

14
Principle 10

A framework for inspirational
design





Aerial view from Manor House



Aerial view from Finsbury Park



View from the south-west: buildings open out to the waterfront



A new park in the south-west will be a major new feature

14

Principle 10

A framework for inspirational design

14.1 Overview

14.1.1

This section establishes key principles relating to how the Masterplan is envisaged to be articulated in the third dimension. Residents have emphasised that as well as the need for high quality internal space standards, external aesthetic appearance is of huge importance and indeed this will play a major role in determining the character and perceived image of the new Woodberry Down.

14.1.2

Woodberry Down provides a unique landscape setting – with the ridgeline topography, water frontage, panoramic views, generous mature tree cover and nearby parkland providing the basis for a localised architectural response. In expressing a contemporary form rooted in the landscape there is also considerable scope for exploiting environmental design influences (in particular solar gain) to generate exciting new forms and help establish Woodberry Down at the leading edge of sustainable community regeneration.

14.2 Ensuring design quality

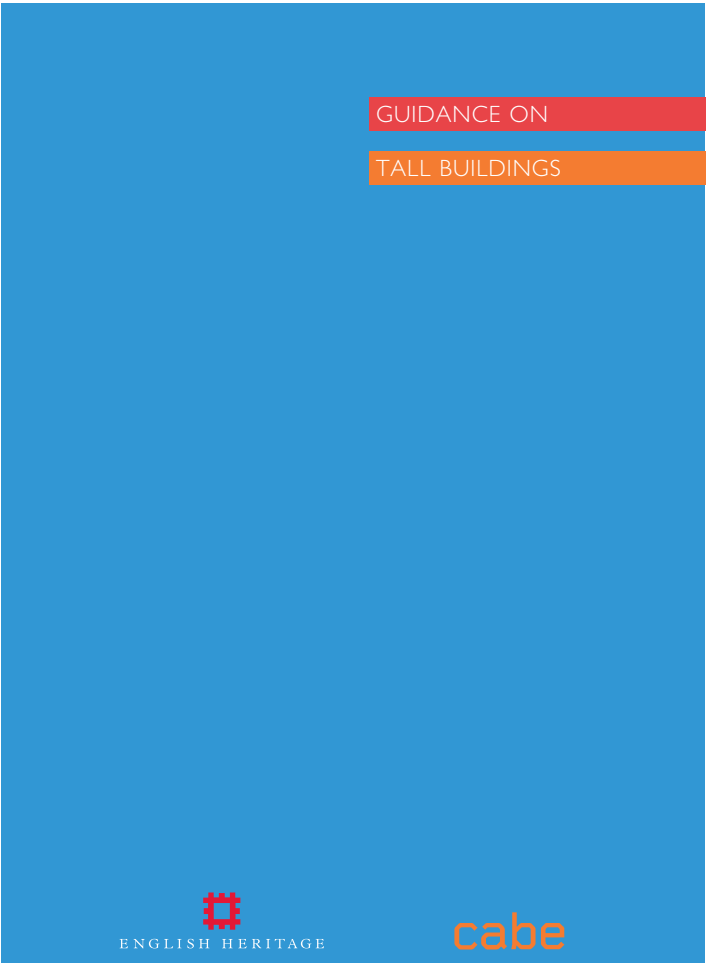
14.2.1

Over the course of the Masterplan's implementation, there will be many design hands influencing how detail design is shaped. Various developers are anticipated to become involved, numerous design professionals will rise to the challenge, public sector officers will come and go. Whilst this diversity of influences will lend richness to the proposals, it is also necessary that a certain physical and visual cohesion is secured. More detailed design codes have therefore been prepared to guide the form of development. The Codes will guide the key elements of building design and establish how design of external spaces is to be 'joined up'. They will express in closer detail how each of the urban quarters is to be articulated and establish a consistency in quality and environmental design standards.

14.3 Building height strategy

14.3.1

As described in the accompanying Statement of Community Involvement, consultation on the Draft Urban Design Framework and early Masterplan provided important feedback on the preferred approach to tall buildings. Residents favoured varying building heights (rather than a more uniform approach), with existing residents re-housed in mid-rise buildings and taller towers placed selectively at key points and targeted at smaller private / intermediate



households.

14.3.2

In addition to resident views, the proposed building height strategy has been influenced by three documents:

- Guidance on Tall Buildings, issued in 2003 by the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) and English Heritage.
- The London Plan: Spatial Development Strategy for Greater London, published in 2004 by the GLA. This provides the primary policy reference. Policy 4B.8 on Tall Buildings Locations states:

“The Mayor will promote the development of tall buildings where they create attractive landmarks enhancing London’s character, help to provide a coherent location for economic clusters of related activities and/or act as a catalyst for regeneration and where they are also acceptable in terms of design and impact on their surroundings”.

This establishes that the Mayor will, and boroughs should, consider all applications for tall buildings against criteria set out in the Plan’s Policies 4B.1, 4B.3 and 4B.9.

- The Hackney Tall Buildings Strategy (TBS), which was prepared in 2005 for the Council by independent consultants. The study was undertaken in four phases. The Phase 4 report constitutes the final recommended strategy. Although guidance contained in the document is not approved Hackney policy, it does constitute a recent statement of intent that is being fed into the Local Development Framework process. Indeed the Phase 3 report notes that *“an urban design framework study for Woodberry Down is currently being undertaken by LBH... This will provide a more detailed view on the role of tall buildings within the area.”* It goes on to provide a note of caution on its applicability in stating *“these recommendations should not prejudice the outcomes of the forthcoming Masterplan for Woodberry Down.”*

14.3.3

The building heights strategy illustrated in Figure 14.1 takes account of this guidance and illustrates key principles. The vast majority of buildings are either low-rise (2-5 storeys) or mid-rise (6-9 storeys).

14.3.4

The placement of tall buildings (defined as 10 storeys and above) requires careful consideration. The Tall Buildings Strategy Plan (see Figure 14.2) identifies Woodberry Down as an ‘Opportunity Area’ for tall buildings. The area is *“broadly defined by the Borough boundary and Blackstock Road in the West, Finsbury Park and the New River in the north, Amhurst Road in the North East and Green Lanes and the reservoirs in the south”* (Phase 4 Final Report). The Phase 2 report expands on this: *“The area to the south and east of Finsbury Park along Seven Sisters Road and extending towards the East and West Reservoirs provides an ideal location for tall buildings due to its high transport accessibility,*

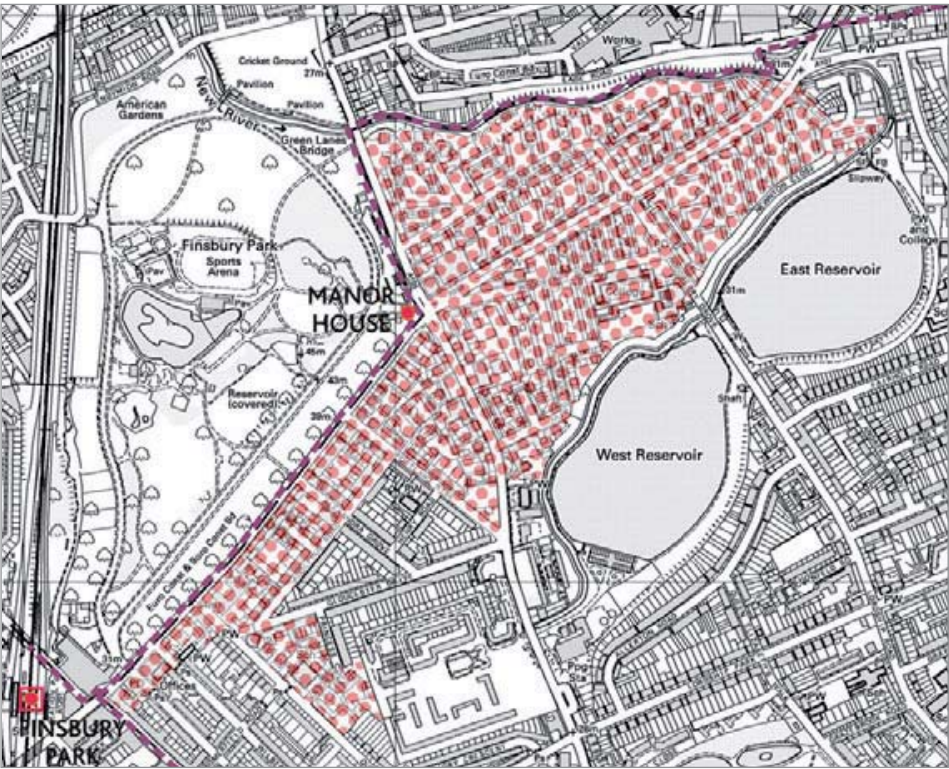


Facing south-west: the new Woodberry Grove Neighbourhood Centre will be denoted by a tall building on the old school site, whilst a group of tall buildings will form a circus on Seven Sisters Road



14.1 Building Heights strategy

- Tall buildings (10+ storeys)
- Medium buildings (6-9 storeys)
- Low buildings (2-5 storeys)



14.2 Hackney Tall Buildings Strategy: Tall building strategy plan (page 11)



A thorough visual impact assessment is presented in the Environmental Statement - this example shows the massing of the proposed cluster of tall buildings on Seven Sisters Road that create a 'circus' feature

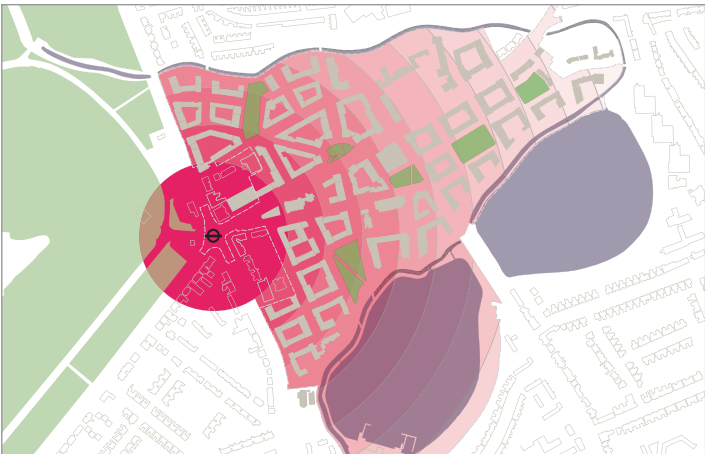
its lower elevation than the park and the strong open space focus available to residents or workers in tall buildings. Issues of visual impact and blocking views from the park must be considered by tall building proposals. Taller development also offers the opportunity to strengthen and enhance the urban edge of the park."

- 14.3.5
Six locations have been identified as suitable for tall buildings, where they will serve to emphasise strategically important locations:
1. Woodberry Down Circus, a major new central feature;
 2. The north-west area adjacent to Rowley Gardens, close to the Underground station;
 3. Woodberry Down Neighbourhood Centre;
 4. Seven Sisters Road eastern gateway;
 5. The southern gateway on Woodberry Grove;
 6. Newnton Close, close to the existing towers on the Lincoln Court Estate.
- 14.3.6

Framing open space



Transport accessibility



14.3 Building heights principles

The TBS identifies eleven 'codes' for planning and design. Each of these is summarised below and summarised with regard to Woodberry Down. Key principles are depicted in Figure 14.3 below.

1. Design quality

Tall buildings will be of the highest design quality. Specifications to attain high environmental standards have been factored into cost planning.

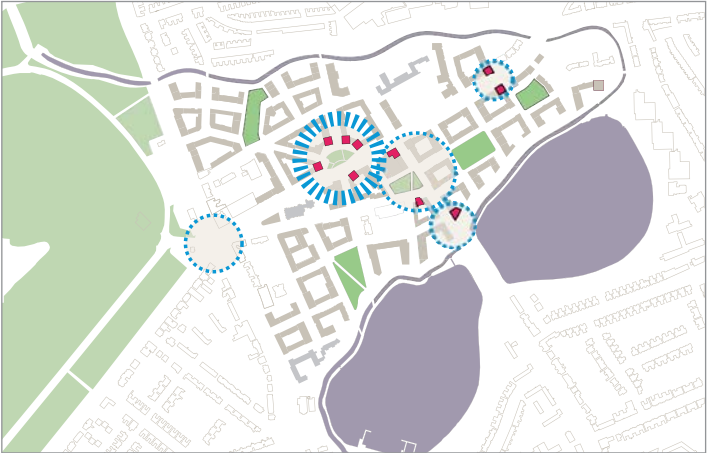
2. Visual impact

A thorough visual impact assessment has been undertaken and is included in the accompanying Environmental Statement. This confirms that there is no adverse visual impact from the selected strategic and local viewpoints agreed with both Hackney and Haringey Councils.

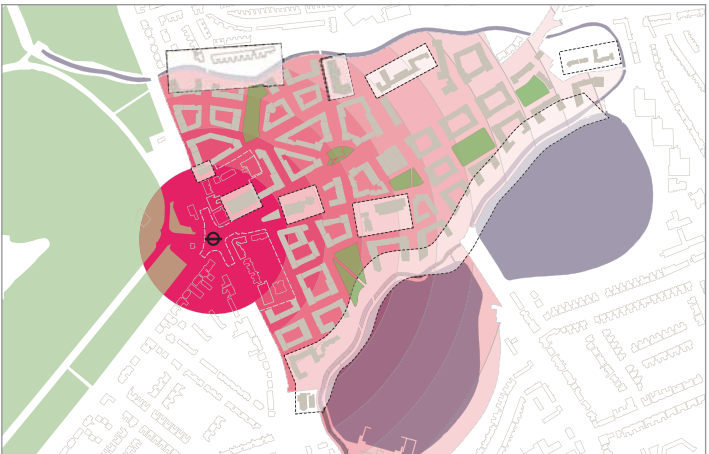
3. Sustainability and environment

As described in Chapters 9 and 10 each of the tall buildings will form part of an integrated sustainability strategy and contribute to a minimum 'very good' EcoHomes and BREEAM ratings.

Gateways



Conservation



4. Conservation

The heights of buildings are moderated around the grade II listed St Olave's Church, complementing other landscape and refurbishment measures to enhance its setting (see Chapter 6.10). New buildings are also set back and kept at low - medium heights in the vicinity of the Grade II listed Primary School and the John Scott Health Centre. Buildings are set back at least 15m from the New River and arranged to minimise adverse impacts on the reservoirs, both designated as conservation areas. The strategy articulated in the TBS has been followed, which states that *"future tall development in the area surrounding the reservoirs should not form a wall of development which would block views out from the reservoirs or impact of the setting of the conservation area, although single towers of a high architectural quality may be acceptable"*

5. Transport accessibility

There is a general pattern of increasing building heights nearer Manor House underground station where these are not within close proximity of St Olave's Church. Building heights decrease progressively from west to east. Also, as noted in the TBS, Seven Sisters Road provides a *"logical focus for incremental redevelopment and tall buildings are seen to be able to play a strong part in improving the overall character of the road."* It furthers, *"frequent bus services*

along Seven Sisters Road and Green Lanes give these corridors potential to support intensified areas including some taller developments in key locations." The individual tall buildings placed around Spring Gardens to the north and the new Woodberry Circus on Seven Sisters Road are within five minutes walk of the underground station and have bus stops virtually on the doorstep. This supports GLA policies to concentrate densities closest to public transport infrastructure and helps reinforce legibility. A full Transport Assessment accompanies the application.

6. Public infrastructure

As described in Chapter 6, the Masterplan establishes a major programme of social infrastructure improvements set to transform health, education and other community provision.

7. Open space

Chapter 12 establishes how AAP open space requirements are met. Each tall building is integrated into a perimeter block structure, with public and private space clearly delineated.

8. Access

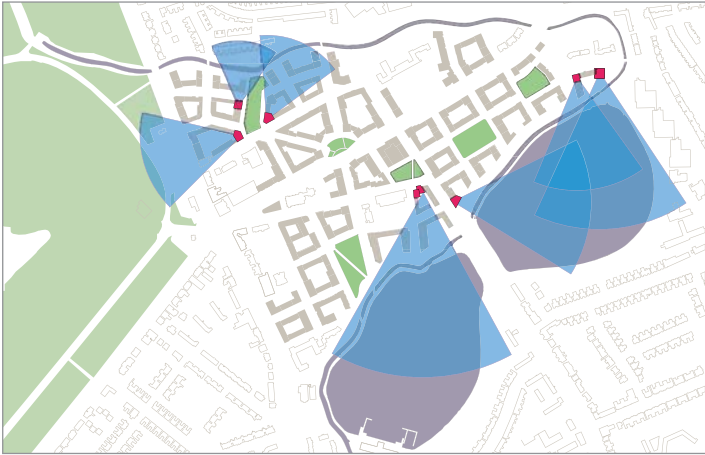
The Design and Access Statement that accompanies this submission summarises how buildings are to provide equal access for all. Where appropriate, public functions are integrated into the lower storeys of tall buildings. The Old School Site has a community centre and restaurant at its base, for example.

9. Land use and density

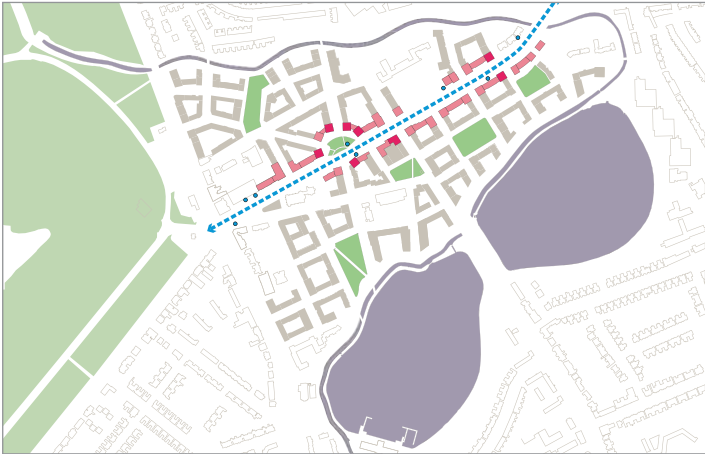
As summarised in Chapter 9, the overall high density exploits this highly accessible urban location, whilst relating to prevailing densities and locational sensitivities in neighbouring areas. Taller buildings are selectively placed to emphasise key focal points, such as:

- Rowley Gardens;
- Woodberry Circus, designed to accommodate mixed uses at ground floor;
- Woodberry Grove neighbourhood centre (above the proposed foodstore and alongside the public space).

Exploiting views



Seven Sisters Road boulevard



Maximising daylight and sunlight



Buildings heights step down on the north-west edge



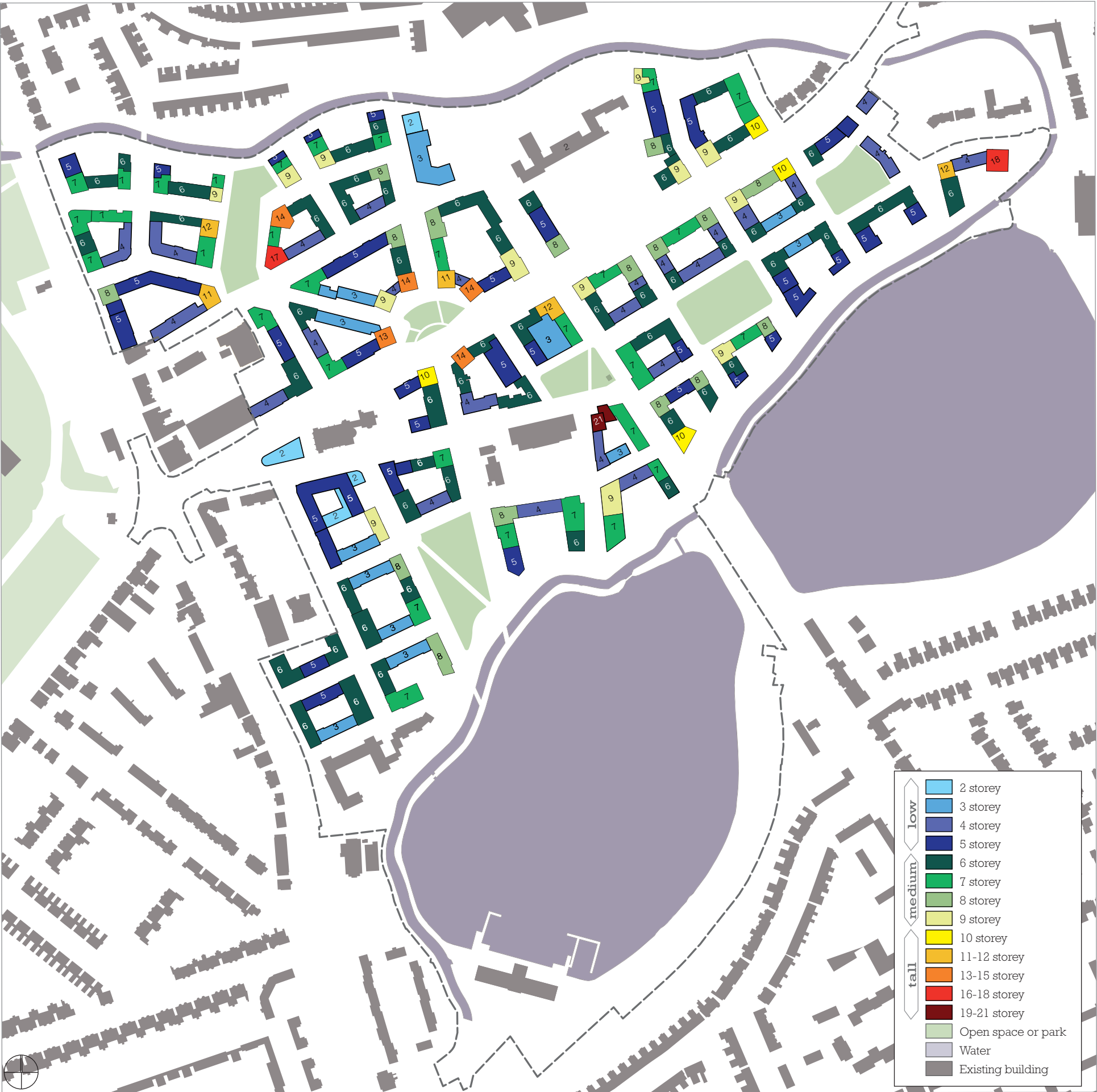
| | | |
|---------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|
| <div>2 storey</div> | <div>7 storey</div> | <div>13/14 storey</div> |
| <div>3 storey</div> | <div>8 storey</div> | <div>15 storey</div> |
| <div>4 storey</div> | <div>9 storey</div> | <div>16 storey</div> |
| <div>5 storey</div> | <div>10 storey</div> | <div>18 storey</div> |
| <div>6 storey</div> | <div>11/12 storey</div> | <div>20 /21 storey</div> |

10. Response to urban setting

- Contextual influences on the arrangement of building heights, which can be discerned in the Figure 14.4 sequence of images, include:
- **Sensitivity to context:** Building heights are lowered around St Olave's Church, close to existing neighbouring residential areas and immediately facing the reservoirs.
 - **Views to the reservoirs** are exploited with building heights staggered on terraced slopes, often arranged as U-shaped blocks.
 - **Solar access:** Perimeter blocks are designed with taller buildings on the north-south axis and lower buildings on the east-west axis. This has two beneficial effects: it maximises solar access to courtyards and buildings; and emphasises routes to the riverside.
 - **Enclosure of principal open spaces** with surrounding buildings, providing appropriately formal facades.
 - **Taller buildings are placed at key entry points**, namely:
 - a) at Woodberry Grove (south), the entry point as one approaches over the Lordship Road causeway; and at
 - b) The eastern gateway point on Seven Sisters Road.
- Whilst not part of this application, the future potential for tall buildings around the underground station have also been accounted for.
- **A strategic panoramic view of Woodberry Down** when seen across the reservoirs, with tall buildings placed at the furthest most eastern and at the central point on Woodberry Grove - heralding this as the neighbourhood centre. The eastern tower, located at Newton Close, accompanies the three existing Lincoln Court estate blocks facing onto the Eastern Reservoir.
 - **Views over North London** are exploited with U-shaped blocks.

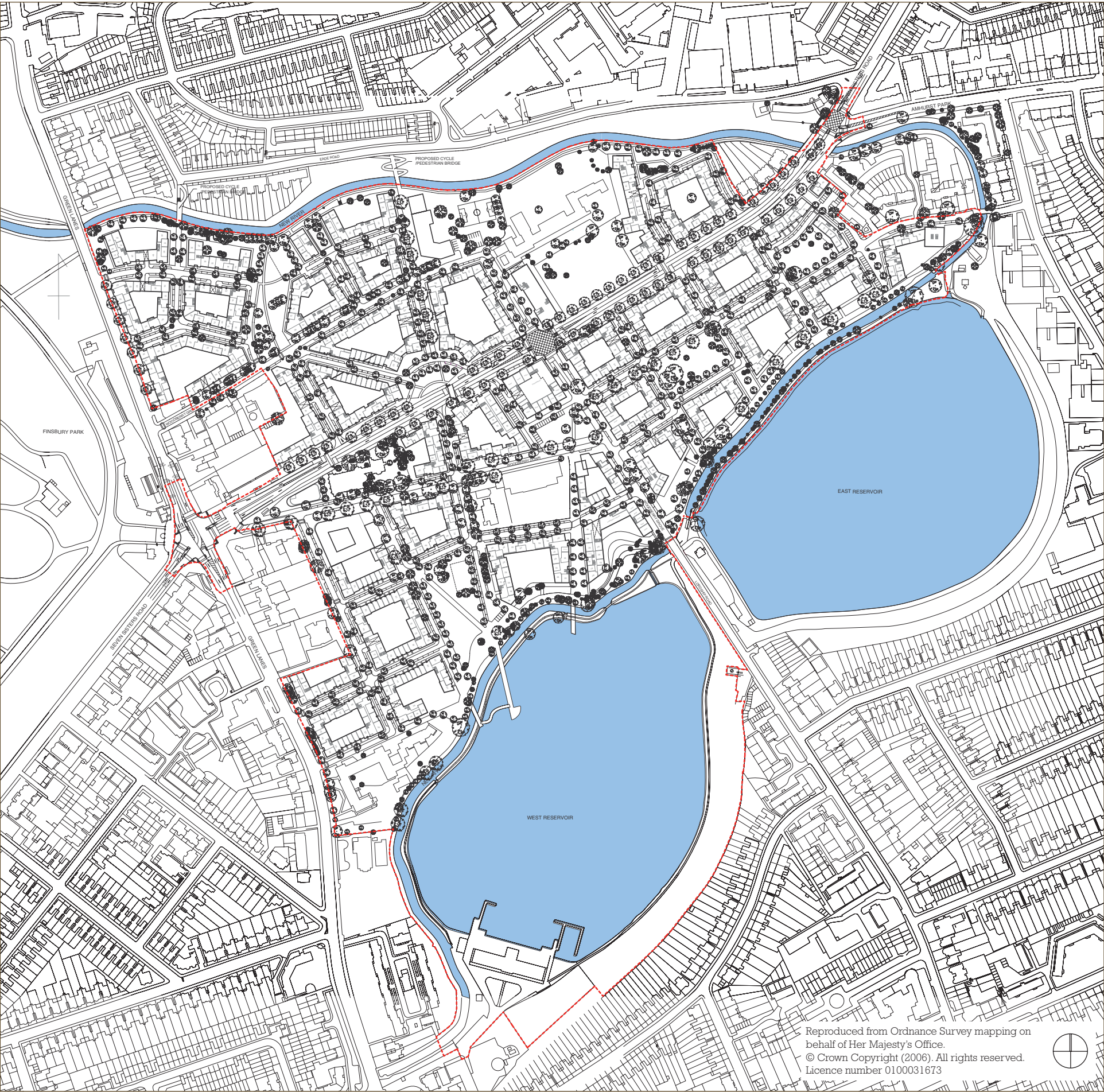
11. Materials and maintenance

The Design Codes will establish an appropriate palette of materials. High quality specifications are proposed and have been incorporated into cost planning. As stated in Chapter 12.6, proposals for ongoing management and maintenance are to go above and beyond those conventionally provided by Hackney Council.



14.5 Indicative detailed building heights plan

14.3.7
Figure 14.5 provides an illustrative representation of how the building height strategy can be applied in detail. This was prepared as the basis for the accommodation schedule, upon which project viability exercises were conducted. Given the need for flexibility over the twenty year project programme, this plan is indicative only.



14.6 Indicative Ground Floor Plan

14.4 Designing for flexibility

14.4.1

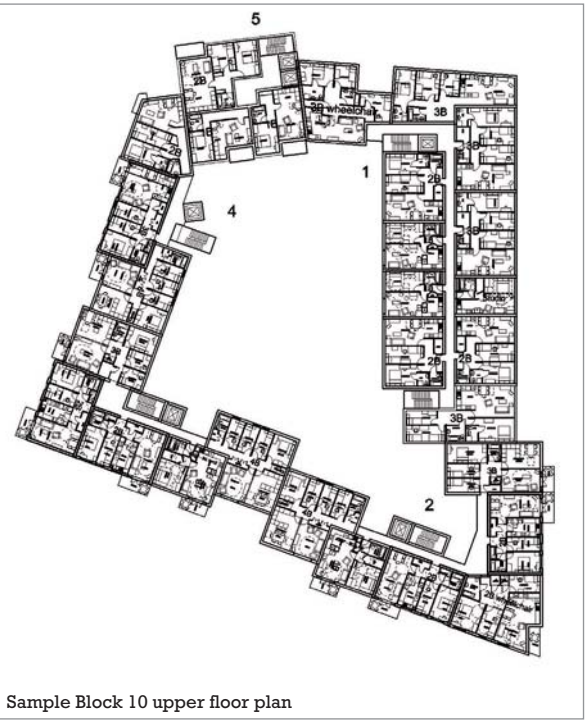
As illustrated in Figures 14.6 and 14.7, the Masterplan has been designed in detail to ensure it is viable and compliant with environmental requirements. However, it is important that it does not become an overly constraining straight-jacket on design development in the years ahead, but rather that it serves as a clear framework within which detailed building solutions can be devised as long as they adhere to the plan's fundamental principles.

14.4.2

To be sustainable, both commercial and residential buildings must demonstrate durability. The needs of the community, the demand of the property market and our everyday lifestyles are all likely to change over the medium to long term. Buildings and open spaces need to be capable of adapting to these changing circumstances.



14.7 Example perimeter block



- 14.4.3
- The primary means of designing-in flexibility at this outline planning stage is the use of 'perimeter blocks' as primary structuring elements. The perimeter block has a number of clear virtues:
- there is a clear distinction between public fronts and private backs - buildings present a public face onto the street. Internal gardens or courtyards are secure, tranquil and well overlooked. They are clearly private, for block residents only. This follows 'Secured-by-Design' principles intended to foster stewardship and reduce crime.
 - streets are active and well overlooked and used, with front doors and windows onto the street. Ground floor flats have their own front doors onto the street rather than off shared entrance lobbies.
 - buildings can be arranged to allow optimum solar penetration for maximum day lighting and sun lighting levels.
 - a range of building types can be accommodated (townhouses, apartments, shops, community facilities etc) to generate mixed-use solutions within a cohesive structure.
 - acoustic and visual privacy needs can be readily accommodated, with a minimum 20m back-to-back distances across courtyards established.

14.4.4

The form of the perimeter blocks identified in the Masterplan is substantially indicative at this stage. As the forthcoming Design Code will specify, a number of solutions can be envisaged whilst maintaining the principles of active frontages onto streets, with a clear distinction between fronts and backs.

14.5.5

At the detailed design stage it is envisaged that that buildings along Woodberry Down street and the northern stretch of Seven Sisters Road (between Manor House and Woodberry Grove) will be designed to enable these streets to adapt over time in response to changing user needs and market preferences. This will require attention to the building-street set-back, placement of circulation cores and the inclusion of generous ground floor to ceiling heights – readily enabling ground floor change of use from residential to small-scale commercial or community uses.



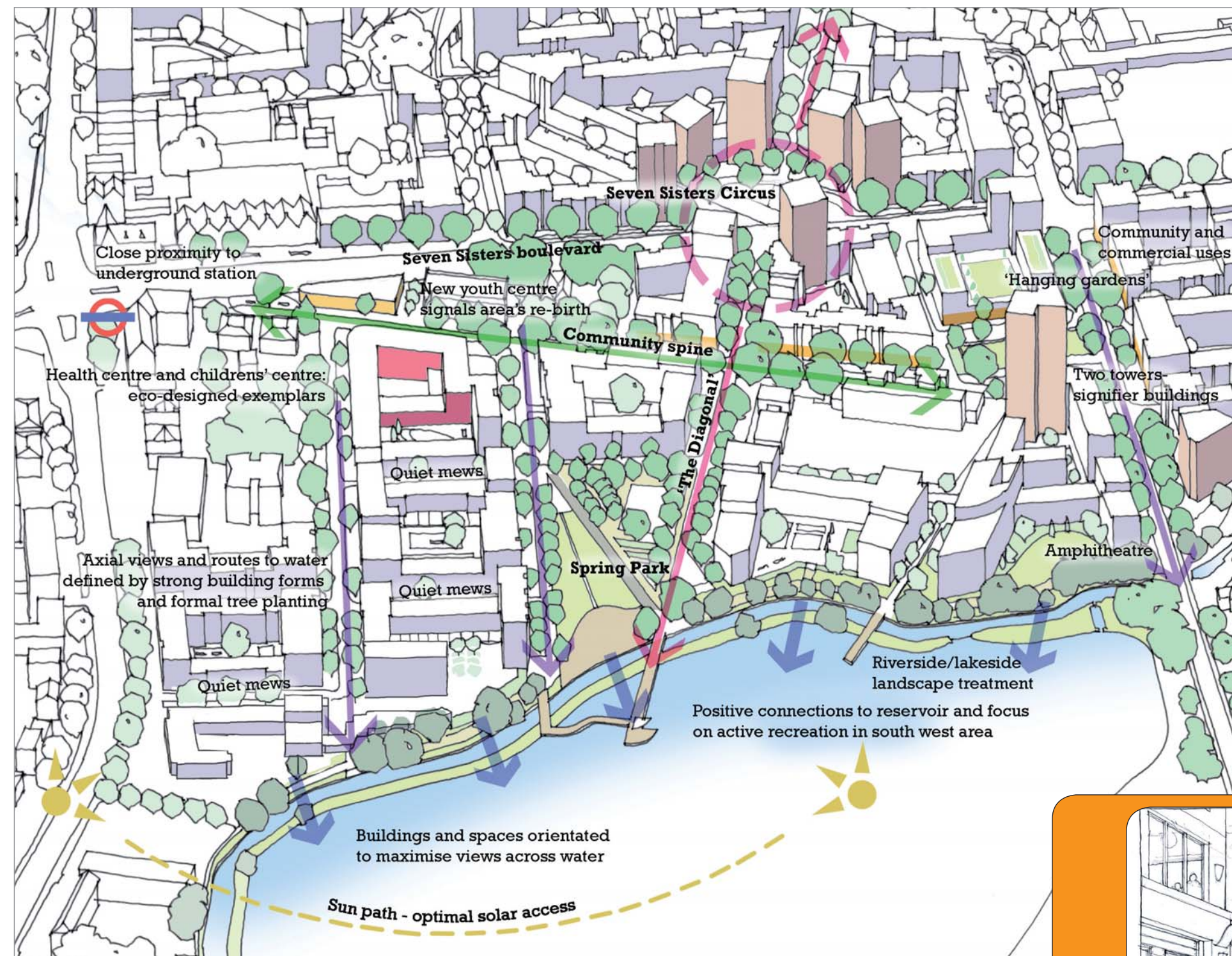
14.8 Character Areas reference plan

14.5 A closer look at the four urban quarters

14.5.1
Each of the four urban quarters identified in Figure 14.8 is envisaged as a 'character area', with high quality architecture and landscape design specified to draw out and emphasise the unique local qualities of each area. As described below, three of these are primarily residential neighbourhoods and the fourth revolves around the new lifelong learning campus.



Spring Park will provide a focal point of activity in the South-west Quarter



14.9 South-west quarter: design parameters

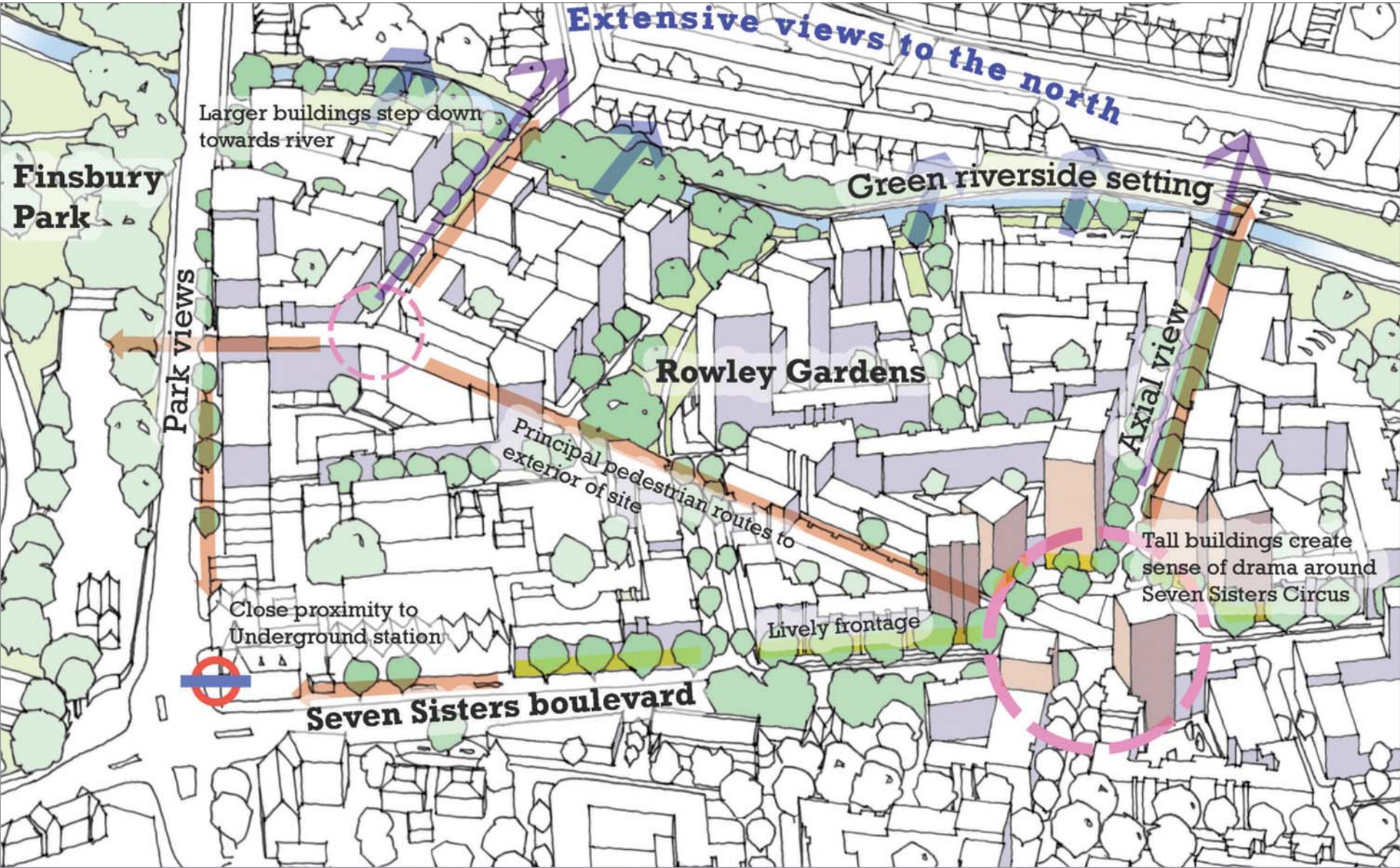
The south-west quarter

14.5.2

The new Spring Park will give this area its central focus. Most of the southern area will open out to enjoy the waterfront views. The northern area will 'ratchet up' in height towards Seven Sisters Road. Woodberry Down road will provide a 'community spine' of activities – linking Manor House underground station, shops and Finsbury Park with St Olave's Church, the new Health Centre and Children's Centre and eastwards to the Beis Chinuch Lebonos Girls School and Woodberry Grove Neighbourhood Centre.

South West





14.10 North-west quarter: design parameters

The north-west quarter
(Rowley Gardens and Woodberry Circus)

14.5.3
The structure of this area will be far more permeable than at present, opening out to its surroundings via a series of new links such as:

- The Diagonal, thrusting north-south through the area;
- A strategic walkway, cutting north-west to south-east through the area – providing direct links between Finsbury Park and the Woodberry Grove Neighbourhood Centre; and
- The new pedestrian and cycle bridges to Haringey.

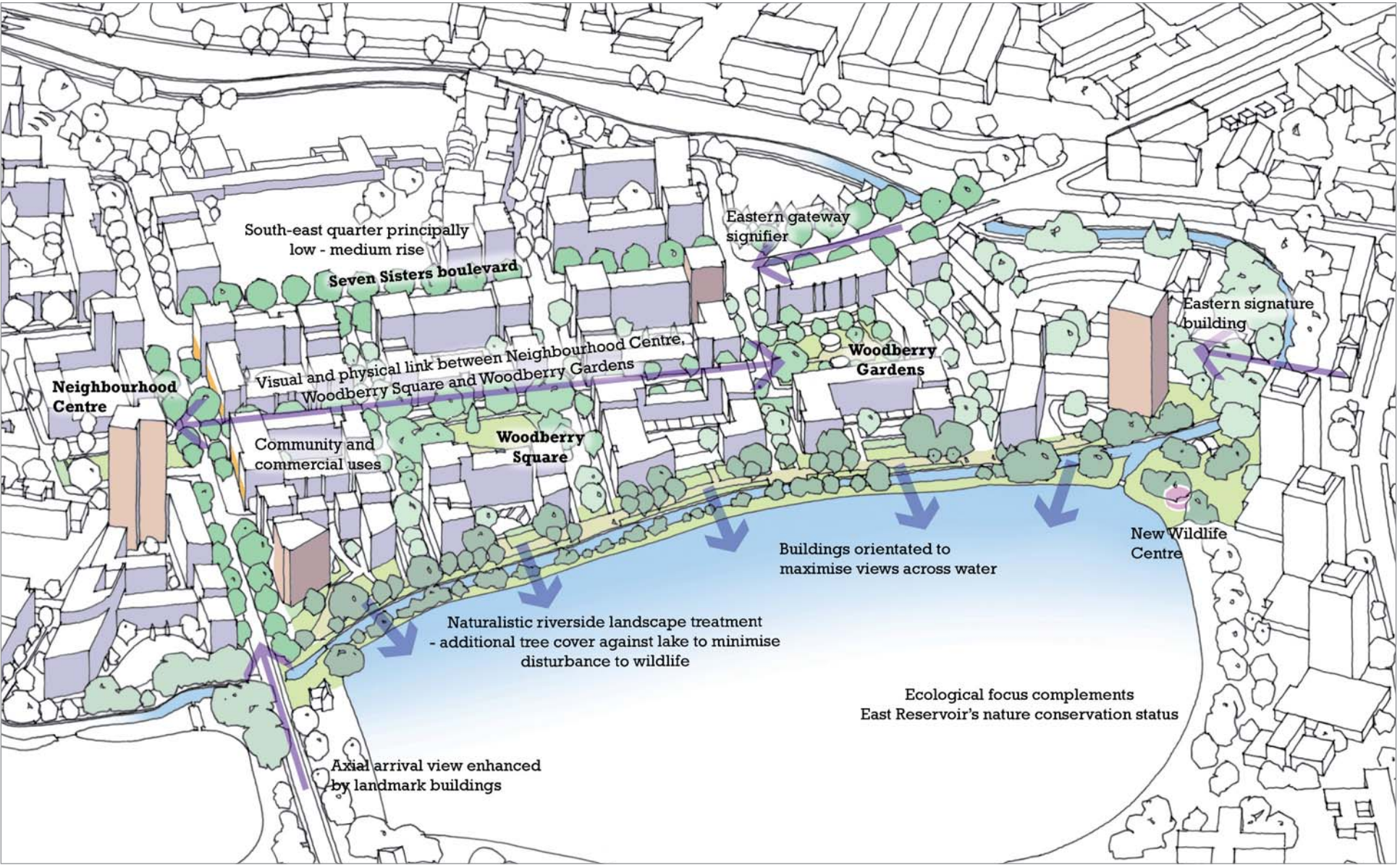
14.5.4
The Rowley Gardens area will continue to have a primarily residential character, supported by play spaces and shared community access to the nearby schools providing a variety of facilities for young people. A series of triangular development blocks provide opportunities for striking corner buildings. Intersecting mews in the quieter internal areas are lined by townhouses best suited for family accommodation.

14.5.5
Two principal public open spaces will serve the area and help shape its character:

- the new Rowley Gardens play area will incorporate a series of terraces, emphasising the panoramic views to the north and connections to the riverside green link;
- the more formal Woodberry Circus, with its cluster of taller buildings, will provide a distinctive new fulcrum mid-way along Seven Sisters Road.



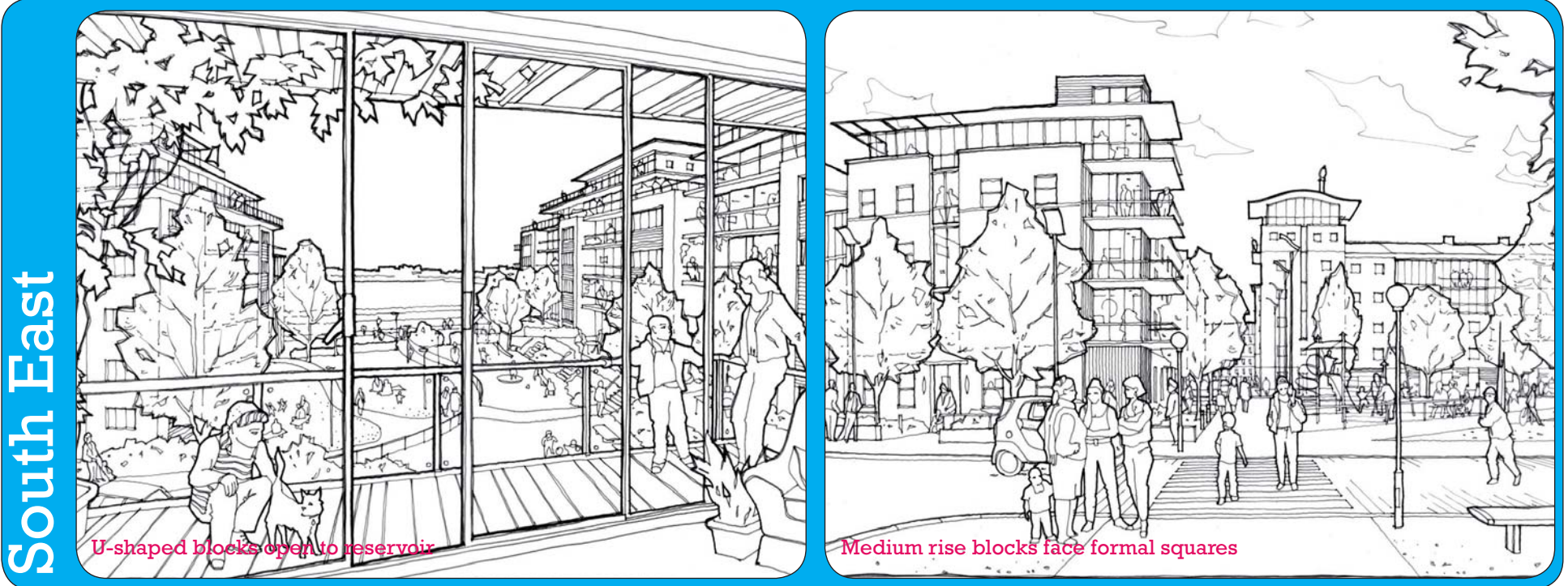
The Masterplan makes the most of the Finsbury Park setting



14.11 South-east quarter: design parameters

The south-east quarter

14.5.6
The vast majority of buildings will be low to medium rise, making this the lowest density residential neighbourhood, furthest from the underground station. Small perimeter blocks provide a traditional urban structure, which accommodates a mix of dwelling types, including family townhouses. Blocks lining the East Reservoir have a staggered height to exploit the views and sunny south-facing aspect. North of this, the blocks that line Seven Sisters Road face onto the two new public open spaces that have been created in the interior.



New parks in the south-east provide attractive new focal points



14.12 North-east quarter: design parameters

The north-east quarter

14.5.7
This comprises the lifelong learning campus, with a medium-rise residential area east of this. Buildings are designed to emphasise the new boulevard character of Seven Sisters Road, whilst exploiting northern views.

