

Proposed Care Home

Former Battle of Britain Site, Coldharbour Road, Gravesend, DA11 8NT

For Frontier

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

November 2022 (Planning Issue)

HARRIS IRWIN ASSOCIATES - 3172



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Introduction

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Harris Irwin Architects on behalf of the applicant Frontier Estates Ltd, and supports a full planning application submitted to Gravesham Borough Council.

This document has been prepared in accordance with national Planning Policy Guidance and local design guidance in order to demonstrate the commitment of the developers and design team to respond positively to the local context to contribute to the creation of characterful and distinctive neighbourhoods, streets and buildings.

Pre-Application discussions have been undertaken with Gravesham Borough Council planning department (reference PRE20210313) and the proposals have been developed in response to the case officer's comments and advice.

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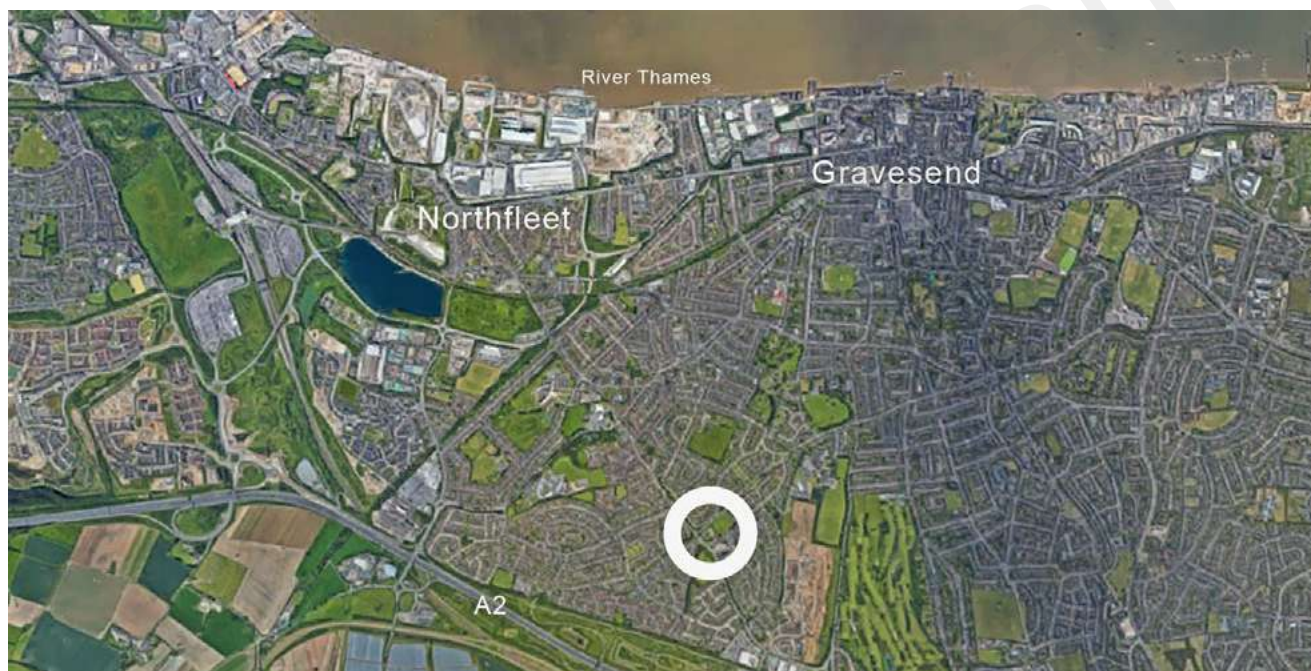
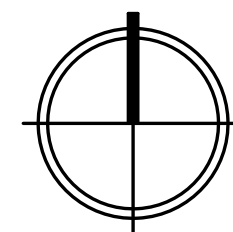
Assessment of Local Context

2.1 Site Location

The application site is located in a predominantly residential and suburban area between Gravesend town centre and the A2, conveniently positioned for access to the M25 and M2. Formerly occupied by the Battle of Britain public house, the 0.47 ha site is now vacant.

Local amenities include convenience stores, a post office and a doctors surgery. The Site overlooks the Shears Green Infant School playing field.

Gravesend is a Thames Gateway commuter town in Northwest Kent, situated 21 miles southeast of Charing Cross (central London) on the south bank of the River Thames and opposite Tilbury in Essex.





1. View of Site from Coldharbour Road



2. View of Site from New House Lane



8. Coldharbour Road



7. View into St Clements Close



3. View of Site from St Clements Close



4. School Field view towards rear of Site



5. View Opposite Site (Coldharbour Road)



6. View Opposite Site (New House Lane)



1. Castle Hill Drive



4. Springhead Parkway



7. Springhead Park Primary School



2. Crete Hall Road



5. Talbot Lane



8. Southfleet Green



3. Kent Police HQ, Thames Way



6. Thames Way



9. Whitehill Lane

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Site Evaluation

3.1 Constraints and Opportunities

The corner site addresses the junction between New House Lane and Coldharbour Road. New House Lane slopes down from Coldharbour road, and the site has been historically levelled out resulting in banking to the North West boundary facing New House Lane.

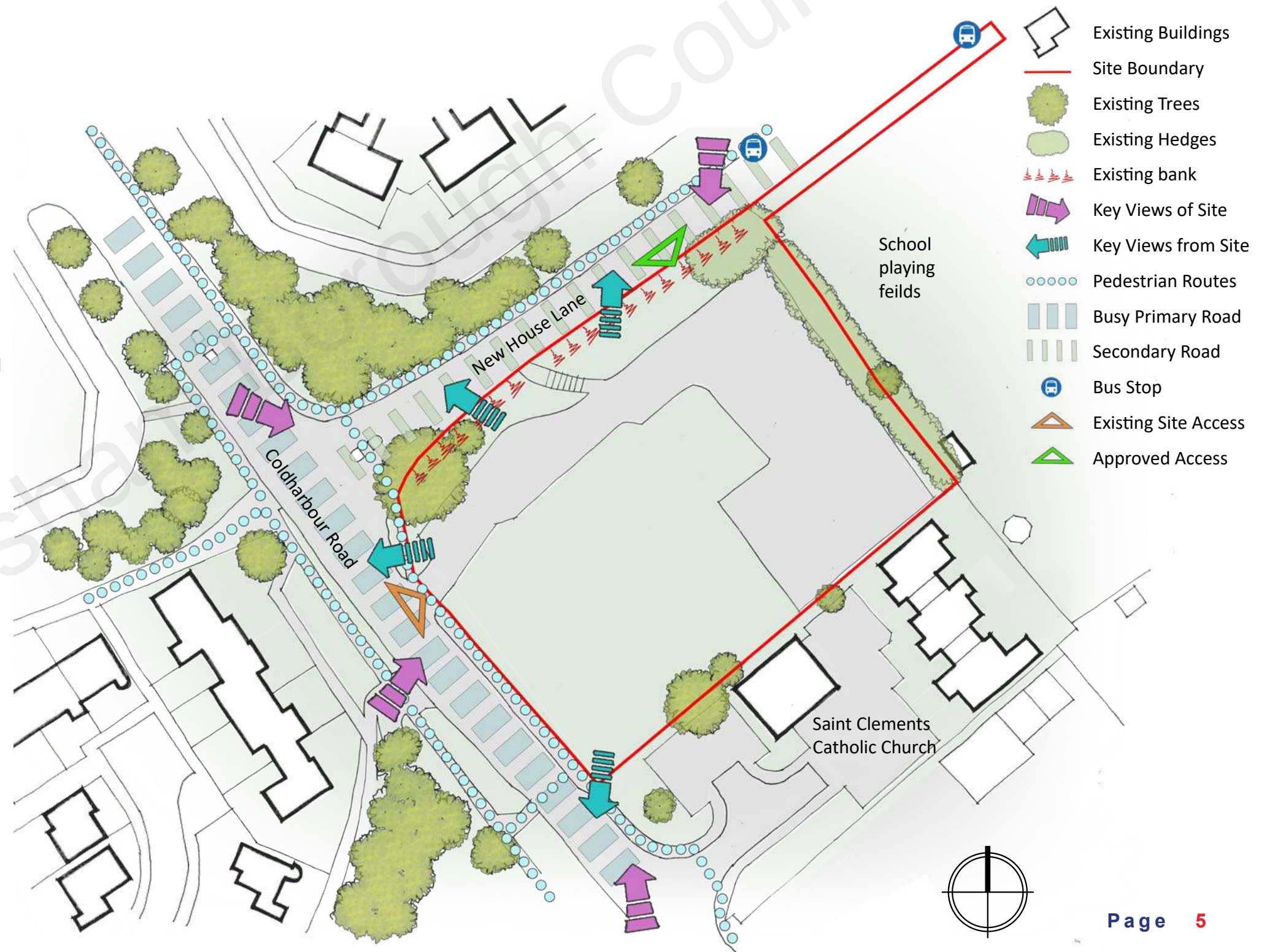
A protected copper beech tree on the corner of the road junction forms a distinctive landmark breaking up the street frontages, presenting an opportunity to incorporate it into the design proposals to good effect.

A green buffer zone exists between the main New House Lane road and the secondary smaller lane (also named New House Lane). This provides an opportunity to promote views of the trees and green spaces beyond from the elevated position of the proposed site, while at the same time maintaining a degree of privacy.

The site benefits from good pedestrian links to local amenities along Coldharbour Road with nearby bus stops along New House Lane, although pedestrian access along New House Lane is limited to one side of the road with the nearest safe crossing point at the junction with Coldharbour Road.

The site has previously received planning consent for a residential development which included forming a new vehicular access point from New House Lane, away from the junction. A new access at this position would restrict vehicular traffic to one part of the site, thereby maximising the area available for a central recreational garden space which is a key design objective.

The roadside location with relatively quiet neighbours offers the opportunity to adopt a 'quiet side / busy side' approach which is a popular strategy within the care design sector, providing a mixture of stimulating 'connected' spaces and quieter restful zones.



3.2 Previous Consent

In December 2020, planning permission was granted for the 'Construction of 20 residential units comprising 6 x three bedroom houses; 9 x two bedroom flats; and 5 x one bedroom flats; laying out of access road, provision of 32 car parking spaces, refuse and cycle storage, private and communal gardens, and construction of vehicular access onto New House Lane.' (Application: 20171245)

The scheme comprised a mainly two storey units with a more dominant three storey block at the prominent corner position. Materials were a mix of brick, lightweight cladding and tiled roofs with elements of glazed curtain walling.



3.3 Pre-Application

A pre-application discussion was carried out in February 2022 (Ref PRE20210313), and in principle the redevelopment of this prominent site is welcomed in terms of land use.

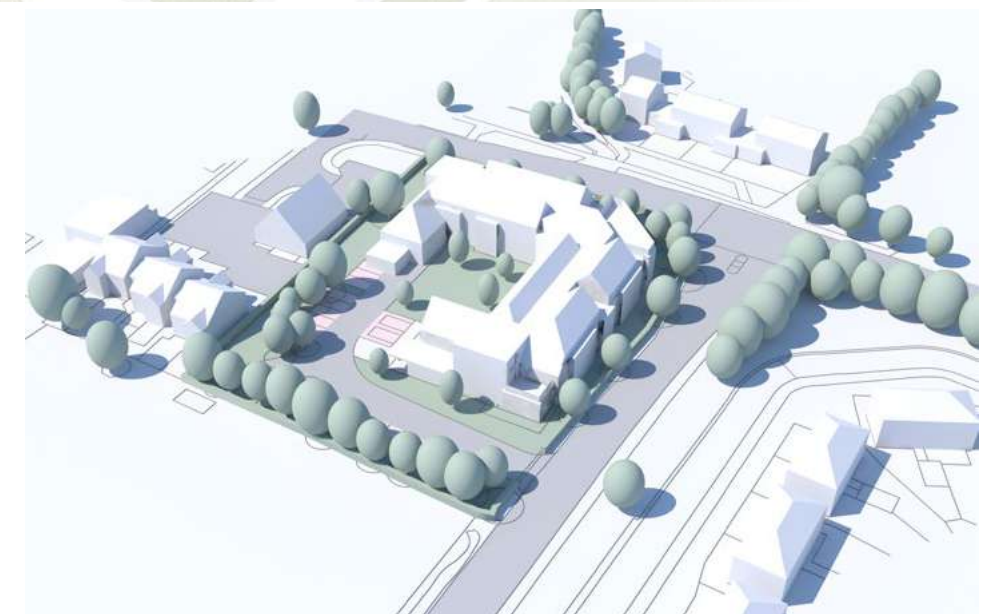
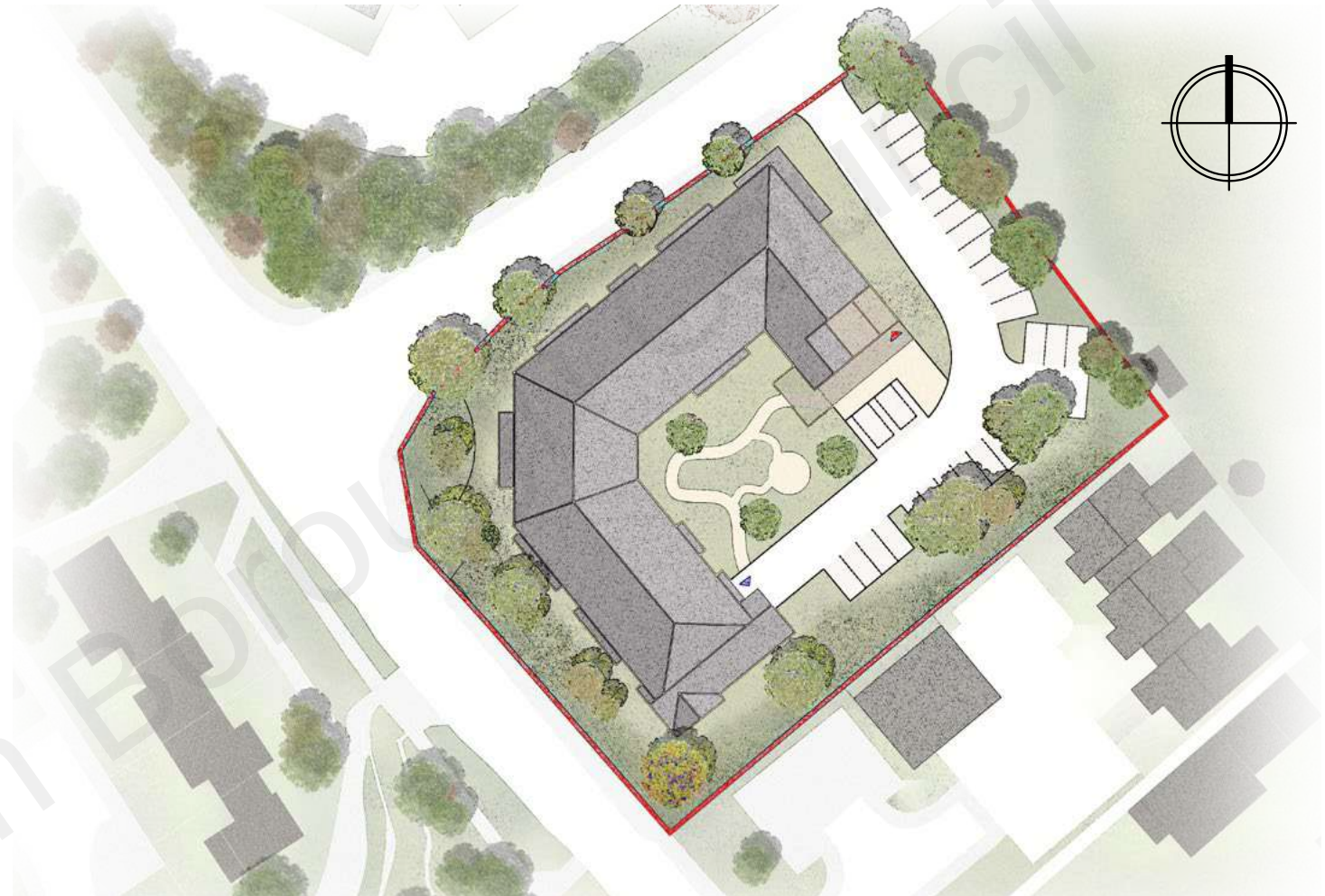
Design South East provided a number of well received suggestions (comments referring to the built form in particular) which have informed the subsequent development of the scheme:

- Breaking up the mass, introducing more variation in height and creating gaps in the perimeter would reduce the impact of the development.
- Consider reconfiguring the development as several smaller buildings, perhaps connected via covered bridges.

Although this is described in more depth in later sections of this document, the principle of articulating the building with breaks in the form resonated well with our design intent to develop the proposals into a more considered and balanced solution.

- The main entrance to the building and site could be clearer and more celebrated. Consider including a public art element to announce the entrance and create a better arrival experience.
- There is concern that the white render volume on the rear elevation juxtaposes strongly with the building overall and may weather poorly.
- Consideration should be given to the potential for the ground floor communal uses (café, spa, etc.) to be open to the public to help embed the proposed care home & its residents into the existing community.

At the pre-application stage, we considered the entrance area to be the least resolved and most in need of further development to make the building more readable and welcoming.



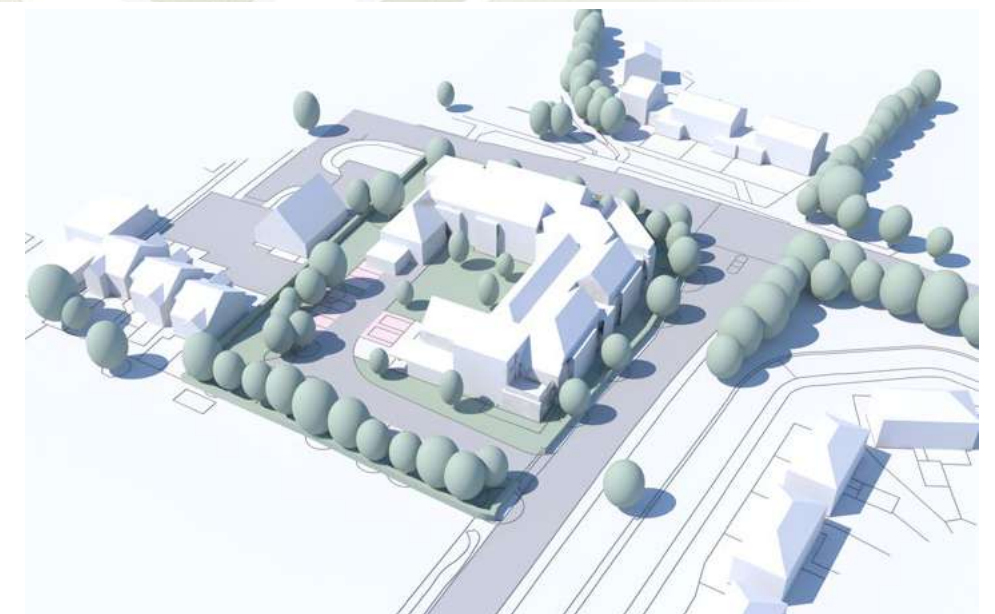
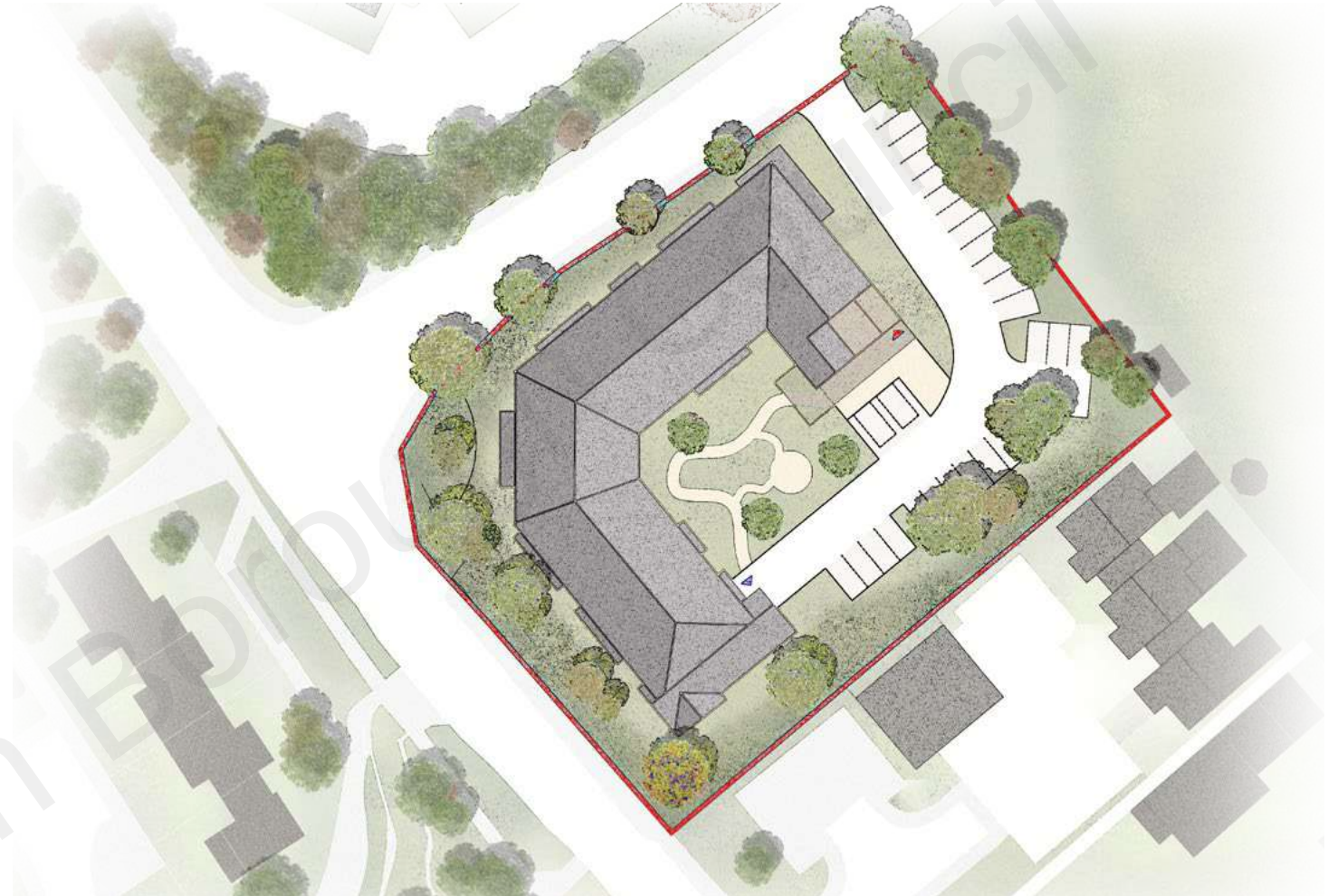
3.3 Pre-Application

The first pre-application discussion was carried out in September 2021, and in principle the redevelopment of this prominent site was welcomed in terms of land use, with the following comments being made by officers

- The layout is the most beneficial regarding the relationship with St Clement's Close.
- The preference is to have the care home provided as a single unit.
- Any scheme should reinforce the street line.
- Consideration should be given to reducing the bulk and mass through provision of rooms in the roof.
- If a 3-storey section is provided on the corner, it needs to be of a higher quality and enhance the area.

In response to these comments an amended scheme was issued to the Local Planning Authority on the 26th October 2021 including a number of visualisations to better demonstrate the scheme. Changes to the scheme included the following:

- Relocated bedrooms internally to the ground and first floor from the second floor to allow for the massing to be reduced.
- Included accommodation within the roof served by dormer windows.
- Proposed a more varied roof form including pitched and flat roof sections, gables and hipped sections.
- Provided detailing in the form of projecting bays, recessed terraces, dormer windows and variation in materials to break up the elevations.
- Maintained the layout to reinforce the street line .



3.3 Pre-Application

Further comments were returned from the LPA Officers and Design South East which included the below.

- Consideration should be given to breaking up the mass, introducing more variation in height and creating gaps in the perimeter was suggested to reduce the impact of the development.
- Consideration should be given to reconfiguring the development as several smaller buildings connected via covered bridges.
- There is an opportunity to improve the quality of the public realm around the site, providing high quality footpaths and some public amenity.
- The main entrance could be clearer and more celebrated.
- Provision of public art should be considered.
- There is a huge potential for provision of high-quality landscaped features on site and the central communal space is welcomed. Separation with the parking area should be provided and consideration should be given to how this visually relates to the surrounding streets.
- Consideration should be given to how the internal landscaped space could better relate to the surrounding streets and neighbourhood.
- Ideally a generous footpath would be provided along New House Lane, connecting the bus stop to the junction of Coldharbour Road and New House Lane.
- Consideration should be given to the provision of two pedestrian entrances – one on Coldharbour Road and one on New House Lane with the main entrance.
- Clarification is required on how emergency services, delivery and refuse collection vehicles will move around the site. These should be able to turn on site.
- Parking provision seems adequate.
- Consideration should be given to mitigating the impact of noise from Coldharbour Road.
- The design should be driven by sustainability considerations.
- Consideration should be given to opening the café for public use.



04

Design Principles & Concepts

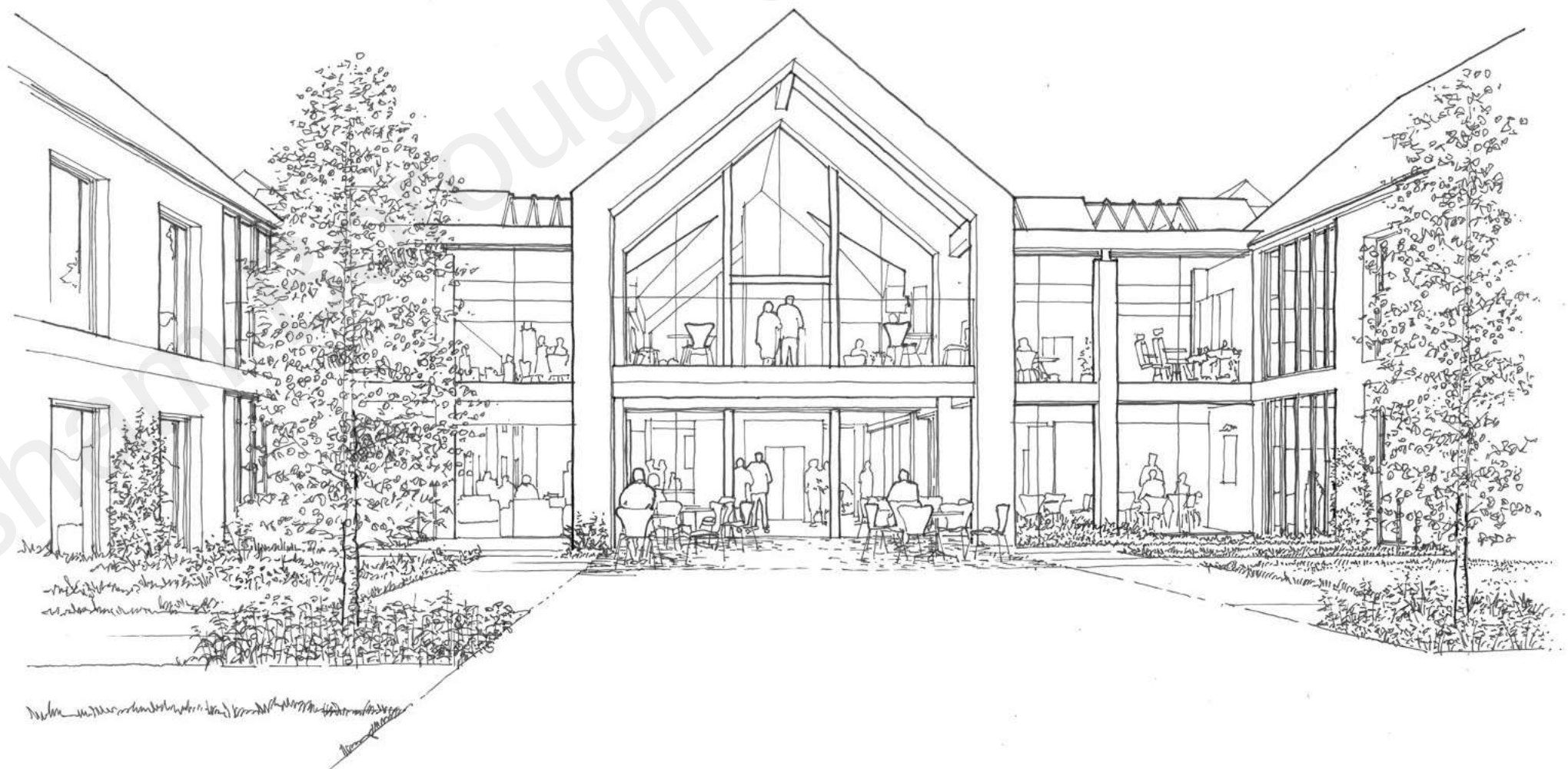
4.1 Use - Care

There is an identified need for a greater variety of accommodation options for older people in Gravesham and this must include facilities equipped to deliver more acute levels of care, rather than relying on remotely located and under-resourced NHS hospitals.

Situating care homes within the community serves to provide the benefits of easier transitions, a greater sense of wellbeing, and improved working conditions for the care providers.

A significant change is needed in the public perception of care homes and their relationship with the community, and this shift begins with the locating of new facilities more centrally within the communities they serve, bringing with them the resources to empower elderly community members and their families, and so strengthen the social cohesion of the local neighbourhood.

The cost of running and staffing a facility is far greater than the build cost, and the investment into sustainable design more than pays for itself financially, functionally, and more importantly socially by reintroducing family support, employment and availability back into the heart of communities that need it.

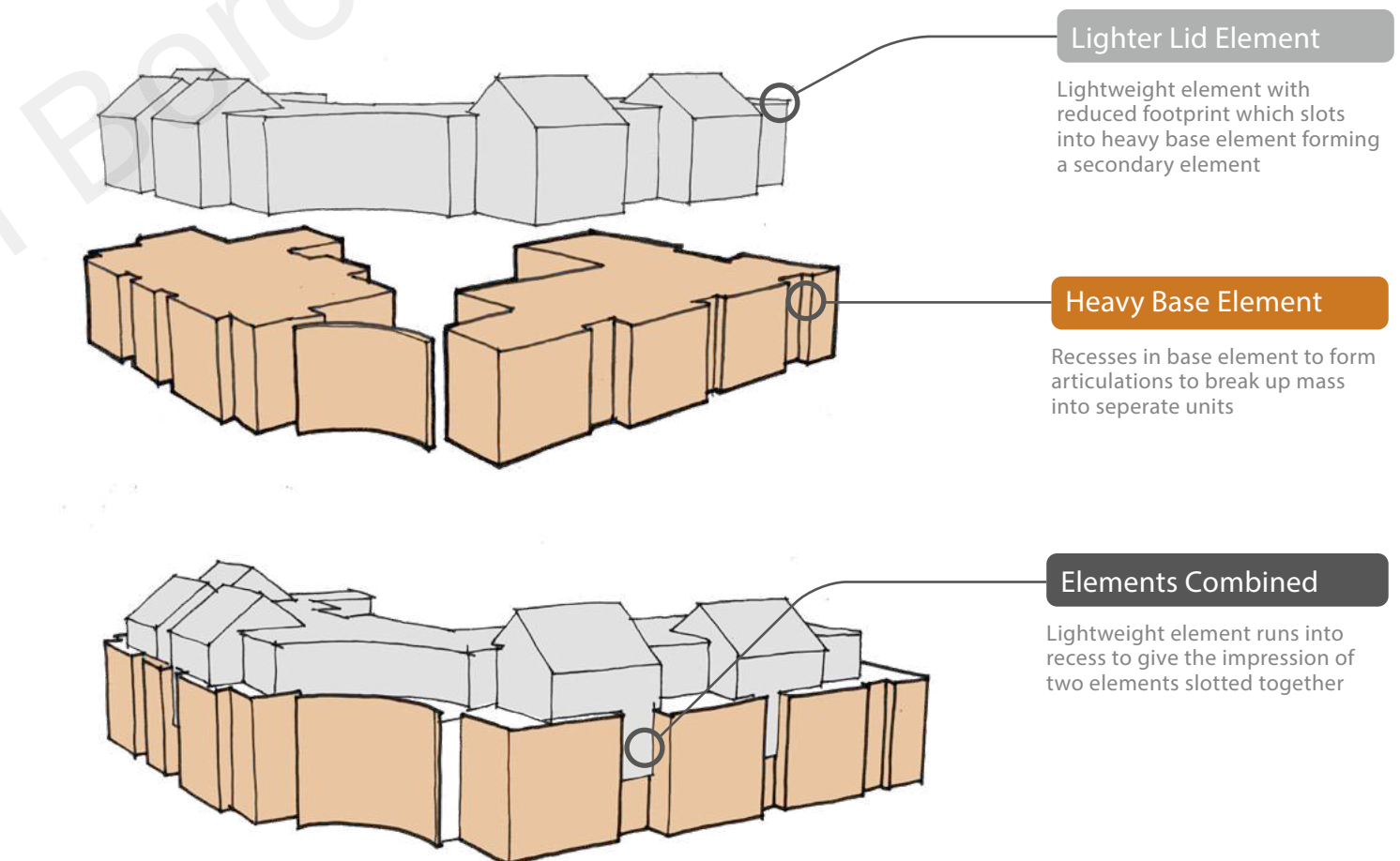
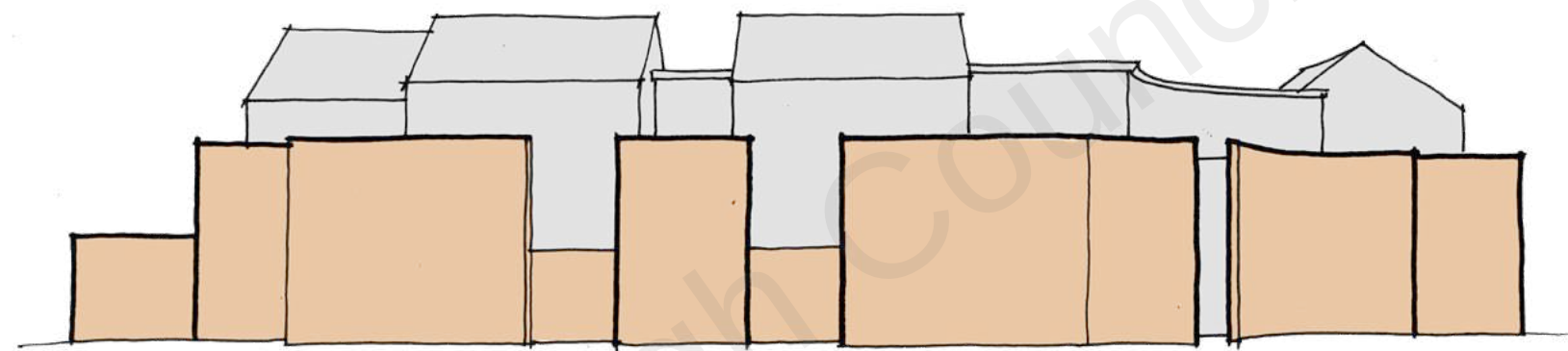
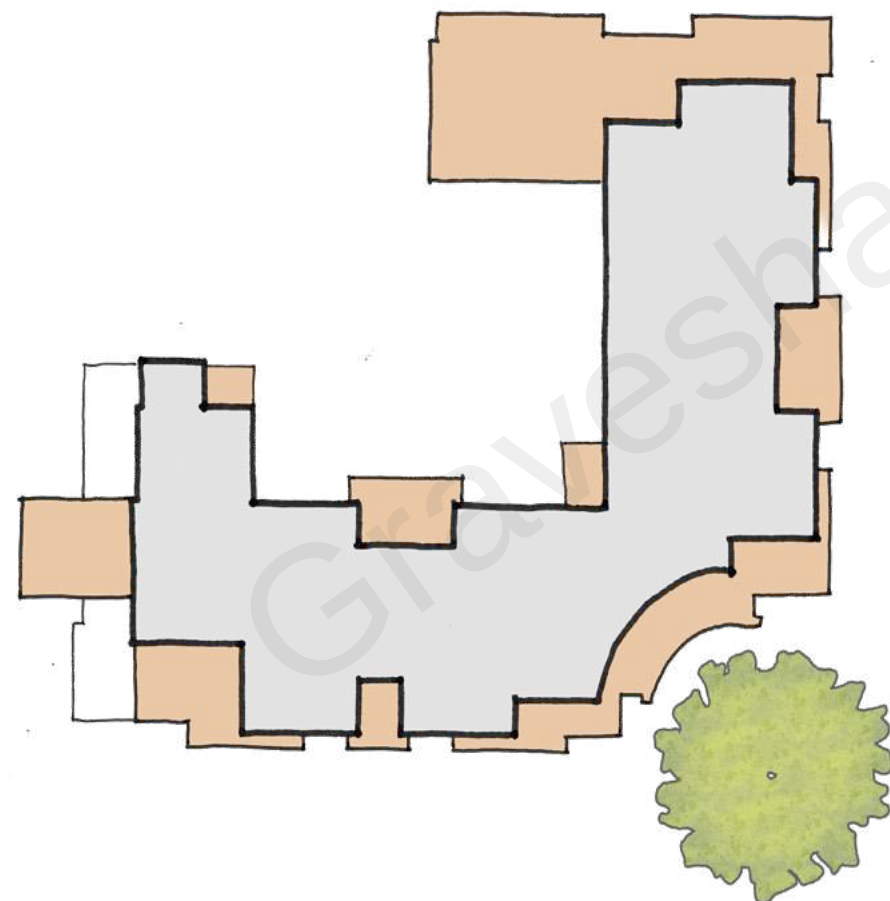


4.2 Scale & Massing

The proposed 'L' shaped building is positioned on the corner site to form two main street facing façades which are visually separated by the existing copper beech tree which forms a key landmark informing the character of the area.

The majority of the accommodation is provided in the first two storeys of the proposed building with a reduced second storey footprint which is also set back from the main line to break down the form at a macro level into a primary two storey element and a secondary lightweight roof element.

These volumes are further articulated into separate blocks implying the rhythm of a row of separate structures. This is further reinforced with a change of material in the recesses.



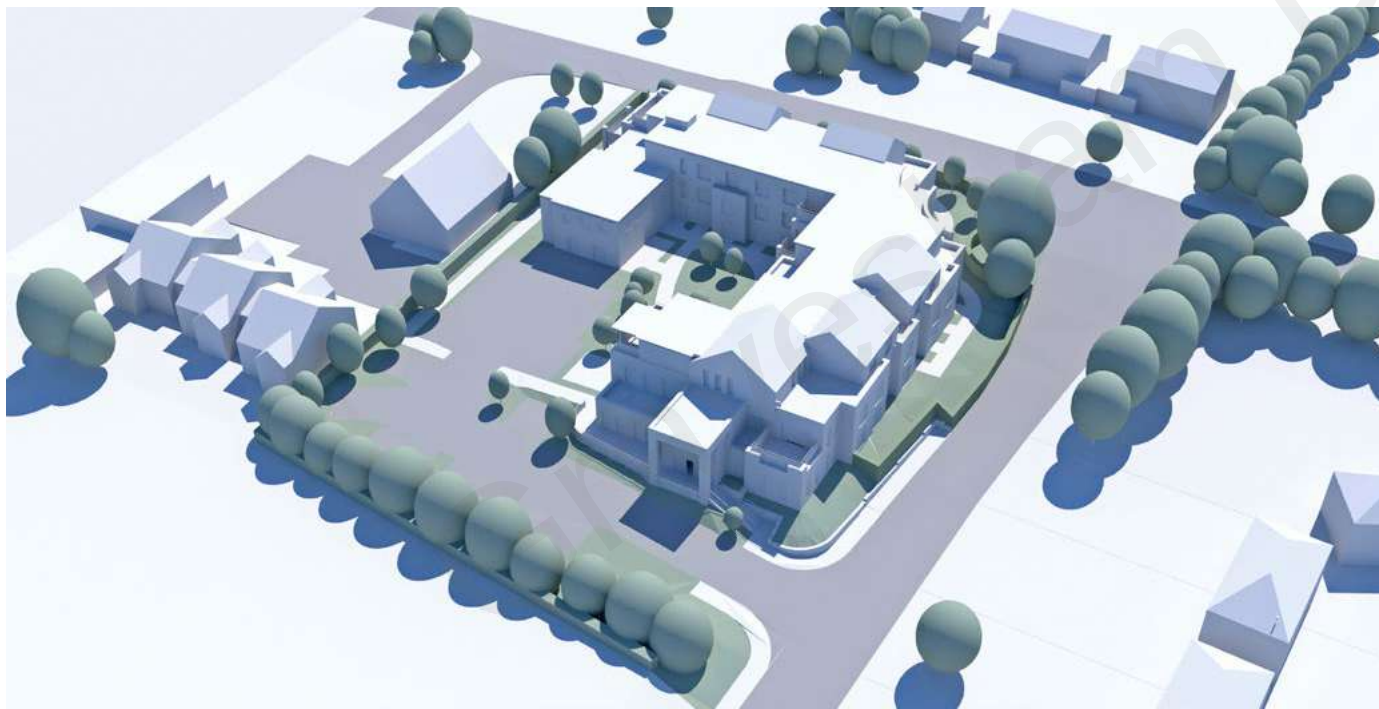
4.2 Massing Diagrams



(1) Aerial view from West



(2) Aerial view from North



(3) Aerial view from East



(4) Aerial view from South

4.3 Landscaping

Existing Landscape

The majority of the existing site comprises rough made ground, following the demolition of the former pub and removal of its associated hardstanding areas.

The landform is predominantly flat with a steep bank forming the northern boundary along New House Lane. The greatest level difference is in the northern most corner of the site, where there is a c.2m level difference.

A large, Category A Beech tree forms a prominent feature within the Site, and is a focal point along New House Lane and Coldharbour Road. Vegetation within the site is predominantly located to the boundaries, with an area of scrub in the northern corner of the site. A mixed native species hedgerow forms an effective screen between the Site and the School playing fields located beyond the north-east boundary of the site.

Landscape Proposals

The proposals aim to provide an attractive garden setting for the residents, staff and visitors to enjoy, whilst enhancing and strengthening the landscape character of the local setting.

The majority of the trees on site are to be retained, including the Category A Beech tree and mixed native species hedgerow.

Additional native species tree planting is proposed within the car park and around the boundaries of the development, to promote biodiversity net gain, and enhance ecological connectivity. An avenue of native trees is proposed along Coldharbour Road, to provide partial screening of the development and to enhance the character of the road.

The majority of bedrooms on the ground floor are to be provided with level access out onto individual patios, separated by planting and leading to circulation footpaths, and communal areas.

The café garden is split into two halves, public and private. A public, courtyard style garden is provided adjacent to the car park and lobby access path, with access provided from the café. A central water feature and benches is provided within the space, with low clipped hedgerows and pleached trees providing privacy, and shelter. A private café garden with seating and canopy sail is provided within the central courtyard garden.

The central courtyard garden comprises a multi-purposes lawn for events and games with a circular path leading through ornamental planting promoting physical and mental well-being. A 'growing garden' with raised planters is provided forming an activity space for residents.

Planting within the car park area aims to create a robust but ornamental setting.



4.4 Sustainability

The location of care facilities within the communities they serve comes at an increased land cost however this is justifiable in terms of sustainability and running costs and should be factored in when considering the project's environmental impact.

The building strategy is to provide a high thermal mass internally by employing masonry walls and concrete plank floors in a repeated plan format to transfer all loads straight through masonry walls and eliminate the need for structural steelwork.

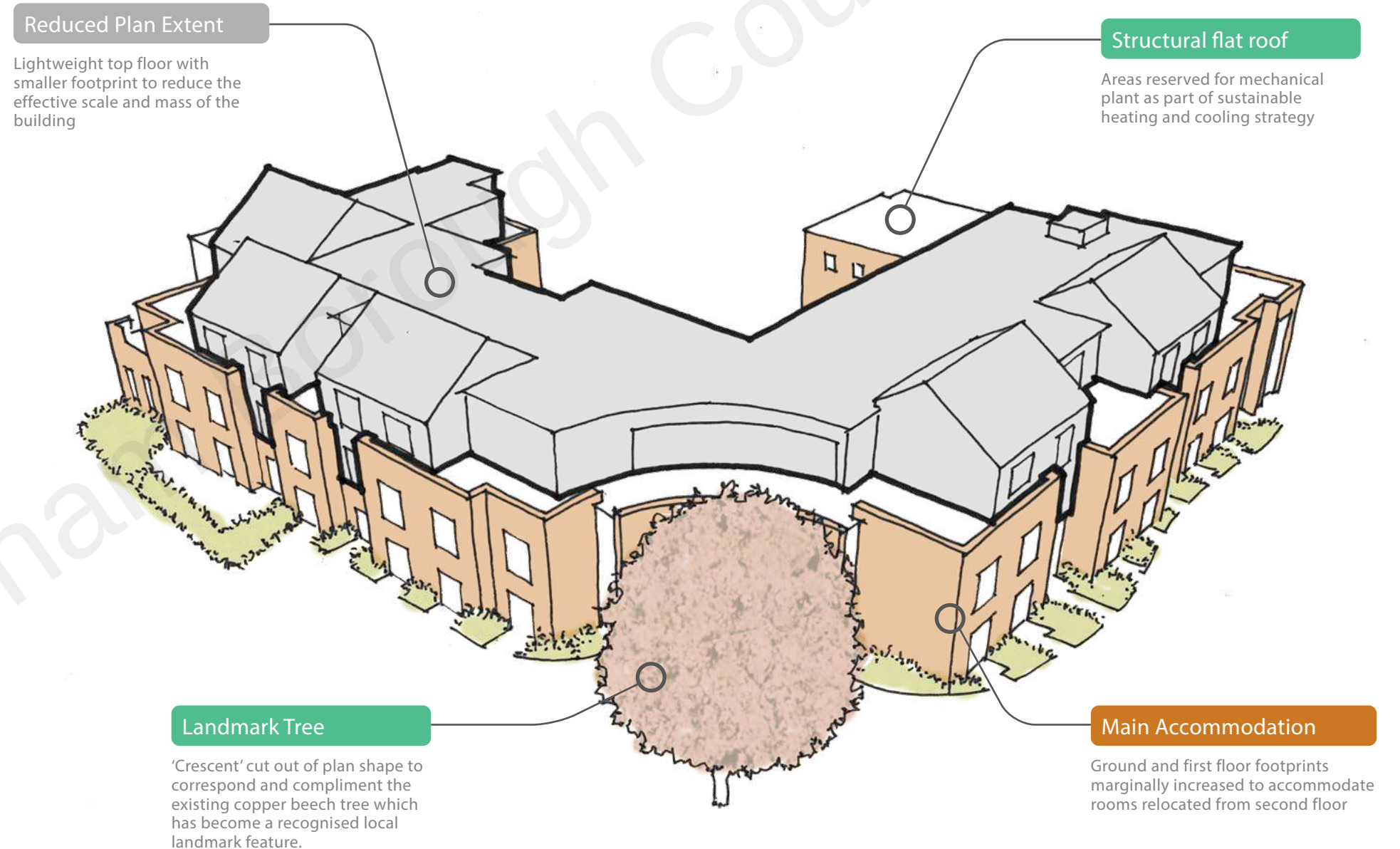
Concrete floor planks also provide structure for the flat roof portions of the second floor level in order to support any renewable energy plant such as air heat exchange units at roof level if necessary, also opening up opportunities to consider green roof solutions without structural consequences.

4.5 Amount of development

The ideal configuration for this type of care home from an operational point of view and in terms of staffing and scales of economy, is a three storey building comprising 64-67 bedrooms with each floor split into separate care groups of 8 residents.

In this case the footprint of the building has been increased from its optimal minimum to accommodate more rooms within the ground and first floors in order to reduce the visual impact of the second floor.

The site area is 0.47 hectares and the proposal is for 65 bedrooms, with 25 bedrooms on the ground and first floors and 15 at second floor level.

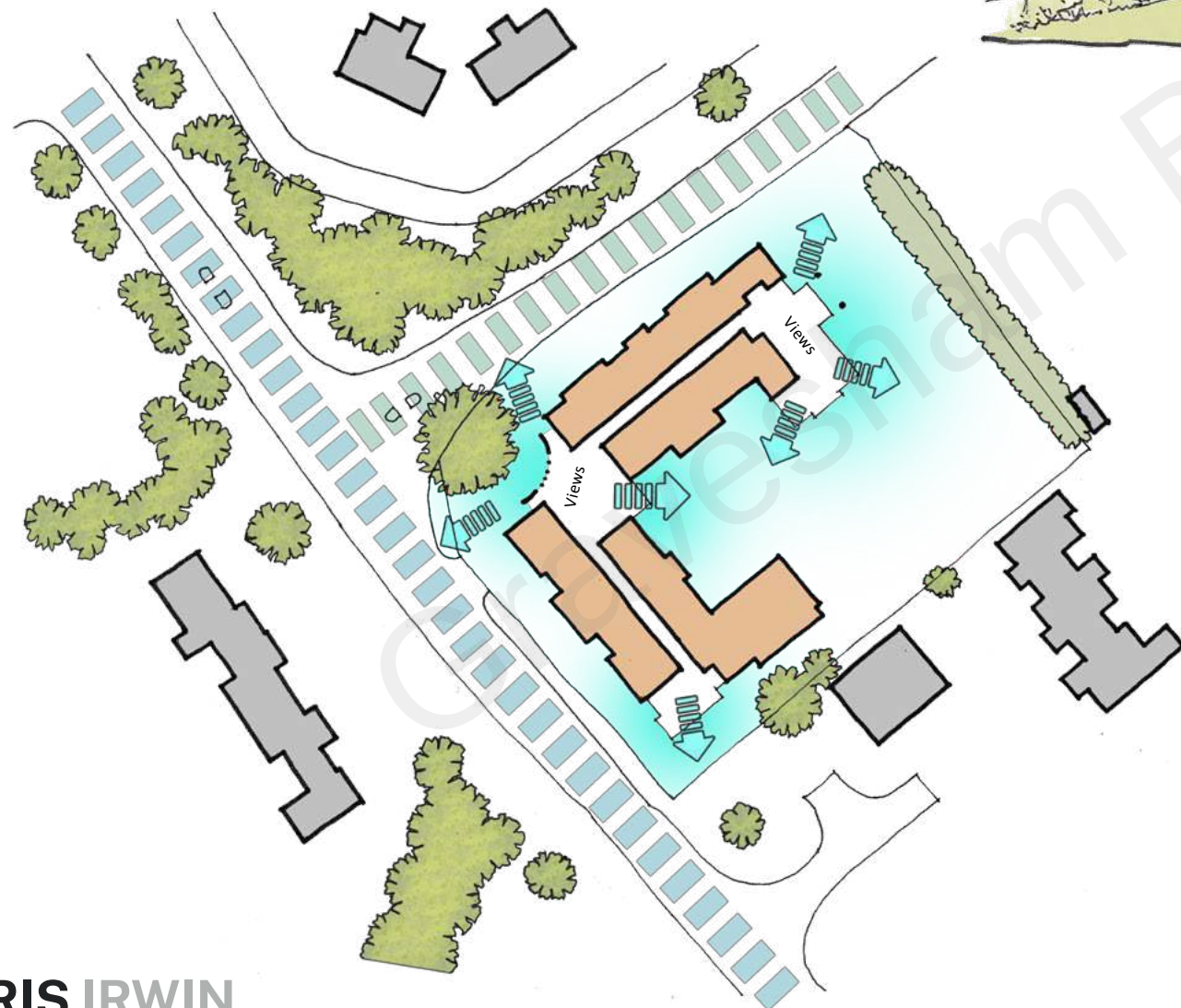


4.6 Layout

The plan is close to an 'L' shaped format in response to the dual street frontage is also determined by the site conditions with the slope of the site determining the most pragmatic position for parking and service access on the NE side of the site.

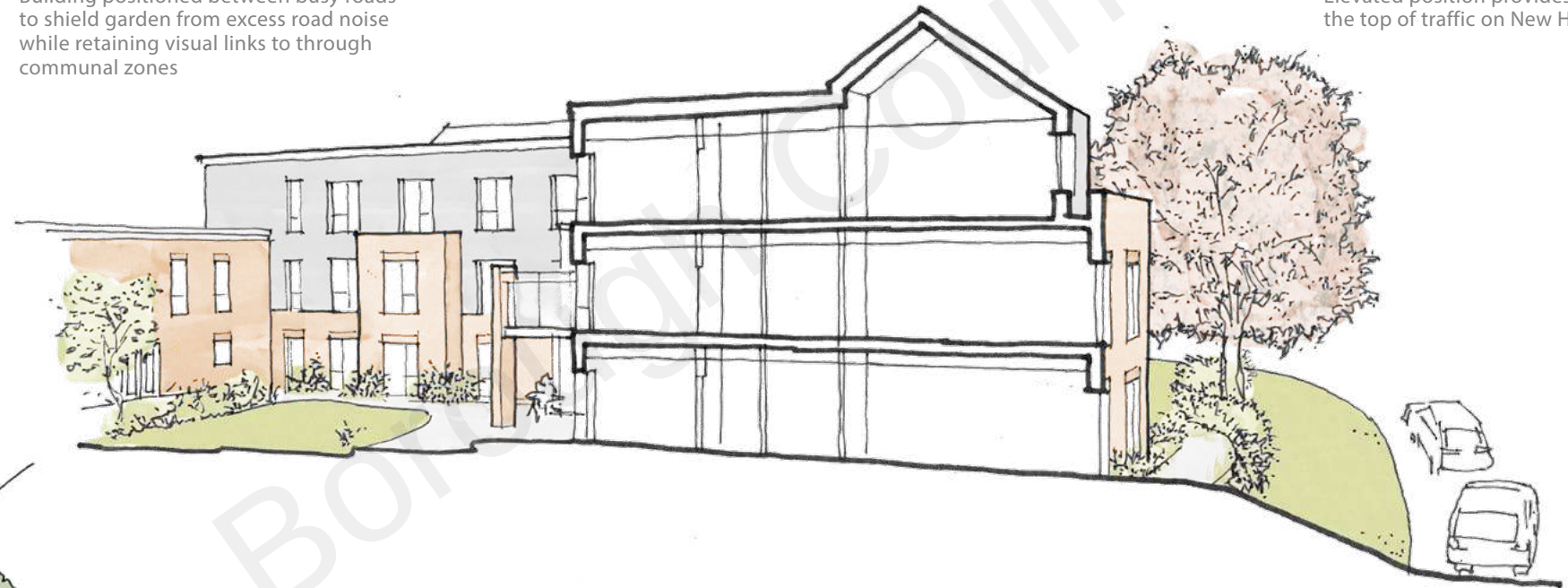
The entrance area is strategically positioned to command a strong street presence and be easily identifiable to visitors whether they are arriving in private vehicles, or as pedestrians.

The strong presence of the copper beech tree at the corner of the junction between New House Lane and Coldharbour Road has been used as a cue to respond with a separating architectural element with its own identity, helping to further articulate and break up the two street facing 'wings'.



Quiet Side

Building positioned between busy roads to shield garden from excess road noise while retaining visual links to through communal zones



Busy Side

Elevated position provides views over the top of traffic on New House Lane



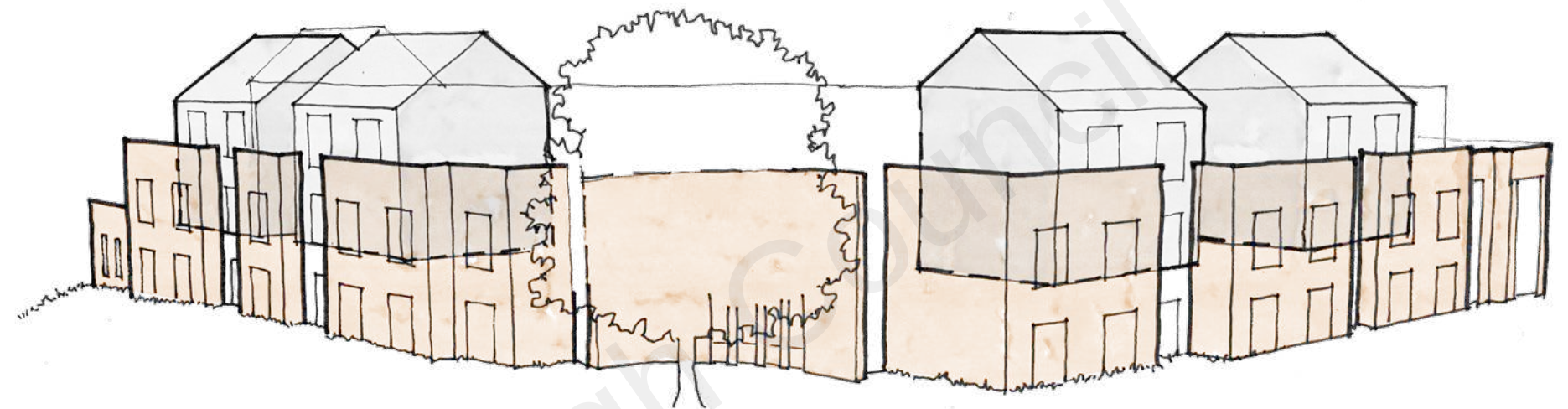
4.7 Appearance

The primary design intent is to provide a relatively contemporary but understated building with strong form and subtle detailing, gradually revealing itself as the building is approached. The overall appearance is intended to have a 'timeless' quality and a sense of place rather than blending in as a pastiche of the surrounding suburban houses.

The building form is divided into two main elements, a heavier solid base element and a lightweight 'roof' element forming the second floor accommodation.

The proposed structure is largely flat roofed with smaller separate pitched elements positioned along the two street facing façades to add articulation and break up the roofline.

The cladding material of the lighter roof element is extended down into the recesses, formed within the masonry element to create the sculptural impression the two simple elements have been slotted into each other.



Services block

Kitchens laundry and plant rooms related to the part of site with the poorest aspects allowing service access from rear through car park area

Lightweight Inserts

Simple pitched roof elements added to modulate key elevations addressing Coldharbour Road and New House Lane

Existing Feature Tree

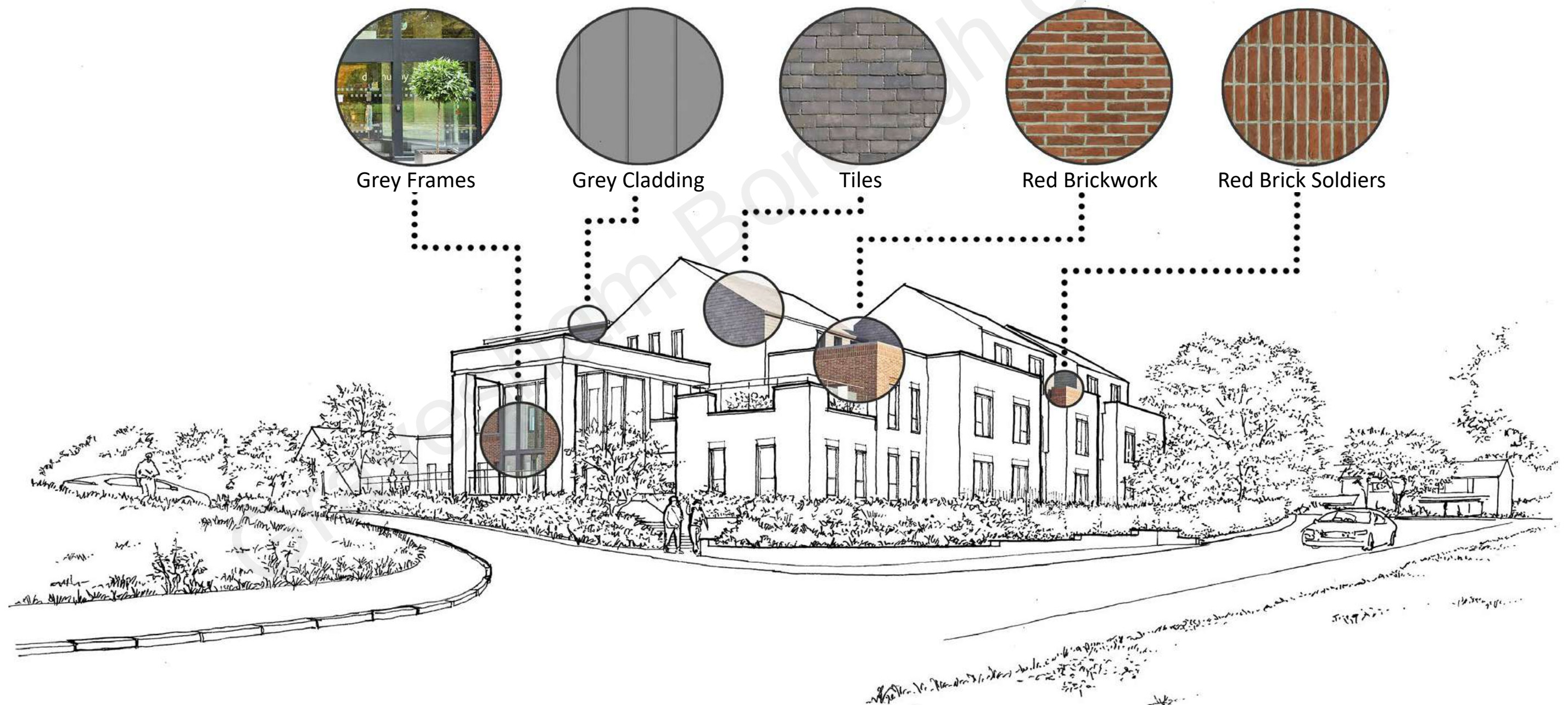
The landmark tree is addressed by a separate curved 'garden wall' element which breaks up the NW and SW elevations with views through the gaps promoted with glazed 'slot' windows

Entrance 'portico'

Building entrance located to address proposed site access point and made clearly distinguishable with a subtle change of proportions and detailing

4.8 Materials

A minimal material palette is proposed to reinforce the simple strong geometry of the built form as read from a distance, with brick detailing and recesses adding subtle definition, apparent at closer proximity.



05

Access Arrangements

5.1 Access

The approved position for a new access as part of the site's previous planning consent has been adapted as part of this application as it is beneficial to move the access away from the junction and it allows the area of site used for vehicular access to be minimised.

5.2 Transportation and Services

The site benefits from local amenities within walking distance and there are public transport links via the nearby bus stops on New House Lane.

Parking for 27 vehicles is allowed for on the proposed site layout with an on-site turning head to safely accommodate waste collection and delivery vehicles.



06

Conclusions

6.1 Conclusions

This design and access statement accompanies a full planning application and should be read in conjunction with the full set of plans and reports submitted with the application.

The preliminary design was supported in principle at pre-application stage and the majority of comments made by Design South East's Design Surgery have been informed by, and been incorporated into the design developments leading to this application.

