



20-169 St Columba's Close

Design & Access Statement

October 2022



BPTW brings together specialisms in Architecture, Planning and BIM to transform not just physical spaces, but people’s lives. Our work tells our story. We are bold. We are innovative. We care.

For over 30 years we have worked with many of the UK’s leading developers and housing providers to create desirable new homes and places. With over 130 staff, our teams are made up of individual experts who cultivate a friendly, creative and collaborative partnership with everyone we work with. From start to finish, we are committed to deliver success on every measure.

BPTW. Together we transform people’s lives..

SCC-BPTW-XX-XX-DO-A-0650-C01-A2

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Executive Summary

Purpose of the Document

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by BPTW on behalf of Gravesham Borough Council to support a full planning application of the site known as St. Columba's Close. In collaboration with other consultants, BPTW has been appointed to lead the design proposal for affordable homes and public realm landscape improvements.

This document provides an analysis of the wider context, and considers the constraints and opportunities of the site. The document is structured to demonstrate how these have been taken into account and illustrates the design principles for the buildings and public realm landscape proposals.

The Site

The site is located between Valley Drive, St Dunstan's Drive, St Patrick's Gardens and St Columba's Close. It is bounded by housing to the north and east, Valley Drive to the west and the public amenity space and playground of St Patrick's Gardens to the south.

The site itself consists of six residential blocks within the boundary which currently accommodates 26 homes and a centrally located open space which is surrounded by three of the blocks of flats.

Description of Development

Demolition of 3no. existing buildings and the associated caretakers' facilities and erection of 2no. 2 storey buildings, 1 no. 3 storey building and 1no. part3/part4 storey building to provide 46 residential dwellings (Class C3 residential use), with associated vehicle and pedestrian access, amenity space with hard and soft landscaping, car and cycle parking, refuse and recycling storage provision, and other associated works.

1.2 Introduction

An experienced design team has been assembled that reflects Gravesham Borough Council's commitment to deliver a high quality affordable residential scheme for Gravesham.



Design Team



Architect
& Planning
Consultant



Employer's
Agent



Sustainability
Consultant



Landscape
Consultant



Transport
Consultant



M&E Consultant



Fire Consultant



Structural
& Civil
Consultant



Communications Consultant



Daylight & Sunlight Consultant



Aerial view of existing site

1.3 Vision



"High quality new affordable homes and landscaping improvement for new and existing residents"

1.4 Site

Wider Context

The site is located to the south east of the historic town of Gravesend, in the Borough of Gravesham.

The town of Gravesend is located in northwest Kent on the south of the River Thames and is a Thames Gateway commuter town with easy access to the A2; a major road connecting London to Dover.

Due to the great location of the town and transport links, the population of Gravesend has steadily increased over the years and therefore, affordable housing is much needed in the area to support the local community.



Connections and Amenities

TRANSPORT

The site is well connected with Valley Drive linking the site to the A2 to the south, which provides a direct route into London.

Gravesend Station is located approximately 2 miles to the north-west of the site via Whitehill Lane. Train services to Charing Cross and St Pancras Stations run frequently to and from Gravesend.

There are a number of bus stops within a short distance walk from the site with bus routes serving Gravesend, Bluewater Shopping Centre, Dartford, and Northfleet, as well as a number of the surrounding villages and housing estates.

LOCAL AMENITIES

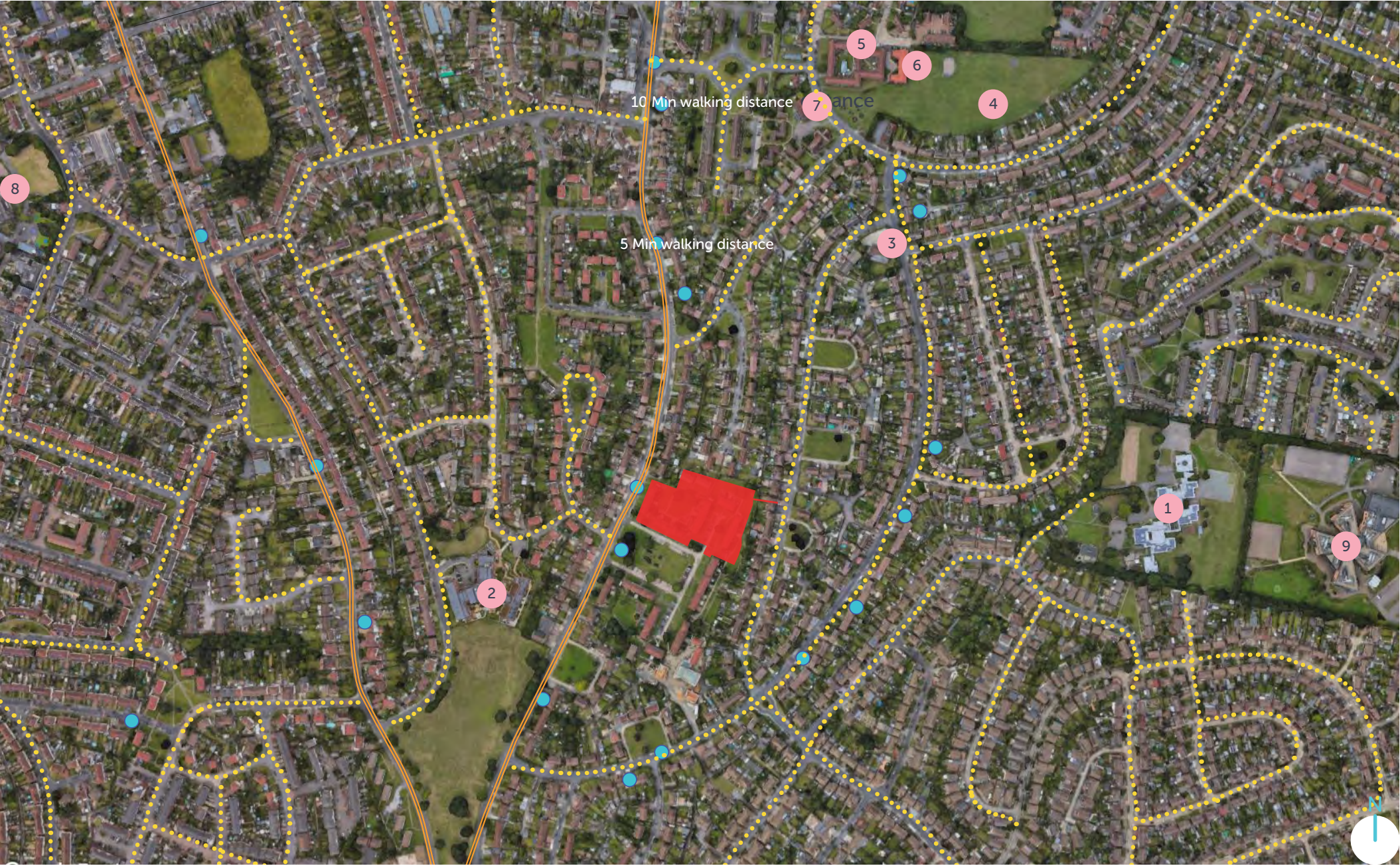
The site is within an established residential area with properties surrounding the site in all directions.

There are a number of public amenity spaces within walking distance of the site including 2 golf courses, open green spaces and children's playgrounds.

The area benefits from a primary school and a secondary school within a 15 minutes' walk with a further two primary schools within a 25-minute walk. There are also two leisure centres within a 30-minute walk.

Although there is no main 'high street' near the site, there are a number of convenience stores, takeaway restaurants, pharmacies and local businesses within a walking distance around the site.

- Key
- Site
 - Bus Stops
 - Major Roads



- | | | |
|--|----------------------|--|
| 1 Tymberwood Academy | 4 St Aidans Park | 7 St Aidans Nursery School |
| 2 Wimborne House - Sanctuary Retirement Living | 5 St Gregory's Court | 8 Whitehill Primary School and Nursery |
| 3 Mosque Gravesend | 6 Churchview Court | 9 Thamesview School Nursery |

Site Location

The site is located between Valley Drive, St Dunstan's Drive, St Patrick's Gardens and St Columba's Close. It is bounded by housing to the north and east, Valley Drive to the west and the public amenity space and playground of St Patrick's Gardens to the south.

The site itself currently consists of six residential blocks within the boundary and green space which serves as communal amenity. The surrounding area includes flat blocks built in the mid 1900's and semi-detached houses.

St Columba's Close is located in Gravesend, Kent. Valley Drive is a primary traffic artery connecting the local area to the A2.

The surrounding buildings within the area are either three storey flat blocks arranged in a line or courtyard form, newer 'infill' flat blocks or two storey houses fronting Valley Drive. There are a number of existing trees placed throughout the site.



Site Context Analysis

Key

Site Boundary

Bus Stops

History

The site and its surrounding buildings are a result of the extended development of Gravesend, a historic town to the north of the site, situated 21 miles (35km) south-east of Charing Cross (central London) on the south bank of the Thames Estuary.

Stone Age implements have been found in the locality of Gravesend since the 1900s. Extensive Roman remains have been found nearby and Gravesend lies immediately to the north of the Roman road connecting London with the Kent coast.

Gravesend's early built-up areas comprise King's Farm, built in the 1920s, to the west of the site and Christianfields to the south-west of the site, which has recently been completely rebuilt over a 6-year project from 2007 to 2013.

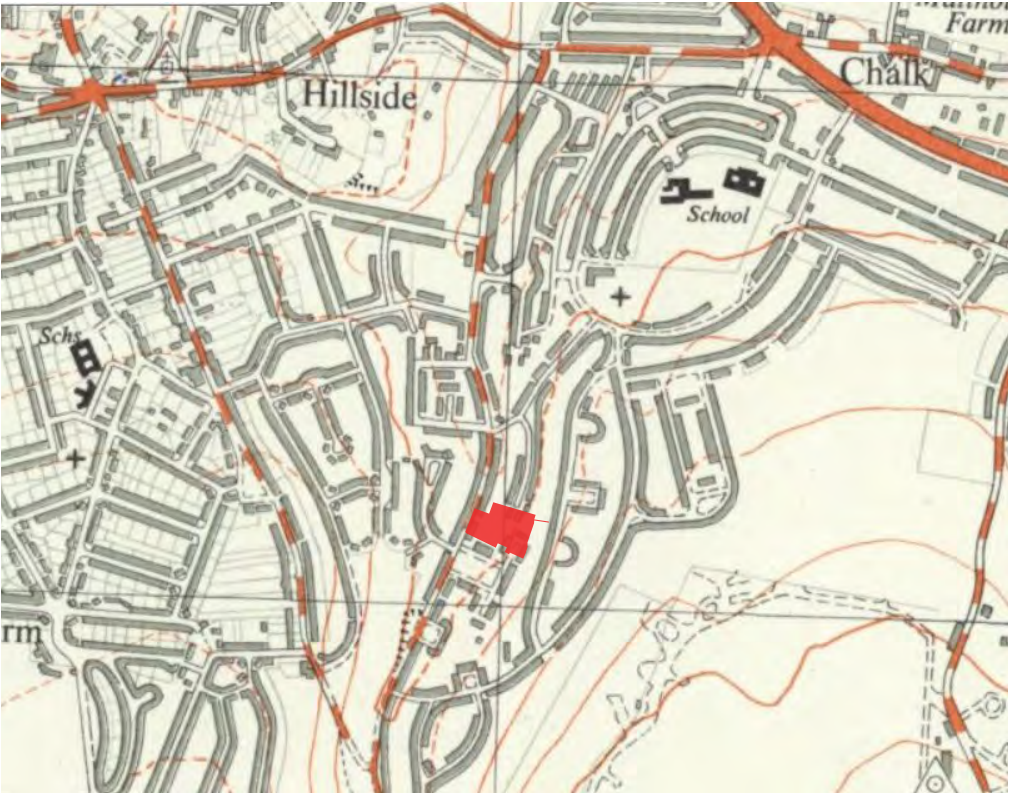
The airfield to the south-east of the site operated from 1932 to 1956. It was initially a civil airfield, and became a Royal Air Force station known as RAF Gravesend during the Second World War, when it was under the control of RAF Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain. The airfield site today has become a housing estate called Riverview Park and little can be identified of its original use as an airfield.



1885-1900



1920-1940



1937- 1961



1944- 1969

Key

Site

2.0 Site Assessment and Analysis

2.1 Site

Existing Site Layout

The site is south of the centre of Gravesend, along Valley Drive.

It is a generally sloping area, sloping westwards to the valley that extends northwards to the river Thames. The level change is approximately 9.6 metres from a high point in the south-east (33.35m AOD) to the lowest point in the north-west (23.73m AOD).

There is a centrally-located open space, surrounded by three blocks; this is poor quality space providing limited facilities, with one cherry tree towards its northern edge. There are rear gardens with high close-boarded timber fences backing on to this space and a couple of separately located leaseholder gardens.

The upper three blocks to the east surround an access road and parking areas. There is one existing tree, the remainder of the landscape being grass.

Significant areas of the site are grassed with minimal planting.

A tree survey has been carried out and has informed the landscaping and planting proposal. For further information please refer to the Landscape DAS document (document reference: SCC-MEL-XX-XX-DO-L-0100).



Key
— Site Boundary

Existing Site Plan

Site Photos



Existing Public Footpath From Valley Drive



Aerial View From the North-East corner



Existing Public Footpath Connecting Valley Drive, St Columba's Close and St Dunstan's Drive



Existing Road - St Patrick's Gardens

Key Plan



Existing Footpath From St Columba's Close



Aerial View From South-East Corner

Key Plan



Existing Communal Amenity Space



Existing Communal Amenity Space

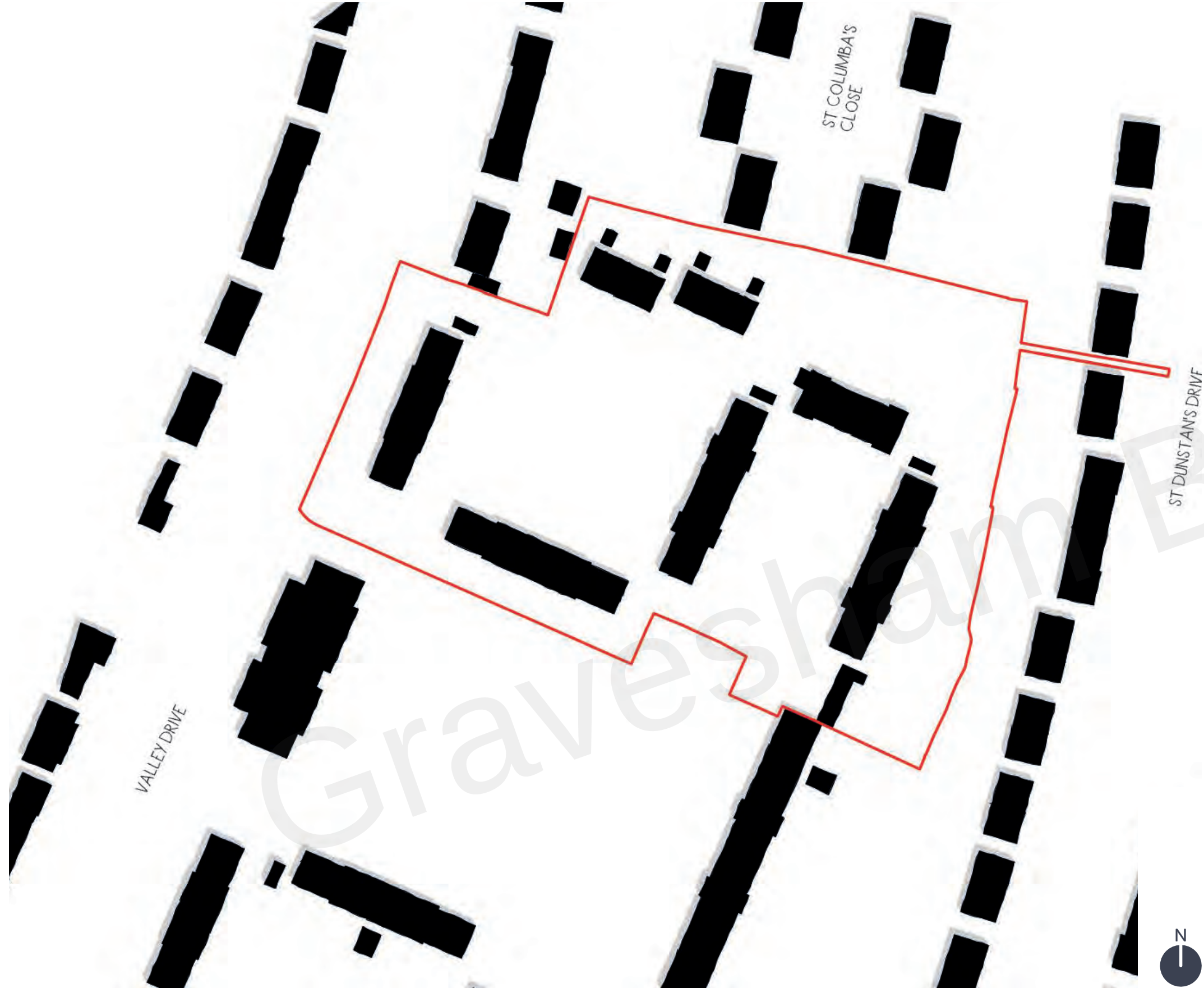
2.2 Site Analysis

Urban Grain

The figure ground diagram to the right show the majority of the existing buildings fronting either Valley Drive or St Patrick's Gardens, with the rear of the building forming a centralised amenity space.

The buildigs accommodating 36-42 St. Columba's Close to the north currently do not have direct road access.

The buildings immediate to the site are predominantly semi-detached and terraced houses with a new flat block to the south.



Existing Buildings - Urban Grain

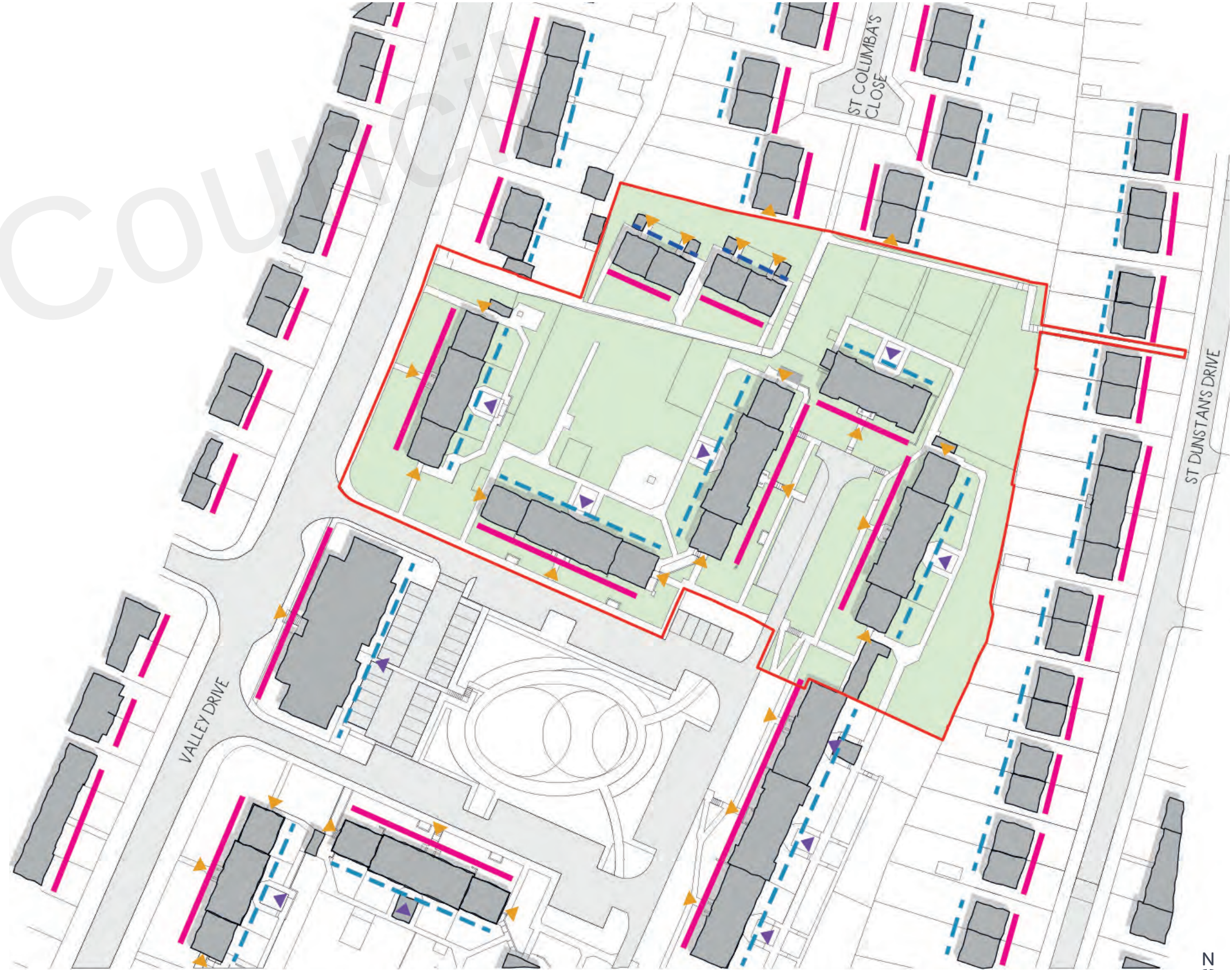
Key

- Site Boundary
- Existing Building

Frontages

The frontages of the surrounding area are ordered, facing onto the street along Valley Drive, St Dunstan's Drive, St Columba's Close and St Patrick's Gardens.

Entrances are typically on the front elevation or the side elevation.



Existing Frontages and Building Entrances

Key

- Site Boundary
- Primary Elevation
- Secondary Elevation
- Undefined Elevation
- Primary Building Entrance
- Secondary Building Entrance

Pedestrian and Vehicular Movement

An existing public footpath connects Valley Drive and St Dunstan's Drive through the residential area within the site boundary

A pedestrian route to the north connects to St. Columba's Close.

A series of pedestrian pathways provide access to the various residential block entrances throughout the site.

The existing vehicular access is from St Patrick's Gardens, towards the south-east corner of the site. The existing access is narrow, providing access to a number of parking spaces.



Existing Access and Vehicular Parking

- Key
- Site Boundary
 - Public Footpath
 - Pedestrian Access
 - Vehicular Access
 - Unallocated Vehicular Parking (Bishops Court)
 - Unallocated Vehicular Parking
 - Informal Vehicular Parking
 - Bus Stop

Amenity and Green Space

A significant area of the site is grassed with some existing trees within its perimeter which provides amenity for the flat block residents. The houses in the surrounding area have generous front and rear gardens.

The new communal amenity at the rear of Bishop's Court is located directly to the south of the site



Existing Amenity Space

- Key
- Site Boundary
 - Communal Amenity Space
 - Private Amenity Space (for ground floor flats)
 - Private Amenity Space (for upper floor flats)
 - Front / Back Garden
 - Play Space

Building Typology

The site is located in a residential area, with semi-detached houses and buildings with flats being the main typologies.

Key

- Flat Block
- Semi Detached House
- Outbuilding / Other



Existing Typologies

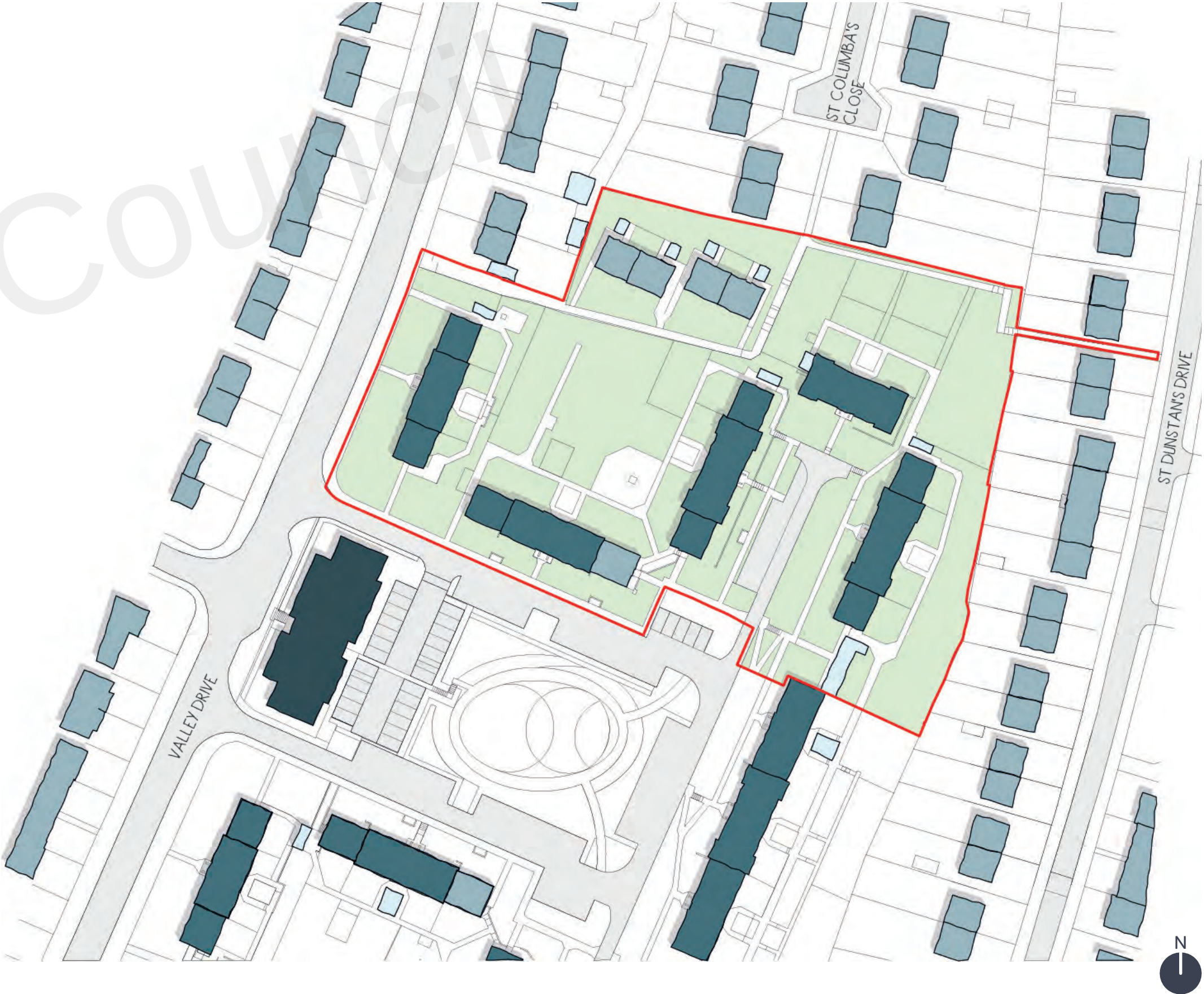
Building Heights

Building heights are predominantly two and three storeys, with the Bishop's Court development on Valley Drive ranging from four to five storeys.

Existing buildings have predominantly pitched roofs, with hip roofs on flat blocks. The adjacent Bishop's Court development fronts onto Valley Drive with a gable roof.

Key

- 4-5 Storeys
- 3 Storeys
- 2 Storeys
- 1 Storey



Existing Building Heights

Topography

There is a significant level change east-west across the site. The level increases from 23m OD on Valley Drive to 34m OD along the eastern perimeter towards St Dunstan's Drive.

In addition to the general slope across the site there are a number of steep banks in certain locations.

These level differences are further illustrated on the existing sections included in the subsequent page.



Key

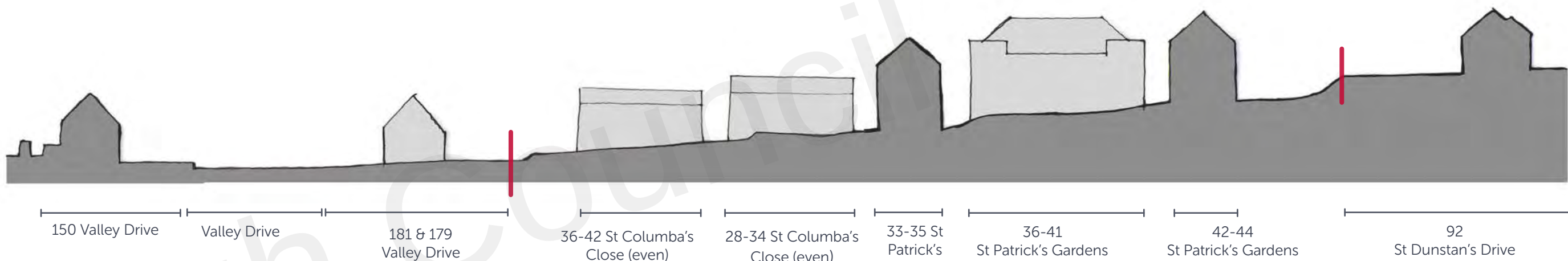
- Site Boundary
- Bank / Steep Change of Level
- Change of Level
- Existing Building



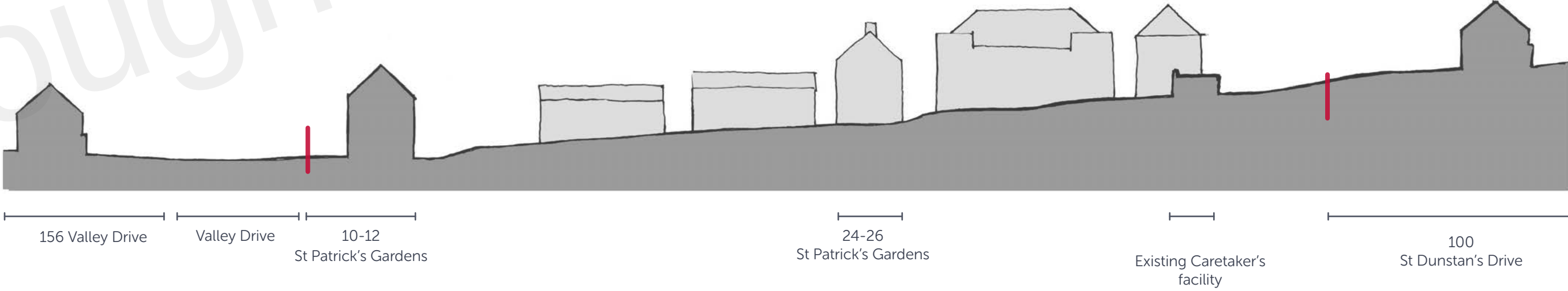
Existing Levels

Existing Site Sections

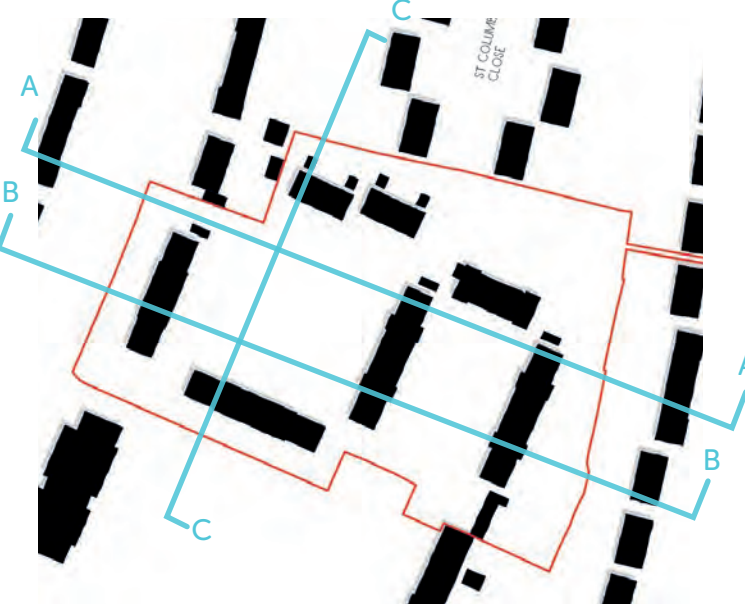
Section A-A



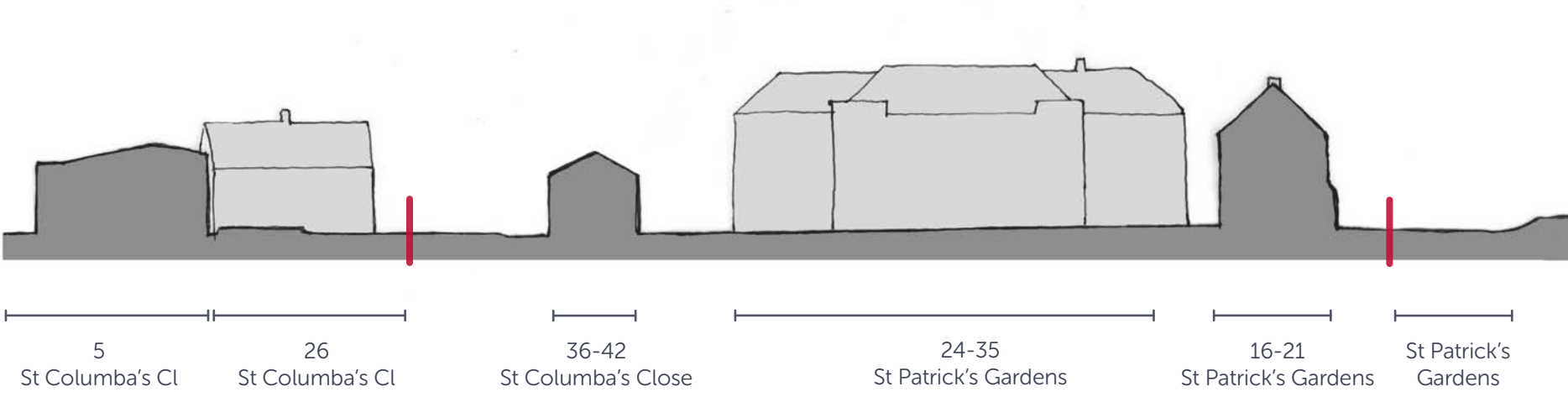
Section B-B



Key Plan



Section C-C



2.3 Local Vernacular

Local Character

To ensure the proposals respond to the character of the local area a review of the characteristics of the local buildings has been completed.

The local setting contains a wide range of features and details that could inform the design quality of this proposal.

The character of the area is predominantly suburban with stylistic motifs taken from the 'Arts & Crafts' movement.

There is a wide array of opening styles throughout the area, however there are a few repeating styles that could be appropriated for use within the proposed development.

- In summary some of the predominant features are:
- > Recessed, private and communal entrances, often painted.
 - > Brick or creasing tile surrounds entrances.
 - > Low eaves levels resulting in cats slide dormers and windows up to soffit.
 - > Tall 3:1 proportion windows to private residential staircases.



Projected creasing tile communal entrance surround and basket weave head decoration.



Recesses to communal entrances highlighted with painted brick



Stone capped gable with chimney with several interesting features including: Stepped Brick, English Bond, extruded brick patterning and brick capping detail.

Existing Buildings

The existing site consists primarily of flat blocks which include some of the following features:

- > Clear distinction to entrances with different material treatment
- > Ordered facades
- > Regular arrangement of windows
- > Horizontal emphasis through windows alignment
- > Facade hierarchy through material treatment
- > Pitched roofs

Materials consists primarily of:

- > Brown Brick
- > Red Brick
- > Render
- > Red Roof Tiles



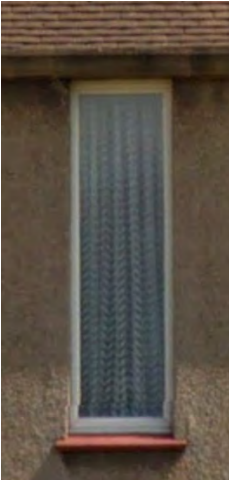
Tile creasing and canopy to communal entrance.



Brick banding and render upper floor contributes to providing a clear facade hierarchy.



The existing buildings consist of a simple facade treatment, with ordered window arrangement, single material treatment and pitched roof consisting of red roof tiles.



Tall thin window proportions to internal staircases.



Stack bonded tile infill panel



Oriel windows



Dormer windows



Brick rowlock capping detail



Feature chimneys contribute to the symmetry of the building.



Protruding bays provide relief in the massing and add interest to the facade.



White window with soldier course and red feature cil.



White window with timber header and red feature cil.

Rhythm and Proportion

Analysis of the rhythm and proportions of the existing housing stock revealed that there are a few common design features prevalent in the immediate area. The most dominant of these features are as follows:

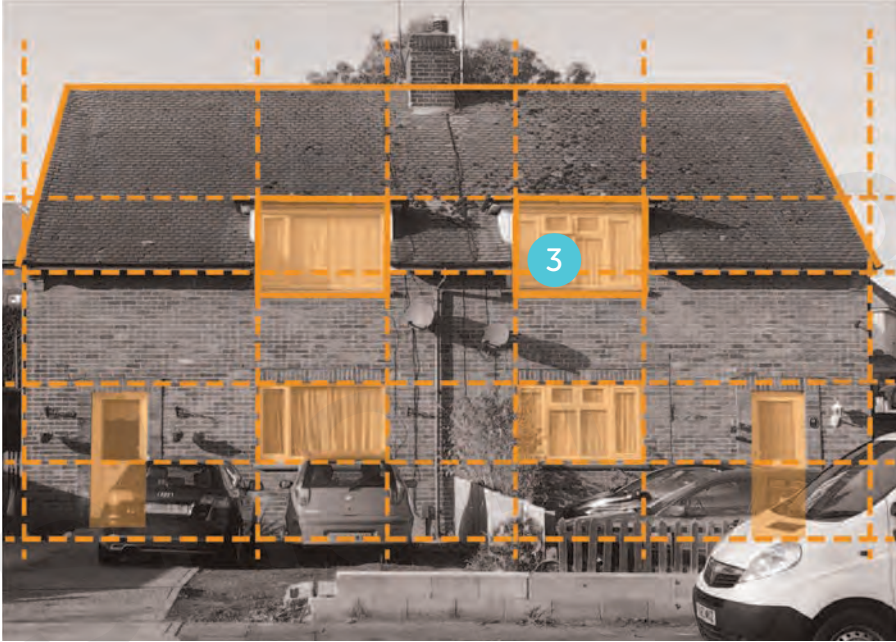
- > Proportionally broad and solid dwellings
- > An emphasis on horizontal planes
- > Universally low eaves
- > A dominance of hipped roofs with some limited exceptions
- > Emphasis on symmetry
- > Low horizontal roof planes often broken with secondary gables and dormers



136-138 Valley Drive



9-11 St. Columba's Close



132-134 Valley Drive

Key

- 1 Gables
- 2 Low Eaves
- 3 Flat Roof Dormers

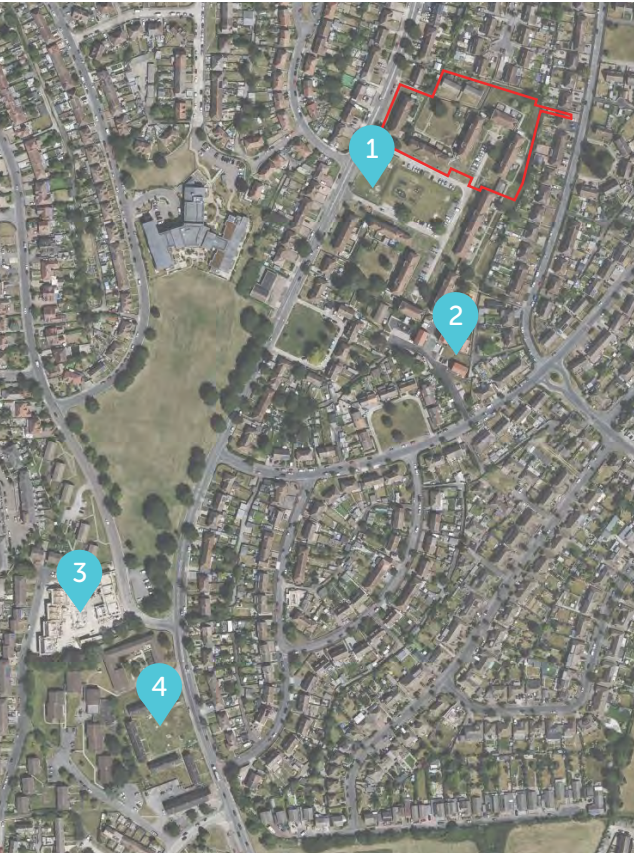
Emerging Context

The local vernacular is in an evolving state.

Nearby are four schemes designed by BPTW for Gravesham Borough Council: one under construction and three schemes completed and occupied. They all draw from the heritage and vernacular of Gravesham. However, the proposals interpret the context to provide a contemporary approach.

It is therefore appropriate to view the new development within this evolving context and form a proposal which not only responds to the existing but also the changing environment.

Key Plan



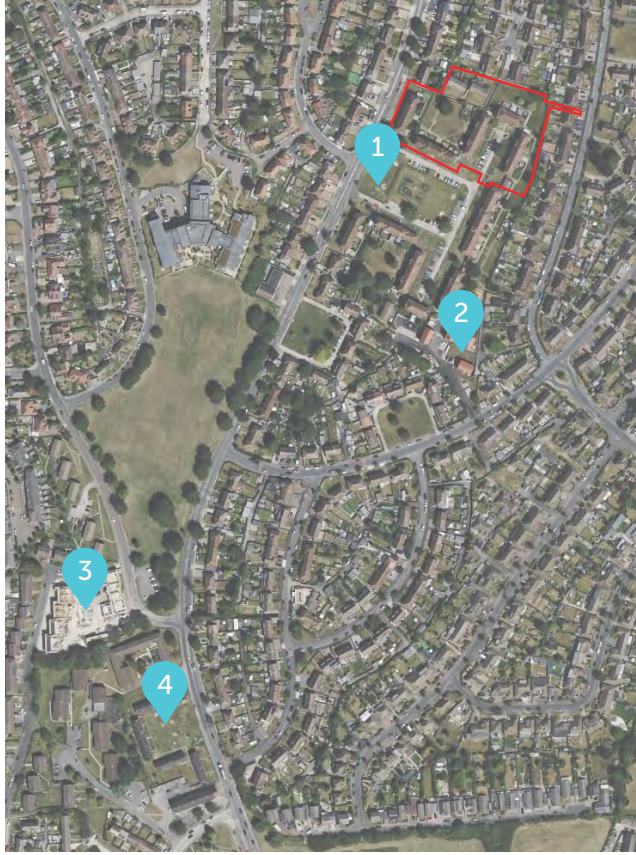
1 Bishop's Court



2 St Hilda's



Key Plan



3 Whitehill Lane



4 Valley Drive



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2.4 Site Constraints

The site presents several constraints to be considered within the proposals. These include:

- 1 Close proximity to existing residents, consider overlooking.
- 2 Narrow existing vehicular access road from St Patrick's Gardens with an unsuitable sized turning head.
- 3 Provision of private amenity for existing residents.
- 4 A public footpath runs through part of the site connecting Valley drive and St Dunstan's Drive.
- 5 Significant level difference across the site with undefined access to areas

- Key
- Site Boundary
 - Bank / Steep Change of Level
 - Change of Level
 - Narrow Road Width
 - Existing Vehicular Access
 - Close Proximity to Neighbouring Buildings
 - Public Footpath
 - Existing Pedestrian Access
 - Noise



Site Constraints

2.5 Site Opportunities

The site also presents various opportunities to inform the scheme. These include:

- 1 Opportunity to improve the frontage to Valley Drive as well as the opportunity for height, complementing the adjacent Bishop's Court development to the south of the site (4-5 storeys).
- 2 Opportunity for a new road to provide access directly from Valley Drive and improve the overall accessibility and connections within the site.
- 3 Reinforcing the urban grain, potentially through completing the existing courtyard with the addition of new homes. This would include improvements to the communal amenity, benefitting from natural surveillance and discouraging antisocial behaviour.

- Key
- Site Boundary
 - Buildings to be retained
 - Potential Development Opportunity
 - Potential for Active Frontages
 - Potential Landscape Improvements
 - Potential Improvement to Existing Gardens
 - Opportunity for Focal Point
 - Opportunity for Height
 - Opportunity to Improve Access
 - Opportunity to Improve Turning Head



Site Opportunities