



Design and Access & Heritage statement

for Finerain Developments Ltd

430 - Development of No4 Downshire Square, Reading, RG1 6NH

September 2019



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430 - Development of No4 Downshire Square
Design & Access Statement
April 2020

site location



This design and access booklet has been prepared to support a proposal to develop No4 Downshire Square into a building containing 5 new dwellings (3x3bed Townhouse, 1x1bed Flat & 1x2bed Flat). This follows the refusal of application 191358 and looks to improve on the 9 flats that were proposed.

No4 Downshire Square, is located on the west side of Downshire Square, Reading. The location is west of the town centre and about a 10 minute walk to the infrastructure, commercial and employment opportunities of Reading town centre. It is therefore a sustainable location for development.

This area of Downshire Square is a residential area, with schools, parks and a few local shops nearby. The residential properties are separated from the street with a set of trees. The surrounding residential buildings date from the early 1920's to 1980's.

The site is broadly square, with the existing single storey building in an east-west axis. The ground on the site is roughly level.

The site is accessed by vehicles and pedestrians, from Downshire Square, where there are two dropped kerb section. The entrances feed the parking area, which is to the side of the house. The front of the site is separated from the pavement with a hedge behind a low brick wall. The only other trees/shrubs are on the eastern boundary of the site away from any development.

Behind the parking area is a garage and access to the back garden.

At the west end of the site there is a footpath around the building connecting the entrance to the parking.

This garden is laid to lawn and includes shrubs at the back of the site. The boundaries are defined by timber fencing. To the front boundary there are raised beds, and a few trees.

site aerial - No4 Downshire Square



site photos



Constraints & Opportunities

To the south of this Submission site are houses presenting three stories to Downshire Square. This is achieved by two stories expressed in the elevation, as well as a hipped roof, with a central gable facing the street, and two small dormers in the roof, which make up the third storey.

To the north of this Submission site the existing houses are two storeys high, and feature a gable facing the road.

Downshire Square is next to a busy town centre road; impact on these traffic and acoustic considerations will be dealt with during the subsequent application.

The dwellings on the south of the site are set back of the other dwellings by approx. 3m from the west elevation. The terrace has external walls faced in red/brown brickwork, and stone quoins. In the south elevation the windows and doors have stone surrounds. On the north elevation the doors and windows are set into brickwork openings.

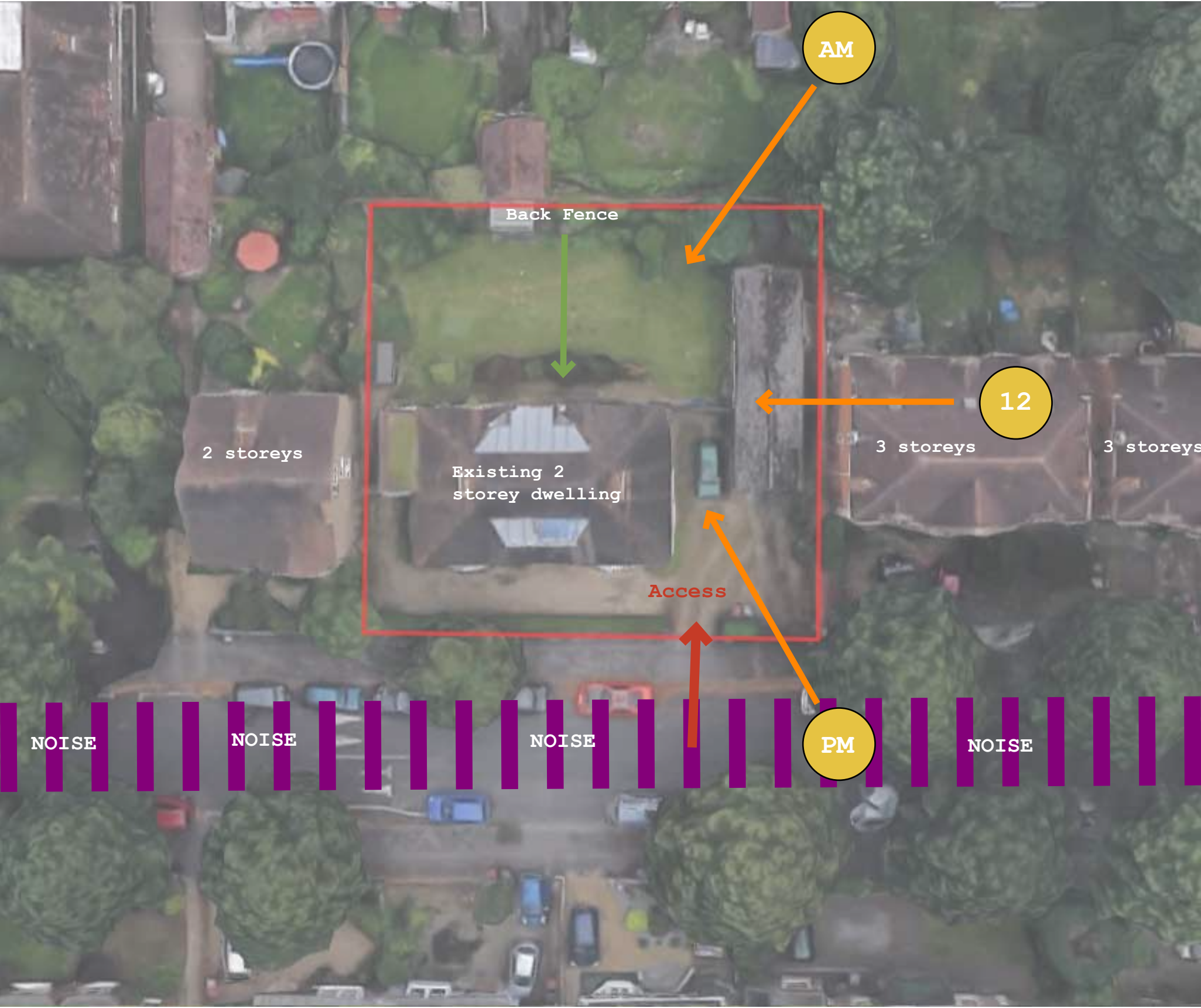
The existing building has a hipped roof finished in brown tiles. There is a dormer facing the road, as well as another dormer facing the back garden of the Submission site. The eaves height of the existing dwelling is approx. 3m lower than that of the building to the north, and approx 5m lower than the two buildings to the south of the Submission site. The bottom part of the building is partly obscured by the brick fence and hedge running along the front of the site. The size and scale of No4 Downshire Square existing dwelling is small when compared with, not only the immediately surrounding housing but, with housing on the opposite side of Downshire Square.

PRINCIPLE OF DEVELOPMENT:

When compared with surrounding housing it is clear that the site appears underutilised and presents a good opportunity for residential development. It is clear that in implementing current standards and policies the Downshire Square site could, without detriment, accept a development density in excess of that existing.

When looked at within the street scene, the existing presentation to Downshire Square is not consistent with those dwellings in the vicinity of the submission site, nor with houses on the west side of Downshire Square. Although a straight building line, or, line of building frontages, does not exist in this section of the east side of Downshire Square, there is however an implied generality of building frontage with which the Downshire Square Dwelling accords.

Clearly the country needs more housing, which is reflected in Government policy. Adding further storeys to existing buildings is an appropriate solution. A percentage of additional housing can, should and must come from development of brown field sites. In this context Downshire Square offers a development and increased density opportunity.



Character Study - Downshire Square

Along the streetscape there are various styles of houses, from a similar period in history with common themes such as gables / dormers, cat slide roofs high eaves. Materials are varied - brick, stone, render, pebble dash clay and slate tiles



Downshire Square Conservation Area



Extract from "Downshire Square Conservation Area Appraisal" - April 2009

5.2 The character of spaces within the area

The conservation area is, generally speaking, a tightly knit suburban area composed of continuous frontages of two-, three- and some four-storey buildings with front gardens generally reflecting a consistent frontage building line to each separate street frontage. Although there are some bungalows at the Maitland Road/Downshire Square junction, there is one recent example where bungalows have been successfully redeveloped to create a development more in keeping with its neighbours at what is now Brownlow Lodge to the north of number 2 Brownlow Road.

6.3 Architectural and historic character: building methods and materials

The conservation area is essentially a Victorian/Edwardian residential suburb of Reading, highly prized because of its location close to Reading town centre. It contains a core of Victorian and Edwardian buildings, and despite otherwise containing "newer" properties than many of Reading's other conservation areas, it retains its historical character and special architectural interest.

With the exception of a few stucco and stone buildings, the buildings in the Conservation area are generally of brick, which is one of the distinguishing features of Reading's architecture and there are examples of good quality brickwork throughout the conservation area. Brick was a popular building material in the 19th centuries and the ready availability of different coloured bricks provided the opportunity for the lively polychromatic brickwork found throughout this part of Victorian/Edwardian Reading. The town had several brickworks, the most notable being S & E Collier Ltd at Water Road and Elgar Road and two brick works in the Tilehurst area.

6.6 Local details and features

The pre-eminent local detail throughout this Conservation Area, and "unifying" it, is the presence, with few exceptions, of brick walls and/or brick walls and railings at the front of the properties.

6.10 Problems, pressures and issues

Design of new development

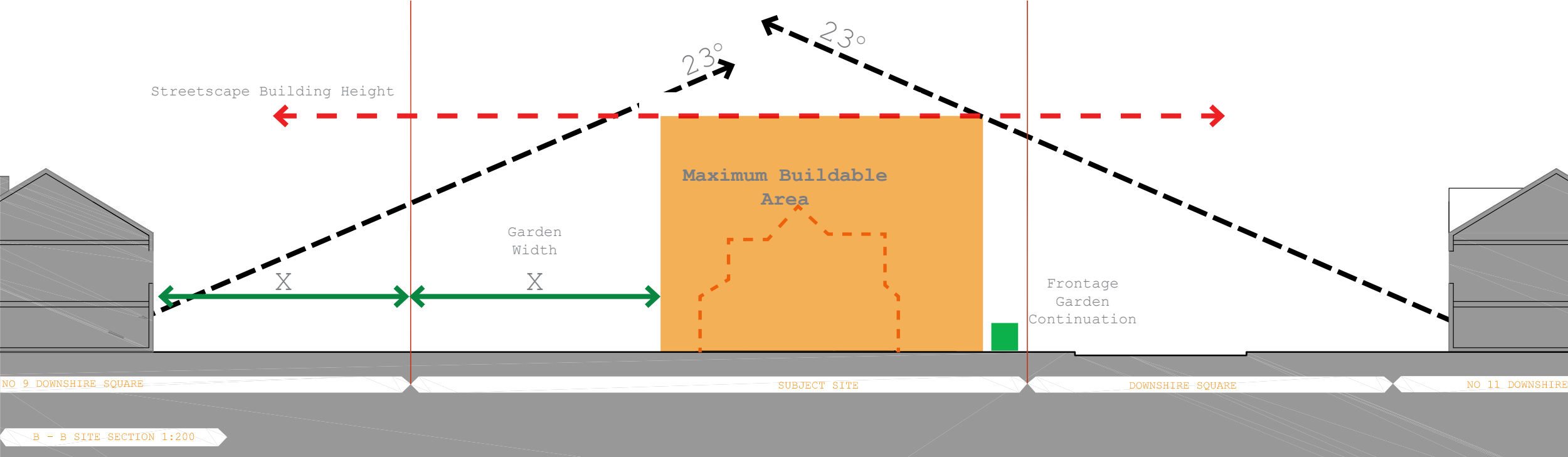
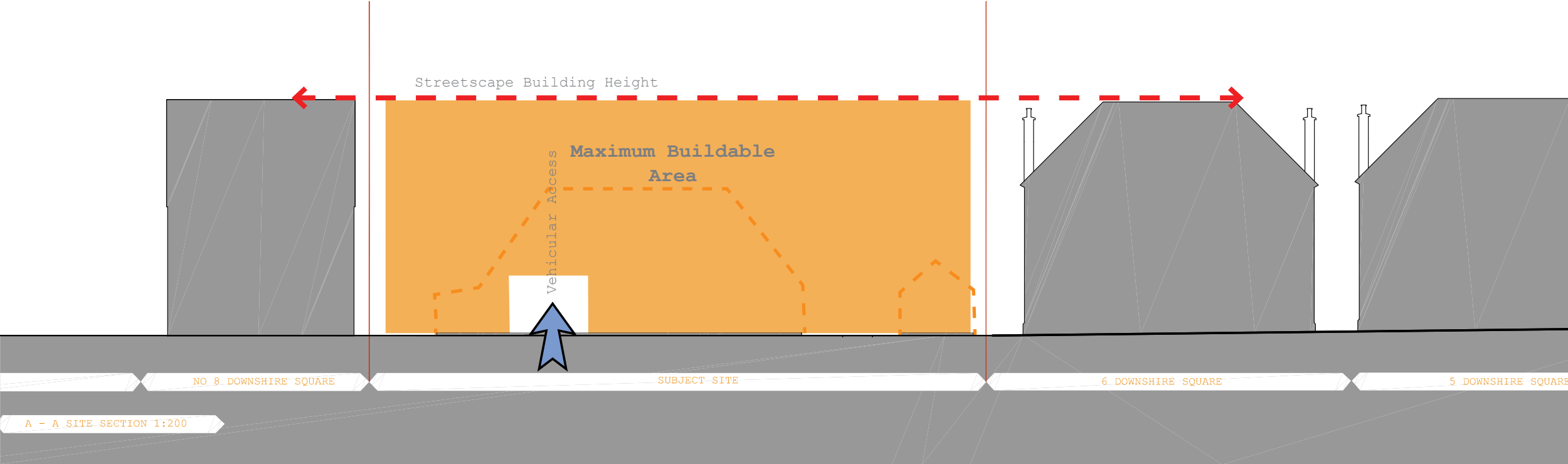
Within the conservation area itself there are few recent developments, but these have generally respected the character, scale of buildings and materials used in the conservation area, thus maintaining its character and appearance. A small number of elements within the conservation area detract from its character, but it is the larger developments immediately outside the conservation area which pay least heed to their context adjoining or near the conservation area and have a notably negative effect on its character and appearance.



Design Principals



Design Principals - Massing Analysis



Proposed block plan



THE PROPOSAL:
This consideration has resulted in a scheme to build a new set of dwellings in place of the existing. The proposed design for the construction of 5 units (3 x townhouses 2 x flats) in lieu of the existing dwelling.

The existing rear garden space can be divided into private gardens serving the townhouses on the ground floor, the remaining area will be for off street parking accessed from the Downshire Square via a flyover. The flats will have private amenity space along the frontage.

Vehicular access will combine and relocated the two existing drop kerbs northwards creating an additional on-street parking space, which makes an allowance for scheme visitor parking. The proposed parking area for 7 parking spaces to serve the 5 dwellings.

A key characteristic of the conservation area, as set out in the conversation area appraisal is the front garden walls and tree/shrub planting. The revised design now better reflects this prevailing landscaping characteristic

Unit 1 - 3 Storey Townhouse	158sqm
Unit 2 - 3 Storey Townhouse	158sqm
Unit 3 - 3 Storey Townhouse	158sqm
Unit 4 - 1 Storey Flat	63sqm
Unit 4 - Ground Floor Storage	6sqm
Unit 5 - 1 Storey Flat	50sqm
Unit 5 - Ground Floor Storage	7sqm
TOTAL	600sqm

Proposed site plan



MASSING AND FORM:

This new development is three stories, plus have an overall height compatible with surrounding dwellings.

The houses along Downshire Square have various styles with gables, dormers with similar ridge heights and visual relationship with the houses to the north and south of No4.

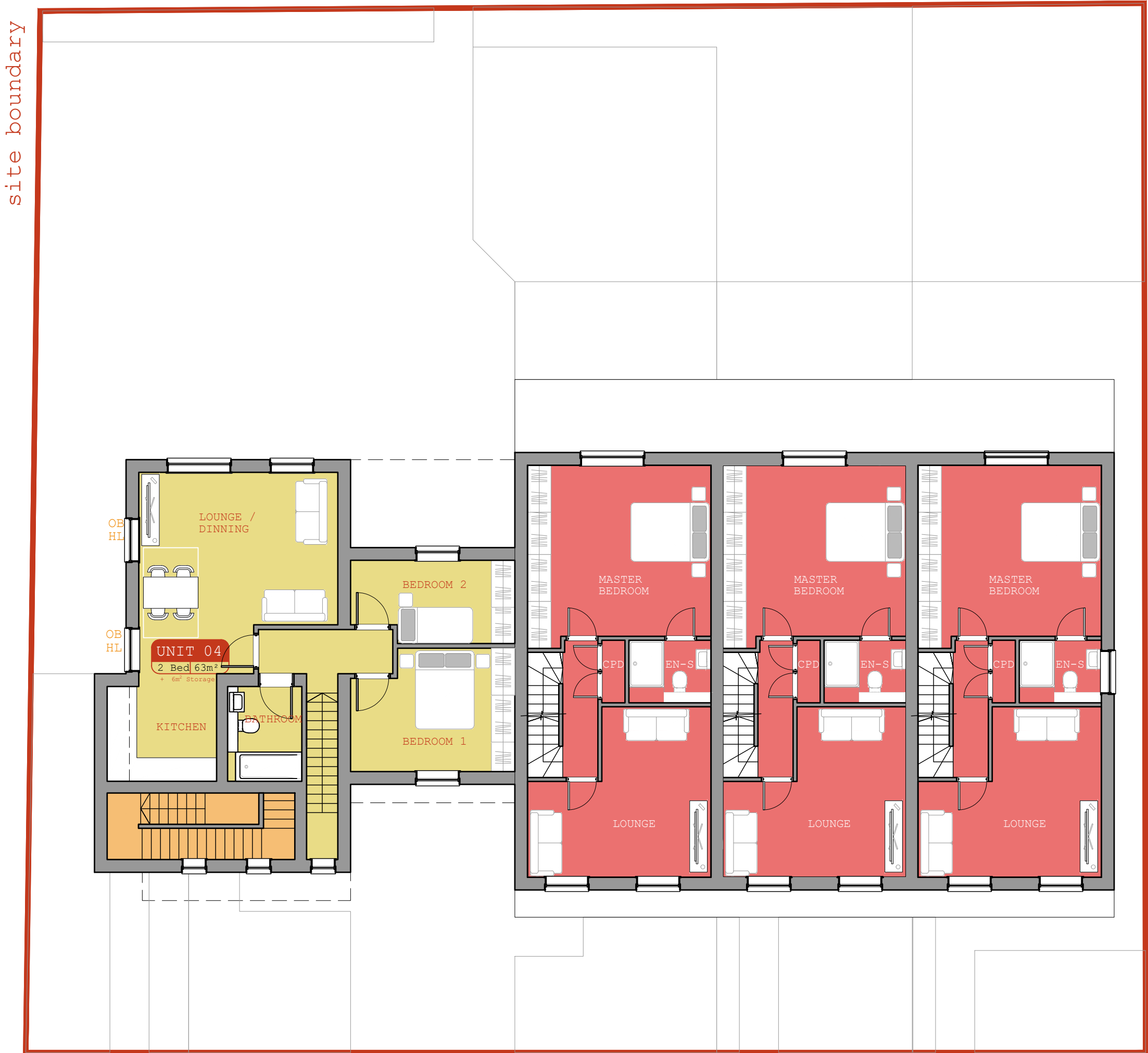
For the proposed design the general form of the roof, and alignment of the ridge, has been repeated to correlate with the houses to the south of the site. The use of the proposed split gable to the forward projecting elements will maintain a visual relationship with the gables of the neighbours.



Proposed ground floor plan

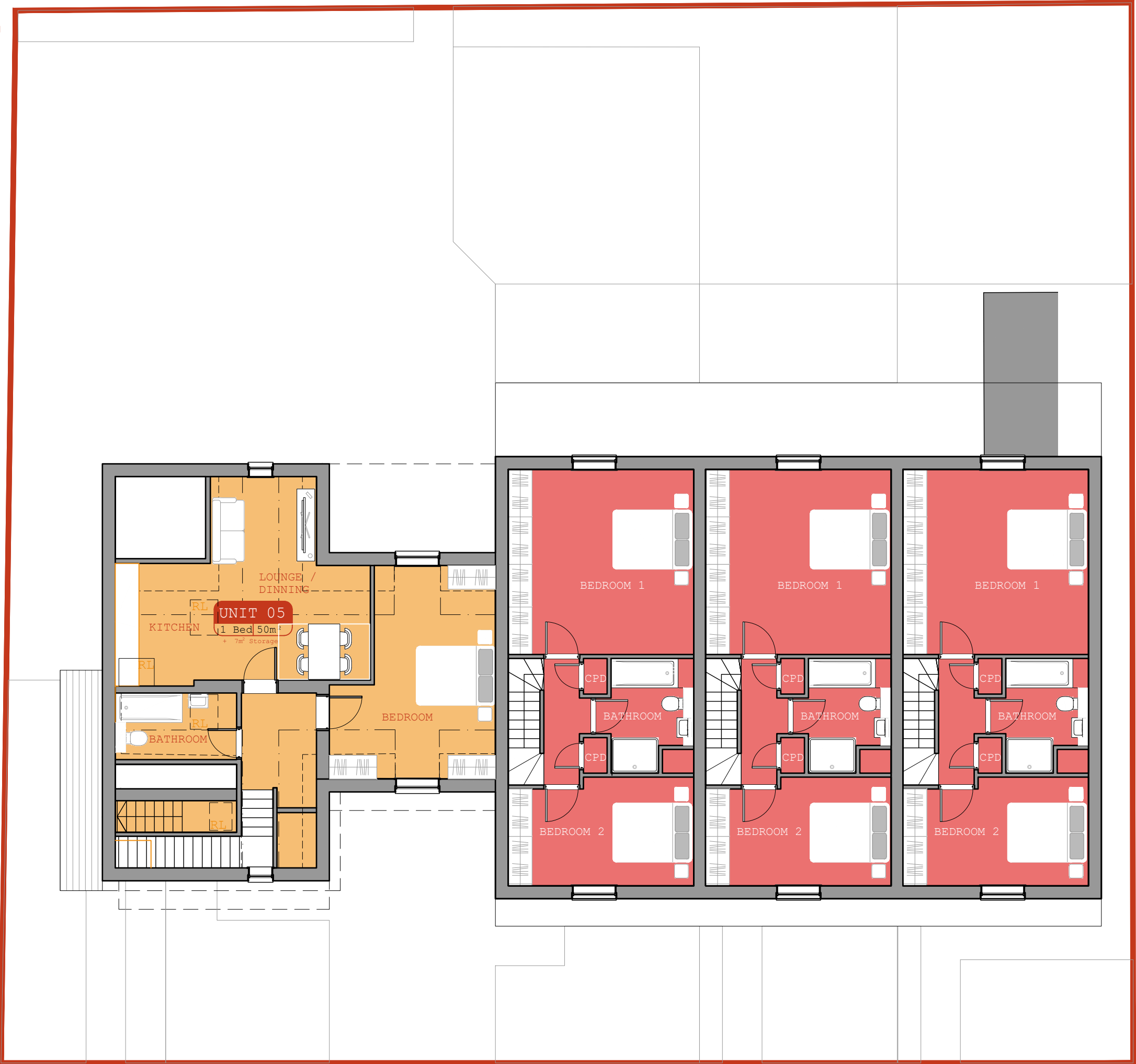


Proposed first floor plan

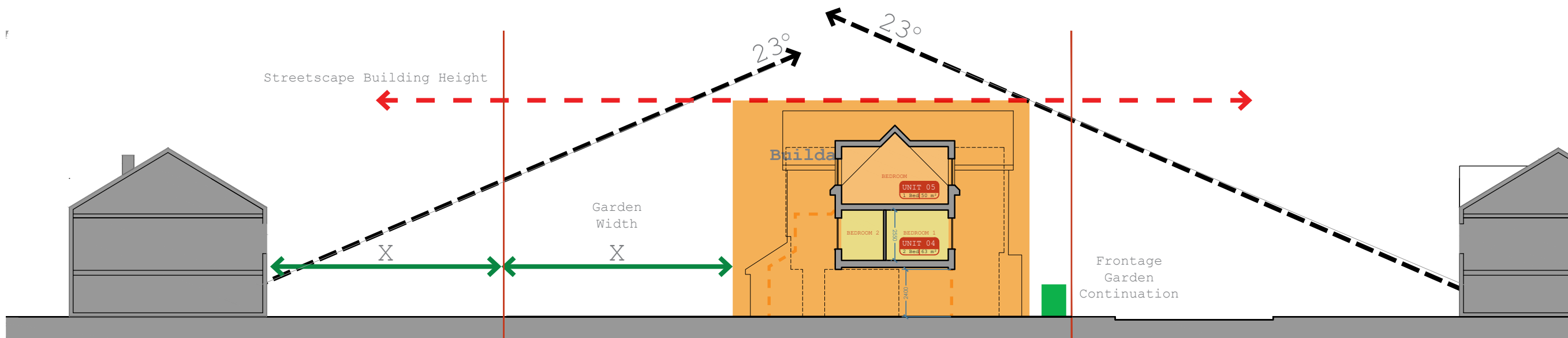
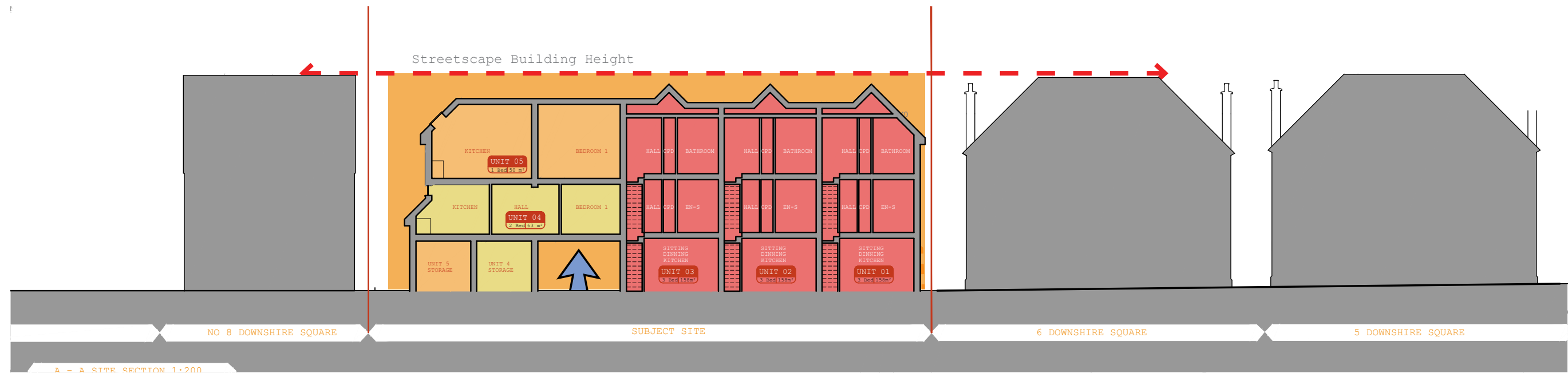


Proposed second floor plan

site boundary



Design Principals - Massing test



Appearance

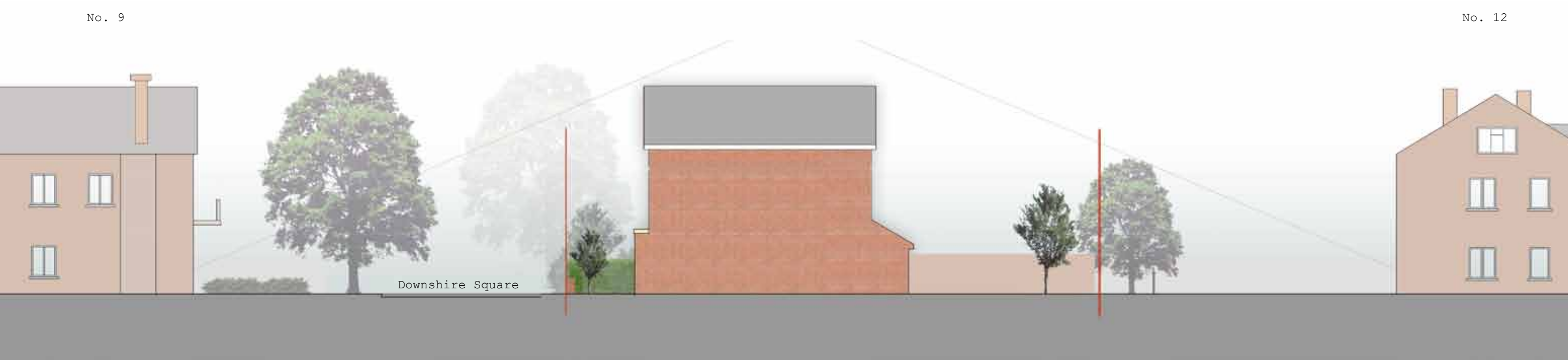


Front (West) Street Scene 1:200



Rear (East) Street Scene 1:200

Appearance



Side (South) Street Scene 1:200



Side (North) Street Scene 1:200

View 1

Proposed planting will obscure the front elevation of the proposal from the road, minimising its impact on the street scene



View 2

The split gables reference the elevations of the neighbouring buildings



View 3

The proposed building sits harmoniously in the street scene with an appropriate scale and massing of development



The overall design of this Submission scheme is largely determined by three principle factors:

- The decision to remove the existing dwelling.
- The back garden benefiting from unobscured natural light.
- The relationship with the adjacent buildings.

CONCLUSION:

It is demonstrated above that the proposed Submission scheme has been designed to improve the density of residential occupation of the site; to add to the variety of housing available within Reading; to comply with the Council's standards and policies as well as national guidance.

Within the Submission, design proposals have taken into account the local environment and the scale and nature of the street scene.