

Exeter City Council
Planning Committee
25 May 2023

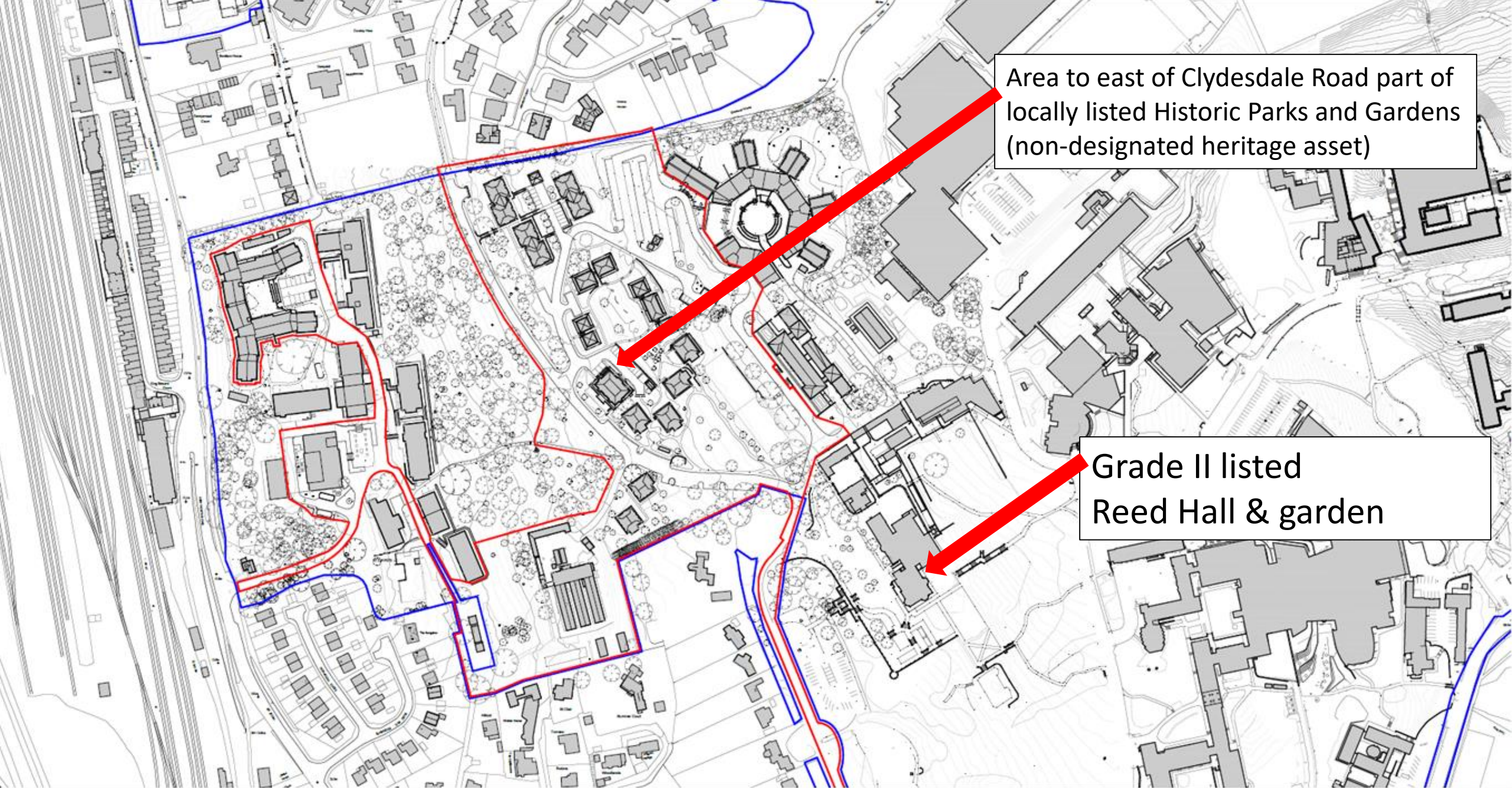
Application 22/1746/RES

Site: West Park, University Of Exeter, Stocker Road, Exeter

Applicant: University of Exeter and UPP

Proposal: Approval of reserved matters of access, appearance, landscaping, layout and scale in relation to outline permission 20/1684/OUT for student accommodation and ancillary amenity facilities, and external alterations and refurbishment of Birks Grange Village Blocks A-E, with associated infrastructure, demolition of existing buildings and landscaping

Case Officer: Catherine Miller-Bassi



Area to east of Clydesdale Road part of locally listed Historic Parks and Gardens (non-designated heritage asset)

Grade II listed Reed Hall & garden

SITE LOCATION PLAN

- Planning Committee resolved to approve Outline application 27 April 2021
- Decision Notice issued 17 September 2021
- **Approved plans** include:
 - Site Location Plan 010002 Rev P2,
 - Demolition Plan (dwg no. 010003 Rev P2)
 - Land Use Parameters Plan (dwg no. 010010 Rev P2);
 - Movement and Access Parameter Plan (dwg no. 010011 Rev P2)
 - Heights Parameter Plan (dwg no. 010012 Rev P2)
 - Landscape and Biodiversity Parameter Plan (Figure 1, dated 16th April 2020)
- Condition 15 and Description specify max. GIA (gross internal floor area) of 49,821sqm

OUTLINE CONSENT 20/1684/OUT

Principle of proposed development approved at Outline

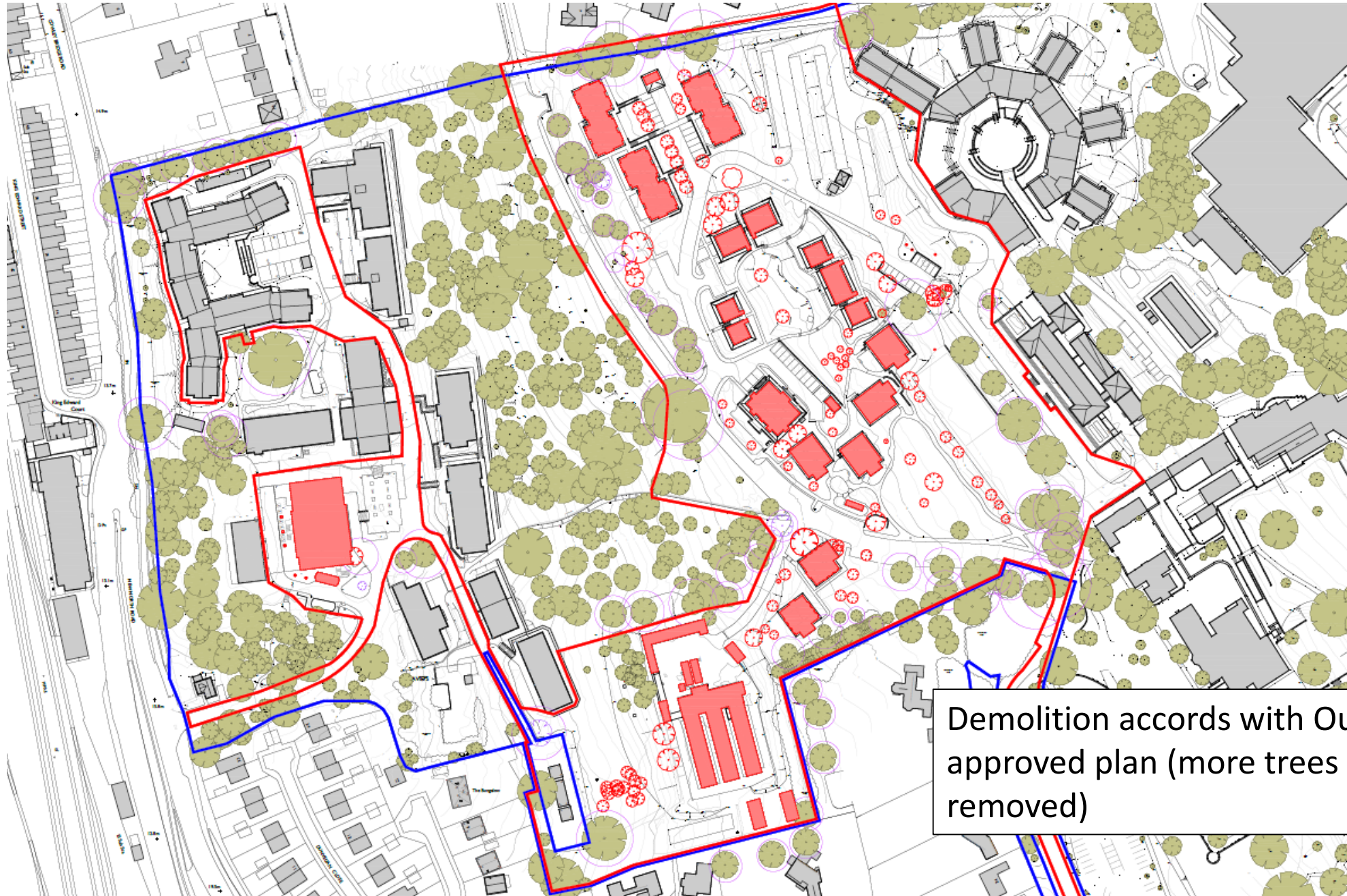
- ECC Core Strategy states:
 - para 2.11: *The University is **very important to the economy and vitality of the city**...*
 - Policy CP5: *Purpose built student accommodation should be provided to meet the housing need ()*
 - para 6.28: *New purpose built student housing **should be located on, or close to, the University Campuses***
- The University of Exeter SPG seeks:
 - ***significant increases** in purpose-built student residential accommodation **(as much as possible)***
- Economic impact* for Exeter:
 - *university's expenditure activities, including spending of students attracted to area, & their visitors contributed **£816.3 million** of output in the city*
 - *a **£509.4 million** gross value added contribution to Exeter's GDP*
 - *supporting **9,750 jobs***
 - *equal to **9% of both Exeter's GDP & of all its employment***

* Economic Impact 2020/21 report by Oxford Economics

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT

- Proposed development **approved at Outline** for:
 - 8no. new student accommodation blocks and ancillary amenity facilities
 - Demolition of existing development
 - Refurbishment of existing Birks Grange Village Block A-E
 - Net uplift in bedspaces – **1,474**no.
- **Reserved matters application for:**
 - The **details** of the **layout, scale, appearance** of the buildings, the means of **access** thereto and the **landscaping** of the site (set out in Condition 1 of 20/1684/OUT)
 - Accords with max. heights and floor area consented under Outline
 - Generally accords with **Illustrative Site Plan** and visualisations presented to Planning Committee at Outline

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT



Demolition accords with Outline approved plan (more trees to be removed)

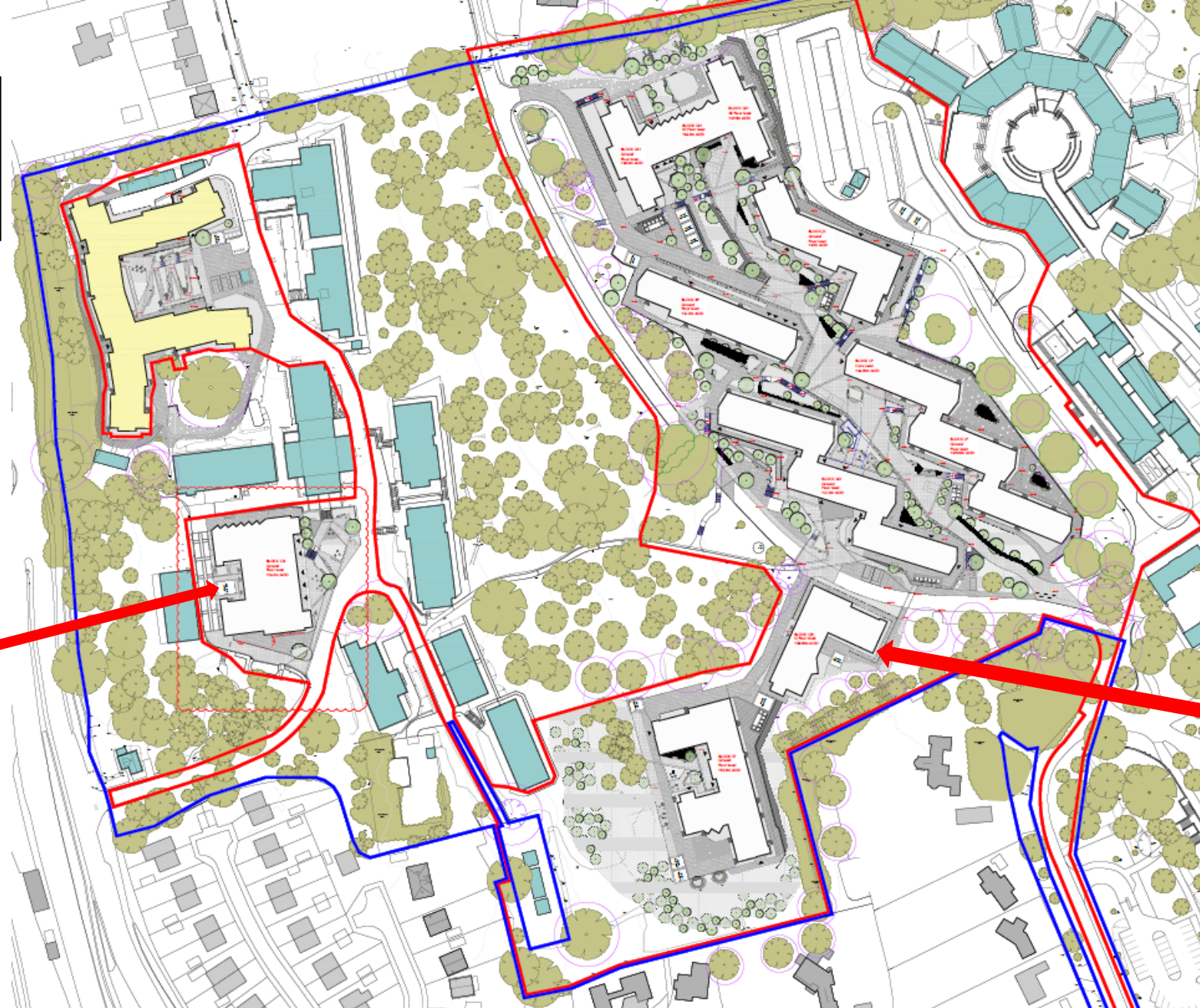
EXISTING SITE PLAN/PROPOSED DEMOLITION


Generally accords
with Outline
illustrative plan

Block CB
amended
at Officer
request

Block QR
accords with
revisions at
outline stage

PROPOSED SITE PLAN





Access road & footpath
omitted from current scheme
as amended

The image is a detailed site plan for a development. It features several building footprints, some labeled with codes: A1, B1, B2, C1, C2, D1, D2, and E1. The plan includes extensive landscaping with numerous green circles representing trees and shrubs. A network of roads and paths is shown, with a red line highlighting a specific access road and footpath that has been omitted from the current scheme. A red arrow points from a text box to this red line. The site is situated next to a larger road or railway line on the left side of the plan.

ILLUSTRATIVE SITE PLAN - OUTLINE

- **16no. representations** from separate addresses:
 - All objections – visual harm, light/noise pollution, overlooking, highways safety
 - Allegedly, 26no. objections on paper handed to applicants to submit to LPA – not received
- **Technical consultees:**
 - **Highways & Exeter Cycling Campaign** originally objected to cycle parking below SPD standards – former is **satisfied** by amended plans but latter has concerns re. design & location of cycle parking
 - **Urban Design Officer** originally objected on visual amenity – now **overcome** by amended plans & conditions
 - **Ecology** – concerns re. bat roosts **overcome** by condition

- **Key issues include:**

- Impact on character and appearance of site & surrounding area – **visual amenity**
- Impact on **residential amenity**
- Impact on heritage assets
- Impact on highways safety
- Impact on ecology
- Sustainable construction

- **Impact on character and appearance of site and surrounding area**
 - Max. building heights & floor areas **already approved** at Outline
 - Therefore, **layout and scale approved in principle**
 - Many of the technical details are covered by separate Discharge of Condition applications pertaining to the Outline consent
 - Only technical details can be assessed here – **the details of the layout, scale, appearance of the buildings**, the means of access thereto and the **landscaping of the site** (Reserved Matters set out in Condition 1 of 20/1684/OUT)

- **Character** retained – multi-storey blocks of student accommodation in landscaped grounds
- **Appearance** –
 - Density and height increase **approved at Outline stage**
 - Concerns regarding differentiation of ‘character areas’ and upper storeys **overcome by amendments & additional information**
 - Materials & details of external finishes to be controlled via **condition**
- **Block QR** – concerns regarding lack of public amenity space/poorly designed frontage (north-west elevation) **overcome by amendments**
- **Block CB** - concerns regarding lack of public amenity space to east & west/poorly designed Gateway from south-west approach (main road and railway station) **overcome by amendments**
- **Landscaping** – Landscape and Biodiversity Parameter Plan **approved at Outline stage** & controlled via conditions

VISUAL AMENITY

Building heights
permitted at
Outline

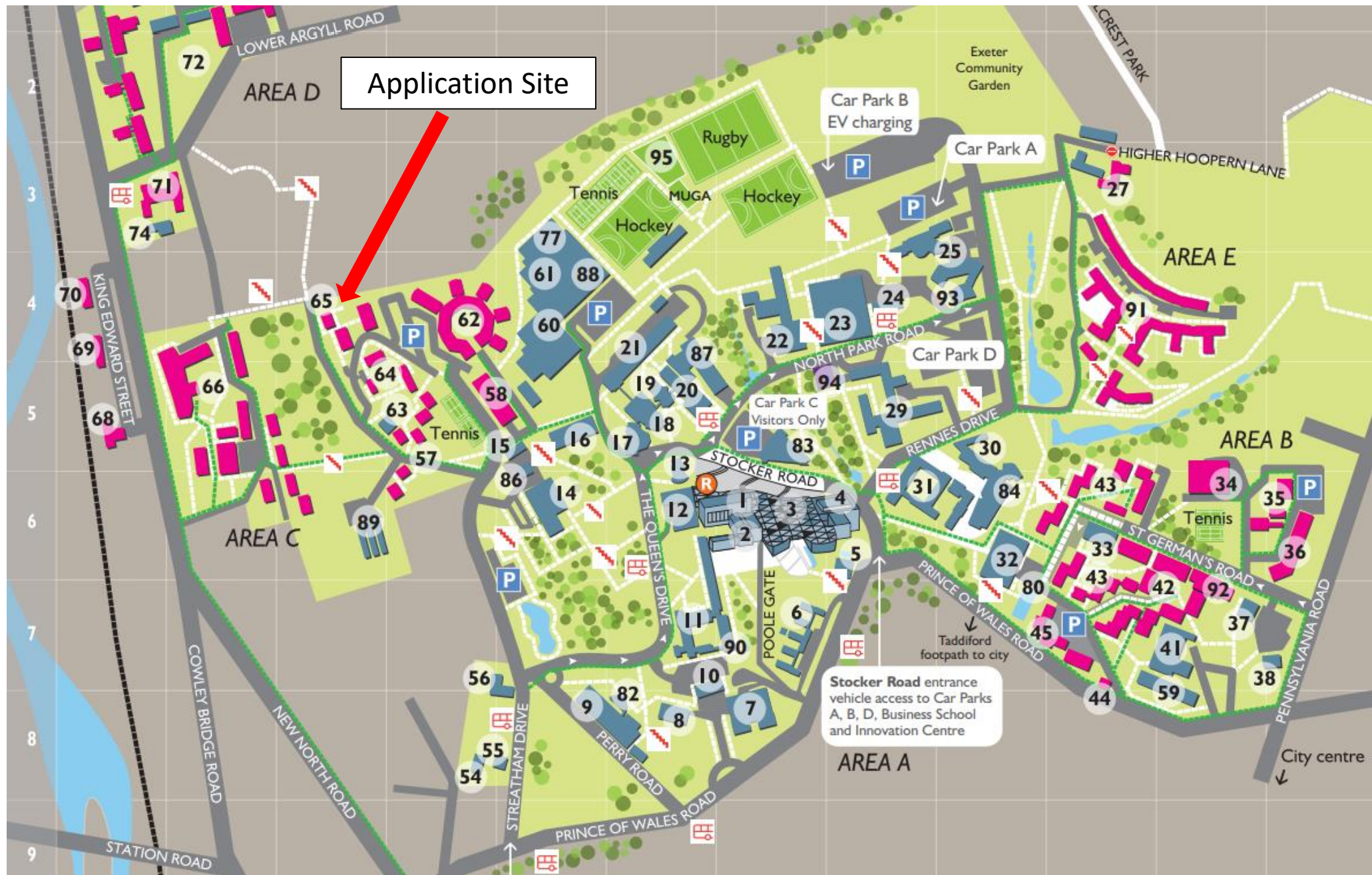


VISUALISATION – OUTLINE

- Proposed building heights accord with Outline consent
- Note: CGI does not show architectural/materials detail – poor image



VISUALISATION – CURRENT SCHEME



UNIVERSITY CAMPUS MAP

1. BG & CB (BG = Birks A-E)

- Lower ground level
- BG - pale grey multi-brick
- CB - red/light multi-brick, grey attic

2. ST & QR

- Lower ground level & building heights – **transition** to residential areas to south
- Red/light multi-brick

5. GH

- Lower building heights – **transition** to residential area to north
- Red/light multi-brick
- Saw-tooth window bays on north elevation to prevent overlooking

4. EF & JK

- Similar in height to AD and LP
- Buff multi brick to reflect the palette of historic Reed Hall, masonry-effect window surrounds & banding

3. AD & LP

- Ground slopes down to south & west
- Southern third of blocks **lower** in height
- Northern 2/3 similar height to EF & JK
- Red/brown multi brick

Relatively central area in context of existing built form & topography allowing higher density & taller buildings

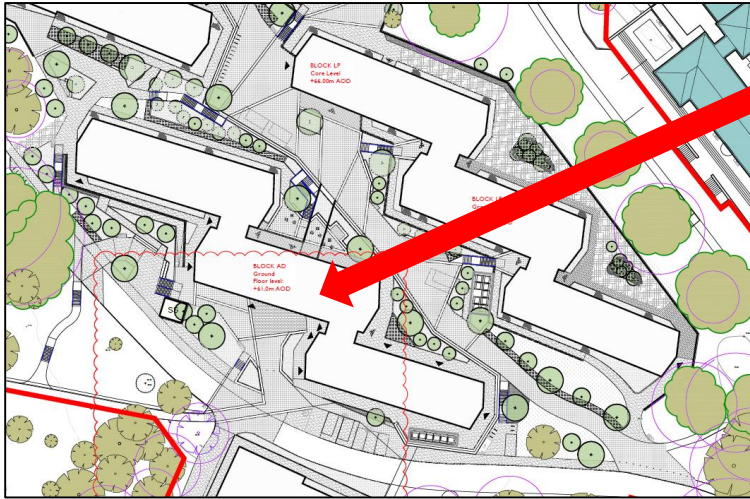
CHARACTER AREAS



- **Tallest block** – 7-10 storeys – max. 27m above ground
- 96.3m AOD (along with Block JK which has max. 9 storeys)
- **Higher ground & tall buildings to north-east** eg Physics Tower approx. 36m tall /130m AOD
- 3no. interlinked blocks with elongated hexagonal planform
- Flat roofs covered with solar panels, step down to south-east
- Lower ground excavated at north-west end



BLOCK LP

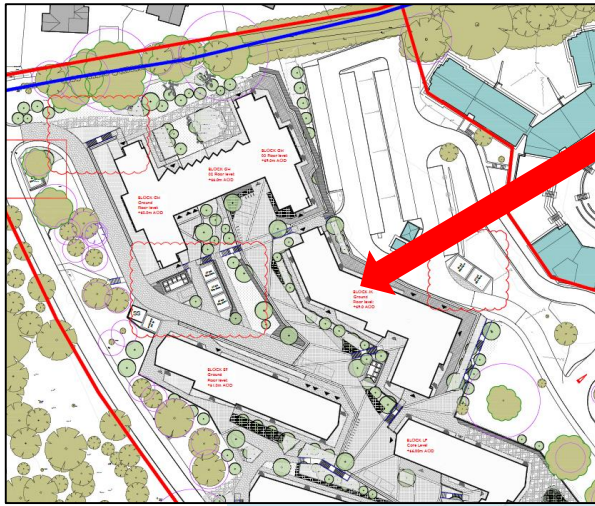


- 7-8 storeys – 86.5m AOD
- steps down to south-east – transition south
- Lower than LP – transition to west – downward slope & green space of Pinetum
- 3no. interlinked blocks with elongated hexagonal planform
- Flat roofs covered with solar panels
- Palette for LP & AD: red/brown multi brick, Chocolate Brown aluminium doors/windows



South-west elevation

BLOCK AD



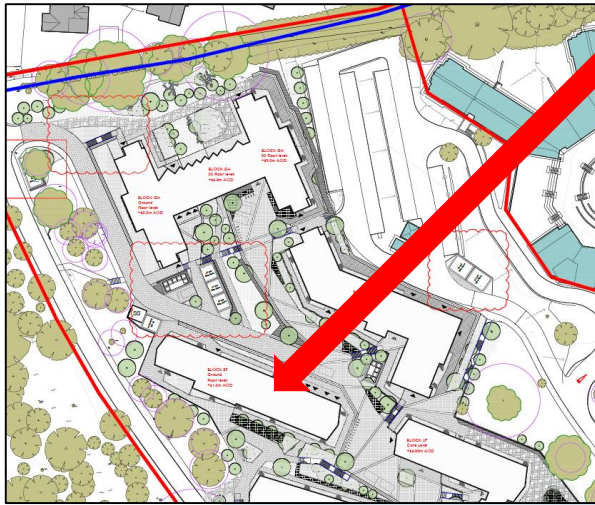
- F-shape planform with 2no. projecting bays to south-west & dog-leg to north-west end
- 7-9 storeys – steps down at north end – transition to GH
- Flat roofs – 3 levels – solar panels on main roof – max. **96.3m AOD**
- Buff light multi-brick, light buff concrete window surrounds to majority, Moss Grey aluminium windows/doors, metal / mesh



cladding
to stairs

South-
west
elevation

BLOCK JK

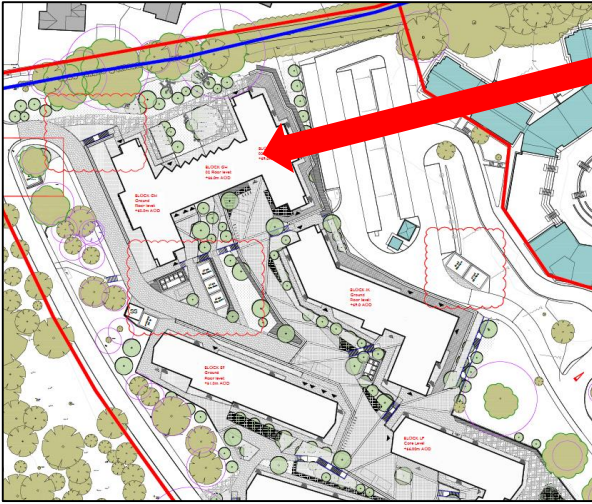


- Single elongated hexagon planform
- 6-9 storeys – 88.3m AOD
- Steps down at north-west – transition to GH
- Flat roofs – 2 levels – solar panels on main roof
- Buff light multi-brick, light buff concrete window surrounds to majority, moss green aluminium windows/doors



South-
west
elevation

BLOCK EF

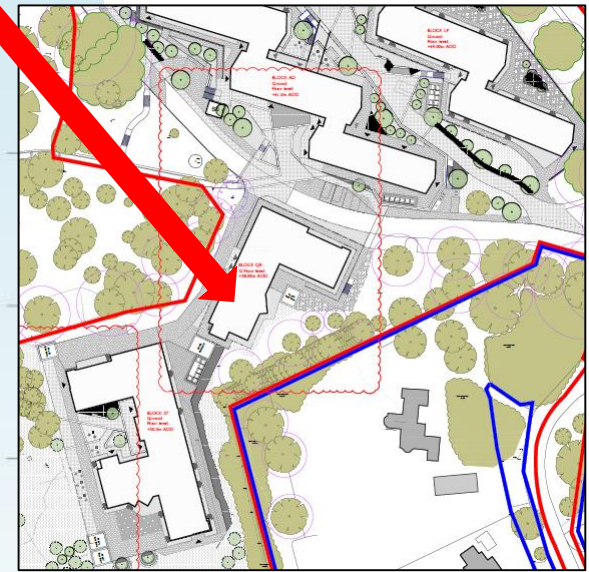


- H-shape planform with 2no. projecting bays to north-west & south-east
- 8no. angled bays on north-west elevations
- 3-5 storeys – no ground & first floor levels at north-east end & no fifth floor at south-west end – max. 75.9m AOD
- Flat roofs – steps down to south-west – solar panels all roofs
- Red / light multi-brick, Anthracite Grey aluminium windows/doors, Chocolate Brown metal / mesh cladding stairs



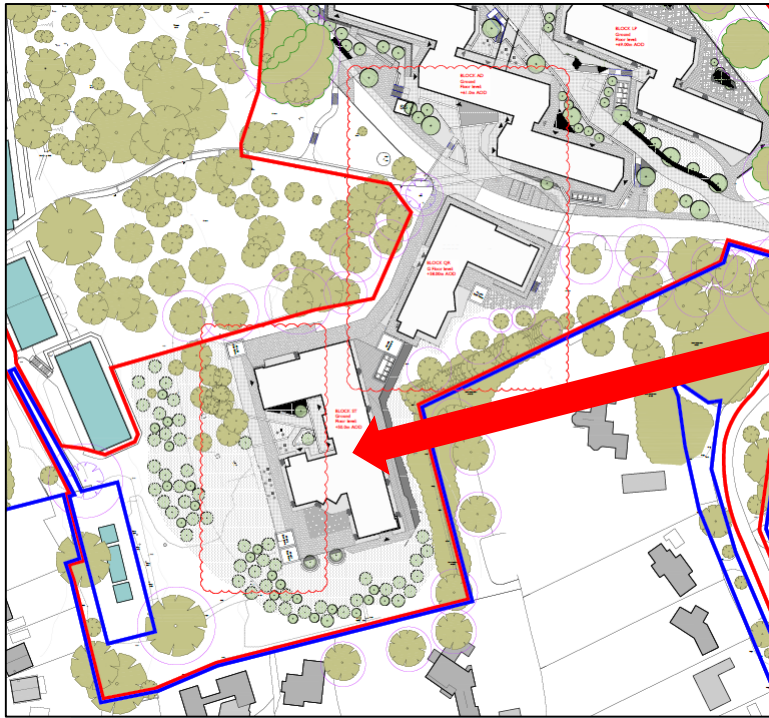
BLOCK GH

- Reverse L-shape planform with 1no. angled bay on south-west elevation
- 3-4 storeys – 4 at northern end – max. 71.45m AOD
- Ground floor partially excavated into higher ground levels
- Retaining wall with balustrade at lower ground levels due to sloping site
- 2no. flat roofs – steps down to south-west – solar panels both roofs
- Red / light multi-brick, Anthracite Grey aluminium windows/doors, Chocolate Brown metal / mesh cladding stairs



North-east elevation

BLOCK QR



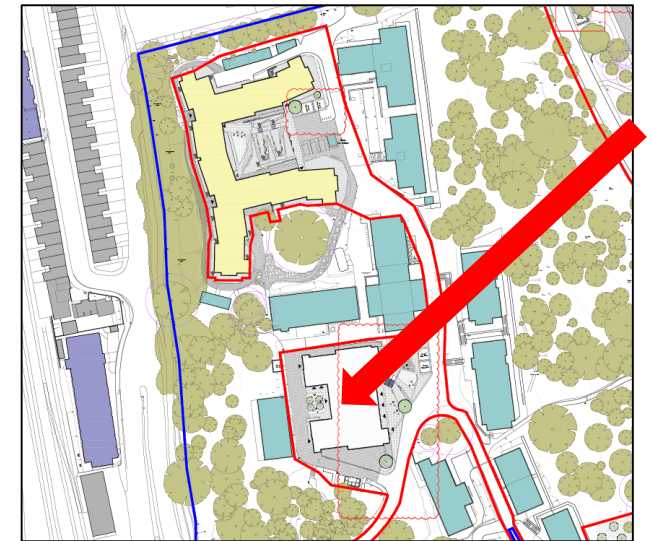
- Reverse F-shape planform with 2no. projecting bays to west
- 3-4 storeys – max. 64.4m AOD
- Flat roofs – steps down to south
- Solar panels both roofs
- Red / light multi-brick, Anthracite Grey aluminium windows/doors, Chocolate Brown metal / mesh cladding stairs



West elevation

BLOCK ST

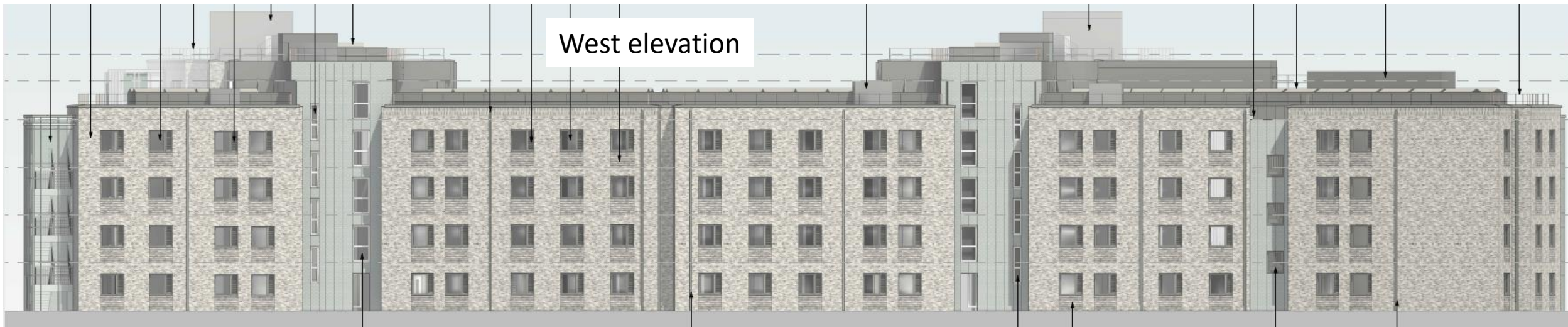
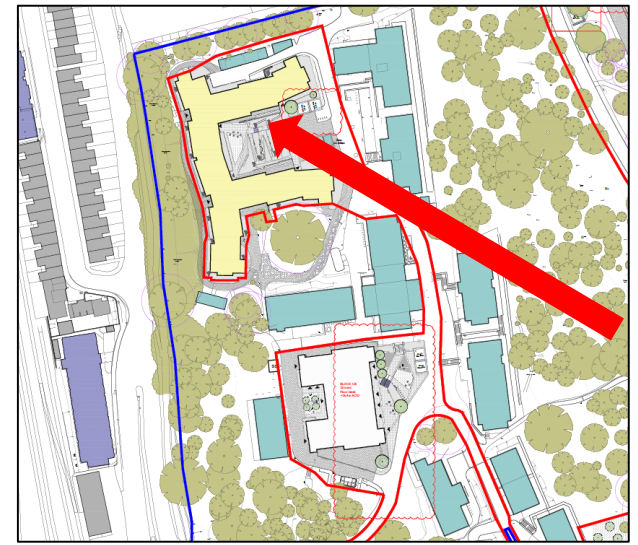
- 5-6 storeys – 6 on main element, 5 on bays to west – max. 46.2m AOD
- U-shape planform with 2no. 5-storey & 1no. single storey bays projecting to west
- Flat roofs – steps down to west – solar panels on main roofs
- Red / light multi-brick, grey concrete cladding to attic (5th floor) elevations, Anthracite Grey aluminium windows/doors, Chocolate Brown metal / mesh cladding stairs



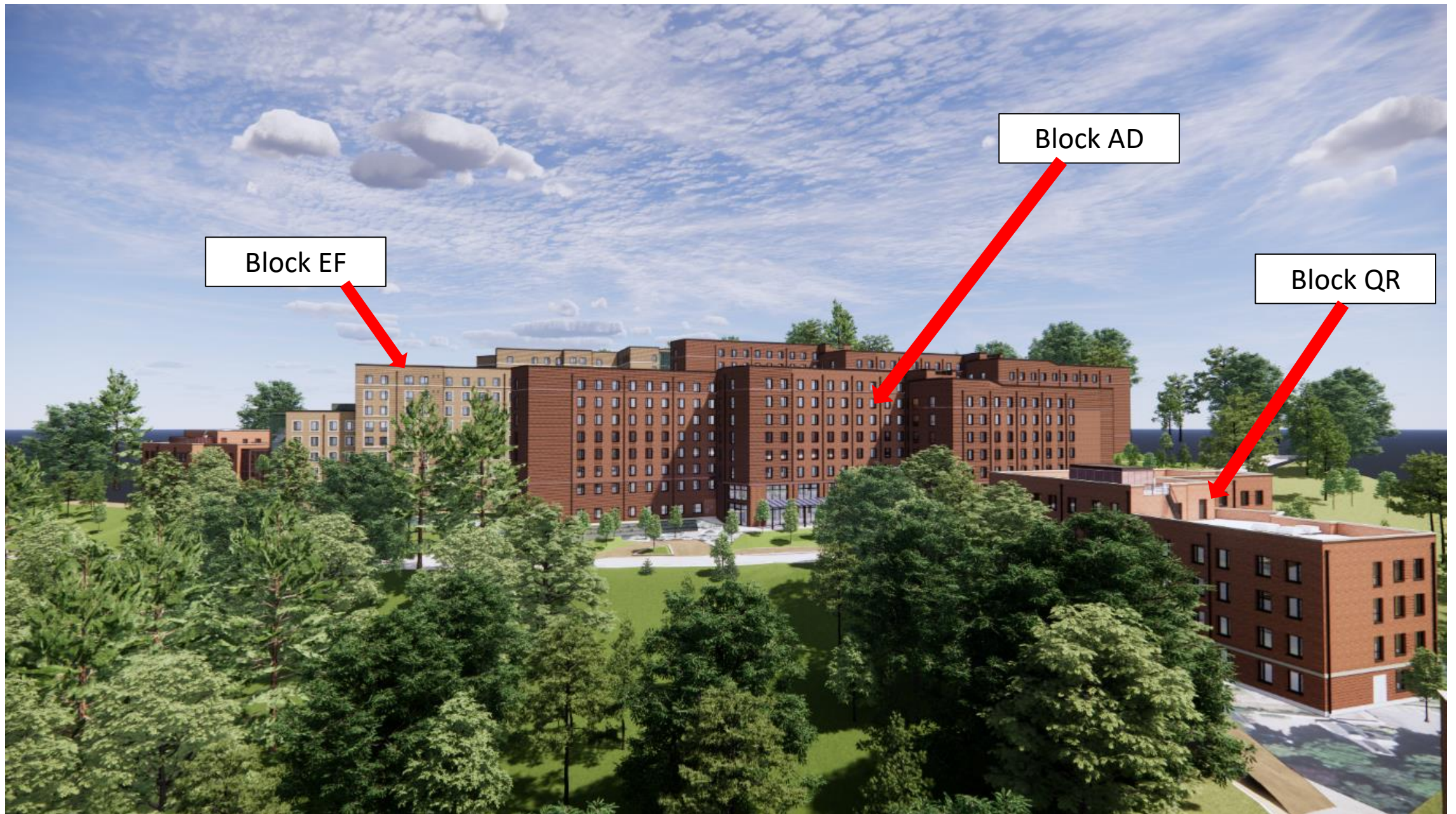
East elevation

BLOCK CB

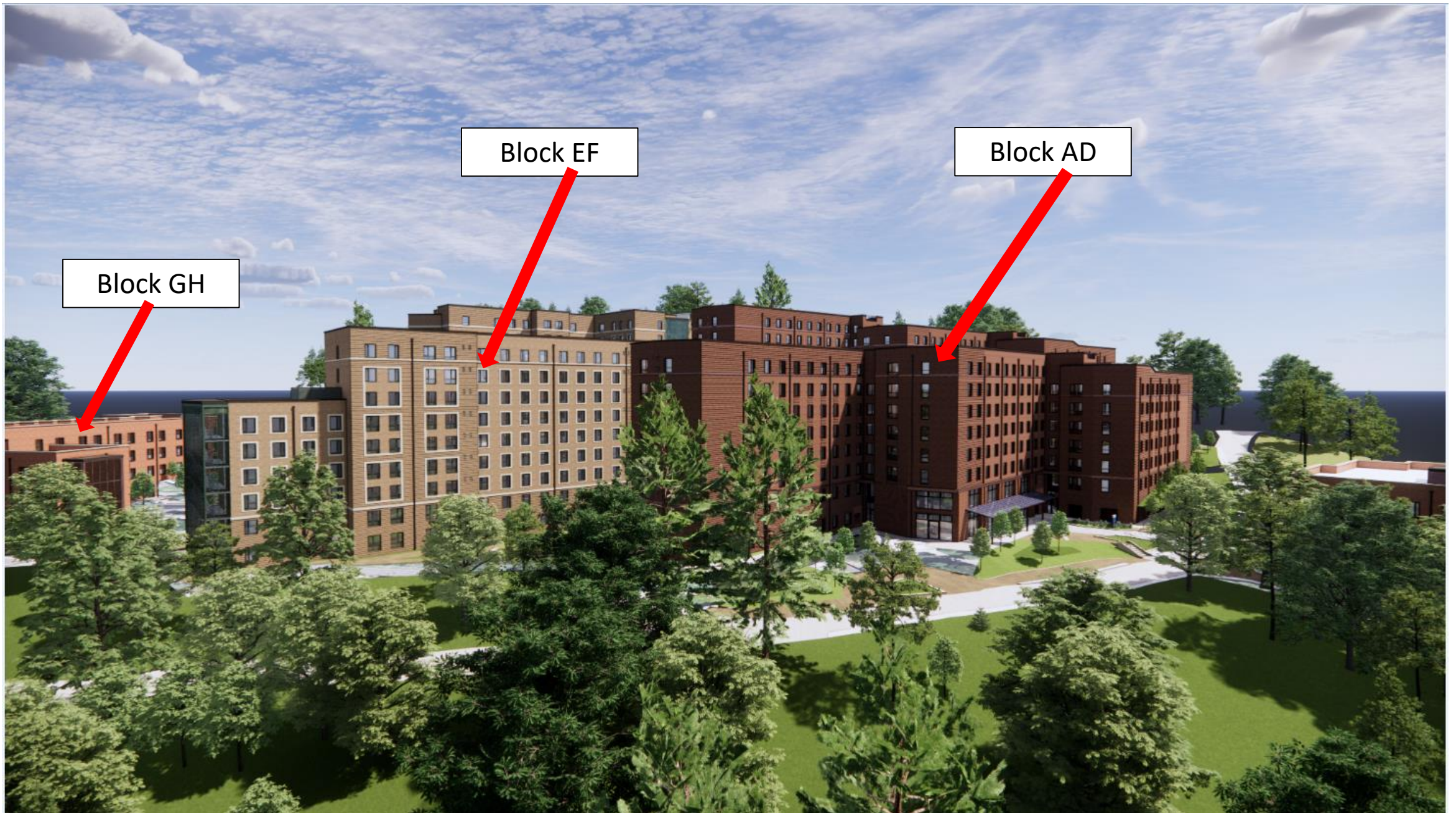
- Existing building to be refurbished
- 3-5 storeys
- F-shape planform – no ground floor level at eastern ends of bays & no 4th floor on western spine except for junctions with bays
- Flat roofs, steps down to west – solar panels
- Main façades pale grey multi-brick, pale grey aluminium windows /doors, vertical elements (junctions with bays/between blocks & escape stairs) clad with perforated aluminium (patterned for wayfinding), soldier brick course at roof / aluminium coping



BIRKS A-E (also referred to as Block BG)



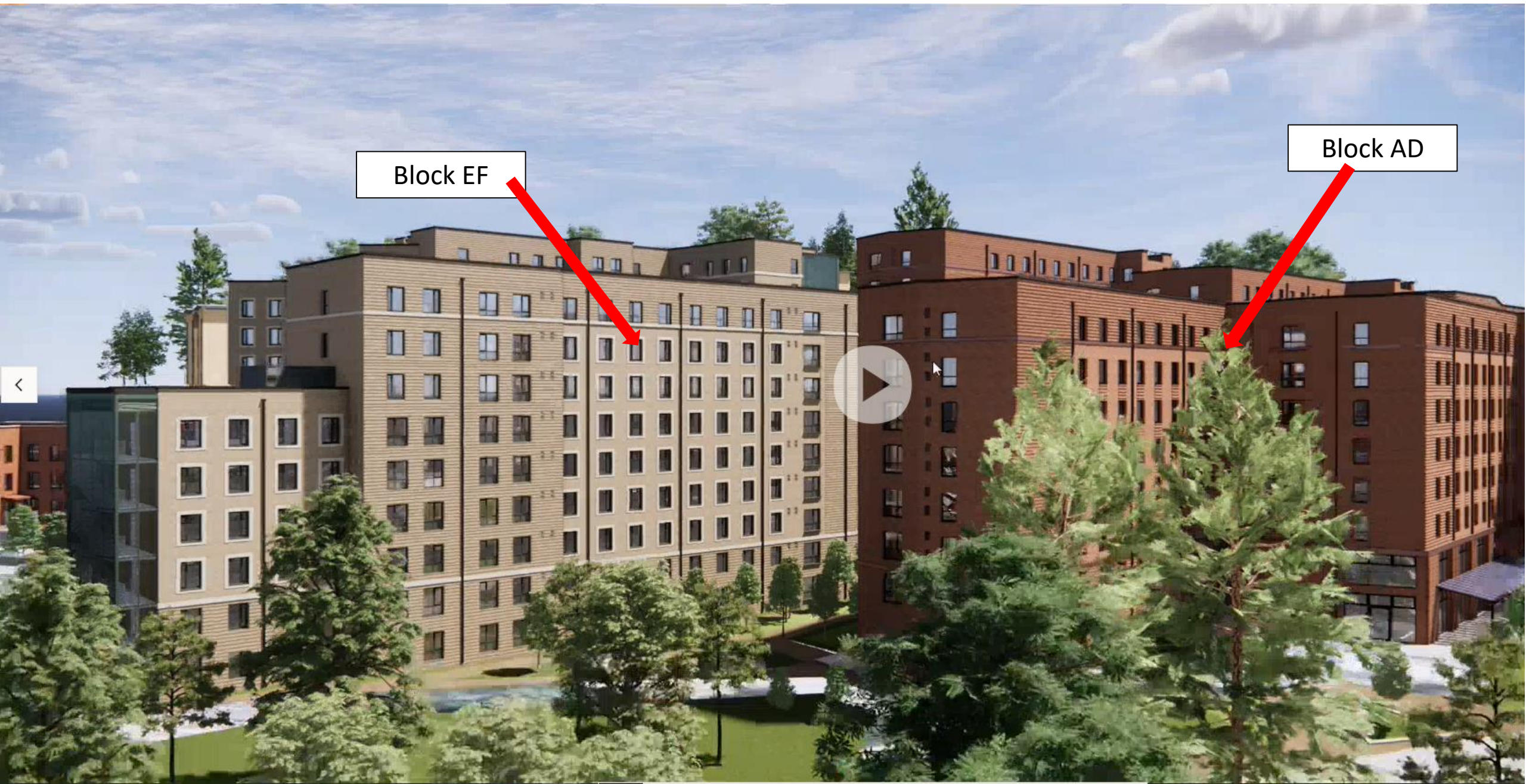
VISUALISATION – looking eastwards



VISUALISATION – looking south-east



VISUALISATIONS – CURRENT SCHEME



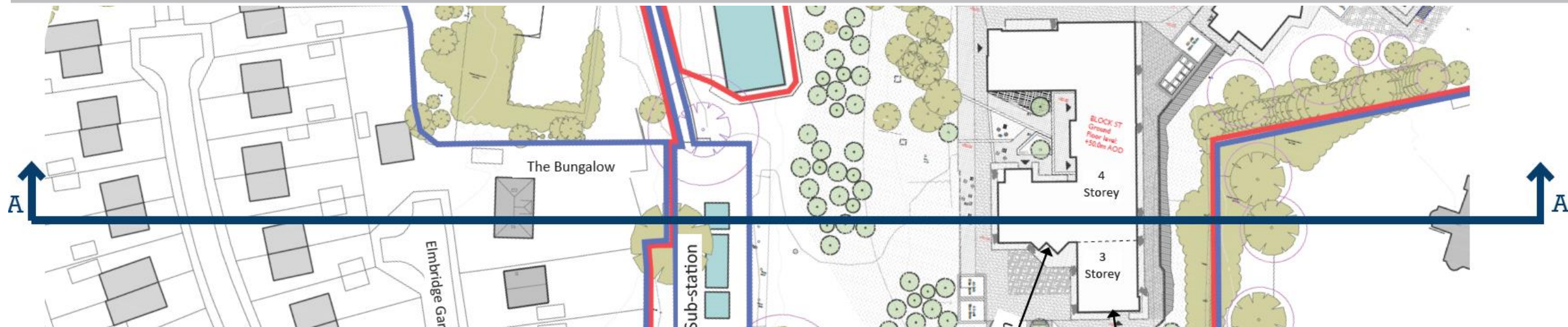
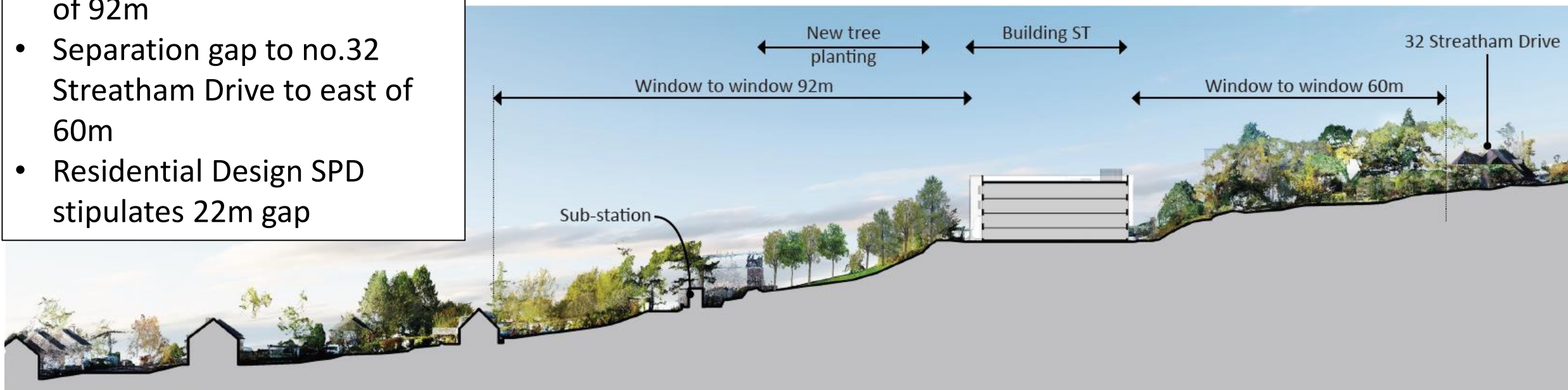
VISUALISATIONS – CURRENT SCHEME

- **Conclusion on visual amenity impact**
 - Reserved matters comprise **details** of the layout, scale & appearance of the buildings, access & landscaping
 - Accord with approved and illustrative plans assessed at Outline
 - Therefore, **acceptable** subject to conditions

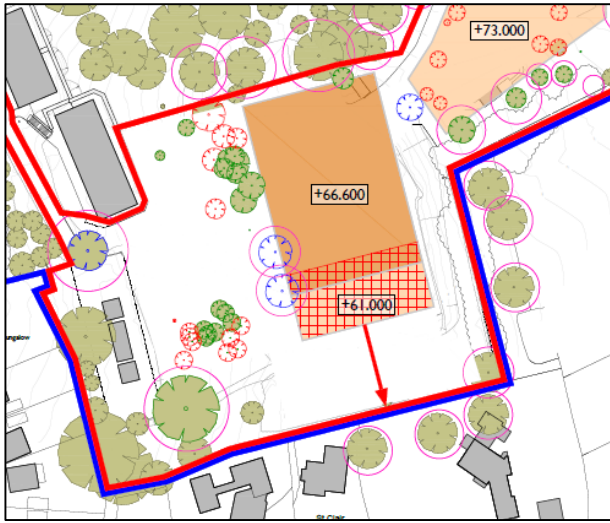
- **Impact on residential amenity**

- Neighbouring dwellings south of site:
 - at the northern ends of Dunvegan Close and Elmbridge Gardens
 - loss of privacy
 - overbearing impact
 - noise/light pollution
- Student residents:
 - overlooking between Birks Blocks J & CB
 - overbearing impact for Birks Block K

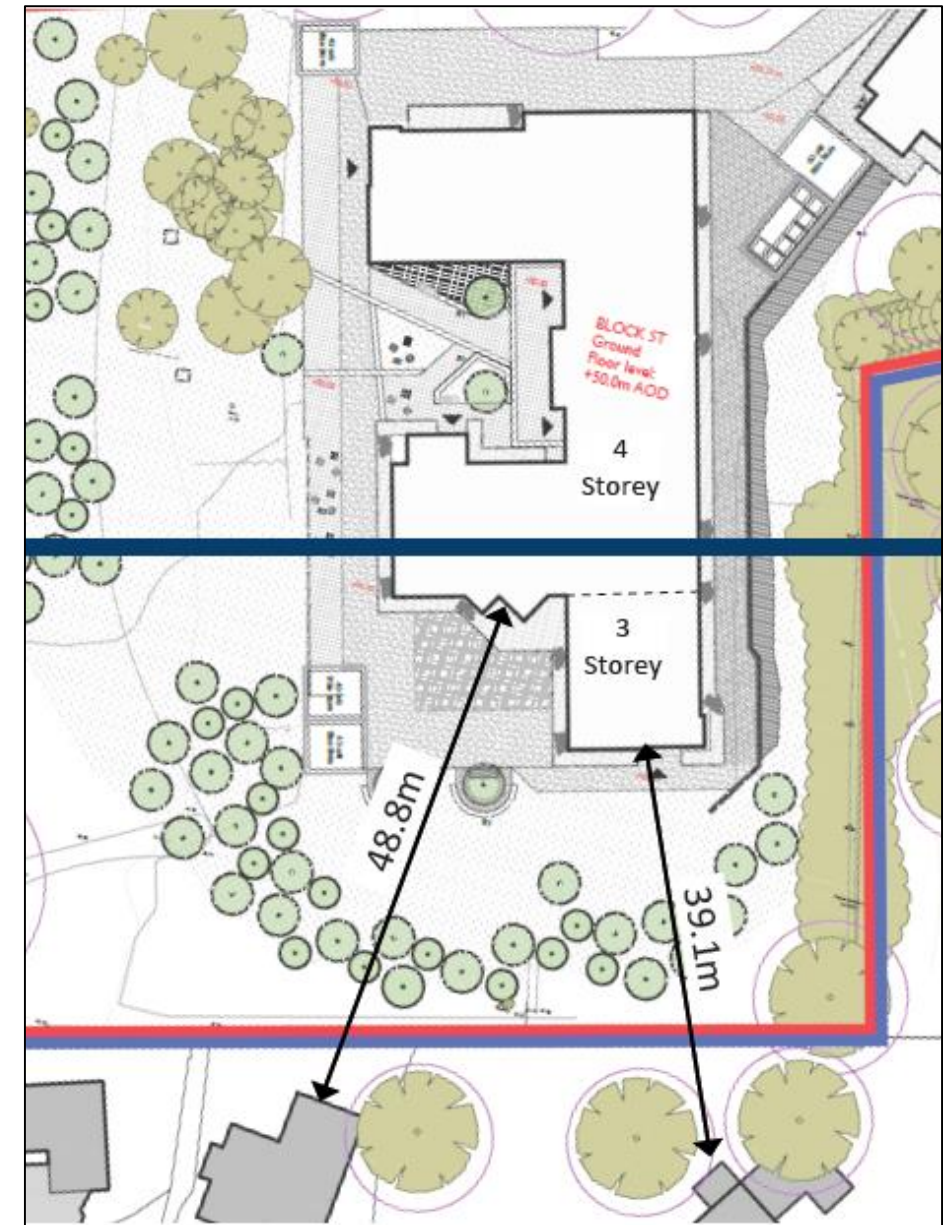
- Separation gap to no.10 Elmbridge Gardens to west of 92m
- Separation gap to no.32 Streatham Drive to east of 60m
- Residential Design SPD stipulates 22m gap



RESIDENTIAL AMENITY – BLOCK ST



- Window Controlled Zone in approved Heights Parameter Plan
- Angled window bays not directly overlooking dwellings to south
- 39m to 48.8m separation gaps
- Acceptable in terms of overlooking & overbearing impact

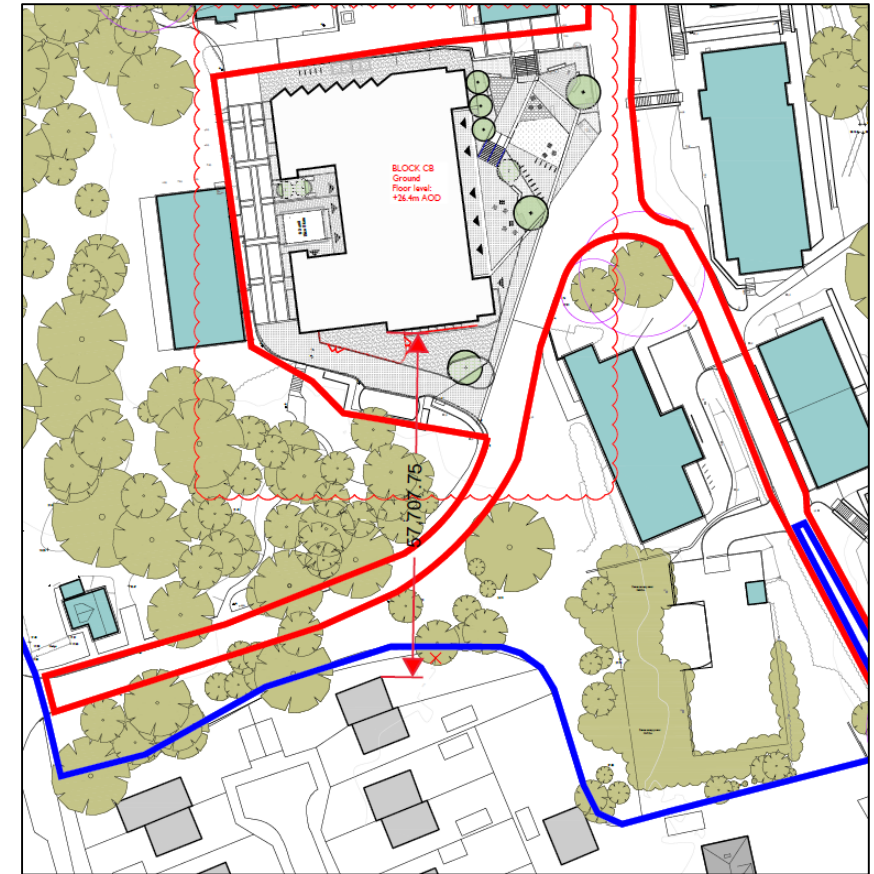


RESIDENTIAL AMENITY – BLOCK ST



Google Street View image (Nov 2012) (looking south from adjacent SW corner of Block CB) shows trees screening no.24 even in winter

- No Window Controlled Zone considered necessary at Outline
- **57.7m** separation gap to no.24 Dunvegan Close
- Residential Design SPD stipulates 22m gap
- Block CB lies at higher ground level but there is substantial screening by mature trees

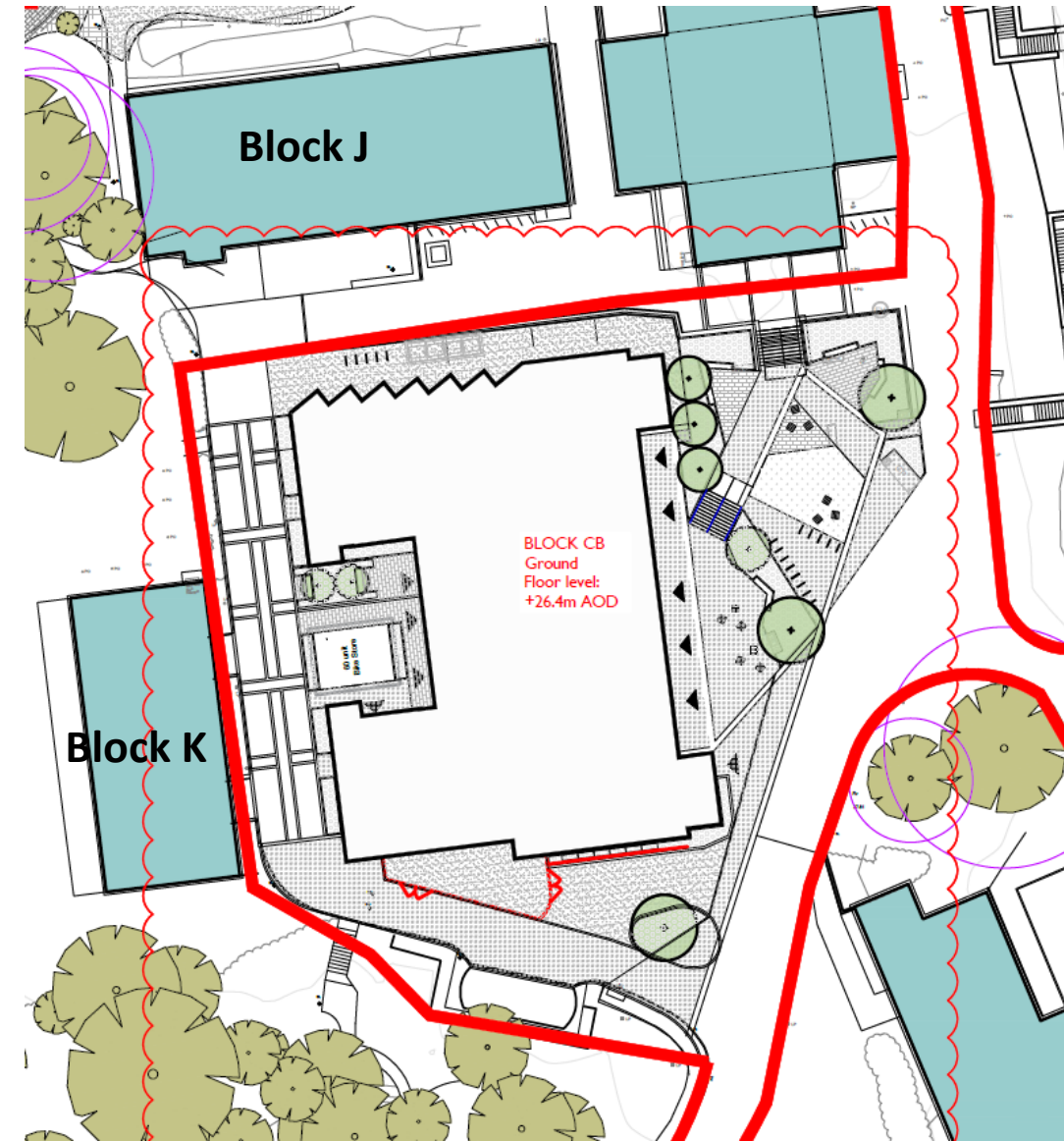


RESIDENTIAL AMENITY – BLOCK CB

- **Impact on residential amenity of neighbouring dwellings acceptable:**
 - **Acceptable** re. **overbearing impact**: change in outlook does not amount to harm – private views not protected; no overbearing impact due to separation gaps (principle already established)
 - **Acceptable** re. **loss of privacy**:
 - Proposed windows in control zones (consented at Outline) would not directly overlook boundaries – angled bays
 - Substantial separation gap from proposed windows on south elevation of block CB to nearest dwellings
 - Retained and proposed landscape screening (conditioned)
 - **Noise pollution** – **acceptable** by reason that change over existing situation not significant; footpath & road to Block ST now omitted; condition recommended
 - **Light pollution** – **acceptable** by reason of angle of window bays; separation gaps; controlled via Condition 11 of Outline consent

RESIDENTIAL AMENITY

- **Impact on amenity of students acceptable:**
 - Unique character of student campus comprises high density living for short-term occupancy with primary concern proximity to university facilities (academic, recreational)
 - Residential Design SPD policies therefore applied with **discretion** in this specific case
 - Some overlooking and overbearing impact would result from Block CB:
 - for occupiers of Blocks K & J
 - for future occupiers of Block CB – north elevation & north & south (hidden) elevations of bays projecting from main west elevation
 - Amendments secured:
 - increased separation gap between CB & J
 - introduction of saw-tooth northern elevation with angled windows to reduce overlooking
 - Privacy Management Plan submitted & secured by condition



RESIDENTIAL AMENITY – BLOCK CB

- **Heritage assets** – acceptable:
 - no harm due to substantial separation gaps
 - intervening buildings & mature trees
- **Highways safety** – acceptable:
 - no change to existing use
 - increase in student numbers not significant
 - car-free scheme
 - designated disabled parking bays only with EV charging points
 - Sustainable Travel Plan in place
 - cycle parking accords with Sustainable Transport SPD

- **Ecology** – acceptable:
 - Landscape and Biodiversity Parameter Plan **approved at Outline**
 - Recommended conditions for bat & bird mitigation, tree protection, landscaping details & implementation of Landscape and Ecology Management Plan
 - **Biodiversity net gains over 10%**
 - +14% Habitat Units
 - +103% Hedgerow Units
- **Sustainable construction** – acceptable:
 - Solar panels proposed on all roofs
 - New build accommodation will achieve Passivhaus standard – highly insulated including triple-glazed windows, electric heating, hot water by Air Source Heat Pumps, Mechanical Ventilation with Heat Recovery
 - Refurbishment of Birks A-E to Passivhaus EnerPHit standard

KEY ISSUES

- Planning Balance:

- The university is of **strategic importance to Exeter** in terms of economy, education & vitality – attracts **substantial positive weight**
- Core Strategy, Local Plan & SPG seek **as much purpose built student housing on campus as possible** to reduce housing pressures in city – proposal would meet this need (nearly 1,500 net gain) – attracts **substantial positive weight**
- A rigorous assessment of the adverse impacts of the scheme (visual & residential amenity) has been undertaken – amendments & additional information secured & conditions recommended to overcome concerns – **neutral on balance**
- On balance, the **benefits of the scheme outweigh any adverse impacts** and the reserved matters are considered acceptable overall
- Officers consider there to be **no policy grounds for refusal**
- The application should, therefore, be **approved** in line with NPPF paragraph 11 c).

CONCLUSION

Planning permission for the proposed reserved matters scheme be **GRANTED subject to additional planning conditions.**

RECOMMENDATION