

# Brighton and Hove City Council

## Appendix 2. Housing Committee Briefing November 2017

Rotherfield Crescent, Hollingbury, Brighton, BN1 8FP



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Existing aerial view looking north of site situated behind residential gardens on Rotherfield Crescent, Buxted Rise, Keymer Road and Fernhurst Crescent.

In 2015 BHCC and the RIBA invited architect-led design teams to submit ideas for 4 sites in Phase 1 of the *New Homes for Neighbourhoods* competition. The Rotherfield Crescent proposal by Innes Associates (IA) was selected for its:

- compelling and optimistic vision of communal living.
- concept providing possibility of access to neighbouring garages.
- careful thought to reduce the impact on neighbouring properties.

The proposed scheme is for 4 new homes situated in a backland garage site in Hollingbury (North Brighton) overlooking the hills of the South Downs. The mix of two storey dwellings is made up from three 3-bed, 5-person homes and one 2-bed, 4-person home ranging in floor plans of 65sqm to 90sqm.

The four homes each have their own individual private terrace and private garden space, while additionally sharing the benefit of the central garden, barbeque seating area and the garden shed.

Access to the four home proposal is via an existing lane situated between 59 and 61 Rotherfield Crescent, with car parking proposed on site.

## Current Condition of Site



A. View down access lane



B. View of south garages and neighbouring residential properties



C. View of northern garages and South Downs in the distance



D. View of garages and rear access to 12 Keymer Road

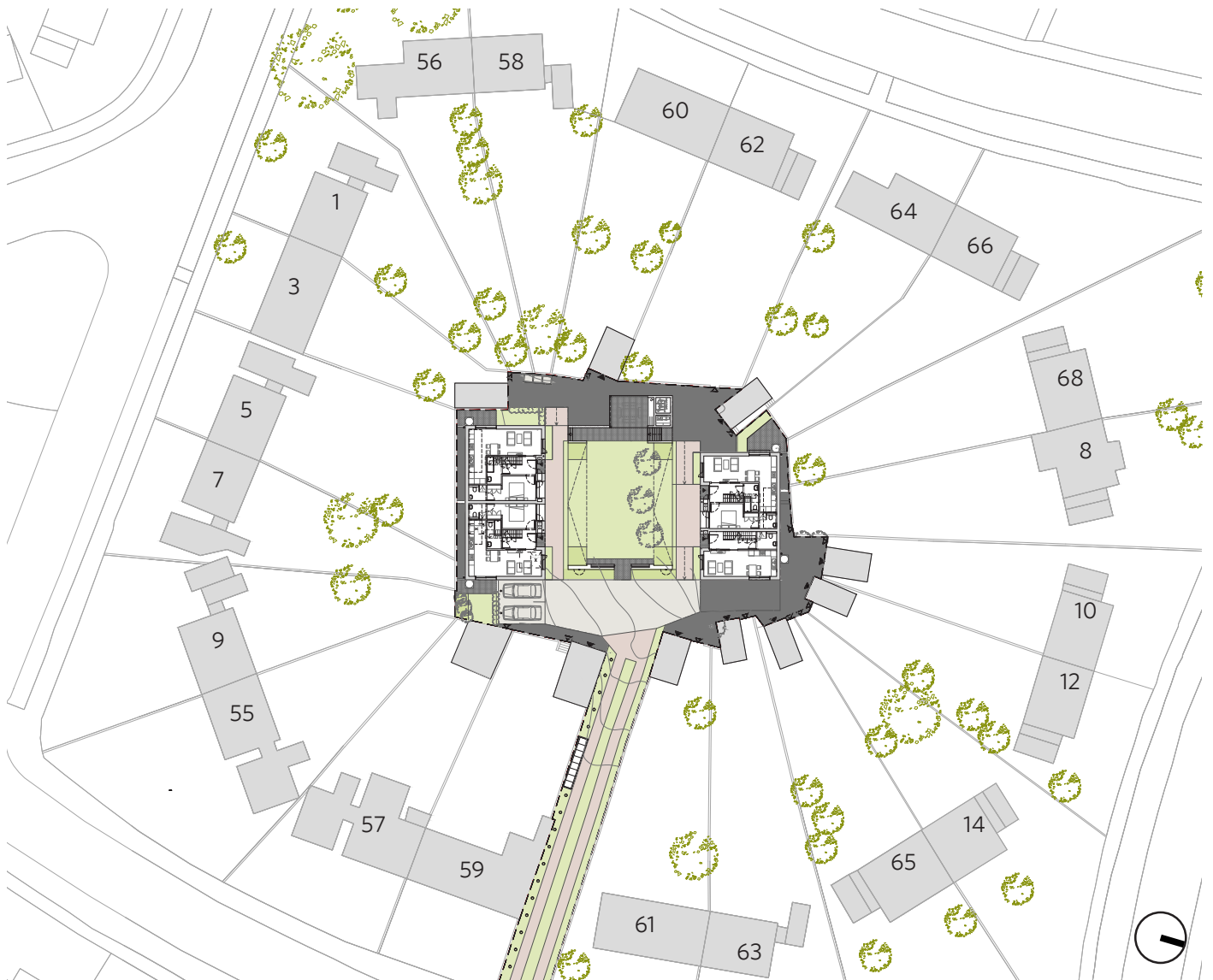
The unusual site in Hollingbury is located at the centre of a ring of houses formed by Keymer Road (North), Buxted Rise (South), Fenhurst Crescent (West) and Rotherfield Crescent (East).

The 1175 sq.m site is surrounded on all sides by the gardens and low level garages of 22 post war semi-detached houses. These properties vary their connection with the site, some having grown hedges and planted trees along the perimeter, while other properties have direct steps and access onto the central pocket of land. Frequent use of the land has been hindered by a history of antisocial behaviour being witnessed on the site with some residents concerned about the security of their garages.

There is a single access point via a 40m track between the gardens of 59 and 61 Rotherfield Crescent. This is currently used by a few of the neighbouring properties to gain car access to the rear of their properties. Currently on the site there are 10 garages in a worn condition owned by the council.

There are long views from the site's hill position out across the northern edge of Brighton to the South Downs National Park creating a great sense of openness. The site slopes significantly with a 3.5m change in height from south-east to north-west.

# Proposed Scheme in Neighbourhood



Rotherfield Crescent and neighbouring properties

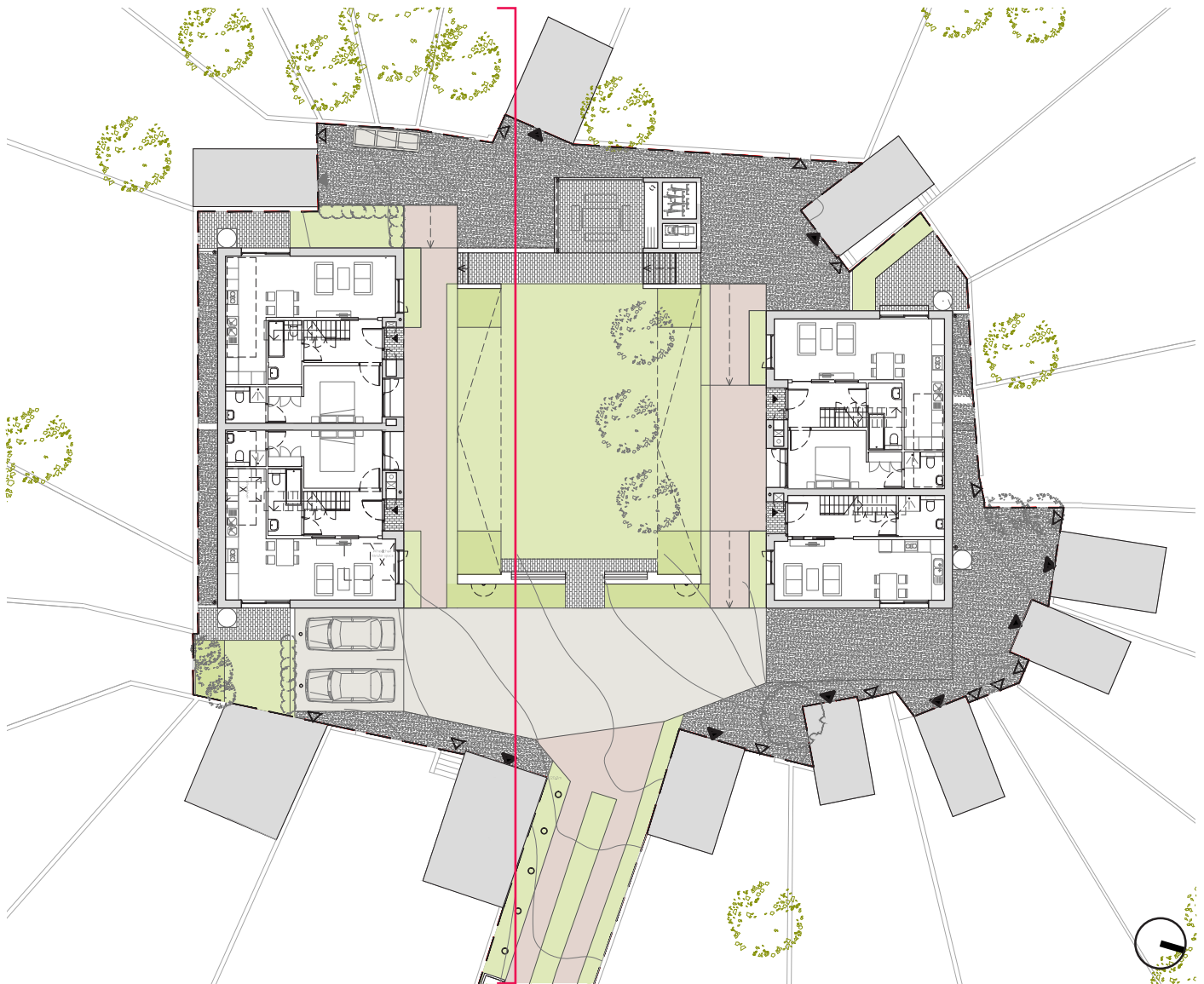
The proposed development is for the demolition of the existing garages and construction of four family houses, of which three are 3-bedroom and one is 2-bedroom, enclosing on its north and south sides a central, communally used and maintained garden space and four parking spaces. A new communal structure to the west of the communal garden provides a table large enough to seat all residents, a barbeque with sink and storage for cycles and gardening equipment. The concept behind the shared space and facilities is to create a child-friendly "home zone" where people can grow plants and vegetables, socialise with each other and children can play safely.

A renewed access track improves the existing surfaces and adds solar-powered lighting but retains an informal quality with a central grass strip. Reinforced gravel provides a permeable

surface for cars on entry to the main site area and low brick walls enclose the central garden.

Care is taken in the design of the terraces to avoid overlooking of neighbours with the following strategies:

- no windows are provided in the walls that run parallel with neighbours' boundaries
- rooflight structure restricts views and access into neighbouring gardens at the back of each of the 3 terraces
- new trees are planted in the south-eastern corner to help screen the new property from its nearest neighbour



*Rotherfield Crescent Community Garden*

Each house is a two-storey structure with an external terrace, or (in the case of the 2-bedroom house) a balcony, provided for private amenity. Each house also has a small pocket garden accessed directly from the kitchen/dining area. On the ground floor the kitchen and dining spaces are combined and given large windows to increase daylight. In the 3-bedroom houses one of these bedrooms is at ground level; a deeper reveal to these spaces provides additional privacy for occupants.

New grass and fruit trees provide a simple, easily maintained central lawn and bound-gravel paths form the access to each house. The northern and southern sides to the lawn are sloped to give as much flat, usable, central area as possible. The communal pergola and store are designed to feel part of the garden and use the same palette of brick and timber.



*Rotherfield Crescent Garden*



*Rotherfield Crescent North Elevation in context with surrounding properties*

Overall the intention has been to create a simple, coherent palette of materials for both buildings and landscape that is both attractive and new but has a recognisable relationship to its context. The main strategies can be summarised as follows:

- › a brick of a lighter tone but comparable hue to the surrounding Hollingbury Estate has been selected for the buildings and low walls to the central garden. Brick is a long-lasting material for an exposed location and continues to have an attractive appearance even when resources for maintenance are limited. The choice of hue is intended to create a connection between new and existing and help to make the new homes seem familiar.
- › elements of white panelling in the deep reveals to the entrance porch and the balcony space by the stairs at first floor level articulate the depth of the brick skin and have an equivalent in the rendered upper floors of the neighbouring buildings

- › timber details to built-in seats and the pergola in the communal space soften the materials and make the structures comfortable for residents

The new proposal focuses on providing Hollingbury with:

- › good homes with private space
- › a sense of belonging not just to the new site but the wider estate, being able to make friends with neighbours
- › an enjoyment of the natural tranquillity and views

# Typical Home Layout



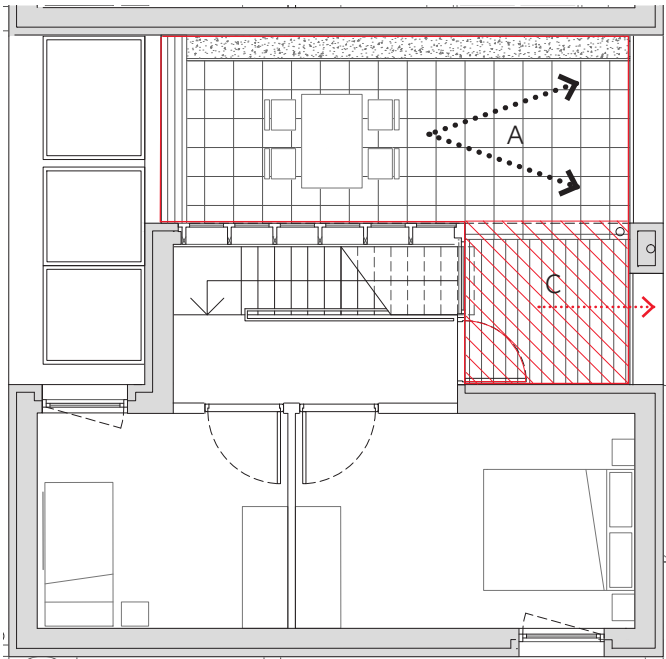
*A.: Visualisation of upstairs terrace looking across central garden*



*B.: Visualisation of living space with varying qualities of natural daylight and views coming from multiple directions*



# Typical Home Layout



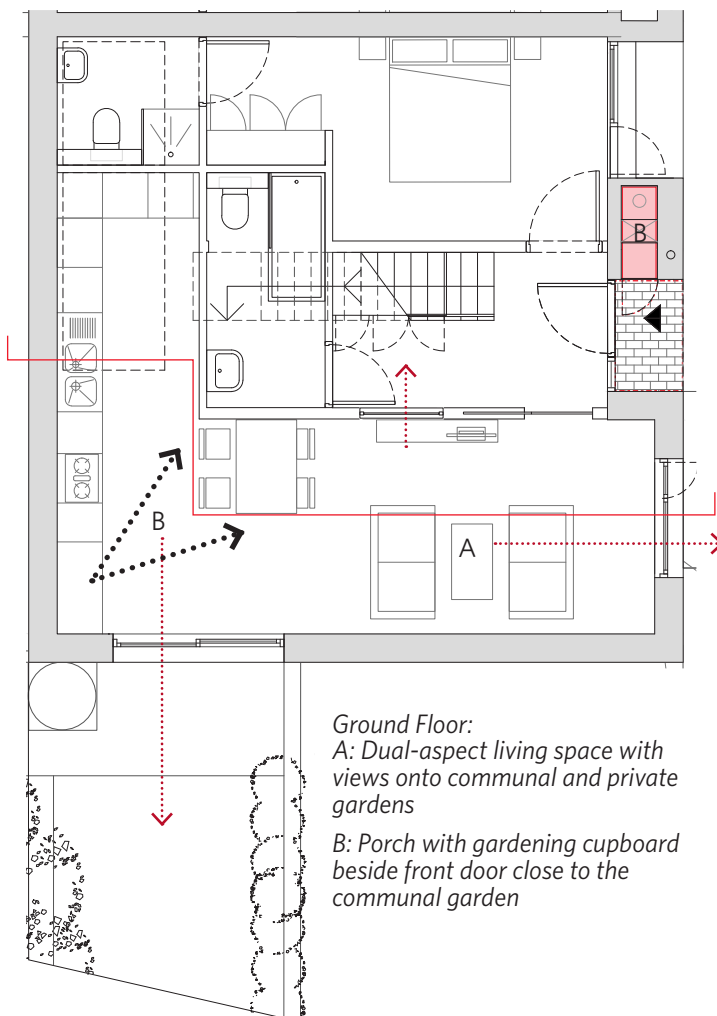
First Floor: C: Private roof terrace with both covered & open space

It is the intention of the design to create a careful balance of attractive living spaces and promotion of communal living. The shared space is designed to promote greater social opportunities for both new and existing residents, while the private amenity spaces provide a degree of privacy and screening away from the shared space. The key design strategies are:

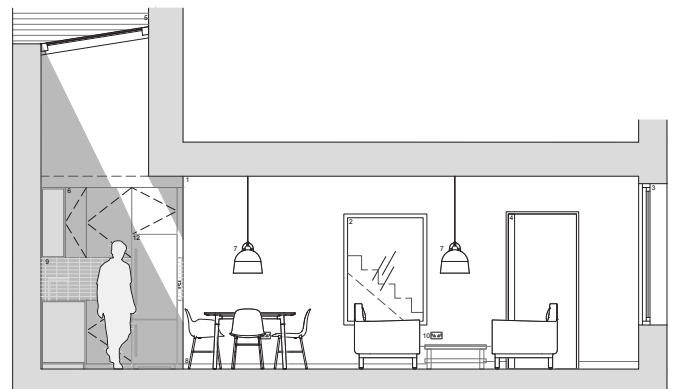
- › combined and dual-aspect living and dining space with views over the central garden and direct access from kitchen to the private garden terrace
- › provision of first floor terrace with covered balcony to create additional private space
- › orientation of all living rooms towards the central garden to create a strong communal bond between homes

Aspects of detailed design in the homes that are considered important to the success of the houses and promotion of communal living are:

- › porch to front door with coat/boot storage to make it easy to go in and out while gardening
- › deeper reveal to ground floor bedroom provides privacy to this space while allowing a view of the central garden
- › rooflight to kitchen spaces gives excellent levels of daylight while keeping the walls free for storage and equipment



Ground Floor:  
A: Dual-aspect living space with views onto communal and private gardens  
B: Porch with gardening cupboard beside front door close to the communal garden



Rooflight in kitchen providing excellent levels of light and more cupboard space

## Public & Neighbourhood Conversation

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Innes Associates and the BHCC Estates Regeneration Team have begun an extensive procedure of open conversation and dialogue with the large number of neighbours surrounding the proposed property line. This is a process that is designed to understand the concerns that people may have and respond to these when possible.

In the summer and autumn of 2017, the 22 neighbouring properties received leaflets which contained a summary of the developed scheme and a request for neighbours to engage in discussions with the Brighton and Hove City Council project team. Through email and telephone contact, 8 home visits were organised with the neighbouring properties that had easements and garages that adjoin the site. These discussions provided an opportunity for neighbours to feedback on the design proposal and to articulate any suggestions and/or concerns they may have about the scheme. These are summarised below and proposed responses where necessary are provided *in italics*:

- › several neighbours would welcome the development as an improvement to a plot that is unsightly and has attracted anti-social behaviour at times
- › concerns of current security risk for possessions stored in garages, would like to see more lighting around the garages to increase security. Would like to maintain car access to the garages in some cases, though not all. *Amended plans show the access can be accommodated.*
- › concerns of overlooking from new terraced spaces (64 Fenhurst Crescent, 3 Buxted Rise). *We propose an allowance in the cost plan.*
- › possible damage to thin fence along vehicular access route to site: suggestion of a hard wearing brick wall. *We are looking to build this into the cost plan.*
- › additional demand on parking. *Planning team have indicated there is sufficient capacity in surrounding streets.*

In each case we believe the response can address or mitigate these concerns to an extent that would be considered reasonable. Amendments would be the subject of design development prior to the planning submission.

Before a final planning submission is presented to the planning department, a final community exhibition is planned in a local venue where the full scheme will be presented with the aim of reaching more of the neighbours and any other interested individuals from the area.