

Appeal by Watkin Jones Group reference 129020/FO/2020

Oakley, 188 Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield, Manchester M14 6LJ

Hearing Statement - Architecture

February 2022

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TIM GROOM ARCHITECTS

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1. Introduction

1.1 This evidence relates to an Appeal against the refusal for planning permission of application 129020/FO/2022 for the proposed development of student accommodation at Oakley, 188 Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield, Manchester, M14 6LJ (the Appeal Site).

1.2 My evidence is concerned with architectural design matters associated with the proposed development and is written in response to two of the six reasons for refusal as set out below

Reason for Refusal 3: The scale and massing of the proposed development in close proximity to lower scale residential buildings and the non-designated heritage asset of Oakley House, would give rise to an overbearing visual impact and provide a significant urbanising effect on the edge of Platt Fields Park. It would form an over-dominant feature within the street scene and area, which would have a detrimental effect on visual amenity and character of the area. It is therefore considered to be contrary to policies SP1, EN1, EN2, EN3 and DM1 of the Manchester Core Strategy, guidance contained in the Guide to Development in Manchester Supplementary Planning Document and Guidance and the NPPF.

Reason for Refusal 6: The windows within the south facing elevation of the proposed development would result in overlooking over a short distance to the living room windows of existing residential properties on Langley Road to the detriment of the reasonable amenity and privacy of the occupiers. As such the proposal is contrary to policies SP1, DM1 and H12 of the Core Strategy.

1.3 This evidence will detail the principles and context of the architectural design process for the proposed development and set out an appraisal of why I consider the reasons for refusal to be unjustified insofar as they relate to my areas of expertise.

2. Qualifications

2.1 I was educated at the University of Manchester where I was awarded an undergraduate BA (Hons) degree and BArch postgraduate degree in Architecture. I undertook my professional examinations and became a qualified Architect, registered with ARB (Architect's Registration Board) in 2001. I also joined as a member of the RIBA (Royal Institute of British Architects) in the same year.

2.2 I worked at a multi-national architectural firm, Broadway Malyan, before establishing my own practice, Tim Groom Architects in 2005.

2.3 The firm is a Manchester based practice which undertakes architectural work on behalf of private landowners, developers and house builders. Commissions include residential, student accommodation and commercial projects ranging from £2m to £60m.

2.4 The practice has won awards for its work in respected regional and national competitions including, most recently, for best large UK housing development. Details of recent awards can be found at Appendix 1.

2.5 I take an active interest in local architectural issues having served on the council of the Manchester Society of Architects for seven years. I am currently undertaking an invited part-time post as tutor at the School of Architecture, University of Manchester. Prior to this, I undertook a similar role at the School of Architecture, Liverpool University. In my role as tutor, I am responsible for teaching the next generation of architects the importance of context, history and place as well as how to understand architectural theory on a global scale and how this can be utilised locally. Fundamental to the ethos I teach, is the belief that well detailed, contextually appropriate materials and considered design will stand the test of time. A core part of the role is encouraging these student designers to seek the highest

possible standard through the implementation of a studio critique based environment where students learn and develop through feedback from peers and experienced architectural professionals.

3. Approach to Design

- 3.1 Throughout my educational and professional career, I have aligned my design ethos with the teachings of the Continuity in Architecture (CiA) studio, which was established at Manchester University in 1993. The approach of this 'atelier' at the School of Architecture is grounded in a deep and theoretical research of context, focusing on learning from history and layering its principles to create new architecture with a true sense of place.
- 3.2 The ethos of the (CiA) studio focuses on the sustainable design of new buildings and public spaces within cities and on interventions within existing structures. Place is the starting point for every project and design proposals are developed through the analysis and translation of a particular location. This approach to architecture and design has its roots in Contextualism and a core focus is on analysing and understanding the nature and qualities of place to develop new elements. Using traditional craft techniques within historic city settings is key to creating vibrant urban environments and this methodology leads a path to sustainable, layered, nuanced, contextual and environmentally appropriate solutions for the modern era.
- 3.3 As well as now being fortunate enough to teach in this studio, the methods it employs are the founding principles of my own practice. It is my opinion that this approach is essential in achieving a concept that constitutes a responsive solution with appropriate character. The concept is then developed through a robust design-led process. These guiding principles are visible in all my designs and form the basis for the success and commendation my practice has achieved.
- 3.4 This robust, iterative and process-driven approach was used to develop proposals for the Appeal Site in order to achieve a locally responsive and contextually appropriate scheme.

4. Practice Experience

- 4.1 My practice has extensive experience of delivering high quality, award winning schemes within Manchester City Centre.



Port Street, Manchester

Residential PRS project for M&G Real Estate on the Manchester City Centre Ring Road completed in 2018.



Blossom Street, Manchester

DTZ Investors PRS residential apartment scheme set across two sites in Ancoats, Manchester. Shortlisted at MSA Awards 2021 for best residential building.



Excelsior Works, Manchester

Private apartment scheme for Mulbury City in Castlefield, Manchester. Winner of national 2021 Brick Awards for best large UK housing development.



Oldham Road, Manchester

MSA Award winning (judged by Lord Norman Foster) residential apartment scheme in PRS sector for Cheyne Capital. Due for completion 2023.



Bendix Street, Manchester

Europa Capital funded PRS residential project. On site 2022 for 2024 completion.



Goulden Street, Manchester

73 private sale apartments built within a Grade II listed building that was formerly a police and fire station. Due for completion in 2024.



Hampton by Hilton, Manchester

190 room hotel completed in 2021 for Mavern Capital.



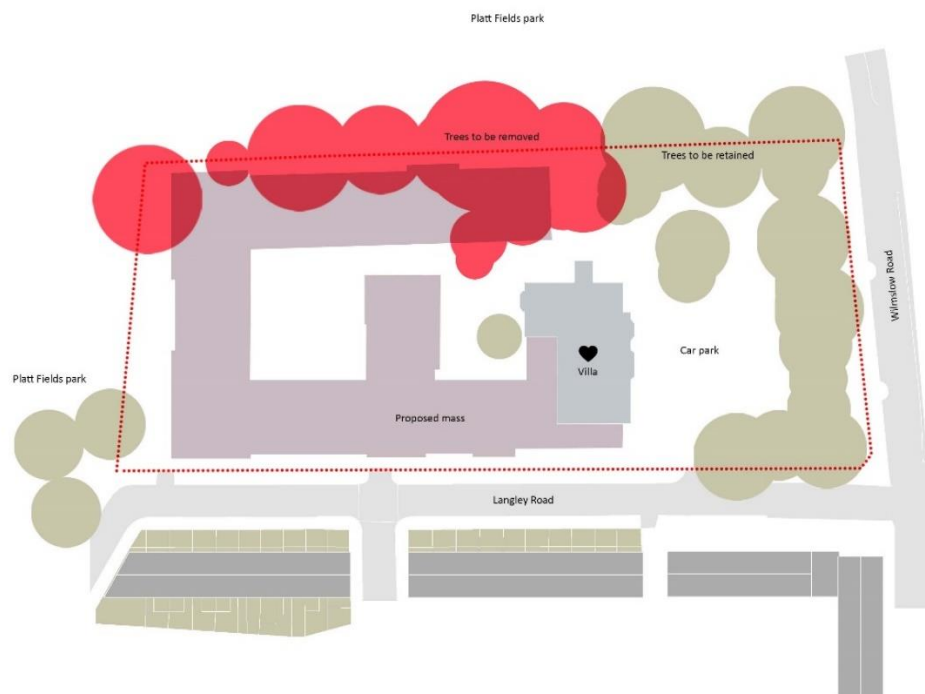
St John Street, Manchester

Conversion of two historic Grade II listed houses from offices back to houses with the addition of a new build house to the rear.

- 4.2 My work in the city has focused on delivering schemes which have honesty and integrity of materiality and whose overall composition is sympathetic with the historic vernacular of Manchester. When winning a national award for one of my city centre residential developments, judges described the building as, *'a calm, contextual response,'* and commented that, *'Manchester would benefit from more new 'background' buildings like this.'*
- 4.3 The success of my schemes, both in Manchester and elsewhere, is in large part due to a detailed analysis of place and a thorough understanding of context and materiality.

5. Project Background

- 5.3 Watkin Jones was working with another architect on a portfolio of schemes across the country, the site at 188 Wilmslow Road being one of these. I understand that a proposed scheme was submitted to Manchester City Council as part of the planning pre-application process in March 2020.
- 5.4 The March 2020 proposals of the original architect appear, to me, to be based on a 'demand-led' design strategy. In my opinion, those proposals lacked a clear design concept and merely sought to maximise the quantum of accommodation on the site. The resultant design utilised almost every available piece of developable land to deliver 497 student bedrooms.
- 5.5 I understand that the proposals were not well received by the City Council and they raised concerns about the density and layout of the development as well as the possible negative impact on surrounding arboriculture and Platt Fields Park. I also understand that the previously appointed practice did not have a track record of delivering projects in Manchester and thus had a limited understanding of the contextual and planning nuances that would be required to drive the scheme forward.



*Proposed sketch of previous architects' proposals
Trees to be removed shown in red*

- 5.6 My practice had worked successfully with Watkin Jones on multiple other projects nationwide prior to being commissioned on this project. Watkin Jones was also aware of my practice's success of delivering schemes within the City of Manchester. I was therefore asked to take a fresh look at the design of the development, taking a conceptual and contextual approach, which would seek to review and address the concerns of the City Council.
- 5.6 I judged the proposals by the previous architect had failed to grant prominence to Oakley Villa as a non-designated heritage asset. Instead, the proposals sought to abruptly adjoin new build elements to the villa and create a dense, overdeveloped figure of eight shape on the site. The resultant design also required a number of mature trees to be removed due to the scale of the development on the site.

- 5.7 After being appointed by Watkin Jones, my practice started the design process from the beginning with a thorough analysis of the site and its context to develop a new vision for the site which centred around reinstating the existing villa to its former glory and making it the heart of the development.

6. Tim Groom Architects' Proposals

6.1 Site Context

- 6.1.1 From my first visit to the appeal site, it was clear to me that we had a challenging design project with many key factors to consider. There were core issues to address, including: arboriculture; landscape; impact on existing residents; permeability and how best to deal with the heritage asset on the site. However, my overriding sentiment was a feeling of deep responsibility to ensure that the opportunity to develop a scheme on such a unique site was done with the requisite amount of skill and care. It was immediately obvious looking at the heritage asset that I had a responsibility to explore the preservation of Oakley Villa and it was equally clear to me that I held a responsibility to residents in the neighbouring streets, in particular Langley Road, to ensure they were considered as part of the development of the design. Whilst Fallowfield is a bustling, dense area known for vital student population, I was clear in my responsibility to ensure any proposal did not harm the local community. On the contrary, I wanted the proposals, to make a positive contribution to the local area.
- 6.1.2 As an Architect trained and practicing in Manchester, I understood the importance of delivering a scheme of the highest quality. Knowing the track record of the design team and consultants working on the project, I was confident that we could maximise the opportunity before us in order to deliver something highly positive for Fallowfield and the wider City.
- 6.1.3 The site is shown in red on the diagram below. Wilmslow Road runs past the eastern boundary of the site with bus routes to the University of Manchester main campus and Manchester City Centre. The University of Manchester Fallowfield campus is a short 5-minute walk east of the site across Wilmslow Road.



- 6.1.4 It was clear from my earliest site visit, that Oakley Villa was the “jewel” of the site as an example of mid nineteenth century architecture. The villa is set back from the extremely busy and bustling Wilmslow Road behind a dense tree belt where original stone walls and wrought iron gates allude to it standing

as a private house from 1837. The Heritage Statement of Stephen Levrant of Heritage Architecture Ltd, which was made available to me at the design stage, identified interesting gothic revival and heritage features, deserving of preservation and restoration. Internal examples of this included joinery work and stained glass ornamentation. However, externally, the building had suffered somewhat as a result of 1930's to 1980's extensions being bolted incongruously to the original house, ripping away some of its original elevations. Further inspection of the grounds revealed a walled garden that would once have enclosed a private space for the original family to relax and play in.

- 6.1.5 My initial concern when considering design options was to minimise the impact of any development on the heritage asset and to provide a viable future for the building. It was immediately clear to me that it would necessary to strip away all the extensions to the villa and reinstate the building at the heart of the site. This approach is also in accordance with the City of Manchester's Guide for Development, which recognises that buildings of architectural importance should be preserved and enhanced to achieve a strong sense of place as part of the rich urban heritage of Manchester.
- 6.1.6 My feeling was that the temptation to cram additional student bedrooms into the villa (as the previous architect had attempted) should be avoided. Instead, I felt that the building should be celebrated and retained for communal use. The grand and large scale rooms seemed perfectly suited for a library, common rooms and meeting rooms – inspiring places in which students would be able to appreciate the original features of the building. I also judged that the villa should be retained within its original walled garden with new additions placed carefully around it that responded to the site and wider context. Again, this approach, paying due regard to the character and context of the area, is entirely in-keeping with the City's Guide for Development.
- 6.1.7 As I walked the site at my first visit, it was clear that the character of the site was, in large part, impacted by the number of trees within the site boundary and adjacent to Platt Fields Park. I had seen that the proposals of the previous architect took the approach of removing a significant number of the trees to maximise developable area. I did not feel this was the right approach and, quite the reverse, believed that the presence of the trees should be celebrated as part of the character and context of the site. This approach, I felt, was also more in-keeping with the City's Guide to Development which stipulates that development should reflect and respect the place it is located.
- 6.1.8 I felt that the existing arboriculture was part of the charm of the site and offered a great opportunity for storytelling. As already alluded to, Oakley Villa is set back from Wilmslow Road behind dense and established treeline and views of the building can just be glimpsed through them. Historic photographs of the villa from Mr Levrant's report showed the villa nestled behind mature trees and I wanted it to remain like that but also for any new elements added to the site to sit within and around the treeline and canopies in a similar way.
- 6.1.9 I understood that on brownfield sites, there can sometimes be an overriding desire to achieve quantum above all else, however my professional responsibilities mean that other concerns must take precedence. In this case, retaining arboriculture and reducing the scale of development to something appropriate for the site, seemed to me to be the correct approach.
- 6.1.10 To the south of the site, there are two storey houses on Langley Road. This was a key factor that needed to be considered to ensure that the design was sympathetic with its surrounding context. Opposite these residences is an bulky and imposing office element, attached to the villa in the form of an extension. The extension crudely smashes into the villa, window lines are misaligned and it pays no reference to proportionality. It is slab sided and sits behind a service area with blank walls and a mixture of large scale ribbon windows with expanses of panelled brickwork. At the eastern end of Langley Road, none of the villa can be appreciated as result of the office building and at the western end there is an expanse of open space used as a car park. The office results in a poor street scene and is incongruous with the residential properties that face it.
- 6.1.11 In the slightly wider context, beyond the appeal site to the north east of the site are examples of taller buildings, one of which is up to nineteen storeys in size, providing precedent for taller buildings in this

location. I envisaged that any element of development at the north eastern edge of the appeal site would be of a completely different rationale than elsewhere in the proposals.

- 6.1.12 Whilst Langley Road has an obvious and immediate built context from which design cues can be drawn, a building located at the north east of the site would need wider urban analysis and consideration of its place near a parkland setting. This is entirely consistent with the approach recommended by the City Council as part of their Residential Quality Guide which determines that the scale of the wider neighbourhood, and how any development responds to it, should be a key consideration. My first task was therefore to consider the views of the area from Platt Fields Park.
- 6.1.13 The trees at the northern boundary of the site provide a vegetated 'skyline' – a continuation of greenery. Set against this green-line are occasional buildings seen in the background. Some examples include the visible spires of Holy Trinity Platt Church, the Holy Innocents church and the nineteen storey Owens Park Tower (student accommodation). These buildings are visible above the treeline and significant in height but appropriate for the setting and act as landmarks in the skyline. Taking into account the appropriate character and context of a tall element in a parkland setting, I went on to develop this in the concept for my own design.
- 6.1.14 Moving around the site further, along the north-south axis of Wimslow Road, one arrives at a major traffic and pedestrian route. This axis is also treelined, particularly so in and around the appeal site. Whilst my Langley Road proposals were in the context of a suburban street, it was clear to me that any development at the north eastern edge of the site should sit in the different context of the park and main arterial route beyond.

6.2 Surrounding Building Heights & Local Vernacular

- 6.2.1 The immediate site surroundings contain a variety of building types of differing heights, ranging from two storey residential dwellings to nineteen storey accommodation blocks. Directly north of the site along Wilmslow Road, exists the eight storey 'toast rack' building. This recently formed part of a consented scheme which includes a new eleven storey building directly off Wilmslow Road. There are also large areas of green space and substantial tree lines.
- 6.2.2 The materials, colours and composition of the local architecture is varied. The historic buildings are predominantly red brick and the newer developments are also red or brown tones with some buff brick. Given that the site needs to be redeveloped, the historic palette will become the most relevant architectural style in the surrounding context, with great consideration given to the surrounding residential houses.



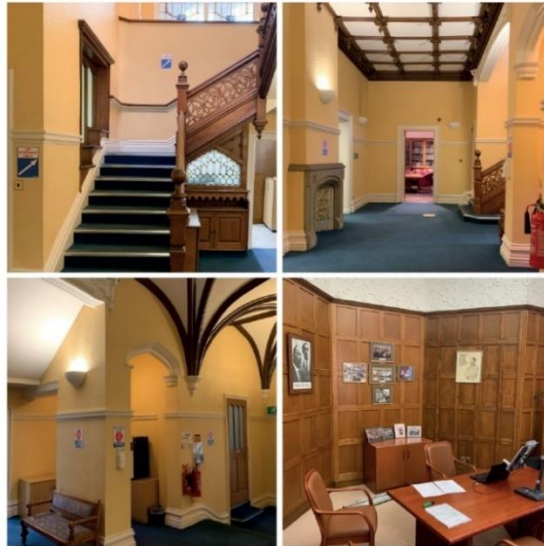
6.3 Existing Site Buildings & Design Rationale

- 6.3.1 The previous architect chose to use the footprint of the existing buildings adjoining the villa as the basis for the layout of their design. I considered that this had an over-bearing effect on the villa itself and did not pay respect to the standalone typology of a grand suburban house. Whilst in their design they stripped away the existing modern additions, they planned to replace them with more of the same form at an even greater density, thereby further overpowering the villa.
- 6.3.2 In contrast, the appeal proposal aims to retain, restore and celebrate the heritage features within Oakley Villa as well as allowing it to stand apart as the prominent structure it was always historically intended to be. Different to the original scheme, which saw some amenity space located in the villa but also student accommodation, the response was to restrict student accommodation to new build areas of the development, allowing the villa to be used solely for student amenity and building management space and thus enabling the focus to be on retaining heritage features rather than 'shoe-horning' in living accommodation.
- 6.3.3 I envisaged the site layout as placement of three, thoroughly considered, individual architectural elements sitting within a 'walled' or tree lined garden as opposed to the previous scheme, which I viewed as one over-developed mass which necessitating the removal of surrounding arboriculture. I took inspiration from the setting and considered placement of the various elements carefully, taking into account where they were each viewed from. I actively sought to set all built forms in their own space and open up views of Oakley Villa whilst keeping existing boundary walls and arboriculture.

Photographs of existing villa



Aerial photograph of villa with existing extensions

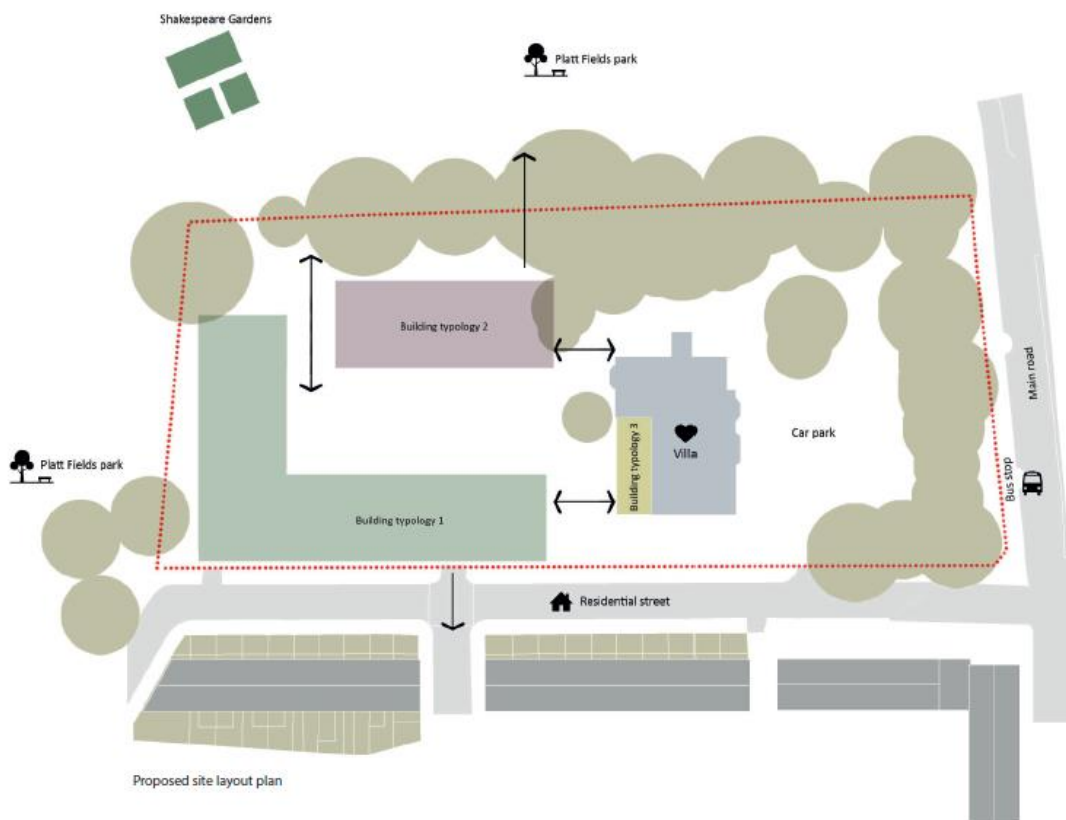


Interiors of the villa

6.4 **Proposed Site Layout**

- 6.5 The proposed site layout is influenced by the layout of both the existing and historic buildings on the site over the years. Historically, the eastern end of the site toward Wilmslow Road has largely remained as building-free, external landscaped space. The proposal maintains this whilst retaining the existing trees and improving on the current hard landscaping with a new proposed landscaping scheme which enhances the approach to the villa from Wilmslow Road. The proposed buildings wrap around the perimeter boundary to the rear of the villa and within the western half of the site.

The proposal splits the site into the following three buildings:



6.6 **Oakley Villa**

- 6.7 As previously set out, the primary vision of the appeal site proposal was to reinstate the existing villa and place it at the heart of the development whilst also restoring its garden setting to the east. The first step in doing this would be to demolish the incongruous twentieth century additions and reinstate the villa as a standalone element with the addition of a coherent, high quality extension taking the form of a contemporary intervention, which draws on the materiality of the existing villa. I agree entirely with the City Council's Residential Quality Guide that good design, 'does not simply restore and retain existing character; it also amplifies and transforms it' (page 27). The guide goes on to state that the 'blend of old and new is essential as part of the natural growth of the city' (page 28). Both these considerations were fundamental in the development of my design for the villa.
- 6.8 The proposed height of the extension follows the height of the stone banding within the façade of the existing villa at first floor level, whilst Slender GRC piers relate back to the slender stone piers within the existing bay windows. Proposed large glazed panels allow for strong connections out to the garden courtyard and the use of carefully selected, high quality materials in the proposed extension, complement and enhance the existing building.
- 6.9 The proposals retained the plan form of the villa and its internal fixtures and fittings by utilising them as amenity spaces for students including a library, games room, study spaces, lounge and a community room for hire by local residents. Utilising the villa in this way allowed me to provide a much greater mix of amenity space than would normally be expected in a development of this type.
- 6.10 Mr Levrant's Heritage statement of December 2020 noted that the proposals would have an overall neutral impact on the villa internally in light of heritage features being retained. Externally he judged there would be an overall minor beneficial impact because the architectural form of the building would be better revealed and the original garden setting of the villa reinstated.



Top two images: View showing existing extension to Oakley Villa

Bottom two Images: Views of Tim Groom Architects proposal showing contemporary extension

6.11 **Building One: Langley Road**

Existing Elevation



- 6.12 The existing elevation diagram shows the office building currently in situ at the Langley Road side of the site. The building is constituted of an unattractive and poor quality collection of patchwork extensions to Oakley Villa added in 1937, the 1950s and 1970s. On Langley Road the outlook is towards an expanse of commercial style, long ribbon windows in continuous bands. The western side of the building hides the gable and chimneys of the villa from view. At the eastern end of Langley Road, the building steps down with solid, monolithic brick elevations. The overall impression is of mismatched additions over time, the site of service yards and bins stores, general disrepair and solid boundary walls.

Proposed Elevation



- 6.13 My first consideration for this area of the site was to place a structure which would re-engage with the existing Langley Road terraces opposite the application site. I was extremely mindful that we were proposing something new that, whatever approach was taken, would be a change for the residents of Langley Road. I wanted to make the change as easy as possible to digest. I judged that to win the design challenge of this area of the site, the proposal would have to be of similar scale, be of better appearance than what was existing, be residential rather than commercial and also be respectful of the villa. I was conscious that, in line with a key aspect of Manchester City Council's Residential Quality Guide, any new residential design needed to contribute to improving the immediate block.
- 6.14 The proposed Langley Road elevation quickly formed in my mind and was the first element of the proposals to feel 'right'. In order to develop the elevation style of the Langley Road terrace, I analysed the style of traditional terraced residences. Key considerations were details such as the composition of bay windows, chimney structure, proportion of glass to solid built elements, arch details and the addition of dormer windows. Those cues were used to develop the design of a contemporary terrace. To quote the City Council's Residential Quality Guide, this contemporary terrace is an example of 'make it Manchester' which means to say that the design approach references a familiar, vernacular style and understands the character and qualities of the City. My belief was that by drawing on these historic

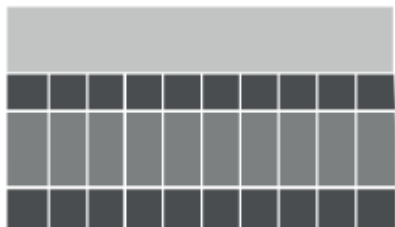
cues in a contemporary way, the familiarity of our design would provide a built form that contributes positively on both an architectural and community level.

- 6.15 The appeal site proposal for this area of the site comprises a four storey 'L' shaped building, vernacular in style, running along Langley Road, which largely follows the footprint of the existing building but seeks to disconnect itself from the villa, thus reinstating it as a standalone element. This also improves permeability through the site.
- 6.16 The four storey building stops short in length eastwards to re-reveal the historic villa, creating a gap between old and new. Langley Road residents will see the newly refurbished villa as well new and extended views into the re-landscaped grounds and park beyond. At the opposite end of the street, carparking is infilled and the new terrace continues up the south west axis. Overall, my proposal is not materially different in length to the existing structure, nor is it materially different in height. The form contains residential scale windows sympathetic with the proportions of other local residential properties. The proposals have one window per room for one person, a window that is narrow and in keeping with the character of the street.
- 6.17 The façade development diagrams for Building 1 give an indication of my approach and desire to draw from the surrounding context of the site.

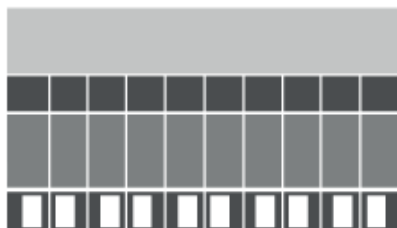
6.18 *Façade Development Diagrams*



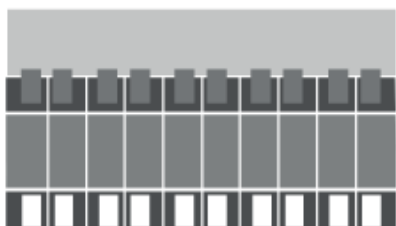
1. Introduce the base and 'crown'



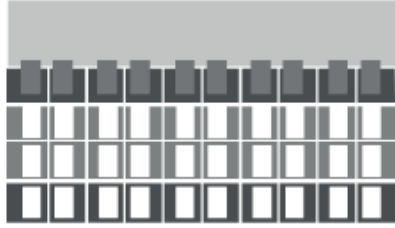
2. Reading the verticality of the surrounding urban environment and introducing roof line



3. Introducing human scale at ground floor



4. Introduction of dormer windows



5. Articulation of mid floors and introduction of horizontal banding

- 6.19 Whilst the proposed design reaches four storeys, the eaves sit lower than parapet level of the existing office building on the site. The predominant design rationale for this building was to analyse the proportions and features of the surrounding terrace housing and replicate these in a contemporary manner whilst still displaying a traditional palette of materials. Features include a pitched roof with dormer windows, traditional brick gables, repeating window bays and brick chimneys. I drew from well-established precedents in the City for inspiration in the design of this contemporary terrace.



Image of existing terraces in the surrounding area

- 6.20 I then set out to add layers of ornamentation and refinement to ensure the design fitted in at a domestic scale. Materiality was a huge consideration for me. I judged that brick would be most appropriate and concluded that red-brick, consistent with terraces in the local area, would be the best choice for the façade. We added light sandstone GRC dressing to lintels and sills to tie in with the villa and traditional details found on Victorian and Edwardian terraces. Careful thought was also given to creating high quality boundary treatments with low boundary walls, hedgerow planting and planter beds at street level to further enhance the domestic character of the development and create a positive effect on the character and appearance of Langley Road.



Image of proposal showing the boundary planting

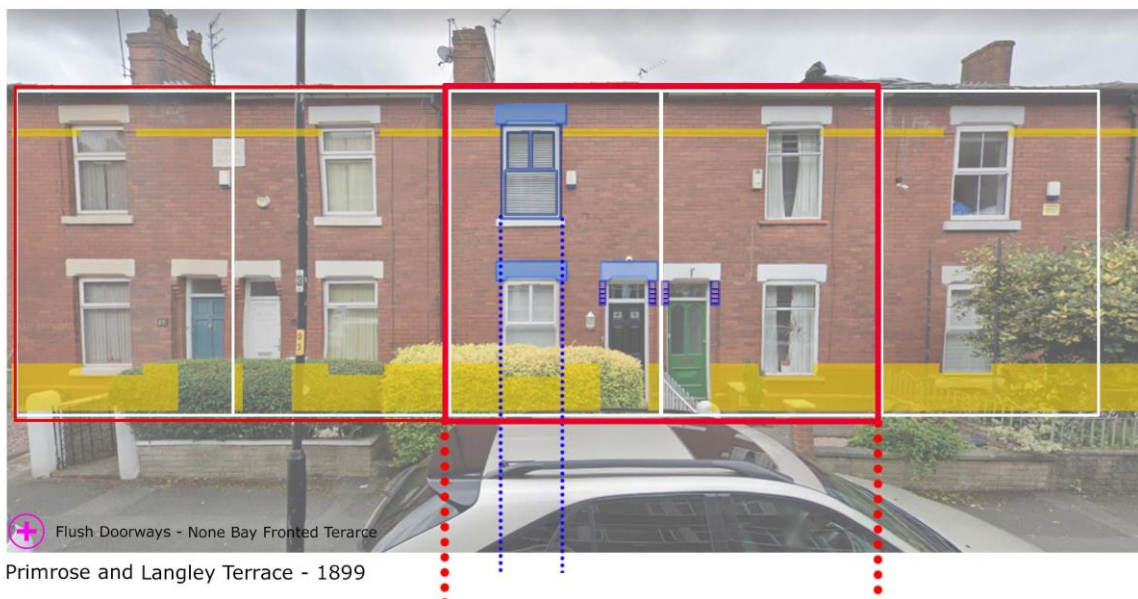
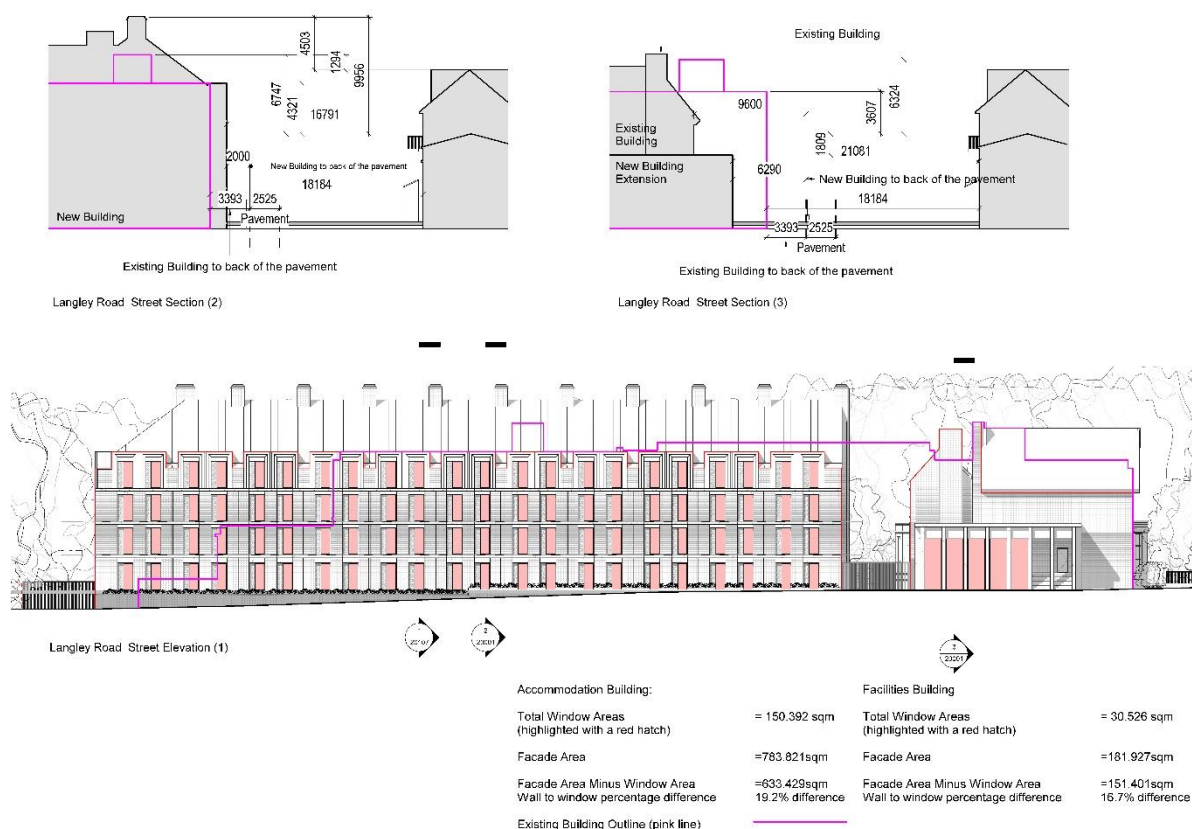


Image of existing terrace housing with planting

- 6.21 In summary, my intention was always to work within the parameters of the existing site structures to guide what was acceptable for the new design. A ‘bottom-up’ approach to the design methodology was key, analysing what was appropriate for the site, as opposed to seeking to squeeze on as much development as possible. The appeal scheme is largely equivalent in scale and massing to the existing structure but has the clear benefit of Oakley villa being revealed as a view from Langley Street. The proposals for Building 1 create a familiar resident to resident street scene as traditionally replicated throughout the local area and Manchester as whole. Overall, the proposal would considerably improve the outlook for the residents along Langley Road when compared the existing building they currently face.



6.22 Building Two: Park Building

6.23 A proposed taller building to the rear of the site stands at ground plus twelve storeys. As explained in paragraph 6.1.13, after analysing the site context, my belief was that the proposals for this area of the site should be different in style from elsewhere on the appeal site. The terraced housing on Langley Road provided a context and the cue to reinstate a familiar, horizontal terraced streetscape in replacement of the existing outdated and vacant commercial building. In contrast, the parkland setting at the north east of the site was a different context and I took cues from the tall buildings in the local skyline, that punctuated the treeline, to design a tall and elegant structure that would act as a local landmark in the same way as those other tall buildings in the vicinity.

6.24 A taller design element in a parkland setting has strong historical and internationally recognised precedent - tall buildings often face over parklands. There are many examples of this globally from the buildings on Park Lane in London which face Hyde Park to the buildings surrounding Central Park in New York City. This context of tall buildings punctuating the tree line was one I viewed as relevant for this particular area of the appeal site.

6.25 This element is 48 metres away from Langley Road, which minimises the potential impact for residents. There are other tall buildings to the north and east of the site plans, as referred to above. As Joanna Ede highlights in her Townscape and Visual Amenity Statement (TVIA), the site is located on a key route into Manchester City Centre which is already lined with a number of taller buildings. The proposed tall element on the appeal site will contribute to this existing pattern. The height of the trees along the site boundary to Platt Fields Park are approximately 20 metres in height. A large portion of the proposal would therefore be screened by these existing trees maintaining the character of key views across the park. Ms Ede further concludes in her TVIA that that tall element on the appeal site would be seen in the background of views as part of the wider urban context, which includes other tall buildings, and it would therefore have little or no effect on local visual amenity of these areas.



Existing and proposed tall buildings in the vicinity of the park



Before and after view of the proposal

- 6.26 As explained, comparable tall buildings in the local area, such as the nineteen storey Owen's Park building on the University of Manchester campus and the eleven storey (consented) new build development at the iconic 'Toast Rack' building site on Wilmslow Road gave cues for this site and I initially envisaged a nine storey structure at this location on the appeal site. The nine storey structure breached the tree line but had a slightly slab-sided appearance due to its proportion. I determined that the local context provided an appropriate cue for a new building to breach the tree line but also considered that any new tall building should be of the highest quality and an excellent proportion as it would inevitably come to act as a local feature or landmark in the skyline. I therefore explored the option of creating a taller building with a smaller footprint for the building. The smaller footprint also allowed for better visual permeability through the site and increased the level of light to the Shakespeare Garden within Platt Fields Park.
- 6.27 As part of my design development, I did consider a nineteen storey proposal which would have been in keeping with the highest building in the local vicinity but felt this was not appropriate because of the possibility of creating an over-bearing impact on views from Langley Road. At ground plus twelve storeys, the building was elegantly proportioned yet virtually obscured from the existing residents of Langley Road
- 6.28 In summary, my analysis pointed to a taller element being appropriate in this location and the thirteen storeys envisioned provided for an elegant proportion which was not out of character with the site's surroundings, including in the context of other tall buildings in the area.
- 6.29 **Summary**
- 6.30 Each building proposed at the appeal site has a distinct character whilst being coherent in the use of proportions and common materials. Key to my design considerations was creating an architectural style that took cues from the surrounding terraces and the existing villa. Overall, the scale of the scheme is

complementary to its surroundings and the scale and character of existing and future (consented) schemes.

7. Robust Design Review

7.1 As set out in Section 3 of this document, in my opinion, a robust design-led approach is crucial in developing a coherent, high-quality design. Once principles were formulated in-house, alongside the design team, I engaged with the University of Manchester (UoM) and Manchester City Council (MCC) to review the scheme and seek their feedback. Further details of pre-planning discussions with MCC and the UoM are referenced in the report of the planning consultant, Stephen Bell of Turley, but in summary I would note the following key discussion points and comments:

7.1.1 From the point of the first pre-application meeting, prior to my appointment, MCC had emphasised the importance of gaining university backing for the development. I was therefore pleased to present my scheme to the UoM and seek their feedback. The UoM supported the proposals and, in particular, responded positively to the inclusion of extensive amenity and green space, which was considered a positive and fairly unique benefit of the design in comparison to other schemes they had been approached with.

7.1.2 Following the meeting with the UoM, I presented my scheme to MCC at a second pre-application meeting. I explained the contextual considerations that had influenced my design and how I had addressed the concerns raised by MCC about the original architect's scheme.

7.1.3 At that meeting, MCC was supportive of my revised design concept and layout and expressed confidence in my firm's ability to deliver a design of the required quality, based on my reputation and past experience of dealing with the City. MCC recognised the heritage and arboriculture benefits of my layout changes and did not suggest any amendments to the scale or massing of the proposals.

7.1.4 I continued to work to review and refine the proposals for the appeal site before the submission of the planning application for the appeal site. Key to the work at this stage was the inclusion of nuanced changes suggested as a part of an independent peer review carried out in October 2020 (further details of which are set out in Section 7.2). Following revisions made as a result of this review, which included adding to the height of Building 2, I presented the scheme again to MCC and, as in the previous pre-application meeting, no concerns were raised generally about the design and it was agreed that the proportion of Building 2 had been improved by taking it taller.

7.1.5 At no stage during pre-application discussions were any concerns raised with my design approach. It was only in March 2021, shortly before the end of the application determination period were any concerns about scale and massing raised in email correspondence. But even in that correspondence there was no specific direction on where or how the design was considered to be unacceptable or needed to be refined.

7.2 Independent Peer Review

7.3 In addition to seeking feedback from key stakeholders, another core part of the design review process is peer review. In line with national planning policy, MCC encourages designers to engage in independent peer reviews to help maintain strong and high levels of quality throughout the design process. For large scale or prominent developments proposed in the City, engagement with the organisation 'Places Matter' is recommended. This is not, however, a mandatory part of the process and, in the case of this development, my firm volunteered to seek a panel review.

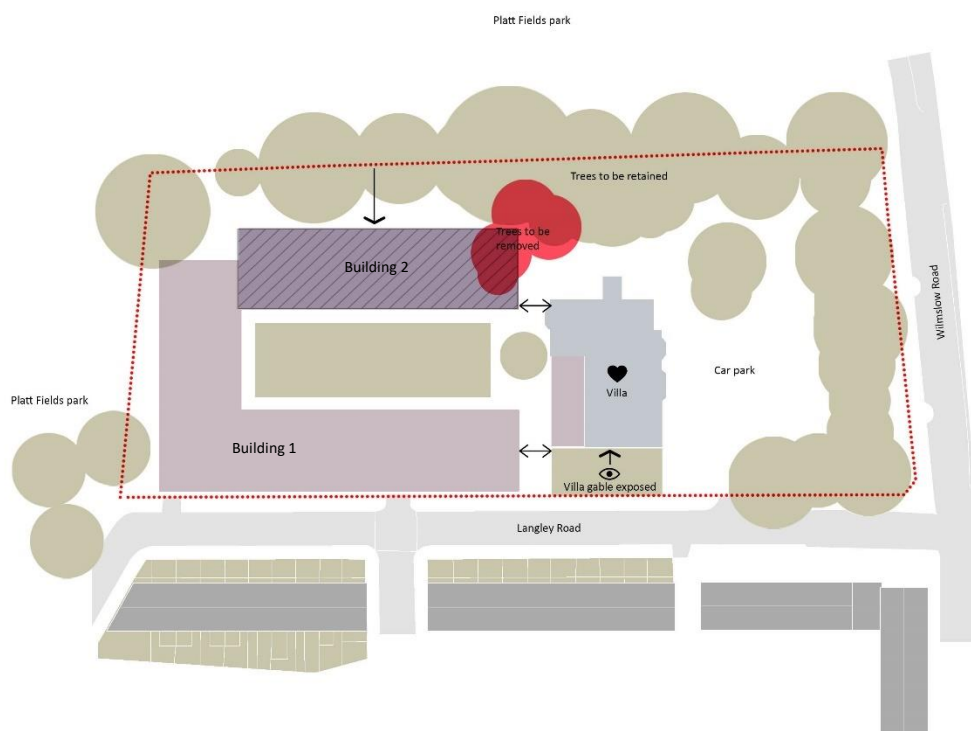
7.4 Places Matter is an independent organisation, hosted by the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA), which is devoted to generating a strong sense of place in living, working and leisure environments. The body brings together an expert design review panel to provide impartial expert advice with the aim of adding value to the development process.

- 7.5 Whilst there is an additional cost associated with engaging Places Matter and even though it is not a mandatory part of the planning submission process, both my practice and Watkin Jones welcomed the opportunity to seek third party expert advice on my proposals on not one, but two occasions. I embrace the design review process and welcome the challenge and rigour of presenting to experts in their respective fields. The panel is usually made up of three experts, which include an architect, urban designer and landscape architect working across the North West region. I believe constructive criticism can have a positive impact of the quality of design proposals and have realised benefits from presenting schemes in the past to Places Matter.
- 7.6 The first review with Places Matter took place in October 2020 and the second review took place in April 2021.

8. Places Matter Review Comments

October 2020

- 8.1.1 The first iteration of my design for the site was presented to the Places Matter panel in October 2020. The panellists involved in the review were Matt Brook (architect), Katy Cardwell (landscape architect) and Tony Wyatt (urban designer / heritage advisor). All three panellists are experienced and respected professionals familiar with the context of developing schemes in the North West region. The sketch below illustrates the proposed development of the site at this time.



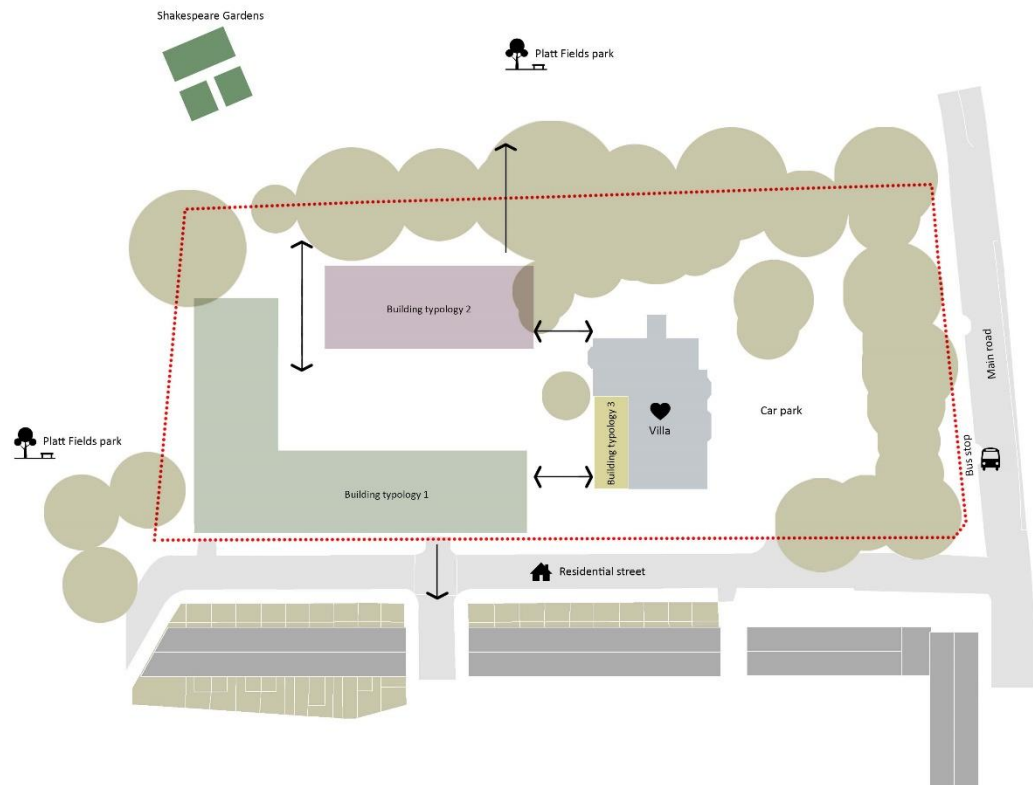
- 8.2 As can be seen from the sketch, it was always intended that the design would comprise of three individual elements – the retention of Oakley Villa set in space as a standalone entity, a four storey terrace to Langley Road (Building 1) and taller component to the rear of the site in the parkland setting (Building 2).
- 8.3 In this first iteration of the design, Building 1 and Building 2 were envisaged as being closely connected with each other, forming almost a 'C' shape together and creating a courtyard behind the villa. Building 2 reached nine storeys in this iteration of the design.
- 8.4 The full report from the panel can be found at Appendix 2, however the key findings and comments of the panel in the October 2020 review were as follows:
- 8.4.1 Overall, the panel was supportive of the general approach of the proposals in principle and accepted the rationale of the approach adopted. Where suggestions for review were made, they were in respect of fine grain, nuanced details which I judged was an overall endorsement of my approach on the project.
- 8.4.2 The panel felt that the approach of using the old villa as an anchor to the scheme was the correct approach. They also supported the old/new hybrid approach of placing contemporary additions alongside the renovated villa. In particular, they stated:

'The Panel supports the retention of the villa and the contemporary terrace approach to the Langley Road elevation.'

- 8.4.3 They highlighted, however, that the 'C' block created by Buildings 1 and 2 could be better imagined. The panel suggested that my firm should explore separating Building 1 as an 'L' shape and setting Building 2 further back from the North West corner of the villa. The panel felt that this would allow for views in and out of the courtyard space to the park beyond.
- 8.4.4 The panel supported the, '*vernacular approach*' to Building 1 and identified that the character of the street on Langley Road would be '*determined at eye level by the roof pitch and dormer elements.*' They asked for the corner junction of Building 1 to be re-considered and the gable end, which gave the impression of a solid horizontal structure, to be re-imagined to better suit an 'L' shape piece.
- 8.4.5 In respect of Building 2, the panel's suggestion was to '*free the block at the back*' and in addition to pulling it further back to the rear of the site, to consider a smaller footprint with a higher number of storeys. The panel envisaged Building 2 as a, '*contemporary and taller element in the tradition of the great modernist buildings*' and suggested that, '*the park setting gives you plenty of space to achieve a taller element.*' I was tasked with considering a stronger base and more defined top for this element to create a better dialogue with the Langley Road roofscape.
- 8.4.6 The panel felt that the right approach was to look for vertical fenestration for the taller element (Building 2) and a horizontal one for the remainder (Building 1 and Oakley Villa).

April 2021

- 8.5 Following the Places Matter review in October 2020, I committed to review the comments of the panel and conduct further analysis and development of the design as part of the usual iterative process. The sketch below illustrates the layout of the scheme following this process:



8.6 In line with the comments from the October review panel, the following refinements were made to the design of the scheme:

- The vernacular style of Building 1 on Langley Road was retained and it was pulled further away from Building 2 to create a standalone 'L' shape. The corner junction of Building 1 was refined to provide for a consistent façade continuing from the Langley Road side and onto the return of the building at the South East side of the site.
- Building 2 was set further to the North West of the site with a smaller footprint and envisaged as 13 storeys.
- Analysis of local context and materiality determined that Building 1 should be predominantly of red-brick construction. For the taller element (Building 2), I chose a construction of brick and GRC for the façade. The brick provided consistency with the rest of the site but I determined that a paler colour, similar to the colour palette of the stone detailing on the villa, would provide a contrast which distinguished Building 2 from the other elements. GRC detailing at the plinth added weight to the lower structure and refined detailing to the top two floors.
- Both Building 1 and Building 2 were set further from Oakley Villa to provide even more space for this anchor building to be appreciated in its own right.

8.7 The updated design was submitted to Places Matter in April 2021, during the planning application determination period. At this second review meeting, the panel, which was constituted of the same three members as the first review in October 2020, made no further suggestions on refinement and

was very supportive of my approach. The full report from the panel can be found at Appendix 3, however, the key comments made by the panel were as follows:

'This is a controlled, rational and well-mannered scheme. You have split out the buildings and created a more regular street frontage to Langley Road. There are welcome moves in relation to pulling the tower away from the villa and the tower itself is of better proportions, being slightly taller, it now feels right.'

'In respect of the tower the Panel was very clear that there is no need to pretend that 'it isn't there' and that in this respect the Panel supports breaching the tree line. This is all part of the drama of an urban park, which should be characterised by views of the surrounding developments which in turn overlook it. This building has a dynamic form and is good enough to merit being seen.'

'In summary, the Panel supports this scheme in terms of building heights, scale and mass. The changes which you have introduced have responded well to the Panel's previous comments'

- 8.8 I regarded their comments as validation of the appropriateness of my design approach from informed professionals in the field of architecture and design principally in the City of Manchester. It was a recognition that the scheme produced was consistent with the strictures of national and local policy, and of the highest quality.

9 Reasons for Refusal

This evidence is concerned with the reasons for refusal associated with the architectural design of the development. These relate to two key areas and my summary comments in support of the final scheme design is as follows:

- 9.1 *Reason 3: The scale and massing of the proposed development in close proximity to lower scale residential buildings and the non-designated heritage asset of Oakley House, would give rise to an overbearing visual impact and provide a significant urbanising effect on the edge of Platt Fields Park. It would form an over-dominant feature within the street scene and area, which would have a detrimental effect on visual amenity and character of the area. It is therefore considered to be contrary to policies SP1, EN1, EN2, EN3 and DM1 of the Manchester Core Strategy, guidance contained in the Guide to Development in Manchester Supplementary Planning Document and Guidance and the NPPF.*

The rationale for the design ethos of the architectural elements of the site have been set out in full earlier in the Hearing Statement but, in summary, I consider Reason for Refusal 3 to be unjustified on the following grounds:

- 9.1.1 The Manchester Core Strategy (2021), in its Policy H12 relating to purpose built student accommodation, sets a criteria that high density developments should be sited in locations compatible with existing developments. It is clear that there is appropriate context for our proposals in respect of the appeal site based on existing and approved precedents in the local area for tall buildings. These include the existing nineteen storey Owens Park tower (student accommodation) built in the 1960s, the modernist eight storey 'Toast Rack' building and the eleven storey consented Hollings Building on Wilmslow Road (see section 6.4.3). As Joanna Ede concludes in her Townscape and Visual Amenity Statement, the development 'would contribute to an existing pattern of taller landmark buildings along the Wilmslow Road.'
- 9.1.2 There are national and global precedents for tall buildings in a parkland setting (see section 6.4.3). Such settings often provide appropriate context for taller buildings or dense developments because the presence of mature trees has the effect of softening the appearance of built form thereby reducing their impact.
- 9.1.3 The provision of high quality, well designed places is a key consideration of The Manchester Core Strategy (2021) at SP1 regarding spatial planning. My design for this scheme went through a rigorous design review process and was validated by an independent panel of expert professionals experienced in delivering schemes throughout the North West of England. They in fact, recommended and supported the increase in height of Building 2 from nine to thirteen storeys. It is both their opinion and mine that the proposed development is appropriate for the context of this site (see Section 8).
- 9.1.4 Stephen Levrant of Heritage Architecture Ltd in his Heritage Statement judged that the visual conjunction between the villa and Building 2 would not compromise the heritage asset and that my proposal to restore the villa's garden setting to the east of the site constituted an enhancement. Overall his assessment was that overall the proposals would be a benefit to the heritage asset on the site.
- 9.1.5 The taller element of my design (Building 2) is set 48 metres from the low rise residential buildings on Langley Road and, as Joanna Ede's TVIA demonstrates, views of the taller element from Langley Road are almost entirely screened with only the very top just appearing behind the contemporary terrace on the appeal site.



New Building B relationship to terrace housing

- 9.1.6 In terms of the design at the Langley Road side of the site (Building 1), the scale and massing of this proposal is in line with the existing structure and the proposed residential design is more in-keeping with the local area than the mismatched and unattractive commercial buildings that are currently in situ (see Section 6.4.2).
- 9.2 *Reason 6: The windows within the south facing elevation of the proposed development would result in overlooking over a short distance to the living room windows of existing residential properties on Langley Road to the detriment of the reasonable amenity and privacy of the occupiers. As such the proposal is contrary to policies SP1, DM1 and H12 of the Core Strategy.*

The rationale for the design ethos of the architectural elements of the site have been set out in full earlier in the Hearing Statement but, in summary, I consider Reason for Refusal 6 to be unjustified on the following grounds:

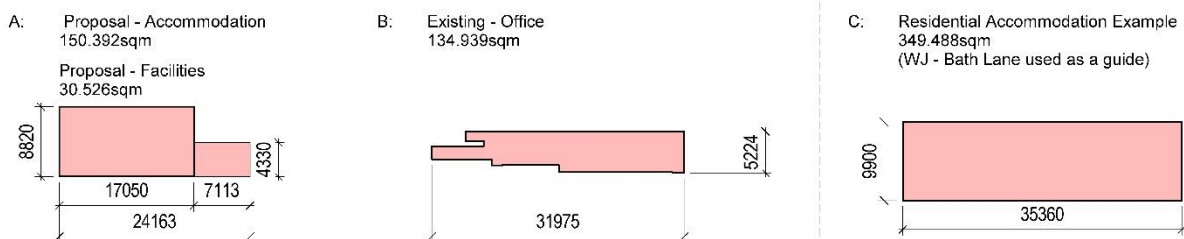
- 9.2.1 There are long, commercial style ribbon windows in the office building currently in situ on Langley Road, which directly face the residential buildings opposite. My proposal seeks to replace the outdated office structure, which currently has windows facing the street, with a high quality residential scheme, that similar to its predecessor, will have glazing on the Langley Road elevation in my proposal. There may be more windows to the western end of the site, with some at a slightly higher level, however there are fewer windows at the eastern end of the site where the existing villa is revealed. The overlooking opportunities are therefore not materially different and there still exists a good degree of separation in-keeping with the local area. In essence, there is no fundamental difference in overlooking terms about replacing a building that has windows with a new building that also has windows on the same elevation.
- 9.2.2 The large ribbon windows of the existing office building currently offer a wide uninterrupted splayed view of the residential properties on Langley Road. Further, the multi-occupancy nature of the office means there is the possibility of multiple people being able to stand at any of these large windows and observe the wide splay of the residential streetscape. In contrast, the appeal site proposals are for individual residences housing just one person with narrow glazing which does not offer a wide splayed view and therefore limits overlooking opportunities in a way that the current office building does not.



Photograph of existing ribbon windows that overlook existing terrace houses

- 9.2.3 The existing site comprised office accommodation and 180 people were employed therein, many of whom might have had the opportunity to look out from Langley Road elevation. The proposed development provides accommodation for a much lower number, only 66 individuals, along this elevation. Although the change in use from office to student residential accommodation may provide for the increased likelihood of occupants looking out of their windows in the evening, this is counter balanced by the likely reduced occupancy during the day and the fact that there will be no occupancy during university holidays, which extend to around 10 weeks per year. I would also note that a number of the existing residential properties on Langley Road are occupied by students and the development is therefore of a more compatible character than the existing office building.

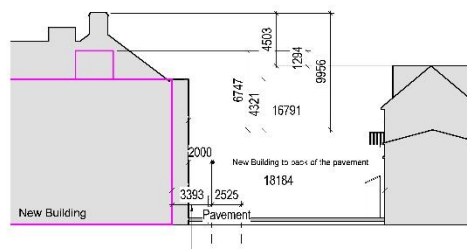
Window Areas / Sizes as a collective - Langley Road



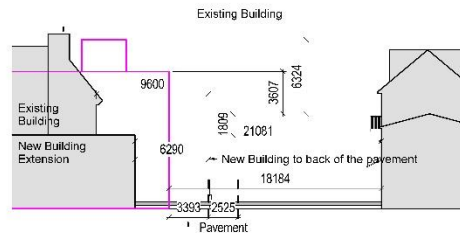
Diagrammatic representation of glazed areas showing proposed, existing and residential alternative

- 9.2.5 I carefully considered separation distances between the existing residences on Langley Road and the proposed contemporary terrace in the development of the design proposals. My firm's analysis of historic window interface distances in the established dense street patterns around the vicinity of Langley Road suggested that a separation distance of 13-15 metres was not unusual. Ms Ede's TVIA explores typical separation distances between residential properties in the local area (see Section 5.11) and her findings support my own analysis.
- 9.2.6 Whilst the Manchester Residential Quality Guidance (2017) suggests that whilst a separation distance of 20 metres should be the norm for new developments, it also acknowledges that this is restrictive and that a reduction might be appropriate where facing uses are compatible and residents can still enjoy a sense of space and daylight.
- 9.2.7 My proposals for Langley Road are at 16.8 metres which is entirely comparable with local precedent and, in fact, greater than several examples analysed.





Langley Road Street Section (2)



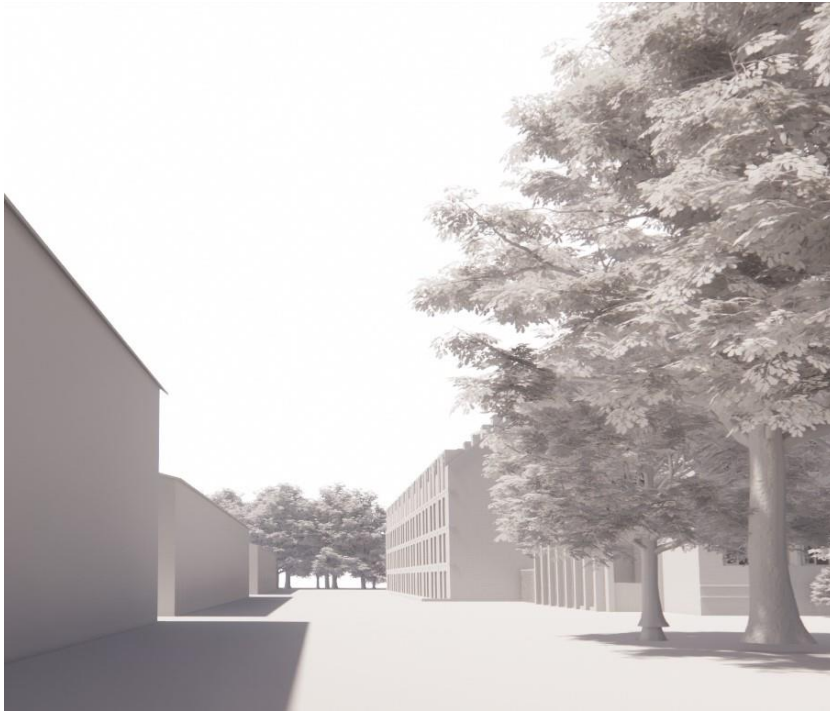
Langley Road Street Section (3)



Langley Road Street Elevation (1)

Accommodation Building:		Facilities Building	
Total Window Areas (highlighted with a red hatch)	= 150.392 sqm	Total Window Areas (highlighted with a red hatch)	= 30.526 sqm
Facade Area	=783.821sqm	Facade Area	=181.927sqm
Facade Area Minus Window Area	=633.429sqm	Facade Area Minus Window Area	=151.401sqm
Wall to window percentage difference	19.2% difference	Wall to window percentage difference	16.7% difference
Existing Building Outline (pink line)			

9.2.7 I acknowledge that, despite the 16.8 metre being entirely appropriate for the context of residential buildings facing each other (for the reasons set out in the previous three paragraphs), there is the issue in the case of the appeal site that the proposed contemporary terrace reaches four storeys whereas the existing terraces reach two storeys. However, for the reasons set out in paragraph 9.2.3, I judge that the effect on overlooking on privacy and amenity would not be material. The existing residents would also benefit from the greater visual amenity of the new proposals in comparison with the existing office structure plus the added benefit of better permeability through the site together with increased views of Oakley Villa. It is also important to remember that the eaves height of the appeal site proposals on the Langley Road side of the site is lower than the parapet height of the existing commercial office building currently in situ. The image gives an indication of the view and distance between the existing Langley Road residences and the proposed development:



9.2.8 My design rationale for the scale of a new development on Langley Road is not at odds with other consented development within Manchester. There are examples of contemporary schemes with separation distances of less than 16 metres, both built and approved by Manchester City Council, where the where the number of storeys in a new development exceeds the number of storeys in adjacent/opposite existing structures. In each case the interface between properties and amenity of residents in both the existing and new build has clearly been found to be acceptable, just as I consider the arrangement associated with the proposals to be acceptable and respectful of residential amenity and privacy. Four such schemes are as follows:

Fallowfield

Lancross Road

Existing storeys: 2

Proposed storeys:

4

Distance: 10.9m



Hulme

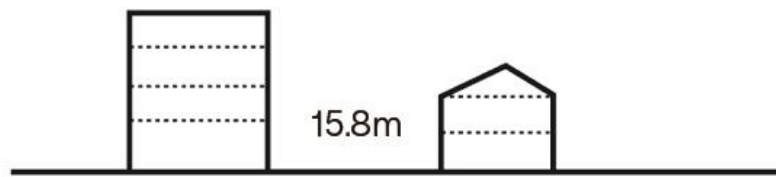
Leaf Street

Existing storeys: 2

Proposed storeys: 3-4

3-4

Distance: 15.8m



Rusholme

Heald Grove

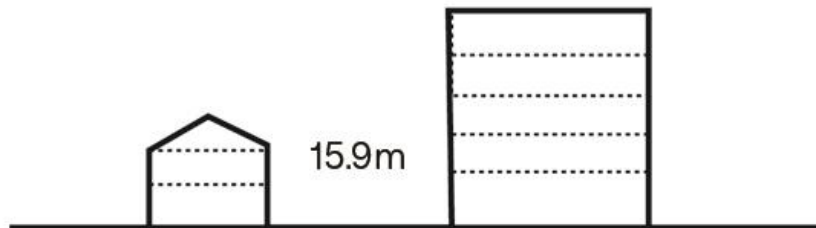
Existing Storeys: 2-4

2-4

Proposed Storeys: 3-5

3-5

Distance: 15.9m



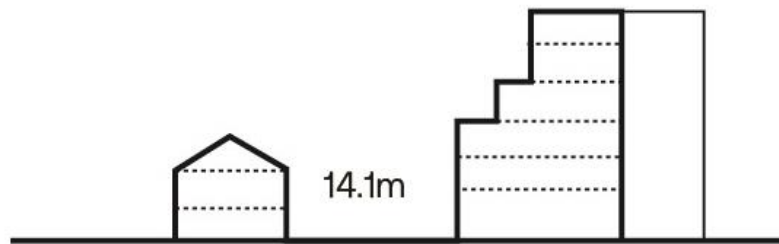
Rusholme

Rusholme Place

Existing storeys: 2

Proposed storeys: 3-6

Distance: 14.1m



I have appended a set of drawings that explains that the interface distances between the existing building and proposed development are not materially different from each other.

Appendix 4 - The Drawing List is as follows (Drawing Number then Title)

- 1093-TGA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-20000 - *Window Alignment Proposed*
- 1093-TGA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-20001 - *GA Elevation A Section 23 - Appeal*
- 1093-TGA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-20102 - *Window Alignment Existing*
- 1093-TGA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-20103 - *GA Elevation A - Resi Option*
- 1093-TGA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-20104 - *Windows Areas*
- 1093-TGA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-20105 - *Existing and Proposed Facade Areas*
- 1093-TGA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-20106 - *Surrounding Houses – Overlooking*
- 1093-TGA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-20107 - *Building Cross Section*
- 1093-TGA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-20108 - *Surrounding Houses - Overlooking Building B to Terraces*

10. Summary & Conclusions

- 10.1 Building 1, on the Langley Road side of the proposed development, is negligibly different to the current building in terms of, height, scale, mass and location. The proposals are contextual in architectural detail in relation to the wider scale residential area in a way that the existing office building is not and it offers a far better architectural outlook for the Langley Road residents than the current outdated office building. In addition, the design proposals grant appropriate prominence to Oakley Villa as a heritage asset and allow it to be presented to the street, having the added benefit of reducing bulk at the eastern edge of Langley Road.
- 10.2 One of the criteria for new purpose built student accommodation set out in the Manchester Core Strategy (2021) is that there should be positive regeneration benefits to any proposals another is that proposals should contribute to the reuse of buildings with heritage value. The repurposing of

brownfield land in respect an office site which lies vacant and is no longer fit for purpose together with the provision of a sustainable and viable future for a heritage asset are key regeneration benefits of the appeal site scheme.

- 10.3 All elements of the scheme (Building 1, Building 2 and the proposals for Oakley Villa) were subject to a robust design review process and received validation from an independent and respected design review panel thereby demonstrating the high quality nature of the proposals and their appropriateness of context. In terms of Building 2 in particular, the panel supported the proposal for a taller element at that site location and it was identified that there are strong precedents for taller buildings in a parkland setting both globally and within the locality of this site.
- 10.4 The Manchester City Council Residential Quality Guide (March 2017) itself highlights the need to balance concerns about overlooking with the need to, 'offer scope for different development options to come forward in response to a site's context' and that in this respect, developments, 'should be influenced by the prevailing street pattern' (see pages 111 & 116). Such contextual and local precedent considerations were fundamental in the development of my design and concerns were not raised by Manchester City Council regarding overlooking when the scheme was presented at pre-application stage.
- 10.5 In respect of Building 1, the building line and height at eaves are all within negligible tolerances of the existing building. Whilst there is a relatively small increase in overall glazing in relation to Building 1, the windows are narrower and provide for a smaller visual splay. The proposed elevation on Langley Rd will house 66 individuals where the office building accommodated around 180 staff. Whilst there may be more opportunities for overlooking in the evening and as a result of adding a fourth storey, this is counterbalanced by factors such as unoccupied terms times, reduction in built form at the eastern edge of Langley Road and a development which has a character more in-keeping with the properties it faces. In addition, the proposed window interface distances of 16.8m are widely comparable with historic and contemporary precedent in the local area and there are myriad examples in Manchester of residential buildings facing residential buildings, including in similar arrangements whereby the position of proposed windows is somewhat higher than opposing windows. Those arrangements have been deemed acceptable, and I believe the arrangement is acceptable in this case, thereby maintaining good privacy levels for both existing and new residents.
- 10.6 In respect of Building 2, the building is set 48m from the low rise residential properties on Langley Road and neither overlooking nor overbearing issues should therefore be a consideration in respect of this element.
- 10.7 It is my belief that the scheme recognises the contextual significance that makes Manchester special and respects its industrial legacy whilst providing a positive and long-lasting contemporary addition to a thriving city.
- 10.8 For the reasons set out above, I do not consider there are justified reasons for withholding planning permission for this scheme.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Tim Groom Architects Competition & Awards Overview

Appendix 2: Places Matter Report – October 2020

Appendix 3: Place Matter Report – April 2021

Appendix 4: Drawings

Appendix 1: Tim Groom Architects Competition & Awards Overview

Appeal by Watkin Jones Group reference 129020/FO/2020
Oakley, 188 Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield, Manchester M14 6LJ

Hearing Statement – Architecture

Appendix 1

Tim Groom Architects – Competition & Awards Overview

Manchester Society of Architects Awards	Year	Status
Commercial building of the year – Baring St	2021	Winner
Community building of the year – Mike Godfrey Sports Centre	2021	Shortlisted
One off house of the year – St John’s St	2021	Shortlisted
Multi-residential development of the year – Oldham St	2019	Winner
Community building of the year – Marlborough Primary School	2018	Winner
President’s Awards – Primus Place	2016	Winner
Brick Development Association – National Brick Awards		
Best large UK housing development of the year – Excelsior Works	2021	Winner
Best large UK Housing development of the year – Blossom St	2021	Shortlisted

Appendix 2: Places Matter Report – October 2020

PlacesMatter

Design Review Report USDAW, Fallowfield

28 October 2020

USDAW, Fallowfield Manchester

Reference: PM_2020_050

Report of the Design Review Panel

Date of Review:	23 October 2020
Location:	Remote Design Review
Site Visit:	The Panel used 3D digital maps and 'street view'.
Design Lead:	Tim Groom Architects with Layer, for Watkin Jones

Findings

Thank you for bringing this scheme to Places Matter Remote Design Review. Due to Covid-19, this review was undertaken in 'remote' format.

There is a real sense that there is "a good scheme here struggling to get out". The Panel supports the retention of the villa and the contemporary terrace approach to the Langley Road elevation.

The provision of generous amounts of green space is to be welcomed, but you need to ensure each element has a clear functional purpose, including perhaps outdoor working.

More strategic site analysis and contextual drawings are needed to explore the correct mass and distribution of the elements. A simpler, tripartite approach is needed that unifies all of the new buildings.

The Langley Road element should be wrapped around to the park as single 'L' shaped contemporary terrace with a dual pitched roof and fully gabled, to resolve the very awkward junction as currently presented.

The taller element needs to be pulled back from the villa and have a more elegant proportion. This can go higher than shown, as it is already above the tree line, but it needs to have a stronger base and a defined top, to create a better dialogue with expressed roofscape on the Langley Road block.

Background

The site is the existing USDAW head office complex on Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield, Manchester. This consists of the original villa c.1840 and the C20th 3-storey office additions to Langley Road. The site is bounded on two sides by Platt Fields Park, with a bank of splendid mature trees to the North.

The proposal is for a student accommodation scheme of some 412-rooms in a 'C' shaped new build to the rear of the retained and restored villa acting as a central hub. The new blocks range in height from four to nine storeys, with extensive green space to the frontage and in a courtyard behind the villa.

Design Review

The Panel thanked you for your presentation. This is a great site with generous spaces and a park setting, which has so much to offer. The old villa as an anchor to the scheme, set well back from Wilmslow Road as it is, allows for an old/new hybrid approach which could make the scheme a distinctive market offer.

Two basic elements of the site strategy were felt to be sound - the retained villa and the four-storey contemporary terrace to Langley Road. The interiors of the villa were thought to be more impressive than the rather neutered and underwhelming appearance of the exterior though. The set back of the blocks to enable to the retention of the park trees on the Northern boundary was fully supported and this will add character to the scheme.

You were asked to provide some strategic site sections to show the true height of the trees and the width of the street scene on Langley Road. It was felt that the elevation to Langley Road might benefit from being set back a little further, even by 1m and you were asked to explore that and illustrate it.

The 'C' block approach was not felt to be working though, as the taller element seems "hunched a little in the shoulder" and would benefit from being taller to give it a better proportion. You were also asked to explore separating it from the remaining part of the block, which might be better as an 'L' shape. The two have no internal connections, so this should be possible. A separation would also allow for views in and out of the courtyard space to the park beyond and avoid this feeling a little too tight.

The appearance and detailing of the taller block was felt to be too “chunky” and would be better set further back from the North West corner of the villa. You were also asked to clearly demonstrate how the façade ideas relate to local typologies and to show how it beds itself in to the locale.

The Langley Road elevation feels plausible, with its contemporary chimneys, but the presentation showed a gable at the Eastern end adjacent to the villa, which on further interrogation is not how the block will appear, as it in fact has an extra storey to the courtyard side. The Platts Field Park view of the West facing block was felt to be less convincing and the junction between this and the Langley Road very awkward as it transitions from a mono-pitch roof to a flat roof. This really does “give the game away” and simply does not work and neither does the higher height to the courtyard.

Overall the landscape is achieving a generous level of space and this was supported, but the courtyard does feel too hidden and there was some uncertainty as to the functionality of some of the spaces. Quality external spaces will be of high value in a post-Covid world, so you were asked to give them all real purpose and functional thought, including perhaps the ability to encourage outdoor working.

Your landscape precedent images really capture what the place will feel like, but the Panel questioned whether some areas, for example the herbaceous planting, would be too high maintenance for this type of development and might benefit from being more formal to deal with the volume of people using the spaces.

The scheme needs to be drawn in a much wider context and shown with long site sections. Together, these will help you to define the correct massing and scale of each element. Optioneering was missing from the presentation, both for scale and mass and finer details, as well as how the typologies can be best brought together to form a coherent composition.

You were asked to “free the block at the back” and do more analysis to see how high this can go, with a smaller footprint, to accommodate the necessary quantum of development. This is not just a numbers game though and should work harder to create a better proportion and look at a vertical fenestration for the taller elements and a horizontal one for the remainder. The vernacular approach to Langley Road is supported in principle, but as presented the overall impression is

that this is just a “stage set” and you need to find a way to bring the whole together more convincingly and in a more honest manner.

There is a real sense that there is “a good scheme here struggling to get out”. In discussion you were asked to seek and approach that has three key simple elements – the retained villa; a dual pitched and fully gabled ‘L’ shaped contemporary terrace on Langley Road, wrapping around to the West; and, a contemporary and taller element, in the tradition of the great modernist buildings, set further back from the villa. This should form the basis of your narrative and link to the ‘story’ of what the landscape is trying to achieve and the functions that it is delivering.

The Panel was clear that as you have broken the tree line, then the taller element needs to have a stronger base and a defined top. The park setting gives you plenty of space to achieve a taller element, but it needs to have more substance and be supported by analysis as to why it has reached the chosen height and to so justify this.

The character of the street on Langley Road will be determined at eye level by the roof pitch and dormer elements. The taller element behind, if it went up to 11 or 12 storeys, will not be visible at eye level, but the South-West corner of the lower block will be prominent, so you must resolve the junction at this point.

The wider park setting really should be having some influence on the design and you need to drawing this context as part of your submission. This is not just about the immediately adjacent trees, important though they are, but should also include the adjacent public footpath, key views in and out from the site, how you capture these and how you have considered any shading issues on the wider park from the taller elements.

The Panel thanked you for bringing this scheme to Places Matter Design Review and for your constructive response to participating in the ‘remote’ format. We have the option for Desk Review once you have refined your proposition and the discussions with the Planning Authority are concluded on this current proposal.

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Appendix 3: Place Matter Report – April 2021

PlacesMatter

Design Review Report USDAW, Fallowfield

27 April 2021

USDAW, Fallowfield Manchester

Reference: PM_2021_011

Report of the Design Review Panel

Date of Review:	20 April 2021
Location:	Remote Design Review
Site Visit:	The Panel used 3D digital maps and 'street view'.
Design Lead:	Tim Groom with Layer, for Watkin Jones

Findings

Thank you for bringing this scheme back to Places Matter Remote Design Review and for the very clear presentation of your scheme. Due to Covid 19 this review was undertaken in 'remote' format.

The Panel supports this scheme in terms of building heights, scale and mass. The changes which you have introduced have responded well to the Panel's previous comments.

You need to demonstrate your thinking in relation to the landscape proposition better, through a clear narrative and to strive to make sure that the very generous space has a defined set of functional uses.

Background

The site is the existing USDAW head office complex on Wilmslow Road, Fallowfield, Manchester. This consists of the original villa c.1840 and the C20th 3-storey office additions to Langley Road. The site is bounded on two sides by Platt Fields Park, with a bank of splendid mature trees to the North.

This is the second Design Review for this scheme and this report should be read in conjunction with the one from October 2020, reference PM_2020_050.

Design Review

The Panel thanked you for your very clear presentation and for referencing how you had responded to the previous Design Review.

From a strategic urban design and heritage context everything appears to be “going in the correct direction”. This is a controlled, rational and well-mannered scheme. You have split out the buildings and created a more regular street frontage to Langley Road. There are welcome moves in relation to pulling the tower away from the villa and the tower itself is of better proportions, being slightly taller, it now feels right.

In respect of the tower the Panel was very clear that there is no need to pretend that “it isn’t there” and that in this respect the Panel supports breaching the tree line. This is all part of the drama of an urban park, which should be characterised by views of the surrounding developments which in turn overlook it. This building has a dynamic form and is good enough to merit being seen.

The Panel debated the material strategy with you. On balance this was felt to make sense and is rational with references to its context – there is no need for the tower to take up a red brick colour. You were asked though to look at giving the top two floors a more definition in relation to the lower floors of the building. As presented, this is still too subtle.

The larger than average size of the rooms were welcomed, but you were asked to see if you could add further windows in the gable ends of the common rooms. The focus for this should be amenity enhancement rather than just pure aesthetics.

The Panel felt that the Landscape design needs more narrative. It should be able to answer a series of key questions: where has the design come from? what are the key drivers? how do you envisage people using the space? A series of key views in and out of the development are needed to show more clearly how the site has responded to the park and what the sense of place and character you are trying to achieve is.

Some of this thinking may already be there but it needs explaining better through a few drawings and sections. It would be good to see a zonal plan for the site in terms of landscape functions. Some site sections would also be useful, particularly in relation to the boundary with the Park and you were asked to explore whether you might introduce some visual openings in the boundary wall to allow for passive surveillance through creating 'windows on the park'.

The planting palette looks attractive and the look and feel of the courtyard suggested in the visuals looks good. You were asked again to introduce external working environment for the students. Whilst there is mention of water attenuation and SUDs, more detail on this and how it would work, as well more details of the hard materials palette are still needed. Overall, you were asked to ensure that the very generous external space, which will be a key selling point for this scheme, has clearly delineated functional areas.

In summary, the Panel supports this scheme in terms of building heights, scale and mass. The changes which you have introduced have responded well to the Panel's previous comments.

You need to demonstrate your thinking in relation to the landscape proposition better, through a clear narrative and to strive to make sure that the very generous space has a defined set of functional uses.

The Panel thanked you for bringing this scheme to Places Matter Design Review and for your constructive response to participating in the 'remote' format. We have the option for Desk Review once you have refined your proposition and the discussions with the Planning Authority are concluded on this current proposal.

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Appendix 4: Drawings

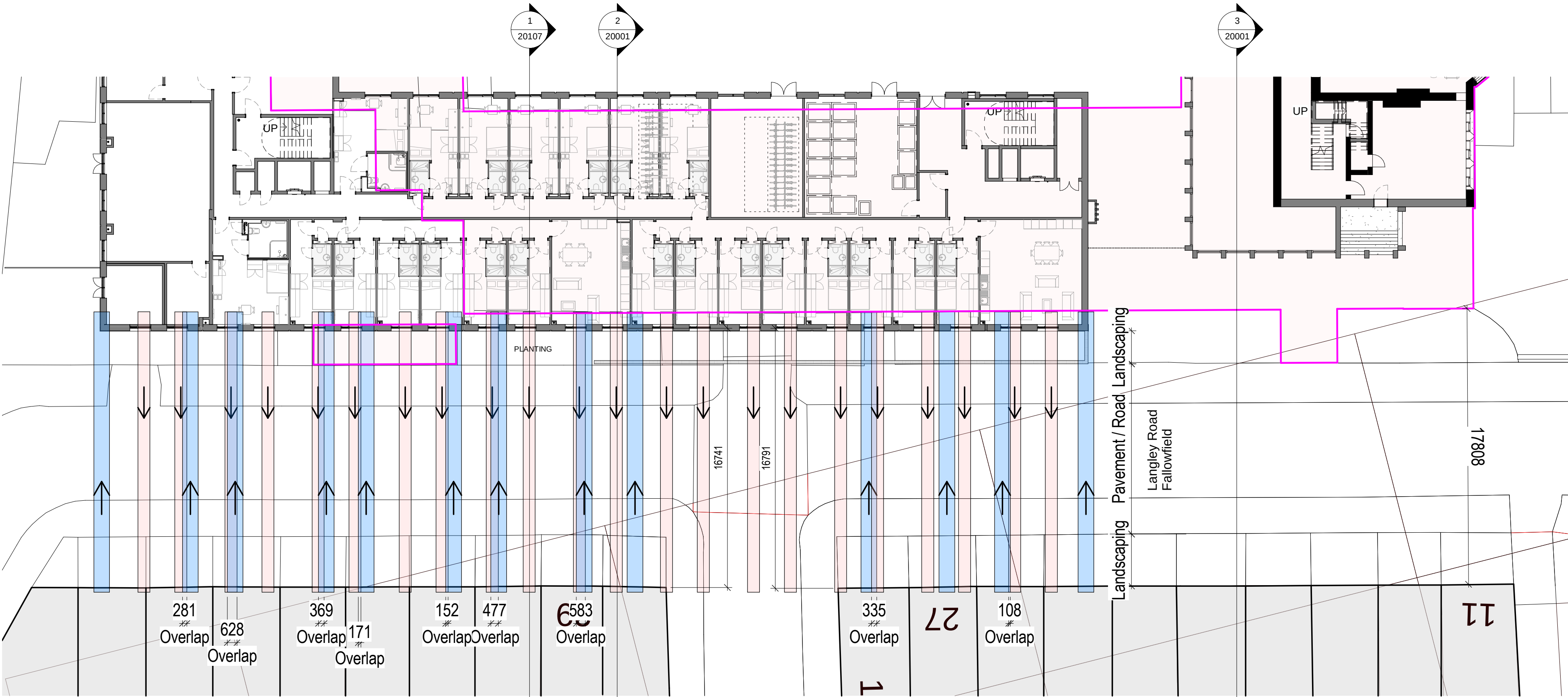


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Rev	Description	Date	By
-----	-------------	------	----



Langley Road Terrace Window Alignment
Proposed Window Alignment
Existing Building Outline

Client
Watkin Jones Group Ltd

Project
188 Wimslow
Road_Manchester

Title
Window Alignment
Proposed
Status
Information

Project number	Date
1093	10/05/21

Drawn by	Checked by
MP	MP

Scale	Revision
1 : 200@A2	

Drawing No.
1093-TGA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-20000

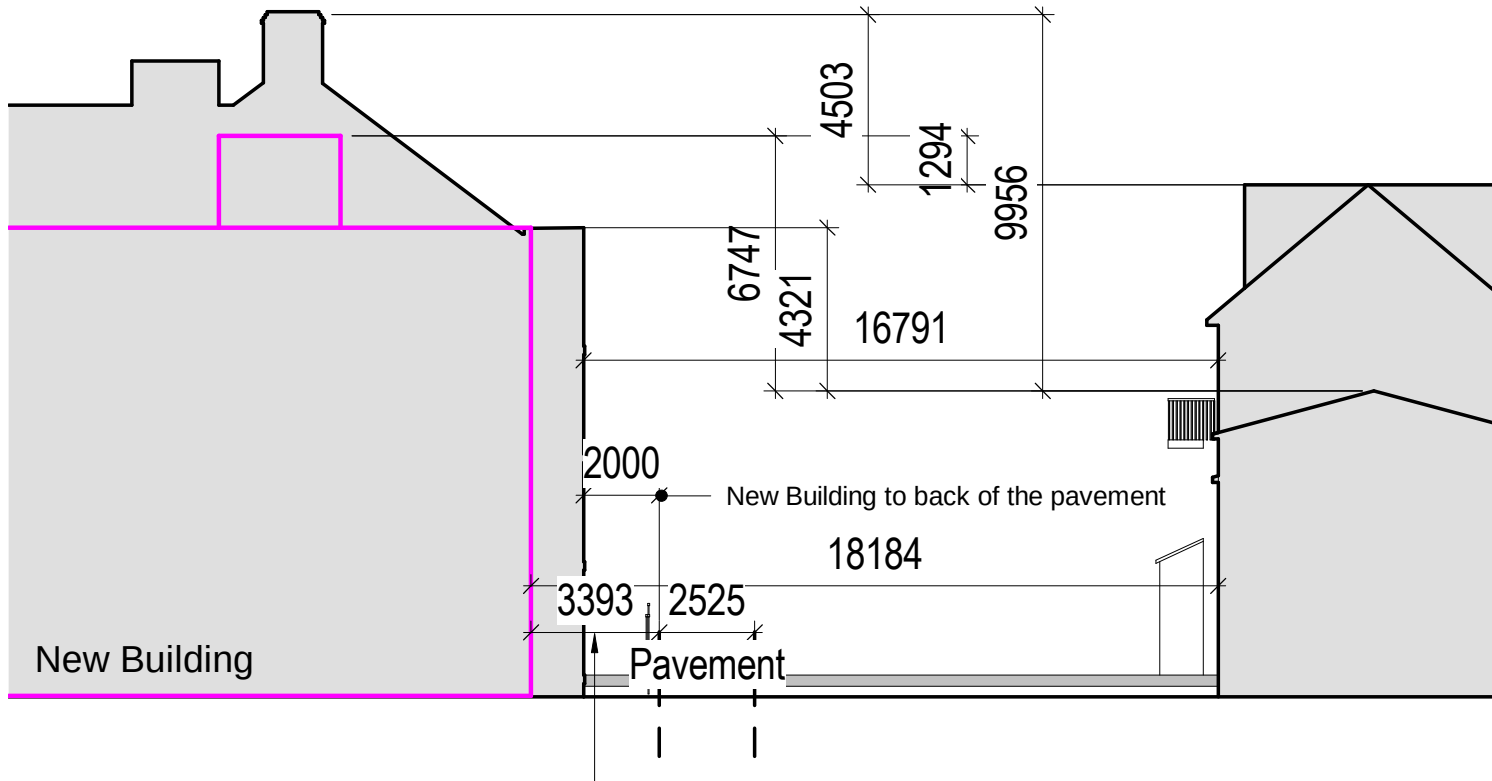


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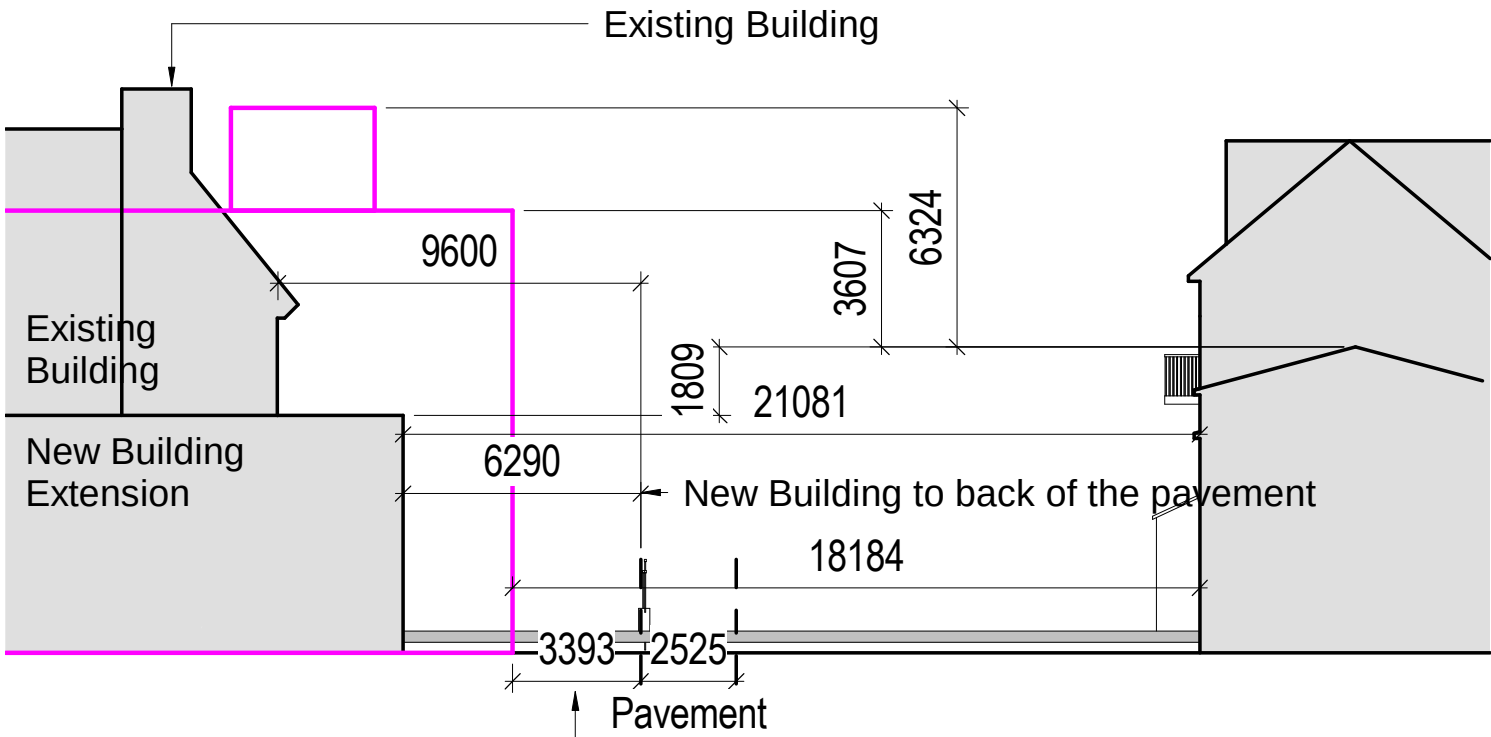
Dimensioning
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Rev	Description	Date	By
A	Additional Dimensions Added	04.02.22	MP
B	Additional Dimensions Added	04.02.22	MP



Existing Building to back of the pavement

Langley Road Street Section (2)



Existing Building to back of the pavement

Langley Road Street Section (3)



Langley Road Street Elevation (1)

Accommodation Building:

Total Window Areas (highlighted with a red hatch)	= 150.392 sqm
Facade Area	=783.821sqm
Facade Area Minus Window Area	=633.429sqm
Wall to window percentage difference	19.2% difference

Existing Building Outline (pink line)

Facilities Building

Total Window Areas (highlighted with a red hatch)	= 30.526 sqm
Facade Area	=181.927sqm
Facade Area Minus Window Area	=151.401sqm
Wall to window percentage difference	16.7% difference

Client
Watkin Jones Group Ltd

Project
188 Wimslow Road_Manchester

Title
GA Elevation A / Section 2/3 - Appeal

Status
Information

Project number
1093

Date
10/05/21

Drawn by
MP

Checked by
MP

Scale
1 : 200@A2

Revision
B

Drawing No.
1093-TGA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-20001

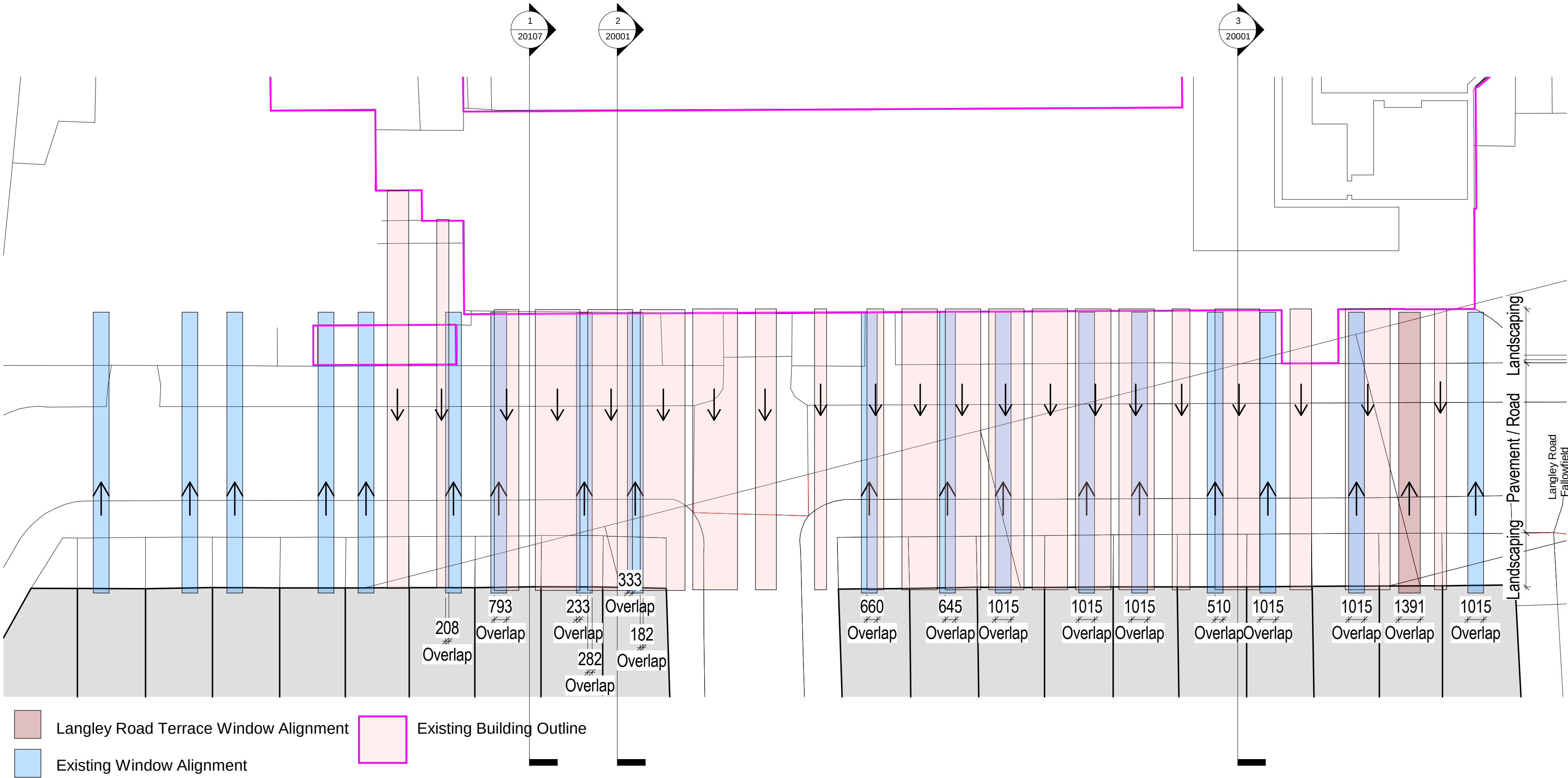


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Rev	Description	Date	By
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Client
Watkin Jones Group Ltd

Project
188 Wimslow
Road_Manchester
Title
Window Alignment Existing

Status
Information

Project number	Date
1093	10/06/21

Drawn by	Checked by
MP	MP

Scale	Revision
1 : 200@A2	

Drawing No.
1093-TGA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-20102

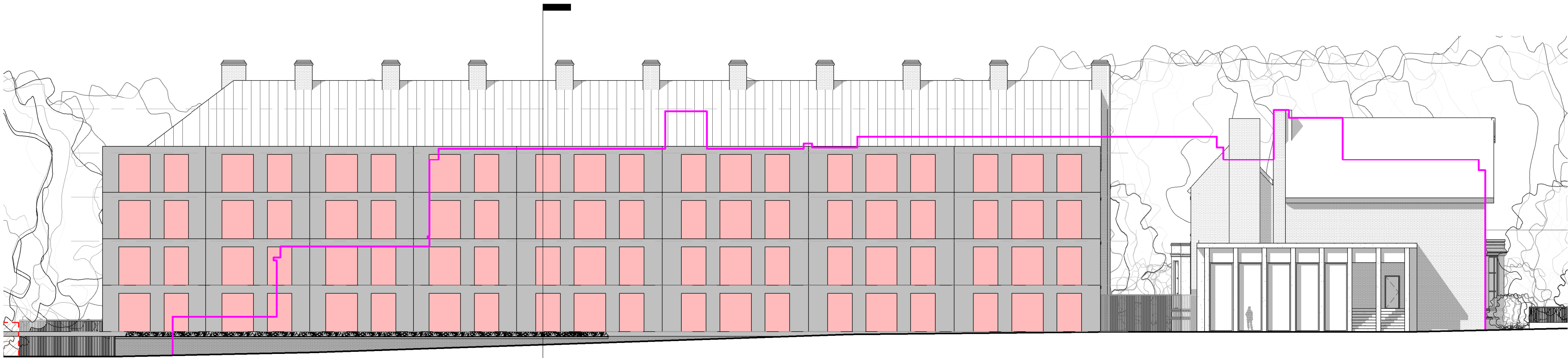


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Rev	Description	Date	By
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1
20107

Residential Building (Alternative Option):

Total Window Areas
(highlighted with a red hatch) = 349.488sqm

Facade Area =827.011sqm

Facade Area Minus Window Area =477.523sqm
Wall to window percentage difference 42.23 difference

Existing Building Outline (pink line) _____

Client
Watkin Jones Group Ltd

Project
188 Wimslow
Road_Manchester

Title
GA Elevation A - Resi
Option

Status
Information

Project number	Date
1093	10/06/21

Drawn by	Checked by
MP	MP

Scale	Revision
1 : 200@A2	

Drawing No.
1093-TGA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-20103



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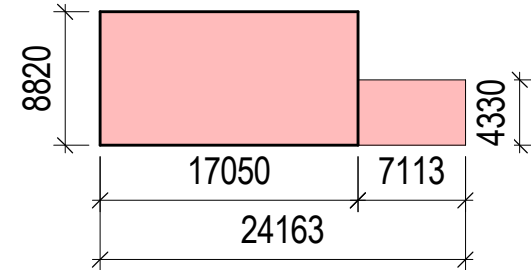
Dimensioning
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Rev	Description	Date	By
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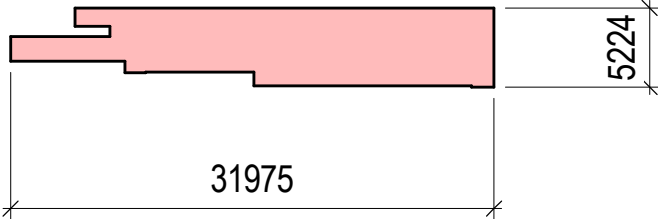
Window Areas / Sizes as a collective - Langley Road

A: Proposal - Accommodation
150.392sqm

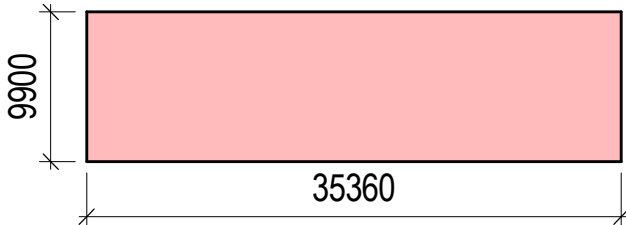
Proposal - Facilities
30.526sqm



B: Existing - Office
134.939sqm



C: Residential Accommodation Example
349.488sqm
(WJ - Bath Lane used as a guide)



Percentage difference between A&B = 29.4138%

Difference Area
46.392sqm

Percentage difference between B&C = 88.8247%

Difference Area
214.962sqm

Percentage difference between A&C = 63.5626%

Difference Area
168.57sqm

Client
Watkin Jones Group Ltd

Project
188 Wimslow
Road_Manchester
Title

Windows Areas

Status
Information

Project number	Date
1093	10/07/21

Drawn by	Checked by
MP	MP

Scale	Revision
1 : 500@A3	

Drawing No.
1093-TGA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-20104



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Project
188 Wimslow Road_Manchester
Title

Exisitng and Proposed
Facade Areas
Status

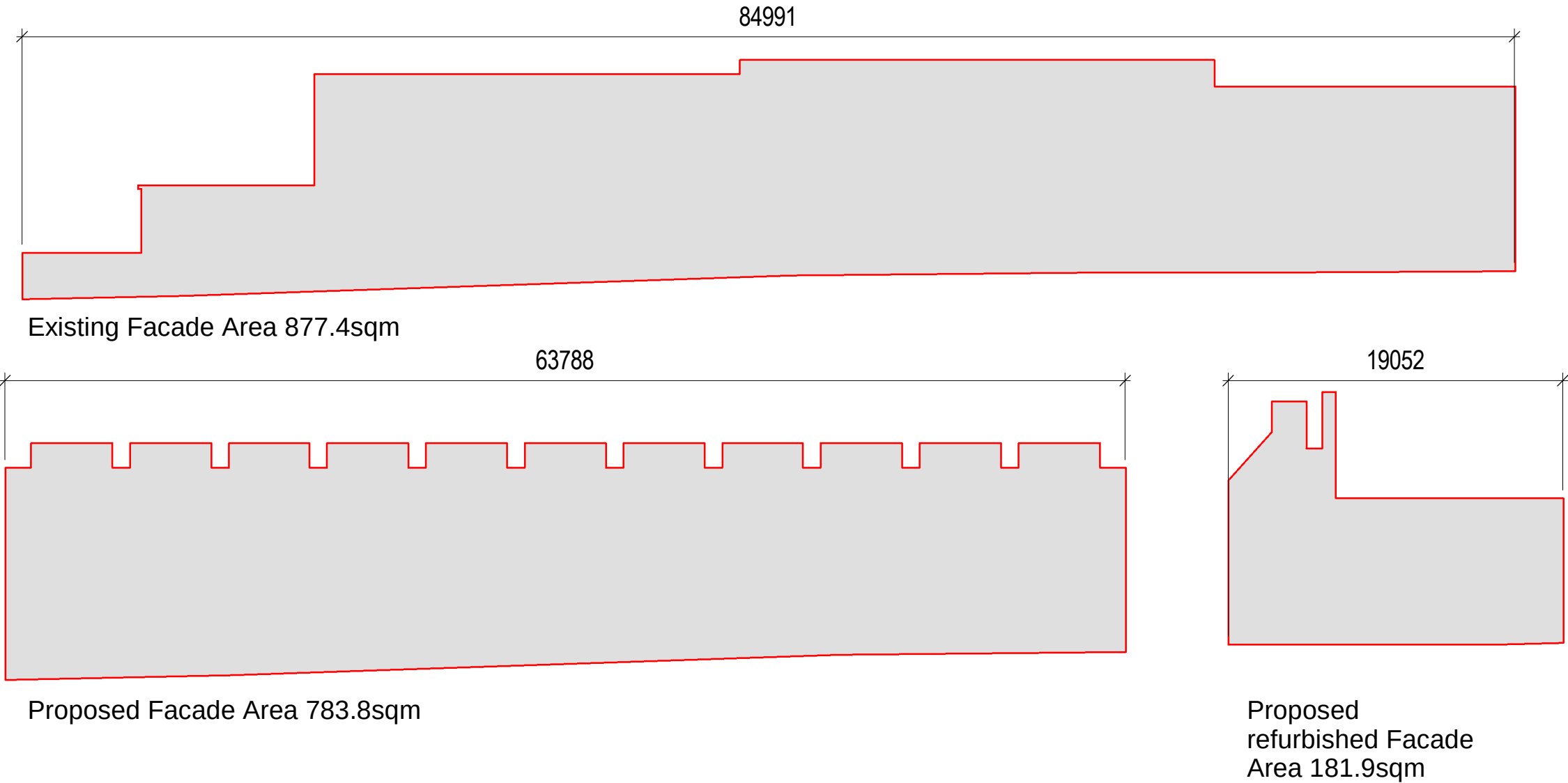
Information

Project number	Date
1093	10/14/21

Drawn by	Checked by
MP	MP

Scale	Revision
1 : 300@A3	

Drawing No.
1093-TGA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-20105



Existing Facade Area 877.4sqm

Proposed Facade Area 783.8sqm

Proposed
refurbished Facade
Area 181.9sqm

+10% Increase



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Rev	Description	Date	By
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Client
Watkin Jones Group Ltd

Project
188 Wimslow Road_Manchester

Title
Surrounding Houses - Overlooking

Status
Information

Project number	Date
1093	12/02/21

Drawn by	Checked by
MP	MP

Scale	Revision
1 : 500@A3	

Drawing No.
1093-TGA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-20106



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Dimensioning
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Rev	Description	Date	By
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Client	
Watkin Jones Group Ltd	
Project	
188 Wimslow Road_Manchester	
Title	
Building Cross Section	
Status	
Section BB	
Project number	Date
1093	02/08/22
Drawn by	Checked by
MP	MP
Scale	Revision
1 : 200@A3	
Drawing No.	
1093-TGA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-20107	

48801 approx

Pink Lines = Existing Building Outline

Langley Road



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Knott Mill
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Rev	Description	Date	By
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Client
Watkin Jones Group Ltd

Project
188 Wimslow Road_Manchester

Title
Surrounding Houses - Overlooking Building B to Terraces Information

Project number	Date
1093	02/11/22
Drawn by	Checked by
MP	MP
Scale	Revision
1 : 500@A3	
Drawing No.	
1093-TGA-XX-ZZ-DR-A-20108	