

3.1 Opportunities and Constraints

The Napier Court site is located south of both the River Thames and Kings Meadow.

The site backs onto the railway line creating a bounding edge for the proposed development. Vehicular access is provided via Napier Road, with entrances located at the most easterly and westerly ends of the site.

The existing office buildings do little to contribute to the sense of place within Kings Meadow or the arrival via the railway into Reading Station.

Existing massing is established with the Thames Quarter, Forbury Place and Kenavon Drive developments with an emerging scheme at Forbury Retail Park creating further opportunity along the railway corridor linking Kings Meadow with the town centre.

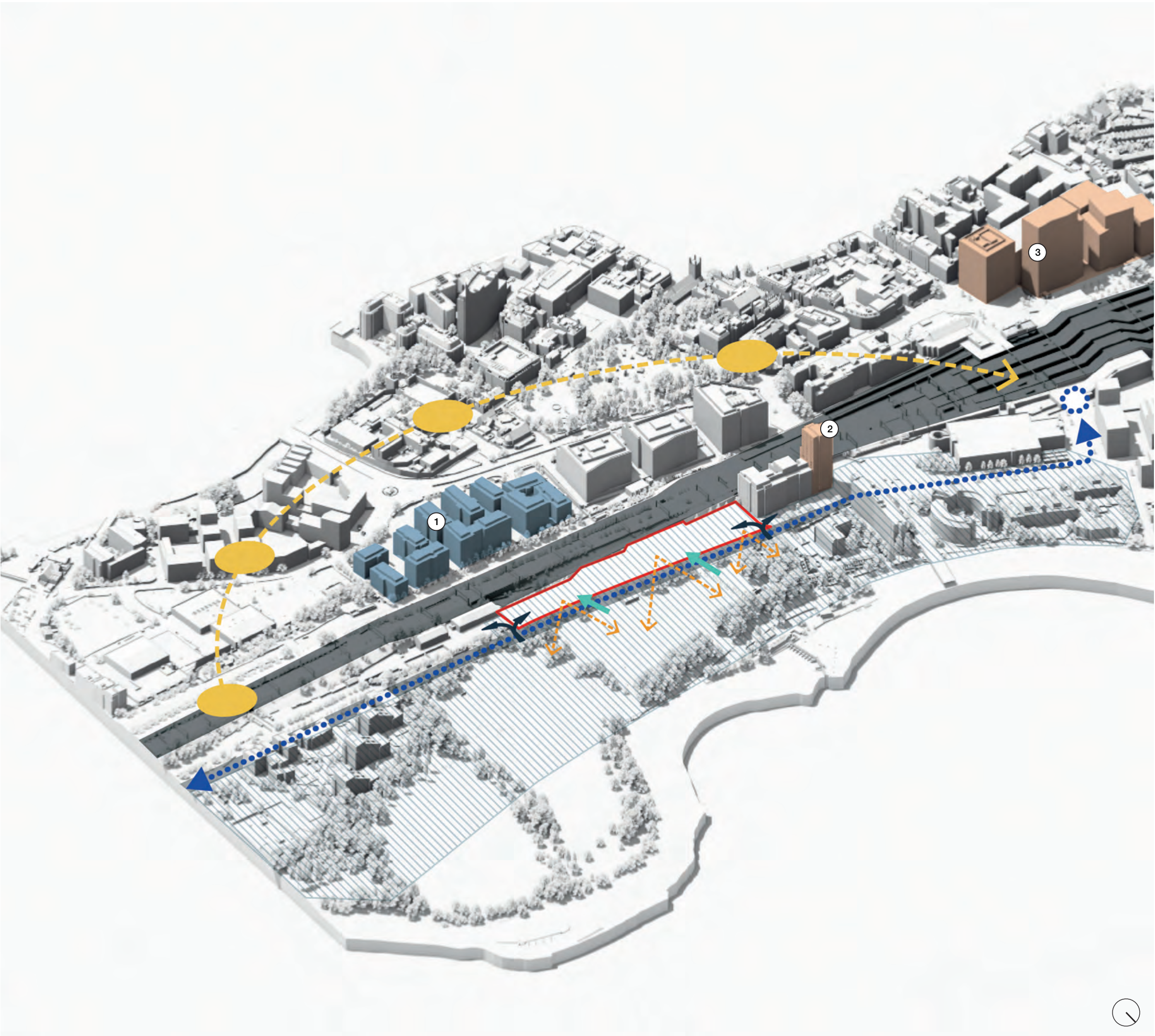
The accompanying diagrams highlight opportunities and constraints associated with the site.

- Key
- Site boundary
-
- Sun path

1

2

3



3.2 Urban Opportunities

The proposed development aims to capitalise on wider urban opportunities also.

It aims to both benefit from existing urban assets, but also reinforce their connections such as;

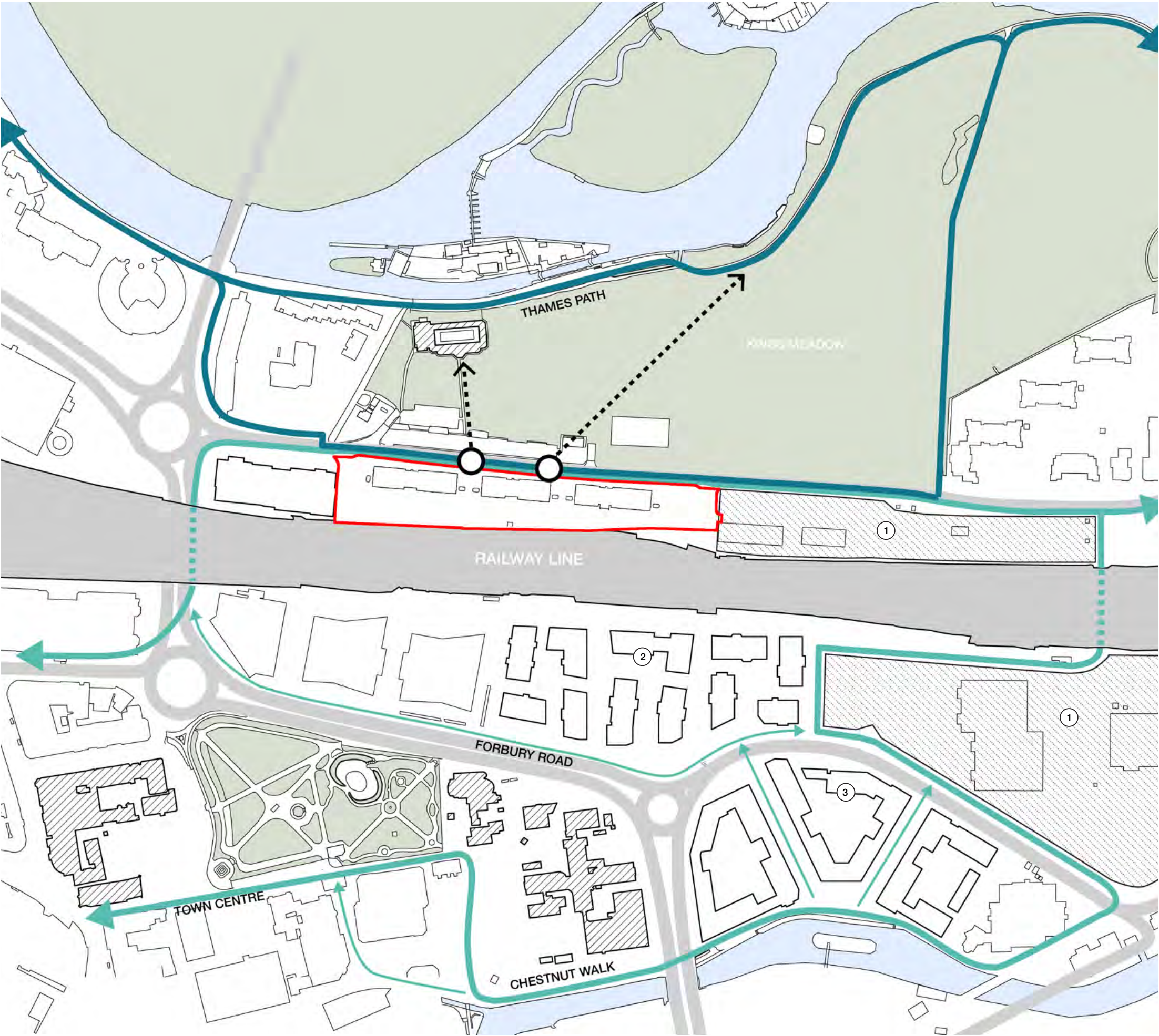
- Opportunity for new pedestrian crossing over Napier Road
- Connection with historic asset Thames Lido improving context and accessibility
- Connection across Napier Road to playground and wider Kings Meadow
- Completing an active 'leisure loop' to benefit from walking and cycling across Kings Meadow to the Thames path
- Contributing to the development corridor, creating a positive walking and cycling route to and from Kings Meadow
- Connecting the Central Reading Loop past heritage and commercial assets such as the Abbey Ruins, Forbury Gardens and the town centre shops.

This improved connectivity activated by new developments such as those proposed at Napier Court and Forbury Retail Park alongside delivered schemes such as Forbury Place, Thames Quarter and Kenavon Drive create a new destination part of Reading with existing green, blue and heritage assets at their heart.

- 1. Future Development Site
- 2. Kings Meadow View Development
- 3. Kenavon Drive Development

Key

-  Site Boundary
-  Central Loop
-  Leisure Loop
-  Potential Dynamic Connections
-  Listed Buildings

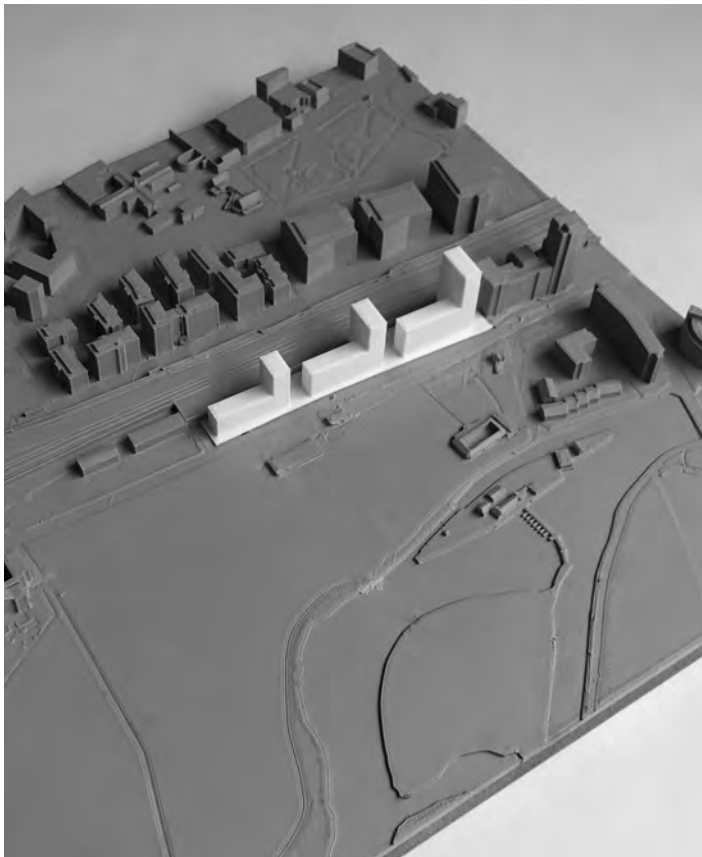
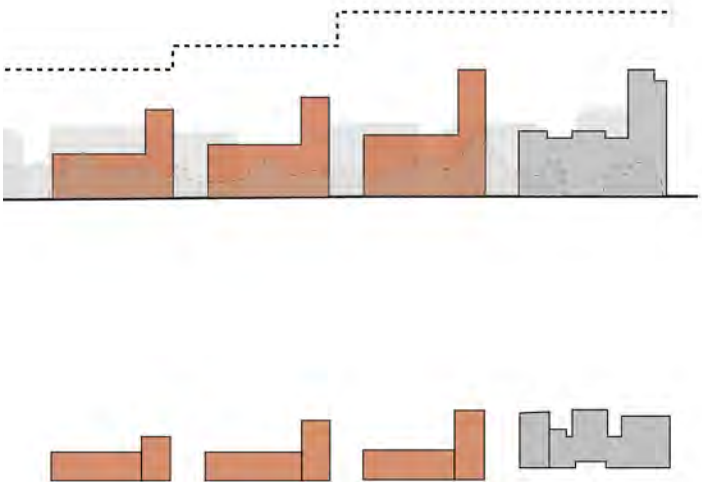


3.3 Massing Experiments

Alternative massing options were explored derived from the analysis undertaken.
A selection of these are illustrated below.

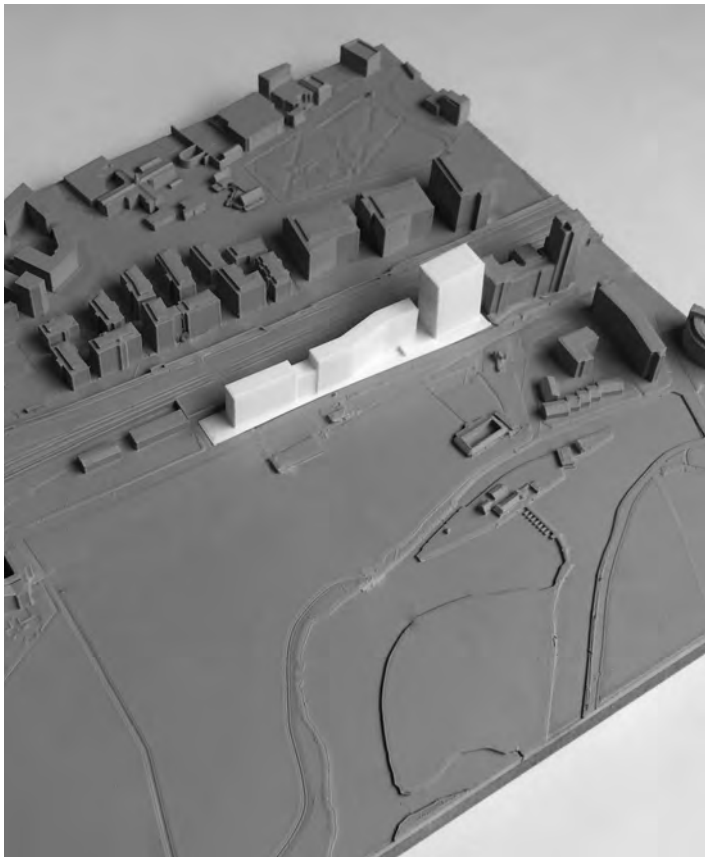
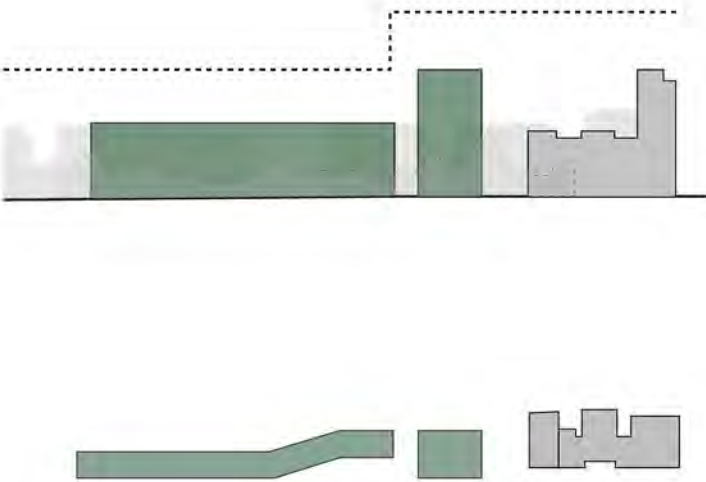
Stepped

Three buildings stepping in height from west to east utilising the established Thames Quarter high rise and low rise datums.



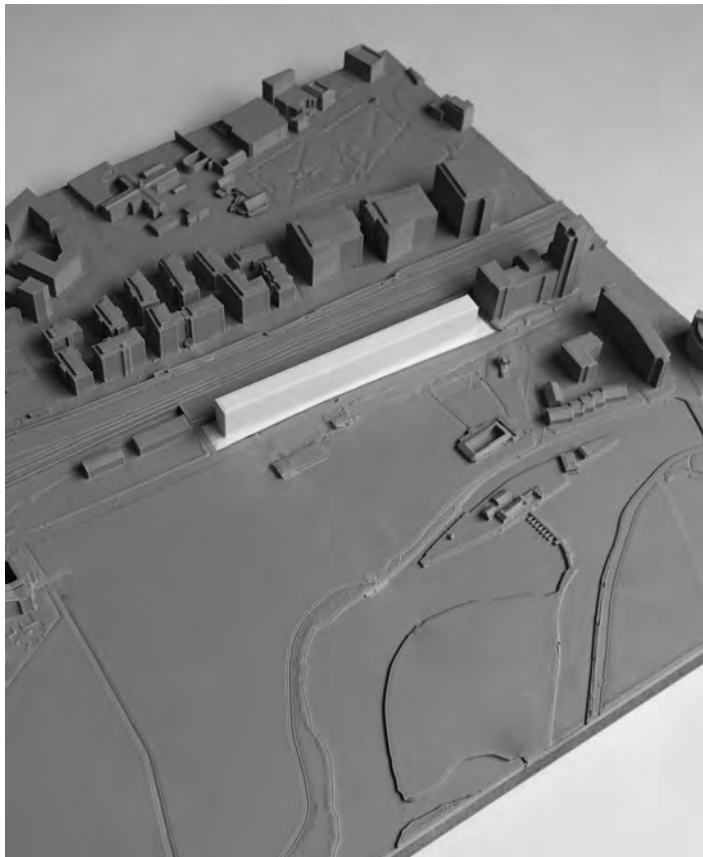
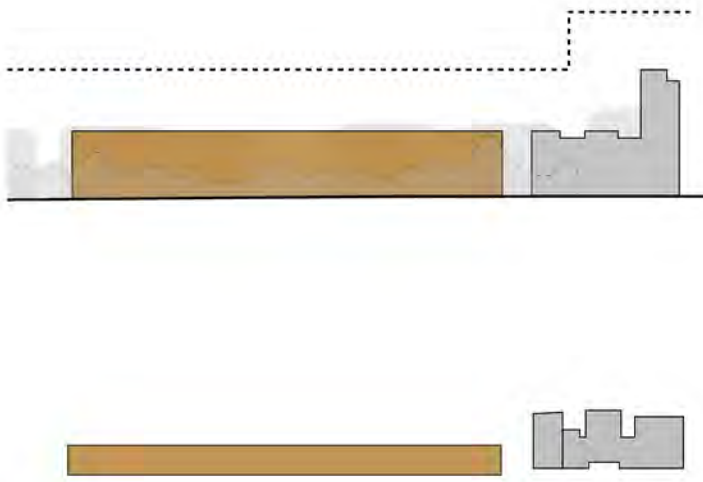
Rake + Tower

Two buildings, one more linear and cranked, the other tower-like to mimic Thames Quarter.



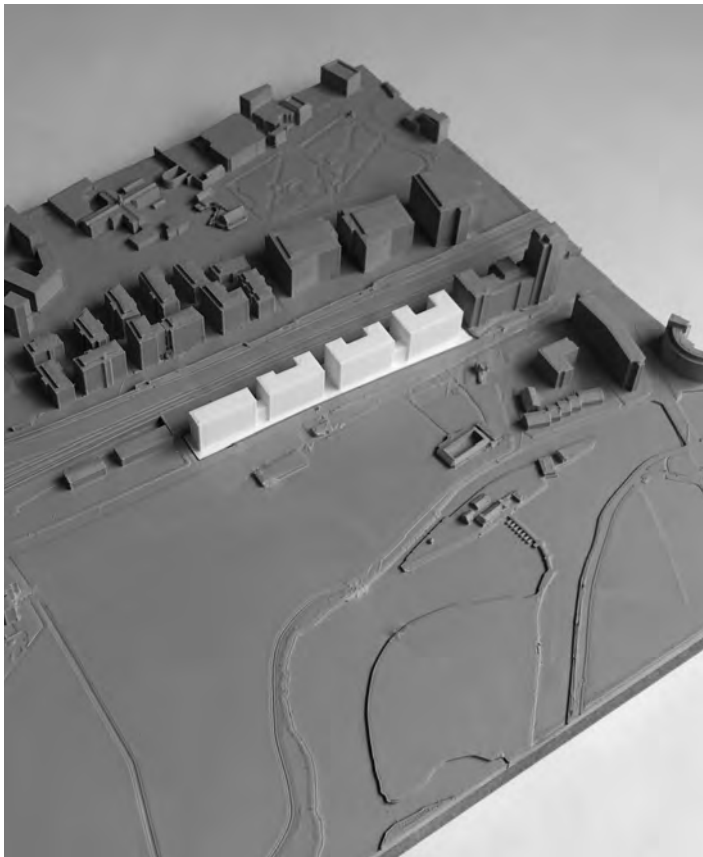
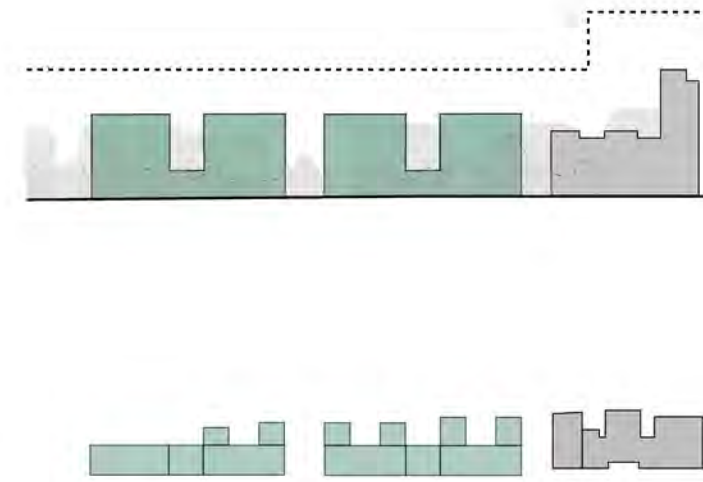
Straight

A single block in line with the 12 storey datum set by the adjacent Thames Quarter.



Mansion Block

Four connected blocks which create a frontage to Kings Meadow whilst offering variation to break up the form.



3.4 Mansion Block Typology / Building Safety Act

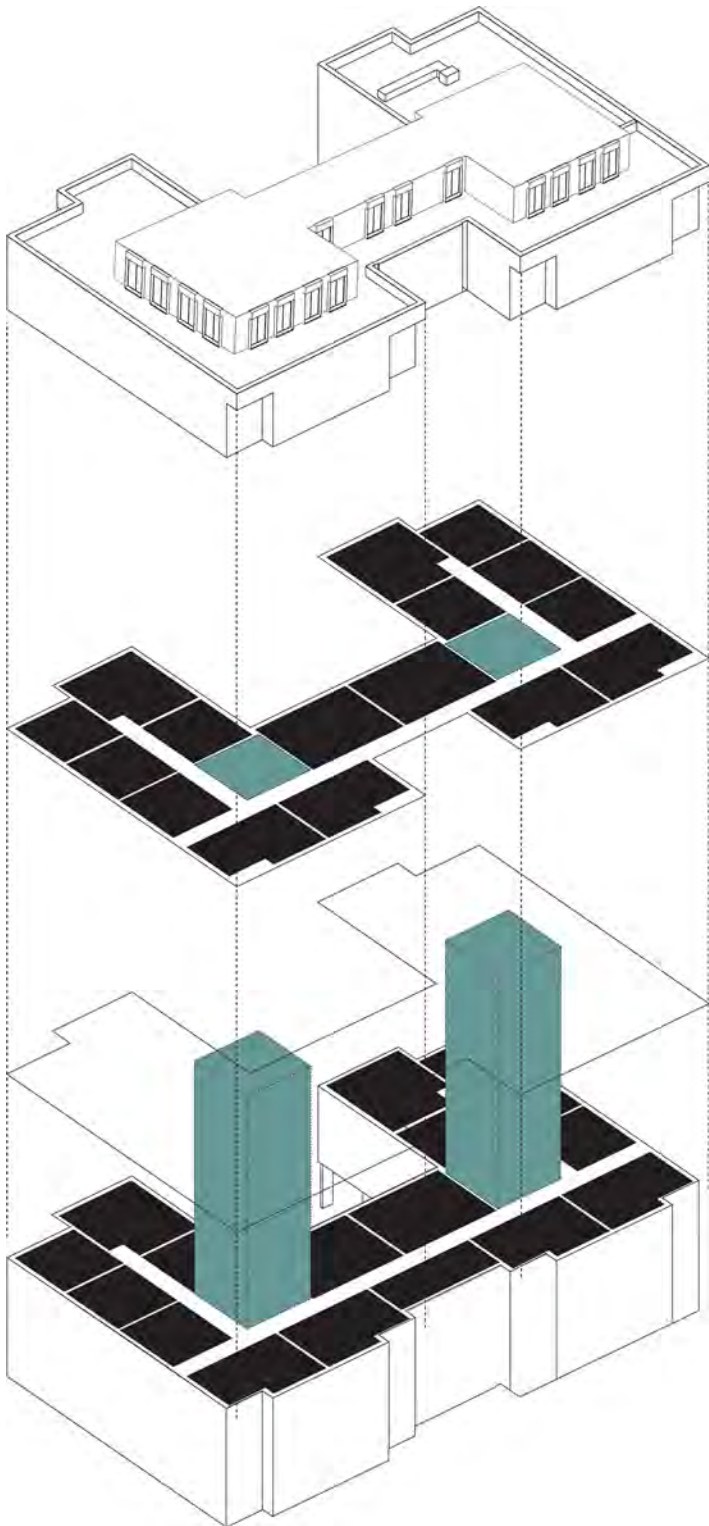
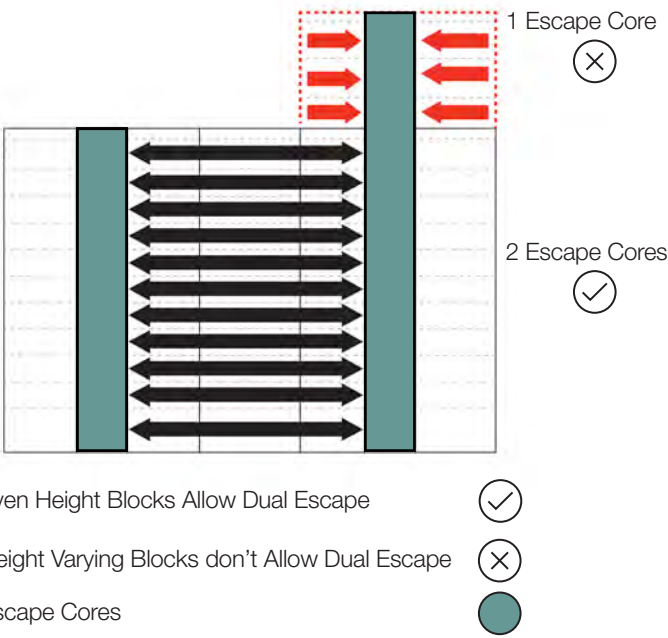
The relationship between site and Kings Meadow is a key consideration.

In approaching massing studies a mansion block typology with open green spaces has been considered the most beneficial approach and a number of renowned comparables are shown opposite.

A restrained approach to massing creating a legible and well mannered back drop to Kings Meadow is proposed, with breaks in the site length to provide visual permeability and to break down the linear mass, whilst also meeting operational and technical considerations such as building operator aspirations and meeting the requirements of the Building Safety Act in terms of escape strategy, etc.

In keeping with new approaches to fire safety and in particular escape from high rise buildings (18m +) set out under the Building Safety Act, introduced following the Grenfell tragedy, the buildings ensure that dual escape is provided to every apartment through the use of two cores.

The images and diagrams adjacent highlight how the requirements for dual escape stairs and a mansion block typology in particular lend themselves to the context of major parkland settings with a regularity and uniformity of massing.



One Hyde Park, London – RSHP



East Village, London – Eric Parry Architects



Brent Cross Town, London – Maccreanor Lavington



Brent Cross Town, London – Allies and Morrison



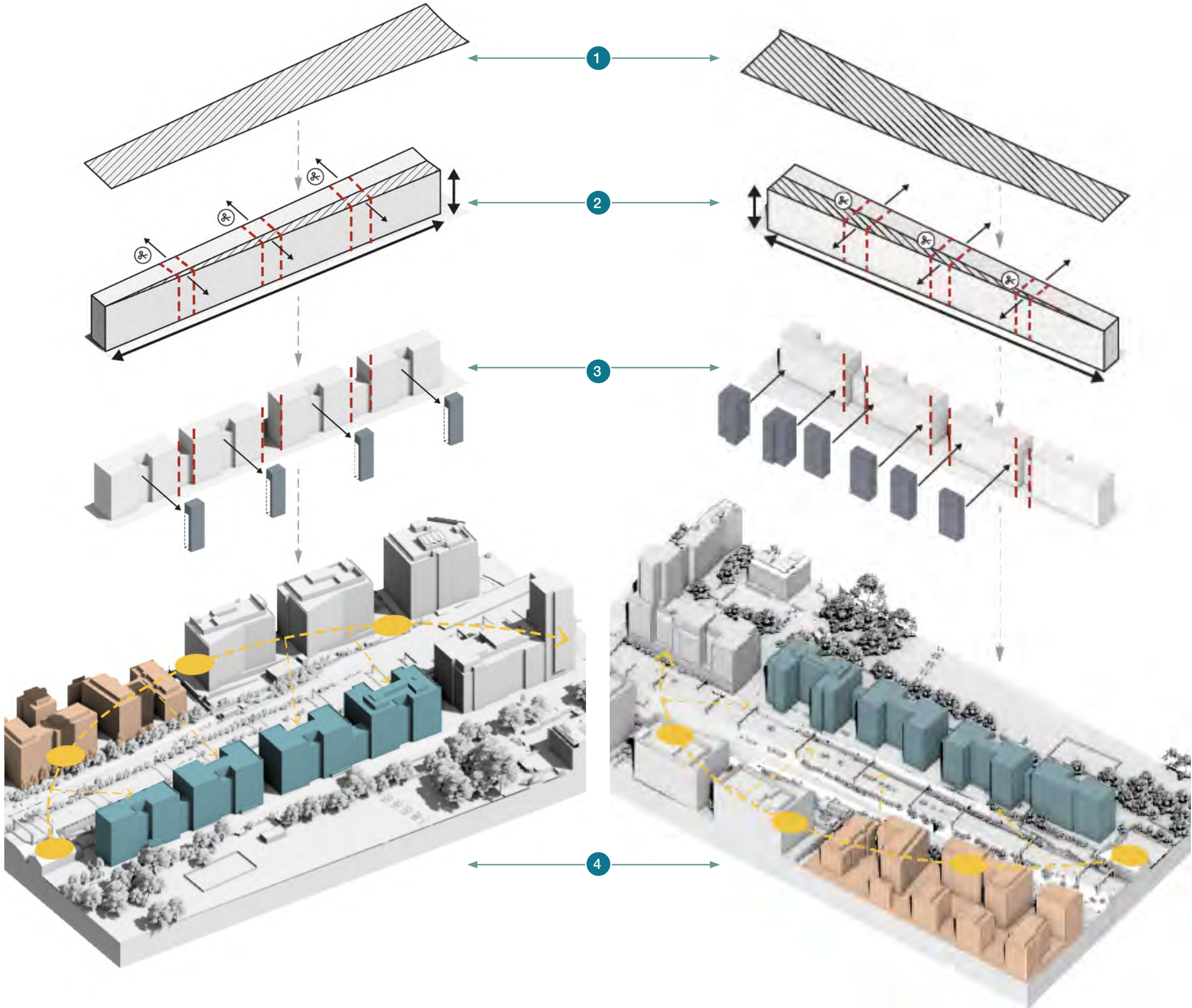
Brent Cross Town, London – Allies and Morrison



Plimsoll Building, London – David Morley Architects

3.5 Developed Massing

- 1 Establish the Footprint
- Set back from MRT safeguarding on Napier Road.
 - Route to rear adjacent railway retaining wall inspection access for Network Rail
 - Access from Napier Road
- 2 Contextual Height
- Extrude developable footprint and develop an efficient and legible arrangement
- 3 Articulate Massing
- Redistribute massing to capitalise on developable plot
 - Create visual permeability between blocks but maintain connectivity for escape strategy and residential community
 - Common language across the blocks creating a legible frontage to Kings Meadow and the railway
 - Efficiency of blocks in repetition and appropriate scale
- 4 Appropriate Massing
- Massing better relates to established scale of neighbouring developments at Thames Quarter and Forbury Road offices
 - Knits in with proposed massing for Kenavon Drive developments and Forbury Retail Quarter proposals
 - Creates south facing common space for residential amenity whilst maintaining access



3.6 Relationship with Kings Meadow

Kings Meadow is identified as part of the Thames Valley Major Landscape Feature and a Local Green Space.

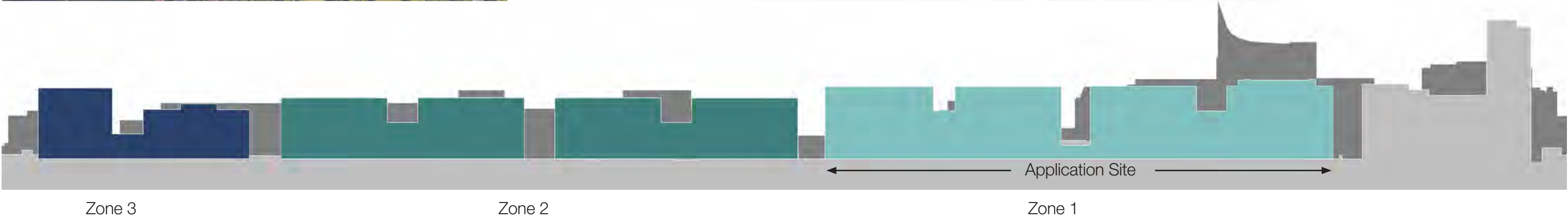
There are three distinct character areas to Kings Meadow within the context of Napier Court defined by the treelined paths which intersect the space from north to south and create a form of separation between the grass areas.

The Napier Court site primarily addresses Zone 1 and the adjacent Network Rail site (remainder of CR11i policy site) addresses Zones 2 and Zone 3.

Kings Meadow comprises mainly open fields of short grass right up to the river bank, with some perimeter trees.

The playing fields are used by football clubs throughout the season and for annual fireworks displays and a beer festival.

Kings Meadow has potential to become a thriving green space that makes a positive connection with the river, towpath and town centre.



3.7 Developed Massing Context

Modelling shows how the CR11i policy area could be developed stepping down from west to east from Thames Quarter (west) to Luscinia View (east). The stepped form of the building reflects the adjacencies with the context of Luscinia View and different zones of Kings Meadow created by tree lines and open expanses of fields to the river.

Massing would be proposed to step relative to these adjacencies reading as a restrained backdrop to Kings Meadow with visual permeability to the established and emerging townscape to the south of the railway.

A final building marking the route from Napier Road to Forbury Road could rise to a contextual height with Luscinia View, helping to act as a landmark building setting up a relationship with Kenavon Drive and a potential route through to the Kennet.

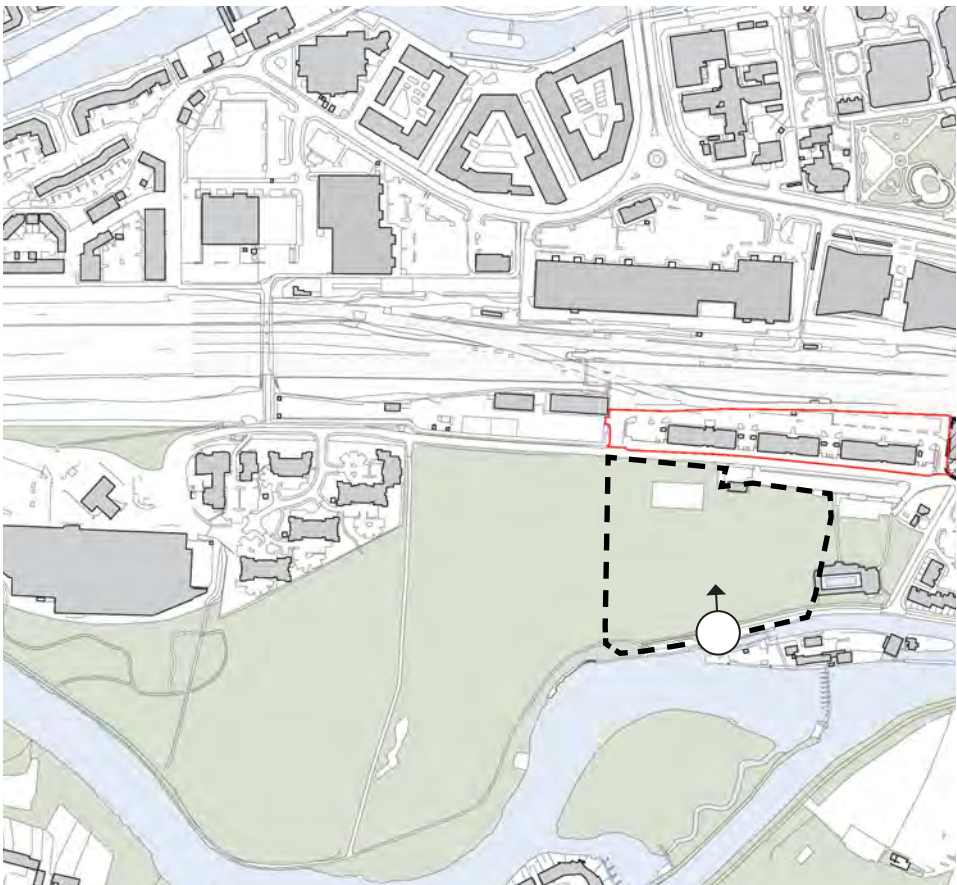
- 1 Thames Quarter
- 2 Napier Court
- 3 Network Rail Site (could step down from Napier Court in accordance with policy)
- 4 Focal building to mark alternative pedestrian route back to the town centre
- 5 Luscinia View Apartments (4-11 storeys)
- 6 Completing the Leisure Route
- 7 Completing the Central Route



3.8 Visual Relationship from Kings Meadow

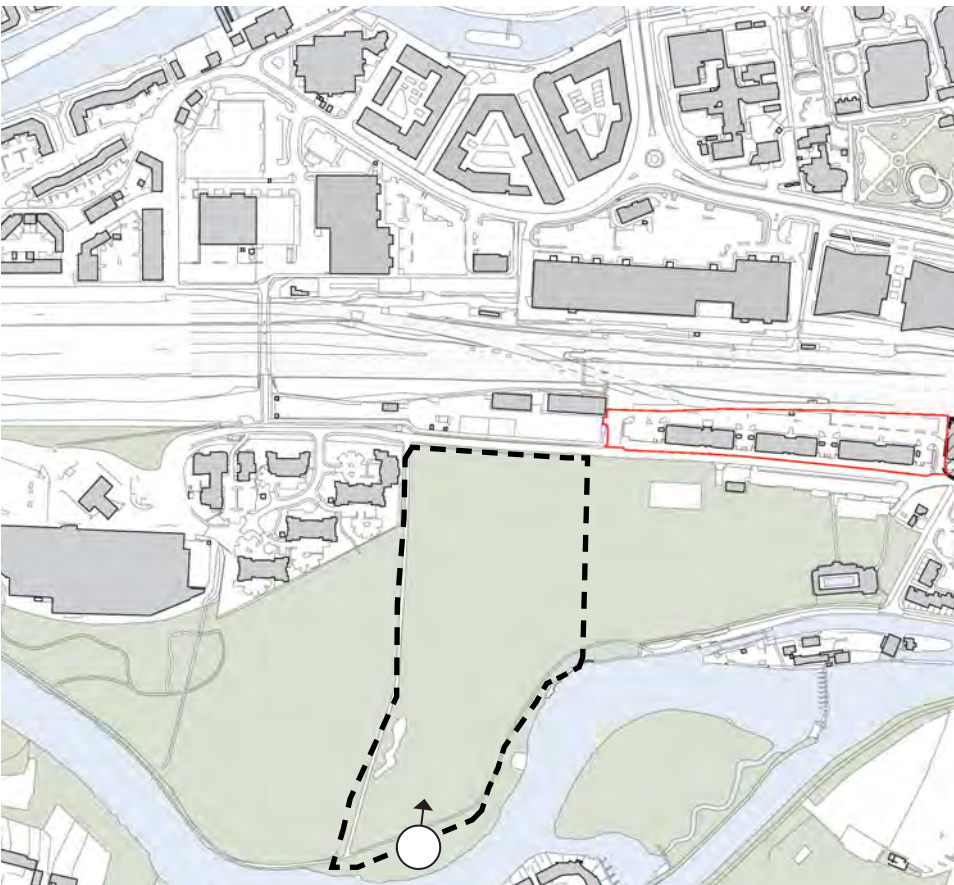
Zone 1

View from towpath adjacent to Thames Lido showing consistency of massing (area 1)



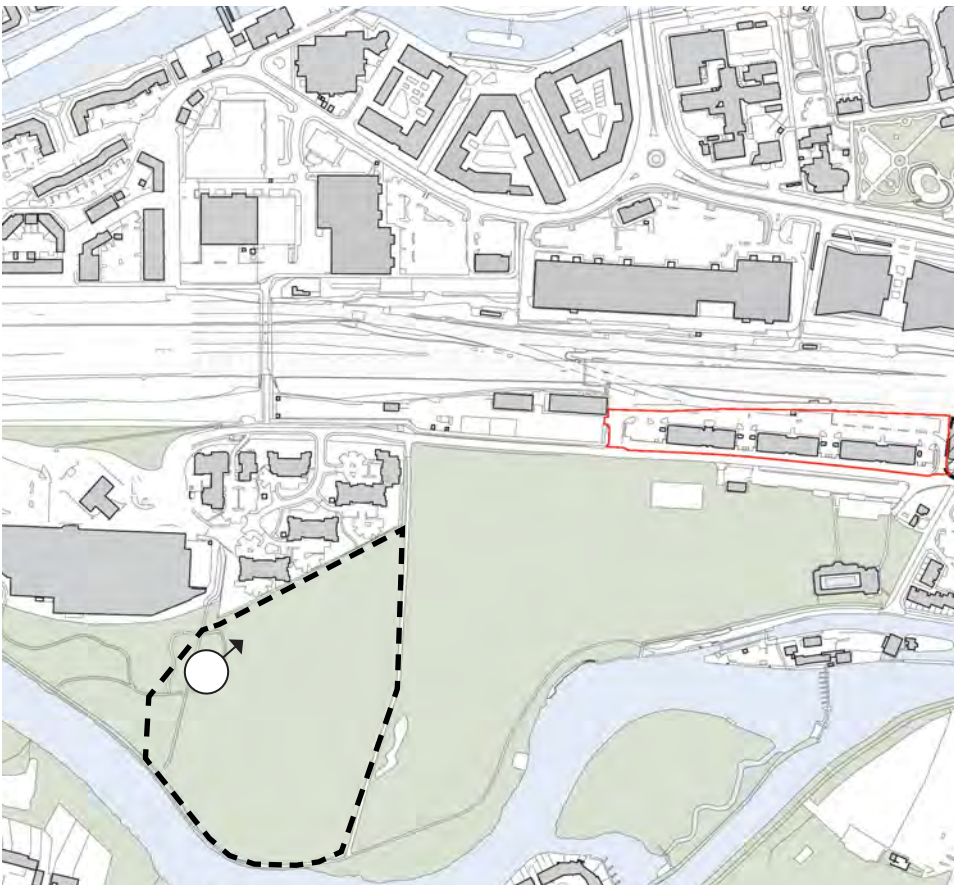
Zone 2

View from path illustrating stepping nature of massing relative to interface with Kings Meadow (areas 1 and 2)



Zone 3

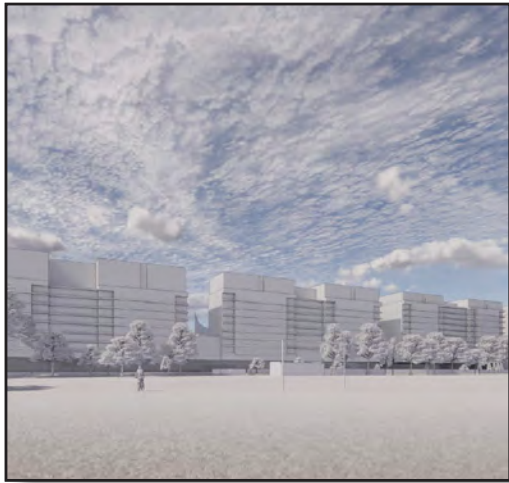
View from to the rear of Luscinia View illustrating stepping relative to interface with Kings Meadow (areas 1 to 3)



3.9 Design Development Town Planning Consultation Overview



1
Pre-App Meeting 01 - April 2023



2
Pre-App Meeting 02 - April 2023



3
Pre-App Meeting 04 - May 2023



5
Design Review Panel - July 2023



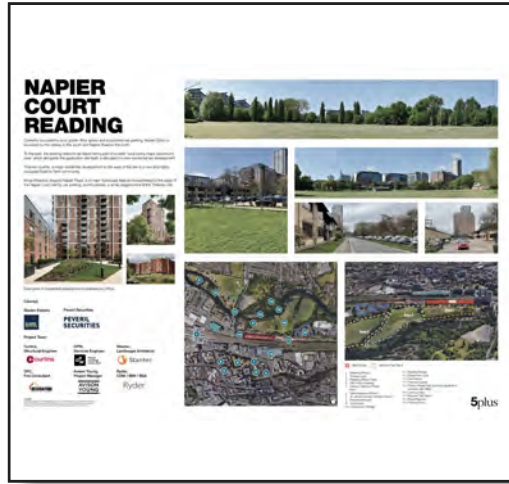
4
Pre-App Meeting 04 - May 2023



6
Pre-App Meeting 05 - August 2023



7
Pre-App Meeting 06 - October 2023



8
Public Consultation - November 2023

The scheme has been presented and reviewed as part of a series of design consultation meetings. This has assisted in the development of the scheme to incorporate planning, public and peer review feedback.

This process has included a series of pre-app meetings with Reading Borough Council's planning department between April 2023 and November 2023; a Design Review Panel which was held with Design South East in July 2023; and a Public Consultation which was held in early November 2023 in the neighbouring Thames Lido.

The following section aims to outline what was presented at each of these meetings and identify the key points of discussion between the attendees. At the end of this section is a summary of the major items of discussion with key design responses that have been incorporated into the scheme.

3.10 Design Development

Pre-Application Consultation Meetings

Pre Application Meeting 01 - 20th April 2023

The scheme concept design proposals were first presented to Reading Borough Council planning officers in April 2023. The presentation sought to outline the initial work that had been developed so far.

The presentation included key metrics which formed the brief of the project and included figures like accessibility provision, affordability provision, targeted sustainability criteria, amenity provision, proposed accommodation mix, space standards for apartments, outline fire strategy requirements, and EV provision amongst others.

Early research highlighting opportunities and constraints were presented which started to allow some early concept first-moves to be made for the development. The architectural vision for the mansion block typology as an appropriate formal approach to Kings Meadow was discussed.

Early plans and imagery were shown of the development at that stage to help visualise the massing.

The key topics of discussion are summarised as below:

1. The importance of the relationship to Kings Meadow was a key talking point and the importance of the height and massing being appropriate for both Kings Meadow and the building itself.
2. The requirement for stepping across the whole of Napier Road was referenced as part of this wider massing discussion.
3. The articulation of the massing was discussed with regard to the stepping to break down the mass and offer up views between the blocks.

Pre Application Meeting 02 - 28th April 2023

The second pre-app meeting was also held in April 2023. The key change to the scheme following on from the first meeting was the height reduction from 44m and 13 Storeys to 41m and 12 storeys. This resulted in a reduction in the number of apartments from 641 to 606.

The scheme visuals started to show development in the scheme articulation to offer stepping from Thames Quarter to the adjacent Network Rail site. The visuals also started to articulate the use of balconies and horizontal stepping to break down the mass.

The key topics of discussion were largely similar to the first meeting. The focus was the importance of the relationship with Kings Meadow and providing a designed solution which had a well considered and appropriate building with a positive impact on the Local Green Space.

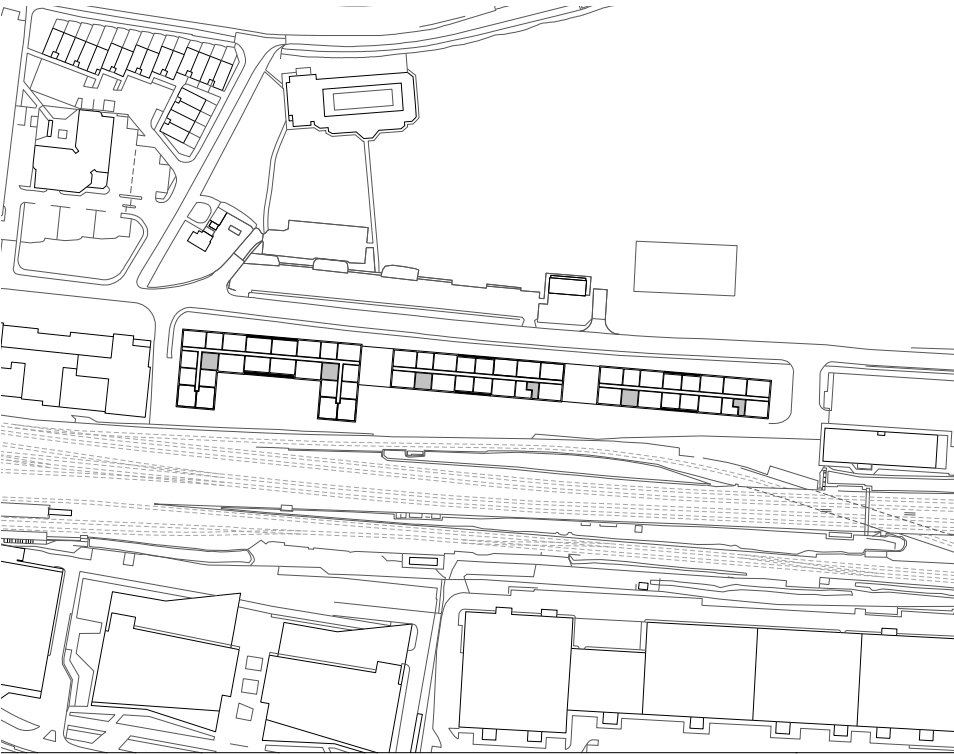
Pre-App Meeting 01

Gross Internal Area
56,091sqm

Height in Metres and Storeys
44m and 13 Storeys

Unit Total
641

Amenity %
5.1%



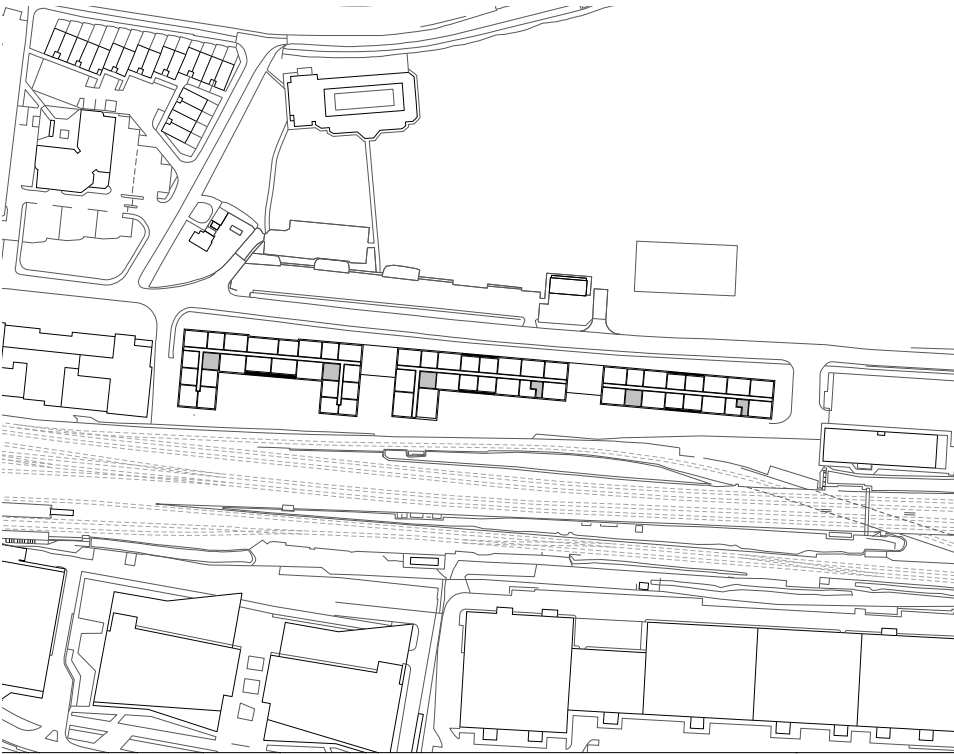
Pre-App Meeting 02

Gross Internal Area
53,095sqm

Height
41m and 12 Storeys

Unit Total
606

Amenity %
4.1%



3.11 Design Development

Pre-Application Consultation Meetings

The third pre-app meeting was a short discussion on the important viewpoints around the site particularly from Kings Meadow with the intention of suggesting and agreeing verified views for the development. The meeting did not include any design discussion relevant for this narrative summary, therefore, it has only been briefly mentioned in this section.

Pre-Application Meeting 04 - 11th May 2023

In the fourth pre-app meeting the proposals had developed in a number of ways as summarised below.

The form of the building had been broken into four blocks rather than three. This helps the northern frontage as follows :

- It visually helps to break down the mass, firstly because there are generally more breaks through, but secondly as these breaks are more meaningful providing clearer views through to the south of the railway.
- It also allows more dual aspect apartments facing in the direction of Kings Meadow and river which increases the value of those spaces for residents.
- It increases the number of balconies, which also helps to break down the mass by 'softening' the corners and providing a break to the regularity of the facade.

The complete breaking of mass between blocks B and C helps to create openness at the ground floor with the introduction of an open 'pocket park'.

The eastern-most block of apartments is shown stepping down towards the east and to the adjacent Network Rail site. This Network Rail site is part of the same policy area with the same policy requirements.

The scheme at this pre-app meeting was presented with two different massing options. These two options varied in height, with one shown as 12 storeys at 599 apartments, the second at 11 storeys with 532 apartments.

The discussion centred on the same key topics. These included the relationship with Kings Meadow, height, massing and articulation. Generally the changes from three blocks to four, the introduction of the central pocket park and clearer separation between blocks were perceived as positive changes.

The discussion on overall height and general tapering across the wider Napier Road policy area from west to east progressed. It was agreed that a peer review to comment on these aspects of the proposal would be appropriate and the Design Review Panel was organised.

Pre-App Meeting 04

Gross Internal Area
56,049sqm

Height and Storeys
41m and 12 storeys

Unit Total
599

Amenity %
4.9



Pre-App Meeting 04

Gross Internal Area
50,469sqm

Height and Storeys
38m and 11 storeys

Unit Total
532

Amenity %
4.8%



3.12 Design Development

Design Review Panel

Design Review Panel - 31st July 2023

The scheme was presented to Design South East, the Design Review Panel (DRP), in July 2023. The review included a guided walk around the site and neighbouring Kings Meadow. The site walkaround was proceeded by a formal presentation, with a summary as per below:

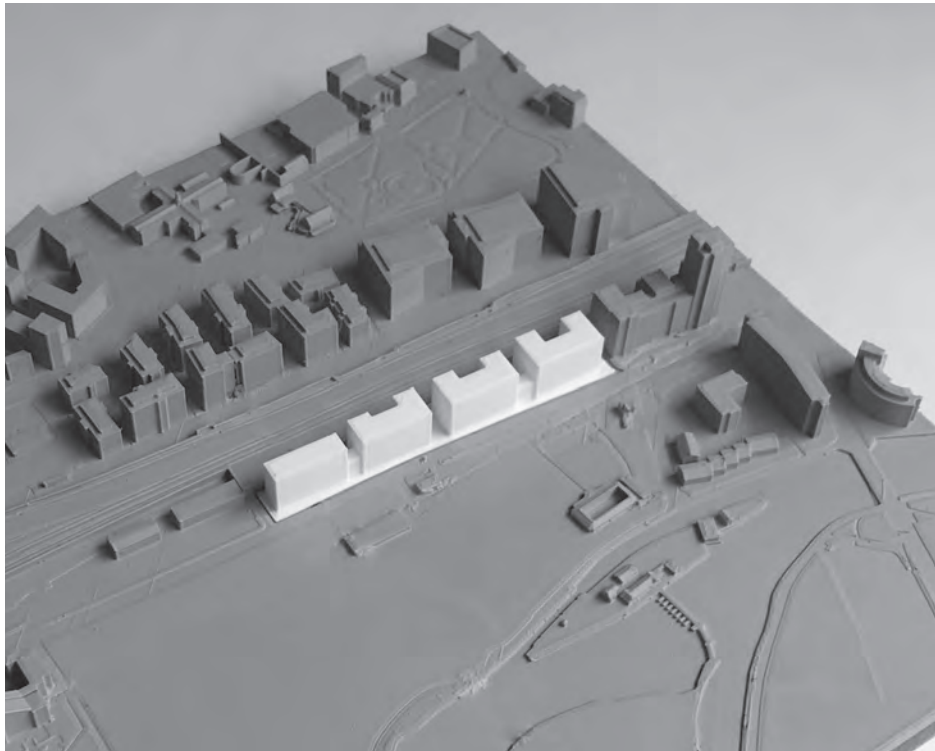
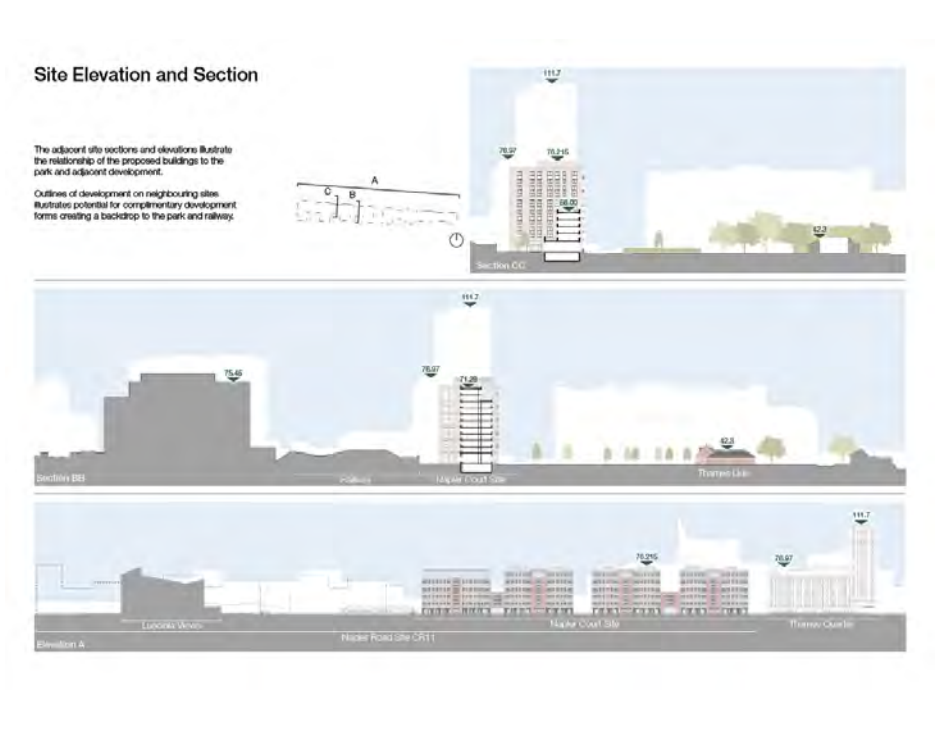
- Site research, analysis, identifying opportunities and constraints.
- Design development, which included a narrative on the massing and articulation particularly towards Kings Meadow.
- Summary of concept design from a large massing scale.
- Landscape proposals, including pocket park, rear courtyards and potential improvements to Kings Meadow focussing on improvement of the ground floor interface.
- Development of appearance, which included bay study, materiality and architectural detail experimentation.
- Proposal of design in its current form including bay studies, materiality and architectural details.

To note, the scheme had developed from pre-app meeting 04, with key changes as follows:

- A basement had been introduced to move the parking and service allocation from ground floor.
- Ground floor was now populated with apartments and each rear courtyard was a landscaped courtyard.
- The scheme remained at 11 storeys of residential accommodation with a plant and amenity level above.

A summary of points of discussion is summarised below:

- Generally the massing in relationship to the Kings Meadow was considered to be appropriate. However a little more articulation through materiality and detailing could improve its perception.
- Consider alternative brick colours and tones
- A positive response to the architectural detailing of the main three blocks. However the fourth block, which had been developed with a slightly different style, should be reconsidered to derive a similar form to the others.
- Generally the Panel were against the introduction of the basement mainly due to the embodied carbon implication.
- Preference from the Panel for cycle facilities over car parking facilities with the possible introduction of a car club.
- Positive response to the retention of a number of trees within the site.
- Strongly supportive of the integration with Kings Meadow and utilisation of the Local Green Space for external amenity as opposed to compromised rear landscape areas.



3.13 Design Development

Pre-Application Consultation Meetings

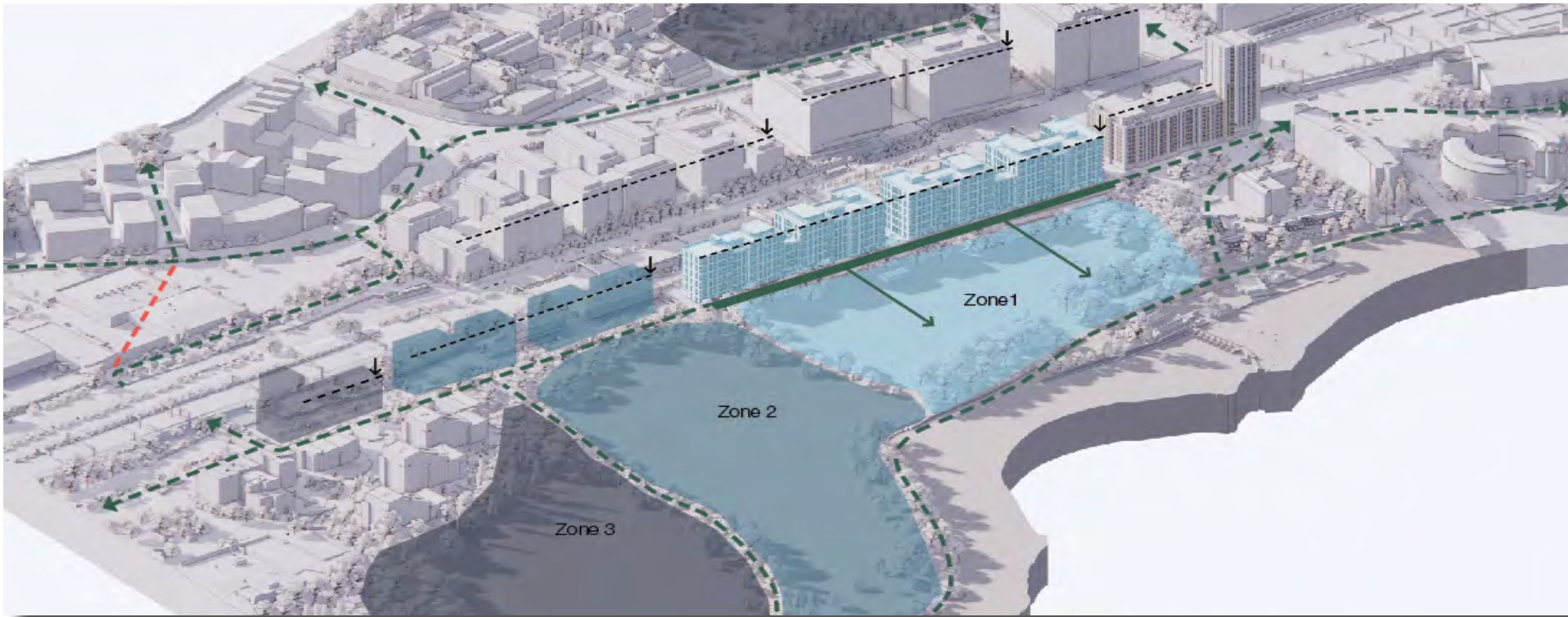
Pre-Application Meeting 05 - 24th August 2023

The fifth pre-app consultation meeting took place in August 2023 following on from the DRP consultation. As a result of that consultation, the scheme implemented a number of changes. The key comments taken on board from the DRP and subsequent changes made are summarised below:

- The basement was reduced in size to accommodate only the sprinkler and domestic cold water facilities. The car parking, back of house and parking facilities have been reintroduced to ground floor.
- The central 'pocket park' has been retained as a positive aspect of the scheme. However one of the rear courtyards has had to be removed as a result of the car parking relocation.
- Block D was reinterpreted to provide a closer resemblance to the other three blocks, reinforcing the idea of a well mannered Mansion Block typology facing Kings Meadow.
- Further consideration and development was incorporated into the facade detailing to help articulate the frontage further, which ultimately can help to break down the perception of mass from Kings Meadow.
- Prior to the DRP the total number of apartments within the scheme was 581. Relocation of the car parking from the basement resulted in a loss of apartments. Some of these were recouped through revisions to the heights of the infill elements of the buildings so that 570 apartments could be provided.

Discussion at the fifth pre-app consultation meeting focused on the relationship with Kings Meadow with two key points of discussion, one being building height and the second being the desired stepping from west to east along the wider Napier Road policy area. It was discussed that the Mansion Block typology is typified by its rhythmic consistency in height, and suggesting that the stepping could happen further to the east.

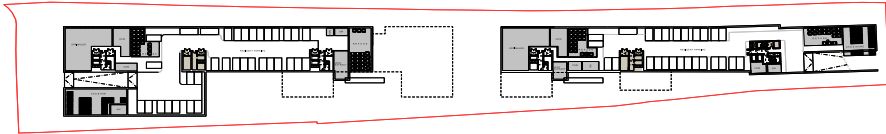
Although generally aligned on most scheme principles such as parking, sustainability, space allocation, architectural detailing, landscape; the matter of building height still remained an ongoing discussion.



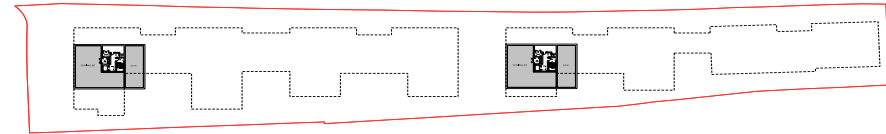
Prior to DRP Design Consultation



After DRP Design Consultation - Block 4 reinterpreted to maintain continuity with other blocks



Prior to DRP Design Consultation



After DRP Design Consultation - Removal of the majority of the basement to reduce Embodied Carbon

3.14 Design Development

Pre-Application Consultation Meetings

Pre-Application Meeting 06 - 10th October 2023

The sixth and final pre-app design consultation with Reading planning officers took place in October 2023 shortly before the Public Consultation.

The scheme had remained at 11 storeys of residential accommodation with a single storey above of plant and amenity. The main change to the scheme was the detail of the facade and materiality.

Finer detail features such as window shrouds, metal cladding panel strips and an increased range of brickwork have been introduced to help bolster the overall articulation. These newly introduced features along with the balcony details and alternating form are all developed to help break down the mass, particularly from the Kings Meadow viewpoints.

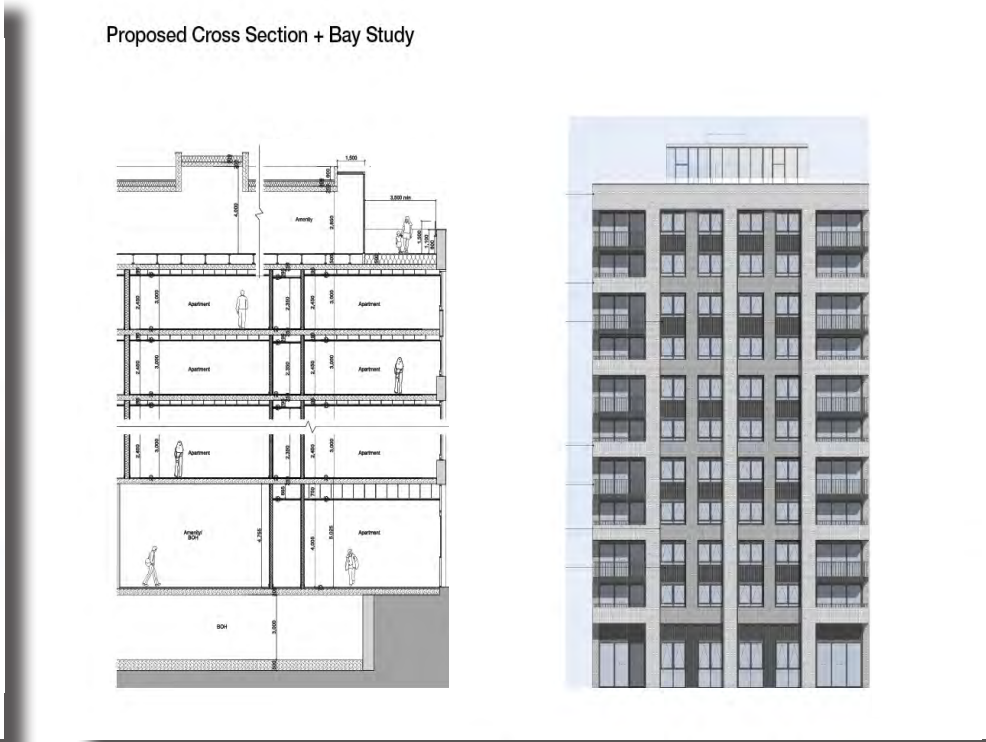
On a more human scale, detailing and texture of the facades at close and medium range views helped to articulate the form and provide interest alongside a landscaped street scene with additional street trees to provide visual connectivity with the Kings Meadow.



Articulated Elevations and Coordinated Landscape



Street Scene Elevation



Typical Bay Setting Out



Kings Meadow Long View

3.15 Design Development Public Consultation

A Public Consultation event was organised in November 2023 and held in the Thames Lido.

A number of presentation boards (illustrated adjacent) set out the proposal. The event was hosted by members of the design and planning teams and attended by local councillors, local residents and others.

A full detailed summary of feedback and points of discussion are summarised in the Statement of Community Involvement prepared by CarneySweeney and submitted to accompany the application.

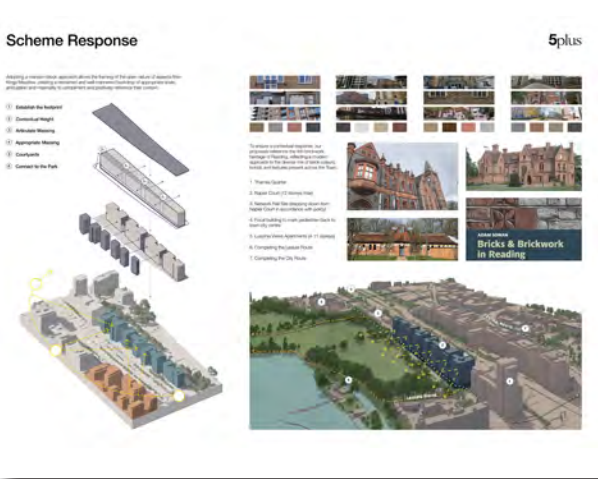
The approach to massing, materiality and landscape was broadly welcomed with some comments around car parking, access and design approach discussed.



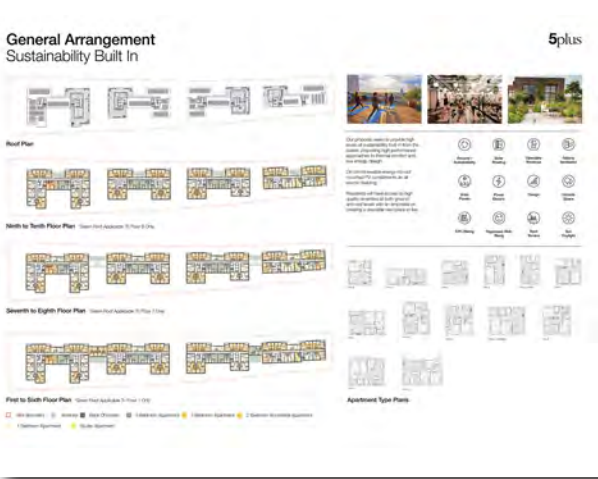
Public Consultation at Thames Lido



Public Consultation Board 01



Public Consultation Board 04



Public Consultation Board 07



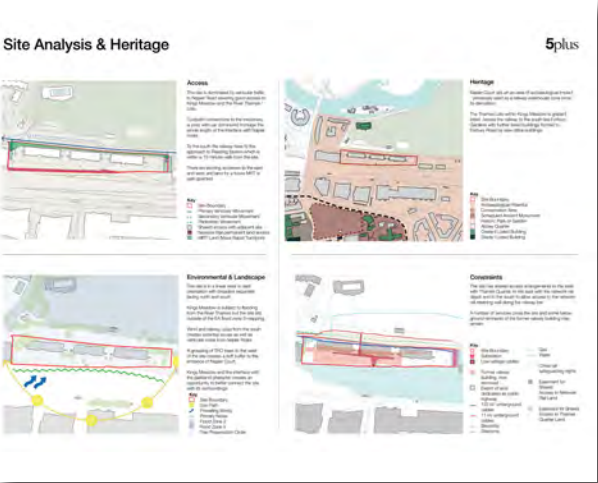
Public Consultation Board 02



Public Consultation Board 05



Public Consultation Board 08



Public Consultation Board 03



Public Consultation Board 06



Public Consultation Board 09

3.16 Post-Consultation

Design Changes after Consultation

The consultations concluded in November 2023 with the Public Consultation. Following this, the scheme has incorporated several design changes which are largely a response to feedback during this process.

Basement

The basement has been removed in the proposed scheme, this was one of the main topics of discussion at the Design Review Panel, with the main argument being the embodied carbon impact of the additional work and material. The decision was made to remove the basement and bring up all the services to ground floor level.

Roof Terraces

The roof terraces have been removed from Blocks B, C and D (still remain on Block A). There were lengthy discussions throughout the consultation process about height and the desire for stepping across the site. This design decision to remove the sky lounges, terraces and cores from the roof level helps to reduce the height of the building and therefore visual impact on the surrounding park.

Covered Building Link

The pocket park has had a covered walkway added to connect the two buildings. The structure will be a light metal structure, open on both side with mesh and climbers. This allows connectivity between the two blocks to allowing staff or residents to move between buildings without getting wet if it's raining.

Car Club Parking Spaces

The Car Club parking spaces which were previously shown in front of the main entrances to the two buildings have now been removed. During the Public Consultation there were several comments suggesting the design of the landscape at the front should dissuade vehicles from frequently parking at the front and cluttering the road with cars.

Feedback from Reading Council to develop alternative means of assisting residents travel through management and travel plans further informed the decision to remove these spaces on Napier Road.



Above Image: Before showing the rooftop level Sky Lounges and Terrace



Above Image: After the removal of the Sky Lounges from Blocks B, C & D.showing the rooftop Sky Lounge only on Block A

DESIGN PROPOSAL

4.1 Introduction

Overview + Design principles

The basis of the design is centred around creating a set of proposals which respond in a complementary manner to the local context in general arrangement, massing and materiality terms.

The proposals seek to create a high quality destination building for residents with a proportionate and well ordered aspect towards Kings Meadow.

The buildings respond to environmental factors such as noise, sun path and wind with opportunities for enhancing the local context optimised wherever possible.

A rational approach to the massing creates a coherent and legible datum with neighbouring properties and creates an appropriate mansion block typology to the expansive open space of Kings Meadow.



4.2 Introduction

Use + Amount

The buildings are arranged across four blocks (Blocks A to D from west to east) with a central external amenity space in between.

To the south, access to 39 car parking spaces (39 EV charging), 6 motorcycle spaces and up to 289 cycle spaces within designated areas is created.

The residential proposals cumulatively create 576 new dwellings in a quantum / mix as follows:

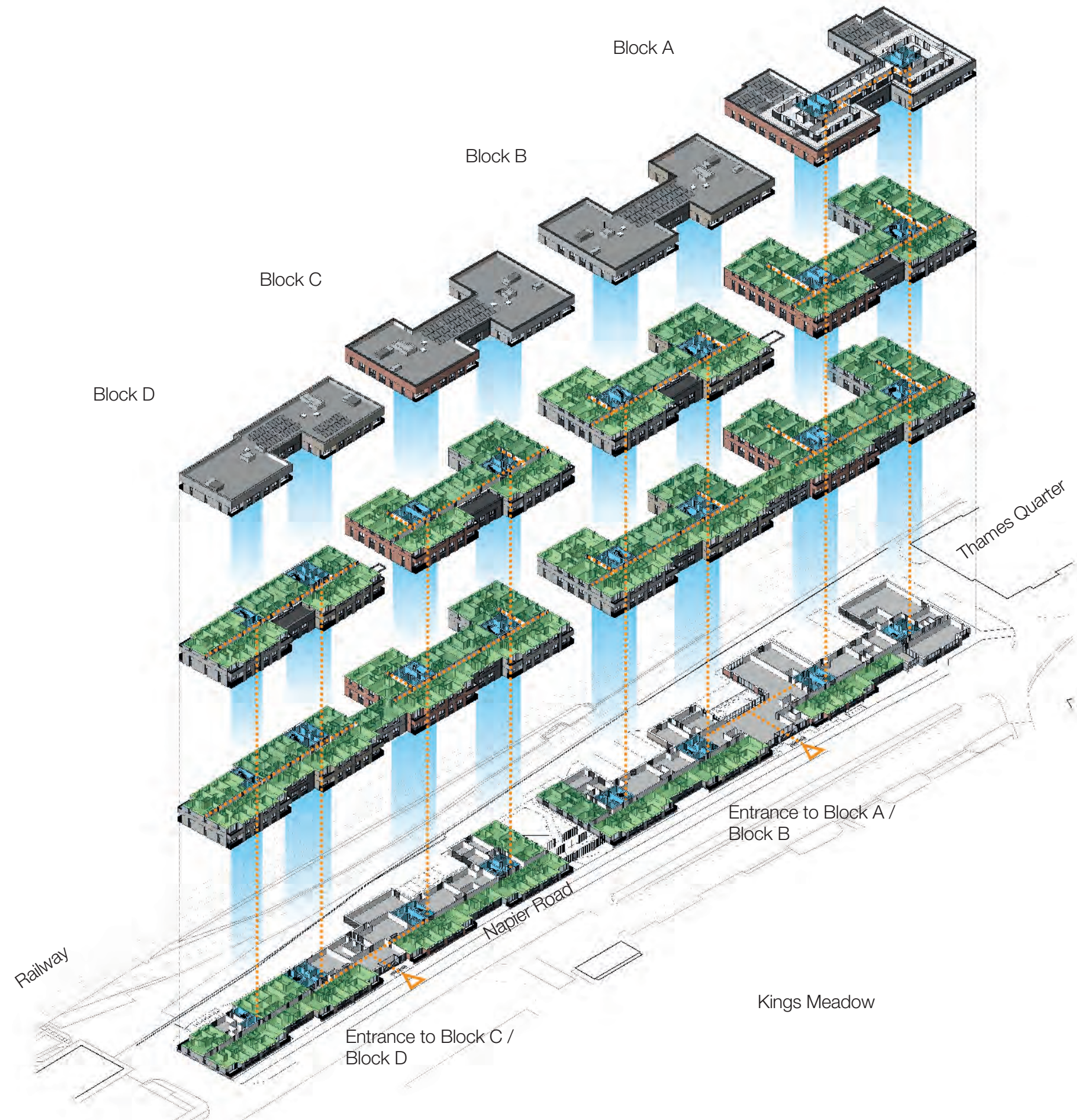
- 56 x 3B5P apartments / (10% of total)
- 309 x 2B4P apartments / (53% of total)
- 211 x 1B2P apartments / (37% of total)

A total GIA of circa 52, 544sqm makes up the four blocks. There is space for circa 37, 935sqm of net internal space (a 72% efficiency) with a total internal amenity space of circa 1,123sqm (representing circa 2.96% of the total net internal space) arranged across ground and roof level.

Ancillary space for plant, cores, circulation and support space take up the remainder of the GIFA.

Each block benefits from dual escape stairs and access to evacuation lifts to aid an improved fire escape strategy.

At roof level, space for solar PV arrays is maximised wherever possible to optimise renewable energy provision.



4.3 General Arrangement Masterplan Ground Floor Site Plan

The adjacent plan indicates the ground floor of the scheme in context of the landscape strategy and the red line boundary.

- Site Plan Key:

1

Building Entrances

2

Retained Existing Trees

3

Courtyard Garden

4

Parking Courtyards

5

Pocket Park

6

Proposed Pedestrian / Cycle Route

Amenity Space

Plant Space

Green Roof

1 Bed Apartment

1 Bed Apartment Accessible

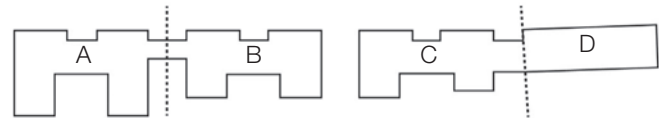
2 Bed Apartment

2 Bed Apartment Accessible

3 Bed Apartment
-
- The adjacent plan indicates the ground floor of the scheme in context of the landscape strategy and the red line boundary.
- 5plus
- 43
- Napier Court Reading

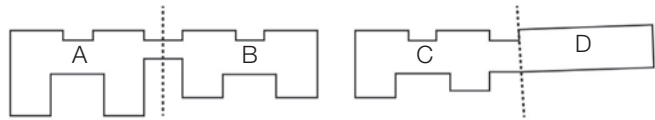
4.4 General Arrangement Masterplan First Floor Site Plan

- Amenity Space
- Plant Space
- Green Roof
- 1 Bed Apartment
- 1 Bed Apartment Accessible
- 2 Bed Apartment
- 2 Bed Apartment Accessible
- 3 Bed Apartment



4.5 General Arrangement Masterplan Second to Sixth Floor Site Plan

- Amenity Space
- Plant Space
- Green Roof
- 1 Bed Apartment
- 1 Bed Apartment Accessible
- 2 Bed Apartment
- 2 Bed Apartment Accessible
- 3 Bed Apartment



4.6 General
Arrangement
Masterplan
Seventh to Eighth Floor
Site Plan



- Amenity Space
- Plant Space
- Green Roof
- 1 Bed Apartment
- 1 Bed Apartment Accessible
- 2 Bed Apartment
- 2 Bed Apartment Accessible
- 3 Bed Apartment

