

Peter Barber

Output 1: Social Housing

Chatsworth Gardens, Morecambe, 2009 (un-built)

Ashchurch Place, Fulham, 2009 (un-built)

Fleet Street Hill, Tower Hamlets, 2009-2013 (un-built)

Baden Powell Close, Dagenham, 2010 (built)

Hannibal Road Gardens, Stepney Green, 2012 (built)

Abstract

This return comprises five social housing projects undertaken by Peter Barber between 2009 and 2013: Chatsworth Gardens, Morecambe, 2009 (un-built); Ashchurch Place, Fulham, 2009 (un-built); Fleet Street Hill, Tower Hamlets, 2009-2013 (un-built); Baden Powell Close, Dagenham, 2010 (built); Hannibal Road Gardens, Stepney Green, 2012 (built). The un-built projects contribute significantly to the development of Barber's research agenda over this period. The primary research questions addressed by the projects are: Can urban life can be regenerated through well designed, mixed use high-density housing? Can sustainable development can be achieved through good design? Can better use of land and resources can be achieved through higher densities in housing? How can energy saving objectives be met in high-density housing? Each of the projects was developed through observational site visits and discussions with clients, community members and local planning officers. Conceptual design strategies drew on the writings of Walter Benjamin and Jane Jacobs, in line with Barber's on-going interest in the cultural life of the urban street, and in-depth analysis of vernacular housing

typologies and the work of his contemporaries. Key urban design moves were established early on in design processes and remained consistent through their evolution. Extensive physical model making, three-dimensional sketching and other forms of visualisation tested design options and refined the overall configuration of the buildings in terms of accessibility, circulation, lighting, housing typology and general functional viability. The many exploratory physical models for each scheme were all constructed with the same logic as the real construction operations would be on site, being regularly and quickly updated throughout the whole process. Positive coverage of these projects has appeared in the architectural press and popular media.

Hannibal Road Gardens was awarded a 2013 RIBA London National Award. Baden Powell Close was shortlisted for a 2010 RIBA Award. In the same year, Peter Barber Architects was awarded the 2010/2011 Building Design Architect of the Year Award for Housing. This followed commendation in the 2008 Civic Trust Awards.

Key Words

Housing, mixed-use, high density, urban street, sustainability.

Context

This return comprises five social housing projects undertaken by Peter Barber Architects between 2009 and 2013 promoting models of high-density urban living in line with a street based vision for cities. All were developed in line with Barber's manifesto, which borrows from Marxist critic and philosopher Walter Benjamin, American sociologist Jane Jacobs and others, who promoted street life as key to vibrant urban places. Chatsworth Gardens (2009, un-built) (fig.01) was a proposal for new urban quarter of seventy-three residences and two new community gardens / parks in Morecambe. Ashchurch Place (2009, un-built) (fig.16) was the winning entry in a high profile competition for a street based urban quarter of sixty-eight dwellings in Fulham. Fleet Street Hill (2009-2013, un-built) (fig.24) was a proposal for a new city quarter of forty-three affordable residential homes on a triangular site between two railway lines in Tower Hamlets. Baden Powell Close (2010, built) (fig.47) is a terrace of fourteen two story, two bedroom courtyard houses running the length of a narrow east / west orientated site in Dagenham. Hannibal Road Gardens (2012, built) (fig.62) is a social housing project in Stepney Green, primarily for large South East Asian families from neighbouring housing blocks.

Barber's practice is unique in its focus on social housing and has a client base comprising dozens of housing associations, trusts and local authorities. Baden Powell Close and Hannibal Road Gardens were designed for the Southern Housing Group, Chatsworth Gardens and Ashchurch Place for Places for People and Fleet Street Hill for Londonewcastle. They were or were to have

been delivered through policies, institutions and financial mechanisms set in place in line with the recommendations of Sir Richard Rogers' Urban Task Force (1997). These included: a radical rethinking of zoning policy that for generations had produced mono-functional neighbourhoods; the introduction of tax breaks for development and, perhaps most significantly, the introduction of new planning guidelines allowing construction and estate renewal on a scale unseen since the immediate post-war period. These recommendations were underpinned by principles of design excellence, social-well being and environmental responsibility within appropriate delivery, fiscal and legal frameworks. Since the housing market collapse in 2008 and the revision of many of these policies, only two of the projects included here have been realised. The un-built projects nevertheless contributed significantly to the development of Barber's research agenda over this period.

General Description

Chatsworth Gardens in Morecambe (2009, un-built) was a proposal for new urban quarter of seventy three residences laid out as a ladder of intimately scaled, tree lined streets and two new community gardens / parks. (fig.04) It was seen as a key element of the West End Master Plan and ranked as a high priority by the Cabinet in 2009. It was not built due to the housing market collapse and the withdrawal of its developer, Places for People. The housing was to have ranged from one-bedroom starter apartments to spacious penthouse style maisonettes. (fig.09, fig.10, fig.11, fig.12,fig.13) Every home would have had its own front door (fig.02) and its own good sized piece of outdoor space in the form of a courtyard garden, a large roof terrace and/or a good sized balcony. (fig.05) At the busier streets and prominent corners at the edge of the scheme, buildings were to have risen to three stories and non residential uses: a little local shop, some places for people to work, a deli, a café, a pub were to be added at street level. (fig.03, fig.06)

Ashchurch Place (2009, un-built) was the winning entry in a high profile competition for a street based urban quarter in Fulham. Sixty-eight two to four storey terraced houses were laid out around three mews streets and two new tree lined public squares. (fig.17) Every house had its own balcony, courtyard and roof terrace. (fig.23) At the eastern edge of the site, the buildings followed the slow curve of Ashchurch Grove and existing mature trees were retained. (fig.20) A sheltered housing scheme was located in a terrace along the northern section of the site. (fig.15) In all locations public space was overlooked with

street frontages enlivened by front doors, bay windows and balconies. (fig.18, fig.19)

Fleet Street Hill (2009-2013, un-built) was a proposal for a new city quarter of forty-three affordable residential homes on a triangular site between two railway lines in Tower Hamlets. (fig.25) It was linked to the redevelopment of Huntingdon Estate by the same developer. The scheme further developed Barber's terrace / courtyard hybrid housing typology, giving each of the twenty five terrace houses in the scheme its own street edge, front door, ground floor courtyard and inset roof terrace. (fig.30, fig.39, fig.40, fig.41, fig.42, fig.43) These enclosed a new public square traversed by pedestrian routes that integrated the development with its surroundings. (fig.31, fig.33, fig.34) Curved facades and arcaded frontages along pedestrian routes framed views into the enclosed square, lined on one side by a communal facility. (fig.32) Its arcaded frontages echoed the industrial vernacular of the Bishopsgate Goods Yard previously on the site. (fig.36) Housing alternated in height between two and four stories, (fig.35) with an eleven-storied tower marking the prominent corner of the site. (fig.37) The developer withdrew the planning application for the project given opposition to the 23-story redevelopment of Huntingdon Estate with which it was linked. A reworked scheme was revealed in 2013.

Baden Powell Close (2010, built) is a terrace of fourteen two story, two bedroom courtyard houses running the length of a narrow East-west orientated site in Dagenham. (fig.46, fig.57) This creates a hard edge of building to

the north, and a tree lined street to the south. (fig.50, fig.58) Each house has two private outdoor living spaces, one a courtyard on the ground floor accessed from the street, the other a terrace on the first floor. (fig.54, fig.55) This arrangement resulted in a notched building profile that greatly enhanced sun and natural light penetration into the units. (fig.52) Each house has dual aspect, one into a private courtyard, one onto the public realm, with balconies and windows facing Baden Powell Close. (fig.49) Houses have green roofs, ground source heat pumps and rainwater tanks to meet energy saving objectives.

Hannibal Road Gardens (2012, built) in Stepney Green is a social housing project for large East Asian families set around a community garden. (fig.63) Here Barber further developed the terrace / courtyard hybrid. (fig.66) A row of 9 large South-east facing stepped and notched terrace houses, with between three and seven bedrooms each, complete the perimeter of an existing community garden. (fig.68) The new row is hard up against the boundary wall of the estate, and so could have no windows or openings to the west at all. (fig.74) This means the buildings have many windows to the east, overlooking the garden. (fig.64) Inside, the houses are large: the biggest has seven bedrooms, (fig.80) another has six, (fig.79) and there are three each with three (fig.77) and four bedrooms. (fig.78) One enters at ground level, straight into an open-plan living space, which has movable screens to make a separate kitchen if desired. Upstairs are the bedrooms, reached via a top-lit staircase, and in every house at least two bedrooms have terraces of

their own. (fig.75) These outdoor spaces are key to the character of the buildings, as with all Barber's work. An array of pleasurable balconies and terraces animate the houses with the residents' own touches. (fig.65) The houses are 100% affordable, with 50% socially rented. They are finished in a timber veneer, the material used in the garden fences they face, anchoring the complex visually with its surroundings. (fig.67) The development achieved Lifetime Home Standards (see <http://www.lifetimehomes.org.uk/>). By incorporating features such as high thermal insulation, rainwater harvesting, low energy fittings and grey water recycling, it also achieved Level 3 code for Sustainable Homes (see <https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/improving-the-energy-efficiency-of-buildings-and-using-planning-to-protect-the-environment/supporting-pages/code-for-sustainable-homes>).

Research Questions

The primary research questions addressed by these housing projects are:

- 1) Can urban life be regenerated through well-designed, mixed-use high-density housing?
- 2) Can sustainable development be achieved through good design?
- 3) Can better use of land and resources be achieved through higher densities in housing?
- 4) How can energy saving objectives be met in high-density housing?

Aims and Objectives

- 1) To regenerate urban life through well designed mixed use high-density housing.

Key to the design of these housing projects is the promotion of high-density models of urban living to increase street activity and improve socioeconomic conditions in deprived Inner London boroughs. (fig.01) Barber operates from the philosophy that, given that housing comprises 70% of cities, when one is designing housing, one is designing cities. (fig.18) He thus conceives of housing firstly as a way of making cities. He organises private residential space in accordance with urban design principles, then accommodating individuation and user adaptation. (fig.24, fig.33) His central focus is reinforcing the centrality of the urban street as the primary generator of social and economic life, and as a means to reinvigorate cities. (fig.02, fig.07) This is an idea with a long pedigree in architectural thought, as promoted by writers such as Walter Benjamin, Jane Jacobs, Richard Sennett and Michael Sorkin.

Common themes run through all of the projects: the use of terrace and courtyard hybrid typologies with tower foci at corners to create dense urban neighbourhoods (fig.06, fig.37); the street as generator of vibrant social and economic life (fig.02); the public square as focus of neighbourhood life (fig.31) and a healthy mix of wealthier and poorer people, older and younger, singles and families housed at sufficient density (fig.15, fig.16). All of the projects combine a range of unit sizes and types, from bachelor to seven bedroomed apartments; all open directly to the street (fig.22, fig.23). At Baden Powell Close, the row of terraces is book ended between two single story units for disabled people. (fig.56a, fig.56b) In all the projects, the public social life of streets and squares is celebrated, with every aspect of the design configured to promote buzzing, thriving public space where people might enjoy sitting out, children playing, people going to and from their homes or just passing through. (fig.31) They all construct communities of mixed tenure, mixed income, mixed ethnicity, and affordable, rental and owner occupied housing.

2. To achieve sustainable development through good design.

These projects are all pursued with the ultimate aim of improving urban sustainability, for Barber, conceptualised in urban and design as well as technological terms. His philosophy is that good design ensures attractive, useable, durable and adaptable places and is key to achieving sustainable development. Good design is indivisible from good planning (fig.04). This means compact, dense urban development (fig.05) supporting a diverse range of uses (live / work / leisure) and well connected to the rest of the city via integrated pedestrian and public transport. (fig.24, fig.34)

3. To make more compact cities and better use of land and resources through higher densities in housing.

Barber's projects promote a more efficient use of land through high density, mixed use development that builds upon London's existing urban qualities and sense of place. (fig.05) He strives to make sustainable and efficient use of space and to encourage intensification and growth in areas of need and opportunity in line with public transport capacity. (fig.24) Courtyard housing is key to this, as rules on overlooking outwards are strict in English planning, but more flexible in introverted situations. (fig.05) In all cases his preference is for individual, freehold houses, not leasehold apartments. By using innovative housing typologies, especially his characteristic terrace / courtyard hybrid Barber aims to overcome previous zoning restrictions, achieve desired densities and focus social activity on the

street. (fig.65) At Ashchurch Place for instance, Barber not only achieved 15% higher density than other entrants achieved using communally accessed blocks of flats (240 dwellings per hectare), his 4m wide, individually accessed, one or two bedroomed flats also reinforced the vitality of street life. (fig.22, fig.23) This was achieved through a radical reworking of the back-to-back terraced house type.

4. To meet energy saving objectives in high-density housing.

This is an ongoing theme running through these projects. At Baden Powell Close, an Eco Homes Rating of Very Good was achieved. 10% of its energy needs are produced on site from renewable sources. Initially a solar thermal water heating system was proposed, but this later reverted to a ground source heat pump due to over-shading issues. (fig.60) This was incorporated into scheme during the detailed design phase. At Hannibal Road Gardens, by incorporating features like high thermal insulation, rainwater harvesting, low energy fittings and grey water recycling, a Level 3 code for Sustainable Homes was achieved. In addition, the houses are clad in timber shingles, which Barber argues will demand less maintenance than a painted, rendered building. He has learned from experience how important maintenance is when making architecturally ambitious housing on affordable budgets. (fig.67, fig.76)

5. To re-establish a process of design which, while accepting the benefits of computer aided design techniques still locates the key decisions in the realm of the hand-made, through sketching and physical model-making.

A clear objective of all of Barber's work is to assert the central importance of physical models and sketches in the evolution of innovative, spatially complex designs. His design process makes extensive use of hand drawn sketches and physical models to conceptualise initial design responses (fig.02, fig.68, fig.71), to test design options (fig.25-29, fig.56a, fig.56b) and to refine the overall configuration of buildings (fig.69) in terms of accessibility, circulation, lighting, housing typology and general functional viability (fig.30, fig.54, fig.55).

6. To use materials and finishes for affect.

Over the course of this series of projects, Barber moved from his characteristic white modernist aesthetic to the use of a timber veneered external finish. The former was both functional (to bounce as much light into small interiors as possible), and to reinforce the idea of housing as robust urban element (fig.47, fig.48, fig.49). Domesticity would come - inhabitation added pergolas, planting, furniture etc. but the frame of strong white volumes would always speak to an urban scale (fig.16). In the more recent work, Barber clads his projects with a timber veneer, eschewing the honesty of the classical modernist aesthetic for what he calls "affect," cladding his surfaces with the "veneer of occupation" (fig.62, fig.67).

Research Methods

Each of these projects, built and un-built, was developed initially through numerous observational site visits to understand the inherent complexity and potential of the sites and their surroundings. Discussions were held with clients, community members and local planning officers to ascertain how open they were to challenges to dominant local housing models and densities. Theoretically, the writings of Walter Benjamin on the lively streets of Naples and Jane Jacobs on Brooklyn (as well as the recommendations of the Urban Task Force) influenced the research methods adopted for these projects. A broad range of historical and contemporary precedents was studied to integrate their ideas into design proposals. Key among these were mass housing schemes by Alvaro Siza, most notably his Quinta da Malagueira, project in Evora in Portugal, which also relies on the use of terraces with notched sections, and the tiny Japanese micro-houses of Atelier Bow-Wow. A crucial aspect of Barber's research method is in-depth analysis of the work of these highly regarded practitioners as well as other vernacular typologies. (fig.P01) These were adapted to create the innovative and distinctive hybrid courtyard / terrace typology that gave form to all these projects (fig.01, fig.32). Also from Walter Benjamin, Barber drew the idea that there is a theatrical aspect to balconies and terraces, which he relates to Jane Jacob's idea of eyes on the street (fig.18, fig.19, fig.31). Buildings were used as popular stages and ways of building community (fig.03, fig.06). They were divided into innumerable, simultaneously animated theatres - balcony, courtyard, window, gateway, staircase etc., (fig.33, fig.34) challenging Londoners to engage

with their hostile street environments with a Mediterranean sensibility.

These concerns were blended with Barber's ongoing interest in the cultural life of the urban street (fig.65). Key urban design moves were established early on in the design process and remained consistent through the evolution of the design (fig.01, fig.24). Iterations of massing, conducted through extensive physical model making, three-dimensional sketching and other forms of visualisation addressed and responded to various constraints, analysis and feedback (fig.71). The testing of various design options was always tied back to Space Syntax and other forms of interpreting just what it was that made a street successful or not, in generating a sense of urban vibrancy (fig.50).

These analyses in turn allow the refinement of the overall configuration of the building in terms of accessibility, circulation, lighting, housing typology and general functional viability. The many exploratory physical models for each scheme were all constructed with the same logic as the real construction operations would be on site, being regularly and quickly updated throughout the whole process (fig.35, fig.29).

Dissemination / Impact

Hannibal Road Gardens was awarded a RIBA London National Award in 2013. Baden Powell Close was shortlisted for a 2010 RIBA Award. In the same year, Peter Barber Architects were awarded the 2010/2011 Building Design Architect of the Year Award for Housing. This followed commendation in the 2008 Civic Trust Awards.

Positive coverage of these projects has appeared in the architectural press and popular media. These include:

General:

Boncza, M. 'Peter Barber explains his vision of social housing.' Morning Star, 02 November, 2012.
< <http://www.morningstaronline.co.uk/news/content/view/full/125684>>

Baden Powell Close:

Abrahams, T. 'Peter Barber's Baden Powell Close terrace in Dagenham.' Building Design, May 2010
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Fleet Street Hill:

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Hannibal Gardens:

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peter Barber Architects.' bdonline, 22 August
2012
<<http://www.bdonline.co.uk/buildings/hannibal-road-gardens-by-peter-barber-architects/5041446.article>>

Evidence

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Press

- P.01 Barber, P. 'You feel as if the architect is speaking to you.' *Building Design*, 03 July 2009
- P.02 Abrahams, T. 'Peter Barber's Baden Powell Close terrace in Dagenham.' *Building Design*, May 2010
- P.03 Boncza, M. 'Peter Barber explains his vision of social housing.' *Morning Star*, 02 November, 2012
- P.04 Long, K. 'Hope for Social Housing.' *London Evening Standard*, 12 September 2012

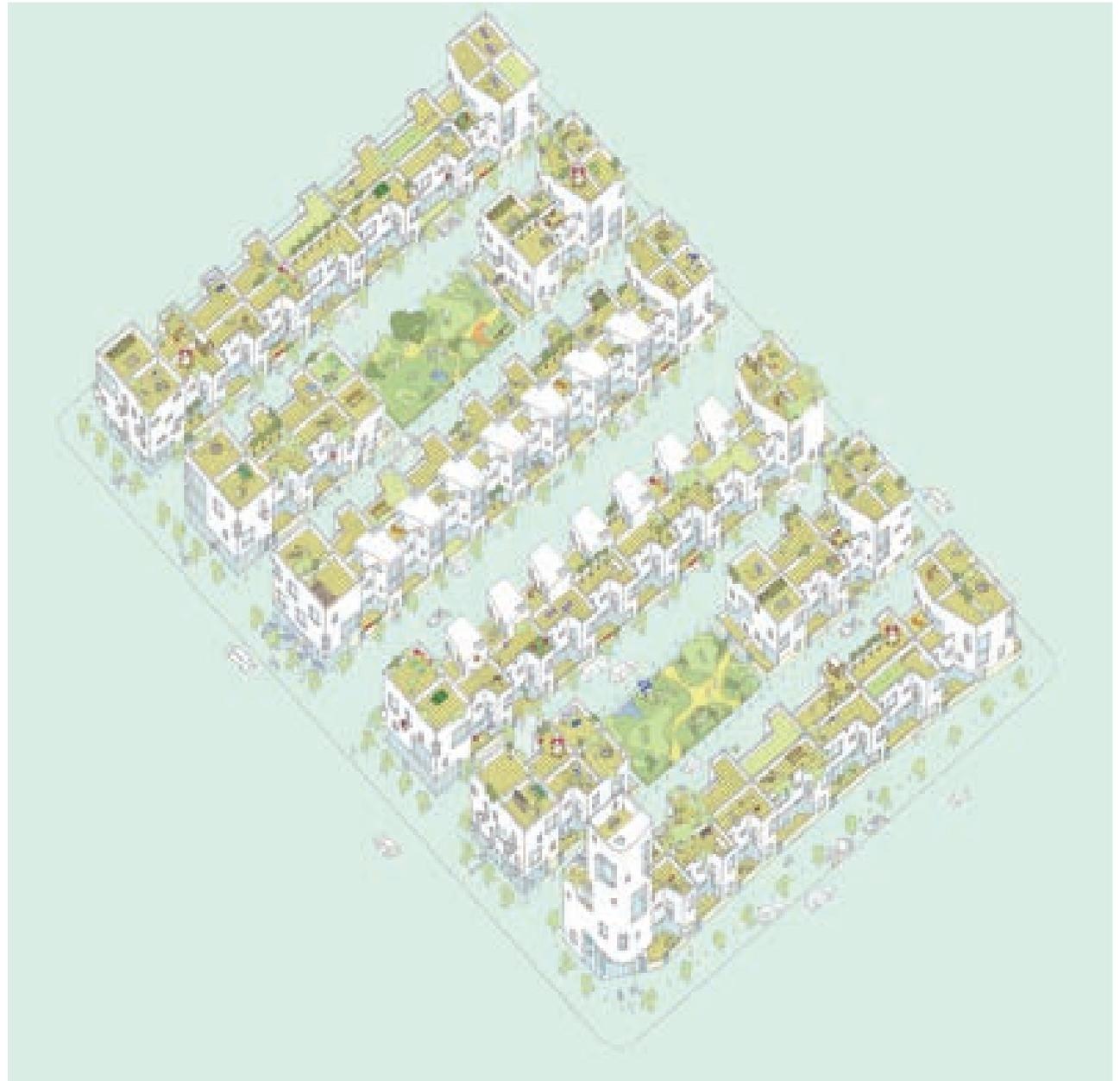


Fig.01.Chatsworth Gardens: Axonometric.



Fig.02.Chatsworth Gardens: Long perspective sketch through internal street.



Fig.03.Chatsworth Gardens: Perspective sketch of corner tower.

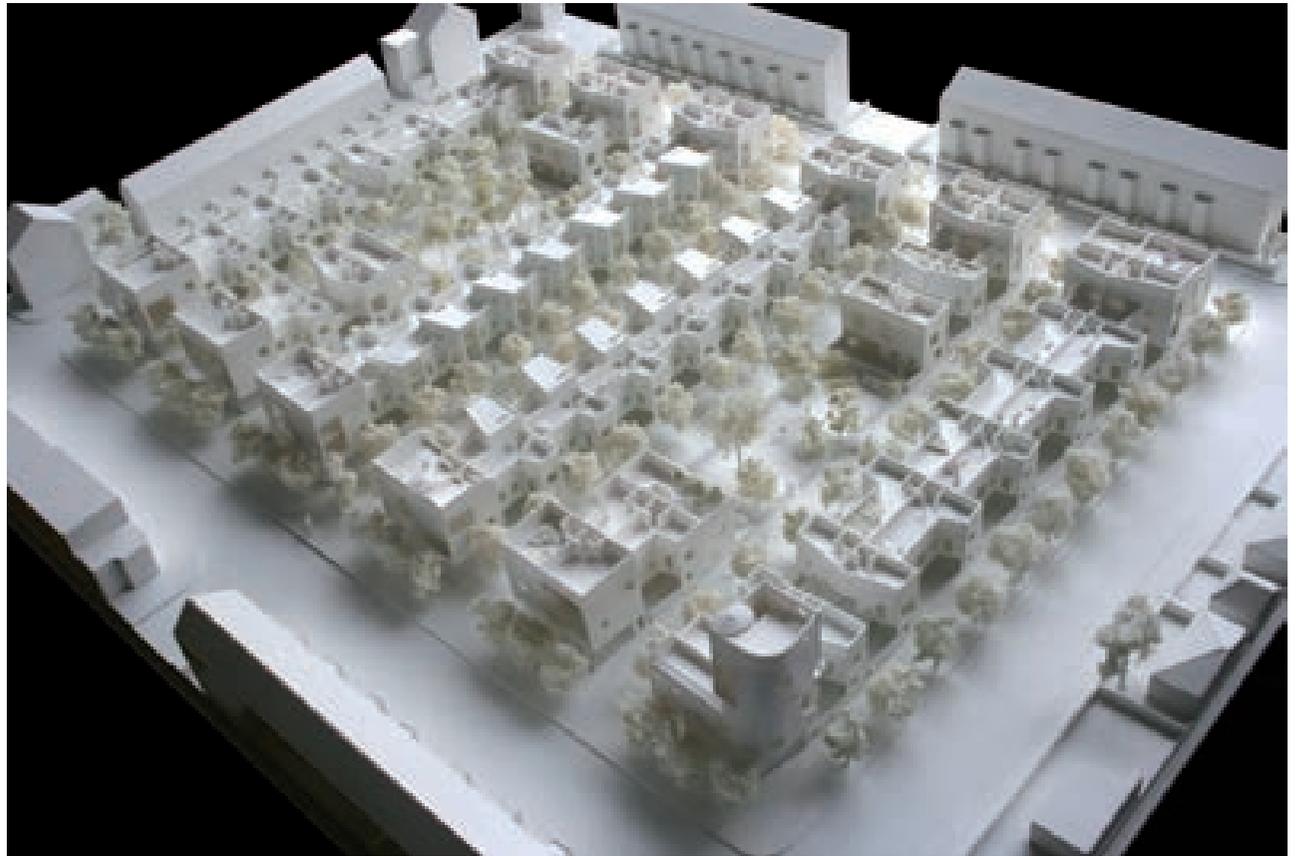


Fig.04.Chatsworth Gardens: Model.



Fig.05.Chatsworth Gardens: Detail of model.



Fig.06.Chatsworth Gardens: View of corner tower and perimeter streets.



Fig.07.Chatsworth Gardens: View down internal street showing community park.

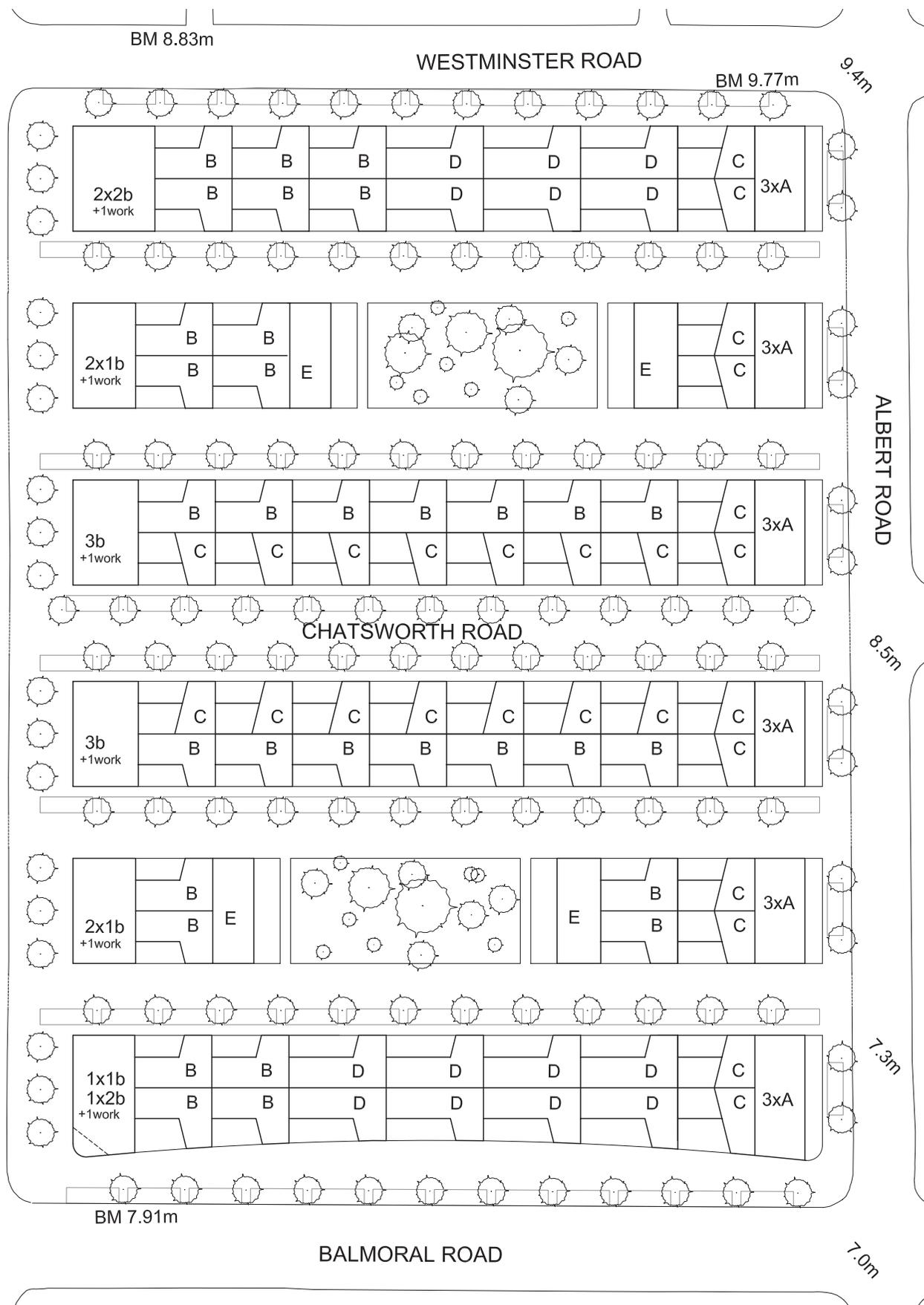
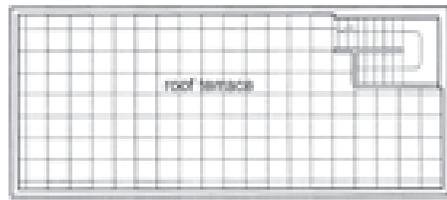
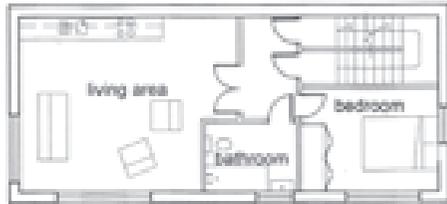


Fig.08.Chatsworth Gardens: Site Plan.



Roof Floor Plan



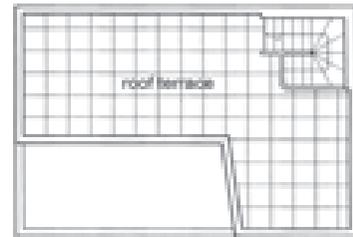
Second Floor Plan



First Floor Plan



Ground Floor Plan



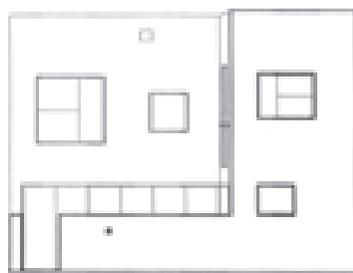
Roof Floor Plan



First Floor Plan



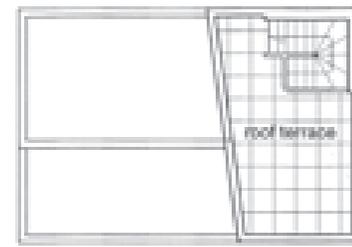
Ground Floor Plan



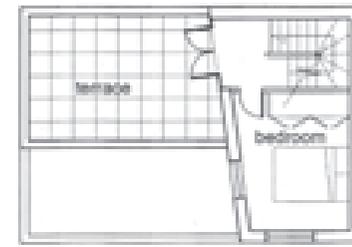
Front Elevation



Section



Roof Floor Plan



Second Floor Plan



First Floor Plan



Ground Floor Plan



Front Elevation

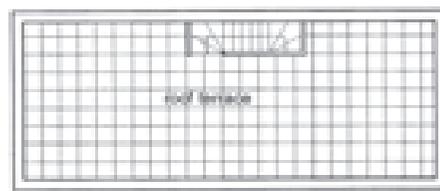


Section

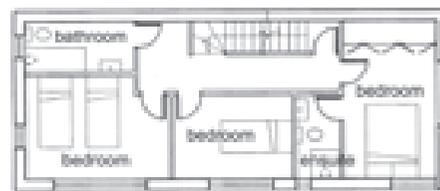
Fig.09.Chatsworth Gardens: House Type A, one bed.

Fig.10.Chatsworth Gardens: House Type B, two bed.

Fig.11.Chatsworth Gardens: House Type C, three bed.



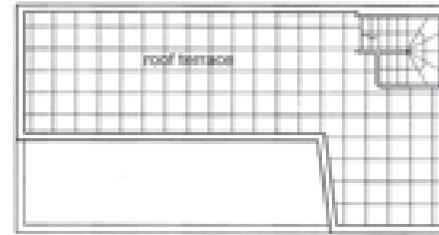
Roof Floor Plan



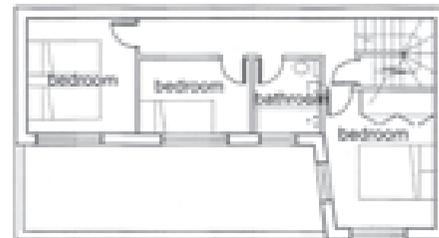
First Floor Plan



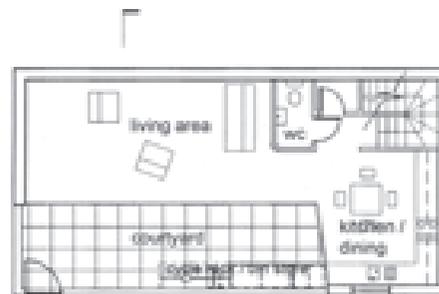
Ground Floor Plan



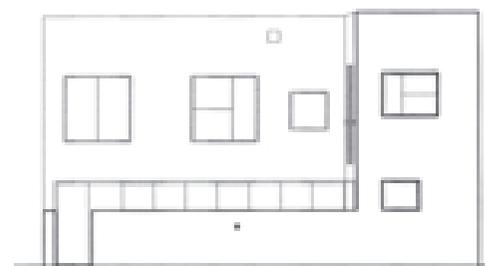
Roof Floor Plan



First Floor Plan



Ground Floor Plan



Front Elevation



Section

Fig. 12. Chatsworth Gardens: House Type D, three bed

Fig. 13. Chatsworth Gardens: House Type E, four bed.



Fig.14. Ashchurch Place: Existing site plan



Fig.15. Ashchurch Place: Proposed site plan



Fig. 16. Ashchurch Place: Axonometric.

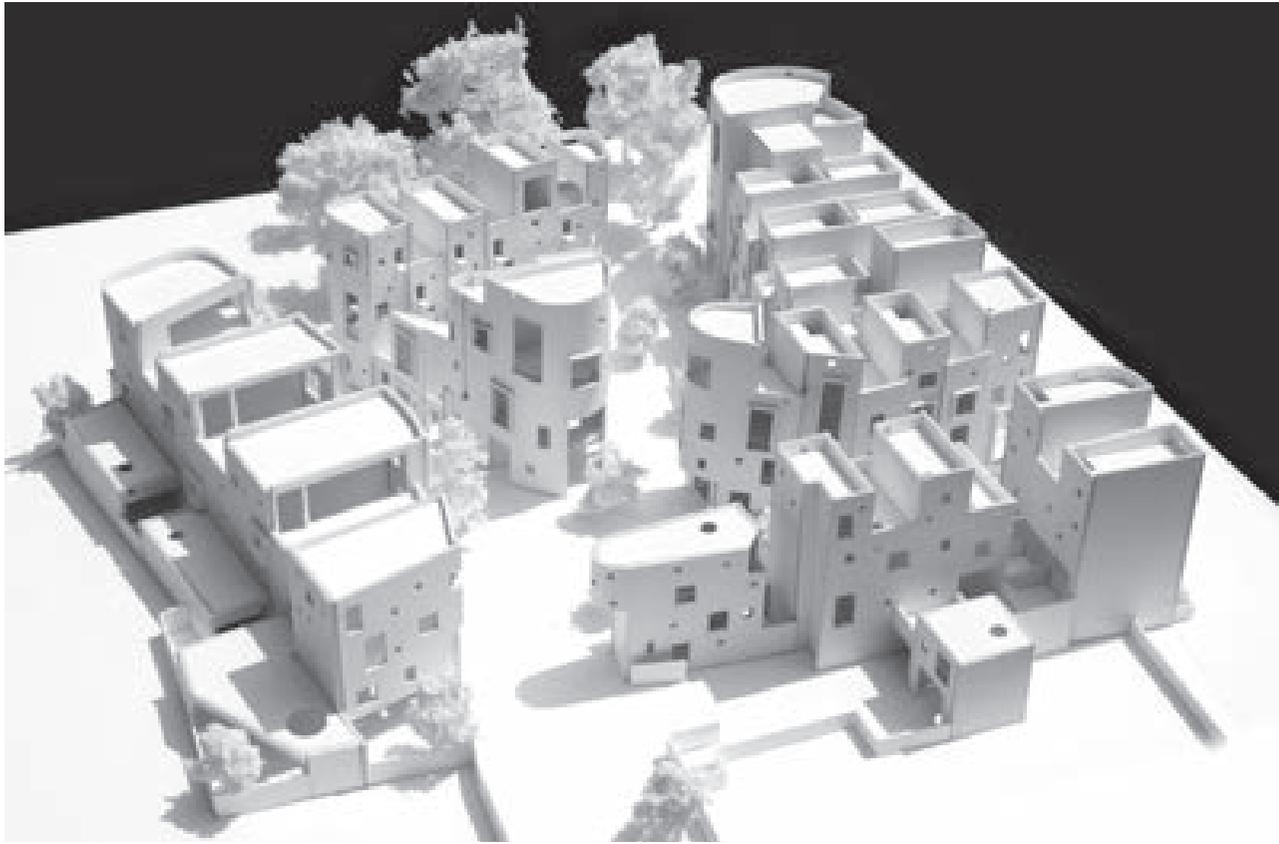


Fig.17. Ashchurch Place: Model.



Fig.18. Ashchurch Place: Perspective sketch from public square.



Fig. 19. Ashchurch Place: Perspective sketch down internal street.



Fig.20. Ashchurch Place: Perspective sketch down Ashchurch Grove.



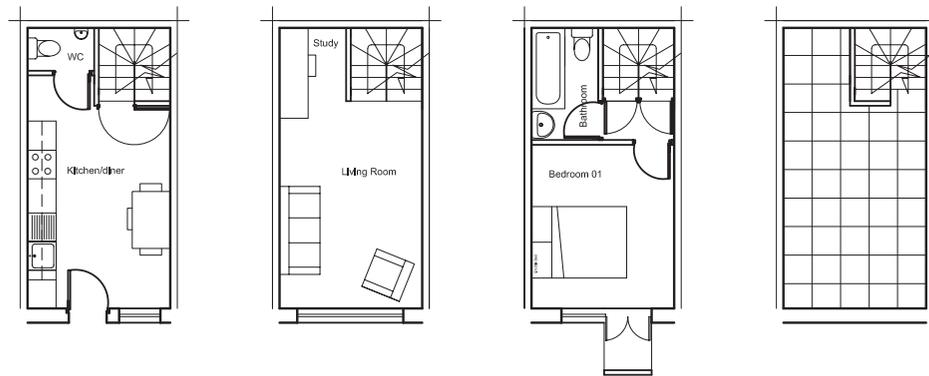
Fig.21. Ashchurch Place: Perspective sketch from Starch Green



Fig.22. Ashchurch Place: Elevation along Goldhawk Road.

Gross internal area = 51 sq m

Ground Floor 1st Floor 2nd Floor Roof Terrace



Gross internal area = 69 sq m

Ground Floor 1st Floor 2nd Floor 3rd Floor Roof terrace

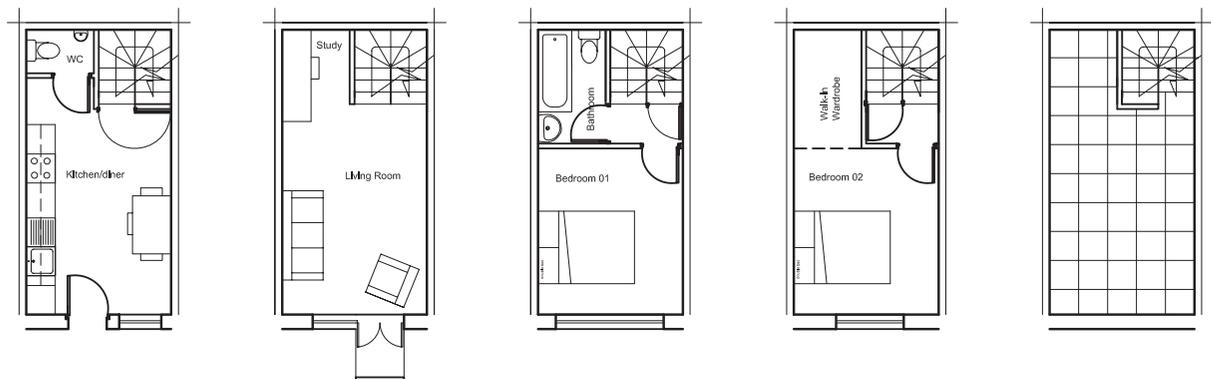


Fig.23. Ashchurch Place: Typical housing units.



Fig.24. Fleet Street Hill: Axonometric.

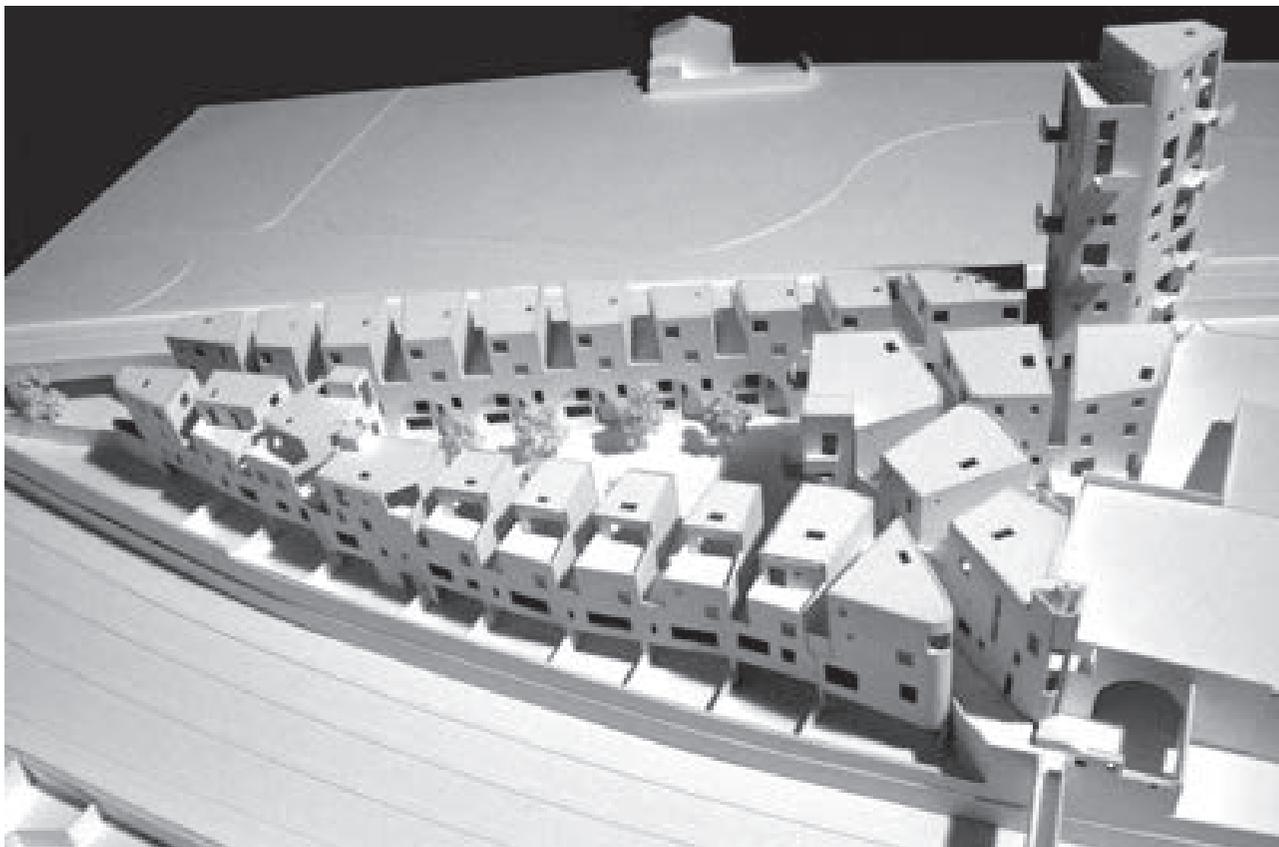


Fig.25. Fleet Street Hill: Model.

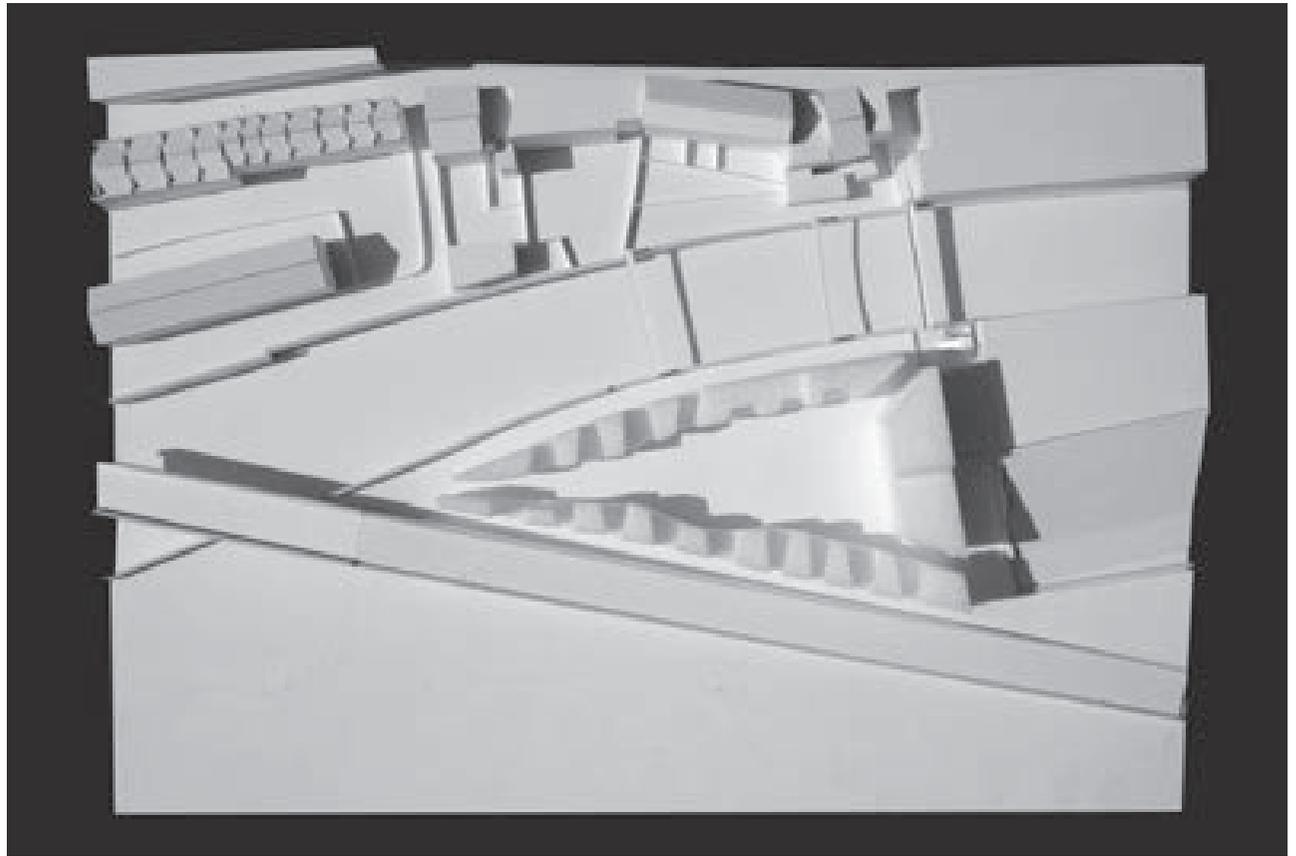


Fig.26. Fleet Street Hill: Development model 1.

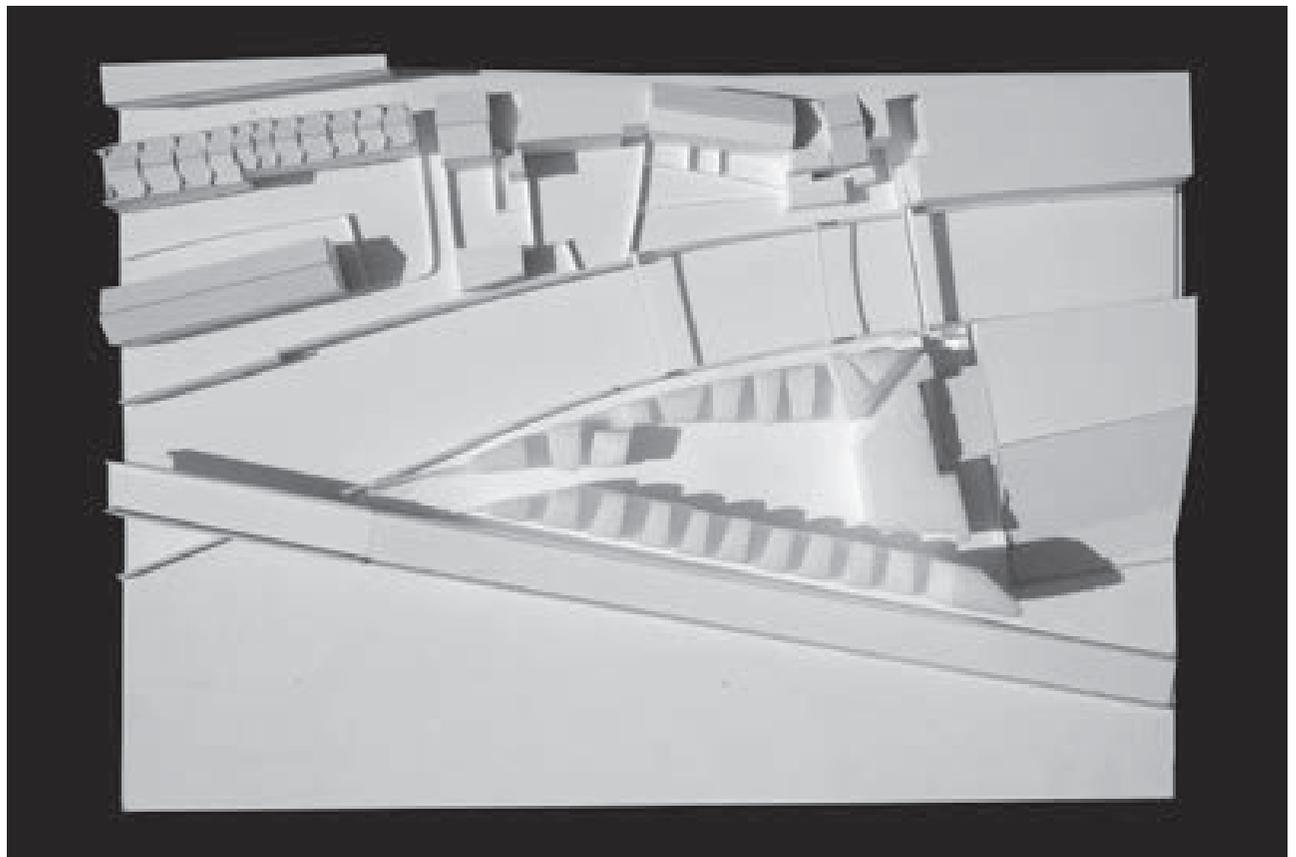


Fig.27. Fleet Street Hill: Development model 2.

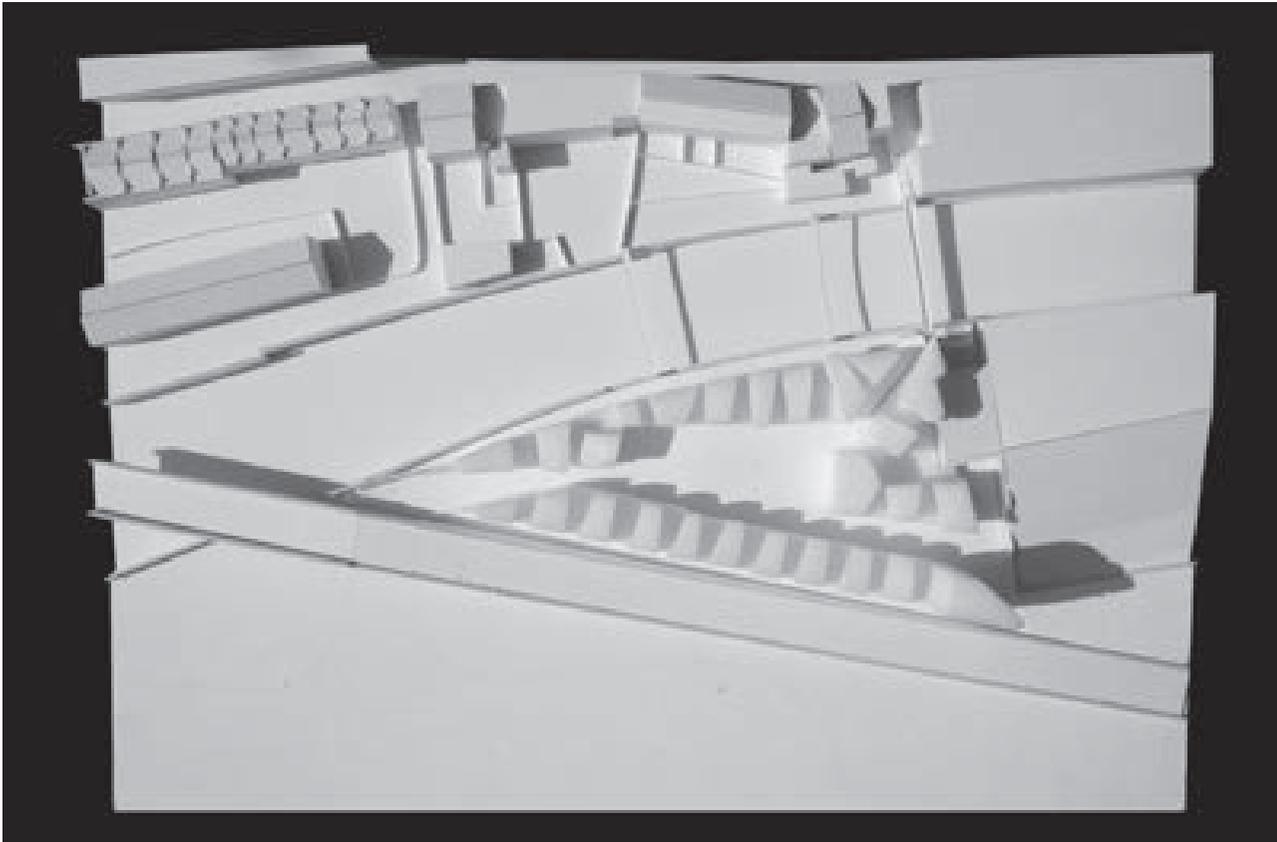


Fig.28. Fleet Street Hill: Development model 3.

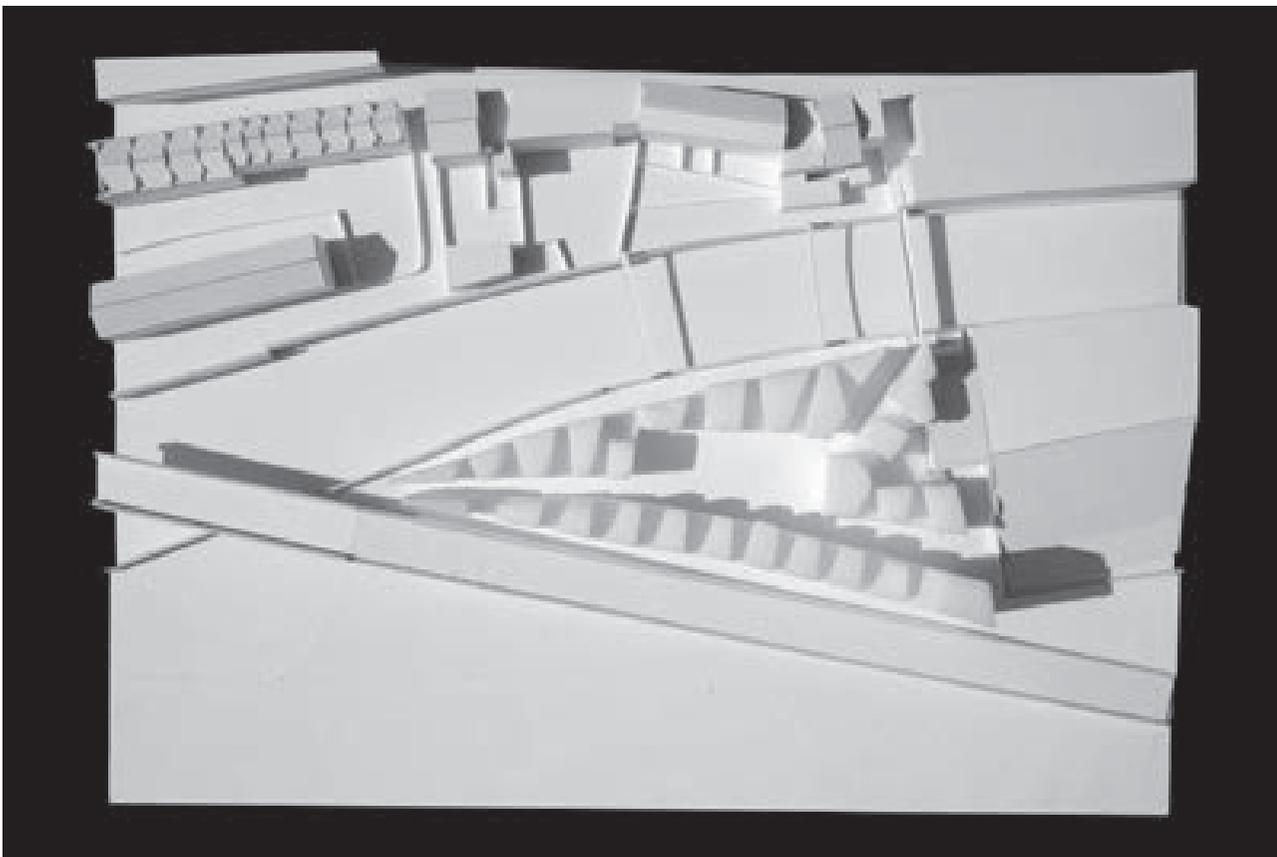


Fig.29. Fleet Street Hill: Development model 4.

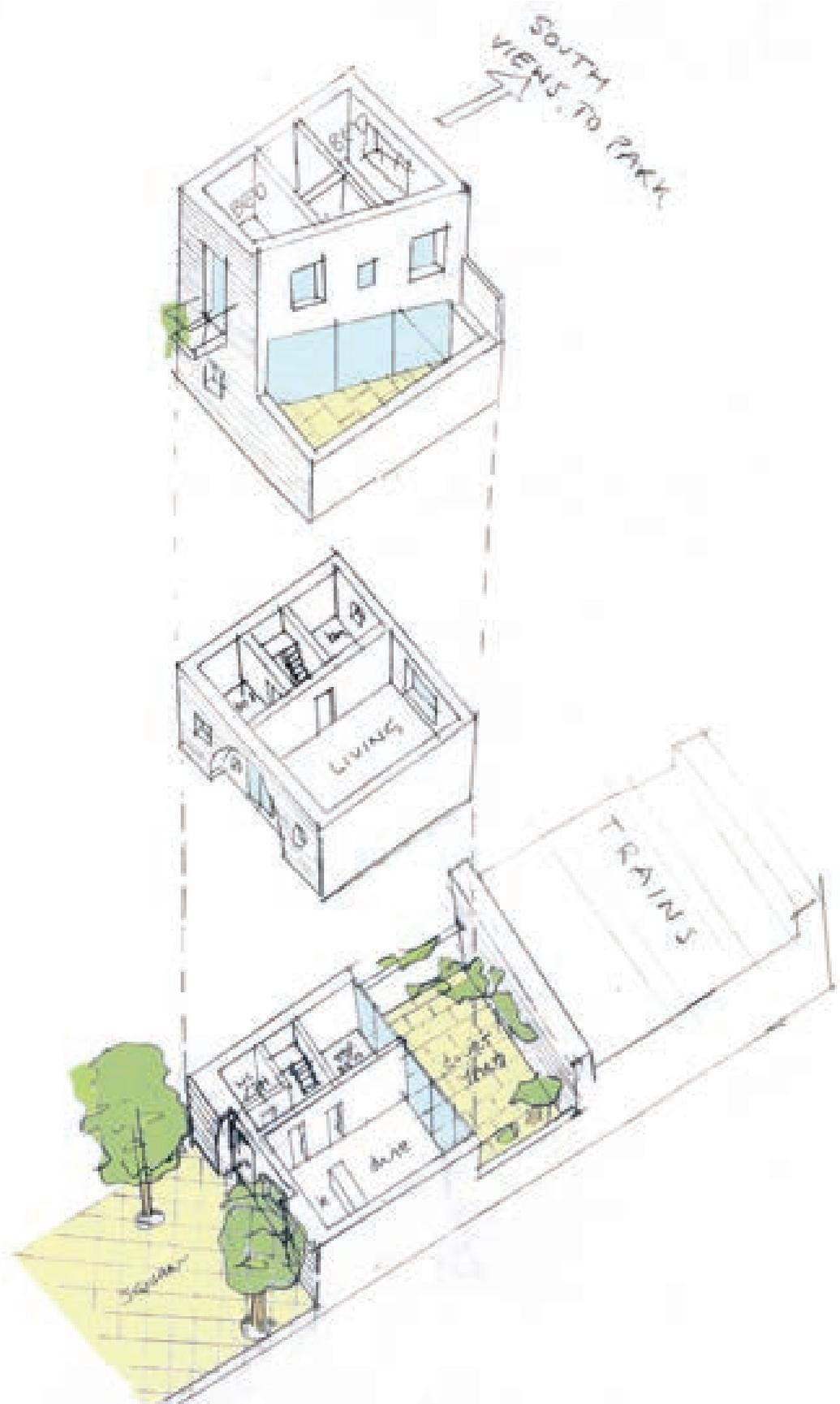


Fig.30. Fleet Street Hill: Exploded axonometric sketch of typical housing unit.



Fig.31. Fleet Street Hill: Perspective sketch of internal public square.



Fig.32. Fleet Street Hill: Perspective elevation of internal public square.



Fig.33. Fleet Street Hill: Perspective sketch down public stair into internal square.

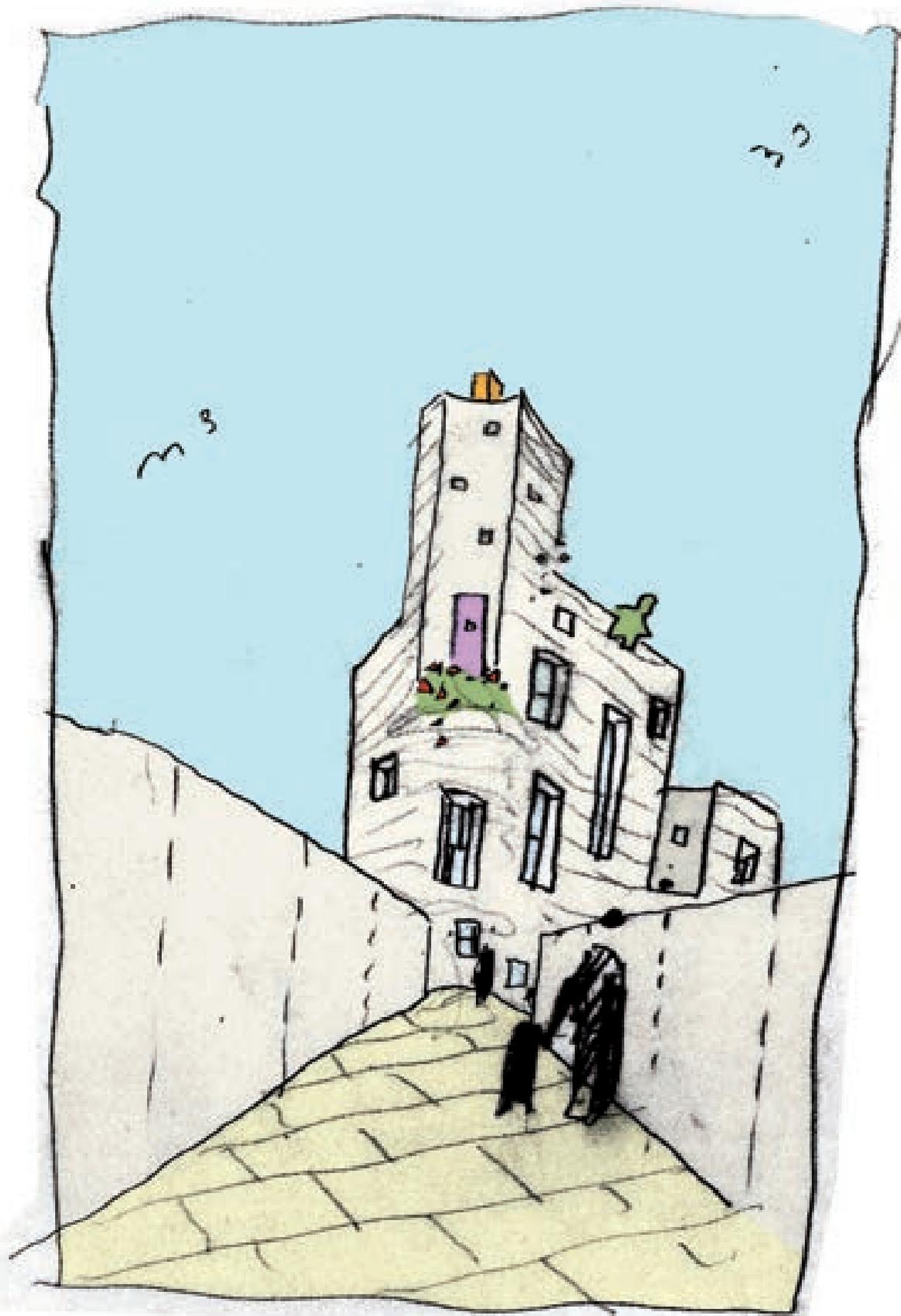


Fig.34. Fleet Street Hill: Perspective sketch of pedestrian bridge.



Fig.35. Fleet Street Hill: Elevation through internal pedestrian street



Fig.36. Fleet Street Hill: Elevation of internal public square.



Fig.37. Fleet Street Hill: Rendering of Miller Hare tower.

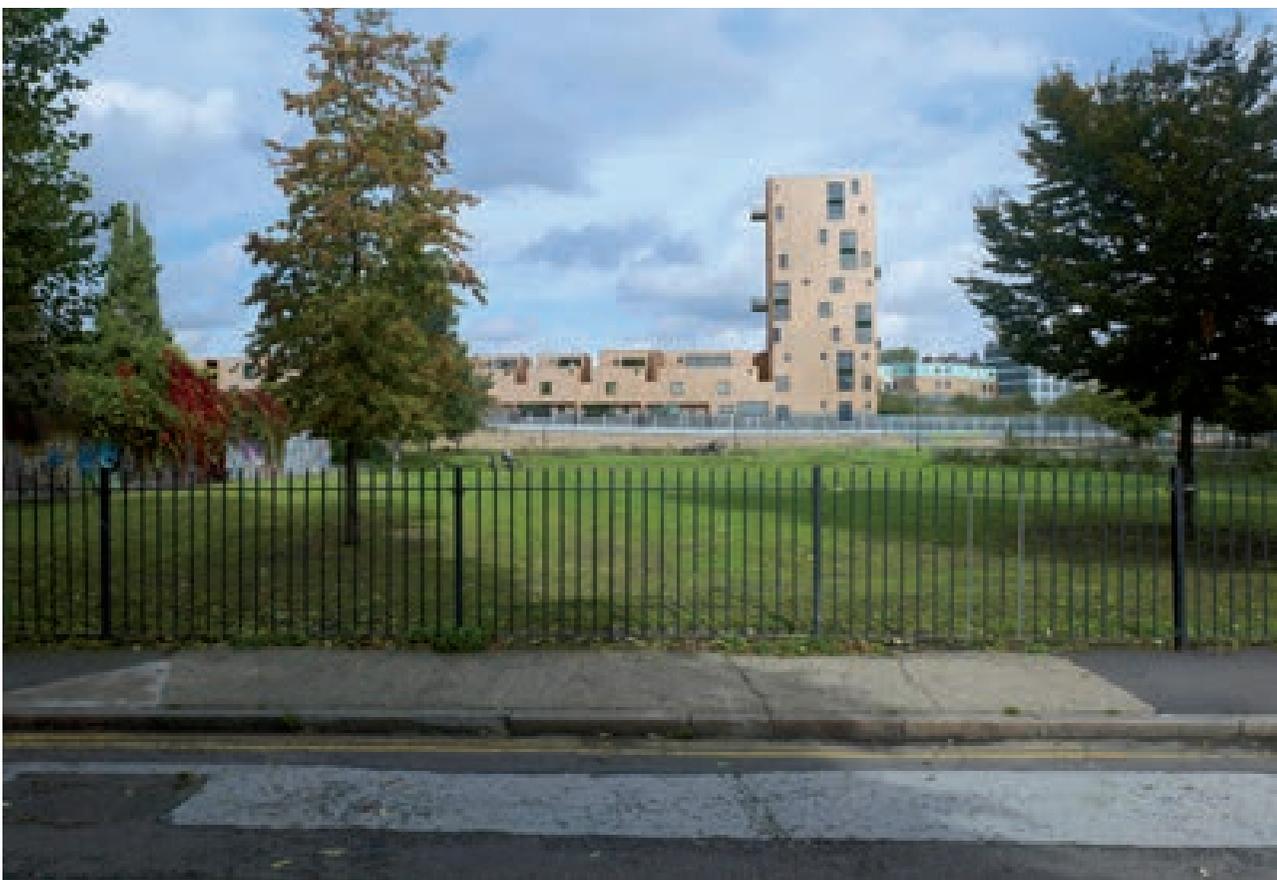


Fig.38. Fleet Street Hill: Rendering of Miller Hare elevation.



Fig.40. Fleet Street Hill: First Floor Plan.



Fig.41 . Fleet Street Hill: Second Floor Plan.

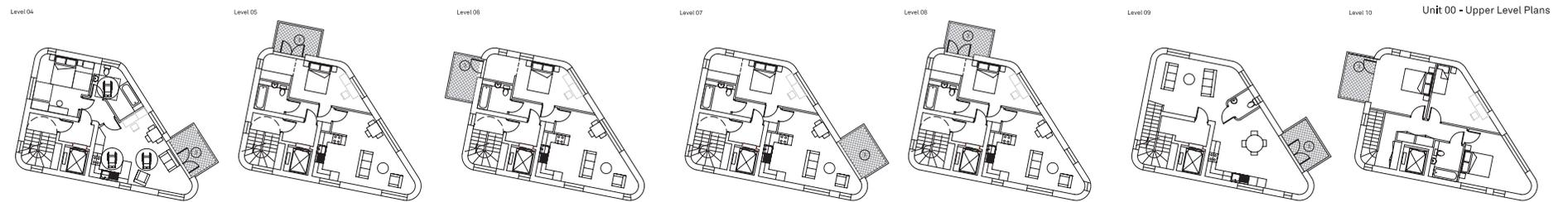
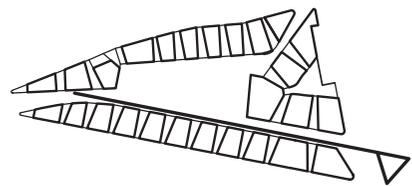


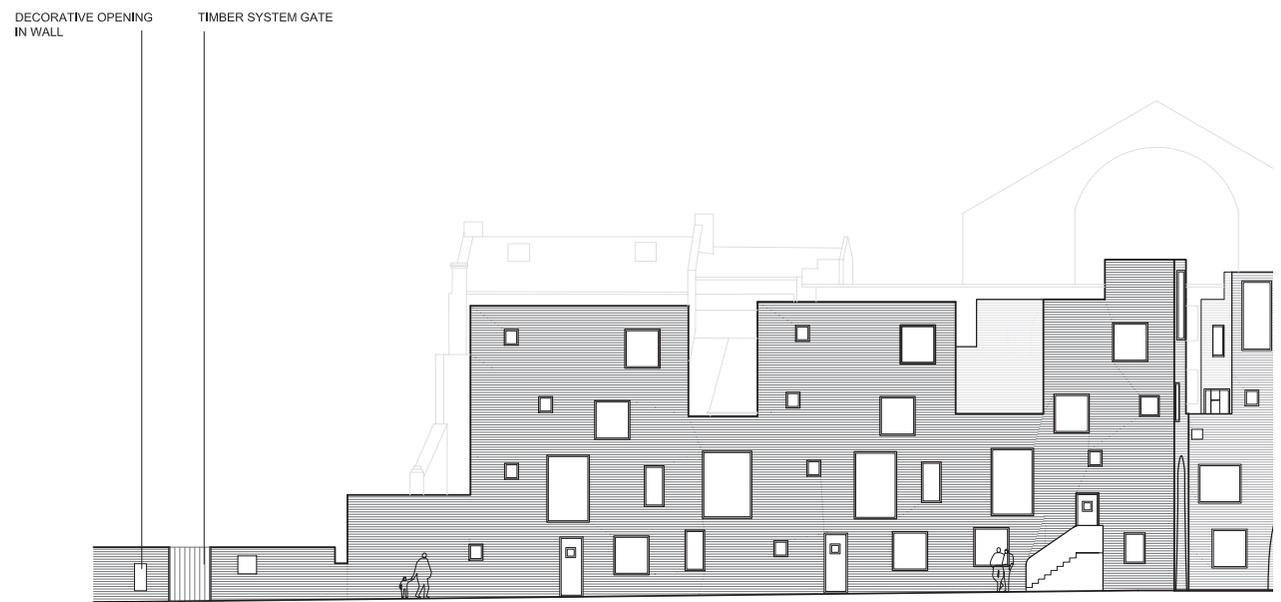
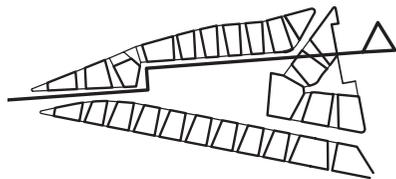
Fig.42. Fleet Street Hill: Third Floor Plan.



Fig.43. Fleet Street Hill: Roof Plan.



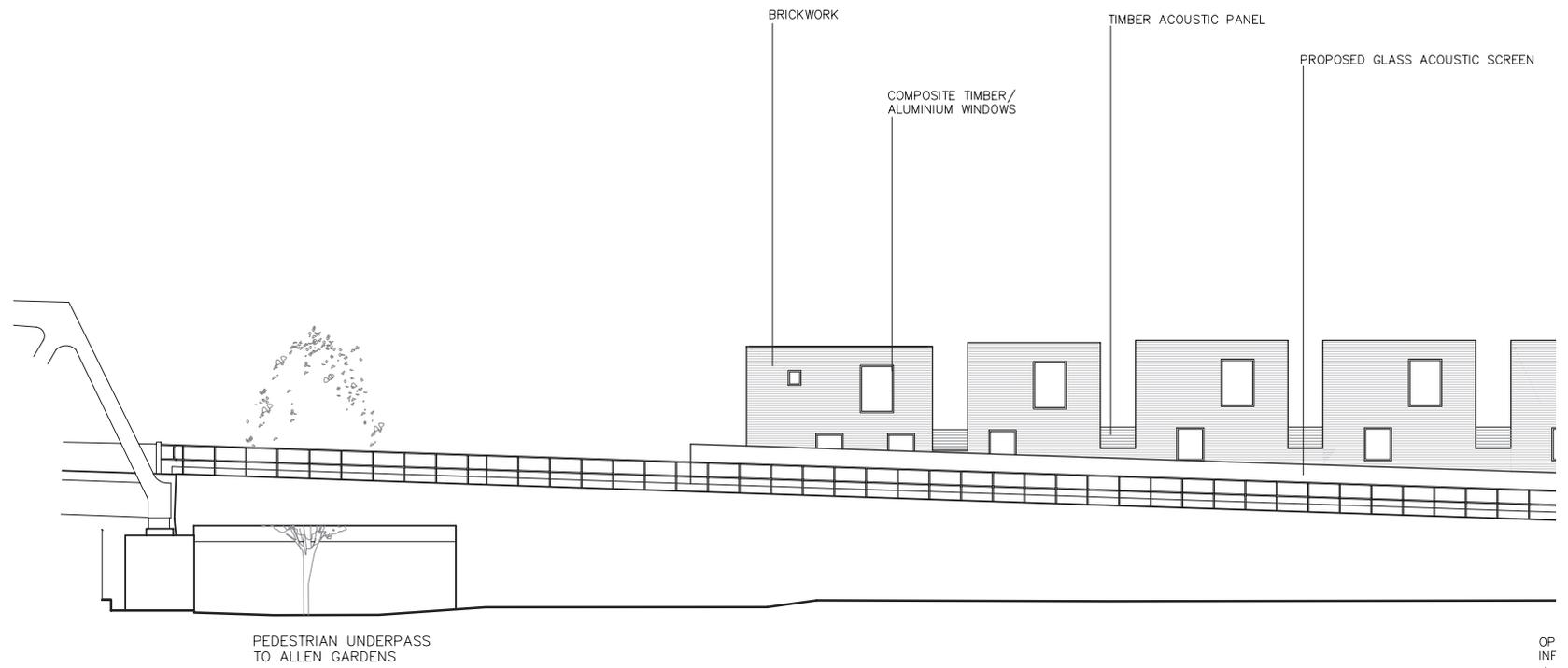
Elevation 01



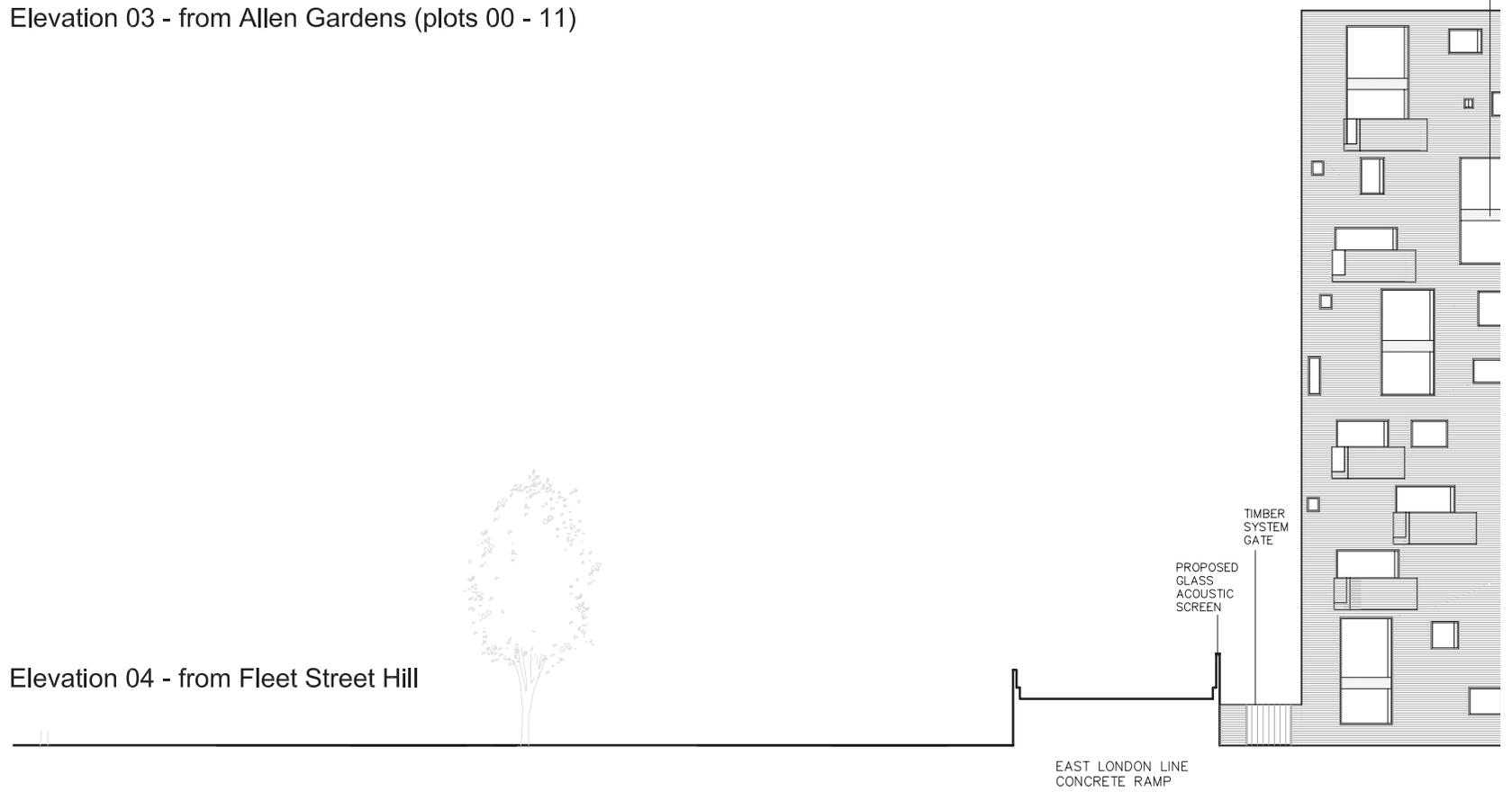
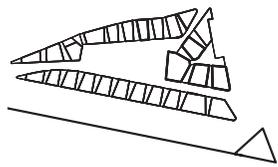
Elevation 02

Fig.44. Fleet Street Hill: Elevations 1 and 2.





Elevation 03 - from Allen Gardens (plots 00 - 11)



Elevation 04 - from Fleet Street Hill

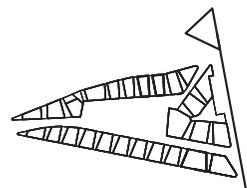
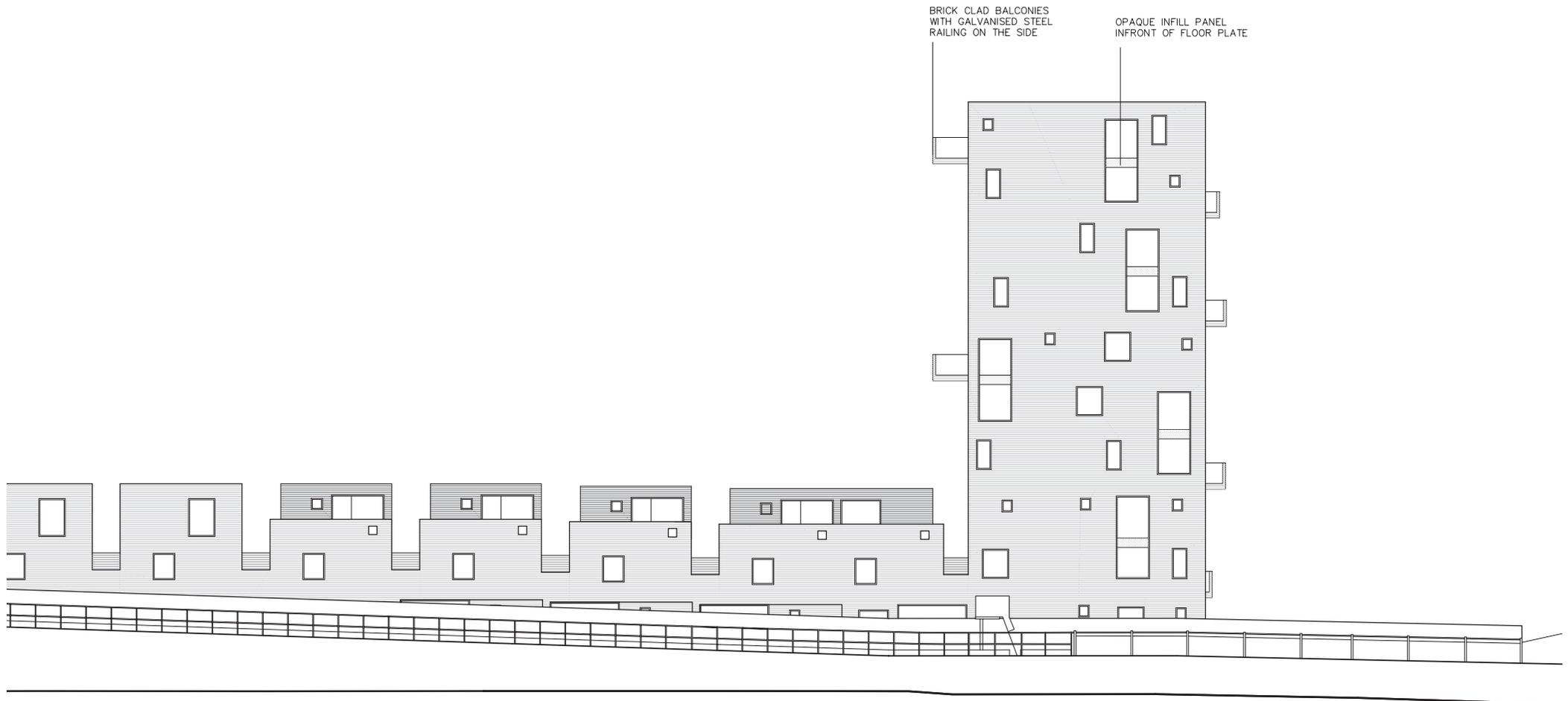


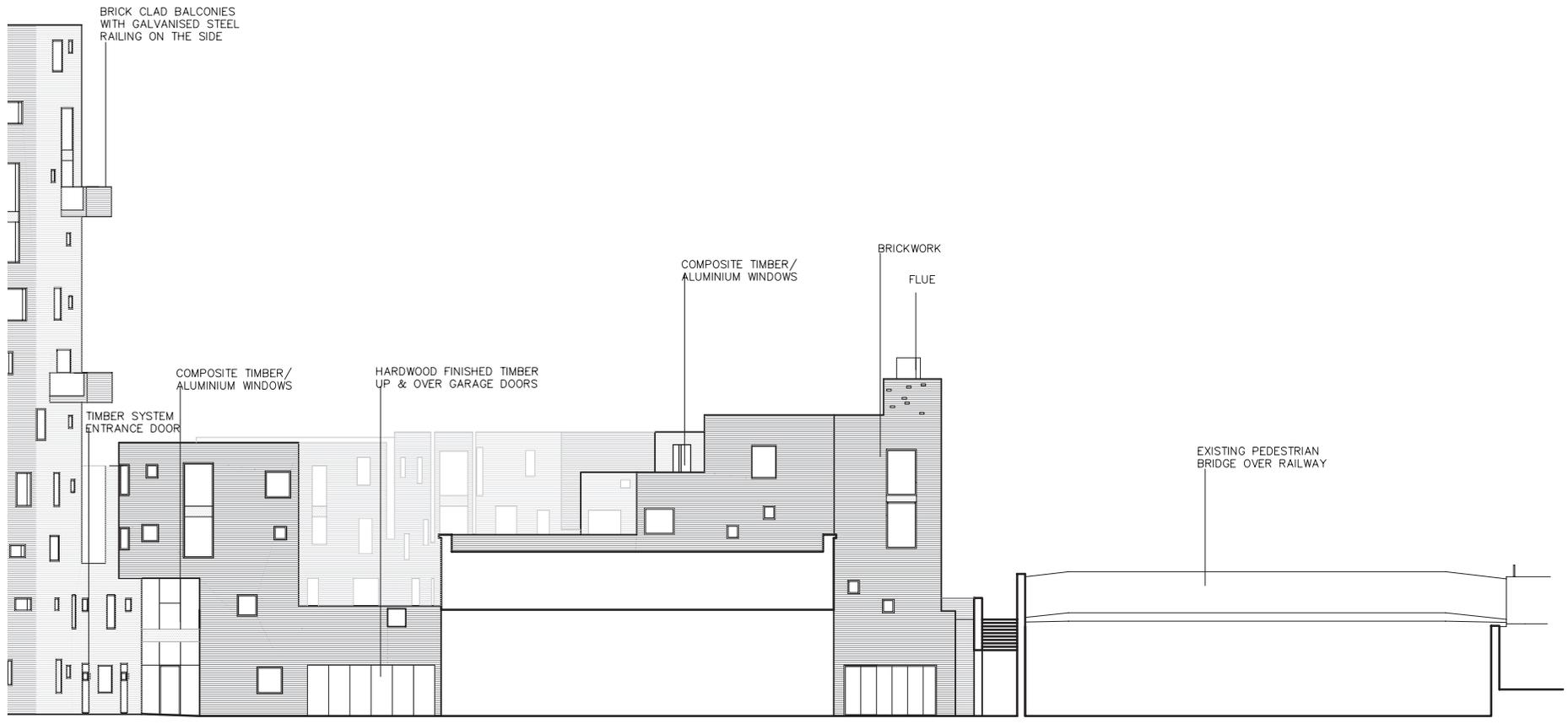
Fig.45. Fleet Street Hill: Elevations 3 and 4.



BRICK CLAD BALCONIES
WITH GALVANISED STEEL
RAILING ON THE SIDE

OPAQUE INFILL PANEL
INFRONT OF FLOOR PLATE

AQUE INFILL PANEL
FRONT OF FLOOR PLATE



BRICK CLAD BALCONIES
WITH GALVANISED STEEL
RAILING ON THE SIDE

COMPOSITE TIMBER/
ALUMINIUM WINDOWS

HARDWOOD FINISHED TIMBER
UP & OVER GARAGE DOORS

BRICKWORK
FLUE

TIMBER SYSTEM
ENTRANCE DOOR

EXISTING PEDESTRIAN
BRIDGE OVER RAILWAY

EXISTING VIADUCT STRUCTURE

MAINLINE RAILWAY



Fig. 46: Baden Powell Close: Existing site.



Fig. 47. Baden Powell Close: Street elevation 1, photograph Morley von Sternberg.



Fig. 48. Baden Powell Close: Street elevation 2, photograph Morley von Sternberg.



Fig. 49. Baden Powell Close: Street elevation detail, photograph Morley von Sternberg.

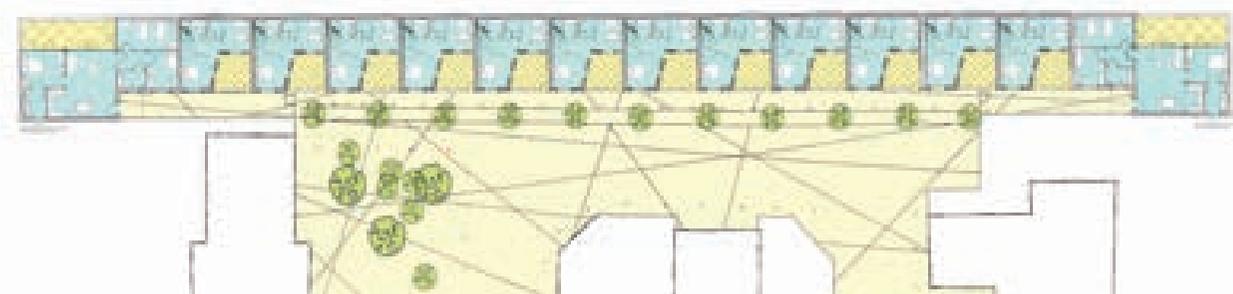
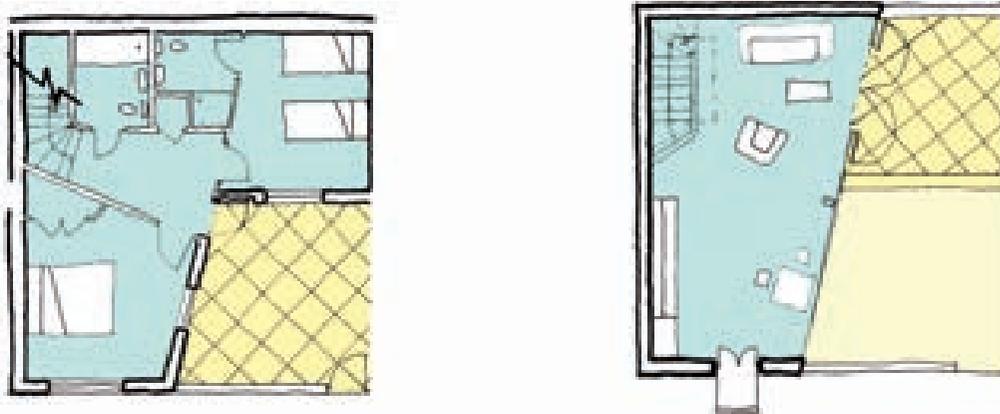


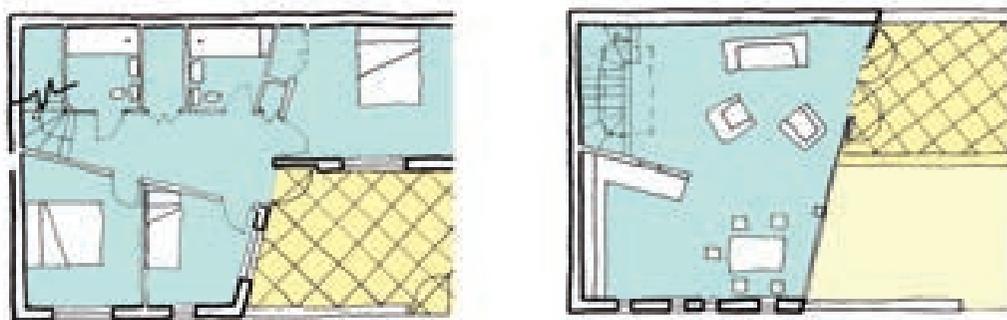
Fig. 50. Baden Powell Close: Site Plan sketch.



Fig. 51. Baden Powell Close: Perspective Sketch.



054. Baden Powell Close: Sketch, 2 bed unit.



055. Baden Powell Close: Sketch, 3 bed unit.

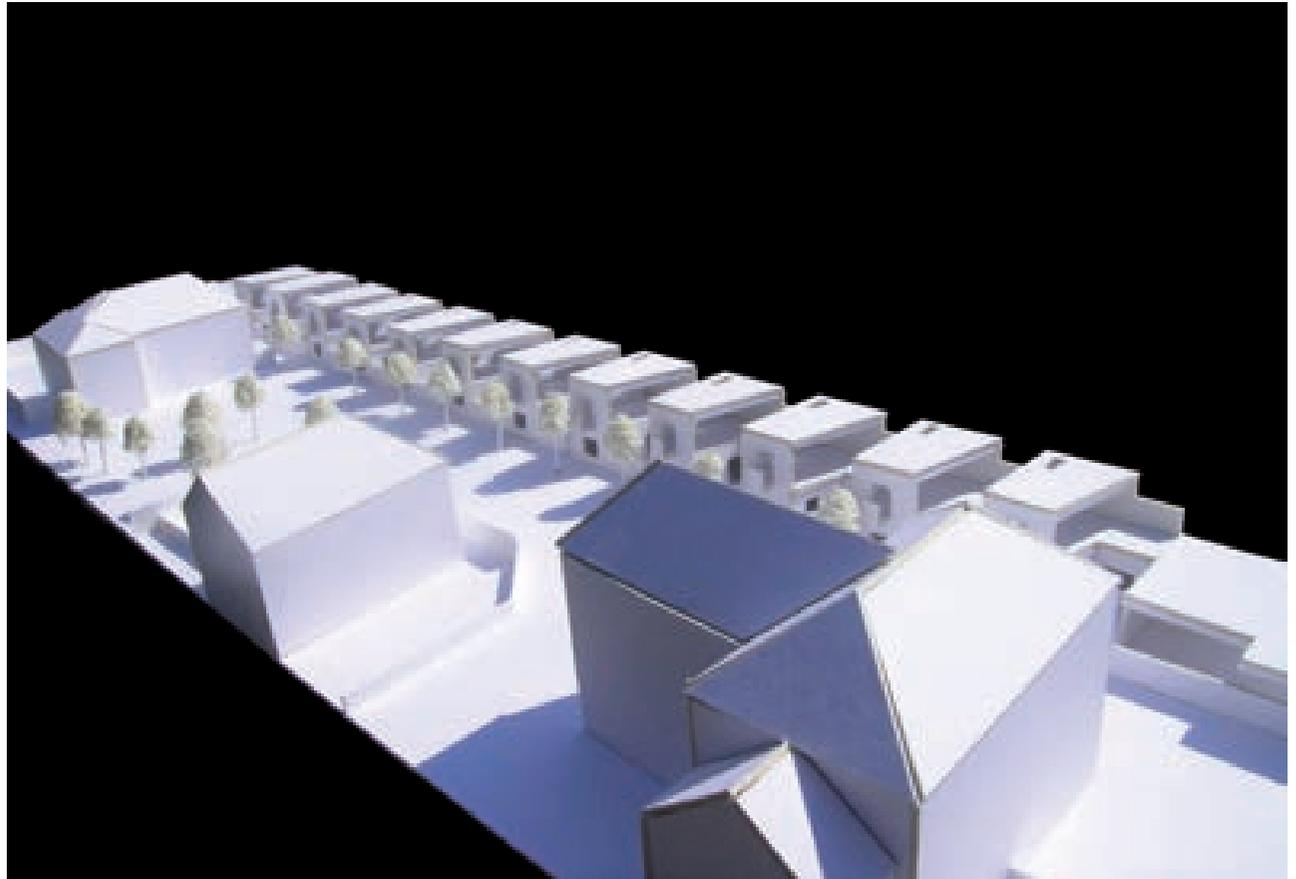


Fig. 52. Baden Powell Close: Sketch model 1.



Fig. 53. Baden Powell Close: Sketch model 2.

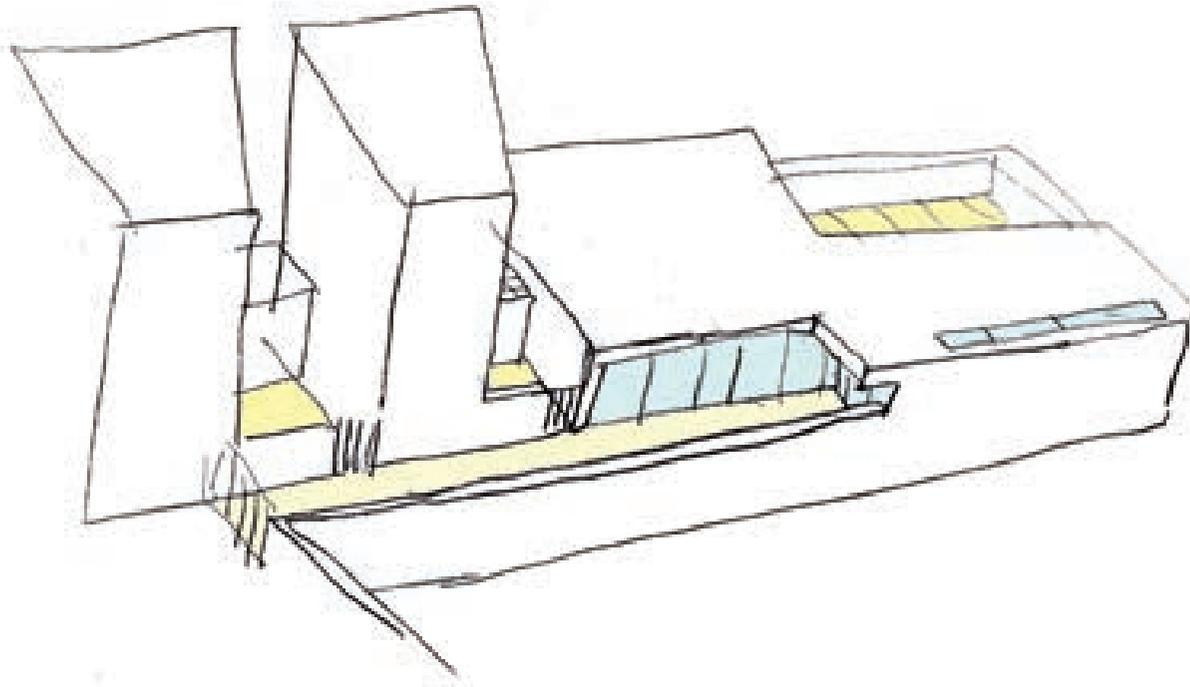


Fig. 56a. Baden Powell Close: Sketches, disabled units.

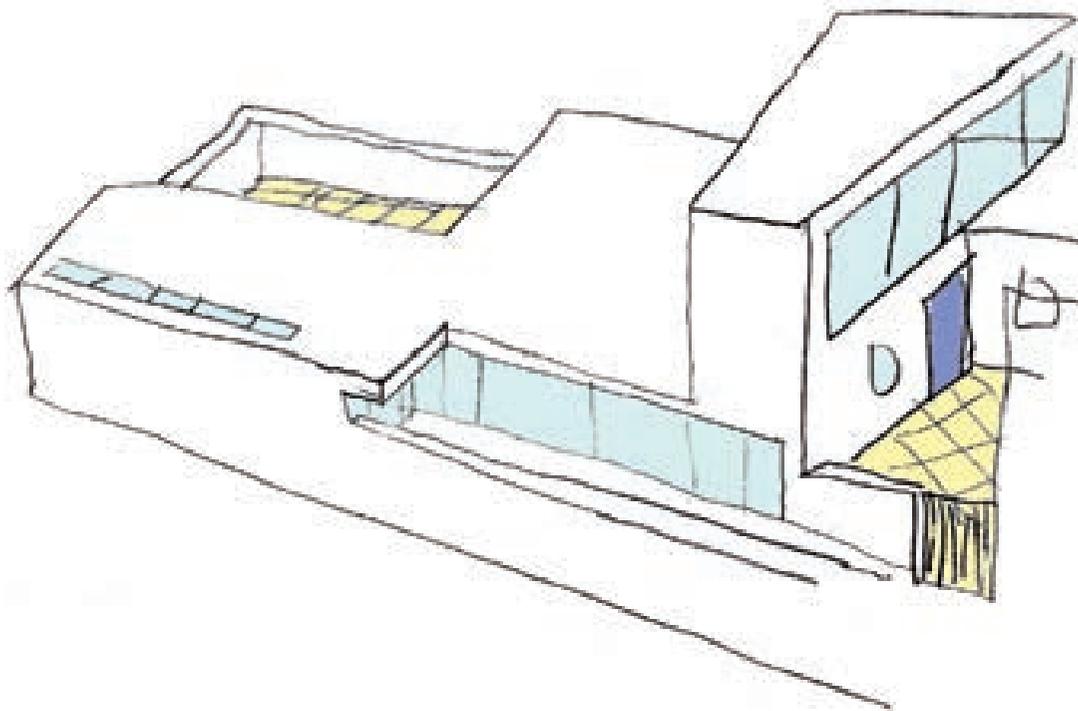


Fig. 56a., 056b. Baden Powell Close: Sketches, disabled units.

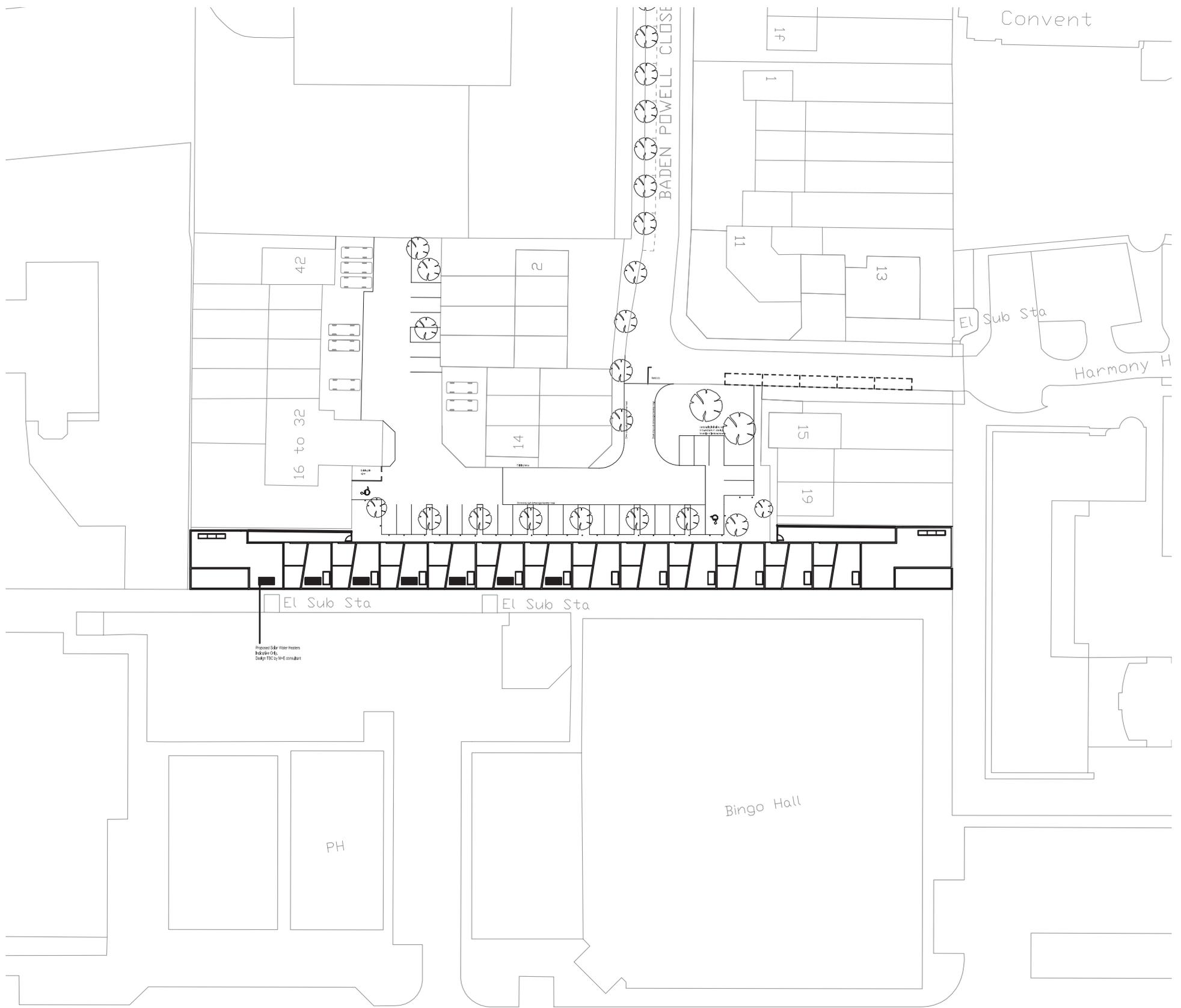


Fig. 57. Baden Powell Close: Site Plan.

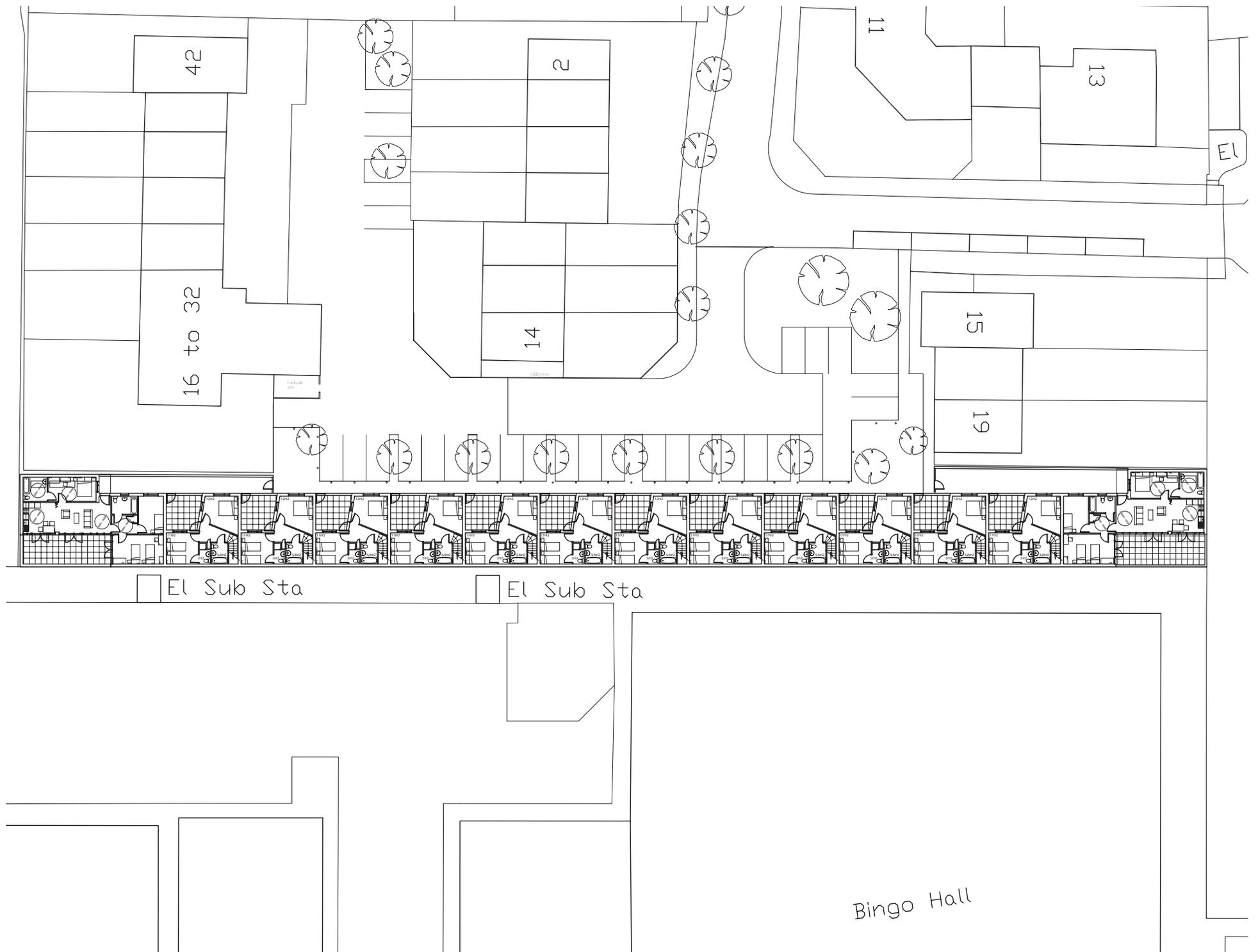


Fig. 58. Baden Powell Close: Ground Floor Plan.

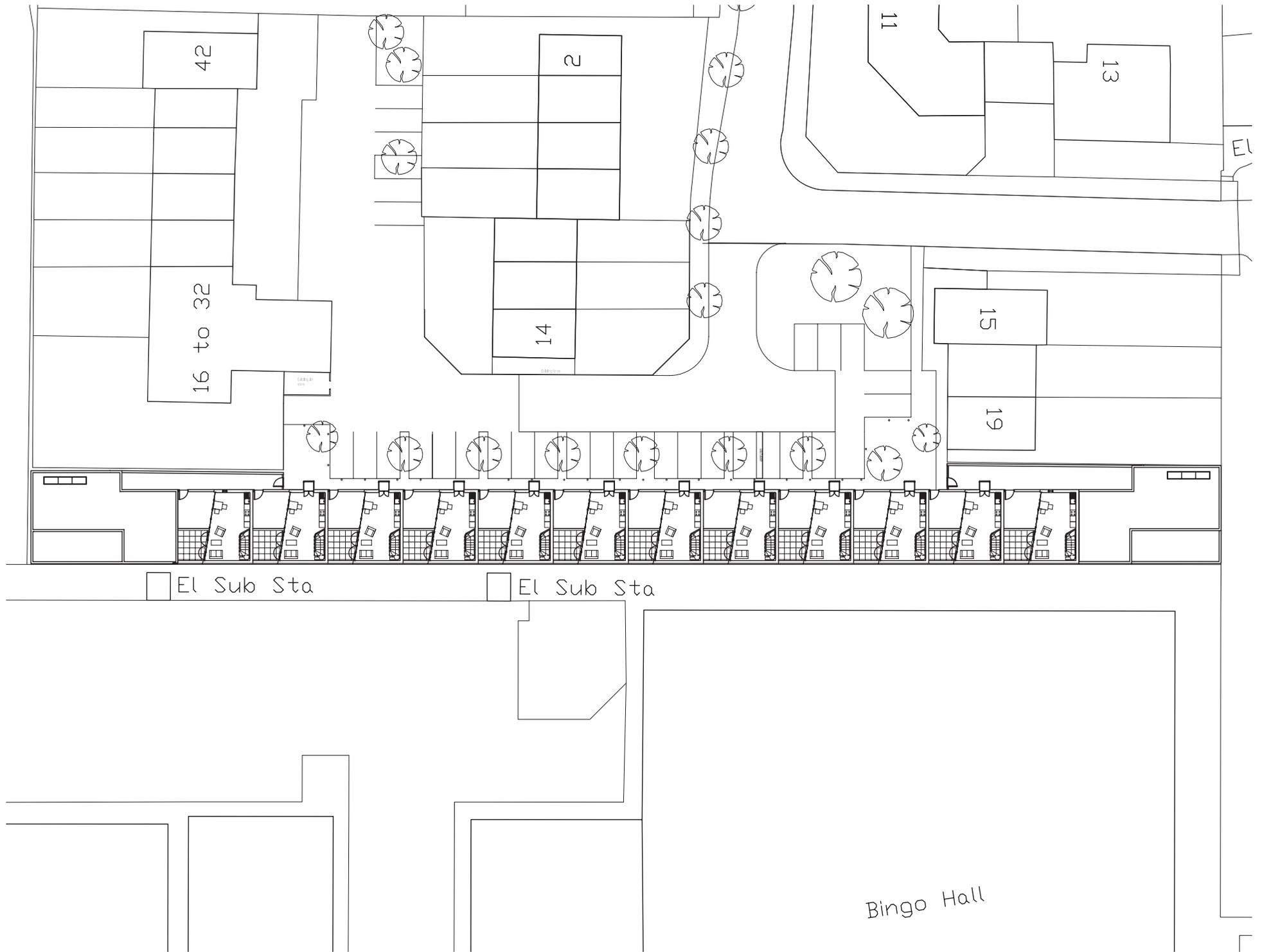


Fig. 59. Baden Powell Close: First Floor Plan.

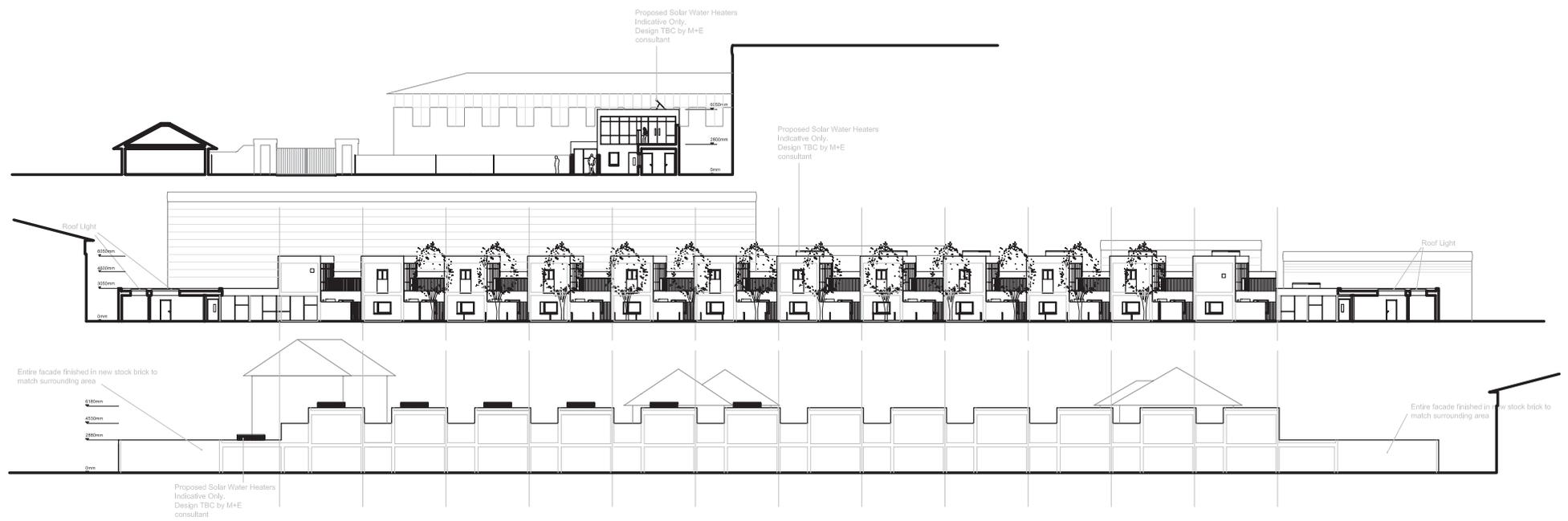


Fig. 60. Baden Powell Close: Sectional Elevation 1.

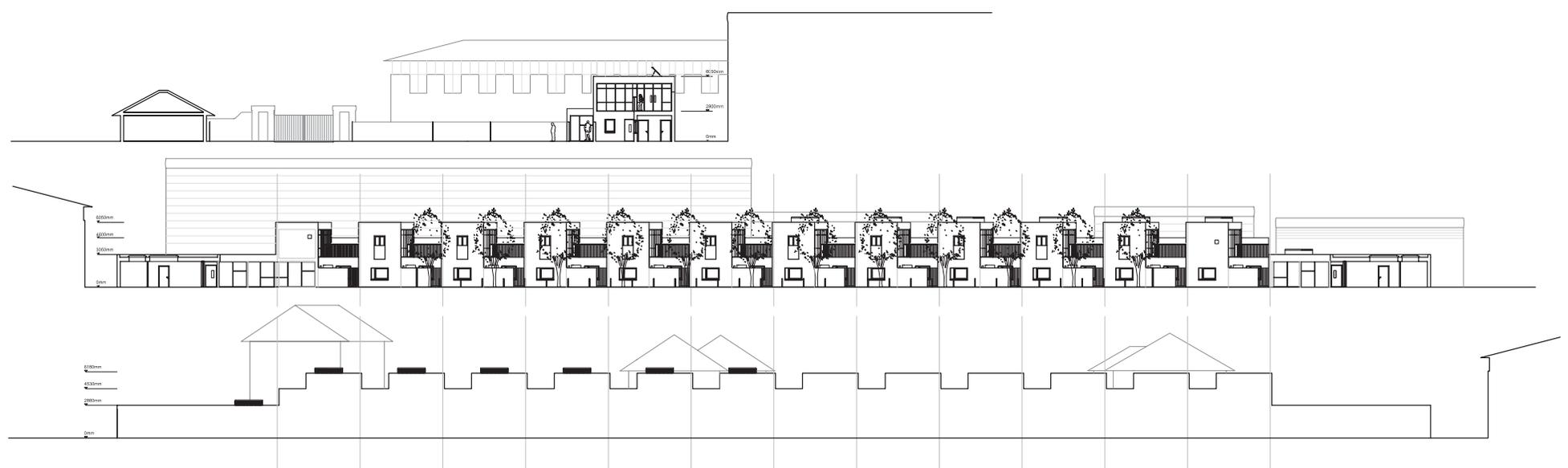


Fig. 61. Baden Powell Close: Sectional Elevation 2.



Fig. 62. Hannibal Road Gardens: Overall view, photograph Morley von Sternberg.



Fig. 63. Hannibal Road Gardens: View from communal garden, photograph Morley von Sternberg.



Fig. 64. Hannibal Road Gardens: View of row of terraces from head, photograph Morley von Sternberg.



065. Hannibal Road Gardens: View of pedestrian street, photograph Morley von Sternberg.



Fig. 67. Hannibal Road Gardens: Detail view, photograph Morley von Sternberg.



Fig. 66. Hannibal Road Gardens: Elevational view, photograph Morley von Sternberg.





Fig. 68. Hannibal Road Gardens: Early sketch.

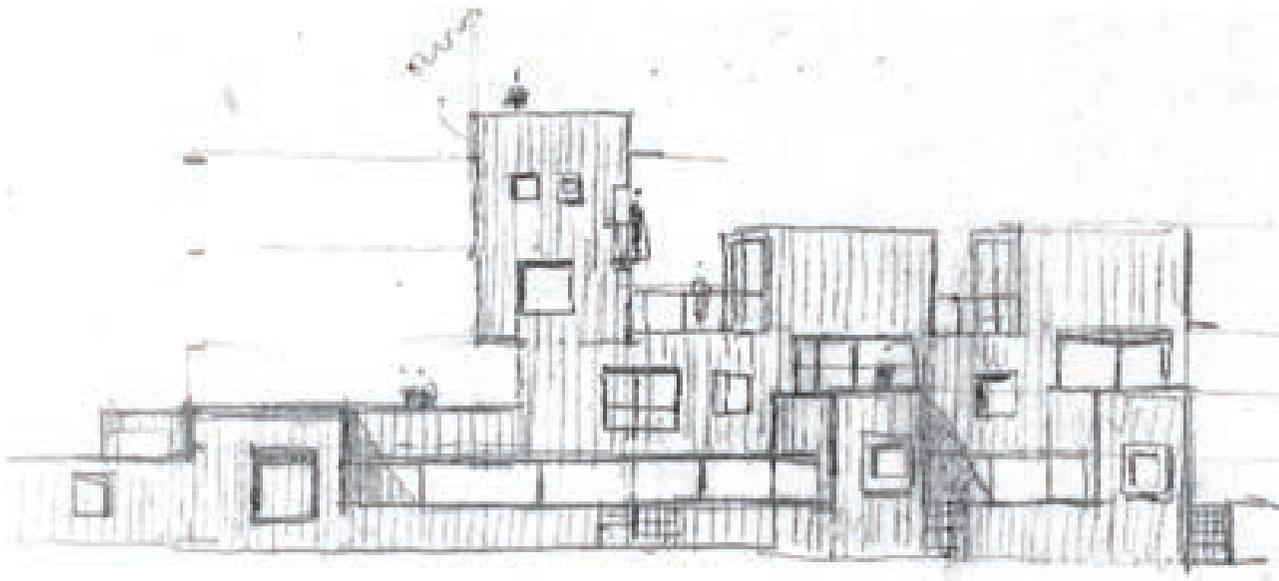


Fig. 69. Hannibal Road Gardens: Sketch elevation.



Fig. 70. Hannibal Road Gardens: Axonometric.

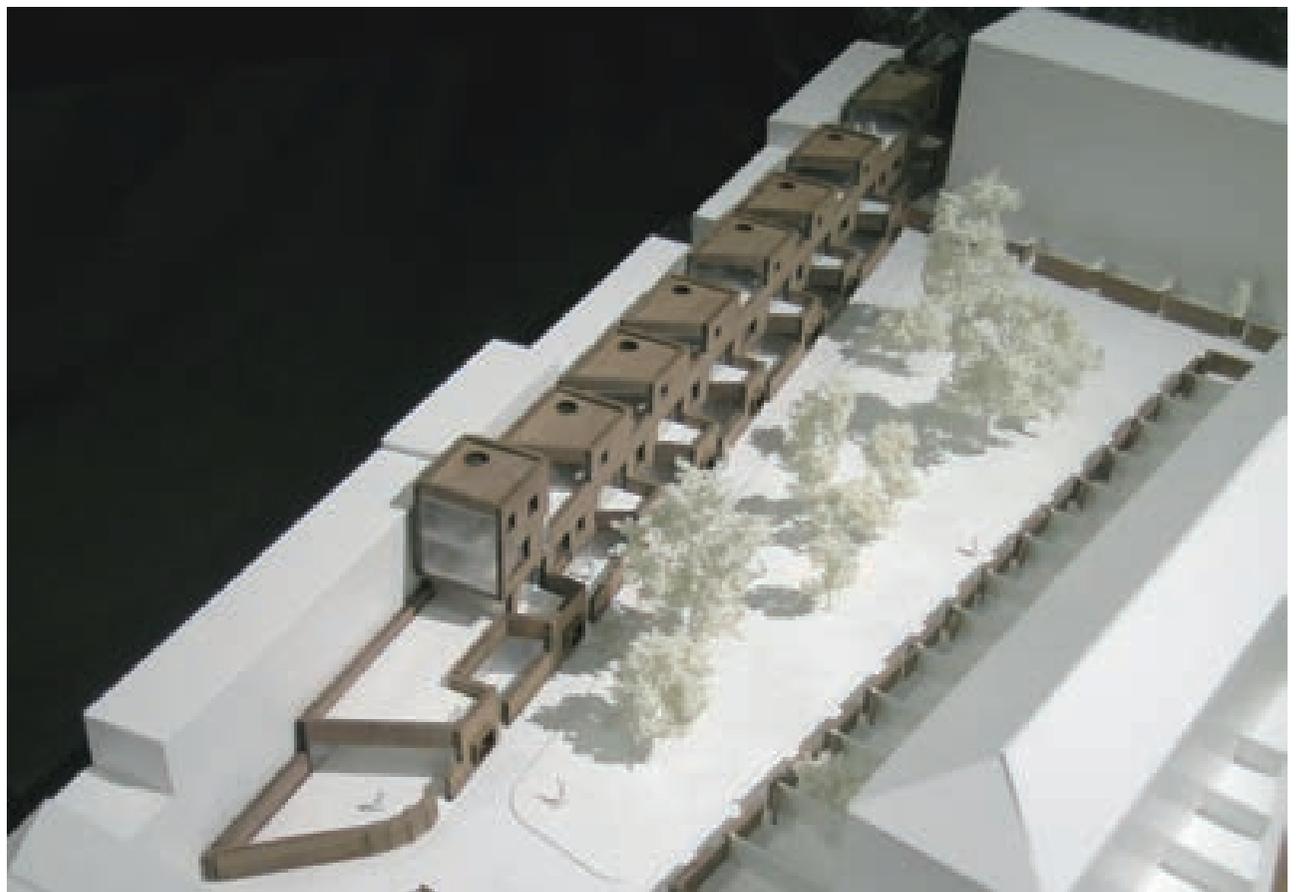


Fig. 71. Hannibal Road Gardens: Sketch model.

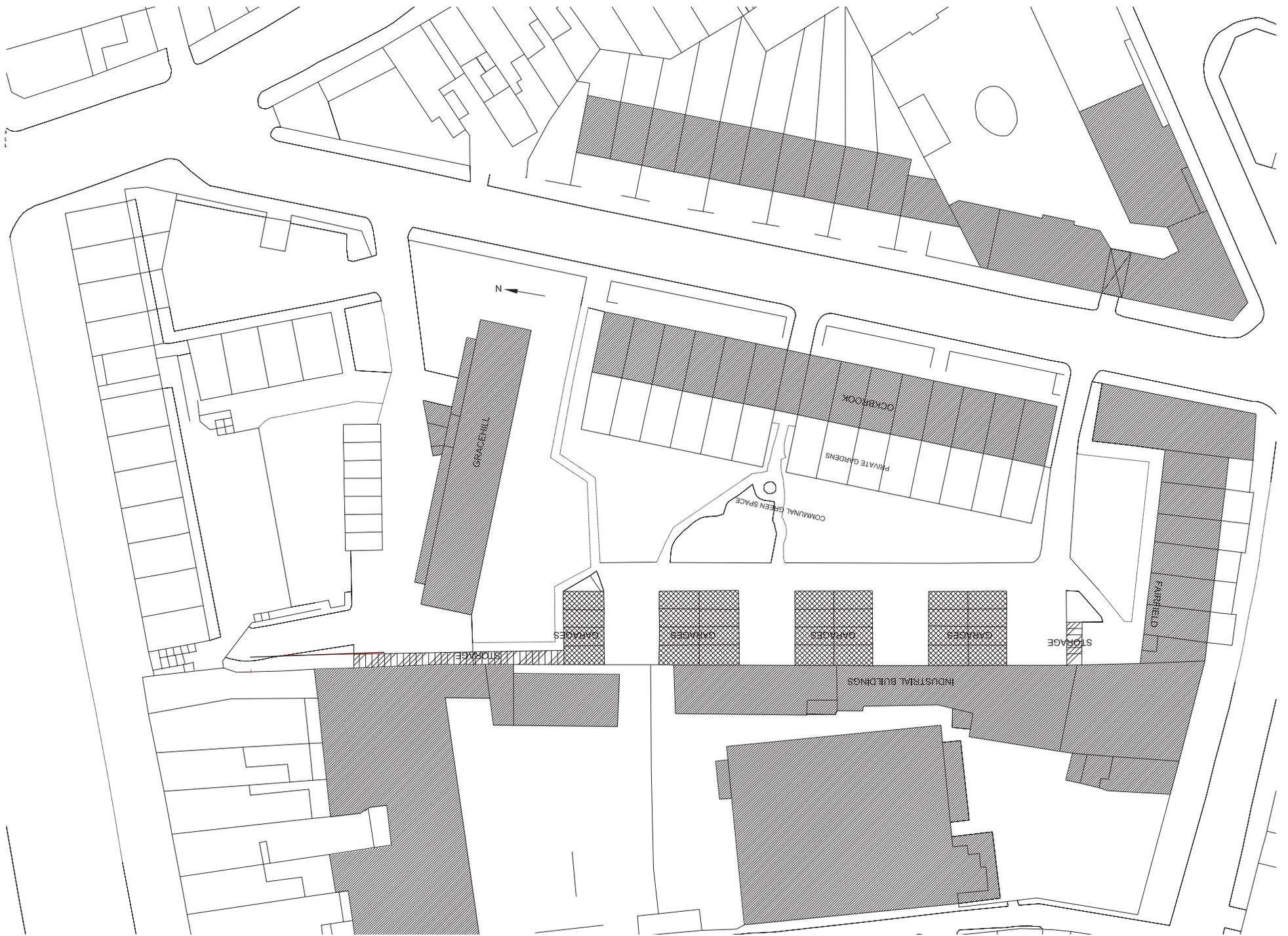


Fig. 72. Hannibal Road Gardens: Context Plan.



Fig. 73. Hannibal Road Gardens: Site Plan 1.

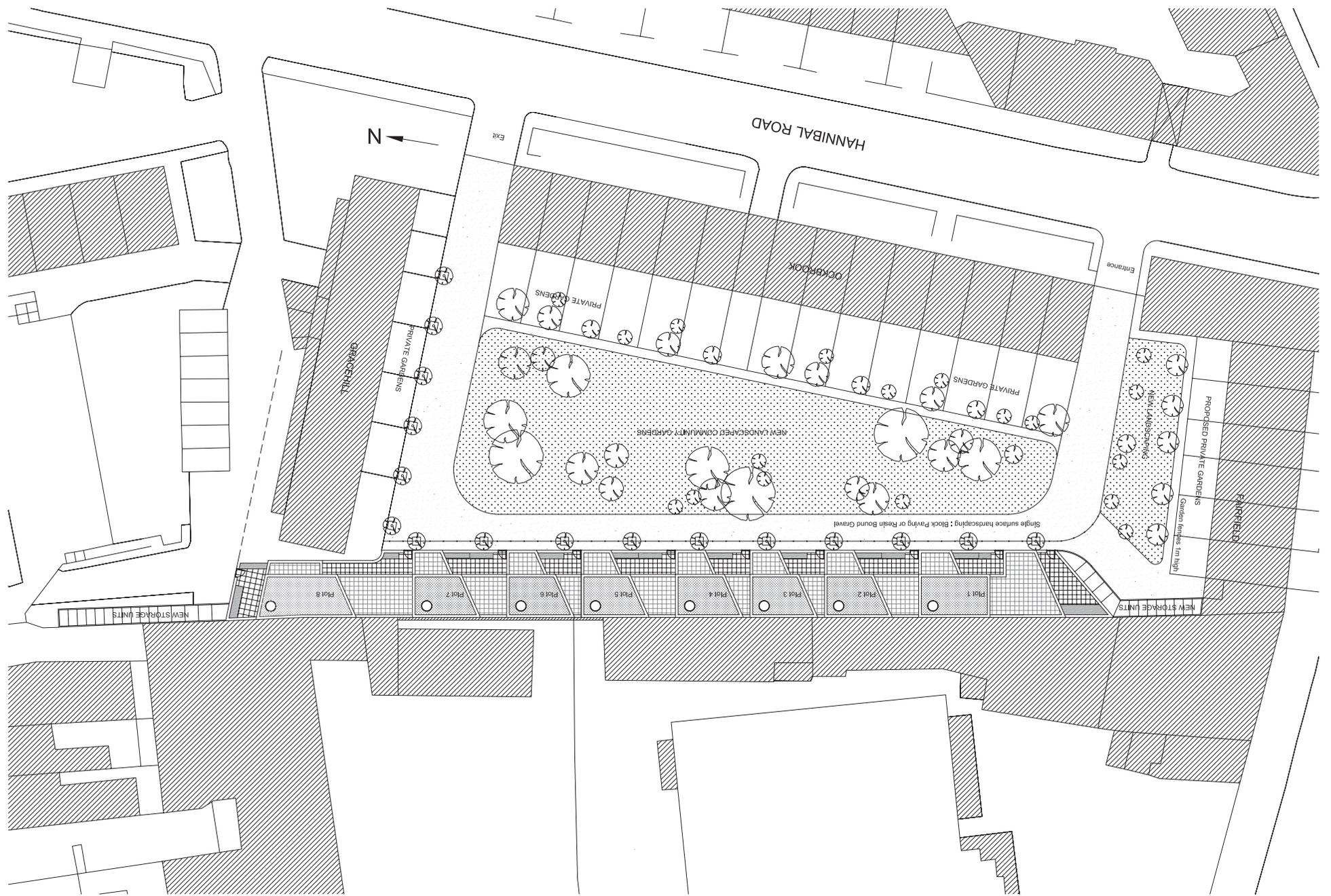


Fig. 74. Hannibal Road Gardens: Site Plan 2.

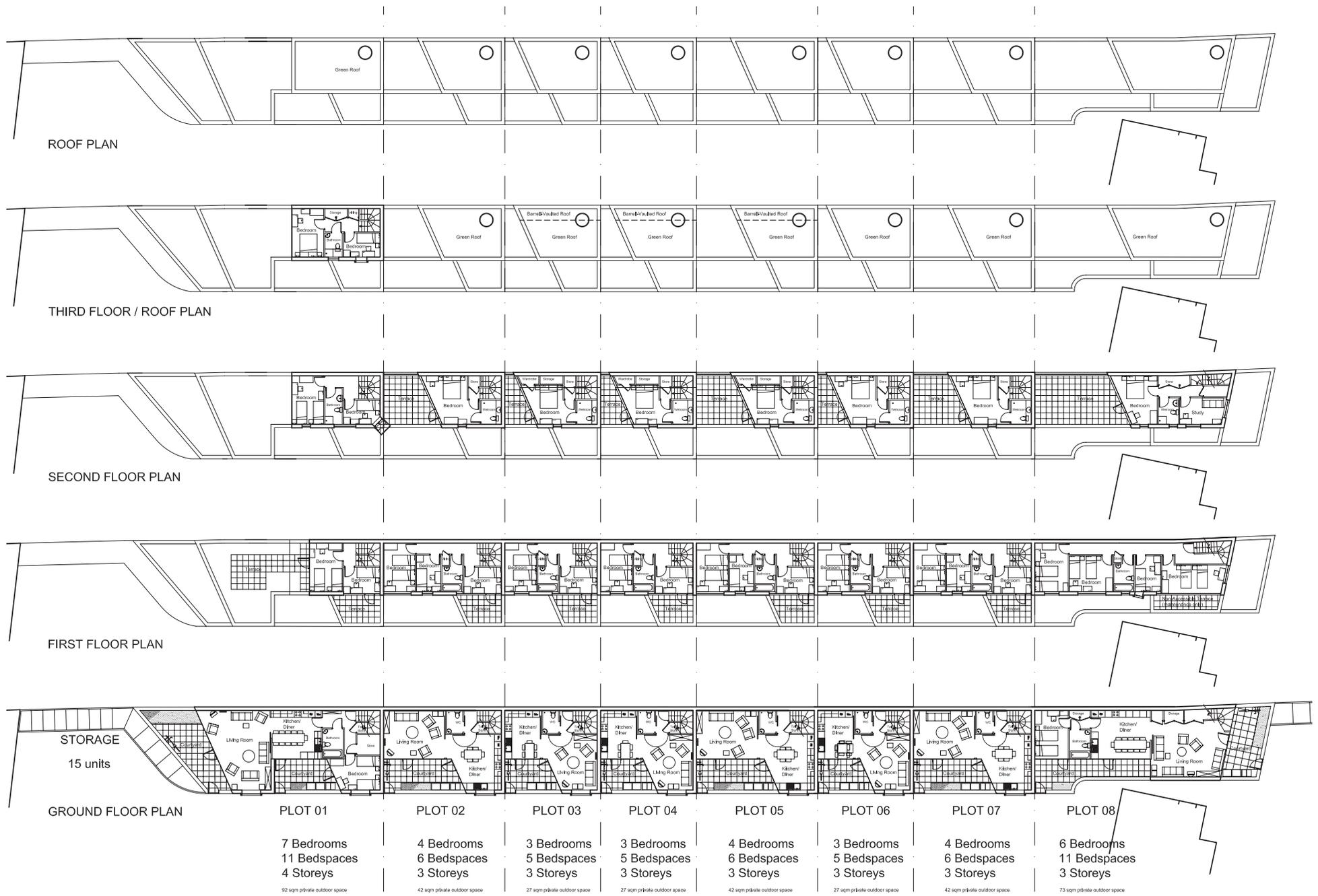
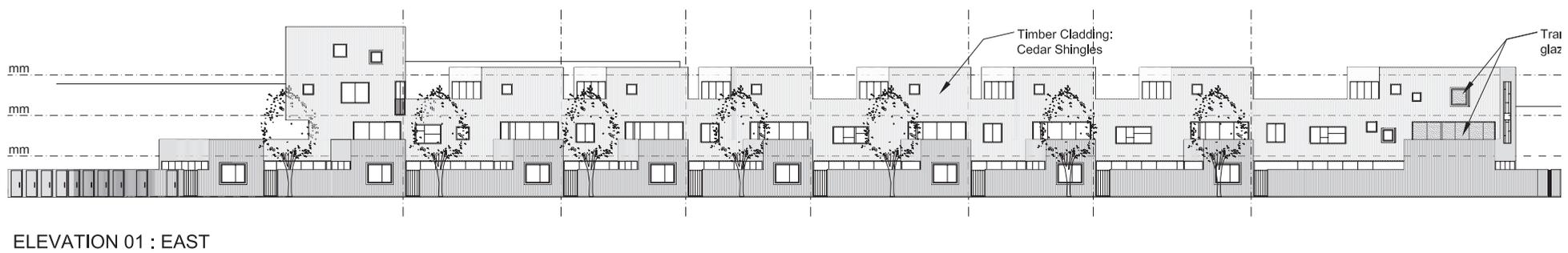
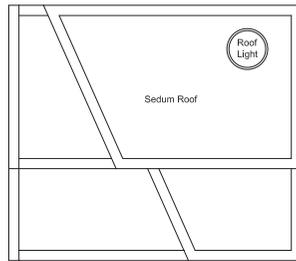


Fig. 75. Hannibal Road Gardens: Floor Plans.

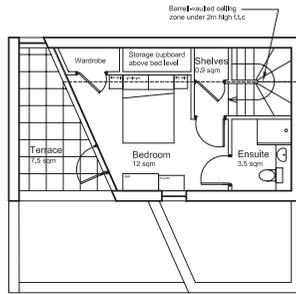


ELEVATION 01 : EAST

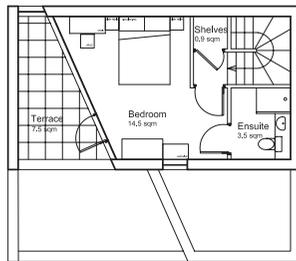
Fig. 76. Hannibal Road Gardens: East Elevation.



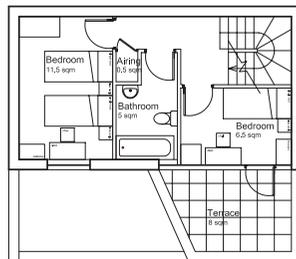
03_roof plan



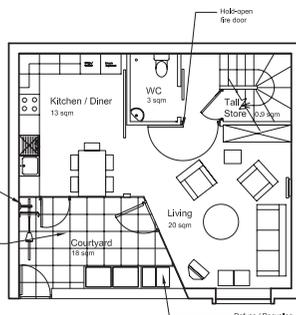
02b_second floor plan (barrell-vaulted ceiling)



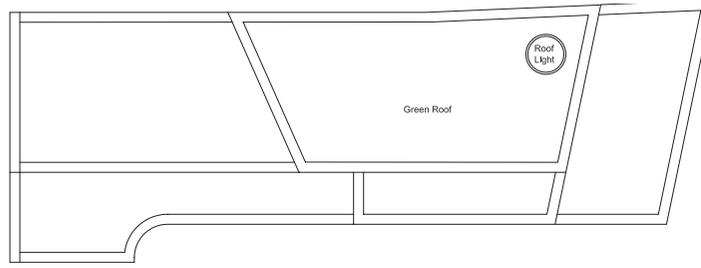
02a_second floor plan (typical)



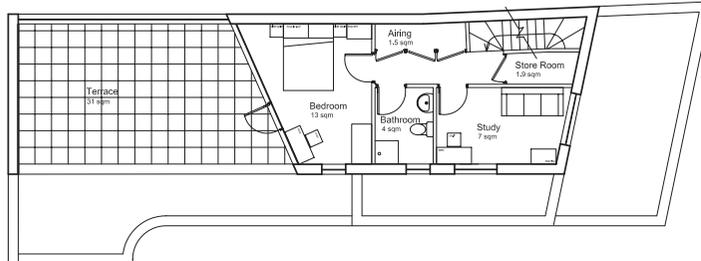
01_first floor plan



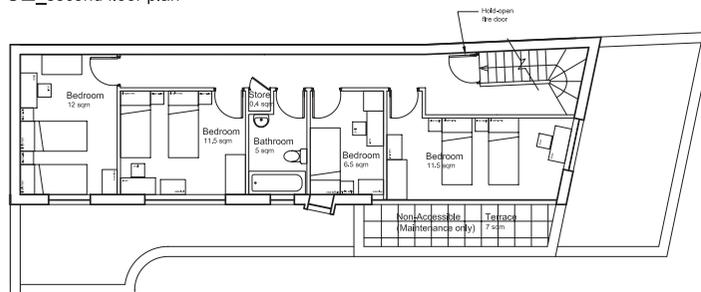
00_ground floor plan



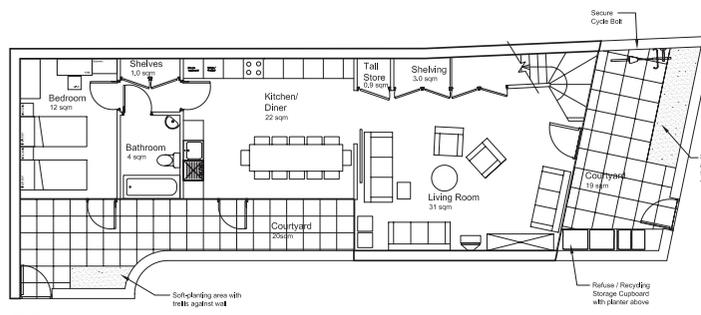
03_roof plan



02_second floor plan



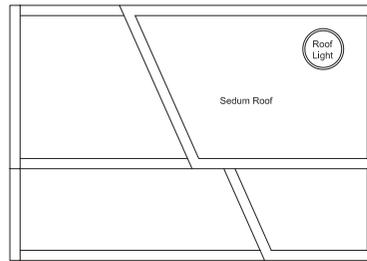
01_first floor plan



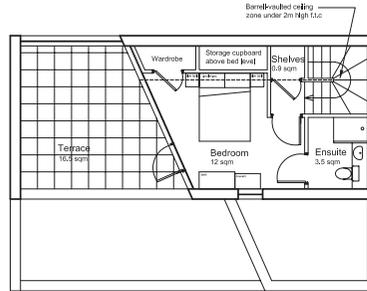
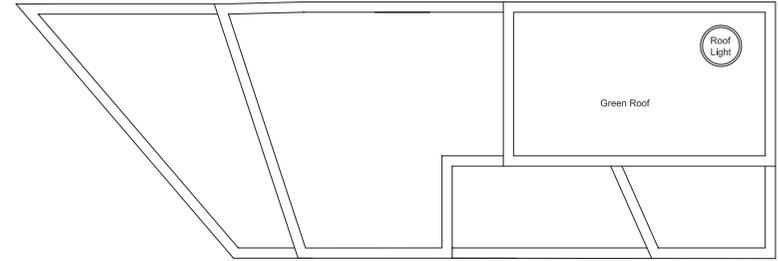
00_ground floor plan

Fig.77. Hannibal Road Gardens: Typical plans, Three bed unit.

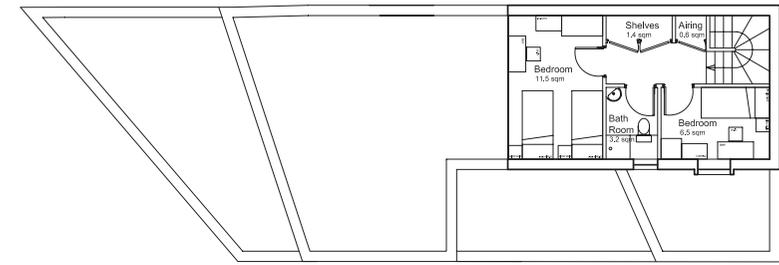
Fig. 79. Hannibal Road Gardens: Floor plans, six bed unit.



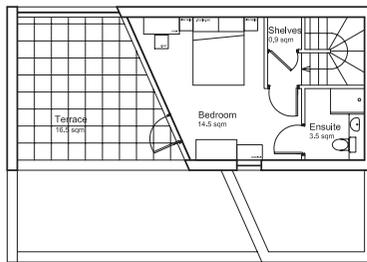
04_roof plan



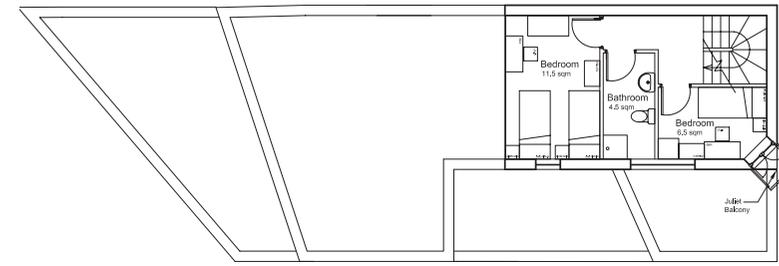
02b_second floor plan (barrel-vaulted ceiling)



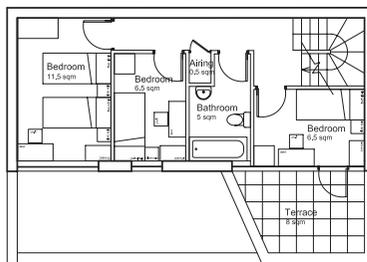
03_third floor plan



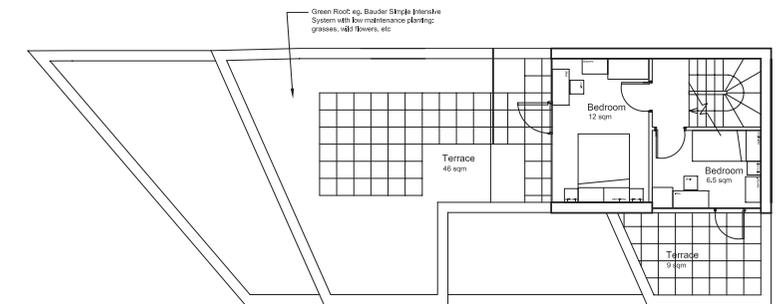
02a_second floor plan (typical)



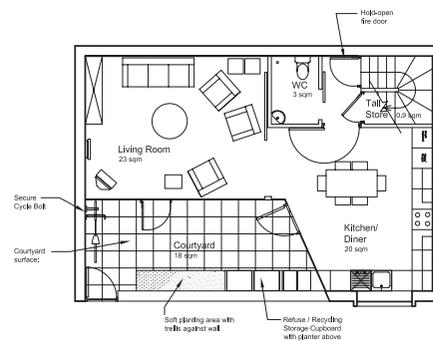
02_second floor plan



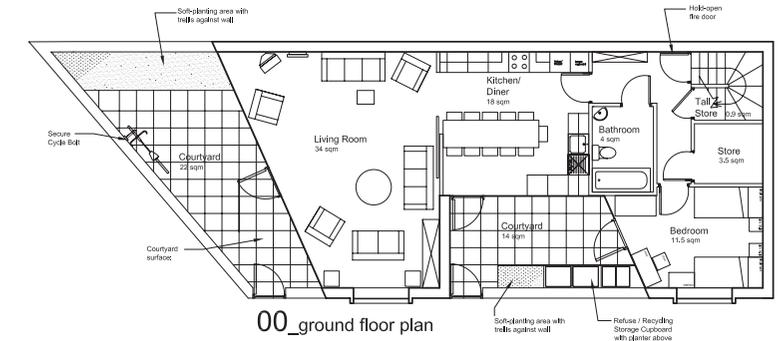
01_first floor plan



01_first floor plan



00_ground floor plan

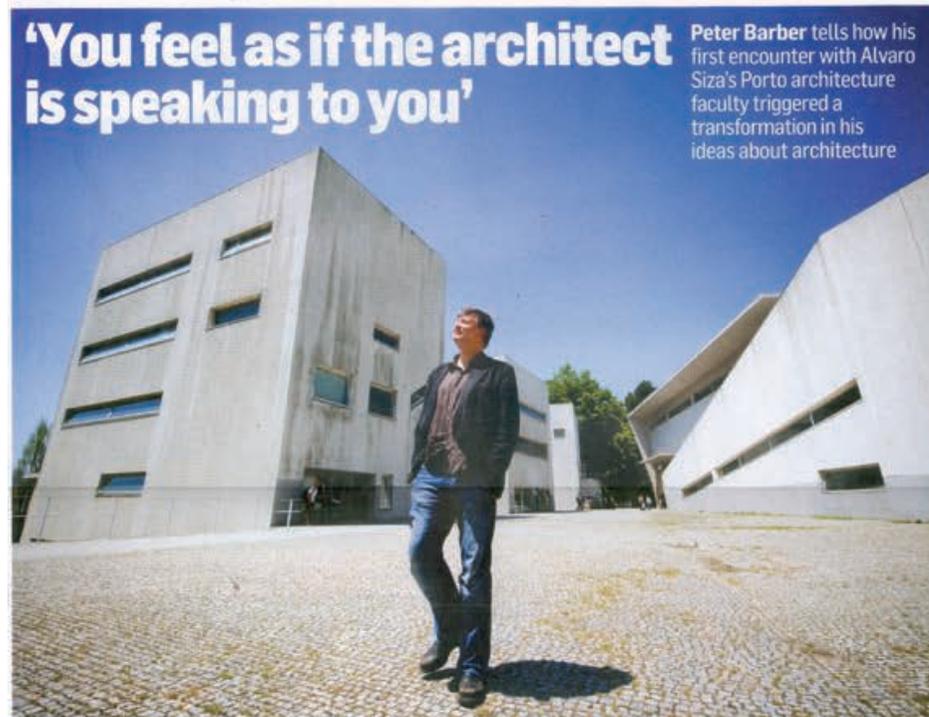


00_ground floor plan

Fig. 78. Hannibal Road Gardens: Typical plans, four bed unit.

Fig. 80. Hannibal Road Gardens: Floor plans, seven bed unit.

SOLUTIONS: FACULTY OF ARCHITECTURE



'You feel as if the architect is speaking to you' Peter Barber tells how his first encounter with Alvaro Siza's Porto architecture faculty triggered a transformation in his ideas about architecture

Inspiration
Faculty of Architecture, University of Porto
Architect
Alvaro Siza
Built 1987-1993
Location
Porto, Portugal

I first heard about Alvaro Siza from Lisa Fior (now of Muf) whose dad lived in Porto when I was studying for my diploma at the Polytechnic of Central London. When I finally saw Siza's work for myself it was a shock, completely alien to the hi-tech aesthetics and righties stuff in England. There everything was about articulated structure and highly detailed building systems, but Siza turned his structure into sculpture. His architecture seemed to be about containment, reduction and poetry. He wanted to hide the technological and instead articulate pure form and space.

I'd been interested in a functionalist environment for my first degree in Sheffield. I loved Architecture and had come to PCL to study under David Greene, and



Campus buildings are grouped around a central thoroughfare.

when I felt I was interested in the idea of an architecture of ephemerality and lightness. My encounters with the work of Siza and also Iain Burgess while I was working for Richard Rogers made me look at architecture in a different way — the idea of mass and voidness — architecture embedded physically, culturally, geometrically in a particular site.

Having already seen other Siza buildings in Porto such as his wonderful salt water swimming pool and the Box Nova neonome, I visited the faculty of architecture in 1994 not long after it had opened. I'd never seen anything like it. Until then, the buildings I'd studied had been very different — more mechanistic, gadgetry, distributed by structure. Through Siza I came to enjoy buildings which are more organic.

I found the Porto University buildings very moving. You feel as if the architect is speaking to you and exerting a subtle but profound influence as you walk around, as if his hand is in the small of your back coaxing you gently through the space around in picturesque sequence. It's a building you discover gradually. As I've come back, floor by floor over the years the subtlety of the building has slowly dawned on me as I've become more familiar with it. It's



One of the four studio towers.

no different to Koolhaas's recently completed Casa de Musica in Porto which looks as if it's crafted from outer space. That is much more instantly understood than Siza's work, which is more layered, complex, nuanced and locally embedded.

Siza is very quiet and self-assured and this building also has a quiet confidence about it, a solidity that makes people look at it more carefully. When you walk into the central space, your pace quickens because it arouses your curiosity and you want to discover it. For me that is what is magical about architecture. I like an honest

faculty feel like a fragment of city. Siza has said that architecture is meaningless until it is occupied, and it seems to me that he thinks positively about how his spaces will be used. On a busy day, the central space is brought to life by students playing football and sitting out on the strange truncated tower. My early encounters with his buildings helped me to think about architecture this way.

In the context of a lot of public and education sector architecture in England, the Porto architecture faculty shows us how to make a place that's calmly confident and lovingly made — civic and non-corporate, unlike so many university buildings. I'd rather be here than in any other architecture school I've been to. But at the same time, in these times when the students are in a Siza building and they're being taught in a Siza way!

When I visited the architecture faculty, it helped me consolidate my enthusiasm for an architecture of solidity, and my determination to work with mass and simple form. After working for Rogers and Aalto I set up my own practice and travelled to Saudi Arabia where I spent a year building my first project, Villa Anbar, which I think shows Siza's influence.

A lot of our work is about streets and public space, and I love the

generosity of the Siza building. It is part of the city's public space of the city and we are invited to walk through it. I like to think that my own urban housing projects are conceived in this spirit. Darnbrook and Tinter Street in east London and the project that places them — a masterpiece for Haggerston West and Kingsland estates in Hackney — are all conceived as pieces of city knitted into their surroundings.

The design of the Porto faculty is very knowing. It's a nod to the Porto streetscape and there are shades of Le Corbusier and Gropius in it. Maybe it's an architect's architecture. The campus continues to fascinate me and I'm sure it won't be long before I'm back. But you have to keep moving on. I'm getting really interested in "home made" self-build housing and I'm also fascinated by the transition street life made possible by a really dense city like Marrakech which I visited a couple of months ago.

Peter Barber was speaking to Pamela Ruxton.

BARBER MEETS SIZA
Above: Peter Barber's Darnbrook housing quarter in east London, conceived as a piece of the city knitted into its surroundings. Left: Villa Anbar, private house in Saudi Arabia, which was Peter Barber Architects' first project.

PORTO'S TOWERS OF LEARNING



The two-level library in the north wing.

Porto's towers of learning



Site plan



A ramp leads to the upper levels of the north wing.

A bay intersection in the basement circulation space.

Alvaro Siza was an appropriate choice to create a new architecture faculty at Porto, having studied at the university before establishing his practice in the city in 1954.

The faculty covers 87,000sqm on a sloping site overlooking the Douro. It is one of a series of large-scale institutional projects Siza took on in the 1980s. He initially conceived the accommodation as a single large-scale building with inner courtyard, but developed the design further into a number of smaller, interlinked volumes. Teaching and architectural research takes place in a row of studio towers with great views of the river, each with varying heights and window openings according to function. Departmental offices, lecture halls, an auditorium and a library are arranged behind them within the north wing, which acts as an acoustic buffer to a busy road running behind the site. On the top floor is the fifth-year studio.

All four towers are linked at basement level by a generous escalator which converges with the basement, further accommodation on a nearby vacant site, and the existing buildings are shortly to undergo repairs.

Alvaro Siza.

Inspiration
Faculty of
Architecture,
University of Porto
Architect
Alvaro Siza
Built 1987-1993
Location
Porto, Portugal

I first heard about Alvaro Siza from Lina Fior (now of Mof) whose dad lived in Porto when I was studying for my diploma at the Polytechnic of Central London. When I finally saw Siza's work for myself it was a shock, completely alien to the hi-tech services and righties stuff in England. There everything was about articulated structure and niftily detailed cladding systems, but Siza turns his structure into sculpture. His architecture seemed to be about concealment, seduction and poetry. He wanted to hide the technological and instead articulate pure form and space.

I'd been immersed in a functionalist environment for my first degree in Sheffield. I loved Archigram and had come to PCI to study under David Greene, and

when I left I was interested in the idea of an architecture of ephemerality and lightness. My encounters with the work of Siza and also Luis Barragan while I was working for Richard Rogers made me look at architecture in a different way – the idea of mass and solidity – architecture embedded physically, culturally, geometrically in a particular site.

Having already seen other Siza buildings in Porto such as his wonderful salt water swimming pool and the Boa Nova restaurant, I visited the faculty of architecture in 1994 not long after it had opened. I'd never seen anything like it. Until then, the buildings I'd adored had been very different – more mechanistic, galactic, dominated by structure. Through Siza I came to enjoy buildings which are more enigmatic.

I found the Porto University buildings very moving. You feel as if the architect is speaking to you and exerting a subtle but profound influence as you walk around, as if his hand is in the small of your back, coaxing you gently through as the spaces unfold in picturesque sequence. It's a building you discover gradually. As I've come back five or six times over the years the subtleties of the building have slowly dawned on me as I've become more familiar with it. It's

generosity of the Siza building. It is part of the city's public space of the city and we are invited to walk through it. I like to think that my own urban housing projects are conceived in this spirit. Dennybrook and Tanner Street in east London and the project that precedes them – a masterplan for Haggerston West and Kingsland estates in Hackney – are all conceived as pieces of city knitted into their surroundings.

The design of the Porto faculty is very knowing. It's robust of the

Porto streetscape and there are shades of Leos, Aldo and Corb in it. Maybe it's an architects' architecture. The campus continues to fascinate me and I'm sure it won't be long before I'm back. But you have to keep moving on. I'm getting really interested in "home made" self-build housing and I'm also fascinated by the transubstant street life made possible by a really dense city like Marrakech which I visited a couple of months ago. Peter Barber was speaking to Pamela Buxton.



BARBER MEETS SIZA
 Above: Peter Barber's Dennybrook housing quarter in east London, conceived as a piece of the city knitted into its surroundings. Left: Villa Anbar, private house in Saudi Arabia, which was Peter Barber Architects' first project.

as different to Koolhaas's recently completed Casa da Musica in Porto which looks as if it's crash landed from outer space. That is much more instantly understood than Siza's work, which is more layered, complex, nuanced and locally embedded.

Siza is very quiet and self-assured and this building also has a quiet confidence about it, a subtlety that makes people look at it more carefully. When you walk into the central space, your pace quickens because it assumes your curiosity and you want to discover it. For me that is what is magical about architecture. I like architect-

ure that throws curve balls – you think it's one thing and it turns out to be something else. And that's what happened – it looked like Siza pored over joints and junctions for days to get them right. One of my favourites is an informal meeting place or hallway below the fifth year tower; the building's principal point of circulation where numerous rooms and uses converge and settle into a space flowing with people rushing through, stopping for a chat, sitting down for a cuppa. As such, it has an urban quality that I like. The arrangement of the buildings around a central square makes the

faculty feel like a fragment of city.

Siza has said that architecture is meaningless until it is occupied, and it seems to me that he thinks profoundly about how his spaces will be used. On a busy day, the central space is brought to life by students playing football and sitting out on the strange truncated tower. My early encounters with his buildings helped me to think about architecture this way.

In the context of a lot of public and education sector architecture in England, the Porto architecture faculty shows us how to make a place that's calmly confident and lovingly made – civic and not corporate, unlike so many university buildings. I'd rather be here than in any other architecture school I've been in. But at the same time, is there a tyranny here in that students are in a Siza building and they're being taught in a Siza way?

When I visited the architecture faculty, it helped me consolidate my enthusiasm for an architecture of solidity, and my determination to work with mass and simple form. After working for Rogers and Atop I set up my own practice and travelled to Saudi Arabia where I spent a year building my first project, Villa Anbar, which I think shows Siza's influence.

A lot of our work is about streets and public space, and I love the

Alvaro Siza was an appropriate choice to create a new architect's faculty at Porto, having studied at the university before establishing his practice in the city in 1954.

The faculty covers 87,000sqm on a sloping site overlooking the Douro. It is one of a series of large-scale institutional projects Siza took on in the 1980s. He initially conceived the accommodation as a single large-scale building with inner courtyard, but developed the design further into a number of smaller, interlinked volumes.

Teaching and architectural research takes place in a row of studio towers with great views of the river, each with varying heights and window openings according to function. Departmental offices, lecture halls, an auditorium and a library are arranged behind them within the north wing, which acts as an acoustic buffer to a busy road running behind the site. On the top floor is the fifth year studio.

All four towers are linked at basement level by a generous corridor which converges with the basement circulation of the north wing. All circulation

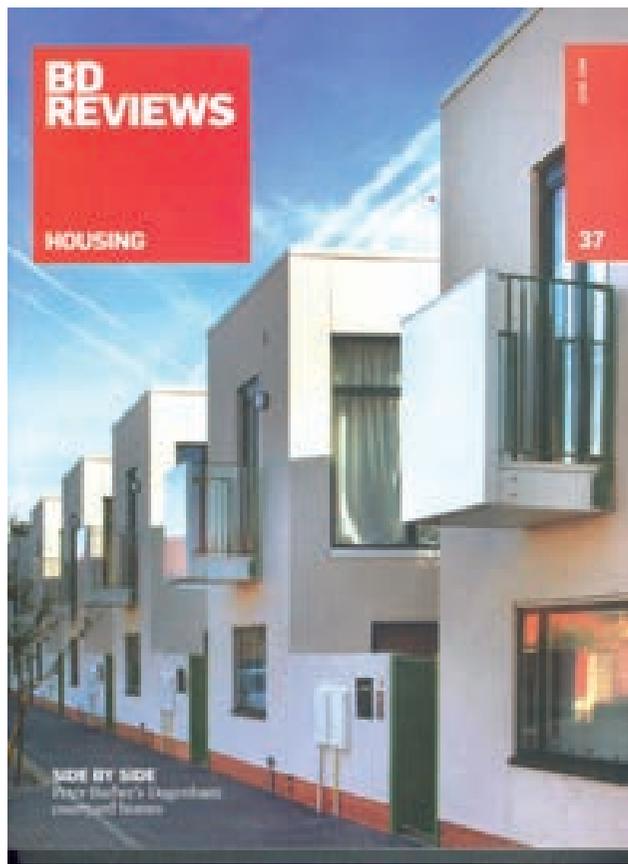
spaces are clad and floored in Travertine marble. Above ground, a central meeting space is semi-enclosed between the north building and the towers. Students also congregate on a platform between two of the towers and in a café pavilion and outdoor terrace situated at the main entrance where the two wings converge. Years are accommodated in their own buildings with second-year students occupying an earlier project by Siza, the Carlos Ramos Pavilion. This is reached via an elevated grass platform through a gate in the top of the site which leads to the former site of the architecture school.

Generally considered to be Portugal's greatest architect, Siza was awarded the RIBA Gold Medal in 2008 and the Pritzker Prize in 1992. He completed the faculty in 1993, and until recently continued to teach at the School of Architecture. The faculty was originally intended for 500 students, but now has twice that number and needs to expand. There are plans to

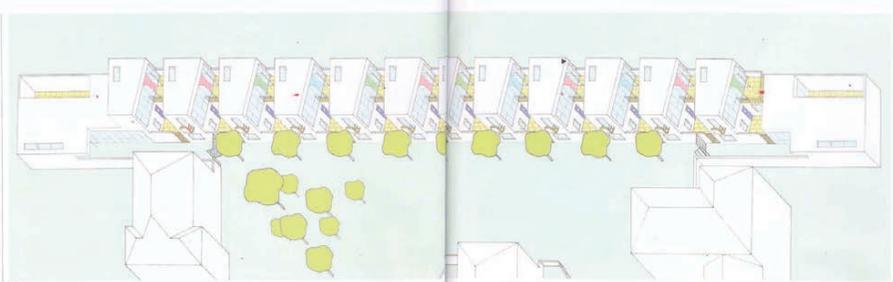
invite Siza to design further accommodation on a nearby vacant site, and the existing buildings are shortly to undergo repairs.

Alvaro Siza





BUILDING STUDY PETER BARBER ARCHITECTS



Even by Peter Barber's standards, the 160-unit terrace of flats immediately behind Dagenham Leisure Park is an audacious proposition for housing. Barber has become the go-to architect for advanced housing schemes in London — whether across business houses for big Asian families in Singapore or high-density masses adhering to the rules of the city's planning code, which often sit on the back of the housing market. Barber has developed a design approach and strategy that is a unique blend of public housing, private housing, and a mix of housing types. Barber's approach is to create a range of housing types and to create spaces that are not just for the public but also for the private.

Baden Powell Close is a mix of typologies: a terrace of 14 two-storey, two-bedroom residential units, all with parallel on-street parking. It sits across the bottom of an existing built-up site, which is itself a result of the wider regeneration plan of the leisure park area. Technically, the terrace is in fact part of a larger part of the site's regeneration. The London Council Council developed the area as a large council estate of 22,000 homes between 1955 and 1970. However, it has a population of more than 100,000 and it remains the largest public housing estate in London.

The client's brief identified people jumping over the fence to get access to the leisure park as a reason to develop the site. It is an odd precept for housing

development in the country. The context of scale makes for an interesting comparison with Barber's 14 homes. The last to be built was Peter Barber's work for the London Borough of Dagenham, in which the challenge was to create a new housing estate in the heart of the borough. Barber's approach was to create a range of housing types and to create spaces that are not just for the public but also for the private.

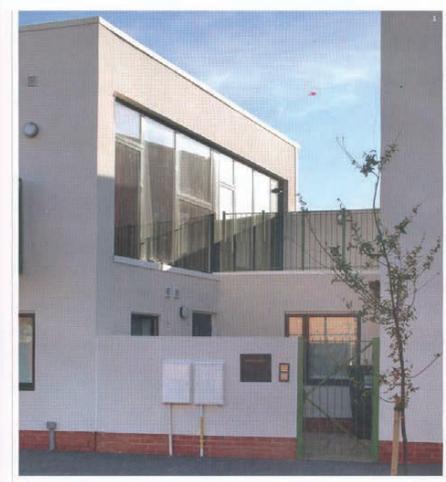
At the recent Council Election, the RDP was elected to lead the council in its role as the local authority for the borough. Barber's approach was to create a range of housing types and to create spaces that are not just for the public but also for the private.

ministers had been made by the Labour government in taking to private housing. It is into this charged context that one architect, Baden Powell Close, and one architect, Peter Barber, stepped in. Barber's approach was to create a range of housing types and to create spaces that are not just for the public but also for the private.

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BUILDING STUDY PETER BARBER ARCHITECTS



1. A window is framed with steel to support the large glass opening. The white-painted frame is a nod to the terrace's original design. 2. The terrace is a mix of housing types, with a mix of housing types and a mix of housing types. 3. The terrace is a mix of housing types, with a mix of housing types and a mix of housing types.

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P.02. Abrahams, T. 'Peter Barber's Baden Powell Close terrace in Dagenham.' Building Design, May 2010.

Even by Peter Barber's standards, the 8m-wide strip of land immediately behind Dagenham Leisure Park is an unlikely proposition for housing. Barber has become the go-to architect for awkward housing schemes in London — whether seven-bedroom houses for big Asian families in Stepney Green or high-density mixed schemes for social housing that are contiguous with leafy Hammersmith. This new project, which clings to the back of the boundary wall of a leisure park just off the A14, proves that Barber has developed a rigorous design approach and ensuing aesthetic which he adapts skilfully to all manner of public housing scenarios. Instead of constructing volumes, Barber's approach is to imagine a larger, monolithic volume and carve spaces out from it, depending on aspect and needs for outdoor space.

Baden Powell Close is a mix of typologies: a terrace of 14 two-storey, two-bedroom courtyard houses, all with parallel on-street parking. It sits across the bottom of an eighties-built cul-de-sac which is itself a tendril added to the wider centripetal plan of the massive Becontree estate. Technically the estate is in Essex but it is still part of the east London continuum. The London County Council developed the area as a large council estate of 27,000 homes between 1921 and 1932. Becontree has a population of more than 100,000 and it remains the largest public

housing development in the country. The contrast of scale makes for an interesting comparison with Barber's 14 homes.

This isn't to demean Peter Barber's work for Southern Housing Group but it does highlight the unique role in the history of housing played by the London Borough of Barking & Dagenham, in which this rhythmic array of stucco-ed houses stands. There can be few places in the country that simultaneously showcase contemporary architecture to be a humanistic practice and highlights the limitations of planning in the current political climate.

At the recent General Election, the BNP put forward its leader Nick Griffin as its candidate in the Barking constituency and made capital of the lack of housing for so-called white inhabitants of the area. While the BNP case was based on a fundamental deficit, the Labour candidate and architecture minister Margaret Hodge was forced to concede during the campaign that

shortages in Barking & Dagenham, it would be churlish to make too much of this contradiction.

This part of the world needs new quality affordable accommodation and Baden Powell Close, which is half socially rented and half shared ownership, certainly provides that. The upper living space is particularly attractive. The floor-to-ceiling height is 2.7m at first floor, higher than the 2.38m at ground. French windows open out on to the terrace to let in ample light. Details, such as the tight turn of the stairs over the ground floor bathroom, work hard to provide that little extra space, giving the first floor a real sense of space. Albeit on a suburban scale, the upper floor has the drama of a studio apartment. Although here it backs on to a blank wall, it can be used back-to-back while still being dual aspect. "We have had interest from developers in using this house type on a much larger scale," says Barber.

Book-ended by three-bedroom, single-storey apartments for wheelchair users, the housing may be legible as a terrace, but there is less of an immediate relationship to the street here than in previous Barber projects. At the practice's Turner Street development, three and a half miles away in Barking, the two-storey buildings have front doors directly on to the street and are defined by a shallow recess which creates a balcony. Baden Powell Close is defined by two areas of outdoor space: private courtyard on the ground floor level and a first-floor terrace. The

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Baden Powell Close's inhabitants are being compelled to interact with their neighbours and this is not always to their own taste

first is more private, hidden behind a wall. The terrace meanwhile sits against the boundary of the leisure park to the rear.

That is not to say Barber has jettisoned his close reading of urban philosopher Jane Jacobs. One of the notable features of the houses is the obtuse angle of the main transversal wall, which enables light from the west to better access the upper floors. It also gives an individual standing on the terrace, looking out on to the street, a widening field of vision. In addition, the window to the street on the first floor has a shallow balcony to it, encouraging interaction between the inhabitants and their neighbours as they pass or get into their cars. Baden Powell Close's inhabitants are being compelled to interact with their neighbours and this is not always to their own taste. Along the terrace, the windows on to the terrace and balcony are covered with drapes and curtains.

Barber is a self-confessed fan of Walter Benjamin's idea that there is a theatrical aspect to balconies and terraces, which sits very well with Jacobs' idea of eyes on the street. I would say that Barber has perhaps over-egged the pudding

mistakes had been made by the Labour government in failing to provide housing.

It is into this charged context that one approaches Baden Powell Close; and sees immediately that the units form a crystallised boundary between the close and one of Essex's most prestigious leisure park landmarks beyond. The architects have wisely opted not to address the huge scale of the hinged hall behind, leaving its hulking sky blue, aluminium clad exterior as a backdrop. There is a strangely antagonistic relationship at work here. Southern Housing Group's brief identified people jumping over the fence to get access to the leisure park as one of the reasons to develop the site. It is an odd precept for housing — to form a barrier to stop teenagers getting at burgers — and one that perhaps could have just as been easily solved by knocking a hole in the wall.

At the architect's earlier project, Donnybrook near Victoria Park in east London, Barber resisted the developer's intention to turn the project into a gated community. Indeed if Barber's design for that development of 25 flats, maisonettes and houses could be said to have been underpinned by one principle, it was that the scheme felt integral to the wider city. Here it is actively intended to create a barrier. However, given the hostility of the site and the traumatic political impact of housing

slightly bars. The shallow balcony is as much a gesture to that vision as a reality, while the upper terrace is very exposed to the street. Observation is one thing but, compared to a Mediterranean city or even a city in Scotland or northern England, London has a more hostile street environment. As a consequence, Londoners enjoy their privacy. Their archetype is Wemmick, the clerk in Dickens's *Great Expectations*, who lives in a house that he calls his "castle". He explains: "The office is one thing, and private life is another. When I go into the office, I leave the Castle behind me." Barber is challenging attitudes here, with detailing and quantity of glazing and I'm not sure it is necessary.

One can't help but warm to Barber's housing, despite his deterministic approach to community interaction. His use of stucco to bounce light into the interior is admirably wiffl — here applied to a wooden framed structure, filled in with concrete block. It gives his houses an incongruous, Mediterranean air that jostles pleasantly with the variety of textures in London's built fabric. The housing itself though is spacious, light and adaptable.

At Baden Powell Close he has developed a housing type that combines features of terraced houses and courtyard houses as well as apartments, providing a high-density suburban model. On a large scale it can achieve 100 houses per hectare and 100% parking. Barking & Dagenham could do with more of it.

PETER BARBER'S TOP FIVE HOUSING REFERENCES

Quinta da Malagueira
housing near Evora in Portugal,
Álvaro Siza



Siza's housing at Evora is an obvious courtyard inspiration for Dagenham. It's a strange courtyard/terraced house hybrid, combining both the continuous terrace that we're familiar with in London and the traditional courtyard, and is arranged in serried ranks. Other courtyard housing references are Corbusier's Pessac and Jean-François Zevaco's courtyard housing in Agadir.

Sculpture
Eduardo Chillida



I first came across Chillida's amazing sculptures on the waterfront at San Sebastián, then later in an exhibition in London not long after he died. I was really struck by the connection between his work and architecture. His drawings are as absorbing as a beautiful urban figure ground plan. His sculptures, with voids cut out of solid metal, wax or stone, evoke urban built forms such as houses, roof terraces and windows.

Pullens Buildings
London



The Pullens estate in London's Elephant & Castle is a cracker: tot-jardin (slightly-style with garden gnomes, potting sheds and patios on top of a Victorian tenement — eat your heart out Corbu. In the 1980s, residents saved the building with a roof-top protest when the housing association bulldozers arrived to clear the way for some yellow brick nobby housing. The powers that be said Pullens Buildings don't meet modern standards... idiots.

Doorway
Nérigueux, France



This image and quote are about the relationship between people and architecture and about spaces that are permeable and invite occupation. "The passion for improvisation, which demands that space and opportunity be at any price preserved. Buildings are used as a popular stage. They are all divided into innumerable, simultaneously animated theatres. Balcony, courtyard, window, gateway, staircase, roof are at the same time stages and boxes." Walter Benjamin. *One Way Street*, 1924

Doris's Place
Hackney, London
Peter Barber Architects



This was my own first UK experiment in courtyard housing in the mid-nineties and explored how it can be a key to quite high density. While rules on overlooking outwards are strict in English planning they are much more flexible in introverted situations. The implication for density, and the potential for social space, is quite interesting.

THE PROJECT MANAGER'S REPORT

From the start we were faced with a challenging design issue because of the site characteristics. It was very long and thin, making it difficult to fit enough units on to make the scheme financially feasible. A scheme was eventually produced that incorporated terraced houses with a bungalow at each end.

The restricted size of the site and its location within an existing residential close

also made it more difficult to manage the construction process and programme.

The scheme was initially met with concern and objections from local residents, which were largely overcome once the residents understood exactly what we were doing and why. Most were pleased to see leftover land being used to house local families, completing the close and overcoming anti-social behaviour problems by providing a new secure boundary

The scheme achieved an EcoHomes rating of "very good" and 10% of its energy is produced on site from renewable sources. We initially looked at solar thermal water heating, but reverted to a ground source heat pump system due to over-shading issues. The architect did well to incorporate this revised requirement into the existing scheme during the detailed design phase.

Paul Terry, Robert Lombardelli Partnership



Culture

Peter Barber explains his vision of social housing

Friday 02 November 2012

by Michal Boncza

Around the corner from Kings Cross station in London the Peter Barber practice nestles in what was once a modest print shop dating from Victorian times.

The ground floor acts as a meeting room where, through the large shop window, the outside world can keep a watchful eye on proceedings.

That transparency reflects Barber's manifesto which borrows from Marxist critic and philosopher Walter Benjamin's *One Way Street*, his 1924 study of Naples in which he declares that buildings should be used as "a popular stage, divided into innumerable, simultaneously animated theatres. Balcony, courtyard, window, gateway, staircase, roof are at the same time stages and boxes."

Those observations have since 1989 been diligently and imaginatively turned into reality by Barber's practice, which has been showered with innumerable accolades and dozens of awards ever since.

He has a coherent vision of what cities should be like and how their topography affects the quality of life of their inhabitants. The classes he teaches at Westminster University receive a strong political component engaging with the social responsibilities of the architect.

Barber, profoundly aware of the reciprocity in the relationship between people and architecture, is at heart a Situationist. He seeks to establish early on in each project an aesthetic and dynamic that aims to awaken and nourish a sense of wonderment, attraction and pleasure by stimulating the spirit of discovery.

In his cityscape the eye is drawn to space, punctuated with distinct Barber towers and their characteristic "random" balconies and different size windows that give an impression of a Piet Mondrian composition. Evoking the 18th-century church spires by Christopher Wren and Nicholas Hawksmoor in the capital they present a topography that intrigues, orients and informs.

Barber's practice is unique in its focus on social housing and has a client base comprising dozens of housing associations, trusts and local authorities. It shot to international prominence with its landmark Donnybrook Quarter, designed and built in 2006 for Circle 33 in London's Hackney.

The project, which won five major British and an international architecture awards, is a dense mixed-use scheme and consists of living units as well as community, work and retail spaces.

It's configured as a terrace-courtyard hybrid typology, reminiscent of a north African kasbah.

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Hope for social housing

A row of eight beautifully designed homes for social r
how a civilised city can treat its needy



Here comes the sun: the buildings in Beveridge Mews, Stepney Green, E1, have many windows to the east, overlooking a new communal garden

Kieran Long



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Hope for social housing - Architecture - Arts - London Evening Standard

the East End, and is now called Hannibal Road Gardens, an estate of maisonettes and flats in unremarkable Fifties and Sixties buildings. It is run by the Southern Housing Group, a housing association that began life as the Samuel Lewis Housing Trust, founded and funded by the financial legacy of a self-made Victorian financier who set up the trust to house London's poor. One wonders what he would make of today's debate about housing for those on lower than average incomes.

Southern now runs the estates of Stepney Green, and the area is something of a museum of London housing. From the Georgian houses of Stepney Green Gardens to the ivy-covered red-brick mansion blocks of Cressy Houses, it contains some beautiful London homes. It also has more than its share of post-war reconstruction, slabs of brick and concrete that replaced slum housing and bomb damage in the Fifties and Sixties.

Those homes, built with good intentions for a growing population, left much to be desired in terms of urban quality. The individual buildings are utterly bland, but they have a subtly destructive effect on this part of the city. There are no shops on the ground floors of the buildings, and the streets are eerily quiet in places: an unrelieved residential monoculture. The spaces themselves are not very flexible, so as residents' families got bigger, problems of overcrowding developed, which persist today. Also, the big box buildings created many unattractive left-over spaces around them; it is those spaces that are being slowly and painstakingly occupied with new projects such as Barber's news terrace.

The new row is hard up against the boundary wall of the estate, and so could have no windows or openings to the west at all. This means the buildings have many windows to the east, overlooking a new communal garden. Inside, these are big houses — a pressing need in east London is housing for large Bengali families where several generations live together. The biggest house here has seven bedrooms. Another has six, and there are three each with three and four bedrooms. You enter at ground level, straight into an open-plan living space, which has movable screens to make a separate kitchen if desired. Upstairs are the bedrooms, reached via a top-lit staircase, and in every house at least two bedrooms have terraces of their own. These outdoor spaces are the key to the character of the buildings, as with all Barber's work. An array of pleasurable balconies and terraces animate the houses with the residents' own touches: plants, parasols, awnings and washing lines all make a Peter Barber building come alive.

The houses are clad in timber shingles, a bold choice for social housing. Barber argues that this natural material will demand less maintenance than a painted, rendered building, and he might be right if all goes well. The timber looks quite orange now but the façade is beginning to take on the silverish hue that Barber hopes will make it blend in more with its surroundings.

Barber has learned from experience how important maintenance is when making architecturally ambitious housing on affordable budgets. Some of his other east London projects have perhaps been too dependent on the kind of upkeep that some councils and housing associations find difficult to pay for. Donnybrook Quarter, a very special development of white terraced houses on the corner of Old Ford Road and Parnell Road in Mile End, always looks a bit grubby when I pass it, for all its undoubted spatial qualities. Tanner Street Gateway, a project of 250 homes in Barking, has fared rather better, thanks to the use of a combination of brick and render.

The timber shingles are an interesting choice. Combining a material familiar to us from rural belfries and seaside cottages with an urban, cubiform architecture creates an interesting paradox, and on a sunny day, the irregular timber cladding and window frames cast beautiful shadows that add texture and character to the building.

It is a sign of the times that when I toured this ingenious and beautiful terrace with the architect last week, I found myself asking whether social housing like this now runs the risk of being too good, too well-designed. These houses, with their generosity of space, multiple outdoor spaces and (some) high quality materials, suddenly throw into unfortunate relief the quality of the properties that developers in London provide for market sale. We live in times when politicians ask openly whether people on lower incomes deserve this quality, and whether they deserve to live in expensive areas of London. I think it's a testament to a civilised city that it houses those on lower incomes in decent circumstances, and Peter Barber's body of work is one I hope has a thriving future doing exactly that.

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www.standard.co.uk/arts/architecture/hope-for-social-housing-8130053.html?origin=internalSearch

P.04. Long, K. 'Hope for Social Housing.' London Evening Standard, 12 September 2012.

Hope for social housing

A row of eight beautifully designed homes for social housing shows how a civilised city can treat its needy

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The houses are clad in timber shingles, a bold choice for social housing. Barber argues that this natural material will demand less maintenance than a painted, rendered building, and he might be right if all goes well. The timber looks quite orange now but the façade is beginning to take on the silverish hue that Barber hopes will make it blend in more with its surroundings.

Barber has learned from experience how important maintenance is when making architecturally ambitious housing on affordable budgets. Some of his other east London projects have perhaps been too dependent on the kind of upkeep that some councils and housing associations find difficult to pay for. Donnybrook Quarter, a very special development of white terraced houses on the corner of Old Ford Road and Parnell Road in Mile End, always looks a bit grubby when I pass it, for all its undoubted spatial qualities. Tanner Street Gateway, a project of 250 homes in Barking, has fared rather better, thanks to the use of a combination of brick and render.

The timber shingles are an interesting choice. Combining a material familiar to us from rural belfries and seaside cottages with an urban, cubiform architecture creates an interesting paradox, and on a sunny day, the irregular timber cladding and window frames cast beautiful shadows that add texture and character to the building.

It is a sign of the times that when I toured this ingenious and beautiful terrace with the architect last week, I found myself asking whether social housing like this now runs the risk of being too good, too well-designed. These houses, with their generosity of space, multiple outdoor spaces and (some) high quality materials, suddenly throw into unfortunate relief the quality of the properties that developers in London provide for market sale. We live in times when politicians ask openly whether people on lower incomes deserve this quality, and whether they deserve to live in expensive areas of London. I think it's a testament to a civilised city that it houses those on lower incomes in decent circumstances, and Peter Barber's body of work is one I hope has a thriving future doing exactly that.