

URBAN DESIGN COMMENTS

Design Officer: Leon Donald, Senior Design Officer

Case Officer: Steven Dover, Senior Planning Officer



Application No: PRE2024/00191

Application Type: Pre-Application

Address: Co-op, Blatchington Road

Description: *Conversion of the first floor, and the addition of a new second storey to create a total of 17 flats (8 on the converted first-floor and 9 on the new second-floor).*

Date: 14/11/2024

Recommendation: *Seek Amendments / Seek Further Information*

SUMMARY

The site is located on Blatchington Road, a busy shopping street in central Hove, close to George Street and Church Road, with retail and commercial spaces. There are many local amenities, including GP services, schools, and community facilities, all within walking distance of the site. A comprehensive site analysis should include a Constraints and Opportunities Plan, studies of the local context, and an assessment of the proposed residential homes' potential impacts on services.

The site fronts Blatchington Road to the north, Haddington Street to the east, and Malvern Street to the south. Haddington Street, a narrower one-way street with poor-quality pedestrian accessibility, borders the site on the east. Additionally, a primary school nearby generates significant foot traffic at various times of the day.

The proposal must ensure the public realm can accommodate the increased residential population and enhance street-level engagement to ensure a successful development. The residential entrances should be designed to contribute positively to the streetscape, giving future residents a distinct and welcoming address. Thought must be given to redeveloping and enhancing the ground floor for improved visual appearance.

The proposals are currently in the early concept stages; therefore, these recommendations are preliminary. Additional design development through further pre-application meetings and a workshop with the **DesignPLACE** panel is highly recommended. The DesignPLACE panel can offer valuable insights that improve project outcomes, buildability, and profitability. Their guidance helps ensure efficient land use in line with City Plan Policy DM19, which emphasises “a balanced approach between respecting local context and maximising site potential to meet city needs, particularly in housing provision.”

Refer to **SPD17: Urban Design Framework, Section 7**: Pre-application process for our preferred design process to allow for early engagement and to offer constructive feedback at identified stages in the design development.

1. CONTEXT & SITE ANALYSIS

Applications are expected to look beyond the site boundary and consider how the design of a development will respond to its location and surroundings. Contextual attributes and considerations that are particularly relevant to Brighton & Hove, and particularly the central Hove area.

The pre-application offers a draft set of drawings for early consideration in the redevelopment of the airspace above the existing retail store. An illustrative set of drawings highlights the key ambitions for the quantity of new homes, currently eight 1-bedroom and nine 2-bedroom apartments, over the first and second floors.

Developing a **Vision Statement** explicitly highlighting the key design ambitions is strongly encouraged. The vision statement will be a useful to direct the design evolution and act as a benchmark to review future proposals. Following a review of the current design brief and proposal, below are some examples of the key design aims that could be considered:

- **Activate the Street**; opportunity to enhance and activate the street frontage and the built form along Haddington Street and Malvern Street, responding to the existing scale and site context. While retaining the existing supermarket in use.
- **Enliven the street corners**; to improve and extend the character of the neighbouring streets by the architectural detailing and form to the street corners. To be considered with desire lines and strategic local views.
- **Rooftop Amenity**; to activate the rooftop with communal green amenity for the new residents. Providing a shared space and opportunity for relaxing and food growing.
- **Provision of truly sustainable homes**; to offer high quality new homes for the residents of Brighton & Hove, that is car-free within a sustainable location.

Neighbourhood Character

- 1.1 An analysis of the character and identity of Brighton & Hove and its neighbourhoods is set out in baseline studies such as the Urban Characterisation Study (UCS) and within Conservation Area Character Statements (CACS). The proposal will need to include a local character analysis to identify the key neighbourhood characteristics and priorities for improvement.

Recommendations:

- *Integrate the neighbourhood characteristics identified in UCS Area 22: Sackville, as well as those of the neighbouring CACS, from the outset of the design process.*

- *Incorporate innovative and contemporary design elements that complement the surrounding built environment.*
- *The site is situated in an area characterised by family homes and local independent shops but occupies a significant portion of an urban block.*
- *Conduct a thorough analysis to document existing street patterns, window arrangements, rooflines, datums, and horizontal and vertical design elements. This analysis should directly inform the design approach.*
- *Establish a harmonious relationship with neighbouring properties on Blatchington Road, Haddington Street, and Malvern Street by respecting and enhancing the character of existing buildings, as derived from the analysis.*

Orientation / Layout

- 1.2 The orientation of buildings offers opportunities for implementing sustainable passive design strategies, these factors should be considered as the design progresses. In adopting a low-carbon approach, prioritise an optimised form factor and evaluate environmental implications early to ensure that the massing supports high-quality living conditions. This includes considerations for shading, wind impact, daylighting, and other passive design measures.

Recommendations:

- *Carry out an internal 'Daylight and Sunlight Assessment' and 'Overshadowing Assessment' before any application is submitted this will help justify the design development for the site.*
- *Refer to BRE published handbook 'Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight a Guide to Good Practice (BR 209 2022)'.*
- *To maximise the daylight and sunlight the design should include shallow rooms to help effectively distribute daylight, main living areas should be in areas of greater daylight potential.*
- *Appreciate the proposal provides all dual aspect dwellings. This will help with improved daylight potential and cross ventilation. Be sure to maximise the potential for cross ventilation to living spaces within the internal layouts.*

Composition of street scene: SPD17:1.3

- 1.3 Streets are essential to city life and make up most of our public spaces, with their appearance and atmosphere playing a central role in defining an area's character. Design elements visible from the street or highway will be critical in assessing the development proposals. Ensure that all elevations contribute positively and enhance the existing character and scale. The Healthy Streets design guidance provides helpful recommendations for effective street design: [Healthy Streets | Making streets healthy places for everyone.](#)

Recommendations:

- *Reference existing building lines, heights, rhythms, and proportions of frontages, windows, and doors.*
- *Create views from inside buildings onto the street or public space.*
- *Ensure the extension of the upper floors are oriented towards streets and public realm, creating perimeter blocks that define and frame these areas, with particular attention to corner facades.*

- *Avoid blank facades to enhance passive surveillance, Malvern Street and Haddington Street has great opportunity for improvement.*
- *Create obstacle-free, sight-impaired-friendly routes, with well-designed shared spaces for pedestrians and cyclists. The development must consider improvements beyond the building footprint.*
- *Include features to reduce water run-off and manage water quality.*
- *Minimise visual clutter and ensure adequate lighting while avoiding unnecessary light pollution.*
- *Ensure easy access for deliveries, removals, and refuse collection, a servicing and delivery strategy need considering ensuring the retail and residential uses coexist positively.*
- *Confirm the refuse strategy, an increased number of bins on street may be required due to the increased number of homes in the area. Screen any proposed refuse storage facilities visible from the street.*

Key Views: SPD17:1.4

- 1.4 Retaining and enhancing key strategic views through the careful development of built form is a key objective. They should protect, complement and enhance strategic local and long distant views in the city.

Recommendations:

- *Evaluate identified key views, especially those from neighbouring Conservation Areas, and demonstrate how the design preserves or enhances them.*
- *Show how the development will appear from all perspectives and approaches.*
- *Provide eye-level views to illustrate how people will perceive and experience the development from different approaches and while moving through the public realm.*

2. DESIGN PRINCIPLES

Enhancing the environmental performance of buildings through thoughtful design, construction, refurbishment, and maintenance is essential to the city's goal of achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 and building resilience to climate change. Meeting housing and commercial objectives requires maximising site use with attention to both the quantity and quality of life for future occupants. Well-designed buildings should promote community cohesion, support health and well-being, enhance biodiversity, and contribute to environmental benefits.

It is recommended that the applicant incorporates and demonstrates the following priorities and recommendations:

Built Form / Scale / Massing: SPD17:3.2,3.3

- 2.1 As part of a thorough contextual analysis, the proposal should draw on identifiable and valued local characteristics to inform the built form. Massing should ensure adequate spacing between existing and proposed buildings to allow for functional

outdoor amenities that meet daylight and sunlight requirements for both the development and neighbouring properties. The design requires further refinement to demonstrate successful integration with the local context, especially concerning the existing ground floor retail area and the preservation of key views.

Recommendations:

- *Use the proposal to establish a prominent marker building at the corner of Blatchington Road and Haddington Street.*
- *Clarify whether the existing Co-op entrance canopy will be retained. Removal or redesign of the canopy is encouraged to allow for a more cohesive integration with the upper-floor re-design. While the canopy offers weather protection, its current size and scale appear overly dominant within the streetscape.*
- *The proposal currently retains the existing first-floor roof structure on the south side. It is strongly encouraged to remove or redesign this feature to align with the broader upper-floor redevelopment.*
- *Additional design rationale would be beneficial to improve the approach to redesigning the southern elevation and the corner of Haddington and Malvern Street.*
- *Consider increasing building height at the Blatchington Road and Haddington Street corner as a focal point. Any increase in height should be well-justified with evidence from key street-view analysis.*

Aspect and Internal Layout: SPD17:3.3

2.2

As the design develops, internal layouts should avoid single-aspect homes, especially north-facing ones. All homes should meet and/or exceed Nationally Described Space Standards and Part M4(2) of the building regulations.

Ensure that internal layouts include appropriately sized internal communal spaces, such as entry lobbies, corridors, and stairs, to encourage sociability and comfortable use of these areas as part of the placemaking approach. Consider how internal spaces interact with private and external amenities, providing clear and legible connections.

Recommendations:

- *Consider including 3-bedroom dwellings, as their exclusion is not fully justified by the site's busy central Hove location. The nearby St Andrew's School and community facilities support the area's appeal for families, which is reinforced by its character of family homes. Brighton & Hove should remain a desirable option for families, that includes family suitable apartments.*
- *Optimise the number of dual-aspect dwellings to enhance natural cross-ventilation, daylight, sunlight, and ventilation, while minimising overheating.*
- *Avoid deep, single-aspect north-facing dwellings.*
- *Ensure all new dwellings meet or exceed National Minimum Space Standards.*
- *Comply with minimum accessibility and adaptability standards according to Building Regulation M4(2) and include an agreed percentage of M4(3) units, if required.*

- *Position communal and private amenity spaces away from areas with poor air quality and high noise levels wherever feasible.*
- *Provide defensible space for all communal residential entrances and demonstrate a design strategy that addresses privacy considerations.*
- *Consider the proximity to neighbouring buildings and St Andrew's CofE Primary School along the northern boundary, with thoughtful placement of windows, balconies, and other design elements to respect overlooking distances and contextual relationships.*
- *Remove the two dwellings per floor (four in total) along the western boundary adjacent to the rear of Blatchington Road properties, as their placement limits usability of the communal roof terrace and restricts daylight for neighbouring lower-level properties.*
- *Provide additional details on accessibility; with the proposed number of units, a communal lift for the upper floors is essential.*

Appearance and Materiality: SPD17:3.5

2.3 At this early design stage, details on appearance and materials are limited. As the design evolves, a material palette should be developed through an analysis of the local context to reflect the area's character. This site offers an opportunity for innovative, well-detailed architecture that references central Hove's character. The materials strategy should prioritise durability, ease of maintenance, embodied carbon, and whole-life carbon. Given the partial demolition of areas to the existing first-floor building, circular economy principles should also be explored to align with the council's climate goals and the need for climate-resilient solutions.

Recommendations:

- *Resolve the built form and massing for the development before further consideration of appearance and materials.*
- *Initial drawings currently suggest poor-quality materials and uninspired elevation treatments; these aspects will need thorough review and justification as the design progresses.*
- *Aim to establish a distinctive appearance with a strong site identity, led by clear placemaking principles and featuring high-quality, innovative, and well-detailed architecture.*
- *Design windows and openings that complement the local context, neighbouring buildings, and balanced proportions.*
- *Choose materials, detailing, and finishes that are straightforward to install, maintain, and repair, with robust materials prioritised for communal areas to ensure longevity and easy maintenance.*
- *Develop a materials strategy emphasizing low-carbon practices, including whole-life carbon and circular economy principles.*
- *Maximise material reuse and recycling, including from onsite construction, demolition, and remediation, ideally supported by a pre-demolition audit.*
- *While the Newland Road development in Worthing offers some useful comparisons, this site's redevelopment should be more ambitious, utilizing higher-quality materials.*

- *Render is likely to be unsuitable for this location, as similar modern developments have led to environmental issues with staining and insufficient maintenance.*
- *Glass balustrades are also inappropriate due to their negative impact on the streetscape and similar lack of cleaning/maintenance.*

3. PUBLIC REALM & LANDSCAPE

The public realm, including streets and open spaces, should be welcoming and accessible to all. Thoughtfully designed outdoor communal areas should integrate seamlessly into the landscape strategy, supporting a range of users and activities. Early planning of these spaces should help shape the design concept and massing for the site redevelopment.

Landscape-led proposals are encouraged to maximise the potential of the public realm by incorporating the following key priorities and recommendations:

Pedestrian / Vehicular Access: SPD17:2.1

- 3.1 The development should create safe and appealing spaces that connect smoothly with the city's network of publicly accessible routes. The proposal should extend beyond the existing building footprint to enhance the public realm where possible. To support the addition of new homes, street-level improvements are essential. Integrating well-designed pedestrian links will be crucial for promoting health, reducing carbon emissions, improving air quality, lowering congestion and noise, and fostering social interaction.

Recommendations:

- *Improve the existing pedestrian route along Haddington Street, ensuring alignment with pedestrian and cycle desire lines for better connectivity between Blatchington Road and Church Road via the school.*
- *Consider enhancements to the public realm on Haddington Street and Malvern Street to improve the pedestrian experience adjacent to the site. Improvements could include widening the pavement, adding traffic-calming measures, and potentially a shared surface for a more pedestrian-friendly environment.*
- *Upgrade the narrow, poor-quality pavements as part of any future site development, with input from transport officers to fully realise the site's potential.*
- *Provide convenient, well-lit, secure cycle parking near building entrances, suitable for users of all ages.*
- *Design clear, level-access building entrances aligned with natural movement patterns and sightlines. Establish a hierarchy for entrances, with the main communal entrance ideally located on Haddington Street.*
- *Design communal entrances with consideration for other site uses, such as Co-op deliveries on the south elevation, high pedestrian traffic to the north, and narrow, fast-moving traffic to the east due to limited traffic calming.*
- *A car-free scheme is suitable for this central Hove location.*

Landscape Strategy: SPD17:2.3

- 3.2 Located in central Hove, this site is in a neighbourhood with limited public open space, where less than half of the population is within a five-minute walk of a recreational area. Any development here should emphasise a landscape and public realm-led approach. A comprehensive landscape strategy should be developed early, integrating sustainable urban drainage and environmental strategies for a holistic, nature-based approach. This strategy should include high-quality communal and private outdoor spaces with varied features to meet diverse needs, such as areas for food growing, informal play, relaxation, and socialising. The landscape design should prioritise resilience and ease of maintenance to ensure it thrives year-round and into the future.

Recommendations:

- *Enhance the city's green and blue infrastructure with new street trees, improving environmental comfort.*
- *Add features like bird/bat boxes and bee bricks to boost biodiversity.*
- *Include opportunities for food growing, such as planting fruit trees and propose raised beds to the proposed communal roof terrace.*
- *Implement nature-based drainage solutions to mitigate surface water run-off, aquifer contamination, and flood risks.*
- *Ensure adequate sunlight and daylight to communal external areas to optimise planting.*
- *Include green roofs where possible to increase biodiversity.*

Outdoor Amenity: SPD17:2.2

- 3.3 Open spaces should be guided by a clear landscape strategy. This involves expanding tree cover and incorporating soft landscaping to enhance comfort, boost biodiversity, provide opportunities for food growing, and mitigate the heat island effect.

Recommendations:

- *The quality of the first-floor terrace is unconvincing. The current design shows an approximately 8m-wide courtyard intended for communal access and amenity use, but this space may feel enclosed and overlooked. Expanding the outlook would encourage new residents to use this area as a communal space.*
- *Position outdoor amenity areas to maximise sunlight, daylight, views, and summer shade, with suitable lighting for both the spaces and building entrances. A daylight/sunlight assessment using the BRE methodology would help demonstrate the daylight quality for the proposed outdoor spaces.*
- *Enhance community cohesion and biodiversity by optimising planting areas and food-growing spaces.*

Mix of Uses and Active Frontages: SPD17:2.4

- 3.4 The proposal does not currently indicate any changes to the ground floor, keeping the existing retail store as is. Presently, the ground floor provides minimal active frontage along the south and east elevations; adding well-designed communal residential entrances would enhance this. Additional details are needed to clarify

whether any adjustments to the internal layout of the retail store's back-of-house areas will be made to accommodate the proposed new residences. Communal residential entrances should be thoughtfully designed to promote a sense of ownership and improve street presence, and where possible, incorporate defensible space to ensure adequate privacy for these shared entrances.

Recommendations:

- *Enhancing the ground-floor elevations along Haddington Street and Malvern Street is essential for the success of the proposal and the successful integration of new homes.*
- *Create a human-scale streetscape with an inviting, accessible public realm that complements the existing active ground-floor use of the Co-op.*
- *Avoid blank walls at ground level; where they are unavoidable, use architectural detailing to minimise any negative impact. Improvements are especially needed along Malvern Street and Haddington Street.*

4. SUSTAINABILITY

In line with the City Plan Part One, the One Planet Living framework and its ten principles should be used to develop and communicate the sustainability objectives for the proposals. The application must explain how the proposal promotes social inclusion, environmental health, and economic vitality in Brighton and Hove. A Sustainability Checklist and Sustainability Statement should be included in any future application, detailing sustainable practices of the development.

Facilitating the transition to a zero carbon and more climate-resilient city will require new development to at least meet and wherever possible exceed minimum standards set out in Part L of the Building Regulations and other resource efficiency targets set out in national and local policy or legislation.

Special attention should be given to the following priorities and recommendations:

Energy Efficiency & Water Management: SPD17:3.1, 3.6

- 4.1 The development should be designed to meet the following policies of City Plan Part Two; DM43 Sustainable Drainage; DM44 Energy Efficiency & Renewables; DM45 Community Energy; and DM46 Heating and cooling network infrastructure.

Recommendations:

- *Employ a fabric-first approach and integrate onsite renewable energy generation, storage, and utilisation into the building design.*
- *The proposal should achieve at least a 19% improvement over the carbon emission targets set by Part L (Policy CP2: DM44).*
- *Aim for the development to achieve a minimum EPC rating of 'B' (Policy CP2: DM44).*
- *Minimise construction waste by prioritising salvage and using modular, off-site construction methods where possible.*
- *Integrate renewable electricity and heat generation, as well as energy-saving measures, with adequate space allocation to support these features.*

- *Ensure 100% LED lighting for all internal and external spaces.*
- *Incorporate rainwater harvesting for maintaining soft landscaping or for non-potable uses, such as window cleaning or toilet flushing.*
- *The development should meet water efficiency requirements according to the optional Part G standard (110 litres per person per day).*

One Planet Living Framework

- 4.2 The council is dedicated to adopting the One Planet approach and its guiding principles to advance toward a more sustainable city. The policies in the City Plan aim to achieve local targets aligned with the following One Planet Living principles: Health and Happiness, Equity and local economy, Culture and community, Land and nature, Sustainable water, Local and sustainable food, Materials and products, Travel and transport, Zero waste, and Zero carbon energy.

Recommendations:

- *Develop a sustainability statement referencing how the application and future proposal will aim to meet the 10 principles of the One Planet Living Framework.*

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Effective community engagement is crucial for contextually appropriate designs, highlighting issues and concerns early in the process to reduce objections later. For major developments like this one, community engagement should be carried out in multiple stages to align with the pre-planning process. It is encouraged for applicants to submit a 'Statement of Community Engagement' report on consultation outcomes and how concerns have been addressed early in the design review.

Public Consultation: SPD17:8.1

- 5.1 Community engagement should be recognised and used as a design tool. In addition to neighbouring properties and residents, applicants can engage with a variety of consultees such as local amenity societies, environmental and transport charities, and equality/minority groups (e.g. BME communities, disabled people, and LGBTQ+). The aims and objectives of the consultation process are to:

- *Understand the needs and aspirations of local residents and stakeholders.*
- *Raise awareness and provide information regarding the design evolution and future planning application.*
- *Collect feedback from the local community through public engagement to inform design development.*

6. APPENDIX

Please note: *The opinions expressed here are informal and given in good faith, without prejudice to the Council's final decision on any planning application. This reflects the planning application process, which includes consultations with statutory bodies, local publicity, evolving information, updated government guidance, and established appeal decisions or precedents.*

Appendix 1

6.1 Precedent schemes for design reference only:

- **Redchurch Townhouse** / 31/44 Architects – Shoreditch (good example for its flank wall design)
- **144 Honk Hertogensite** – Leuven (example for its corner position and materiality)
- **Dockley Apartments** / Studio Woodroffe Papa – Southwark (example for a gallery access scheme)
- **24 social housing units** / Jean-Christophe Quinton Architecte – Paris (example for corner plot position and gallery access scheme)

Appendix 2

6.2 Relevant Policy and Guidance:

Context & Site Analysis

- CPP1 Policies SA6 Sustainable Neighbourhoods; CP10: Biodiversity; CP8: Sustainable Buildings; CP12: Urban Design; CP13: Public Streets and Spaces; CP14: Housing Density; CP18: Healthy City
- CPP2 Policy DM18: High Quality Design and Places; DM22: Landscape Design and Trees
- SPD06: Trees and Development Sites
- SPD11: Nature Conservation and Development
- SPD16: Sustainable Drainage
- SPD17: Urban Design Framework sections 1.1: Environmental Conditions, 1.3: Composition of Street Scene; 2.1: Active and Inclusive Travel; 2.2: Outdoor Amenity; 2.3: Landscaping, Biodiversity and Water; and 2.4: Mix of Uses and Active Frontages.

Design Principles

- CPP1 Policies SA6 Sustainable Neighbourhoods; CP8: Sustainable Buildings; CP12: Urban Design
- CPP2 Policies DM18: High Quality Design and Places; DM20: Protection of Amenity
- SPD17: Urban Design Framework, sections 1.1: Environmental Conditions; 1.3: Composition of Street Scene;
- CPP1 Policies SA6 Sustainable Neighbourhoods; CP8: Sustainable Buildings; CP12: Urban Design; Section 2.3: A Sustainable City
- CPP2 Policy DM1: Housing Quality, Choice, and Mix

- SPD17: Urban Design Framework, sections 3.1: Resource Performance and Use; 3.2: Designing at Density; and 3.3: Housing Types and Mix of Uses
- CPP1 Policies CP8: Sustainable Buildings; CP12: Urban Design
- SPD17: Urban Design Framework, sections 1.2: Neighbourhood Character; 1.3: Composition of Street Scene; 3.1: Resource Performance and Use; 3.4: Greening; and 3.5: Materials and Maintenance

Public Realm and Landscape design

- CPP1 Policies SA6 Sustainable Neighbourhoods; CP10: Biodiversity; CP13: Public Streets and Spaces
- CPP2 Policies DM18: High Quality Design and Places; DM22: Landscape Design and Trees
- SPD06: Trees and Development Sites
- SPD11: Nature Conservation and Development
- SPD16: Sustainable Drainage
- SPD17: Urban Design Framework sections; 1.2: Neighbourhood Character; 1.3: Composition of Street Scene; 2.2: Outdoor Amenity; 2.3: Landscaping, Biodiversity and Water; 3.1: Resource Performance and Use; 3.4: Greening; and 3.5: Materials and Maintenance

Appendix 4

- 6.3 Massing considerations for discussion/ideas only, further massing and site testing should be carried out before the next pre-application meeting:

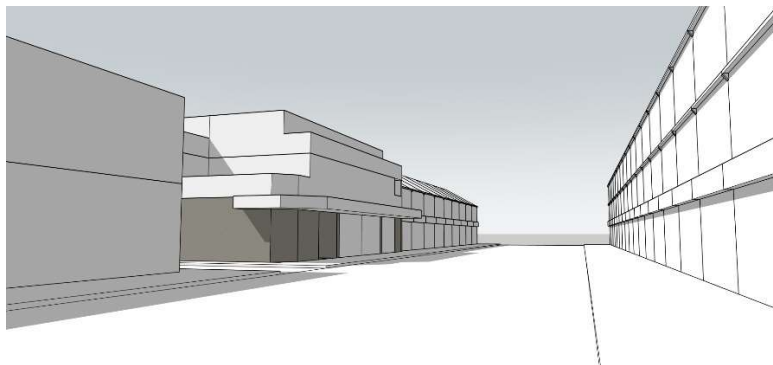


Figure 1 – Blatchington Road looking west – Current Massing



Figure 2 – Blatchington Road looking west – Testing a strong corner position with increased potential for height.

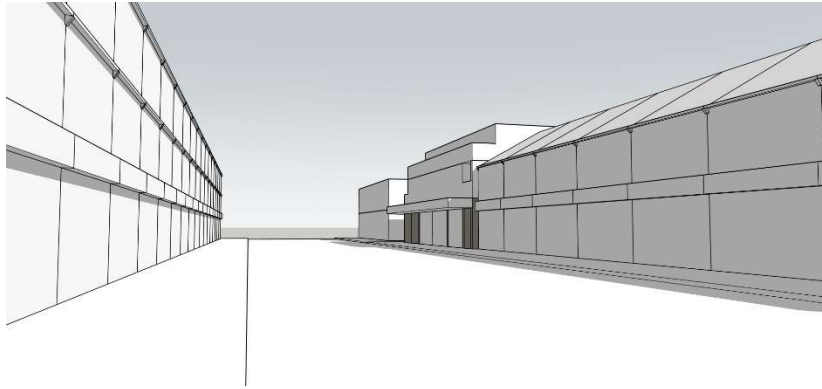


Figure 3 – Blatchington Road looking east – Current Massing.

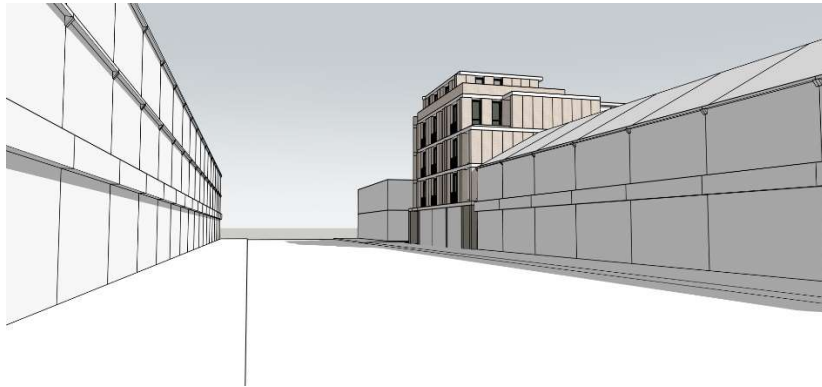


Figure 4 – Blatchington Road looking east – Testing an increased potential for height and further detail to the flank wall.

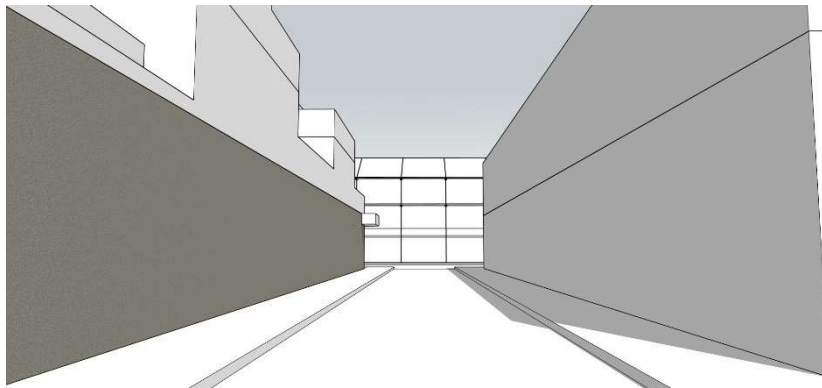


Figure 5 – Haddington Road looking north – Current Massing.

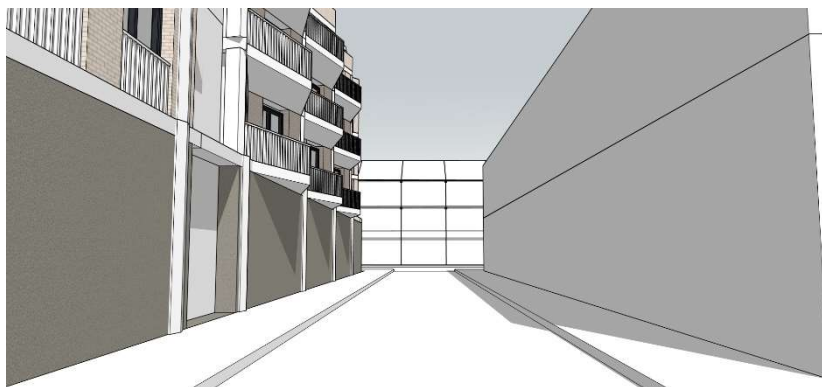


Figure 6 – Haddington Road looking north – Testing better activating this street elevation, further work to test the well-detailed ground floor communal entrance on Haddington Street.