

# Saunders

Architecture + Urban Design

**CAMPUS EAST, WELWYN GARDEN CITY**

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

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# 1.0 Executive Summary

## 1.1 PURPOSE OF DOCUMENT

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared on behalf of Bellway Homes, appointed by Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council (WHBC) in support of a full planning application for the redevelopment and delivery of 317 new residential properties.

The project is on the site currently known as ‘Campus East’ in the centre of Welwyn Garden City and will deliver 30% affordable housing in line with current policy requirements.

This statement aims to identify the site and set the project within its planning context, including the established WGC 2120 Strategic Planning Framework and describe the guiding design principles which respond to site constraints and the surrounding context and heritage to deliver much needed housing for Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.

The document sets out the contextual analysis, design development narrative and confirms engagement from the consultation process which has included pre-application meetings, key stakeholder consultation and public exhibition events all of which have guided the final proposals which will be presented in the following sections.

These proposals and the information contained in this document should be read in conjunction with other supporting documentation as part of the submission package; these include:

- Planning Statement;
- Travel Plan & Transport Assessment;
- Parking Management Plan & Construction Traffic Management Plan;
- Air Quality Assessment;
- Noise & Vibration Assessment;
- Heritage, Townscape & Visual Impact Assessment;
- Daylighting & Overheating Assessments;
- Sustainability & Energy Report; and
- Fire Strategy Statement.

## 1.2 PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The site is located in Welwyn Garden City and is known locally as ‘Campus East’, located centrally within Welwyn Garden City, to the northern end of Parkway and in close proximity to Waitrose and the Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council offices. The site measures approximately 2.114ha and currently comprises predominantly surface parking with a single storey parking deck located towards the site entrance. Beneath the parking deck there are privately owned garages / storage facilities. All existing buildings on site are proposed to be demolished as part of these proposals.

Proposals seek to build on the aspirations of the established WGC 2120 strategic planning framework to deliver a high quality development that comprises 313 new residential properties, including 30% affordable dwellings for WHBC. In addition the scheme will seek to enhance the public realm with high quality landscaping proposals.

Since the project was won through competitive bid in June 2021, the project team has worked closely to develop a scheme that positively contributes to the Welwyn Garden City environment. Proposals seek to deliver a quality development that:

- Aligns with WHBC’s WGC 2120 Vision & Building Code Principles;
- Provides 30% affordable housing;
- Adopts sustainable design and energy principles;
- Includes 14 independently-accessed blocks of between 3 and 6 storeys, comprising 1, 2 and 3 bedroom flats & scheme concierge;
- Creates a quality environment with improved connectivity and an enhanced public realm; and
- Improves pedestrian, cycle and transport links.

1.3 BELLWAY HOMES

Bellway Homes have been creating dream homes for over 75 years. Beginning as a small family business in 1946, Bellway have a passion for building exceptional quality homes in carefully selected locations, inspired by the needs of real families.

Bellway are a 5-star builder with a mission to build first-class homes that the end user is proud of. Bellway were awarded 5-star builder status by the Homes Federation five years in a row.

The Bellway aim is to build beautiful, expertly crafted homes, which meet the needs of today and consider the demands of the future. Through a sustainable approach to their people, their communities, their build materials and the environment, Bellway hopes to demonstrate that the future of our planet is an important aspect of their designs.

In addition, Bellway North London currently boasts: 592 Units Volume; £199m Turnover; £235m Total Land & WIP on their balance sheet; 12 Sites Under Construction; 10 Live Sales Outlets; and 9 Sites in Planning.

Bellway North London is a NHBC 5-Star House Builder and has received the NHBC Quality and Seal of Excellence at:

- Hertsmere Mews**, Borehamwood;
- Apsley Quay**, Apsley;
- QEII**, Welwyn Garden City; and
- The Foundry**, Hemel Hempstead.

Bellway’s involvement in the Campus East site began in early 2021 when their design team developed and submitted a winning bid entry to purchase and develop the site. The development team continue to carry out the pledges made within that bid as they continue to engage with Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council and local stakeholders to ensure a quality scheme that integrates into the wider context of Welwyn Garden City and its urban design principles.



QEII (PHASE I & II), Welwyn Garden City

Bellway worked closely with the Council’s senior management team to bring this reserved matter application to a delegated approval. Benefiting the NHS Trust, this development lies adjacent to the Commonswood Nature Reserve.







**RIVERWELL, Watford**

Bellway Homes Waterside forms part of the 70-acre Watford Riverwell development, a new commercial and residential destination on the outskirts of Watford and located on the banks of the River Colne, surrounded by parkland.



# 2.0 Introduction

## 2.1 SITE LOCATION



FIG 1 - LOCATION: NATIONAL

Welwyn Garden City is located in Hertfordshire in the East of England. Welwyn Garden City is within the London commuter belt, located approximately 20 miles north of London.

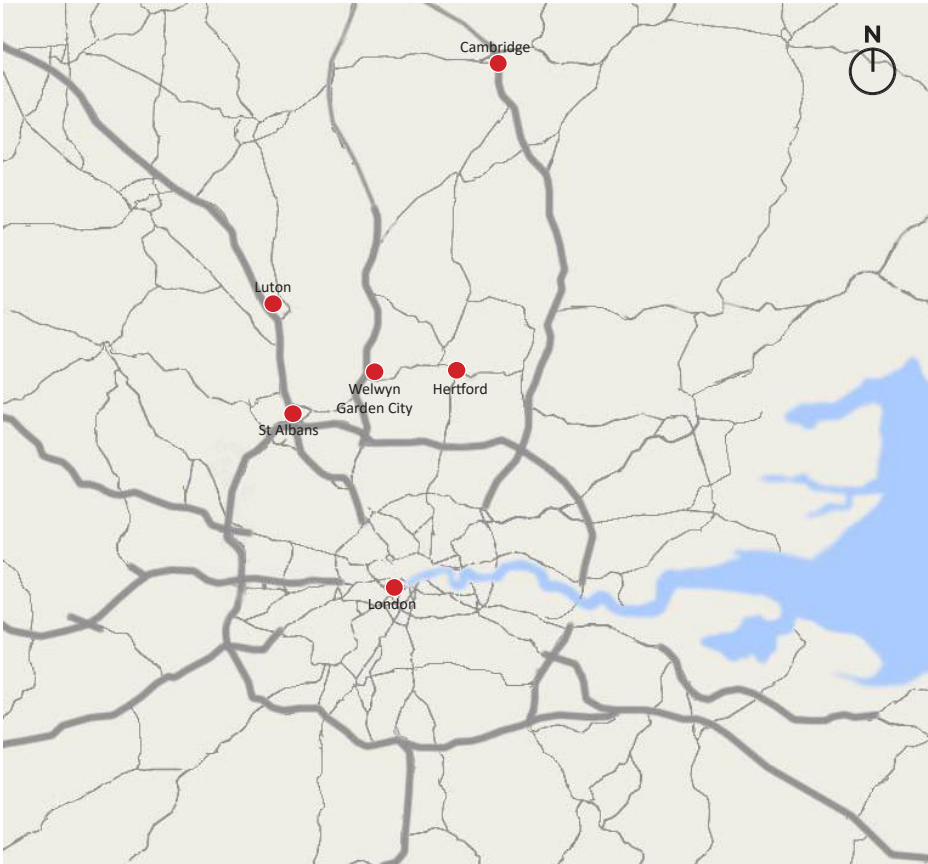


FIG 2 - LOCATION: REGIONAL

Welwyn Garden City and neighbouring towns are popular commuter bases that benefit from good road and rail links enabling easy access to the A1 motorway which runs north to south and links to London and the A414 which connects Hertfordshire in an east-west direction.

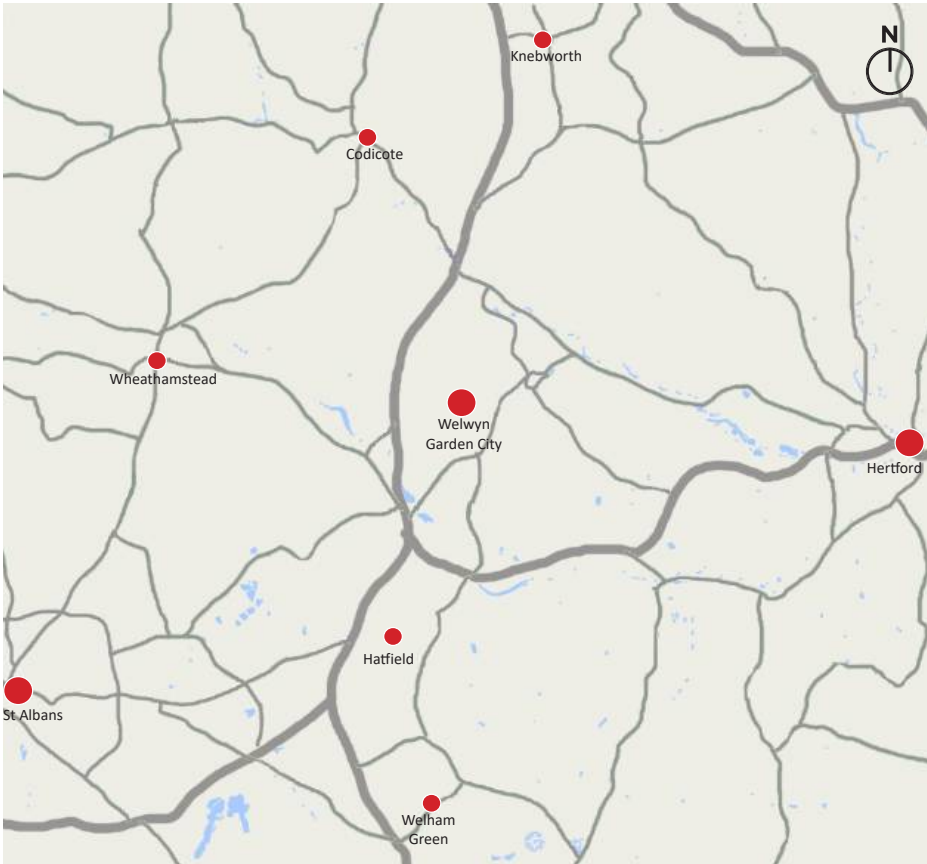


FIG 3 - LOCATION: LOCAL

Campus East is located centrally within Welwyn Garden City, situated to the northern end of Parkway, which is a landscaped spine terminated by 'The Campus', consisting of the Central Library, Oaklands College and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council offices. Campus East sits behind WHBC and Waitrose, bound on the east by the railway line which provides links to London and the North.



2.2 WGC 2120 FRAMEWORK

WGC 2120 Objectives

The overarching strategy for this area of the town has been informed by a series of objectives, these include:

- To preserve and enhance the character of the Garden City;
- Create high quality new residential buildings and public realm that respect the history of the town, contribute positively to the townscape and make the town centre area a more attractive and safer place to visit and spend time;
- Build new town centre housing to increase activity, security and footfall as well as much needed accommodation;
- Secure new shopping opportunities;
- Introduce new uses including community, business, leisure, cultural and arts uses to attract more local people and students to the town centre;
- Improve the environment and public realm and promote sustainable development;
- Ensure an appropriate supply of car parking for shoppers, visitors and businesses while reducing surface car parking by re-providing them with decked options; and
- Improve access for pedestrians and cyclists.

The strategy envisages a new residential quarter being constructed on The Campus East site with a central retail-led mixed-use development and car park at Hunters Bridge being brought forward after. These developments are facilitated and supported by projects at Campus West car park which has already received consent and has been commenced. All projects are integrated with improvement to the public realm, accessibility and highways.

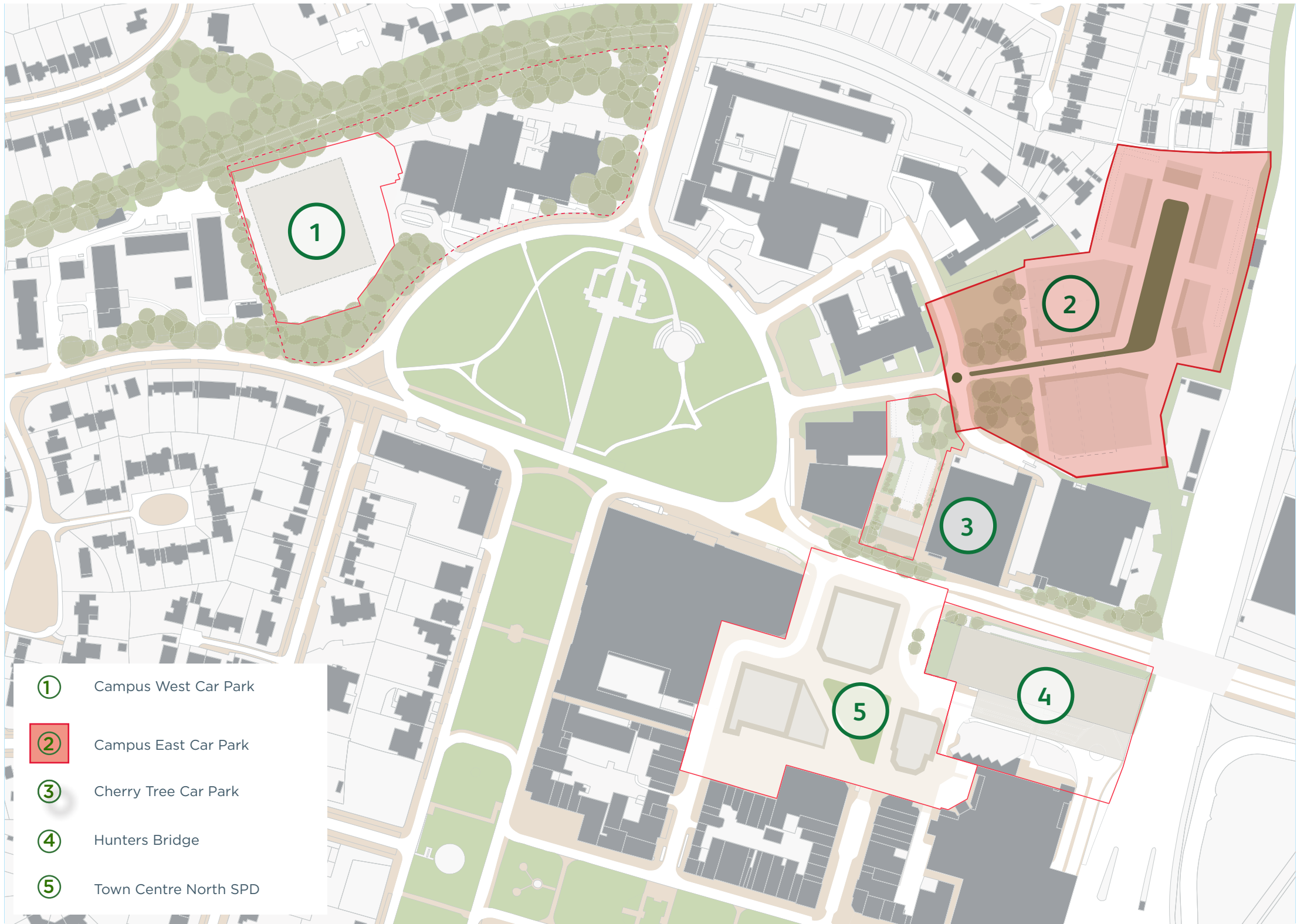


FIG 4 - WGC 2120 OPPORTUNITY SITES

WGC 2120 Analyses

The overarching Strategic Planning Framework document defines;

Townscape Features

The Town Centre includes several features that add visual interest and create a sense of legibility. Whilst in traditional historic towns, key features would comprise taller landmarks, including church spires, in Welwyn Garden City, the key element that contributes towards the overall character and appearance of the Town Centre is the landscape itself. The scale of the buildings within the Town Centre is relatively low being predominately 2 or 3 storeys with landmark buildings such as the John Lewis Store being 5 storeys. The subtle differences in the heights are characteristic to the hierarchy of uses and help to distinguish buildings in a subtle fashion.

Weaknesses and Constraints

There is poor permeability between the northern and the southern sections of the town centre and poor linkages between the centre and surrounding areas due to the vehicular network. The extent of surface-level car parking has also weakened the urban grain and isolates the town centre.

The public amenity of The Campus green space is under-used due its separation from the rest of the town. The radial routes leading from The Campus to the various outer areas remain under-used and difficult to access.

Strengths and Opportunities

The historic formal grid of the centre creates a strong townscape and remains as one of the key principles originally envisioned. The extensive green space of The Campus capitalising on the natural topography of WGC, creating a vantage point of the axial routes of Parkway.

There is a legible hierarchy of building uses and procession through the townscape is reinforced by the 'green buffer zones' of Parkway and The Campus.

TOWNSCAPE FEATURES

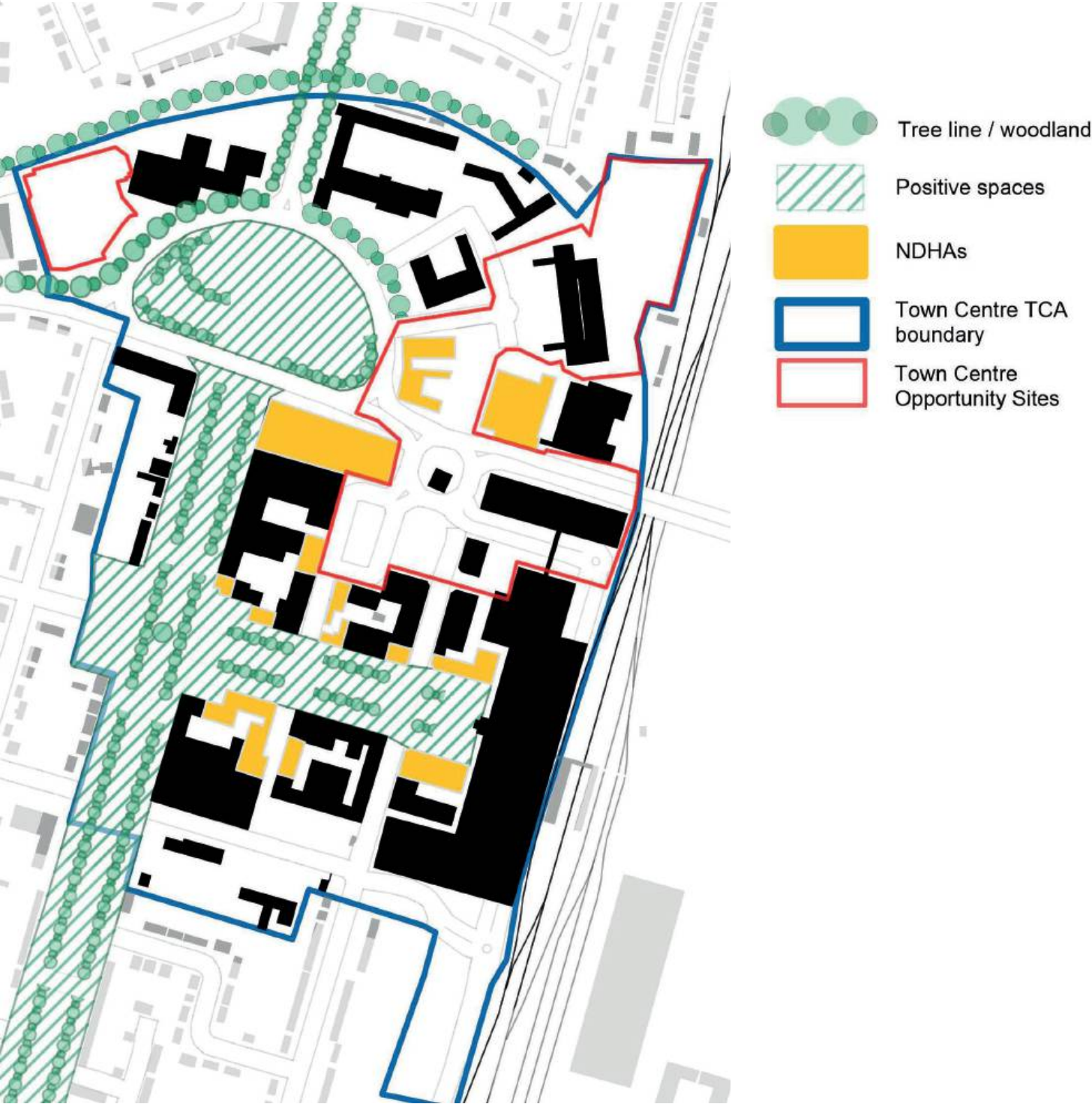
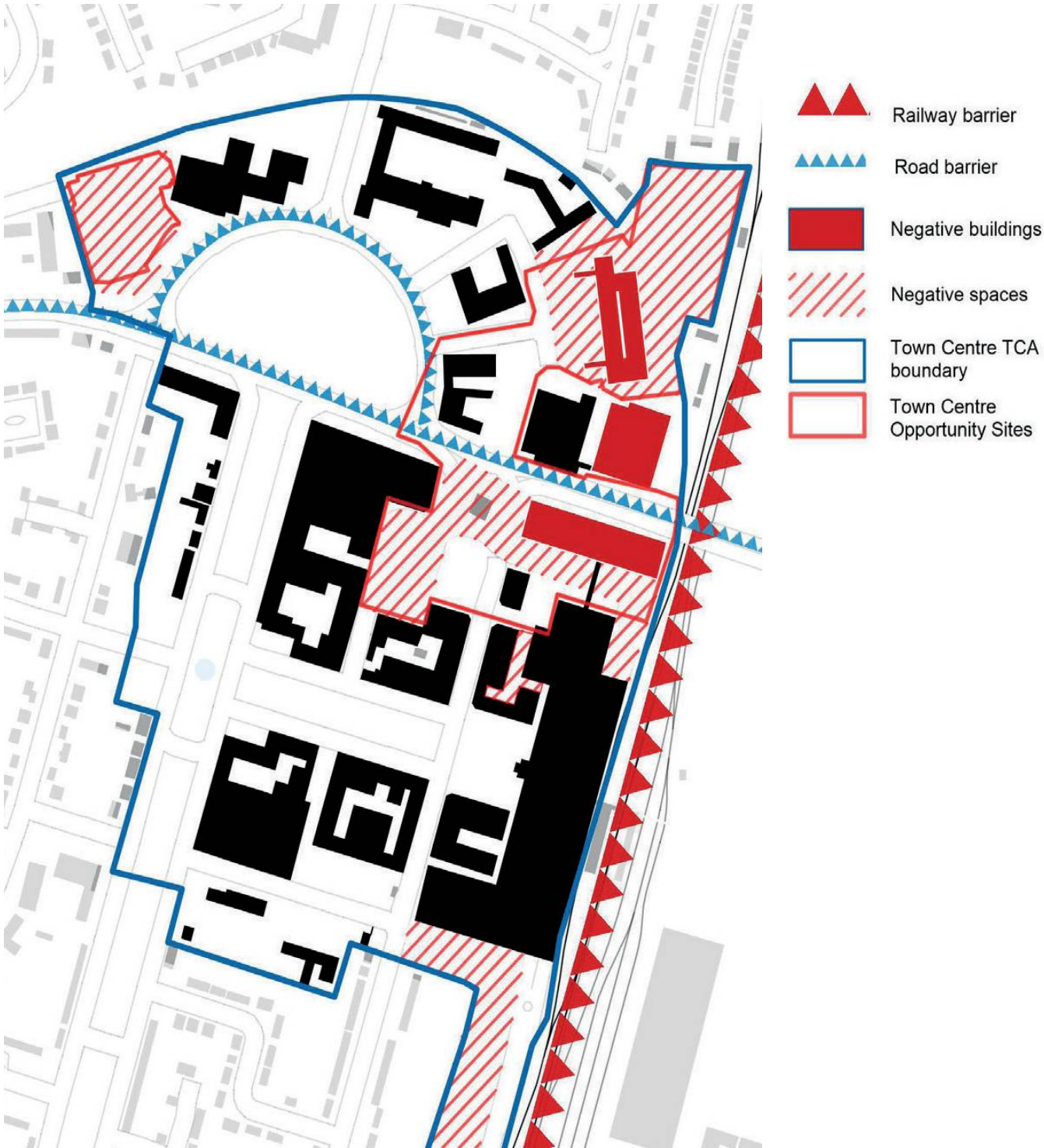


FIG 5 - WGC 2120 TOWNSCAPE ANALYSES



WEAKNESSES & CONSTRAINTS



STRENGTHS & OPPORTUNITIES





2.3 WGC PLANNING CONTEXT

Wider Planning Context

Welwyn Garden City's industrial area is undergoing an important transformation from an industrial, zone to mixed-use.

The former **Shredded Wheat Factory** development is at the heart of this and provides a mixed-use project including up to 1,340 residential dwellings including 414 affordable tenure; 114 C2 extra care; health use; office space and 650m² of retail. The refurbishment of the factory will provide flexible business space, art centre, gym, restaurant and daycare facilities. Permission was granted in February 2019 and the site is the subject to a subsequent application to increase the number of units.

The **Bio Park Development** located at Broadwater Road is approximately 3.06 acres in size. The recent scheme proposes 289 residential units and includes a flexible community hub. The scheme was granted permission at appeal in September 2022.

**Griffin Place** is a residential development of the former Roche Products Factory, which is a Grade II listed building with an industrial Art Deco aesthetic.

**The Mirage Development** is a Taylor Wimpey scheme, situated between the BioPark development and the Roche building. It consists of red brick and white rendered apartment blocks with full height windows that have spandrel panels in bright, primary, colours.



FIG 6 - WIDER PLANNING CONTEXT



## 2.4 SITE PLANNING CONTEXT

The site's listing in the WGC Strategic Planning Framework also schedules the critical planning considerations, including the encouragement for early and pro-active pre-application engagement with the LPA, which the applicant has completed during the design phases of these proposals.

The site is currently used as a car park for both town centre and Council users and delivery of new housing in this town centre/brownfield location is supported at all levels of planning policy. As such the redevelopment of this brownfield site for residential use is felt acceptable subject to design considerations laid out in the Framework:

- 1** Proposals should preserve or enhance the setting of the Conservation Area;
- 2** The redevelopment should mediate between the residential area to the north and the busier Town Centre to the south;
- 3** The layout of the development should respond to the radial geometry of the wider Campus setting;
- 4** The WGC character around the site should inform the appearance of the development;
- 5** The groupings of existing mature trees to the west of the opportunity site should be retained and enhanced;
- 6** The development should provide a new landscaped space at its heart;
- 7** Car parking should be organised to ensure that it does not detract from the public realm quality of the development;
- 8** The layout and public realm should make a positive connection to the existing footpath to the North;
- 9** The development should maximise north-south orientation of residential buildings;
- 10** Proposals should make allowance for the access to the Network Rail site; and
- 11** The proposals should be tested in a number of views.

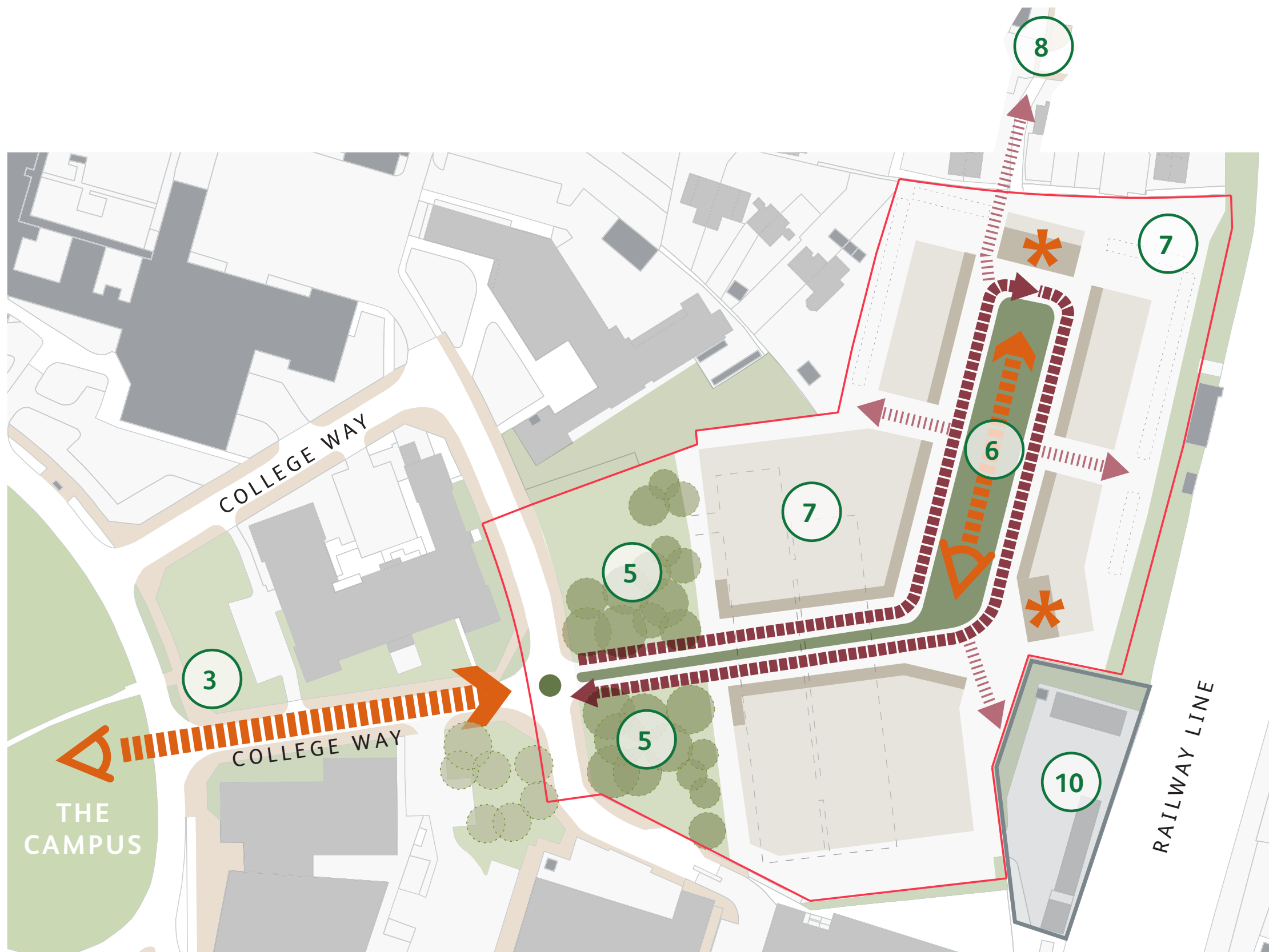


FIG 7 - WGC2120 OPPORTUNITY SITE 2