

4.0 Landmark Potential

- 4.1 Renslade House is one of only 5 tall buildings in Exeter:
Engineering Building (Exeter University Stretham Campus)
Exeter College (St Davids Hill)
John Lewis (formerly Debenhams- Sidwell Street)
Exeter Cathedral.

Exeter has conservation areas around the city and Renslade House lies outside the adjacent to the Riverside Conservation Area which lies to the South of the Cathedral Conservation Area.

The Riverside Conservation area falls below the city wall and encompasses much of the Quay areas and surrounding historic area which served the growing industry. This industrialisation has led to the loss of certain historic fabric and the Renslade House and Fitness First have been developed many times as various uses have dictated.

Strict roles govern developments within the conservation areas and the Renslade House site offers a rare opportunity to promote a large scale contemporary architecture and reflect Exeter's aspirations to the future acknowledging the city's history but at the same time looking forward.

The John Lewis building is an excellent example of regeneration of one of these tall landmark buildings and the development of Renslade House will allow a similarly ambitious project to be realized. There is aspiration for Exeter to be one of the UKs Top 10 University Cities by providing world class standard accommodation with an equally prestigious architecture and architectural language appropriate to the 21st Century.

Precedents can be found in the UK and further afield in cities like Barcelona, Washington and Boston where landmark student accommodation celebrates success of the city and its university.

Renslade House is a stand-alone building lying amongst other commercial and residential buildings. Its architectural language reflects the ambition of its creators- its height makes a strong statement of its status as an office building address, the River Exe and the approach to the city. Any new development should show this aspiration and not be seen to shy away from the potential impact as a gateway to the city. Its position at the bottom of the sharp incline to the city allows large scale development without detriment to the city scape beyond. Distant views from Haldon Hill and Exwick show Renslade House nesting down in the foreground of the city and it is only on direct approach from Alphington and St Thomas does its ambition and scale become fully apparent.

With the Exception of Exeter's Tall Buildings the city's architecture is characteristically low rise with very few buildings taller than 6 storeys with many recent commercial and student accommodation limited in height appropriate to their locations with the city's conservation areas. A contemporary architectural language has been welcomed by the city albeit quite modest and understated.

As one of the few sites of this potential the Renslade House development has the opportunity to promote a landmark architectural language and celebrate modern architecture.

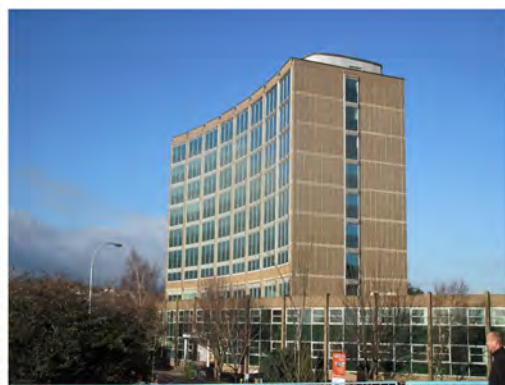
The proposals seek to enhance the composition of the existing Renslade House development and appraisal of the existing building provides an opportunity to respond with an appropriate design solution that allows the proposed development to be read as a whole but offering an independence that will facilitate enhancements or development of the existing tower in the future.

Exeter hosts a number of large post world war buildings that are expressions of their era and use.

Tall and large buildings of this type are located outside conservation areas, as with the site of Renslade House, which provides opportunity to make an architectural statement about contemporary living.



John Lewis Building



Renslade House



Exeter College



Exeter University Engineering Block



London

There are a number of precedents where student residences have been used to regenerate the local character and economy of cities around the world.

This site presents potential for Exeter to follow suit and regenerate an under used and unattractive site.



Leeds



Washington

5.0 The Development Proposal

- 5.1 The proposed development involves the consultation of existing office accommodation and demolition of two underutilised podium structures and the erection of two new buildings providing 387 student studio apartments with shared common facilities. Footprint size of 1,740m².

6.0 Massing Development Strategy and Design Development

- 6.1 Renslade House occupies a prominent site on the gateway to the City Centre South of the River Exe but has failed to secure full occupancy from completion.

There is need to develop the site to offset/ compliment the poor occupancy rates and rented values alone do not justify the capital expense required to upgrade the office facilities and environment. This therefore creates the opportunity to develop the site and optimize its potential as a gateway to the city.

The existing tower currently stands alone in terms of height and mass and there is little or no built context in which to consider its presence.

It is felt that proposals should provide a context to allow the tower to be considered with complimentary adjacent massing.

Initial massing proposals involved the provision of 2 towers sharing the footprint of the existing podiums which were elevated to one storey below the existing office tower.

Proposals seek to avoid competition between the elements and to reduce the isolation of the single tower.

Similarly a complementary elevational treatment was sought to allow the proposals to be read as a group of similar but individual built elements. A vertical architectural language was adopted which echoed the vertical structural elements of the existing tower but which reflected the proposed use of the new buildings in a contemporary language.

Different cladding treatments were adopted for each element to provide this identity- a simpler cladding to the western building which followed the curved line of the existing podium and provided three dimensional interest in the staggered facets creating a rippled effect.

Proposals were presented to Exeter City Council Planning Working Party Member Group who were supportive of the scale and massing of the proposals and welcomed the redevelopment of the site.

The proposals were then presented to the South West Design Review Panel on the 20th April 2015 and the panel was supportive of the general scale and massing of the proposals. It was suggested however that proposals need not be subservient to the main tower which was not held in high regard by panel members. It was suggested that perhaps the proposed towers could be adjusted in height to include the existing tower in a wider overall composition. This included the potential increase in height of the East building to create a stepping of proposals towards Fore Street and the city beyond but an overall reduction in length to increase views of the city on approach from the South.

The DRP comments were incorporated into proposals that resulted in an increased height of the East building by 2 storeys and context studies suggested that there would be no adverse effect on distant views of the city and in particular Exeter's 12th Century Cathedral whose significance in the Exeter skyline cannot be underestimated or compromised in any way. Consultation was then undertaken with Historic England who introduced three principal elements against which proposals should be considered:

- Views of Exeter Cathedral
- Views from the Medieval City Wall
- Relationship with Tudor Street, in particular Tudor House

Historic England considered the massing of the East and West towers to impact on views from the city wall which enjoys an elevated position with views out to the distant countryside. They also sought a more domestic scale to the predominantly 3 - 4 storey Tudor Street.

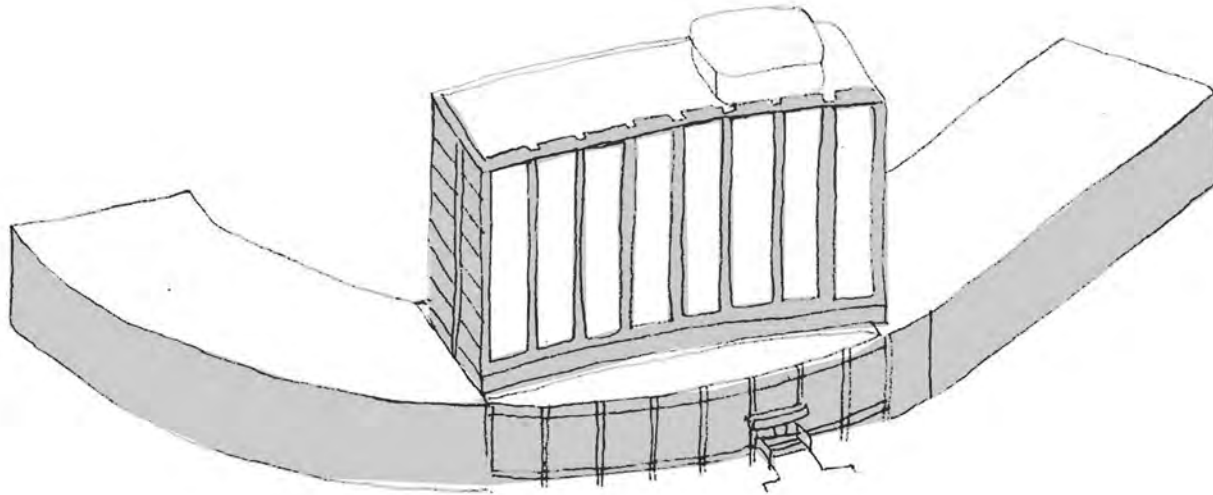
Proposal massing was then amended by reducing the overall height of the East building by 1 storey throughout and 2 storeys to approximately ½ of the building footprint. In addition to this the East and West proposals were moved away from the existing tower and lightweight, glazed elements introduced to allow views through the proposed buildings to the countryside beyond. The building mass to Tudor Street was also significantly reduced and an elevation treatment adopted to literally reflect the period domestic nature of Tudor Street.

The reduction in massing was taken further by reducing the uppermost storey to the west building to a half storey with roof terrace to the South so that apparent masses are lower from the river side.

Proposals were presented to the DRP for a second time on October 22nd. Whilst supportive of the consultation process the panel felt that design responses to those comments have diminished the strength of the design concept and the associated massing.

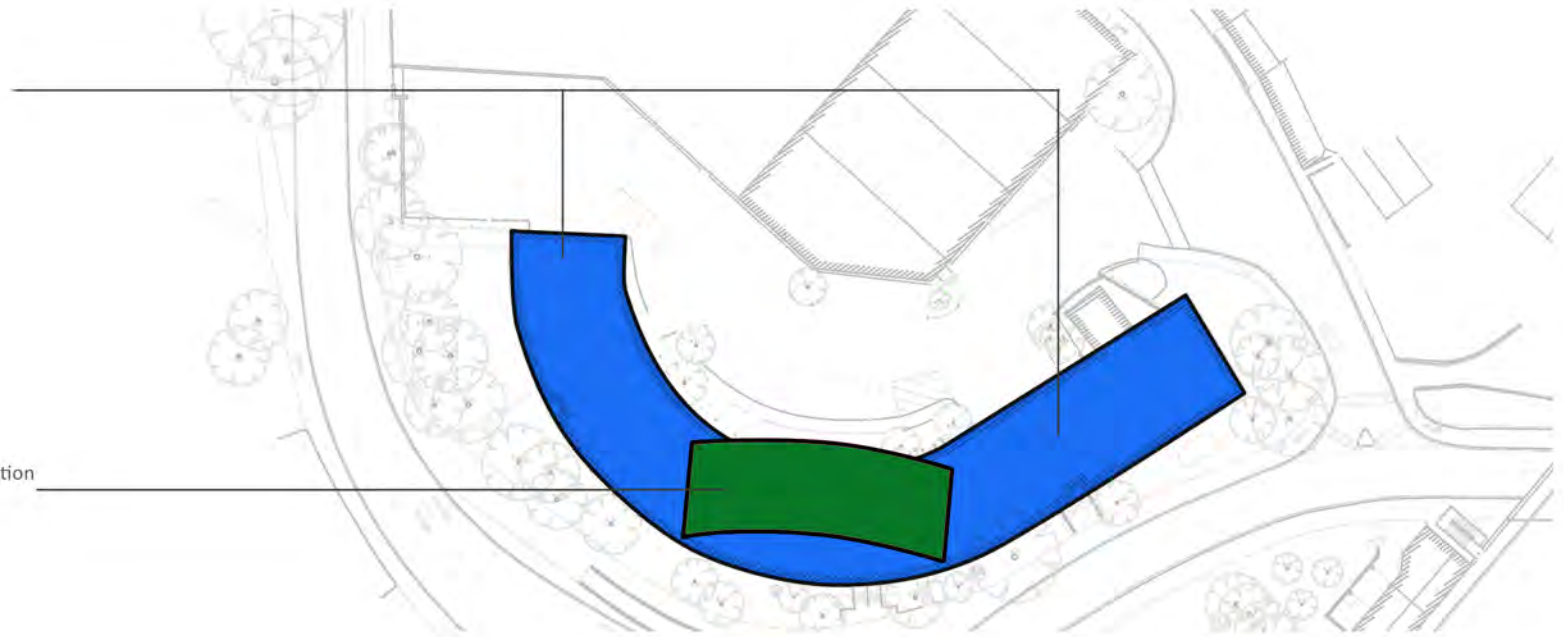
In response to those comments a portion of the uppermost storey to the West building has been reintroduced adding strength and a degree of simplicity to the massing which increases the 'stepping up' approach towards the City Centre.

Existing massing of Renslade House.



3 storey podium structure of existing building follows Bonhay Road frontage

Central office block in sound structural condition and fit for purpose to be retained

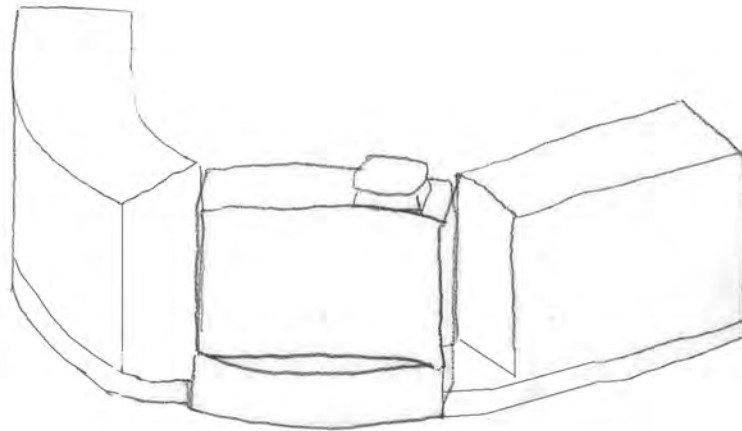


I 1.0

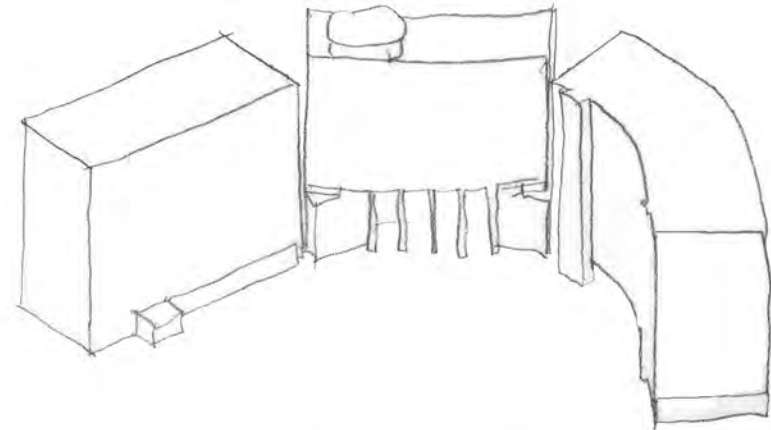
Iteration 1.0

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Iteration 1.0 massing of Renslade House.



Building Front (Southern Elevation)

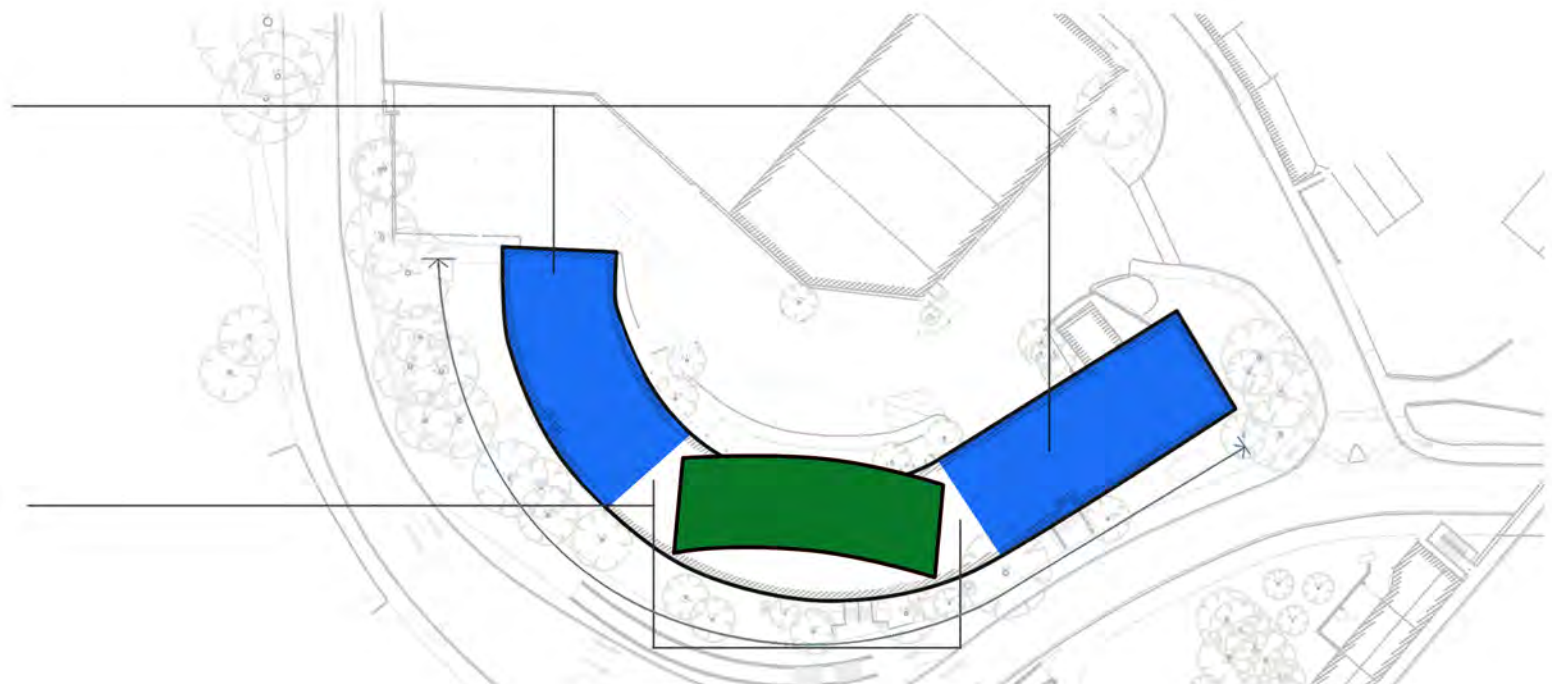


Building Rear (Northern Elevation)

Early proposals follow podium footprints
Demolition of existing podiums permits
mass more suited to proposed use

Visual break and distinction between blocks
formed through relief spaces between the
buildings above first floor level

Proposals include podium and plinth to
create visual link to central block

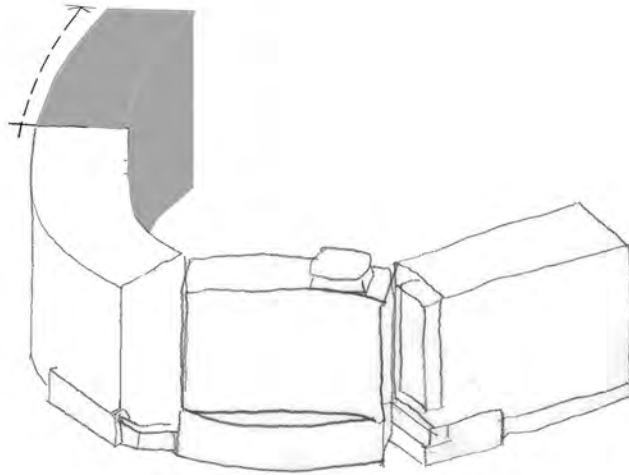


1.1

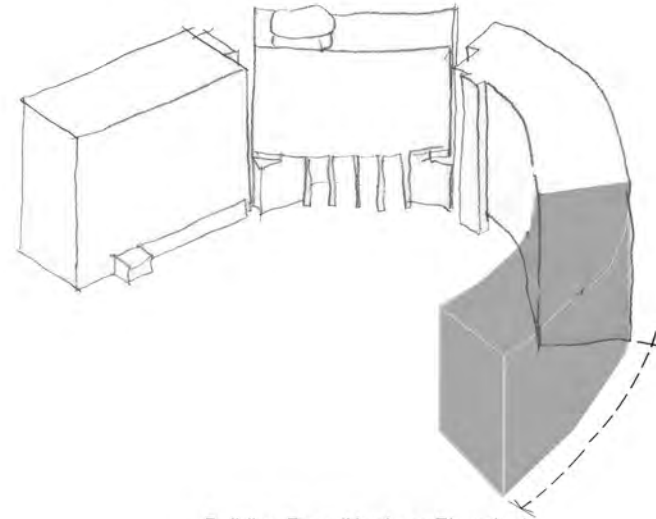
Iteration 1.1

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Iteration 1.1 massing of Renslade House.

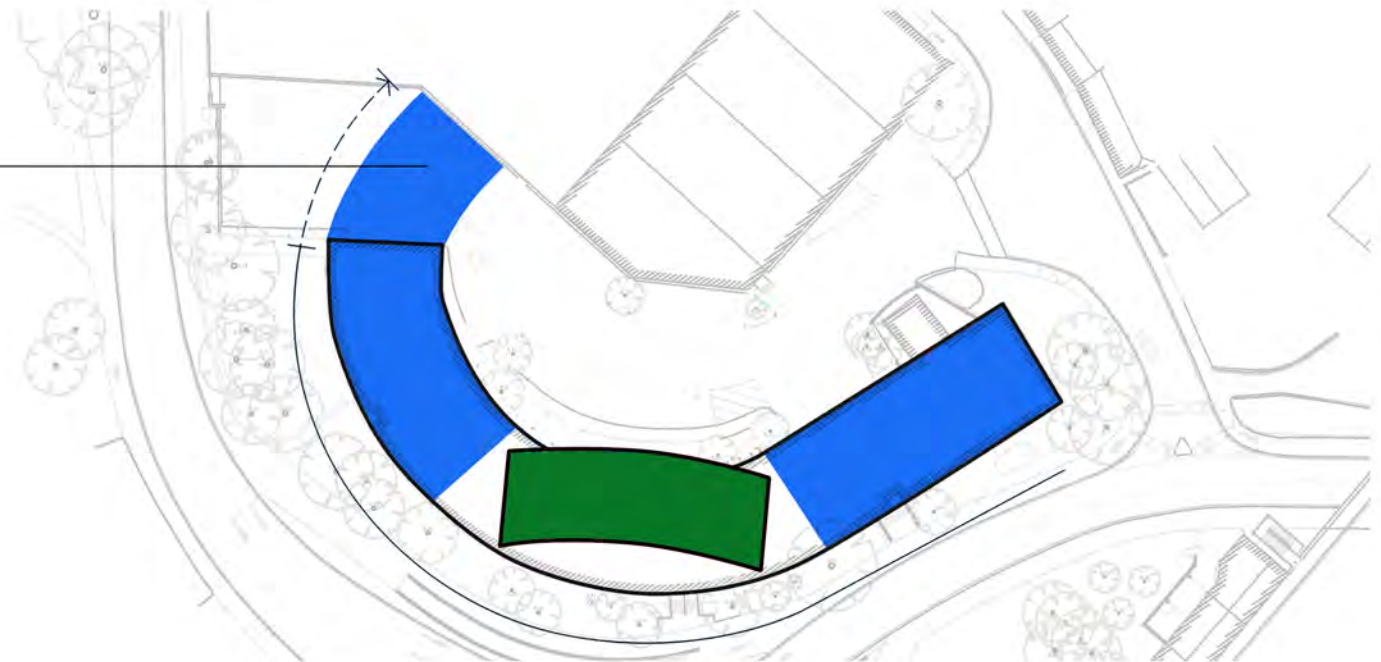


Building Front (Southern Elevation)



Building Rear (Northern Elevation)

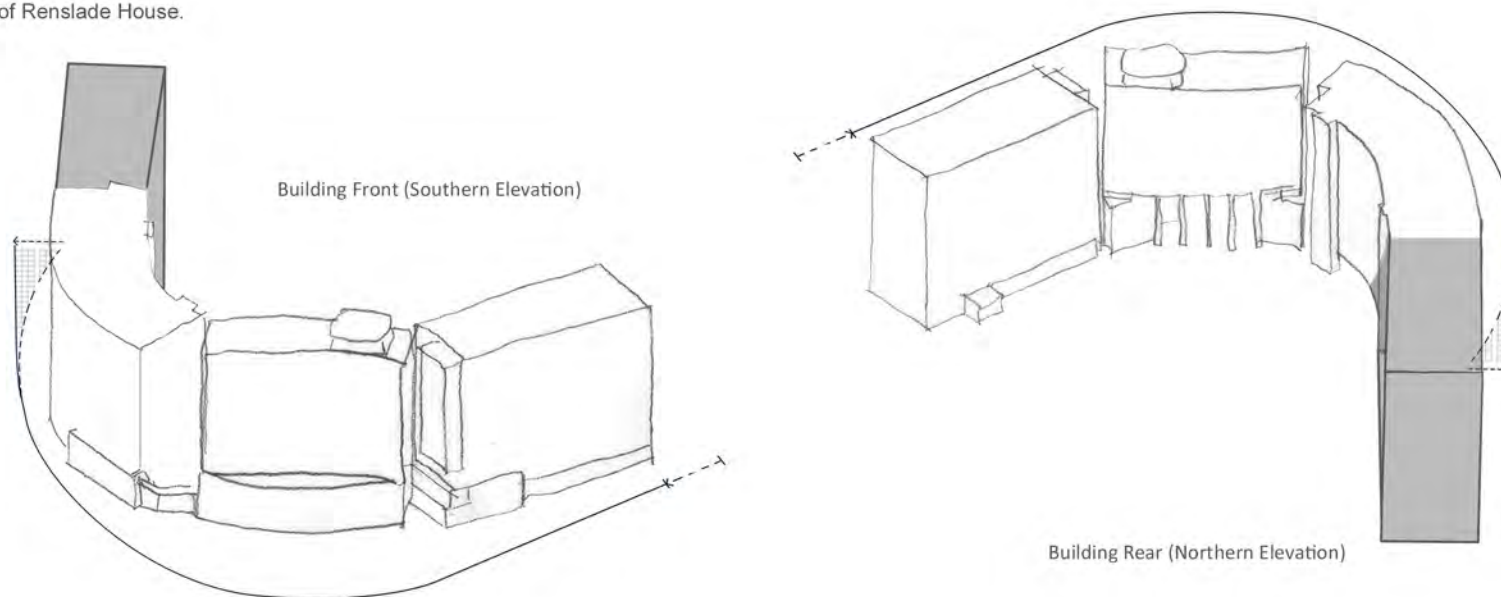
Western tower extended to boundary
[greater efficiency and better relationship
with the street]



I 1.2

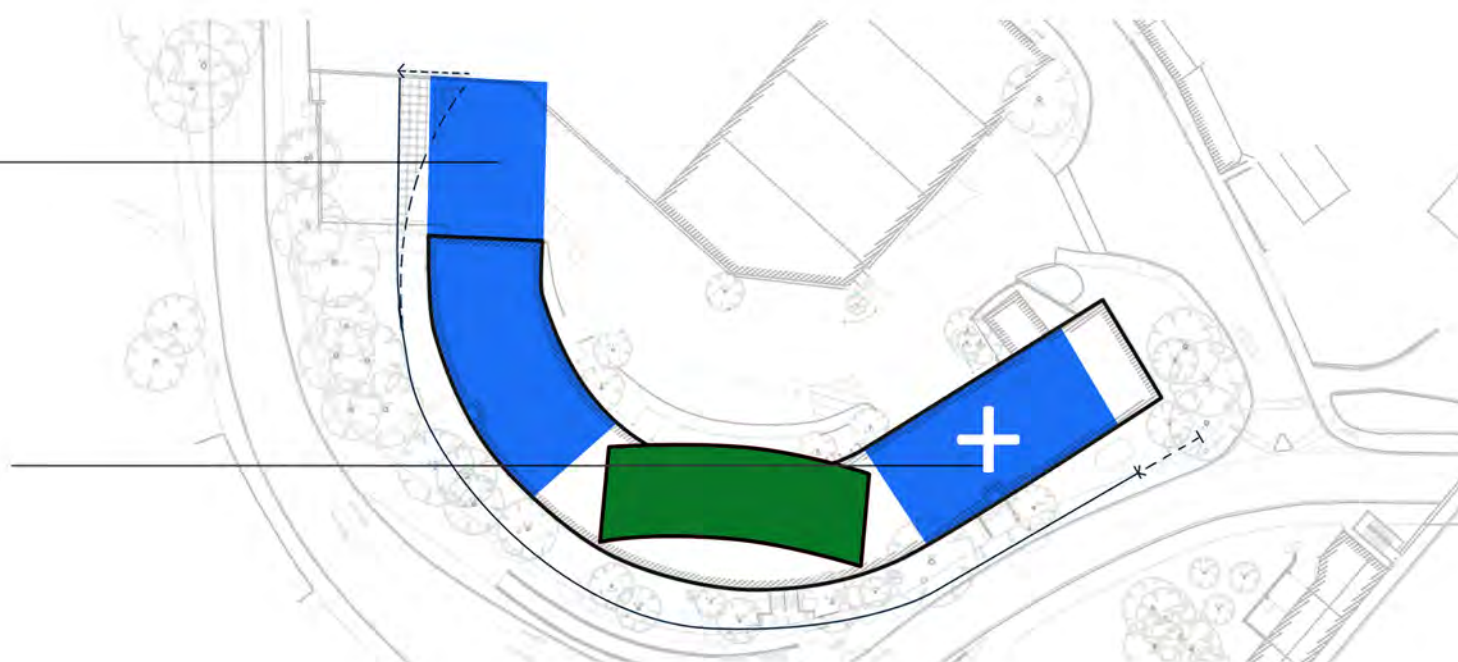
Iteration 1.2

Iteration 1.2 massing of Renslade House.



Western tower straightened to better address the street frontage

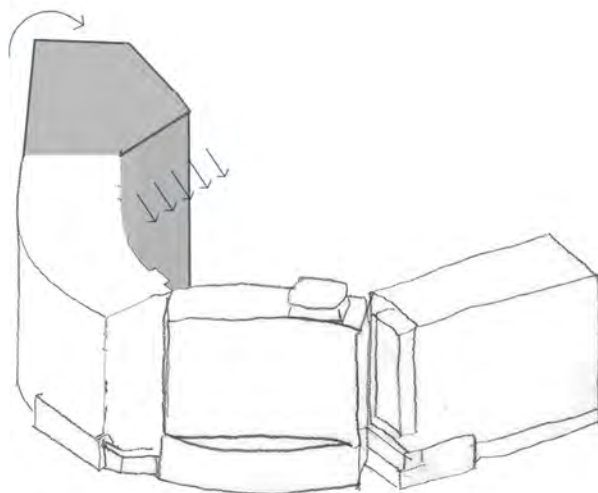
Eastern tower reduced in length and increased in height [accentuates stepped nature of development in context of city scape backdrop]



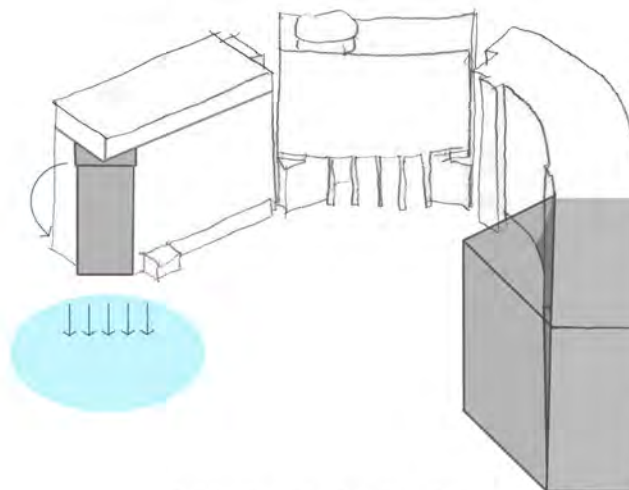
I 1.3

Iteration 1.3

Iteration 1.3 massing of Renslade House.



Building Front (Southern Elevation)

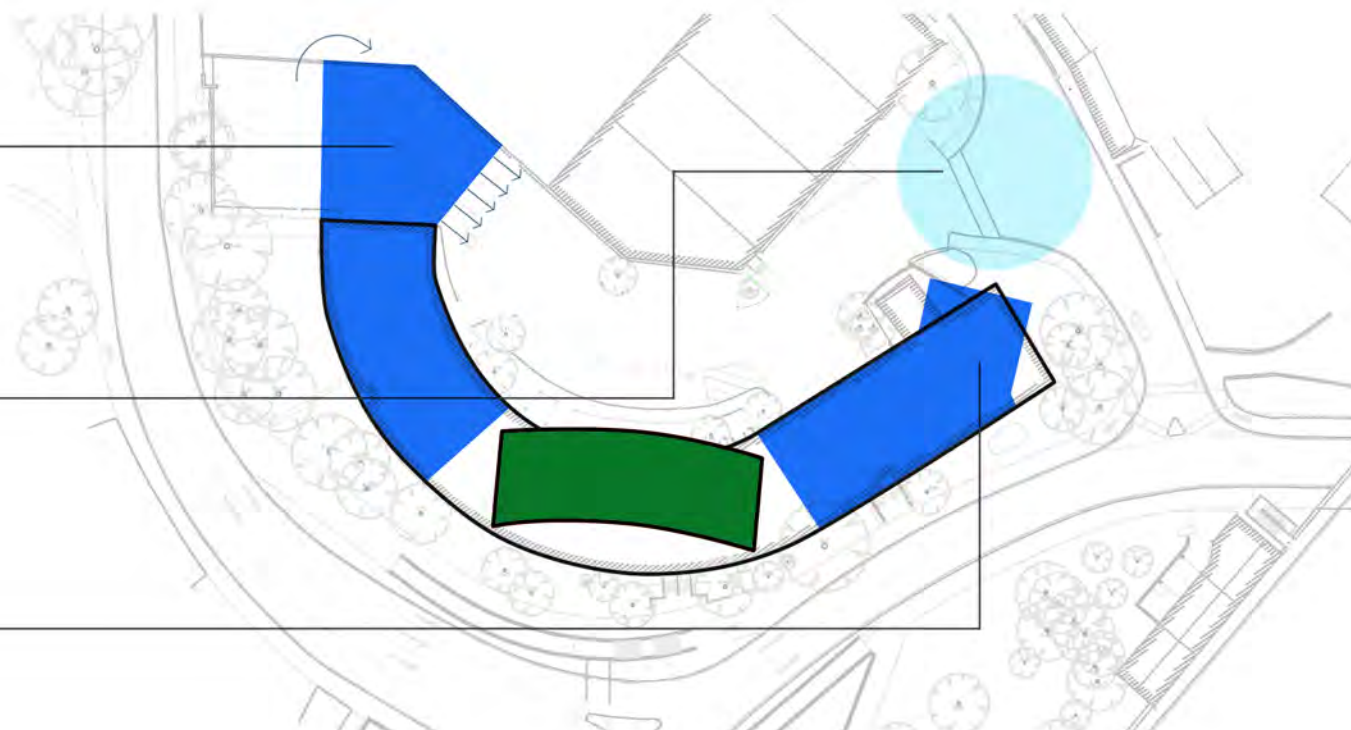


Building Rear (Northern Elevation)

Northern edge of the Western building mass turned around the corner against the site boundary to address the inner courtyard space

opportunity for landscaped area to enhance dialogue with and setting of Tudor House

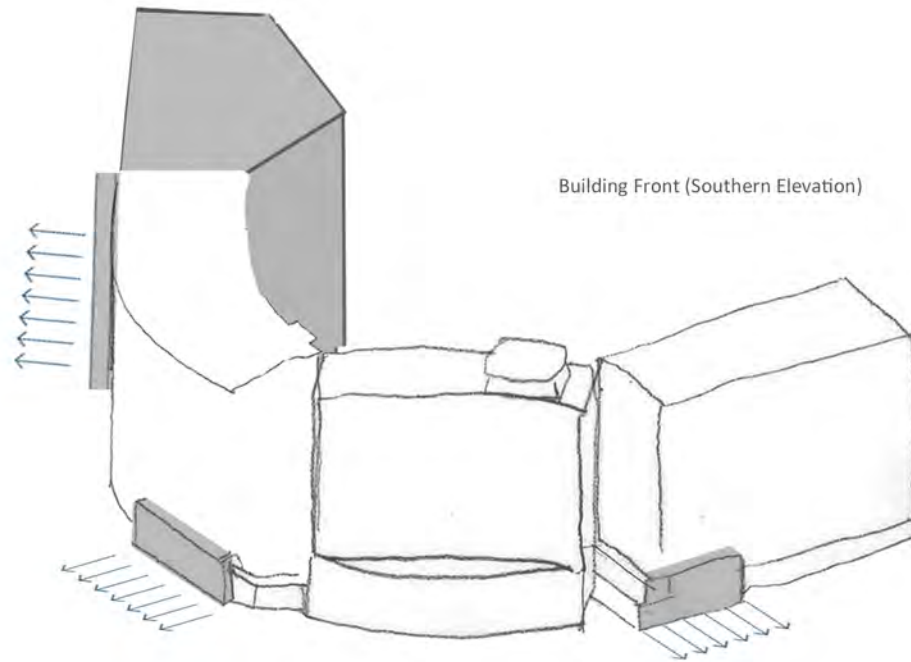
Eastern block shortened and turned to face Tudor House at a reduced height to develop a dialogue



I 1.4

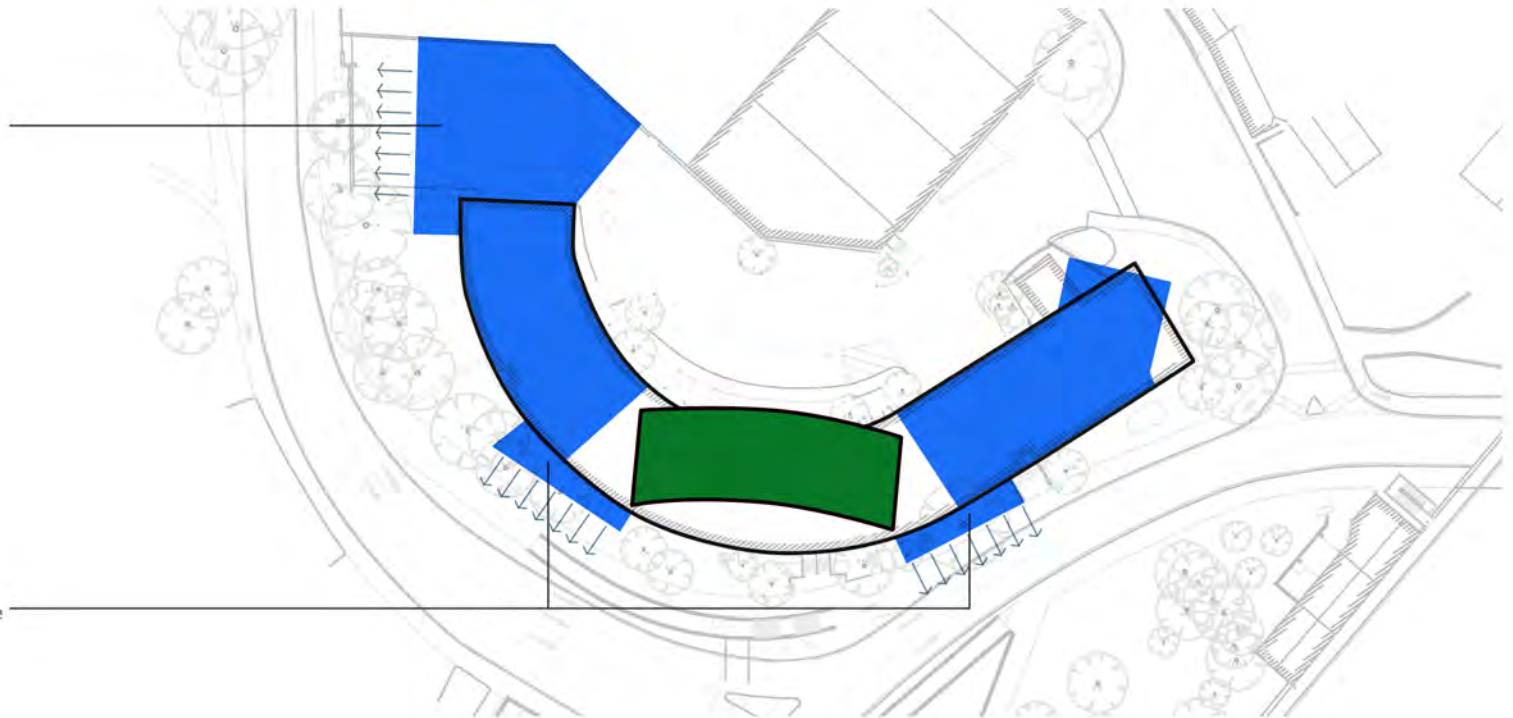
Iteration 1.4

Iteration 1.4 massing of Renslade House.



ground floor common areas extruded to address entry and break out to garden space

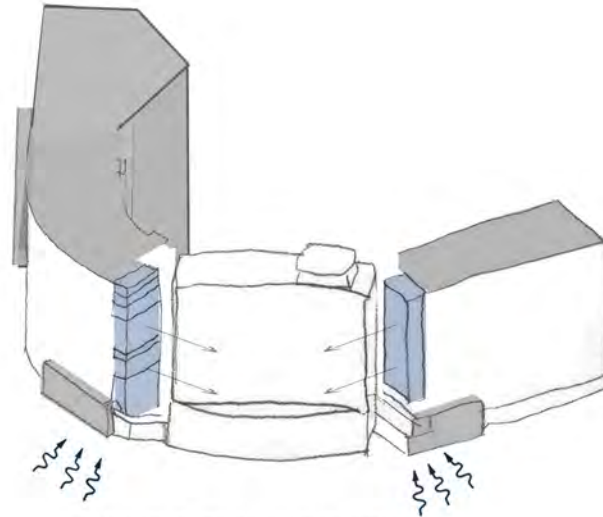
ground floor extrusions provide street frontage and first floor level amenity areas and flood escape



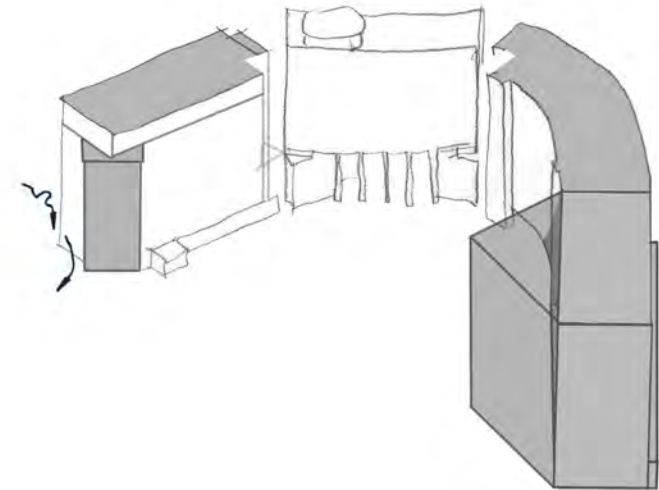
I 1.5

Iteration 1.5

Iteration 1.5 massing of Renslade House.



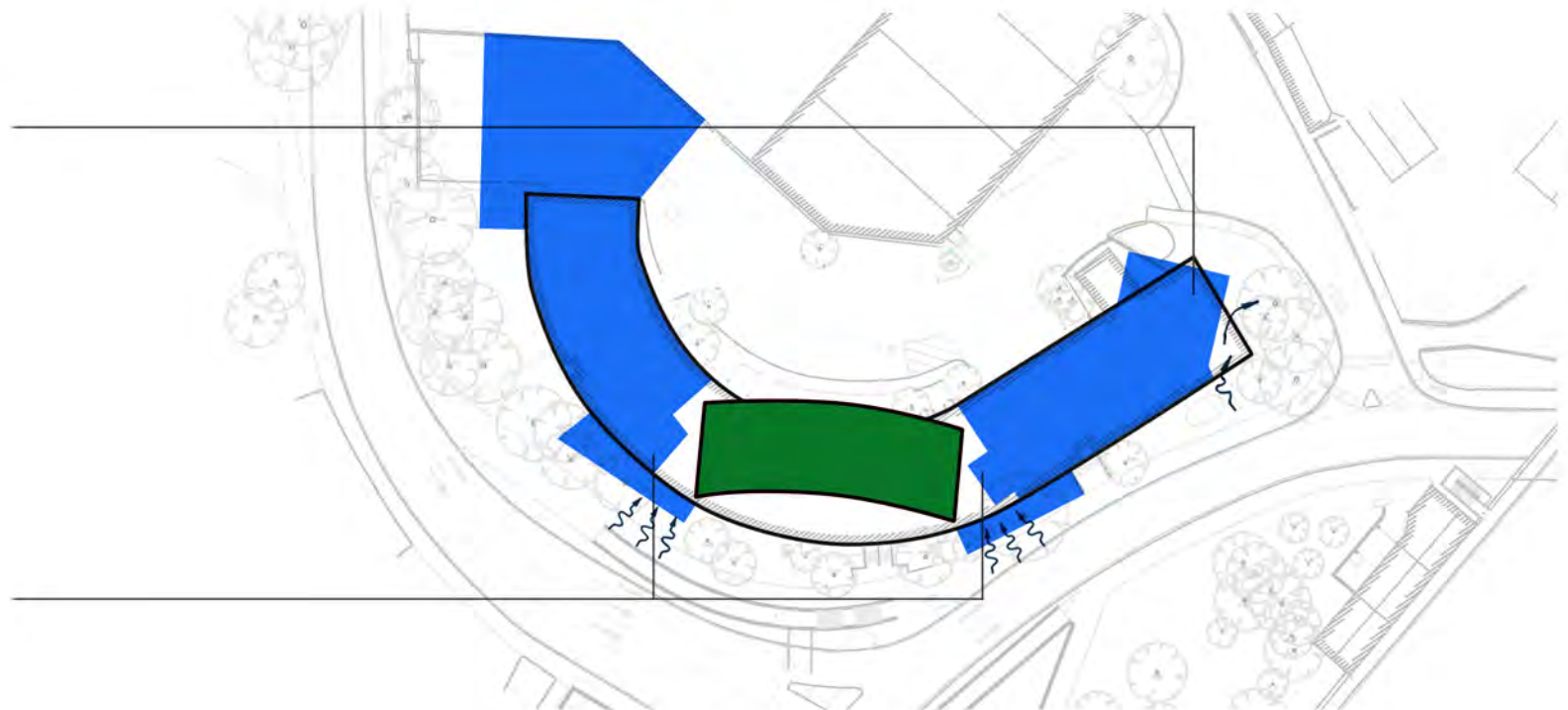
Building Front (Southern Elevation)



Building Rear (Northern Elevation)

Secondary mass to the Eastern tower to reduce the impact of prevailing wind towards the site and across the rear courtyard space

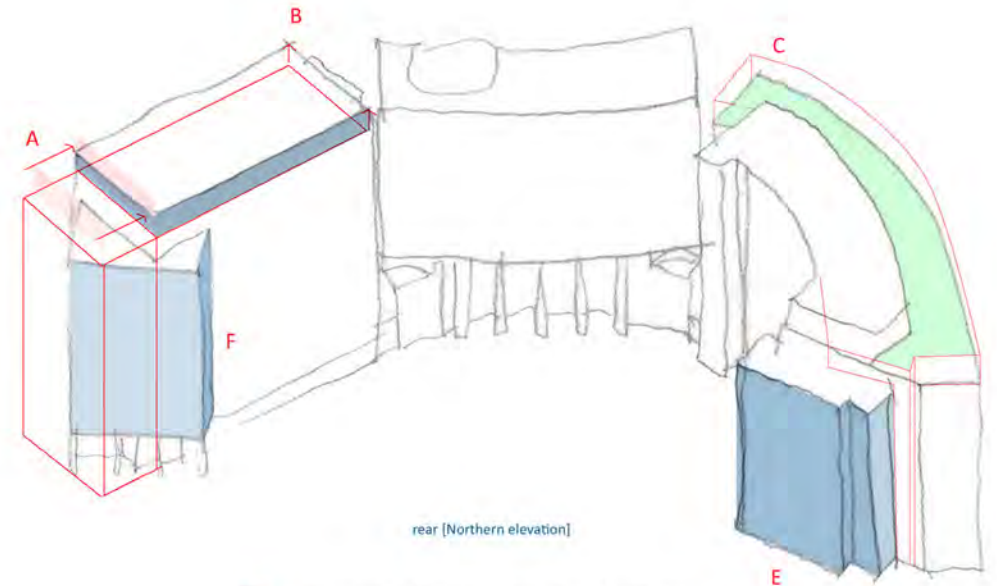
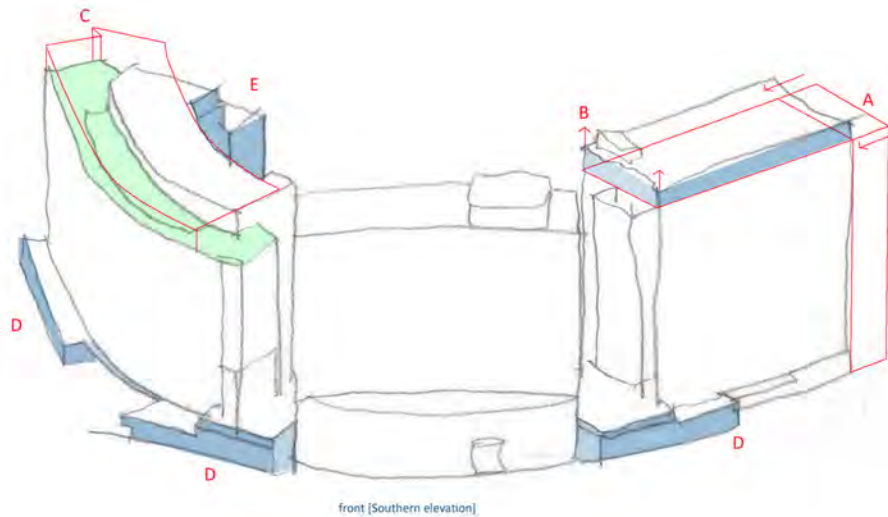
Secondary mass between the Eastern and Western towers and central tower to further reduce site winds and to reduce ground level draught



I 1.6

Iteration 1.6

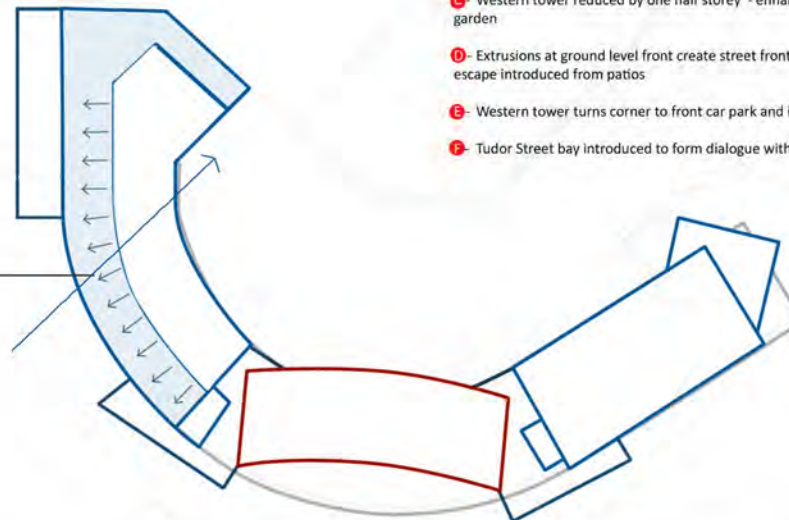
Iteration 1.6 massing of Renslade House.



- A- Eastern tower shortened to improve relationship with Tudor Street
- B- Eastern tower grown to step masses from East to West in line with city scape backdrop
- C- Western tower reduced by one half storey - enhances the stepped mass concept and introduced roof garden
- D- Extrusions at ground level front create street frontage and introduce down draught wind break. First floor escape introduced from patios
- E- Western tower turns corner to front car park and inner courtyard. Mass stepped to ground proposal

half storey removed from Western building
and replaced with green roof space and terrace
off inside communal area
[perceived mass reduced from the South]

- A- Eastern tower shortened to improve relationship with Tudor Street
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- C- Western tower reduced by one half storey - enhances the stepped mass concept and introduced roof garden
- D- Extrusions at ground level front create street frontage and introduce down draught wind break. First floor escape introduced from patios
- E- Western tower turns corner to front car park and inner courtyard. Mass stepped to ground proposal
- F- Tudor Street bay introduced to form dialogue with Tudor House and reduce Frog Street impact



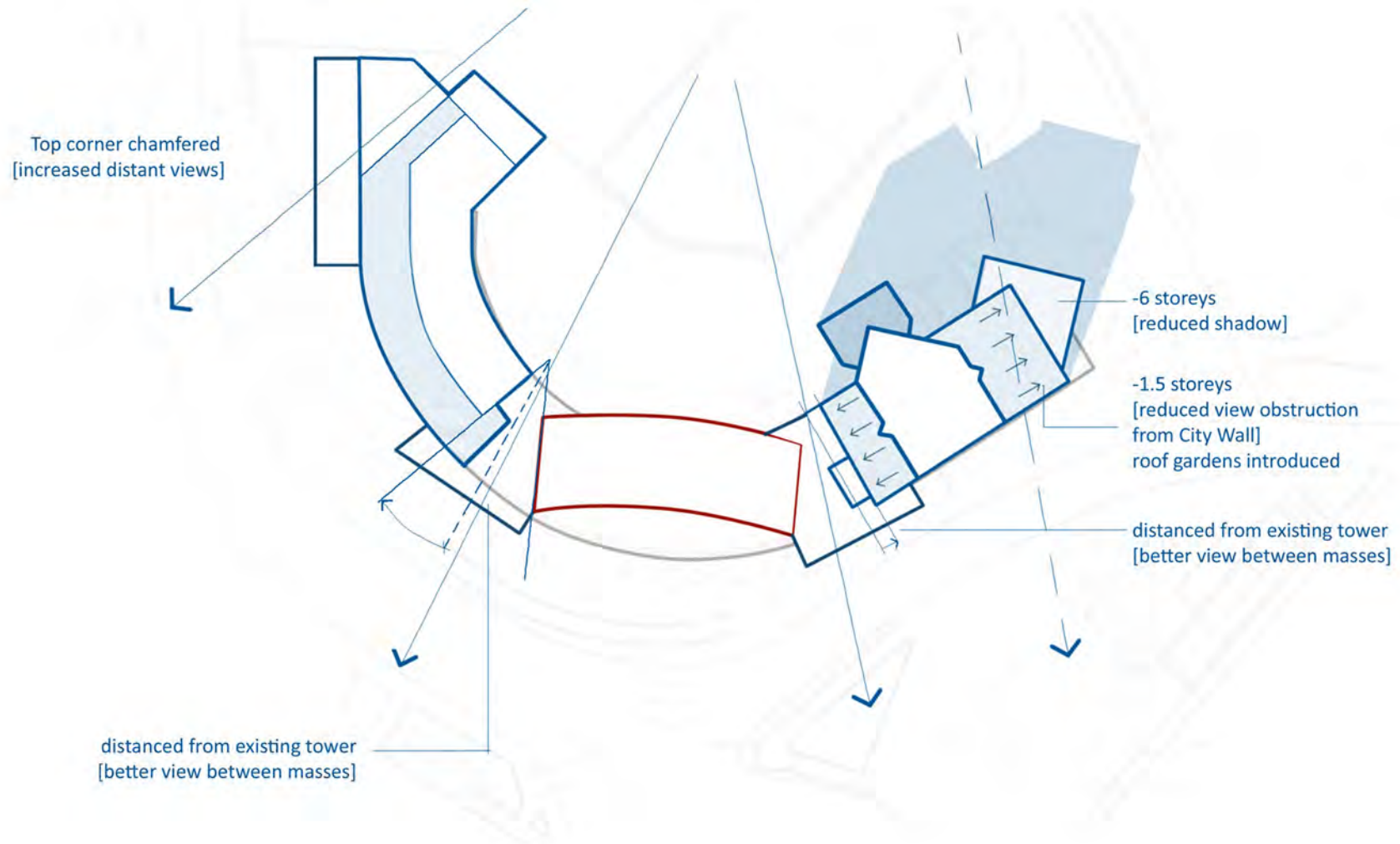
Interim Mass Concepts

Masses developed in response to city scape, neighbourhood and technical considerations
Street frontage and first floor escape formed with ground floor common area extrusions

I 1.7

Iteration 1.7

Iteration 1.7 massing of Renslade House.



Mass developments in respect of local heritage assets and optimisation of views from City Wall

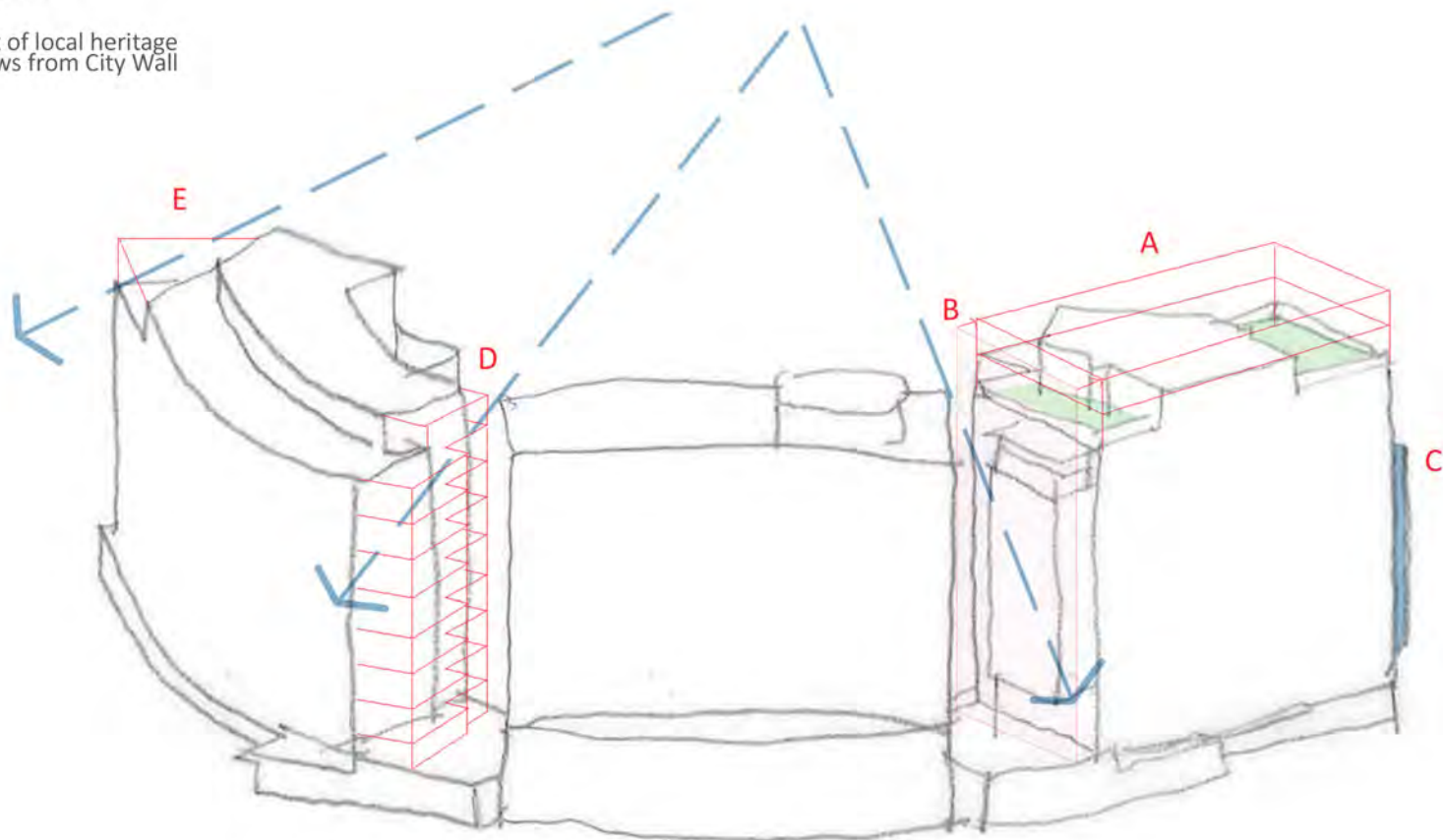
1.7

Iteration 1.7

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Iteration 1.7 massing of Renslade House.

Mass developments in respect of local heritage assets and optimisation of views from City Wall



front [Southern elevation]

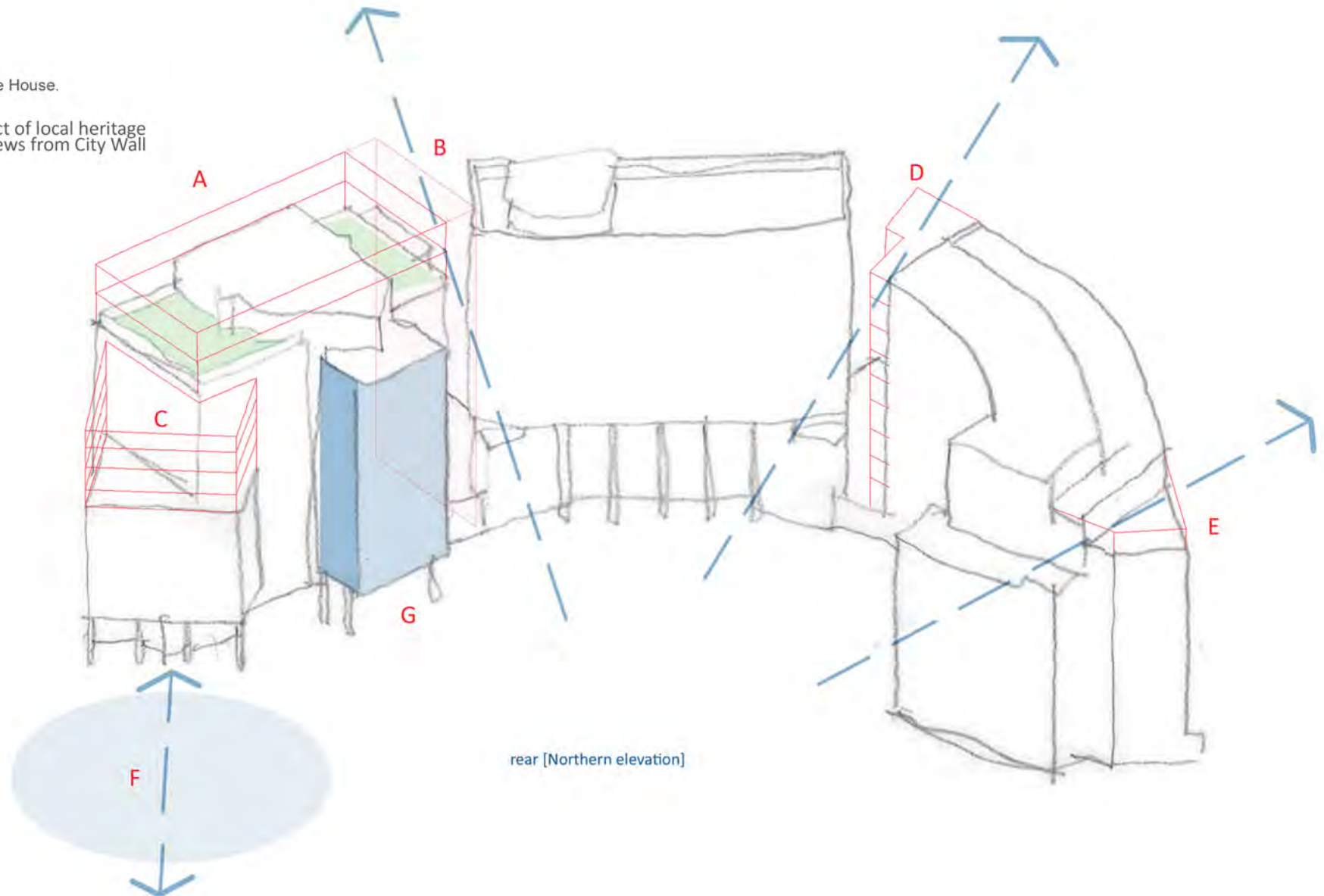
- A**- Eastern tower reduced by 1.5 storeys and roof gardens introduced - reduced countryside visual impact
- B**- Gap to Renslade House increased to better distant views between buildings
- C**- Tudor Street Bay reduced in height to a scale intermediate of the domestic and tower block
- D**- Gap to existing tower increased through removal of end units - increased distant views between towers
- E**- Northern edge chamfered to promote distant country views past Western block and reduce visual impact of mass at Northern edge

I 1.7

Iteration 1.7

Iteration 1.7 massing of Renslade House.

Mass developments in respect of local heritage assets and optimisation of views from City Wall



A- Eastern tower reduced by 1.5 storeys and roof gardens introduced - reduced countryside visual impact

B- Gap to Renslade House increased to better distant views between buildings

C- Tudor Street Bay reduced in height to a scale intermediate of the domestic and tower block

D- Gap to existing tower increased through removal of end units - increased distant views between towers

E- Northern edge chamfered to promote distant country views past Western block and reduce visual impact of mass at Northern edge

F- Space between Proposals and Tudor House landscaped to create common ground addressing relationship between buildings

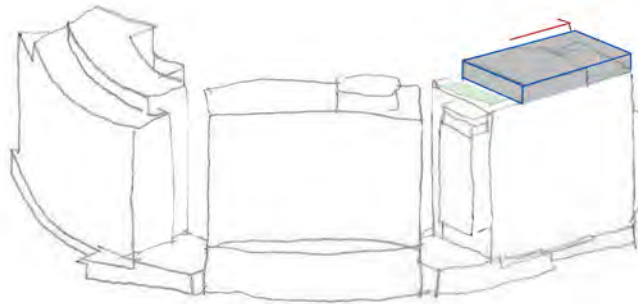
G- Internal bay extruded to replace units removed in other adjustments.

I 1.8

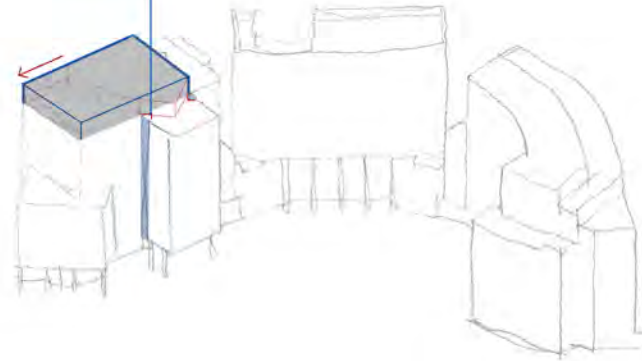
Iteration 1.8

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Iteration 1.8 massing of Renslade House.



Building Front (Southern Elevation)



Building Rear (Northern Elevation)

Eastern tower mass simplified

triangular bay removed from rear extrusion

simplified junction between bay and main mass

top storey extended to edge of building

