

# University College School

## UCS Project 200

### Planning & Heritage Analysis of Locality Context

FINAL 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023  
Planning Application Stage

# Contents: Context Analysis

This Planning & Heritage Appraisal of Locality Context was prepared by Ed Toovey Architects as background research for the UCS Project 200 at the outset, and later presented at the first PPA Workshop with Camden Planning Officers to illustrate the important context of the proposals and how it had informed the design development.

Ed Toovey Architects - Rev3 15<sup>th</sup> December 2023

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### Character of South Frognal area

- The Camden Character Appraisal & Management Plan of 2022 and Redington Frognal Heritage and Character Assessment of 2015 are important documents for understanding the whole Conservation Area
- This Context analysis relates only to the immediate locality of UCS School, the main area of interest around southern Frognal
- The area has developed from larger estate and farmland areas at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century into an area of mainly residential plots
- Free-standing 'villas' incrementally developed characterise the subsequent fast growth, with the conformity of wealth, purpose and history resulting in a general coherence of buildings in terms of scale, type, materials and details - without being repetitive
- Large plots have allowed for generous gardens, particularly in the rear private domain but also along frontages, with gaps between properties signalling the rhythm and pattern of unique development
- In the course of nearly 150 years this has resulted in a pattern of mature planting and trees that has something of the nature of a "Garden Suburb", although the lack of consistent tree planting along streets shows that developments were mainly privately funded, rather than part of a pre-conceived plan
- The analysis will demonstrate the patterns of space and habitation that have emerged in this process
- The proximity of Finchley Road to the west, which acts as the major local distributor road for traffic and circulation - has allowed the locality to evolve as a more sheltered and idyllic, quieter area
- UCS School buildings were constructed in early 20<sup>th</sup> Century in some contrast to the historic pattern to a design by Arnold Mitchell - the development being of taller scale, larger massing, more formally symmetrical in layout planning, and somewhat at odds with the sloping topography of the land
- On the eastern [private] side, the UCS site was terraced [reportedly with excavated fill from a nearby railway tunnel construction], to create the sequences of levels emanating up from Centre Block, defining a man-made 'basin' at a lower level to most of the gardens around
- After nearly 130 years on this site, and with UCS committed to its long term future here, the now listed buildings have not only endured, but by quirky, decorative classical / rococo design and warmth of materials, by well-considered boundary treatment and landscaping, now have a strong and positive influence on the locality



Context analysis: Historic growth of the locality 1

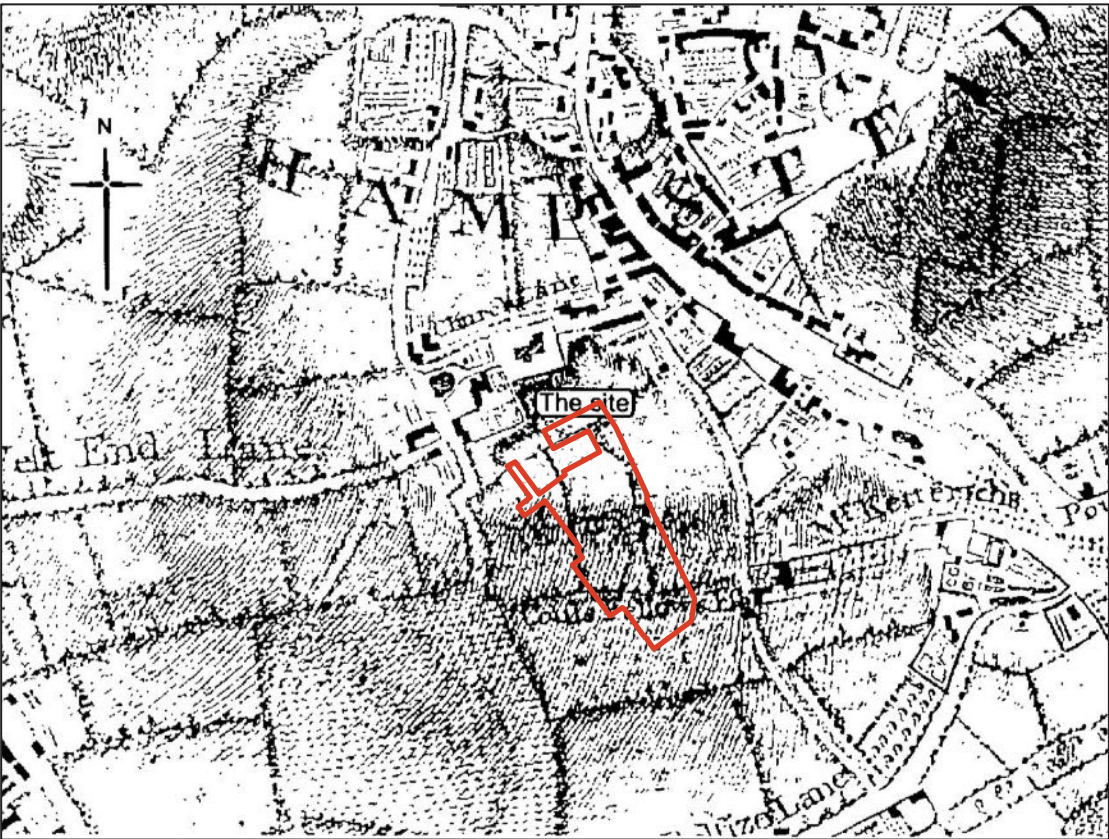


Fig 3 Rocque's map of 1746.

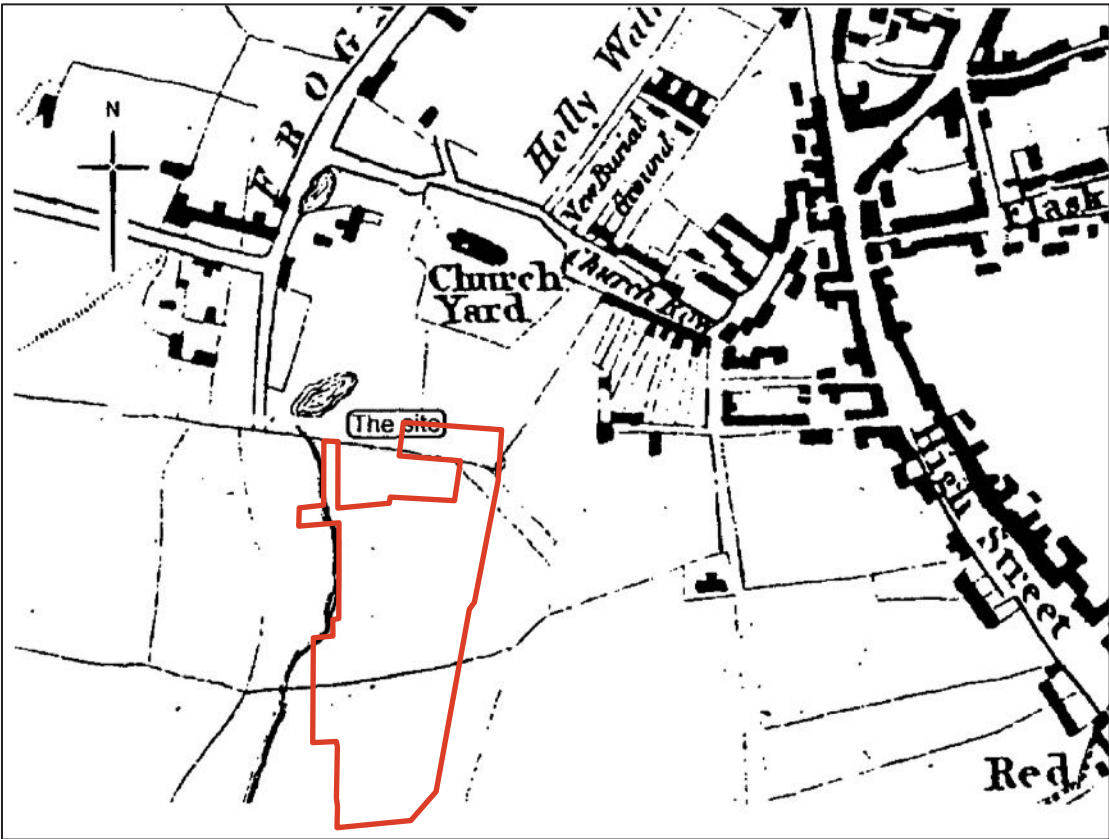


Fig 3 Hampstead map of 1814

- This locality was formerly undeveloped fields before 18<sup>th</sup> Century - St. John's Church being a focal point for Hampstead village to the north-west
- Frognal Hall had a large tract of land around estate
- In 19<sup>th</sup> Century land then developed by Sir John Maryon Wilson & family
- By end of 19<sup>th</sup> Century the street pattern and residential housing had evolved, mainly large villas / detached properties
- In 1906 University College School moved to its new site from UCL Gower Street

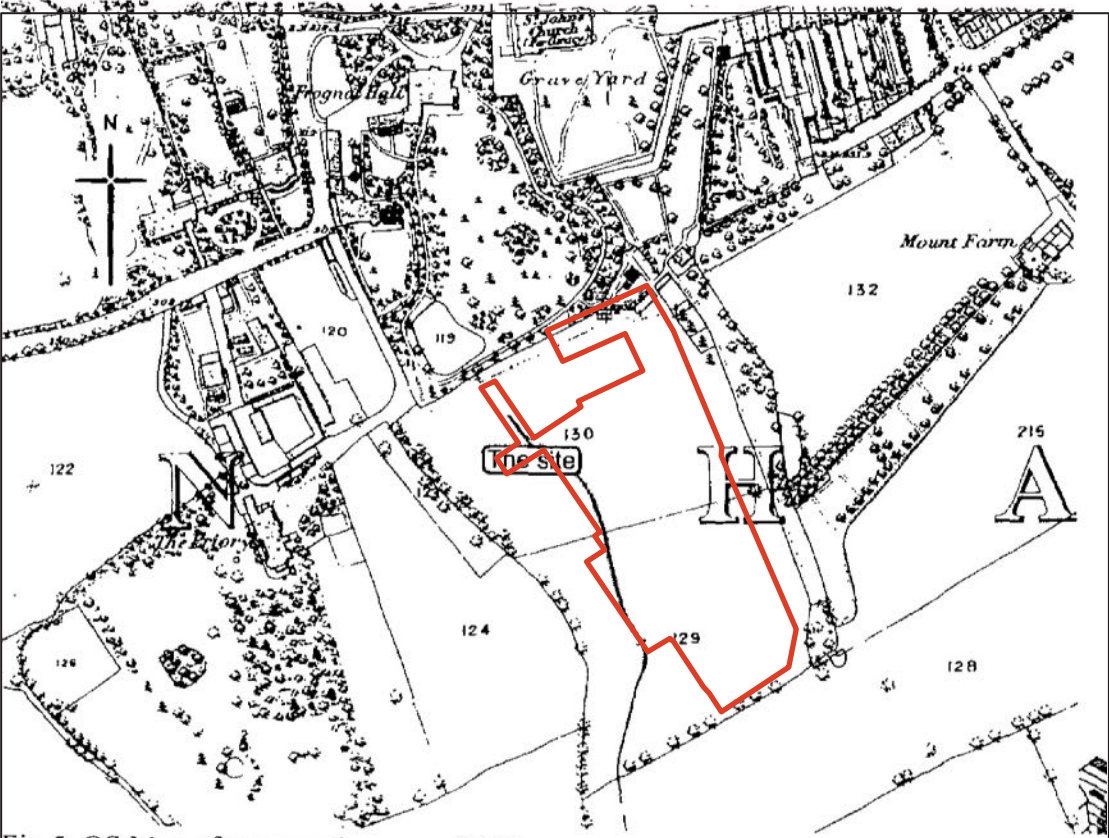


Fig 5 OS Map of surrounding area, 1866

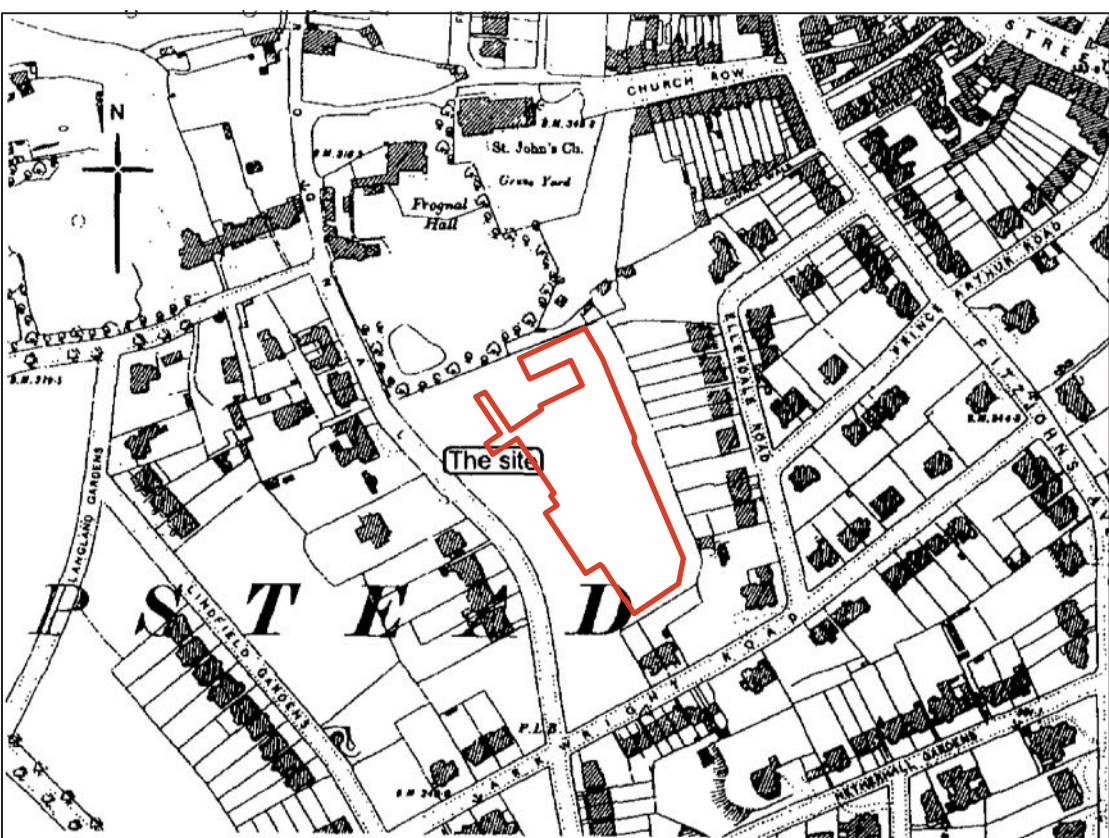
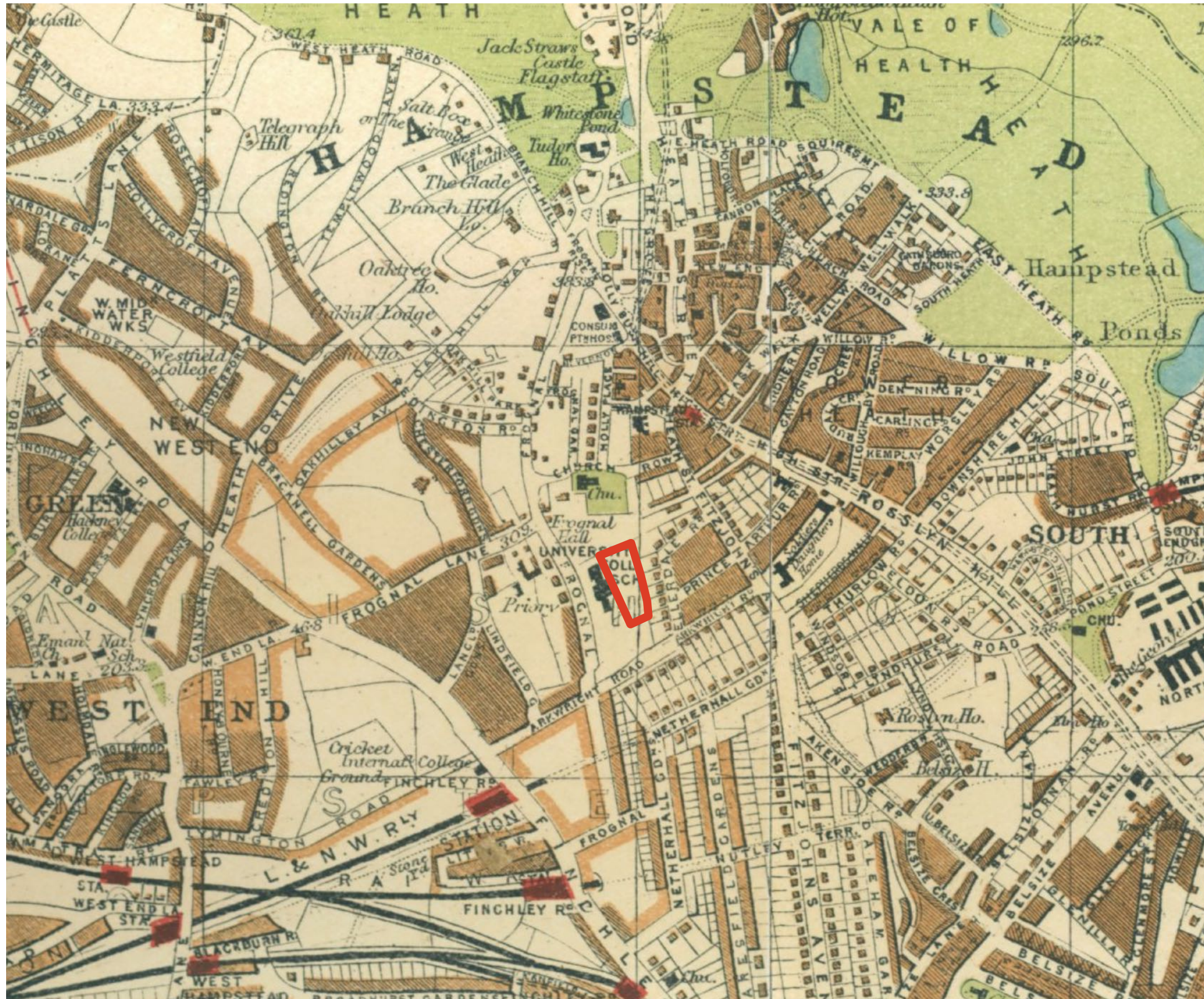


Fig 6 OS Map of surrounding area, 1894





- This map is of uncertain date [being shown as 1904 but with the UCS buildings already in place, which were built 1906] - It was published in 1918.
- The map date may therefore be closer to **1910**
- The style of the map is not an accurate OS representation of individual properties
- The project site is indicated approximately





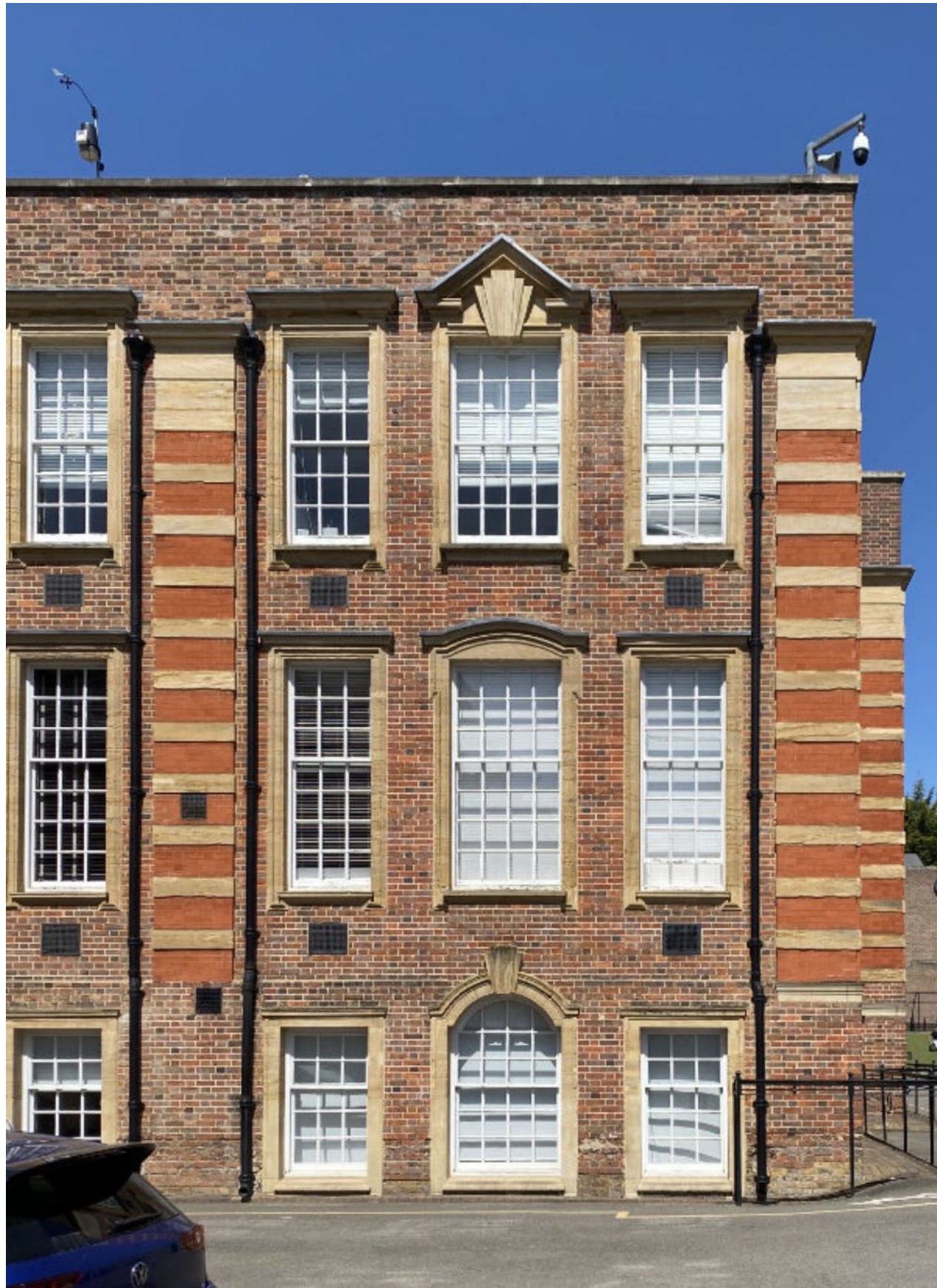




- The Grade II listed buildings are the historic centrepiece of the School campus from its origin
- More recent development to the north and south has created “arms” of buildings that frame the central outdoor games and recreation space
- The tennis courts sit at a level above this, part of the garden terracing [1 court on a roof]
- The geometry of the garden is at the angle of Ellerdale Road boundary wall, in contrast with the listed buildings



## Context analysis: UCS Listed buildings' details



- The varied red / purple brick walls are not necessarily typical in this locality - the red rubber feature bricks more so
- The Ham stone has a rich, beige, warm softness - but is a poor material for weathering
- Architectural style is Edwardian classicism, but with a playful rococo spirit
- The piers exemplify this, with their "striped" colour palette
- In this locality of vernacular houses, the UCS buildings stand apart, but have softened with age





- Leafy mat





- The project site is mainly seen through the South Gate on Frognal
- The existing and future entrance is nearly 60 metres set back within the site from the gates
- The 'Kents' building extension provided a new reception and colonnade leading eastwards
- Visitors to the new proposed Music Recital Room will follow this path under shelter
- The roof tennis courts level can be seen, with the backdrop of UCS gardens behind, then the houses, trees and gardens of Ellerdale Road beyond



## Context analysis: Local area, St.John's Church & typical house types



- St.John's at Hampstead Church is a focal point - the spire is seen from UCS and marks the village location as reference point
- Houses of brown and red clay brick predominate, also some red terracotta features and stone dressings, with white windows
- Red clay tiles are common as roof and wall finish, often with decorative patterns of detail
- Dark grey slate is also typical, although the UCS buildings' roofs have grey/green welsh slate
- Characteristic large "villa" housing have small planted front gardens, often large mature rear gardens



## Context analysis: Typical house types and details in locality 2



- Houses have a variety of styles but many are “English Free School” picturesque vernacular
- Larger houses in Frognal have dominant pitched roofs, pointed gables and asymmetric compositions
- Amongst the 19<sup>th</sup> century villas, there are some important modern movement houses of good quality
- Mature trees, hedges and garden planting give the streets a strong suburban quality
- The winding route and steep Topography, with a consistency of red clay materials, give Frognal its very unique identity





- Examples shown of “Queen Anne” and English Free School style
- Characteristic consistency of red natural clay materials:
  - Red brick
  - Red clay pantiles
  - Red clay roof tiles
  - Red terracotta details
- Other characteristic features:
  - Strong triangular gables
  - “Pedimented” frontages
  - Tall chimney elements
  - Asymmetric composition
  - White timber windows
  - Bay windows
  - Picturesque massing
  - Varied roofscapes





- Large rear gardens are a characteristic of the locality, with smaller planted front gardens [under threat from car parking]
- Mature deciduous trees provide a larger scale of foliage & shade
- Typical garden plots are rectangular with perimeter shrub and flower planting - lush gardens are not organic shape
- Sloping topography typically dealt with by terracing, retaining walls and garden steps



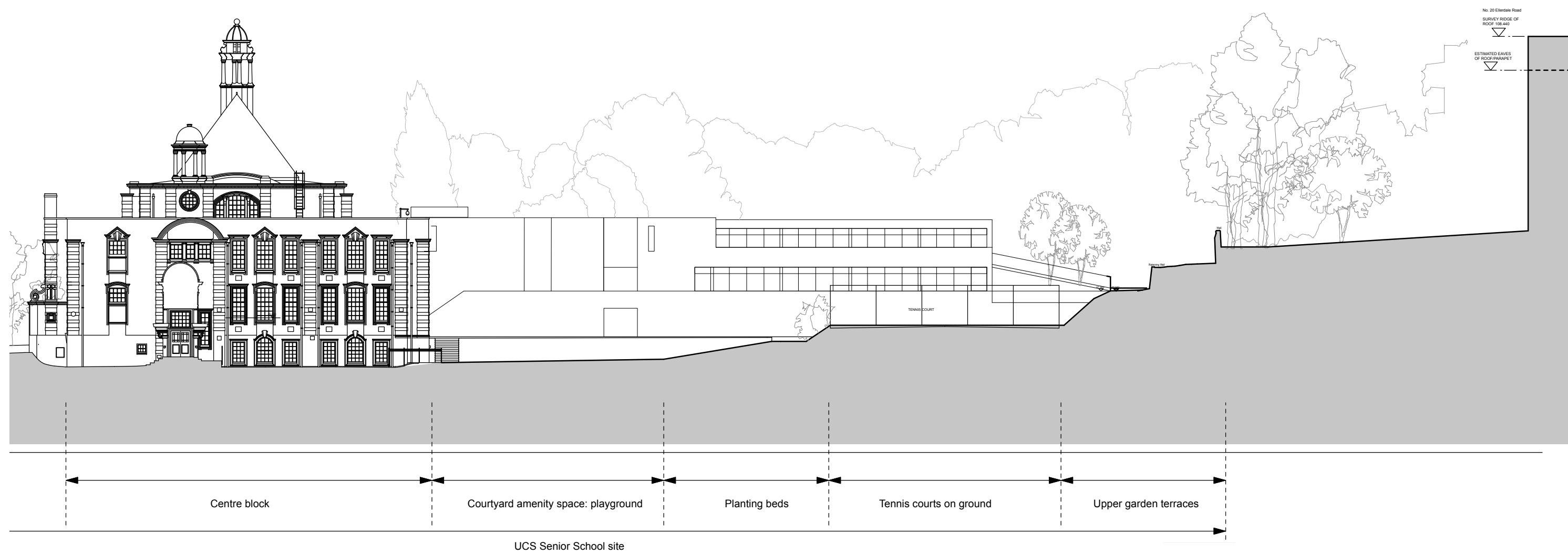


## Context analysis: UCS School frontage landscaping



- Mature trees behind railings along the curving, rising Frognal frontage of UCS front - softening the strict classical symmetry of the listed buildings
- In south Frognal and the corner with Arkwright Road, the UCS Sports Centre development created a rich floral wild planted garden - this is a rare open planted space within the locality
- On Arkwright Road a mature beech hedge blends with the listed iron railings
- The School makes an important positive contribution to this Locality along Frognal



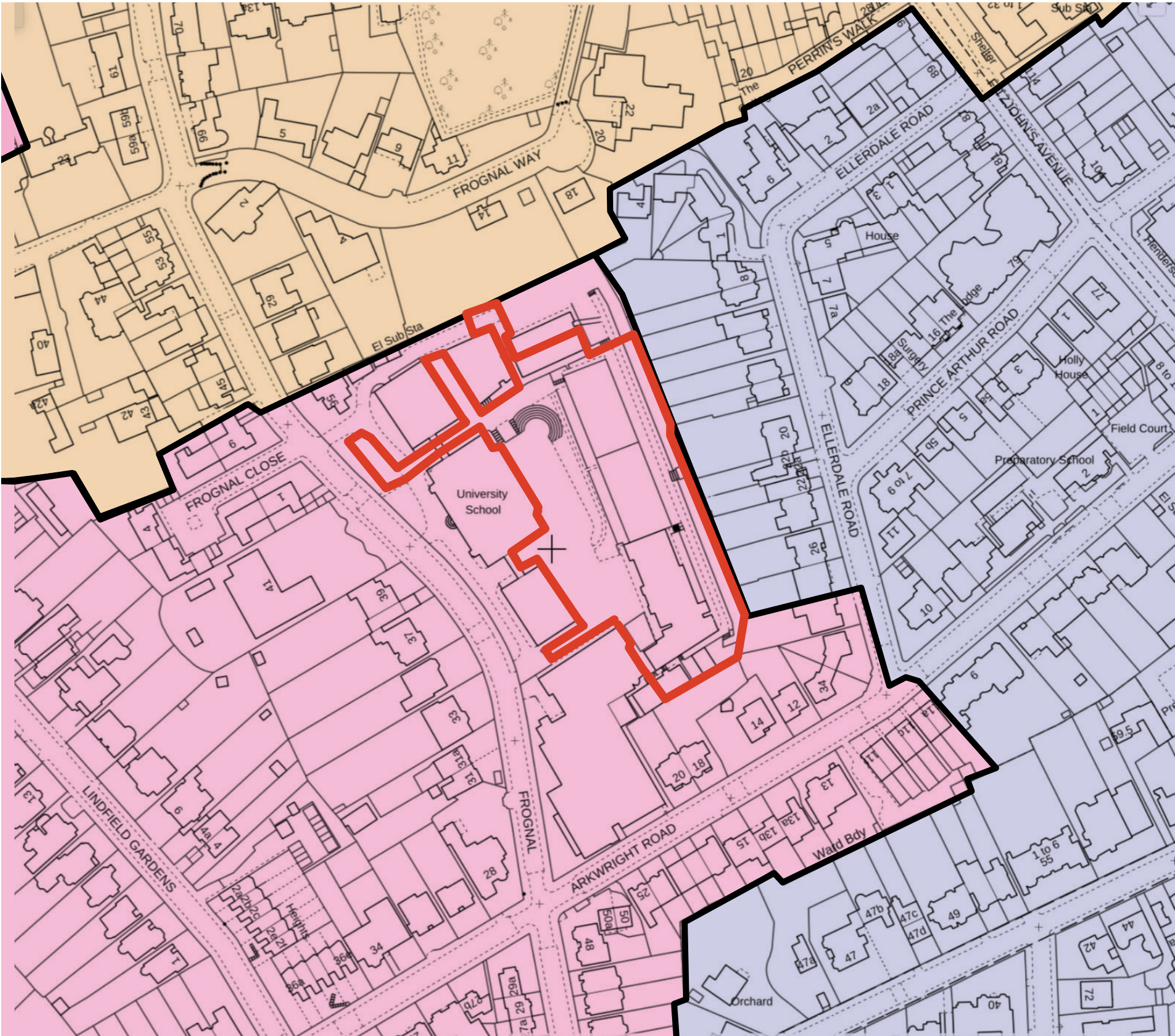


- The topography of this part of Redington Frognal Conservation Area is sloping up approximately from south-west to north-east, up to Hampstead village
- This is best represented in the existing UCS site survey east-west section looking north
- As is typical in local gardens and land plots, when steep the slope is managed with a combination of retaining walls, banked sloping land and steps
- Boundary walls are often a juncture where land can step to the next plot level
- Along the UCS west frontage to Frognal, the land rises from 77.4m datum at south-east end, to 87.4m at the north-west end - a rise of **10 metres** [the base levels for the listed buildings is therefore rising also, none of the 3 blocks are set at the same level]
- On the east-west axis, Frognal at the main UCS entrance gate rises from 83.2m datum, to 96.7m in Ellerdale Road - a rise of **13.5 metres** [or typically 3-4 storeys]

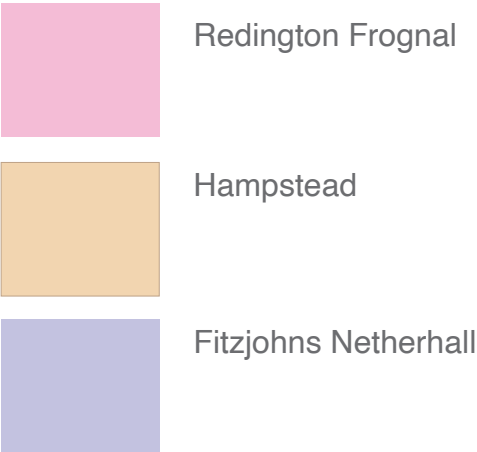








- The site lies within Redington Frognal Conservation area
- The eastern site boundary is adjacent to Fitzjohns Netherhall.
- The northern boundary is adjacent to Hampstead CA.



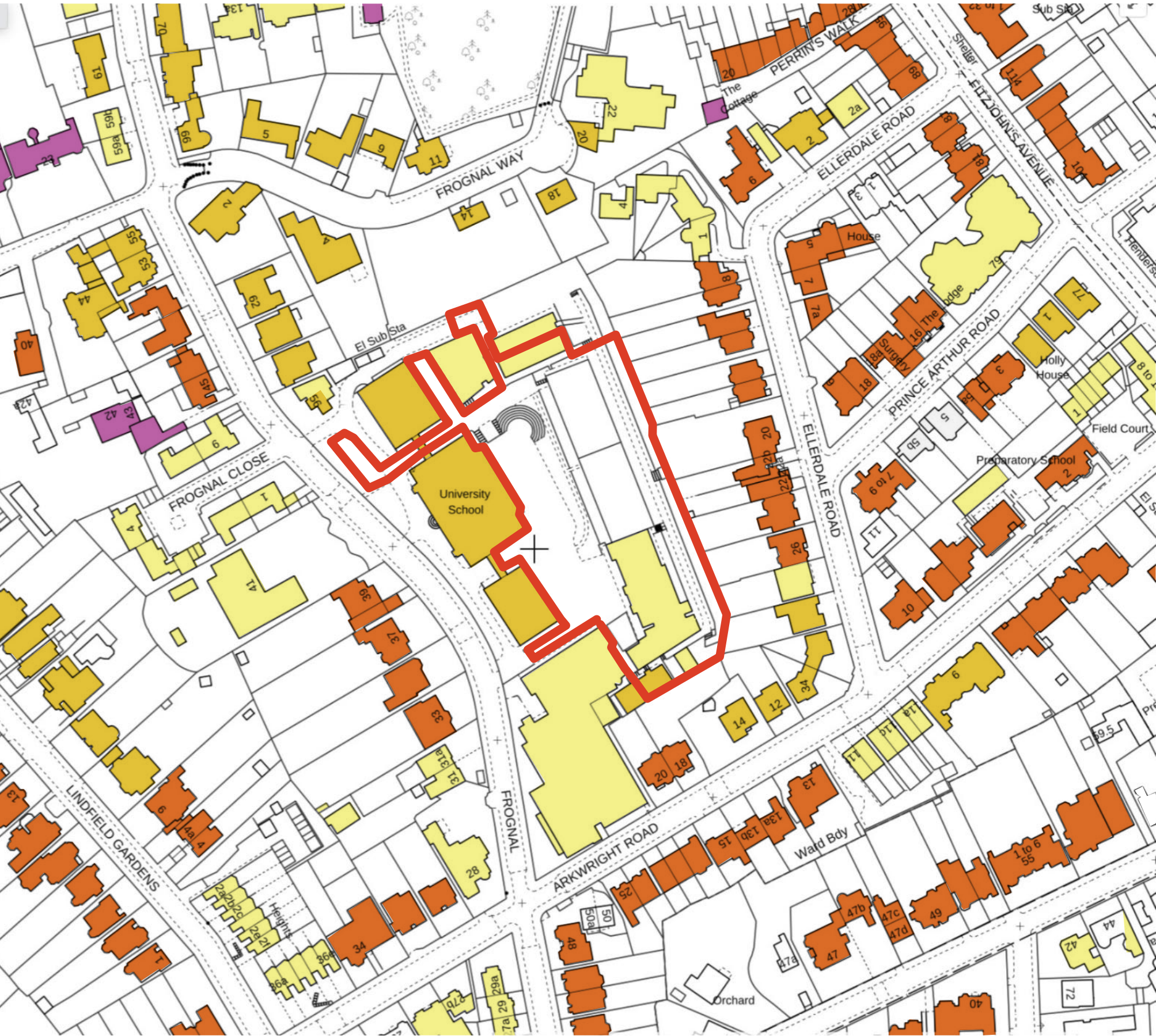




- Listed buildings are noted on the locality plan
- All 3 UCS teaching buildings are listed, with the Porter’s Lodge and perimeter piers, gates and railings

● Historic England Listed buildings or structures





- Age of buildings reflect periods of growth - from 1870's onwards the Victorians developed large villas
- UCS was built in 1906 when the locality was sparsely developed, but with street patterns in place
- Since then more housing has filled in the vacant plots





05

Context analysis: Built Form & Urban Development Pattern



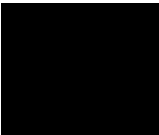
- The built form diagram shows the pattern of generally detached villas with large plots and gaps between buildings
- In the locality of UCS the rear gardens are generous all around
- On the north, east and south-east ground is rising up from UCS land
- UCS buildings are by far the largest local development, the symmetry of original buildings being unusual in this area


 Built form

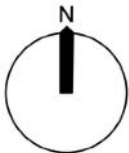




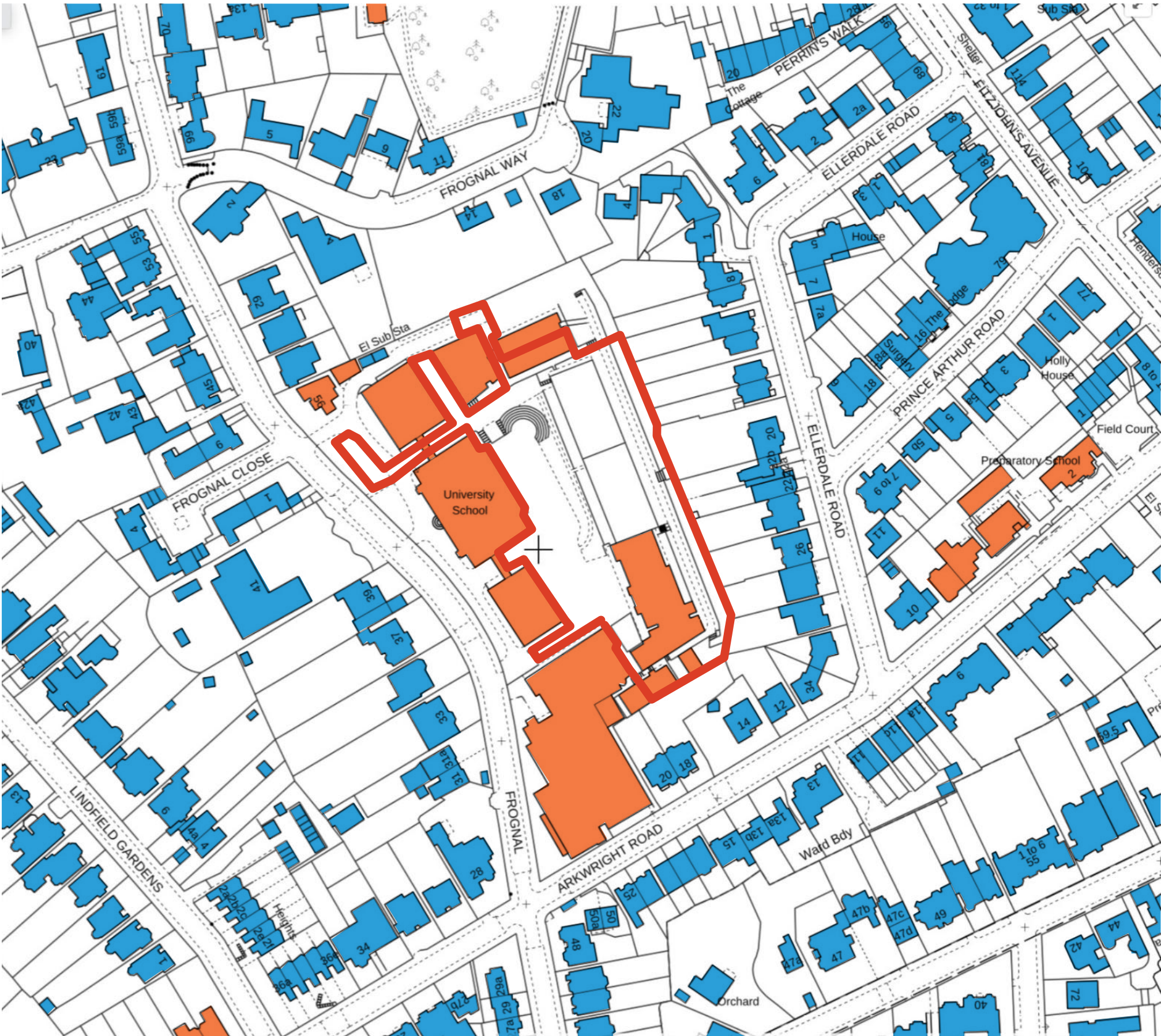
- Negative space diagram shows the very large area of open land within the urban block formed by UCS buildings and houses in Arkwright Road, Ellerdale Road and Frognal Way
- Combined with the topography this forms a man-made basin of terraced and sloping open land, Part garden, part hard-standing

Space between buildings

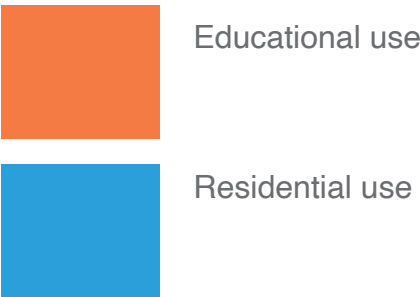
Buildings



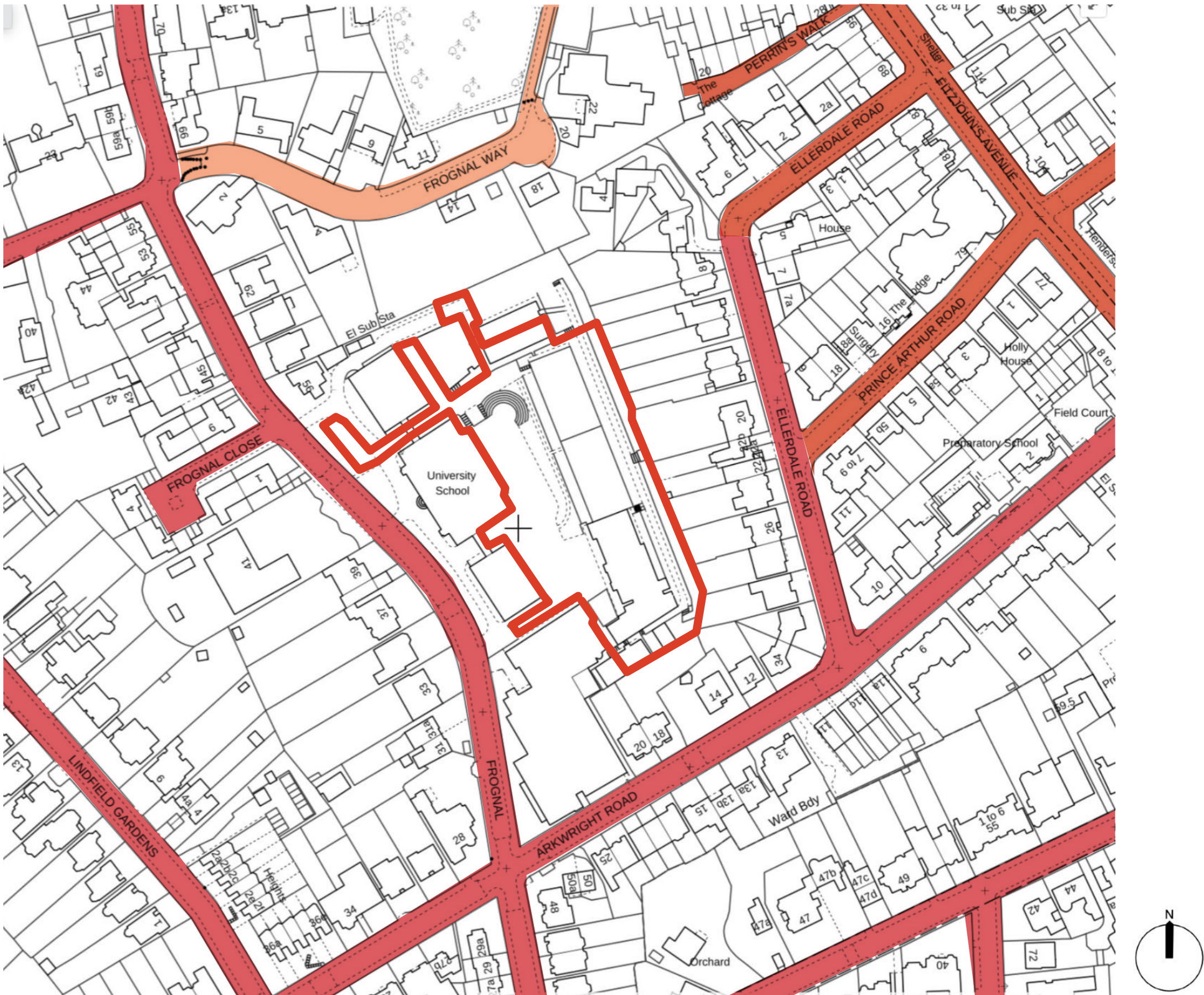




- The area is primarily residential since the later part of 19<sup>th</sup> Century
- UCS has a long-standing role in this locality as educational centre. Since 1906
- There are other schools that occupy former houses with newer extensions
- There is no retail or industry in this area





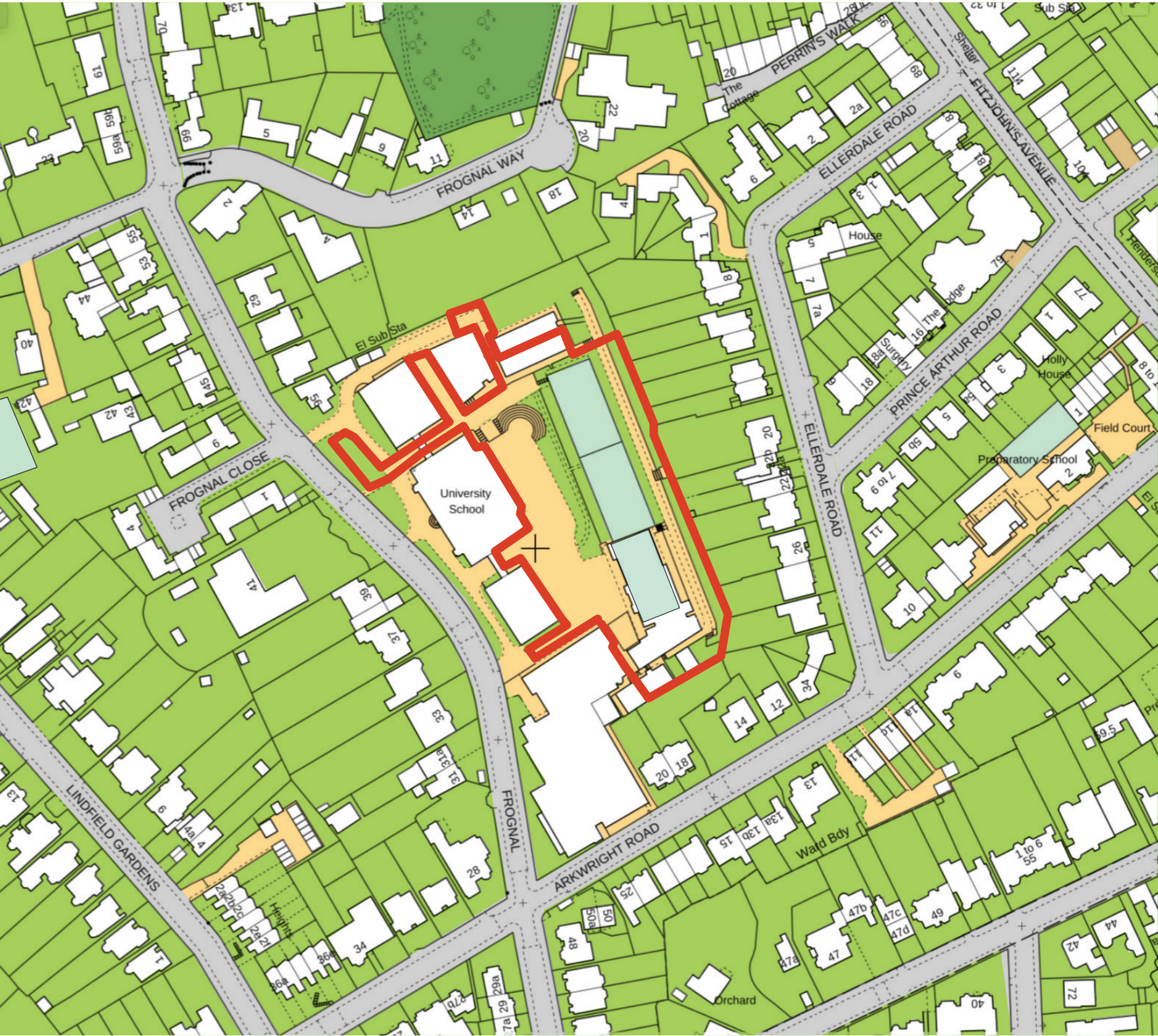


- The street pattern was mainly determined in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, often based on field lines streams or hedge boundaries
- The curve of Frogmal is a result of historic land ownerships but also reflects the site topography
- To the west Finchley Road is a major transport artery

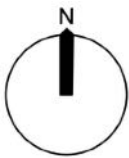
Public highway streets and pavements

Private road

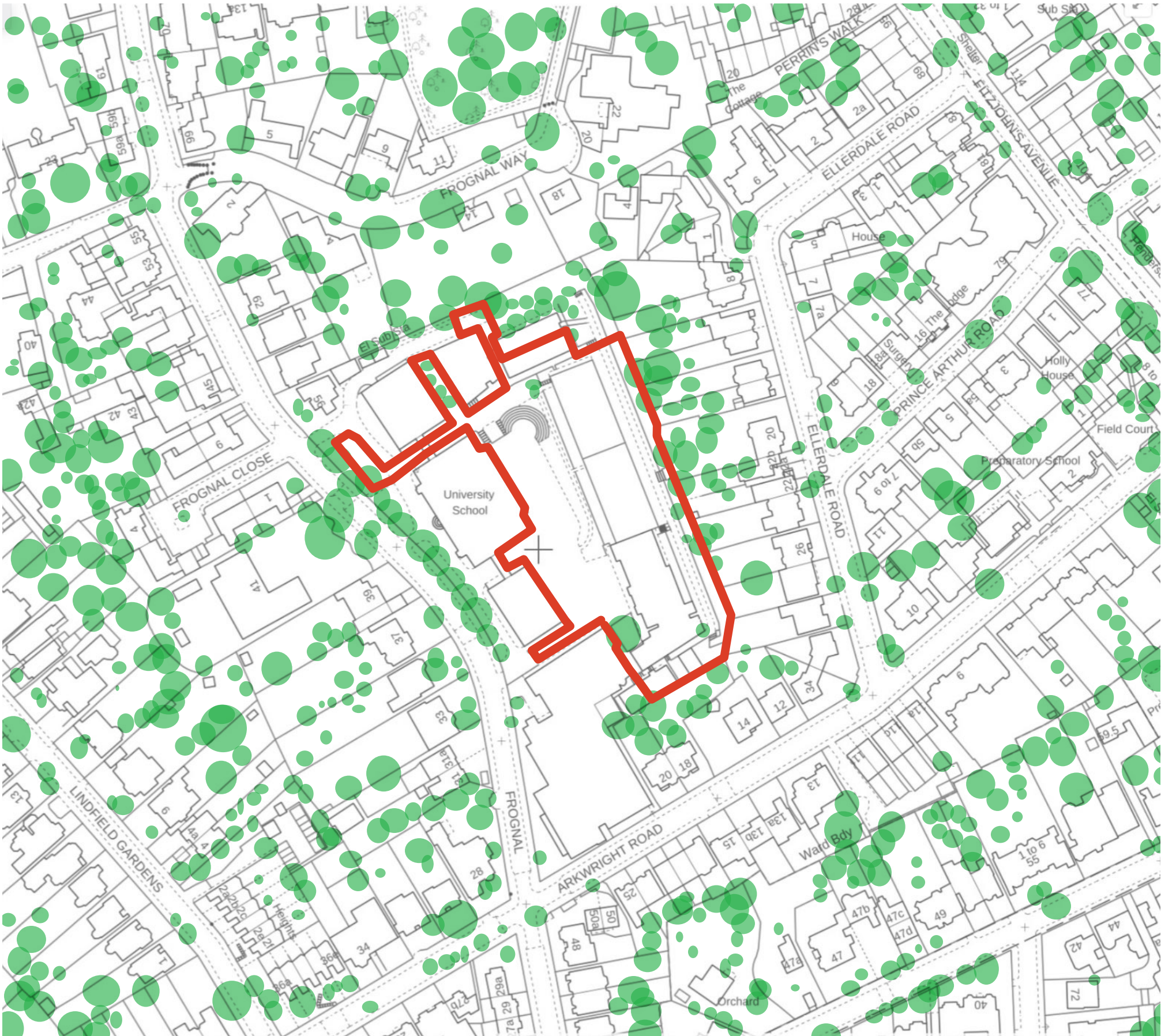




- The diagram reflects the “Garden Suburb” character of the locality
- Green areas are obviously not fully planted, and some front gardens are under threat from vehicle parking
- In this locality, the UCS west frontage [recently renovated and redesigned] is an important contributor to quality of Frognal







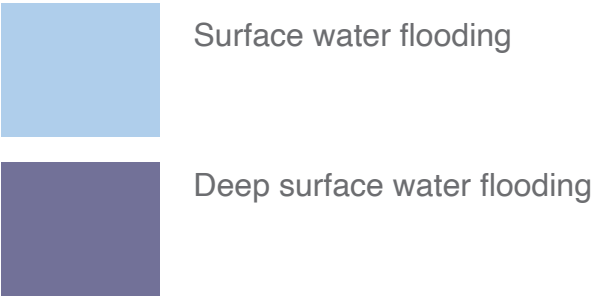
- Tree stands diagram is taken from aerial photograph
- Even distribution of trees shows the importance of garden planting
- Only on the UCS west front are trees really important to the street and public realm - in general they are mostly in rear gardens

● Tree stands  
[Approximate estimate only]





- The natural topography has a high point at Hampstead village to north/north-east, land falling to south-west, though this has been terraced or flattened in parts
- Across the site this results in localised areas of surface water flooding potential [particularly at basement / undercrofts]
- Refer to specialist report for Flood Risk analysis







- The aerial photo shows the importance of the UCS site within the area, forming a visual and massing focal point
- Most of the UCS external site is concealed from view from public realm, but fully a part of the more private “rear gardens” realm



- The project location means that it will not impact on the public street, but will be visible from neighbouring houses to north, south and east so its design is more relevant to the particular context of the UCS campus, and especially to the setting of the listed buildings
- The proposed scale of 1-2 storeys is modest - while it is less than most properties in the locality, it allows the horizontal emphasis of the campus site to pre dominate, and retains the focus of massing with the listed buildings
- The project is part of the garden realm of the site and locality, with the sports/play area provision on the roof being important for the School and Community
- The formation of the external space is an essential part of the project - the external courtyard lies at the centre of the immediate locality as open space
- Well-planted rear gardens are characteristic of the locality, and the project needs to find a balance between landscaped areas and play/social areas
- Retaining walls and banks will assist in responding to the sloping topography of the site, in keeping with local measures
- The materiality in the locality of red clay products is typical and relevant to the project; external facings can explore red clay brick, terracotta, tiles as part of the elevational palette - as part of the deferential “backdrop” or setting of listed buildings this material is more relevant than matching the historic buildings
- Buildings in the area are characteristically asymmetric, picturesque in composition and massing
- On sloping ground there will be steps in heights compared to existing, such as adjacent ‘Kents’ building - the parapet of the listed buildings represents a high point in the context not to exceed; the recent Bentham building also used this as a datum for parapets