

5.0

DESIGN PROPOSAL

5.1 USE & AMOUNT

Riverview Flats was constructed in the early 1970s and was used for residential use until 2016. Since then the site has remained unused and unoccupied, with consent sought to either extend or replace the building.

Historic photographs suggest that in the past the site has been occupied by a two-storey white-rendered building.

The existing Riverview Flats building has 4no. 2-bed apartments arranged over two storeys. The accommodation is at first and second floor, with four vehicle parking spaces located at ground floor.

The proposed development adds a new storey to the building - to form 6no. 2-bed apartments arranged over three storeys. The four vehicle parking spaces are retained, and 1no. new space added at the north-eastern end of the site.

The existing building has a floor area of 234sqm Gross Internal Floor Area (322sqm when including the open garage area). The proposed new development has a GIFA of 444sqm (including new stair cores) or 551sqm including the gated garage area and bin/cycle stores.

The proposed First Floor Plan (right) shows the extent of the existing and proposed floor area. From this view it is clear to see that this proposal is primarily a refurb project, with some new build elements above and the staircores at either end. Having said this, it is a key aspiration to improve the perception of the building and contribute positively to the context and Conservation Area by reworking the street elevation of the building.

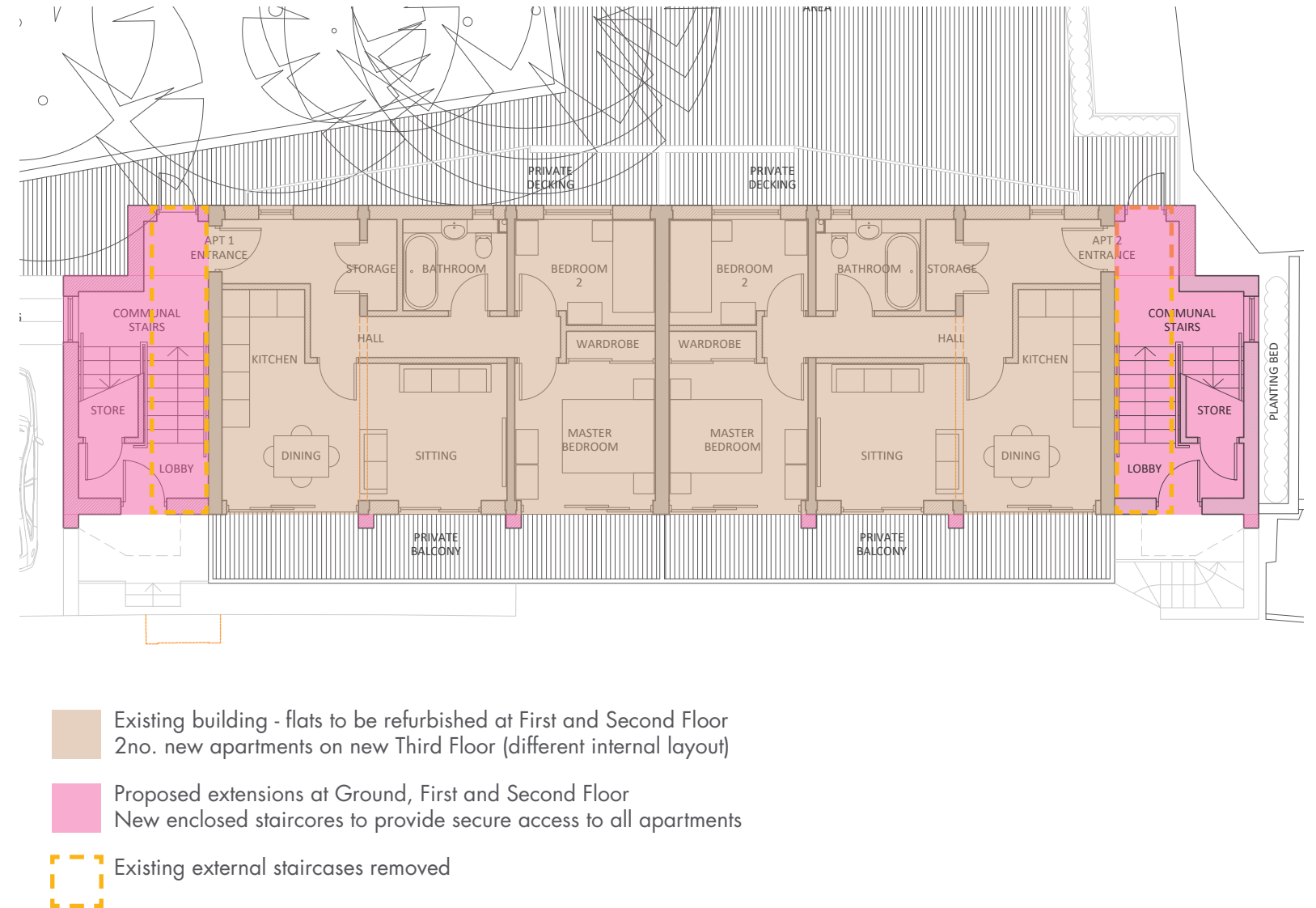


Image 29: Proposed First Floor Plan showing the extent of refurbishment and new-build elements

5.2 SITE LAYOUT

The existing building is oriented south-west to north-east. The site has a raised level area to the rear, and a steep bank up to Wilton Road. To the north-east of the site are listed terraced houses. A car parking space is to be inserted between the proposed extended building and the existing No.14 Wye Street. This is to create a buffer between the two buildings and retain the view to the south-western gable of No.14.

The withdrawn 2019 scheme proposed to build a six storey building close up to the north-eastern boundary and just 3.5m from the single storey extension to the listed building. This would have created a poor relationship between the proposed new building and the neighbour. The buffer between the proposals in this application is now 6m.

The level area to the rear of the building will be retained as communal amenity space. A narrow strip of the amenity area will be assigned to the first floor apartments, with access gained from Bedroom 2. The private area will be enclosed by a low level timber fence.

The existing entry level of the building is raised above street level. Access for users is therefore via external steps. All existing flats are accessed via communal external steps. The lower level flats are accessed via the front balcony area, and the upper floor flats have exposed private external staircases.

Whilst it isn't possible to fit in sufficient ramps or lifts to provide level access in the proposals, efforts have been made to improve the access to the building. Communal (enclosed) staircores are to be included at either end of the building. Access to the north-eastern stair is made via three external steps or use of the parking space as a ramp.

Entry to the south-western end of the building is reached via a replacement set of external steps. Once inside either staircore there are nine steps leading up to the entry level apartments. This level also affords access to the rear communal amenity area.

The site and building are not ideally located for solar gain for much of the day. The adjacent Ice House and the steep bank cast shadows across the site. The main street-facing elevation (north-west) receive sunlight later in the day.

Internally the apartments are predominantly arranged with the main habitable spaces (master bedroom, kitchens, dining and sitting areas) to the north-west side of the building - to benefit from the views to the River Wye and late afternoon and evening sun.

There is potential for an array of photovoltaic panels to be added to the roof of the south-west facing elevation. Further studies are required to assess the suitability of this array given the adjacent context.

The site is currently bounded with temporary fencing. The building appears run-down, with smashed windows and removed materials. The existing arrangement allows access directly to the front door of all flats. It is the intention of the proposals to create a secure buffer using the communal stair cores. The staircores also create a thermal buffer between the exterior and front door of each apartment, thus reducing some heating requirements. The existing garage areas are open, however the new proposals have metal gated entry for improved security and appearance.

Image 30 (right): Proposed Site Plan showing access into and through the building, and views out from primary spaces



5.3 BUILDING CONFIGURATION & HEIGHT

When measured in the centre of the building, the existing ridge is approximately 9.5m above the pavement level. The withdrawn 2019 proposal (by others) sought permission to increase the building by 5.75m. This was a significant increase that did not respect the context. These proposals would have resulted in a building that was too tall (and wide), and poorly sited against the adjacent listed buildings.

Effort has been made to carefully create an acceptable balance between the financial viability of the scheme (the need to add more units above the existing building) and responding to the context appropriately.

By undertaking a Pre-App Stride Treglown have been able to discuss the context and design with the Local Planning Authority. Following receipt of the Pre-App guidance, Stride Treglown have subsequently revised the design proposals. The applicant has engaged with the local community using graphics such as the sketches in images 31-33. The sketches demonstrate the appropriateness of this new application in comparison to the over-sized 2019 scheme (by others) and the linear form of the existing building.

Taking on board the Pre-App responses, the staircores were amended to be more integrated into the design. Inspired by the immediate and wider context, the staircores are part-housed in the gables. Externally this provides a reference to nearby buildings such as the British and Foreign School and the Royal Hotel. Internally this roof form allows the eaves and overall height of the building to be lowered. The roof form at the end of the building then allows light to the adjacent housing to the north-east, and reduces the obstruction to the views from the Ice House (see images 32 and 44).

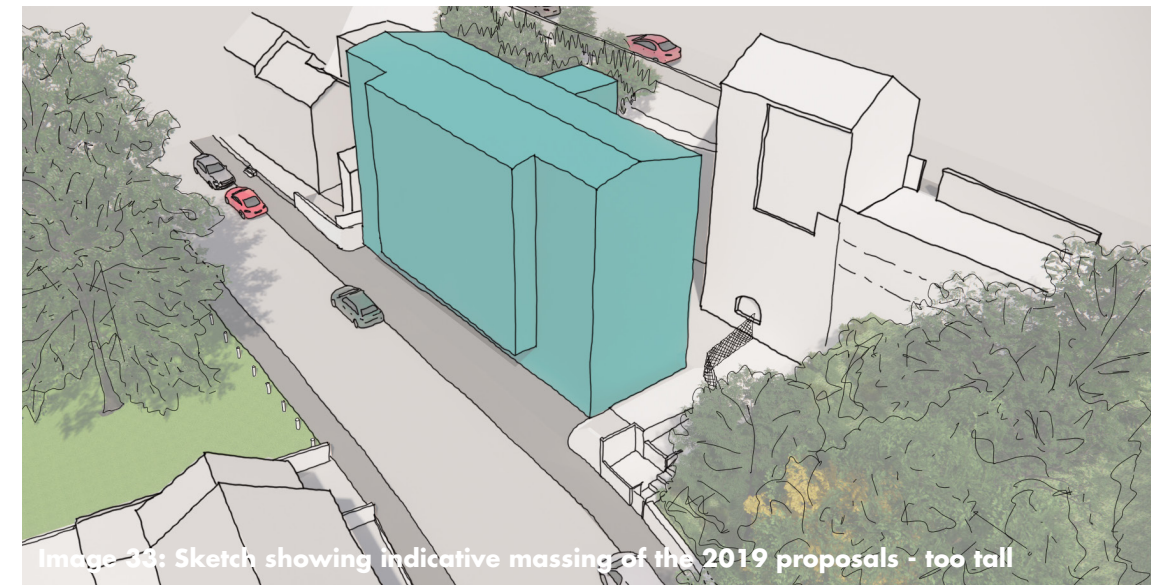
This application seeks to raise the ridge by 2.96m. This has been established using a street section assessment of potential overlooking and overbearing. As can be seen in images 34 & 35, the height of the proposed new ridge is not higher than the line drawn between the upper floor roof of No.23 Wye Street and the existing ridge of the Ice House. The trees on the steep bank form a backdrop to the site - the proposals have also been designed to not exceed this tree line, as viewed from the upper floor of No.23 Wye Street.

As is evident from the sketch in image 33, the height of the 2019 scheme did not respect these views, and greatly exceeded appropriate heights.

Several buildings in the Wye Street area regularly feature in photographs of the town. As has been established, the site does not feature in the main view from the A40 bridge over the River Wye. Historic photos show that the site is usually out of shot or obscured by the large mature trees on the west side of Wye Street.

The site will be seen on approach into the town via Wye Street. Whilst the building will be taller than the existing, buildings such as the tower and hotel on the elevated land to the east will still be seen on the approach. The extended building will also significantly improve the perception of this area of Wye Street - a gateway into the town.

In terms of the human scale of the proposals, the height of the building has been set to respond to the external parameters. The internal spaces of the upper floor are therefore designed at a minimum to create headroom for access, to be habitable and for the opening of sliding doors.



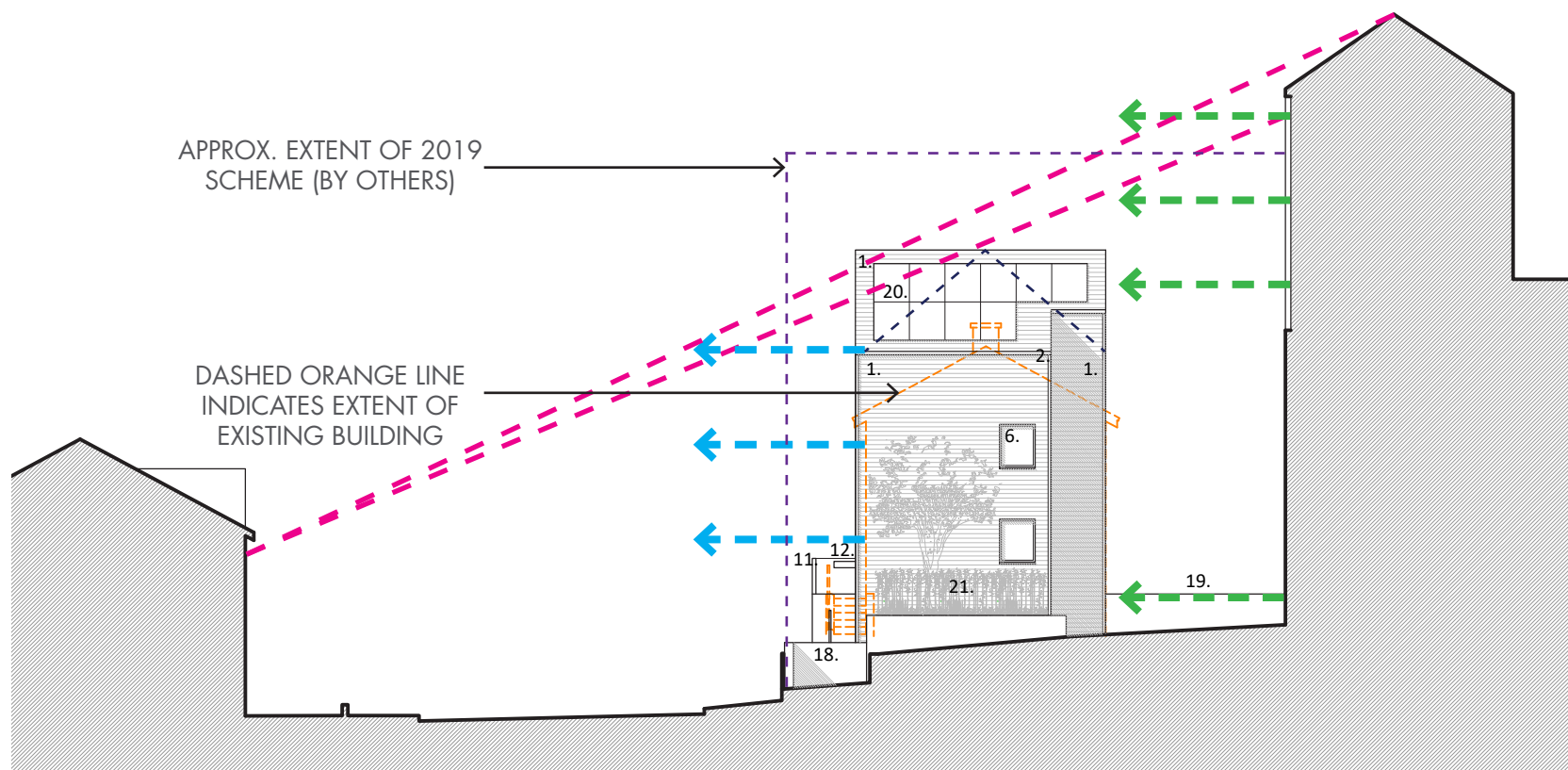
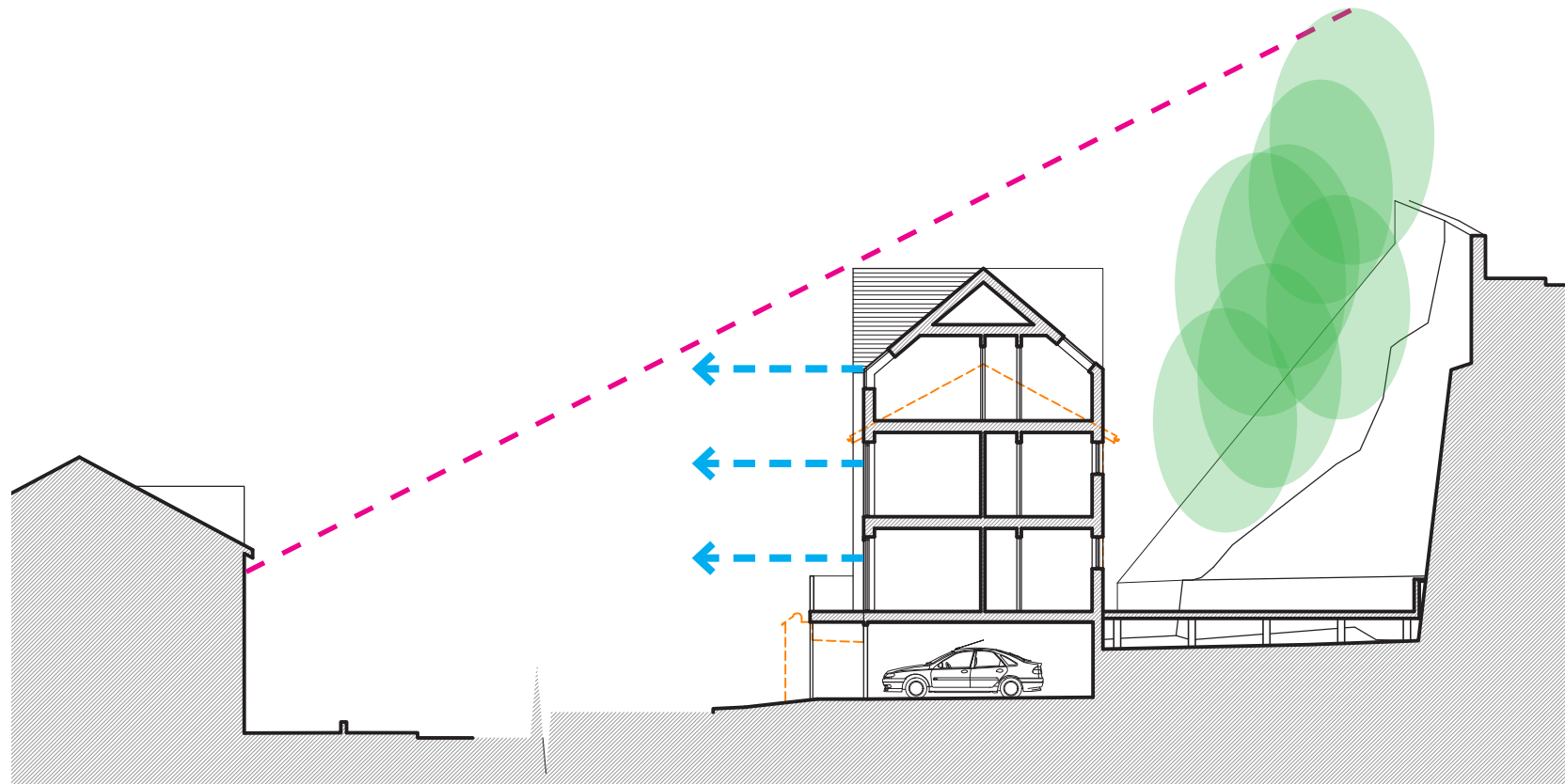


Image 34 (upper): Street and building section showing the proposed extended building lower than the tree-line when viewed from the upper floor of No.23

Image 35 (lower): Street section and elevation showing the views out from the proposed extended building and the existing Ice House

5.4 APPEARANCE & MATERIALS

Following the feedback of the Pre-App response, the proposed appearance has been inspired by the immediate context as well as buildings in the wider area. The gables reference the Royal Hotel and British and Foreign school, both of which have north-west facing gables. As per the guidance, there are now an odd number of gables – one at either end of the building, and one centrally.

The existing building has a linear appearance, with little layering or relief. The proposals in this application seek to provide improved layering, to respond to the rhythm of the street. The protruding gable frames break down the mass of the building into vertical segments more inline with the scale of the stepping of the existing buildings of Wye Street.

The gables also respond to the two-storey white rendered buildings west of the site on Wye Street.

As can be seen in images 36-43, the existing buildings on Wye Street are a mix of coloured render, stone and painted brick, with slate roofs. The proposed materials in this application reference the materials used on Wye Street and in the local area. Slate is used for the roofs, and is wrapped down the walls at either end of the building, and to the edge of each protruding gable frame. Stone cladding is used as a plinth, and also to the walls between the gables. Render is then proposed to each gable. The rear of the building, which is likely to be largely unseen, is to be rendered and far simpler in its detailing.

Standing seam metal roof canopies are located above each entrance to provide cover. The patterned metal gates to the bin and bike stores and each garage provide some interest at street level. Existing brickwork near the garage entrances is to be painted to match the colour of the metal gates.

White painted timber frame windows are used on the existing building. The proposed windows, doors and spandrels panels are to be dark grey. There is precedent in the vicinity for the extent of glazing, frame colour and modern glass balustrades and balconies. The Ice House has a large area of fenestration to the upper levels of the building. A modern addition adjacent to the British and Foreign School demonstrates how modern design can work successfully in this context.

By using projecting gable frames and appearing to set glazing back in the facade, the extent of the glazing will appear reduced when the building is viewed along Wye Street. The glazed areas to the street elevation therefore take advantage of the view to the River Wye, whilst being offered some shelter by means of the gable frames.

Overall the appearance of the new building is a contemporary interpretation of the context, with a suitable mass, form, scale and materials palette.

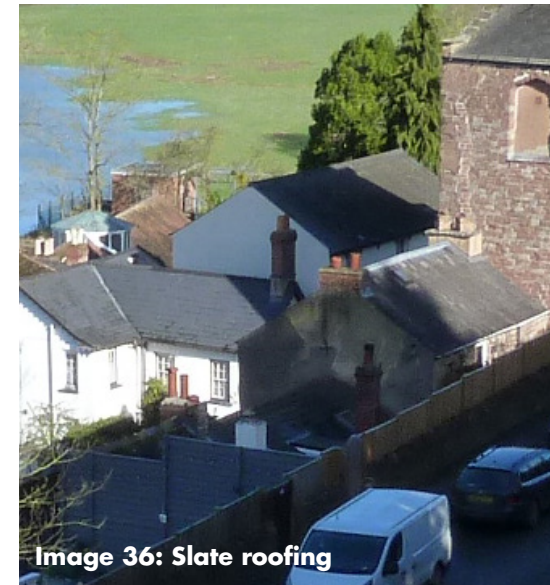


Image 36: Slate roofing



Image 37: White render and dark barge

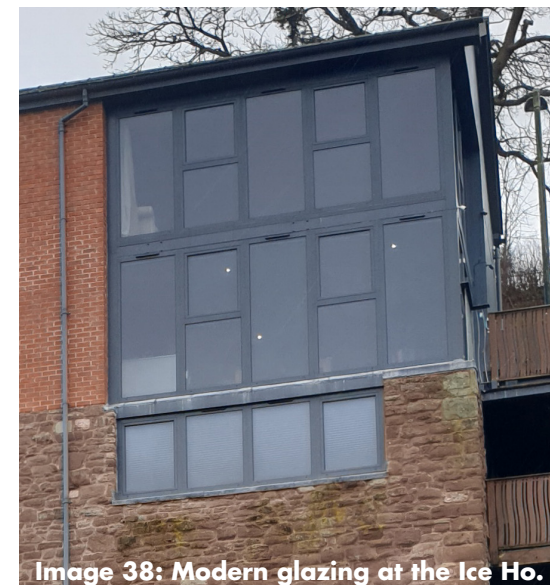


Image 38: Modern glazing at the Ice Ho.

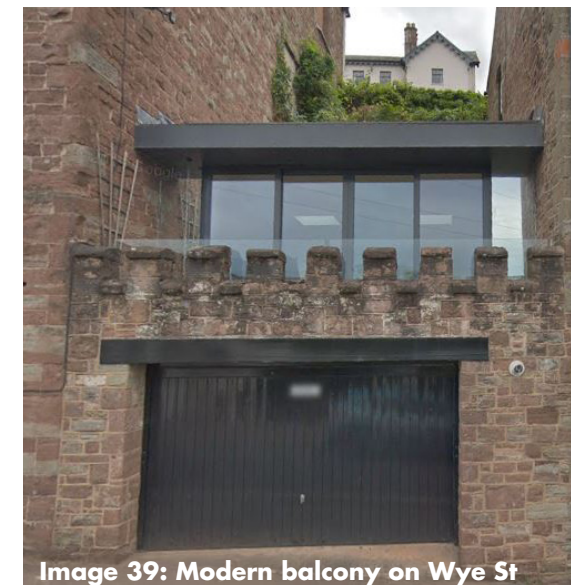


Image 39: Modern balcony on Wye St



Image 40: Painted brickwork on Wye St



Image 41: Colour & balconies on Wye St

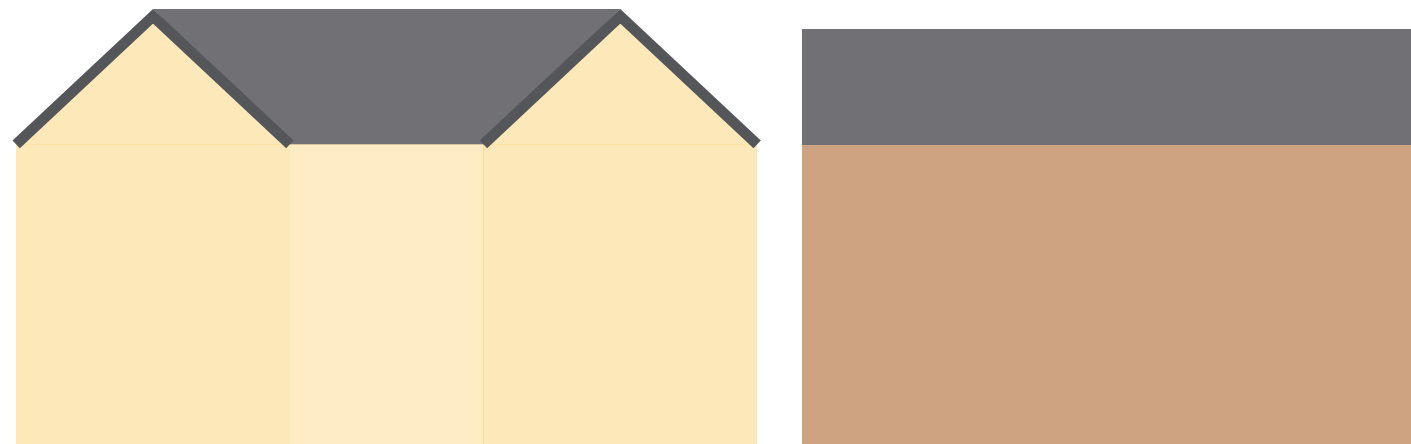


Image 42: Diagrammatic elevations of The Royal Hotel (left) and sandstone buildings on Wye Street



Image 43: The British and Foreign School, Royal Hotel and listed stone buildings on Wye Street

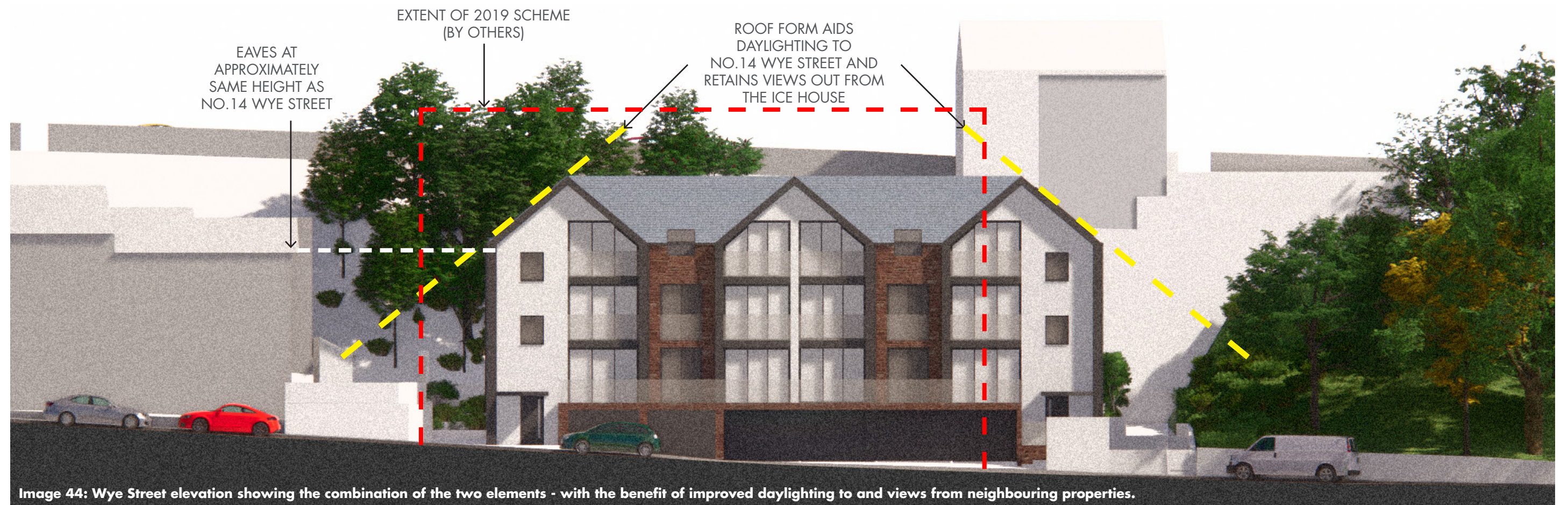


Image 44: Wye Street elevation showing the combination of the two elements - with the benefit of improved daylighting to and views from neighbouring properties.



5.5 HERITAGE IMPACT

As has been established in previous sections of this statement, the proposals will reference the local forms and materials of this area of Ross-on-Wye. The contemporary form of the proposals will allow the building to contribute positively to its context by referencing the listed buildings without seeking to produce a carbon copy or mislead with respect to the era of construction. The building will be legible as a new intervention, but one inspired by the local context.

Image 44 shows the positive impact of the gable ends of the building. The roof form here allows improved daylighting to the listed building to the north-east.

Previously approval has been granted for an extension up to the north-eastern boundary. This structure would have masked the end gable of No.14 Wye Street. The new proposals allow a view to the gable, but help to mask most of the recent lean-to extension.

Other proposals for the site have sought to increase the overall height of the building, bring the building line forward and revert to a flat roof structure.

The height of the proposals in this new application reduces the impact on the neighbouring listed building. Image 44 shows that the eaves of the proposed gable is set at approximately the same height of No.14 Wye Street, and the ridge positioned approximately in line with No.13 Wye Street.

Due to the appropriate height of this new proposal, the scheme does not impact the setting of the other listed buildings in the area. The building is seen set with the steep bank, trees and Wilton Road as a backdrop.

By retaining the existing trees and vegetation on the steep bank along the south-east boundary of the site the building is obscured from view from The Prospect (see image 49 below).



5.6 LANDSCAPING

The existing site is predominantly hard landscaped, with an area of unplanned / overgrown planting to the steep bank behind. Hard landscaping takes the form of paving to the north-east of the site, with a 2m high wall and timber fence providing the boundary treatment.

The proposed scheme aims to retain the rear paved area for communal use. The junction between the rear paved area and the north-eastern end parking space is to be a stepped planting bed - to provide a level of security and visual interest.

At the south-western end of the building a planting will allow bushes and a small tree to grow against the backdrop of the proposed slate wall. This contrast will provide a pleasant view on approach into the town.

Planting is also provided between the communal amenity area and the adjacent electricity sub station and Ice House.