



Artist's impression of the proposals

Welcome

Welcome to this public exhibition about proposals for the Watch Tower House site in Mill Hill, and the adjacent Kingdom Hall.

Our vision is to create a series of modern and thoughtfully designed homes intended for a retired generation who seek social engagement and an active lifestyle in retired life, meeting the need for new senior living homes in the area. These new homes will sit alongside a series of new public spaces, including a community hub building for a range of uses and a new three-hectare wild common.

On these boards and via the website you will find information about the proposals and details of how you can provide your feedback before a planning application is submitted to the London Borough of Barnet.

You may have already seen an earlier iteration of our plans online or at the public webinar that we held in May 2021. Since then, the design team, led by Barr Gazetas, has considered all the feedback received and worked to refine this vision to create a scheme that reflects the spirit of the existing community and the surroundings of Mill Hill's beautiful Conservation Area.

Once you've had a chance to read through these boards or spoken to the project team, you can provide your feedback by:



Visiting the website
www.MarsteadMillHill.co.uk



Emailing
watchtowerhouse@londoncommunications.co.uk



Calling **0800 3077 571**



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The scheme at a glance

By listening to local people and representatives over the last six months our specialist design team, led by Barr Gazetas and landscape architects Exterior Architecture, have created proposals that we believe respond to local need and policy, and both respect and enhance the surroundings. We hope you agree.

Overall, the proposals will create:

1. A new three-hectare common

for the public to use and enjoy

2. New senior living homes

meeting the significant identified need for such housing in Mill Hill and Barnet

3. A development nestled in its landscape

and sat behind trees which surround the site from all sides

4. A masterplan shaped by the beautiful cedars

and other prominent trees around the site, with an increase in the number of trees overall

5. Facilities that improve the quality of life for senior residents

such as a hydrotherapy pool and arts space

6. An increase in green space

compared with the existing Watch Tower House, by reducing the extent of the built up part of the site

7. A new farmhouse café and shop

for community use

8. A new long-term owner and neighbour

committed to being part of the Mill Hill Community

9. New affordable housing

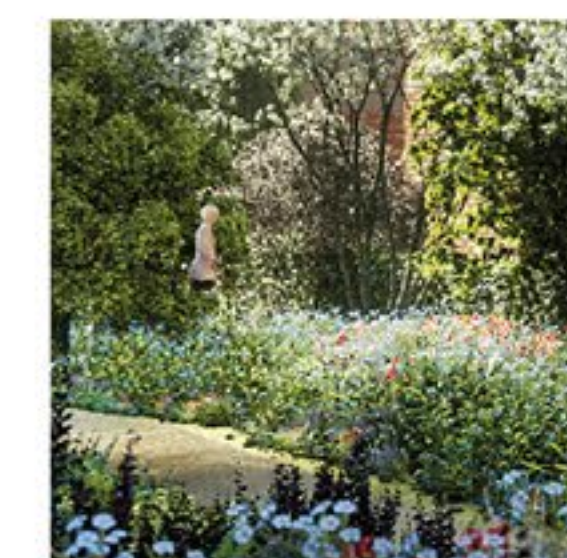
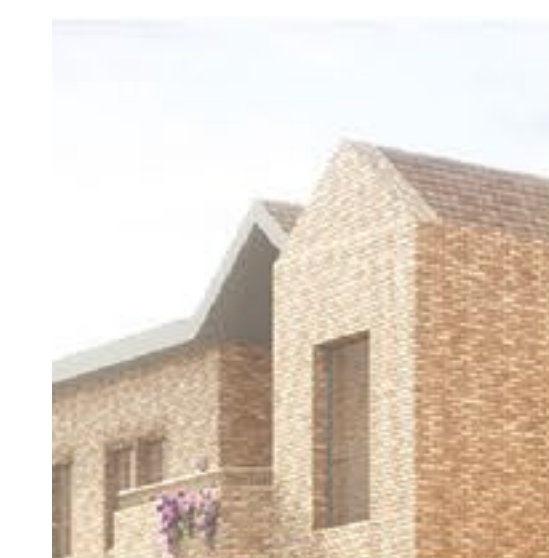
to help support those in need

10. Reduced pressure on local services

such as GP surgeries, by providing care on site



Artist's impression from Cedar Square



1

2

3

4

5

6

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The Watch Tower House Team

Marstead Living



The Marstead Living team has over fifty years of combined real estate development and operational experience in London and the UK. We are both developers and operators in the hospitality sector, creating specialised housing for ageing demographics. As operators, we naturally take a long-term interest in our projects.

We aim to give senior people complete peace of mind, helping them to live independently in the comfort and security of their own homes and to engage in meaningful social interaction within a vibrant peer community.

Barr Gazetas

BARR GAZETAS

Lead architects

Architecture, master planning and interior design practice Barr Gazetas was established in 1993 after a competition win for a sustainable village in Hydra. Today we work on award winning projects across the UK and are known for a progressive approach to design and placemaking. Barr Gazetas puts people, sustainability and wellness at the centre of every project, creating spaces and places to make life better.

Exterior Architecture

EXTERIOR
ARCHITECTURE

Landscape architects

Exterior Architecture (ExA) is an award-winning team of creative and innovative Landscape Architects in the United Kingdom. Its London and Manchester based studios work on a range of projects including master planning, public realm, green spaces and infrastructure, mixed use and residential developments, leisure, and resorts.



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The site & context

Watch Tower House is a large outdated 1950s building that was until recently home to the operations of the International Bible Student Association (Jehovah's Witnesses), who have now moved to other premises. The next door site is known as Kingdom Hall, which also formed part of the IBSA community but is now vacant.

According to local planning policy and our own architectural and heritage specialists neither of these buildings has any particular architectural interest and they do not contribute to the Mill Hill Conservation Area in which they sit. The Watch Tower House site is however identified for allocation in Barnet's draft Local Plan to provide homes, community uses and open space, and sits within the Mill Hill East Growth Area.

Watch Tower House is made up of a central building with several wings, a number of outbuildings, tarmac, concrete service roads and car parks. As shown in the pictures below, the developed footprint of the existing buildings and car park is quite extensive, despite the site falling within the Greenbelt. Reclaiming and greening some of this space is a significant part of our thinking.

The site benefits from a dense perimeter of boundary trees which largely screen the site from its surroundings. Sat on the brow of the hill, the site also slopes down significantly as you move further south as is shown in the image below.

The Kingdom Hall site includes a one and a half storey hall at the very north of the site, and a large maintenance shed area by the Ridgeway. The vast majority of the site is taken up by a large field to the south of the hall, which is currently private and inaccessible to the public.



Aerial image showing the Watch Tower House and Kingdom Hall sites



The existing Watch Tower House building



Existing field at the Kingdom Hall site.

Your feedback & our response

Marstead Living very much wants to be part of the Mill Hill community for many years to come as the long-term owner and manager of the new development. As such, the ML team is committed to being a good neighbour and to contributing positively to the community and environment of Mill Hill.

Over the last six months we have been talking to many of you along with many community representatives about what you think the area needs and your concerns about any future development here. From April to September 2021 we undertook our first phase of public consultation on the proposals, which included:

A public webinar

attended by 52 people.

Social media adverts reaching over

43,000 people locally

Two adverts

in the Barnet Borough Times.

Regular letters

sent to local stakeholders

2,000 flyers

sent to local residents and businesses

8 meetings

with local stakeholders and representatives, including two meetings with the Mill Hill Preservation Society and local ward councillors.

Consultation website

launched providing details of the emerging scheme

Via our website, survey, and webinar we received plenty of valuable feedback from the local community, and since then we have spent four months reflecting on the comments received and evolving our designs in response. After also receiving feedback from planning officers at the LB Barnet and the Greater London Authority, we have refined our proposals.

You said, we did



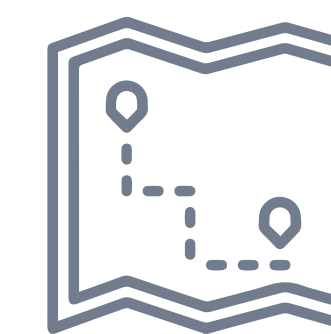
“Ensure the height is in keeping with surrounding buildings so there is minimal impact on views.”

We have reduced the height of the buildings in our masterplan by one to two storeys, so that the buildings will be up to five storeys at most – just a storey taller than they are currently. The tallest buildings will be towards the centre of the site, which along with tree cover means there will be minimal impact on views.



“There should be plenty of car parking spaces to avoid residents parking on the Ridgeway.”

We are now proposing to create a new underground car park to ensure there are plenty of spaces for residents and visitors and allowing us to dedicate more of the ground level to green space. There will also be short-stay spaces for those visiting the farmshop and café.



“The buildings should be located well away from homes on the Ridgeway and Bittacy Park Avenue.”

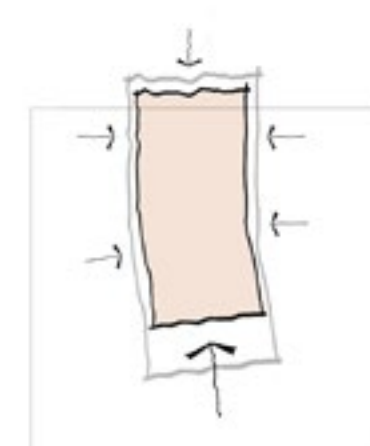
We have moved all the proposed buildings in our plans to the West by 9 metres, which means the buildings are at least 20m away from nearby residents. We have also demonstrated the impact on the area by commissioning a series of proposed views that we are sharing with you today.



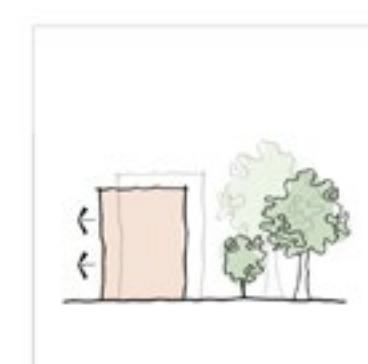
“The site could be more open and accessible to the public.”

We are opening up access to a substantial, new three-hectare public common on the Kingdom Hall site, that will not only help improve biodiversity, but offer a fantastic new peaceful green space for community use. In addition, we will be creating a new café and farm shop building, that can act as a communal meeting point in the area.

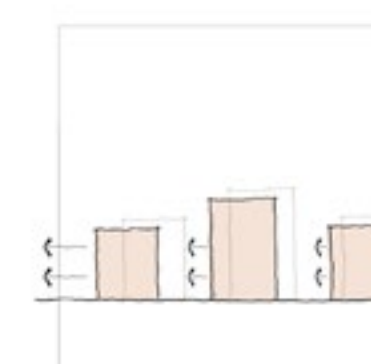
A summary of the key design moves



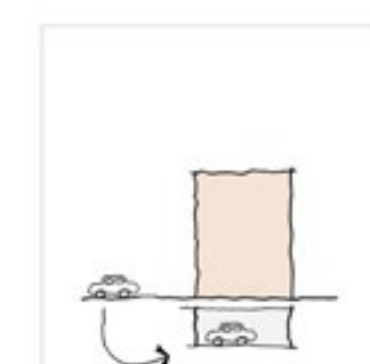
01 Reduced building footprints



02 Retain all trees on east boundary of the site



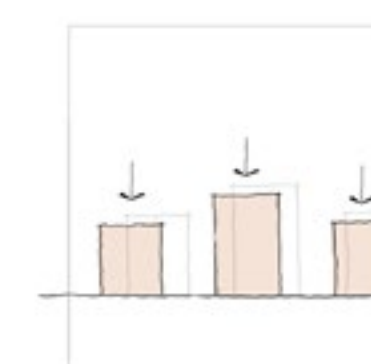
03 Move buildings to the west and away from the eastern boundary



04 Move residents parking below ground to protect trees and create a safer car-free environment



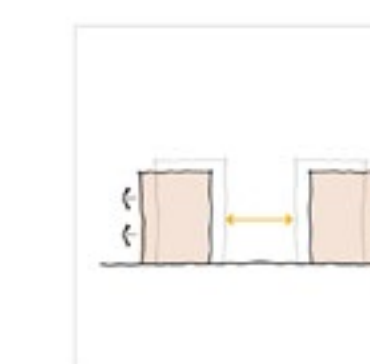
05 Planting new trees to enhance biodiversity



06 Reduce building heights



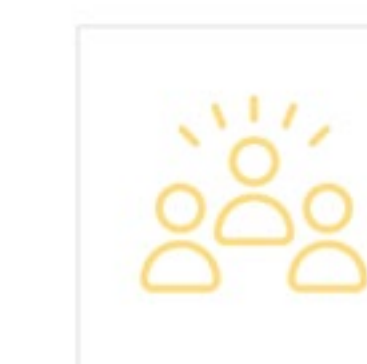
07 Further reduce amount of hard standing (roads and car parks)



08 Increase space between buildings



09 Increase in openness of the green belt from existing



10 Optimising community benefits

Design principles

Our vision is to create a place that is nestled respectfully into its surroundings with architecture that reflects the character of Mill Hill. We are also excited to be opening up a series of green spaces to local people and encouraging biodiversity through our landscaping strategy.

In order to do this, we have worked with our lead architects Barr Gazetas to develop a strict set of principles that have guided the plans that you see today. This includes:



Increasing the proportion of the Watch Tower House site that is permanently open 'green' land through the removal of a substantial amount of hard standing, including the large amounts of tarmacked and concrete car park areas that are currently there.



Situating the majority of the new development to the northern part of the Watch Tower House site in order to keep the southern gardens and green areas permanently open.



Using existing trees, including the prominent cedars, oaks and pines to guide the masterplan and similarly use boundary trees and vegetation to visually screen the new buildings and minimise their visibility from outside of the site.



Providing much-needed affordable housing on the north of the Kingdom Hall site, and opening up the large open three-hectare field at the south to the public for the first time in a generation.



Laying out buildings in a manner that creates views through the site, reducing the impact when viewed from the Ridgeway and encouraging better use of the gardens and landscaped areas.

As you read on we hope you will see how and where we have demonstrated these principles in our proposals.



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The updated masterplan

The setting in this beautiful part of north London is a huge part of the draw and the proposed masterplan reflects that, creating homes and spaces that sit sensitively within their surroundings and the existing trees on site.

The new homes will be set in buildings around a central square, concentrated towards the north of the site, and pulled away from the site boundaries.



Existing



As proposed at the public webinar May 2021

Overall, the masterplan comprises of:



180 senior living homes

Around 180 much needed and beautifully designed senior living homes at the Watch Tower House site, alongside the provision of new affordable homes for families on the northern part of the Kingdom Hall site.



More green space

More green space through the removal of concrete and tarmac areas, delivering a net gain in overall green space.



Extensive new planting of trees

Retention of the majority of trees in and around the perimeter of the site and extensive new planting to retain and enhance its character and natural boundaries.



A three-hectare common

The opening up of the adjacent field on the Kingdom Hall site to provide approximately three hectares of public open space as a 'wild common' – a new benefit for the area which was previously closed to local residents. This includes improvements to the public Right of Way, such as a much needed cycling route and a connection into the field.



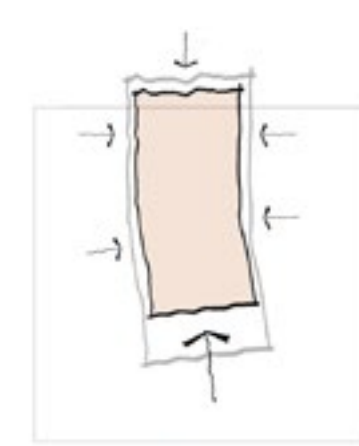
New amenities for the community

New amenities for the community, including a new community hub building with potential for a farmhouse café, shop, bookable meeting rooms and other community uses.

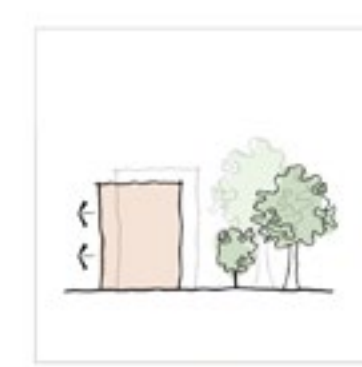


Current proposals, November 2021

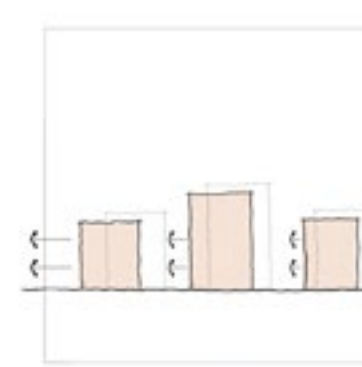
A recap of the key design moves



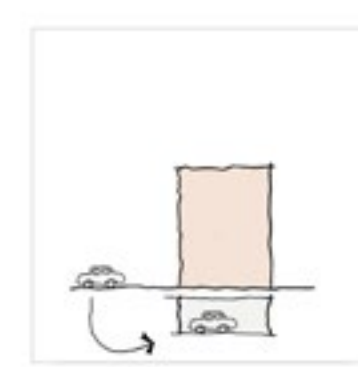
01 Reduced building footprints



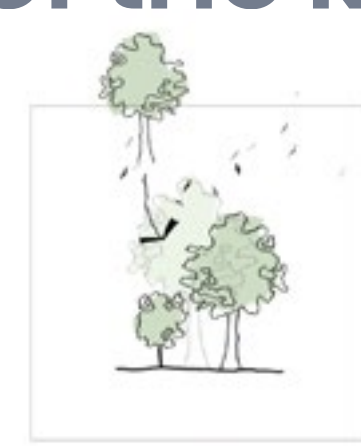
02 Retain all trees on east boundary of the site



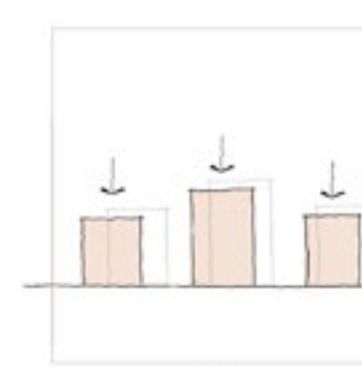
03 Move buildings to the west and away from the eastern boundary



04 Move residents parking below ground to protect trees and create a safer car-free environment



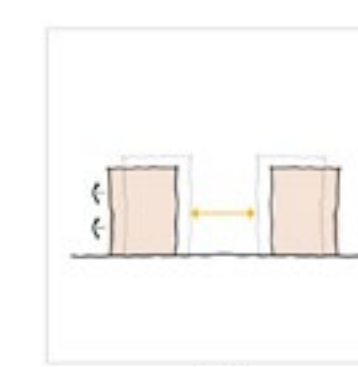
05 Planting new trees to enhance biodiversity



06 Reduce building heights



07 Further reduce amount of hard standing (roads and car parks) by 56%



08 Increase space between buildings



09 Increase in openness of the green belt from existing by 6%



10 Optimising community benefits

Creating the right type of specialist older persons' housing

There is a clear and growing need to build homes for people who are over 65 and still active and independent, in search of the right environment, amenities and community to suit this next stage of their lives. Marstead Living wants to make it easier for older people to 'right-size', to create a place that enables long, healthy and happy lives and in turn free up larger family homes and reduce the pressure on local health and social care services.

The homes we are proposing would be for sale and intended to allow Barnet residents to lead more independent lives, in their own homes, and for longer. For example, by providing communal facilities managed by Marstead Living on site, we can create a sense of belonging, social and community engagement and encourage and facilitate healthy, active lifestyles. These facilities include:

A restaurant and dining area

for communal eating and functions – though residents will also have their own kitchen and dining areas in their own homes too

Kitchen and growing gardens

including orchards and vegetable gardens

A range of beautifully designed and fully-accessible gardens

that extend south of the site

A gym and small pool

for hydrotherapy sessions

Potential for doggy day care

allowing residents to continue to live with these special companions much later into life than would otherwise

Lounges and a library

for relaxing and spending time in a communal environment

Personal and nursing care services will also be provided by permanent on-site staff for residents who need this service, alongside an out-of-hours call service for round-the-clock support.

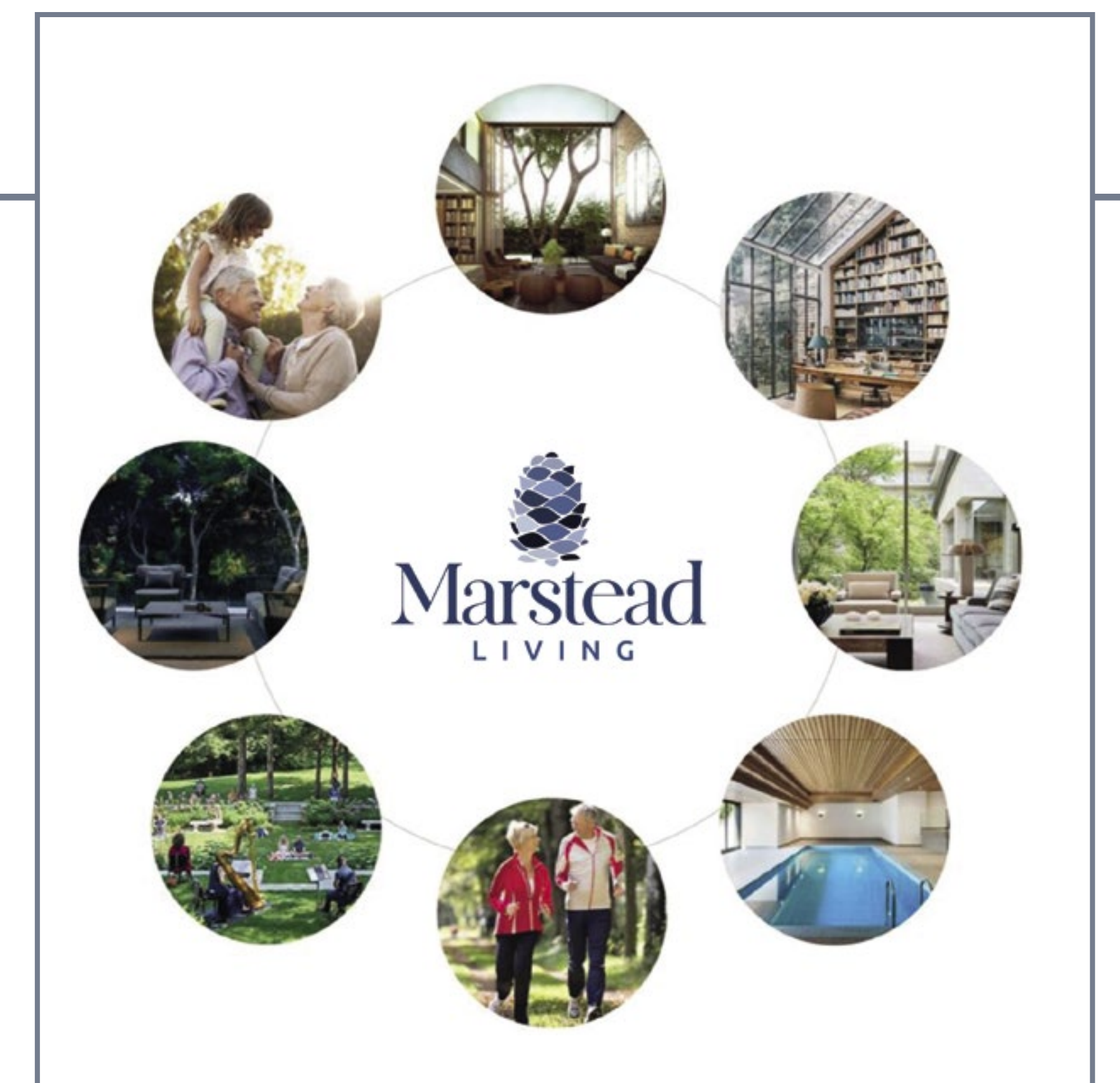
The 2019 Extra Care Report found that those who benefited from these types of facilities and access to on-site care were less likely to visit local GPs and spend time in hospital. Indeed, the Report concluded that living in Extra Care saved the NHS around £1,944 per person on average over five years.

Establishing the need here in Barnet

The London Borough of Barnet has a fast-growing community of over-65's, often still living in their family homes, which may no longer be fit for purpose, but with no better option to suit their needs.

By 2041, the London Borough of Barnet is projected to have 25,450 more residents over the age of 60 and 27,300 more residents over the age of 75. This means the Borough will need 6,900 new specialist homes for older people (SOPH) over the next 30 years, or 276 per year.

The need is particularly acute in Mill Hill, as in ten years' time 56% of the population will be aged over 65. The need for SOPH in London and Barnet in particular is supported in both the latest London Plan and the Barnet Local Plan.



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A scheme nestled within its setting

By understanding the existing landscape and through responsive, sensitive design, architects Barr Gazetas and landscape architects Exterior Architecture have created a scheme that will deliver the types of homes that Barnet desperately needs, whilst remaining nestled into its surroundings in such a way that it will create almost no visual impact on the local area.

The new buildings will be between two and five storeys – approximately a storey taller than the existing Watch Tower House building – with the tallest elements deliberately situated back from the Ridgeway and neighbouring homes. With the dense tree coverage along the perimeter of the site, this means the new building will have very little visual impact on the surrounding area, as is demonstrated by the series of wire line drawings to the right. The site also benefits from a significant slope north to south, which means that while still five storeys, the buildings further south are only roughly three storeys above the Ridgeway.



An artist's impression of the proposals

That said, we do not want this site to be separate from the public as the integration between new residents and the area is key to making sure that we can contribute positively to the community here and give residents a great quality of life. That is why we are proposing to open up access to the buildings at the north of the site with the creation of a farmhouse café, shop and community hub.

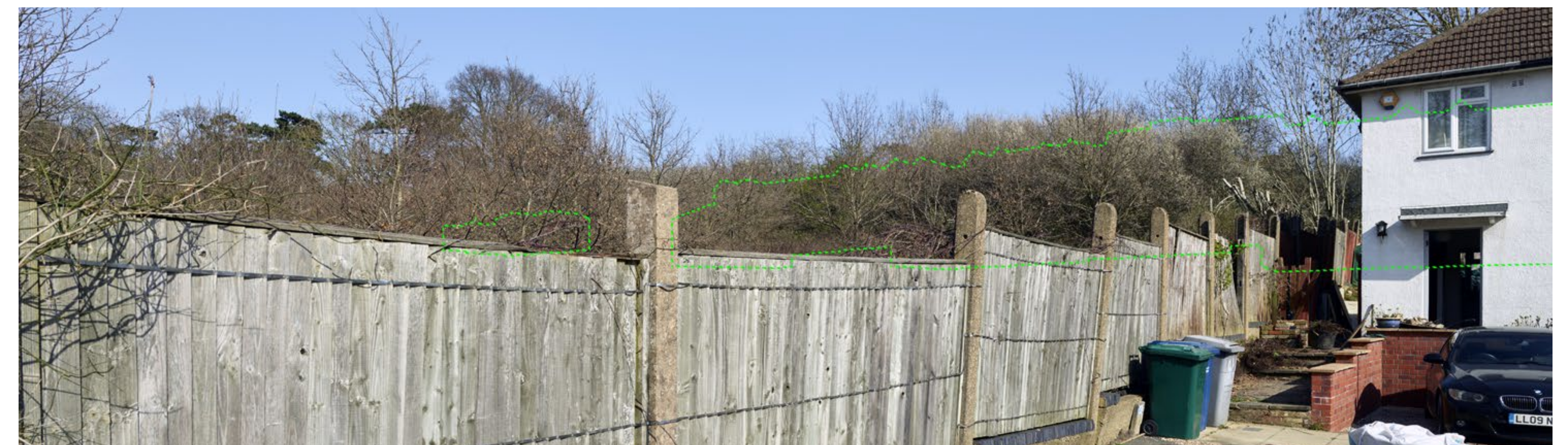
The below views show where the building sits behind natural features such as trees and woodland. As is the case with the existing buildings, it will be possible to see glimpses of the buildings through the trees when viewed from the Kingdom Hall field, however views from the Ridgeway will be limited. Overall, the visual impact of the proposals compared to the existing will be negligible. These images have been produced independently and verified by the Council.



The proposed as viewed from the Adam & Eve pub on the Ridgeway



The proposed as viewed from the Ridgeway



The proposed as viewed from Engel Park

Creating more public green space and increasing biodiversity

Our proposals will create a new three-hectare common by opening up public access to the large meadow that sits within the Kingdom Hall site, that is currently inaccessible to the public. At the same time, we will be removing the large tarmacked car park areas that currently sit on the Watch Tower House site, to give more of the development back to nature in a process of 're-greening'.



Existing

Proposed

The new common will be three hectares in size and will be a peaceful area for the public to use, enjoy and pass through. It will be maintained and managed by Marstead Living.

Our landscape specialists have also been considering how we can expand and upgrade the green spaces and planting on the Watch Tower House site. With parking now underground more of the site will be dedicated to green space. Even without the new common there will be a 6% net increase in green space.

Shown in the diagram to the left you can see the grey areas to the south that we are proposing to remove, and how this creates the uplift in green space.



An artist's impression of the common looking south



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Respecting and adding to existing plant life

We are blessed here with some spectacular mature trees, including a cedar that is over 400 years old. We have shaped our masterplan around these natural features, giving them greater prominence. By retaining as many trees as possible and through planting a range of new, climate-resilient trees, we will actually increase the number of trees on site overall.

Our strategy responds to the feedback from our first public consultation, at which many local people rightly said that they want us to preserve and protect the trees on site. None of the most significant trees (also known as 'Grade A' trees) will be removed from the site, and there are only a limited number of younger trees, including certain invasive species, that will be removed to accommodate new buildings. These trees are shown in the plan below. The new trees we will plant will also help further shield the new buildings from external view.

Tree Strategy

- Existing tree to be retained
- Existing tree to be removed
- Existing tree to be moved
- Proposed tree



Previous masterplan



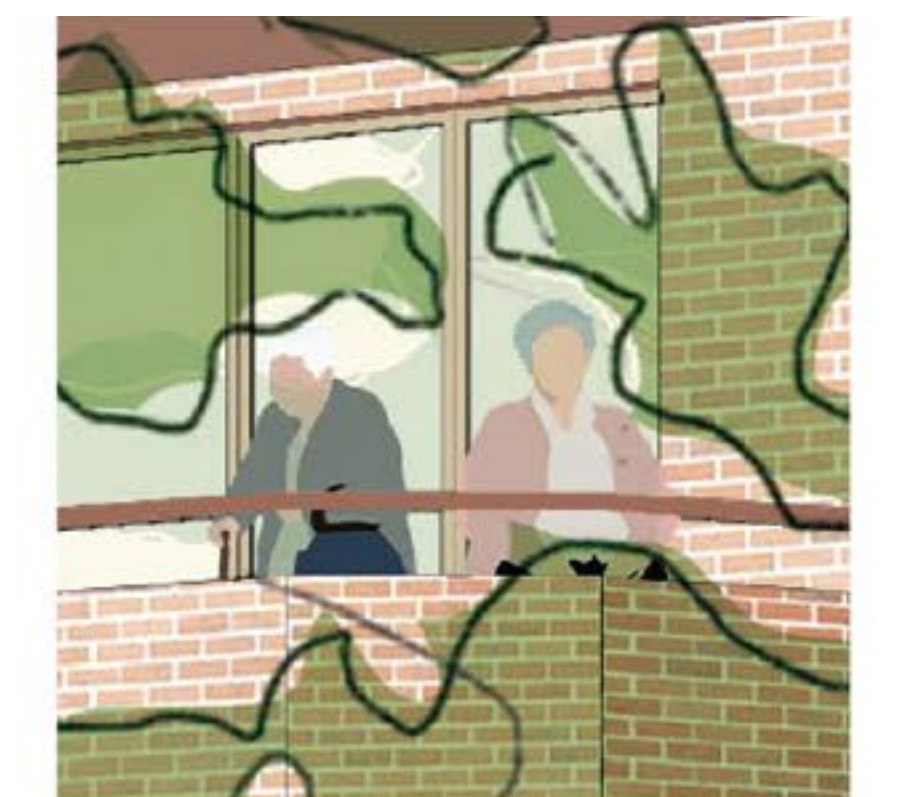
Proposed

Creating beautiful architecture

Our design is about the experience, spirit of place and celebrates the incredible trees, flora and fauna. The buildings are designed to respond to the local character and context and to compliment the trees and views.

The design of the Kingdom Hall housing, Community hub and the Ridgeway gateway building on the Watch Tower House site is directly influenced by the richness found in the Conservation Area. They are high quality, small scale and carefully considered.

Once you are past the tree-lined Ridgeway, a collection of individual buildings with unique characteristics and quality, bound by a landscape plan that draws the Green Belt up the site and into the heart of the development, can be enjoyed by the residents. We have carefully crafted six key components to define homes that although hidden from the public view, enhance the Conservation Area.



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Site access and parking

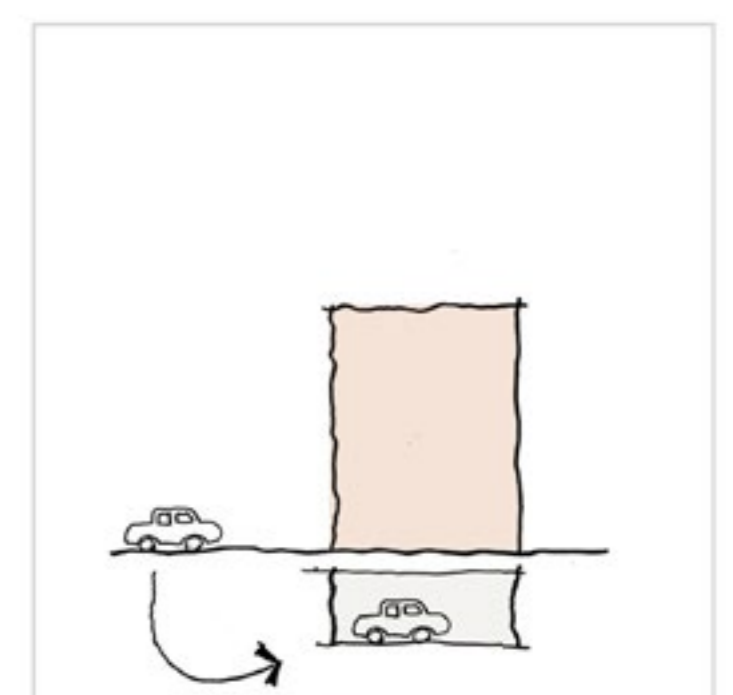
In our first consultation, many local people said they were concerned about an increase in vehicle traffic and congestion caused by guests and visitors. Our strategy, worked up in conjunction with transport consultants ARUP, will in fact see fewer cars visiting the site each day, compared to when the site was previously in operation.

We are now proposing to excavate a basement level to create a new underground car park, with all the parking spaces needed to cater for residents, staff and visitors. This will mean that no visitors will need to park on the Ridgeway, and that a larger portion of the ground level on our site can be dedicated to green space.

There will also be a number of parking spaces for the new farmhouse café at the north of the site, reducing pressure on the Ridgeway.

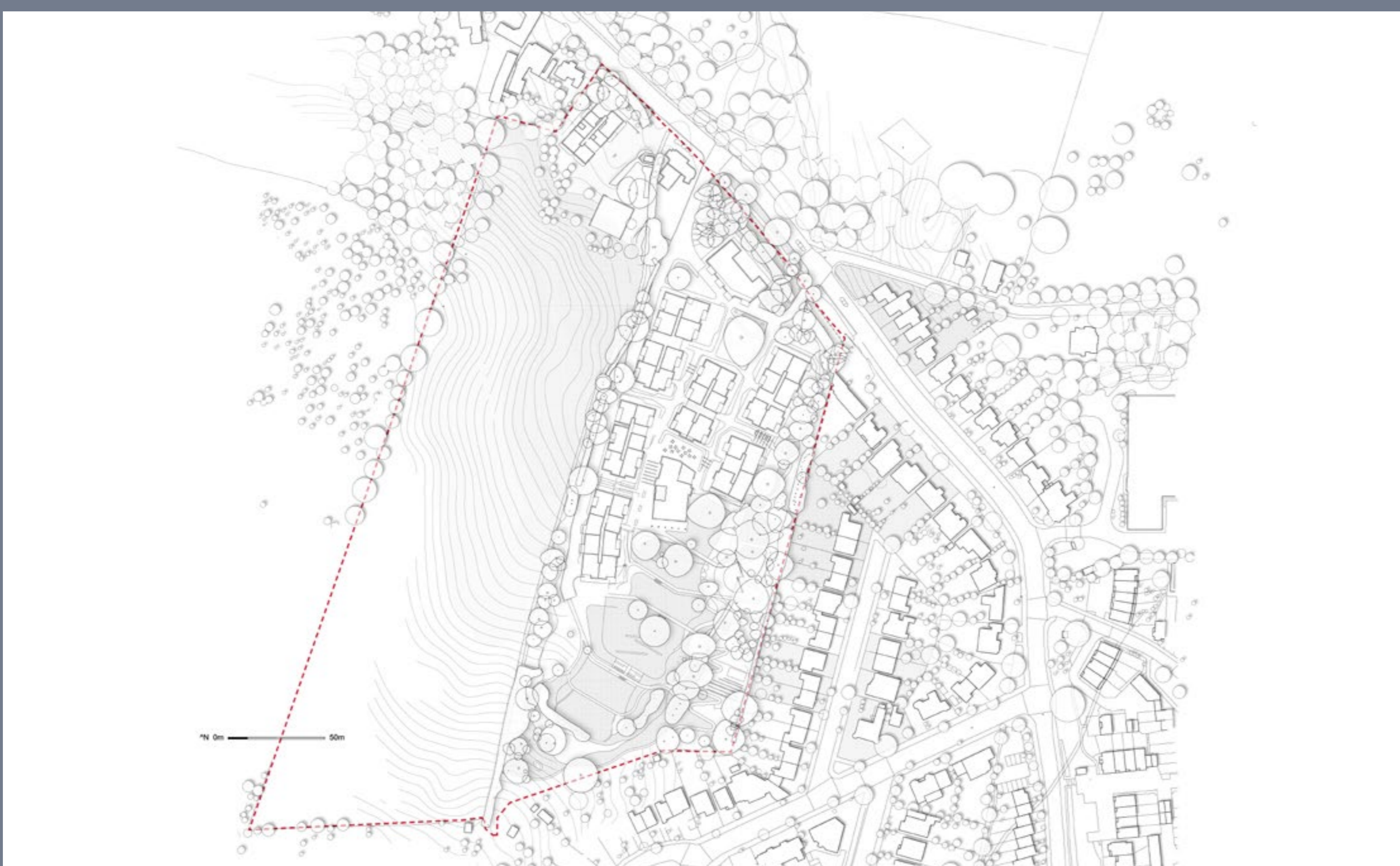
Marstead Living will offer an on-site electric car club for our residents, as well as a dedicated mini-bus. That said, our research shows that people over 65, especially those who live in these types of communities, have different travel patterns, and the number of parking spaces for residents will take into account the public transport links nearby. These links include the 240 bus route which stops outside the site, and Mill Hill East tube station which is under 1km away. We also anticipate that there will be less cars and people visiting the site each day than when ISBA operated here.

Our response to feedback



04

Move residents parking below ground to protect trees and create a safer car-free environment



The proposed masterplan



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Managing construction

Marstead Living are committed to being a long-term neighbour. As such, we will ensure the construction works are completed sensitively and that there are measures in place to ensure they are well-managed.

A Construction Management Plan (CMP) will be submitted with the planning application, setting out how the construction process will be managed to minimise disruption. Works will also be limited to the London Borough of Barnet's set hours, which are Monday to Friday between 8am to 6pm and on Saturdays between 8am to 1pm.

In addition, we are currently looking at methods of modular construction, which will help reduce construction time on site by seeing parts of the development built off-site before then being delivered to the development.

During construction, Marstead Living is committed to continuing on a regular basis to engage with the community to ensure any issues are addressed in a mutually beneficial way. This will include the creation of a community liaison group that will meet regularly with Marstead and our appointed contractor to discuss the programme of works coming forward, along with the issuing of newsletters locally.

We will also be appointing a contractor who is part of the Considerate Constructors Scheme, a not-for-profit, national organisation that commits those sites, companies and suppliers registered with the Scheme to care about appearance, respect the community, protect the environment, care about safety and value their workforce. This includes having a dedicated Community Liaison Officer, who residents can get in touch with throughout construction if they have any issues or concerns.

Next steps & feedback

Thank you for attending our public exhibition – we now want to hear your views on our proposals.

You can fill out one of the feedback forms provided and leave it with us, or fill out our digital survey online using an iPad provided. We will then consider all comments received over the coming weeks, and integrate feedback received wherever possible into our proposals before a planning application is submitted later this year.

After two extensive phases of public consultation over six months, Marstead Living are committed to further dialogue and consultation beyond the planning process and during construction. If you are interested in hearing more about this process, then please don't hesitate to get in contact with the team.

If you have any comments or questions you can contact us using the details below:



Visiting the website: www.MarsteadMillHill.co.uk



Emailing: watchtowerhouse@londoncommunications.co.uk



Calling: 0800 3077 571



Scan me to visit the website!



Artists illustration of a resident's view



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