

4.0 Design Approach

Response to context

Our design approach deals with the varying scales of design and experience, both in terms of the current context and our proposal. On a macro scale the design seeks to engage with its wider context; the approach from Kentish Town Road, or from Spring Place. At the more 'close-to-hand', human scale, the materials, surface and architecture seek to invite appropriation, engaging with both passers by and residents/ workers. The design is intended to improve an area of poor design quality.

Commercial area

The proposal consists of predominantly commercial floorspace on the ground floor with residential units above. This has the advantage of providing an active, working presence at the street level, whilst the residential units are offered more privacy and security above. This distinction in use is reflected in the materials and overall design. At the ground level, engineering bricks to mark the commercial unit, mixed with large areas of curtain wall glazing. The bricks, blue/grey in colour, provide a durable/ commercial character, whilst the glazing allows for visibility to the street and natural light to penetrate into the depth of the plan. Whilst the end user of the commercial area is not at present known, the proposal combines accessibility with flexibility for the full range of B1 uses. The B1 space benefits from a minimum possible floor to ceiling dimension of 3.0 m and is to be acoustically insulated from the residential accommodation above in order to maintain amenity.

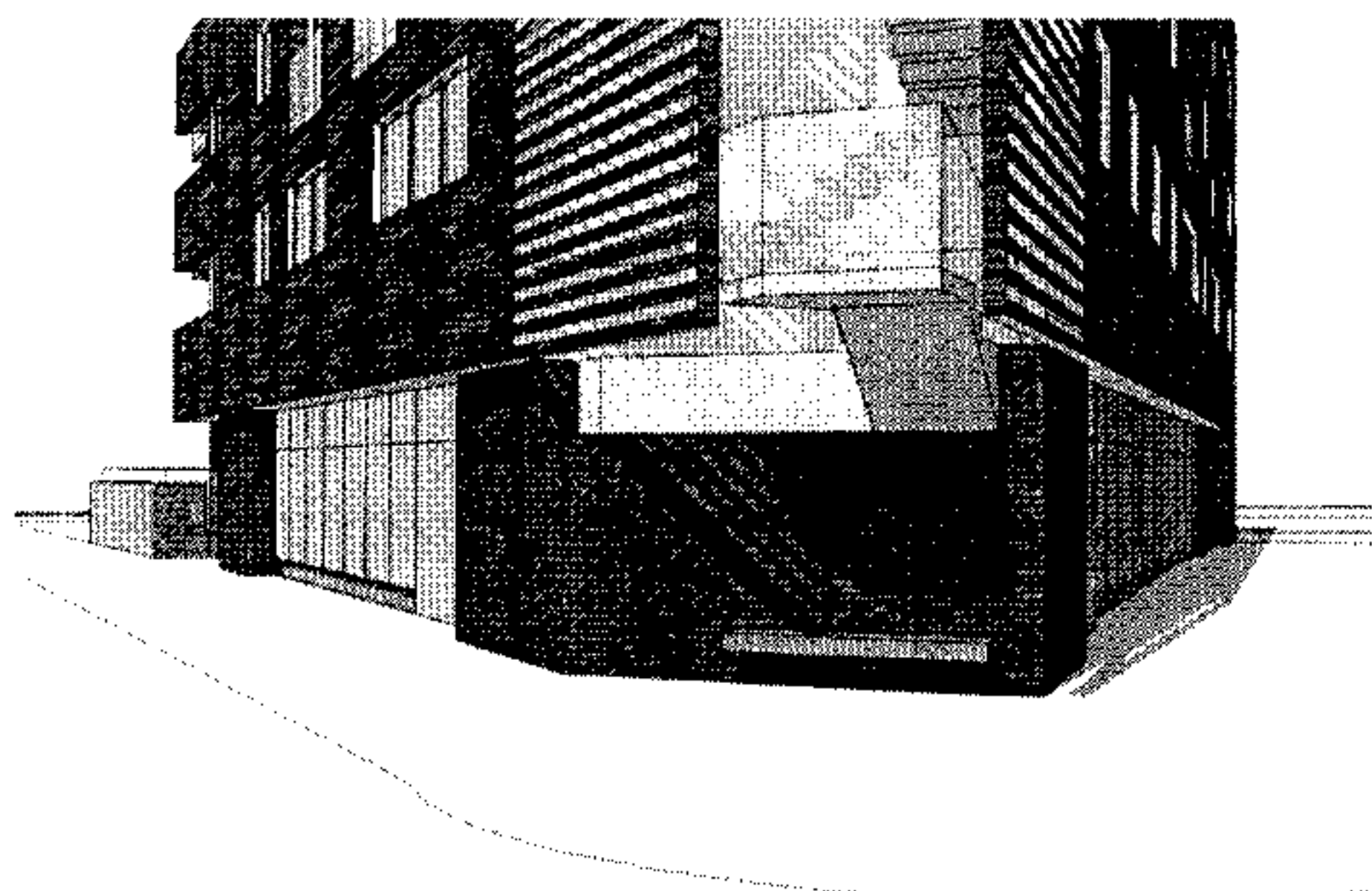


Residential proposal

The flats sit above the commercial floorspace, with the exception of one residential unit that is located near the main entrance, acting like a gate house. The use of horizontal timber cladding at this higher level creates a physical & material separation from the commercial use below. The glazed apertures within the veiled façade of timber vary in size, dependent on the room type they serve. Large windows, almost floor to ceiling in height, are proposed for the living rooms with juliet steel balconies. The bedrooms have smaller, square windows. Whilst there is a rationale

to the arrangement of windows within the north and south façade, this is balanced against the relationship to function, quality of the internal environments and overall aesthetic. As such, the apparent, underlying framework is at times broken, reflecting a certain individuality, and 'looseness' to the composition. Both the south and north façade display this same character, palette of materials and treatment of junctions. Both facades are viewed together when approached along Holmes Road from Kentish Town station.

The large windows on the north façade allow good daylight into the depth of the single aspect flats, whilst on the south façade the large areas of glazing give the flats presence on the street, investing it with life, particularly at night.



Articulation of the corner

The corner has been carefully considered to articulate the dynamic nature of the site. The two timber planes fronting the residential accommodation project forward at this point, cantilevering over the corner, but not physically meeting. The resulting slot in between the timber cladding reveals a staircase that serves 3 flats. The staircase appears independent of the timber and takes on a sculptural importance due to its form and location. At night the lit staircase will generate a slot of light at the front of the building acting as a beacon/ focus to the corner site location. The timber boarding to the staircase is open boarded to allow light to enter the staircase whilst emphasising the nature of the timber as a lightweight screen. At night the façade will be enlivened with back lighting from the development.

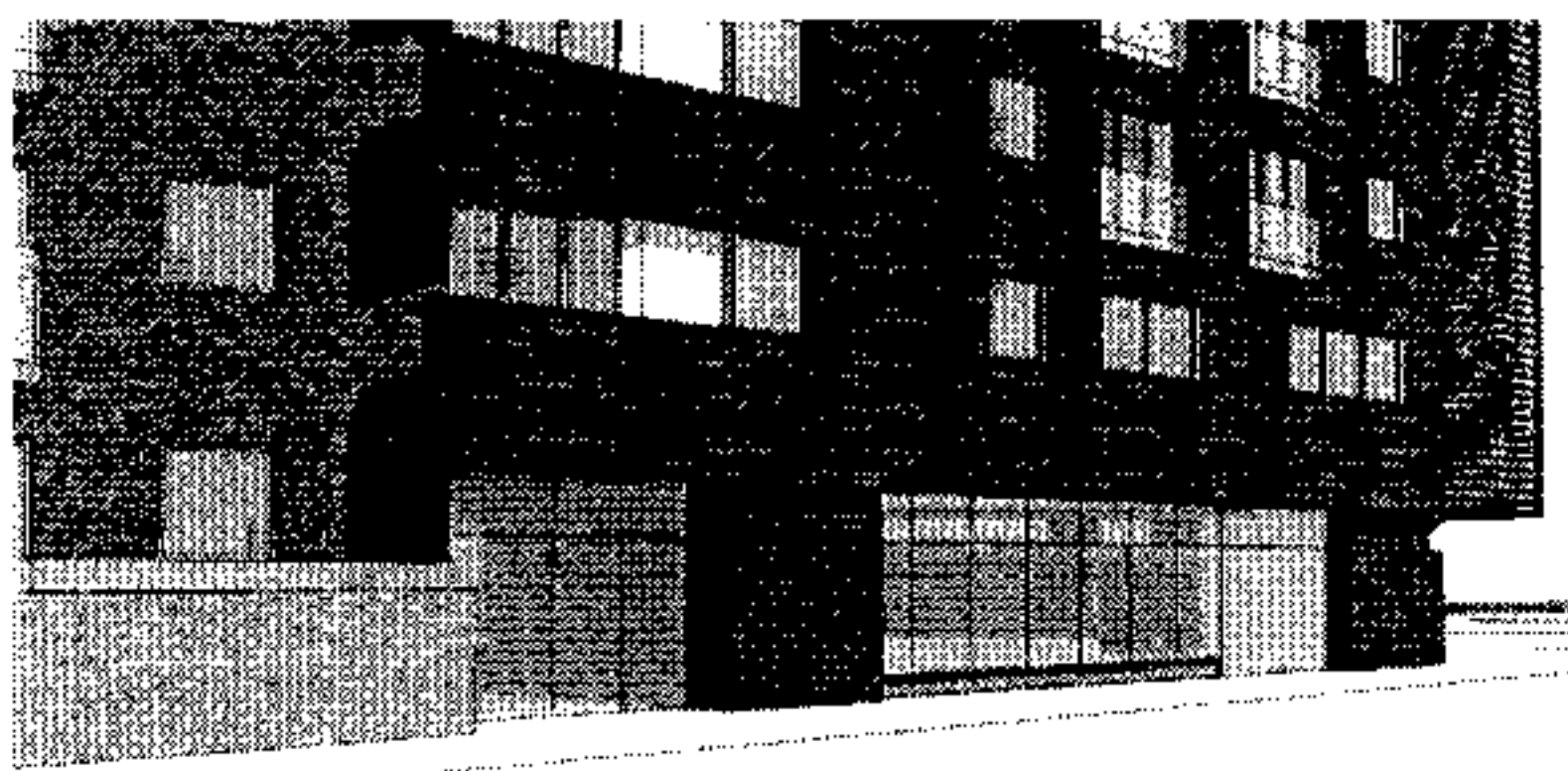
At the street level the blue/ grey engineering brick is proposed to provide a robust junction with the footpath whilst the path widens at the corner of the site to allow passers by more space whilst passing under the overhang of the stair.

South façade main entrance

The main residential entrance is located on the south façade, positioned within the folding of the commercial brick wall and the extended brick boundary wall. The entrance is not anonymous but instead seeks to be visible to the street. This improves security, general ownership whilst allowing easy access.

At this entrance area planting is proposed, both as an attractive means of separating the public footpath from the private outside space of the ground floor flat, and also providing colour, fragrance, seasonal & daily variation. An example of the benefit planting can bring can be found at the corner of Holmes Road with Spring Place on the

façade of the George IV public house. Similarly, trees situated along Holmes Road, though few in number suggest the potential for appropriate planting to provide colour and amenity to the area.



West façade and internal daylighting

The west façade is a boundary wall and therefore limits the potential for making openings. With this in mind the mass of this wall has been significantly reduced by splitting the façade into two elements with a partially glazed recess. The glazing allows natural light to enter the internal staircase and penetrate into the depth of the buildings corridors. This has been done to prevent the creation of artificially lit, internalised space, maintaining a healthy link with the outside world.



Recessed top floor

The 4th floor is stepped back on all sides creating terrace areas for 3 flats. The stepping back reduces the apparent bulk, whilst the proposed composite panels add a lightness to the top floor.

General materials

Two brick types are proposed, chosen for their character and appropriateness. A hard engineering brick is proposed at the base level to the commercial area. A 'softer' orange/red brick is proposed for the residential area to the west façade, wrapping round the south-west corner and including the extension of the boundary wall. In general the brickwork gives the building a grounding and familiarity appropriate to the context and acts as an antidote to the dourness of some of the surrounding buildings.

The horizontal timber boarding to the residential areas of the two main facades is a light façade, in contrast to the brick walls which are built up from the ground. The timber is open boarded in areas to further emphasise this lightness, allowing light to penetrate. Steel juliet balconies are set within the timber façade as if to suggest a framework the facade.

The light coloured composite panels at high level offer a lightness to the top floor, blending with the skyline. Each material (including the planting) whilst distinguishable from each other and with purpose in its use has also been considered holistically.

Summary

The approach adopted uses an understanding of the character and sense of place in the surrounding context in creating the design proposal. From this, the design of the scheme has developed as an imaginative response to that interpretation of place, resulting in a scheme which interacts positively with its context at a physical, social and individual level.