

Description of existing site

The site is a complex of buildings to the south-west of Kensington Square that mainly form a satellite campus for the University of London, providing educational buildings and a student hall of residence for theology and philosophy students (Heythrop College), but also include other unrelated social and community uses (nursery, community hall and centres for dyslexia and counselling).

The campus itself is an adaptation of the Convent of the Assumption, which was established on the site in 1859 and includes a pair of 4-storey Regency townhouses onto Kensington Square (23 KSq); an adjoining Victorian secondary school building with side extensions to the west (recreation wing); and a 3-storey end of terrace property adapted as a villa in the 1820s (24 KSq). The buildings are connected mainly by a long single storey entrance arcade that was built in the 1920s (St Celia's gallery). They also connect through at the rear to the neighbouring Maria Assumpta Chapel (21/ 22 KSq). The convent features large areas of lawn with mature trees and a pulhamite grotto dedicated to the Virgin Mary at the rear. It also includes a former primary school building (St Andrew's Hall) and associated cottages in the south-east corner of the site, accessed from South End.

Taking over the convent in the 1950s, Heythrop College inserted a series of low-rise infill buildings (Isabel and St Catherine House) and the taller 9-storey hall of residence (Alban Hall) with an attached 3-storey library (Copleston Wing) in the southwest corner of the site. Rear extensions were also added at that time to the secondary school building (Loyola Hall) and to one of the townhouses (23 KSq).

The theology college is in the process of relocating from the site. However, the convent continues today, though much reduced in size and housed in neighbouring properties. The nuns occupy 20 KSq and an L-shaped, 1960s dormitory building (Milleret House) that is located at the rear of Maria Assumpta Chapel and forms the east boundary of the site. The dormitory presently shares the vehicle access onto South End with the college. This route is also used during funeral services, which make use of a side entrance that leads from the central gardens directly into the chapel apse.

The campus sits completely within the Kensington Square Conservation Area, which stretches north of the square to include the Derry and Toms and Barkers department stores on Kensington High Street, and southwards to include South End and the southern boundary of the campus. The eastern boundary of the conservation area sits mid-block behind Young Street and Ansdell Street, adjoining the Kensington Court and De Vere Conservation Areas that lie further to the east. The western edges of the conservation area and campus coincide, and are formed by the London Underground Circle and District Lines that are deep set in a cutting with brick retaining walls.

The properties surrounding Kensington Square are grade II listed, including Maria Assumpta Chapel (1875) by the architect George Goldie, the villa at 24 KSq (17/18th C) and, following an assessment at the beginning of the year by Historic England, the Convent's townhouses (1838) and secondary school (1875-1889); the latter also by George Goldie. A revised statutory list description, however, confirms that the additions to the secondary school, including those of the late 19th century, have no special interest and do not form part of the listing.

At the rear of the site the contemporaneous St Andrew's Hall (also by George Goldie) is curtilage listed, contributing to the aesthetic and historical value of the convent complex; whilst

the later cottage (14 South End) and post war hall of residence, library and other ancillary buildings (Isabel Block and St Catherine House) are not. The Council's Conservation Area Appraisal for Kensington Square (November 2017) identifies the newly listed buildings, including the late 19th century extensions, as making positive contributions to the conservation area, as do St Andrew's Hall and the neighbouring cottage. Loyola Hall, Isabel Block, St Catherine House, Alban Hall and the library are recorded as neutral.

Proposed development

The proposals are for the development of the site mainly for extra care housing for the elderly and support services, providing 142 self-contained units and communal facilities (including library, restaurant, leisure and other well-being facilities); a café; a replacement community hall facility; and a new apartment building providing 5 affordable flats. The scheme also includes the reinstatement of the two townhouses (23 KSq) and neighbouring villa (24 KSq) as private residential dwellings.

The physical works include internal and external alterations and partial demolition in connection with the conversion of the listed buildings fronting onto Kensington Square for residential and extra care uses; the demolition of all other remaining buildings and structures to the rear; the erection of a deck over much of the adjacent London Underground Line, involving the loss of a number of mature plane trees; the construction of 5 new buildings that range in height from a single storey to 8 storeys, some above basements and two partly constructed on the new deck; and re-landscaping of the site, including new tree planting.

The proposals follow an earlier submission for a mainly extra-care development of the site. The planning and listed building applications were withdrawn prior to determination (pp/1800329 and lb/18/00330). An objection was raised on design grounds. The current submission is an extensive re-working of the scheme. The revised proposals were presented to the AAP in July 2018.

Demolition

The scheme proposes the partial demolition of 23 and 24 Kensington Square, which are grade II listed; the complete demolition of St Andrew's Hall and neighbouring cottage (14 South End), which are curtilage listed and make a positive contribution to the local conservation area; and the complete demolition of the student hall of residence, its library wing and the remaining low-rise infill buildings on the site.

The student hostel, library and other low-rise post war buildings and structures (incl. Loyola Hall and the rear townhouse extension) are architecturally distinctive of their time. The architecture is of some interest, offering a sense of historical development within the area, but overall are neutral in terms of their contribution to the local conservation. As such the demolition of these buildings is supported, though subject to the quality of the replacement buildings.

The demolition works to the listed buildings and the complete demolition of the curtilage listed building (St Andrew's Hall) cause harm to the heritage assets, including the local conservation area, and must be assessed in terms of the overall heritage and townscape benefits (see below).

General layout

The current site suffers from a constrained layout; set within the corner of Kensington Square, bounded westwards by the railway cutting, and with road access limited to the narrow mews in South End. This layout has worked well as a convent and education campus with an inward focus of activity and 'contained' sense of place, but is untypical of much of the surrounding Victorian urban grain, and makes easy integration with the wider public realm difficult.

The proposed masterplan offers a positive response to the site constraints, working with the building alignments onto Kensington Square and setting out an orthogonal layout to the development at the rear. It draws the traditional urban grain of Kensington into the site, providing a series of routes and spaces that connect well with the adjoining streets and extend the public realm into the site in a legible manner.

A new pedestrian route into the site is provided from Kensington Square by opening up a passageway through the listed school building. This route runs directly southwards adjacent to the neighbouring Milleret House and connects with South End. The mews itself is realigned and extended westwards to form a pedestrian and vehicle route into the site. The extended mews accesses the development's service bay, resident drop-off facility and off-street garage. It also continues briefly onwards as a pedestrian route onto the new deck via a new stairway. Further north-south pathways are provided adjacent to the central garden space, above the deck and adjacent to Milleret House and accessing the chapel. An additional side passage cuts around the school building and emerges onto Kensington Square adjacent to the listed villa (24 KSq).

The intention is to allow public access throughout much of the site, offering a good level of permeability. The existing gates on South End will be removed, permitting continuous pedestrian and vehicle access, whilst the undercroft pedestrian link onto Kensington Square will be open to the public during daylight hours. That public access is continuous via South End is welcome, ensuring that the development is not a gated community. However, restricting access onto Kensington Square to daylight hours impacts upon the level of public permeability and is likely to prove inconvenient for visitors and those using the new community hall. However, the provision of full public access onto Kensington Square at all hours, or at the very least extending the hours of use of the undercroft until midnight, should be sought for reasons of securing good permeability and wider connectivity. Similarly, it will be important to ensure that any door to the passageway is held open during hours of operation to promote the visual and physical connection and foster wider public use. These matters should be secured by condition or preferably legal agreement (DM to consider). The additional side passageway is shown gated at all times and is for residents only, though it is unclear whether it allows out-of-hours access for staff and residents of the affordable housing. Its wider public use is unnecessary, though as a public route it would add to the charm of the place.

The new layout helps to improve local connectivity, adding to the network of publicly accessible routes in an otherwise constrained area, which is welcome. It provides an attractive onward pedestrian link from Derry Street through to St Albans via South End as an alternative choice of route via Thackeray Street/ Kensington Court Place. Furthermore, there is the potential for a more significant east-west pedestrian route that in time could link South End through to Wright's Lane. This would be via the new public stairway onto the new deck, which offers the prospect of a bridge link over the railway; albeit this connection can only be delivered by the development of the opposing Copthorne Tara Hotel. Nonetheless, the deck/ bridge infrastructure and opportunity for wider connectivity are welcome as a starting point.

Importantly, the extended South End route through to the public stairs is legible and lined by active building frontages and new public uses (café and community hall): This should support a safe and attractive route and as such represents good urban design. This direct route, however, involves the realignment of that part of South End within the site, which has heritage and townscape consequences (see later). That this network of routes is mainly pedestrian-only is not untypical of the Kensington area, which contains a number of passageways and pedestrian cut-throughs (e.g., Stanford Rd/Cornwall Gardens, Kensington Church Walk). The key feature is that the network is open and reads as a natural extension of the public realm (see landscaping). The minor pathways running within the site provide a finer grain network of routes and spaces within the development, adding a sense of intimate scale and charm that is welcome.

The masterplan effectively divides the site into two halves, separated by the extended mews and characterised by a hierarchy of spaces and built forms. To the north are the listed townhouses and main school building that back onto a large area of gardens, which forms the principal open space. The gardens are enclosed to the east by the listed chapel and by Milleret House, which are outside but immediately adjacent to the site boundary. On the west side, the gardens are mainly enclosed by a new building (block 5), though they extend to the existing boundary wall towards the northwest corner of the site. A further new building (block 3) replaces Loyola Hall and the unlisted school additions in this corner. A pavilion building (block 4) is positioned in the southeast corner of the main garden space, adjacent to Milleret House and fronting onto the mews. To the south, the masterplan is much more built up, with blocks 7 and 6 forming a continuous building edge onto South End and its westward extension across the site. The adjoining blocks, however, open up southwards to form a central courtyard space. This secondary open space is laid out as gardens and forms a private amenity space for the care residents. It can nonetheless be seen from the mews through a glazed entrance and lobby area within block 7, offering a visual amenity to the mews.

The masterplan is well conceived, offering a clear legibility and hierarchy of buildings and spaces. It generally reflects the layout suggested in the SPD for the site, which similarly conceived two open areas, separated by the extended mews. Where the masterplan differs from the SPD are in the construction of the new deck over the railway extending the site; buildings that sit partly above this deck; and block 5, which partly cuts into the current central open space and prevents the space from fully opening to the west. These interventions work well to optimise the site for development, but bring changes in scale and character to this backland area. Nonetheless, following a design-led reworking of the proposals, these changes are well handled and draw from the traditional qualities of the context, and should make for a comfortable urban form. The masterplan brings defined edges to the open spaces and mews, with a clear sense of public and private realm, and good activation of the building frontages.

Key to the changes has been the reduction in height of the proposed deck and revised scale (height and massing) of blocks 5 and 6. Briefly mentioning the deck, this has been compressed to its functional minimum. The revised structure sits some 4-5m above garden level and is much more seamlessly absorbed within the ground floors of the adjacent blocks 5 and 6. Its new height also presents less of a challenge for the public realm in stepping up from South End. The deck's construction and footprint of block 5, however, require the loss of a large area of lawn and several significant trees (see Trees comments). This loss of green space and the changes to the settings of heritage assets are important considerations (see later), and must be balanced against the quality and benefits of the new development.

In terms of the proposed uses and distribution of activities, the majority of the buildings are planned as self-contained extra care accommodation at grade, deck levels and upper floors overlooking the new central and courtyard spaces and accessed by shared communal entrances onto the spaces. The main reception for the extra care development is housed within building 7 at the south end of the site, which features a distinctive lobby and drop-off facility that fronts onto the extended mews. The lobby also provides access to the residents' communal wellbeing and healthcare facilities (inc. swimming pool, gym and cinema) located at basement levels and a communal library at first floor level that overlooks the mews and gardens beyond. The lobby could also control possible access to the basement facilities for the wider community. An adjacent ground floor ancillary restaurant within the building further animates the street frontage.

The ground floor café in block 6 and replacement community hall (block 4) are similarly located onto South End and work well to define and support the extended mews, activating the public realm and providing informal surveillance. Both uses are given the room to spill out onto the adjacent footway and gardens, adding further public activity to the open space.

The development contains elements of both private and affordable housing. The private accommodation is provided as separate dwellings within the listed townhouses (23 KSq) and villa (24 KSq) that front onto Kensington Square, with the front entrance porches to the two townhouses reinstated. The affordable accommodation is provided within block 7, but as a discrete apartment building that fronts directly onto South End. Both the private and affordable housing add to the residential character of their streets.

All vehicle access and servicing for the extra-care development and public café and community hall is via South End. The split in servicing and car parking access is welcome in retaining the sense of pedestrian-priority within the primary central space (Highways to confirm). Overall, the distribution of activities complements the function and hierarchy of routes and open spaces within the development.

Built Form and its Scale

Looking at the proposed built form and beginning with the north of the site, the retention of the townhouses, main school building and street elevation of 24 KSq is welcome in terms of preserving the scale and massing onto the square and retaining the coherent and attractive form of the historic garden square. The loss of the rear modern extension to the townhouse and modern extensions (Loyola Hall and lift core) to the main school building are supported, taking the buildings back to their original form, though subject to architectural details (see later).

The demolition of the western extensions to the main school is supported on listed building grounds, as they are not judged and adding special interest to the listed host building. The extensions are, however, identified as making a positive contribution to the local conservation area and as such their loss will result in harm to its character and appearance (see below).

As a replacement building, block 3 works well in its height and massing. The new building is part 3/ 4-storeys (13/ 15m) above grade with a similar footprint to the southern wing of the school and has an articulated form that responds well to the adjacent listed building. The building line and gable end form match the adjacent school wing, whilst its 3-storey height sits comfortably below by some 4m. Its 3-storey gabled form at the rear of the villa is similar in massing to the current extension and maintains a comfortable relationship with the listed buildings. The 4-storey element sits at the back of the building towards the railway line and has a flat parapet roofline. It is mostly obscured in close by views by the lower elements and remains compatible with the prevailing building height of the school. The taller element will be seen above 24 KSq when viewed along the south side of Kensington Square, though as part of the general roofscape, subject to conditions (see later).

In the revised scheme, block 4 has been pushed southwards adjacent to the mews and is conceived as a single storey building, albeit a generous storey (4.5m to ridge) and with an engaging folded roof form. It reads as distinctly ancillary in scale to the surrounding buildings, but nonetheless distinctive in its pavilion form. Complemented by its detailed design treatment with its sense of 'transparency' (see below) the building sits well within its garden setting, reading more as part of the landscape. Its position and scale, however, work well to define the mews and vehicle drop-off point, and responds in scale to the low-rise lobby entrance opposite.

Building 5 is one of the two large, extra care apartment buildings. In its revised form, the new building retains a large footprint when assessed at deck level, but its height has been scaled back and is massing better articulated. Overall, the new building has a comfortable built form that responds well to the existing context and character. The building is designed as a composition of two 5-storey gables: one wing aligned with the rear southern wing of the listed school and edging the central garden space; and the other a 'L' shaped wing that sits above the new deck and returns along the new stairway. The 'L' briefly grounds adjacent to the extended South End, where it effectively becomes 7 storeys above grade (27m). The composition of

gables does well to suggest a finer building grain, and to allow the built form to better address the adjacent context.

The new building is set back from the southern wing of the school by 18m, providing a better sense of space between the two opposing wings. Its main (east) façade is aligned with the building line of the school wing, whilst at 5-storeys and with a gabled roof form (18.5m to ridge), it almost matches the southern wing's general height, massing and roofscape. In maintaining the prevailing building line, height and form, block 5 provides a consistent townscape and coherent sense of enclosure to the central gardens, which are welcome. Whilst the 'L' form is positioned above the deck, its raised form has little impact upon the central gardens, being mostly obscured by the building's front wing, appearing mainly as a taller return element adjacent to the extended mews. The taller return does not overwhelm the main building, but helps to terminate the central square. It also works well in easing the transition to block 6 (see below). At the rear of block 5, the gable wing is slightly cranked to address the slight shift in alignment of Wright's Lane and the Copthorne Tara Hotel. At 5 storeys above the deck, the wing moderates the transition in scale to the much larger hotel, but without becoming overly tall or bulky. When experienced from the deck, its scale reflects the traditional built form of the school.

Looking at the southern part of the site, block 6 is the other main apartment building. Its height and massing have been revised and its volume compressed; albeit at 8 storeys above grade (30m) it remains the tallest of the proposed new buildings. Its height accords with the Heythrop SPD, which suggests a replacement building in this location of less than 9 storeys in response to the existing hostel block, albeit the latter has distinctly more modest floor-to-floor heights. Importantly, block 6's final two floors are setback on all sides, easing its sense of scale. The 6-storey shoulder height at 22m follows through with the eaves height of taller part of block 5, lending a visual coherency to the townscape around the new stairway and to the southern end of the central garden space. The setback storeys present as conventional penthouse levels rather than attic storeys, but nonetheless remain sufficiently recessive.

Where block 6 sits above the deck, its massing articulates back and steps down to four storeys in height. This eases the building's apparent scale when viewed obliquely along South End, improving its proportions and avoiding an overly long slab block. The articulation also makes for a comfortable scale alongside block 5 when experienced at deck level. At the rear, the building additionally sets back at 5th floor level and, with its simplified massing, reduces its sense of scale towards Kelso Place. Overall, the new building is large scale, but is no-longer overbearing. Its revised scale and proportions arguably reflect Cottesmore Court; a similar large 1930's apartment building nearby in Kelso Place.

Lastly, block 7 is a composite block, comprising a 3-storey affordable building within the current South End; an adjacent 4-storey 'L' shaped extra care apartment building that runs perpendicular to the street to enclose the private courtyard; and a 2-storey infill building onto the mews that abuts block 6 and forms the main entrance or 'loggia'.

Beginning at the eastern end, the affordable building is presented as two main storeys and an additional mansard storey (10.5m). The parapet height (8m) almost continues through from the neighbouring group of properties and the façade detailing suggests a finer plot width (see below). The general height and massing respond well to the context, integrating the development with the adjoining townscape. It provides a coherent 3-dimensional scale that is typical of a mews, albeit there is a change in current character with the realignment of the street (see below). The step up in height to four full storeys (14.5m) works well to discreetly announce a change in urban character as South End enters the main development, but also to accommodate the double-height service bay entrance. The additional height at this point is not overbearing within the mews, particularly as it is eased by the setback of Milleret House opposite. Running southwards the mainly four-storey L-shaped apartment building is

comfortably scaled with the communal courtyard and allows good daylighting of the enclosed gardens. Its height works well to counterbalance the much taller block 6 (opposite) and avoids the development becoming too dense in this more constrained corner of the site. The block steps down to three storeys for the return, preserving the amenity of neighbouring properties at the rear in Kelso Place (DM to confirm). Lastly, the 'loggia' includes a double-height ground floor lobby with a library room above, and is effectively 3 full storeys in height at 10.5m above grade. Its modest height works well within the context of the preceding mews and 4-storey element, but also as a foil to part 6/ 8-storey block 6. The variation in roofline and the loggia's setback building line and distinctive façade treatment (see below) combine well to highlight the main entrance in an understated manner.

Architectural treatment

The design approach is contemporary in style, but is well detailed and has a contextual approach in its blend of the horizontal hierarchy of base, middle and top, the vertical proportioning of its window openings, and in its use of handset stock brickwork and precast stone. The detailings of window and door surrounds are also well conceived. The detailed architecture of each buildings responds to its immediate site context, but nonetheless holds together well to present a composition of buildings that sit well with their listed neighbours and provide an attractive sense of place. Its success will be dependent on the quality of finishes, which should be controlled by appropriate conditions. Briefly taking each new building in turn:

Block 3: The architecture is intended to rear as a calm backdrop to the adjacent listed school building. As referred to above, this is achieved in part by its secondary scale and massing, with its pitched roof and gable-ends. The façades complement this approach, adopting a simple and sympathetic design language, comprising a regular order and hierarchy of piers and subservient horizontals. The windows are recessed within a consistent grid of openings, but placed slightly asymmetrical to provide a design feature and avoid direct overlooking of the apartments opposite. The brickwork closing side panels add solidity and detail to the elevation. The windows are multi-paned in a contemporary pattern and finished in dark metal frames. The attic storey comprises a single, long dormer in dark metalwork with similarly contemporary windows, set within a pitched slate roof. The 4-storey element features a light penthouse floor in dark metal. The communal entrance is on the east elevation, aligned with the gated side passage. Its simple canopy and stacked windows above announce its position in an understated but nonetheless legible fashion. A side panel of textured brickwork at ground floor adds to the effect. The overall design is simple, respectful and engaging, and is welcome on design grounds, subject to conditions controlling the quality of finishes (incl. canopy, textured brickwork).

Block 4: The single storey community hall is designed to read as a pavilion in the park. The structure is simple, comprising a suspended roof over mostly glazed facades that gives the building a light and airy quality. Its transparency allows the building to sit relatively quietly within the garden setting. A pitched and folded roof form with an exposed timber ceiling finish give the structure a finer grain and visual interest. The building is entered from South End through simple glazed double-doors, albeit the entrance would benefit from a more robust and legible finish. A similar single glazed door on the north elevation allows access to an activity lawn. The building's simple, unassuming design is welcome, though its quality will depend on its detailed finishes (incl. main entrance and ceiling finish), which should be conditioned.

Block 5: The apartment building is intended to work as a contemporary companion to the school, not only in its scale and form (see earlier), but also in its architectural expression. The facades take their design cue from the listed building, adopting the same primary vertical ordering, proportions and expression of piers, with a secondary horizontality in its cill, lintel and cornice detailing. The outcome is restrained and complementary. The sense of base, middle and top are evident and run through with next door. The piers are broad at ground/1st floor, suggesting a robust base, but are narrowed for the 2nd and 3rd floors, similar to the school and

denoting the middle section of the façade. The piers become capped and gathered in precast stone to form a terminating cornice. The top's attic roof is finished in slate and articulated by a row of metal-clad dormers that are large, but add a contemporary feel. There is a discrepancy in the plans and images of the dormers. This should be resolved by condition, ensuring that the dormer size and fenestration are well-proportioned and not too large. The windows throughout are multi-paned with dark metal frames in a Crittal style that is typical of the development. Brick soldier courses for the 1st and 3rd floor lintels and sloped gable edges provide additional visual interest, though their quality (incl. mechanical fix and without metal supports) will be important, as will be the brickwork in general, which should also be conditioned (bond and pointing).

The architectural language is carried through to the gable ends and repeats on the deck-facing facades. Where the building becomes 7 storeys at its southern end, it sits above a 2-storey stone base that wraps around to flank the new staircase. The stone base projects forward 3.6m on its east side to form a legible and robust entrance portico. The profiled stonework adds an elegance and avoids the structure from appearing chunky. The western façade includes a communal entrance that allows the residents direct access to the deck and its gardens. This too is highlighted in stonework, but more low key fashion and as a secondary entrance. It's central position and legibility provide a focal point for the façade's design, which is welcome: In time this will form an important façade, addressing the pedestrian through-route from Wright's Lane and the eventual bridge link.

Block 6: The largest of the blocks, the southern building employs a similar calm and ordered appearance and material palette as its companion buildings, but introduces variety in its architectural style. The façade design has a subtle horizontal expression, inspired by other large grain 1930's buildings located nearby and within the Royal Borough. Constructed in stock brickwork with stacked, vertically proportioned, continuous stone banding is introduced every two floors with stone lintels above windows on intermediate floors. The stonework lends a horizontal design emphasis and articulates the main volume in three parts, reducing its sense of scale. The base is additionally defined by a double-storey order, marked by stone architraves around the stacked ground and first floor windows. The upper section is defined by its flat parapet and stone cornice line. Two penthouse floors are set back from the main elevation above, with the first storey finished in smooth stone, providing a lighter tone, and the second clad in typical dark metal.

Additional visual interest is provided by step profile reveals, fluted stonework and intricate dark metal balconies. The full floor windows are multi-paned in dark metal frames and include French windows, giving access to private balconies set within the deep window reveals. Overall, the architecture is well proportioned for its scale and pleasing in its composition, and should make for a robust, handsome appearance. However, the quality of the detailed finishes is critical to this, and should be conditioned.

Block 7: The block comprises three parts: the affordable housing; extra-care housing; and entrance loggia. The affordable housing is provided as the 3-storey apartment building located in South End. The building is designed to appear as a row of contemporary mews buildings in direct response to the local character. It is composed of a rendered ground floor, stock brick upper floor, and a metal-clad mansard storey that is set behind a flat parapet wall. The street façade is divided by a series of downwater pipes that are slotted into the masonry and set out at 5-6m intervals, suggesting a fine plot width typical of mews. Expressed metal lintels are provided at ground floor level, reflecting traditional bressemer-style garage openings. The upper floor level has a simple appearance, with punched hole openings and minimal dressing that comprises a band of soldier course brickwork providing the lintel detail and a stone coping. The window sizes and positions vary, lending an informal quality, though overall the façades remain well composed. The outcome is an attractive, mews appearance that complements the building's setting and is tenure-blind.

The part 3/ 4-storey element adopts a more ordered approach, but retains a relative simplicity in its appearance. It presents as full floors in stock brickwork with stacked window openings, and topped by a flat parapet and stone coping. On the South End façade the windows openings are recessed and feature stone lintels and mullions that lend a warehouse character to the design and works well to incorporate the service bay entrance. The courtyard façade is more articulated featuring recessed openings with chamfered reveals to one side and asymmetrically positioned windows; and projecting stone surrounds for the communal entrances. Where the final floor returns onto the courtyard elevation, it is set back, but finished in brickwork. The windows are multi-paned and the frames and Juliette balconies finished in dark metalwork throughout. The architecture is well-mannered and handsome, and sits well with the adjacent mews and block 6.

Lastly, the loggia is intended to be a distinctive building, highlighting it as the main entrance to the extra-care facility. It does this with its rich architectural treatment, featuring an expressed main framework of glazed terracotta and dark metal-framed windows with brass trims, railings and canopies. The ground floor windows and fanlights are slightly folded for additional visual interest. The detailed design has an art-deco quality that complements block 6. Arguably, it could have worked well as a contemporary element, but it is nonetheless engaging. It has a opulent appearance, but is not flamboyant or overstated. The building is read mainly from within the central gardens; its impact on the mews being played down by recessing the loggia behind the general building line of block 7 and 6. Its success, however, is very dependent upon its detailing, which should be conditioned.

Functionality

The buildings function well, with tall ground floors of 4m in most buildings and excellent internal heights of 2.8m (clear) for the extra-care accommodation on the upper floors. The provision of full height windows promotes good daylighting within the apartments. The plan forms are good throughout the extra care accommodation, often arranged to optimise dual aspect. Nursing stations are located on all residential floors and lifts are sized to accommodate wheelchairs or gurneys.

The private residential benefit from the good amenity of the historic buildings, with well-proportioned and well-lit rooms on the principal floors. The townhouses feature piano nobile. The new affordable housing is less effective, with two of the units being single aspect and north facing, albeit one is a duplex unit. None of the units have private balcony spaces. However, the accommodation enjoys the same generous ceiling heights of 2,8m, whilst single aspect mews properties with little or no outdoor amenity space are not uncommon within the Royal Borough; and in this instance the residents would have ready access to the development's central gardens. Nonetheless, the affordable block could be re-planned to omit the lift core and to provide additional dual aspect and/or access to a small communal roof terrace that could be laid out above the adjacent service bay at the rear, subject to the amenity of neighbouring residents. This could be sought by condition, if appropriate (DM to confirm).

Lastly, the pavilion provides a highly flexible plan form, with a generous ceiling height and excellent daylighting, and amenities that should allow a wide range of community uses.

Heritage and townscape

Heythrop College, 23 KSq has very recently been designated a statutory grade II listed building. It comprises the two former 1838 townhouses and the adjoining Victorian Gothic style former convent school designed by George Goldie for the Sisters of Assumption and built in phases between 1875 and 1889. Both the townhouses and the purpose-built school retain much of their planform and a number of fittings. The list description includes the 1925 entrance gallery by Joseph Goldie, but explicitly excludes the western range by George Goldie (1889) and by Joseph Goldie (1929). The college site includes George Goldie's Victorian Gothic style elementary school (St Andrew's Hall) at the southern end of the former convent, which can be regarded as a curtilage grade II listed building.

The application site also includes 24 KSq, which is a grade II listed late 17th century house that was made over into a villa in the 1820s and considerably rebuilt in the mid-20th century. The site abuts the grade II listed Chapel of the Assumption Convent (1875) by George Goldie on its east boundary; and the grade II listed 18th Century stucco fronted house, 25 KSq, on its northwest boundary. The site is entirely within the Kensington Square Conservation Area and borders with the De Vere Conservation Area to the east.

Sections 16(2) and 66 of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a statutory duty on the local authority in planning decision-making to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting. Section 72 of the Act also requires the local authority to pay special regard to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of a conservation area. The National Planning Policy Framework 2012 (NPPF) expects that great weight is given to the conservation of a heritage asset and that its significance can be harmed or lost through alterations or destruction of the asset or development within its setting. The harm or loss to the significance of the heritage asset should be demonstrated as necessary and be outweighed by public benefits (para 132-4).

Looking at the impacts of the development on heritage assets, they comprise the external and internal works to the listed buildings themselves; the impacts of the new buildings on the settings of the listed buildings; the loss of a curtilage listed building; the impacts on the local conservation area from the loss of buildings that make a positive contribution, and from the changes to its open space. Taking these matters briefly in turn:

Townhouses: The proposals are for the reconversion of the college's ancillary offices and teaching rooms back to residential use as two separate dwellings. The external works involve the demolition of the connecting entrance gallery on the front elevation; reinstatement of the traditional street facades at ground and basement levels, including new entrance porticos and a continuous metal balcony at first floor; the reinstatement of front lightwells and traditional front boundary railings; and the removal of the non-original rear additions and works to make good.

Internally, the works involve the infill of the lateral openings to separate the two properties from each other and from the chapel to the east and school building to the west; and the updating of services for modern residential use. The opportunity is being taken to repair and reinstate elements of the original planform and internal decoration, including cornicing, fireplaces, windows and shutters.

The main feature is the return of the properties to their original townhouse form and use as separate dwellings, which is of benefit to the architectural integrity of the built form and to the setting of Kensington Square as a historic residential square. It is, however, predicated on the loss of the connecting gallery entrance, which is an important part of how the complex of buildings functions and how the listed former convent presents itself onto the square; the broken pediment and cruciform being a distinctive and legible feature in the streetscape. Arguably, its loss returns the convent complex to an earlier appearance, prior to the addition,

whilst the gallery does mar an appreciation of the intrinsic qualities of the underlying late Georgian townhouses.

In terms of the alterations, the approach is generally supported. The repair and reinstatement of the traditional features, including the porticos, first floor balconies and boundary railings, are welcome, as is the retention and in parts the return of the historic planform. The revised plans show a more sympathetic treatment regarding the positioning of door openings and bathrooms. However, it will be important to confirm details of the restoration work and new interventions through conditions. This includes the replacement porch details and masonry, but also the positioning of service runs, which should avoid new pipework and ducting on the street elevation and minimise the impacts on the internal historic fabric. On balance, the changes to the townhouses are positive and welcome on heritage grounds.

Main school building: The former convent school is currently the main college block, providing a number of facilities, including administrative offices; catering; assembly hall; lecture and tutorial rooms. The proposals convert the building for use as a series of extra care residential units on all floors, with duplex units making use of the attic space. The external works include the demolition of the connecting entrance gallery on the street elevation and basement link to 24 KSq; demolition of the modern lift and earlier stair towers; demolition of the western range of extensions; reinstatement of the street façade at ground floor level and elsewhere to match following demolition works; removal of an external fire escape stair; excavation of new lightwells on along the southern elevation and enlarging basement lights to form new windows and door openings; and enlarging arched window openings to form a new building entrance to a communal lobby and an adjacent public through-entrance to the rear gardens.

The internal works involve the extensive removal of partition walls and creation of new openings; the loss of historic fabric, including wall panelling, doors, an attic stair and other joinery; and installation of new services and lifts in connection with the internal planning of the building for self-contained apartments throughout.

Externally, the most prominent change is the loss of the gallery entrance. As with the townhouses, this impacts upon the legibility of the historic building as part of the convent complex. This may be weighed against the benefit of returning the built form to its appearance prior to the gallery's construction, though no evidence is presented as to how or whether the school was accessed from the street. Nonetheless, in this instance, the impact can also be offset by the design benefit of improving public access to the site in a manner that complements the building, providing a through-route in the style of a porter's lodge to a college precinct; and by the opening up of the adjacent townscape gap between the school and 24 KSq to allow views of the restored front elevation, albeit the public's view is limited by the replacement gateway.

The detailing of the new public and communal entrance doorways and the finish of the new passageway would need to be confirmed to ensure its high quality and sympathetic design, though these features could be sought by condition. The remaining external alterations are sympathetic in their sensitive repair and restoration, though the excavation of the rear lightwells requires careful detailing if the sense of the building's base is not to be undermined: Again, these matters could be addressed by condition.

Internally, at lower floor levels whilst much of the original fabric has been lost, important elements survive (stone corbels, exposed ceiling beams and joinery). The retention of the original feature stairs is welcome, as is the retention of the parts of the simple joinery at upper floor levels and particularly within the attic spaces. However, not all the surviving fabric is retained (e.g., internal timber steps and an attic stair) and other elements will become less visible in subdividing the spaces. The loss of plan form and many internal features will cause. More could be done to limit the loss and the degree of harm caused, though it is acknowledged

that alterations are required to support the use. As such, a condition should be attached to ensure that existing primary features (including fireplaces) are retained and that more of the simple internal detailing is retained. The detail should remain exposed where possible (include doors fixed shut if necessary) or re-used elsewhere in the building where not.

It should also be noted that the proposed planning of the school misses the opportunity to make good use of a significant building for a similar education use or a more communal/ public function or activity that would respond more to its architecture (large rooms and legibility) and would in turn support a more active ground floor and adjacent public realm. However, overall, the heritage impacts are neutral on balance, subject to conditions.

West range: Mention should be made of the school's western range. The demolition of the 1960s single storey assembly hall attached to the southwest side of the school and the 1929 two-storey side extension immediately adjacent to the western boundary wall are supported. The buildings are not listed and partially obscure the remaining buildings, and as such their loss presents the opportunity to restore and better appreciate the host building. However, the proposals include the demolition of two late 19th century additions that formed the later phases of the school's original development and are tucked neatly alongside the main building and behind 24 KSq. The structures by George Goldie are purpose-built and well detailed, and though smaller in scale, sit harmoniously with the main school, following through its material finishes.

The statutory list confirms these additions do not contribute to the significance of the listed building. As such their loss is not considered to impact upon the building's special interest, and is therefore supported on listed building grounds. Nonetheless, the additions have a value as positive contributors to the character and appearance of the Kensington Square conservation area (see below).

24 KSq: The proposals are for internal and external changes, including the reconstruction of the rear elevation, in connection with the reconversion of the nursery back into residential use. This is a welcome change of approach, given the earlier proposals to retain the nursery use and for a large rear extension containing a new lift core.

Much of the building's internal fabric and plan form has been lost over the years, as has the rear elevation, which was rebuilt in the 1960s. The revised proposals look to recover much of the property's previous residential plan form, reinstating the stair core in a more central position and the proportions and internal features of the principal rooms. The details for the stair and internal features should be conditioned to ensure they are sympathetic. The rear elevation is rebuilt, with the correct window proportions and timber sash windows reinstated, albeit the details (including new brickwork) should be similarly conditioned. The reinstatement of the building's historic roof form and new slate covering are particularly welcome, as is the tidying up of the front elevation. Overall, the proposals are of positive benefit and are welcome on heritage grounds.

St Andrews's Hall: The proposals are for the demolition of all buildings within the southeast corner of the site for the construction of block 7. This includes St Andrew's Hall, which was designed by George Goldie as an elementary school for the convent and is contemporaneous with the chapel and main school. The T-shaped building with its gable end onto South End has an aesthetic and historic value that contributes to an appreciation of the complex of buildings and grounds that formed the convent. Internally the building retains a number of original/ early features, including a simple spiral stairway, exposed ceiling timbers, internal timber panelling and partitions with transom lights that are part of its interest. The loss of the curtilage listed building is harmful. The harm is less than substantial, but nonetheless important, detracting from the convent's historical and architectural interest. That loss should be offset by benefits of the scheme. In this instance, the benefits would include the urban design benefit of extending

the public realm and providing a more legible, coherent east-west route into the site, with the potential to improve onward connectivity.

Listed Building settings

By virtue of their scale and/ or proximity, blocks 3, 5 and 6 impact upon the settings of the listed buildings on site and nearby, albeit the revised masterplan approach has sought to minimise the visibility of the development from outside the site. Looking at the new buildings in turn:

Block 3: The impacts of the scale and appearance of the replacement building on the setting on the main school and 24 KSq are valid considerations. Block 3 is designed to complement the main school building in terms of its size, form and its appearance. As discussed above, the proposed built form generally reflects the adjacent listed building and is scaled to read as secondary. With an intervening distance of about 5m, its close proximity is not uncomfortable and could help form a characterful passageway space between. In terms of the proposed architectural detailing, the contemporary approach works well in terms of its ordered appearance with recessed openings with dark metal multi-paned windows, attractive multi-toned brown brickwork and slate pitched roof with dormers. It presents a calm backdrop building that responds to rather than competes with the adjacent listed school.

Elsewhere the revised massing of block 3 pushes the taller 4-storey element of the building westwards to the edge of the site away from 24 KSq. This appears to be sufficient to ensure that the additional height of the replacement building is generally unseen from Kensington Square (View A) and, in particular, from the south side at its junction with Thackeray Street (View 1). This is despite the taller element's parapeted roof rising some 2m above the villa's ridgeline. It may well appear above the ridge when viewed further along Thackeray Street. However, it would be only marginally discernable, given its dark material finish.

Block 3 is visible from Scarsdale Place, a publically accessible open space to the west of the site, close to Wrights Lane (view 11). In this view the new building replaces the school's western range and obscures the main building's west gable and all but the pitched roof of its main southern wing, which appears above block 3's 3-storey element. To an extent block 3's calm and ordered architecture lends a sense of a composition of similar buildings, but it is nonetheless harmful to the setting in this view. However, the impact is less than substantial. The listed villa is unaffected in this view, as it is currently obscured by the school's western range and remains so in the proposals.

Block 5: The new part 5/ 7-storey, gabled building sits to the rear of the southern wing of the L-shaped listed school building, separated by an 18m wide garden space. Its façade line aligns with the courtyard façade line of the school. The intervening space allows the southern wing of the school building to be read within a green landscaped setting. The alignments and similar height and massing of the new building ensures that the building does not obstruct or impose upon the listed building. It provides a more coherent context for the listed school building, acting in part to screen out the nearby Copthorne Tara Hotel and to bring more of a focus to its central garden setting. The architectural expression of the new building is contemporary, but is restrained and complementary to the heritage asset in terms of its solidity, proportions and material finishes. Arguably the new building can be seen to establish an attractive precinct setting for the school, townhouses and chapel and as such it enhances the setting of the complex of listed buildings.

Block 6: This is the larger of the two apartment buildings is positioned southwards further away from the convent complex, and despite its size is regarded as sufficiently distant from the convent buildings not to impact upon the setting when viewed from within the development.

Outside of the development, the building is not visible from within the gardens of Kensington Square, sitting below the roofline of the listed chapel and convent complex (view 3). Its roof

breaches the roofline above part the neighbouring listed terrace (15-16 KSq) when seen from the junction with Young Street (View 4), though it is only just discernable during winter months and is lost during summer within the square's extensive tree cover. Similarly, it has no visible impact upon the listed convent buildings when viewed from the junction with Derry Street (View 2), sitting below the roofline of the listed buildings. Its uppermost storey, however, does come into view further northwards along Derry Street towards Kensington High Street (view B), albeit the impact is short-lived as the geometry results in the school and block 6 becoming obscured by 35 KSq and Derry and Toms in the foreground (view C). Nonetheless, for that short stretch the final penthouse storey sits directly above the school's ridgeline, becoming more pronounced when the large dormers are internally illuminated. This detracts from the school's setting in this view, albeit the harm is minor, given its brevity.

Blocks 4 and 7: For completeness, blocks 4 and 7 are low-rise and sufficiently distant from the convent and chapel buildings not to impact upon their settings, though their effects on the conservation area remain (see below). The revised position and scale of block 4 is particularly welcome in no-longer diminishing an appreciation of the direct visual connection between the chapel, former convent and its grounds.

Impacts on the local conservation areas

Kensington Square: The application site is entirely within the Kensington Square conservation area, which has the residential square as its focus, but extends to include the adjacent department stores on Kensington High Street to the north, and the smaller buildings of South End to the south. The special interest is its very high quality of buildings surrounding the square, which are all listed, and as the first garden square development in the Royal Borough. It is also regarded for its varied character from the striking, listed Art Deco department stores through to the village charm of South End. Green space and planting make a very important contribution to the conservation area in terms of the open character garden square, but also the mature green setting of the former convent.

The proposed scheme involves the demolition and redevelopment of the early west additions to the school building in the north of the site, and St Andrew's Hall and the neighbouring cottage (14 South End) in the south. These are identified as positive contributors to the local conservation area, albeit the contribution of the extensions is limited to an extent by their low visibility behind later extensions and the railway. St Andrew's Hall particularly makes a very important contribution to the character of South End with its Victorian Gothic style long façade and central gable with oculus bringing a focus to its immediate street setting, whilst working well with the scale of the mews. Whilst the loss of the buildings is less than substantial harm to the heritage asset as a whole, it nonetheless has important detrimental impacts on those parts of the conservation area. The harm should be offset by benefits.

The loss of St Andrew's Hall and cottage are required to improve vehicle access to the site for construction and servicing (Highways to confirm). The loss of the buildings and realignment of South End enable the more orthogonal site layout and the direct extension of South End westwards, improving the legibility and connectivity of the public realm. The architecture of block 7 in a sympathetic style works well to retain a mews character to the street. Though different in appearance, the character of this part of the conservation area is preserved and, arguably, modestly enhanced by the sense of visual progression into an open area and onward connectivity (view 6).

Regarding the west range, given their limited visibility and the architectural quality of the replacement block 3, which is sympathetic in character to the adjacent listed school, the character of this part of the conservation area is preserved, and arguably moderately enhanced by the removal of Loyola Hall and restoration of the school wing.

There is also the impact on the conservation area of the reduction of the central open space, felling of several mature plane trees and the construction of block 5. The loss of its green, open and informal quality and replacement with an enclosed and more ordered landscape with its series of gardens and lawn bring a distinct change in character and appearance to this part of the conservation area. The consistent building line and scale of block 5 and the school wing and the sympathetic architecture of the new building brings an attractive coherency to the townscape. Together with the main school building, townhouses and chapel the townscape takes on more of a precinct quality, similar in character to a historic college complex. Setting aside the special contribution made by the trees (Consult Trees), as such the change is an enhancement of this part of the conservation area.

Wider afield the development does not affect the views within Kensington Square, which is the centre-piece of the conservation area, beyond the minor impact when seen from Young Street during winter (View 4). The other impact is on the view from Derry Street (View B), where the penthouse level of block 6 is partly visible above the ridgeline of the school, detracting from its clean roof profile and indicating a large-scale development beyond, suggesting a more built-up character to the conservation area. As referred to earlier, the view is short-lived and the harmful impact is minor.

Surrounding Conservation Areas: The development can be seen from the neighbouring De Vere conservation area, though occasionally and where the townscape is low rise. Most noticeably it is seen in view 5, where blocks 7 and 6 sits in the backdrop to the low-rise setting of South End/ Ansdell Street. In this view the affordable building's slate mansard and extra-care building's brickwork flank façade blend into the townscape. The large scale of block 6 is evident on the skyline, though its alignment, ordered appearance and articulated penthouse level appears calm and not overbearing above the distinctly domestic setting. That block 6 obscures views of the Copthorne Tara Hotel beyond is of some benefit, although the hotel appears more distant, of similar form and not especially intrusive in this views.

Whilst the development is also seen further away along St Alban's Grove (views 7 and 8) it sits low and calmly on the skyline. Its stone banding and parapet reflecting the cornicing and stucco parapet walls of the Victorian buildings in the foreground when viewed from the junction with Stanford Street (view 7); whilst its scale and form appears much the same in the more distant view from the junction with Victoria Grove (view 8).

The development cannot be seen in the views provided from the Kensington conservation area (views C and F), Lexham Gardens conservation area (view D), Cornwall Gardens conservation area (view J) or from Queen's Gate conservation area (view G), due to densely built-up context.

Impacts on the townscape outside of conservation areas

The site is largely screened by the Copthorne Tara Hotel in views from the west, whilst the tight street form and relatively tall building context obscure wider views from the north, east and south, most of which are from within conservation areas (see above). The development is, however, occasionally seen in views that are outside of conservation areas and/ or over longer distances. The most noticeable are:

View 10, Kelso Place: The current townscape is varied in character, comprising low-rise, late 20th century housing in the foreground, the southern flank of the college's 1960s student hostel immediately above, and the prominent slab block of the Copthorne Tara Hotel. In this view the proposed southern end façade of block 6 replaces the student hostel. Though larger in massing, it appears lower on the skyline. With its better alignment, simple massing and lighter brick tones sitting the new building sits more comfortably above the foreground residential buildings. The amenity is moderately enhanced.

View 11, Scarsdale Place: A square that located to the west of the site and is accessible to the public. The change in townscape is significant with the view of the school becoming mostly obscured and the open character of the site becoming mostly infilled. However, blocks 3, 5 and 6 work well as a family of buildings with a common material palette, but with a variety of massing and visual interest. The development brings a more built up character to the backdrop to Scarsdale Place, but is not harmful.

View E, St Mary's Place: The townscape comprises consistent terraces of late 20th century neo-traditional townhouses and apartment blocks. The flank wall of the Copthorne Tara Hotel and the rear elevation of the college's student hostel are prominent above the rooflines, although the hostel appears to follow the line of the terraces and with its simple, unfussy architecture and red brickwork sits relatively quietly on the skyline. In this view block 6 replaces the hostel and is of similar height. Its realignment and revised massing results in the new building terminating the view. However, its ordered facades and contrasting light brickwork are not out of character with the terraces. Its form and appearance appear better resolved within the townscape than currently, albeit the improvement is modest.

Landscaping and public realm

The proposals provide for a series of new, smaller open spaces and walkways, albeit at the cost to the more open character and appearance of the central lawned gardens. The replacement open space is generally well landscaped and should make for a series of attractive, newly planted gardens, most of which are accessible to the public. The railed garden adjacent to the school is private, but offers wider visual amenity. The loss of some substantial trees will detract from the landscape maturity and quality (Consult Trees).

The courtyard garden space between blocks 6 and 7 appears well landscaped and should offer good amenity for the extra care residents, as well as glimpsed amenity for passers-by when seen through the glazed loggia. The new garden spaces above the deck are of reasonable amenity, given the close proximity of the Copthorne Tara Hotel and scale of buildings 5 and 6, though the revised and more rational layout should improve daylighting and the sense of comfort.

Lastly, the development includes new routes in traditional hard landscaping and natural stone that match the adjacent street finishes and should provide a seamless sense of public realm, which is welcome. That the routes are open to the public, generally ungated (see earlier), legible and well activated by a mix of public and private communal entrances should make for an attractive and engaging environment.

Conclusion

No objection is raised on design grounds, subject to conditions. The urban design and architecture of the development are of high quality. The scheme provides a well-connected, inclusive and legible network of routes and spaces that draw upon the traditional townscape qualities and form of the Royal Borough. The new buildings are contemporary in style, but are well-mannered, attractive and respond well to the surrounding built context. It includes the sensitive restoration of two listed townhouses and a listed villa and their reinstatement for residential use, and the relatively sensitive restoration and re-purposing of the listed school for extra care use. It does, however, cause harm to the listed buildings (include curtilage listed building) and their settings and to the Kensington Square conservation area. This harm is offset by other design benefits and particularly the improvements to local permeability and potential connectivity and the opening up of the gardens for public access and enjoyment.

Richard Craig
6/11/18