

5.0 Design Development

5.5 - Discussion with Camden Council Design Officer 21.02.2011

One of the main points to come out of the previous meeting with the Design Officer, was how the expressive elements of the boxes could be strengthened. The client agreed to investigate the feasibility of adding projections to the boxes within the constraints of the modular construction.

The modular construction would not allow us to project rooms. If rooms were to be projected we would have to abandon the modular construction in localised areas. By doing so, the efficiency of the building would be compromised and therefore the conceptual idea of expressing and celebrating the modules would be false.

The sketch on the opposite page was sent by the design officer. It shows two elements of the design that he wanted us to explore. Firstly, slots in the brickwork should be more pronounced. This can be achieved by making the reveals deep, and by placing more brick around them, ie fewer slots, more brick. This is something that we explore later and indeed has found its way into the final design.

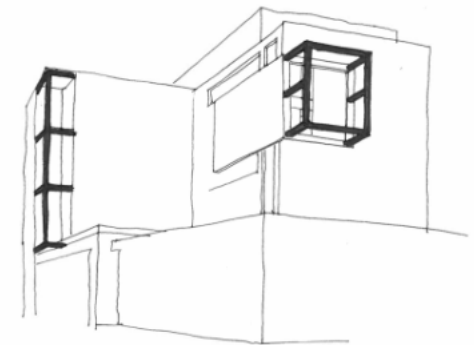
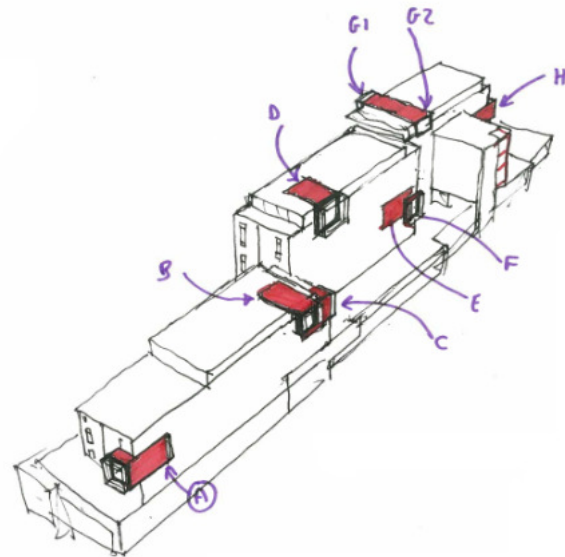
The second element of his sketch is the projecting boxes. The suggestion is to project the boxes in two directions.

We discussed this with our clients in terms of the buildability but we also tested it against our original concepts. We felt that the boxes should be seen to be sliding into place inline with the modules and by projecting out in two directions at the corners, they would look as though they were sliding in from an angle. We wanted to explore the leaning out idea, but in a more directional way and in a way where we could express this idea in several locations.

The sketches shown on this page offer an idea for how to address that. We can, without compromising the modular construction apply a frame to the building. This frame could be left exposed or be clad in louvers, with the same material as the boxes to express movement as if by slotting into place they have left a trail. This mesh would also link the ideas expressed by these 'moving' boxes with the mesh panels forming the fence of the Travis Perkins depot below.

This main focus of this discussion was on the expression of the boxes. The Design Officer was keen to see significant projections of the boxes to be at least 1.5m, in order to strengthen their purpose. It was agreed that we would discuss further with the client, to see if there is a way we can improve on the sketches tabled here.

The other issue regarding the depth and frequency of the cut outs was also discussed. Design Officer sought a 400mm deep reveal and to reduce the amount of cut outs to really accentuate them. We agreed to pursue this line of thought.



Sketch View Option 1
Expressed frame similar to the corner
of the protruding block.

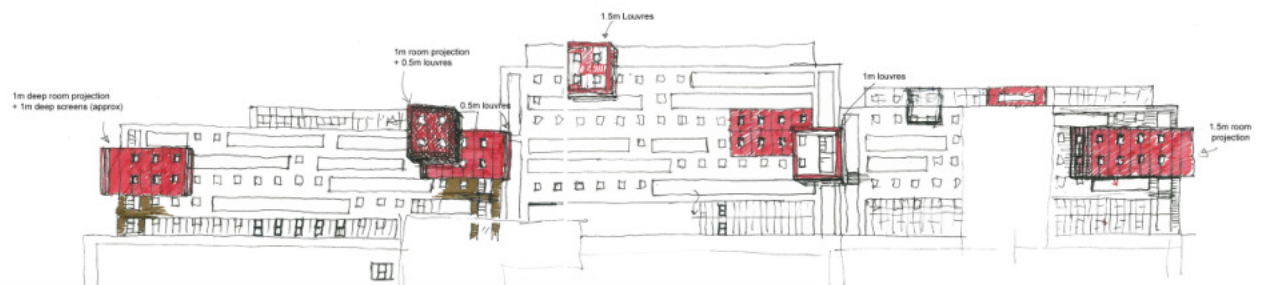
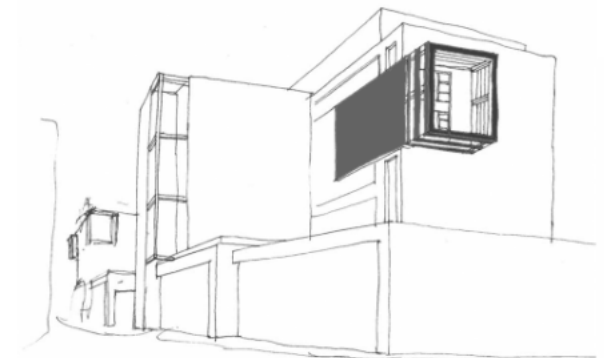


Fig - 5.5.2 - Studies of the Red Boxes



Fig - 5.6.1 - Draft Model viewed from St Pancras Way (Revised)

5.0 Design Development

5.6 - Presentation to the Greater London Authority 24.02.2011

The size of the development requires consultation with the GLA and a presentation was made to their case officers by all members of the client and design team.

We presented the scheme from the first principles:

- Travis Perkins were the driving force behind the scheme, as they identified logistical and layout problems with the current buildings on site, that would limit their operations in the years to come.
- Some of the problems associated with the site include loading and deliveries which have an impact on the local highway network.
- We presented the site in its context and indicated how well located it is, relative to several higher education establishments.
- We showed how our proposals would allow the site to be developed to improve Travis Perkins' operations.
- We introduced our proposals starting with the height and mass as agreed with Camden. We showed the building outline in context from critical local viewpoints.
- We also introduced the current stage of façade design by showing the latest version of the computer model.

The GLA's design officer asked to see some more information in order to assess the height and mass of the scheme. He understood the principles of the project and design, but wanted to see how the development fits in with Camden's idea of how the area will be developed in the coming years.

It was agreed that we would arrange a further meeting with Camden's design officer and the GLA's design officer, in order to explain further the reasoning behind the form and mass.



Fig - 5.6.2 - Critical View from Goldington Square
(The white space is a neighbouring development)



Fig - 5.6.3 - View of the Model



Fig - 5.6.4 - Elevation Detail

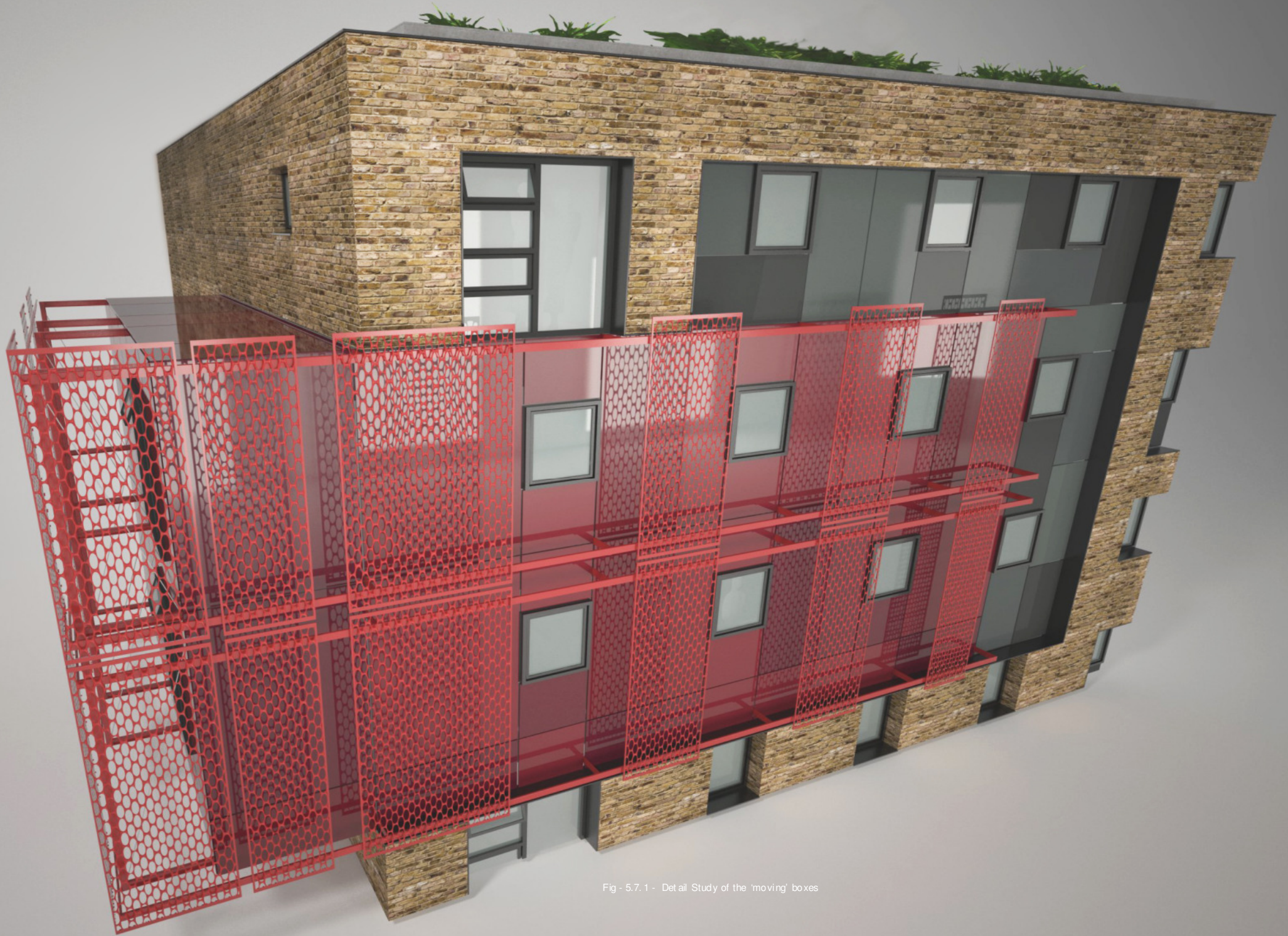


Fig - 5.7.1 - Detail Study of the 'moving' boxes

5.0 Design Development

5.7 - Discussion with Design Officers from Camden Council and the GLA - 08.03.2011

The purpose of this discussion was to explain to the GLA's design officer, the design development process that led to the building being in its current form. We presented a series of sketch views which analysed the project in townscape terms. The main points that we covered were as follows:

- Original advice was that the height at the centre of the site should not exceed 10 storeys. Whilst our proposals comply with this, it's true that the ground floor storey is high. That said, the overall height is no greater than a usual 10 storey building. We also showed how the site sits in a dip, relative to its surroundings.
- A question had been raised as to why Block D was so high, particularly as it comes out to the street line. We showed in the sketches why we thought it's important to continue the rhythm of the street from Beaumont Court in the North to our new block A in the South, by adding an element in between.
- We also tabled some further ideas as to the elevation design, based on our previous meeting with Camden's Design Officer.
- There had been some questions raised at the previous meeting about the level of detail in the gable ends, and in particular, the gable end of Block D where it meets the street. We had worked on this some more and presented some ideas as to how this could be improved.



Fig - 5.7.2 - Sketch Model of the Elevation

The advice from the meeting was as follows:

- The principle of placing the highest part of the development in the centre of the site was understood and accepted.
- The idea of how block D was being used to add some rhythm to the street was accepted.
- The red boxes were accepted as elements of interest that added to the overall composition.
- The GLA's design officer was keen to see some more development of the elevation design. He said the long elevation of the building appeared very repetitive and horizontal. It was however accepted that the elevation drawing was misleading as the development is more fragmented than that and needed to be seen in three dimensions. He also suggested we look again at larger windows in the rooms, such as floor to ceiling windows, and also at varying the colours across the site to give each block its own identity.
- It was agreed that the design of the ground level boundaries was a good response to the site..
- The final advice was that the height and mass of the scheme could be supported if the elevations were of a high enough quality.

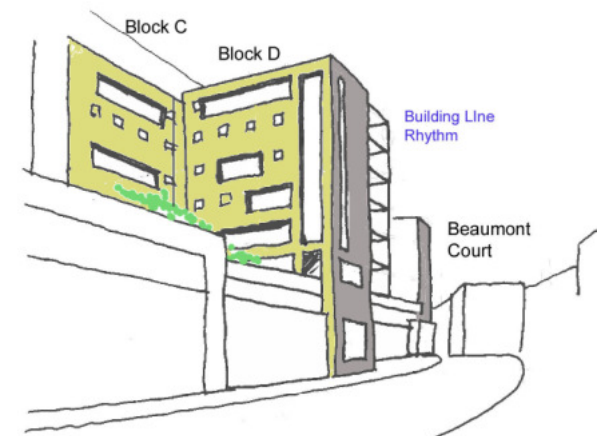
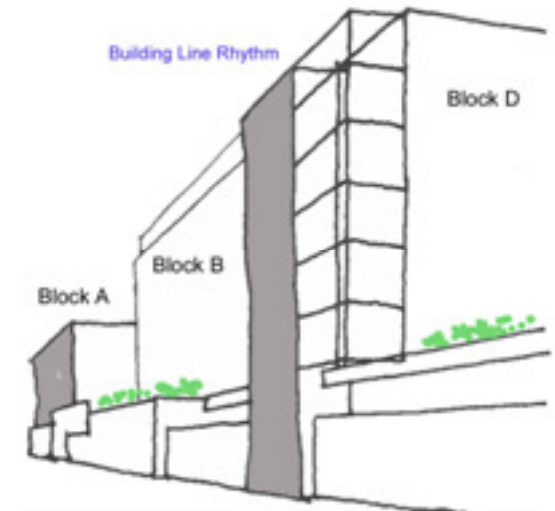


Fig - 5.7.3 - Urban Design Studies

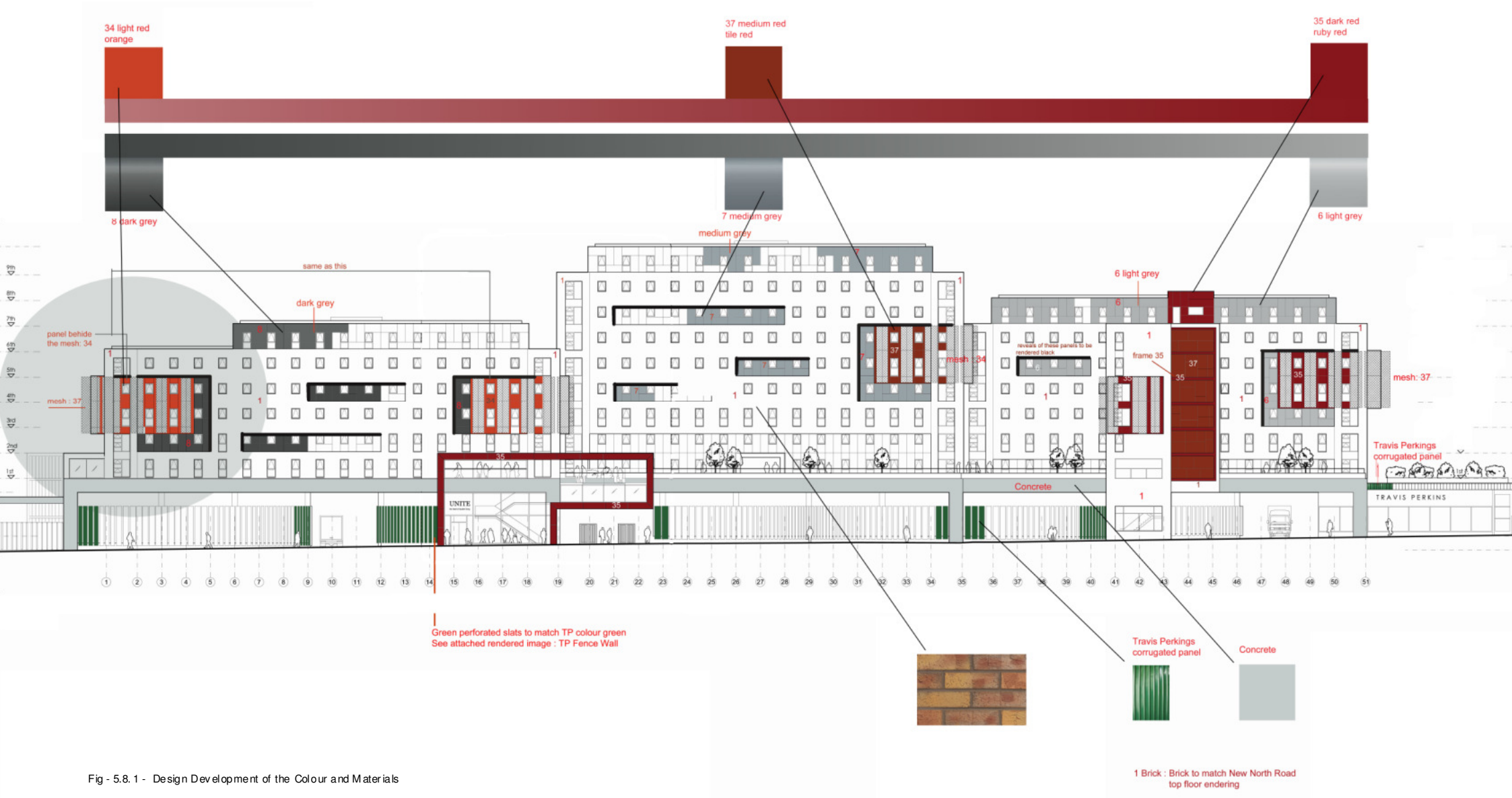


Fig - 5.8.1 - Design Development of the Colour and Materials

5.0 Design Development

5.8 - Further Design Development

Approaching the final design stages, we spent some time addressing the main comments from the GLA's Design Officer. We investigated several options for refining the elevation design.

The principles that we wanted to reinforce and follow were:

- Whilst we're keen to see some variation in colour across the scheme, we also want the development to look like a cohesive whole, and not a disparate collection of buildings.
- We felt that although the site is very long (about 200m), the blocks themselves are not excessively long, and would tend to be seen as separate elements. Although we explored a number of options to introduce distinct vertical forms, we felt that it would be best to accentuate the verticality of the block ends. It has always been a key intention of the design to show a strong edge to the individual blocks. We looked at reinforcing this by sliding the red boxes in behind the brick skin, in line with the modules behind.
- We looked again at the fenestration, and re-introduced a pattern of floor to ceiling windows in a traditional pattern by confining those to the lower levels of the blocks, and standard punched windows in the floors above. We also looked at continuing that theme into the red box elements themselves to improve the proportions and to connect their design to the buildings as a whole.
- In discussion with the clients, we decided to investigate the construction of the kitchen elements (at each end of every block) to be concrete. This will allow us to add a step detail in the brick to further accentuate their strength, and to lean some of the rooms out in those locations, which will go some way to addressing this final detail point of concern from the Design Officer.

A more robust response was received from the GLA in the form of a letter and we explored some more alterations to the design which are discussed on the following page.

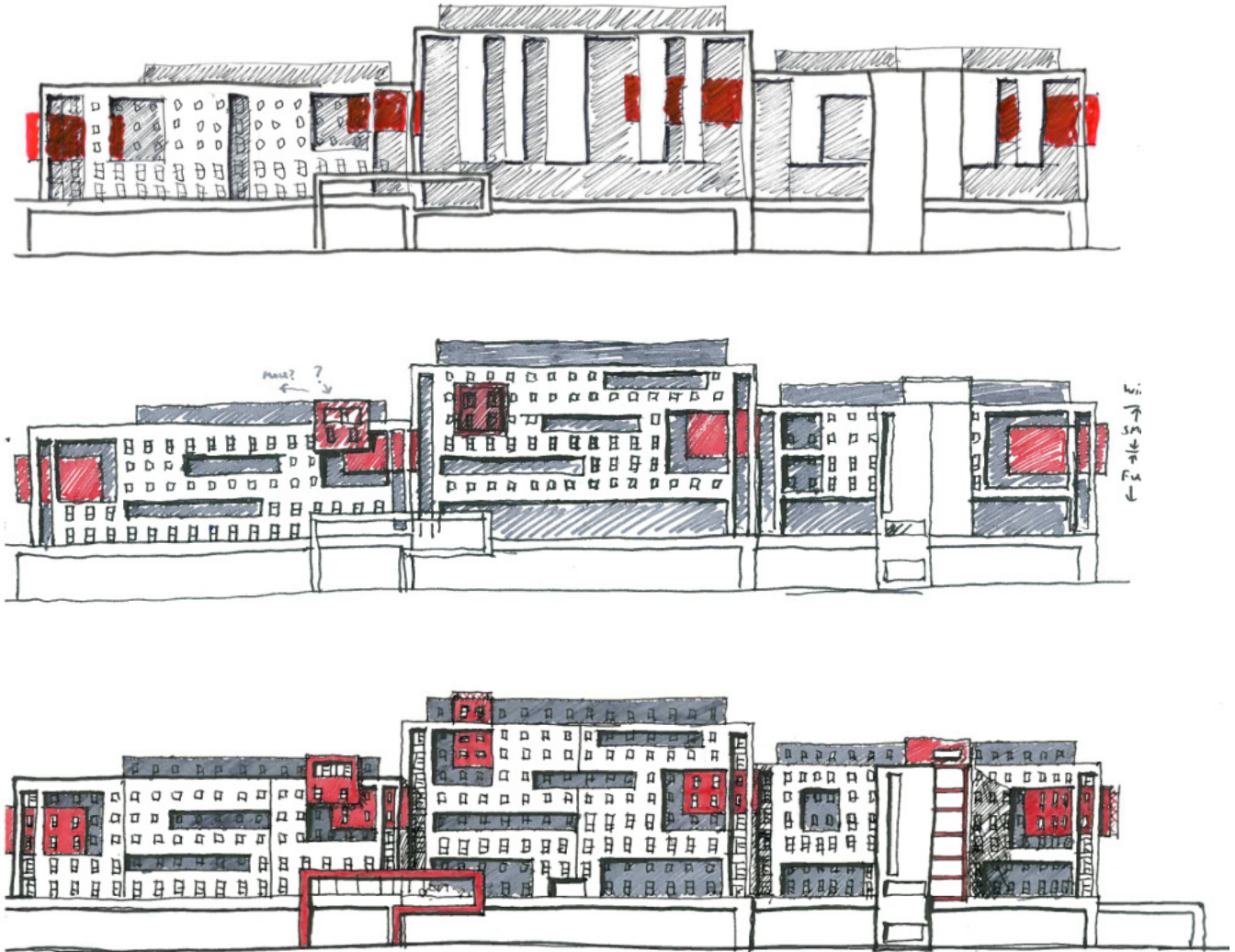
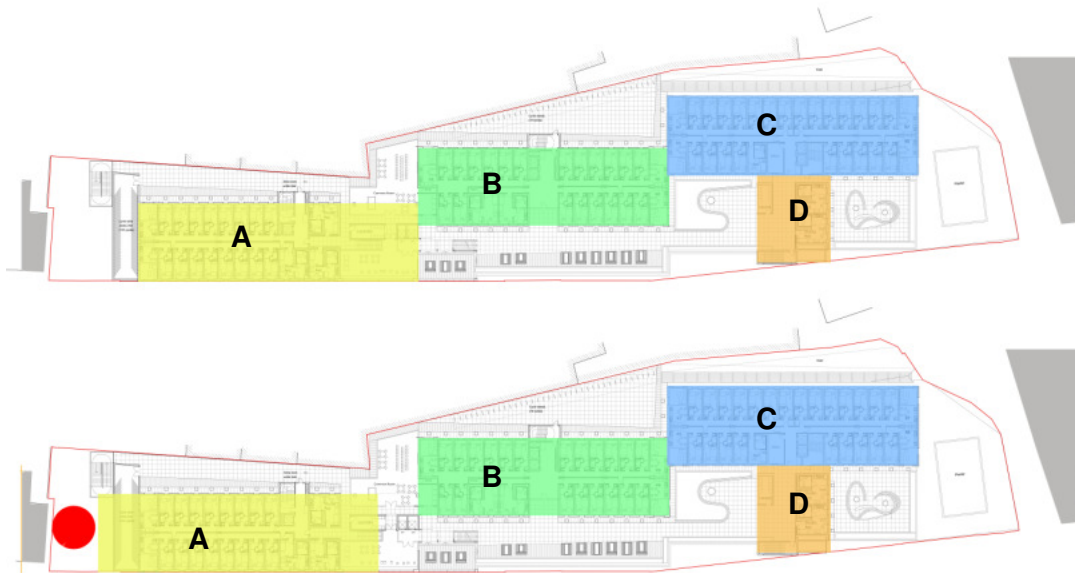


Fig - 5.8.2 - Sketch Studies of the Elevation



Daylight Impact

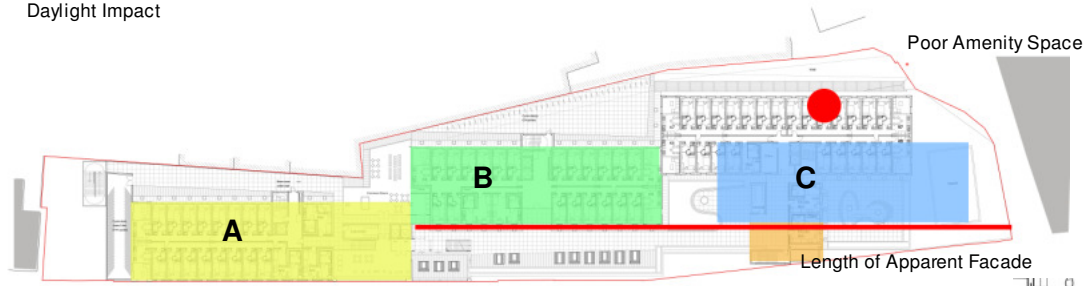


Fig - 5.8.3 - Study of the Effect of Separating the Blocks



Fig - 5.8.4 - View through to the Rear of The Site



Fig - 5.8.5 - Improved Connection Between the Amenity Spaces

5.0 Design Development

5.8 - Further Design Development (continued)

Since the meeting with the GLA design officer, we received written advice on the design that can be summarised as follows:

- The success of the street level design will be dependent on the detail of the boundary and the details of vehicle access.
- There is concern that the northern amenity space will be underused due to its isolation from the main space.
- A taller feature at the centre of the site is broadly acceptable but impact assessments will need to show the effect on the Royal Veterinary College.
- Officers are concerned about the overall scale, mass and elevational treatment of the blocks viewed from St Pancras Way and Granary Way.
- Questions raised as to whether the proposed modular design and treatment is able to create a satisfactorily high level of architecture for a building of this scale.

Officers asked that we investigate the above comments by exploring some potential alterations, such as:

- To separate one of the blocks from the other two by 10-15metres.
- Vary the treatment of the three blocks with less emphasis on the continued horizontal treatment.
- Varying and increasing the size of windows on all elevations, including the ends of the blocks, trying to emphasise a depth to the building.
- Providing more information on the maintenance, weathering and colouring of the proposed materials across the whole building and amenity space
- We should provide detailed information on the access and detailed design of the North amenity space.

We have addressed these points as follows:

- The diagram opposite (fig 5.8.3) shows the impact of introducing a separation space between the blocks. Moving Block A would impact excessively on the daylight of St Mungo's, which is why we've always kept a space between the development and the neighbour. Moving Block C would mean the block has to come forward on the site, thereby making the buildings, from certain angles, look very linear. This would also create a more hidden amenity space in the least attractive part of the site. We were also concerned that the view between the blocks would look unattractive (fig 5.8.4) Block C would also then lean out over the Travis Perkins showroom which has been designed and expressed as a separate element, distinct from the student development. Furthermore, our concept has always been about connections and communication, and not separation. For these reasons, we decided that the current format of the blocks on the site is the correct one.
- We looked at introducing a different materials palette for each block. However, we have always wanted the development to look cohesive, not a collection of disparate blocks. This has been fundamental to our design ethos since the start. However we are now proposing to introduce a gradation of colour across the site from dark red on light grey at the North, to light red on dark grey to the South, with a multi stock brick tying everything together. (fig 5.8.1)

We did look at introducing more verticality into the façade. We felt that the ends of the blocks should be the strong vertical elements to reinforce our idea of containing the modules in something stronger. We strengthened these vertical elements by slipping the red boxes behind the brick, and by protruding them further out from the face of the deep brickskin. We have also reduced the amount of horizontal slots, and introduced a number of square openings. We've also introduced more larger, floor to ceiling windows to further add more verticality to the detail of the elevations.

- We've increased the window size in the ends of the blocks, and linked them up with a deep slot in the brickwork. The gable of block D is also more animated now with the introduction of more openings, and the protruding red box.
- We accept that the detail design of the façade will be crucial and at that stage, to spend time investigating the right quality of materials to use. Our intention is to choose a multi brick that will pick up on the wide variety of colours of brick in the immediate surroundings.
- The intention of the North amenity space was to create a different kind of atmosphere to the main collegiate plaza. We wanted a more intimate area for study and reflection. However, we accept the GLA's concerns that this space, being so cut off from the rest of the deck would become underused. We have therefore altered the layout of the deck level apartments at Block D, to allow a more open approach to this areas, without it being totally visually linked to the main plaza (Fig 5.8.4).

We feel the input from the GLA has helped us to refine the last details of the design.

In the following pages, we'll show how the long consultation process with Camden and the GLA, have helped us to bring the design together in to a cohesive composition.

5.0 Design Development

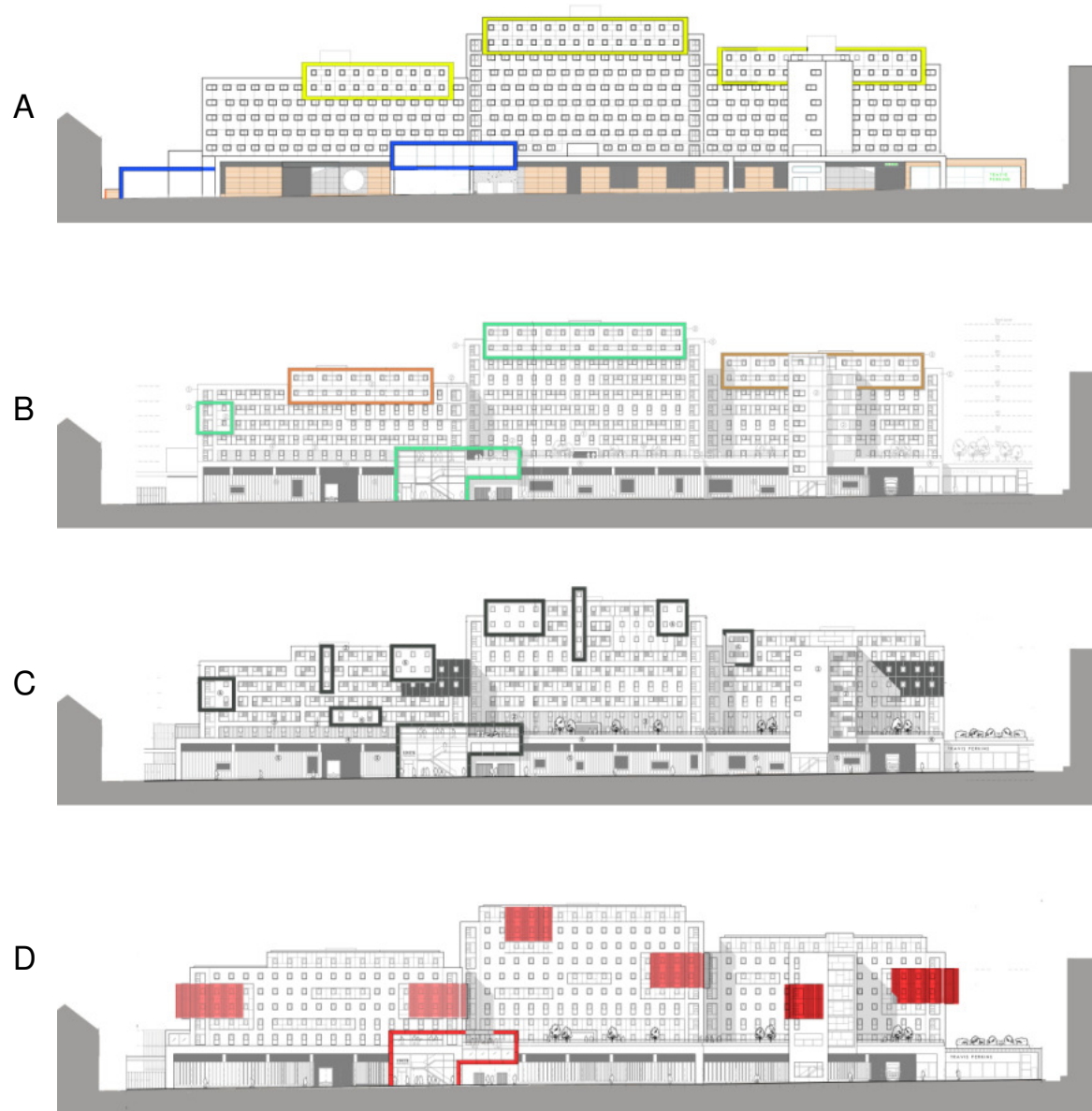


Fig - 5.9.1 - Elevation Design Development

5.9 - Summary of the Design Process

There follows a brief summary of the process that we went through to arrive at the final design.

22nd September 2010

First discussion with the Design Officer.
The new concept and overall massing was generally considered to be acceptable.

20th October 2010 (A)

- Second discussion with the Design Officer.
Further design development was asked for in the elevational design and some general avenues of exploration were discussed.

15th December 2010 (B)

- Third discussion with the Design Officer.
Treatment of ground level boundary was generally accepted.
Elevation design principle was accepted but required some further development.
Current form and mass of the building was accepted.

4th February 2011 (C)

- Fourth discussion with the Design Officer.
Generally the elevations were accepted subject to some further work on the materials and localised expression of certain elements.

21st February 2011

- Fifth discussion with the Design Officer.
Elevation details were discussed such as accentuating the slots in the brick, and extending out the red boxes.

8th March 2011

- Discussion with Camden and GLA Design Officers.
Discussion of the overall height and mass that was accepted subject to further improvements to the elevation design.

Submitted Design (D)

- Final alterations and refinements were made to arrive at the design submitted for approval.