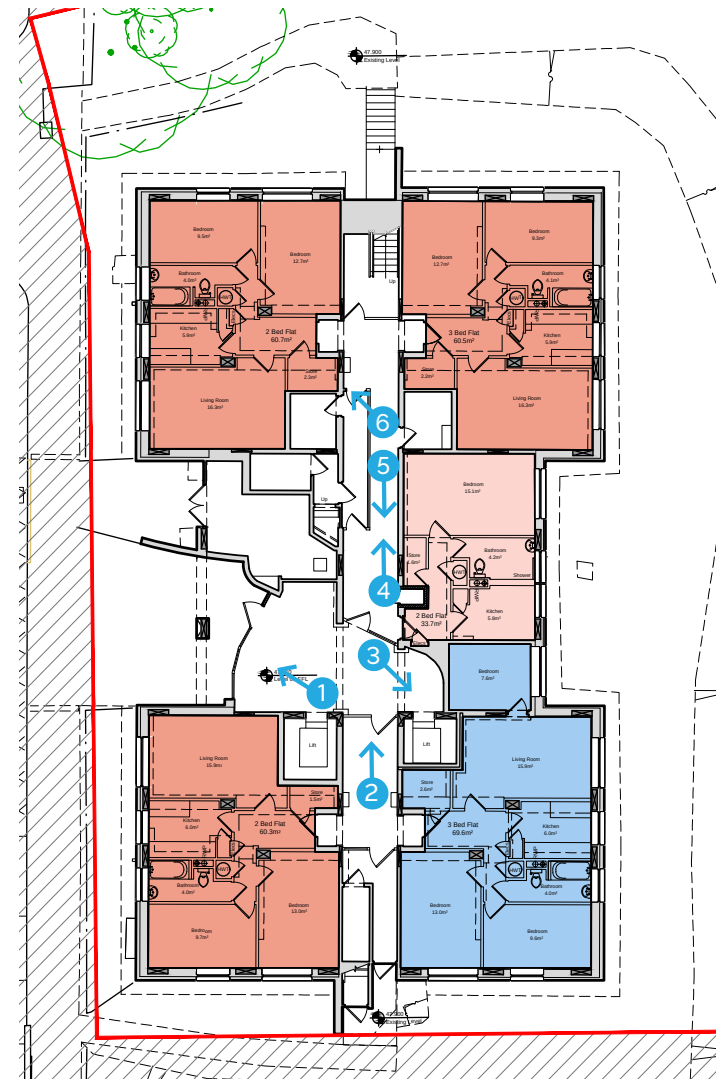
Cycle Storage Lockers - To be relocated

2.4 Existing Site Photos

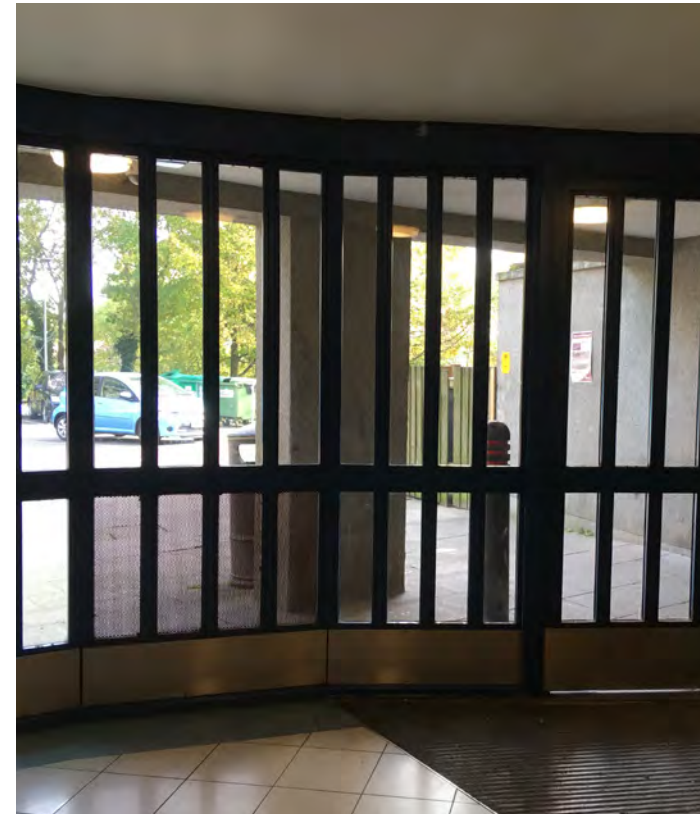
Internal Views - Ground Floor

Within each building the main entrance and lift foyer connects to a north-south circulation corridor, which terminates with a stair core at either end.

Glazed doors and partitions separate the circulation areas allowing views and natural light through these spaces. A secondary glazed corridor at ground floor level provides a lobby to the existing cleaners and refuse store.



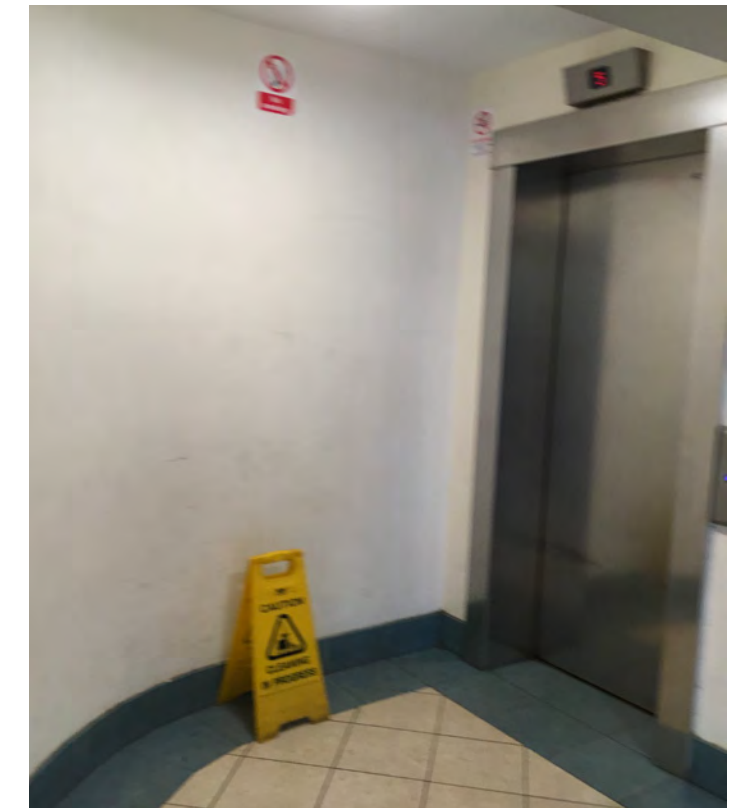
Key Plan - Ground Floor



1 - Entrance Lobby



2 - View into entrance lobby



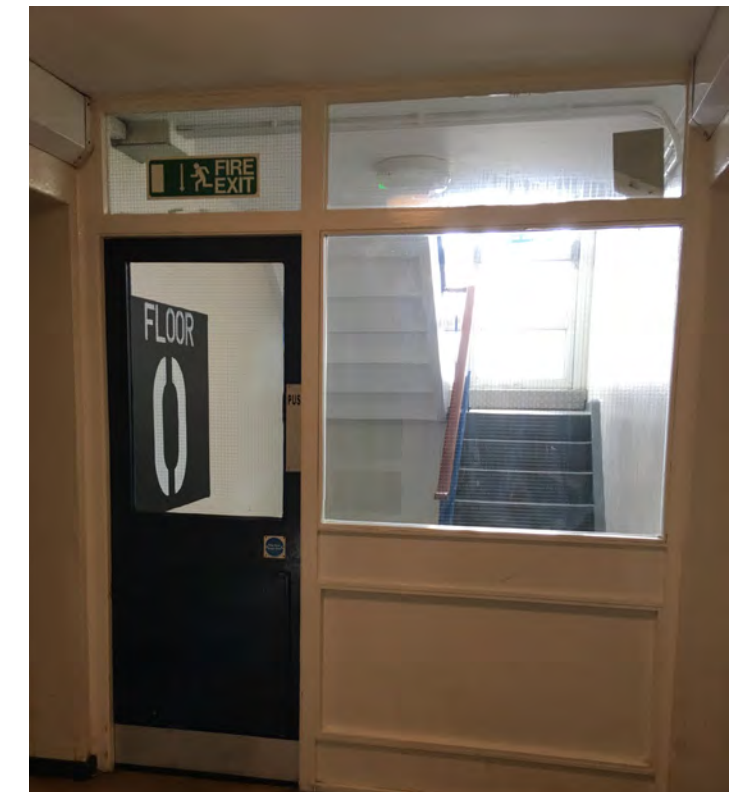
3 - Lift Entrance



4 - Communal Corridor



5 - Communal Corridor



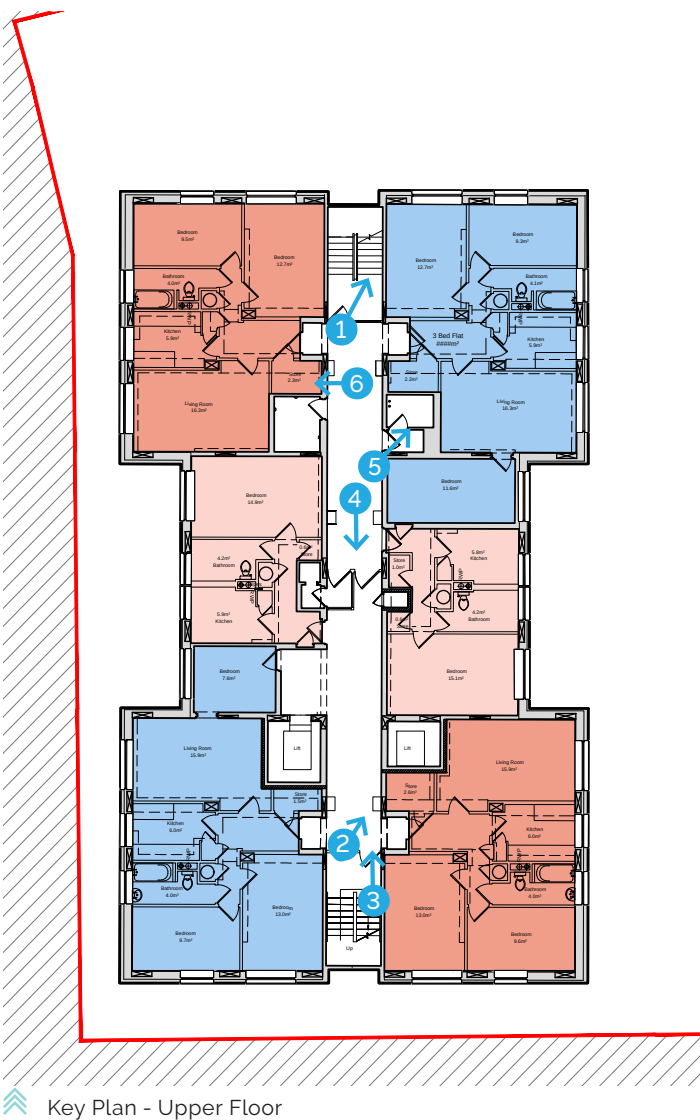
6 - Staircore Entrance

2.4 Existing Site Photos

Internal Views - Upper Floors

The central corridor provides access to the drying rooms (although mostly decommissioned), riser room (maintenance access only), refuse chute and six flats. The four corner flats have a recessed entrance creating some separation between the main circulation route.

Full height glazing to the stair cores results in a high level of natural daylight within the stairs, and also provides some secondary natural daylight into the corridor via the glazed door and screens.



1 - Fire escape (at half landing)



2 - Staircore lobby



3 - Staircore



4 - Communal Corridor



5 - Drying room



6 - Flat Entrance

2.5 Site History

Site Timeline

Coley Park flats are located within the former Coley Park Estate, now a suburb of Reading. The land was acquired by the Vachell Family in the late 13th Century and remained in the family for over 400 years. During this period the original Tudor Coley House was constructed and reconstructed on the banks of the Holy Brook, along with a working farm which served the estate.

Both were subsequently demolished when the estate was purchased by John McConnell, who commissioned the construction of the Georgian Coley Manor House in the early 1800s.

From the late 1960s the Ministry of Agriculture occupied Coley Manor and during this period two additional office blocks were constructed on the grounds. The building is now used by the Berkshire Independent Hospital.

In addition to the manor, during the 19th century there were other significant developments on and around the Coley Park Estate, most notably a section the GWR line from London to Reading as well as the now disused Coley Branch line, built in the early 20th century.

The site of the Coley Park flats and the immediate surrounding area remained undeveloped until the southern area of Coley Park Estate was purchased by Reading Borough Council (RBC) in 1956. In the subsequent decade RBC constructed a large residential estate, which included pubs, shops, chapel and other local amenities.

Coley Park Flats were constructed between 1958 and 1960, as part of one of the earlier phases of development in the Coley Park estate. The three existing buildings were refurbished 30 years later in the early 1990s.

c.1309

The Vachell family acquired the agricultural land in and around the area of Coley Park



c.1602

Following the English Civil War, Vachell House was extensively restored and new dutch-inspired landscape gardens were constructed

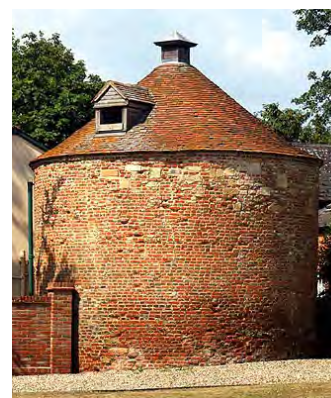


1838 - 1841

Great Western Railway (GWR) line from London to Bristol opened, running through Reading via the Southcote Junction

c.1555

Vachell House or Old Coley House and a working farm were the first known building to be constructed on Coley Park Estate.



1802

Architect Daniel Asher Alexander commissioned to design the New Georgian Coley House.

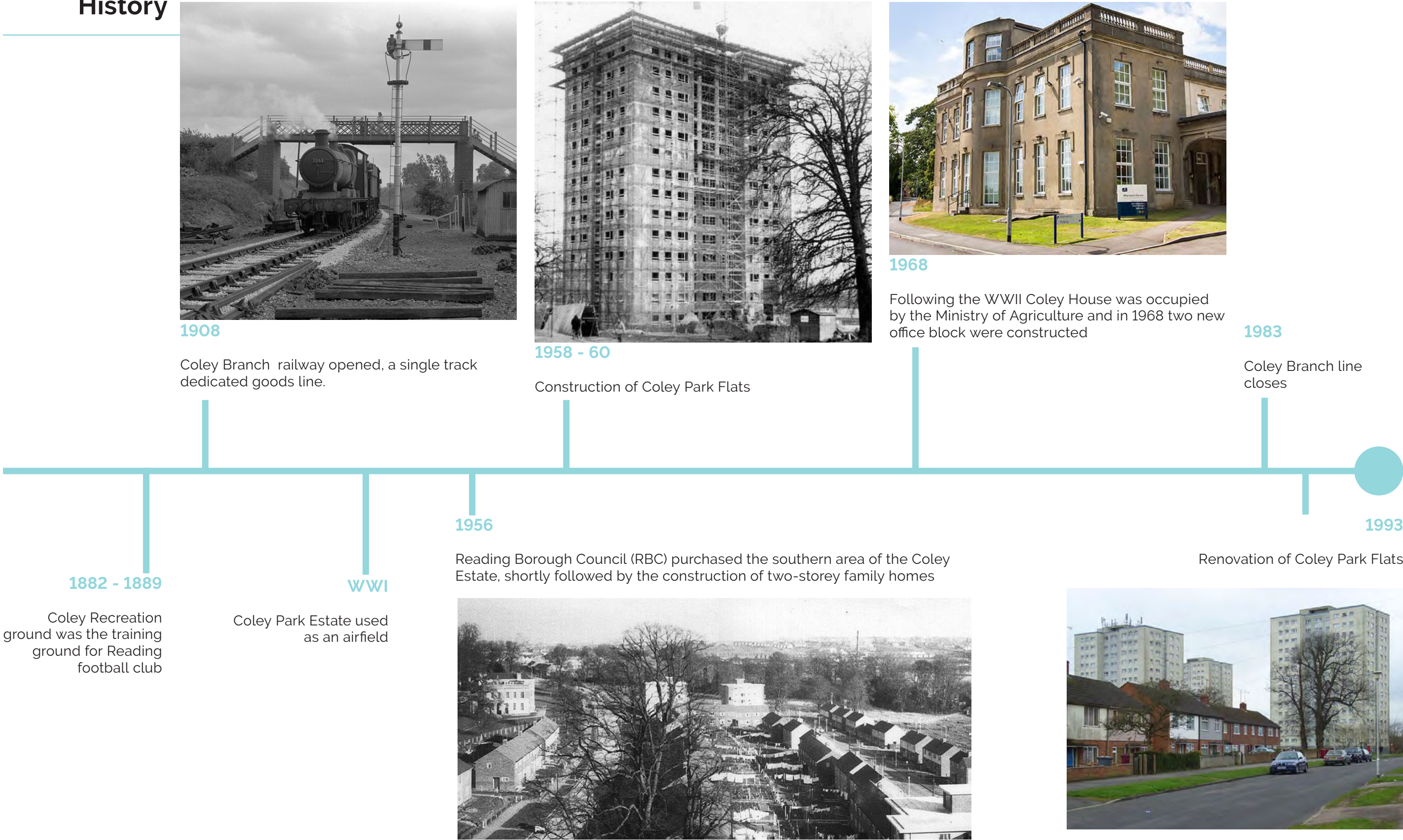


1872

Coley Primary School completed



2.5 Site History



2.5 Site History

Historical Plans

Whilst development did not occur on the site of the Coley Park Flats, until the late 1950s when the existing buildings were constructed, the sequence of historic maps shows the proposed site located within the former grounds of Coley Park estate, as well as the proximity to significant developments within the area.

1883

By this time the London to Reading and the Reading to Basingstoke GWR railway lines were well established having been operation for just over 40 years. Despite the key intersection at Southcote Junction located at the south-west corner of Coley Park Estate, other than the reconstruction of Coley Park Mansion earlier in the 19th century, there had been little development in the area.

1900

Much of the land surrounding the sites remained agricultural, or completely undeveloped such as the Fobney meadow and wetlands to the south of the site. However, to the north-west of the site there was some development around Oaklands farms.

1914

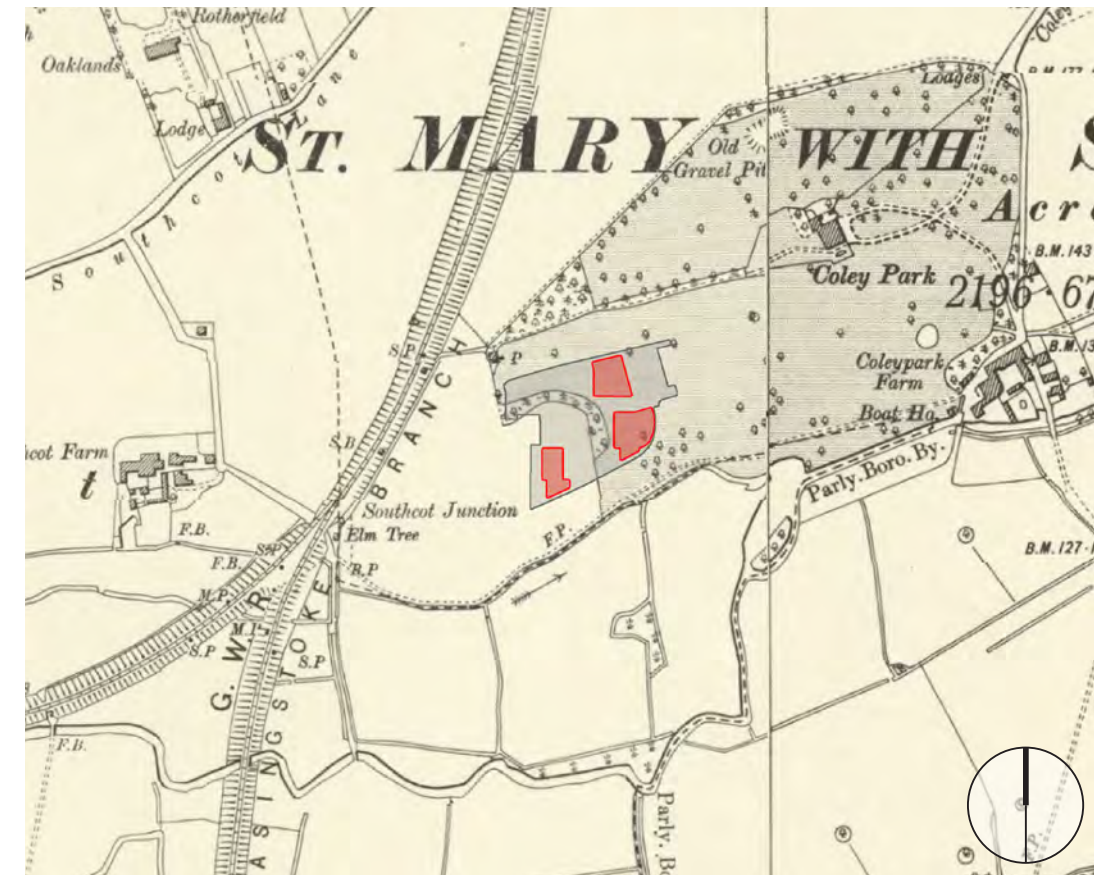
The Coley Branch line, a single railway track for transporting goods to the thriving industrial area south of Reading had been completed, running through the south-west corner of Coley park and into Fobney Meadow.

1935

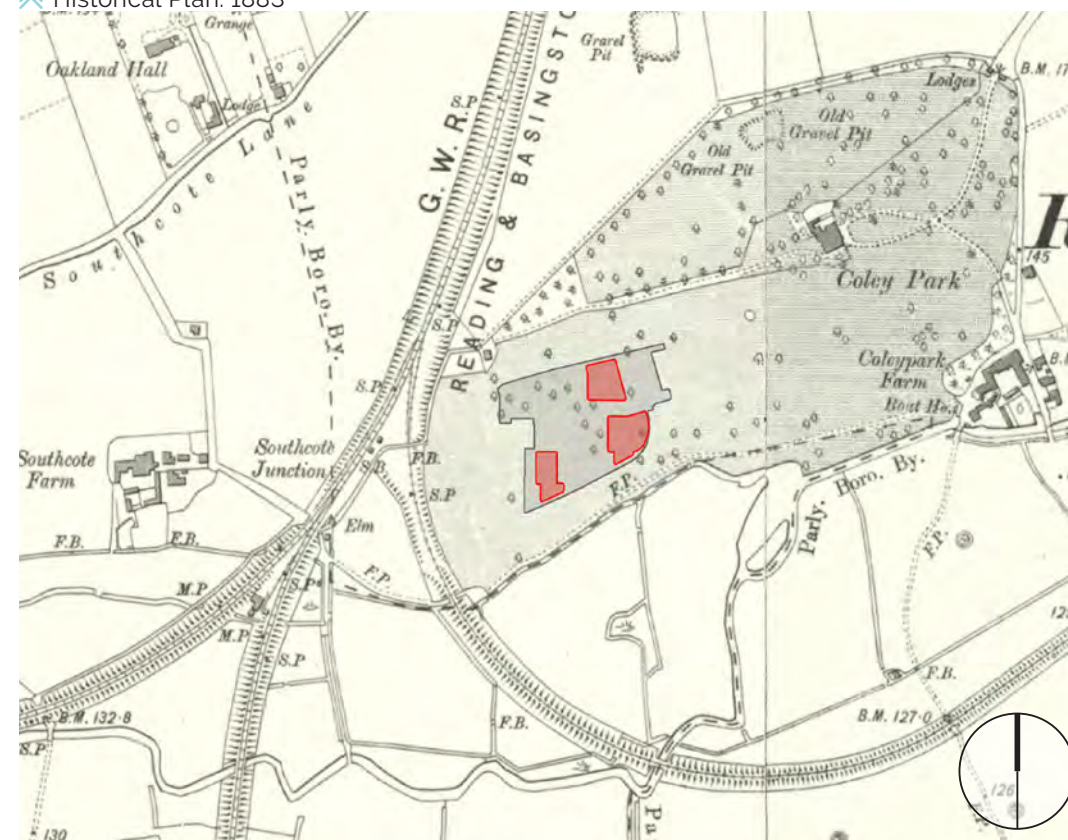
To the west of the railway line a planned private residential development, consisting of semi-detached family homes has been constructed around new residential streets including Kenilworth Avenue.



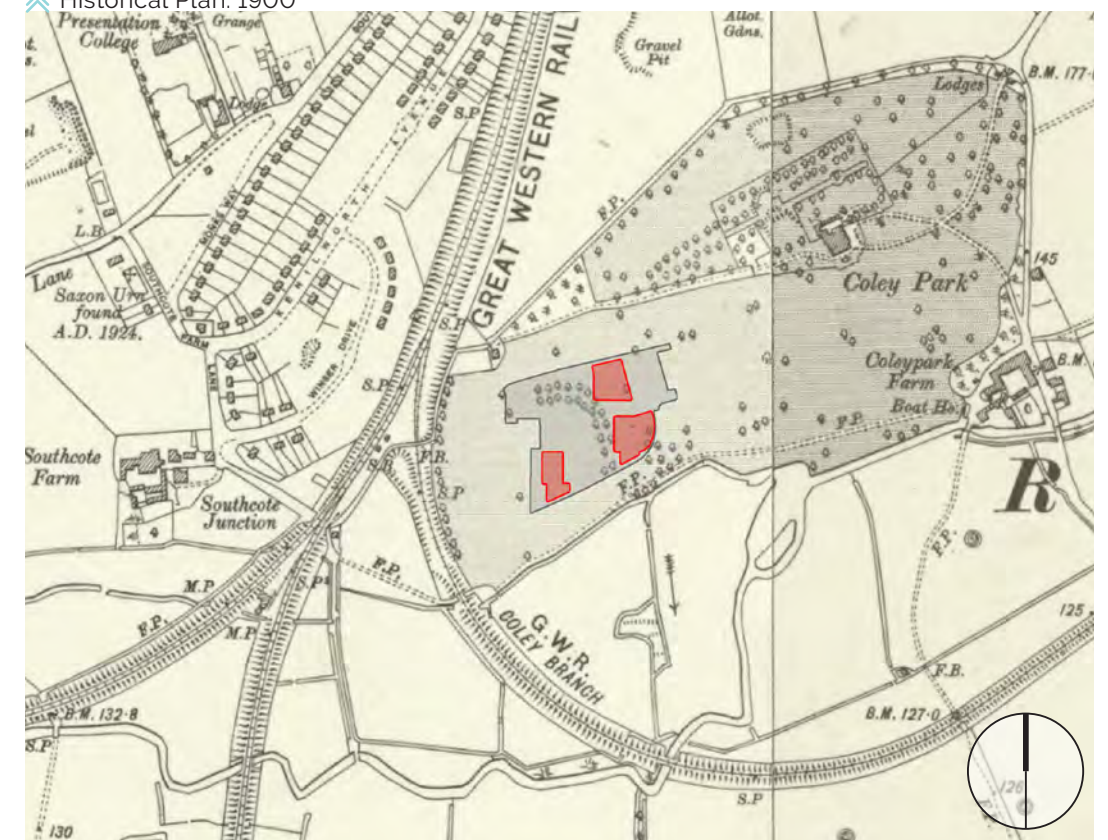
Historical Plan: 1883



Historical Plan: 1900



Historical Plan: 1914



Historical Plan: 1935

2.5 Site History

1944

Further residential developments are completed to the west of the site in Southcote. Also, the private residential cul-de-sac Hungerford drive, comprising of large semi-detached houses is constructed just to the north of Coley Park.

1962

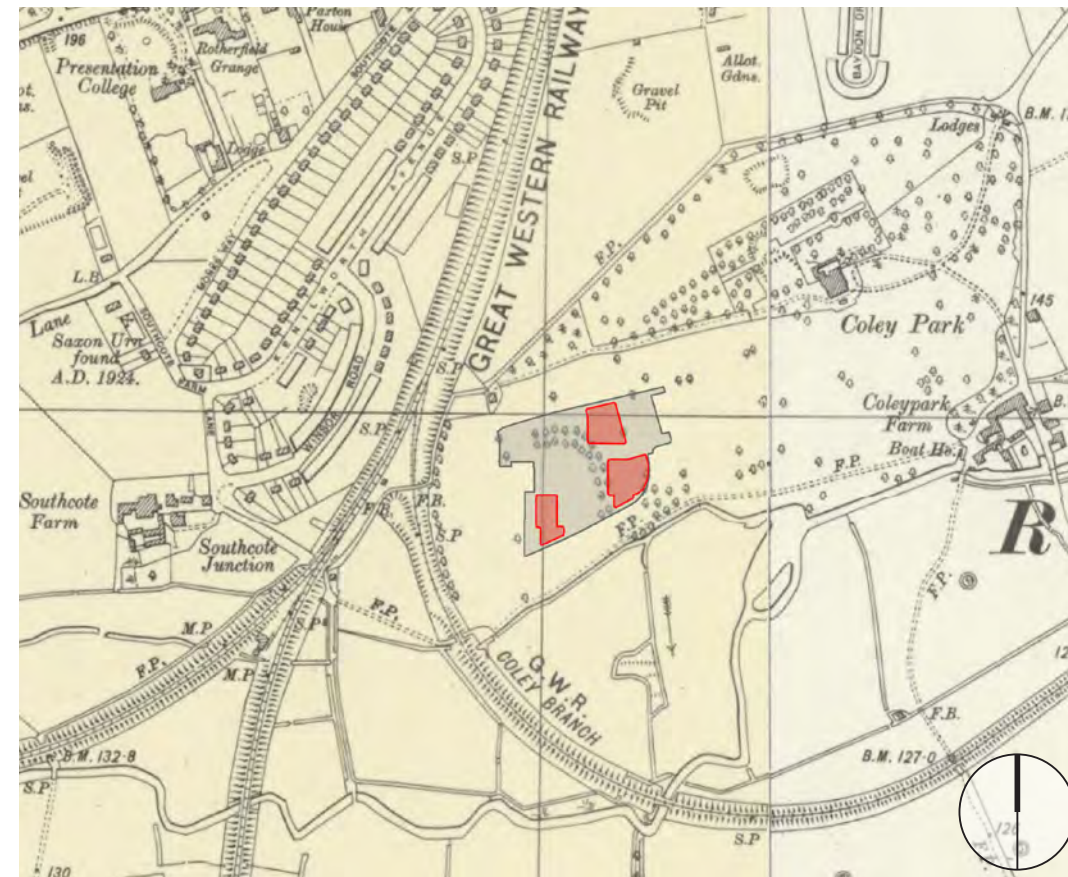
Having purchased the majority of the remaining Coley Park six years earlier, Reading Borough Council (RBC) completed the construction of a significant proportion of the new Coley Park Estate, which included social housing, new roads and communal facilities. Further private residential developments are also completed to the west and north of the site.

1973

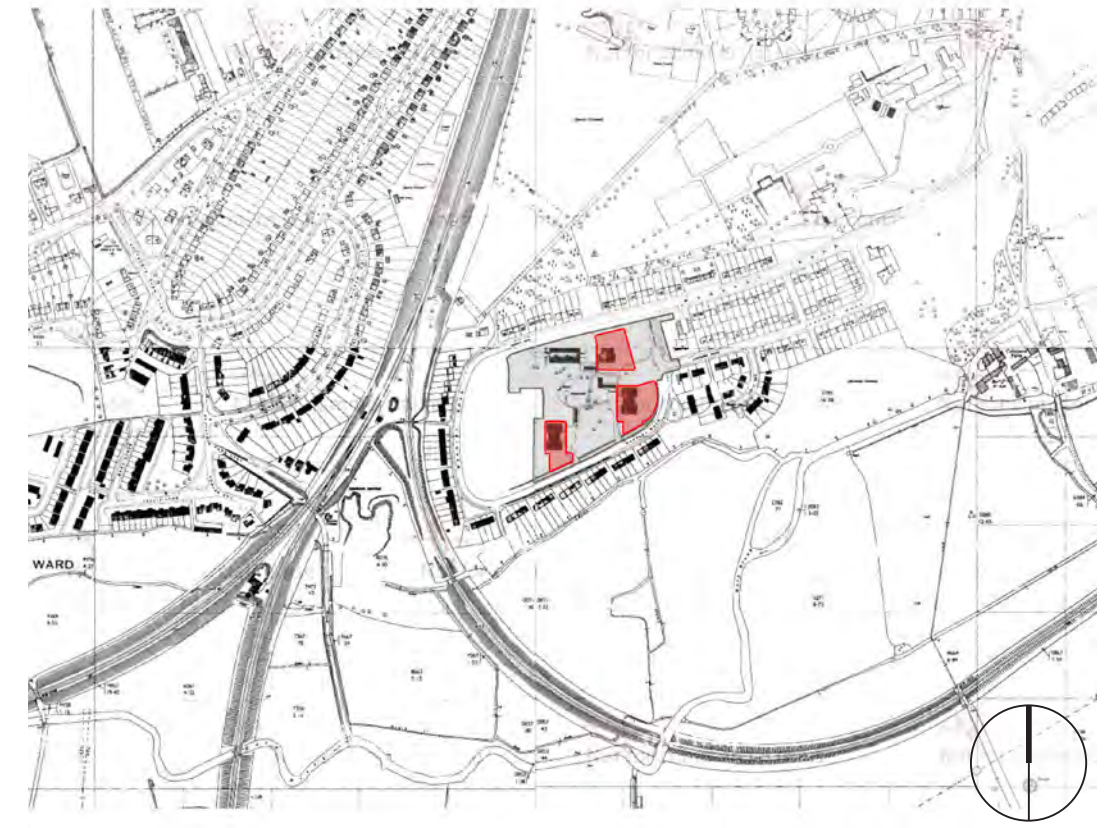
RBC have completed the construction of further social housing within the Wensley Road loop, as well as other aspects of the Estate. The 19th Century Coley manor has been occupied by the Ministry of Agriculture and two neighbouring offices buildings have been constructed.

1992

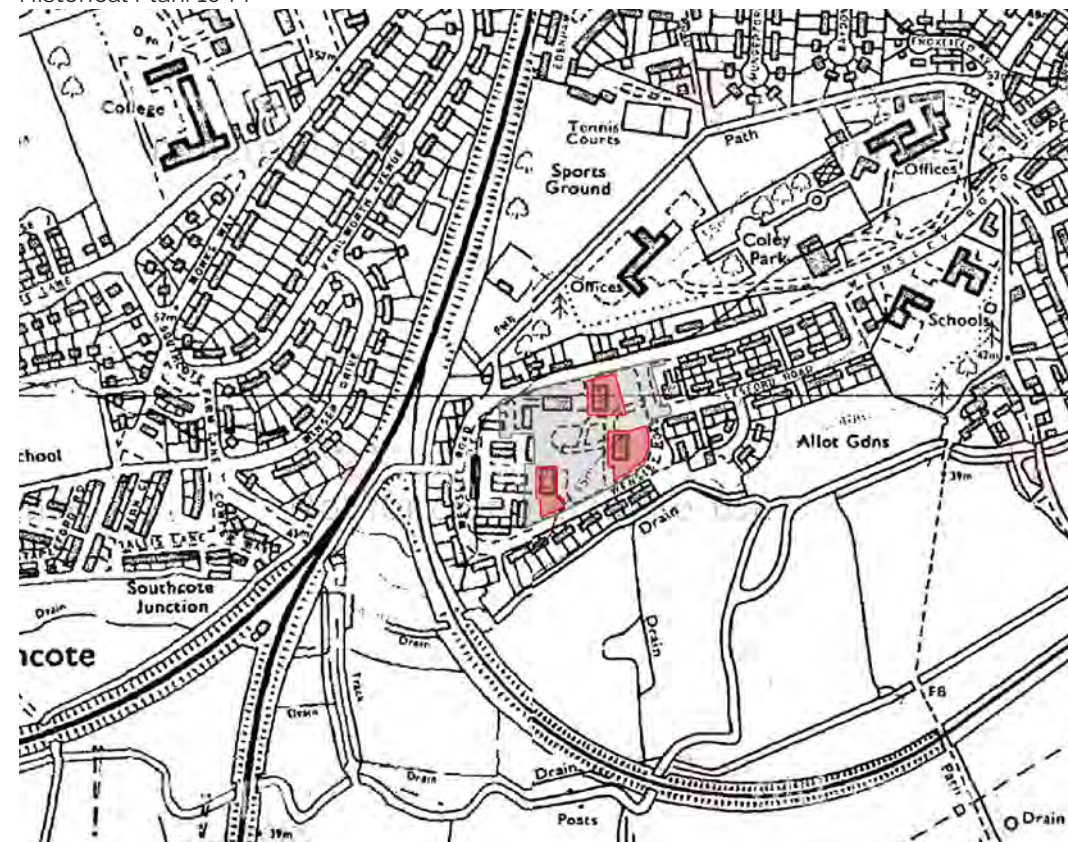
A development of mid-rise apartments buildings 'Rembrandt way' has been completed to the north of Coley Park. Coley Manor has been taken over by the Berkshire Independent Hospital.



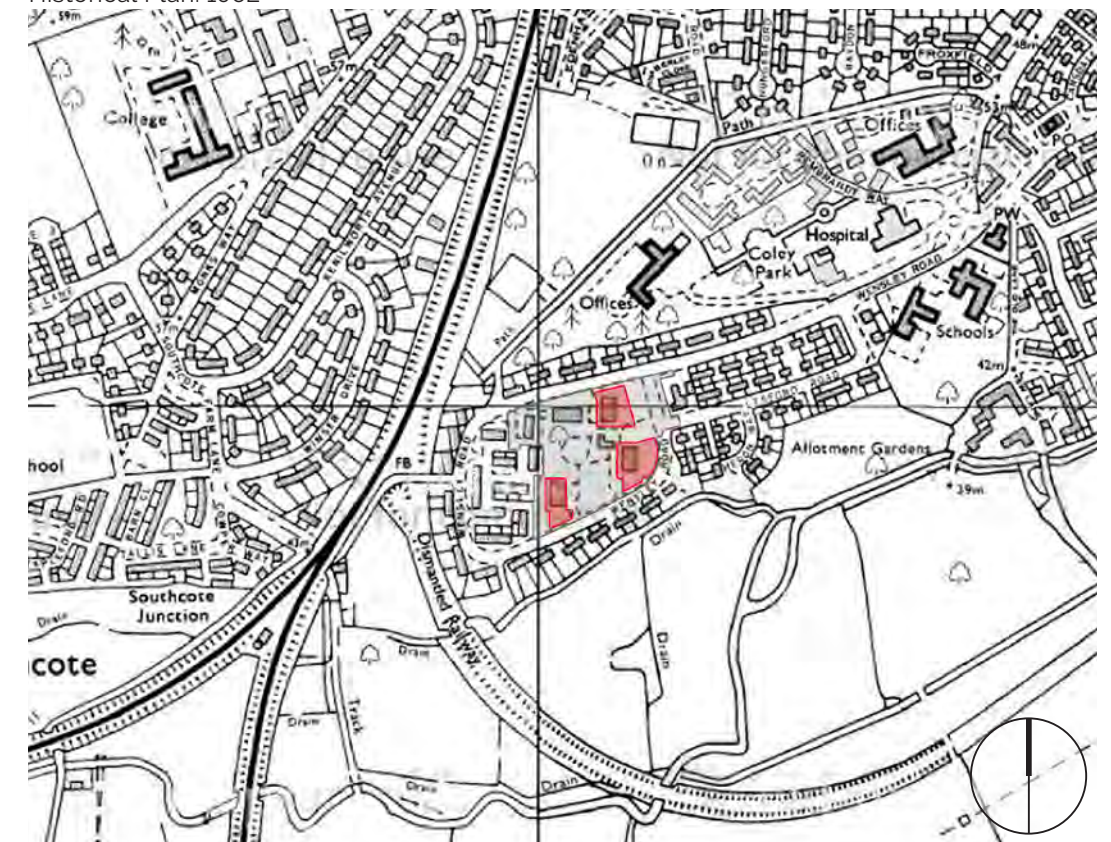
Historical Plan: 1944



Historical Plan: 1962



Historical Plan: 1973



Historical Plan: 1992