



**13 Britannia Street & 146-146A Wicklow Street, WC1X 9LF**  
Development of 23 new build residential units

For



in association with Durkan Limited

**DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT for Full Planning Application**





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## INTRODUCTION

This Design Statement outlines the proposed redevelopment of **13 Britannia Street & 146-146A Wicklow Street, WC1X 9LF** by first analysing the site and the urban context, describing how the scheme has evolved and the planning history, and finally highlighting the design considerations and qualities of the scheme which forms the full planning application.

### Planning Policy

For detailed information regarding the planning policy and planning history refer to the [Planning Statement](#) prepared by [Kings Sturge](#) which forms part of the application.

### Pre-application planning advice meeting

A pre-application advice meeting was held at L.B. Camden offices on 16th March 2006 to discuss the scheme proposals and this application represents the design response to many of the issues raised. The meeting was attended by Origin Group and David Wood Architects and advice was received from the following parties:

- Stuart Minty (Development Control – South Area Team)
- Leo Hammond (Conservation and Urban Design)
- Celeste Giusti (Planning Policy and Information)
- Matthew Prince (Transport Policy)
- Louis Gavriel (Housing and Adult Social Care)

### Consultation

In addition the following parties were consulted prior to the application being submitted:

- L.B. Camden Housing Department
- L.B. Camden Crime Prevention Design Advisor
- Kings Cross Conservation Area Advisory Committee (KCCAAC)
- L.B. Camden refuse department

For more detailed information refer to the [Planning Statement](#) and the relevant sections below.

### Schedule of Accommodation

The proposed scheme is a 100% affordable housing scheme for Origin Group, a Registered Social Landlord, comprising:

- 6 No. 1 bed (2 person) flats
  - 13 No. 2 bed (3 person) flats
  - 4 No. 3 bed (6 person) flats
- TOTAL = 23No. units (67 habitable rooms / 75 bedspaces)

The gross site area is approximately 0.127 hectares and the proposed scheme will achieve a residential density of 181 dwellings per hectare and 528 habitable rooms per hectare. The gross floor area is approximately 1955m<sup>2</sup>.

The building is part four storey, at the Wicklow Street end of the site, part five storey at the Britannia Street end and is of traditional masonry construction. The scheme also includes 455m<sup>2</sup> amenity space (including a secure children's play area), covered cycle parking for 30No. cycles, lockable external storage, an external refuse store, entrance walkway, plant room facilities and 2No. new disable parking spaces on Britannia Street.



## SITE APPRAISAL, CONTEXT & DESIGN

### Site Location & Current Use

The site is situated between Britannia Street and Wicklow Street, approximately 300 metres east, and 100 metres south, of Kings Cross Station and is within Kings Cross Conservation Area. The site is immediately adjacent to a London Underground railway cutting through which Metropolitan, Hammersmith & City and Circle lines trains operate and partially over a Network Rail tunnel through which Thameslink trains operate. The current use is a private car park on a formerly vacant plot of land.

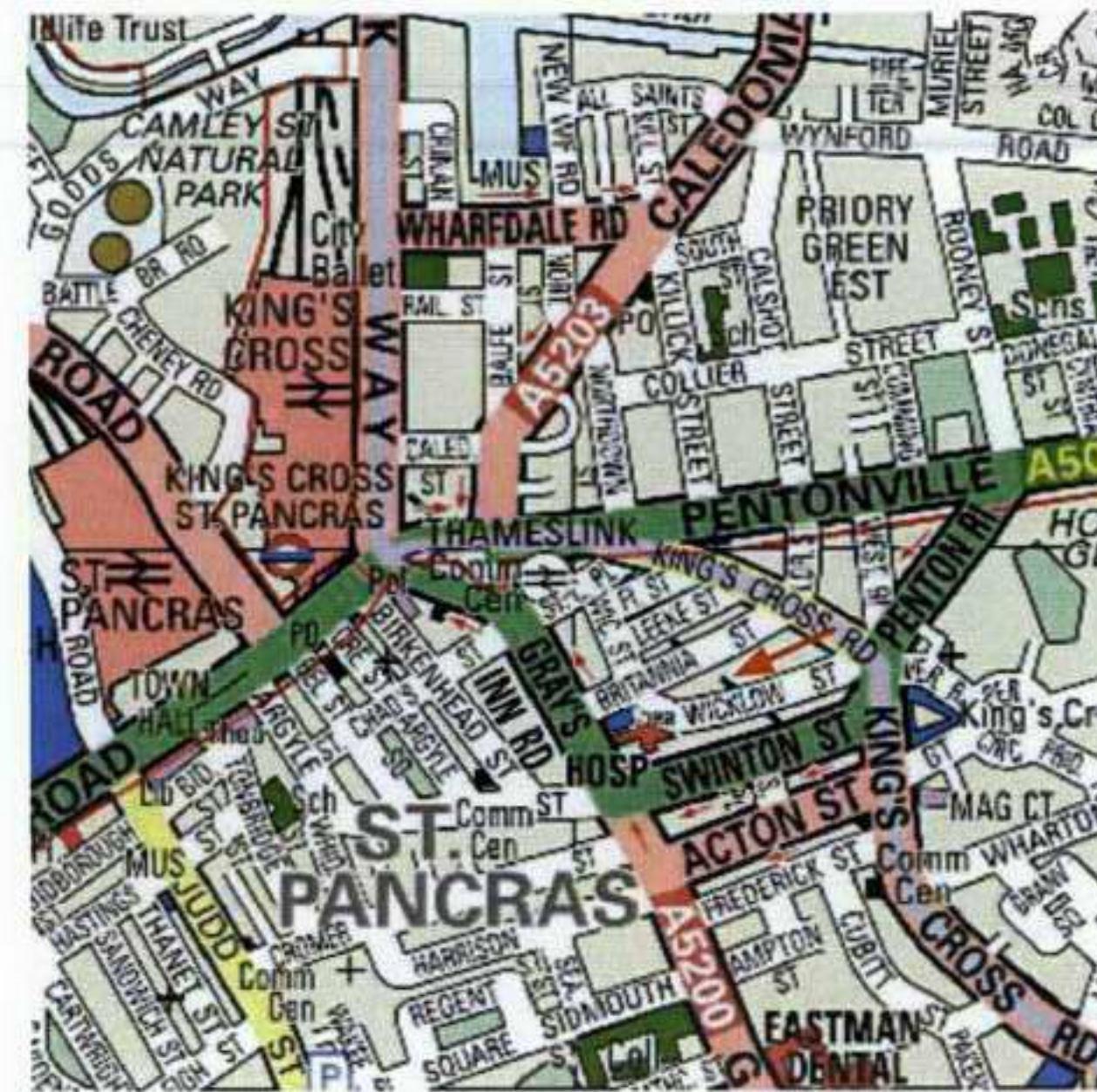
### Conservation Area

The site is located within Kings Cross Conservation Area and a separate application for Conservation Area Consent is submitted in parallel to this application.

L.B. Camden Conservation Area Statement 22 identifies that the immediate context of the site makes a positive contribution to the area and is generally considered 'industrial' in character and appearance. Derby Lodge lies to the east of the site and is a Grade II listed building and therefore any proposals must have due regard for its setting and architectural integrity.

The area between the King's Cross Road and Gray's Inn Road includes narrow streets paved with granite setts principally lined with later 19th Century buildings and several vacant sites currently used for car parking. The buildings front directly onto the back of pavement and therefore create a strong sense of enclosure.

The area is divided by the Metropolitan and Thameslink railway cutting, which is flanked to the east and west by narrow corridors of vacant land.



The formerly vacant site is currently as a private car park with the entrance off Britannia Street on the North side. The enclosing walls and fences are poorly maintained at the junction with the Western boundary overlooking a railway cutting below ground.



Existing brick wall over railway cutting adjacent to site



The North side has a corrugated metal fence along the boundary. There is also a temporary structure acting as the car park attendant's booth on the site.



On the Eastern side is the 3 storey boundary wall to 7-11 Britannia St.



The boundary wall continues at approximately 2 storeys and becomes the boundary to the Derby Lodge site.



The South boundary is defined by a corrugated metal fence



2 storey brick vent for the underground train tunnel on site



Railway cutting with low boundary wall and metal railings forms western boundary of site



### Surrounding Buildings

The surrounding buildings vary in height from 3 to 6 storeys and are generally former light-industrial, commercial and residential uses. The principal material is facing brickwork and there is a mixture of yellow London stock brick, often greyed by pollution, and red brick in the area. More modern materials such as timber boarding and render are used sparingly on recently refurbished buildings and the overall character remains industrial.

The adjacent site at 7-11 Britannia St contains a 3 storey light-industrial building in red brick with horizontal metal framed windows. Planning consent for a 6 storey scheme was recently granted on appeal (Planning Ref. 2005/3801/P & APP/X5210/A/05/1197447). The Appeal Inspector observed that the flank walls adjoining the car park site make very little contribution to the character of the Conservation Area.

The railway cutting on the western boundary is located beyond a  $1\frac{1}{2}$  storey wall between the car-park site and 15 Britannia St. 15 Britannia St. is a narrow 3 storey building constructed of stock brick with red brick detailing, dating to c.1875. Directly opposite the site on Britannia St. is a single storey garage, constructed from red brick with a grey brick plinth at ground level, connected to the Gagosian Gallery which is a 4 storey yellow stock brick building with a grey brick plinth at ground matching the garage and rendered corncicing between the ground and first floor. The former light-industrial gallery has painted horizontal metal windows. The building to the West fronting onto Wicklow St. is a single storey rear elevation to no. 15 Britannia St. and dates to c.1875. The facade of the building includes panels of sand coloured render below the line of the windows on the ground floor.

The Grade II listed Derby Lodge is a series of residential blocks adjacent to the site. The Southern block is located to the East of the site and is almost identical in form to the Northern block on Britannia St. The proposed building's relationship with Derby Lodge is discussed in more detail in the architectural design & strategy section of this statement.



7-11 Britannia St. Early-mid 20th Century, 3 storey light-industrial building in red brick with horizontal metal framed windows painted red.



Extant consented application for 7-11 Britannia St. is a 6 storey mixed use development with residential units above a ground floor restaurant.



The railway cutting is beneath the  $1\frac{1}{2}$  storey wall between the car-park site and 15 Britannia St.



15 Britannia St. is a narrow 3 storey building constructed of stock brick with red brick detailing, dating to c.1875.



Southern block of Derby Lodge is located to the East of the car-park site and is also grade II listed and identical in form to the Northern block on Britannia St.



South boundary fence as seen from Wicklow St. and the flank wall to the Grade II listed Derby Lodge



Single storey rear elevation to no. 15 Britannia St. dates to c.1875



The Gagosian Gallery sits opposite, a 4 story former industrial building with a grey brick plinth at ground level and render between ground and 1<sup>st</sup> floors.



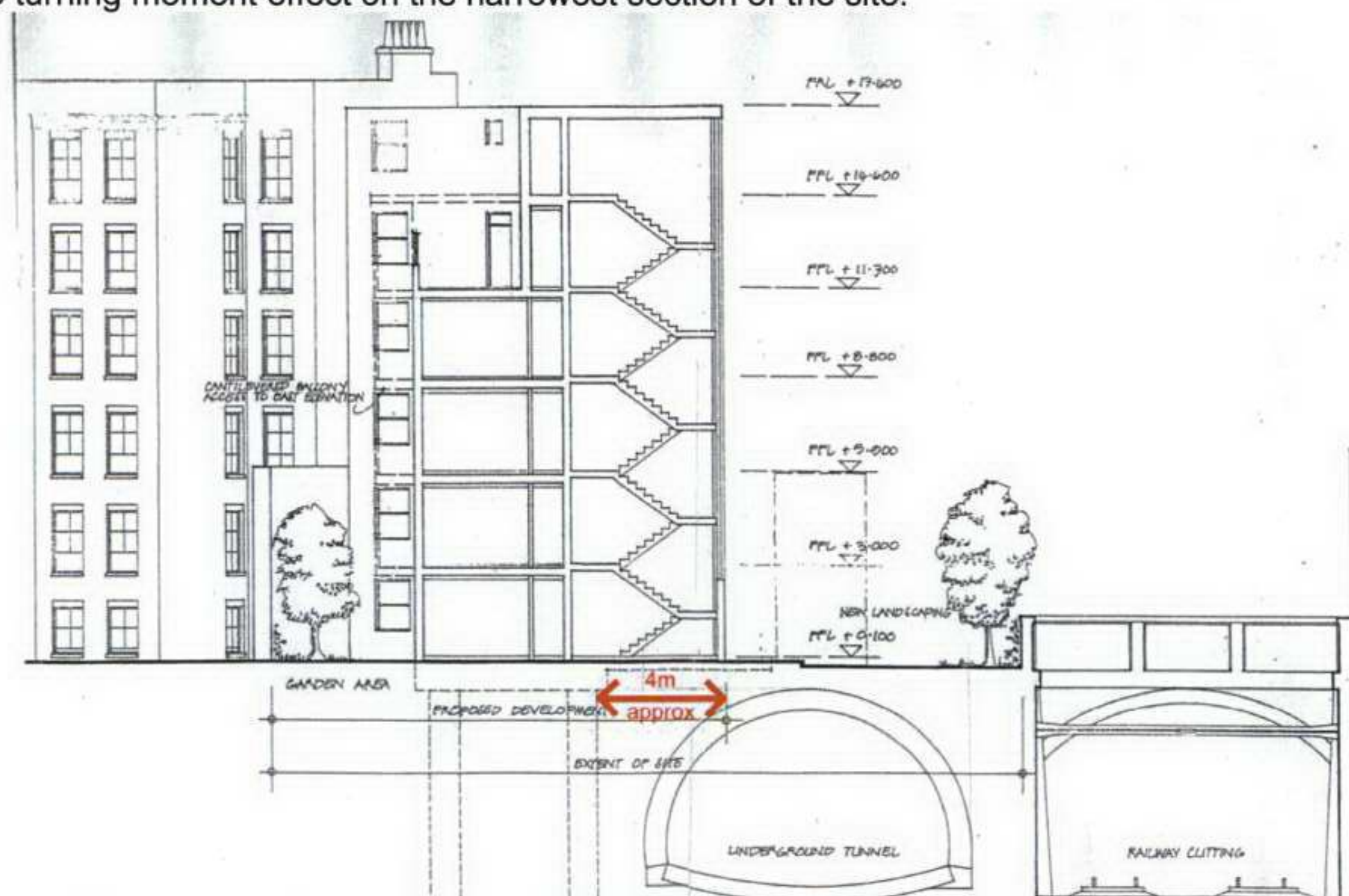
### Brief design history

Planning permission for a part four storey part five storey 26No. unit residential development (comprising 5No. 1 bed, 13No. 2 bed, 5No. 3 bed and 3No. 4 bed flats) was granted in Autumn 2001. The proposal was also a 100% affordable housing scheme for Origin Group (formerly known as St Pancras & Humanist Housing Association), designed by others. This consent expired in September 2006.

Owing to technical reasons outlined below the proposed building is necessarily smaller in height, mass and area on plan than the previously approved building.

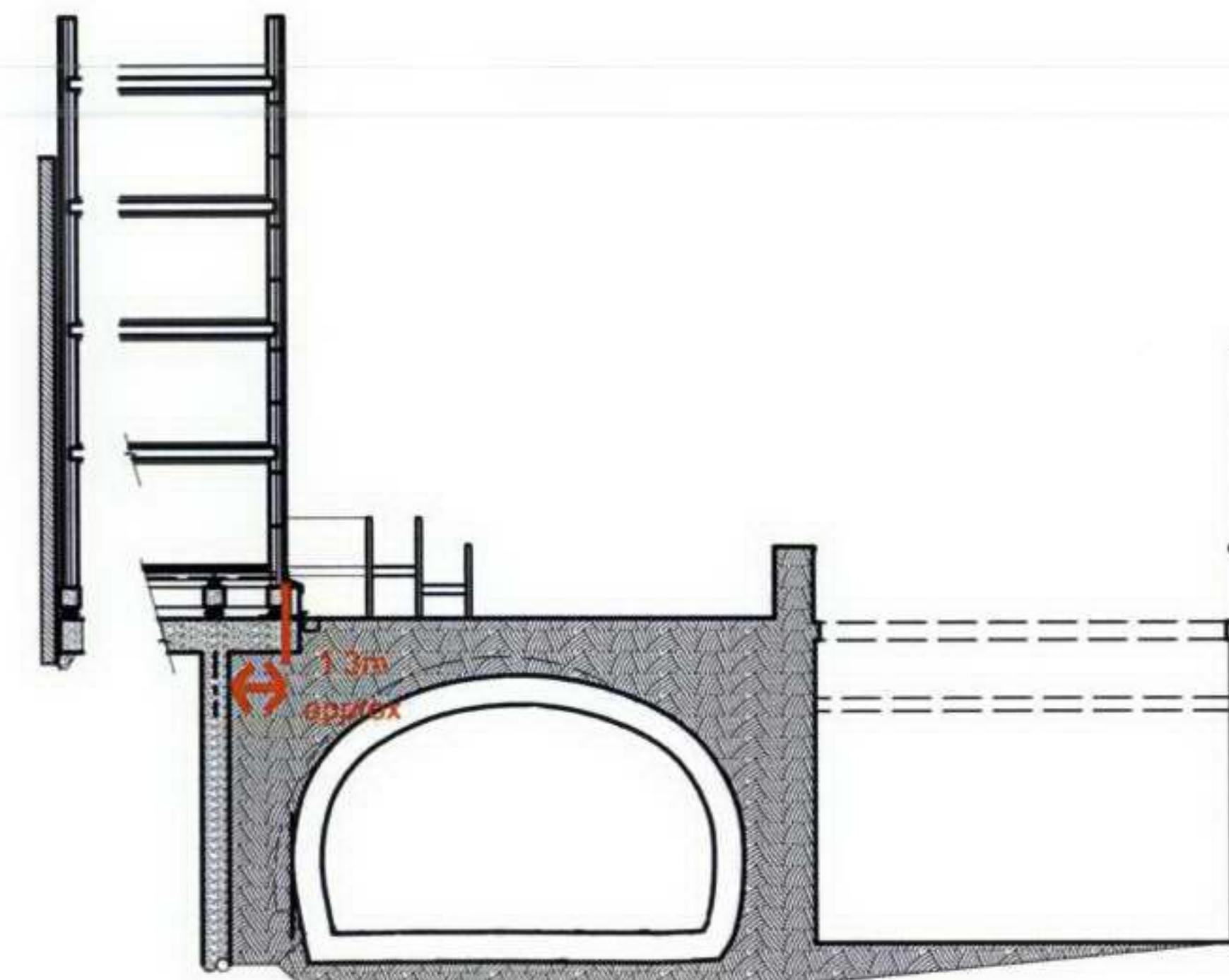
### Technical issues relating to the previous consent

The principal reason why Origin did not build this consented scheme related to the technical constraints of building over and immediately adjacent to the existing tunnel. The extent of the cantilever (piling not permitted within 1 metre of the extent of the tunnel structure meant that the building cantilevered approximately 4 metres from the piled foundation – see extract from previously consented planning drawing [PM1799/SK/15b](#)) required that a lightweight form of construction on a piled raft type concrete foundation would be necessary. Conversely at pre-construction stage a detailed analysis of the effect of noise and vibration from trains running through the tunnel and cutting on the proposed residential accommodation concluded that a traditional masonry structure would be required. The noise and vibration consultant [Noise.co.uk](#) advised that this was primarily due to the degree of risk and complexity of the computer software analysis associated with predicting vibration transmission through a lightweight structure given a paucity of empirical data for the building type and the particular arrangement of railway tunnel and cutting. A more accurate prediction of the effect of vibration from the railway and underground lines would be obtainable for a traditional masonry structure as there are several existing buildings in the area from which noise and vibration survey data could be obtained. The cantilever of the building therefore had to be reduced due to the increased weight of the building and the turning moment effect on the narrowest section of the site.



Extract from previously consented planning drawing [PM1799/SK/15b](#) (by others)

not to scale



Proposed section illustrating reduced cantilever over tunnel

not to scale

### Vertical setting out

In order to isolate the building structure from the vibration from the tunnel the structural engineer and noise consultant determined that two foundation structures separated by high performance vibration pads would be required. Given that the crest of the tunnel is less than 1.5 metres from the existing ground level this has the effect of lifting the building out of the ground. The ground floor level of the proposed building is therefore approximately 1.2 metres above street level where the four storey section of the building occurs at the Britannia St end of the scheme and approximately 1.7 metres (where the lift shaft and pit occurs) above street level where the five storey section occurs at the Wicklow Street end.

In order to minimise the impact of lifting the building out of the ground on the overall height of the building the floor construction and storey heights are set at a reasonable height of 2.775m and an entire storey omitted. The height of the parapet remains broadly the same on Wicklow Street, at approximately 300mm lower than the 17.4 metres of the previously approved scheme and significantly lower on the Britannia Street elevation at 13.5m compared with the previous 14.8m.

The combined effect is that the proposed scheme remains subservient in height to the existing Derby Lodge (Grade II listed building) which is an important feature of the streetscape of Britannia St and Wicklow St.



## Architectural Design & Strategy

### Massing

The massing of the proposed building is largely dictated by the desire for it to remain subservient to the adjacent Derby Lodge buildings. The height of the scheme is therefore restricted to 4 and 5 storeys with the necessary raised ground floor described earlier. Refer to the massing study opposite and the more detailed notes below.

The unusual shape of the site and the oblique angle to the street elevations presented an unusual challenge as three elevations, Britannia Street, Wicklow Street and facing the cutting would all have an impact on the streetscene. The strong linear feature of the railway cutting and tunnel offered an opportunity to tidy up the flank elevations to the adjacent building and to complete the form of the block.

### Relationship of proposed building with Derby Lodge

In L.B. Camden Conservation Area Statement 22, Derby Lodge is described as, "a grade II listed apartment building erected by the Improved Industrial Dwellings Company in 1865. This six-storey building is constructed of grey/buff brick with rusticated stucco at ground floor level. The building's recessed open stairwells and ornate cast iron balconies give the frontage depth and interest, which is enhanced by stucco pediments over the windows and decorative iron ventilation grilles between the windows on each floor"

The listed building is approximately 18.3 metres in height and on the Wicklow Street elevation, where the building is immediately adjacent to the application site, has rusticated stucco at ground floor level and a decorative cornice and render band at the parapet. The effect of these features is to frame the five upper floors which are constructed predominantly in facing brickwork and create two strong horizontal lines grouping the listed buildings when viewed along the street. However the exposure of the flank wall to the building which has little architectural merit, and the presence of the two storey

section of a partially-demolished boundary wall to the application site is highly detrimental to the decorative nature of the front facade and detracts from the character of the listed building.

It is important that the proposed building is subservient in scale to Derby Lodge to avoid diminishing its importance within the local area. There is also an opportunity to upgrade the setting of this building by obscuring the poor flank elevation, which has clearly been exposed by the partial demolition of former buildings on the application site. The rhythm and visual interest created by the pairs of open balconies on Derby Lodge should also be respected by the proposed building.

The height of the proposed building has therefore been kept to around 17m so that a clear step down of more than 1m is visible at parapet level. The existing wall immediately adjacent to Derby Lodge will be demolished to make way for the new flank wall to the proposed building.

### Existing vent to tunnel and site structures

The existing brickwork vent to the tunnel is no longer a functional requirement and an agreement in principle for its demolition was reached with the relevant railway authority as part of the previously approved application proposals. The vent has little merit and its location, has no significant relation to any of the buildings in the conservation area, and would not make any positive contribution to any new building. It is therefore proposed that it will be demolished to make way for the external landscaping proposals which will form a more appropriate relationship with the new building. In addition to the rear of 7-11 Britannia St where existing pier structures create large inappropriate protrusions from the line of existing boundary wall these are to be reduced to allow the construction of the new external wall to the proposed building.



The massing of the building is subservient to the Grade II listed 'Derby Lodge' building – illustration shows finalised scheme



Derby Lodge recessed balconies - view along Wicklow St



Existing brick tunnel vent to be demolished and capped at ground level to create space for landscaped area



Existing piers to boundary wall at rear of 7-11 Britannia St to be partially demolished to suit new building external wall position



Existing partially-demolished wall to former building on application site to be demolished and replaced with new external wall to proposed building



### Materials

As highlighted in the context study above the choice of materials and fenestration must have due regard for the setting and architectural integrity of Derby Lodge.

The existing materials in the area give a strong precedent for a new building however the Council's policy for Conservation Areas is that proposals should seek to preserve and enhance the character of the area. This does not mean that there are prescriptive requirements. In particular it was felt that to attempt to 'exactly match' the materials and features of the existing building would be the wrong approach and lack ambition. In addition, the previously approved scheme for the site had taken a very bold approach with the selection of an entirely modern appearance incorporating large areas of render and concrete panels and this was evidently deemed to also be an acceptable approach.

In response to the above points, facing brickwork was chosen as the main material with feature materials (render and timber boarding) giving a more modern slant on the building style. It was felt that the surrounding area is characterised by industrial-style buildings many of which have been renovated and refurbished in recent years. The sensitive introduction of more modern materials such as glass, timber and coloured render has added to the vibrancy of the neighbourhood and enhanced the appearance of the Conservation Area.

### Fenestration

Given the industrial character of the area it was felt that horizontal style metal windows would be appropriate and that these should be in groups or bays with a repetitive pattern. For technical reasons outlined above, the vertical setting out of the proposed windows and storey heights would not match the existing building. In developing elevational proposals it became evident that this served to reinforce the separate identities of the two buildings.

### Elevational treatment – initial proposals

Initial sketch proposals for the elevational treatment were put forward for discussion at the

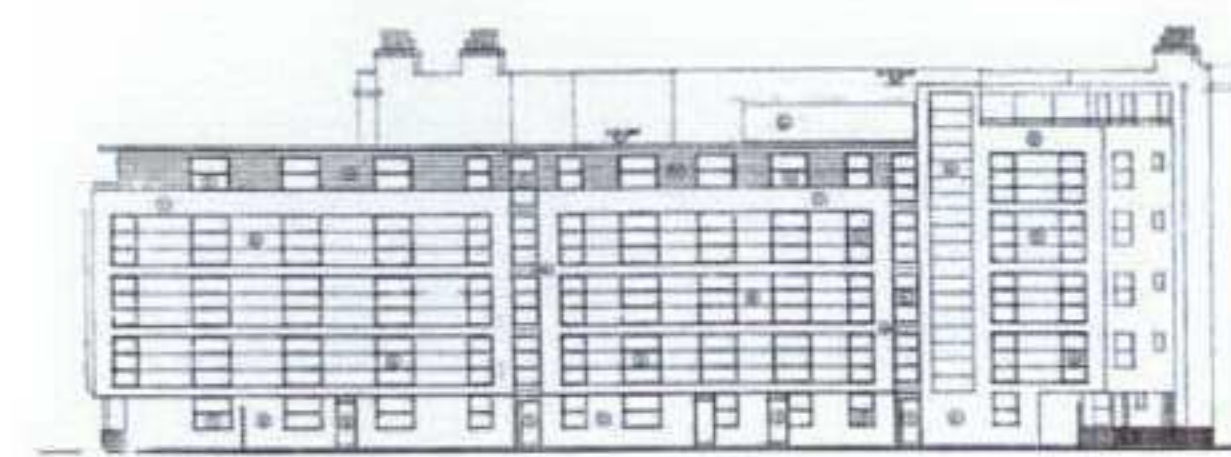
Pre-application advice meeting (see example opposite). The Urban Design Officer comments were as follows:

- projecting and recessive planes on the elevations gives the building visual interest
- good use of contextual materials with an industrial character and appearance
- horizontal window types are appropriate to local context and the bays of windows grouped together give a clear emphasis to the façade.
- timber cladding not considered appropriate to context, particularly next to Derby Lodge
- large areas of render should be avoided
- active street frontages would assist with local security and community safety.
- the Council welcomes the fact that the proposed building would be subordinate in height to the Listed Building, Derby Lodge and that storey heights and materials should relate favourably to the Listed Building
- a larger gap between the flank wall of the proposal and Derby Lodge on the Wicklow Street elevation should be incorporated.
- the building line on the Wicklow Street should be set back from that currently indicated, so that it does not protrude beyond the building line of Derby Lodge.

### Kings Cross Conservation Area Advisory Committee

The initial proposals were also forwarded to the Kings Cross Conservation Area Advisory Committee and the following verbal comments were received:

- stated that 'found little architectural merit in the scheme proposed at pre-application meeting'
- appreciated that these were early proposals trying to address inherent challenges of the site and the building type.
- requested that the detailed design concentrated on creating an architecturally exciting building to both preserve the character and enhance the Conservation Area
- looking forward to seeing how the scheme design progressed and to commenting further on the application drawings during the consultation period



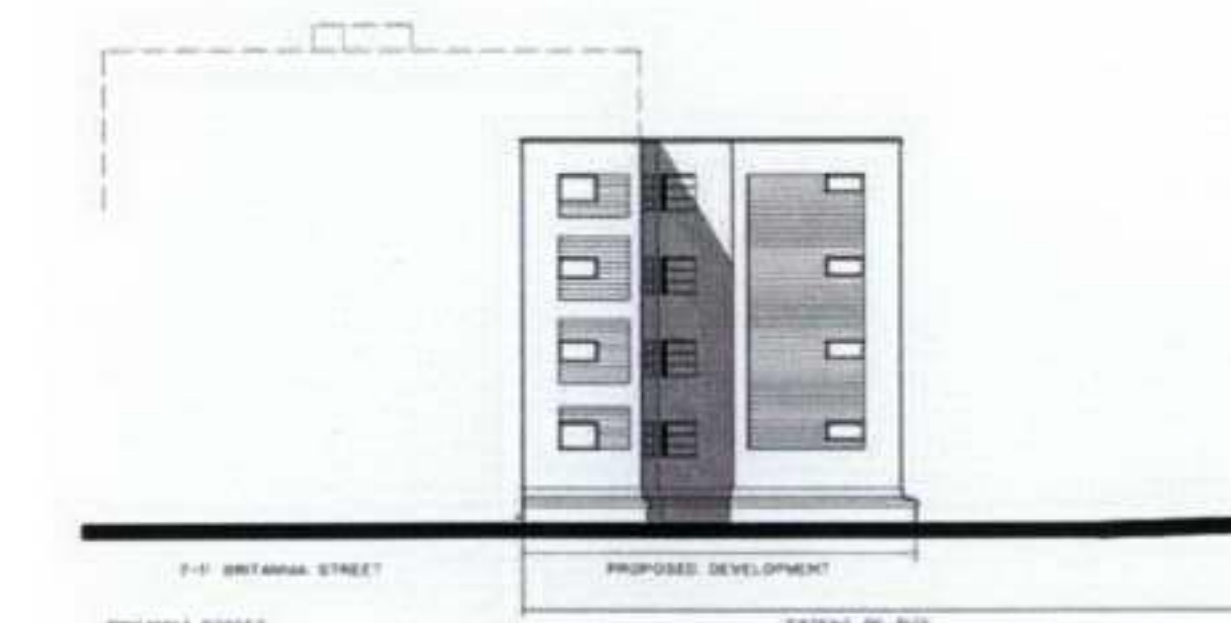
Previously consented scheme utilised modern materials – concrete, metal and terracotta panels with render



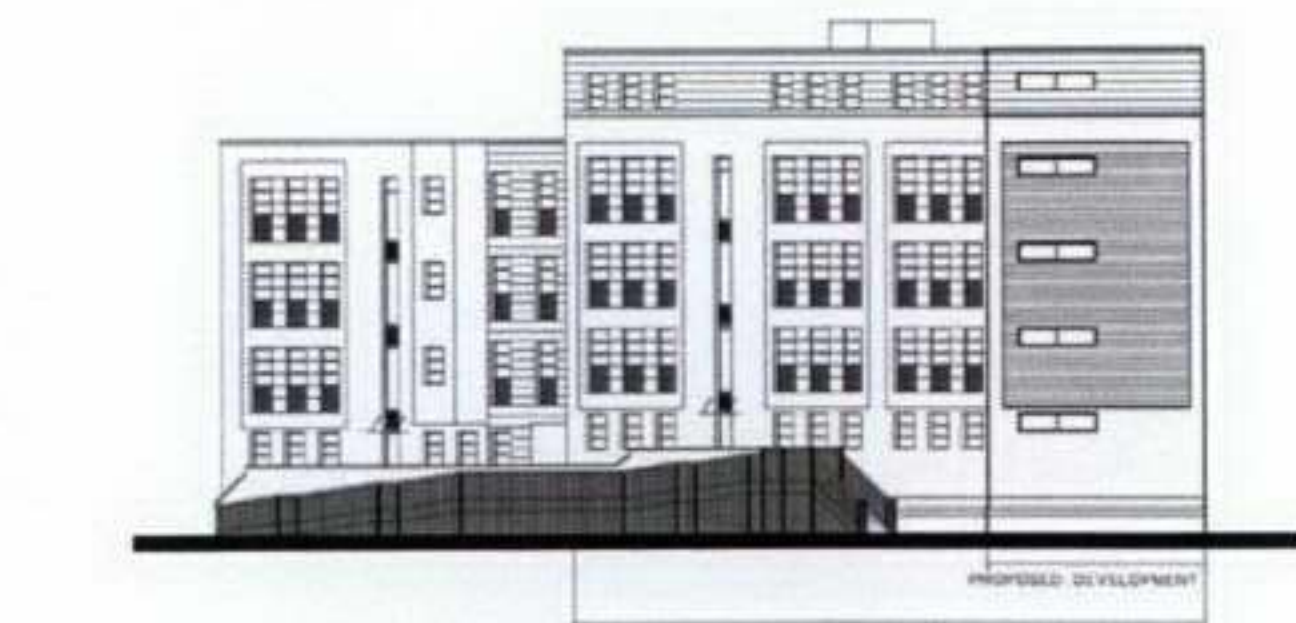
Gagosian Gallery - Industrial character yellow stock brick building with feature materials of timber boarding and render



Differing brick types, render, stucco, ashlar effect and window surrounds



Sketch proposal for elevational treatment as part of pre-application discussions



Sketch proposal for elevational treatment as part of pre-application discussions



#### Design development and response

The initial proposals were then developed further and many of the points raised were taken onboard.

#### Revised design proposals

The elevational treatment of the building was refined during the detailed design process. The industrial character of the building was enhanced by increasing the use of facing brickwork and a decision was taken to use red brick as the main brick. The vent shaft to the tunnel below and remnants of a partially demolished wall on the Wicklow St end of the site revealed that the previous building had also been red brick. A darker brick was selected as a feature brick and used as a plinth at the base of the building to create a 'grounding' effect. There are several examples of this detail in the area so it is used as a contextual clue.

Further examination of the buildings in the local area revealed two main approaches to the ornamentation of buildings. The first is the use of stucco or render to window and door surrounds and at ground floor level. The second is through subtle brick detailing and the use of feature brick bands, arches and piers. It was felt that the brick detailing approach was more appropriate for the industrial-style buildings and was therefore used to highlight the rhythm of the fenestration along the facade and the hierarchy of levels above ground. The long facade of the proposed building mirrors the service recesses alongside the railway tracks with their tall slender brick piers in line with the openings in the brickwork above. The use of repetition in the facades is possibly a reminder of the area's industrial past, however in the context of this site it is a style of architecture that is both relevant and current.

The use of modern materials was drastically reduced with the omission of all timber boarding and the inclusion of render to the projecting bay only.

The line of the building is set back along the Wicklow Street elevation so that it matches Derby Lodge and a small recess is used to

create a separation between the two buildings. This is reinforced by the selection of red brick to subtly contrast with yellow/grey of Derby Lodge.

The entrances to the site are prominently placed at either end of the site in full view of the principal windows and a children's play area introduced to help create an active street frontage.



Proposed long elevation running parallel to the railway tunnel and cutting



Brickwork panels add interest to facade



Dark brick at street level creates plinth to building



Window with curved head give industrial feel



Piers and recesses to railway cutting structure



## Amenity Space Provision

In order to satisfy the Network Rail technical requirements for spreading the load over the existing tunnel both during construction and when the building is in use it is necessary to construct a concrete slab approximately 200-250mm thick over the entire extent of the tunnel. This is an unavoidable design requirement to allow the development of the site. As a result there is limited opportunity for grassed or planted amenity space in this area as this would need a minimum depth of topsoil and suitable drainage which would affect the tunnel structure. However this does present an opportunity to provide enhanced amenity of an alternative nature. Origin Group proposes to provide a secure children's play area within the site in order to meet the requirements of the potential residents of the building. A total of 455m<sup>2</sup> amenity space is provided and this excludes the cycle store, refuse store, secure external stores and plant areas within the site. Certain ground floor units also benefit from private garden space and terraced areas, and there is a communal walled courtyard garden to the rear of the building. The site is located within a few minutes walk of a major transport interchange at Kings Cross and major bus routes giving access to the full range of recreational activities available in London.

## Waste strategy & storage

The development provides waste storage capacity in line with L.B. Camden Refuse Department requirements. The capacity calculations and waste strategy principles were agreed with Stephen Rice ([Waste Officer, Street Environment Services](#)) and Matt Fernandez ([Recycling Officer, Street Environment Services](#)) as part of pre-application consultation.

L.B. Camden Refuse Department provides domestic refuse collection twice weekly and calculates that each individual dwelling generates approximately 3 bags of waste per week. For 23No. flats this equates to 69 bags per week, or 34.5 bags per collection. In addition a range of recycling facilities is required for developments of this size.

The refuse storage provision is as follows:

- 3No. 1100 litre Eurobins are provided for domestic waste (45 bag total capacity)
- 4No. 1100 litre Eurobins are provided for waste recycling (paper, glass bottles, plastic bottles &, cans)

These bins are to be located in a secure external refuse store of 18m<sup>2</sup> is provided at the south end of the site for the sole use of the occupants of the residential development. Access for refuse collection is obtained directly from Wicklow Street where refuse collection vehicles can park immediately adjacent to the binstore street entrance. Residents will access the binstore from within the site and will not need to leave the development in order to put out their rubbish.

## Daylighting & sunlighting

For detailed information regarding the acceptability of the proposals in relation to neighbouring properties and the calculation of the supply of light and outlook to the proposed dwellings refer to the [Sunlight and Daylight Report](#) prepared by [Calford Seaden](#) which forms part of the application.

## Energy Strategy

For detailed information regarding the energy strategy for the development refer to the [Energy Strategy](#) prepared by [RYB:KONSULT](#) which forms part of the application.

The report concludes that the building is energy efficient with specific measures which:

- provide 50% of the hot water demand through the use of solar water collectors (renewable energy source) and
- potentially reduce the development's carbon dioxide emissions by 12.5%
- potentially reduce the development's energy consumption by 17.7%
- and are connected to a communal heating system

## Sustainability Statement

For detailed information regarding the sustainability strategy for the development refer to the [Sustainability Statement](#) prepared by [RYB:KONSULT](#) which forms part of the application.

The report concludes that the Proposed development:

- responds to the UDP
- contributes to the sustainable development of the local area
- can be considered Good Practice in Sustainable Design

## Ecology Report

For detailed information refer to the [Ecology Report](#) prepared by [Thompson Ecology Ltd](#) which forms part of the application.

The report concludes that:

- the site is not considered to have potential to support species of conservation concern
- no protected species were found to be present
- there is potential to include planting boxes and container within the amenity space with native species of shrubs and herbs
- the walls facing the rear garden potentially offer reasonably sheltered and undisturbed locations for the erection of bird or bat boxes

## Noise and Vibration Report

For detailed information regarding the noise and vibration strategy for the development refer to the [Noise and Vibration Report](#) prepared by [Noise.co.uk](#) which forms part of the application.