

Land adjacent to I St. Johns Wood Park
Townscape Assessment
October 2018

This Townscape Assessment has been prepared by van Bruggen Ltd

This Townscape Assessment draws on the information in the planning application and is supplemented with the authors own photographs and separately commissioned model massing imagery by GIA and the architects Maccreanor Lavington.

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I. INTRODUCTION

I.1 This Townscape Assessment has been prepared to support the application for the proposed scheme at the land adjacent to 1 St Johns Wood Park, Swiss Cottage (hereafter referred to as the 'Scheme Proposal') located to the south of the London Borough of Camden (LBC), close to its boundary with the City of Westminster (CoW).

I.2 The site is a vacant area of land that previously housed domestic garages and is currently framed by hoarding. It is positioned at the northern end of St Johns Wood Park on the western side of the street, closest to Swiss Cottage district centre.

I.3 Prior to the appointment of the architects Maccreanor Lavington, van Bruggen Ltd undertook a study with support from GIA on the potential height and scale of a building on this site in terms of the likely impact on the townscape of the area. This informed the final design. The conclusion of this is presented here.

2. METHODOLOGY

Introduction

2.1 The approach in undertaking this assessment is based upon informed and reasoned professional judgement, taking into account a combination of quantitative and qualitative factors.

Study Area

2.2 The site consists of a vacant area of land that is positioned at the northern end of St Johns Wood Park on the western side of the street, close to Swiss Cottage district centre. The study area for the townscape character area appraisal includes both the Site and its wider context at a 250 metre radius from its boundary, as shown in Figure 2.1. The visual assessment considers the likely visibility within this study area, with further long distant views being considered where identified and relevant.



Figure 2.1 - Site Location



3. TOWNSCAPE

Townscape Baseline Situation

3.1 The following elements have been identified as contributing to the townscape character of the study area. They also influence the visibility between the Site and the wider townscape.

3.2 The Site consists of a vacant area of land that previously housed six domestic garages and is currently framed by hoarding. A permissive route is accommodated through the Site and accessible at fixed timescales.

3.3 The surrounding land use is predominantly residential with associated infrastructure such as nursery and schools. There are also civic and leisure uses such as a library, leisure centre and cinema to the north, close to Swiss Cottage Underground Station.

3.4 There are a number of large residential buildings within the study area and wider townscape, which includes (as shown in Figure 3.1):

- Regency Lodge (part 6 and part 7 storeys)
- No.95 Avenue Road and the Polygon (7 storeys)
- Sheringham and Walsingham (part 8 and part 11 storeys)
- Langhorne Court and Farjeon House (9 storeys)
- Boydell Court (11 storeys)
- Buttermere and Blair Court (12 storeys)



Figure 3.1 - Tall buildings

3.5 These taller buildings provide local landmarks within the townscape. They, along with mid-rise, four storey residential blocks, are typically set back from the road within semi-private landscaped grounds. Whilst the low-rise residential detached or terrace housing typically addresses and defines the street.

3.6 In summary, the mix of building heights and footprint sizes can be split into three groups, as shown in Figure 3.2:

- Low rise – typically 20th century residential detached or terrace housing, with small footprints;
- Mid rise - 20th / 21st century civic, leisure and education buildings, with medium to large footprints; and
- High rise - Mid to late 20th century residential apartment blocks, with medium footprints.

3.7 The palette of façade materials ranges within the study area and, typically, relates to the type and age of the building. The 20th century, low-rise, buildings are predominantly London Stock or red brick, with white rendering. Whilst the late 20th century and early 21st century, mid-rise, civic, leisure and education buildings are clad with either concrete, brick or metal screen panels (of varying colours). The high-rise buildings are typically clad with red or buff brick and the ground floor is defined with a different material.

3.8 Swiss Cottage provides a transport interchange with an underground station and bus stops. Whilst the primary road Finchley Road (A41) and secondary routes of Adelaide Road (B509) and Avenue Road (B525) create a vehicular dominated townscape. These highways effect the pedestrian movement through the area and tranquillity of the study area.

3.9 Open space within the study area is typically associated with the residential properties and an area of open space in front of Swiss Cottage Library and Leisure Centre. The Grade II Registered Park and Garden of Primrose Hill is situated to the southeast, outside of the study area. Four grade II listed buildings fall within the study area. These include:

- Swiss Cottage Library
- Regency Lodge
- Primrose Hills Tunnels (western entrance)
- The Hampstead Figure Sculpture

3.10 The conservation areas of Belsize Park, Elmsworthy and St Johns Wood, fall to the north, east and south respectively, as illustrated in Figure 3.3.

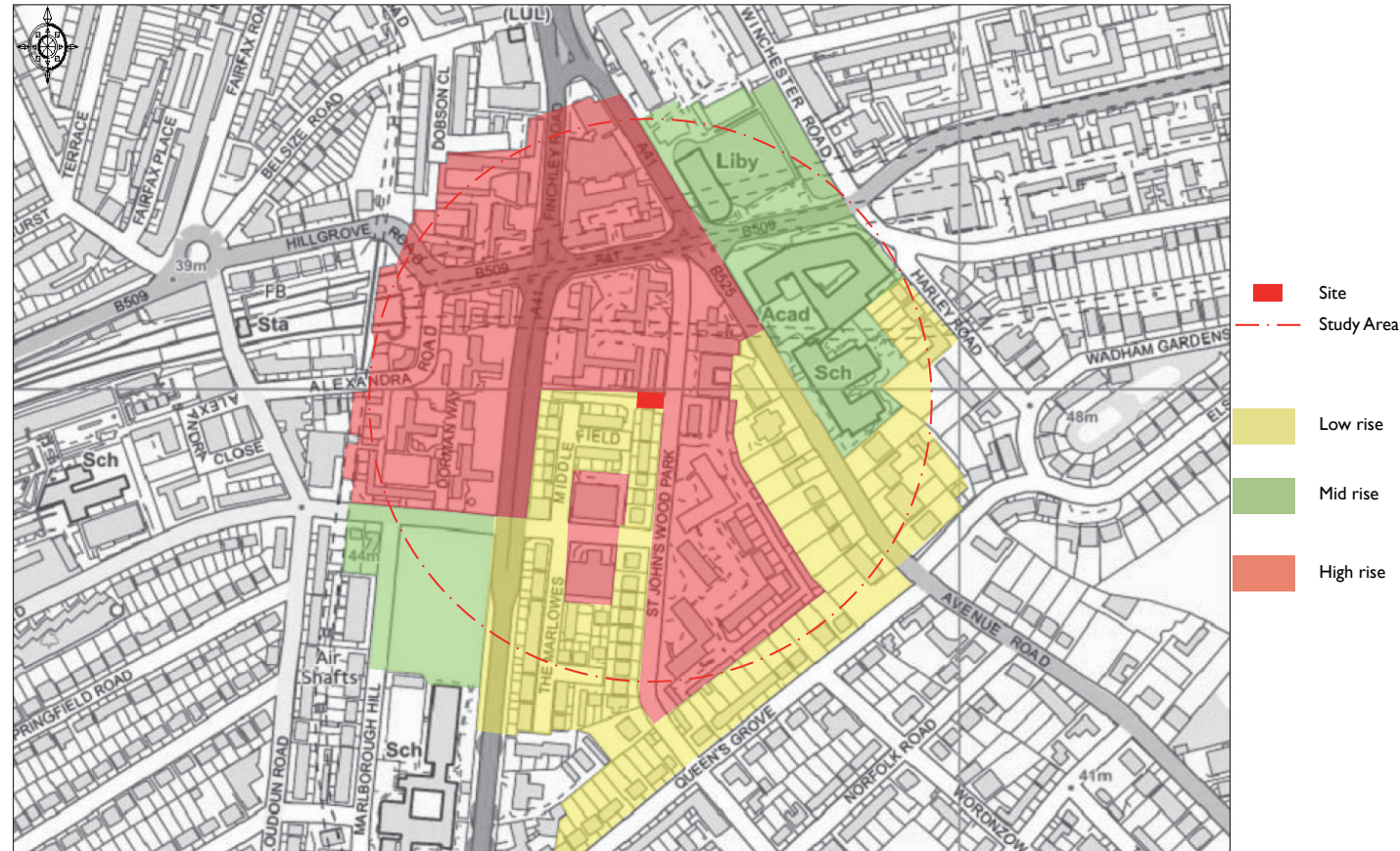


Figure 3.2 - Mix of building heights and footprint sizes

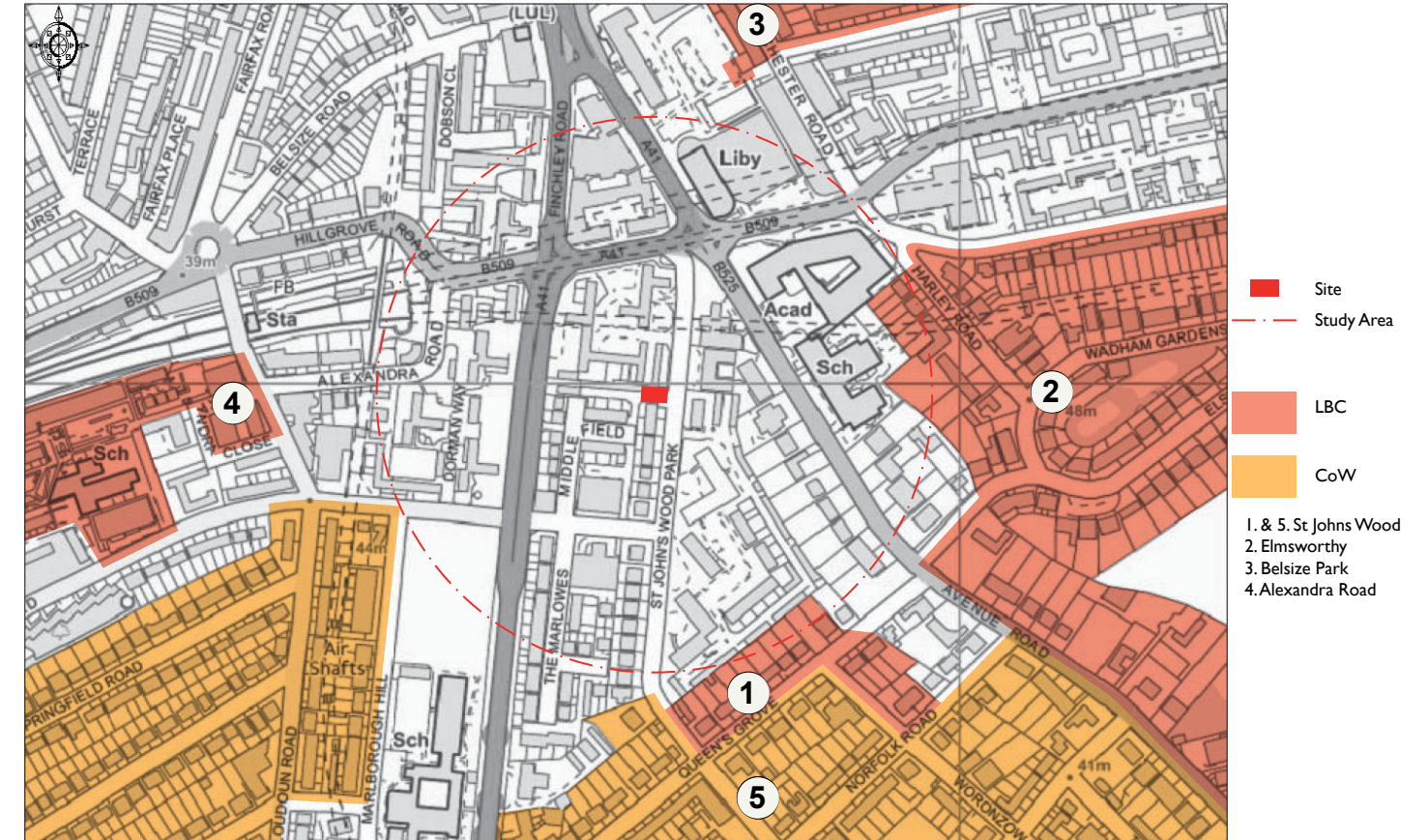


Figure 3.3 - Conservation areas

Townscape Character Types

3.11 In order to define townscape character types (TCT) an understanding of the existing townscape elements such as land use, built form (mass and height) and movement has been established. This has identified, along with consideration of aesthetic and perceptual factors, two TCT's (Figure 3.4) which share common features and characteristics which are summarised in Table 3.1.

3.12 The site currently sits in between the two TCT, with TCT 1 – High and mid-rise buildings present to the north and TCT 2 – Low rise buildings to the south.

Table 3.1. Summary of Baseline Townscape Characterisation

	TOWNSCAPE TYPES	TOWNSCAPE VALUE
TCT 1 – High and mid-rise buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Mixture of land uses that include residential, civic and leisureBuilding heights, footprints, material and architecture range in scale from 4 to 12 storeys and typeBuildings are stepped back from the street within shared areas of semi-private open spaceThe highways of Finchley Road, Adelaide Road and Avenue Road dominates the environmentThe area includes 4 grade II listed buildings	High to medium
TCT 2 – Low rise buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Predominately residential land useBuilding heights and footprints are typically 2 to 3 storeyThe building material is typically either red or London Stock brickMature to semi-mature street trees are present and green the neighbourhood	Medium

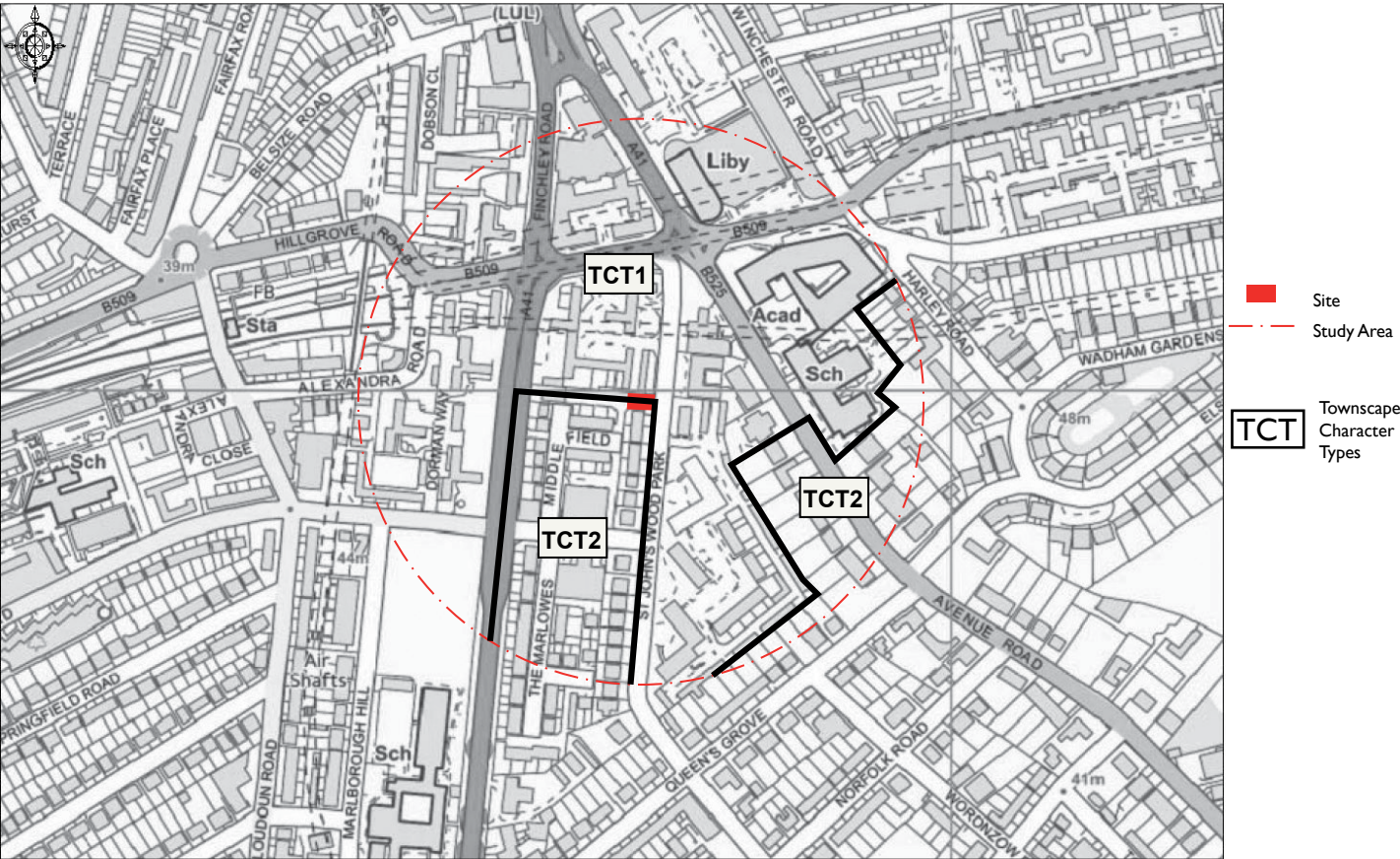


Figure 3.4 - Townscape Character Types

Visual Appraisal

3.13 The visibility of the Site has been established through a desktop analysis of the surrounding area and by on-site confirmation of the localised screening effect of built form, landform and movement.

3.14 The visibility of the Site is contained by the surrounding built form, with open views only from a section of St Johns Wood Park and Middle Field, where they pass the Site. Visual receptors (defined as where people can experience views of the development) were identified. The receptors have been established through both a desk top analysis of the surrounding area and a field study and are set out below.

- Low rise residential properties located adjacent to the Site and within 250 metres of its boundary;
- Public highways within 250 metres of the Site; and
- High rise residential properties positioned within 500 metres of the Site

3.15 In determining possible visual effects consideration has been given to local planning policy and relevant conservation area appraisals, in summary:

- No Panorama, Linear, Townscape or River Prospect LVMF views pass over the site.
- LBC identify local views within their Local Plan, none of which are orientated towards the site.
- St Johns Wood Conservation Area falls to the south of the study area, no views are established towards the site within the supporting appraisal.
- It is not visible from the surrounding conservation areas of Elsworth Conservation Area (to the east of the application site), Belsize Park Conservation Area (north)

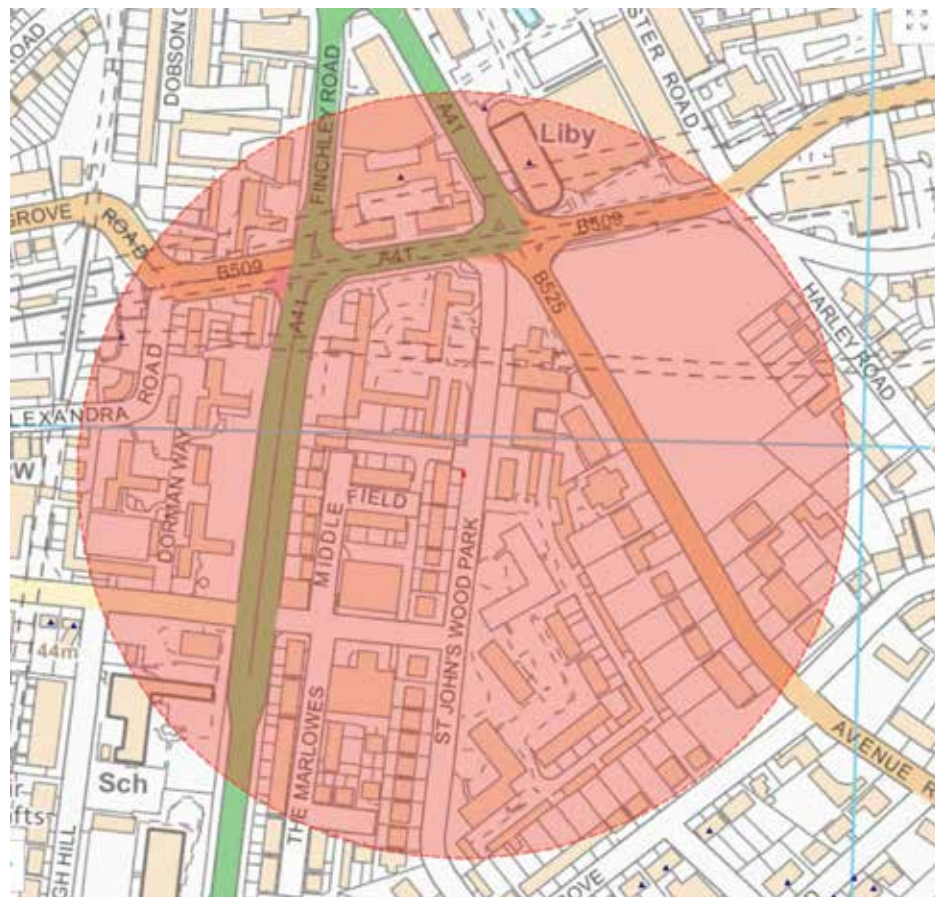
3.16 The visibility to the Site from these identified views was checked during the field study, along with a number of townscape views.

4. DESIGN APPRAISAL

4.1 The existing Site has a negative contribution to the townscape due to the lack of built form which would define the street. Its features do not respond to the character types of either to 'TCT 1 – High and mid-rise buildings' and 'TCT 2 – Low rise buildings'. The Scheme Proposal has the opportunity to reflect and respond to the surrounding townscape and offer a transitional building between the varying building heights. The site also has the opportunity to make a positive contribution to this townscape by providing an active frontage to ensure natural surveillance to the street and introducing new architecture of high quality.

4.2 The Scheme Proposal reinforces the building line of St Johns Wood Park and retains the linear local views along the street. The Scheme Proposal would be recessive within the middle and long distance views and relate positively to the surrounding rooflines with careful attention to the new development's relationship between the identified heritage assets.

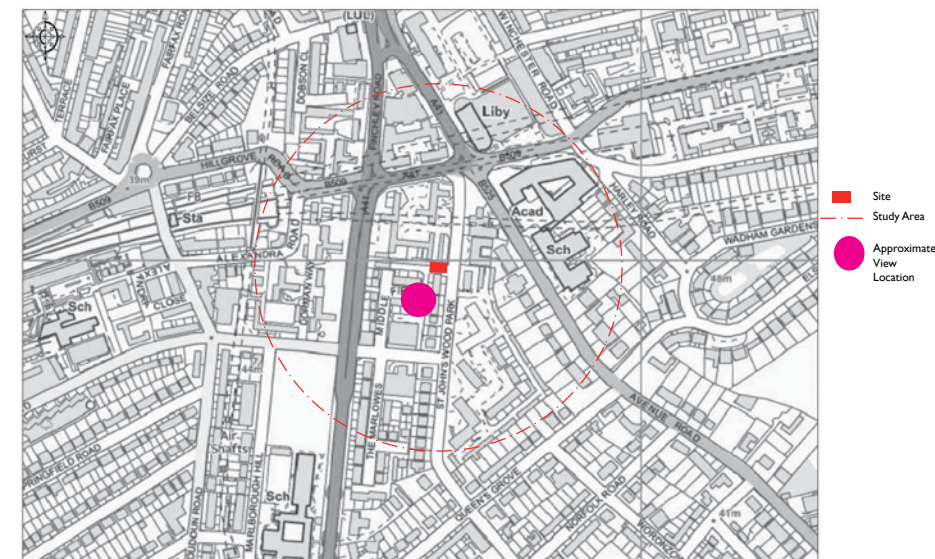
4.3 With the proposed height the Scheme Proposal is likely to increase the Site's visibility.



Location of Heritage Assets within 250m of the Site.



Illustration of the Scheme Proposal from Middle Field.



Townscape to the North

4.4 The Scheme Proposal is likely to be seen in the far middle ground of the view from the north. It is considered that any view to the Site and the Scheme Proposal is limited due to the existing traffic lights and street trees, particularly in the summer months.

4.5 The height of the Scheme Proposal at six storeys is clearly subservient to Boydell Court and No. 95 Avenue Road ensuring that they remain the dominant feature when approaching from the north.

4.6 The Scheme Proposal will not compete with the buildings that define this road junction. Consideration has been given to the treatment of the northern flank wall.

Figure 4.2 - Photograph from the North of the Site at the road junction. This view was taken in the winter months. It is to illustrate the context and the approach from the north. The view is not surveyed.

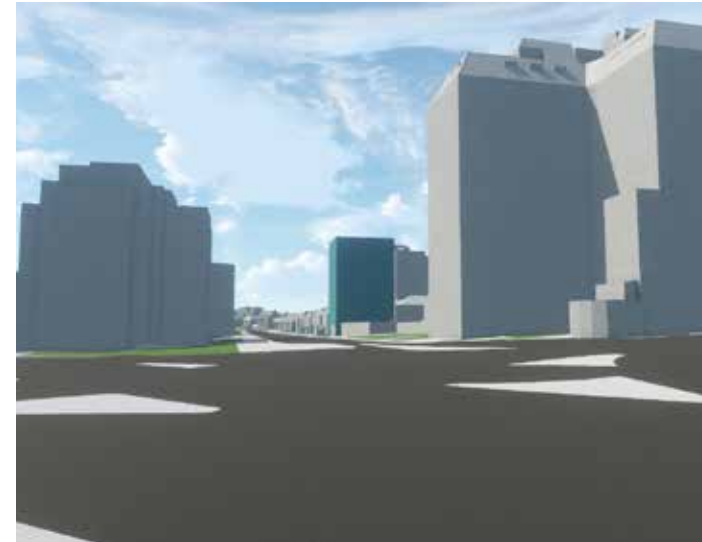


Figure 4.3 - At the early stages of scheme development, the potential massing was tested. This illustration demonstrates 8 storeys.

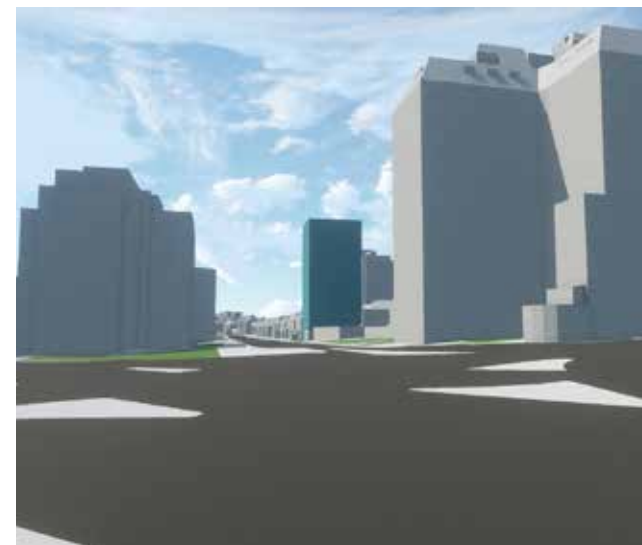
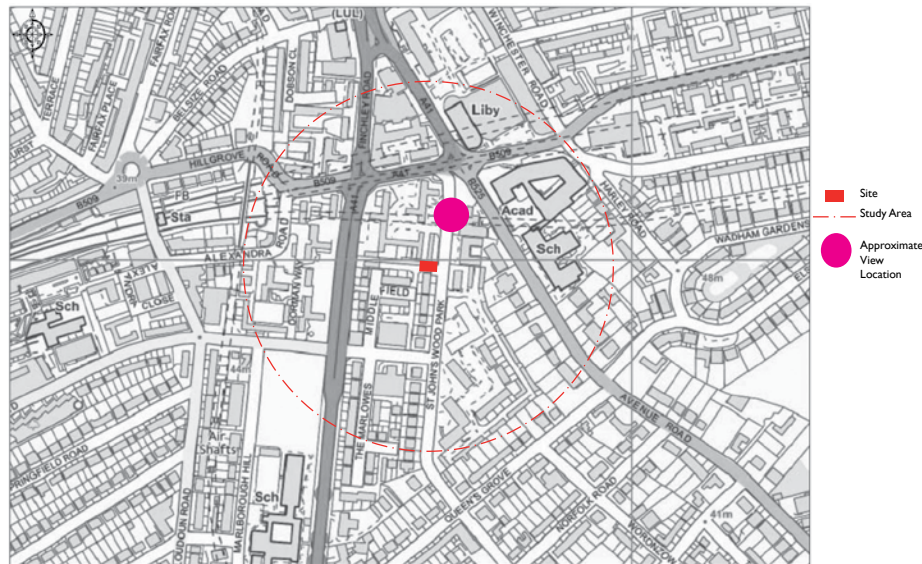


Figure 4.4 - At the early stages of scheme development, the potential massing was tested. This illustration demonstrates 10 storeys.



Illustration of the effect of the Scheme Proposal on the townscape from the north close to the Site. The Scheme Proposal is six storeys.



Townscape from the South

4.7 From the south, on the edge of the St John's Wood Conservation Area (looking out), the foreground of the image consists of the carriageway of St John's Wood Park and vehicles parked along it. In the middle ground, are the two storey, detached houses, that frame this road and rising above are the 12 storey apartment complexes of Blair Court, Buttermere Court and 11 storey Boydell Court.

4.8 The Scheme Proposal will be subservient to Boydell Court, ensuring that it remains the dominant feature and aiding with legibility to Adelaide Road, St John's Wood Park and Avenue Road. This mass also helps to integrate it into the townscape. The Scheme Proposal carefully considers how the southern flank wall is treated.

Figure 4.14 - Photograph from the south. This photograph is taken in the winter months and is not surveyed.



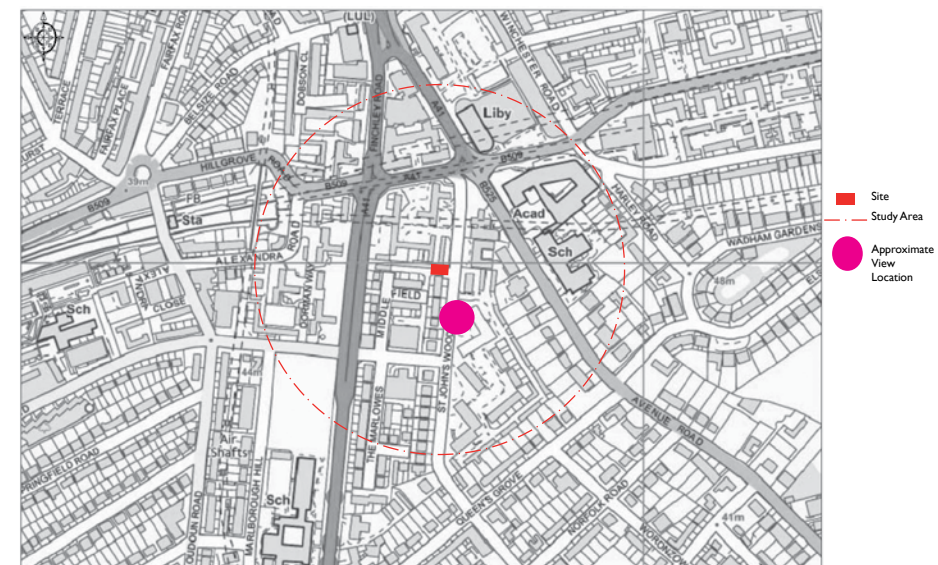
Figure 4.15 - At the early stages of scheme development, the potential massing was tested. This illustration demonstrates 8 storeys.



Figure 4.16 - At the early stages of scheme development, the potential massing was tested. This illustration demonstrates 10 storeys.



Illustration of the effect of the Scheme Proposal on the townscape from the south. The Scheme Proposal is six storeys.



5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The Scheme Proposal, the subject of the planning application, has been informed by a thorough understanding of the local and wider townscape context.

5.2 The baseline assessment has established that the Site is not located within a sensitive townscape, as it does not lie in a conservation area nor does it include any heritage assets. It also does not fall within a local or strategic view, as recognised by regional and local planning policy. The likely views are very limited and any effect is likely to be confined to the adjacent streets only. No formal Townscape Assessment is required and the scheme is not significant enough to warrant further assessment.

5.3 The Site lies between the two townscape character types (TCT): TCT 1 – High and mid-rise buildings, present to the north; and, TCT 2 – Low rise buildings to the south. TCT 1 – High and mid-rise buildings includes a mix of residential, civic and leisure uses and building heights range in scale from 4 to 12 storeys. Buildings within TCT 1 are typically stepped back from the street within shared areas of semi-private open space. Whilst TCT 2 – Low rise buildings is predominately residential land use and includes 2-3 storey buildings that address the street.

5.4 The visibility of the Site (and building on it) is contained by the surrounding built form, with open views from a section of St Johns Wood Park and Middle Field only. There are a number of existing high-rise residential buildings within the area that aid with legibility. This includes Boydell Court (11 storeys) and Buttermere and Blair Court (12 storeys).

5.5 The existing Site has a negative contribution on the townscape due to the lack of built form which would define the street. Its features do not respond to the character types of either the 'TCT 1 – High and mid-rise buildings' or 'TCT 2 – Low rise buildings'. The Scheme Proposal takes the opportunity to reflect and respond to the surrounding townscape and offer a transitional building between the varying building heights. The Scheme Proposal also has the opportunity to make a positive contribution to this townscape by providing an active frontage to ensure natural surveillance to the street and introducing new architecture of high quality.

5.6 The Scheme Proposal follows the building line of St Johns Wood Park and retains the linear local views along the street. It will also relate positively to the surrounding rooflines with careful attention to the northern and southern flank walls.

5.7 The Scheme Proposal will be visible from a very confined area of St Johns Wood Conservation Area, and only to a limited degree and will appear as part of the wider townscape that includes much taller buildings. The relationship and distance of the Site with listed buildings in the study area, and scale of the Scheme Proposal, are such that in no case will there be any effect on the heritage significance of any other statutory listed building.

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