

Mulberry House

Design and Access Statement

Replacement 5-storey residential development
1a Eldon Road, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 4DJ

March 2018



01 introduction

This planning application design statement outlines the proposal for a new 5-storey residential development on the site of a vacant dental surgery in the heart of Reading.

The document assesses the planning and architectural constraints and opportunities and summarizes how this analysis has informed and generated the design solution.

Content

01 introduction

02 site and context

03 planning history & pre-application

04 concept & scheme development

05 the proposal

06 conclusion

02 site and context

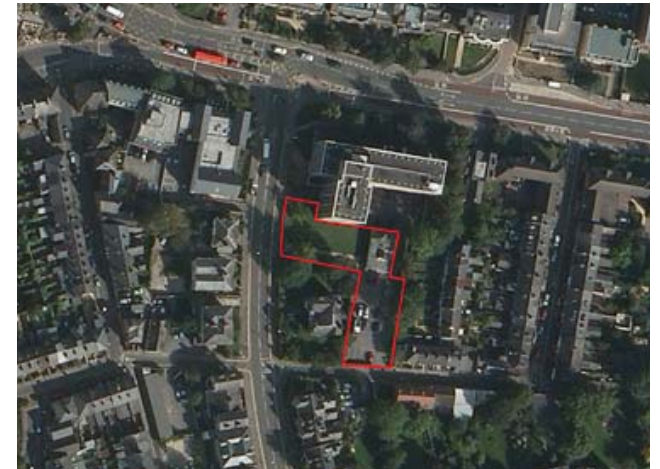
site location



Overview



Neighbourhood



Boundary

02 site and context



Ordnance Survey, (c) Crown Copyright 2017. All rights reserved. Licence number 100022432

Site

The site lies to the south of the arterial King's Road (A329). The site is accessible to pedestrians from Eldon Road which links to London Road (A4). This runs parallel with the A329.

King's Road and Eldon Road act as major bus and vehicular traffic routes through Reading, a bus stop is located directly outside the existing access into the site.

The site can be accessed via Eldon Terrace which operates as a one-way highway. Eldon Terrace is accessed from King's Road via Eldon Street and Victoria Street located East of the site.

The Mulberry House dental surgery currently occupies a small portion of the site to the east. Its relationship with Eldon Road is nondescript and is overborne by Hanover House to the North, 1,3 Eldon Road to the South and a high tree line to the East.

The dental surgery building is in a poor state of repair and would be considered unsustainable for future use. Poor access arrangements also undermine the future use of this building for its intended purpose.

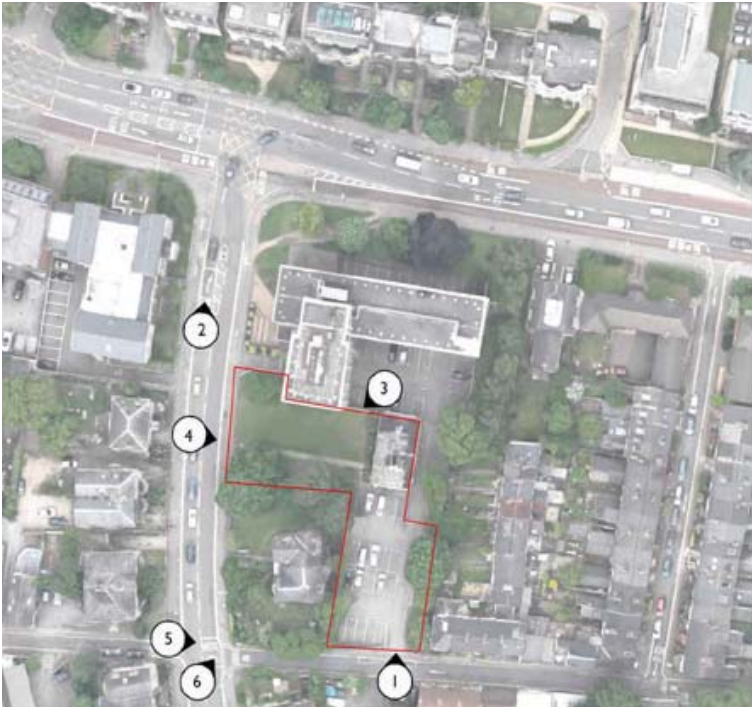
A planning application for the demolition of the existing dental surgery on site has been approved, REF: 171521.

A grassed servant piece of land is located between the existing surgery building and Eldon Road. This gap goes some way to aiding a transition from the scale of Hanover House on King's Road to 1,3 Eldon Road, aided further by the scale of the mature trees to the south boundary of the site.

The site is raised in relation to its immediate context. To the north, a retaining wall determines the extent of the site boundary with Hanover house, with a storey drop to private car parking. To the east a ramped approach for vehicular traffic from Hanover House allows access to Eldon Terrace. The West boundary with Eldon Road is determined by a poor quality retaining wall, approx 1.2m high, retaining 1m of ground, with a stone veneer finish. The wall is of no architectural merit or relevance to the area.

The site currently has 5 "typical" parking spaces which are not of current Highway Standards dimension. These are accessed via a controlled car park for Hanover House accessed from Eldon Terrace.

02 site and context



Context

The site lies within the Eldon Square Conservation Area.

Eldon Square is accessed to the south of the site from Eldon Road located just north of London Road. There are an array of Grade II listed dwellings along both sides of Eldon Road, typically of the Georgian style.

To the north of Eldon Road on the junction with King's Road a series of grand Grade II listed buildings create a compelling street scene exhibiting typical Georgian detailing, proportion and site layout with iron fences and pillars.

The listed buildings are typically of Bath stone ashlar, with examples of ground floor channeling. There are examples of stucco with cornice, blocking courses, barred glazing, relief pediments, stone mullions, pilasters and stone porches.

The urban scale of King's Road has lent itself to larger scale buildings evident to the east and west with additional storeys and new high rise buildings still being constructed. There are recent examples of 3-4 storey residential blocks being constructed in close proximity and adjacent to the listed buildings along Eldon Road. Development has also swamped number 220 and 222 King's Road which is located between Hanover House and a recent residential development, Henry Court and Edward Place. These are typically of facing masonry and render, typically of poor quality materiality and of no architectural merit.

Hanover House is located adjacent to the listed buildings and shields the site from part of Eldon Road and all of King's Road. Previously office accommodation, Hanover House has recently been converted to small unit domestic accommodation. It is a typical example of early modern architecture constructed to suit local employment need as a consequence of rapid population growth in the area. Its scale and architectural detailing are incongruous with the finer architectural examples it shares its context with. Its original flint string course and inset columns have been over-clad with PPC metal, its colour hinting at the tone of bath stone.

Those dwellings to the south of the site, 1,3 Eldon road, are raised three-storey properties typically of Edwardian style. They are faced with a yellow brick likely in response to the listed buildings of Eldon Road and Eldon Square to the South. To the rear, East, they are faced with a red brick.

To the east lie two-storey pitched roof terrace dwellings of facing red brick and slate roofs

02 site and context

site photographs



01



02



03



04



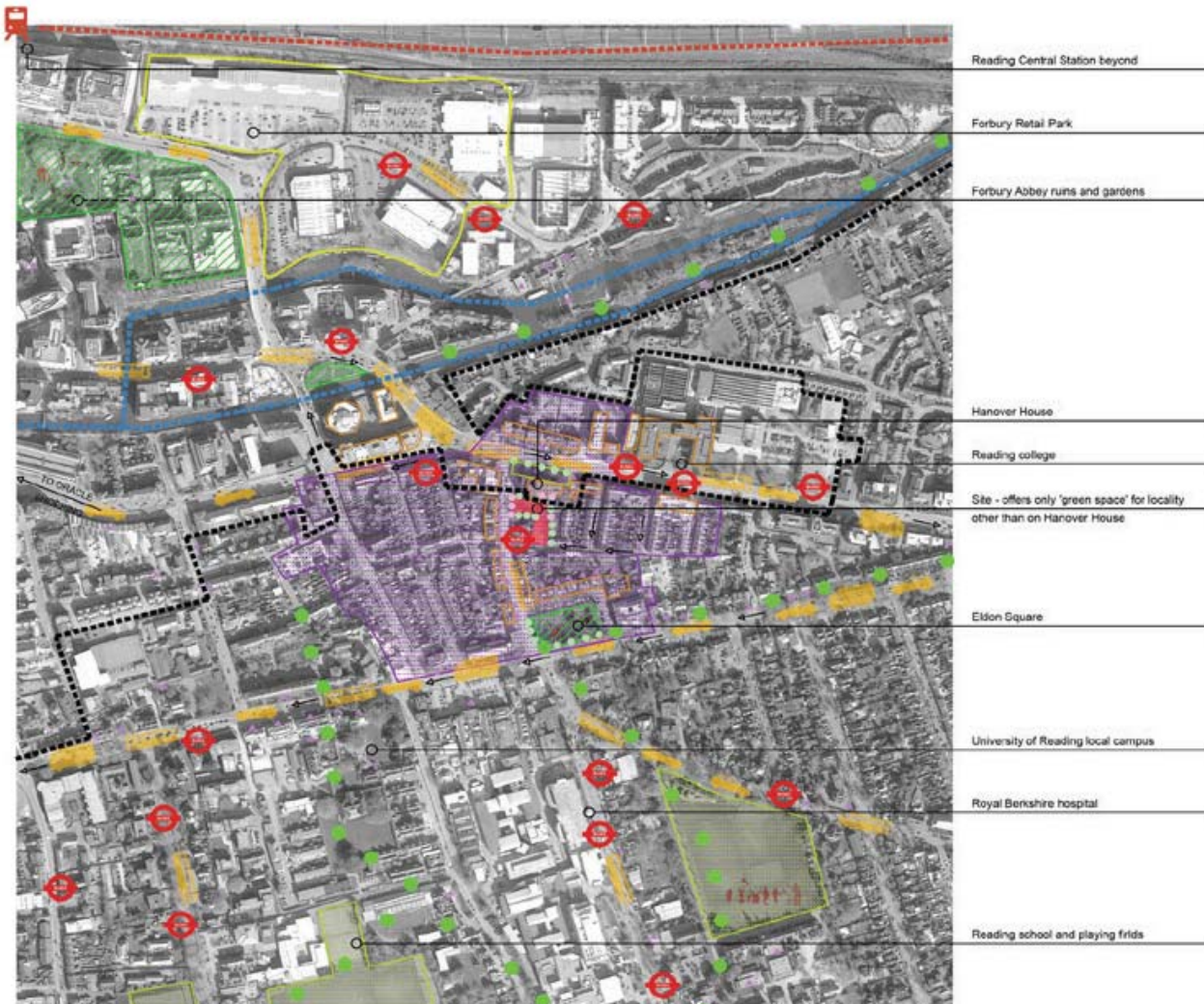
05



06

02 site and context

Contextual analysis



Contextual analysis

Thorough analysis of the site is paramount to understanding the constraints to any proposal. We work to produce a building well suited to the site and the constraints are considered at the earliest stages of feasibility and concept development to inform this process.

Site visits and desk based studies are translated into form through careful consideration of scale and massing and key relationships with the local context.

Please see form + scale development.

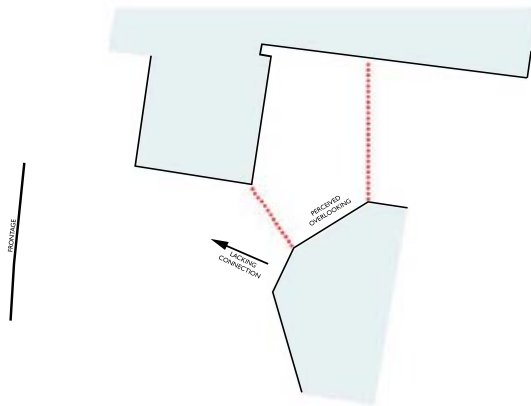
It is evident that the site is well located to benefit from the local infrastructure, however, there is an apparent lack of quality green space to the immediate area. It is evident that, other than a requirement, any proposal should consider the amenity value of existing green space and mature trees on site and consider the value of this to the wider community.

The study identifies that the proposal will have to carefully manage the relationships to Hanover House, north, terraces to the east, listed buildings to the west and properties to the south west in respect of overlooking, overbearing and daylighting.

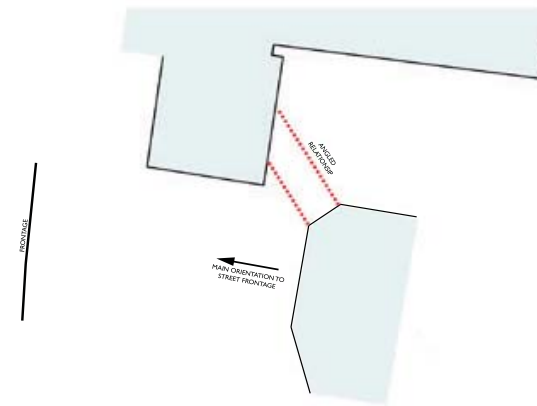
It is additionally important that the proposal enhances and integrates itself successfully within the wider Eldon Square conservation area.



03 planning history & pre-application



Pre-application



Full application



Pre-application submission

Visualization of proposed development at Pre-application stage.

Please refer to '04 concept and scheme development' & '05 the proposal' for developments and submitted proposed plans

Planning History

The site was previously part of the land of Hanover House. Hanover House was granted Prior Approval for a change of use from class B1(a) Offices to C3 (dwelling houses) under application **14/1343**, Approved: 10th October 2014. (excl. 4th floor). The 4th floor was later approved under application **15/0229**. Applications 14/1343, 15/0229, did not consider the proposal site, Mulberry House, 1a Eldon Road, as part of the applications.

Application site

17/ 1521 (approved) 05th December 2017

Demolition of Mulberry House (Class D1) and replacement with soft landscaping (nil use) (amended description)

Other than the above, the application site has no other recorded applications.

Pre-application

An application for pre-planning advice was submitted in June 2017, with formal response provided from the Case Officer 17th August 2017. The proposals were presented to the Design Review Panel (DRP) at the request of the Case Officer on the 20th September 2017.

A formal response was received on the 3rd August 2017.

The DRP identified that there is 'potential for additional development on the site, if consideration is given to how proposals bridge the change in scale between the two neighboring properties', also noting that the proposals presented an 'extremely ambitious architectural intent' with a 'clear and elegant concept', with the dissected form 'showing promise'.

Plan arrangement

The proposal 'managed some issues of views to Hanover House' but 'it does present a closed face to the street and also disguises the residential use of the building'. A rearrangement, positioning balconies and larger opening towards the frontage '....could really help this'. During the presentation it was also discussed that there was potential for awkward internal relationships between open-plan spaces, i.e. kitchen proximity to living space to be resolved through this exercise.

During the development of the proposals post pre-application, the DRP and Case Officer comments were considered through the form development, with greater consideration given to the internal layout and placement of balconies overlooking the frontage and how this would impact the form. The improved relationship to Hanover House and Eldon Road is illustrated left and under '04 concept & scheme development - form + scale development'

Please also refer to '05 the proposal' for plans and layout.

03 planning history & pre-application



Pre-application submission



Planning submission

Form & overlooking

'Currently the proposals reference the tallest part of Hanover House, with the top of the scheme approximately a floor below HH roof level. The proximity of the application site to Hanover House creates an uncomfortable juxtaposition that causes issues regarding outlook / amenity and will likely effect daylight and sunlight as well' it was suggested that reducing the massing would 'deliver the opportunity to generate a more appropriate solution'

The proposals presented at pre-application stage were driven by a conceptual form that responded to the scale of Hanover House, transitioning to the scale of adjacent smaller buildings. Through the development of the proposals the form response was driven by addressing the scale of Hanover House, with greater consideration given to adjacent buildings, resulting in the loss of a floor and reduction in scale. Please see left.

Elsewhere, large terraces that may have impacted on adjacent properties amenity have been removed through the development of the scale, form and massing of the proposals.

Please refer to '04 concept & scheme development - form + scale development the proposal'

The floor levels of Hanover House are set at different levels to the applicants proposals. Any direct overlooking to Hanover House is mitigated by this relationship. Nonetheless, window placement in these areas have been carefully considered to further mitigate any overlooking.

Please also refer to '05 the proposal' for plans and layout.

Daylight & sunlight

Hawkins Environmental Ltd were appointed to undertake a daylight and sunlight study to consider the impact of the pre-application scheme. The proposals post pre-application were developed in close cooperation with Hawkins Environmental to reduce and mitigate the impact on surrounding buildings. The report is available as part of the planning application and is referenced in the Planning Statement.

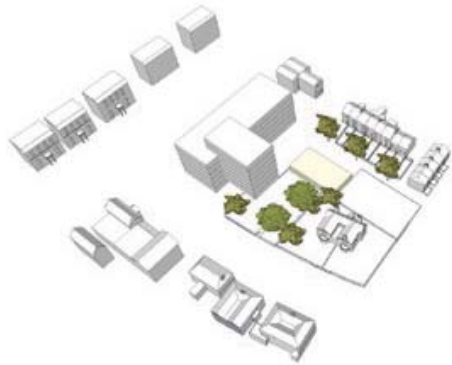
Materiality

The DRP acknowledged that the materiality of the proposals were 'conceptually similar in nature to the listed villas on Kings Road' The concept was a carved block that allowed views and through the site.

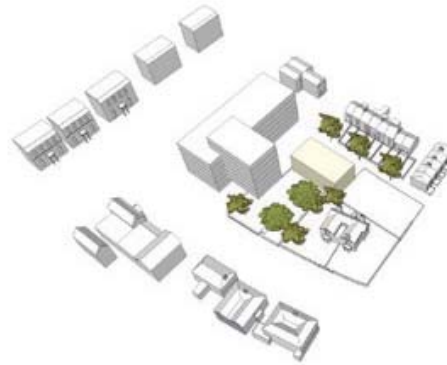
The concept and materiality was considered a strong element of the proposals and have been retained as the basis of the proposals.

04 concept & scheme development

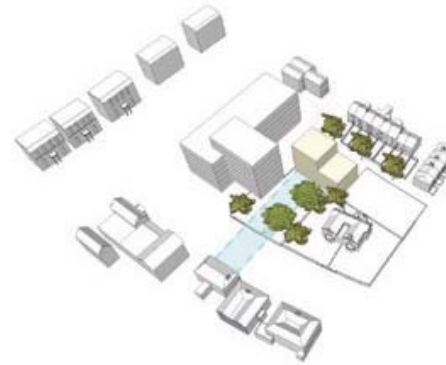
form + scale development



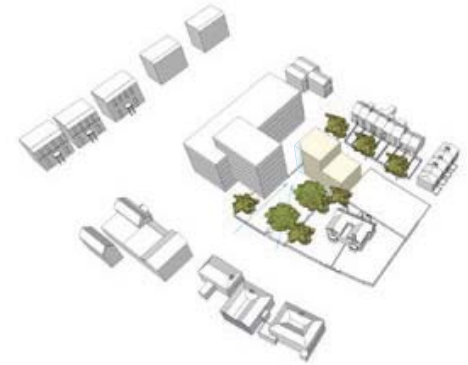
- 01 - OPTIMAL FOOTPRINT
- set back from Eldon Road tree and listed building constraints
 - retain green frontage / amenity
 - consider proximity to Hanover House



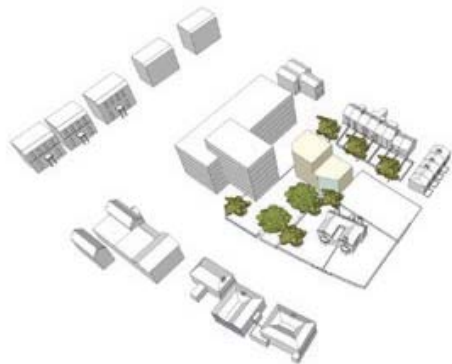
- 02 - RESPOND TO SMALLEST SCALE
- increase height to respond to lowest contextual relationships



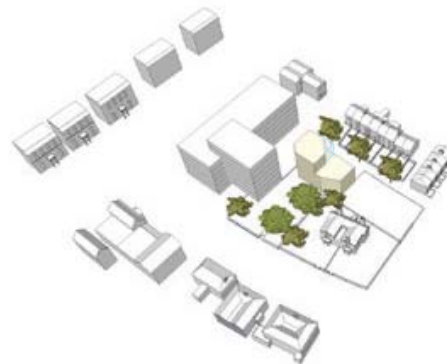
- 03 - TRANSITION
- respond to & address complex urban scales
 - respond direct to adjacent listed building and street scene
 - consideration of proportion of listed building



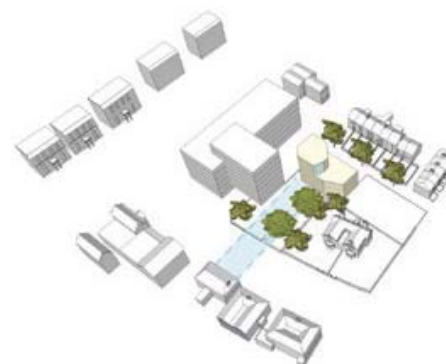
- 04 - APERTURE
- cut-back corner to provide visual separation to Hanover House form key views into the site



- 05 - RELATIONSHIP & APERTURE
- respond to relationship with 1,3 Eldon Road
 - cut back to provide visual separation to 1,3 Eldon Road
 - respond to tree



- 06 - SLENDERNESS
- reduce visual prominence of form to Town Place to east and Eldon Terrace to south.



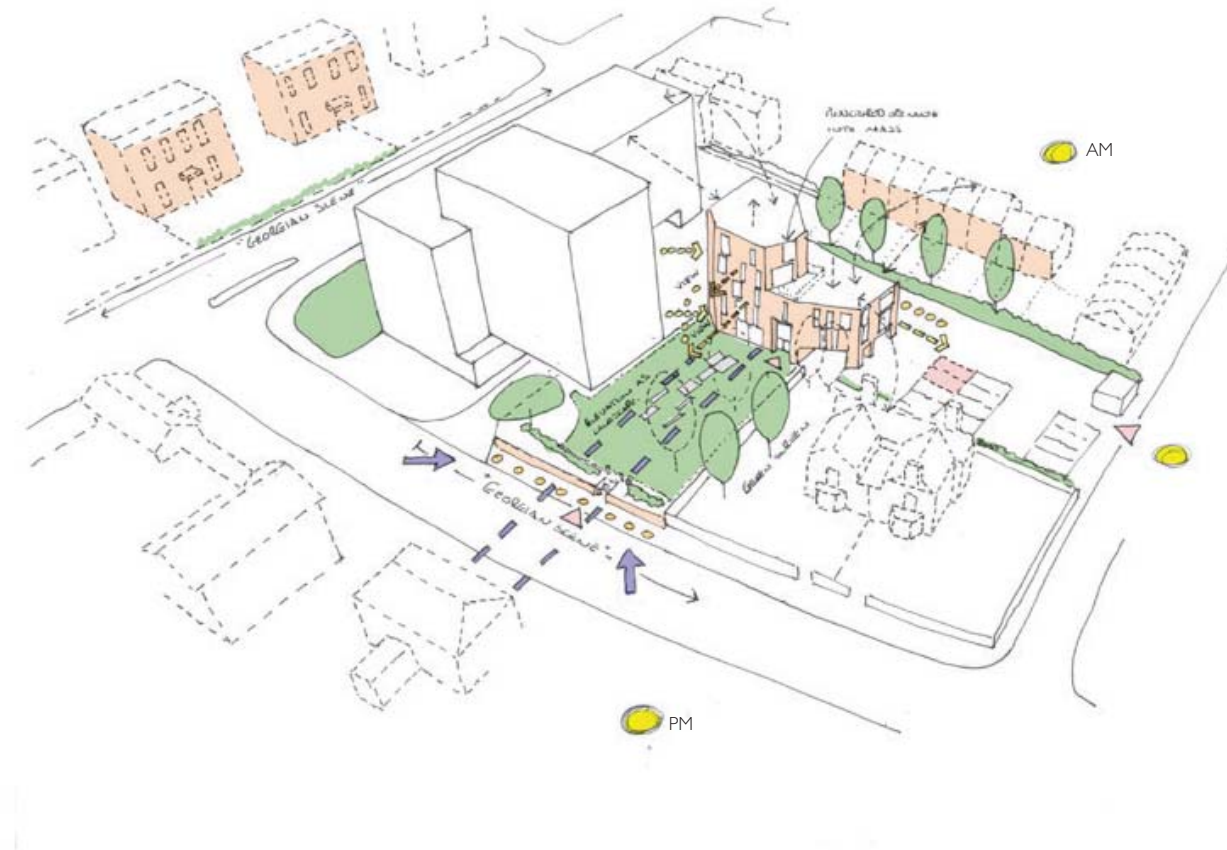
- 07 - PROPORTION & APERTURE
- cut-back corner to increase view through site and reduce mass of front elevation
 - reference proportion of adjacent listed building



- 08 - TRANSITIONAL FORM

04 concept & scheme development

response



- ▶ site / building entry
- key frontage / relationship
- informative relationship to scale / form
- identification of extent of key view onto site
- critical relationship / mitigation required
- reference to historical context

Brief development

The form and scale of the proposal is driven by a consideration for site constraints and opportunities realised from initial observations, surveys and studies of the local area and context. A massing study, previous page, illustrates the process by which the form was developed to relate to the contrasting relationships evident in scale, style, materiality and proximity to the north, east, south and west. Conceptually the form was developed with an underlying aim of creating a building that forms a transition between these contrasting urban scales, addressing the large scale of Hanover House to the north, with the lower 2-3 storey buildings adjacent.

A series of cut backs form a responsive form. In relating to the context, conceptually the building presents itself as a solid mass. Fenestration has been punctured into the mass retaining an overall look of a solid form carved out for habitation. Large panels of facing stone are retained with varying hierarchy of opening identifying function, in a response to the 'Georgian' townhouse window proportion.

Please refer to '04 the proposal' for further analysis.

Views out of the proposed building are managed to create a direct view across parking to the south and the green amenity west, identified and retained as an important green space within the wider urban context.

Clear aims and strategies were established from early analysis and discussions with the applicant to :

- Improve the street scene on Eldon Road;
- consider the location of terraces to retain neighbour amenity value
- use of elevation treatment to identify the building as residential and identify entrance
- address contextual relationship to historical assets;
- relate to scale of urban context;
- consider overlooking and overbearing of adjacent properties;
- consider local vernacular;
- functional and improved amenity;
- high quality open-plan internal living spaces.

05 the proposal



Layout + amount

This planning application design statement outlines the proposal for a new 5-storey residential development on the site of a vacant dental surgery in the heart of Reading. The accommodation consists of 1 no. 1 bedroom 1 person studio apartments 2 no. 1 bedroom 2 person apartments and 4 no 2 bedroom 3 person apartments. A well sized refuse store is located on the ground floor as well as communal secure, cycle storage and 5 no. parking spaces.

The building layout was driven by the conclusion of the contextual relationship and form development studies, included within the site analysis. It was realised early on that the existing building is well placed to mitigate any adverse impact on the mature trees and mitigate overlooking from and too Hanover House. The resultant setting back of the proposed building from Eldon Road provides a generous transition space from Eldon Road to the building. This provides an opportunity to implement a suitably styled and contemporary threshold to the street and improve and maintain the biodiversity the site currently supports.

It is proposed to retain the current position of the pedestrian access to Eldon Road and the vehicular access from Eldon Terrace. A new pier entrance will identify a formal entrance synonymous with the historical context of the area without giving the appearance of a closed community. The existing retaining wall will be re-clad / repaired and faced with a similar finish / colour to that of the proposed building. Railings will be set back from the wall edge and fronted with a hedgerow in a modern interpretation of the Georgian street scene.

From the street this is considered the main entrance. In consideration of the mature trees, and TPO listing on site, no access ramp is proposed from this main entrance. There is provision for 2 no. DDA compliant parking spaces within the applicants site, as level access is provided to the site from the access from Eldon Terrace to the south.

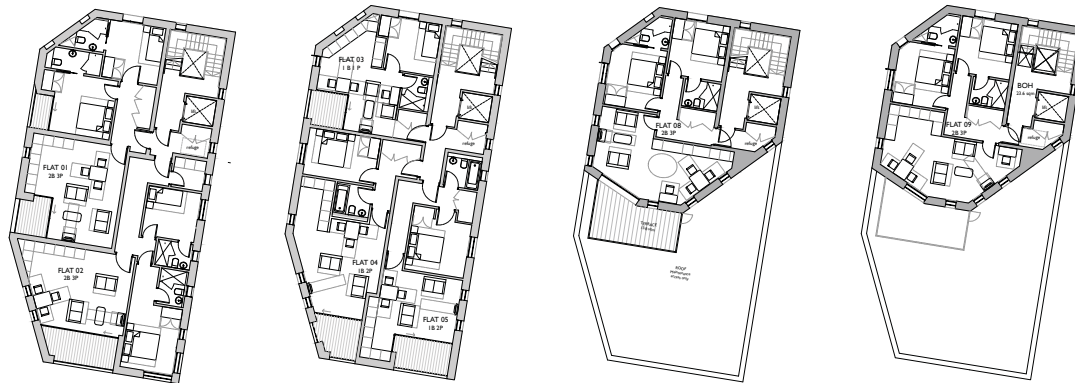
Cycle and refuse stores are located internally to prevent incongruous street features and buildings with drainage points for wash down.

Refuse collection currently navigates the ramped approach to the East of the site for Hanover House and it is proposed refuse will be collected by the same refuse lorry / route on its way to the pick-up located to the Hanover House car park entrance on Eldon Terrace.

The car parking and cycle stores are located flush with the external ground level for ease of access.

Please refer to the accompanying Planning Statement by Atlas Planning for commentary on Planning Policy and Mix considerations.

05 the proposal



First Floor

Second Floor

Third Floor

Fourth Floor

The plans have been organized to respond to the buildings immediate context.

The communal stair and lift has been positioned to the north where the proposed building has the greatest overlooking impact, as well as the poorest orientation and views.

At its closest point, the proposal appears to look directly at Hanover House, please see the diagram in '03 planning history & pre-application' showing how the form and cut back helps mitigate the close relationship. The closest accommodation to the proposal has a bedroom use, with reference to the submitted plans and diagram earlier in this statement, the reduction in elevation facing this corner of Hanover House, re-defining the angle and main orientation, results in a largely mitigated appearance of overlooking and the perception of overlooking between the occupants of both buildings. This is further mitigated by the variation in window and floor heights between the two buildings please refer to section BB. Bathrooms with opaque windows or kitchens are otherwise positioned in these positions.

The footprint has been divided to provide for sizable rooms and free layouts which are designed to provide a greater allocation of space than standard guidelines. It is the clients desire that these are high quality apartments for a range of occupants.

At first and second floor the apartments enjoy an 'internal' terrace to strengthen the lack of perceived overlooking and make these spaces function as usable amenity. The one to the third floor enjoys a larger private terrace. There is also a large amount of available space on site for landscaping and amenity due to the site constraints and arrangement of adjacent properties.

All apartments have at least dual aspect with well proportioned windows for quality daylighting and ventilation. An air-quality assessment has been undertaken and supplements this planning application. It has been determined that the air quality to the site is sufficient to allow for natural ventilation.

To mitigate overlooking from the terrace on the third floor overlooking the terrace houses east, on Town Place and Eldon Street, the balustrade has been set back with no access possible to the main roof. This relationship is further improved by the existing tree lines that define the boundary to the adjacent owners side. These trees are located off-site and are not subject to any Arboriculture works but have been assessed as part of the Arboriculture Report. Identified as G1 grouping, of mixed shrubs with occasional ash and sycamore trees, up to a height of approx. 1.8 meters.

Please refer to section drawing overleaf which shows the proposed relationship

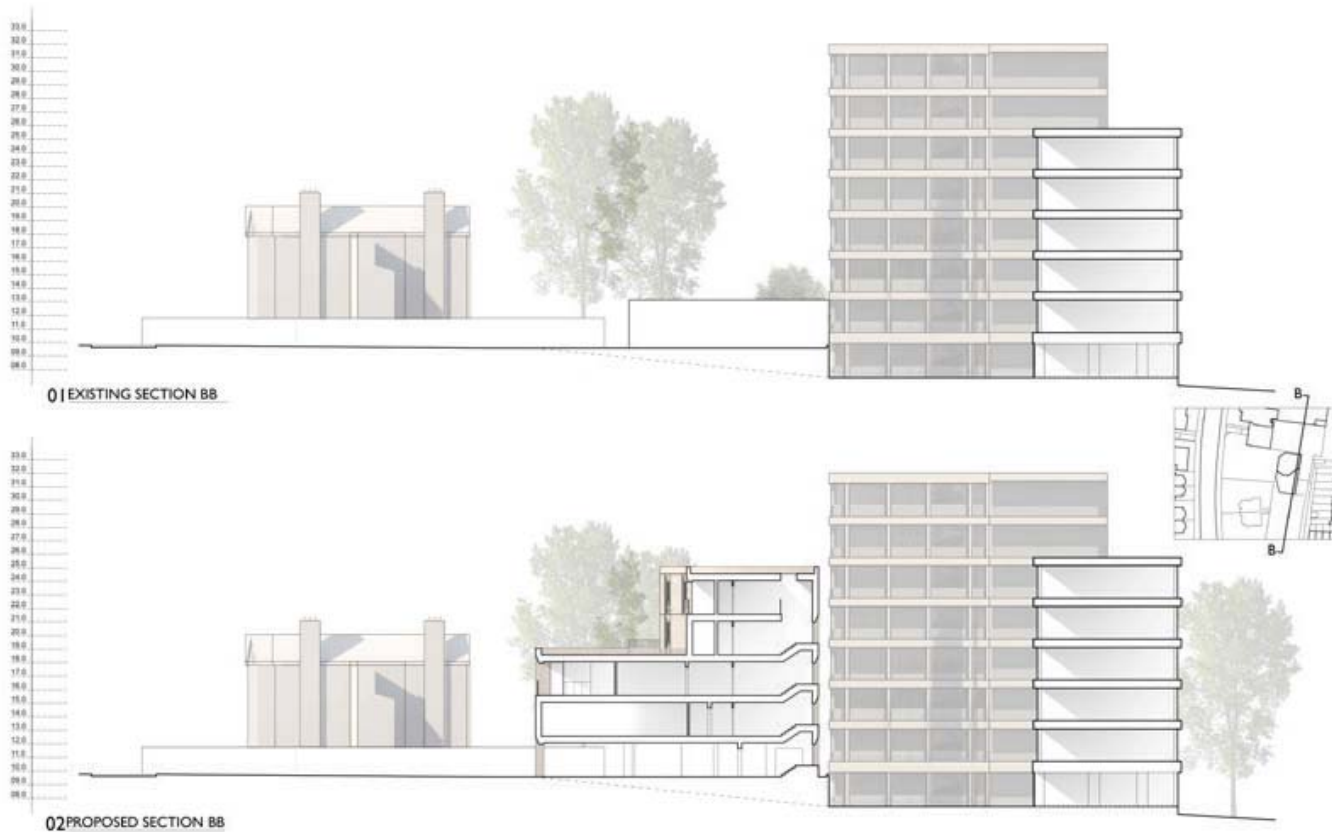
05 the proposal

Site section A-A showing natural screening provided by the existing trees.



05 the proposal

Street Section B-B showing hierarchy of built form.



Scale

At 5-storeys the proposed building is considerably larger than that of the existing surgery. The surgery was dwarfed by the context in which it existed and it was identified early on that and replacement would have to address the context in a commanding yet respectful way.

The proposals placement and layout, as discussed and evaluated through the site analysis, qualifies its scale in the site. The thorough analysis and concept development provides for the retention of landscaping to the Eldon Road elevation. This, combined with the car parking to the south allows the building to comfortably sit within the site, away from the immediate street elevation overcoming overbearing issues that could be associated with similar high-rise buildings.

The building has been designed as a transition between the contextual relationships it holds, aiming to retain a hierarchy of built form, positioning itself centrally with the aim of overcoming the incongruous relationship Hanover House holds with its own context. Section AA, previous, and Section B-B opposite, clearly demonstrate how the building form steps to address the relationships, stepping down to 1,3 Eldon Road at 3-4 storeys, and up to Hanover House, which at its highest is 8 storeys.

Please additionally refer to Elevation AA, BB overleaf.

The stepping back form of the proposed dwelling, and addressing the heights of the adjacent building results in a 5-storey building that successfully mitigates between existing ill-proportioned urban relationships. The form of the proposal and restricting it to 5-storeys retains Hanover House as the dominant building within the street scene and ensures that it maintains its presence. The green frontage to the proposal to Eldon Road further enforces this.

The floor to floor heights are set at 3m, allowing for 2.4-2.5m floor to ceiling heights. Where appropriate internally, the spaces are based around the requirements of the London Design Guide, to establish a level of quality of space and layout.

05 the proposal

Street elevation A-A, B-B showing hierarchy of built form.



05 the proposal

Appearance + Materials



Existing photo

05 the proposal



EXTERNAL MATERIALS AND APPEARANCE

- 01 - Smooth Panelised stone appearance to sub-divide mass
 - Stone rainscreen system - Aerolite Stonework - T1 Tiles Int or similar
 - Bath / similar style stone - Aerolite Stonework, REF: CSV (S)BAS, Finish: Honed or similar
 - Mixed panel size
- 02 - Textured panelised stone appearance to sub-divide mass
 - Stone rainscreen system - Aerolite Stonework - T1 Tiles Int or similar
 - Bath / similar style stone - rough finish - Aerolite Stonework, REF: CSV (S)YWW, Finish: Sandblasted or similar
 - Deep reveals for privacy to occupants and adjacent buildings in style of embrasure to allow additional daylight, improved views and break up elevation
- 03 - Privacy screens to reveals to deepen reveals and break up elevation
- 04 - Deep clear shadow gaps to break up elevation further and reference string coursing

Appearance + Materials

The proposal is for a robust and contemporary building of the highest quality detailing and materiality. It is proposed to use traditional materials in a modern interpretation to embed the building into the site and local surroundings.

The proposal aims to borrow and reinterpret detail, material and concepts from the historical context, rather than providing a pastiche of the Georgian architectural style. It is felt this will enable the proposed building to generate a relationship with the multiple styles of architecture that make up its context.

The building has been conceived as solid form that has been carved away to respond to the site constraints. The concept was further developed to inform the materiality of the building. A smooth but varied stone would be best used as the main facade, the reveals deep with chamfering will be the same material with a textured rough finish as though the single form has been carved into as part of the form development process - this would be etched or sandblasted to add real distinction and variation to the facade.

The fenestration generally is in three distinct widths, other than over the entrance to terraces where deep terraces and wide openings allow for variation and identification of a change in space beyond. The fenestration generally decreases as the building height increases. An idea developed from the narrowing of Georgian Architectural Glazing which was used to denote the internal space use (living > bedroom > servant quarters). Whilst the uses of the proposal do not vary to this pattern its adoption aids in the articulation of the elevation and help establish a compelling composition.

The chamfered reveals create a hierarchy of openings and add further visual interest to the building as well as elevation relief.

- Major = Terracing, chamfered jamb and head detail
- Minor = Typical opening chamfered head detail

The result is an articulated, sophisticated and controlled façade that encompass varied textures and materials in a controlled composition.

The approach adopted from the outset prevents ill proportioned fenestration that is often placed in an ad-hoc arrangement in an attempt to break down the massing and scale of building.

05 the proposal



Alternative to natural stone - factory produced reconstituted stone / aggregate concrete for smooth / etched / sandblasted finish.

Precedent above:

Olympic Village Athletes Housing N I S

Material Type: Grit Blasted, Recon Acid Etched by Techrete.

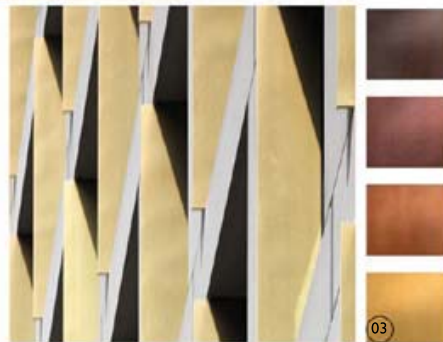


Privacy screen to increase depth of reveal and focus views whilst breaking down monotony of elevation.

Precedent right:

Two Pancreas Square - Allies and Morrison

*Material Type: Recon Acid Etched by Techrete
Bronzed screen reveals*



The strict response to the elevation was developed in line with the form, mass and scale resulting in a building that is aesthetically creative, innovative and representative of it's function.

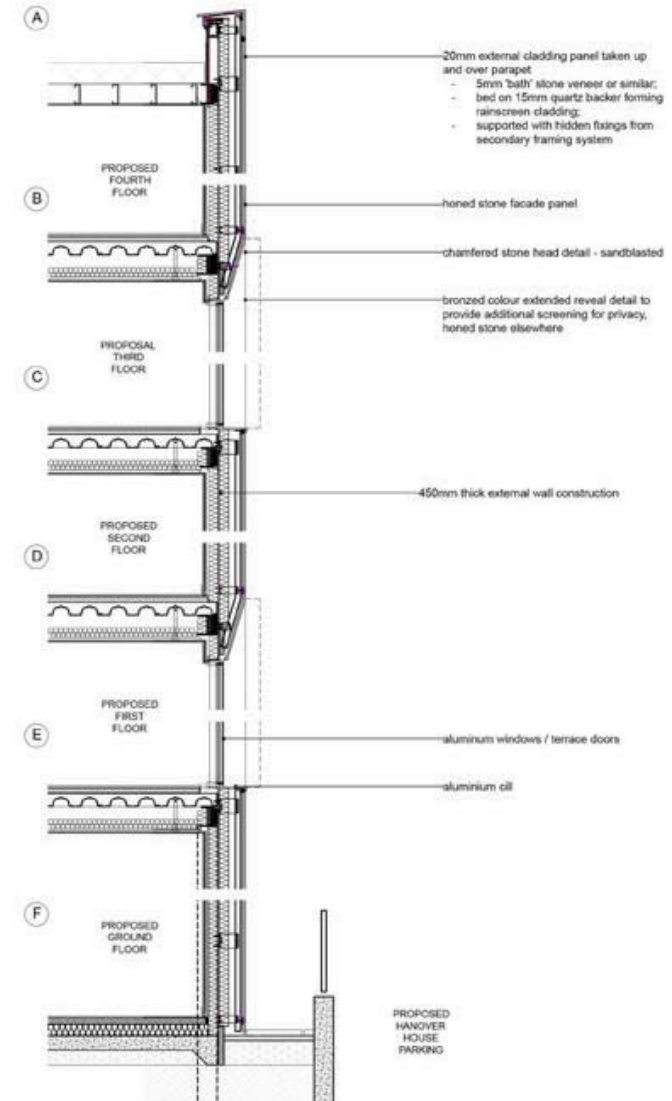
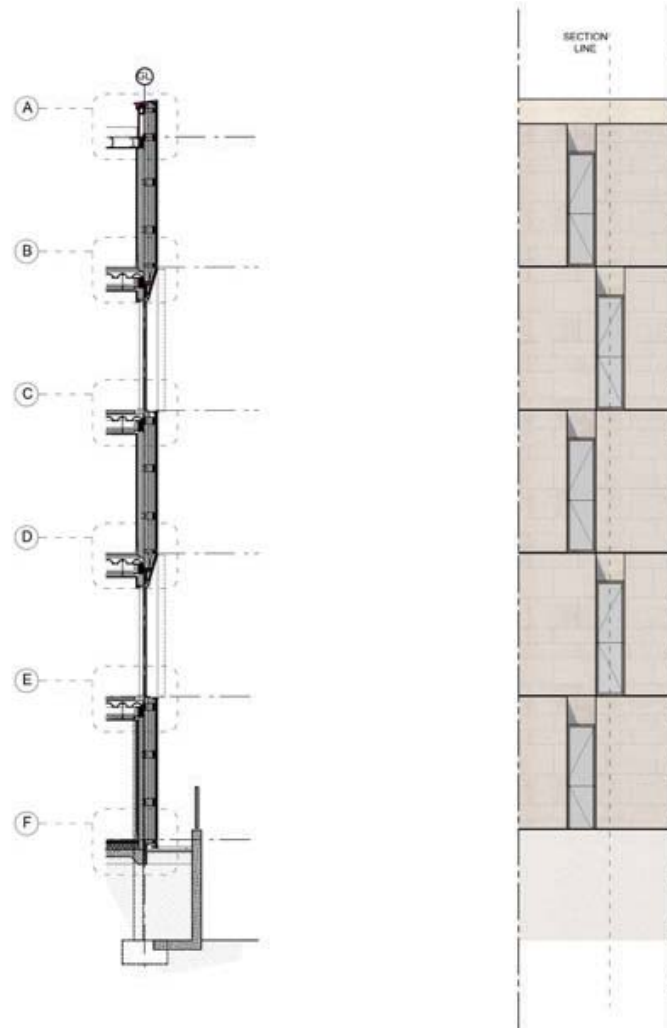
High quality materials are proposed that are soft, textured and 'light' in hue to create a more delicate and 'quiet' character than that of similar new buildings in the area where examples of heavy red brick, clay tile roofs and PPC metals take precedence.

Privacy screens in selected window reveals, bronzed metal or similar; add elevation relief and visual interest whilst guiding views away from neighbouring apartments or buildings by locally increasing the reveal depth.

The material contrast of stone, with a smooth textured rich metal finish works extremely well with the materials allowing each to stand out.

It is proposed to install a new entrance way to the site from Eldon Road in a matching tone to that of the building. The boundary wall will also be re-clad along the Eldon Road elevation which will support a railing and hedgerow in acknowledgment of the typical Georgian street scene evident in the area.

05 the proposal



06 conclusion



This proposal aims to regenerate a site that has been underutilized to provide a much needed allocation of apartment living in the heart of Reading.

For the reasons set out above, it is considered that the proposed development proposes a high quality architectural intervention that is complementing to the local area and successfully addresses a complex arrangement of street scenes of various urban scenarios.

It is felt that the proposal represents high quality development that is well integrated with, and complements the neighbouring buildings and the local area.

It is hoped that the development can act as a catalyst for an improved quality of architectural intervention in the area making better use of under utilized sites.

07 OB Architecture

about us



OB Architecture is an award-winning RIBA Chartered Architects Practice based in Winchester, with projects located all over London, the South of England and Wales.

The practice is experienced in designing a wide range of building types, including: offices, private homes, large residential schemes, hotels and interiors.

The practice was established in 2010 and has since grown to 15 employees.

The quality of their designs has been recognised with a number of awards and publications around the world.

ob
architecture.