

Eastfields Estate, Mitcham
Visual Impact Study
October 2016



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Introduction

1. This Visual Impact Assessment has been prepared by Peter Stewart Consultancy as part of the evidence base for the case for regeneration of the Eastfields Estate. The Visual Impact Assessment will analyse the visual impact of the estate in its existing form, and in particular the visual impact from the surrounding streets towards the estate.
2. The analysis of the existing situation around the estate will be carried out primarily through the consideration of images that have been taken from key locations surrounding the site. The selection of these viewpoints is made following the examination of maps and aerial photographs, as well as site visits and with the aim of including a range of locations from which the site is visible. The viewpoint locations have been agreed with the London Borough of Merton.
3. Sue McGlynn was commissioned to carry out an urban design review in 2015, which would examine the quality of the built environment of the Eastfields Estate. The present report builds on that review by introducing more information on visual considerations of the townscape around the estate.

The Site

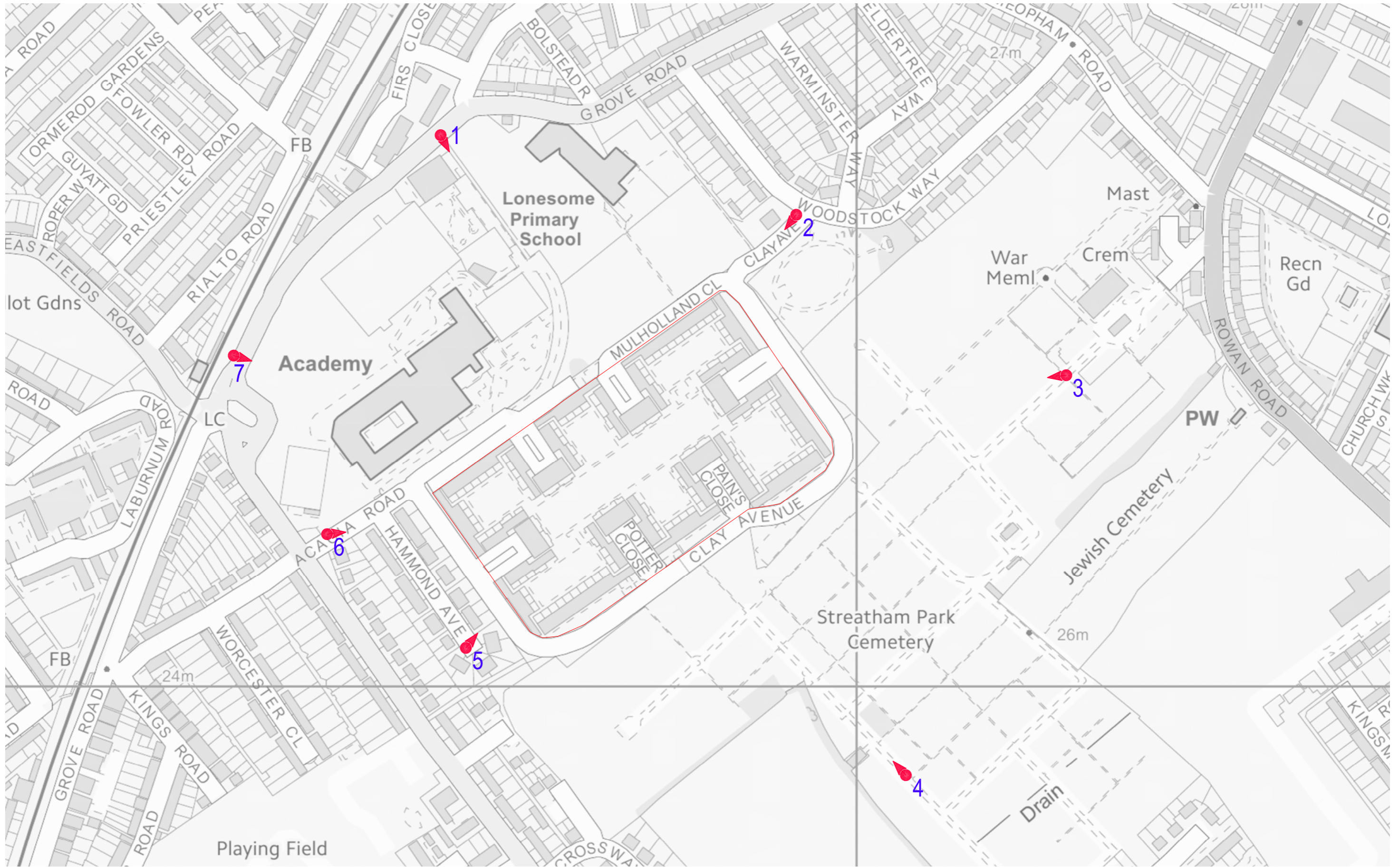
4. The Site is the Eastfields Estate, in Mitcham Eastfields, in the London Borough of Merton. It is bounded by Acacia Road and Mulholland Close to the north and Clay Avenue along the remaining three sides.

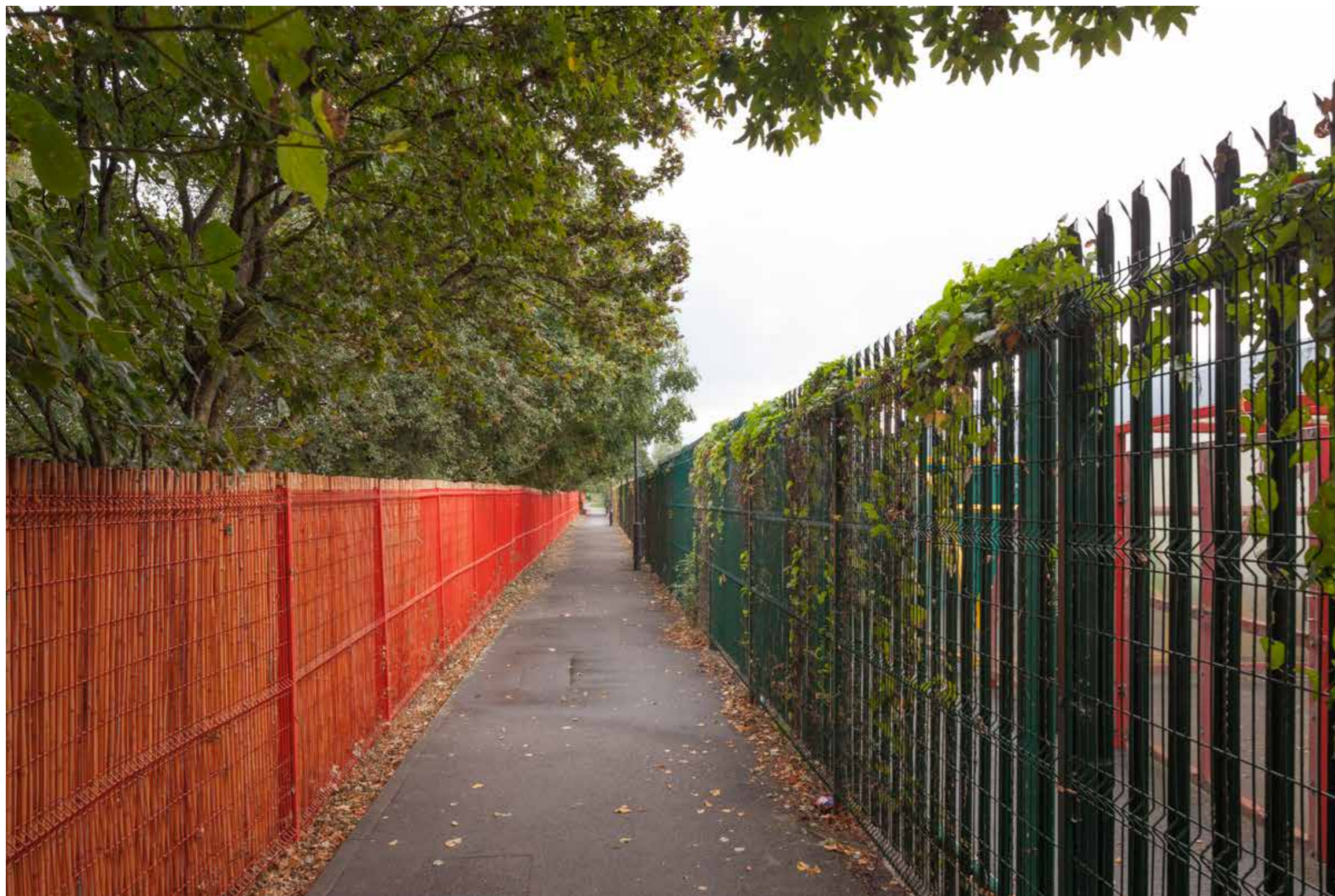
Context

5. Eastfields Estate is located to the east of Mitcham town centre and is served by Mitcham Eastfields train station. To the north of the estate is the St Marks Church of England Academy, a late 20th century school complex of mostly two storey buildings, and the Merton Saints BMX club, as well as the Lonesome Primary School and the Acacia children's Centre, a single storey community centre designed by Curl La Tourelle. A row of bungalows along Hammond Avenue abut the estate to the west and to the south and east the estate is bound by Streatham Park Cemetery.
6. Eastfields Estate was designed by Richard MacCormac and built in the 1970's. It consists of three storey blocks with garages at ground level. The blocks are positioned around a large internal courtyard, which is rectangular on plan with a number of 'U' shaped indentations. This courtyard is accessible through narrow pathways dotted around the estate. The Estate was built from concrete with white enamel panel cladding.
7. Beyond the immediate context formed by the school and the cemetery, the area is primarily residential, with most of the houses dating from the inter-war era. The character is therefore primarily suburban, with average building heights of two storeys. On the corner of Clay Avenue and Woodstock Way there is a recent residential development designed by Rogers Stirk Harbour and Partners, which rises to three storeys in height.
8. The estate is distinctly different in character from much of its surroundings, both architecturally and in terms of urban design. Most of the residential streets surrounding the site are lined with terraced housing either side of linear streets, offering a permeable layout that is fairly straight forward to navigate.
9. As discussed in the Urban Design Review for Eastfields by Sue McGlynn, the Eastfields Estate is not very successful in terms of urban layout and design. The layout of the estate contributes to its isolation from the surrounding urban grain, with little connectivity to or within it. The estate also offers a lack of active ground floor frontages along its elevations and illegible, narrow alleyways for accessing the central courtyard, making it feel unsafe and difficult to navigate.

Views and Visual Impact

10. This report will include and describe seven views that have been identified by Peter Stewart Consultancy and agreed with the Local Authority, in order to give an understanding of the existing townscape character in the area surrounding the Eastfields Estate.
11. The viewpoint locations have been agreed by Merton Council on the basis of a desktop analysis (using google maps and working knowledge of the estates). The location of viewpoints was considered by identifying a study area centred on the estate and limited to locations from which the estate and buildings in it can be seen. Within this study area, candidate viewpoint locations were identified based on an examination of maps and aerial photographs, maps of conservation areas, and maps and lists of listed buildings. The final selection of viewpoints was made following a site visit and with the aim of including a range of typical townscape locations from different directions from which the estate is seen, and from which the effect on other points nearby can be deduced.
12. The assessment of individual views and the conclusion (which has been informed by the view assessment) consider the townscape and views as they would be experienced by viewers in reality. Photographic images of townscape are no more than an approximation to this, for a number of reasons:
 - Viewers have peripheral vision; their view is not restricted by borders as a photograph is, and they can move their eyes and heads to take in a wide field of view when standing in once place;
 - Viewpoints themselves are not generally fixed. Townscape is experienced for the most part as a progression of views or vistas by people who are moving through streets or spaces rather than standing still;
 - Photographs do not reflect perception of depth of field as experienced by the human viewer due to parallax;
 - The photographs illustrate the views in conditions that are particular in respect of time of day and time of year, daylight and sunlight, and weather, and the view will appear differently to varying degrees when any of these things vary (for example a photograph with deciduous trees will look different in summer and in winter. Once the trees lose their leaf in winter, they can be perceived as smaller and more will be visible in their background); and
 - Townscape is experienced not by the eye alone but by the interpretation by the mind of what the eye sees, considered in the light of experience, knowledge and memory.
13. Opposite is a map indicating the positions from which these images were taken.

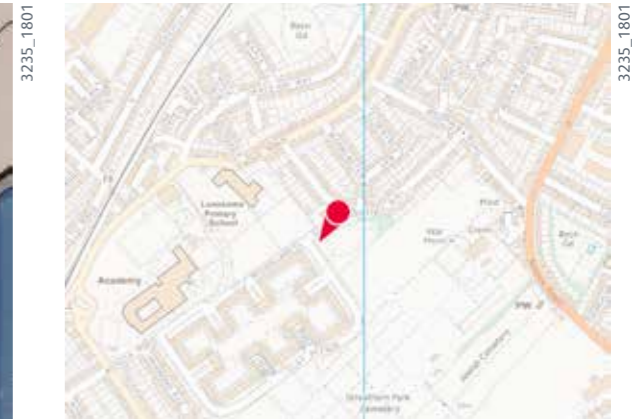




Existing



14. This viewpoint is located at the north of the footpath that runs between the Lonesome Primary School and the Acacia Children's Centre and faces south towards the estate. The main aspect of this image is the footpath and the railings either side – red to the left and green to the right. The tree foliage above the footpath completes the framing of this view. The estate is not visible from this viewpoint.

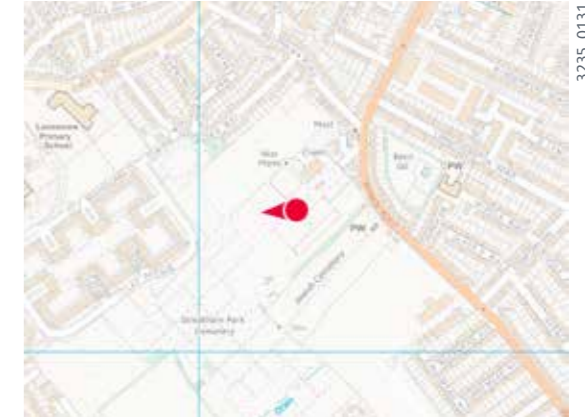


15. This viewpoint is located to the north of the estate, on the corner of Mulholland Close and Woodstock Way, facing back towards the estate. The main characteristic of this image are the trees and landscaping in the park. The new Rogers Stirk Harbour development is also seen on the right of the image, which due to its architecture and colours, attracts the viewers' attention. The existing estate can be seen in the background, beyond the trees.

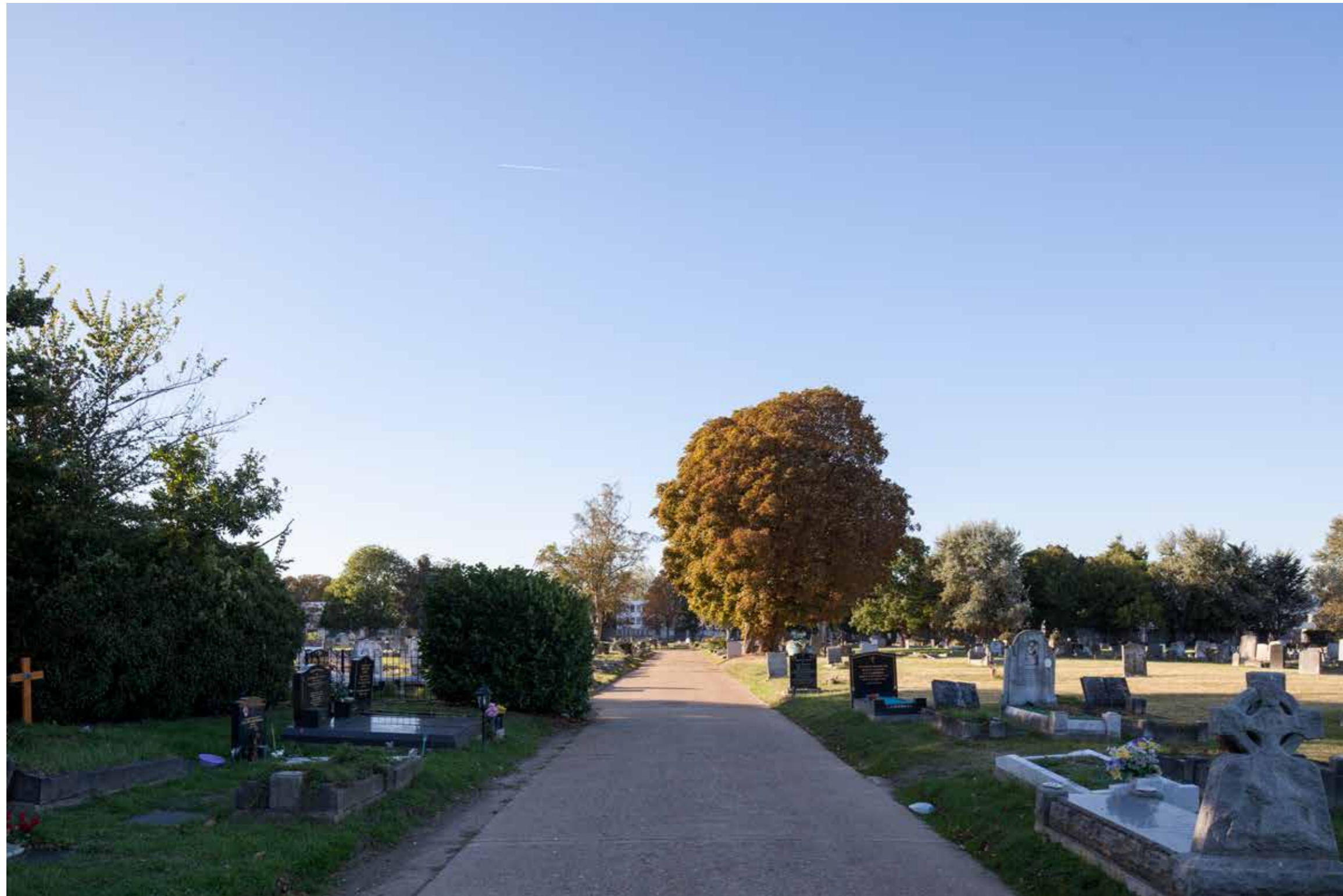
Existing



Existing



16. This viewpoint is located to the east of the estate, close to the crematorium building. The main aspect of this image is the cemetery itself, along with the associated trees and landscaping. The Eastfields Estate buildings are partially visible through the trees, in the background.

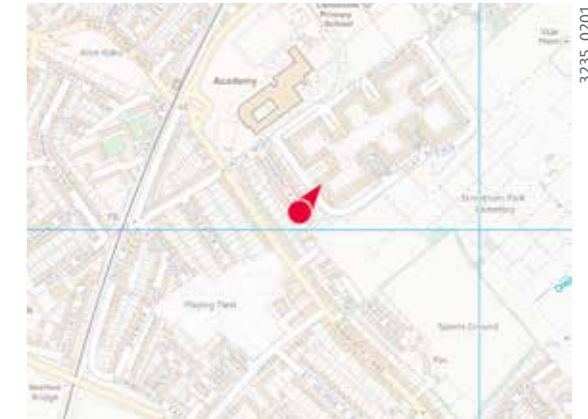


17. This image was taken from within the cemetery, south of the estate, looking north towards the estate. The predominant aspect of this image is the cemetery and its associated hard and soft landscaping and tombstones. Eastfields Estate is barely visible in the background, through the trees.

Existing



Existing



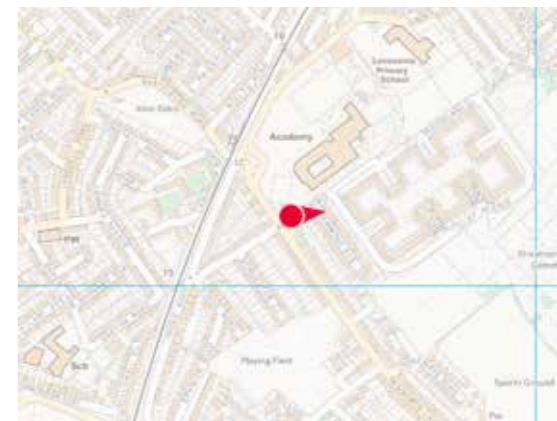
3235_0201

3235_0201

18. This viewpoint is located to the west of the Eastfields Estate, along Hammond Avenue. The focal point of this image are the bungalow houses and the hard landscaping in front of them. Behind the bungalows one can see the foliage of some fairly mature trees. The estate can barely be seen behind them, when the trees are in leaf.



3235_0161



3235_0161

19. This viewpoint is located to the west of the estate, near the corner with Tamworth Lane, facing northeast towards the estate. What is noticeable in this view is the lack of street frontages along both sides of the street, due to the garden walls and edges of the houses on one side and the school fence on the other. Eastfields Estate is barely visible in the background of the image, behind the bungalows and trees.

Existing



Existing

3235_0171



3235_0171

- 20. Grove Road. This image was taken from Grove Road, to the north of the estate, near the Mitcham Eastfields station, looking southeast towards the location of the estate. One can see the buildings of the St Marks Church of England Academy, along with the playing fields in the foreground. The estate is not visible or perceived from this location.

Conclusions

21. The townscape surrounding Eastfields Estate has a mixed character of varying quality. To the east and the west of the estate are streets with terraced or bungalow housing, mostly dating from the inter-war era. Immediately to the north is the St Marks Church of England Academy and the BMX Club, which offer little in terms of street frontage towards the estate. To the south and east is the Streatham Park Cemetery, which creates a clear boundary to the estate, with no visual or physical permeability from Clay Avenue.
22. The Estate is built in a fairly isolated site. The poor urban design layout and architectural expression of the estate creates a negative visual impression on the immediately adjoining streets.
23. In terms of visual impact, the main views that are affected by Eastfields Estate in its existing layout are those from locations immediately adjoining the estate and which show the ground level conditions, architecture and layout and which expose the respective urban design defects of the estate. The estate has no visual impact from viewpoints located further away from the estate. What is noticeable from most of the images and, indeed, from walking around the area, is that there is no sense of arrival at the Eastfields Station and little legibility in trying to navigate from the station, around the school and towards Eastfields Estate.

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