

# Design.

*Process of analysing character and context of the site.*

*Mill Lane is an important artery running east - west and linking West Hampstead with Kilburn and Cricklewood. It has variety in a number of aspects .*

*i) Physical: it has a sequence of changes of direction and also changes of level, which produces a constantly varying process of vistas and views.*

*ii) Topographical: there is a constant change of level, almost none of the lane is level and it changes up and down, generally increasing in gradient downwards towards the west.*

*iii) Architectural: There is no dominant architecture or theme. The entire lane is characterised by great varieties of scale, material, period style and massing. There is a notable break in continuity at two points; the railway bridges west of Westbere Road, and the back of gardens to Hillfield Road, within which this site occurs. There is brick, stone detailing, slate and render amongst the building stock.*

*iv) Landscape: There is also a strong contrast in natural landscaping, from major significant grouping of trees to complete lack of vegetation. Generally there are trees in view aligning the length of the lane, however.*

*v) Condition: the bulk of the buildings dates from early 20<sup>th</sup> century to the 1980's. The standard of maintenance varies from good to poor. The rear of Hillfield Road is characterised by varying amounts of dereliction to fencing and garages.*

*Vi) Function: the eastern and western ends of Mill lane are almost exclusively residential, three to four storey terraced housing and four to five storey flats. The central section is commercial, retail, and leisure, with small businesses, shops, cafes, restaurants and pubs.*

*The rear of Hillfield Road comprises the backs of gardens with some garages, creating a noticeable gap in the continuity of the urban fabric.*

*Mill Lane is a significant traffic link which is also served by a number of bus routes. There are major public transport facilities in West End Lane and Cricklewood.*

# Use

*The application covers part of the area to the rear of Hillfield Road which contains a mixture of back gardens and garages towards the Mill Lane frontage. The character of this frontage is one of small scale and significant garden landscaping, all in a mostly dilapidated state.*

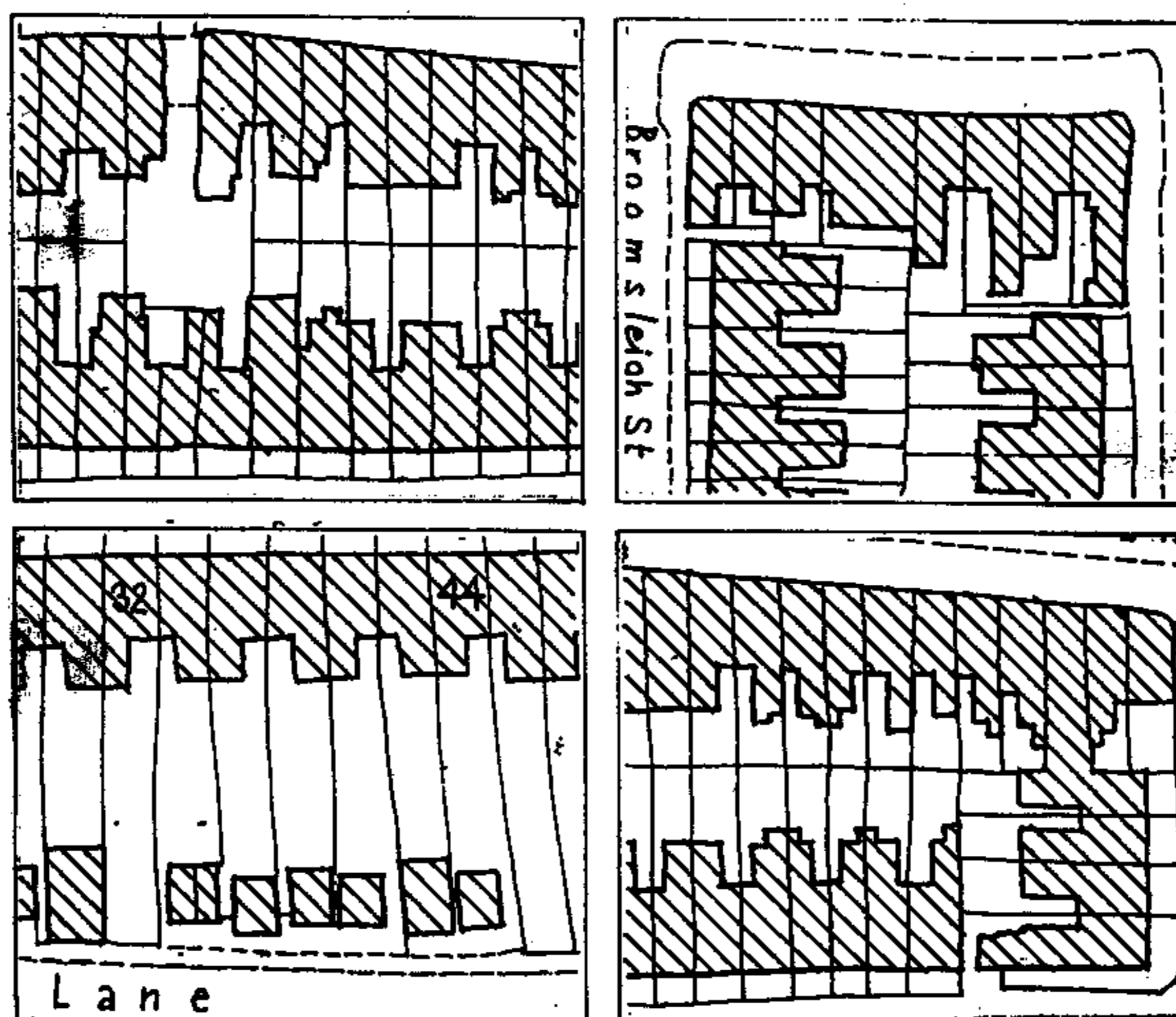


*View from Broomfield Street looking north towards the site.*



*The re-cycling bins outside nos. 18-20 Hillfield Road.*

The gardens to the rear of Hillfield Road are very large. A look at adjoining streets show them to be about twice the size of the average for the area. Many of these gardens have a garage accessed from Mill Lane. The applicants collectively seek to look at the potential to take advantage of this depth to develop small dwellings and also to rebuild some of the garages. The car parking within the existing garages would need to be replaced within the site.



The residential use of four dwellings would be non-contentious, naturally adding to the housing stock of the neighbourhood, and would be within reasonable density standards. It would be possible to provide this housing without affecting privacy or creating problems of overlooking.

The new houses would be accessed from Mill Lane and would create a new vitality to the immediate street scene.

In terms of land use policies the application area is categorised as a previously developed Brownfield site. It is therefore possible to create much-needed additional family housing within an accessible location. These are no constraints of conservation or special character and the development proposals do not affect the siting of any listed or sensitive building.

Government policies seeks to provides additional housing within existing urban locations, especially on previously developed locations. The site falls strongly within this criterion, and is, moreover, particularly well served by public transport.

We would refer the development to fulfilling the conditions of national, regional and local planning guidance (PPS1, PPG3, PPG13, the Spacial Development Strategy of the London Plan, and the Council's UDP policies EN1, 13, 14, 16, 23, and RE2).

# **Amount**

*The application is for four small dwellings and two garages within the site six existing garages.*

## **DENSITY**

*The approach to considering the size of the development was influenced by a study of existing and proposed densities, and the proposed development is within the Council guidance. The accompanying plan extracts show comparable densities of developments in nearby streets and show that the proposed development continues the dominant grain of the area.*

## **FOOTPRINT**

*The existing footprint is 200 sq m which represent 15.2% of the site area. This application represents 22.8% of site area. This therefore represents a increase of 7.6% of built area within the site. The accompanying plans show this graphically.*

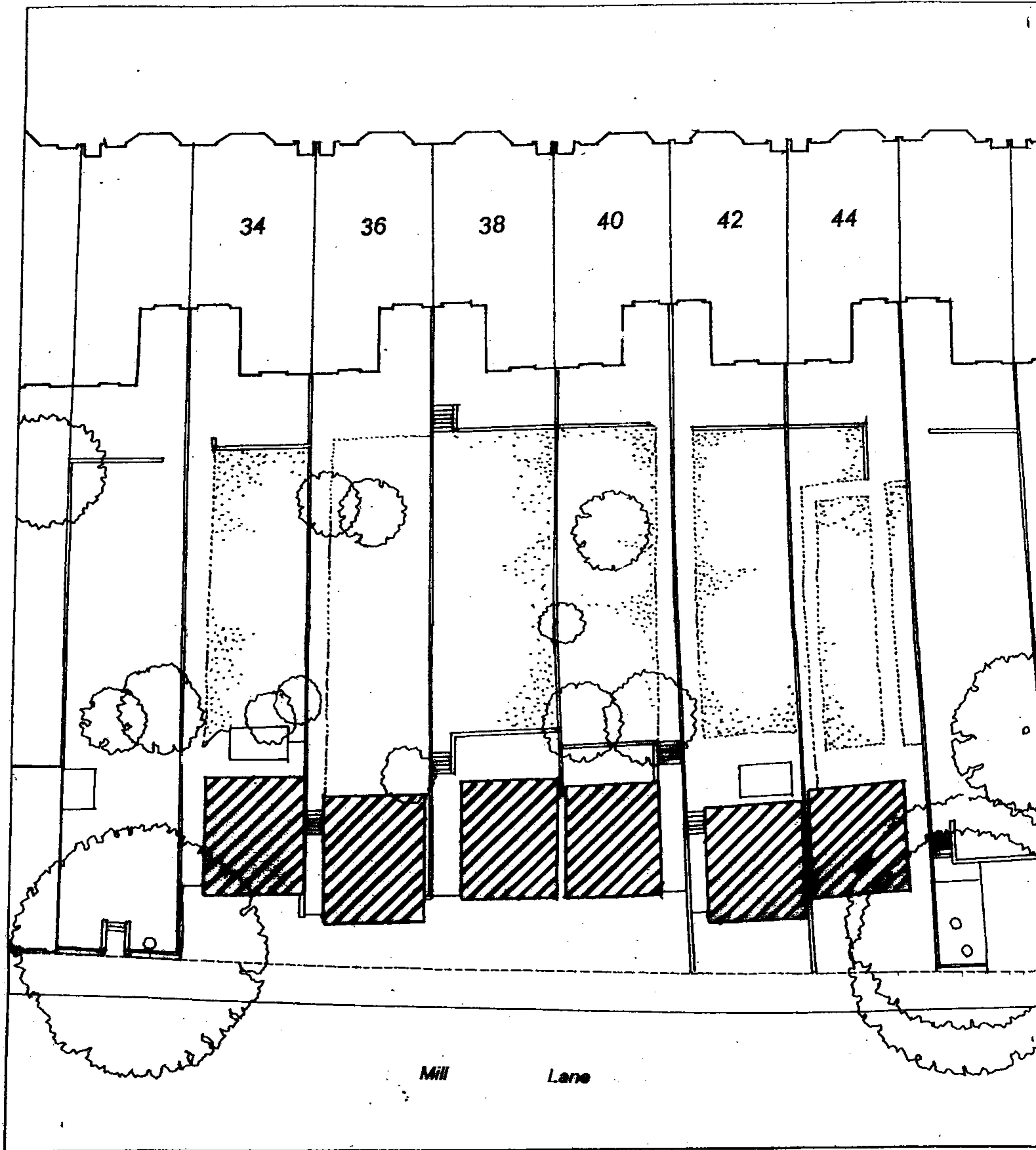
## **DESIGN**

*The increase in area and volume of the development, compared to the existing has received great consideration. The residential units are set back from the building line of the existing garages and are also set significantly into the ground. This is an important aspect of the overall design intent which seeks to control the massing and impact to a scale broadly comparable to the existing situation.*

## **SITE LINES AND OVERLOOKING**

*The accompanying sections show existing and proposed situations. It can be seen that the Hillfield Road gardens slope down towards Mill Lane by an average of about 2 metres. This allows the massing impact of the new dwellings to be reduce when viewed from the rear of Hillfield Road, and in conjunction with screen planting and (possibly) green roofs, the visual impact and potential overlooking have therefore been considered and controlled to a very high degree.*

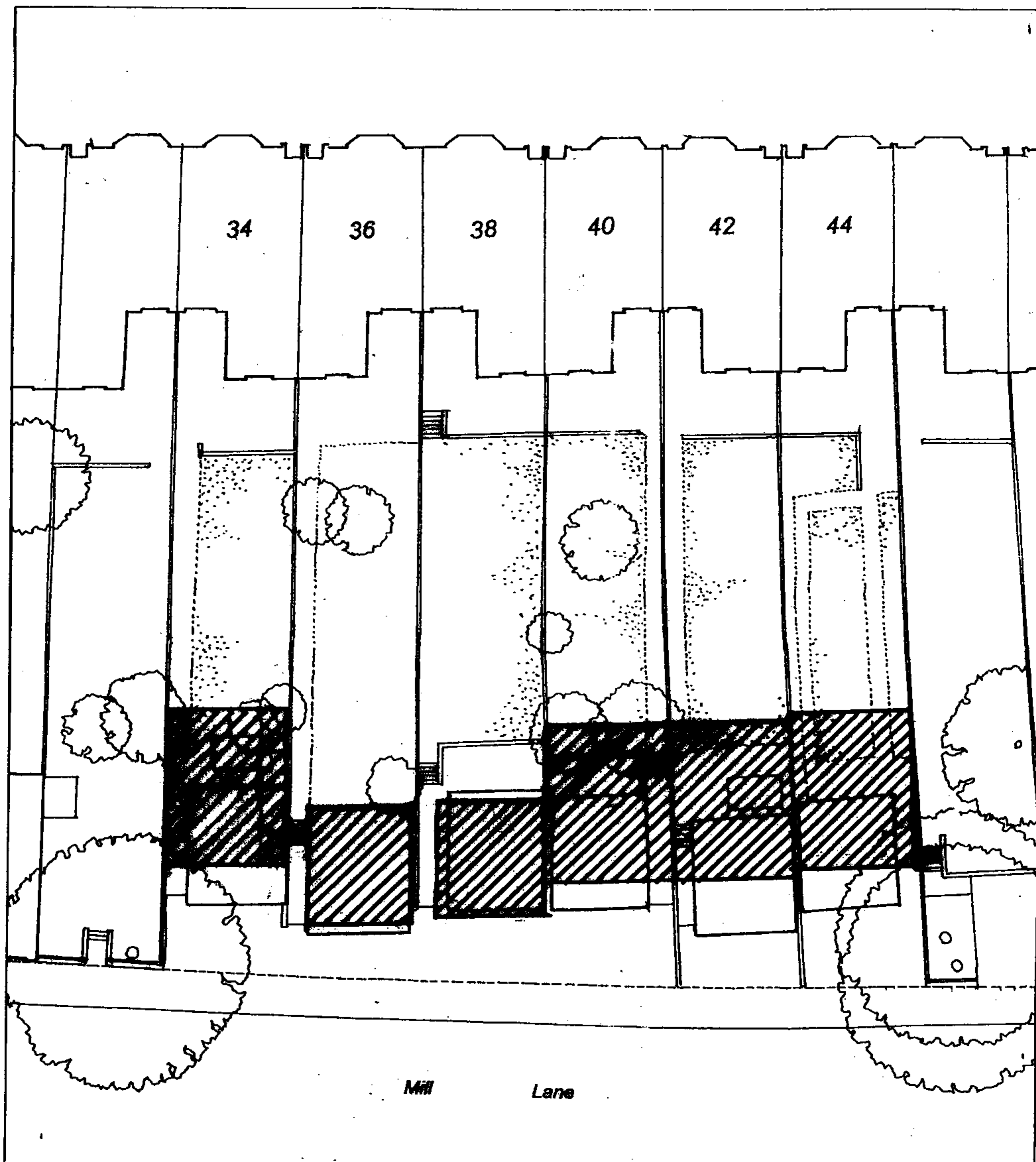
*The overall effect of the new development within the general street frontage has been carefully designed to minimize its impact and visual change. We are confident that the amount of development is consistent with the scale and character of the existing context.*



*proportion of built to unbuilt space  
existing*

*total built area existing 193.5sqm = 16.7%*

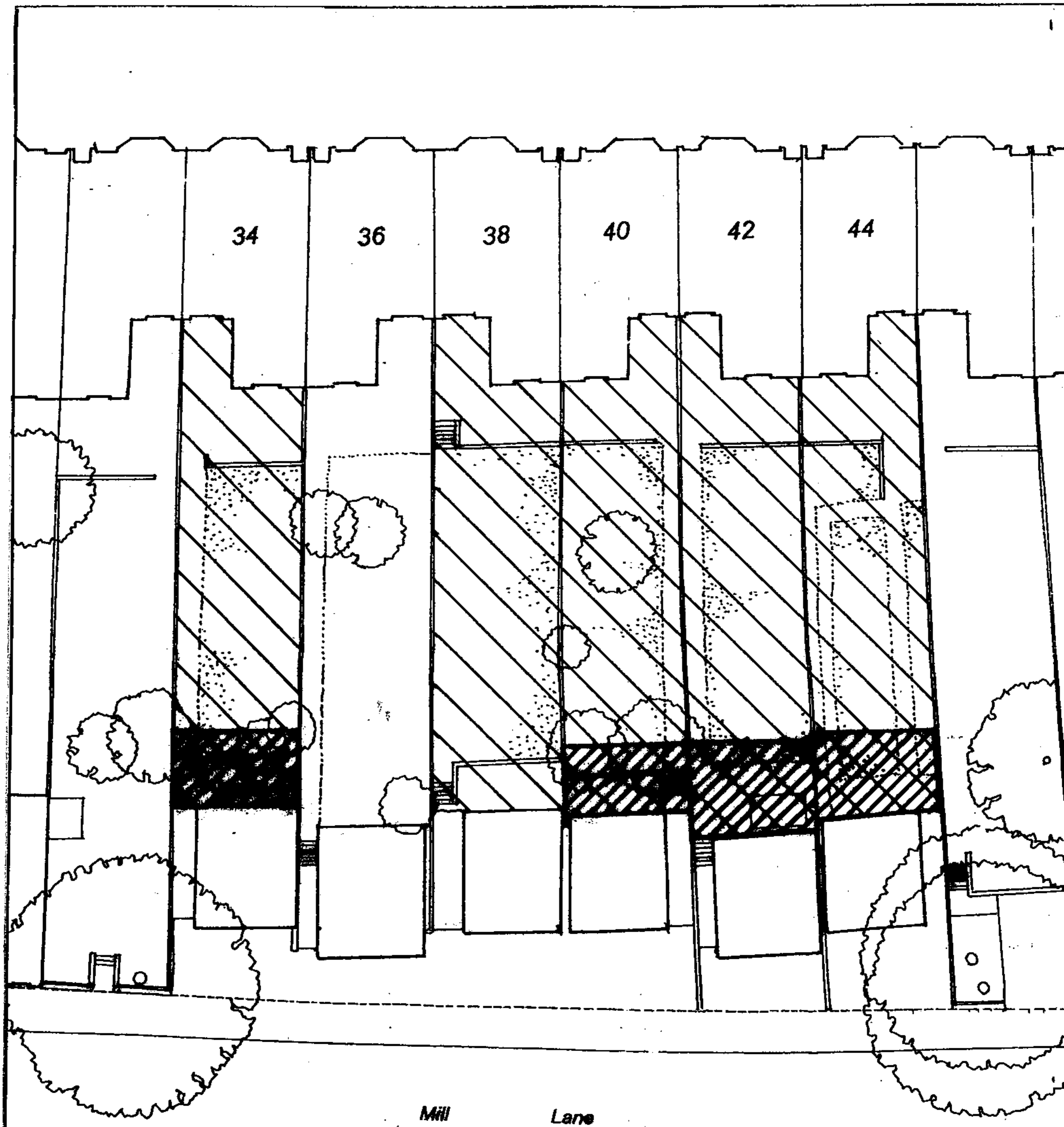
*total site area 1160.5sqm*



*proportion of built to unbuilt space  
proposed*

*total built area proposed 285.5sqm = 24.5%*

*total site area 1160.5sqm*



new built area  $\pm 13.9\%$  of existing area



total rear garden space 772.5 sqm

loss of rear garden area



existing

proposed

# OPEN SPACE COMPARISON

# Layout

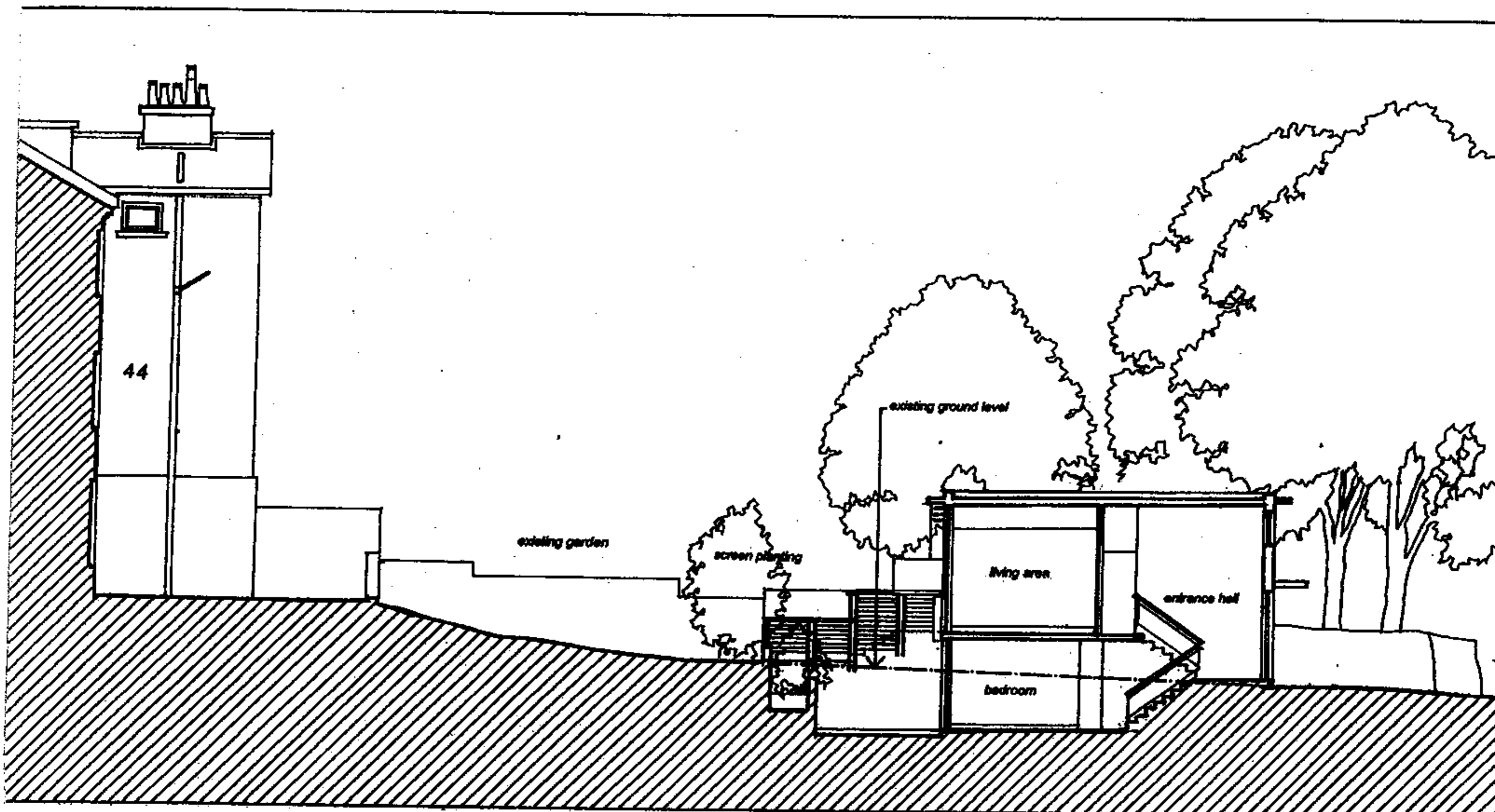
*The site consists of six adjoining gardens. As a consequence, the basis of the design layout is individual development within each of the six gardens rather than a cohesive, or monolithic organisation. The intention is, therefore, to maintain the existing street grain and scale.*

*The brief has been for four two-storey houses and two replacement garages within the six plots. As a result there is an inherent randomness within the layout, which helps break down the overall massing.*

*In terms of access and townscape the proposed development relates essentially towards Mill Lane.*

*The two garages replace existing structures and lie largely within the existing footprint. Within the footprint of the other garages, there will be a level hard standing continuing directly from the back of pavement and accessed by existing crossovers. This forms the parking facility for the houses in Hillfield Road. The new dwellings are located directly beyond these. As a result they are set back about seven metres from the kerb. Thus, an area of high quality hard landscaping replaces the existing dilapidation and will significantly improve the appearance and amenity of this section of Mill Lane, and provide a safe entrance environment to the general frontage. The setting back of the housing creates. In conjunction with the garages, an inherently varying building line which, importantly, reflects the character of the adjoining frontages.*

*The layout of the residential units is very specific to the site and it's constraints.*



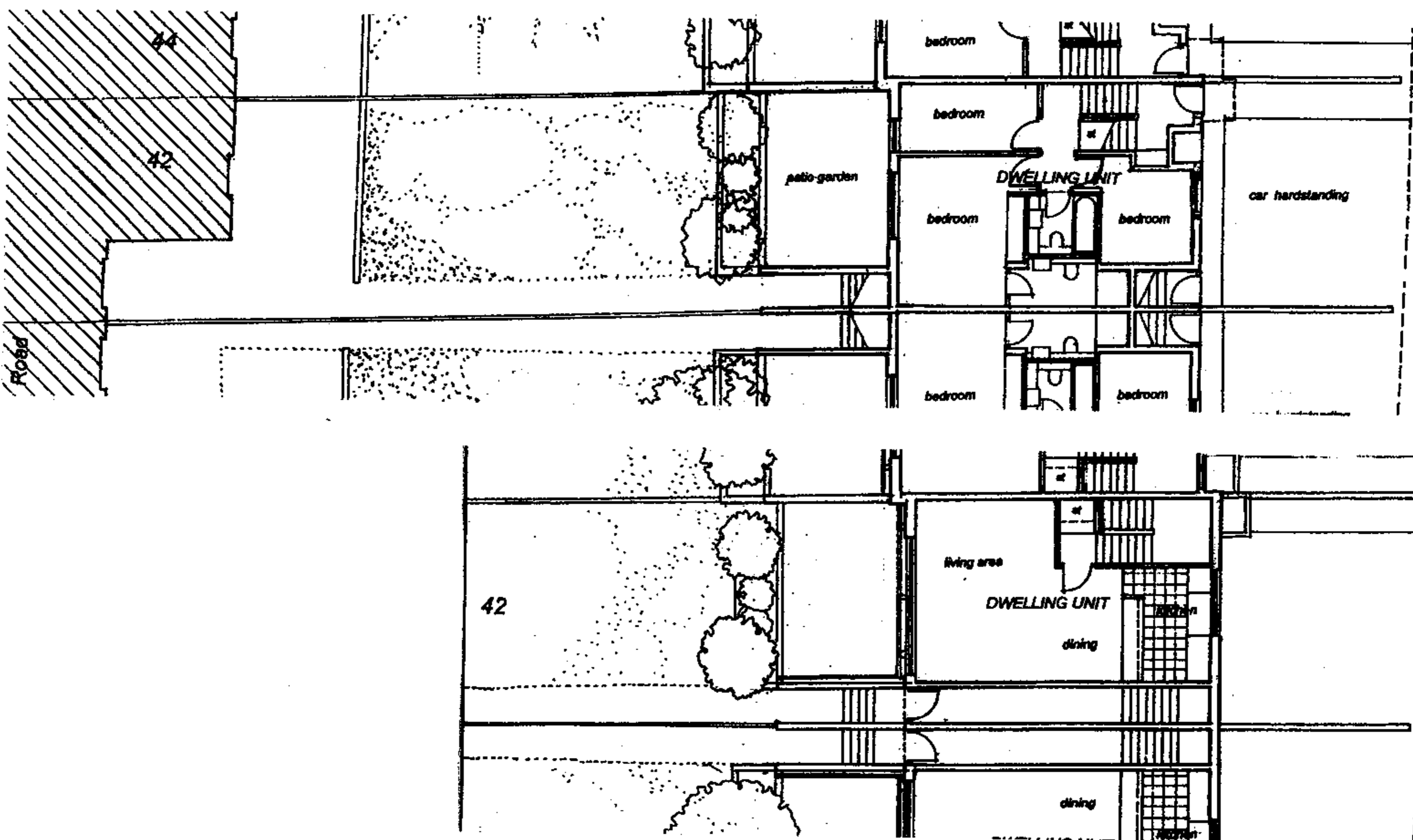
Following an early decision to try and limit the height and scale of the new units, the houses will be set about 1.2 metres into the ground. An inherent consequence of this is to limit the amount of natural light to the lower level of the two-storey plan. The decision was therefore made to place the bedrooms at the lower level, allowing the main living areas to be placed at the upper level where optimum natural lighting, views and aspect could be enjoyed. An almost directly southern orientation provides excellent daylight and sunlight into the major living spaces. It is also possible to create good views south to Mill Lane, and north to the small patio garden and new landscaping.

This arrangement allows the dwellings to engage with their context in a much stronger way.

A further important aspect of the layout is that the car parking provided to the front of the residential units is for the replacement of existing garage accommodation. This provision exists as facility for the houses in Hillfield Road. It is the intention of this application to have a car-capping agreement applying to the new residences, which will be the subject of a Section 106 agreement.

As a result of this a passageway has been provided down the side of each unit to allow Hillfield Road residents to have continued access through to Mill Lane. This will allow direct access to the parking facility, and pedestrian access through to Mill Lane and West Hampstead, as exists today.

The layout and character of the development is, therefore, strongly defined to an unusual degree by its context.



# Scale

*Appropriate scale has consistently been a strong determinant of this design.*

*Whereas the general building massing along the north and south sides of Mill Lane is three to five storeys, and sometimes higher, the allegiance of the development site, can be argued in terms of scale and massing, to be with the general pattern and scale of the grouping of existing large garages within which the development site occurs.*

*There are two main aspects to the consideration of scale to this design.*

## *1) Height and Massing*

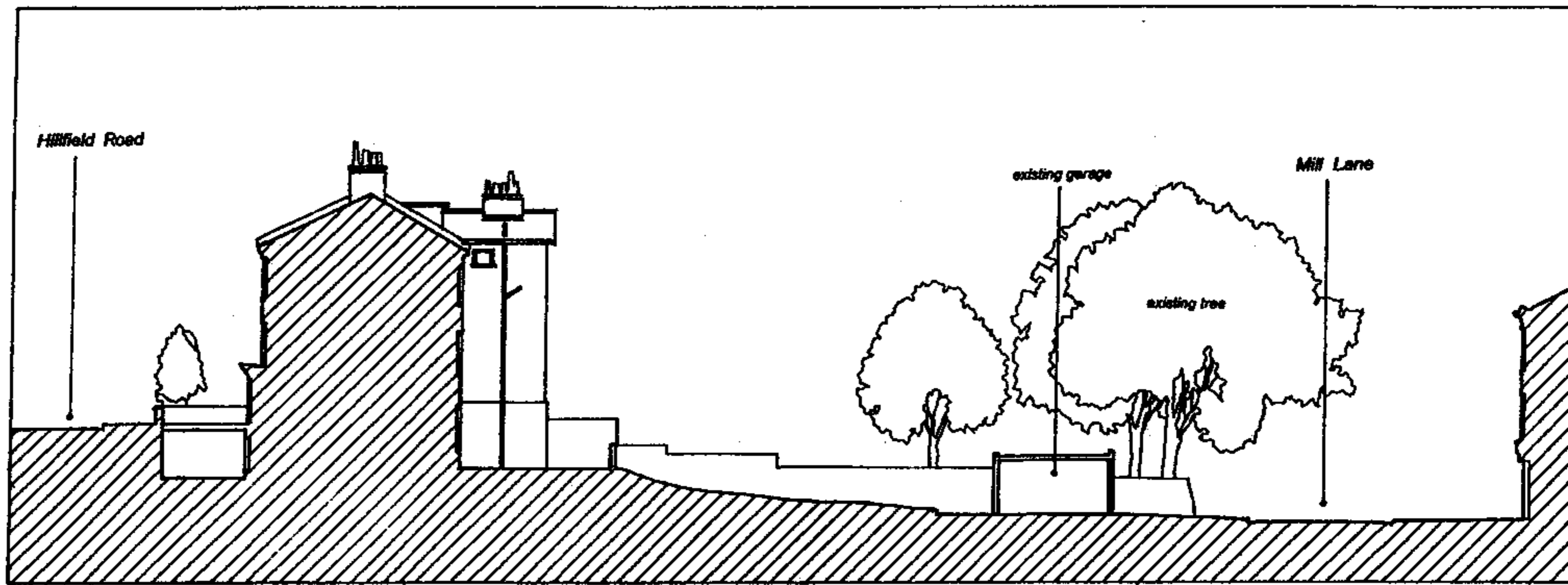
*As explained in the previous section the residential units are organised to be set into the ground in order to limit overall height. The height limit was chosen to be comparable with the studio building at no 30 Hillfield Road. The choice of flat roofs also limit's the scale. The new garages have a scale appropriate to their function and are largely similar to existing garages.*

## *2) Footprint*

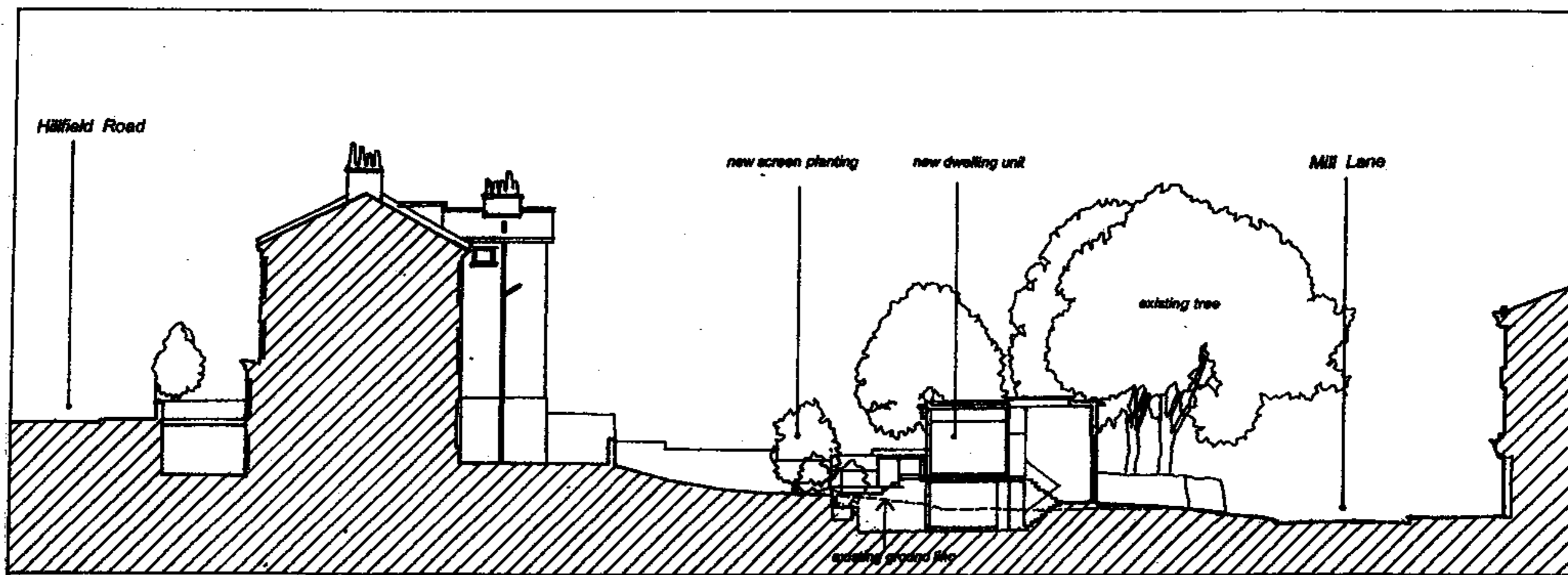
*Although the dwellings are designed as family accommodation on two levels, and having three bedrooms, the general planning and layout seeks to control the overall size and bulk. The lower level of accommodation provides for one double and two single bedrooms, and these are all slightly above the minimum area defined in the Council's Residential Development Standards. Similarly, the overall floor area is around eight per cent above the minimum also defined in those Standards.*

*The concern to control scale also controls the depth of the units, and thus we are seeking to minimise the impact upon the existing gardens and maintain the maximum distance to the rear of the houses in Hillfield Road.*

*The accompanying sections show the existing and proposed situations for comparison.*



SECTION E-E through 44 Hillfield Road showing existing situation



SECTION H-H through 44 Hillfield Road showing proposed situation

# **Landscaping**

**Currently, the central sector of Mill Lane is characterised by contrast.**

**A broken frontage of three to four storey late Victorian and early 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial and residential building exists along the southern frontage. There is no significant landscaping apart from a few young trees within the wider sections of pavement.**

**Along the northern edge there is a continuous frontage of garages and garden fences interspersed with an irregular trees and greenery ranging from large bushes to major mature trees. While this northern aspect is further characterised by a general dereliction and lack of maintenance, it does have a landscape character which is of local townscape value, and which would benefit from the introduction of a sympathetic urban and landscape fabric.**

**We will look at the development proposals in the light of hard and soft landscaping.**

## **Hard Landscaping**

**The current frontage of the development site consists of a random arrangement of concrete hardstandings, most of which are cracked and badly maintained. These are interspersed with dwarf brick dividing walls, defining ownerships. These areas of hardstanding form the entrance area to the existing garages, and are currently often used for car parking. As a result, the visual amenity and pedestrian environment is poor.**

**The development seeks to replace this hard landscaping in its entirety, and provide new high quality paving selected from materials to be agreed. The separating brick walls will be replaced. As these naturally help both to determine the ownerships and define the changes of level occurring as the site falls gradually towards the east.**

**The new entrance zones will have no major changes of level, however, and will be compatible with disabled needs. Changes of material will define the pedestrian and parking zones within the forecourts .**

**The intention is that the entrance zone, which is a semi-private buffer, will enhance the area without creating a major change of character. Supplementary lighting will be provided to aid night time visibility and security.**

## **Soft Landscaping**

**There are two areas of consideration relevant to the development site.**

### **1) mature trees**

**There are three mature trees adjoining the site which are recorded on the relevant plans; a London plane within the garden of no 32, and two horse chestnut trees within the garden of no 46. These were surveyed by Harraway Tree Services in 2000, and a copy of this is attached. Since that date, one of the horse chestnuts is thought to be dying.**

**However, the intention is to comply with BS 5837, and make adequate provision To retain and protect the trees during construction. A meeting was held on site some while ago with one of the Council's tree officers to discuss the principles of this.**

**The retention of these trees is important because they are very dominant within the context of the site, and provide tangential screening as the site is viewed obliquely from eastern and western approaches.**

### **2)secondary trees and existing gardens**

**All the gardens of 34 – 44 Hillfield Road adjoining the development site have small trees and clumps of bushes. These are shown on the site plan accompanying the application. Some of these will be removed by the development, and these are noted on the drawing, but the intention is that the character, privacy and screening within the gardens will be maintained and increased by significant extra screen planting along the northern edge of the patio gardens of the new dwellings. There will be an overall increase of planting within the gardens.**

**In addition, green roofs are being considered for the residential units, which will greatly enhance the landscape character when viewed from the upper levels of adjoining properties.**