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Project	Okell Drive, Knowsley - Design & Access Statement
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About FCH

Established in 1997, Falconer Chester Hall (FCH) has an international reputation for using creative design intelligence to deliver inspirational buildings that maximise the commercial potential of a site.

FCH approach every project design with the same balance of creative and commercial flair. Working closely and actively with clients, they combine local themes and materials with a contemporary design approach, to create buildings that are both visually distinguished and commercially viable.

At Falconer Chester Hall, we believe that good master planning starts with understanding the place. We analyse the context of the site, including its history and community, and combine it with an appreciation of how the people who live, work and visit there would

interact with the space. Squares and sightlines, green space and more intimate areas, all combine to create character and interest. The buildings, appropriate to their function, are sensitively scaled and massed, layered with more subtle elements of texture and materiality to create legible and liveable places to be.

Our aim is to create visually stunning, practical buildings that not only respond to their context with flair and sensitivity but combine commercial viability and visual appeal to bring impressive economic, cultural and community benefits to the wider area.



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1.00 Location & Context

1.01 Strategic Context

Located in Knowsley, Halewood lies near to Liverpool's South Eastern boundary. Approximately 8 miles from the city centre Halewood lies adjacent to the suburbs of Netherly, Hunts Cross and Wooton.

It has excellent rural connections as well as strategic connections to wider parts of the UK via the M62 and M57 as well as other nearby A roads linking Warrington, St Helens and Runcorn and Liverpool Speke Airport to the South West.

One of the defining features of Halewood is Halewood Park, a local attraction and designated Local Wildlife Site consisting of mature woodland, ponds, walking trails and heathland remnants.

The Park was developed in 1982 when land previously used for the discontinued Cheshire Line Railway was purchased and the tracks were removed from the Junction leaving the distinctive triangular shape we see today. The park is flanked either side by residential properties.

The site, situated along Okell Drive, lies next to the park, occupying a small open space that is free of woodland or any other notable features aside from a single storey, disused pub. The site does not form part of the park.



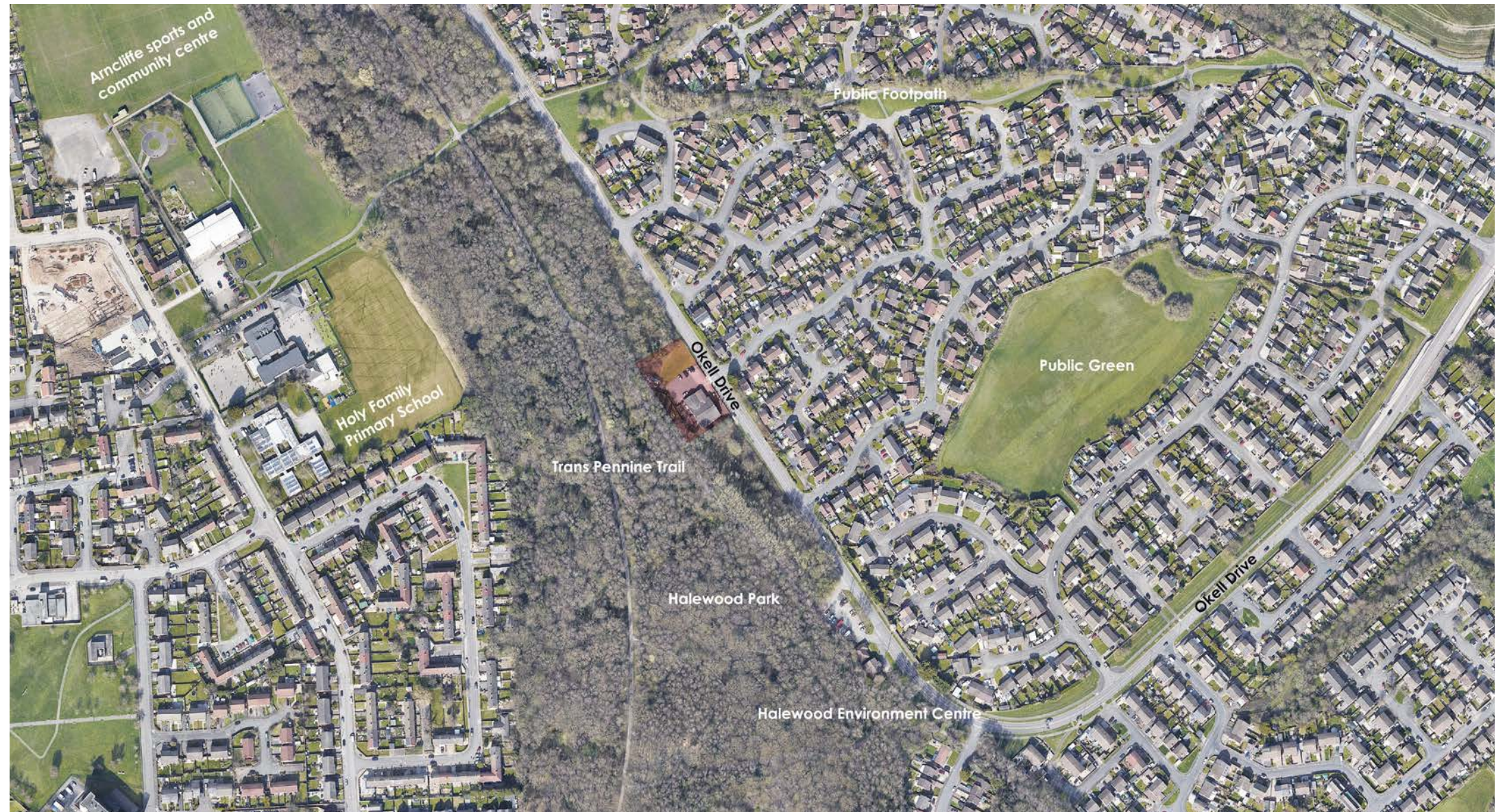
1.00 Location & Context

1.02 Wider Context

The site lies within a predominantly residential area, supported by a nearby community centre, local schools, shopping centre, golf course and both Halewood and Hunts Cross train stations.

There are numerous green pockets for locals to enjoy and an abundance of wildlife in the area. The Trans Pennine Trail runs almost perpendicular to Okell Drive and is easily accessible from the site via the Halewood Environmental Centre to the South.

To the west of the site, Holy Family Primary School and the Arncliffe sports and community centre also back onto the Park and are within easy walking distance, accessible via the old Northern Junction link that allows East West connections either side of the park via foot.



1.00 Location & Context

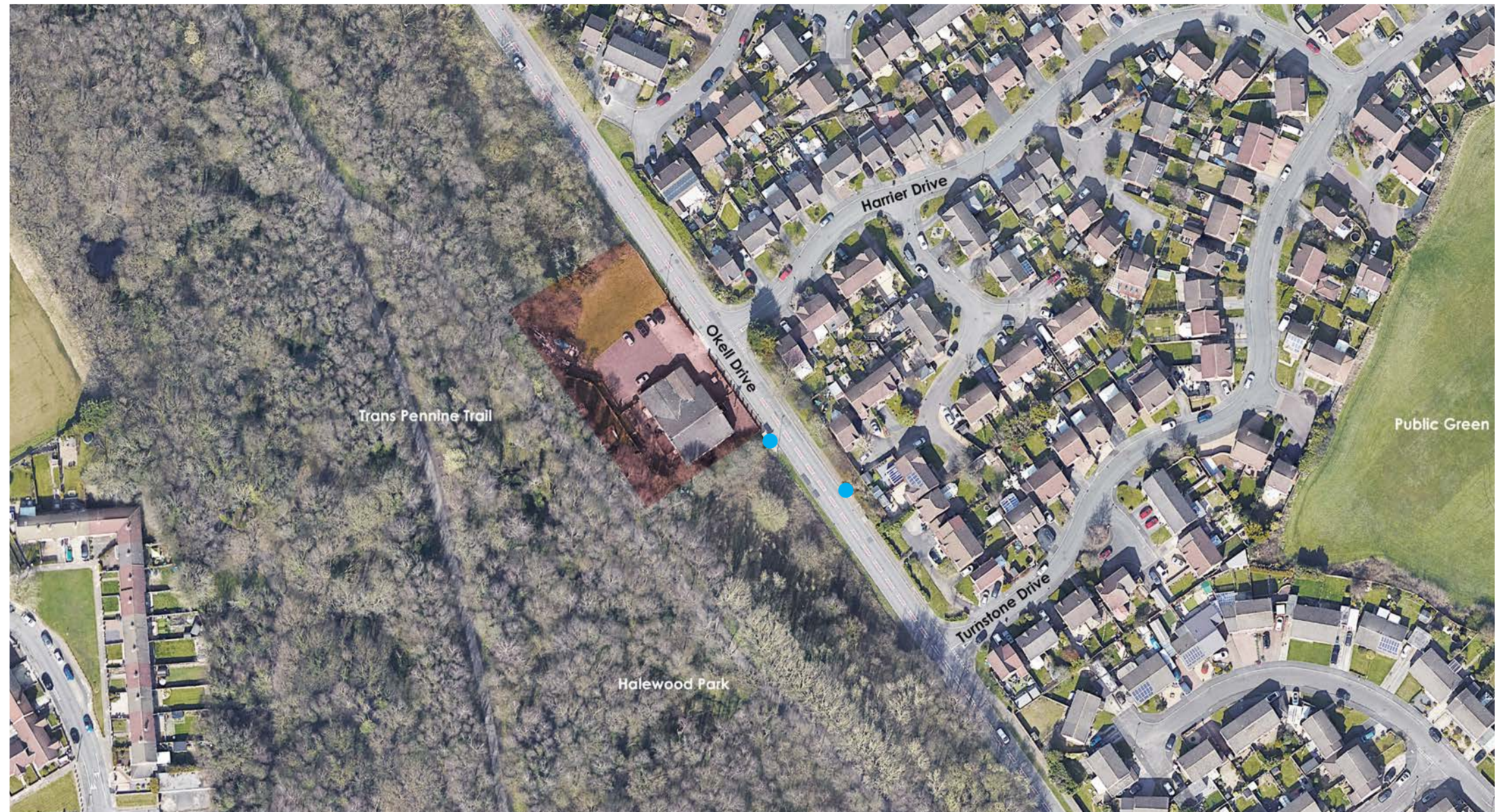
1.03 Local Context

● Bus Stop

The surrounding area consists of mainly semi detached and detached 2 storey dwellings that follow sprawling street patterns bound by the surrounding fields and greens.

The site lies opposite a T Junction between Okell Drive and Harrier Drive, which opens up into a thriving residential neighbourhood.

There is a nearly public green space to the East and a bus stop either side of Okell Drive both less than 1 minute walk to the South.



1.00 Location & Context

1.04 Existing use and access

The site is currently occupied by a single storey, derelict pub with gable frontage overlooking Okell Drive. The pub has very little architectural quality and presents a blank, brick frontage that has no engagement with the surrounding area.

The garage style building is somewhat of a landmark given its location and isolation but currently, the building has a negative effect on the area.

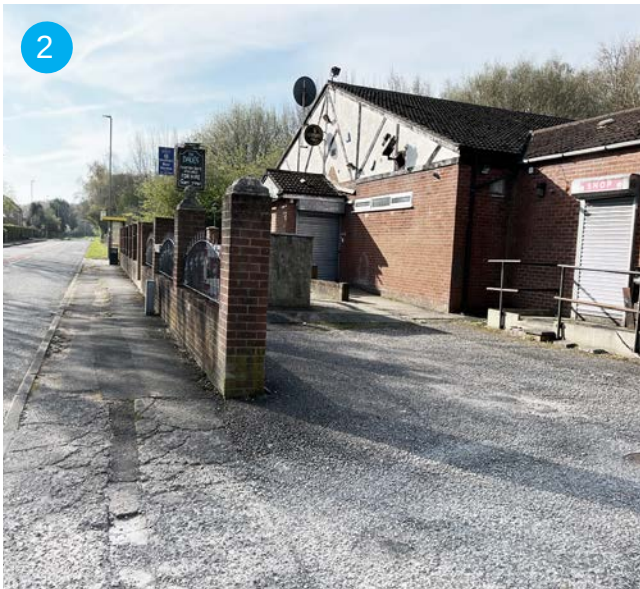
Existing site access is via Okell Drive, leading to a car park with tarmac surface. The car park is not secure or protected.

Key



Key

- 01View from Okell Drive
- 02 Looking South into the site
- 03 Looking North into the site
- 04 Nearby Bustop
- 05 Blank façades with gable ends

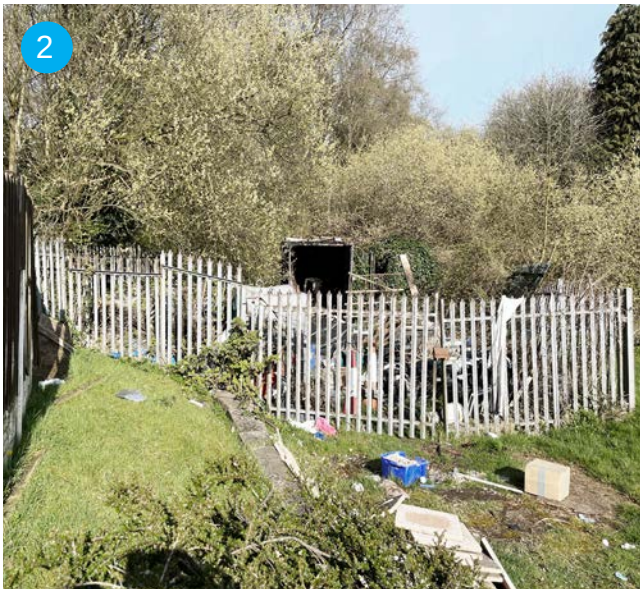


1.00 Location & Context

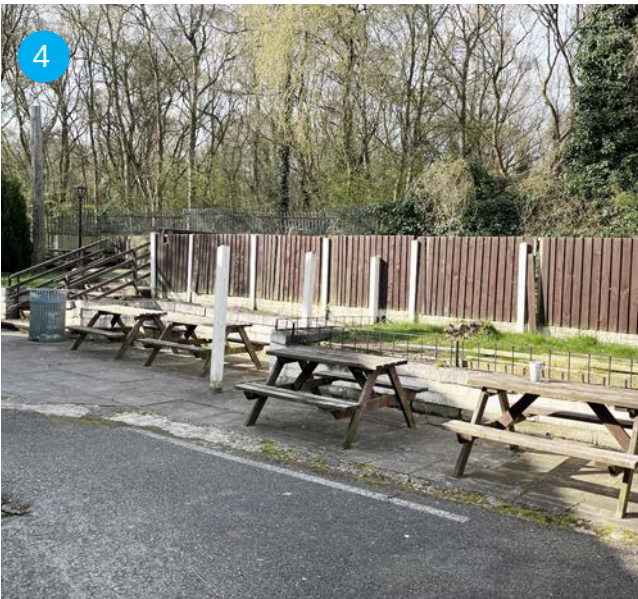
1.04 Existing use and access

Existing photos illustrating the immediate spaces around the building, demonstrating that the site is easily accessible due to its isolated nature and lack of natural surveillance.

- Key
- 01 Looking North
 - 02 North West site boundary
 - 03 North West site boundary
 - 04 South East site boundary
 - 05 Existing site access



Key



01 Location & Context

1.05 Surrounding area

The surrounding area is consists of generously sized and well maintained 2 storey dwellings with pitch roof and timber cladding.

Projecting window bays and porch style entrances are common. Roads are also generous with most properties having front yards with lawns and car park spaces for two vehicles. Bricks are generally red/brown.

Road layouts are organic, interspersed with sections of green, trees and sweeping lines. There are no hard edges within the immediate area.



01 Location & Context

1.05 Surrounding area

Okell Drive is largely flanked by mature trees and hedges on either side of the road but has only one pavement along the Eastern edge. There is a small section of pavement adjacent to the site (on the Western edge) but only to allow access to the nearby bus stop.

The only other building along the western edge is the Halewood Environmental Centre (bottom left).

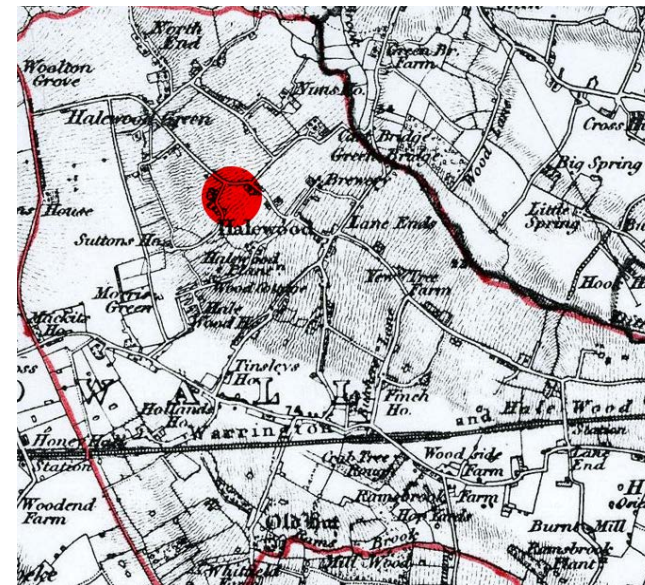


1.00 Location & Context

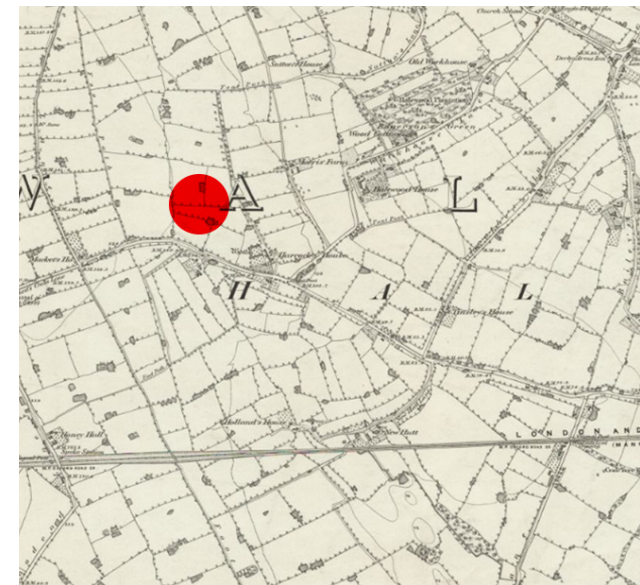
1.06 Site History

Halewood has a rich agricultural background and countryside atmosphere, historically consisting of scattered farmland, such as Okell Farm, and other country lanes and cottages.

The railway was bound along the East by Okell Farm and its farmland, which presumably later became Okell Drive when a road was introduced running parallel to the railway.



1847



1893



1895

1.00 Location & Context

1.07 Historical Context



1894 (with 2023 map underlay)

Changes in the area begin to come in around the 19th Century following the introduction of two main railways lines. The north south, east west line, owned by Cheshire Line Railways, now the Trans Pennine trail, historically merged at a junction known today as the Halewood Triangle, later converted into Halewood Park and a defining feature of the site.



1927 (with 2023 map underlay)

Historic maps show that the site was once pond land, and whilst the surrounding area was planted, evolving into the mature woodland we see today, the site was not, which makes it a unique and special plot of land.

1.00 Location & Context

1.07 Historical Context



1951 (with 2023 map underlay)

By the 1950's residential areas begin to appear to the West of the site although much of the area remained rural.



1980 (with 2023 map underlay)

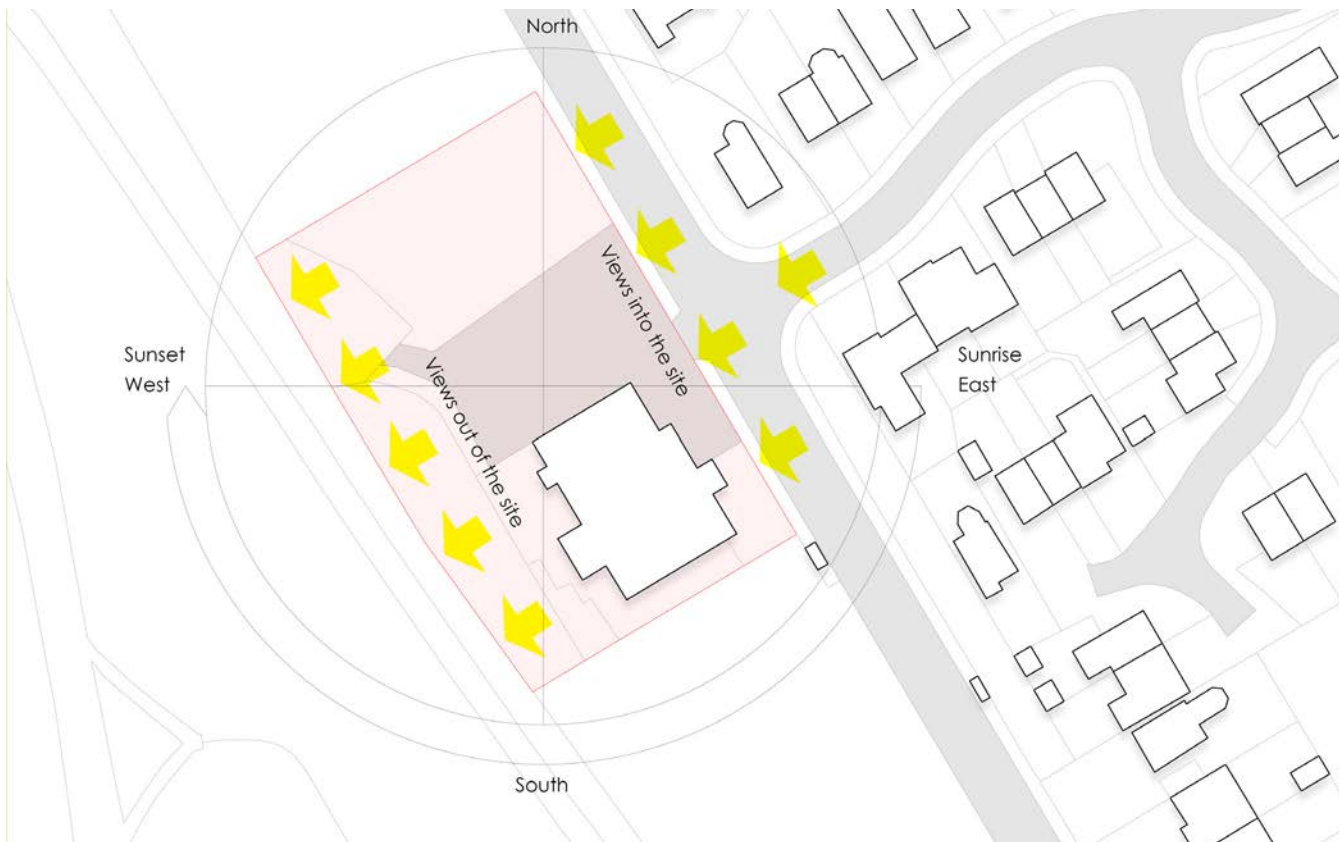
Drastic changes can clearly be seen by the 1980's with the development of the neighbourhoods that we see today. The development of Halewood Park can clearly be seen.

2.00 Site analysis

- 2.01 Sunpath
- 2.02 Building lines
- 2.03 Trees
- 2.04 Existing figure ground plan

2.00 Site Analysis

2.01 Site Analysis: Sunpath



Sunpath

The site is generally speaking very well lit, benefiting from morning sun across the eastern edge that fronts Okell Drive.

As the sun passes over to the West, sunset views are likely to be obscured by the mature and dense tree line running along the site boundary.

The site does benefit from a large expanse of south facing land that would make for ideal back garden space.

2.02 Site Analysis: Building lines



Building lines

Given the sites isolated nature there are few building lines that might impact any new development. The existing building was set back from the road by about 6m. Buildings on the opposite side of Okell Drive are also set back by c. 6m.

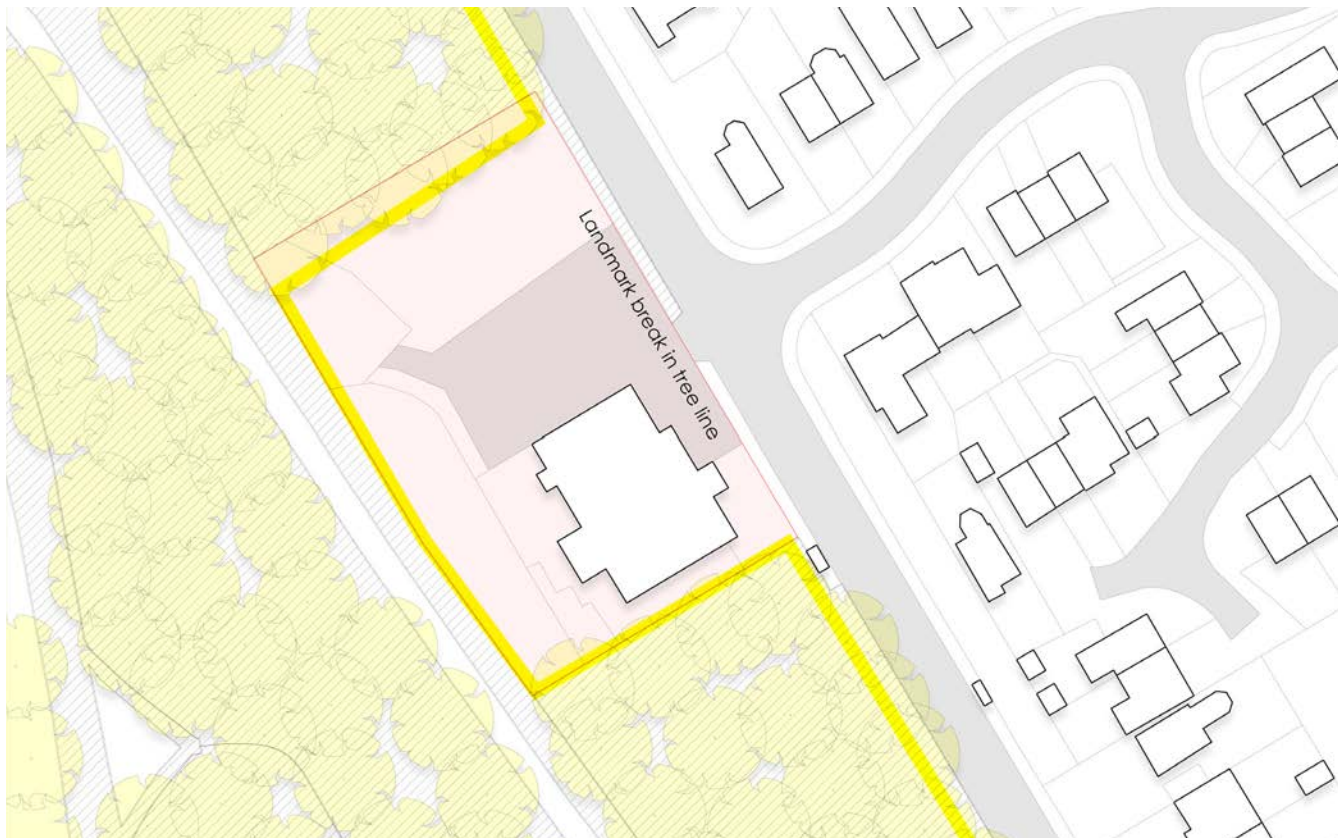
There are no historical building lines that we might draw reference from.

The existing tree line wraps around the site leaving a large open space in the middle. The nearest building along Okell Drive is the Halewood Park Environmental Centre which is set back by about 5m.

Whilst Okell Drive has a straight line axis the residential neighbourhood opposite is sprawling with many twists and turns. The buildings in this area are set back from the roads and feature front lawns, hedges and greens.

2.00 Location & Context

2.03 Site Analysis: Trees



Trees

There is an abundance of trees and greens within the area for residents to take advantage of, most notably Halewood Park. The best views out of the site are to the West, looking into the Park. The best views into the site are from Okell Drive.

A carefully detailed development here could present a complementary street-scene with the Park tree line in the background.

2.04 Site Analysis: Urban grain and massing



Urban Grain and massing

The surrounding area is predominately comprised of 2 storey plus roof detached and semi detached dwellings. The exception to this is the existing building which is a single storey garage style building. The nearby Halewood Park Environmental Centre is also 2 storey plus roof, as is the Holy Family Primary School. The Arncliffe Road Community Centre is single story.

As described earlier, the urban grain in this area is sprawling, largely due to its rural location and surrounding fields, around which the street pattern has been developed. The existing building does not contribute to the street pattern in any way. A new development however, could complement the existing street patterns and grain.

3.00 Design development

3.01 Pre app advice - Key points

3.02 Pre app advice - Layout, scale and massing

3.03 Design influences - Semi detached dwellings

3.00 Design Development

3.01 Pre-app Advice - Ref 23/00013/PREAPP - The Dales

A pre app meeting was held 05.07.23, during which initial proposals (fig 1) for a high quality, small residential scheme were presented to the council.

Support was generated although a number of Architectural / urban design issues were raised as outlined below, requiring further consideration.

The following section seeks to address how each point has been considered.

Key concerns / Points raised at Pre App:

- The development should create a transition from the suburban built form on the eastern side of Okell Drive to the wooded, green aspect of Halewood Park.
- Any redevelopment should avoid creating conflict between the surrounding tree cover and the living conditions of future occupants.
- Strong urban form and linear frontage is not appropriate for the site.
- The siting of the units needs to be more spacious with more provision for landscaping.
- The current proposal has a dominant form that should be avoided.
- Interface distances and private amenity should follow the guidance within the New Residential Development SPD.
- A robust hedgerow should be provided to the Okell Drive frontage adjacent to the pavement.
- Materials should be carefully selected and justified.

3.00 Design Development

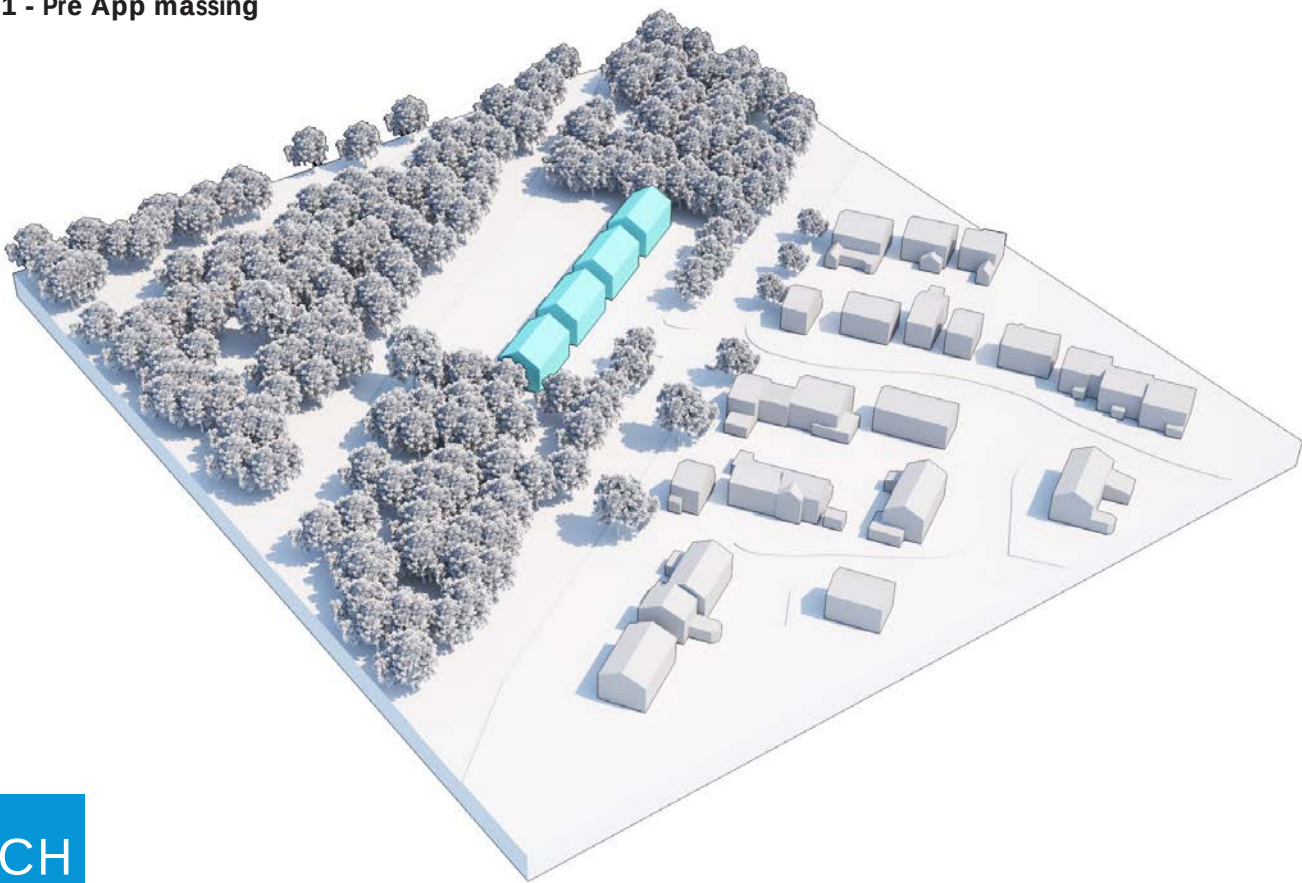
3.02 Pre-app Advice - Layout, scale and massing

The previous proposal was for 8no. 2 storey units arranged in a linear form fronting Okell Drive, providing a strong urban front, illustrated below.

Pre app advice outlined that this approach was not appropriate for the site or the housing estate opposite which is arranged around an organic street pattern without any linear frontage or dominant forms.

The strong edge to Okell Drive was considered to be out of character for the area, and did not help the transition from the suburban built form to the Park.

FIG 1 - Pre App massing

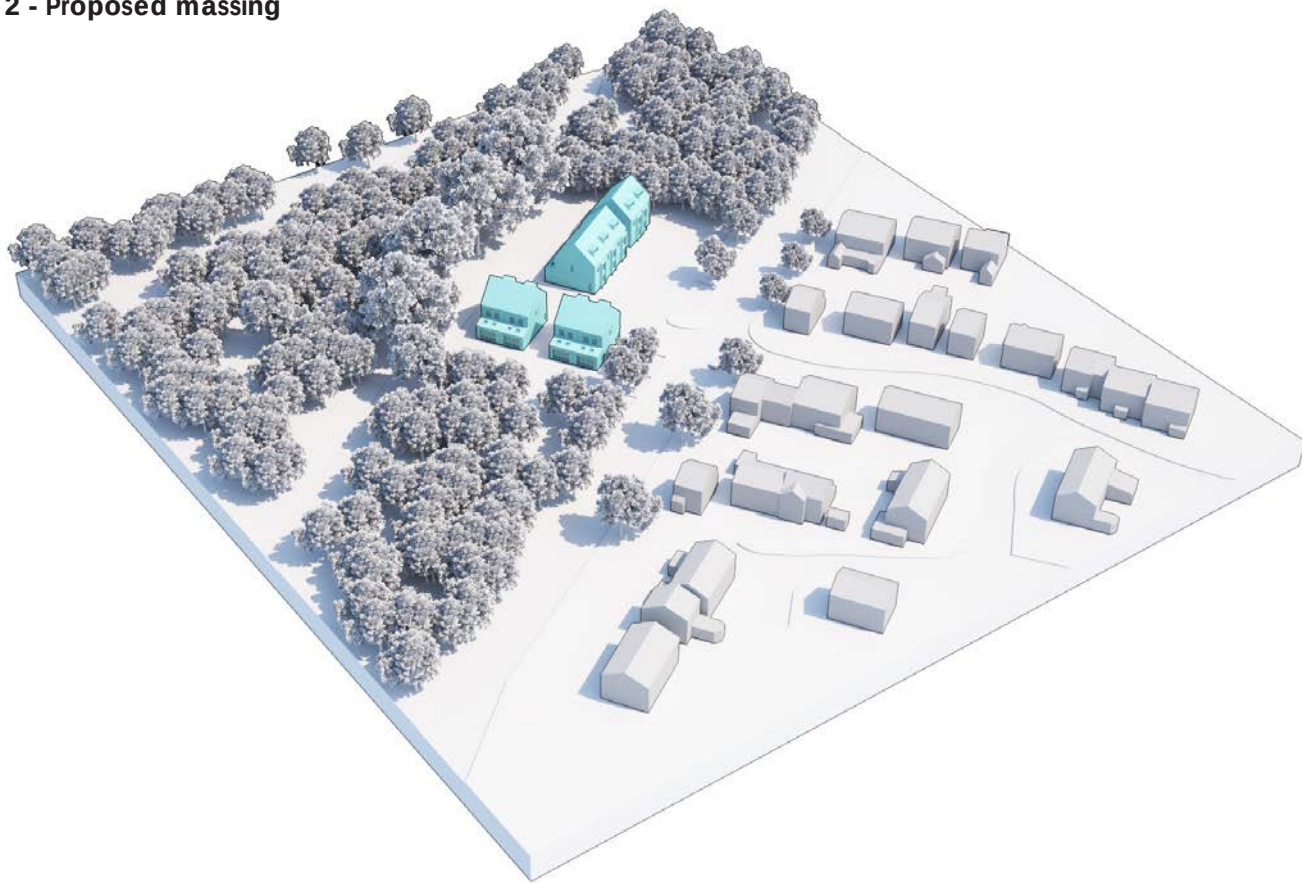


The updated proposal makes better use of the site with 9no. 2 storey units being proposed.

The development has been re-arranged as to better integrate into the local context. The new arrangement is far less impactfull against Okell Drive and also far less dominant, with set backs that help to transition between built forms and the park behind, which frames the proposals.

The layout is now more organic, seeking to complement the surrounding area with more opportunities for landscaping and a more generous spacing between plots.

FIG 2 - Proposed massing



3.00 Design Development

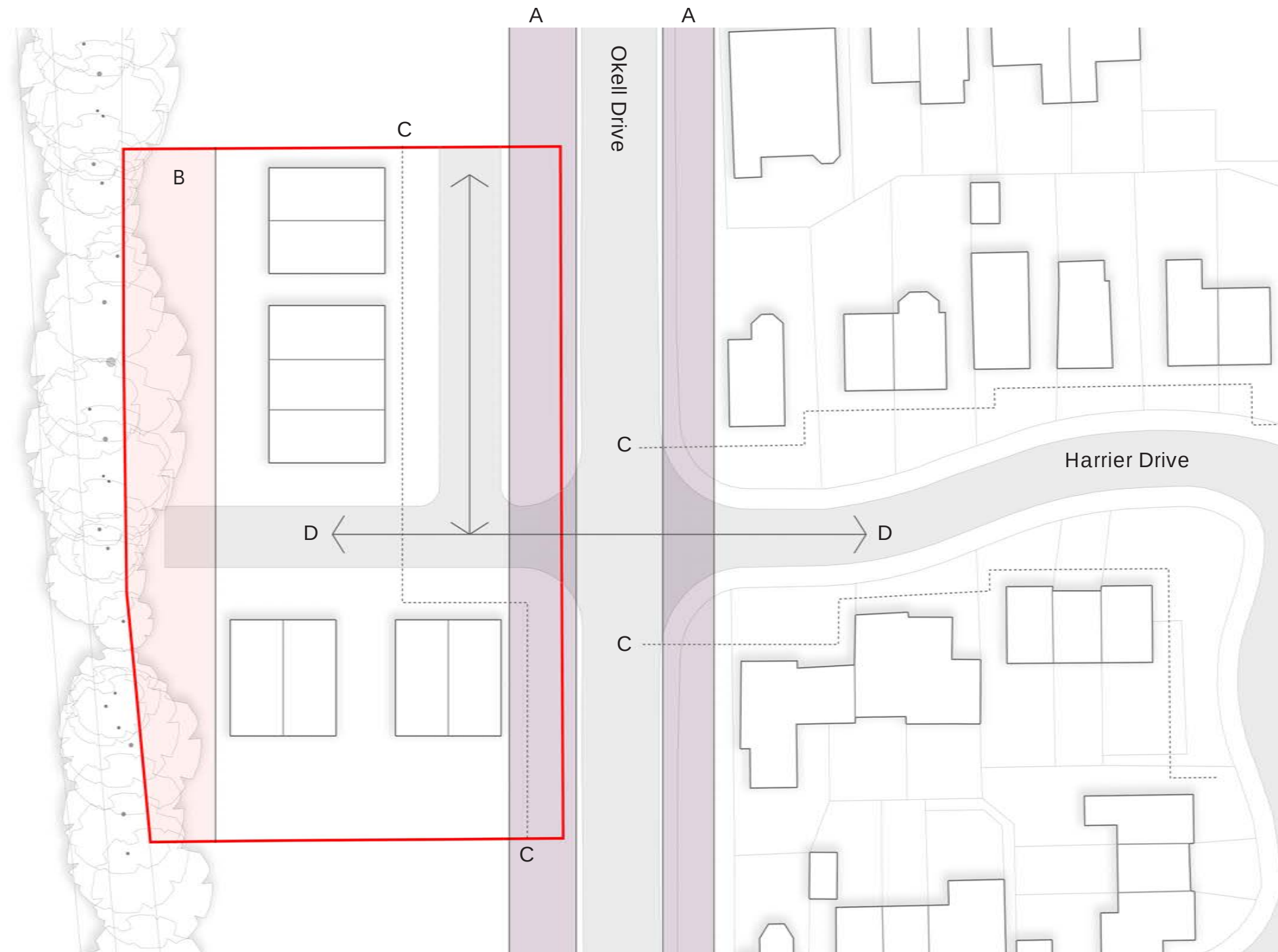
3.02 Pre-app Advice - Layout, scale and massing

The proposed layout has been carefully reconsidered. Initially, a series of no build zones were formed at A and B, ensuring that the mature tree line and park, and offset against Okell Drive was maintained. The resulting central space of the plot was then used to locate the various plots. With the plots proposed to the centre of the site, any potential conflict with the existing tree cover is avoided.

The proposal is arranged with a step to the building line (C) which is in keeping with the local character of the area, which does not have any hard edges. The road layout that follows this is also in keeping with the local road layouts that are somewhat sprawling and varied, although a new junction is formed with Harrier Drive, this helps to integrate the development into the local context.

Key:

- A - Building offset lines from Okell Drive.
- B - Offset line from Park and mature tree line.
- C - Consistent stepped building lines
- D - Link to Harrier Drive / New junction



3.00 Design Development

3.03 Design influences: Semi Detached Dwellings

Typically built between World Wars I and II, the semi detached house type remains synonymous with suburban living, emerging out of its rural birthplace this house type is now common place throughout the UK.

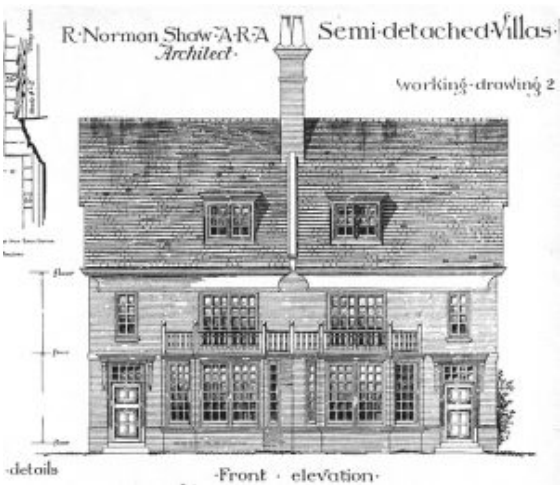
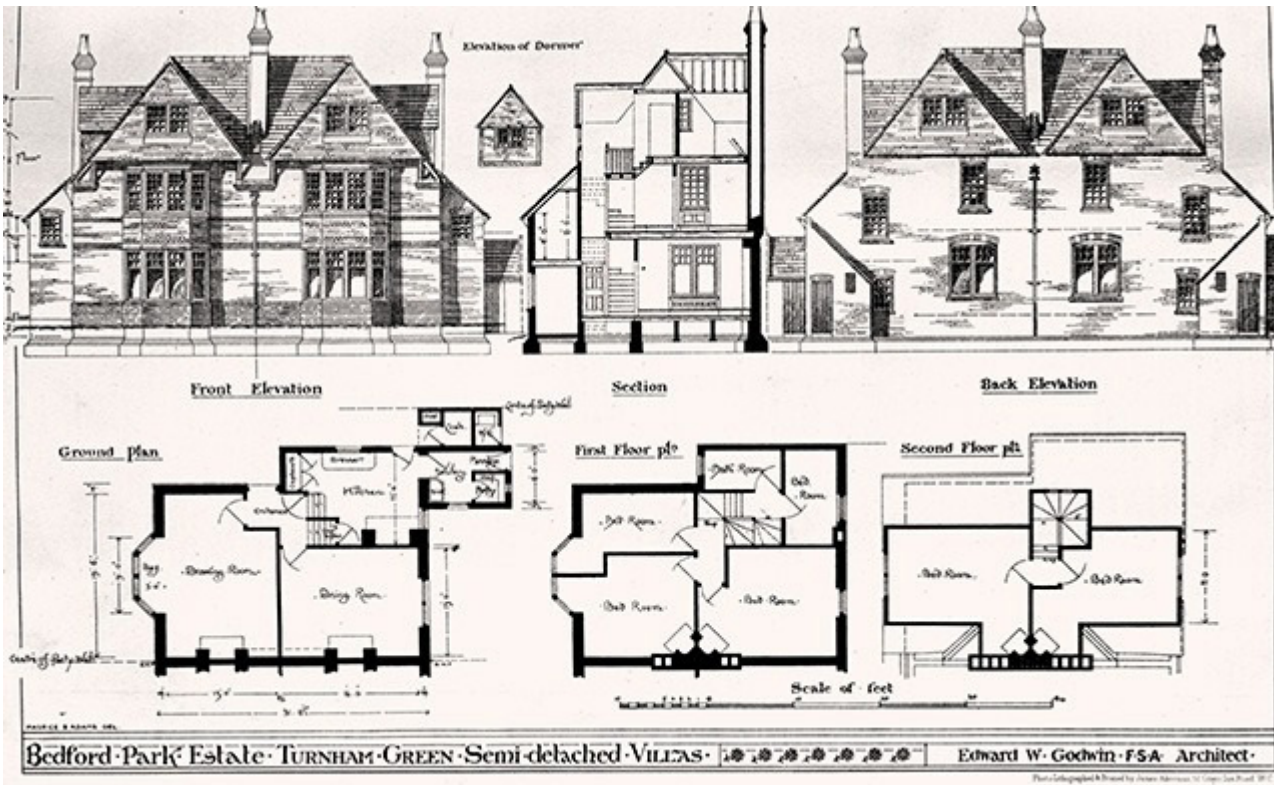
Semi Detached houses were usually found in rural areas where it was more economical to build two houses together with a shared wall, that it was to build detached.

Renowned Architect Norman Shaw is widely credited for his influential Semi detached

designs with rational layouts that were easy to mirror and repeat, featuring light filled bay windows and a unified, yet individual frontage. As can be seen below with drawings for Bedford Park, Shaw was also utilising roof space as early as 1877.

Following Shaws influence, the Semi has evolved into what we typically see today.

The proposed development draws inspiration from this, applying modern interpretations to tried and tested ideas.



Shaws designs are characterised by tall pitched roof spaces with dormer like features, bay windows and horizontal banding.

4.00 Proposed design

- 4.01 Wider context site plan
- 4.02 Proposed site plan
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- 4.04 Proposed GA elevations
- 4.05 Proposed materials
- 4.06 Proposed context elevations
- 4.07 Appearance and detail precedents

4.00 Proposed Design

4.01 Wider Context Site Plan



The proposed development consists of 2 block types. Block type A - a 3 unit terrace, and Block type B - a 2 unit semi detached.

A single Type A terrace is proposed to the centre of the development, flanked by 3, Type B semi detached properties.

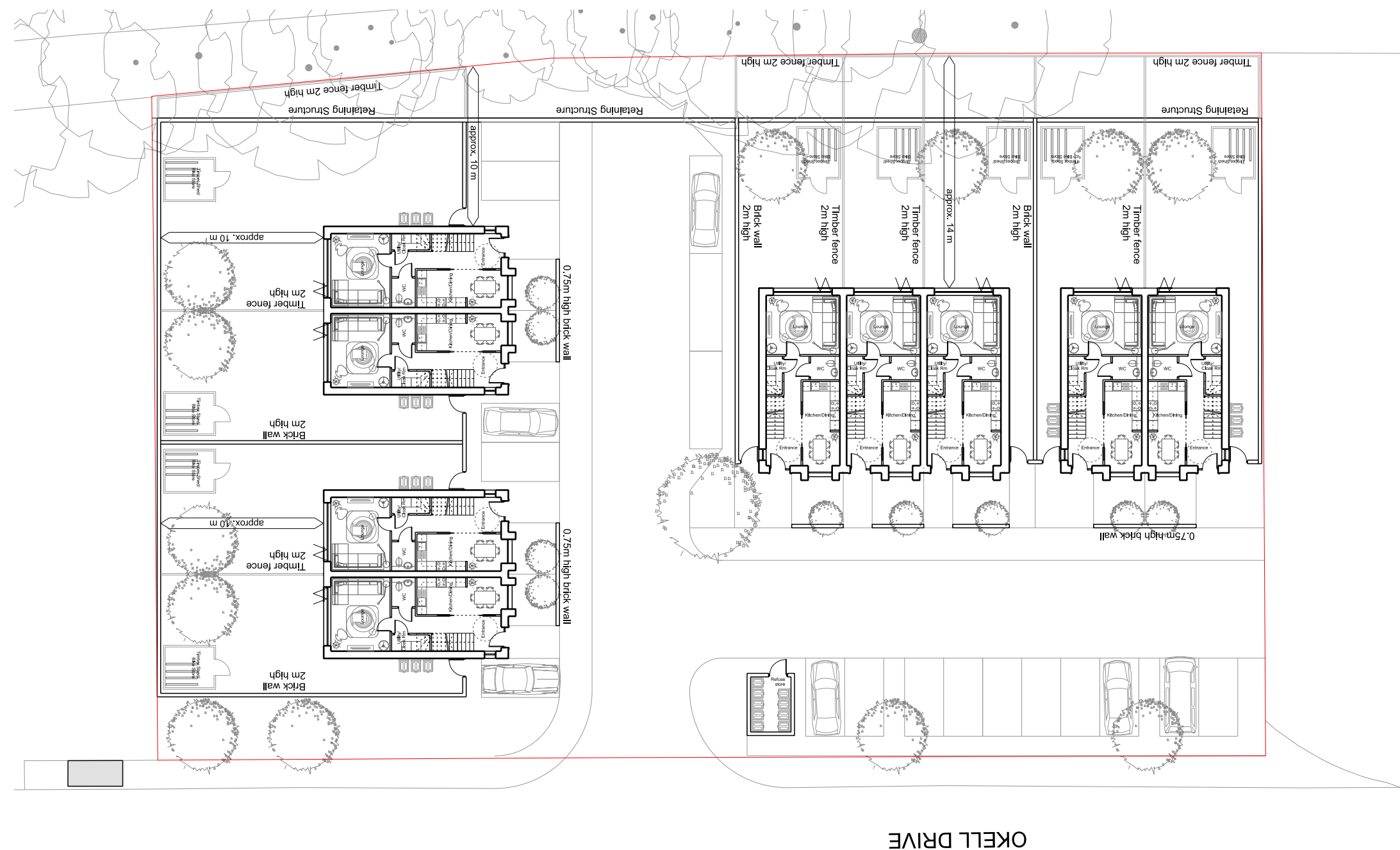
9no. 3 bed units are proposed total.

Access into the proposed development is via a new road, aligned to Harrier Drive opposite, affording continuity of the street pattern whilst also ensuring integration into the wider context.



4.00 Proposed Design

4.02 Proposed Site Plan



The proposed development seeks to strike a balance between open space and developed land, with each property fronting its own access road.

Each plot has also been set back from the track and mature tree line to the rear, by 10/14m, which provides a buffer zone to the park. The buffer zone also allows the park and tree line to form a backdrop, framing the houses in-front.

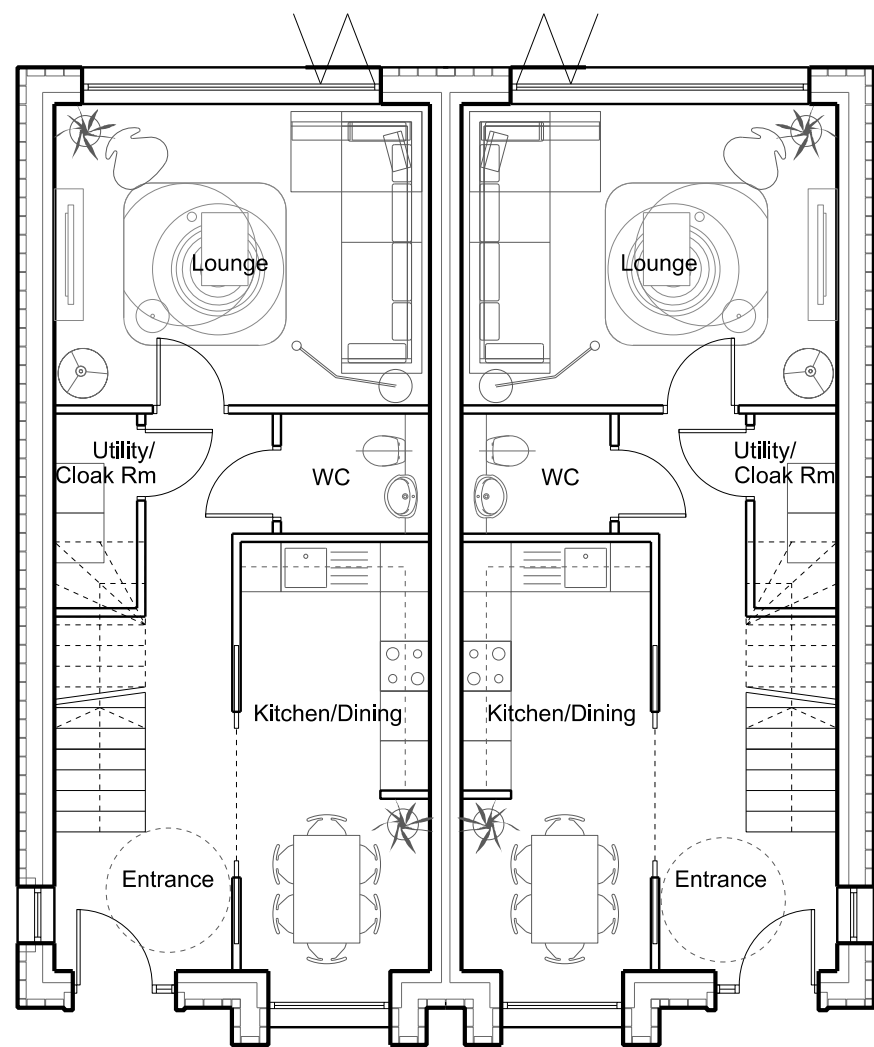
This arrangement ensures that no properties have a direct outlook onto either Okell Drive, or the park, they are all set back, clustered towards the centre of the development with plenty of open space.

Each property has 2no. dedicated car parking spaces.

4.00 Proposed Design

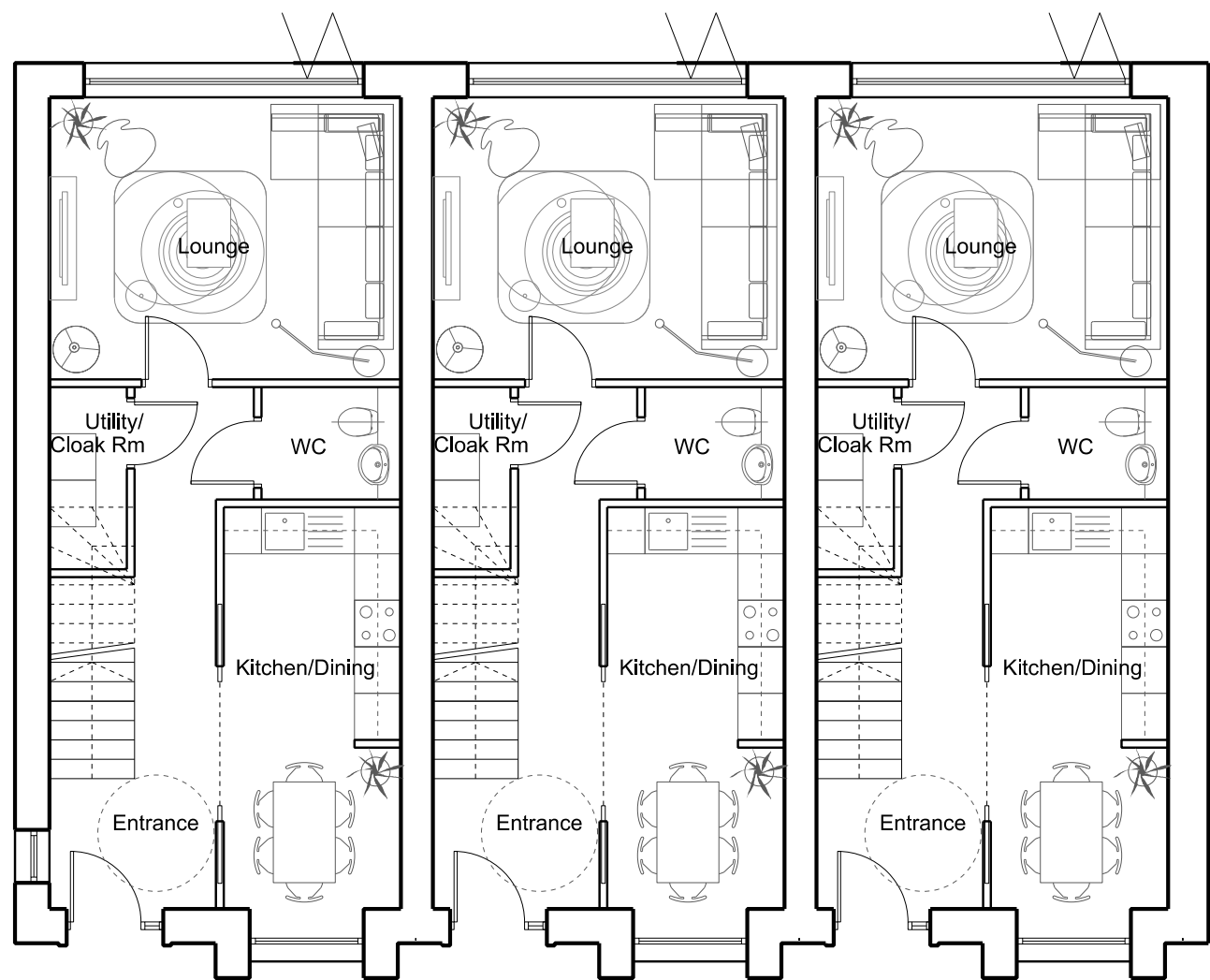
4.03 Proposed GA Plans - Ground floor

Block A



Block A layouts are mirrored about the centre line.

Block B



Block B layouts are repeated.

Each Block Type has the same internal layout, both have been designed to NDSS. The lounge is proposed to the rear, away from the main road (Okell Drive) and the new access road / car park and has large format bifold doors that open out onto generous open space. The lounge also has skylights in the roof space

above, ensuring the space is filled with natural light. The Kitchen / Diner is located to the front, adjacent to the main entrance, and features a pocket door, opening up into the hallway and stair for open plan living. Stair and WC are located centrally within the plan.