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DESIGN & ACCESS STATEMENT THE WELLS, EPSOM

R001 November, 2018



ENTRANCE TO THE SITE

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared in support of a detailed Town Planning Application to redevelop the site at the Wells Centre, Spa Drive, Epsom to provide 23 new residential dwellings, a new community hall and a new play ground with new play equipment.

The document considers the existing site and use, its characteristics and that of the local neighbourhood as well as the key considerations of the topography, landscape and existing residential neighbourhood that may influence the design of the new buildings and play area.

The document also sets out the development of the design and the other influences including inputs from advisors on landscape, arboriculture, ecology and landscape visual assessment.

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THE SITE & HISTORY



The Site

The site is located near the centre of the Wells which is a residential neighbourhood located 2.5 miles south west of Epsom town centre. The neighbourhood comprises mainly one and two storey houses.

The Wells neighbourhood is located on Epsom Common.

The site is approximately 0.32 hectares and falls some 5 metres from the upper level by the entrance to the north off Spa Drive to the lower level by the south west corner. There is an existing redundant community building in the centre of the site with parking and a gated play area. A footpath, known as Wickers Way, is a public right of way and crosses the site from north to south near the eastern boundary. There are mature trees around the boundary of the site and a group adjacent to the footpath to the eastern section of the site.

Adjacent to the site to the north is the Karibu Residential Children’s Home run by Surrey County Council Residential Homes whose backgardens the site.

History

Epsom salt was first discovered by Henry Wicker, a local cowherd. He was walking his cattle across Epsom Common when he came across a pool of water from which his thirsty cattle refused to drink. The water tasted bitter and on evaporation yielded a salt. Wicker also noticed that the wounds on the animals who waded in the bitter-tasting water, seemed to heal more quickly.

Jim Hill (the president of the Epsom Salt Council) wrote, “From this discovery, many in England began to travel to Epsom to experience numerous health benefits, particularly the relief from the painful symptoms of gout and for the natural purging effects of the water.” Enough visitors travelled to Epsom for this purpose that, in the mid to late 1600s, it became known as a spa town.

Epsom salt wasn’t officially called Epsom salt (or salts) until 1695, when a scientist named Nehemiah Grew gave a name to the “bitter purging salts” that he found at Epsom. He and an associate went on to try to manufacture Epsom salt to sell, but the wells in Epsom soon dried up and the town’s reputation as a spa destination waned in the early 1700s.



EPSOM SALT WELLS



HENRY WICKER



EPSOM SALTS

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SURROUNDING CHARACTER ANALYSIS



1. SPA DRIVE



2. THE CRESCENT



3. KARIBU CHILDREN'S HOME - THE WELLS HOUSE



4. UNIVERSITY OF THE CREATIVE ARTS, EPSOM



5. MOUNTHILL GARDENS



6. STATION APPROACH

Surrounding Area

The Wells is a small local neighbourhood of some 500 dwellings which is separate and isolated from the town and other immediate built up areas. It consists of mainly one and two storey residential dwellings of a mixture of styles and appearance. The buildings are of an applied 'vernacular style' typical of post war development but are of no architectural distinction.

Materials include red brick and render under tiled roofs with timber painted windows.

Further afield more distinct buildings have emerged including the University of Creative Arts and within the town centre by Station Approach.

Wells House, the Karibu Children's Home, is one of the more distinct buildings within the neighbourhood. It is a brick building with tile hanging to the upper levels and the tile hanging characteristic is referred to in the design of the new building by proposing to clad the buildings in a modern tile hanging cladding under a pitched roof reflective of the immediate area.



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SITE PHOTOS



ENTRANCE ASPECT

From the entrance the public footpath, Wickers Way can be seen following a line between the existing trees along the eastern boundary whilst the former Wells Spa building roof and upper storey is visible down the slope of the access road and car park. In the distance the horizon is clear which clearly shows the considerable slope and fall across the site..



ASPECT FROM THE WEST

The aspect from the west shows the natural fall of the site and in consequence how the building becomes two storey on it's southern edge. The existing playground can be seen on the righthand side.



ASPECT FROM THE SOUTH WEST

The view from the south west corner clearly shows the existing playground which is still in use. The fence and tree screen to the residential rear gardens to the south is on the right hand side of the photograph.



ASPECT FROM THE SOUTH EAST

The view from the south east corner, by Wickers Way, shows the 2 storey nature of the existing building close to and facing the southern boundary with the existing rear gardens to the existing houses.

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SITE PHOTOS



WICKERS WAY SOUTH



WICKERS WAY



SOUTHERN BOUNDARY



PLAY AREA



WELLS HOUSE; KARIBU RESIDENTIAL HOME



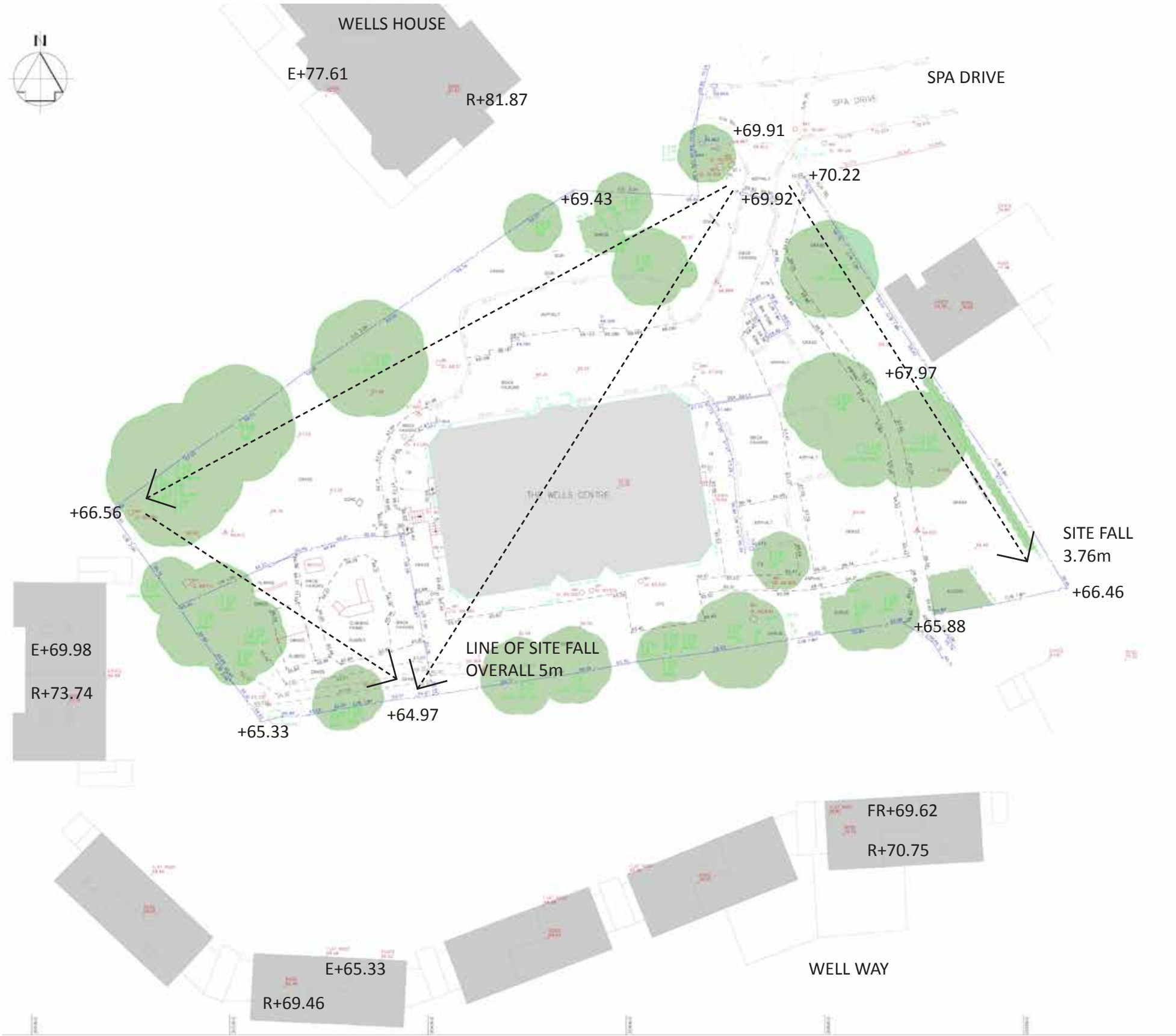
SOUTHERN BOUNDARY RESIDENTIAL AMENITY



LOOKING TOWARDS THE WELL

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SITE PARAMETERS - LEVELS & MASSING



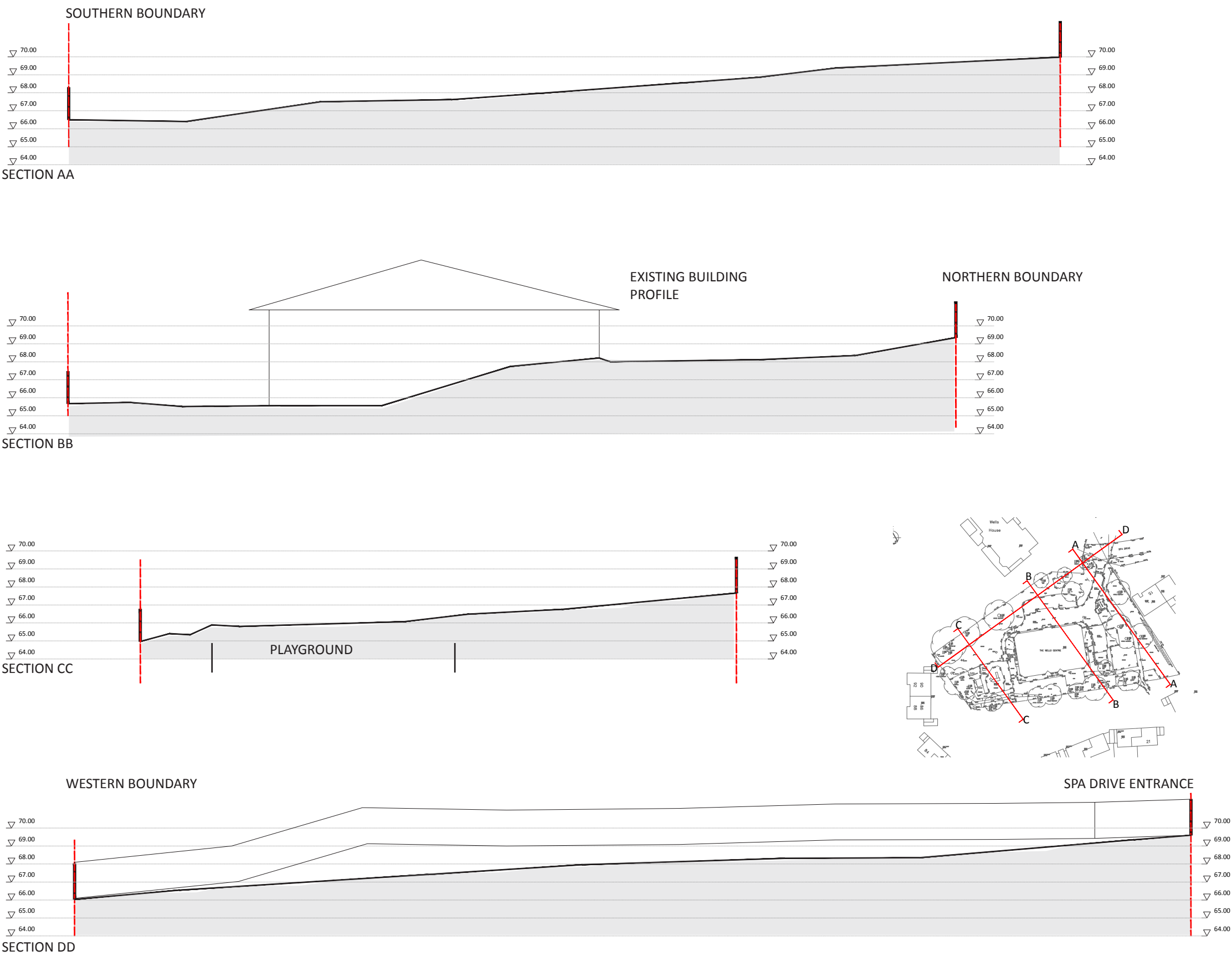
Site Levels

The highest part of the site is by the entrance off Spa Drive at a level of approximately +70.0 AOD. The natural fall of the land runs to the south and south west, the lowest part of the site being in the south west corner of the site where it is approximately 65.0 AOD. There is therefore a fall of approximately 5.0 metres across the site.

Placing the new building on site will need to address this large differential in levels in a sensitive and creative way, as well as maintaining the mature landscape. As with the existing building on site, the level difference will mean that there will be an additional lower ground floor along the southern boundary to any new building.

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PREFERRED LAYOUT - SITE SECTIONS



Site Sections

The sections show the typical levels across the site and include the profile of the existing building.

Section AA runs approximately along the line of Wickers Way public footpath, the lower level being close to the southern boundary by the footpath leading the Well Way. This section shows the gradual slope running across the site.

Section BB runs from the southern boundary with the houses on Well Way running up towards the northern boundary with Wells House – the Karibu Childrens Home. This section shows the profile of the existing building on site and indicates the level difference between the entrance to the north, being single storey, and the two storey aspect to the south

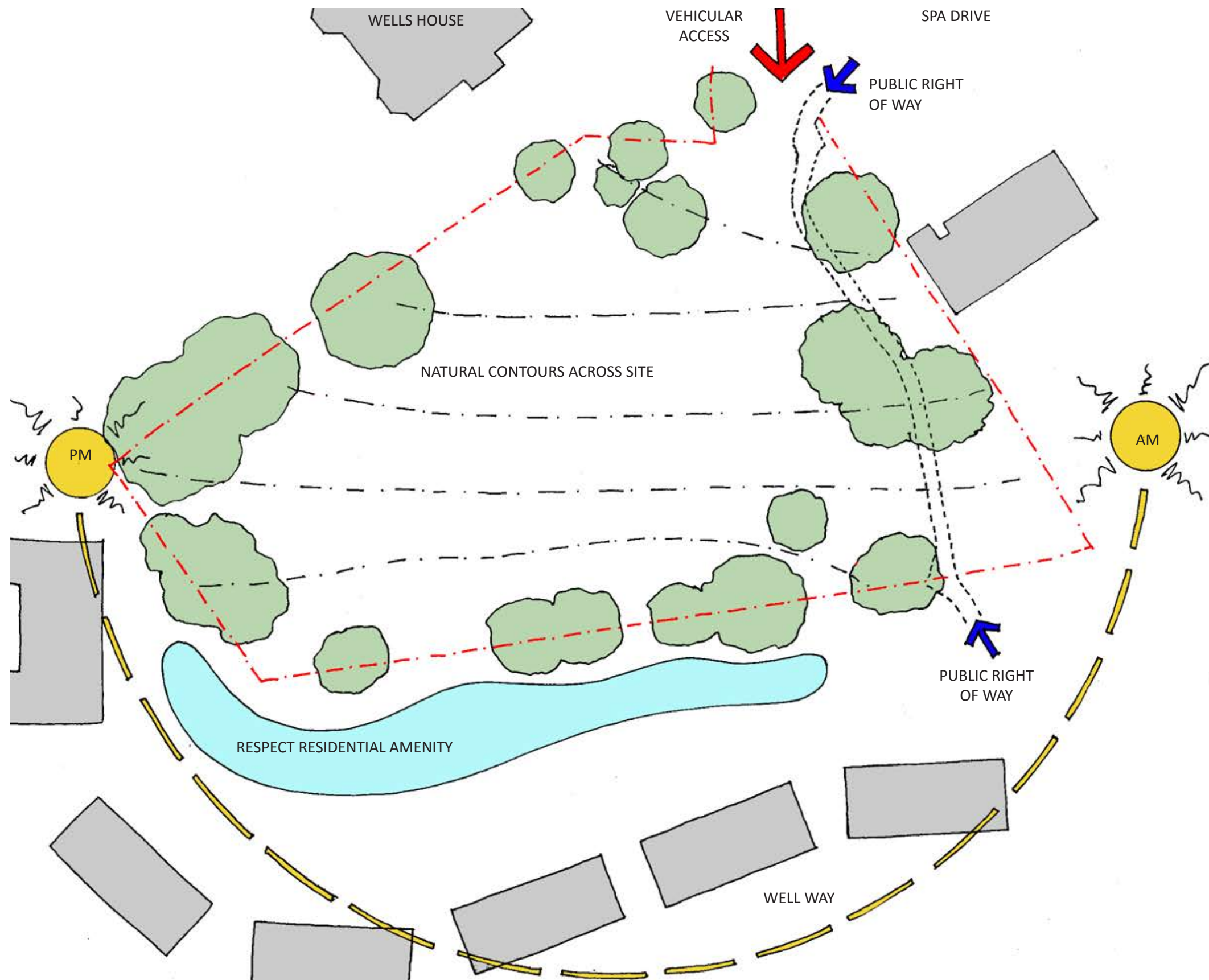
Section CC shows the south western end of the site cutting through the existing playground and rising up towards the boundary with Wells House

Section DD is a longitudinal section running the length of the northern part of the site and includes a view of the boundary fence with Wells House. The section ends at the entrance to the site off Spa Drive.

Overall the sections explain graphically the fall over the site from the northern entrance to the southern boundary and the profile of the landform.

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OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS



Opportunities & Constraints

The outline brief is to provide much needed new residential accommodation as apartments, a new community hall, a new playground with new play equipment whilst maintaining the public footpath, Wickers Way.

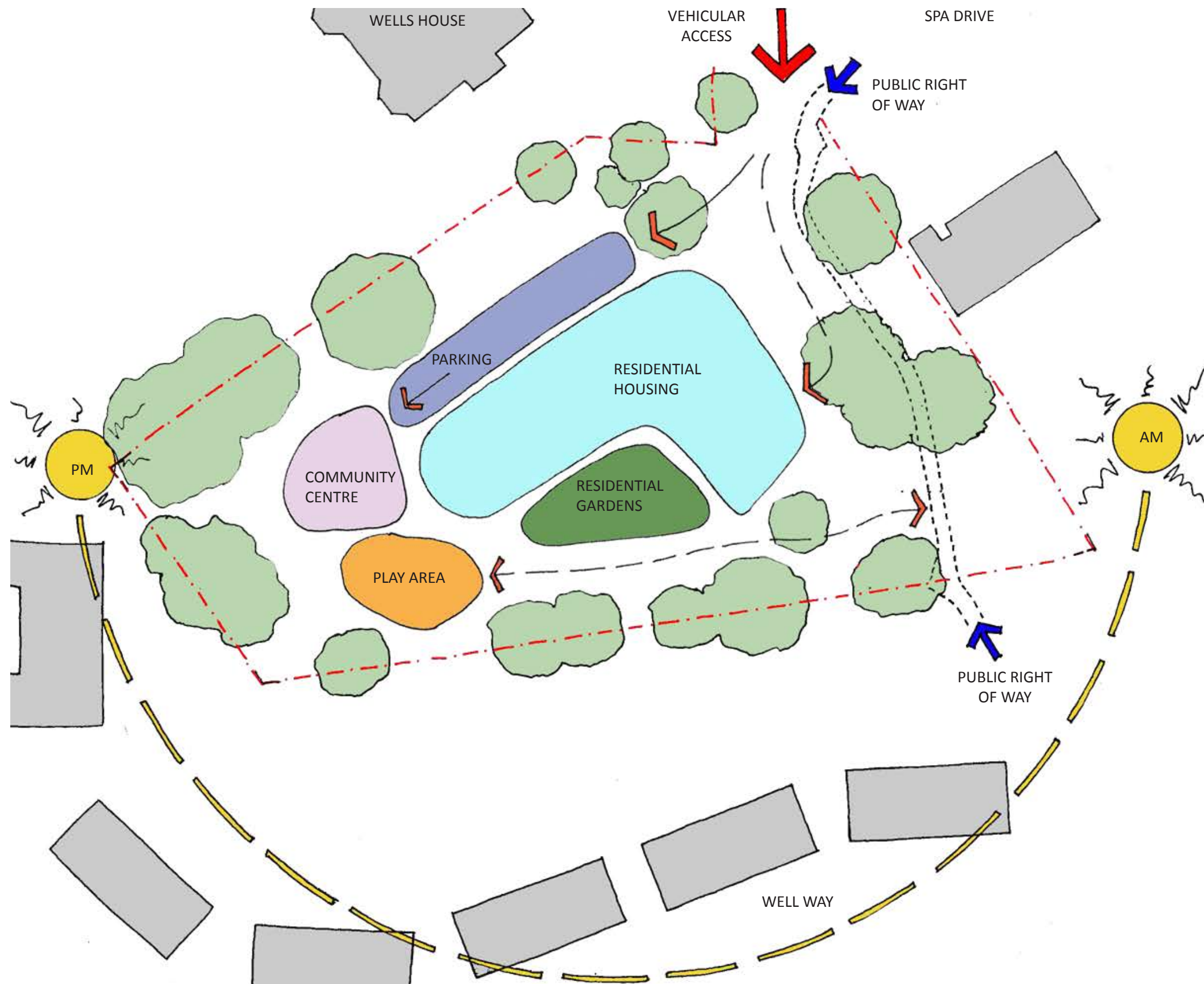
The main point of access for vehicles is from the north off Spa Way. The public footpath also runs from Spa Way across the site in a southerly direction and continues down to Well Way.

There are mature trees and landscape to the outer edges of the site as well as a group of mature trees through which the footpath passes on the eastern flank.

The site enjoys a good southerly aspect but it is important to sensitively address the residential amenity enjoyed by the houses on Well Way.

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OPTION 1



Concept Layouts

The vehicular access is maintained off Spa Drive as is the public footpath running across the site. The main residential building is located to the centre of the site to have the least impact on the existing landscape and houses. The location of the community centre, playground and parking are further considered in the design studies, of which three options are highlighted here:

OPTION 1

This layout (and the following options) maintains the vehicular access from Spa Drive and retains Wickers Way, the public right of way connecting Spa Way with Well Way to the south.

All options also locate the buildings close to the centre of the site to maintain as many of the mature trees as possible and away from the existing houses.

The proposed residential building faces south by a private resident's garden. Parking is organised orthogonally to the north, following the natural levels of the site.

The community centre is located to the west with the adjacent play area, close to where it is now.

The downside of this proposed site organisation is that the community centre and play area are remote from both the vehicular and pedestrian access points and the public footpath, making them less accessible.

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OPTION 2



OPTION 2

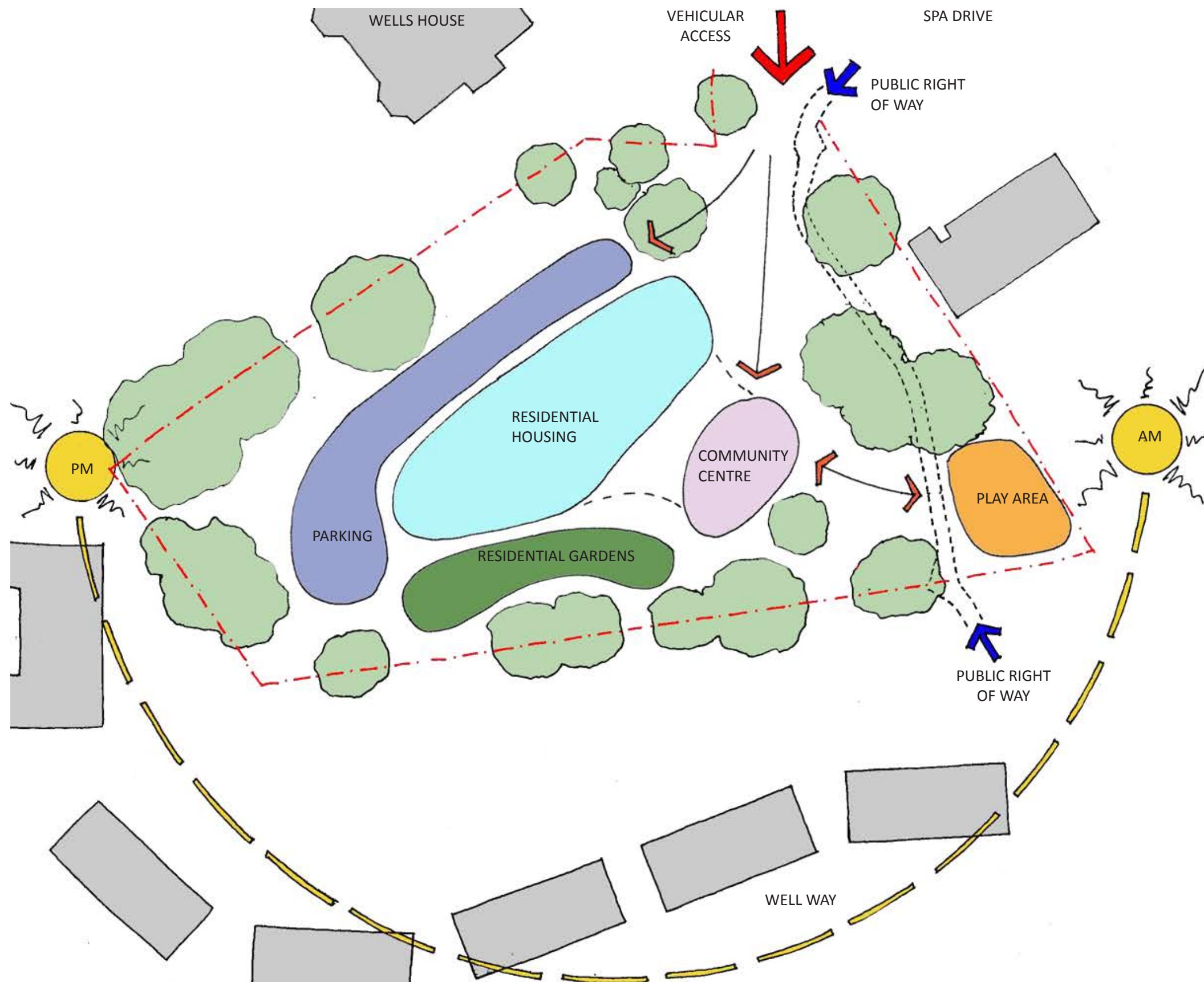
This layout maintains the residential building facing south and forming a natural resident's garden with carparking wrapping around to the north and west.

The community hall is placed within the main building opposite the entrance and the play area is located by the public footpath to the south eastern corner of the site.

Whilst the community hall is more accessible it is still slightly disconnected from the play area and at a different level. It is also close to the entrance and therefore any external area will be compromised

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OPTION 3



OPTION 3

The third option locates the community hall closer to the play area and at a similar level close to the public footpath making it easily accessible whilst enjoying a more useful external area.

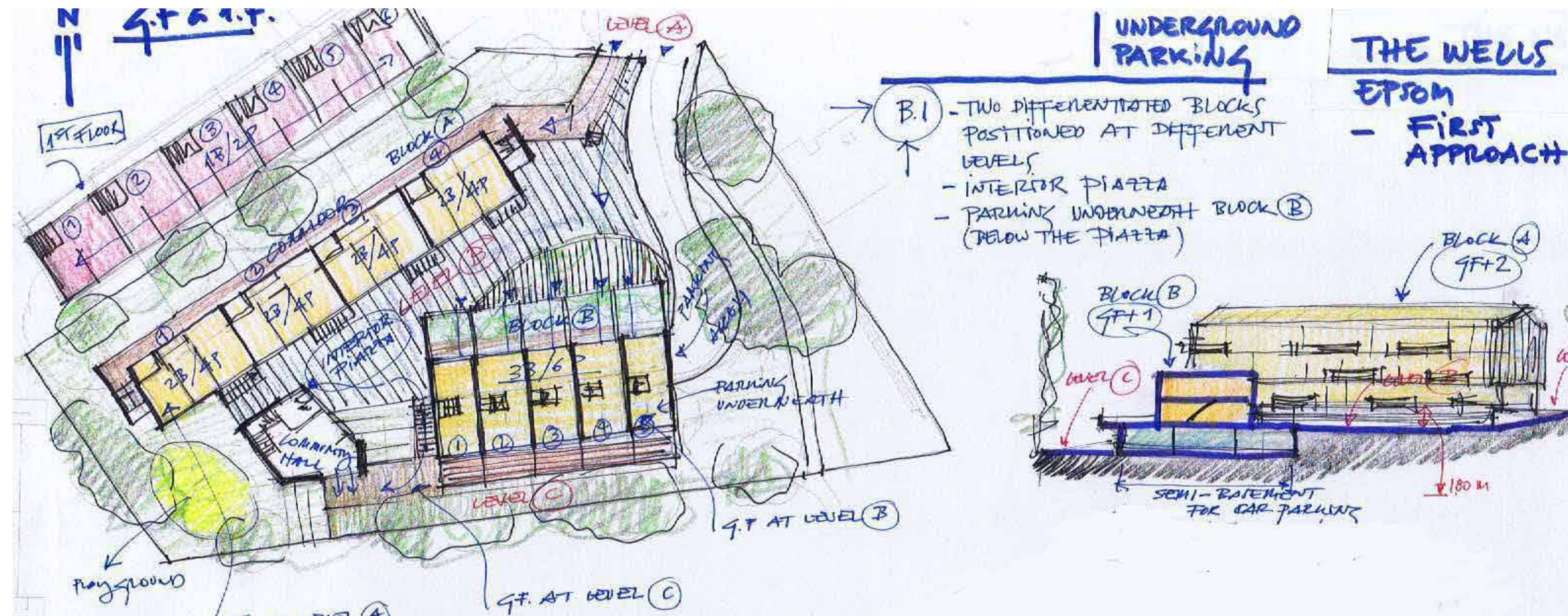
The residential building faces south as a more linear building form with gardens facing the sunpath.

Parking wraps around the building to the north following the natural contours of the site.

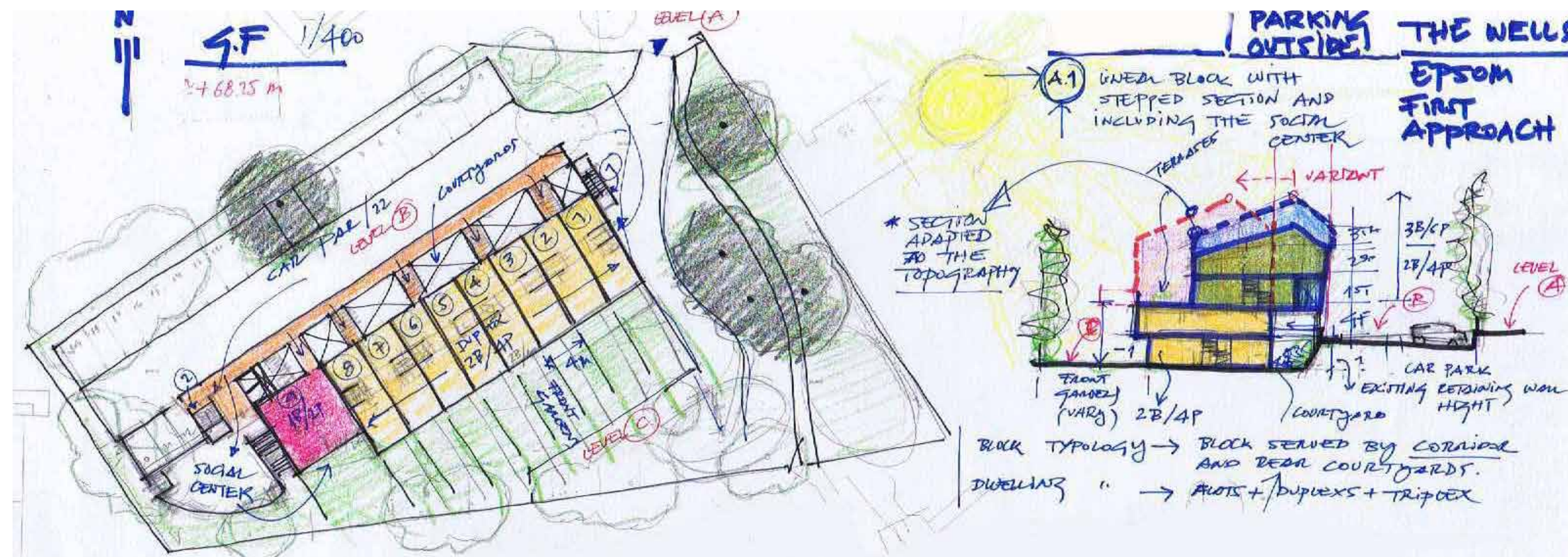
This option also suggests that the community hall could be independent of the main building being a stand-alone building. This may offer both the community hall and residential building separate functions, independence and therefore more flexibility. Offering both uses more flexibility and independence.

Of all options creates the best response and use of the existing site.

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OPTION A



OPTION B

Sketch Designs

Our sketch layouts developed some of the options explored for the building forms and relationship with the site levels.

Option A looks at 2 separate buildings forming an internal area. This organisation, whilst setting up an interesting external area, create units.....too close and some of the residential units to the north have poor aspect and sunlight.

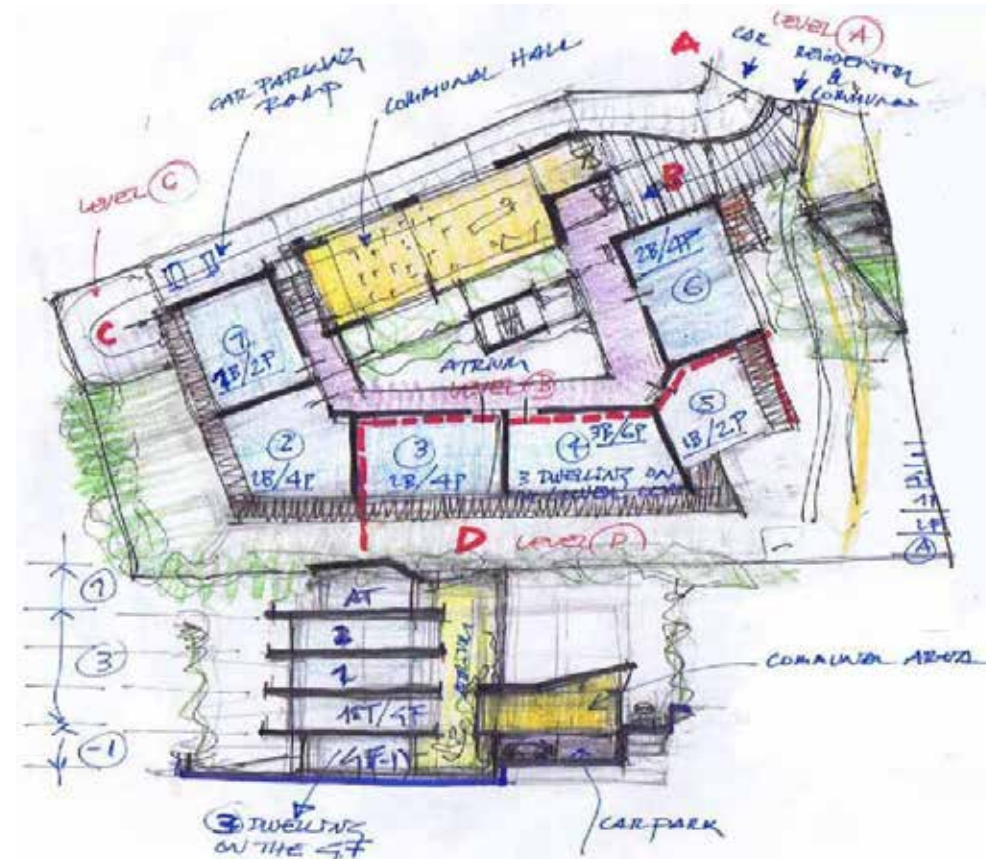
Option B proposes a linear block which offers good aspect to all the residential unit which also enjoy a dual aspect.

The community hall however is remote from the public footpath and is therefore less accessible.

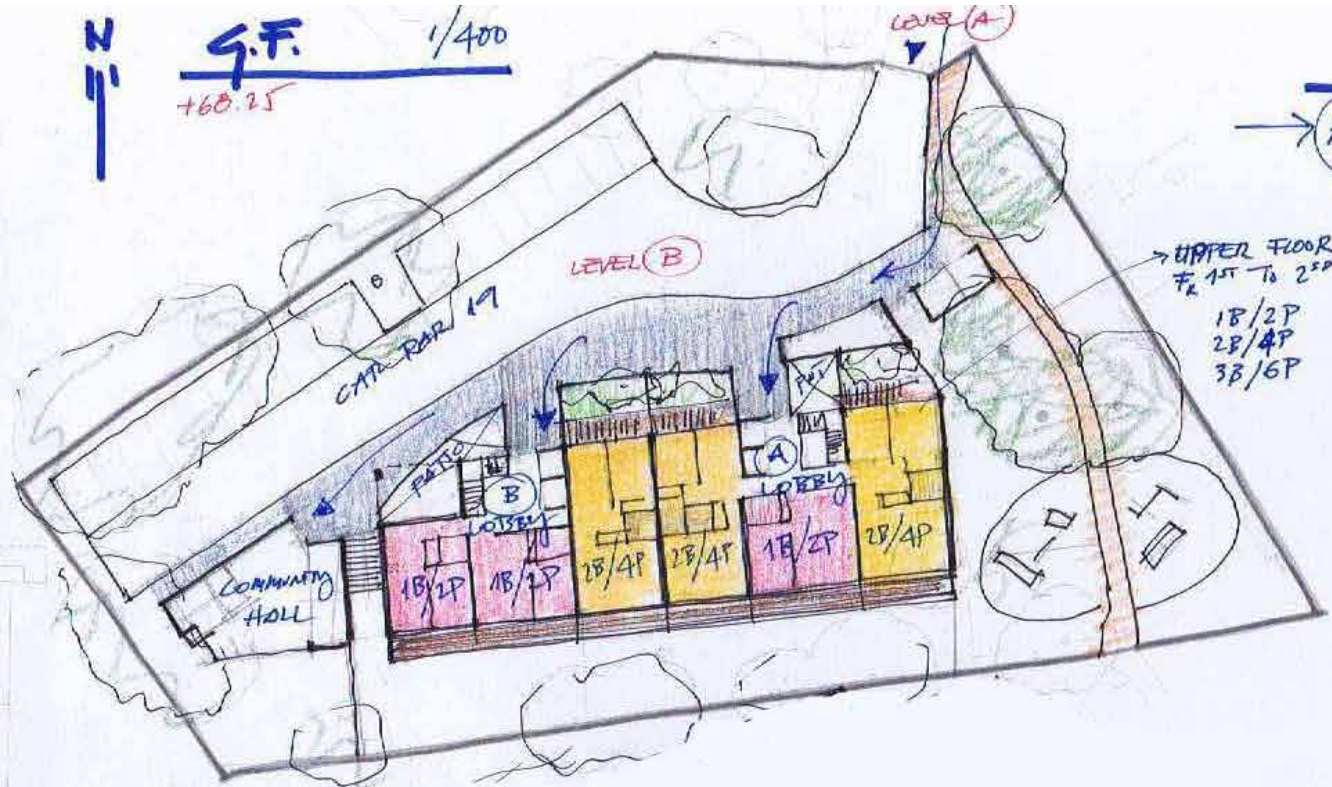
The section indicates how the existing levels on the site can be managed to offer an optimum arrangement of floor levels.



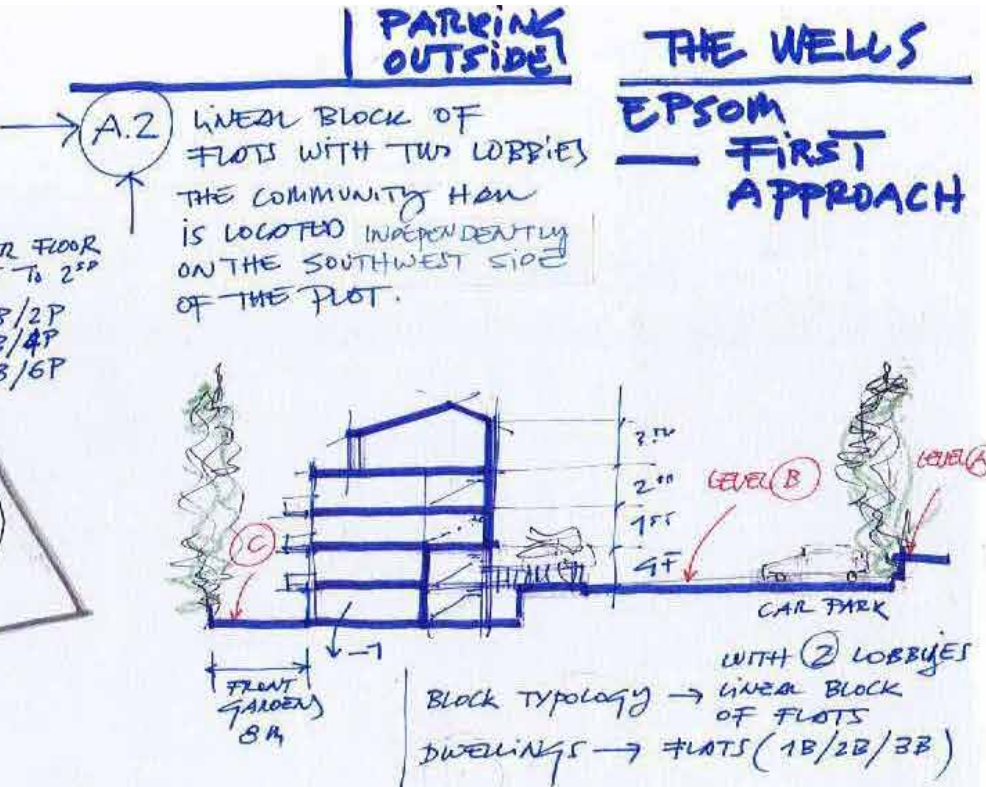
OPTION C



OPTION D



OPTION E



Option C is a square block with a community hall to the north. This layout requires underground parking area which is costly and would be unaffordable. The new building is closer to the existing houses on Well Way.

Option D creates an enclosed block around an atrium with the community centre to the north. Whilst an exciting building form it is more typical of a town centre location and the dwellings to the eastern boundary do not enjoy a particularly good aspect. The costs for the building including the atrium and underground parking would be disproportionately high for the scale of development.

Option E is a derivative of the original Option 2 but aligns the building with the southern boundary and places the community hall to the western boundary. The buildings relationship with the rear gardens of the existing houses is more challenging than Option 2.

Summary

A derivative of Option B with the community centre located to the east, where it would be more accessible, would provide the optimum layout and relationship with the levels to the site.

This layout arrangement has been the basis for the development of the design.

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PREFERRED LAYOUT - Block Plan



Preferred layout as previously noted in the summary for the design options, Option B is considered the most appropriate arrangement of buildings and accommodation on the site, offering the optimum layout and relationship with the existing houses and building and then levels across the site.

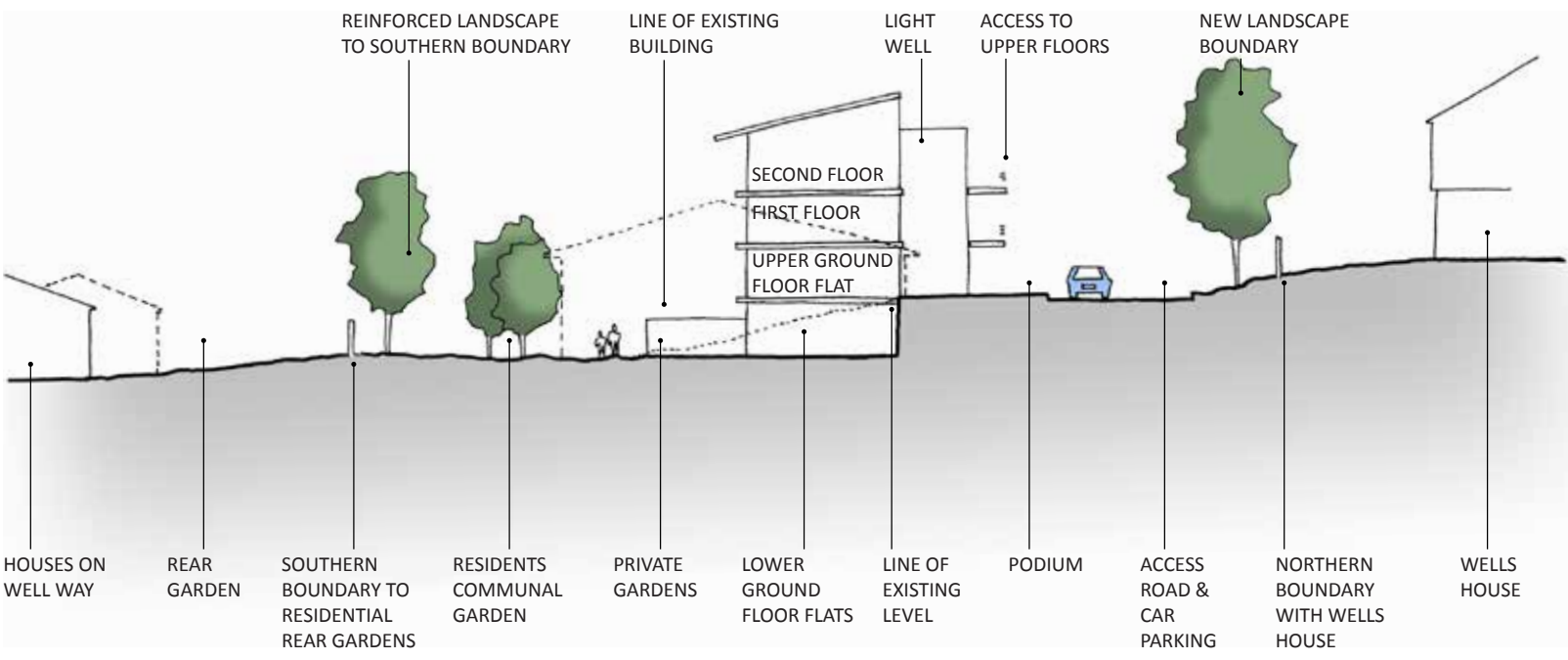
The block plan placed over the Google Aerial map shows how the proposed relationship would sit on the site with the car park to the north, the building to the centre, and the community hall and playground located to the south eastern section close to the public footpath.



OPTION B

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SITE LAYOUT MASTERPLAN

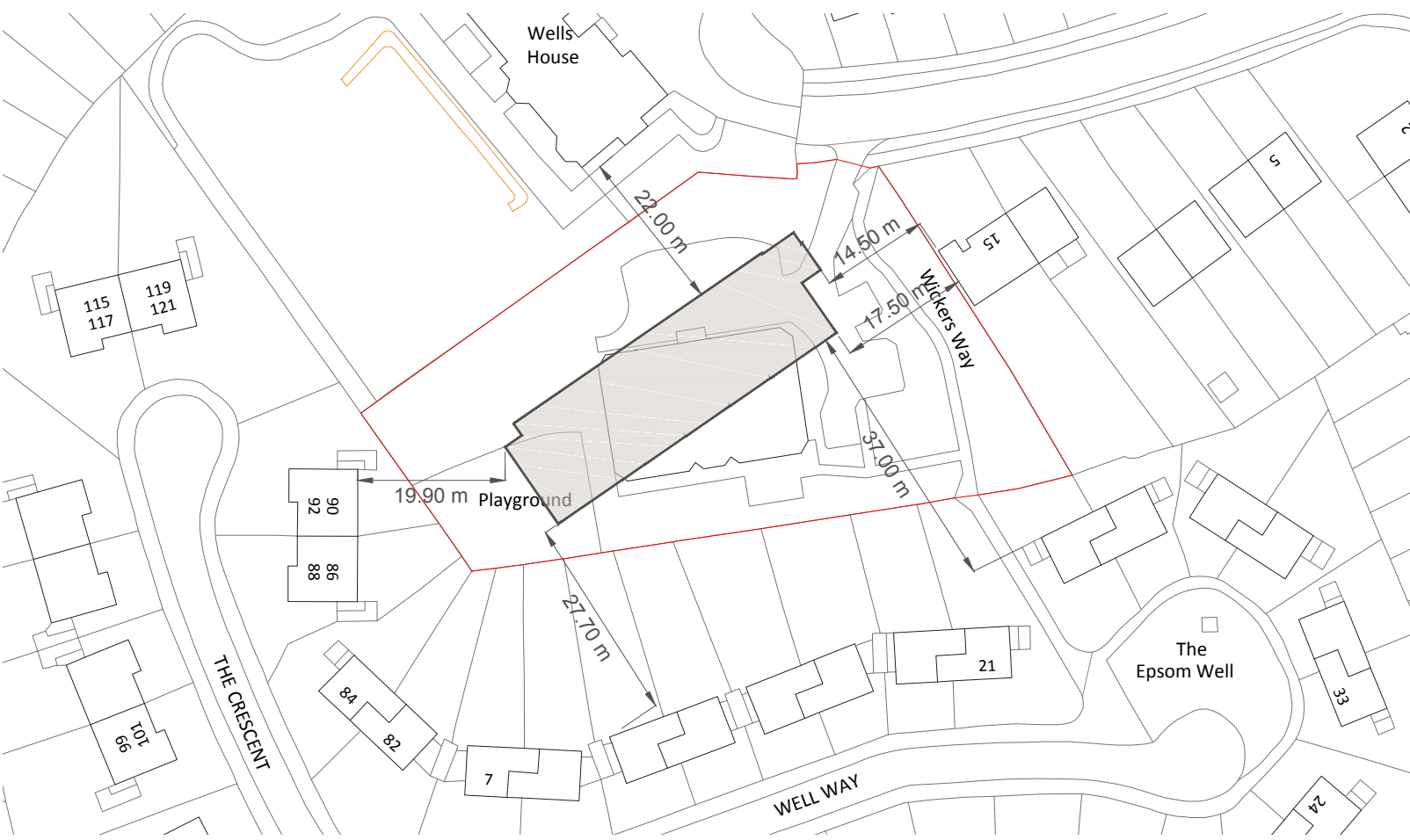


Site Layout Masterplan

The main building lies along the centre of the site with the community centre and playground close to the public footpath to the south east where they can be easily accessed by the public. The car park is located to the north of the building

Utilising the level changes across the site the ground floor has both an upper part by Spa Drive and the car park and a lower part with gardens for the flats to the south. The building will therefore be the equivalent of three storey from Spa Drive and four storey from the gardens to the south.

This overall massing is considered appropriate on the site and in comparison with the existing residential building and Wells House. Whilst it is higher, it is set back further from the southern boundary than the existing building. The overall height is lower than Wells House - The Karibu Residential Home - and is placed so the distance between it and the adjoining houses are in line with or better than the optimum design standards and distances between habitable rooms of adjacent homes.



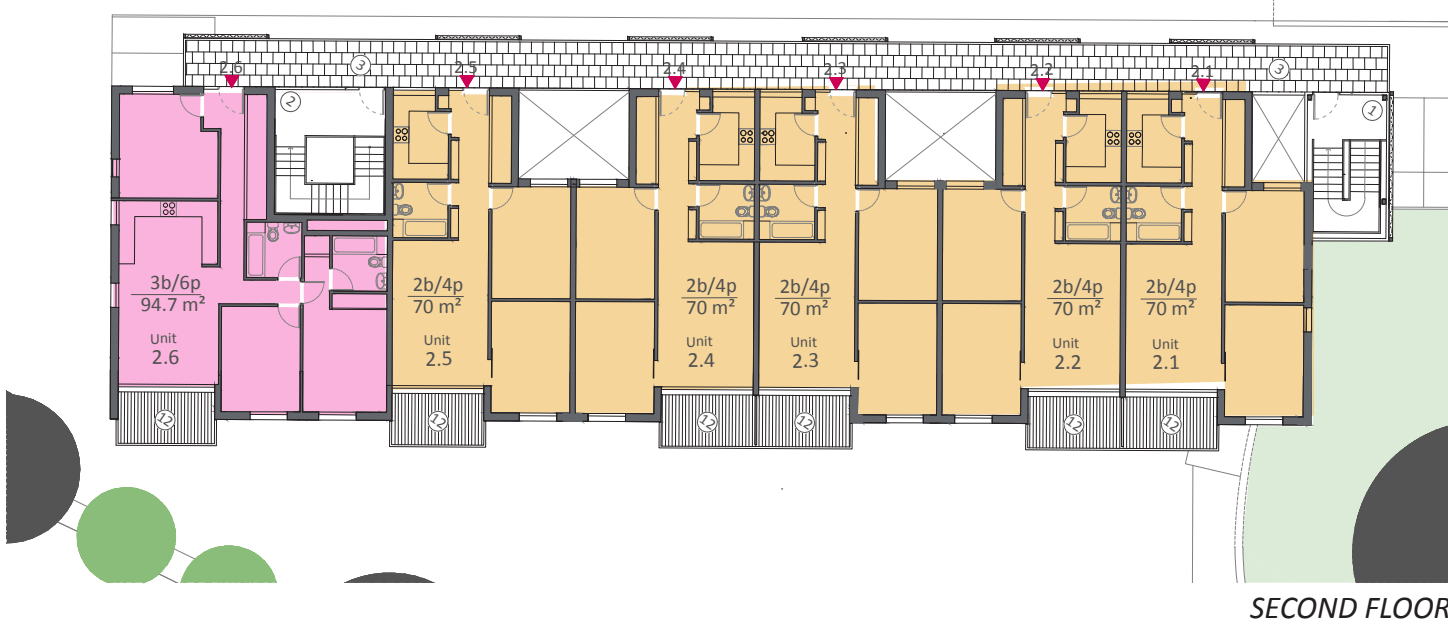
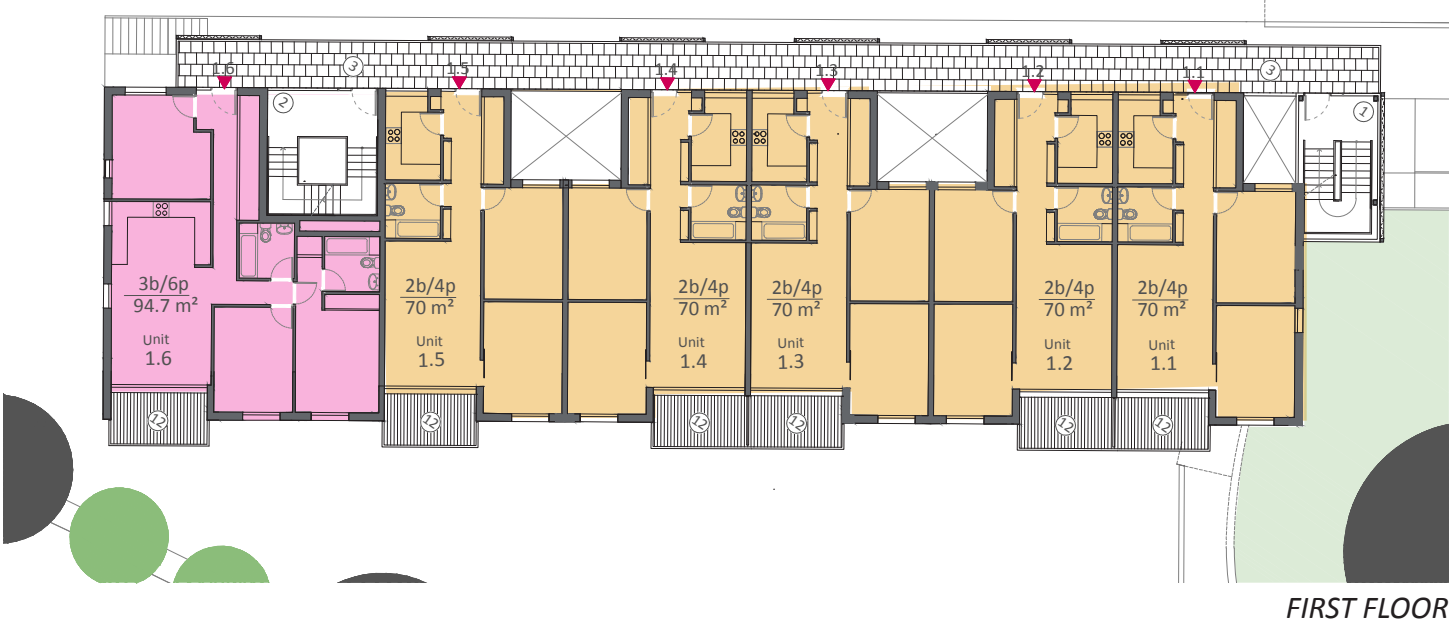
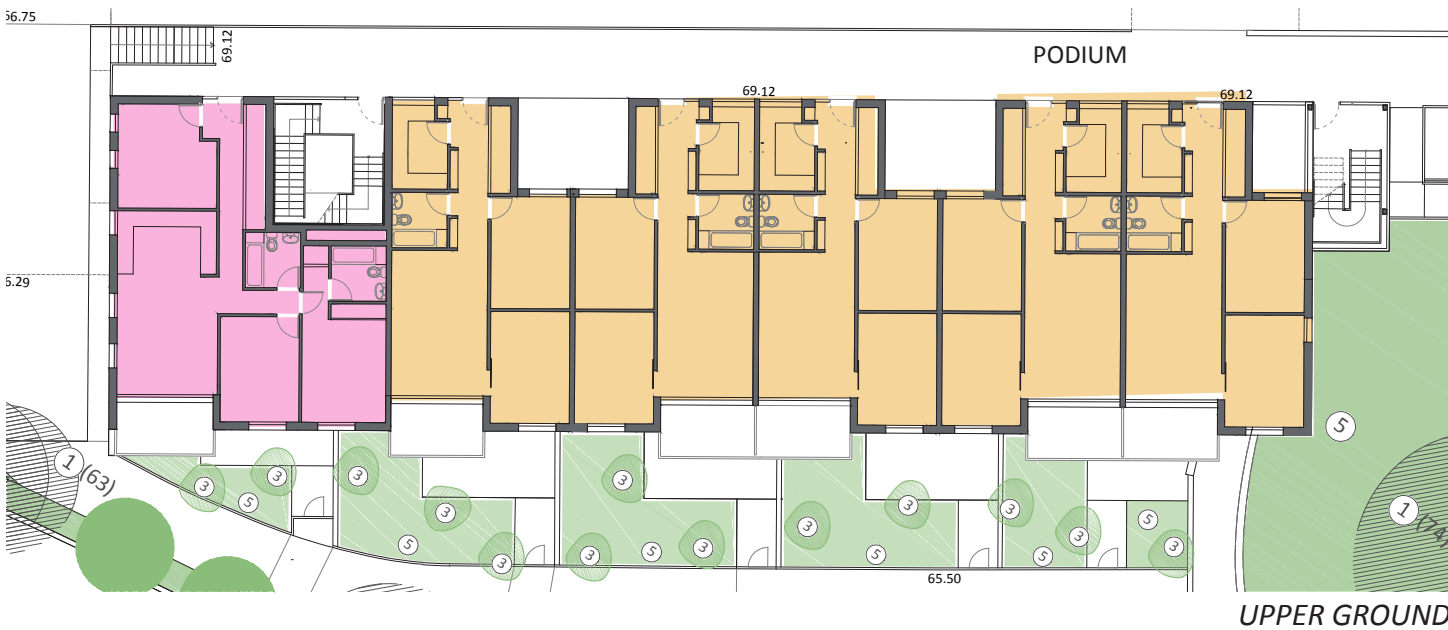
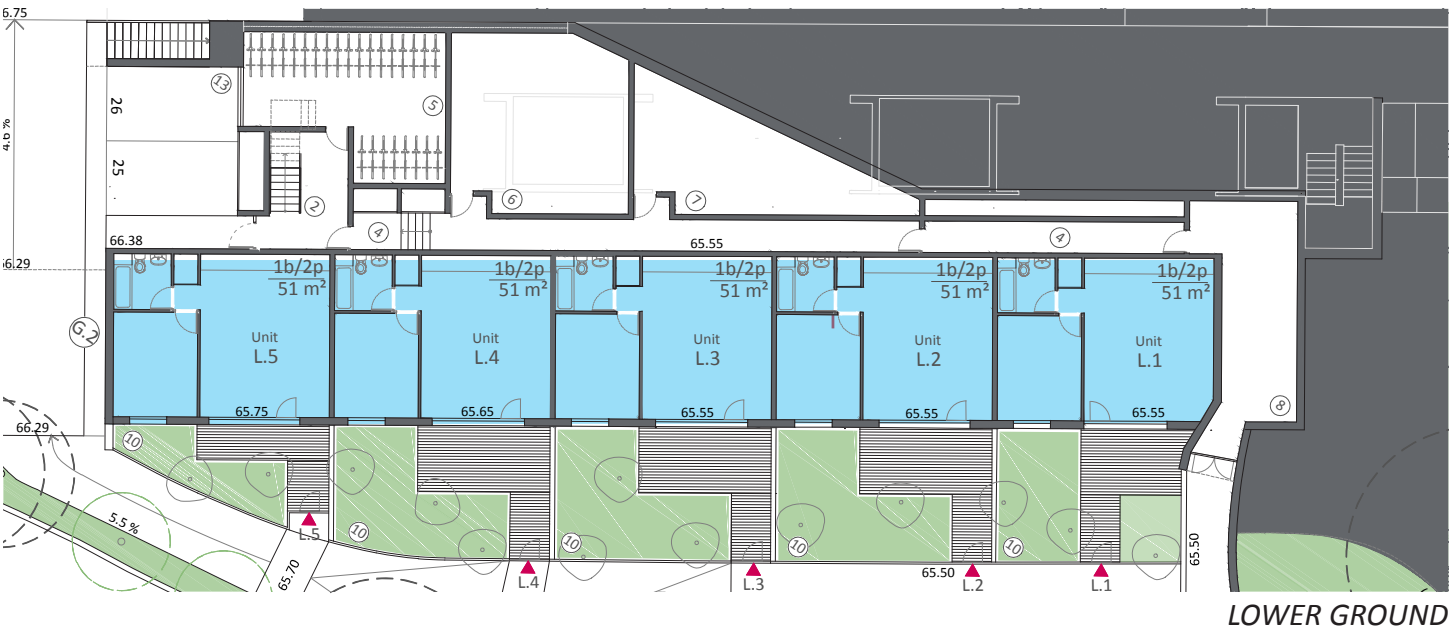
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FLOOR PLANS

The floor plans for the flats have been developed to provide a good standard of accommodation for the occupants and in line with the London Plan and the local authority design standards.

A mix of 1,2 and 3 bedroom flats are proposed all enjoying a southerly aspect and shared access from the podium close to the car park to the north. The lower ground floor flats have private patio gardens and access from the lower footpath.

Resident’s bike store and the main plant rooms are located on the lower ground level behind the flats, nestled into the slope of the site.



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COMMUNITY HALL & PLAYGROUND



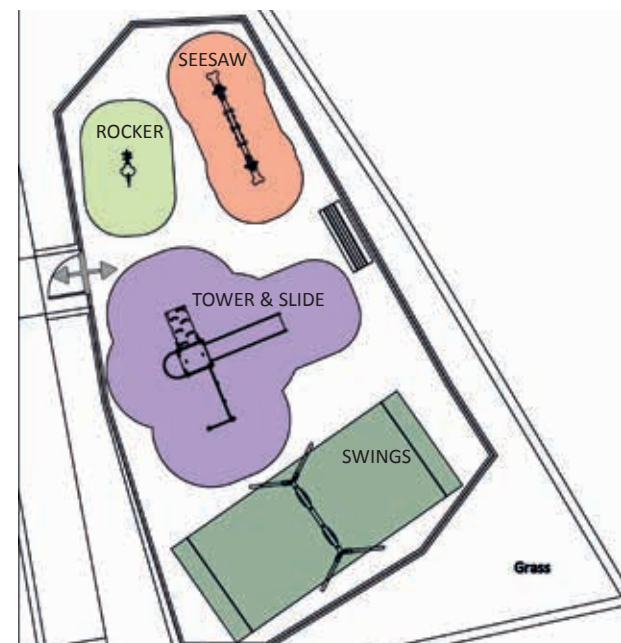
VIEW OF HALL FROM THE LOWER GROUND FLOOR FLATS



VIEW FROM WICKERS WAY



THE COMMUNITY HALL & PLAYGROUND



PROPOSED PLAY AREA LAYOUT



Community Hall

The Community Hall is designed as an independent building adjacent to the public footpath for ease of access and close to the new playground and equipment.

There will be level access to the hall via a short ramp or stair from the public footpath and there is level access from the carpark, along a footpath running along the southern boundary.

The Community Hall will be approximately 1,700 sq ft. With a large open plan space to offer flexibility for the neighbourhood's use and will include a kitchenette area and toilets.

It will have a 'green roof' and rooflights to get plenty of light into the building without overlooking the neighbours' gardens.

The building will be designed to be as sustainable and energy efficient as possible to reduce future energy and running costs, and is proposed to be clad in timber to soften the aspect.

The Playground

The new playground is located next to the public footpath where it can be easily accessed throughout the day. It will have a secure fence all around and will include a safe surface and a bench.

New equipment will be installed to offer a variety of play activities including swings, climbing frames with slides, see-saws and rockers.

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MATERIALS AND PRECEDENTS



The building is proposed to be clad in a tile to reflect the upper story of the Wells House, but expressed in a modern manner appropriate for a modern building of its time. The rear walls to the flats facing Wells House are partly clad in metal sheeting to modulate the northern elevation and express the upper level walkways and metal screening.

As the lower ground level of the building is exposed as the site levels fall away, it is proposed to use 'reconstituted stone/GRC' cladding to form a strong base and proportion to the upper levels which are tile hung.

The roof is proposed as an upstand metal roof.

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3D COMPUTER SKETCH IMAGES



NORTHERN ASPECT



SOUTHERLY ASPECT



VIEW TO COMMUNITY HALL



VIEW FROM PARKING AREA



VIEW TO WEST

As part of the design process, 3D modelling has been used extensively to inform and help communicate the design development. This has also been helpful to understand how the proposed building would relate to the existing levels across the site and landscaping.

It has also been used to help to develop and express the modelling of the building and use of materials.

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3D COMPUTER SKETCH IMAGES



COMMUNITY HALL & PLAY AREA



SECTION ACROSS SITE



VIEW FROM WICKERS WAY



VIEW FROM WICKERS WAY



PODIUM FROM LOWER GROUND AREA

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PUBLIC EXHIBITION



A public exhibition was held at the former Wells (Day) Centre on Spa Drive on Thursday 18th October 2018 between 4pm and 8pm where representatives of the design team, Council officers from the Property & Regeneration department and Councillors were in attendance to help explain the proposals and answer any questions visitors may have.

A number of Councillors unconnected with the project also took the opportunity to attend and view the proposals, including one County Councillor.

Before the event 526 invitations were sent to all residents and businesses within the Wells Neighbourhood area. Details of a dedicated email address 'Askwells' was given in the invitation, together with the information that the plans could also be viewed at the Town Hall if residents were unable to attend the consultation event itself.

At the public exhibition visitors were able to leave their comments about the proposals or alternatively to send those comments by email either to the Council email address 'Askwells', or to planning consultant, Bell Cornwell.

Of the 526 households invited to attend, 87 individuals attended the event, 7 of which were Councillors and 24 comments forms were left. Subsequently, 1 request for a comment form has been received at the 'Askwells' dedicated email address, **and xx comments have been submitted to Bell Cornwell.**

A full summary of the comments and responses are set out in the planning statement which forms part of and accompanies the application.

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ASSESSMENTS

PLANNING

Section 70 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires planning applications should be determined in accordance with the development plan unless other material considerations indicate otherwise. The development plan of relevance is the Epsom and Ewell Local Plan which provides the local policy framework for the borough.

The adopted Plan currently consists of The Core Strategy 2007 and the Development Management Policies Document (2015). The main material consideration is the National Planning Policy Framework July 2018 (NPPF) which sets out the Government's up to date strategy and guidance for plan making and decision taking. Other guidance is contained in the Sustainable Design SPD, the Parking Standards for Residential Development and Making the Efficient Use of Land – Optimising Housing Delivery 2018.

The Local Authority is taking a proactive role in identifying and helping to bring forward land that is suitable for meeting development needs. The principle of development is acceptable given the site's sustainable location and brownfield status. The NPPF clearly sets out that substantial weight should be given to the value of using brownfield land within settlements for residential development. The latest document, Making the Efficient Use of Land – Optimising Housing Delivery, makes way for development seeking to optimise the capacity of a proposal site by developing to a higher density (greater than 40 dwellings per ha) and/or exceed the maximum building height, being considered positively.

This scheme promotes an effective use of a suitable vacant brownfield site within a settlement and contributes to the need for more homes, whilst retaining a community facility and enhanced children's play space, safeguarding the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.

The scheme comprises a suitable mix of 5 x 1 bed, 15 x 2 bed and 3 bed properties and a balance has been struck between optimising the site whilst maintaining the area's prevailing character and setting, alongside provision for parking of both vehicles and cycles, including landscaping.

The proposed accommodation accords with current National Described Space Standards, with a 40% policy compliant onsite affordable housing contribution with a tenure mix to be agreed.

Planning policy is detailed further in the accompanying Planning Statement.

ABORICULTURAL ASSESSMENT

A detailed assessment of the existing trees within the site and on adjacent land has been undertaken to inform the design of the development.

The assessment recommended which trees may have to be retained and which could be removed, based on whether the trees are classified 'veteran'; whether their removal would have a significant and adverse impact on the character and appearance of the local landscape, amenity or biodiversity; which are important features within the local landscape and removal would be contrary to local planning policies. The trees have been categorised in accordance with BS5837:2012 for reference.

Working through this process those trees to be retained have been identified and their canopy and root protection areas marked on the emerging plans to inform the location and design of the proposed buildings and playground.

With the development of the design and in discussion with the aboricultural consultant, an Aboricultural Implication Report and Tree Protection plan have been prepared which includes specific Root Protection Zones and also tree canopy offsets to safeguard the existing trees during construction.

The detailed reports form part of the supporting information for the detailed planning application.

ECOLOGY ASSESSMENT

An Ecological and Bat Emergence survey has been undertaken by Furesfen, an independent consultant.

The survey found that the site is used by wildlife due to its position within the buffer zone of Epsom Common and the area being of a relative low density with generous open spaces. However the site in its current form is not suitable for reptiles and no evidence of bats roosting within the building were found, although bats were foraging on the wing in the evening.

Recommendations to safeguard and mitigate the impact on bats and wildlife have been logged in the report and will be adopted as part of the design and construction methodology statement.



VISUAL/LANDSCAPE ASSESSMENT

AWAITING VISUAL ASSESMENT TO SUMMARISE

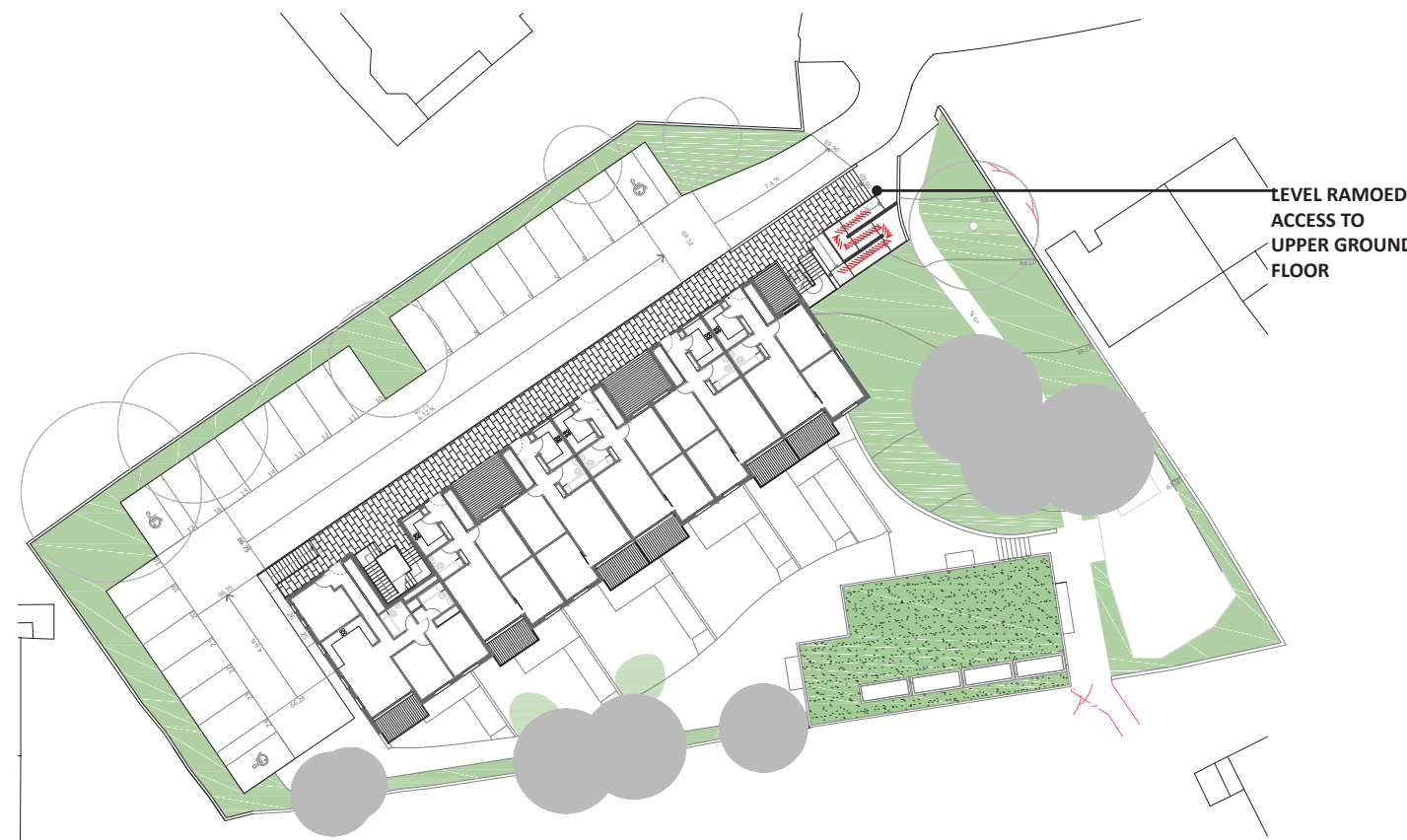
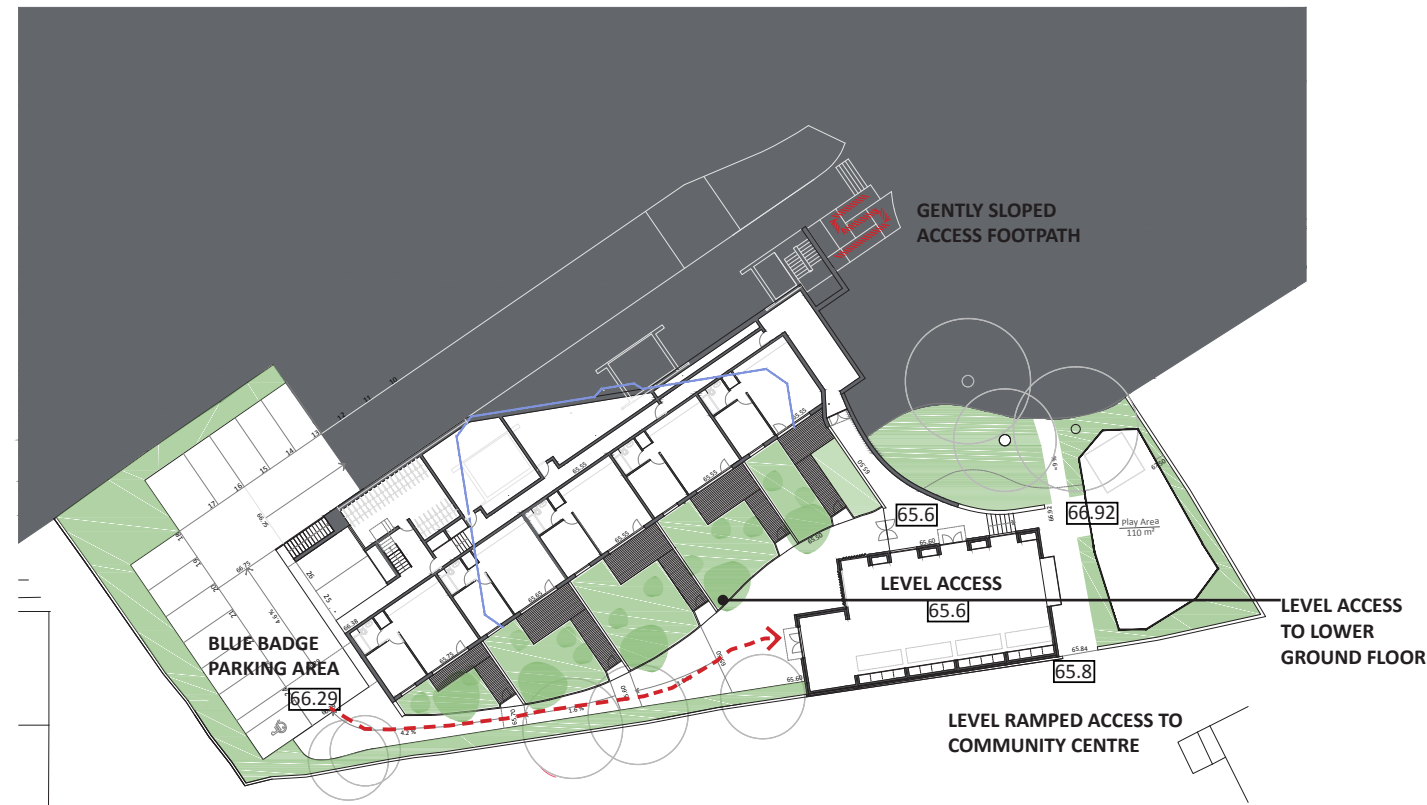
SECURED BY DESIGN

We have consulted with the Secured by Design Officer over the development proposals in order to create a scheme that is as safe and secure as possible, through its design and technical specification.

The design considerations include natural surveillance through overlooking and good lighting as well as the detail of securing the individual flats.

As the design develops further consultation will take place and the officer's recommendations incorporated where possible.

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Whilst the site has quite significant level differences, the design has sought to achieve a good level of accessibility to all, including ambulant disabled to the residential flats and community centre.

There is vehicular access from Spa Drive to the carpark which includes Blue Badge spaces for the residents of the flats as well as visitors to the community centre.

The upper ground floor flats have level access from the pedestrian pavement entrance off Spa Drive via a ramp leading to the ground floor podium from which all the upper ground floor flats can be accessed.

The lower ground floor flats can be accessed from the carpark by the western boundary via a ramped footpath that leads directly to the garden gates and front doors of the lower ground floor flats.

Similarly the community centre has level access along this pathway to the front door, as well as having access from the public footpath via a ramp.

There is therefore good access for all mobilities to the residential and community centre across the site for both vehicles and pedestrians.

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SUMMARY

The former Wells Spa site is located within the local residential neighbourhood of the Wells, set on the Epsom Common, some 2.5 miles south west of Epsom Town centre. The site is well landscape and has a natural slope of approximately 5 metres falling to the south west. The site is also well landscaped with mature trees around its boundaries and close to the eastern boundary.

The existing building is redundant, having been a former Community Centre. There is an existing children's playground to the west of the site, away from the public footpath which is open and is used on a regular basis.

The brief is to redevelop the site, now considered a 'brownfield site', to provide much needed residential accommodation as well as a new neighbourhood community hall and playground with new equipment.

The design of the scheme responds to the levels running across the site, the mature landscape and the existing neighbouring buildings, which are residential. The design also maintains the existing access from Spa Drive and the public footpath, Wickers Way, which crosses the site along its eastern boundary.

Several layouts have been investigated and the optimum layout locates the residential building to the centre of the site to maintain acceptable distances from the existing buildings not to impact on the residential amenity and also to minimise the impact on the existing mature landscape. The community hall, which is an independent building is located close to the footpath and the new playground for ease of access for all abilities.

In response to the level changes across the site, the residential building has its principle level access on the buildings upper ground floor, this is accessed from the north close to Spa Drive. There is level access also to the lower ground floor flats from the garden path to the south of the building.

The height and massing of the building has been carefully considered to balance achieving a good level of accommodation that is efficient whilst respecting the levels, landscape and existing townscape. The overall height of the building is lower than the Wells House (Karibu Residential Home) but taller than the predominately two storey houses on the estate. The building is three storey to the northern aspect and becomes four storey as the land falls away to the south. Whilst this is taller than the existing building, it is set back further from the line of the existing building and being between 27 and 37 metres distant to the existing residential building's on Well Way, it is considered appropriate in scale.

The accommodation is a mix of 1, 2 and 3 bedroomed flats designed to the London Plan and of which 40% will be 'affordable'.

Whilst the building is modern in its typology and expression with a simple material palette, it recognises some of the local materials and in particular picks up on the tile hanging to the upper storey of Wells House. The new building is expressed as a three storey tile clad building sitting over a reconstituted stone plinth but with metal clad elements to the northern elevation to layer and add variation to the building. The roof over sails the front elevation to express the eaves of the existing buildings and create an upper cap to the building. The community hall is clad in a vertical timber screen to provide a softer natural finish and to distinguish it from the main building.

The building will be designed to a high level of sustainability including the use of timber framing, high levels of insulation and air tightness. It will be designed to reduce energy consumption and CO2 emissions to a greater level than current building regulations.

