

2.6 Existing Building Analysis

Since the buildings were completed in the early 1960s, there have been a number of renovations carried to the existing blocks. These works have provided necessary improvements to the living conditions of the existing residents, however they have also had an impact of the visual character of the buildings.

Past Works

- 1959 - Wensley Court and Irving Court were constructed
- 1961 - Riversley Court Constructed
- 1993 - All blocks were re-rendered
- 1992-1994 Riversley Court entrance lobby was extended and refurbished
- 2017 - Cycle storage lockers installed on site
- 2018 - Planning Application approved for sprinkler system water storage tank

Changing Features & Appearance

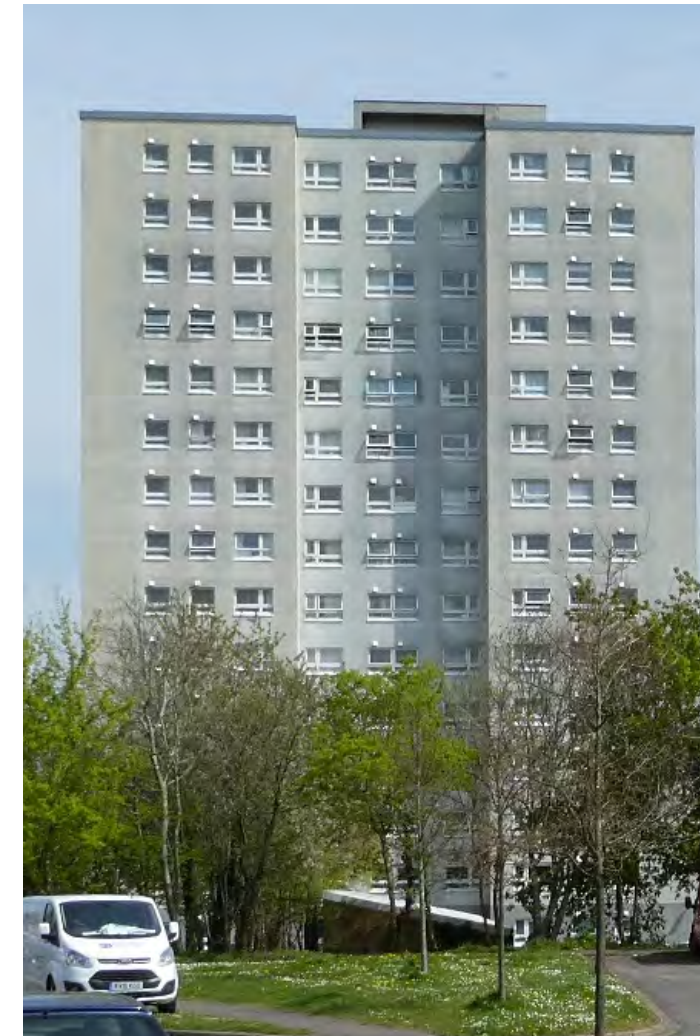
The buildings were originally constructed with brick to the central section of the building and pebble dash finish to the sides, creating distinct contrast between three sections of the elevations. The variation across the facade was reduced when the buildings were refurbished in the early 1990s with a consistent grey render used.

The window opening sizes and the original rhythm of openings remains pronounced today however, on the original elevations, the windows were more clearly articulated with contrasting white window surrounds and an expressed lintel to windows within the central section.

Balconies also added further interested to building appearance and their staggered arrangement hinted to the alternating odd and even floors internally. The balconies were removed prior to the renovations in the early 1990s, owing to health and safety concerns.



Wensley Court 1982 - Original Materials



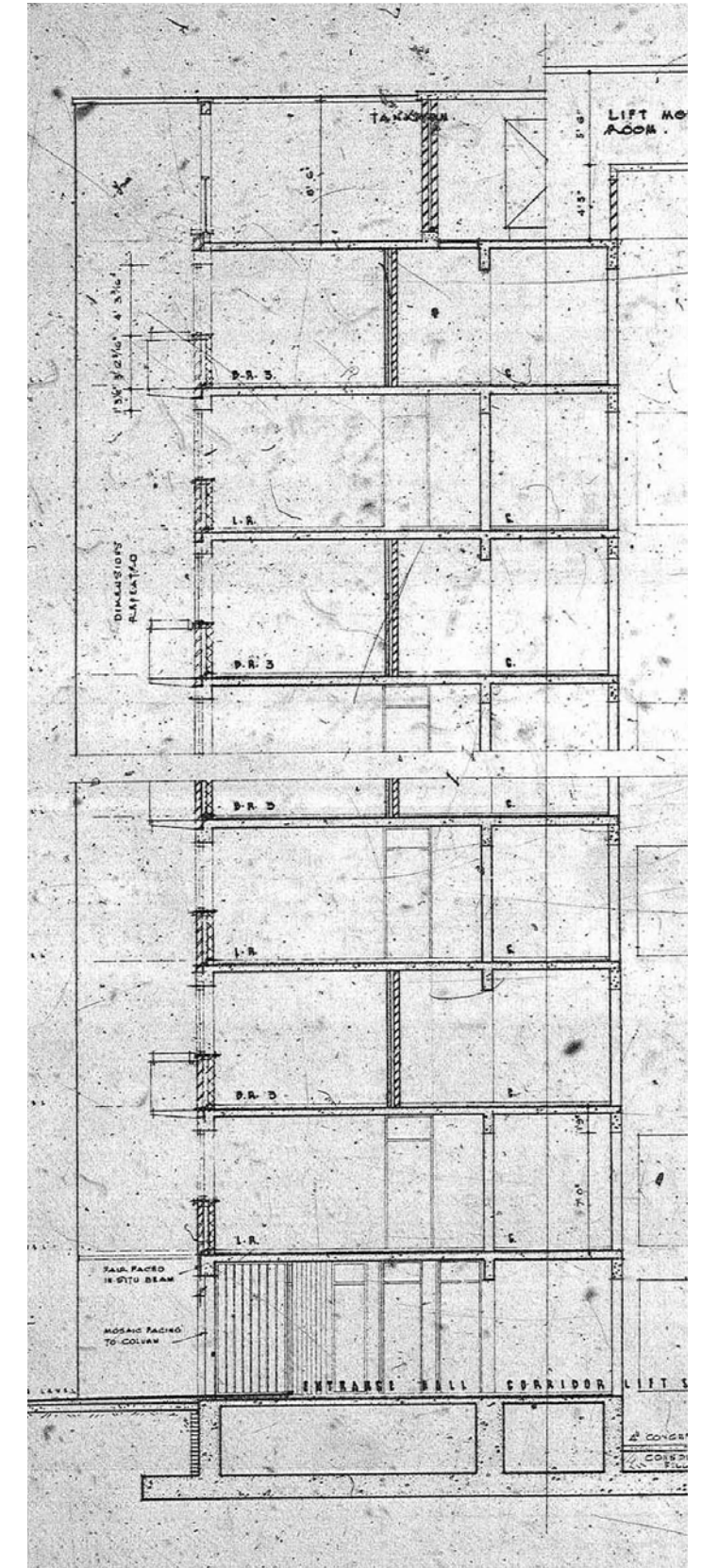
Wensley Court 2020 - Post early 1990s refurbishment



Wensley Court 1982 - Original Materials



Riversley Court 2020 - Extension built 1993



Section (Circa 1958) - Through Entrance

2.6 Existing Building Analysis

Original Tower Construction

The three existing towers were built between 1958 and 1961, using Wimpey no-fines construction method.

A significant number of Wimpey no-fines houses were constructed during the 1950s and 1960s across the UK. Originally this was used as load bearing system to construct two and three storeys houses, as well as some small apartment blocks.

A multi- storey system was later developed incorporating non-load bearing no fines concrete walls set within an in-situ reinforced concrete structural frame. In excess of 700 buildings in the UK were constructed using this method, with structures up to 25 storeys high.

The original construction drawings show the reinforced concrete columns within the external walls and compartment walls, with further structural columns located within the corner flats.

Initial structural investigations have been carried out on typical units, and further comprehensive structural investigations will be undertaken as part of the detailed design stages.

Legend - Unit Types

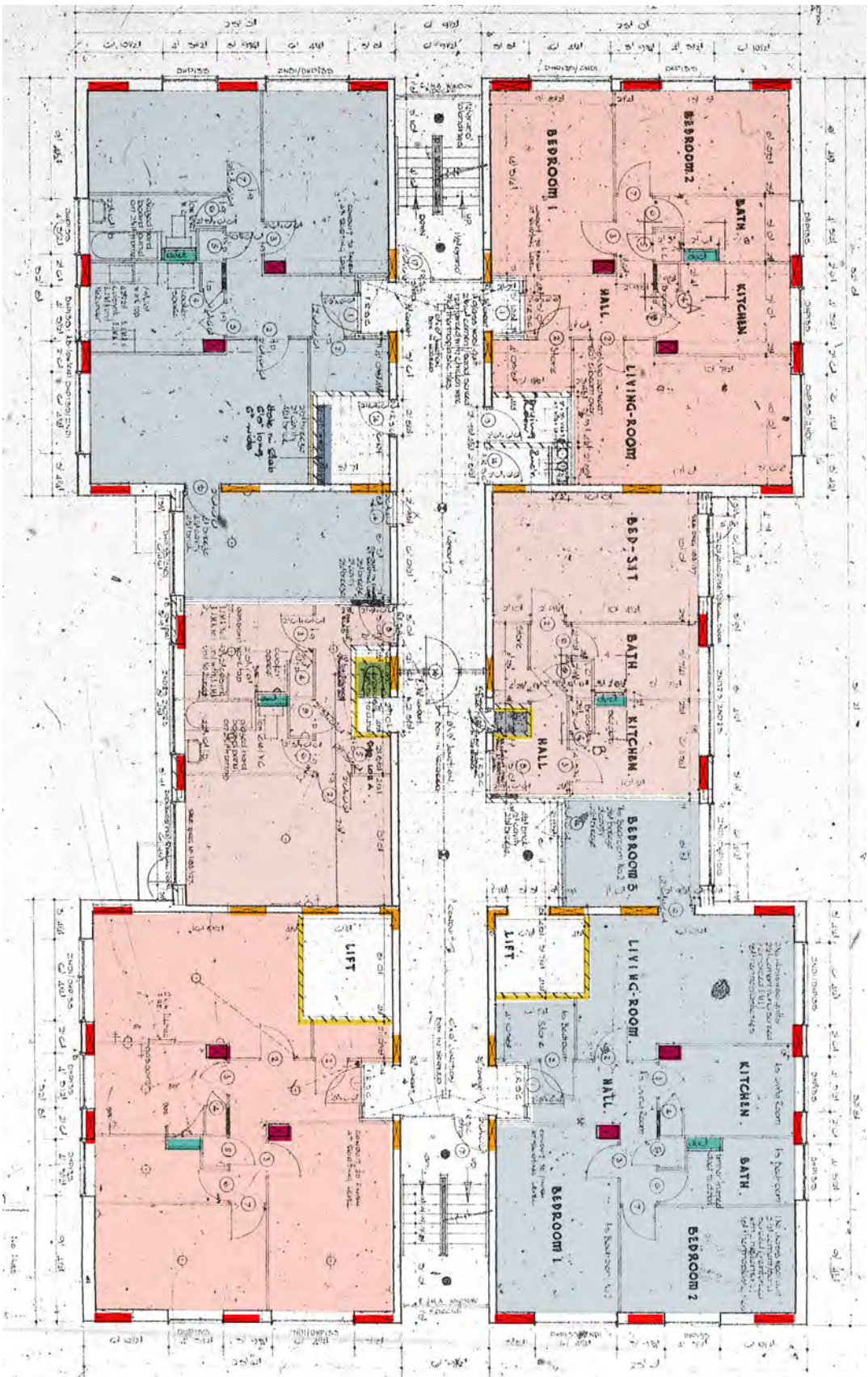
- Bedsit/1 Bedroom Flat
- 2 Bedroom Flat
- 3 Bedroom Flat

Legend - Structure

- Reinforced Concrete Columns - External Walls
- Reinforced Concrete Columns - Internal
- Reinforced Concrete Columns - Internal Walls
- Lift & Services Shaft Walls

Legend - Services

- Refuse Chute
- SVP & Rainwater Riser
- Services Risers
- Dry Riser



Original Plan (Circa 1958) - Odd Floors



Original Plan (Circa 1958) - Even Floors

2.7 Existing Accommodation

Accommodation Schedule

Each of the existing buildings contain 89 flats, with a mix of 1 bed studios, 1 bed flats, 2 bed flats and 3 bedroom flats. There are five flats on the ground floors and 6 flats per for on the upper 14 floors.

Each tower contains two lifts, one serving odd floors and one serving even floors and as result the layout of the floor plans alters on the odd and even floors.

Whilst the windows, structure and circulation layouts are generally consistent, the configuration of the flats differs in each of the blocks resulting in a varied mix of dwelling types.

Unit types									
	Studio		1 Bed Flat		2 Bed Flat		3 Beds		
	RBC	Private	RBC	Private	RBC	Private	RBC	Private	Units per floor

193 - Wensley Court	Number of Units								
Level 14	2				2		2		6
Level 13	1		1		3		1		6
Level 12	2				2		2		6
Level 11	1		1		2	1	1		6
Level 10	2				2		2		6
Level 09	2				2		2		6
Level 08	2				2		2		6
Level 07	1		1		3		1		6
Level 06	2				2		2		6
Level 05	2				2		2		6
Level 04	2				2		2		6
Level 03	2				2		2		6
Level 02	2				2		1	1	6
Level 01	1		1		3		1		6
Level 00	1				3		1		5
Total	25	0	4	0	34	1	24	1	89

Unit types									
	Studio		1 Bed Flat		2 Bed Flat		3 Beds		
	RBC	Private	RBC	Private	RBC	Private	RBC	Private	Units per floor

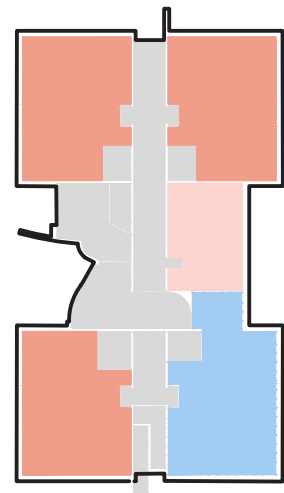
203 - Irving Court	Number of Units								
Level 14	1		1		3		1		6
Level 13	1		1		3		1		6
Level 12	1		1		3		1		6
Level 11	1		1		3		1		6
Level 10	1		1		3		1		6
Level 09	1		1		3		1		6
Level 08	1		1		3		1		6
Level 07	1		1		3		1		6
Level 06	1		1		3		1		6
Level 05	1		1		3		1		6
Level 04	1		1		3		1		6
Level 03	1		1		3		1		6
Level 02	1		1		3		1		6
Level 01	1		1		3		1		6
Level 00	1				3		1		5
Total	15	0	14	0	45	0	15	0	89

205 - Riversley Court	Number of Units								
Level 14	2				2		2		6
Level 13	2				2		2		6
Level 12	2				2		2		6
Level 11	2				2		2		6
Level 10	2				2		2		6
Level 09	2				2		1	1	6
Level 08	2				2		2		6
Level 07	2				2		2		6
Level 06	2				2		2		6
Level 05	2				2		2		6
Level 04	2				2		2		6
Level 03	2				2		2		6
Level 02	2				2		2		6
Level 01	2				1	1	2		6
Level 00	1				3		1		5
Total	29	0	0	0	30	1	28	1	89

Total	69	0	18	0	109	2	67	2	267
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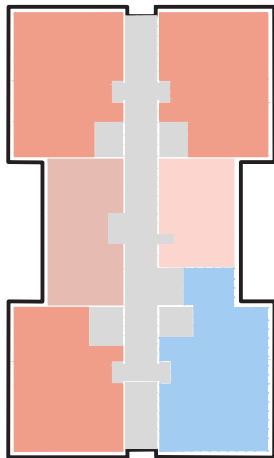
2.7 Existing Accommodation

193 - Wensley Court



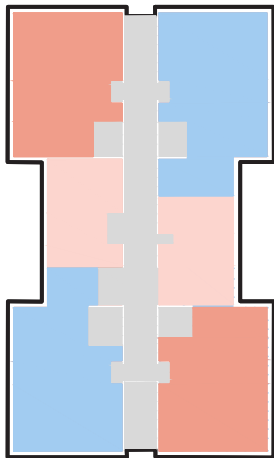
Level 00

1 x 1 Bed Studio
3 x 2 Bed Flat
1 x 3 Bed Flat



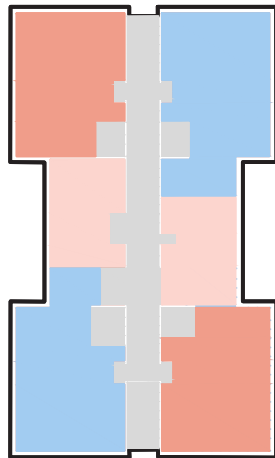
Level 01, 07, 11 & 13

1 x 1 Bed Studio
1 x 1 Bed Flat
3 x 2 Bed Flat
1 x 3 Bed Flat



**Level 02, 04, 06, 08,
10, 12 & 14**

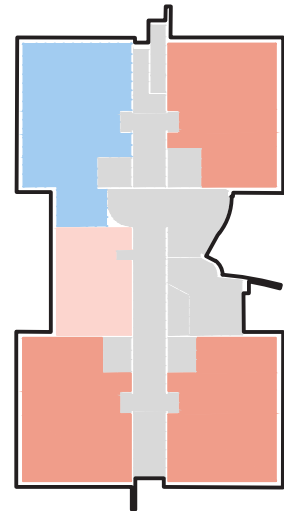
2 x 1 Bed Studio
2 x 2 Bed Flat
2 x 3 Bed Flat



Level 03, 05 & 09

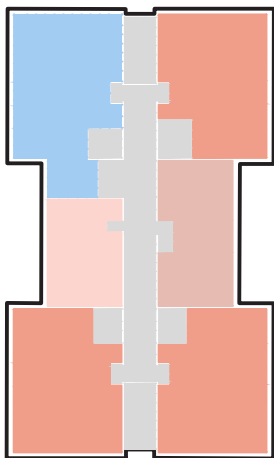
2 x 1 Bed Studio
2 x 2 Bed Flat
2 x 3 Bed Flat

203 - Irving Court



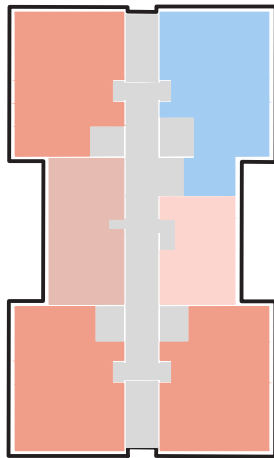
Level 00

1 x 1 Bed Studio
3 x 2 Bed Flat
1 x 3 Bed Flat



**Level 01, 03, 05, 07,
09, 11 & 13**

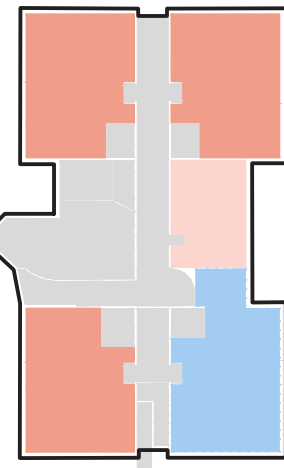
1 x 1 Bed Studio
1 x 1 Bed Flat
2 x 2 Bed Flat
1 x 3 Bed Flat



**Level 02, 04, 06, 08,
10, 12 & 14**

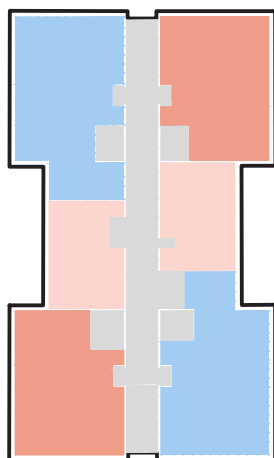
1 x 1 Bed Studio
1 x 1 Bed Flat
2 x 2 Bed Flat
1 x 3 Bed Flat

205 - Riversley Court



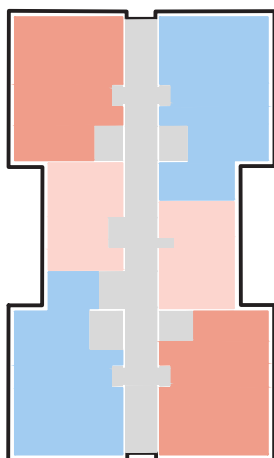
Level 00

1 x 1 Bed Studio
3 x 2 Bed Flat
1 x 3 Bed Flat



**Level 01, 03, 05, 07,
09, 11 & 13**

2 x 1 Bed Studio
2 x 2 Bed Flat
2 x 3 Bed Flat



**Level 02, 04, 06, 08,
10, 12 & 14**

2 x 1 Bed Studio
2 x 2 Bed Flat
2 x 3 Bed Flat

2.8 Context Views Analysis

Distance Views



Image B: Berkeley Avenue - Looking south along Ashley Road



Image C: Holy Brook - Looking West toward Wensley Road



Image D: Waterloo Meadows - Looking North



Image A: Southcote Farm Lane - Looking east along Windsor Drive



Image E: Train into Reading - Looking North-East

2.8 Context Analysis Views

Context Views

As the site is surrounded to the north, east and west by predominantly two and three storey residential properties and with Fobney meadow to the south, Coley Park Flats can be viewed from various locations within the wider area and act as key visual land marks.

Owing to the proximity of Coley Park flats to the train line heading south out of Reading, the existing buildings act as a landmark to signal the arrival into Reading when approaching by train from Newbury and Basingstoke.

Approach Views

As Wensley Road is the only vehicle route into the Coley Park estate and as the Coley Park flats are located within the loop where the road terminates, the existing buildings are continually visible when approaching the Wensley Road site,

193 Wensley Court first comes into view from the Wensley Road roundabout, and shortly after 203 Irving Court also becomes visible. However, 205 Riversley Court, located furthest to the west, is predominantly obscured by Wensley and Irving Court on the approach to the site.

Although Wensley Road is the only vehicular approach route to site, there are also two pedestrian and cycle approach routes to the site, one from the Southcote to the west and the other from Courage Park to the north-west of the site.

When approaching from Southcote, it is Riversley Court which is first visible however the footpath gets closer to Wensley Road the west elevation of all three of the buildings are all clearly visible.



Approach View 1 : Wensley Road (West Facing)



Approach View 4: Lesford Road (West Facing)



*Approach View 7 : Wensley Road (North-West Corner)



Approach View 2 : Wensley Road (West Facing)



*Approach View 5 : Southcote Pedestrian Link



Approach View 8 : Wensley Road (South-West Corner)



*Approach View 3 : Wensley Road (West Facing)



Approach View 6 : Wensley Loop (Facing West)



Approach View 9 : Wensley Road (South-East Corner)

2.9 Site Constraints

The adjacent plan illustrates the existing site constraints both within the application boundaries, but also within the wider Wensley Road regeneration site

This includes information related to physical constraints as well as planning constraints regarding site designations. This information has been based on OS plan information, topographical survey, existing building surveys, tree survey, utilities survey and visual inspection of the site by HTA Design during several site visits.

The following key site constraints have been identified:

- Existing entrance locations of the existing tower blocks and surrounding houses
- Limited internal refuse storage
- Dispersed external refuse provision, prone to fly tipping in the less well overlooked locations.
- Dead-end vehicle access.
- Electricity sub-station in the centre of the site
- Overlooking distances to adjacent homes
- Change in site levels

Diagram Legend

	Building Frontages		Major Road Junction
	Overlooking Frontages		Primary Vehicular Route
	Existing Refuse/ Recycling Lo		Secondary Vehicular Route
	Existing Fire Escapes		Existing Site Entrance (Pedestrian & Vehicles)
	Electrical Substation		Existing Site Entrance (Pedestrian Only)
	Water Tank		Primary Pedestrian Route
	Existing Green Space		Secondary Pedestrian Route
	Existing Play Facilities		Indicates fall in level
	Existing Parking Court		1 storey
	Existing Trees - Onsite (Approx. Location)		2 storey
	Existing Trees - Offsite (Approx. Location)		5 storey
	Bus Stop		15 storey



2.10 Site Opportunities

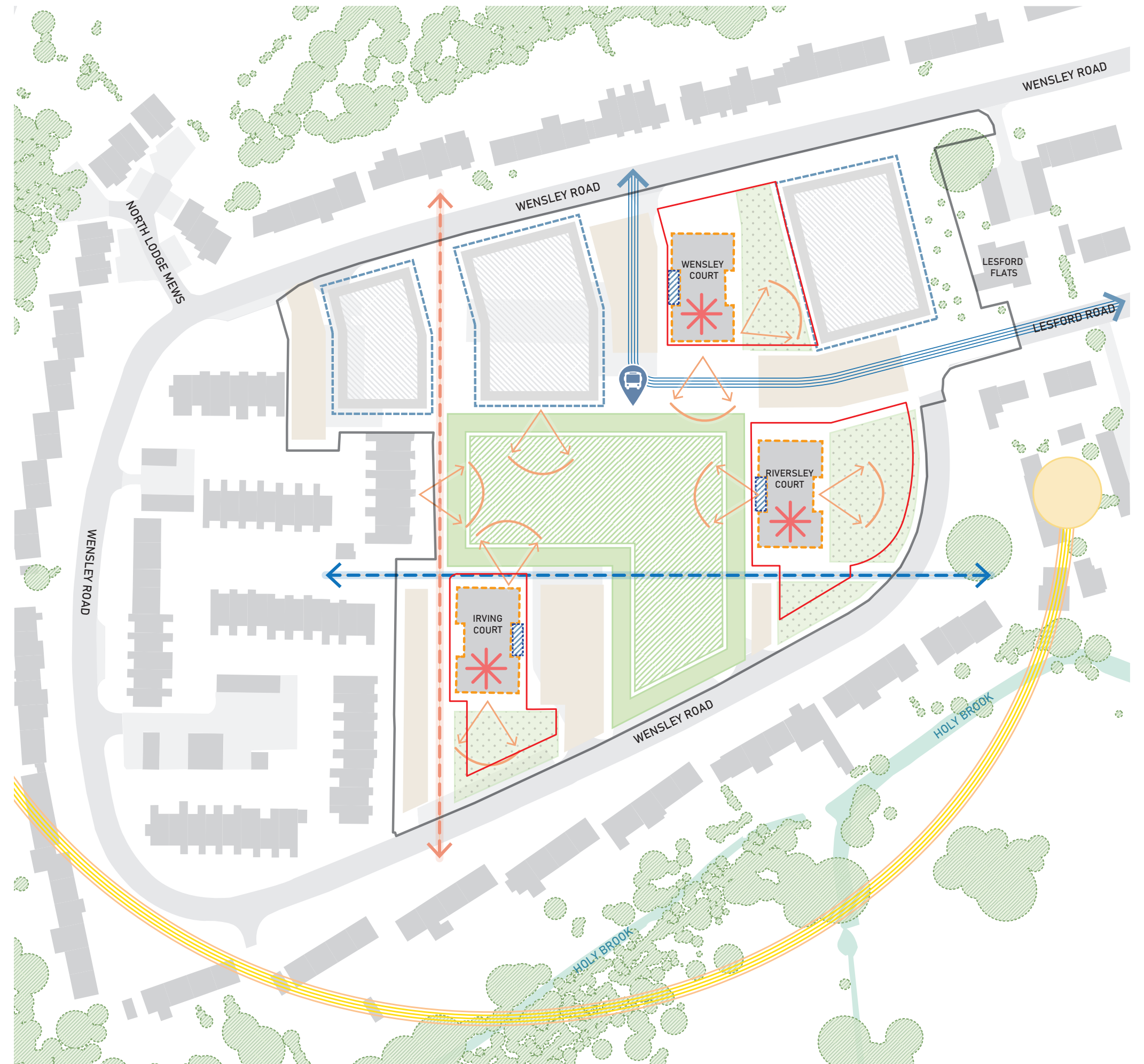
The adjacent plan reflects the opportunities identified for the whole of the Wensley Road regeneration site, including both the new build phase 1 works and the phase 2 improvements to the existing homes.

These have been developed and refined through the site analysis and the consultation process. The key opportunities in terms of improvements to the existing homes are highlighted below: -

- Utilise the visual prominence of the existing buildings to create positive landmarks for the area.
- Enhance and emphasis the main entrance to create a sense of arrival for each of the existing buildings.
- Create definition to the landscape areas, giving an increased sense of ownership for existing residents and providing more imaginative, usable spaces.
- Improve the visual and thermal performance of existing homes to the same standard as new build, modern sustainable homes.

Diagram Legend

	Phase Two Development Area		Potential Area for new homes
	Existing Roads		Create new visual land marks in the neighbourhood
	Re-configured Parking		Create primary Vehicular connections
	Create an activate public space surrounded by new and existing homes		Improved North - South Car, Pedestrian & Cycle Links
	Improve and create and active public space		Improved East - West Pedestrian & Cycle Links
	Activate and improve green spaces for new and existing residents		Buildings overlook key green areas
	Existing Trees - Surrounding Site (Approx. Location)		Bus Stops
	New Entrances for the Tower Blocks		
	New Improved Building Fabric		
	Create active street frontages and hierarchy of building heights		



3.1 Design Development

In order to define the brief and scope for the project, a series of initial layout studies and sketch elevations were discussed with the RBC Client team and RBC Housing Management teams, along with different options in terms of technical solutions and materials.

Internal Layout Development

The phase 1 masterplan was designed to allow space for an extension to each of the three buildings, in order to provide additional internal space for the desired phase 2 renovations without encroaching on the proposed footways.

Early sketch designs for the internal layout tested different options for the size of the internal refuse and recycling store, type of cycle storage, location of the concierge offices and entrance configurations. Some of these options resulted in the loss of ground floor flats in order to accommodate larger refuse stores and internal cycle storage areas.

Entrance Areas

A key principle for the proposed refurbishments is to create a coherent relationship between the new build homes in phase 1 and the existing homes. Early proposals for the new main entrances for the apartment blocks were informed by the language and materiality of the phase 1 apartments.

Working with the constraints of the existing building, as well as the other internal requirements, the intension from the outset was to provide a welcoming, light bright space, by maximising the floor to ceiling heights for the extended entrance.

Refuse & Recycling Store

Based on discussions with the RBC Client and Housing team regarding waste management, as well as technical research into refuse and recycling solutions, it was decided that all refuse and recycling facilities should be located internally.

Rather than losing an existing flat to make way for a larger refuse store, it was agreed that the ground floor should be extended to provide an increased capacity for refuse and recycling storage and management.

Cycle Storage

Different options were considered for increasing the cycle storage provision, including external communal cycle stores, internal cycle communal storage and an increased number of external cycle storage lockers.

Several concerns were raised regarding communal cycle storage areas. Owing to the number of residents within each block, it was felt a communal facility would lead to the damage and/or the theft of bikes stored in these areas and would ultimately result in this facility being under used.

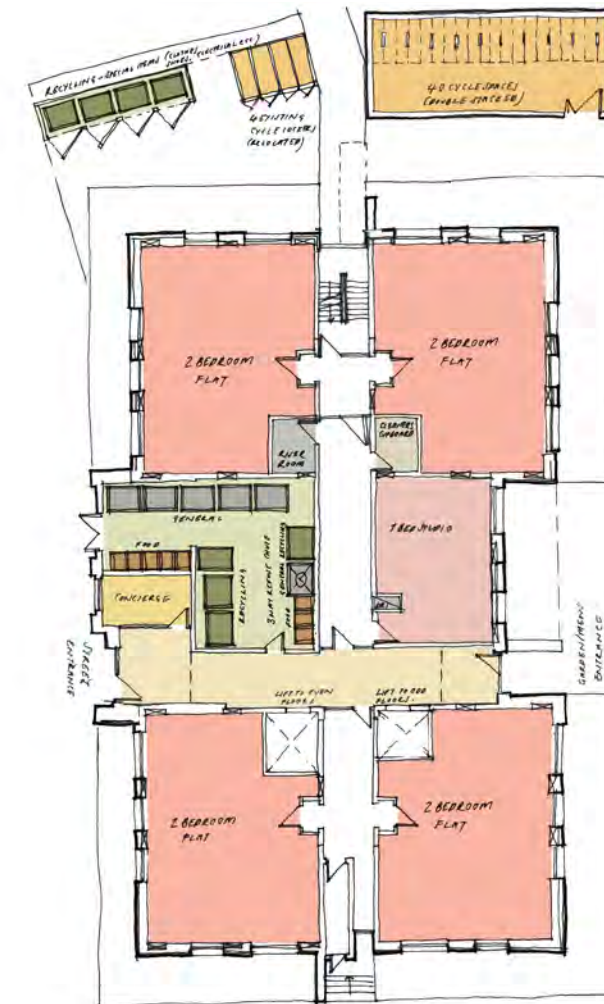
In order to accommodate internal cycle storage, a ground floor dwelling would need to be lost to create space within the existing buildings. Owing to the current demand for affordable housing in Reading, it was felt by the RBC Team that this was not appropriate.

Concierge and Tenant Liaison Office

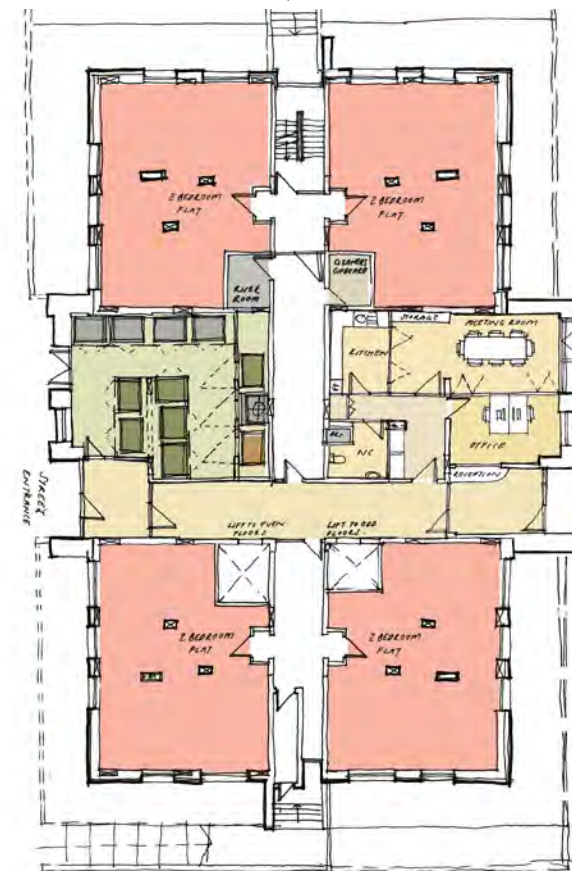
Early studies included the provision of a small concierge office within each of the blocks however, rather than individual offices, it was agreed by the RBC Housing team that a single facility would be more suitable to meet the current and future needs of the on site staff.

Options to locate this facility internally within one of the existing blocks or as a separate stand alone building were explored, alongside discussions regarding the future use of this space.

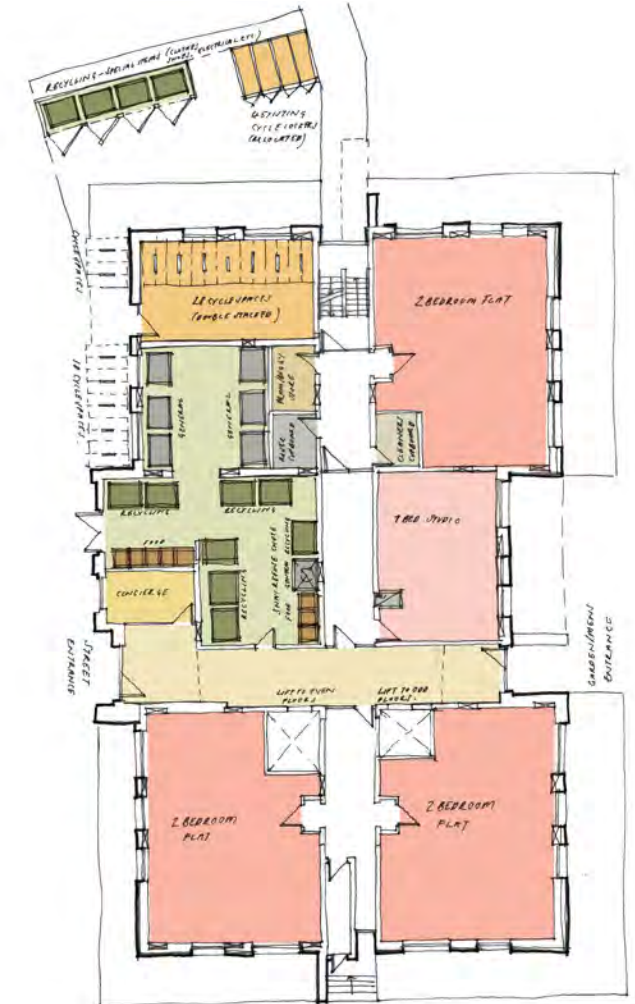
As the vision for this facility began to develop, it was clear that a new separate space, that could serve both the existing and new homes would be more appropriate. Therefore a separation application will be submitted for the a community liaison hub to serve both the new and existing homes.



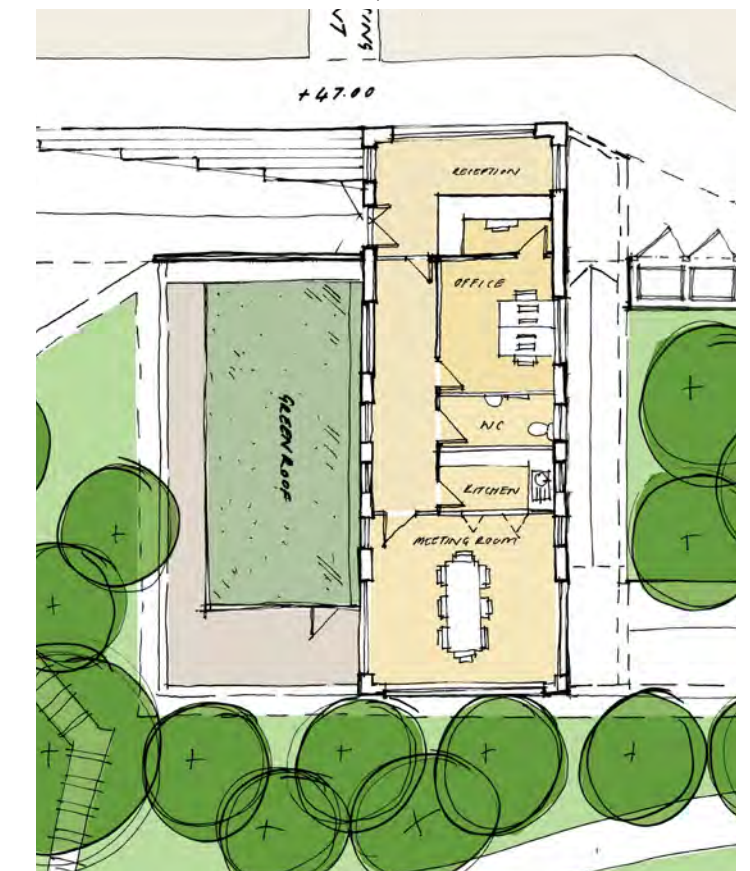
Ground Floor Plan - Sketch Option



Ground Floor with Tenant Liaison office - Sketch Plan



Ground Floor Plan - Sketch Option



Standalone Tenant Liaison office - Sketch Plan

3.1 Design Development

Elevation Development

Composition

To create visual coherence with the proposed new homes and provide a robust, durable materials at lower level, it was decided early in the design development to provide a two storey brick base to each of the existing buildings. However a number of different options in terms of detailing and portions were tested, alongside a various options to explore the composition of the buildings as a whole which centred around the treatment and configuration of the windows.

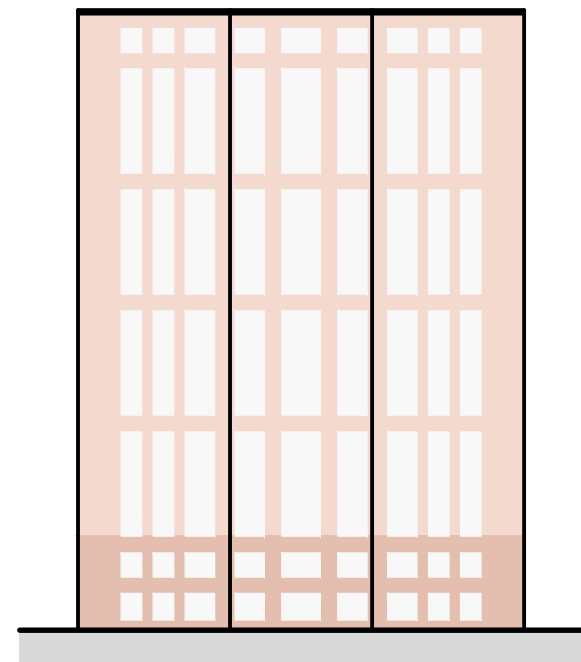
Owing to the existing Wimpey no-fines concrete construction, there is no opportunity to change the window opening sizes. However, the overall composition and the proportions still has the potential to be transformed using different arrangement of materials and detailing around the windows.

Materials

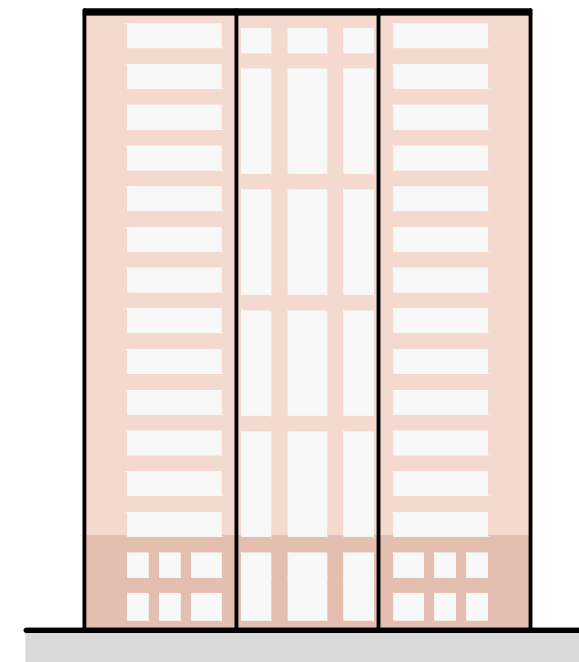
Research was undertaken into possible external wall insulation systems and finishes that could be used with the existing Wimpey no fines concrete structure, as well as achieved A2-s1,d0 or higher to meet Regulation 7 of the 2018 Building Regulations.

Other key considerations included material life-span, durability, maintenance requirements, method construction, build-up and cost. Based on this requirements, three possible options were proposed; Insulated Render, Terracotta rainscreen and mineral fibre (rockpanel) rainscreen.

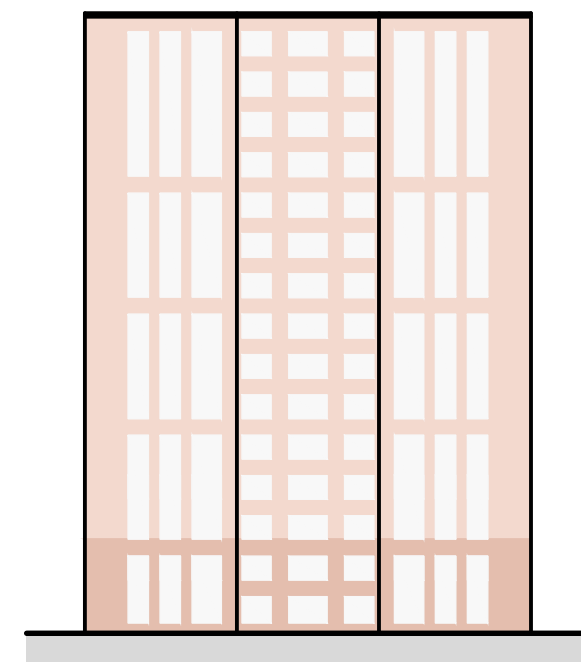
Of the three systems external render was preferred, owing to thinner wall build-up and simplicity of construction, as well as the ease of repair and maintenance in comparison to the rainscreen options.



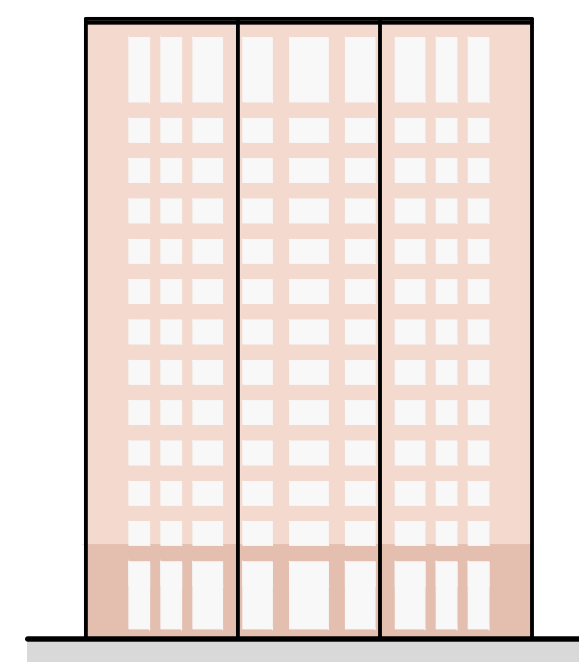
Vertical Emphasis
Upper Storey windows combined in vertical modules of three.



Horizontal & Vertical Emphasis
Upper Storey windows combined modules of three. Vertical in the central section and horizontal at the sides



Vertical Emphasis to Sides
Windows combined modules of two at the base and three on the upper floors at the sides only



Base & Capital Emphasis
Two-storey brick base, ground and first floor windows combined, and upper floor windows combined with an infill panel.



Composition & Materiality Bay Study
Vertical & Horizontal Emphasis with brick detailing



Composition & Materiality Bay Study
Vertical Emphasis with aluminium detailing



Composition & Materiality Bay Study
Base emphasis with verolite/grc detailing

3.1 Design Development

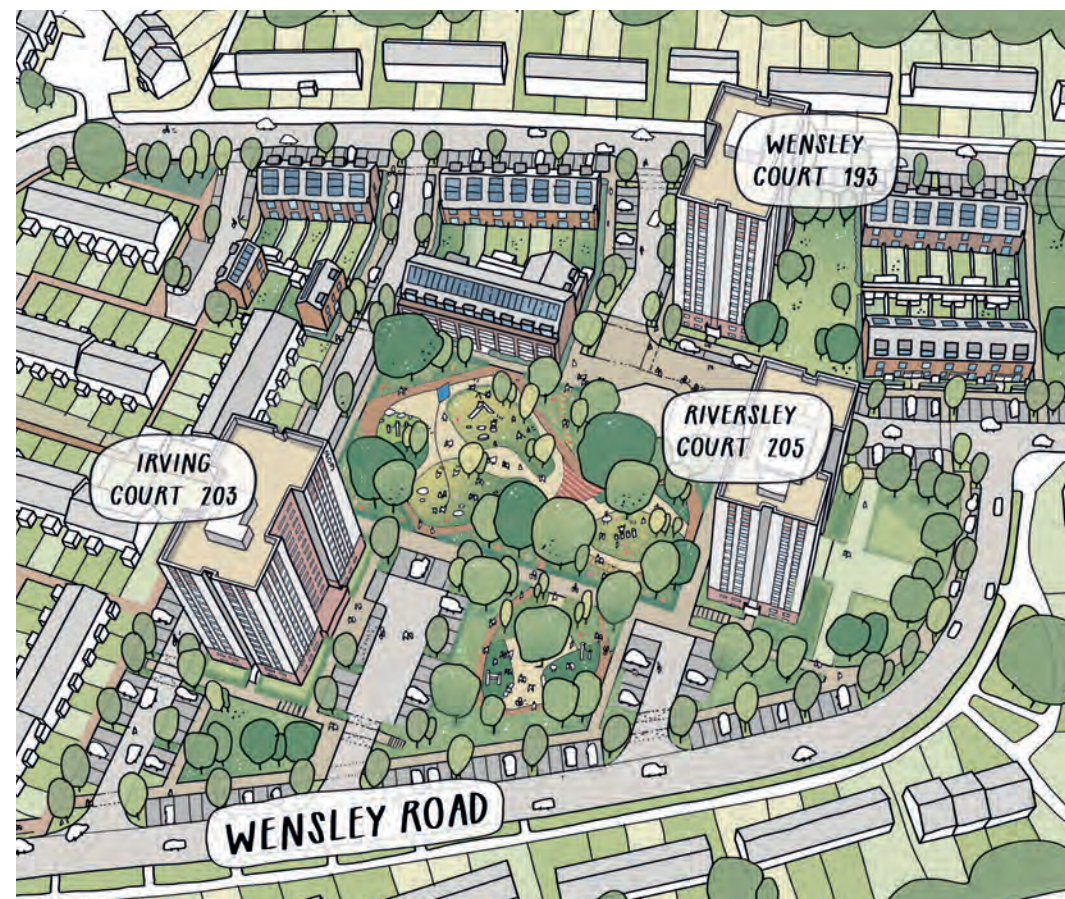
Stage 3 Design

Following feedback on the various internal layout, elevation and material options presented and discussed at a range of workshops and meetings with the RBC Client Team, RBC Housing Team and RBC Councillor members, a single design proposal was developed.

The developed design proposal was then used throughout the consultation process, including the public consultation, pre-application planning meeting and Design Review Panel. Feedback from the consultation process is provided on the subsequent pages.

Public consultation information comprised of artists' illustrations of the scheme, accompanied by details of the proposed improvements a high level timeline.

The documentation presented the pre-application meeting and Design review panel included additional information regarding the design development process to date, plans of the internal layout, elevations and possible material suggestions.

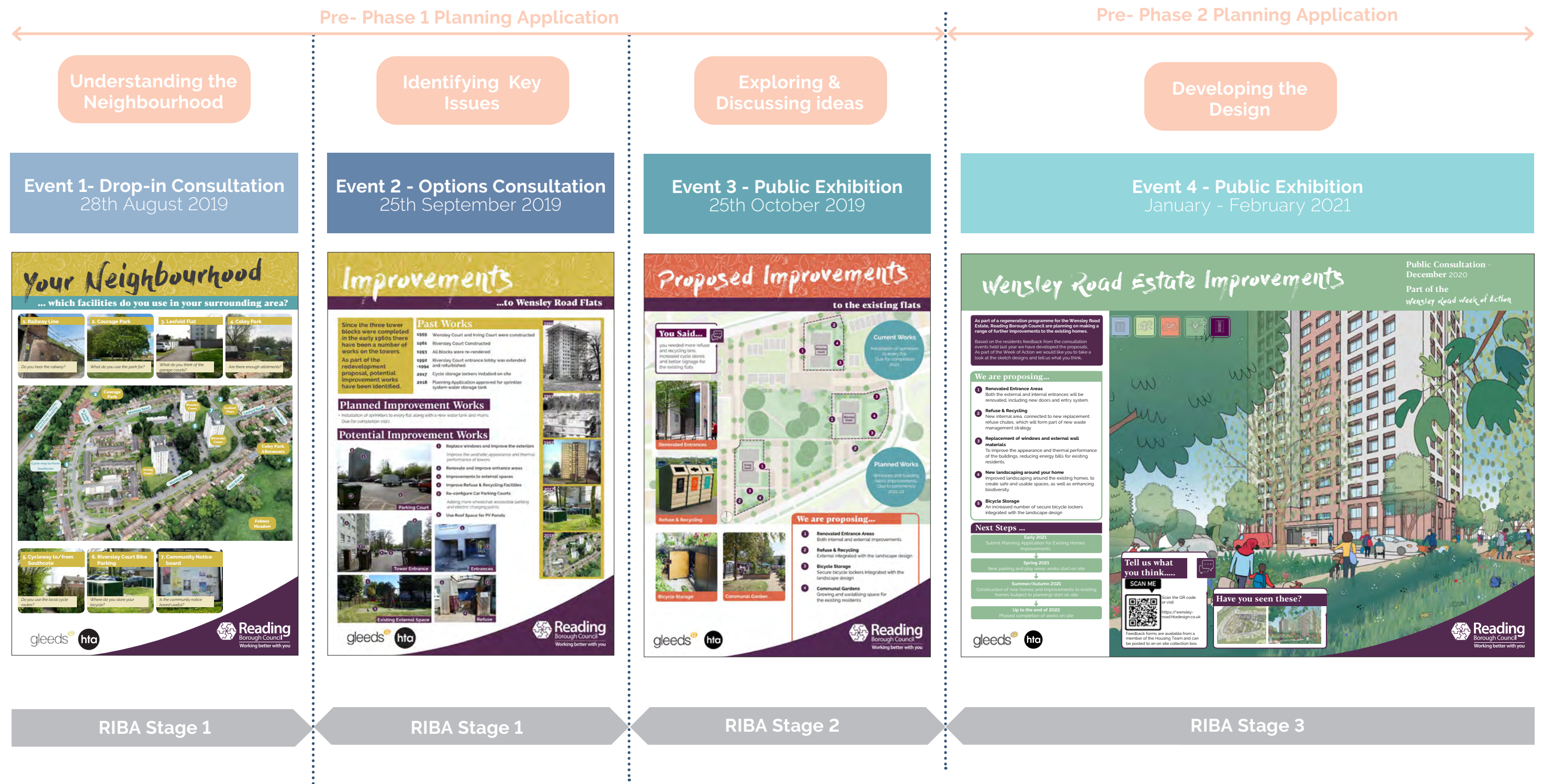


Public Consultation Illustrations January - February 2021

Top - View across the central green to
Wensley & Riversley Court
Bottom Right - Aerial View of Phase 1 & 2
Bottom Left - View toward Irving Court

3.2 Public Consultation

Consultation Timeline



3.2 Public Consultation

Pre- Phase 1 Planning Application

The brief for the refurbishment of the existing homes was heavily influenced by input from residents during the three the phase 1 public consultation events. In advance of the phase planning submission there were three consultation events held in August, September and October 2019.

There were a large number of discussions with existing residents regarding the towers during the initial August event, therefore in both the September and October events, a 'Tower Improvements' board was included to provide residents with information about current planned works and suggested improvements.

This stimulated many further discussions at the subsequent events and residents feedback regarding the potential improvements to the existing homes were recorded. A Statement of Community Involvement was submitted as part of the approved phase 1 planning application (ref: 20012)

Key Refurbishment Comments:-

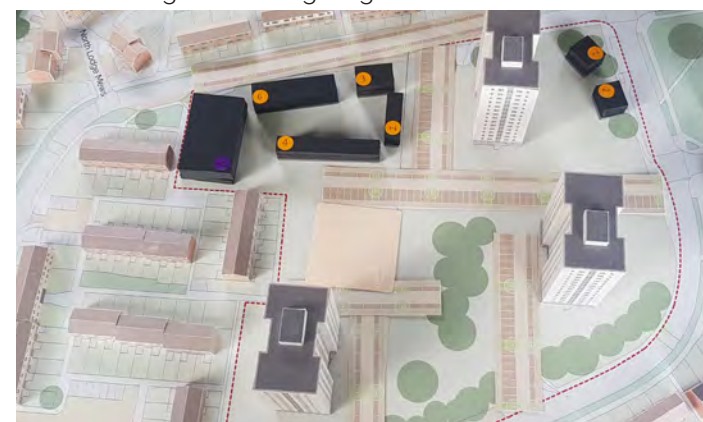
- Cleaner, sheltered and increased refuse and recycling facilities are desperately needed.
- Ongoing issue with rats, in particular at the base of the towers and around the bins.
- Maintenance of communal facilities is very poor and needs to improved.
- Lack of integration between the Tower residents and residents living in the housing around the loop.
- Flats are a good size, although some residents noted there was damp at ground floor.
- General lack of storage. Currently a waiting list for the existing cycle lockers.
- A number of residents welcomed the idea of a communal garden



Drop-in Consultation Event - August 2019
Gazebos situated on the Coley Park Flats site



Drop-in Consultation Event - August 2019
Discussing the existing neighbourhood with residents



Drop-in Consultation Event - August 2019
Interactive model with resident's layout



Drop-in Consultation Event - August 2019
Interactive model with resident's layout



Design Options Event - September 2019
Models of the three options



Design Options Event - September 2019
Display boards



Design Options Event - September 2019
Residents completing feedback with RBC Staff



Design Options Event - September 2019
Discussion over option 3 model



Design Options Event - September 2019
Project information display boards



Design Options Event - September 2019
Illustrative masterplan with key design information



Public Exhibition Event - October 2019
Landscape and play proposals



Public Exhibition Event - October 2019
Visualisations of proposed homes