

5.0 Design

5.1 Use and Amount

Use

This application includes a change of use from B1 offices to C3 residential use class. The site has been vacant and marketed for office to rent and for sale for over 1 year without attracting any serious interest for its existing use. Our aim is to bring the building back into an active use which will ensure the ongoing maintenance of this important heritage asset. The site is in an excellent, sustainable residential location near existing road, rail and bus transport links and benefits from neighbouring riverside and green amenity spaces. Refer to the accompanying Planning Statement for further details.



Photograph of slae advertisement

Custom House, Gravesend

Amount

The proposal for the site is to reuse and sensitively upgrade the existing Grade II listed building and associated ancillary buildings to provide 27 residential units comprising of a mixture of one, two and three bedroom apartments and town houses. There are to be 10 apartments accommodated in the existing building envelope of the Grade II listed Custom House with a single townhouse located in the adjacent Coach House, this will include a sensitive single storey extension. 8 townhouses are proposed within the Outbuildings, 4 of which will be located partly within the existing building fabric and partly within roof extensions. The Boathouse will accommodate a further 4 townhouses and the original element of the Workshop (the old boathouse) will house a single residential dwelling, all of which will be accommodated within the buildings existing envelopes. A final 3 townhouses will be housed within a newbuild block that has a footprint comparable to that of the modern workshop building that is to be demolished.

	1 Bed	2 Bed	3 Bed	Total
Custom House	3	6	2	11
Outbuildings	2	2	4	08
Workshop	0	1	0	01
Boathouse	1	3	0	04
New Build	0	0	3	03
TOTAL	6	12	9	27

Accommodation Schedule - Distribution of dwellings

The ambition has been to create generous, well proportioned rooms and dwellings whilst respecting the original room proportions and minimising the impact on the existing fabric. Wherever it has been possible nationally described space standards have been met. A full schedule of accommodation and areas is included in the submission.

The proposal will accommodate generous amounts of green and communal amenity space. Approximately 500m² of shared amenity space will be provided, made up of the existing walled garden, the new central green space and the communal riverside space adjacent to the Gazebo. 18 of the proposed dwellings will have their own defensible outside space with 11 units further benefiting from a private balcony, terrace or garden.

	Total Units	Ratio
	27	100%
1 bed	6	22%
2 bed	12	45%
3 bed	9	33%
Site Area	0.44 ha	
Site Density	61 u / ha	
Car Parking Spaces	22	81%
Cycle Spaces	33	122%

Accommodation Schedule

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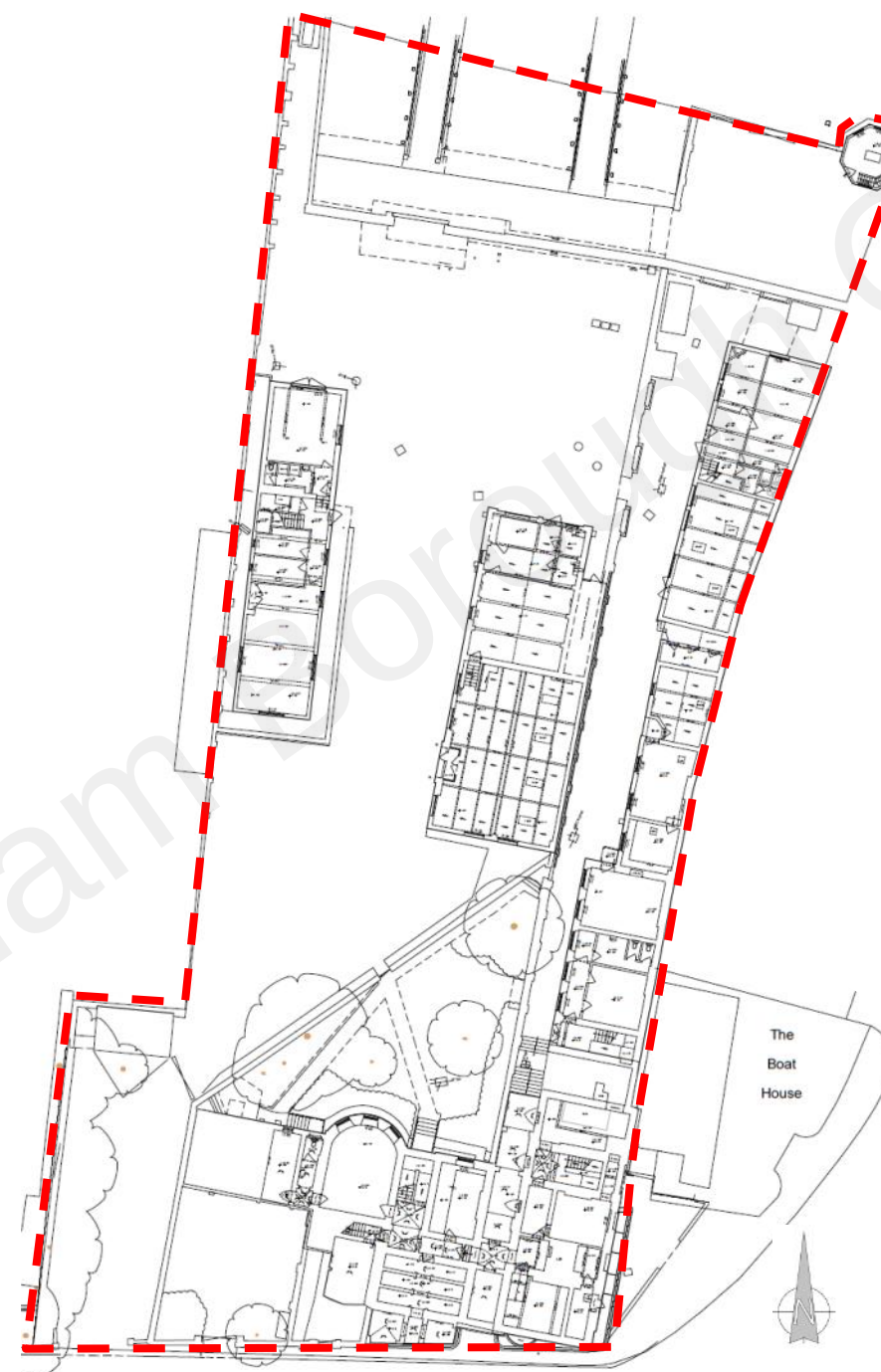
5.2 Layout

The layout of the built environment across the site will largely remain the same, with perhaps the most considerable changes being the removal of the modern Workshop, the addition of a three unit new build and the enhancement to the hard and soft landscaping.

The access into the site, in the south-western corner, will remain much as existing, with direct access from the Terrace. The entrance will be widened slightly by the removal of a small area of brick wall to improve vehicular sight lines. This gateway to the site, with a visible presence from within the Conservation Area, will be enhanced with landscaping and the existing brick building adjacent to the entrance gates will be restored and repurposed as the bin-store facility.

The New Build is visible from the entrance area and its rectangular footprint is chamfered to address the entrance and the change in axis. The New Build is located to the south of the Boathouse and follows its form, depth and rectilinear footprint. The demolition of the modern Workshop enables the creation of a landscaped communal space, that together with the retained, existing walled garden to the south will provide a green focus to the centre of the site.

The historic access route that runs alongside the internal spine wall from Custom House towards the River Thames will be retained and enhanced. Three new openings to the spine wall will be introduced to improve movement, security and belonging through the site. To the north-west of the site the space created between existing walls will be upgraded to provide a communal cycle store and to the north-east the Listed Gazebo building will be retained, restored and brought back into communal use.



Existing Site Layout



Proposed Site Layout

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5.2 Layout

The layout of the built environment across the site will largely remain the same, with all existing structures to be retained with the exception of the mid 20th century addition to the Workshop. The modern addition to the Workshop (140m² footprint) has been identified as having a neutral significance value by the heritage consultant and its removal will provide the opportunity to open up, enhance and green the central part of the site.

A new build element (highlighted in green) with a smaller footprint of 130m² is proposed to the south of the Boathouse. The new build footprint will reflect that of the adjacent Boathouse building in terms of its size, shape and orientation. The internal spine wall will be opened up in three locations (highlighted in orange) to enable improved pedestrian connections across the site and to assist in the provision of a secure access strategy for all residential units.



Aerial photograph of existing site as viewed from the north

The addition of sensitive one and two storey extensions to some of the Outbuildings (highlighted in blue), having been deemed acceptable in the heritage evaluation, is proposed. These will be set back within the existing footprint of the outbuildings with a scale and mass appropriate to the surroundings. The addition of a sensitive one storey extension to the Coach House (highlighted in blue) is also proposed having been deemed acceptable in the heritage evaluation.

The most considerable change to the layout of the site will be the enhancement of the hard and soft landscaping, which is referred to in detail in section 5.5 landscape. All hard surfacing will either be made good or upgraded to unify the site and to define the access and movement hierarchy. Additional soft landscaping will be introduced throughout the site, with a large communal green space in place of the demolished workshop as the key focus. The area adjacent to the Gazebo will be thoroughly refurbished with attractive paving, planters and seating to enable communal use.



3D visualisation of proposed site as viewed from the north

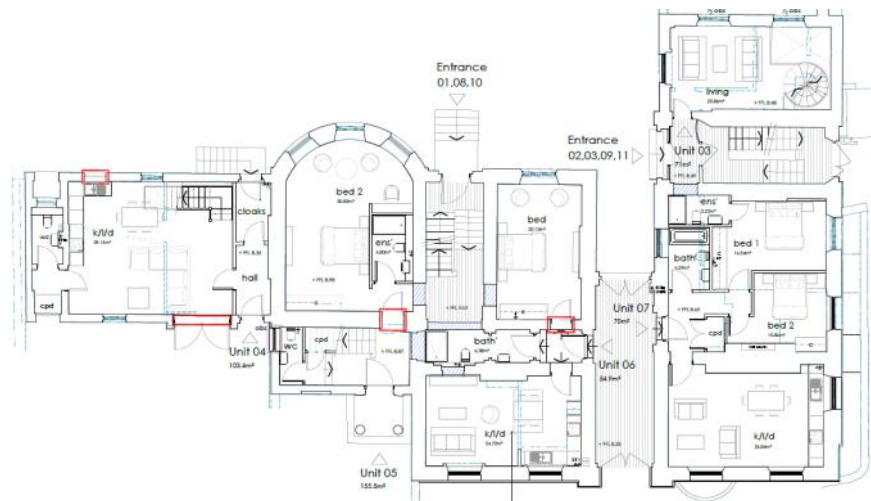
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5.2 Layout

In Custom House the internal focus has been on maintaining original room proportions and removing any non-original and modern partitions to re-instate rooms to the intended scale. Great care has been taken to organise internal layouts around existing openings and to strictly limit any new apertures to absolute minimums. The architectural plans highlight new apertures with a red bounding box and existing openings to be closed in a blue hatch.

In line with the strategy of conservation the proportions of the largest and most important rooms have mostly been retained or reinstated to their original form. In Unit 5 however the introduction of new partition walls to accommodate en-suites has been necessary within two of the four curved triple window rooms. To maintain the memory of the original the new partitions walls will include shadow gaps.

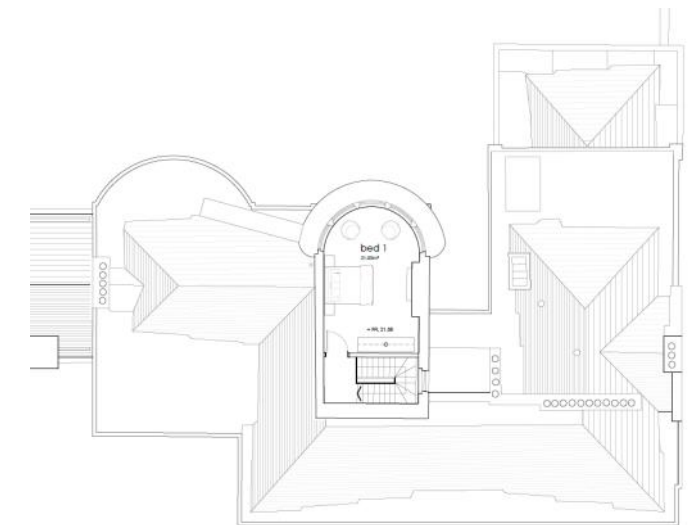
The residential layouts within Custom House have been arranged to best utilise the existing staircases, including the unsupported central staircase designed by Robert Adams. Each staircase is accessed by a minimal number of residents to enhance privacy and legibility.



CUSTOM HOUSE: Upper Ground Floor Proposed Plan



CUSTOM HOUSE: Second Floor Proposed Plan



CUSTOM HOUSE: Third Floor Proposed Plan

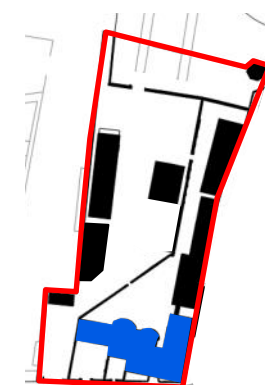


CUSTOM HOUSE: Lower Ground Floor Proposed Plan



CUSTOM HOUSE: First Floor Proposed Plan

LEGEND



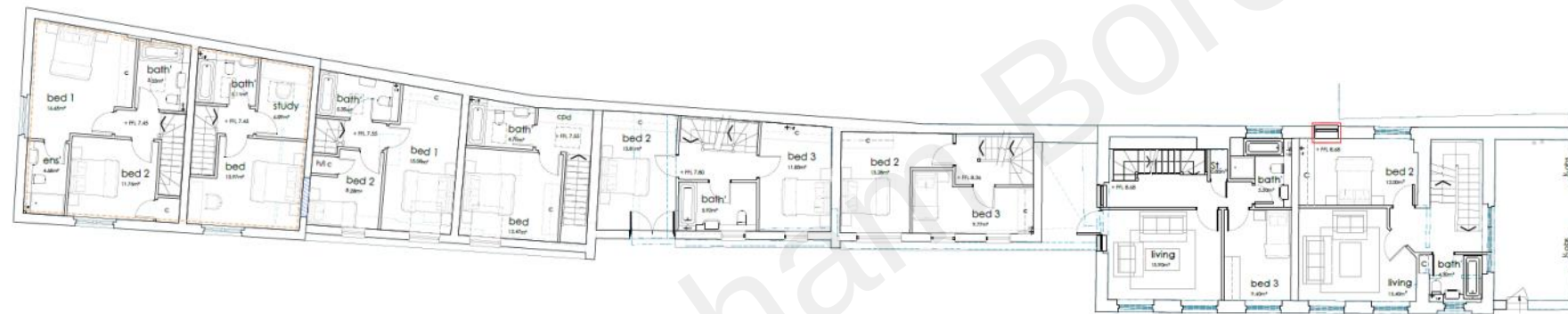
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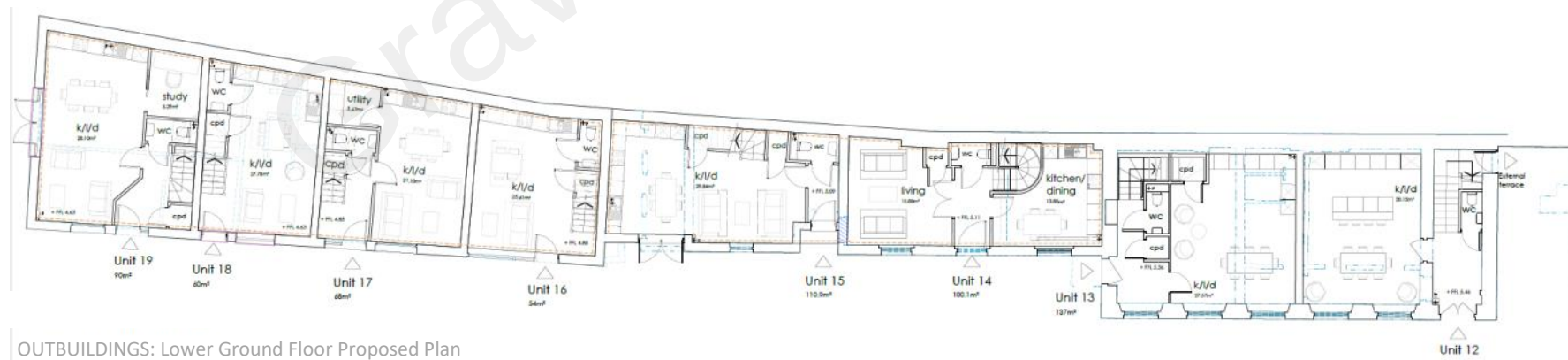
5.2 Layout



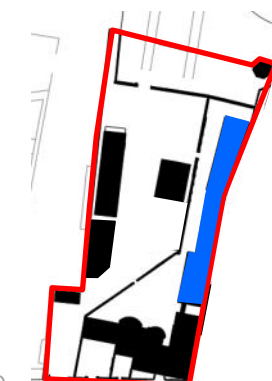
OUTBUILDINGS: : First Floor Proposed Plan



OUTBUILDINGS: : Upper Ground Floor Proposed Plan



OUTBUILDINGS: Lower Ground Floor Proposed Plan



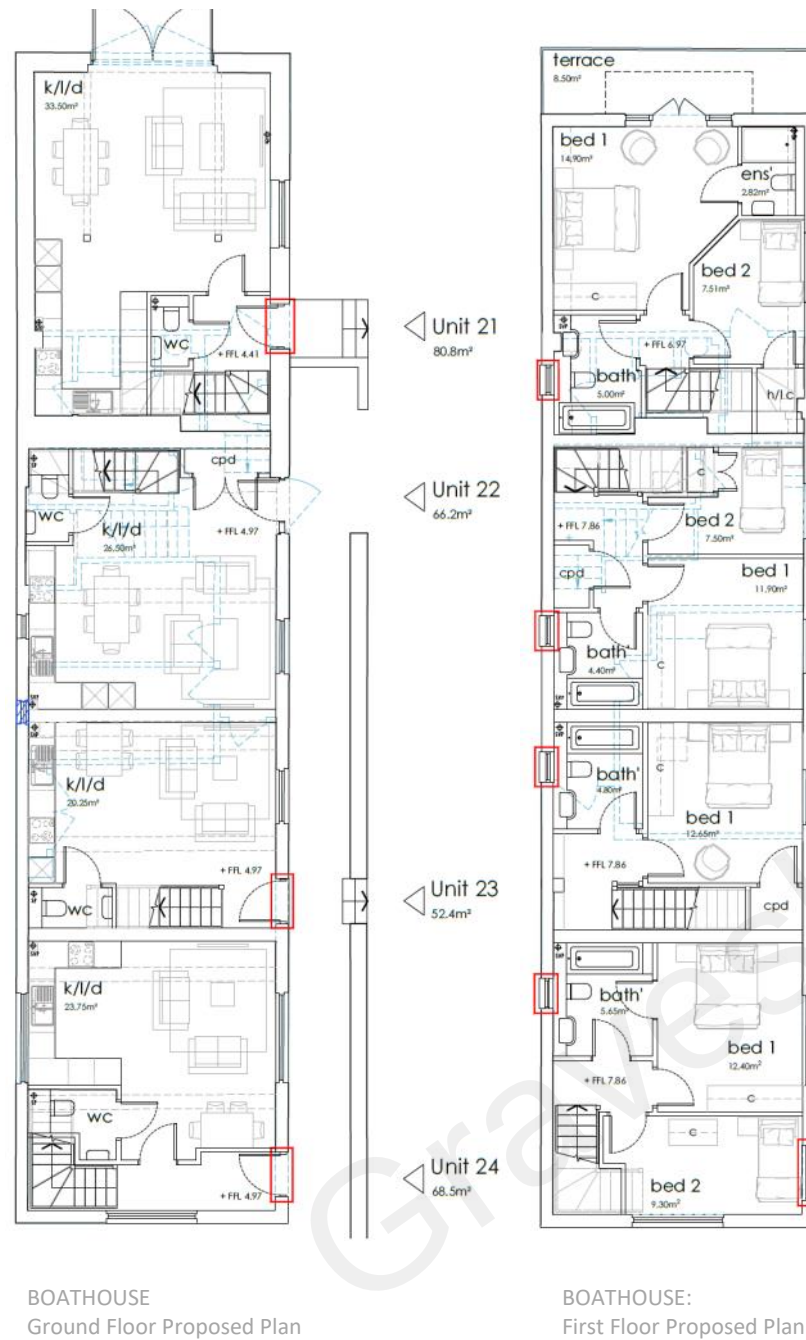
LEGEND

In the Outbuildings the focus remains one of conservation of the existing building fabric and the internal layouts were therefore organised around existing openings. New openings were limited to where they were deemed essential to make the unit habitable, including the addition of a new window within the eastern external flank wall to provide views from bed 2, unit 12. The architectural plans highlight new apertures with a red bounding box. The locations of all bathrooms and en-suites were carefully arranged to be stacked vertically to minimise the amount of penetrations to the existing listed fabric.

There were fewer design constraints within the extension envelope, with more scope for contemporary fenestration, roof windows, terraces and Juliet balconies were included to maximise views, daylight and external amenity for the residents.

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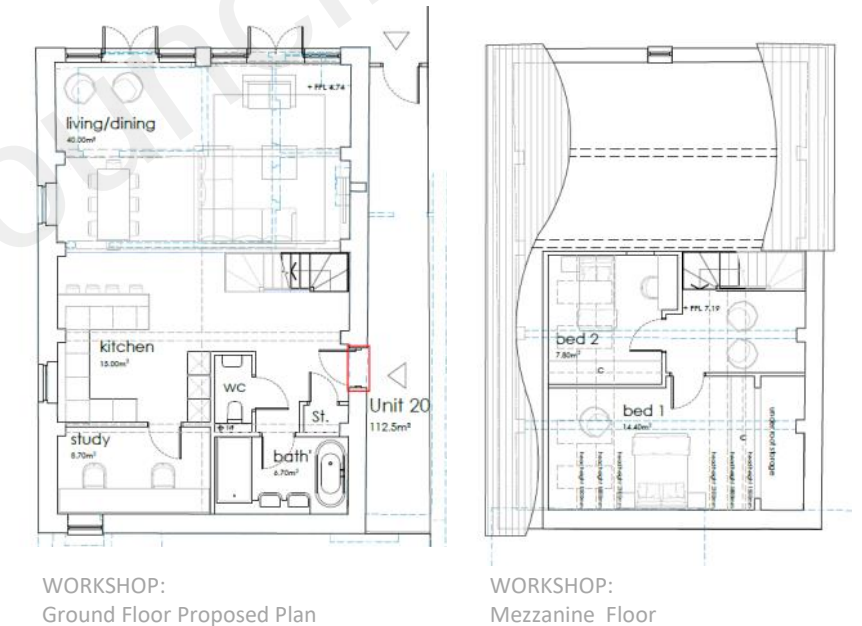
5.2 Layout



The original element of the Boathouse will accommodate one townhouse dwelling within its existing envelope. The focus remains one of conservation and the internal layouts are therefore organised around existing openings wherever possible. To enable the large doors facing the Thames to be glazed and to open onto a private garden a new entrance however has been created on the front elevation. The master bedroom on the first floor will benefit from the existing balcony.

The remaining Boathouse will be split into three townhouses, requiring two additional entrance doors to be inserted into the front elevation. The layouts all have open plan living spaces on the ground floor and the sleeping accommodation and bathrooms on the first floor. Four small additional openings on the rear elevation have been necessary to provide an openable windows to the bathrooms. These casement windows will all be obscured glazing to provide privacy to both the residents and to the users of the neighbouring LPA carpark.

The Workshop will accommodate a single 2-bed dwelling with the existing fabric treated sensitively and appropriately as with all the heritage assets. A new entrance to the Workshop on the left flank will be made to enable a more private access and the double brick archway facing the Thames will be reinstated, opened up and glazed to provide access onto the private garden. The living space will be left double height with the existing timber truss structure repaired and exposed in these areas. In order to provide sleeping accommodation above flood level a mezzanine floor has been added to approximately 50% of the footprint. The kitchen, bathroom, study and W.C. are located underneath the mezzanine deck.



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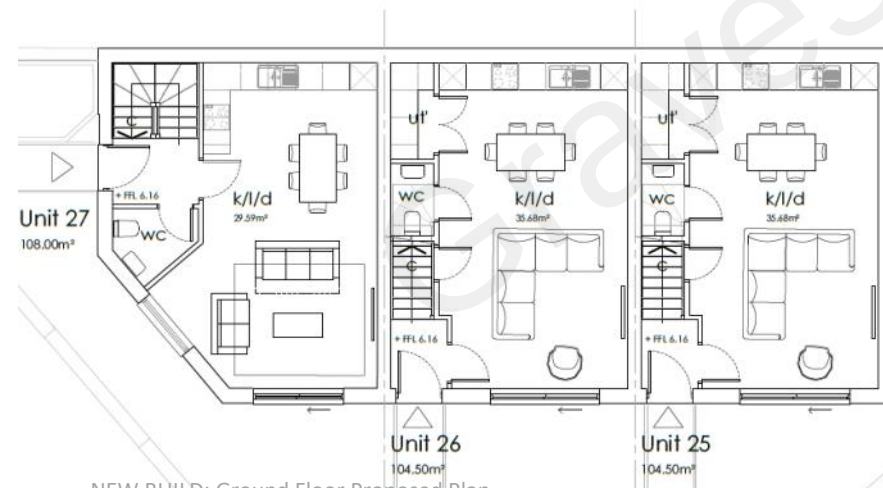
5.2 Layout



NEW BUILD: Second Floor Proposed Plan



NEW BUILD: First Floor Proposed Plan

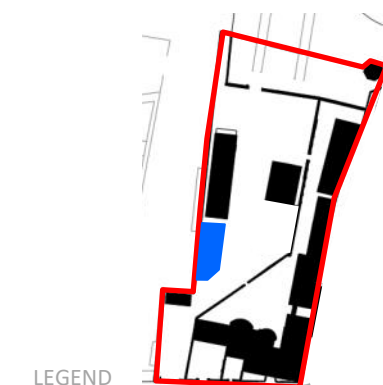


NEW BUILD: Ground Floor Proposed Plan

The New Build layouts benefited from having fewer constraints, however the form and size of the new element was heavily influenced by its context. Three three-bed town houses are proposed, with open plan, ground floor living accommodation. Two bedrooms and a bathroom are located on the first floor of each unit and the master bedroom and en-suite on the second floor. The building line is set back on the front elevation of the second floor to provide external terraces, accessed via the master bedroom.

The New Build will be built against the western boundary brick wall that separates the application site from Port of London Authority land, currently used as a car park. There are 5 no. windows proposed on this elevation, all at first floor level. Each of these windows will be inward opening, with the two small bathroom windows being obscured glazing. The remaining three windows all belong to bedroom accommodation and will provide improved security for the adjacent car park.

A flood risk assessment, prepared by Herrington Consultants, accompanies this application and details how finished floor levels work within the confines of the flood defence levels AODN.



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5.3 Scale and Mass

There are essentially three new build elements or extensions that have been proposed in addition to the refurbishment of the original buildings. These are the one and two-storey extensions to part of the Outbuildings, the one-storey extension to The Coach House and the 3-storey New Build to the south of the Boathouse. The overarching strategy is for all new additions to be in a scale and mass that is appropriate for the heritage context of the site and is subservient to that of the adjacent heritage buildings.

The outbuilding extensions have responded to the sites natural topography and existing massing with the proposed roof form stepping upwards from north to south across the site. A single storey extension is proposed towards the northern end of the site, with the same ridge height as the adjacent, existing two-storey outbuilding. The central outbuildings will have a two-storey extension with an intermediate ridge height that is higher than the adjacent roof to the north but lower than the adjacent roof to the south.



3D visualisation of the extensions to the Outbuildings



3D visualisation of the Boathouse and New Build



3D visualisation of the extension to The Coach House

A set back to either side of the 2nd floor central outbuilding extension creates a gap that provides breathing space between the connecting buildings. All extensions to the Outbuildings will be set back behind the original, existing parapet wall to further respect the hierarchy of the heritage buildings.

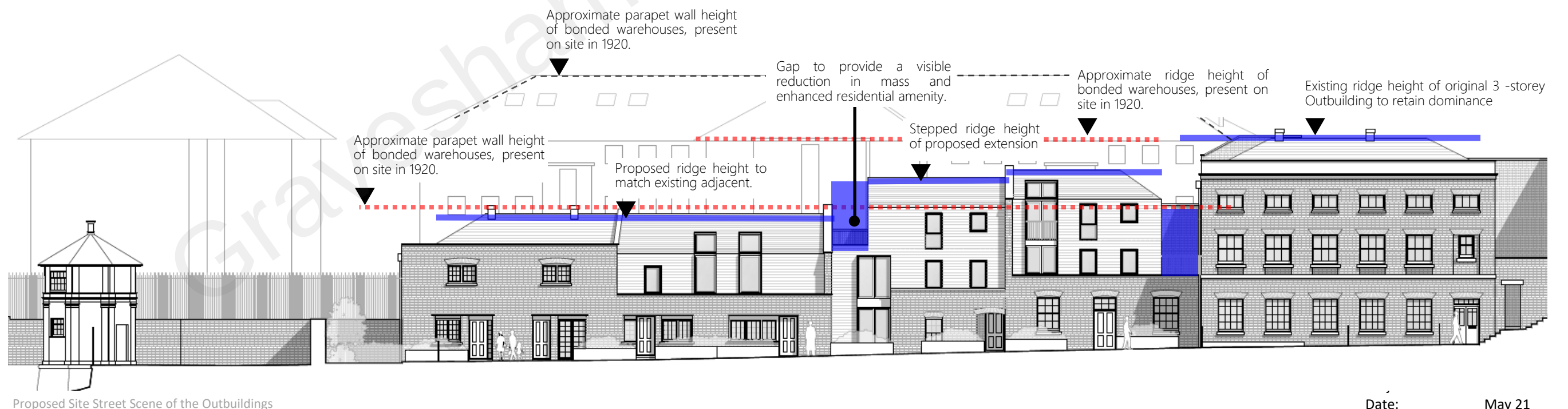
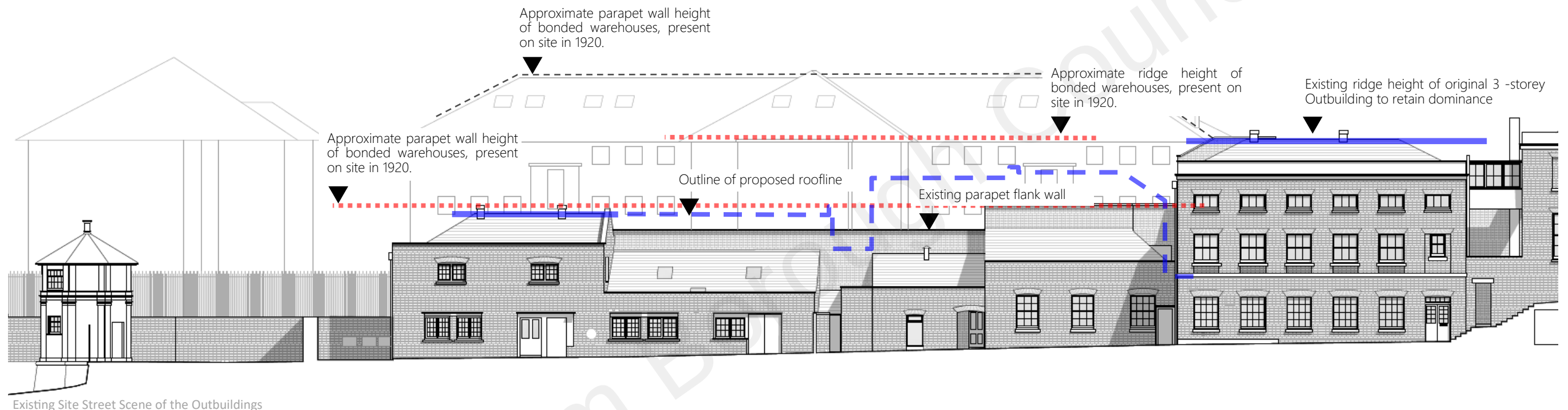
On the opposite side of the site the new build element will, in a very similar way, step up appropriately across the site in keeping with the natural topography of the site and the scale and massing of the existing Boathouse. The ridge line of the original Boathouse is set lower down than that of the later addition which increases in height towards the south of the site. The new addition follows this established pattern and the ridge line is accordingly set higher than that of the Boathouse. The New Build will reflect the massing and scale of the Boathouse, utilising a slender, rectangular footprint and elegant gable roof. The building line of the second floor is set back on the front elevation, and clad in a darker material, to reduce the mass.

A sensitive one-storey extension to the Coach House has been deemed appropriate due to the Coach Houses medium level of heritage significance and the considerable setback of the building line from The Terrace. The scale of this proposal respects the hierarchy of the key heritage building, Custom House, as well the wider conservation area context. Similarly to the outbuildings the external walls of the extension will be set back behind that of the original walls to further respect the hierarchy of the heritage buildings.

5.0 Design

5.3 Scale and Mass

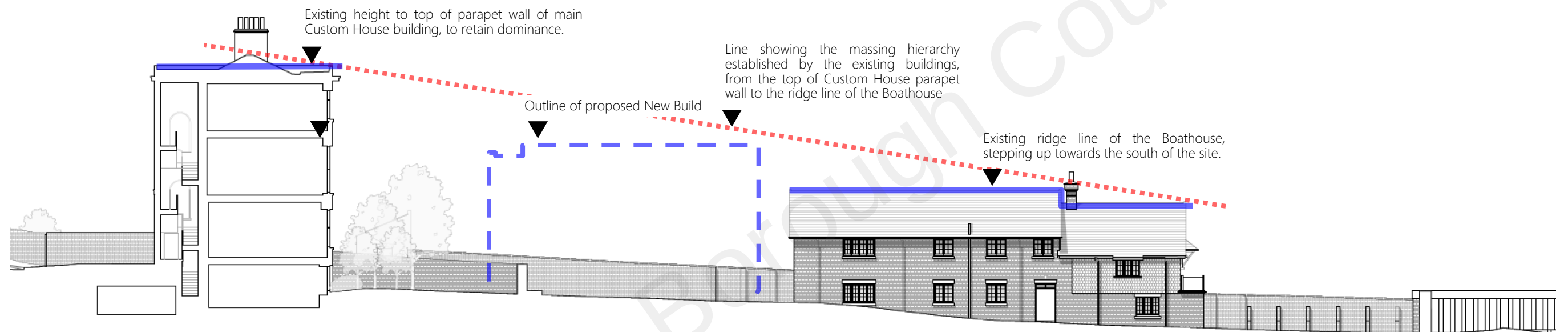
Massing Principles



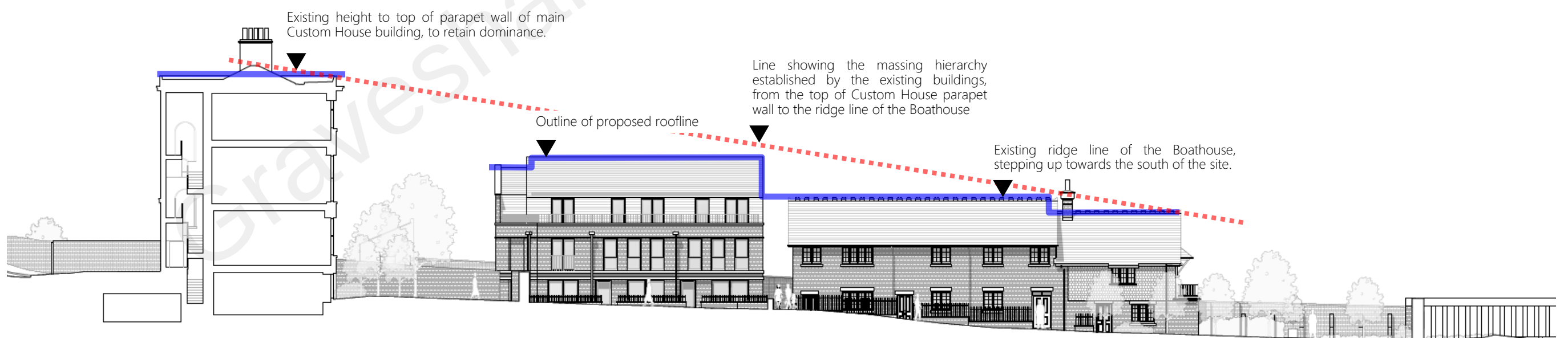
5.0 Design

5.3 Scale and Mass

Massing Principles



Existing Site Street Scene of the Boathouse and Custom House



Proposed Site Street Scene of the Boathouse, Custom House and New Build

5.0 Design

5.4 Appearance and Materials

The proposal for the treatment of external surfaces across the site can be divided into two key principles. The first, where dealing with the existing building fabric, is to respect the existing buildings distinctive qualities, to sympathetically maintain, restore and, where appropriate, enhance. The approach of respectful, conservation has sought to minimise alterations to the external fabric wherever possible and where intervention is required they will match the appropriate original period style. In all other situations where new elements are to be introduced, including extensions and insertions the overarching strategy is to clearly delineate the original from the new whilst ensuring the latter complements the pattern, scale and massing of the existing development.

The existing Grade II listed Custom House and the ancillary buildings will be sensitively upgraded with the external fabric of each building retained and restored. Where it has been necessary to form a small number of new openings, none of which are on the principal elevation of Custom House, Box Sash, slimline, single-glazed conservation-grade timber windows are proposed to ensure continuity with the original period windows. The accompanying Heritage and Conservation Strategy provides further detail on how this will be achieved.



3D visualisation of proposals for Custom House from The Terrace

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5.4 Appearance and Materials

The use of materials has been seen as the principal way in which to clearly delineate the original from the new built form. A review of materials and precedent studies was conducted to determine the most appropriate materials that would be both distinctive and complementary to the existing fabric. A material palette of slate cladding, Corten highlights and yellow/brown brickwork was selected and applied to all new elements creating a cohesive language across the site.

Whilst it was an early intention to use different materials to characterise the new additions to the site it remained important that any materials selected must complement and respect the heritage value of the existing buildings and wider site context. There are a diverse mix of building typologies, ages and scales within the neighbouring area, many of which reflect the maritime history. The buildings range from the 14th century yellow/brown brick Milton Chantry to the 9-storey tower block to the late 20th Century white, weatherboarded Heritage Quay. With render and painted brick work also present and with no predominate style in the area it was resolved to focus on complementing the aesthetic style of the existing buildings within the site. The predominate existing materials across the site consist of yellow/brown facing brickwork with grey, slate roofs and lead flashing. These materials of brick and slate have been included in our material palette but will be used in a contemporary way, ensuring the aesthetic will be easily differentiated as well as complementary.



Sample page from material and precedent study booklet



Precedent images of projects using Slate Cladding

5.0 Design

5.4 Appearance and Materials

The strategy to clearly delineate the original from the new has also been effected through the use of modern and distinctive fenestration. The new windows are contemporary in both fenestration design and material specification with double-glazed, slim, aluminium frames. All new window reveals are edged in Corten steel to add further contrast with the existing fabric and to provide a cohesive appearance across the site.

The inspiration for the architectural form and composition of the extensions and new build elements has largely come from the distinct character of the existing. The strong gable roof forms and projecting brick gable ends in the new architecture seeks to reference the language of the existing heritage buildings.

One benefit arising from the demolition of the modern Workshop is that a large proportion of the historic spine wall will be re-exposed. The Workshop will be carefully removed and the spine wall repaired as necessary, this expanse of spine wall will then form the back drop to the communal green and will be a highly visible and celebrated part of the site.

The internal spine wall will be opened up in three locations to enable improved pedestrian connections across the site, including enhanced disabled access and to offer better autonomy, security and privacy to each residential unit. The new openings will be identified by Corten steel reveals which, like the overarching strategy for the development, will clearly distinguish the original and new elements through a defined and consistent material pallet.



Annotated 3D visualisation of proposals for communal green space against internal spine wall with Outbuildings to rear.

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5.4 Appearance and Materials

The appearance together with the scale and massing of the New Build element was evaluated carefully against the historic context of the site and the Conservation Area background. A brickwork gable-end was ultimately proposed for the key south elevation which marks the entrance to the site and addresses The Terrace, albeit from a distance. The mass on this key corner is also reduced through a set back in the roof form to ensure the building scale is fully subservient to the adjacent Custom House. The south-east corner of the New Build is chamfered to further respect the hierarchy of Custom House and to reflect the change of axis and draw people into the site.

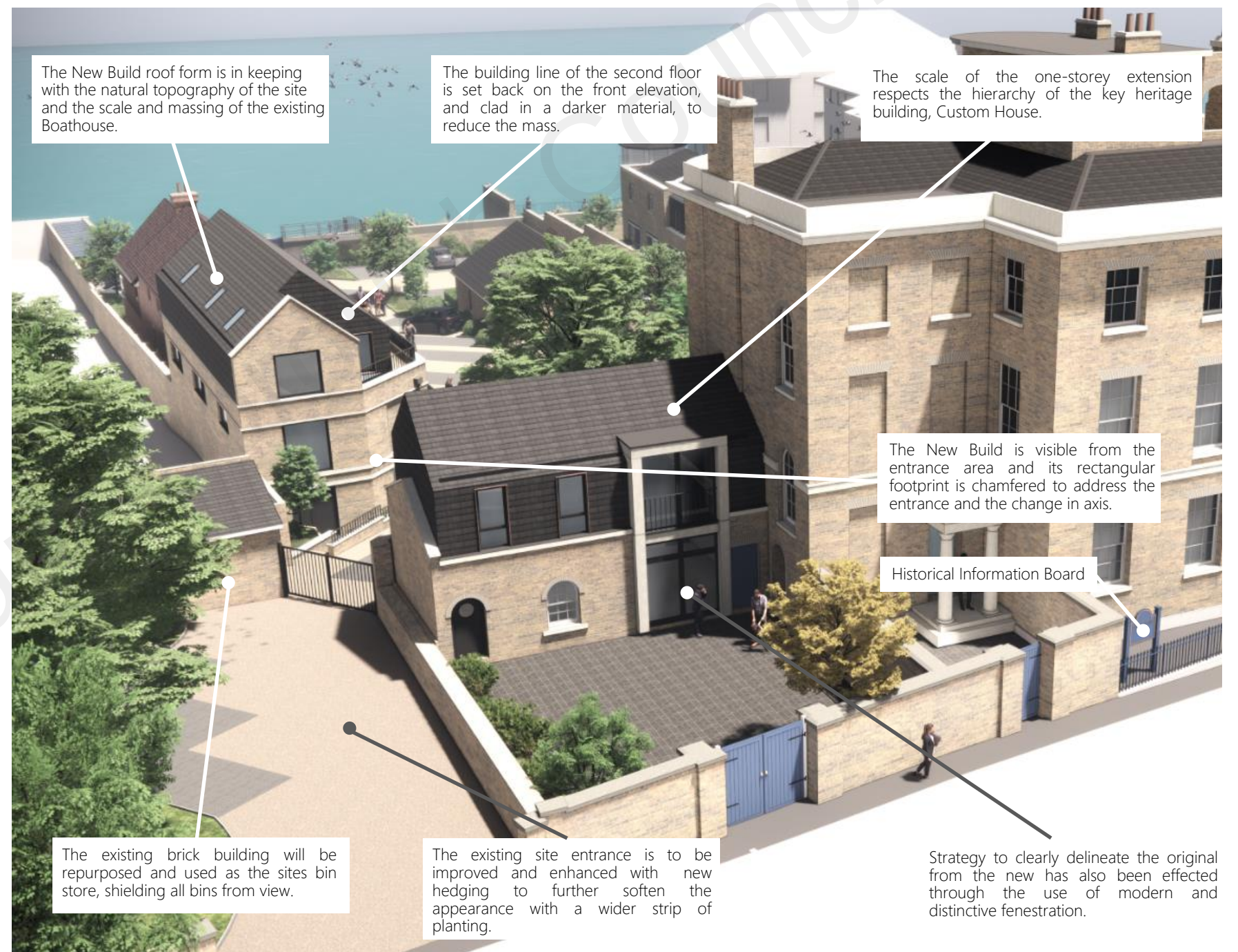
The appearance, materials and scale of the Coach House were similarly evaluated against the adjacent historic context. The eventual proposal was to remove the modern replacement roof and add one additional storey, using slate tiles to clearly differentiate the new extension from the older brick building. The extension, with its modern fenestration adds life to The Terrace whilst its gable form and diminutive scale ensures that this is achieved without detracting from Custom House.

In a prominent position on The Terrace, in front of the main Custom House a historical information board will be provided to tell the story of Custom House and its historical importance in the development of the shipping industry and Gravesend Town Centre.



Examples of Historic Information Boards

Custom House, Gravesend

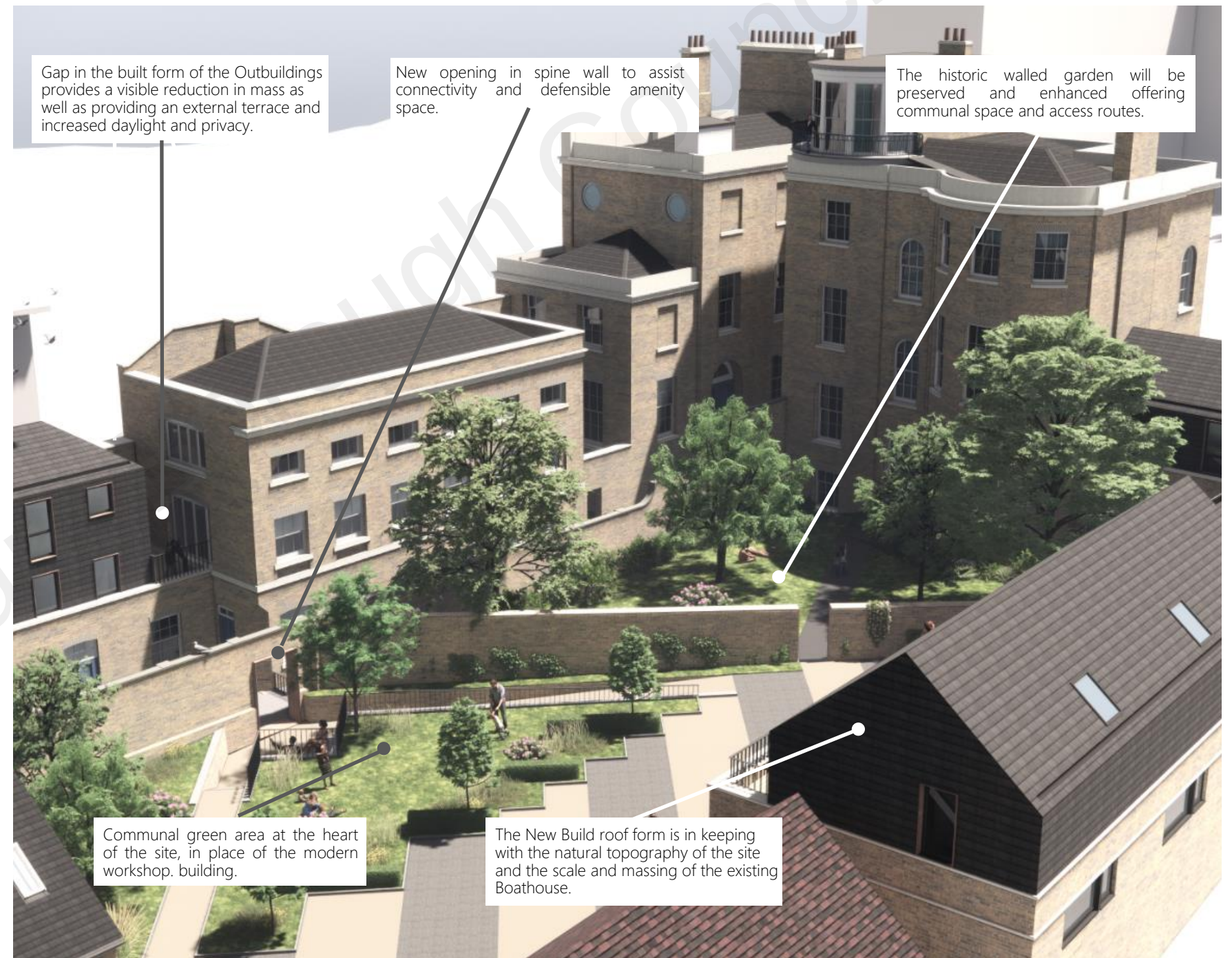


Annotated 3D visualisation of proposals for entrance approach, the Coach House, Custom House and the New Build

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5.4 Appearance and Materials



Annotated 3D visualisation for the proposal, looking into the centre of the site

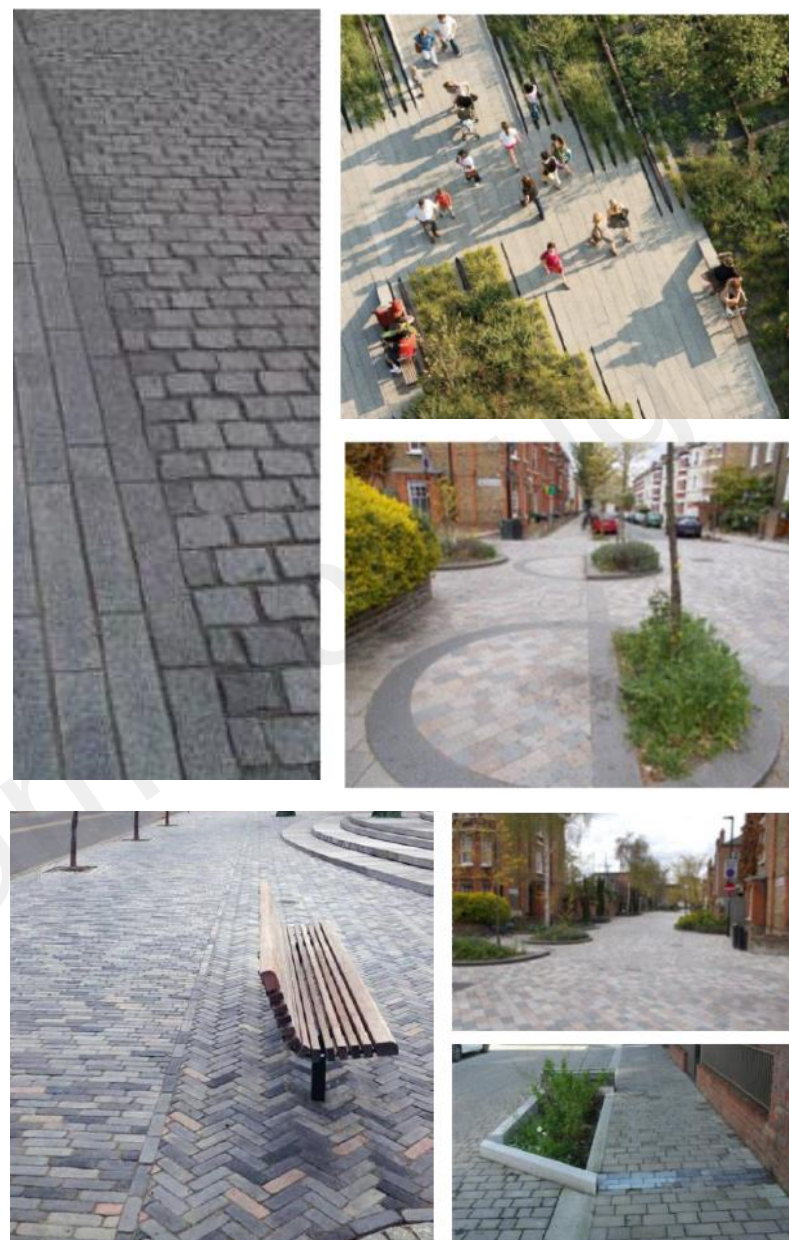
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5.5 Landscape

The landscaping strategy for the site was seen as a key opportunity for enhancement, using hard and soft landscaping to define key routes, improve legibility and to create a strong identity for the development.

The current predominant surface on site is concrete and tarmac which has been marked out for vehicular parking. There are several existing enclosed, walled gardens and courtyards within the development with the two walled courtyards addressing The Terrace entirely laid with flagstones. The largest walled garden is set to the rear of Custom's House, it is triangular in shape and is heavily vegetated with existing trees, shrubs and lawn. All three walled areas will be preserved and enhanced through this proposal with all trees retained and the majority of flagstones maintained.

The hard landscaping to the west of the spine wall will be resurfaced in small scale paving blocks in two complementary colours to provide a rhythm and definition to the external spaces. The whole site is a shared surface and is underpinned by a 'home zone' philosophy where pedestrians take priority over cars. Car parking spaces, where possible, have been set within the soft landscaping to reduce the visual appearance of vehicular dominance. The same paving blocks will be utilised from the site's entrance from The Terrace to the sea defence wall at the opposite end of the site. The homogeneous paving, together with the green wedge running through the centre of the site is intended to reinforce the desire line running from the street to the River Thames.



Precedent image of paving and surface treatment.



Landscape and Boundary Treatment Plan

5.0 Design

5.5 Landscape

The Historic public access route that runs from the rear of Custom House, along the internal spine wall and down towards the banks of the River Thames will be retained and enhanced. Large unit block paving, laid in the direction of the routes long axis will unify and clearly delineate this historic path. Care has been taken to ensure that there will be no solid visual or physical barriers along the full 70m long route. Where boundaries have been required to achieve defensible space and access security for residents, lightweight metal fencing has been proposed.



Precedent image of paving with strong directional axis.



Precedent image of paving with strong directional axis.



3D visualisation looking north along the historic access route, towards Custom House, with the Outbuilding Town Houses on the left.



3D visualisation looking south towards the Thames

5.0 Design

5.5 Landscape

There is a deliberate hierarchy to the green spaces proposed within the site, with a range of communal, semi-private, defensible amenity space and private external gardens and terraces. The proposal will accommodate generous amounts, approximately 500m², of green and communal amenity space, made up of the existing walled garden, the new central green space and the communal riverside space adjacent to the Gazebo. The provision of generous and multiple communal spaces was seen as an essential provision, particularly for residents within the Grade II listed Custom House where it has not been possible to provide external private space.

Defensible outdoor space has however been provided to all other residential units with many also benefiting from a private balcony, terrace or garden. The defensible space, adjacent to the entrance of the majority of residential units has been delineated by a range of barriers, with varying and appropriate degrees of transparency. Corten steel planters have been used where the emphasis has been to keep visual obstructions to a minimum, simple metal railings have been utilised where a height difference needed accommodating and dense hedging in more communal areas to offer a soft but robust edge.

The central green wedge, bolstered by the removal of the modern addition to the Workshop and its replacement with a communal garden space, with new trees and planting has previously been outlined. This garden will be at the heart of the site and will provide an improved outlook for all residents as well providing a new welcoming pedestrian link between the Terrace and the River.

Legend:

	Private amenity space		Communal Cycle Store
	Private amenity space terrace / balcony		Communal Bin Store
	Defensible space / Semi-private		Fire Appliance Turning Circle
	Communal amenity space		Key Routes through site
	Indicative parking space		Footprint Comparison



Precedent image of Corten steel planters



Planting images for clipped hedge borders



Landscape Plan

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5.5 Landscape

The proposal is seen as an opportunity to improve the appearance of the site entrance from The Terrace, and enhance the street scene within the Conservation Area. The existing trees that run along the sites western boundary are within the adjacent site, however we propose to plant new hedging and further soften the appearance with a wider strip of planting. The existing brick building, currently obscured by shrubs will be repurposed and used as the sites bin store, shielding all bins from view. A new more aesthetically pleasing vehicular gate will be installed to replace the existing modern gate.



3D visualisation looking through entrance gates



3D visualisation looking at entrance to the site from The Terrace

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5.6 Access

The access into the site, in the south-western corner, will remain much as existing, with direct access for vehicles and pedestrians from the Terrace. The entrance will be widened slightly by the removal of a small area of brick wall to improve vehicular sight lines. This gateway to the site, with a visible presence from within the Conservation Area, will be enhanced with landscaping and the existing brick building adjacent to the entrance gates will be restored and repurposed as the bin-store facility. A new vehicular and pedestrian access gate will be installed in the same location as the existing which will be entered via an access control system.

All residents will have access to the entrance gate and all communal facilities and spaces however the access arrangements for each building will be limited to where it is appropriate for each individual unit. The intention has been to utilise existing entrances and stairwells wherever possible with the additional objective of limiting the number of residents using each entrance. This strategy not only improves security but also fosters a better sense of ownership whilst providing the residents with improved privacy. The access strategy diagram opposite details the typical entry approach and access points for each residential unit.



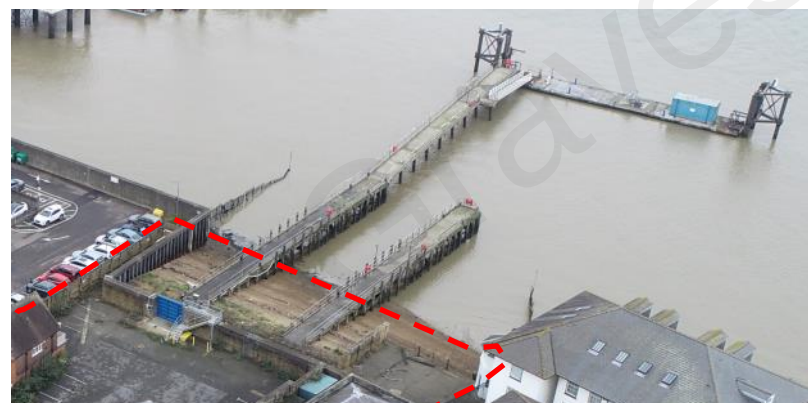
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5.7 Flood defences and access to the Thames & Pavilion

It is the aspiration of this proposal to enhance the appearance and to activate the riverside area adjacent to the River Thames. The listed Pavilion building will be fully restored and brought back into use and the surrounding area will be suitably landscaped to provide a coherent and attractive environment. The development site includes the initial 10m (landside) of the two piers, these will be maintained and it is proposed that metal gates will be installed at the boundary for security. The remaining parts of the pier and river structures are outside the development site and are beyond our control since they are in a separate legal ownership.



Proposed Site Plan



Photograph of River Thames with applicant site denoted by red hatched line..



Photograph of Flood defence wall with PLA building visible behind.



Photograph of Flood defence wall, flood gate and existing staircase.

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5.7 Flood defences and access to the Thames & Pavilion

The typical access to the riverside will be via steps and will utilise the existing staircase, with the handrails suitably upgraded. The existing landing above the sea defence wall will be extended to the east with a new staircase located on the opposite side of the sea defence wall. The new staircase has been positioned so not to interfere with the movement of the flood gate. Disabled access will be via the flood gate, with entry arranged by prior agreement. Suitable native coastal planting will be positioned between the hard landscaping and the banks of the Thames to enhance the appearance and to act as a natural barrier to improve site safety. The riverside area will contain appropriate signage and lifesaving equipment (life buoys and throw bags) as recommended in the 'A safer Riverside' document by PLA.



3D image of proposal for the Pavilion and Riverside area

Photograph of River Thames with applicant site denoted by red hatched line..

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5.8 Sustainability, Building Services and Maintenance

Transport

Due to the highly sustainable location of the site, with close proximity to the city centre, public transport bus and rail links and local amenity the provision of 22 parking spaces is considered sufficient for a development of this type in this location.

Electric Vehicle Charging Points will be provided in appropriate numbers and locations to meet GBC requirements.

Cycle Storage

A covered, secure, communal cycle store with provision for 33 cycles is provided in the north-west corner of the site with some residential units provided with private storage within their curtilage.

External Materials

A Sustainable Urban Drainage System will be utilised on site to ensure the development does not increase the risk of flooding elsewhere. The proposed landscaping strategy will in itself improve the permeability of the site through the provision of permeable paving and increased soft landscaping.

Refuse Strategy

The existing brick building, to the south-west of the site will be repurposed and used as a communal bin store, providing adequate recycling, food and general waste euro bins.



3D visualisation looking south towards Custom House from the bottom of the site

6.0 Conclusion

Housing and Sustainability

- The site is in an excellent, sustainable residential location near existing road, rail and bus transport links and benefits from neighbouring riverside and green amenity spaces.
- The proposal will sensitively upgrade the existing Grade II listed building and ancillary buildings to provide 27 residential units comprising of a mixture of one, two and three bedroom apartments and town houses.

Conserving the Heritage Asset

- The development will bring the Grade II listed building back into an active use which will ensure the ongoing maintenance of this important heritage asset.
- The Grade II Listed Gazebo and the adjacent riverside area will be thoroughly refurbished and brought back into communal use.
- In Custom House the internal focus has been on maintaining original room proportions and removing any non-original and modern partitions to re-instate rooms to the intended scale and form
- The residential layouts within Custom House have been arranged to best utilise the existing staircases, including the unsupported central staircase designed by Robert Adams.
- The approach of respectful, conservation has sought to minimise alterations to the external fabric wherever possible and where intervention is required they will match the appropriate original period style.

Extensions, New Build and Additions

- The overarching strategy is for all new additions to be in a scale and mass that is appropriate for the heritage context of the site and is subservient to that of the adjacent heritage buildings.
- The proposal will clearly delineate the original from the new whilst ensuring the later complements the pattern, scale and massing of the existing development.
- The architectural form and composition of the extensions and new build elements seen in the strong gable roof forms and projecting brick gable ends references the language of the existing heritage buildings.
- The new elements will reflect the massing and scale of the adjacent heritage buildings and respond to the sites natural topography utilising a slender, rectangular footprint and elegant gable roof.
- All extensions to the Outbuildings will be set back behind the original, existing parapet wall to further respect the hierarchy of the heritage buildings.
- The scale of the sensitive one-storey extension to the Coach House respects the hierarchy of the key heritage building, Custom House, as well the wider conservation area context.

Landscape

- The landscaping strategy for the site was seen as a key opportunity for enhancement, using hard and soft landscaping to define key routes, improve legibility and to create a strong identity for the development.
- The whole site is a shared surface and is underpinned by a 'home zone' philosophy where pedestrians take priority over cars.
- The homogeneous paving, together with the green wedge running through the centre of the site is intended to reinforce the desire line running from the street to the River Thames.
- The historic public access route that runs from the rear of Custom House, along the internal spine wall and down towards the banks of the River Thames will be retained and enhanced.
- There is a deliberate hierarchy to the green spaces proposed within the site, with a range of communal, semi-private, defensible amenity space and private external gardens and terraces.
- The proposal will accommodate generous amounts, approximately 500m², of green and communal amenity space, made up of the existing walled garden, the new central green space and the communal riverside space adjacent to the Gazebo.