

design & access statement

Elstree Land is seeking Full Planning Permission from Reading Borough Council for the erection of nine dwellings at 28-32 Northfield Road & 26-30 Swansea Road Reading, following the demolition of the existing buildings.

This Design and Access Statement describes the design principles for this application in accordance with the Town and Country Planning Development Management Procedure (England) (Amendment) Order 2013 and the National Planning Practice Guidance (Validation Requirements) paragraphs 029 - 031.

We recognise and welcome the increasing necessity for high quality design in new developments, instigated by the National Planning Policy Framework and associated design guidance. The high standard of design which this application embodies is essential to the positive contribution that the development will provide, both to the local character and to the community.

The design and development standards set down within Reading Borough Council's policies and guidance have been responded to and developed within our planning and architectural proposals, and we have also been directed by our detailed appraisal of the local context and the established development pattern and character, as well as consultation with the Local Authority and a comprehensive Professional Team across a range of disciplines. In particular, the following consultants have contributed to this Design and Access Statement:

- Architectural Consultant: **DHA Architecture**
- Planning Consultant: **Savills**
- Transport Consultant: **i-Transport**
- Engineering Consultant: **Odyssey**

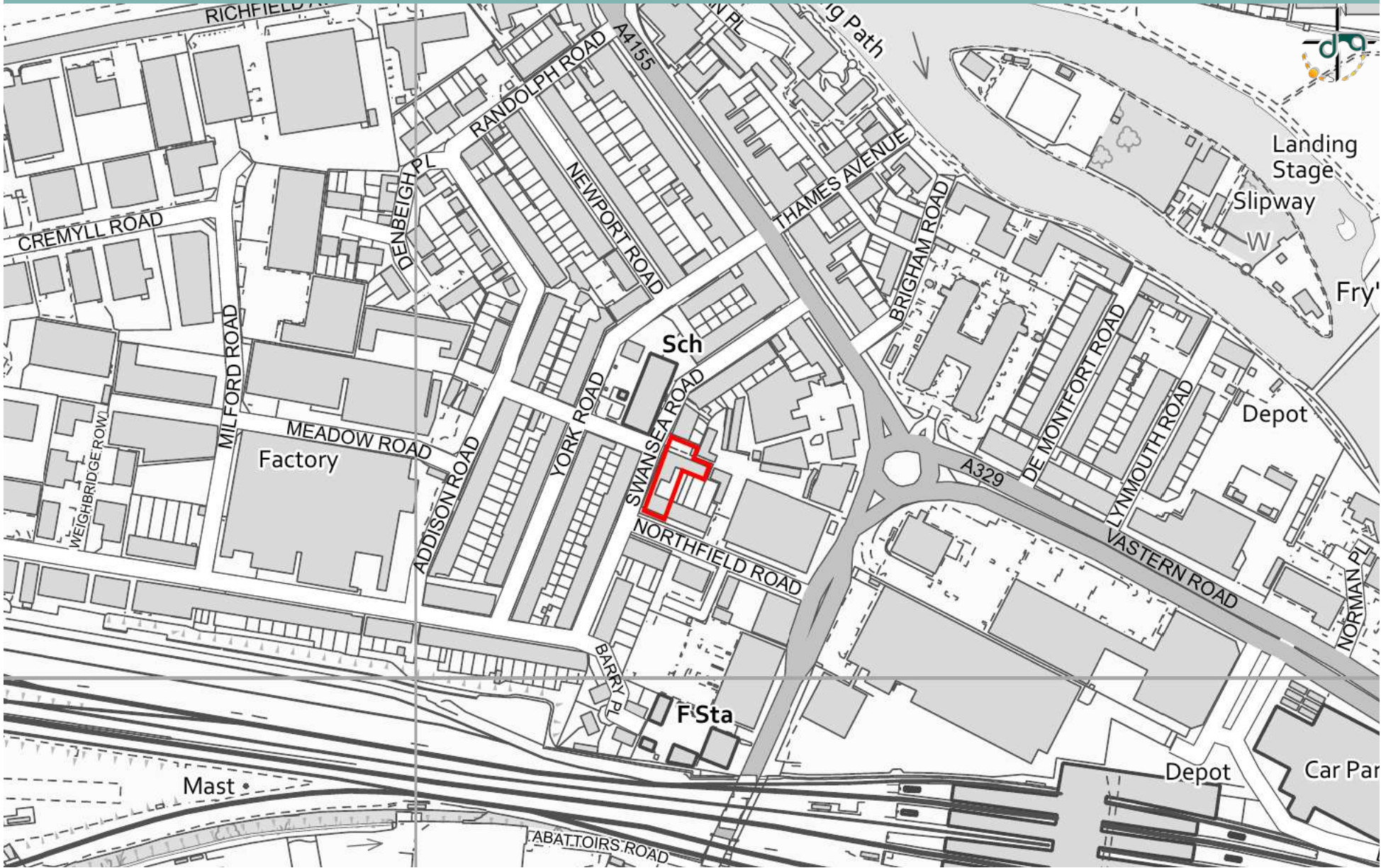
In the following chapters we demonstrate our design strategy, detailing the urban design, landscape design, architectural approach and access principles for the scheme. The chapters describe the way in which the form of the site and the open space areas provide a legible and positive experience of the development, enhanced by a consistent architectural style and materials palette.

The development offers a sensitively designed, high quality built environment, meeting local and national aspirations for sustainability and character.

**ELSTREE
LAND**



The Application Site in Context



The Context of the Development

"The steps taken to appraise the context of the development"

The Wider Setting of the Application Site

The context of the site is shown above. The application site is situated in Reading, Berkshire and lies within the jurisdiction of Reading Borough Council. The site is located adjacent to Reading town centre, lying to the west of the A329 (IDR), a major route through the city, and to the south of the A4155. The immediate surrounding context includes a multitude of use classes ranging from predominately residential with industrial to the east and a school facility to the north of the site.

The site has excellent public transport links, and is served by the M4 motorway which closely skirts the borough. An extensive local and regional bus network operates within the local vicinity of the site, with the nearest stop located along the A4155. Reading station, located 0.5miles from the application site is the main station in Berkshire. The station links to a host of locations including Oxford, Wokingham, Didcot and London Paddington. The site is located within a close proximity to the Oracle Shopping Centre. Different modes of transport indicate that it is a convenient location to travel to with an average of 1.8miles via vehicle modes of transport, 0.8miles via pedestrian paths and 1.1miles via cycle paths indicating a sustainable travel distance to local amenities.

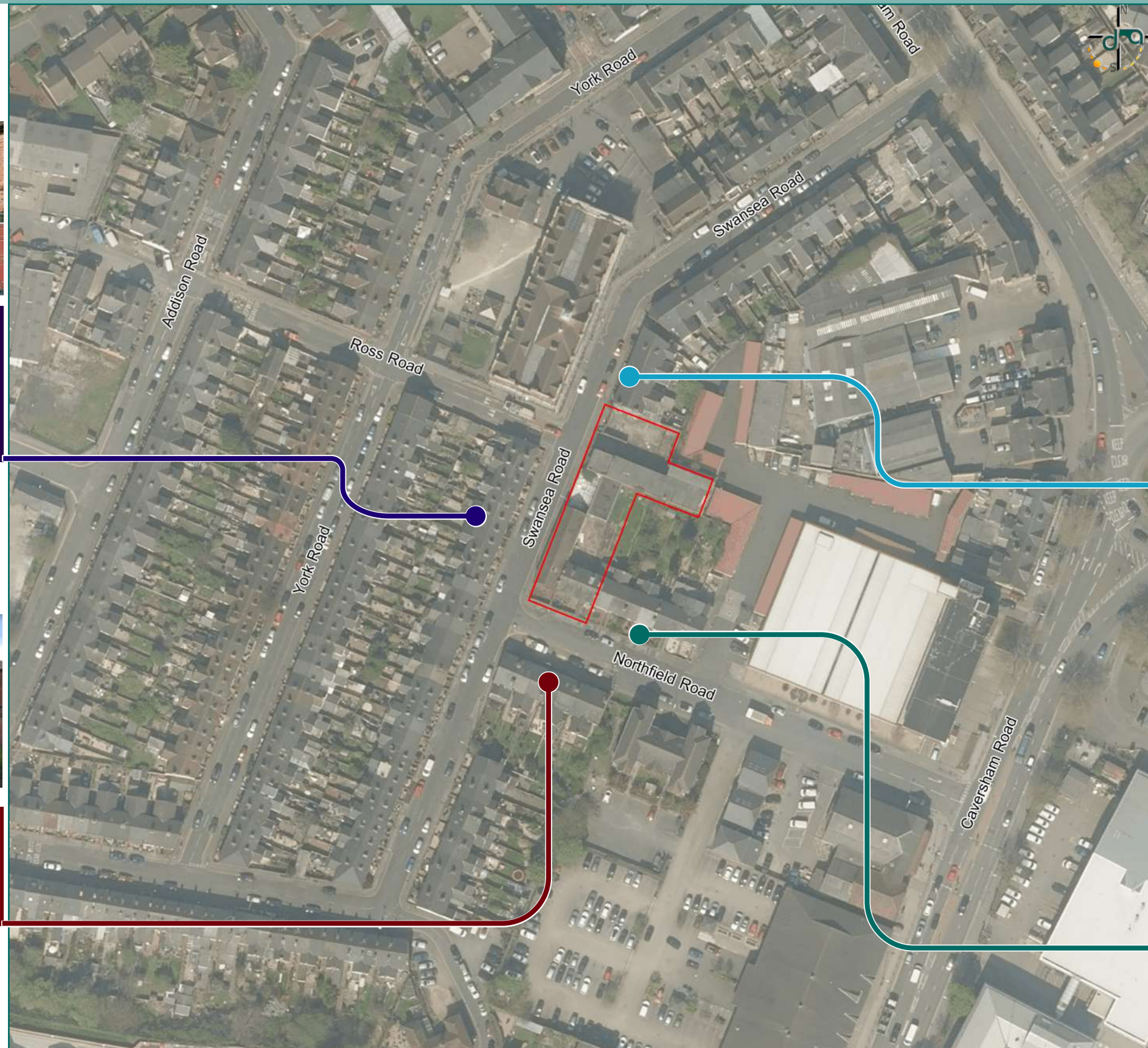
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Terraced dwellings have a mixture of material finishes and colours due to the elevational upgrade treatments. Short fronted curtilages provide an intimate character. On-street parking acts as a natural traffic calming measure. Many properties have converted the loft space into additional rear facing accommodation.



All brick terraced dwellings with contrasting brick detailing. Similar to houses on Swansea Road, the properties have rhythmic proportions. Sliding sash windows with arched headers, chimneys and brick band detailing feature heavily in the local area.



To the north of the site, terraced dwellings continue in uniformity and contain a consistent use of materials and finishes. Bay windows along with projecting ground floor picture windows are evident along this street. Defensible spaces on the street frontage is in keeping with the local character of the area and creates a distinctive difference between the private and public realm.



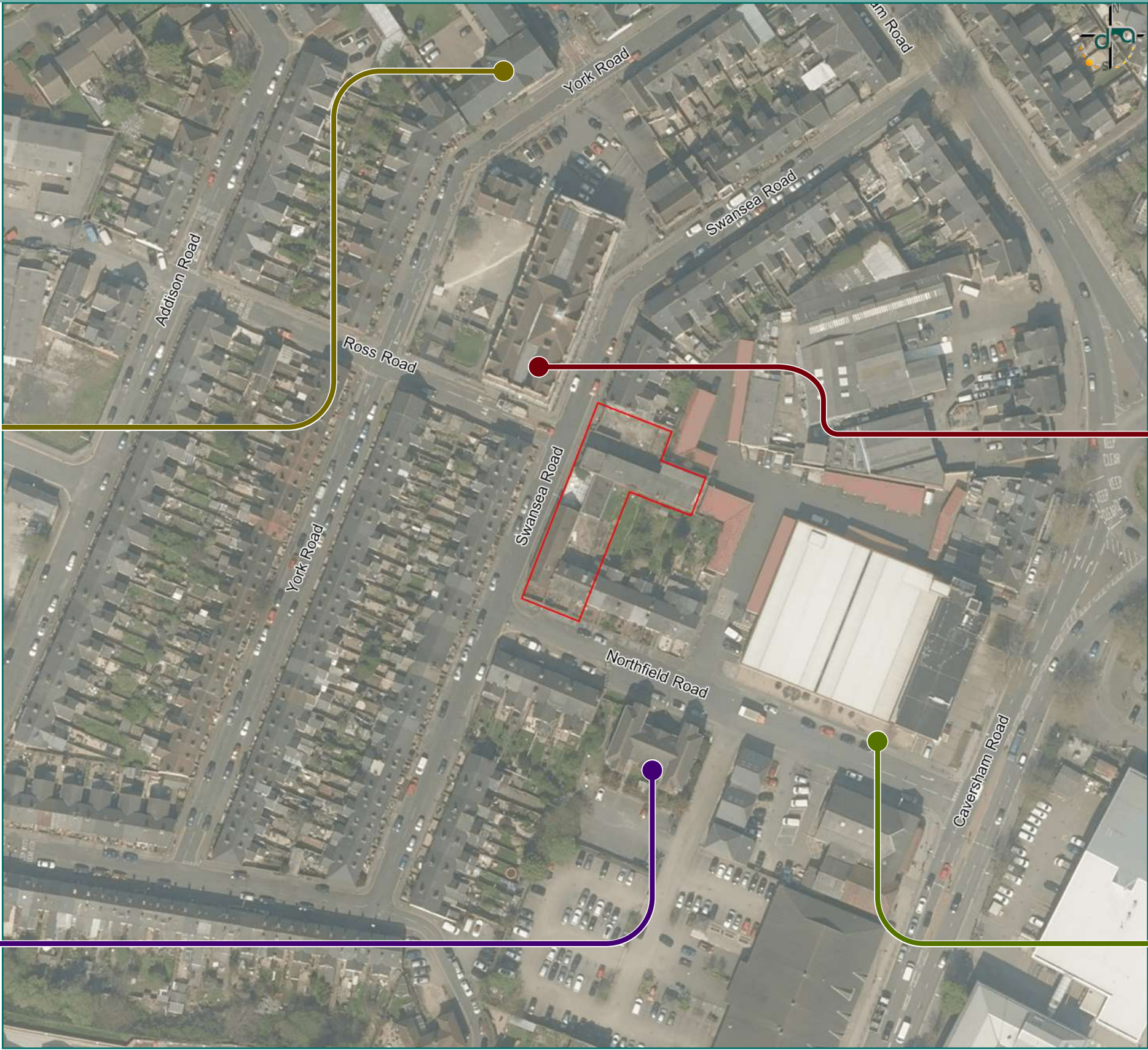
Immediately adjacent to the site are terraced dwellings which have a direct relationship to the proposed development. Fewer front curtilages are bounded by brick walls and are more open to the public domain footpath due to the longer front gardens. Terraced dwellings are set further back from the street frontage allowing for a greater amount of landscaping.



The New Hope Centre is a recent 2½ - 3 storey development comprising a collection of townhouses and apartments.



Monmouth Court to the south east is a 3 storey apartment block providing amenity housing for older people. This building does not subscribe to the local vernacular with gable fronted elements, modern casement windows and buff colour main facing brickwork.



E.P. Collier Primary School is a substantial period building to the north of the development site. Materials are of traditional "Reading Red" brick construction with an increased level of brick detailing typical of landmark institutional buildings in the local area.



Further to the east are industrial buildings and self-storage warehouses which form part of the frontage to Caversham Road. Vehicular access and associated parking courts along with a terrace of houses separate this complex from the application site.

The Particular Characteristics of the Application Site

As a development, it is important that the proposals pay particular attention to the unique character of the site and its immediate context.

- A large industrial self storage facility lies east of the application site within a mixed use cluster, fronting onto Caversham Road. This industrial site can be accessed via the service road which is provided along Northfield Road, forming a buffer between the residential area to the west and industrial to the east.
- The existing dwellings along Swansea and Northfield Road have a strong continuous built form and building line, both of which are within 1-2 metres of the road frontage.
- The application site is situated on a junction of Northfield Road and Swansea Road and consists of a two storey end of terrace dwelling with under croft access on Swansea Road. A series of garages front Northfield Road which have historically been used for car repairs and MOT services which signifies a heavy industrial use class within the area. The distinct relationship between residential and industrial is apparent and therefore should be considered in the proposed design.
- Existing terraced housing immediately abuts the site's northern boundary (see image A-A below) and south eastern boundary (see image B-B below). The site sits in an 'L' shaped parcel of land and borders the rear gardens of the properties along Northfield Road along its eastern boundary.



Design Parameters

“How the Design of the Development Takes the Physical Context Into Account”

Illustrated on the plan opposite, are the development principles which direct the masterplanning of the scheme.

- Attractive terraced dwellings front Swansea and Northfield Road and therefore, the proposed new dwellings should reference this frontage, forming a continuation of the built form of the existing properties. This in turn allows for an opportunity to create dual aspect accommodation on the corner of Northfield and Swansea Road.
- Because the eastern projecting land area has a closer relationship to the commercial self-storage units on the adjacent site, it is considered that this is a better location for parking, rather than houses or gardens. By locating parking here it conveniently and efficiently provides a protected and secure parking court with cars being visually screened from the street frontage and reducing the dominance of cars on the existing streets.
- Careful consideration needs to be given to the relationship between the existing properties and the proposed development. Measures to mitigate any potential overlooking issues and to protect the residential amenity of surrounding occupiers will be implemented into the development proposals.
- Illustrated further are the design considerations which led to the first Pre-Application meeting in August 2019.

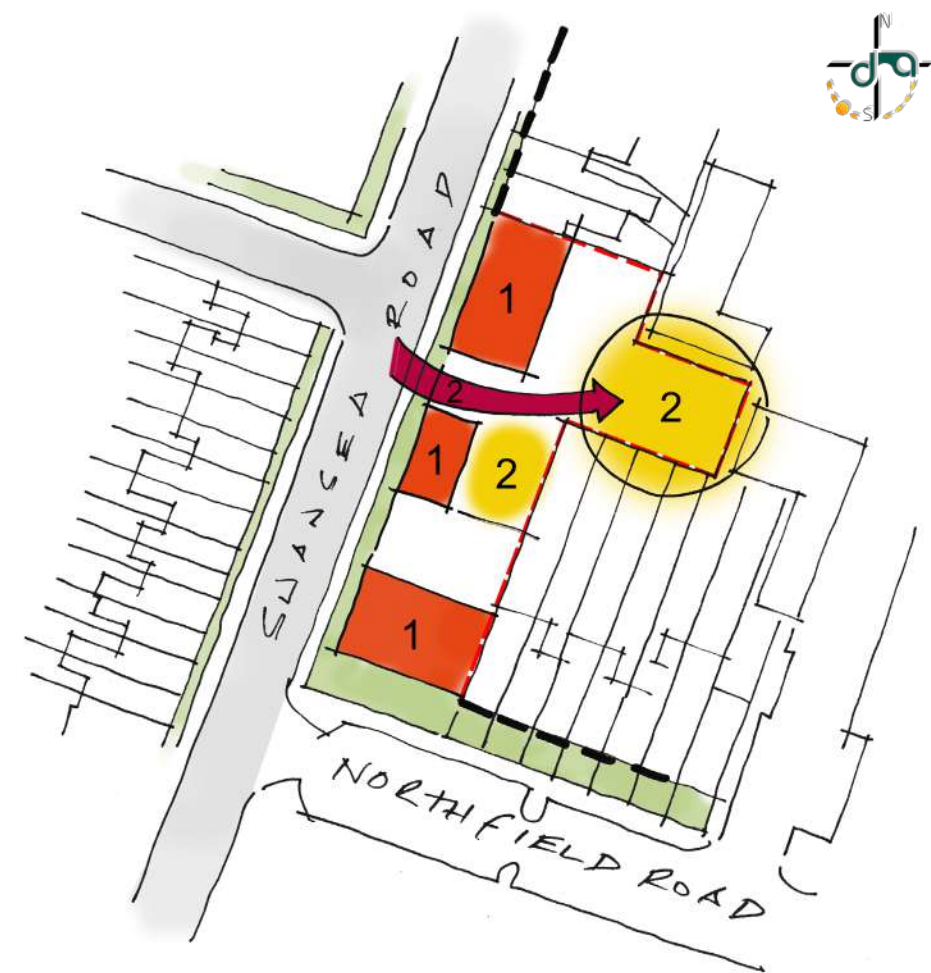
Parameters and Approach



Design Evolution

Space Planning:

- 1. Building Form to re-establish the existing development perimeter block
- 2. Access Point for parking areas
- 3. Areas for off-street parking



Replicating Townscape Form:

- 1. Building placement reinforcing the common build line
- 2. Directional views requiring Vista buildings
- 3. Active frontage to enclose and police streets
- 4. Secure areas for parking and amenity behind the street build line



Mirroring Building Form, Scale, Massing & Footprint:

- 1. Replicating the existing building form, maintaining eaves and ridge lines common to the street so buildings blend into the street scene
- 2. Rear projections allow overall building ridge height to be consistent with the original Victorian architectural style, whilst maximising daylight into first floor accommodation at the rear
- 3. Private and secure rear landscaped gardens



Pre-Application

In August 2019, a pre-application consultation was undertaken with Reading Borough Council and the layout right was discussed. The following key points of feedback have been integrated within our design rationale and implemented into the subsequent proposals shown overleaf.

The drawing right illustrates how the housing form continues that of the existing housing terraces, reinforcing that of existing housing buildings to create an attractive and secure perimeter block with private parking and garden amenity to the rear.

With a positive response to our proposal accepting the general principle of development, there were a number of comments which we have acknowledged and implemented into our now formal application submission illustrated in the pages overleaf.

- Seek to reduce the size of the flat roof dormer window and its projection.
- Care should be taken to respect the existing property adjacent to plot 1 to protect its privacy and daylight.
- Access to the rear parking to be in accordance with driveway widths and allowing the appropriate vision splays.
- Cycle parking should be accommodated to cater for two cycles per unit.
- Electric vehicle charging points to be provided.
- Bin storage facilities to be within 15m carry distance from the highway.
- The coachouse, although considered in keeping with the street, should avoid blind windows onto the street.



Evolving Layout Proposal



Evolving Street Scene A-A



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The Proposed Layout

The proposed site layout shown right proposes nine dwellings, with a mix of eight three bedroom houses and one three bedroom coachhouse. These proposals address the specific comments from our Local Authority Pre-Application meeting and the formal consultee response received on 14th October 2019.

- The proposed continuation of the terraced form of development to both the Northfield Road and Swansea Road frontages is considered appropriate and integrates well with the surrounding area. Whilst the proposed plot sizes are narrow frontage dwellings, this is in keeping with the character and urban grain of the surrounding area. The proposals also maintain the existing uniform building line and roof profile alignment.

Dwelling Mix

- The proposed dwellings consist of 8no 3-bed houses and 1no 3-bed coachhouse. This mix is in line with the latest 2016 Strategic Housing Market Assessment where there is a higher need for 3 bedroom houses.
- As required by Policy H5 of the Emerging Local Plan 2018, all dwellings have been designed to meet the Nationally Described Space Standards. The 3-bed coachhouse has also been designed in line with M4(2) of the Building Regulations.

Height, Scale & Materiality

- The form and scale of the proposed dwellings respond positively to the local surroundings and buildings in order to sympathetically integrate the dwellings into the street scene. The residential buildings are terraced in form and are predominately 2 storey in height but accommodation is provided in the otherwise unused roof void, a common feature now for a significant number of existing housing having now been altered.
- Specific and detailed materials and colour palette are subject to condition. However a red facing brick, grey concrete tiles as well as UPVC Windows and rainwater goods are proposed in the scheme.
- Below are the proposals for the Swansea Road and Northfield Road street scenes. Proposed houses are designed to blend in with the existing character of the area with main facing brickwork, brick band detailing and roof tiles matching the adjacent properties and reinforcing the local material choices and distinctive architectural detailing exhibited in the Reading area.

Proposed Layout



Proposed Street Scene (A-A)



Proposed Street Scene (B-B)



Cross section of Plot 6

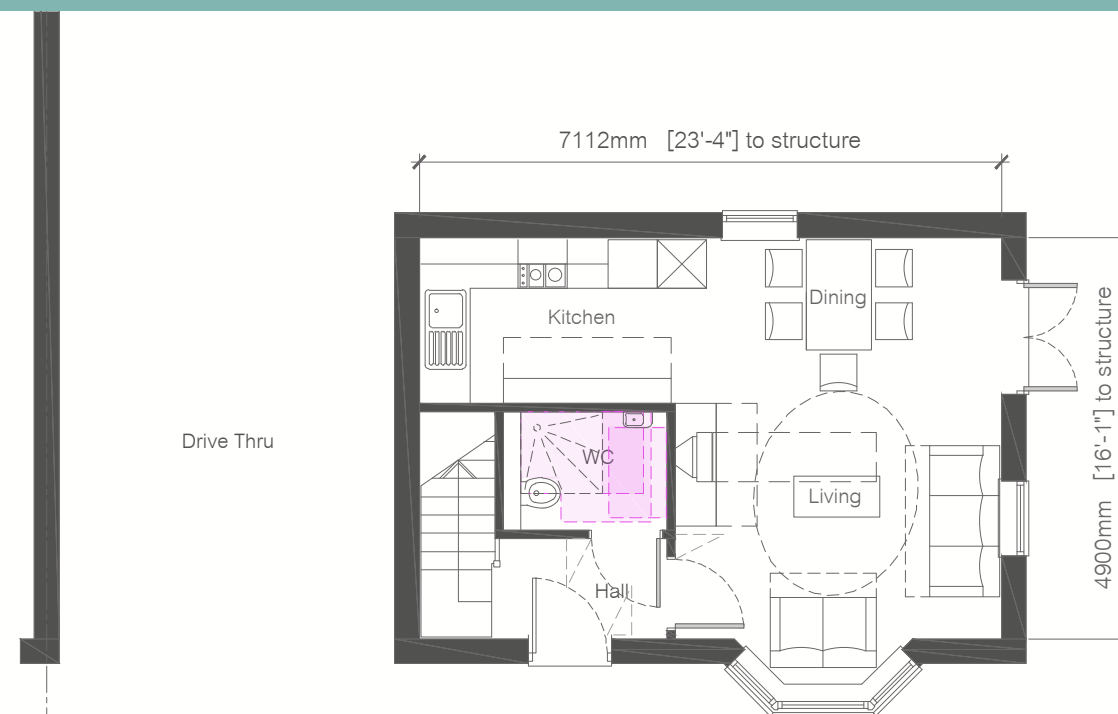


- The loft space within our proposals has been utilised to provide an additional bedroom. Habitable room windows are designed to be rear facing maintaining a two storey perspective view along Swansea Road, with small obscure glazed velux windows serving the second floor bathrooms being the only intended indication of accommodation on the second floor. Details of the accommodation in the roof are illustrated in the section below.

Proposed Layout

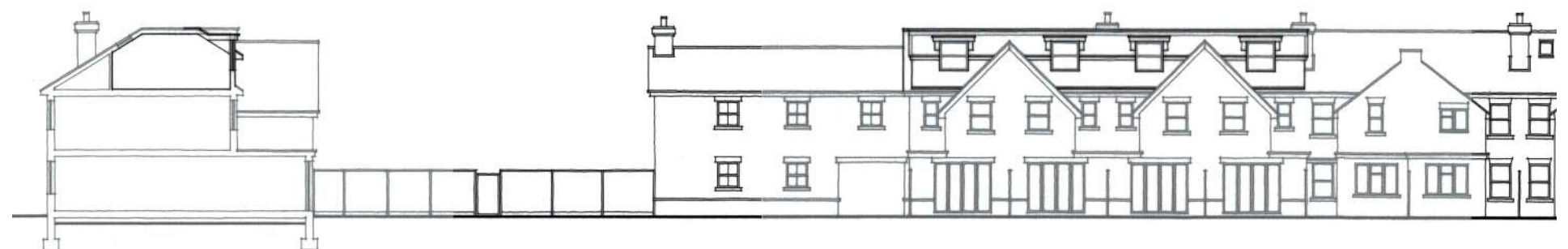


Coachhouse - Ground Floor Plan



- The coachhouse has been redesigned to accommodate ground floor accommodation to avoid the need for blind windows onto the street scene and internal parking court. This dwelling is now terraced to plots 1-4 to create a continual frontage and extension of the existing terrace.
- The section illustrates how we have reduced the scale and size of the loft accommodation and its rear dormer window. This is also demonstrated by the rear elevation.

Pre-App Street Scene (C-C)



Proposed Street Scene (C-C)



- This rear garden elevation demonstrates how the proposed roof line dormers have been reduced in appearance and scale. The previous proposals illustrated a continual dormer running the full length of the two terraces of houses which sat on the face of the main rear elevation external wall. The dormers are now split into pairs of windows with the dormer sitting back on the pitched roof.

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Amenity

Due to the nature of the application site and its setting, careful consideration has been given in order to sympathetically integrate the site into its surroundings. Therefore, garden depths, unit depths and relationships with the adjacent neighbours have all been considered as seen on the plan below and right.

- The proposed development utilises the already established continuous built form, forming an uninterrupted street scene and therefore, forms a positive relationship with the adjacent properties.
- The proposed design stays consistent with and does not differ from the widths and depths of the existing surrounding units. The proposals replicate and repeat that of the existing buildings.
- The surrounding residential setting consists of narrower terraced dwellings in a structured urban grain. As seen on the plan right, the garden sizes of the neighbouring dwellings are comparable to the proposed garden sizes, illustrating a consistency in relation to the existing context.

Sustainability

- All dwellings will achieve at a minimum, 19% improvements in the dwelling emission rate as set out in Policy H5 (Standards for New Housing) of the Emerging Local Plan 2018. This will be achieved through a fabric first approach.

Garden depths of the proposed and surrounding development



Parking and Servicing

Through discussion during the Pre-Application, it has been confirmed that due to the site's proximity to the town centre and Reading train station, a lower parking standard can be justified against policy and is therefore considered acceptable for this site.

- One for one parking allocated per unit is proposed, accommodated to the rear of the build line within a private parking court.
- The parking is accessed through a coachhouse dwelling which has an access width of 4.1m to allow 2-way vehicular traffic. Dropped kerbs will be provided within land under highway control and, as advised by the Highways Department, with visibility splays of 2.4m x 43m. Please refer to i-Transport's supporting drawings for this technical detail.
- Each property will have secure rear garden storage for two cycles. Details of this structure are included in the submitted drawings pack.
- Also submitted within the drawings pack is the Supporting Planning Layout (drawing 02) which illustrates that all refuse is stored within appropriate locations and can be positioned on day of collection within 15m of the highway roadside collection:
 - Plots 1-4 have a permanent storage facility designed into their rear pathway. Plots 1&2 and plots 3&4 share two areas, whereby wheeled bins can be positioned and on day of collection can be moved to a hard landscaped refuse collection point adjacent to the vehicular access and within 11m of the highway.
 - Plots 5-9 will have private individual hardstanding areas in each rear garden. They have gate access to allow the residents to position their bins on the hardstanding area adjacent to the drive-through access.
- i-Transport will document other supporting highways requirements in their report.



Parking and Servicing Principles



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Access Policy and Principles - prepared by i-Transport

“The approach to access, and how issues relating to access to the development have been addressed”

Access Principles & Policy Context

- The National Planning Policy Framework (2019) sets out at Paragraph 108 the three key tests that should be applied to all development proposals including that “safe and suitable access to the site can be achieved for all users”. The broad principles identified by National level policy are reiterated within the Reading Borough Local Plan and associated documents. These principles have been considered in designing the access to the site particularly in relation to ensuring that the design provides for all users in the form of a shared surface. These forms of access operate best whereby traffic flows are less than 100 vehicles per hour as identified by the government document Manual for Streets which will comfortably be the case in this instance.

Site Access & Routes within the Site

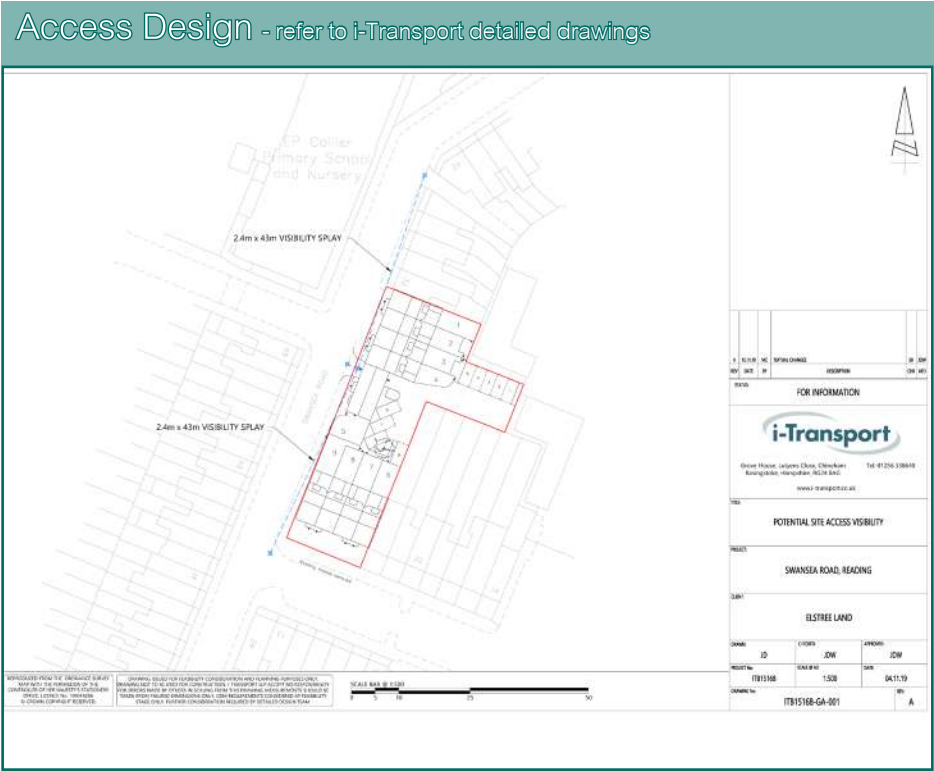
- As set out above the site access has been designed to accord with National and Local Design Guidance in achieving safe and suitable access for all potential users of the site. Once inside the site the hardstanding areas will operate as a shared surface for all users to given the extremely low levels of vehicle movements anticipated and the low vehicle speeds within the site. This is further supported by each dwelling having direct frontage access for pedestrians onto Swansea Road or Northfield Road.

Maintenance

- Currently the site is not anticipated to be offered for adoption through a S38 application and therefore the access and internal layout will be maintained via a private maintenance agreement.

Access Consultation

- Pre-application discussions with Reading have identified that the principle of access to the site is acceptable with officers recognising the benefit of the site over the existing situation given the consolidation of up to six vehicle crossovers onto Swansea Road and Northfield Road into a single point of access. This will provide benefits to local highway safety through focusing movements to a single point where adequate visibility in line with local and national standards can be achieved for all vehicles entering and exiting the site.



Flood Risk and Drainage - prepared by Odyssey

- The site is situated within Flood Zone 2 for fluvial flood risk, land assessed as ‘having between a 1 in 100 and 1 in 1,000 annual probability of river flooding (1% - 0.1%)’, associated with the River Thames. Odyssey previously completed a hydraulic modelling update for the River Thames for a consented scheme south of the Thames in Reading, and the model extents included this site. The outputs of the study not only confirmed the Flood Zone classification at the site but also defined the design flood level for the 1 in 100 year plus 35% event to account for climate change. The minimum Finished Floor Levels for the development proposals will be set at least 300mm above the design flood level, and the appropriate flood mitigation has been provided. The site is at ‘very low’ to ‘low’ risk of surface water flooding.
- A surface water drainage strategy has been included in the proposals, which incorporates SuDS features and follows the most feasible option of the drainage hierarchy; ‘to a surface water sewer’. It is proposed to discharge to the existing Thames Water surface water sewer running along Northfield Road. All surface water flows shall be discharged from the site at a controlled rate of 2.0l/s. Permeable paving shall provide sufficient water quality treatment, to ensure that water quality on site and leaving the site is not negatively impacted by the proposed development. Foul flows from the site shall connect to the existing Thames Water foul sewer at a rate of 0.4l/s, in accordance with Sewers for Adoption 8th Edition guidance.

Conclusion

This Design and Access Statement demonstrates how these proposals are in keeping with the established character of Swansea and Northfield Road, particularly in terms of the appearance, size and massing of the new homes as they provide a positive addition to the street scene, and create a logical infill to the street. We have shown how these proposals do not impact adversely on existing properties and are provided with appropriate on-plot amenity.

The development will act as a seamless extension to the existing residential terraces. The location of the site close to the town centre, public transport nodes and an established community are positive characteristics, heightening the sustainable location of the site and the required need for family housing.



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