

PLANNING APPLICATION PUBLIC COMMENT

Application number: PP/18/05313
Site Address: Heythrop College, 23-24 Kensington Square, LONDON, W8 5HH
Proposal: Reinstatement of three townhouses (Class C3), (part of 23 and 24 Kensington Square); refurbishment of college building (part of 23 Kensington Square) and use as an extra care facility (Class C2). Demolition of all other buildings on site. Erection of deck over adjacent London Underground line and construction of 5 buildings (ranging between 1 and 8 storeys in height) for use as an extra care facility including units, communal facilities and services areas, community hall and on-site affordable housing and associated access parking, servicing and landscaping. (MAJOR DEVELOPMENT)

Comment received: I would like to submit my support for this application, as resident of Kensington Square, in line with the comments submitted by our residents association KSRA, which has worked with us, RBKC and the developer over a significant period of time (to provide extensive input into the Heythrop SPD with RBKC 3 years ago and consultations with the developer during their exhibitions to the public starting last year).

We not only support the extra care use, but feel that for many of us that have lived a long time on Kensington Square in large houses, there is actual interest in the product being offered as we age and an opportunity to stay close to our area and community. We have heard residents outside the square are objecting to the project due to the fact that they claim there is no community benefit, but having lived next to Heythrop for many years now, we have to say, we never saw any public benefit as residents from Heythrop, which was closed to the public and inaccessible at all times. We recall having asked Heythrop years ago whether we could use their facilities (for example the tennis court, which they left derelict) and the answer was always no. In the past we could only use the hall for the Kensington Square AGMs, which was not free and paid by KSRA and our garden committee. As such, the developer is providing a definite improvement over the status quo, with new - and importantly well designed and maintained - gardens, play area for children, a community hall which they have said will be open to the public and have indicated that they are willing to work with the community to offer more access to this beautiful site. We initially were very concerned about new permanent traffic generated via the square, but the developer worked with us to provide a sensible scheme, that meets conservation area needs, to avoid intensification of use and also meet their own residents security needs, so for us the daytime only pedestrian access, with gates closing at night to prevent crime is key.

We sympathise with and understand the frustration of the residents outside Kensington Square who feel they will bear more traffic than we will, but then again Kensington Square residents bore solely the brunt of the 3 year development of 19-21 Young Street, which was indeed very unpleasant, leaving many residents unable to get out of the square by car given the blockages on Kensington Square and one way of Thackeray Street. So while many outside Kensington Square seem to be complaining about the prospect of a luxury development being left empty, we think it is important to remember that Heythrop is already empty and will very much benefit from this redevelopment, which is not meant as a residential scheme, but as an extra care facility. Whether its luxury or not is really besides the point, as frankly there is demand for extra care at all ends of the market and considering property prices in the vicinity, many of the local residents could sensibly downgrade into Heythrop when they need extra care, a much preferable choice certainly to us when our times comes than to move to a care home far from Kensington, as we watched one of our neighbours do recently with much sadness. If the new development was operational, he would have very much been a prime candidate and stayed in the community.

In summary, as the residents immediately affected on Kensington Square, we support the scheme which we feel brings something new and positive for our borough's eldest and would represent a welcome addition.

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Comment type: Support