



Design and Access Statement

Buckthorn Avenue Flats, SG1 1TT

Residential Apartment Blocks Retrofit

CONSTRUCTIVE
THINKING

Revisions

Revision	Issuer Initials	Date	Comments:
P01	YC	21/11/2023	DRAFT
P02	YC	24/11/2023	ISSUE P02
P03	YC	28/11/2023	ISSUE P03

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1. Introduction

The Design and Access Statement supports the planning application for the retrofit of 2no. residential apartment blocks at Buckthorn Avenue, Stevenage. This statement outlines the design in relation to planning policy and sets out the design principles for its retrofit. The proposal has been developed and is supported by a range of design and energy efficiency parameters which form the basis of the detailed design proposals.

The application and the content of this statement is supported by the suite of plans, elevations and visualisations submitted as part of the planning application. Graphics are used within the narrative to illustrate the points being made in the text and to make the document more readable.

The report concludes with a brief summary of the matters covered. Every effort is made to relate the contents of this statement with the CABE publication 'Design & Access Statements – How to Write, Read and Use Them' (Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment 2006) breaking down the statement into the key areas:

- Use
- Amount
- Scale
- Landscaping
- Appearance
- Access

This document seeks to clearly explain the intent and rationale influencing the proposal submitted and seeks to demonstrate the merits of this project in the context of planned regeneration in the city.



1.1 Project & Brief



Preamble

The project is a whole house low energy retrofit scheme part-funded under the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero strategy 'Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund.

Project and Brief

Constructive Thinking Studio has been commissioned to develop a proposal that will provide a significant improvement in the energy efficiency of the flats. The brief aims to contribute to reduction of energy usage in dwellings in the UK whilst helping lift people out of fuel poverty.

It is the aspiration of Constructive Thinking Studio that the development when completed, will enhance the local area by using complimentary materials in its context.

The client and current owner of the site has explored several options for the design of the development, before settling on the application.

2. Site appraisal

Location Plan

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by Constructive Thinking Studio Ltd in support of a Full Planning Application for the retrofit of 2no. apartment blocks at Buckthorn Avenue, Stevenage.

The site is accessed from the main road on Six Hills Way and Walden End, on what is a residential street. The blocks are located within an open site, with landscaping surrounding the apartment blocks. The footprint of the blocks (in red) are shown within the location plan to the right (flats no. 2-24 and 26-48).

Ordnance Survey
Ukmapcentre.com



2.1 Context

The site is easily accessible by public transport services as well as by car and foot. The local area is predominantly residential area of similar architectural style.



2.2 Site Boundaries

The boundaries are formed using a combination of planting, hedges and fencing as you would expect for a property of this type in this location. Buckthorn Avenue and Walden End are shown below to give an insight about the local materiality.



3. Planning Context

Background to the Proposals

Several design solutions have been evaluated as part of the design process. The site analysis, opportunities and constraints, and a review of policy fed into the development of initial options. The design team prepared the proposals for the site to meet the client's requirements and to improve the quality of the built fabric.

Response to the principal objectives fundamental to all design options included:

- A. The retrofitted building should create a high quality and aesthetically pleasing living environment.
- B. Ensuring the relationship with neighbouring residential properties maintains privacy and a good outlook.
- C. The design of the building should respect the material nature of the local area.

Public consultations have been undertaken with the residents.



3.1 Existing and Proposed Use

Existing Use

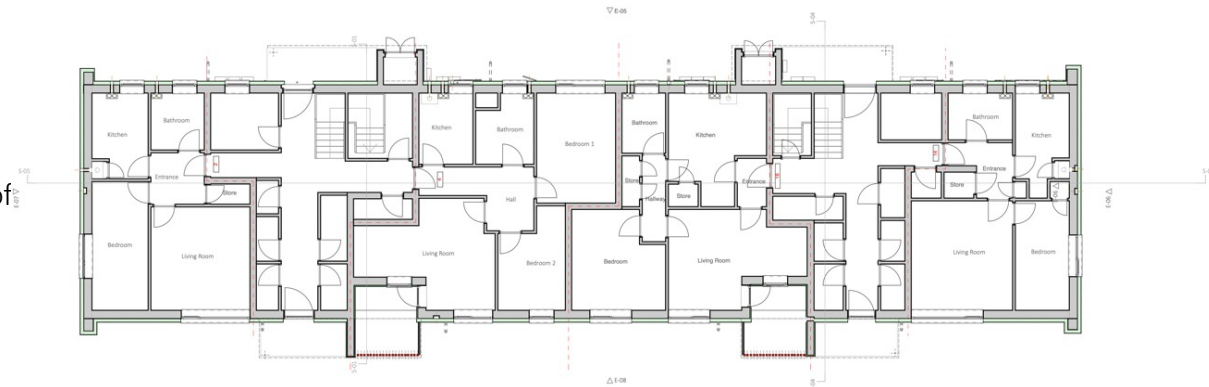
Currently, the 2no. apartment blocks are entirely residential use. Each block has 12no. apartments and a central space, which contains a stairwell, storage area and bin store in the outbuilding.



Existing Ground Floor Plan

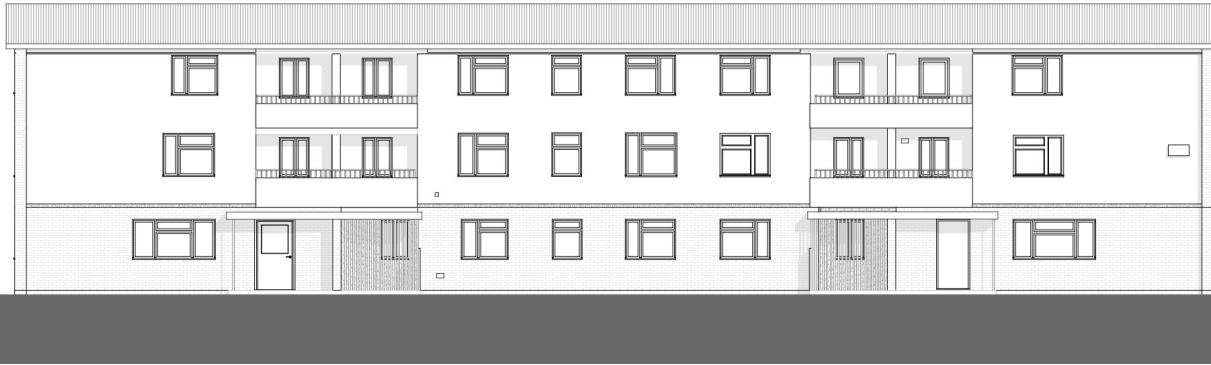
Proposed Use

The retrofitting process will not change the building use or the number of apartments across the site.

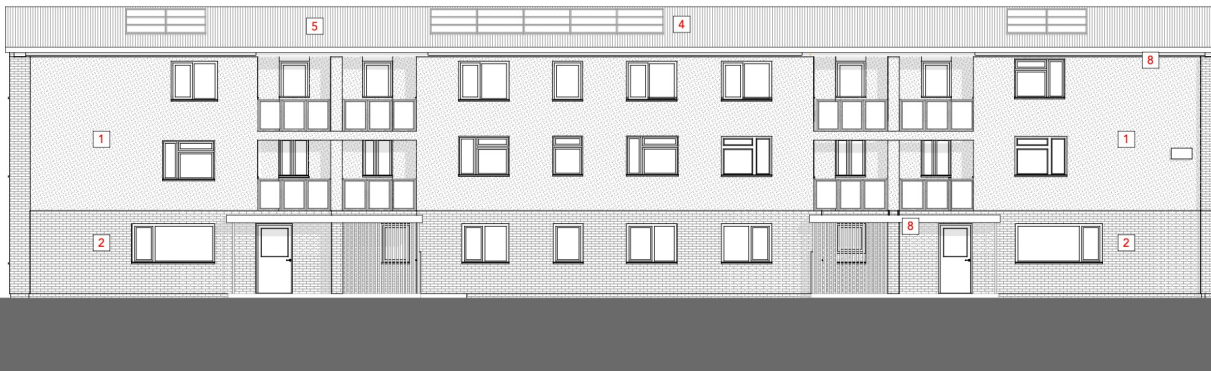


Proposed Ground Floor Plan

3.2 Street Scene



Existing Rear Elevation



Proposed Rear Elevation

The proposed development consists of the installation of new external wall insulation with white and brick render effect on the 3-storey apartment blocks, and renewal of the balcony railings as part of the overall refurbishment.

The building footprint and vehicular access has not been altered during the development of the design.

Proposed measures:

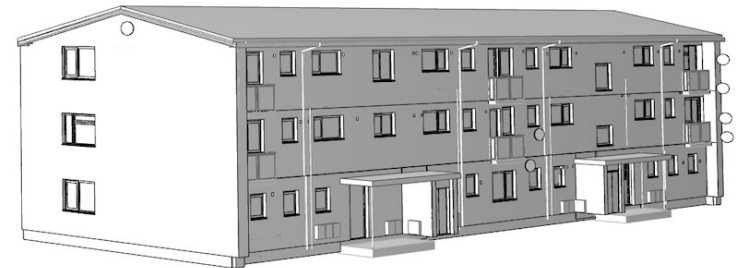
- 1 'Winter White' render.
- 2 'Sanded Slate grey' brick effect render, stores on front elevation to be match render
- 3 Windows and doors replacement
- 4 PV cells system on new roof
- 5 New Roof- metal sheet system
- 6 Upgrade ventilation dMev
- 7 Loft insulation top-up to 400mm
- 8 Fascia and canopy replacement (as part of maintenance)

3.3 Planning Policy

Consultations

Relevant planning policy identified was as follows:

- National Planning Policy Framework
- Stevenage Local plan 2011-2031
- Supplementary Planning Documents
 - Stevenage Design Guidance
 - Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy



5. Amount



The amount of proposed works is limited to the external elevations of the existing buildings. The proposed works allow for improvements to the thermal fabric of the building, including external wall insulation, replacement of windows and doors, and adaptation to the roof eaves to allow them to project beyond the insulation over cladding to the external walls.

The roof is to be replaced with a new metal sheet and a solar PV-system.

6. Scale + Impact

Massing

The proposed retrofit will not increase the footprints of the 2no. apartment blocks. The thickness of the external wall insulation to be added is between 120-150mm to the external walls and 30mm on the returning vertical brick detail piers.

There are no alterations to the layout of the building, scale, landscaping, access or security.



6.1 Impact

The street scene will be improved through the new external wall insulation with the white and grey brick render finish. The new windows will brighten up the façade, modernising and improving the thermal performance of the blocks. The new solar PV panels will be visible from the rear of the site at a distance, but they will be out of sight from the street given the overall building height.



6. Appearance

The design team and client agree that the new building and surrounding landscape should have a positive visual impact on all residents and visitors who approach the site.

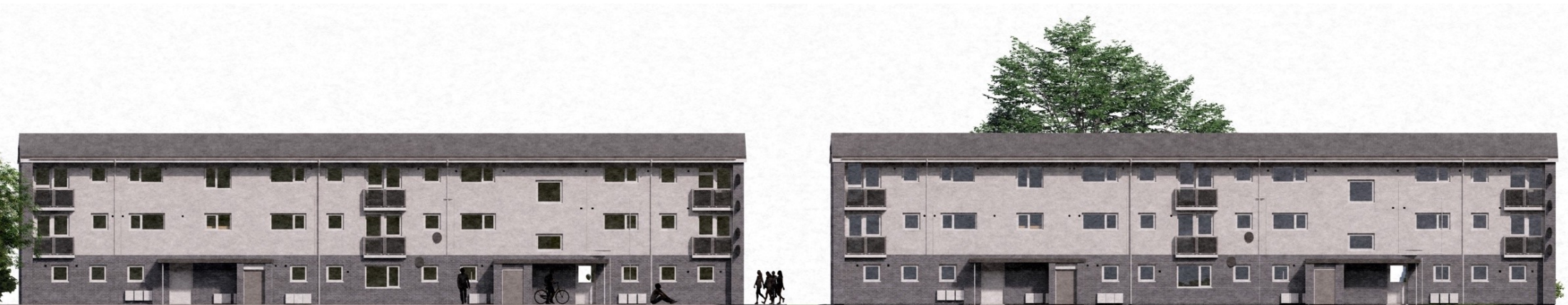
The client is keen that the building should be aesthetically pleasing whilst responding to the context of the local area.

The current design aims to satisfy these aims with a restricted palette of materials to maintain simplicity, visual understanding and its contemporary nature.

A white and grey brick effect render will be applied to compliment the white UPVC windows, reflective of the surrounding context to maintain the language of the area. The roof is to be finished in a grey metal sheet system to reflect the existing and surrounding roofs.

All materials will of course be subject to sign off by condition as part of the discharge of any permission granted.

The proposed retrofit has been purposely designed to create a building that will be familiar, coherent and comfortable to all who reside there and visit it.



7. Access

- **Pedestrian**
 - Pedestrian access remains the same as existing. Access to the apartments is provided directly from the public pathways with level access.
- **Public Transport & Vehicular Access**
 - Vehicular and public access remains the same as existing.
- **Access Within and Around the Building**
 - The Equality Act 2010 requires reasonable provision be made to enable services be provided to all users regardless of ability. BS8300:2001 Design Guidance has been consulted widely in the production of these design proposals.

All approaches around the site and into the building will continue to provide level access where it is reasonable to provide them. All routes will be firm and level underfoot.

Door sets are provided where necessary to comply with Building Regulations, fire safety and general security. Handle sides of doors are to be at least 300mm from any other adjoining partition or obstructions to provide ease of access for anyone in a wheelchair.



8. Summary

We have consulted with all the previously stated persons and groups and reviewed and implemented key sections of discourse in relation to the proposals outlined and evidenced here:

- The design improves the energy efficiency of 2no. existing apartment blocks.
- The proposed changes will have a positive impact on the local residential area.
- The design does not affect the privacy of any neighbouring properties, nor overly impact them.

In specific response to current planning policy:

The proposed retrofit scheme will be PAS2035 compliant. The measures will ensure that the energy demand for the 2no. blocks is significantly reduced. Firstly, the scheme will exceed DESNEZ SHDF standards of minimum EPC C and 90KWh/M2/annum, contributing to the achievement of the UK's carbon emissions targets. But secondly, the changes will improve the lives of the residents by reducing their energy bills and improve affordable warmth, assisting the pathway to Net Zero.

Retrofitting this building ensures its longevity and use longer term.

