



# DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT

WHITWORTH ROAD DEVELOPMENT, ROCHDALE

Produced by Triangle Architects Ltd  
On Behalf of Cornerstone Place  
March 2022

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 THE SITE

The site is composed of three plots of land adjacent to Whitworth Road in north Rochdale. Each plot is on brownfield land owned by Rochdale Borough Council. The total area of the site (inclusive of the three respective plots) is approximately 0.135Ha.

## 1.2 THE PROPOSAL

The proposal is for 14 dwellings, split across 3 blocks on their respective sites:

- Site 1 - Block A: 8 units
- Site 2 - Block B: 4 units
- Site 3 - Block C: 2 units

Associated boundary treatments and landscaping are also proposed to demarcate and integrate the development within its surroundings.

The dwellings, which are use class C3, will provide supported accommodation to help those who have been homeless or are at risk of homelessness. Block A includes ancillary spaces to facilitate support staff on site from the homelessness charity, Stepping Stones, who will manage the homes.

## 1.3 PROJECT TEAM

**Cornerstone Place** is a social enterprise with the mission to help end street homelessness in the UK by 2030. They do this by working in partnership with homelessness support charities to provide fully funded move-on accommodation and providing their unique model to help the charity grow unrestricted income and balance sheet growth over time.

**Stepping Stone Projects** provide accommodation and support across the North-West to care leavers, people who are homeless and those currently at risk of losing their homes. They believe that everyone has the right to good quality accommodation, and the kind of support that will allow them to reach their optimum level of independence. By offering a range of stable short-term accommodation with both on-site and floating support services, they aim to help their customers to develop the skills, knowledge, and confidence they need to secure and maintain independent accommodation.

**Triangle Architects** is an award-winning architectural practice based in Manchester, with a focus primarily around the housing and healthcare sectors, as well as urban regeneration, community, and workplace projects. Triangle's commitment is to provide the highest quality of service: in the interests of our Clients, the end-users of buildings and the environment they help to shape.

**DLP Consultants** have long standing experience in providing independent and wide-ranging planning advice across the UK. They provide comprehensive town planning and development consultancy services to both public & private sector clients, across all aspects of development management and plan/policy preparation.

## 1.4 DESIGN OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of the development is to deliver much needed accommodation to help address the homelessness crisis. Supplementing this goal are several objectives:

- Incorporate the principles of psychologically informed environments to provide dwellings which offer comfort, safety, and enjoyment to future residents, to help them in recovery and cultivating independence.
- Integrate the development within its context, to minimise potential friction within existing communities and provide a positive contribution to the neighbourhood.
- Minimise the carbon footprint and long-term operational costs of the development with net zero design principles.
- Balance the aspirations for quality with capital costs, recognising the need to spread funding and revenue streams across projects.

## 1.6 PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT

This document covers each design issue in turn. Under each issue an appraisal is carried out, current planning policy and best practice are considered and the reasons for the current proposals are put forward. A number of different sources have been used to compile this report including *'Design and Assess Statements: How to write, read and use them'* by CABI and the *'National Design Guide: Planning Practice guidance for beautiful, enduring, and successful places'* by MCHLG.

The role of this design and access statement is:

- To guide and shape the future use and redevelopment of this site adjacent Whitworth Road in Rochdale.
- To establish the parameters and principles for the new development.
- To act as a material consideration in the determinations of the reuse and redevelopment of the site.
- To create a sustainable and high-quality development that is appropriate to its context and that both preserves and enhances the character and appearance of the site.

# SECTION A: THE PROCESS

## 2 ASSESSMENT

### 2.1 SITE CONTEXT

The site is situated approximately one mile north of central Rochdale on Whitworth Road, one of the main arterial routes connecting the town to its northern neighbourhoods. Rochdale Infirmary is a few streets away to the west. The immediate context is a dense network of low-rise terraced streets, primarily housing, with shops on the main road.

Site 1 occupies a former playground (now unoccupied hardstanding) and part of a grass verge adjacent Whitworth Road. Site 2 utilises a pocket of land currently used for garages (alternative arrangements have been made with the occupants). Site 3 is situated on a leftover area of hardstanding, informally used for car parking, adjacent a substation.

Although the three sites are separate, the intention of the design is to aggregate these into a collective whole, integrated within but clearly distinct from its surroundings.

### 2.2 SURROUNDING BUILDING TYPOLOGIES

As illustrated by the site photographs, the surroundings are primarily two storey terraces, interspersed with some taller buildings such as the former church and the RPCSL building.

### 2.3 SITE PHOTOGRAPHS

Please refer to drawing *WHI-TRI-XX-XX-SU-A-2701-P03* for a collection of site photos, illustrating key views, vistas, and features of the sites.

### 2.4 PLANNING POLICY & GUIDANCE

Further to the NPPF, the development takes into consideration the following guidance:

- Rochdale Core Strategy (CS) (2016).
- Rochdale Borough Unitary Development Plan (UDP) (2006).
- Guidelines & Standards for Residential Development SPD
- Oldham and Rochdale Urban Design Guide
- Rochdale Borough's Homelessness Strategy

Further details of how the development responds to the relevant policy and guidance documents is provided in the separate Planning Statement.



## 3 INVOLVEMENT

### 3.1 CORNERSTONE PLACE & STEPPING STONES

Cornerstone Place provided the momentum to drive the project forward. In collaboration with Rochdale Borough Council and Stepping Stones homelessness charity, they identified the opportunities of the site and defined the design brief. The design underwent several iterations at the early concept stage, to refine the objectives of the scheme and how it could be accommodated on the site. This process continued and quickly adapted following the pre-application feedback, which determined that the site could not include the car park due to issues with stopping up.

Stepping Stones were regularly consulted throughout the design process, offering their extensive experience and knowledge of service users' needs, to provide a facility that would accommodate these needs effectively, in addition to catering for the operational requirements of the charity.

### 3.2 ROCHDALE BOROUGH COUNCIL

The scheme has been discussed in detail with planners to conform to aspirations for the area and to local characteristics. A formal pre-application enquiry (Ref: *PREAPP/00135/21*) was submitted to Rochdale Borough Council and pre-application meetings were held with the Interim Head of Planning and the Planning Officer, Daniela Ripa and Michael Atkinson Smith, on 6<sup>th</sup> October 2021 and 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2021, respectively, to assess the suitability of the proposal on the site.

General scheme principles, massing and appearance were discussed, along with the constraints of the site and consideration for planning policy and obligations. Advice and suggestions from this meeting and formal response have been incorporated into the final scheme proposals.

### 3.3 SPECIALISTS & CONSULTANTS

Investigation of the site has been carried out, including a tree report, an arboricultural impact statement, an arboricultural method statement and a Phase 1 and Phase 2 Site Investigation. The findings and recommendations have been used to inform the design.

## 4 EVALUATION

### 4.1 SITE CONSTRAINTS

Please refer to drawing *WHI-TRI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-3001-P02* for a detailed analysis of the existing features and site constraints.

As illustrated by the above drawing, the site is complex and richly layered. The existing street pattern generally orients north-northwest and perpendicular to this, whereas Whitworth Road follows a different angle. Consequently, orientating the development to the existing building and pavement lines proves challenging. The hierarchy of streets needs to be considered, with Whitworth Road taking the highest priority as the main route through the area, from which the main block will primarily be viewed.

The existing brownfield land does not offer a great deal in terms of uses, amenity or biodiversity, however, there are some existing trees on the site which have been assessed by an arboriculturist. Further to this, established rights of way require careful consideration, including footpaths and access to the rear gardens of existing properties.

The recently installed advertising sign facing Whitworth Road is retained, which necessitates a set back from the main road to accommodate the sign and lines of sight.

### 4.2 SITE OPPORTUNITIES

Since the three plots are currently underutilised brownfield land, the primary opportunity of developing these sites is to make better use of their potential by providing much needed accommodation for service users.

Integrating the new accommodation within the established communities is challenging, not least because the physical characteristics of the site limits how the urban form can be harmonised. However, there is opportunity to create a positive living environment for future residents and to help them gain stability and independence. The separation into three blocks blends the facilities into the surroundings as a series of dwellings, rather than a larger facility within a single building, which would inevitably be more institutional. As such, the scale, proportion, and appearance of the new buildings supports the integration of service users into society.

The associated landscaping provides the opportunity to improve upon the existing trees, planting, and biodiversity of the site and to provide better definition to the footpaths, boundaries, and car parking area. Since the established trees lining Whitworth Road have been identified as poor quality, it is proposed that tree planting is located along the side of this main road to improve upon the frontage to the development. This will also improve the appearance of the car park and shop fronts, providing benefit to the broader site.

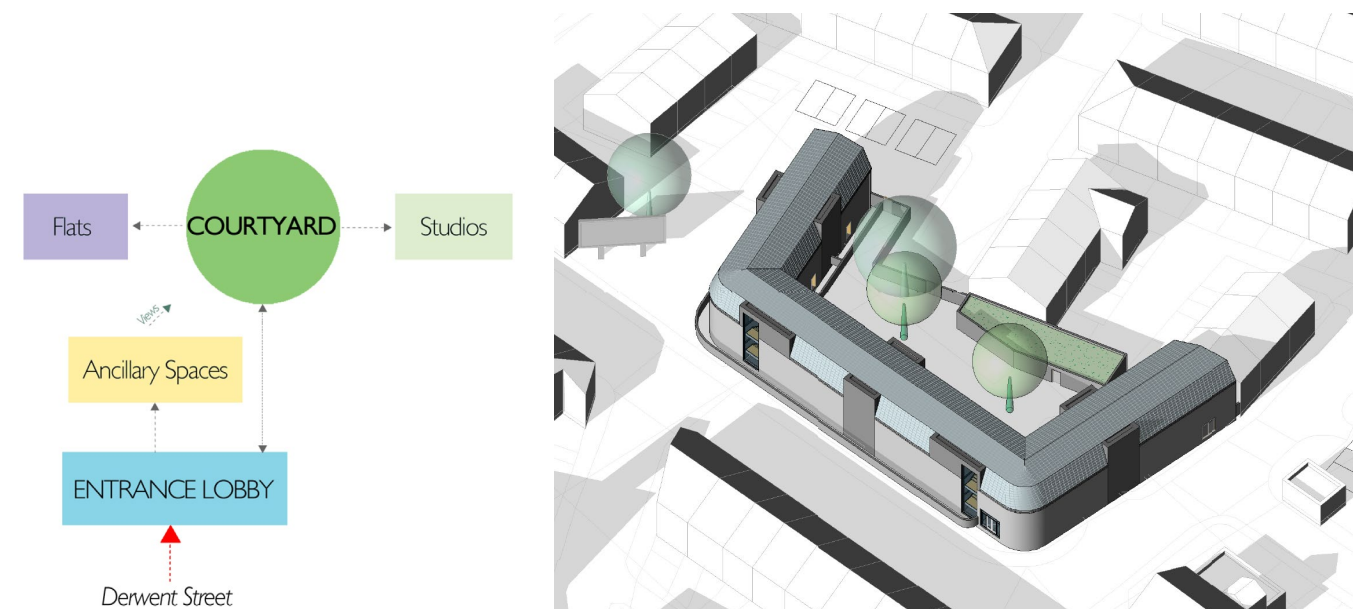
The location of the new dwellings creates continuity in the urban fabric, filling in gaps and vacant sites, and providing natural surveillance to areas that were not previously overlooked. This will benefit the area by creating more activity and socio-spatial relationships, thereby encouraging positive social behaviour rather than antisocial behaviour.

## 5 DESIGN

### 5.1 INITIAL DESIGNS

The site originally included the full extent of the existing surface car park and former playground, forming a single plot of land bordered by Whitworth Road, Grasmere Street, Derwent Street and the neighbouring terraced housing and shops. It was intended to provide a single building, shaped around a secure landscaped courtyard, providing access to supported accommodation units across three storeys.

This strategy came unstuck due to consideration for the stopping up procedure for the surface car park – it was concluded that this could not be achieved without objections, which would at least delay the development, or potentially prevent it entirely.



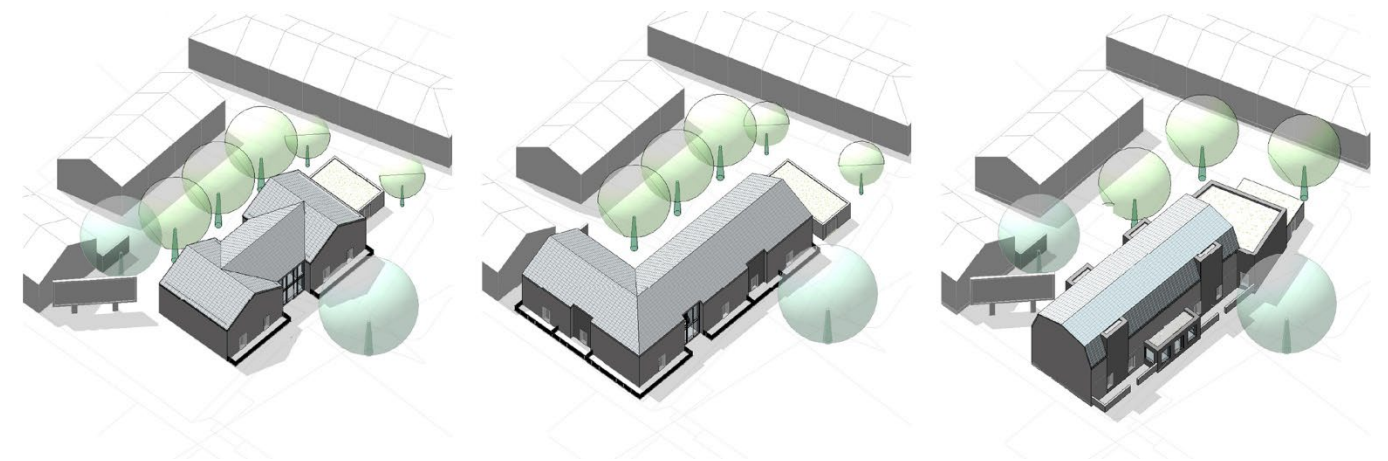
### 5.2 PRE-APPLICATION FEEDBACK

Following the above feedback, extensive discussions took place between the project team and Rochdale Borough Council to determine the best route forward. Considerations were made whether to retain the advertising hoarding or apply for its removal, which dictated whether the building would be set back from Whitworth Road.

It was concluded that the three sites would be developed as three separate blocks, under one planning application. Sites 2 and 3 (Blocks B & C) were resolved in principle relatively quickly – Block B would be a simple two-storey block offset from the terrace gable facing Grasmere Street, and Block C would be an L-shaped bungalow, making the most effective use of the plot around the substation and avoiding issues with an adjacent gable window at first floor level.

Block A proved more challenging and went through several design iterations before reaching the proposed design. Via the formal pre-app advice received *PREAPP/00135/21*, in addition to video call and phone call discussions with the planning officer, some key decisions were made, which shaped the outcome of the design process:

- The advertising sign would remain in situ.
- Block A would be two-storeys and would not include any dormer rooms in the roof.
- The separation distances could potentially deviate slightly from official guidelines due to the established density in the area, but there was a limit to this flexibility, taking into consideration amenity of existing dwellings.
- The roofline of the block needed to be minimised where possible to reduce the impact on existing dwellings.



### 5.3 RESPONSE TO PRE-APPLICATION FEEDBACK

During a discussion with the planning officer, they suggested that a T-shaped arrangement might make the most effective use of the space, whilst keeping separation distances as generous as possible. The T-shape enabled units to be orientated as far as practicable from existing properties.

Combined with a secure yard and defensible space to the perimeter, Block A is carefully positioned to sit harmoniously within the site, achieving over 15metres on a splay from the principal elevation to Derwent Street, and a minimum of 13.5metres to the secondary elevations to the rear of the terraces across the yard, one of which is also splayed.

The roofline facing west is hipped, to minimise its impact for the terraces across Derwent Street and to the west.



## SECTION B: THE PROPOSAL

## 6 USE

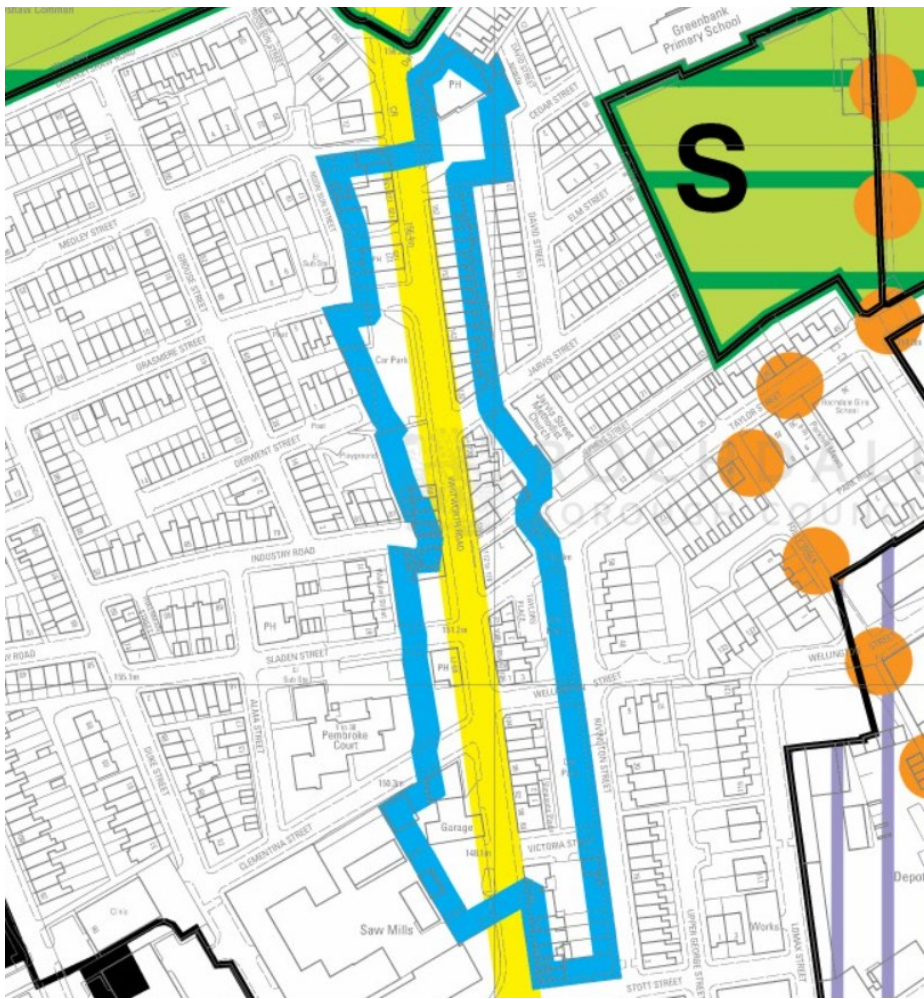
### 6.1 THE PROPOSAL

The proposed use of the development is C3 Dwelling Houses. The dwellings will be managed by Stepping Stone Projects, to provide supported accommodation for homeless people and those at risk of homelessness.

The designs follow Approved Document M and BS8300 guidance to deliver accessible dwellings, which can be used by residents with a wide range of abilities and circumstances, including wheelchair users, ambulant disabled and people with mental health issues.

The Rochdale Borough Unitary Development Plan identifies a strip (highlighted blue) of the Whitworth Road corridor bordering the site for S/3 'Primary Shopping Areas'. This is reflected by the independent shops across the road from Site 1 and the diverse range of businesses in the area, which the new development will support. There is no other allocation for the land, and it is not recognised as protected open space.

The development supports the 'Housing First approach', a key tenet of the Rochdale Borough's Homelessness Strategy, by providing new capacity which can be operated sustainably in the interests of service users and the broader community.



## 7 AMOUNT

### 7.1 SCHEDULE OF ACCOMMODATION

The density of the development has been carefully considered, to strike a balance between providing new dwellings to support a critical area of housing need, whilst not exceeding an appropriate scale of development for the site. The resulting quantity of units emerged naturally from the design development process, taking into consideration the constraints of each site for the three blocks.

Each dwelling is designed to meet Nationally Described Space Standards and follow the principles of Category 2 'Accessible & Adaptable Dwellings'. The designated accessible dwellings follow the principles of Category 3 'Wheelchair user dwellings'.

|                                 |                       |                     |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------|
| Apartment A1                    | 1 bed flat            | 36.5m <sup>2</sup>  |
| Apartment A2                    | 1 bed flat            | 37.5 m <sup>2</sup> |
| Apartment A3                    | 1 bed flat            | 37 m <sup>2</sup>   |
| Apartment A4                    | Accessible 1 bed flat | 53 m <sup>2</sup>   |
| Apartment A5                    | 1 bed flat            | 36.5 m <sup>2</sup> |
| Apartment A6                    | 1 bed flat            | 37.5 m <sup>2</sup> |
| Apartment A7                    | 1 bed flat            | 37 m <sup>2</sup>   |
| Apartment A8                    | 2 bed flat            | 60.5 m <sup>2</sup> |
| <b>BLOCK A: 8no. units</b>      |                       |                     |
| Apartment B1                    | 1 bed flat            | 39 m <sup>2</sup>   |
| Apartment B2                    | 1 bed flat            | 39 m <sup>2</sup>   |
| Apartment B3                    | 1 bed flat            | 39 m <sup>2</sup>   |
| Apartment B4                    | 1 bed flat            | 39 m <sup>2</sup>   |
| <b>BLOCK B: 4no. units</b>      |                       |                     |
| Apartment C1                    | Accessible 1 bed flat | 41 m <sup>2</sup>   |
| Apartment C2                    | Accessible 1 bed flat | 42 m <sup>2</sup>   |
| <b>BLOCK C: 2no. units</b>      |                       |                     |
| <b>GRAND TOTAL: 14no. units</b> |                       |                     |

## 8 LAYOUT

### 8.1 SITE LAYOUT

Blocks B and C are orientated to Grasmere Street, in-filling underutilised gaps within the street fabric and providing continuity to the streetscape. The Block B entrance is recessed from the back of pavement to provide space for pedestrians and separation between the ground floor dwellings and public realm. The set-back also improves visibility at the car park junction. Block C has entrances facing Grasmere Street and Noon Sun Street, for the two ground floor dwellings, respectively. Block A is accessed from the footpath connecting Whitworth Road and Derwent Street, which will be widened and improved to support the new development and improve existing connections through the site. The entrance is recessed from the footpath to provide a degree of separation and a threshold between the building and public realm. This access point will be staffed by an on-site operative, providing not only security to the building, but also support for the service users and a friendly point of contact. To the rear of each block are private gardens and yard spaces, echoing that of the surrounding neighbourhood, with a clear distinction between the front and rear; principal and secondary elevations.

Each block will benefit from a wheelchair accessible level-access entrance and a step-free approach route, designed in accordance with Approved Document M and BS8300 guidance. Eight of the fourteen dwellings will be accessed step free (the remaining six dwellings being upstairs in Blocks A and B). The two Block C dwellings are specifically designed to be accessible dwellings, for a range of disabilities including a wheelchair user. Improvements to the public realm, most notably the footpath fronting Block A, will improve accessibility and connectivity within the neighbourhood as a whole.

The three blocks have been designed with the same distinctive materials, which differentiate the development within its surroundings. This will assist service users in identifying the accommodation and wayfinding, including Blocks B and C which are separate from the staffed complex in Block A.

### 8.2 VIEWS & VISTAS

The primary views are from Whitworth Road, as the main traffic and pedestrian thoroughfare in the area. Blocks A and B can be seen clearly from this road, whereas Block C is mainly obscured. Accordingly, the gable elevations of the former two blocks and the oblique view of their front and side elevation have been carefully considered. The feature cladding and surround element has been incorporated on both elevations to create a coherent repertoire of form and detailing, which distinguishes the separate blocks as a singular development. The front elevations of Blocks B and C have also been considered within their respective street scenes, in particular Block B which is situated adjacent Victorian terraces, the detailing, and proportions of which have been subtly referenced.



## 9 SCALE

### 9.1 FINAL MASSING

The earlier Design section of this document has detailed the comprehensive evolution of the scheme massing in response to the many site constraints, site opportunities, Rochdale Borough Council's planning involvement and our Client's requirements. The scale, density and massing of the proposal has been developed to blend in with the local area and local characteristics.

The scale of the development responds to adjacent existing buildings, considers the existing topography, and reflects the specific nature of the scheme a dwellings and support facilities for service users with complex needs.

Based on RBC feedback, room in roof accommodation was avoided in favour of a strictly two storey development, in keeping with the predominant building typologies of the area. Simple 30° pitched roofs were used, with gables and hipped roofs where appropriate, to minimise ridge heights.

Where necessary, in the case of Block C, the scale was reduced to single storey dwellings, to reflect the existence of bungalows on Grasmere Street and avoid overlooking issues to an existing first floor window.

The quantity of dwellings is proportionate to the size of the site and will not add burden to the infrastructure and services of the area, rather the function of the dwellings as houses for vulnerable service users will alleviate pressure on services and provide invaluable social assets.



# 10 LANDSCAPE

## 10.1 LANDSCAPE STRATEGY

As per the *Ecological Mitigation, Management and Enhancement Plan* enclosed, and with reference to drawing WHI-TRI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-3010, the landscaping and ecology strategy for the site includes replacement tree planting, shrubs, new grass and garden areas, and bat & bird boxes integrated on the external walls of the new buildings.

A total of 5 new trees are proposed on the broader site. Due to the constraints of the 3 respective sites for Blocks A, B & C, there is not sufficient space for tree planting within the immediate vicinity of the buildings, however, the existing grass verge adjacent Whitworth Road offers the opportunity for high quality tree planting in a suitable location. These new trees will not only enhance the amenity of the development but also that of the surrounding neighbourhood and those passing by on Whitworth Road. Strategically placed hedgerow/shrub planting will supplement the trees in contributing to the biodiversity of the site and providing screening and security where appropriate.

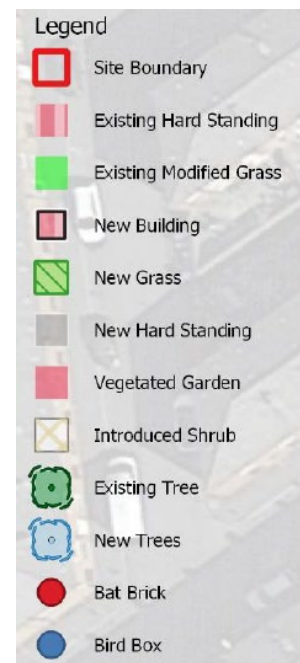
### Tree Schedule

|    |                                    |
|----|------------------------------------|
| T1 | Existing tree removed              |
| T2 | Existing tree retained             |
| T3 | Existing tree replaced by new tree |
| T4 | Existing tree replaced by new tree |
| T5 | Existing tree removed              |
| T6 | New tree                           |
| T7 | New tree                           |
| T8 | New tree                           |

Total trees removed: 2no.

Total trees replaced: 2no.

Total trees planted: 5no.



# 11 APPEARANCE

## 11.1 VISUAL STRATEGY

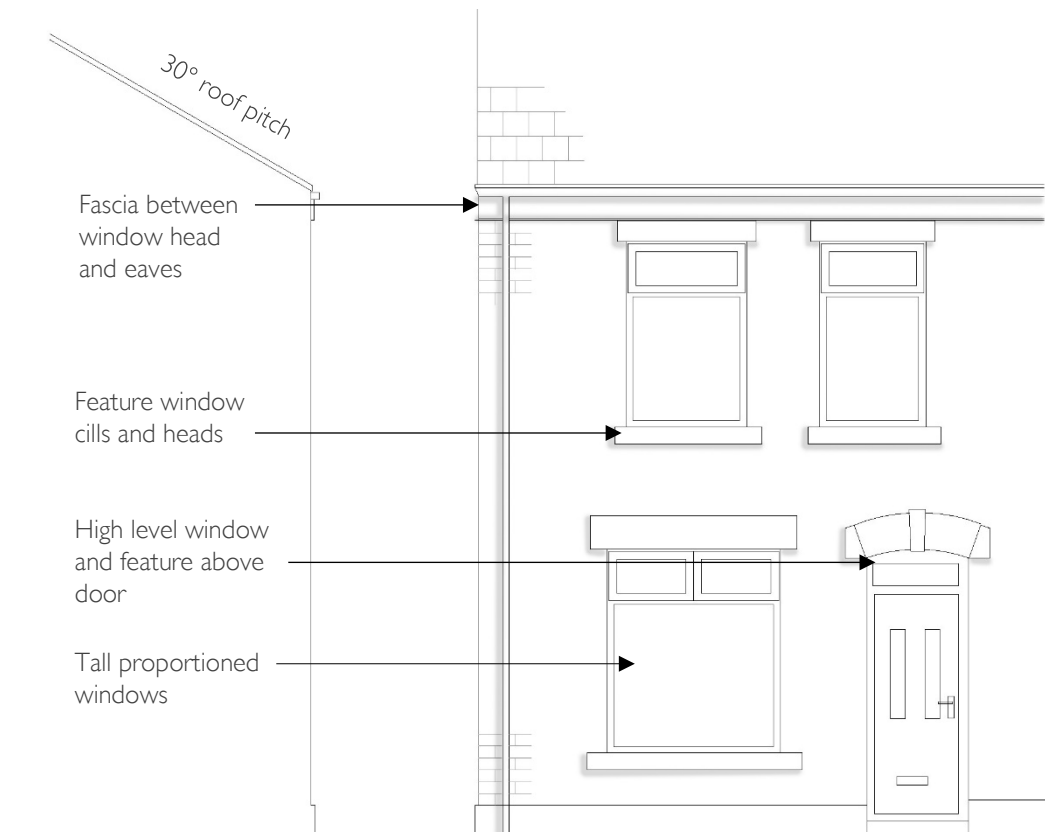
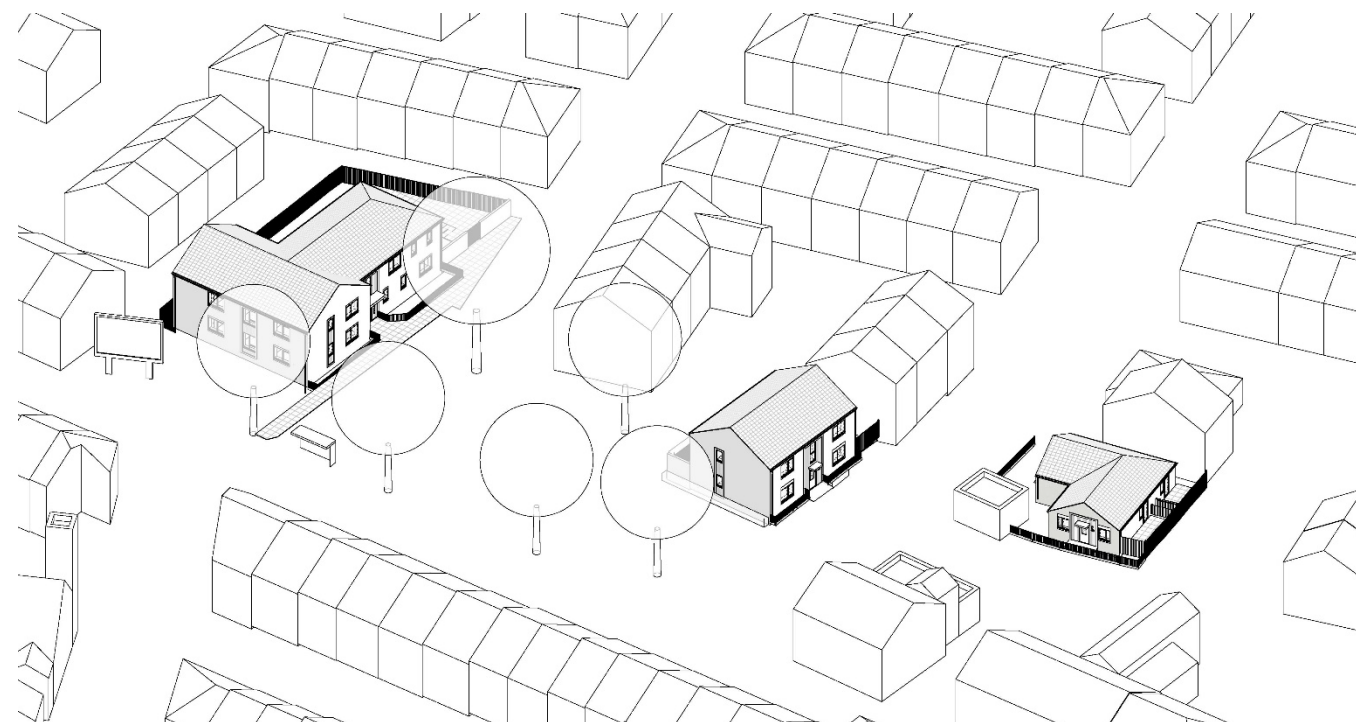
As outlined in previous sections, the massing of the development is key to integrate it within the existing context, which is richly layered and diverse. The primary visual strategy that arose from the pre-application process was to take cues from this context, maintaining two-storey building form with 30° pitched roofs, and traditional appearance such as facing brickwork and slate roof tiles.

Among the mixed vernacular of the surrounding neighbourhood, the Victorian terraces stand out with their familiar but idiosyncratic character, featuring detailing elements such as arched door lintels, testament to the pride taken in their work by the builders of the day. Utilitarian elements such as oversized window lintels, banding at ground level, and large fascias at the eaves provide practical advantages whilst contributing to the proportions and appearance.

The aesthetic of the proposed development takes cues from this history and abstracts it into new forms. The oversized window cills and lintels are echoed in the new elevations, but whereas the Victorian cills projected to add depth, these contemporary cills sit flush. And, whereas the Victorian lintels and cills were formed in contrasting colours, the new lintels and cills inherit the tone and colour of the surrounding brickwork, thereby subtly emphasising the change in rhythm and proportion between brickwork coursing and larger stone elements.

This subtle approach on the larger sections of elevation helps to emphasise the contrast on the feature sections, which utilise a blue cladding material to contrast with the brickwork. These areas of cladding are bounded by cast stone elements, in this case with a projection to emphasise the change in material and provide depth. The canopy elements once again echo the aesthetic philosophy of the Victorian terraces, which emphasised the front doors with depth and detailing above, in this case by the inclusion of cantilevered canopies of the same colour as the contrast cladding.

The massing and detailing strategy is coherent across the three blocks, thereby distinguishing them within the site, so that service users, visitors, and the general public can identify the scheme in its surroundings. The simple and bold colour scheme and design philosophy aims to create dwellings that foster a sense of identity for their inhabitants, thereby assisting them to feel comfortable, safe, and valued.



## 11.2 ELEVATIONS & MATERIALS

As described previously, the material palette features a primarily two-tone colour scheme:

- Primary colour: a soft, light grey, with subtle variance provided by a multi brick and cast stone elements, contrasting with the dominant red brick of the existing buildings in the area.
- Contrast colour: a calming, desaturated blue for the cladding, doors, and canopy, which compliments the soft grey. Whilst being distinctive, the colour is subtle, and the blue/green tone is informed by the psychological effect of colours (blue inspires calmness and serenity, while green cultivates peace and growth).

Brickwork and cast stone are proposed not only for their aesthetic properties, but their durability and robustness. Similarly, a long-lasting synthetic or pre-treated cladding will be used, which will be protected from weathering and decay. Traditional slate appearance roof tiles are proposed with a thin leading edge, in grey to match the existing roofs in the area, and uPVC is proposed for windows for its cost effectiveness and simplicity.

## 11.3 SCHEME VISUALS

Please refer to enclosed drawings *WHI-TRI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-3201-P01 Proposed Street Elevations* and *WHI-TRI-ZZ-ZZ-DR-A-3501-P01 Proposed 3D Perspectives* for two-dimensional and three-dimensional visualisations of the scheme.

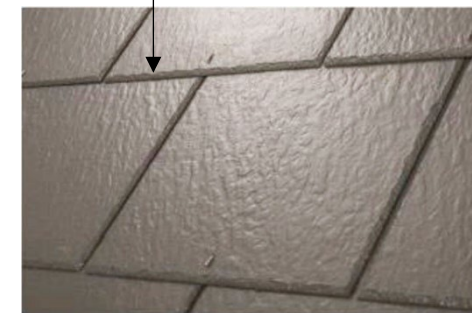


Light Grey Brick

Cast Stone surrounds,  
heads & cills

Contrasting Feature  
Blue Cladding

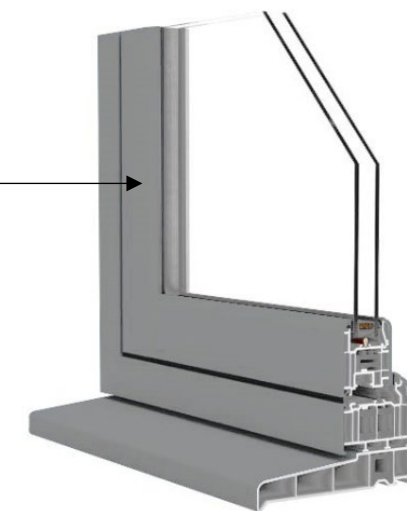
Thin profile concrete Roof Tiles  
(traditional slate appearance)



Contrasting Feature Blue Doors



Grey uPVC Windows



## 12.0 ACCESS

### 12.1 INCLUSIVE ACCESS STRATEGY

The overall philosophy is to create a development that will improve the character of the surrounding area and create a focal point that will meet the needs of its occupiers and visitors. This statement demonstrates a clear commitment to deliver a welcoming and inclusive residential development. Careful consideration has been, and will continue to be applied, to meet best practice and inclusive design standards.

The designs follow Approved Document M and BS8300 guidance to deliver accessible dwellings, which can be used by residents with a wide range of abilities and circumstances, including wheelchair users, ambulant disabled and people with mental health issues. Each dwelling is designed to meet Nationally Described Space Standards and follow the principles of Category 2 'Accessible & Adaptable Dwellings'. The designated accessible dwellings follow the principles of Category 3 'Wheelchair user dwellings'.

### 12.2 VEHICULAR & TRANSPORT LINKS

The site is within a highly sustainable location and meets the aspirations of the National Planning Policy Framework. It is well served by public transport, with a bus stop situated immediately adjacent the site on Whitworth Road, providing access to services generally arriving at 15minute intervals for the 464, 867 or 999 routes. The site is also within 1km of Rochdale Interchange tram stop, providing access to the Metrolink network with connections across Greater Manchester.

There is a cycle lane immediately adjacent to the site on the west side of Whitworth Road, connecting the site to the Rochdale cycle network.

This proximity to the main road also ensures the location is well served by the local road network, making access by car or taxi very easy. Parking is available on the adjacent public access car park or on street parking, ensuring that disabled users will be able to park in a convenient location to use the facilities.

### 12.3 REFUSE & RECYCLING STRATEGY

Refuse storage is provided for each of the 3 blocks in a secure enclosure obscured from view of the street.

For Block A, bins will be stored in a secure yard facility which will be maintained by the building management operatives. Refuse is already collected from the end of Derwent Street so these bins can utilise this existing provision. For Block B, the bins will be stored in a secure yard adjacent to the block and collection is already in place from Grasmere Street for the existing houses. Block C will have bins stored between the rear gardens in a secure, shared enclosure between the two patio spaces. The bins can be wheeled out via the rear ginnel to Noon Sun Street, where refuse collection arrangements are already in place for other properties.

Bins will be provided in accordance with the Rochdale Waste Management Strategy, for recycling, general waste, and compostable waste.