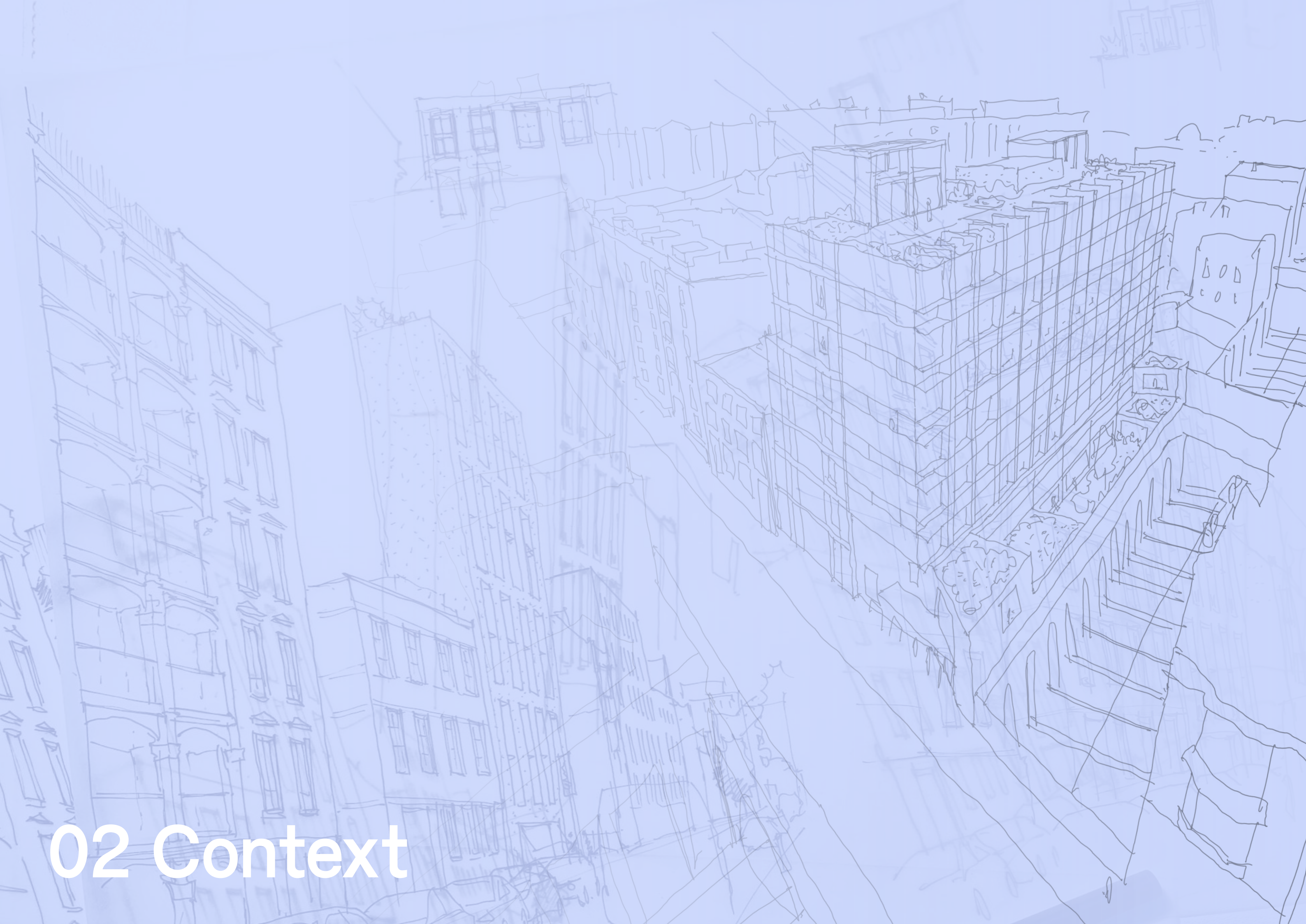


With amenity for residents and the local community





02 Context

2.0 CONTEXT

a neglected opportunity in the heart of King's Cross

The site is located in the King's Cross Ward of the London Borough of Camden, bounded by Britannia Street to the north; the three storey 'Help Musicians Building' and six storey Derby Lodge buildings to the east; Wicklow Street to the south; and by London Underground railway lines (in a cutting) to the west. The Thames Link railway line also runs in a shallow tunnel beneath the western half of the Site.

The site comprises undeveloped hardstanding in use as a public car park and includes a ventilation shaft linked to the Thameslink railway tunnel running below the site.

The area surrounding the Site was historically industrial and residential in nature with the Site itself having previously been occupied by a 3-storey warehouse. While the area generally retains its historic built form, forming part of the Kings Cross St Pancras Conservation Area, over time the area's industrial uses have been replaced by office, creative and additional residential uses (including student accommodation).

Building heights in the area generally range from two to six storeys, while the consented redevelopment of the nearby Royal National Throat, Nose and Ear Hospital (located to the south-west of the Site) permits the delivery of a building up to 13 storeys tall.

The Site benefits from a high PTAL rating of 6b ('Excellent'), Kings Cross and St Pancras Railway and Underground Stations are located within 370 metres / 7-minute walk from the Site. There are also a number of bus stops within close proximity, with bus stops located at Grays Inn Road and Kings Cross Road.

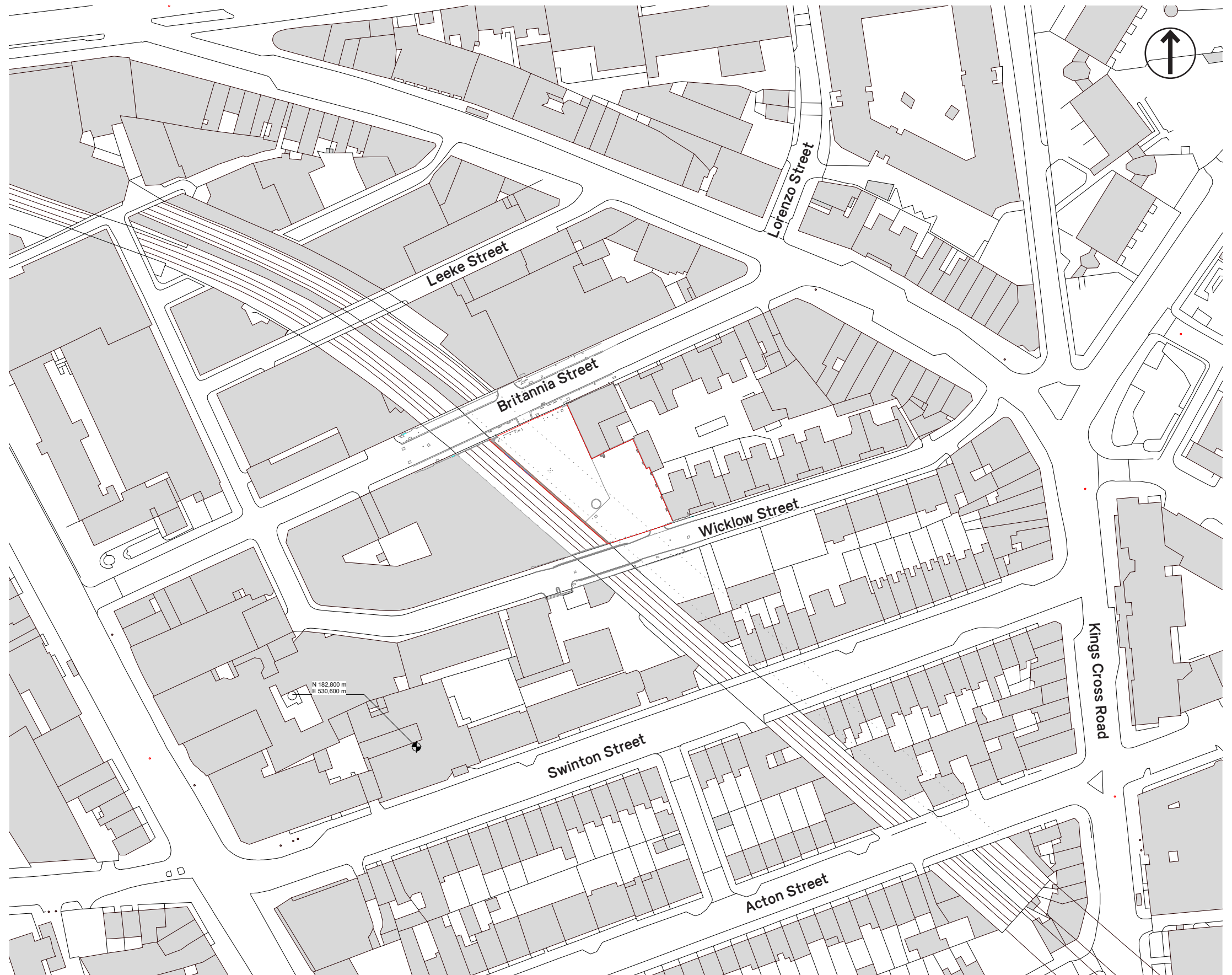


Figure 1 - Context Map

2.1 Context photos

2.1.1 Britannia Street

Britannia Street is made up of 3-6 storey buildings, typically enveloped in London stock brick, with contrasting ground floor plinths.

It bridges over the two railway lines that run under the site, with the typical streetscape of an inner city back road, made up of two pavements either side of a narrow car route.

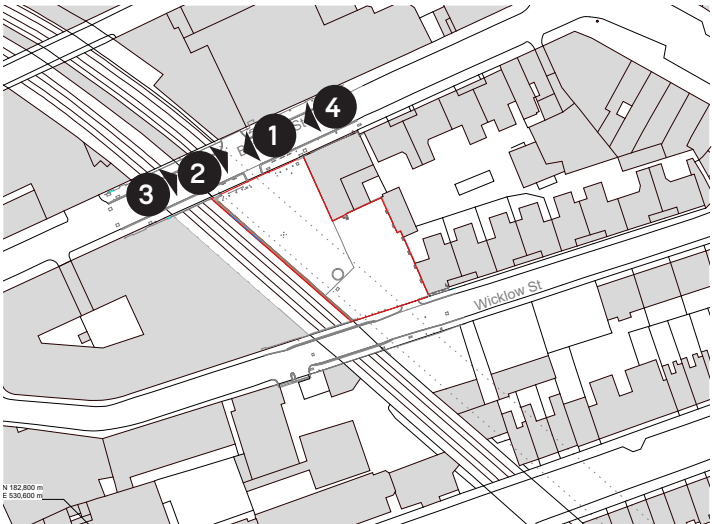


Figure 2 - Looking west along Britannia Street



Figure 3 - Looking east by the entrance to the site



Figure 4 - Looking west by the entrance to the site



Figure 5 - Looking west from further down Britannia Street

2.1.2 Wicklow Street

Wicklow Street runs parallel to Britannia Street to the south, with similar street-scape proportions, but with a cobbled road.

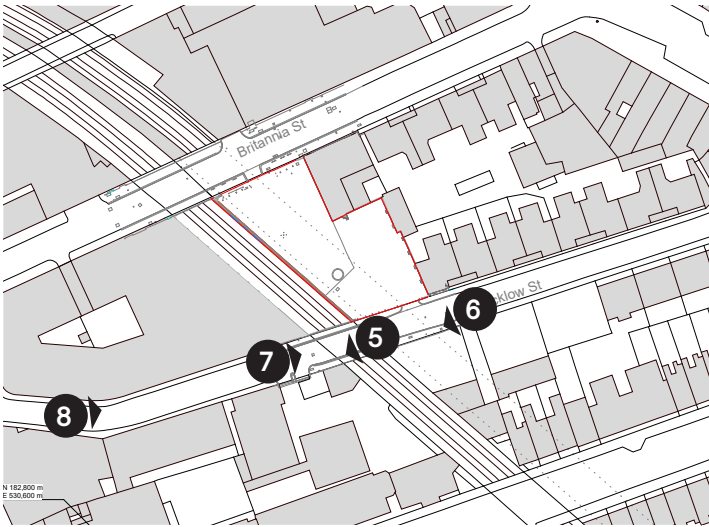


Figure 6 - Looking west along Wicklow Street, just past the site



Figure 7 - Looking east on Wicklow Street by the children's park



Figure 8 - Looking east along Wicklow Street



Figure 9 - Looking east as Wicklow Street bends around

2.1.3 Wider Context

Further afield, the site is dotted with other examples of historic and characterful brick buildings, rising to 4 or 5 storeys, with the occasional more contemporary example, using more contemporary materials.

Residential properties are interrupted with local small businesses and cultural institutions.

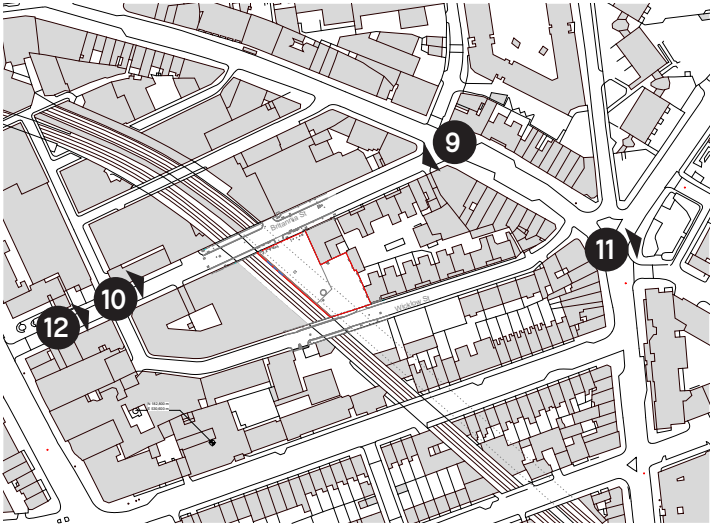


Figure 10 - Location Map



Figure 11 - Looking west along Britannia Street



Figure 12 - Looking east by the entrance to the site



Figure 13 - Looking west by the entrance to the site



Figure 14 - Looking west from further down Britannia Street

2.1.4 Site photos

The site itself currently acts as a surface level car park, with tall buttressed walls to the east, a large brick flue from the underground tunnel within the heart of the site and protective fencing to the west that runs alongside the railway.

Remnants of the demolished industrial building on the site are retained along the eastern boundary and a redundant ventilation shaft rises through the centre of the site from the Thameslink tunnel below.

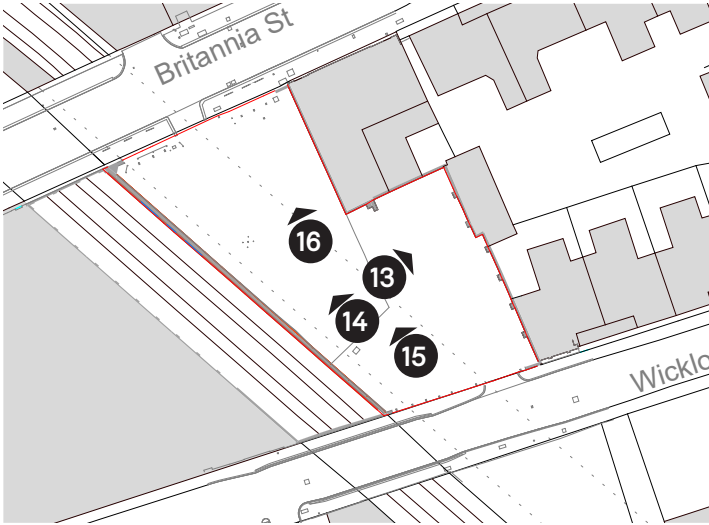


Figure 15 - Location Map



Figure 16 - A large, buttressed brick wall runs along the east boundary



Figure 17 - A metal fence with gate divides the site centrally



Figure 18 - A brick flue rising from the underground



Figure 19 - The buttressed wall continues to the edge of the site

2.2 King's Cross Conservation Area

The site is within the Kings Cross Conservation Area, sub-area 4. This sub area is bounded by Pentonville Road and King's Cross Road to the north and east, Swinton Street to the south and the Birkenhead Street Estate to the west.

These roads are lined with a mix of early 19th century terraces and larger scale institutional buildings. The area between the main roads contains narrow streets paved in granite setts, predominantly lined with later 19th century buildings of former light-industrial and commercial uses, as well as housing.

The streets are bisected by the London Underground Metropolitan Line and Thameslink railway cutting, and, despite piecemeal redevelopment, have a characteristic fine urban grain with broad consistency of building heights and materials.

The conservation area statement notes there are buildings within the Conservation Area which detract from the appearance of it, including this site which is specifically listed as a "Building or feature that detracts from the character of the Conservation Area."



Figure 20 - View looking East on Britannia Street

a characterful enclave

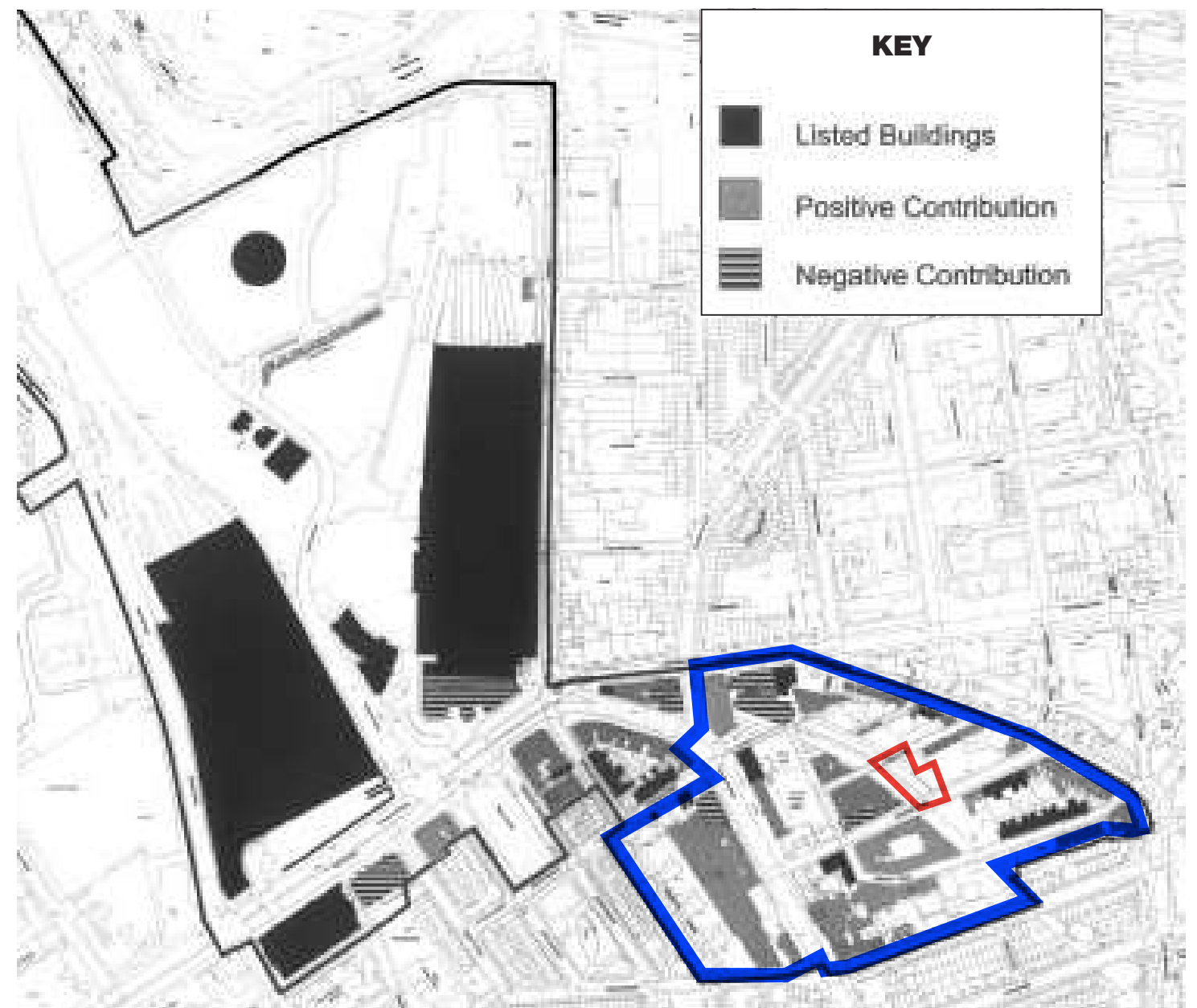


Figure 21 - Conservation Area Map - Kings Cross Conservation Area Statement 2004

Sub-area 4

2.3 Site History

The full footprint of the site was formerly developed. This had a simple silhouette along Britannia Street and more articulate forms facing the railway and Wicklow Street. The building was demolished post-war but remnants remain along the boundaries. A redundant brick ventilation shaft from the railway tunnel is also currently present.

Figure 22 - The site in 1947

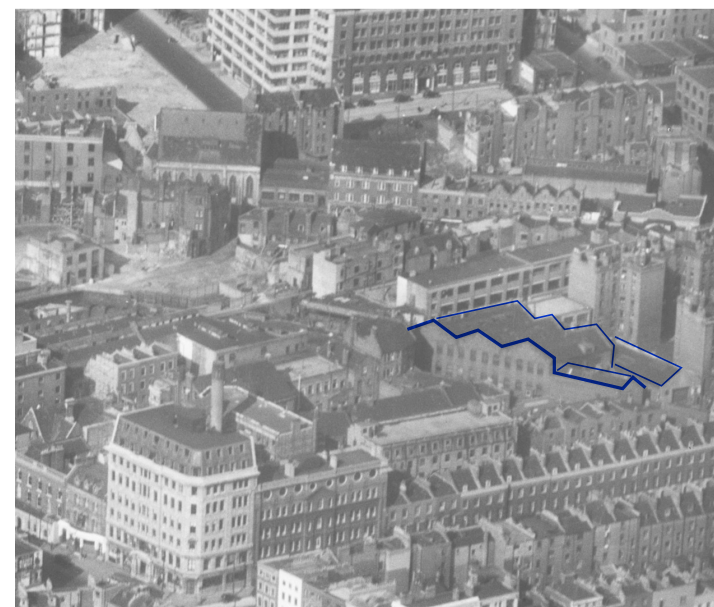
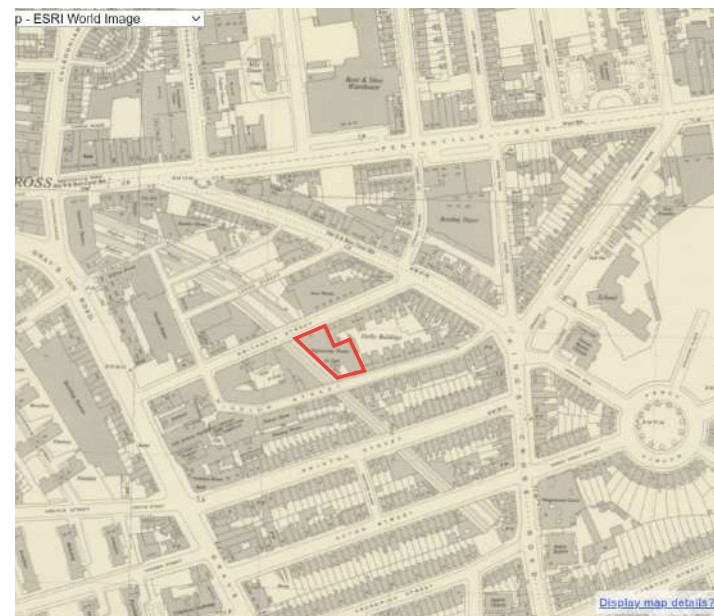


Figure 23 - The site in 1947

2.4 Planning History

There have been a number of preceding applications to redevelop the site since 2000. None have proved viable to deliver and in general they have struggled to address the complexity of the site with high quality, technically resolvable or viable proposals.

2.4.1 26 Affordable Apartments

PS9904306 - Permitted 2001

20 x 1 bed, 9 x 2 bed & 2 x 3 bed.

100% affordable.

The scheme had limited communal amenity space, no private amenity space for the flats, and a high proportion of single aspect units.

The Officers report recognises the site's constraints including those relating to the railway tunnel.



Figure 24 - 2001 Ground floor layout

extremely challenging to realise

2.4.2 23 Affordable Apartments

2006/5860/P - Granted 2006; Renewal Refused 2010

6 x 1 bed, 13 x 2 bed & 4 x 3 bed.

100% affordable.

The scheme had limited communal amenity space, no private amenity space for the flats, and a high proportion of single aspect units.

Officer recognition that the site is highly constrained.

An application to renew the permission was refused in 2010.

As per the 2001 permission the scheme would only see half the site built on to avoid the railway tunnel which does not deliver site optimisation.

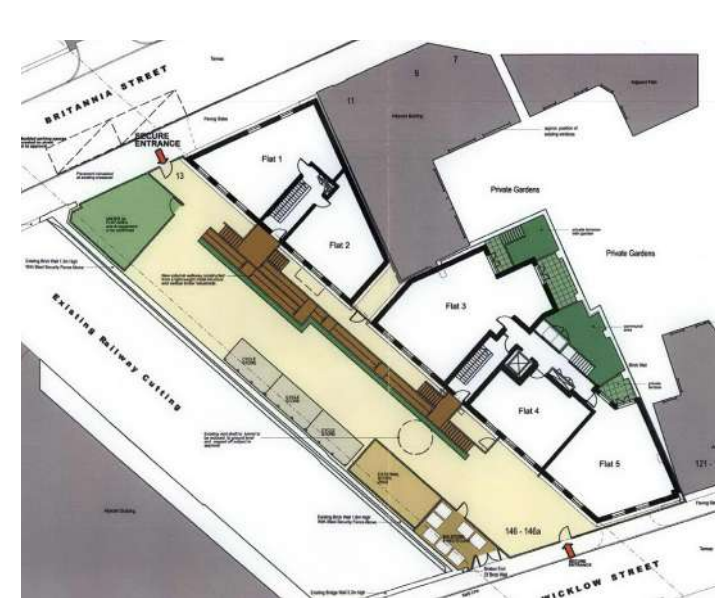


Figure 25 - 2006 Ground floor layout

2.4.3 13 housing units and 121 bed hotel

2013/0592/P - Refused 2013

Conservation Area Consent (removal of vent shaft)

2013/0618/C - Refused 2013

131 hotel rooms & 13 apartments (4 x 1 bed & 9 x 2 beds). 61% affordable.

The scheme had limited communal amenity space, limited private amenity space for the flats, and a high proportion of single aspect units. Outlook only over the railways was not considered acceptable.

A key reason for refusal was the poor quality of residential accommodation due to the proximity and outlook over the railway line.

The site was poorly optimised with only around half developed.



Figure 26 - 2013 Typical floor layout

2.5 Emerging Context

The hospital site to the south-west of Wicklow street has consent to rise significantly above the existing context.

Whilst this proposal will have a substantial impact on the conservation area, our design has focused on the relationship with the existing, rather than the possible, scale and character of the context.

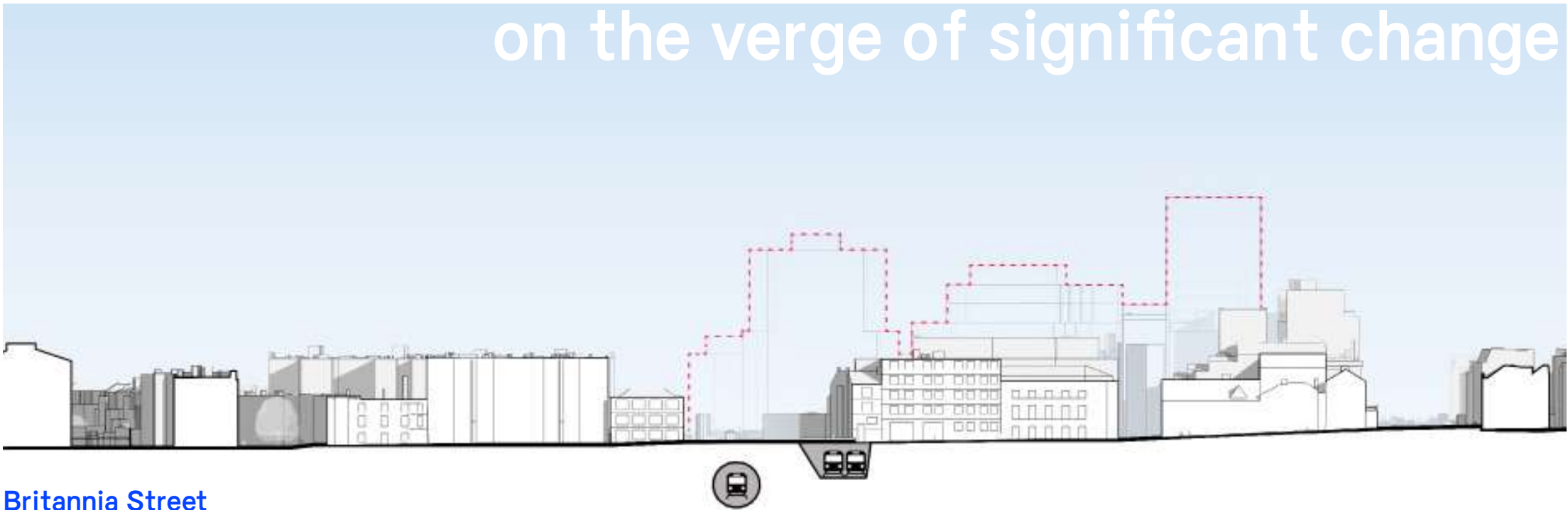


Figure 27 - Wider Site EW Section



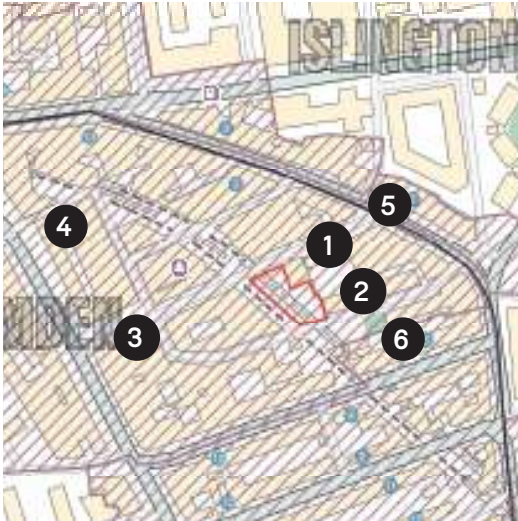
Figure 28 - Wicklow Street



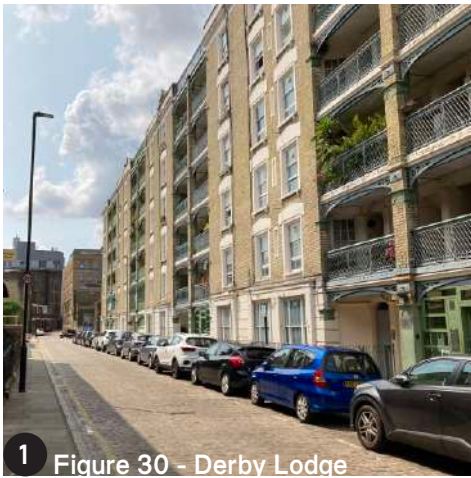
Figure 29 - Consented development by AHMM

2.6 Listed Buildings

Several notable buildings are located within the sites immediate context, including 6 listed buildings located below. Our neighbour, Derby Lodge, is the most pertinent to this application and we have worked closely with officers and residents to optimise the relationship of our proposal with these homes.



- 1 Derby Lodge, 1-36 Britannia Street, 2023
- 2 Derby Lodge, 37-102 Britannia Street (top, bottom) 1967, 2023
- 3 75 Wicklow Street (top, bottom) 1978, 2023
- 4 Willing House and attached wall with railings 2023
- 5 Cobden Buildings (top, bottom) 1967, 2023
- 6 4-26 Swinton Street (top, bottom) 1973, 2023



1 Figure 30 - Derby Lodge



2 Figure 31 - Derby Lodge



3 Figure 32 - 75 Wicklow Street



4 Figure 33 - Willing House



5 Figure 34 - Cobden Buildings



6 Figure 35 - 4-26 Swinton Street

2.7 Surrounding Uses

There is a rich mixture of uses within 5 minutes walk of the site. The north and edges of this area are predominantly non-residential with uses including offices, education, galleries and cultural venues. From Britannia Street south, there are more residential institutions including hotels, homes and student accommodation.

Site

ENT Site Boundary

Consented at ENT Site Proposal

Residential

Hotel

Student Accommodation

Playspace

Old Kings Cross Station Entrance

Art Gallery

Music Venue

Retail & Services

Cafe/Restaurant

Pub/Bar

Office/Workspace

Education



Figure 36 - Location Map - Surrounding Uses

2.8 Opportunities

The empty site offers an opportunity to heal the urban grain and to take advantage of the assets afforded by the streets and railway including their character, the outlook and opportunities for daylight and views and the combination of excellent connectivity with relatively secluded streets. The opportunity to bring vitality to the site can also benefit the context creating more active, enjoyable and safer spaces which, as highlighted by the Police, have had issues with antisocial and illegal behaviour.

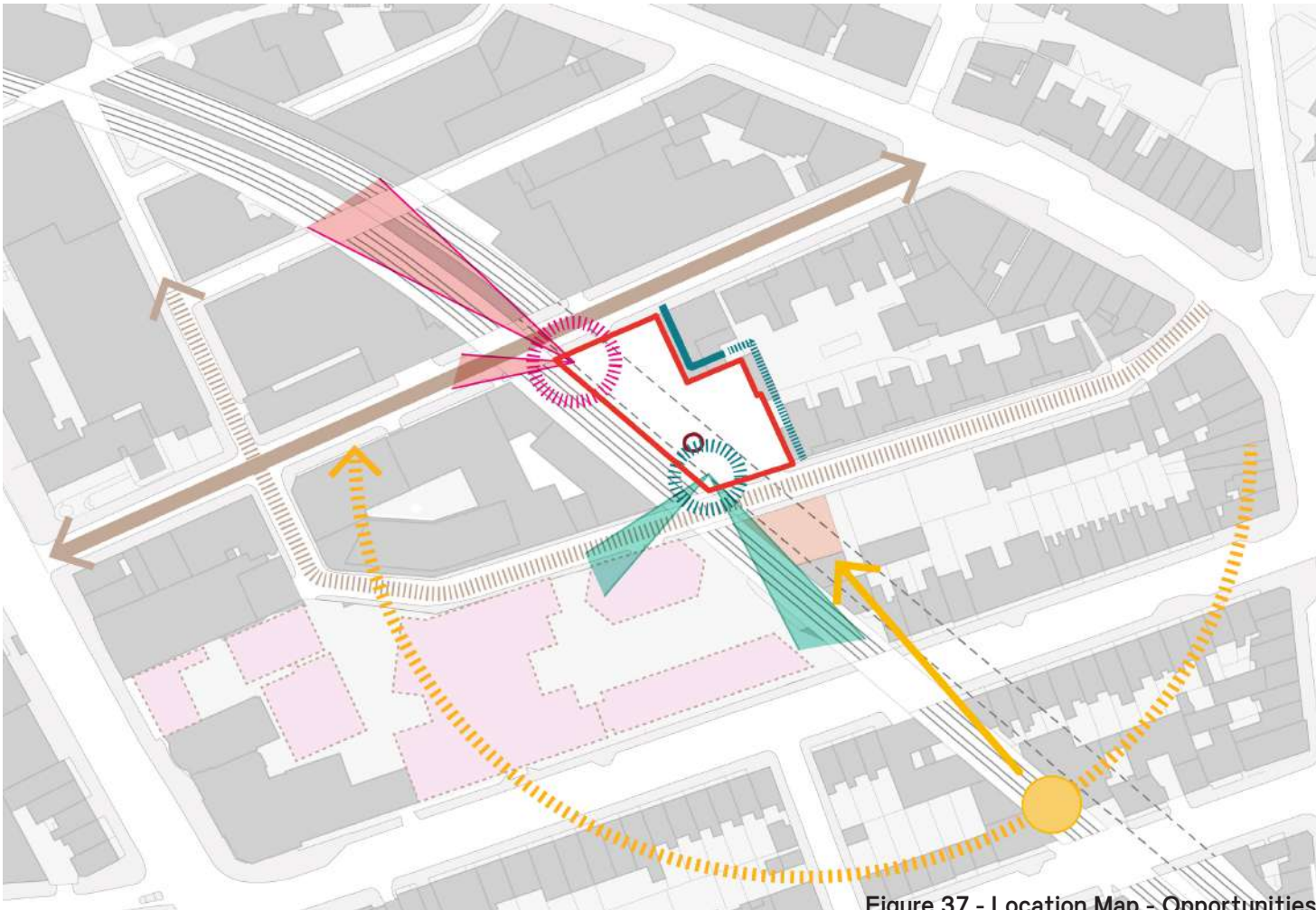
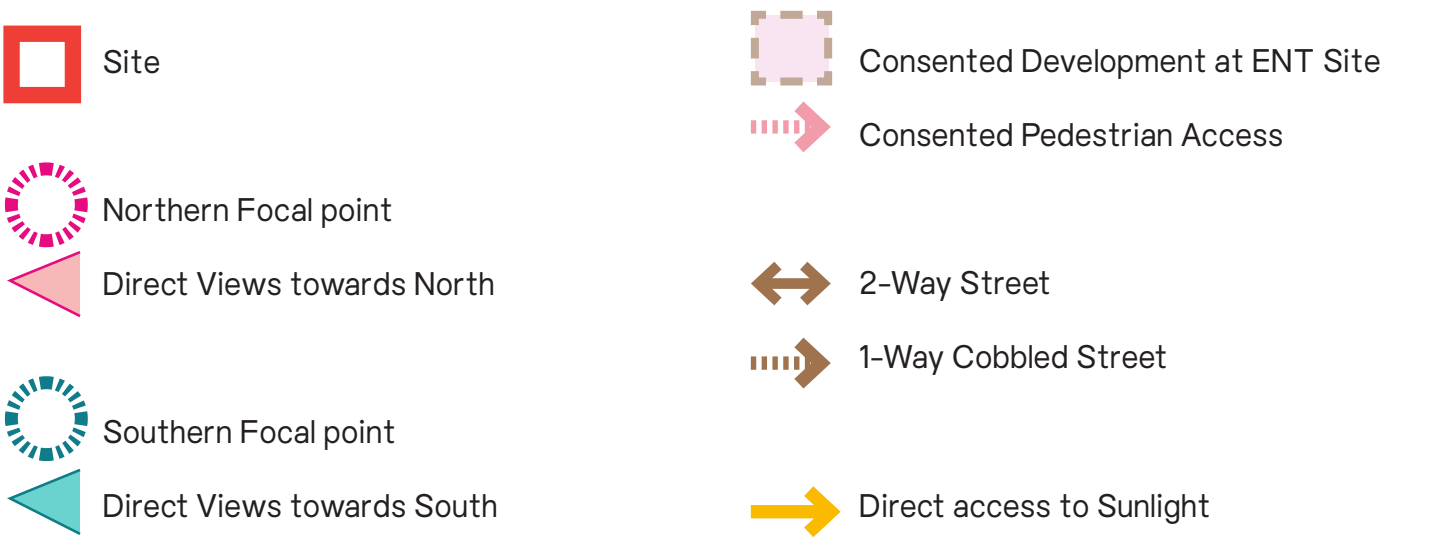


Figure 37 - Location Map - Opportunities

2.9 Constraints

The major technical constraint of the site is its proximity to the railway lines and the tunnel beneath the site. In addition we are very conscious of the impact of development on the character of the conservation area and listed buildings and to minimise impact on the amenity and wellbeing of our neighbours.

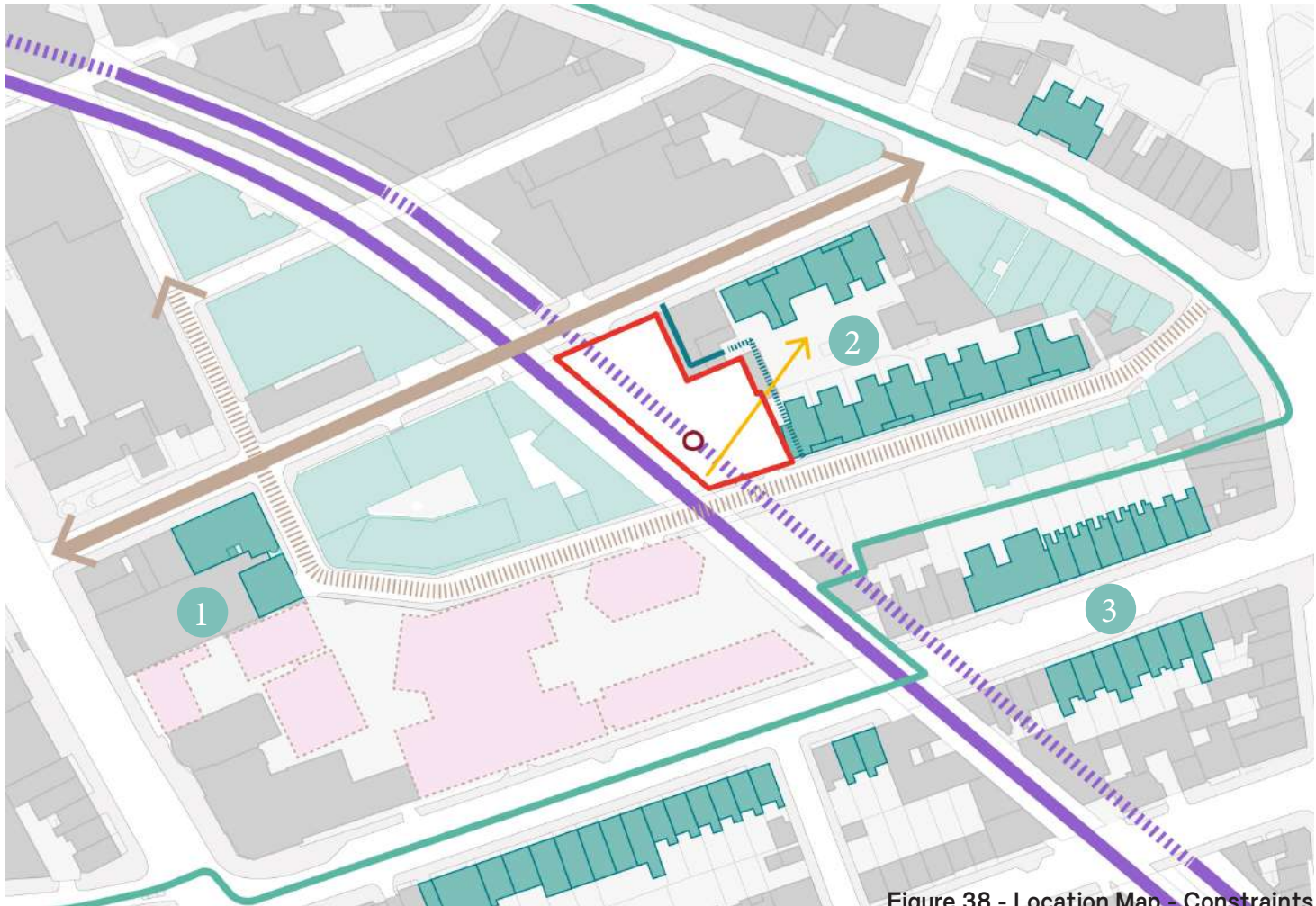
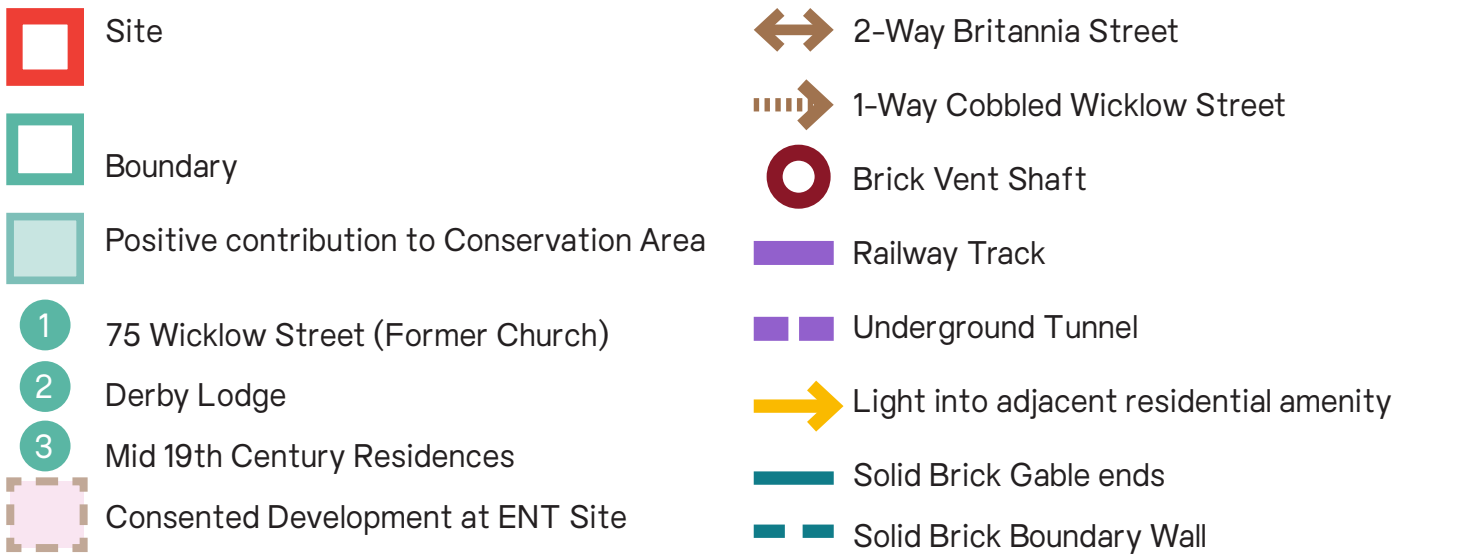


Figure 38 - Location Map - Constraints

2.9.1 Structural constraints

Ground Movement Analysis

Following testing of a number of variations we are now proposing the construction of a building away from the tunnel supported on piled foundations connected by a pile cap, and of a lightweight building directly above the tunnel, supported on a raft foundation. The output of all sensitivity analyses indicates no significant overall changes in current stress state in the brickwork of the NR tunnel.

Typical movements predicted by the sensitivity analyses are presented below and show that the tunnel may experience up to circa 15mm of settlement and up to circa 6mm horizontal movement towards the retained cutting. Cross-section differential movements were assessed to be circa 15mm shortening in the vertical direction and circa 6mm elongation in the horizontal direction. The different sensitivity analyses show an increase in compression in the cast-iron prop up to circa 10% in relation to the current condition.

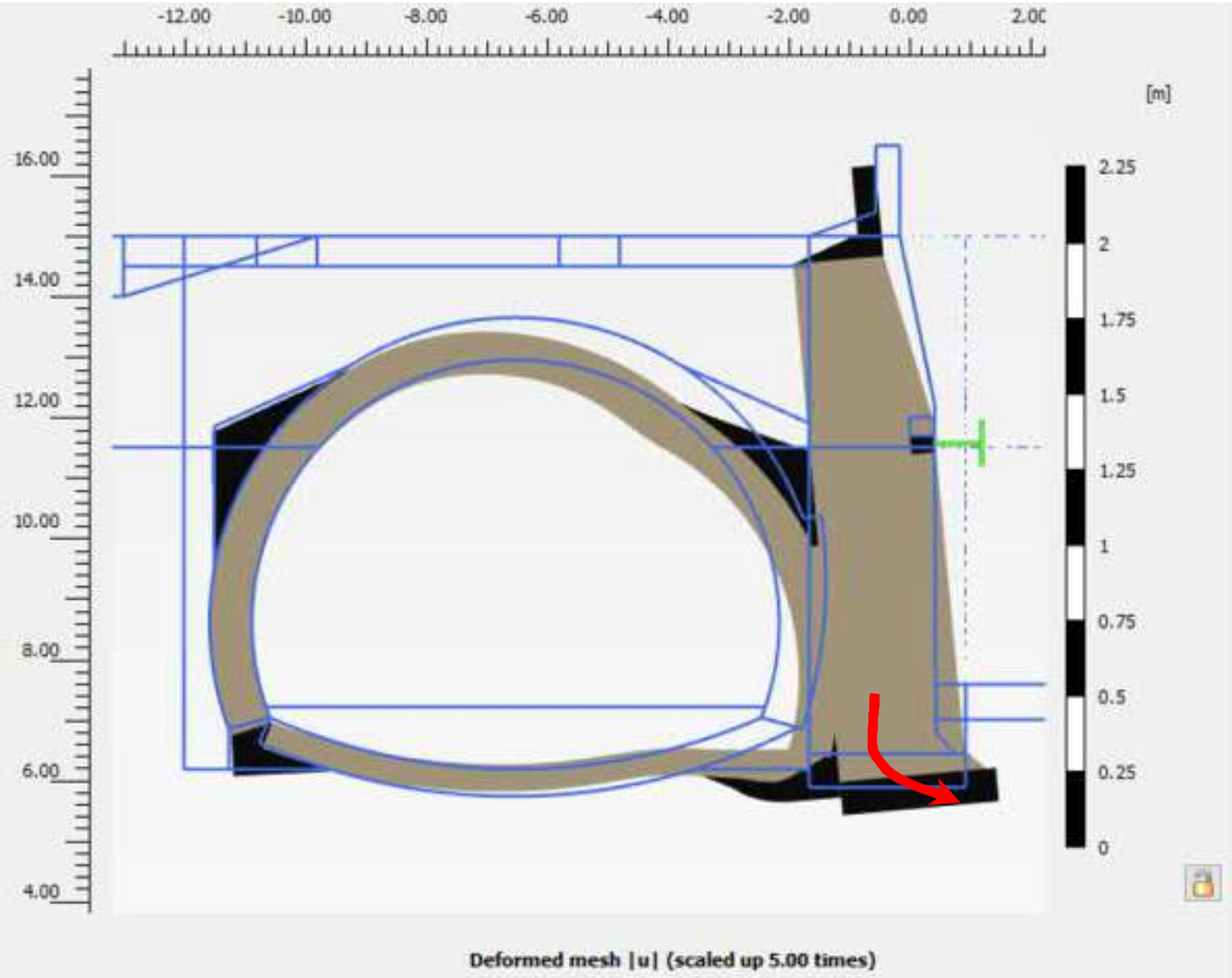


Figure 39 - Tunnel deformation

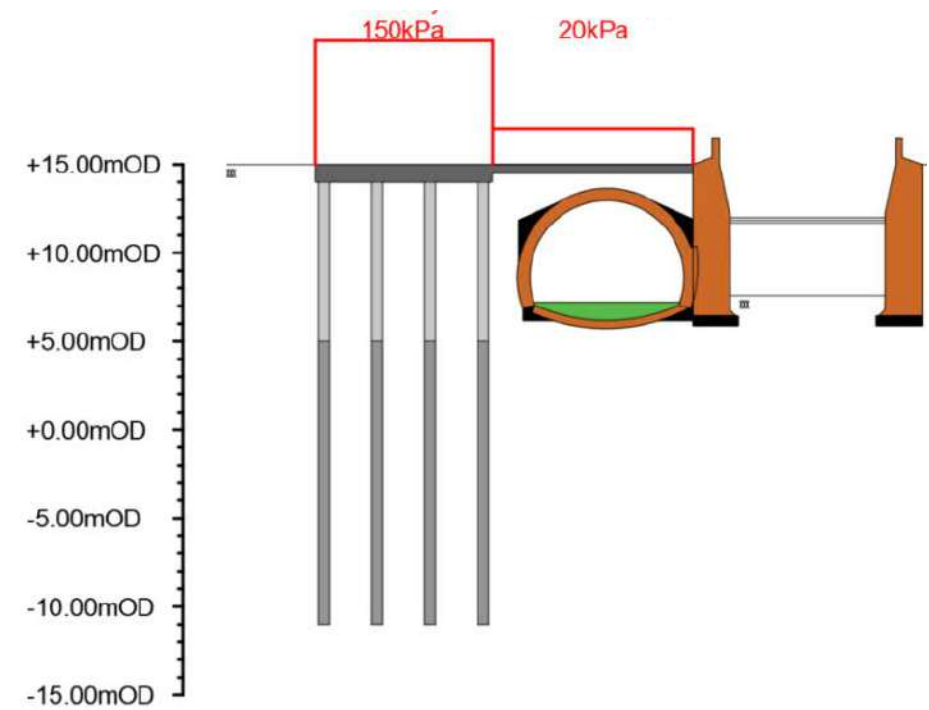


Figure 40 - Piling Requirements

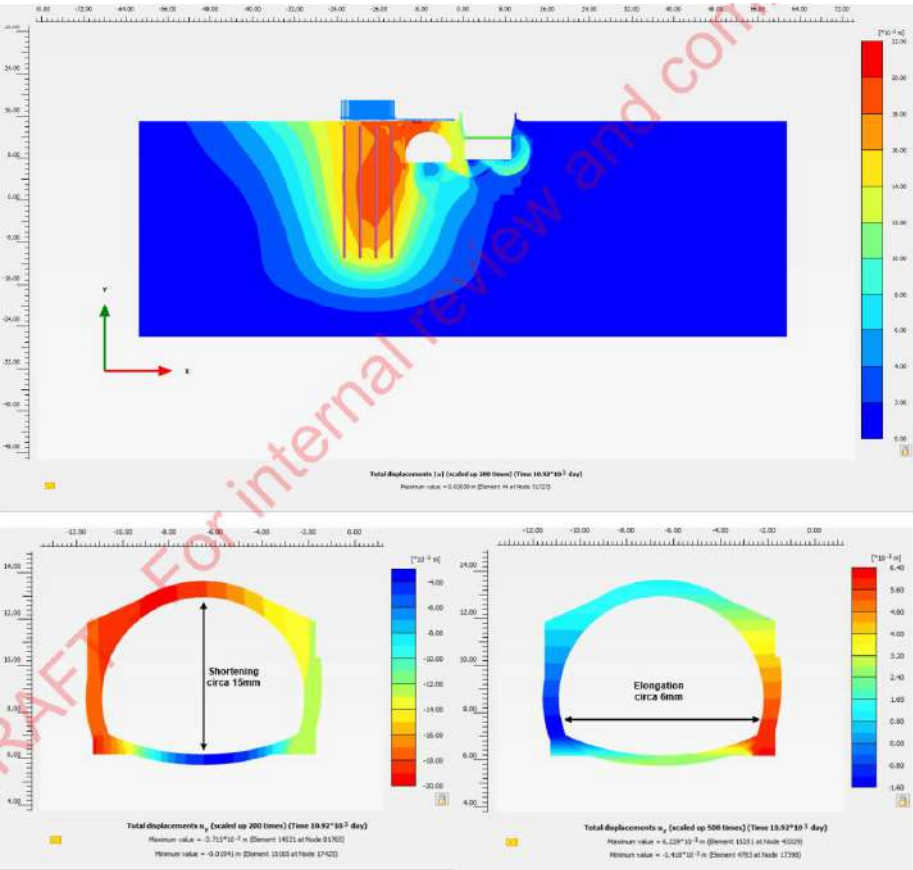


Figure 41 - Displacement Analysis

a bespoke solution and highly constrained layout

The plan and section below illustrate the principles and constraints which underpin the proposal. The western main structure is designed to cantilever over the tunnel area with steel hangers suspending the cantilever from roof level.

It is supported by primary structural offset from the tunnel, towards Derby Lodge. Pile foundations designed to take tension generated by the cantilever on a logistically constrained site. A 2-3 storey lightweight structure then bears over the tunnel up to the western boundary with the cutting to the underground.

- Structural zone / Pile foundation zone
- Thameslink Tunnel Zone:
2 storey lightweight structure zone (Piling prohibited zone)
- Cantilever Zone (Steel transfer beams)
- Site Boundary

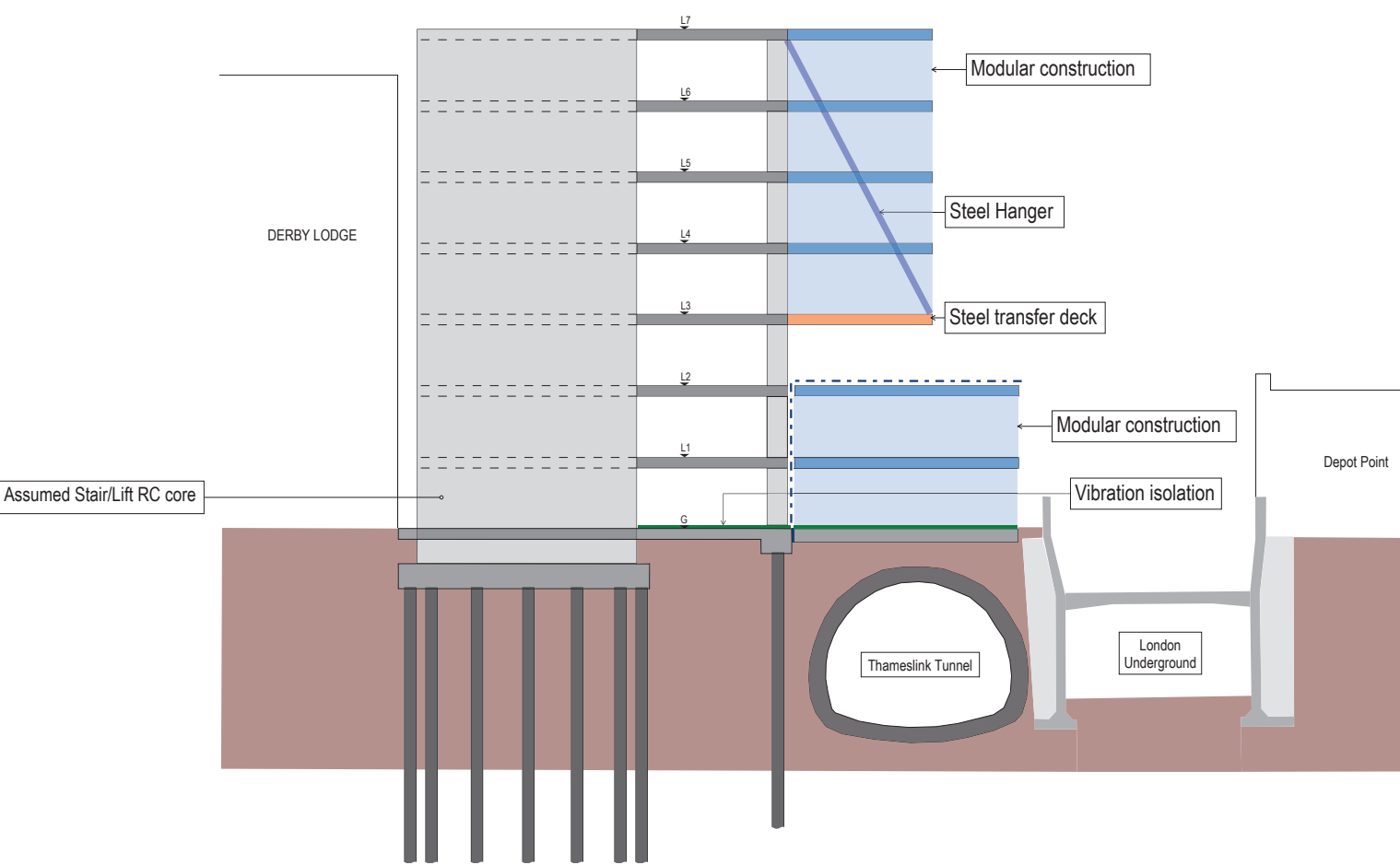


Figure 42 - Sketch Structural Proposal

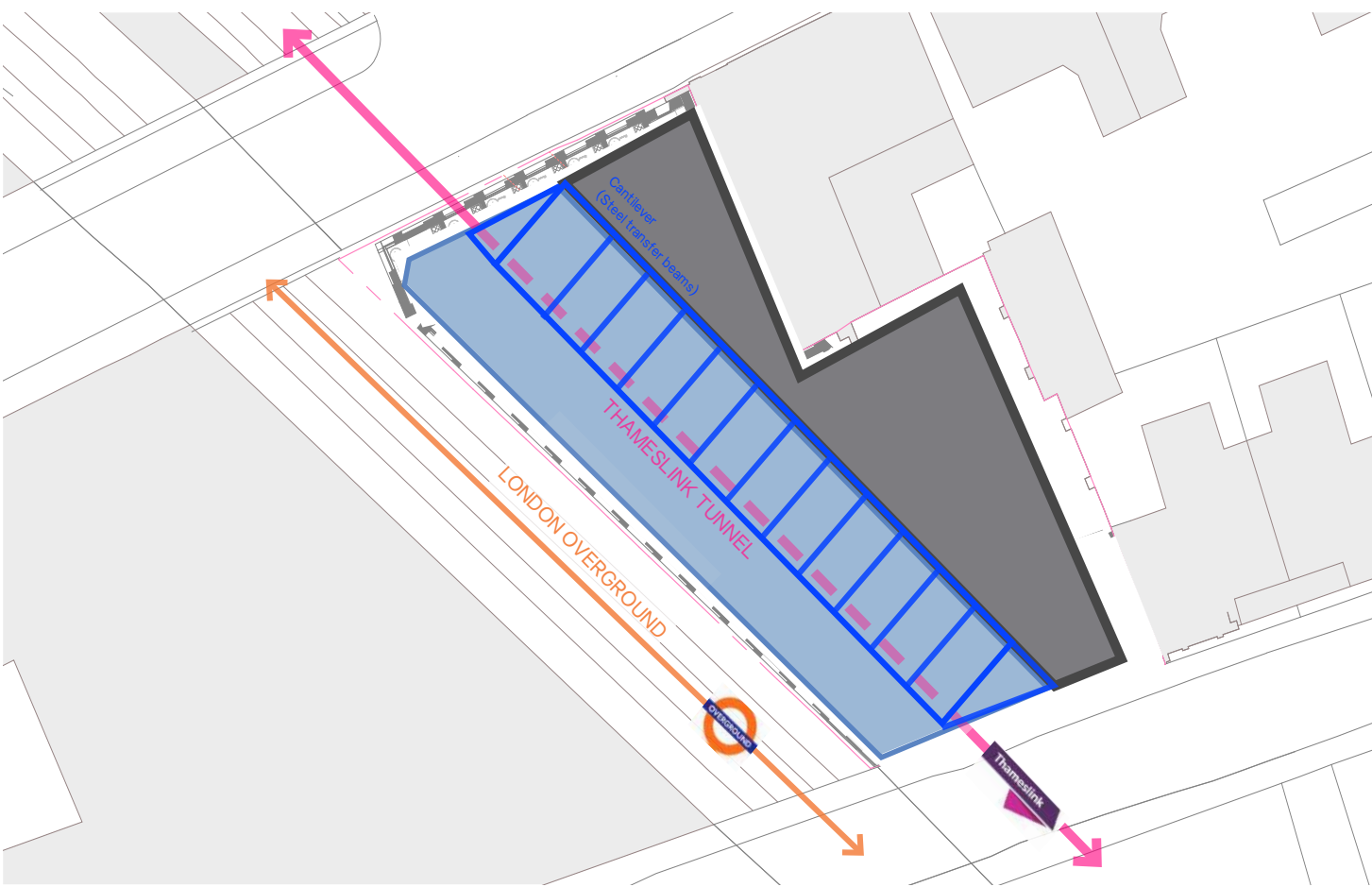
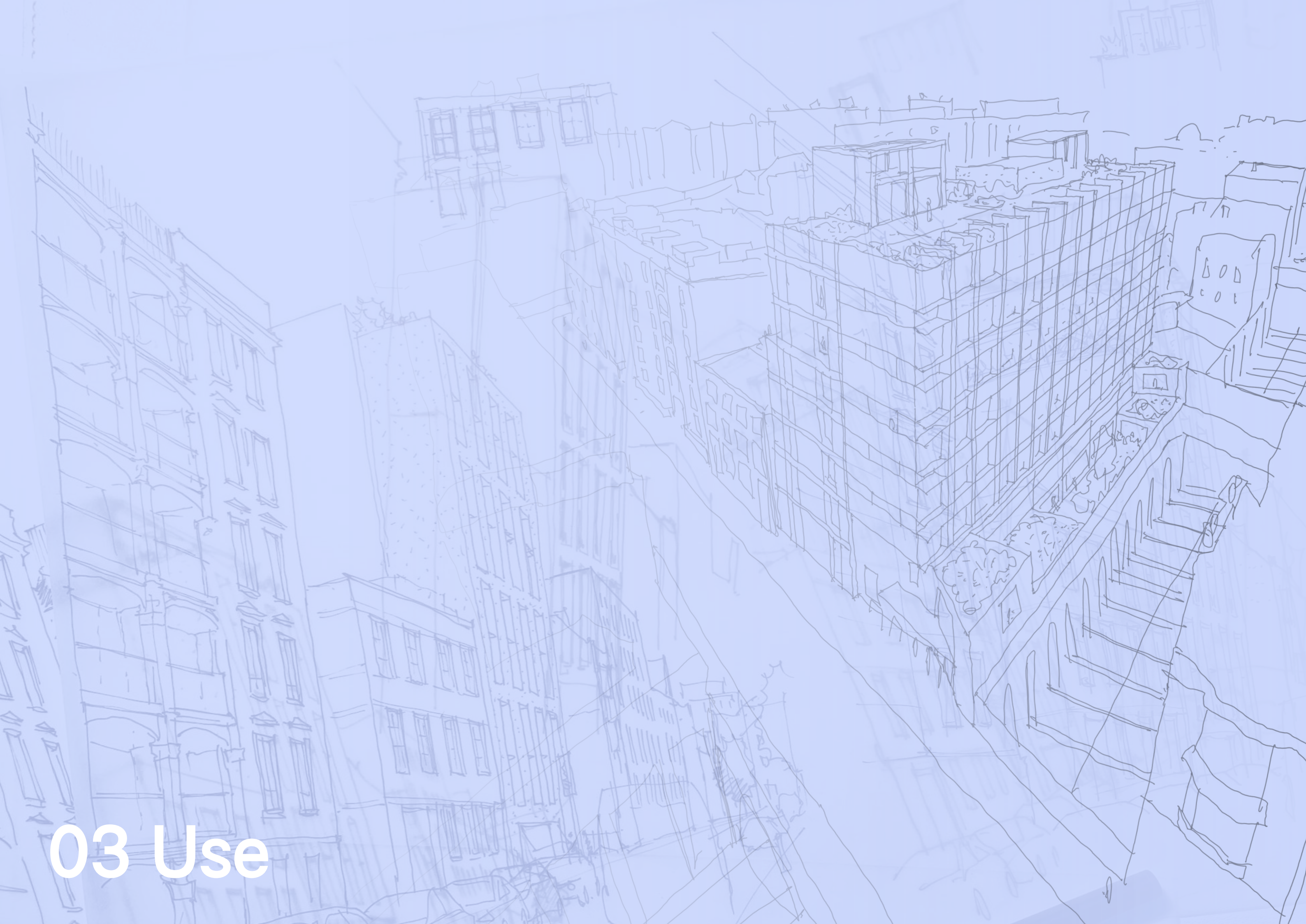


Figure 43 - Structural Principles



03 Use

3.1 Introduction

The following section demonstrates why we think the site, within the Knowledge Quarter, is appropriate for Purpose Built Student Accommodation (PBSA). It also considers why it is inappropriate for other uses.

3.2 Well connected

The site is extremely well connected to local, national and international public transport and has the best PTAL rating, 6B. This provides excellent access to the London as a whole and rapid access to a wide range of educational institutions.

3.3 Close to Education

The site also has excellent pedestrian connectivity as is within walking distance of various academic institutions, making it a convenient and sustainable location for student accommodation. As universities and colleges look to expand their student body, demand is expected to increase and this will help provide that capacity without necessitating vehicle or public transport use for access.

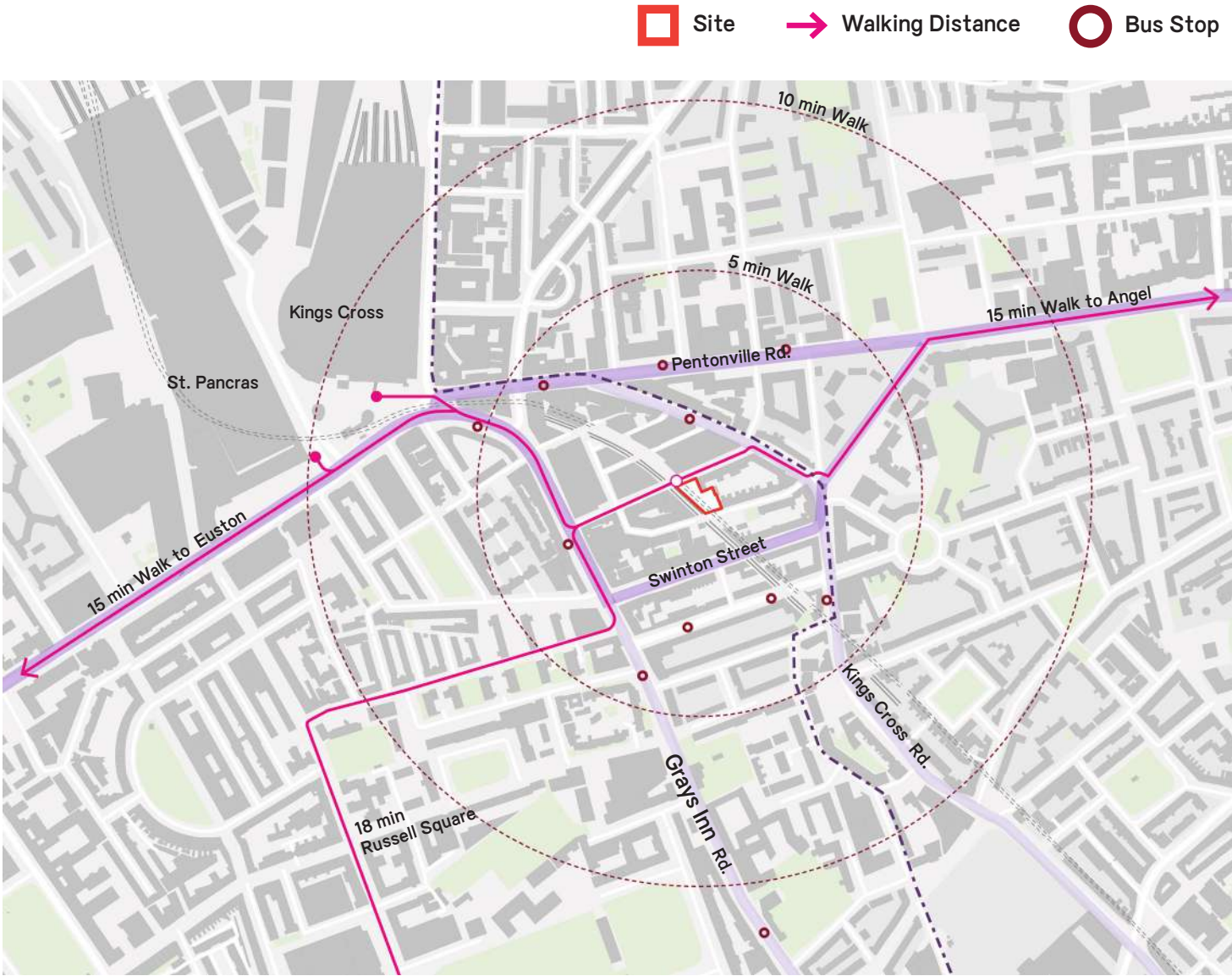


Figure 45 - Location Map - Connectivity



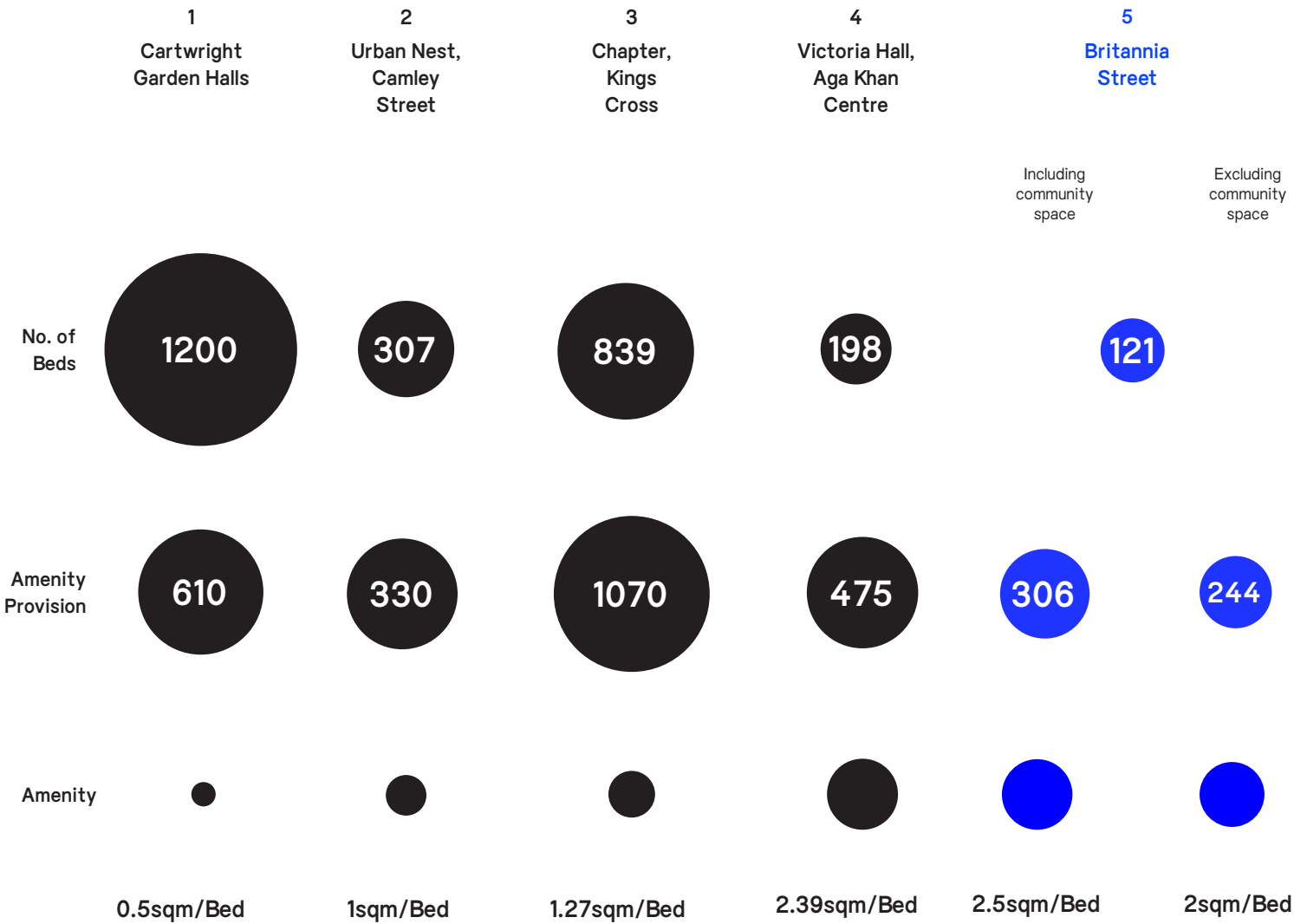
Figure 44 - Location Map - Student Accommodation

delivering and managing a high quality community

3.4 High quality homes, management and amenity

The project team have focused on delivering a distinctive and high quality design. Over its lifetime this will be supported by management and pastoral care by the applicant, Curlew Capital, to ensure a welcoming and supportive environment. This will be underpinned by spaces within the scheme.

The quantum and quality of these spaces has grown from the applicant’s expert understanding of requirements and has been refined through benchmarking against local provision. This has informed a scheme will which will deliver amenity space at a ratio per bed that exceeds local precedents, whilst also providing a space for the benefit of the local community.



3.5 The applicant

Curlew Capital (“Curlew”) is a UK & Netherlands based alternative real estate development, asset & fund manager.

Founded in 2011 for the purpose of investing in purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA), it has since funded and developed over 35 such PBSA and mixed-use schemes across England, Scotland and The Netherlands. To date, our investment in the sector totals over £1bn in more than 10,000 beds.

Curlew takes a holistic approach to PBSA investment from site selection, acquisition and development through to operational management. We can therefore place more emphasis on the things that matter most to the occupants such as optimal location, a well-designed mix of studios with high-quality amenities and a focus on mental wellbeing.

Crucially we also place a strong emphasis on the environment and sustainability, ensuring our schemes are delivered through best-practice in sustainable building design and development.

In recent years, Curlew has been awarded the Property Week 2016 Student Investor of the Year, the MSCI / IPF UK 2018 Property Investor of the Year, 2021 Property Week Student Accommodation Award for the Best Halls of Residence (The Lantern, Liverpool) and the MCSI 2019 Data Quality Award. We were also finalists for the Student Investor of the Year 2018 and short listed for the Scottish Student Accommodation Developer Award in 2019.



Figure 47 - The Knowledge Quarter



Figure 46 - Poland House

3.6 Comparison of Uses

The table below, discussed at pre-app, 3 summarises analysis of different uses on the site and was focused on whether we could incorporate some residential use in addition to, or instead of PBSA.

This testing revealed significant constraints upon and compromises to a fully residential scheme including inefficient use of space due to separate cores and access, generation of poor doors, and particularly constraints on delivering high quality, policy compliant, homes. Constraints on quality include high levels of with single aspect homes and some north facing dwellings and prohibition of private external amenity close the railway meaning only dwelling facing Wicklow Street could have good quality, private, external amenity.

Following pre-app 2, a hybrid scheme with some residential homes was progressed. It included a smaller number of family homes, in the only appropriate location, adjacent to Wicklow Street. From pre-app 6 we reverted to a 100% PBSA proposal as the reduction in developable area due to the structural constraints precluded a mixed use developed due to issues including density and viability.

3.7 Preceding Residential Application Quality

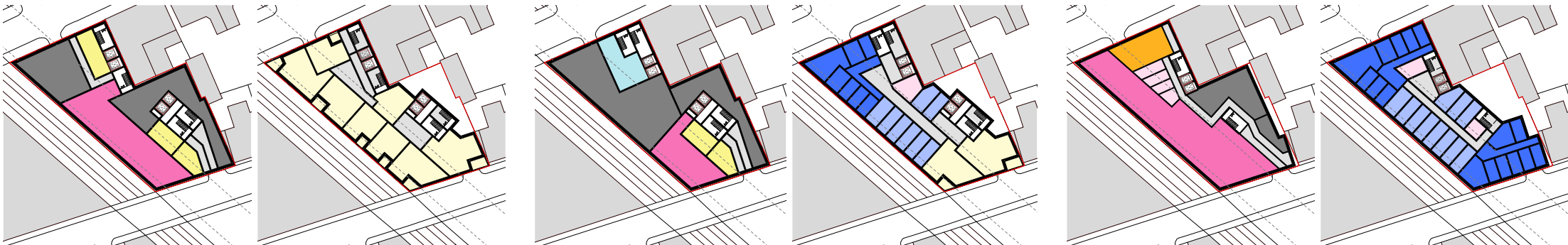
Previous planning applications for this site (PS9904306, 2006/5860/P, and 2013/0592/P) failed due to significant quality issues, including poor site optimization, inadequate unit mix, insufficient dual aspect units, and substandard amenity space. The earliest applications delivered only 23-26 homes while avoiding the Thameslink tunnel, while the most recent mixed-use proposal was refused due to substandard accommodation concerns.

The initial residential permissions (PS9904306 and 2006/5860/P) proposed building only over the site’s eastern portion, avoiding the Thameslink tunnel. However, both schemes proved undeliverable due to viability and technical constraints related to the railway tunnel.

These earlier proposals would fail to meet current planning policy standards, particularly regarding unit mix requirements, dual aspect units, and amenity space provision. The Officers Report for PS9904306 explicitly noted non-compliance with residential standards, while the 2006 permission renewal highlighted inability to meet lifetime homes and wheelchair accessibility requirements.

The final application (2013/0592/P) proposed a mixed-use hotel and residential development with 13 residential units above the Thameslink tunnel. This too was refused, with officers citing substandard accommodation, inappropriate unit mix, failure to meet accessibility standards, and inadequate outlook facing the London Underground lines.

Positive
Negative



Themes	Residential	Residential + PBSA	PBSA
Cores	2	2	1
Lifts	4	4	2
Stairs	4	4	2
Resident Entrances	2 (1/tenure, perception of poor door)	2	1
Back of House Entrance	2	2	1
Community Use Frontages	1	1	2
Inactive Frontage	60%	60%	10%
Aspect	Lots of single aspect homes, some solely north facing	Dual aspect PBSA communal spaces, dual aspect homes	Single aspect bed spaces and all dual aspect communal spaces
Private External Amenity	Desirable for all dwellings but unlikely to be achievable adjacent to railway	Can be provided for the limited number of homes	Not required
Communal External Amenity	At roof level - not optimised for play	At roof level -playspace on residential terrace	At roof level - no playspace required

the site constrains residential amenity, quality and identity

3.7.1 Constraints on Residential Use

The following constraints preclude a residential development on the site. These were developed prior to the more restrictive structural constraint which would increase the impact of these issues.

Cores - High demand for a small site

A core would be required for each tenure. 1 core would serve 2-3 dwellings per floor and both require 2 stairs and at least 2 lifts for fire safety and accessibility. Recent updates to regulations mean 3 may be required per tenure. Due to structural exclusion zone, the second core impinges on the adjoining property outlook. This is very inefficient, costly, results in poor site optimisation and creates the appearance of a poor door.

Ground Floor - Limited activation of the street

All 4 stairs require independent escape access resulting in inactive ground floor. Back of house spaces and access point will be required for each tenure. This restricts active frontage and creates a less hospitable streetscape. The duplication is also inefficient and limits public or community ground floor uses.

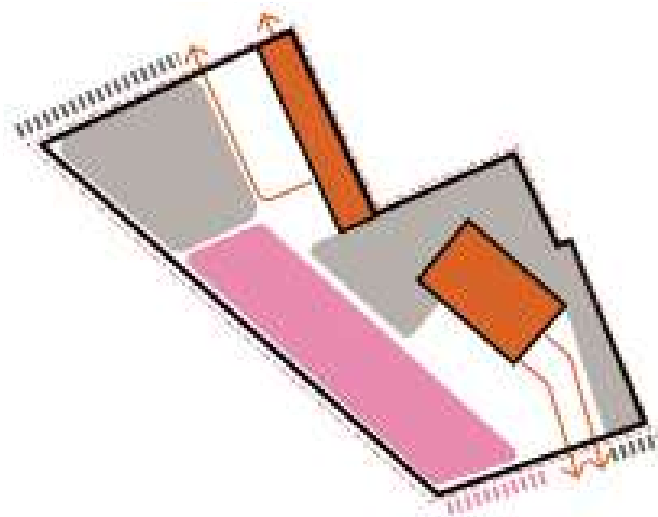


Figure 50 - Ground Floor: Doubling of Cores and BOH resulting in inactive frontages and tenures segregated between streets

Tenure & Identity - Poor community ethos

The constraints and geometry of the site mean separate street accesses are required for different tenures, reducing the community togetherness.

Outlook - Single aspect and north facing homes

63% of dwellings will be single aspect. Whilst the remainder can be dual aspect dwellings, a single-aspect north facing home is likely to be unavoidable whilst optimising the site.

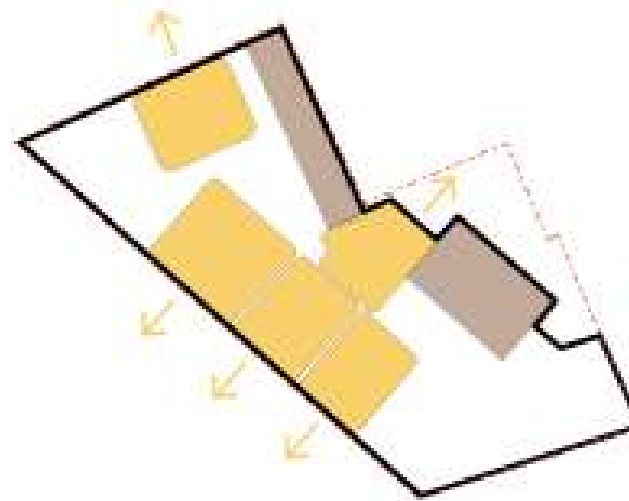


Figure 48 - Outlook: Single Aspect Dwellings, with one North-Facing Unit

Amenity - Few opportunities for balconies

Operable windows and balconies conflict with rail noise and safety, resulting in poor quality of private amenity. Recently TFL have required full height fixed screens to balconies adjacent to the DLR. Some communal amenity and playspace could be provided on roofs, although low level is often preferred for play.

Value - Inefficient and limited quality

Sales are likely to be severely impacted by constraints on quality, reducing the viability of the site.

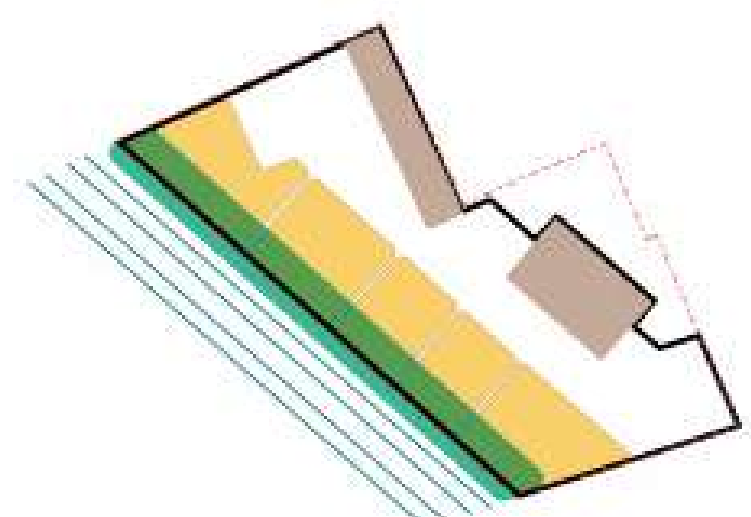


Figure 49 - Amenity: Poor quality private amenity due to Rail

3.8 Evolution of use

Whilst the current proposal is 100% PBSA studio, we developed a number of options with more mixes of use of types of home. The final use has been driven by contextual constraints on construction, height and use and the most appropriate opportunity, student housing.

Plans below summarise the change during the pre-app process whilst following pages outline the constraints on alternative uses and particularly the residential use of the site.

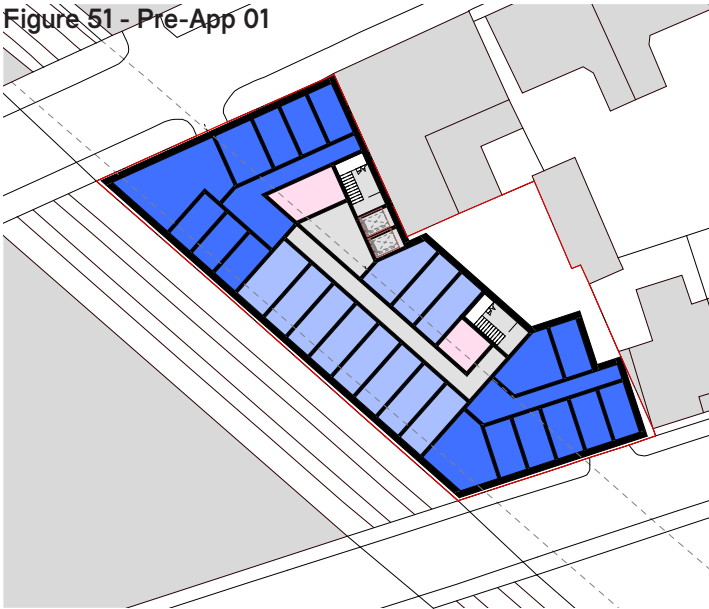
KEY

- PBSA Studios
- PBSA Clusters
- Residential apartments

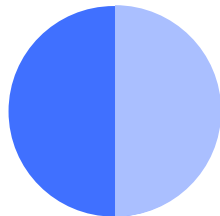
3.8.4 Pre-App 1 - 13.07.23

Initial engagement with the local authority started with a mix of student studios and cluster accommodation, with an enclosed corridor enveloped by 182 beds.

Figure 51 - Pre-App 01



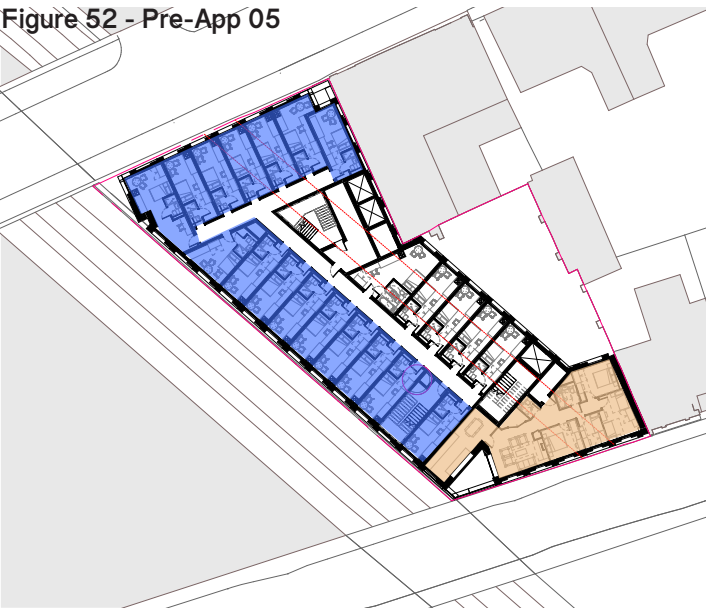
50% PBSA Studios
50% PBSA Clusters
182 PBSA beds



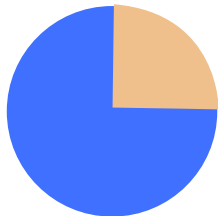
3.8.1 Pre-App 05 - 29.11.23

In further consultation, the scheme introduced 10 affordable housing units to the south of the site, which introduced a third core, reducing the efficiency of the floor plate, but providing a more diverse mix.

Figure 52 - Pre-App 05



75% PBSA Studios
25% Residential
143 PBSA beds
10 Residential Apartments



3.8.2 Pre-App 07 - 05.08.24

Following survey results from the underground tunnels structural integrity, a reduced mass was required to ease the load on the below ground structure. The loss of storeys made an affordable housing offer unviable, and the scheme moved to 100% PBSA, at a reduced rate of 134.

Figure 53 - Pre-App 07



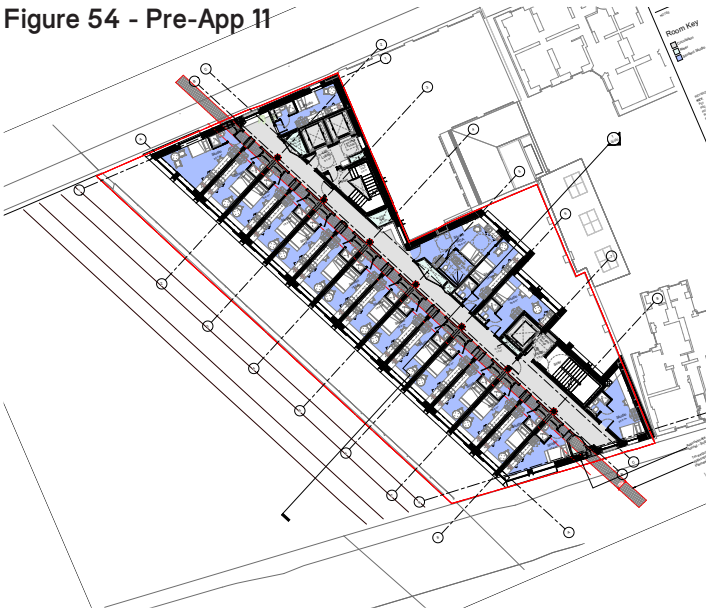
100% PBSA Studios
134 beds



3.8.3 Pre-App 11 - 07.11.24

Proceeding pre-apps carved away the mass towards the neighbouring Derby Lodge residents to protect privacy, as well as updated core layouts that align with contemporary fire and life safety regulations, resulting in a further reduced rate of 121 studios.

Figure 54 - Pre-App 11



100% PBSA Studios
121 beds

