



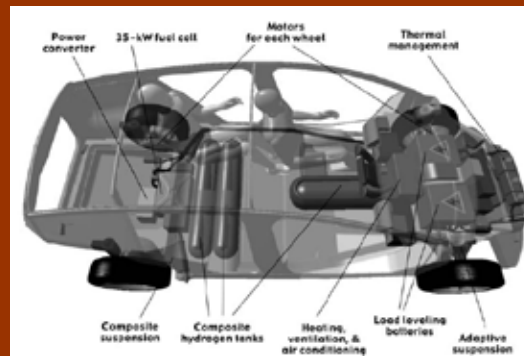
LEICESTER WATERSIDE



A submission to Blueprint by...



THIS IS NOT A MASTERPLAN



The brief asks us to demonstrate our approach to the site rather than to prepare a masterplan. While they may look like one, the drawings as part of this document are not therefore a masterplan. They are more like a concept car or demonstration house that a manufacturer might use to try out all of their new ideas.

There are a lot of ideas in our plan, maybe even too many for any one scheme. They are, however, a response to many of the things that we have been thinking about for some time to do with density, sustainability and efficiency and their effect

We have been fighting a valiant rear guard action against this by trying to work within the current set of rules that drive commercial developers to create humane, and more sustainable environments. But it has occurred to us for some time that there might be another way of producing a commercially efficient plan.

nurture community life in its many different forms.

In preparing this document we have therefore set ourselves a series of rules, which have developed into a manifesto which we outline on the following pages. We then set out to see if we could produce a plan that followed these rules and yet also made sense commercially. We are not sure that it has quite worked yet but there is enough in the plan to suggest to us that we are on to something.

There are very few developers in the UK who are prepared to think laterally in these matters. Blueprint and Igloo are one of the few and we would welcome the opportunity to explore these ideas with you.

‘there might be another way of producing a commercially efficient plan’



on placemaking and liveability.

We are currently undertaking a significant amount of masterplanning for private developers and know only too well the pressures for everything to become taller, for all flats to become single aspect and for layouts to degenerate into a series of slab blocks with little relationship to the street or public realm.

In our Housing Market Renewal work we have also been thinking a lot about how mixed communities can be made to work in practice. This has raised issues such as how urban living can be made attractive to families and older people, how to shift the emphasis from the private to the public realm, and how to

MANIFESTO



We aim to create an intimate, dense, human scale, sociable neighbourhood that achieves the same efficiencies as some of the large apartment blocks being built around Leicester and many other city centres. Integrated with this aim is the need for a sustainable urbanism that will reduce carbon emissions by more than 60%. To this end we set ourselves the following objectives:

1 Historical form:
To respond to the urban character and grain of Leicester's medieval heart by developing modern versions of the burgage plots, mews courts and row houses that once stood on the site.

3 High footprint:
To do this we have increased the footprint of the development to create compact development forms, so that least 40% of the site area is covered with buildings.

5 Aspect and microclimate:
To learn from tradition urban design that responds to bioclimatic influences and to avoid single aspect apartments with no through ventilation. We set a goal that all homes should have two aspects and allow through ventilation while the form of the development should provide shelter without excessive shading.

7 Integrated uses:
Traditional urban areas mix uses effortlessly and create the street life of a neighbourhood. We therefore decided that workspace and retailing would be provided largely on the ground floor of the residential blocks while community and leisure uses would animate the neighbourhood, with a focus on key streets and spaces.

9 Innovation that follows the rules: Why is it that innovative urban design ignores the rules that have governed urban areas for centuries? URBED has spent 15 years arguing these principles and we are not going to discard them now. However they don't always need to result in a perimeter block layout and the concept plan explores new forms which don't break the rules.

2 Low rise:
To achieve the densities set out in the brief while creating a human-scale neighbourhood that encourages walking and cycling and makes the most of its waterside setting we set ourselves the goal that the scheme should be predominantly three storeys.

4 Sociable space:
To explore a new approach to public realm by reducing private space and allowing the amount of public realm to expand. This will encourage activity in public areas that are carefully graded to create friendly, safe, lively spaces with cars out of sight.

6 Family housing: The urban renaissance will come to nothing if urban development is just for single people so we have explored ways of introducing family housing into urban neighbourhoods with four different housing typologies along with complementary functions such as safe play spaces and a nursery.

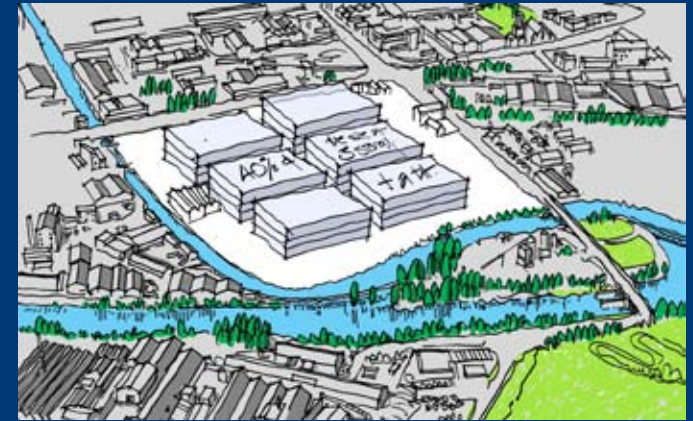
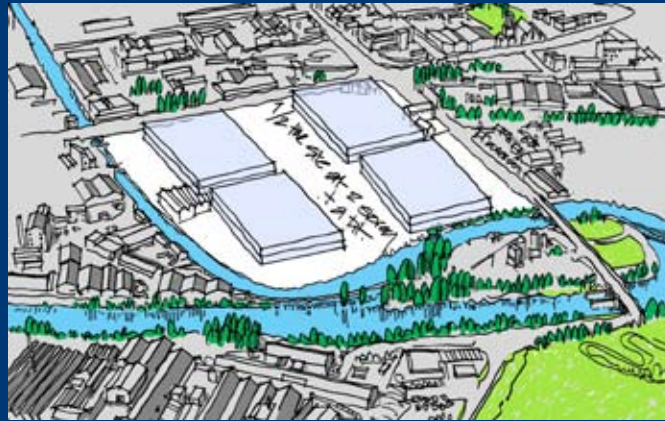
8 Infrastructure and Connectivity: Urban development should created the impetus and the economies of scale to put in place new infrastructure to future-proof urban neighbourhoods for a low carbon, knowledge-based future. We have therefore explored a heating network; strategic cycle routes; and a fibre optic network to facilitate the digital economy.



CONTEXT



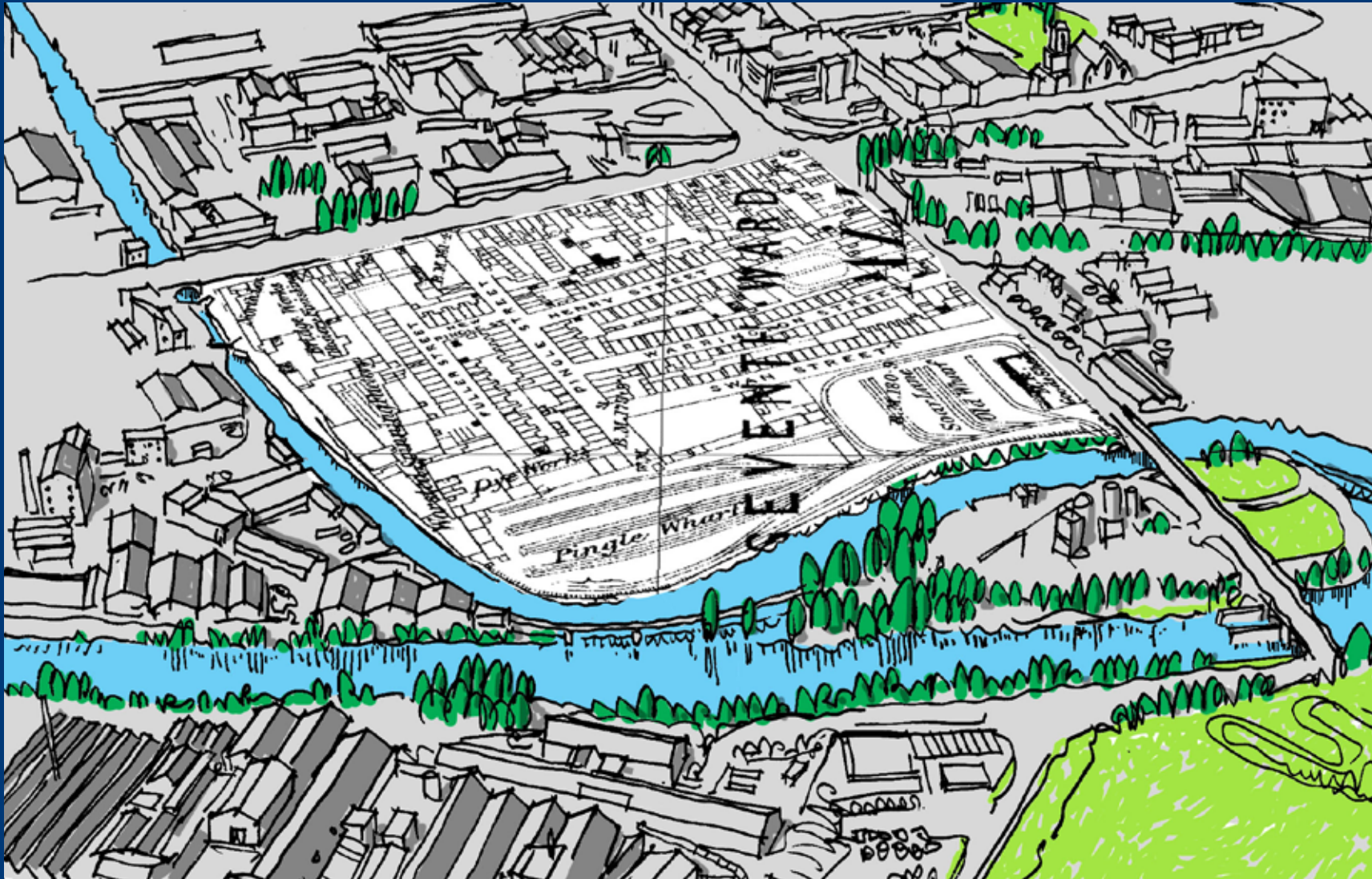
CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT: Plot Ratio



The 500,000sqft floor area in the brief will cover the site entirely at 1 storey (plus a bit). Most modern developments achieve density by building high, with as little as 30% site coverage. However, examples like Barcelona (left) and Stockholm (on the manifesto page) in very different climates are historical forms that achieve much higher plot coverage. This in our view is one solution to building humane environments at higher densities. One implication is that the amount of private space is reduced to provide more public space. This is the approach in Amsterdam (below) and Berlin (below right). We have increased this to 40% meaning that we only need to build to 3 storeys to provide the floor area. In fact we have gone slightly higher and believe that a greater density could easily be achieved.



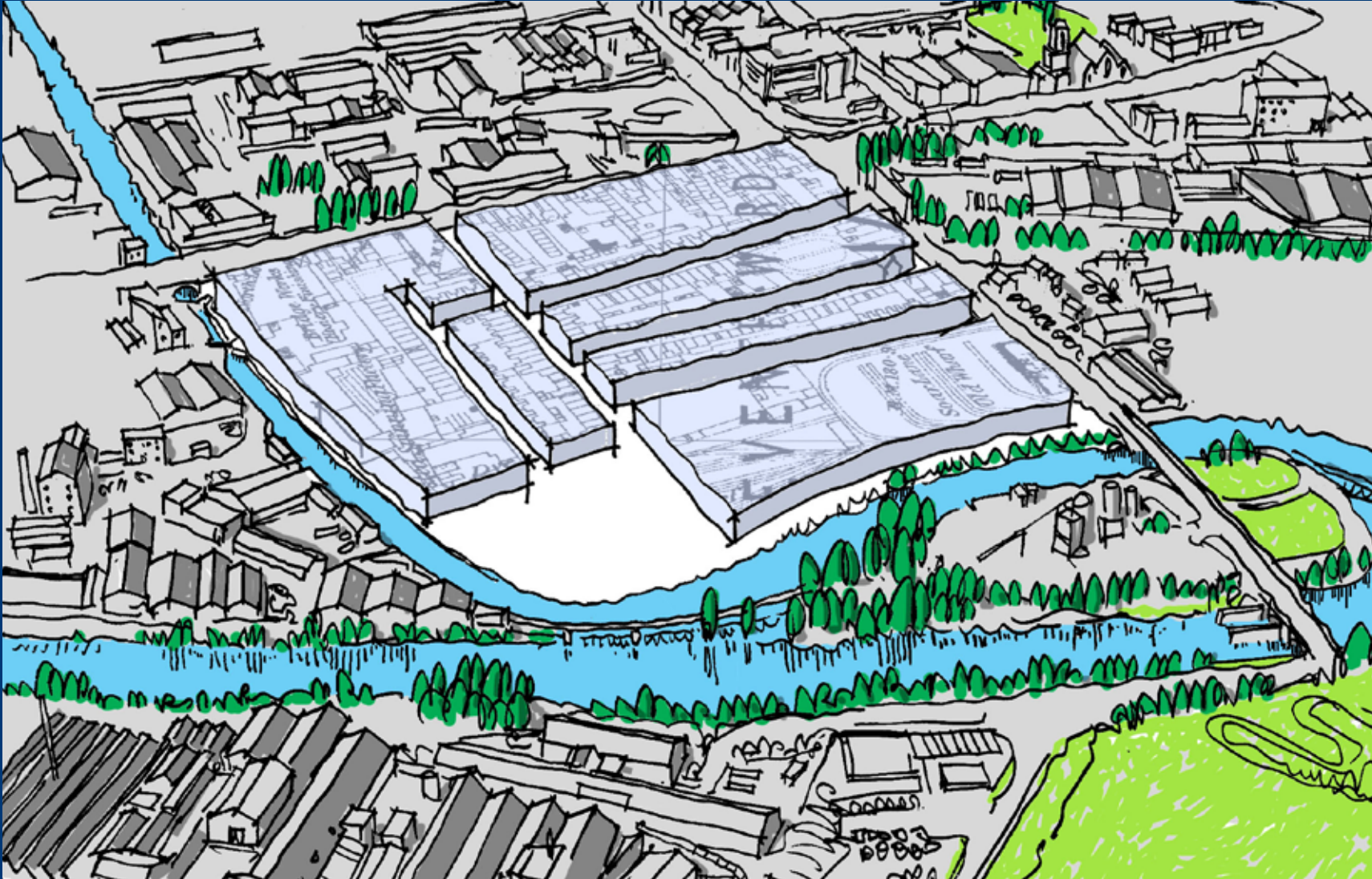
CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT: Rediscovery



URBED has a very historicist attitude to urban design. Areas that grow over time create natural patterns that often make a lot of sense. Our starting point is therefore always to ask whether we should reinstate the old roads. This has the added advantage of keeping services in-situ allowing the retention of existing buildings.

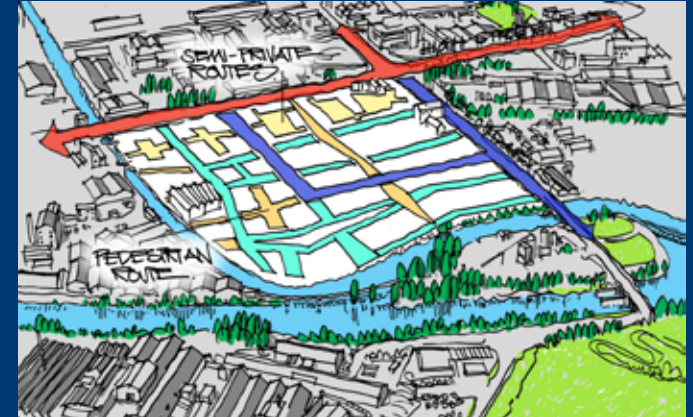
The old plan of Waterside has some fascinating burgage plots on the main road with a series of tight Victorian streets to the rear. We have decided to work with this grain.

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT: Carving the streets



The first step was therefore to carve out the streets and public spaces from the site. This is the opposite of most architects who start by placing objects on the site. This carving essentially reinstates the historic street pattern. Because of some of the tight terraced housing plots that previously stood on the site this already starts to develop our ideas about high site coverage development.

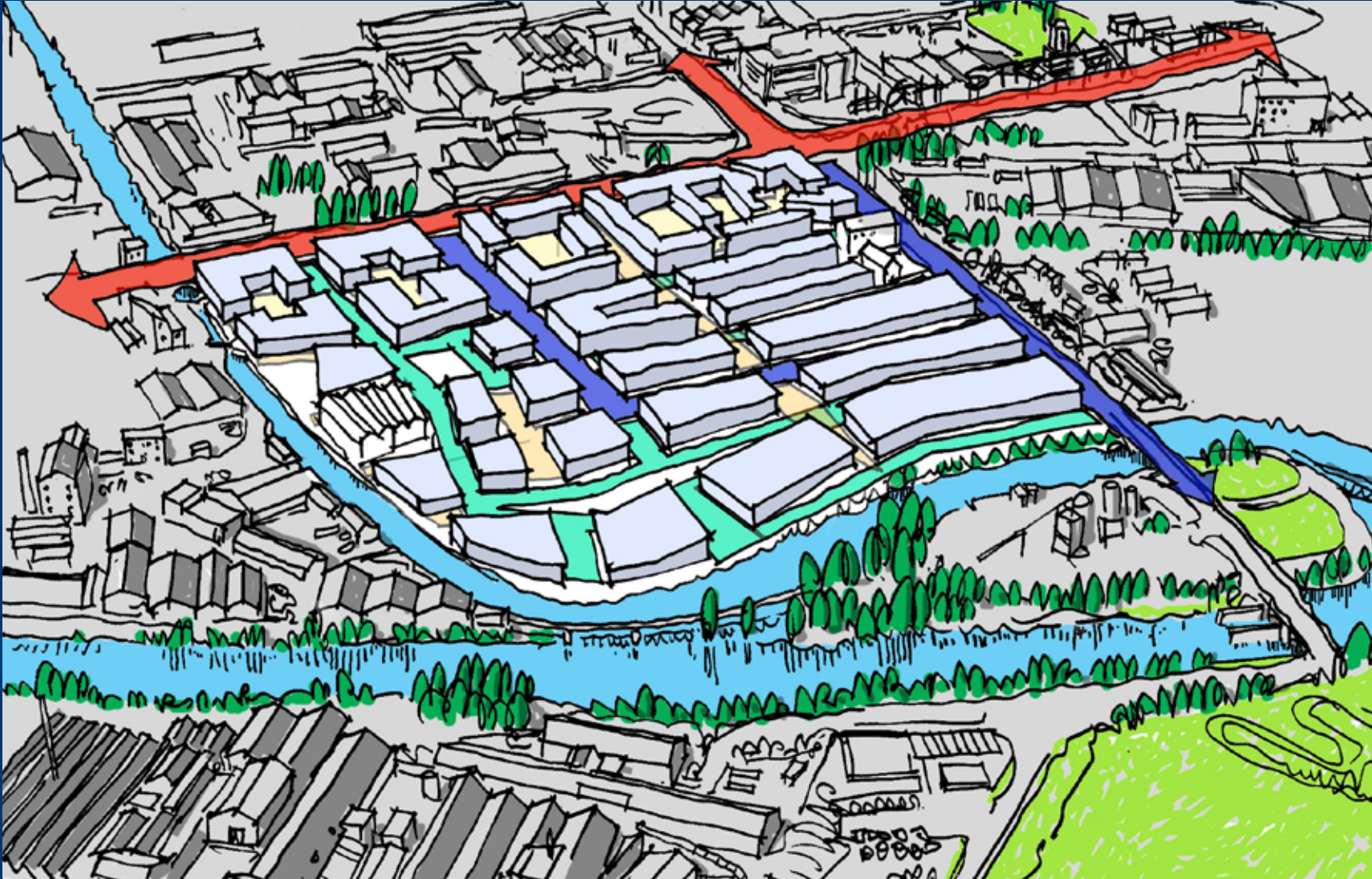
CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT: Hierarchy



The next task is to prioritise the streets according to their importance and function. The high street is Northgate Street and the scheme should not compete with this. The implication is that retail space should be onto this street rather than within the site. The main routes through the site together with Soar Lane are secondary routes carrying traffic into the area and should be the focus for commercial and leisure uses. This local level of streets will provide vehicle access to each of the properties in the scheme. This will be designed as a shared surface to homezone standards (although without parking). Finally we have created a pedestrian circulation network. This draws on the medieval forms of Leicester allowing circulation through courtyards.



CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT: Massing

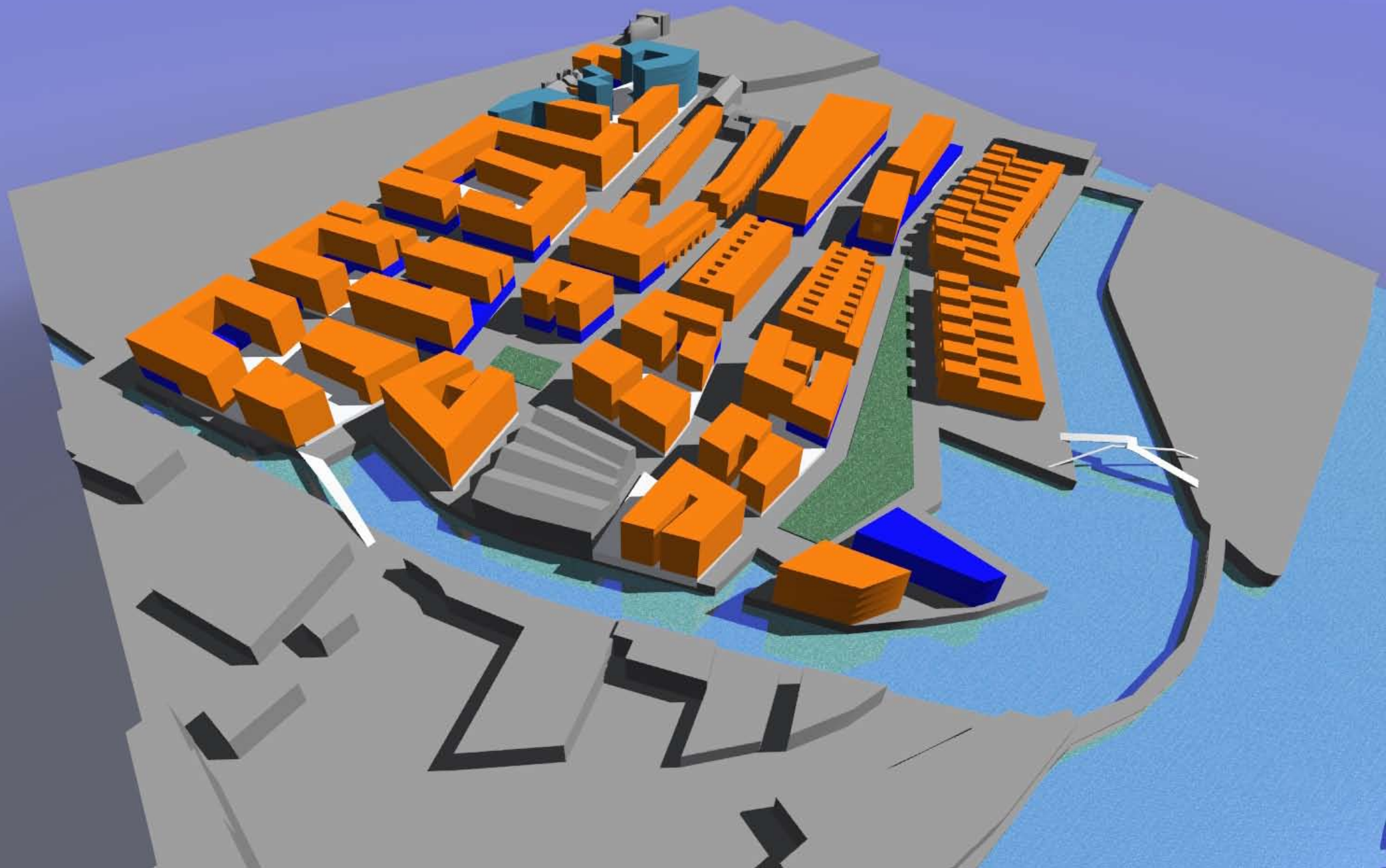


This approach has allowed us to create a structure for the plan that is incredibly permeable and yet retains a high plot coverage without having to go much beyond 3 storeys.

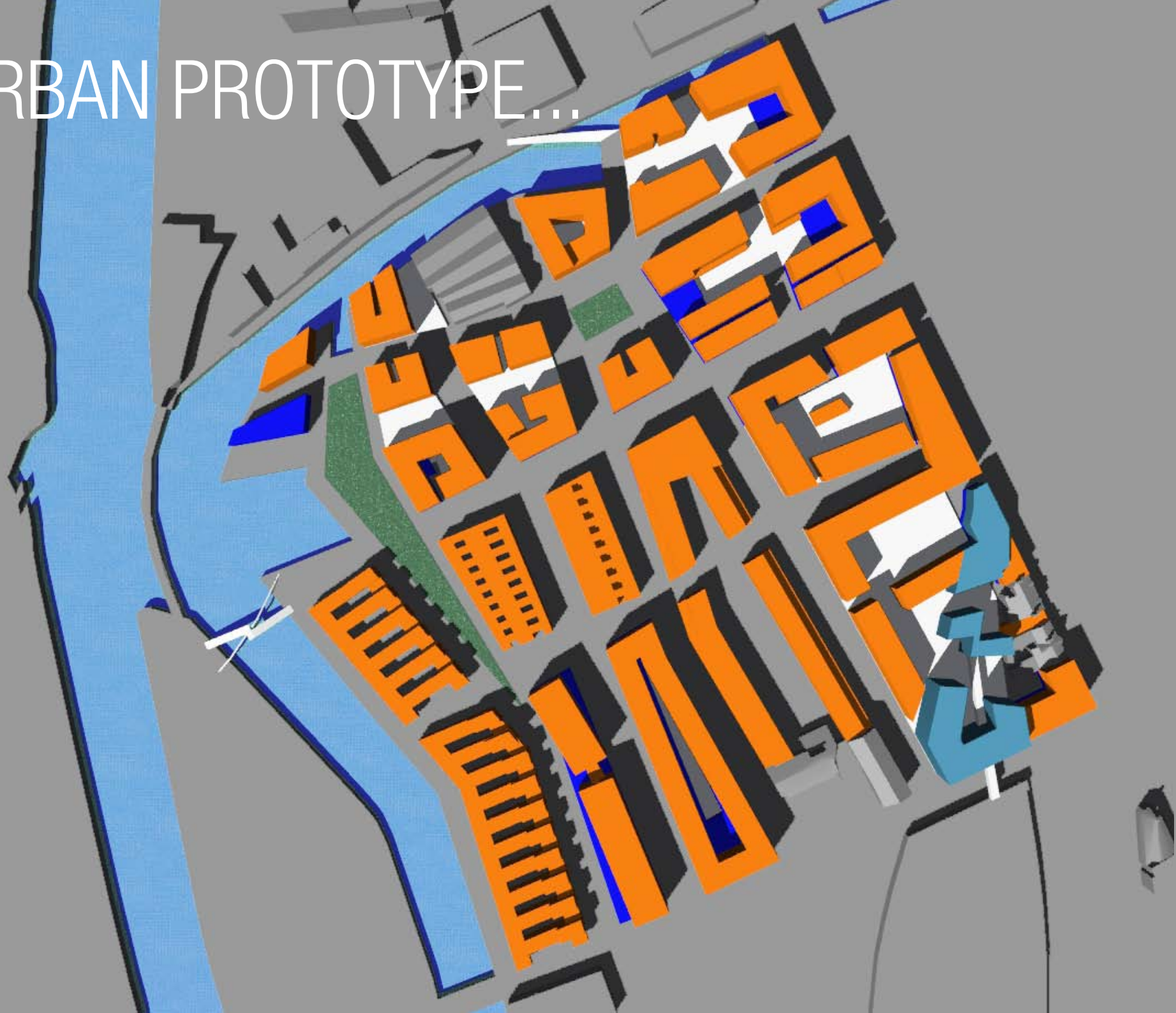
The scheme has a graduation in density from the main roads to the back of the site. This however is achieved not with height but with the solidity of the blocks which become more fragmented towards the water.

Our hope is that this potentially changes the economies of development because it uses domestic scale buildings with comensurately less foundation costs, structural requirements etc..

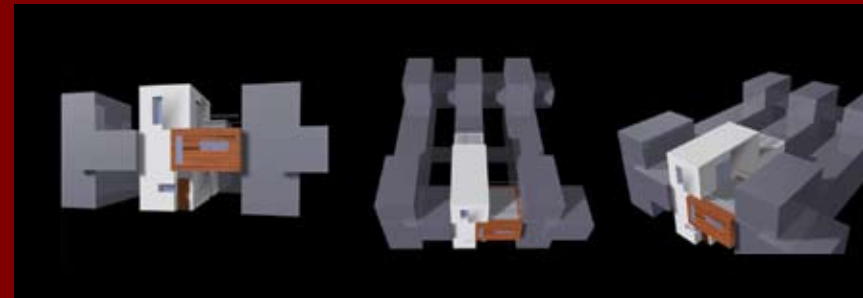
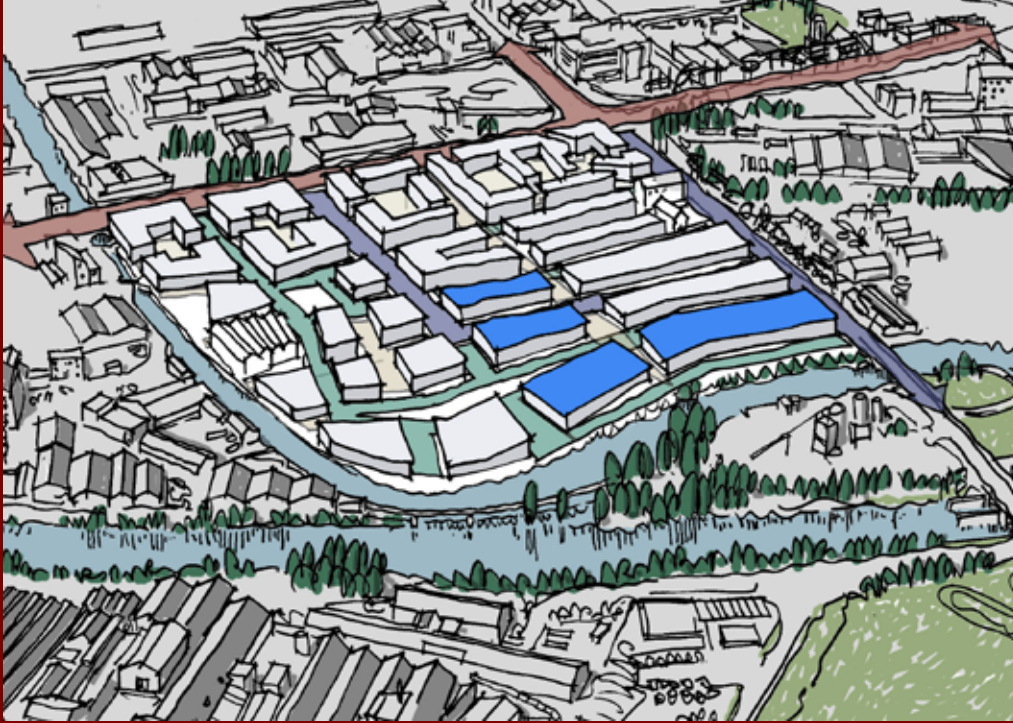
URBAN PROTOTYPE...



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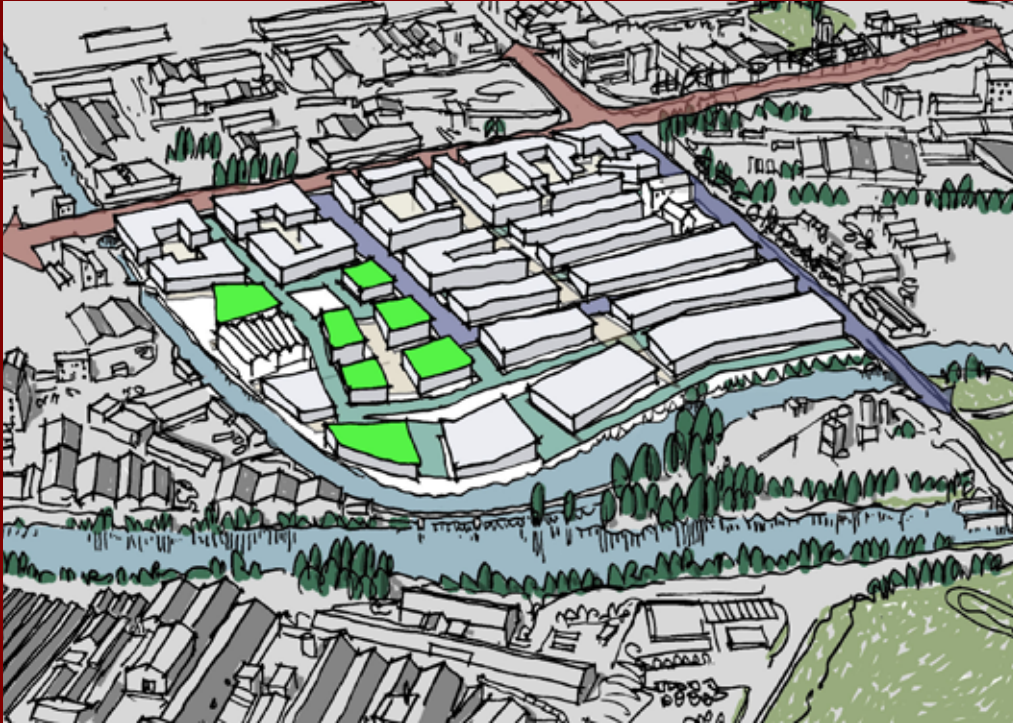


TYOLOGIES: COURTYARD HOUSES



The courtyard houses built in Amsterdam have generated a huge amount of interest. The illustration above is a version that we developed through work in Oldham and involves three variations on a plan with a 25m plot depth to create a variety of house types. The two used here are the courtyard house, a back to back form with an internal courtyard and the through house which fronts onto streets at the front and back.

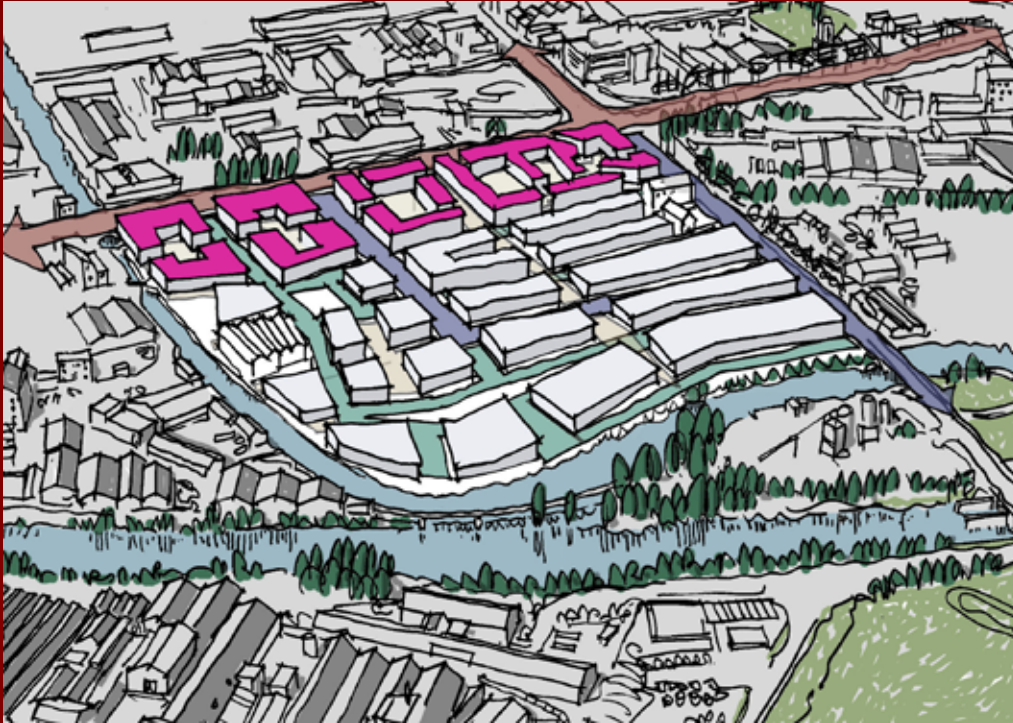
TYOLOGIES: ICEBERGS



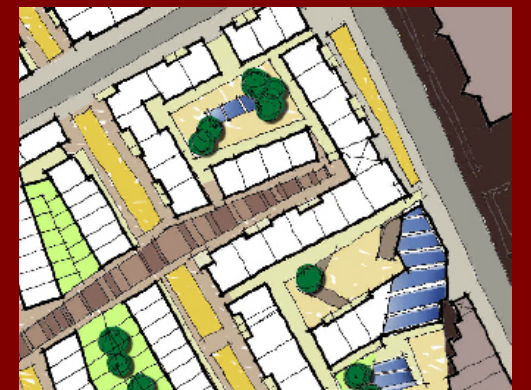
The Iceberg blocks are small apartment buildings with four flats a floor around a central core. This is similar to the block in Berlin (left) and Venice (above). The advantage is that every apartment has two aspects. On the plan the blocks have been grouped either in twos or fours with parking at the lower ground floor level serving all of the blocks. A timber deck is provided over the car park to provide a semi-private area shared by all of the apartments but also forming part of the public realm of the scheme.



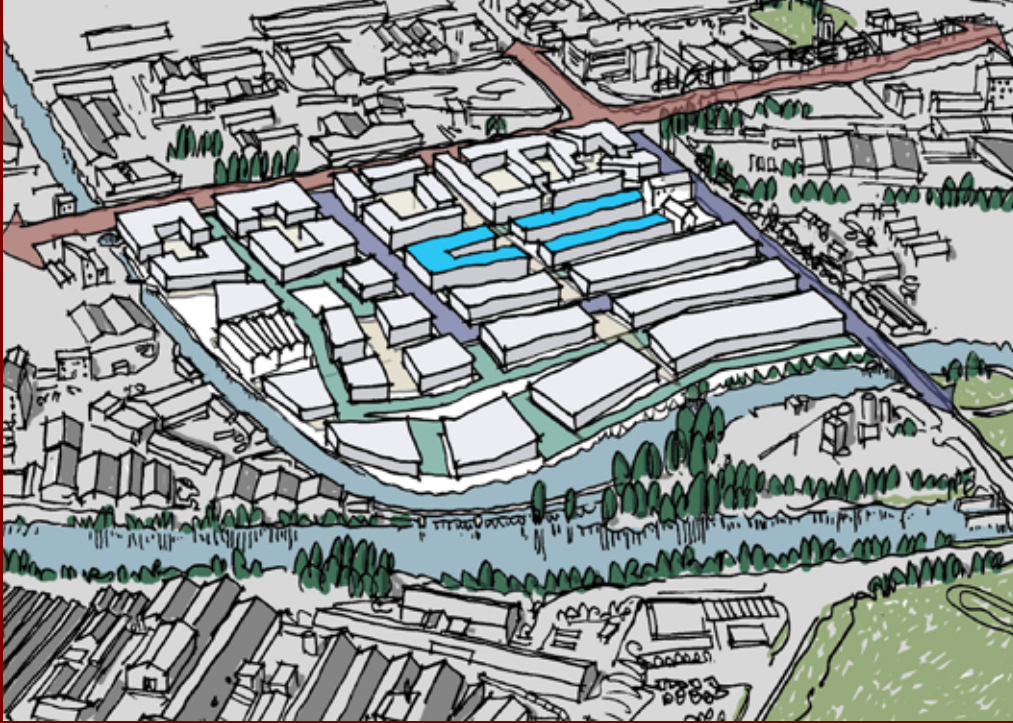
TYOLOGIES: COURTYARD BLOCKS



On the former Burgage plots along the main road we wanted to replicate the courtyard form that existed before. We have therefore created a series of courtyard blocks where the main circulation is through the courtyard. All of the apartments are dual aspect with one face onto a more public space and one onto a more private area. However, the public is able to permeate through the ground floor. Temple Bar in Dublin is one of the best examples of this type of development (left).

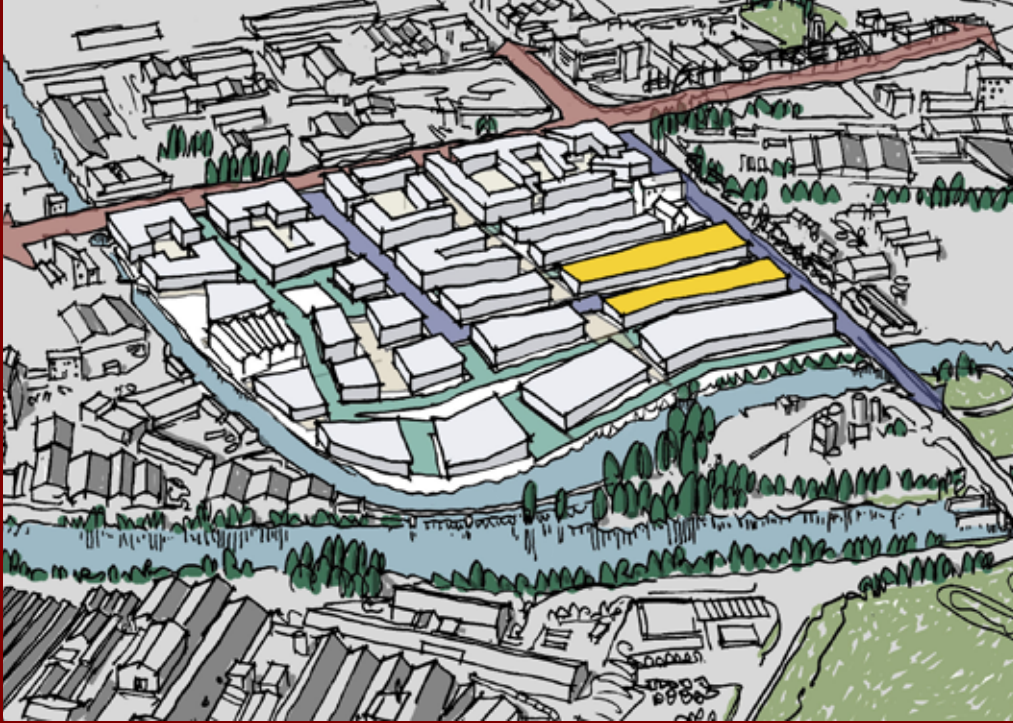


TYOLOGIES: TERRACES



These are a relatively traditional form of terraced housing with back gardens. The example above is from URBED's New England Quarter masterplan in Brighton (above, front, left, the rear view). They show how significant high value family housing can be accommodated on a tight site with roof terraces compensating for the small garden.

TYOLOGIES: APARTMENT TYPES



We have explored two types of apartment blocks that provide some of the efficiencies of double loading while creating dual aspect apartments. The Scissor Block (above) we developed originally for a competition although it is based on an original concept by le Corbusier. A central corridor gives access to a room on either side with one flat going up and the other going down. This is very efficient although only works with larger apartments. The second form is the atrium block with the central corridor expanded to form a naturally ventilated atrium. To the left is a traditional form from Seville, the best known version in the UK is the Smithfield Building by Urban Splash.

