

Swithland Court: A New Urban Centre for Swithland



Design Brief: Responding to Latent Rural Issues

Lack of Local Amenities

In spite of its active community, Swithland lacks essential everyday services. The closest food shops is 2km away and there are no informal gathering spaces or central community spaces. It requires frequent travel for a fulfilled life.

Imbalance in Housing Provision

House prices in the village have reached an apex of £1.6 million, making it difficult for younger families to enter and renew the demographic profile. The lack of housing variety also limits elderly residents from downsizing and freeing up housing stock, leading to stagnation.

Ageing Population

Swithland's median age is 50; 10 years above the national average. There is a clear need to support the ageing. The present lack of smaller, energy efficient homes and walk-able pedestrian environments reduce activity and lead to ill-health.

Fading Regional Identity

After the closure of the slate quarry in 1888, the rich heritage of construction with the material began to fade. This, until recently, led to economic downfall and vulnerability. The absence of stonemasonry skills partially contributed to a selection of modern buildings that are not connected to the region's strong architectural identity.



Design Response

Creating a 10 Minute Village

A commercial hub is featured in the core of the urban extension, delivering local services and reducing dependence on neighbouring villages. A central courtyard is formed, forming a new civic space for social interaction.

Expanding Housing Access Through Scale and Diversity

A range of modest homes have been designed with a variety of capacities to meet the needs of younger families and older residents that wish to downsize. The layout is zoned according to function, promoting public, but quiet areas for pleasant living with access to amenities.

Reinforcing Local Identity

A range of architectural styles are utilised, including classicism, vernacular, and Victorian. These are all carefully integrated into Swithland's material palette - primarily consisting of Swithland slate and red brick.

Material Palette



Existing Architecture



Principal Elevation

Scale 1:50



13000

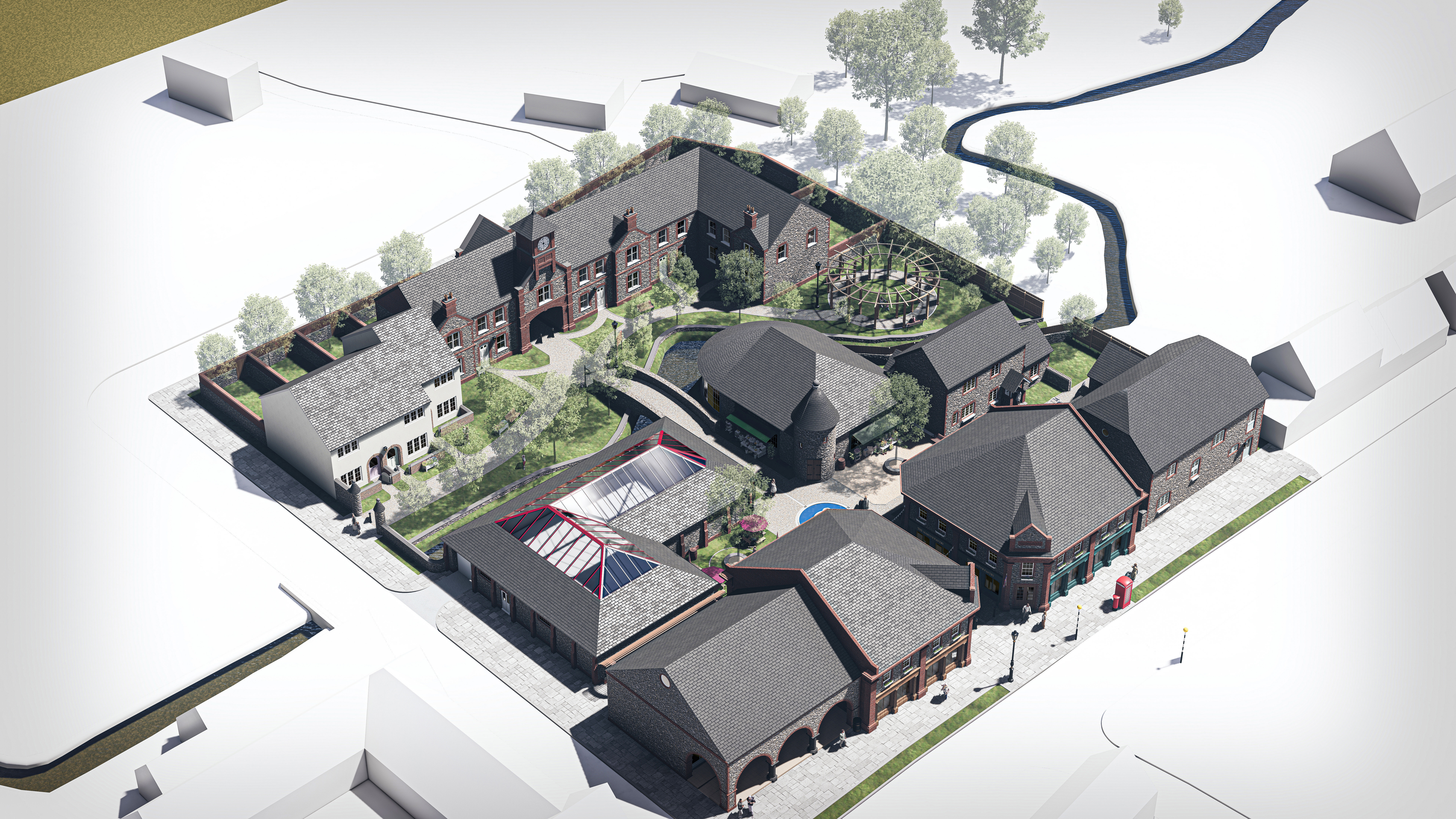
12850

4500

12850

3000

15000



Schedule of Accommodation

Gross Internal Area: 2622.5m²

Public & Community Focused Spaces:

Farm shop (314m²)

- Fully fitted with counter, fridges/freezers, storage and accessible WC.
- Serves to reduce resident reliance on distance services and increase community resilience.

Cafe (314m²)

- Fully fitted with a commercial kitchen, counter, fridge/freezers, accessible WC and indoor/outdoor seating.
- Includes seating within Swithland Court, encouraging passive connection to the stonemasons

Florist (312m²)

- Includes a preparation area, display area, storage, staff WC and external display zone with awning.

Swithland Court (420m²)

- A landscaped public courtyard with cobble paving, gravel, grass, benches, bins, and planting areas.
- Features cycle storage, a parcel locker, drainage system, and central fountain to form the civic heart of the proposal.

Brookside Gardens (830m²)

- A public green space with seating, bins, community notice board, and warm ambient lighting.
- Contains a timber structure encircling a tree, acting as a landmark and space for quiet contemplation.

Stonemasonry Facilities

Stonemasonry Workshop: 312m²

- Includes a full workshop fit-out with tool storage, stacking/loading areas, private clerical office, and shared WC facilities.
- Designed to support commissioned stonework, particularly ecclesiastical and domestic, art based work - reinforcing regional identity.

Stonemasonry Shop: 91.5m²

- Provides retail space for the display and sale of workshop output and community artisanal work.
- Functions as a public-facing shop, encouraging community engagement with the traditional craft.

Residential Accommodation

Private Homes (1,279m²)

- The proposal features 10 individual homes, with a mix of 2 and 3 bedroom layouts to support younger families entering the area, and elderly residents seeking to downsize.
- Each home features private gardens, a mix of ensuite and standard bathrooms, and a variety of layout to suit a diverse selection of accessibility needs.



Site Plan
Scale 1:250



Ground Floor Plan
Scale 1:200



First Floor Plan
Scale 1:200

Swithland Court

Scale 1:75



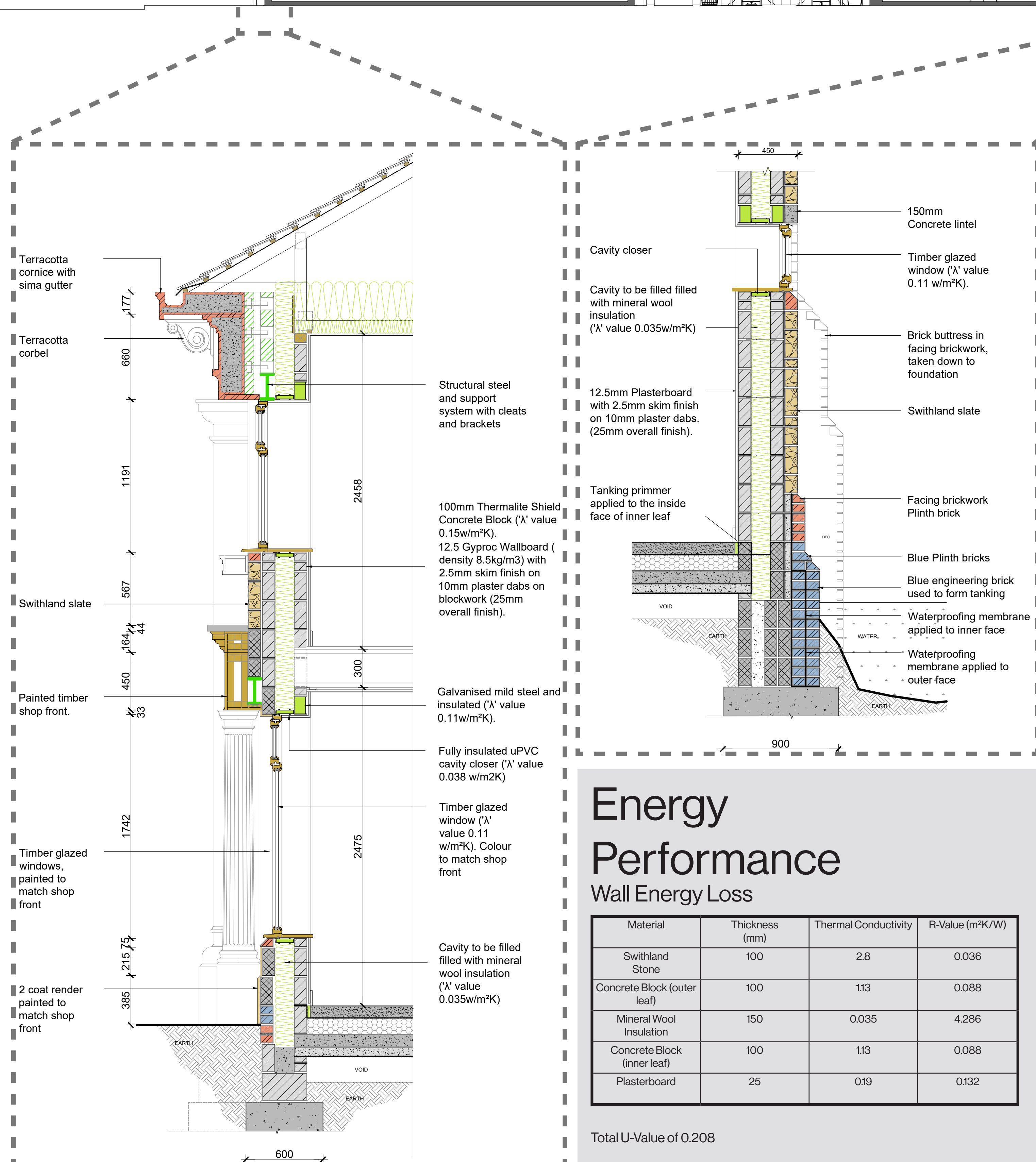
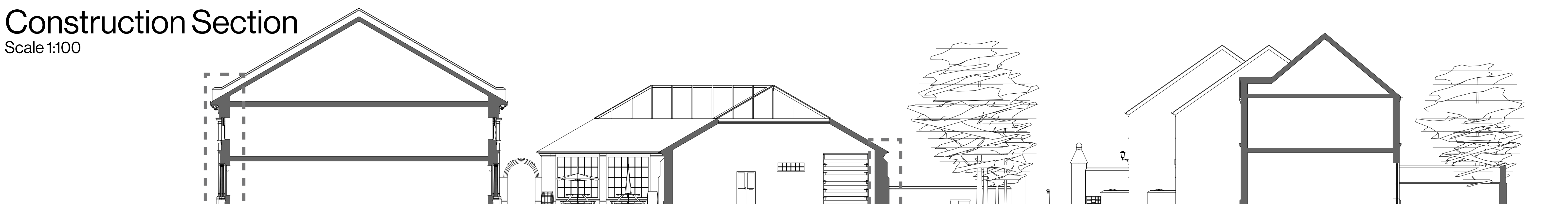
Brookside Elevation

Scale 1:75



Construction Section

Scale 1:100



Energy Performance

Wall Energy Loss

Material	Thickness (mm)	Thermal Conductivity	R-Value (m ² K/W)
Swithland Stone	100	2.8	0.036
Concrete Block (outer leaf)	100	1.13	0.088
Mineral Wool Insulation	150	0.035	4.286
Concrete Block (inner leaf)	100	1.13	0.088
Plasterboard	25	0.19	0.132

Total U-Value of 0.208



Construction & Sustainability

Local Material Sourcing

All primary materials are sourced from within a 40 mile radius to reduce transport emissions and stimulate the local economy. Timber is sourced from Charnwood Forest, hand-fired red bricks and terracotta classical elements are manufactured in Loughborough - 2.5km from the quarry.

Contemporary Performance, Traditional Form

The project is deeply traditional, in both its architectural style and walk-able urbanism, yet constructed in an energy efficient manner. A low energy construction is balanced with exterior aesthetic continuity, allowing for both integration into the existing village, and efficient performance.

Longevity as a Carbon Strategy

Despite the concrete block included in the construction, the environmental impact is offset through durability and long-term use value. The project includes all key amenities within walking distance to support a low carbon lifestyle. The architectural quality also ensures it is designed to be maintained, loved, and retained for centuries - avoiding the significant carbon cost of demolition. It instead acts as a carbon sink through its permanence.

