DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT
OCTOBER 2013
CAMDEN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Proposed development at:

Kings College Court
55 Primrose Hill Road
London
NW3 3EA

PIRTON LTD

KAAL

CONSERVATION ARCHITECTURE & PLANNING

JIM GARLAND
ARCHITECTS LIMITED

PROJECT TEAM

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View of remodelled building from the SE

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

This statement supports the proposed works of alteration and extension to a block of 9 storeys containing 48 flats. It is considered that the development will benefit the building, area and wider community in the following ways:

1. Complete architectural remodelling

2. Two storey + belvedere extension containing 3 flats + 1 maisonette

3. Building standard upgrade and energy conservation

4. Entrance and other ground floor improvements

5. Improve common parts including upgrading poor ventilation of existing landings

6. Site and landscape improvements

7. Access and streetscape improvements

9. Financial contributions towards Education, Open Spaces, Pedestrian, Cyclist, Environmental and Mayoral CIL

The planning, design, technical approach and detail have been carefully worked out in the course of continual dialogue with Camden Council officers. The record of discussion is set out in this document. The proposal is supported by the residents and management of the block.

The applicant, Pirton Ltd and the design team are experienced in successfully reconditioning, upgrading and transforming buildings of similar age and condition. In each case a long term, whole building approach has been adopted in contrast to the more typical exploitation of rooftops alone. Compare for example Pirton's work at Parkland Court, Kensington & Chelsea with the permitted scheme at Queens Court, St John's Wood in neighbouring Westminster, illustrated below.

1.1 TALL BUILDING EXTENSIONS COMPARED

Pirton Ltd - before and after views, Parkland Court, Kensington

Typical approach to roof extension, St John's Wood

2.0 SITE LOCATION AND ACCESS

Kings College Court is located near the junction of Primrose Hill Road and Adelaide Road, fronting onto both roads. The foreground of both frontages is landscaped, planted with a variety of trees, bordered by low hedging and fencing. The main pedestrian entrance is onto Primrose Hill Road. Vehicle access to 48 covered and open car spaces at lower level is via the somewhat depressing Tobin Close, a private drive which also gives access to a group of two storey terraced houses.

Kings College Court view from SE, with Dorney Tower

2.1 HISTORY AND CONTEXT

The block stands within a loose cluster of 20-23 storey blocks interspersed with rows of houses similar to Tobin Close, which form the large Chalcot estate. These buildings were designed in 1965 by the Architects Department of the newly formed London Borough of Camden. 12 Inner London and 20 Outer London boroughs had been created within a new Greater London Council area embracing over 8 million people. Building the Chalcot estate was one of the largest housing projects in England. The first of the towers, Blashford House was opened on 2 December1967, followed by Burnham, Bray, Dorney and Taplow towers to the west.

Camden's opening ceremony text described Blashford House as formed of loadbearing in situ concrete walls with a ribbed finish. The finish, shaft like treatment of external walls and castellated roof line were selected to emphasise the slenderness of the building. The ribbed finish was intended to prevent severe weather staining. The architects were Sidney Cook (1910-79) in succession to C E Jacob. Cook was best known for presiding over the design (by Neave Brown) of the now listed, mould-busting Alexandra and Ainsworth estate and Brunswick Centre, designed by Patrick Hodgkinson. These were a few years later than Blashford House which followed an earlier phase of post-war high rise building pursued by the London County Council. Influenced by the work of Le Corbusier, the LCC created such internationally known projects as Alton East and West, Roehampton, also now listed. All five of the derivative Adelaide Road blocks have recently been refurbished and reclad in smooth, lightweight aluminium rainscreen panels. They have not yet achieved historic status but still dominate the townscape of the area.

Blashford House after recladding.
Part of the original ribbed concrete has been left visible.

Dorney Tower with present Tobin Close approach to Kings College Court.

View from Dorney Tower raised terrace, with Blashford Tower in distance.

2.2 KINGS COLLEGE COURT DESCRIPTION

Kings College Court is a commercial market residential block erected in 1969. It is dwarfed by the neighbouring Blashford Tower (19 storeys) to the SE and the quartet of Dorney, Bray, Burnham and Taplow Towers (all 23 storeys) to the west.

The building is visible from a variety of viewpoints. Nearly all of them find it juxtaposed with the towers and 2-3 storey long terraces of the estate. It is also seen from Fellows Road, the north side of which lies within the Belsize Conservation Area. Views from Fellows Road also include all 4 tower blocks.

Pedestrian access is from Primrose Hill Road which leads directly to the entrance foyer, or if arriving by car, a more tortuous route is taken from the Fellows Road access to Tobin Close, which in turn leads to the mix of open and undercroft parking serving Kings College Court.

The structural system is a reinforced concrete frame vertically infilled on its upper floors with windows, composite cast panels and brick faced masonry panels. Arranged in varied widths, the brick would if not confused by the intervening window and spandrel panels emulate a “bar code” elevation style. Behind a severe parapet line, the building has a flat roof on which sits a large brick structure enclosing the lift motor room and water tanks.

The ground floor has no residential accommodation, and is largely open undercroft parking with a small area occupied by the entrance foyer, services and refuse area.

The parking immediately adjacent to the building is largely hidden from view to Adelaide and Primrose Hill Roads by the clever use of levels and hedges. However close to the undercroft leaves much to be desired and in its current state is unattractive and shabby.

Undercroft, Kings College Court

2.3 BASELINE CONDITIONS

Although constructed to a good standard for the time, the architectural relationship to the Camden cluster was discordant and architecturally undistinguished. It can be summarised as follows:

FORM – a thick squat slab in contrast to the slim, linked square tower forms

PROPORTION – 9 storey height in relation to longest width is about 1:1. Blashford Tower presents itself as about 1:3.5. Dorney, Bray and Burnham do appear more slab like in distant views but their proportions are rescued by splitting them into two linked towers each of which is about 1: 4 or more.

EMPHASIS – Mixed vertical and horizontal, the latter formed by spandrel and window proportions. Contrast with strong vertical emphasis of towers.

COLOUR – dark brown brick with light painted spandrels, similar to nearby low terraces but contrasting with light grey of towers.

2.4 DESIGN QUALITY

Architect unknown. Undistinguished, comparable to numerous post-war London development areas.

2.5 DEFECTS

Facing materials starting to decay, substandard in technical performance. Some brickwork spalling, mortar joints decaying. Ad hoc repairs evident. Precast spandrel panels weathered and painted over.

2.6 SUSTAINABILITY

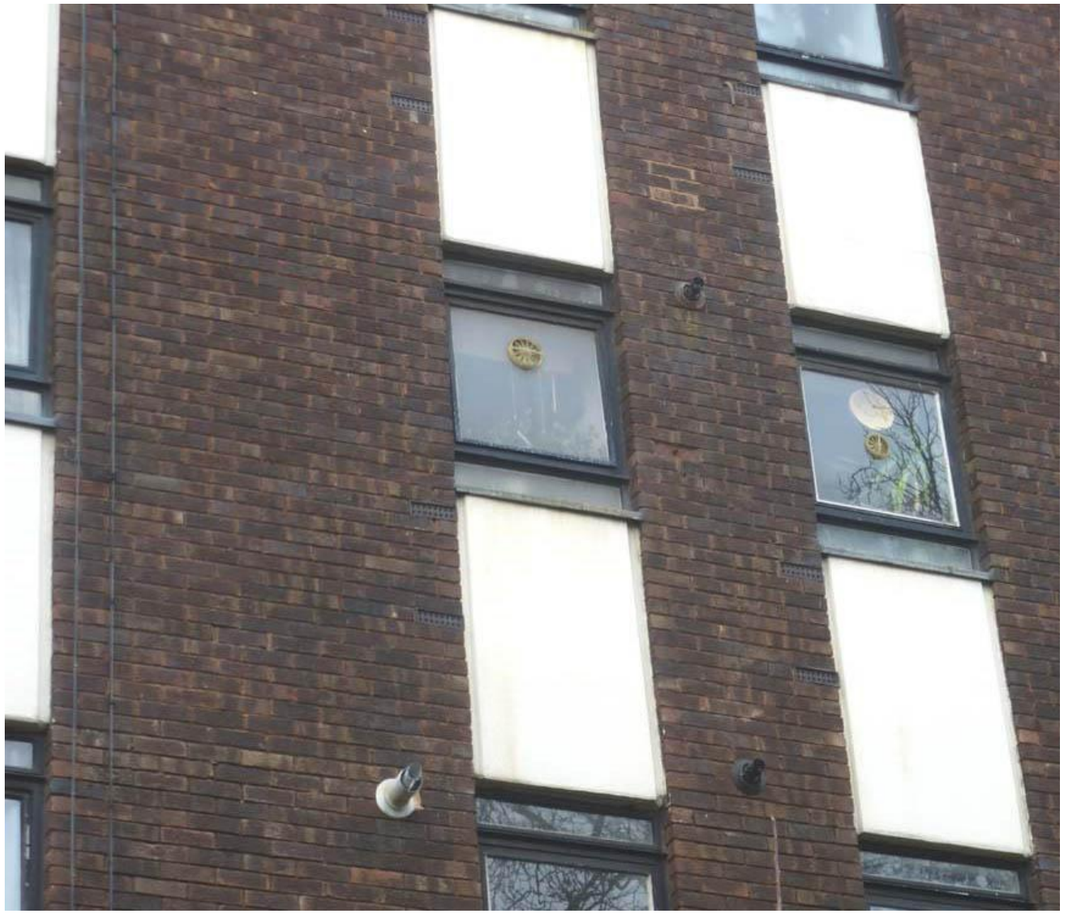
Current conditions include:

- Single glazed metal windows thermally inefficient and poorly sealed
- Various flues and air bricks puncture walls at random locations
- Uninsulated concrete frame allows cold bridging through fabric
- Overall thermal properties substandard

In summary the building is increasingly unsustainable. Failure to address these issues is likely to create conditions in which major long term maintenance costs outrun available resources.

2.7 DESIGN RATIONALE

Although the structural condition is undiminished the appearance is worn and energy performance is very poor. The sustainable response proposed here is to extend the life of the building well beyond its original life cycle by fully reconditioning and upgrading to meet current and future standards. This approach also creates the opportunity to introduce missing amenities, enhance the joint approach road and achieve a more fitting architectural style to harmonise with its more dominant and other neighbours.



Inferior quality and deteriorating condition of facade.

3.0 RECENT PLANNING HISTORY

The Council was approached about the principles outlined above early in 2012. A series of meetings took place and correspondence was exchanged.

The Council's formal pre application advice, issued 4 July 2012, appended to this Statement appeared to support the proposed development in principle subject to a daylight/sunlight study, viability study and design details. These studies formed part of application No. 2013/0074/P. However, the application did not meet with officer approval. After prolonged dialogue it was eventually refused. A copy of the decision notice is appended.

3.1 RECONSIDERATION

The applicant and design team have carefully considered the reasons for refusal and have substantially redesigned the scheme in the light of these and additional officer comment. The changes now applied to this application can be summarised as follows:

- The number of additional storeys has been reduced from three plus full height transition floor to two plus belvedere feature, improving upon the present roof plant.
- The overall height has been reduced from 39.27m to 36.08. This compares with an existing overall height of 29.38. The height to the parapet is 5.45m lower than the previous scheme.
- The need for extensive structural reinforcement, adding height, bulk and visual prominence has been eliminated.
- The vertical cladding will remain as brick, in the form of slips applied over new insulation. This presents the opportunity to reclad with more appealing brick colour and texture, details of which can be a reserved matter.
- Similarly, high quality cladding over new insulation will be used for the spandrel panels.
- Re-windowing with high quality, compatible pattern double glazed units throughout.
- Introducing balconies to improve residents' amenity and go some way to compensating for the absence of useable amenity space originally.
- Introduction of covered secure cycle storage accessed directly from the ground floor for all flats.

Overall it is considered that the design now successfully addresses expressed concerns which led to refusal of the previous application, with a carefully balanced, optimum solution.

4.0 ARCHITECT'S STATEMENT

The following section describes the architect's approach to the design of the proposed development.

4.1 ADDITIONAL STOREYS

Compared with the neighbouring residential towers, the proportions of KCC appear leaden and squat. However, its setback from the street and generous grounds presents the opportunity to improve its proportions, adding height to the existing building without adverse impact on neighbour amenity or any other value. Two further floors plus belvedere is within the structural capacity of the existing building without the reinforcement used in the previous scheme. The additional floors have no adverse impact on day and sunlighting to houses in Tobin Close and Fellows Road. The new residential units are designed to comply with the Code for Sustainable Homes, Level 5.

This approach is more sensitive to the form and appearance of the existing building. It is also more sustainable, improving performance and extending the building's life at lower unit cost. .

This existing form is enhanced with a simple terminating frame. New balconies improve amenity and visual interest. The new framed elevations provide a clean, uninterrupted skyline to close views, whilst the belvedere provides additional interest to long views and avoids the more commonly found array of visually uncoordinated plant.

4.2 REFURBISH EXISTING FABRIC

The façade improvements follow the example of sustainable energy conservation used by the Council in the recent Chalcot Estate refurbishment. By placing new insulation to the outside of the existing fabric, a huge improvement can be made to the U values of the external skin. For instance, the U value of an uninsulated cavity masonry wall is in the order of 1.5W/m^{2}K. Insulation as part of the proposed over cladding system yields a U value of 0.29 W/m^{2}K, more than a fivefold reduction in the rate of heat loss. Similar gains could be expected by replacing the existing single glazed windows with new thermally broken aluminium double glazed units. These 2 simple measures would significantly reduce the ongoing carbon foot print of the existing building as well as benefitting existing and new residents.

4.3 BALCONIES

The landscaping to the south and east boundaries serves a visual purpose but provides no useful external amenity space. The new balconies will be cantilevered from the existing structure. The balconies have been positioned to serve the living rooms of the existing flats, and provide approx 6m^2 of new external space to each flat.

4.4 IMPROVED ENTRANCE AND ACCESS

Existing front entrance from Primrose Hill Road.

During the winter, the car park is dark and remote for residents using their cars. The current arrangement is also extremely awkward for wheelchair users to reach the front entrance from the parking. The refurbishment includes a redesigned front entrance with provision of a more convenient, attractive and disability friendly access to it via a new lobby which extends southwards to allow direct access from the rear parking. A new concierge station will further improve security and provide assistance.

Proposed front entrance from Primrose Hill Road.

4.5 REFURBISH COMMON PARTS

The building suffers from inadequate ventilation to its common parts, leading to residual smells in the common landings. The proposed works would renew the permanent ventilation to these areas, including Automatic Opening Vents to improve fire safety in the event of a fire.

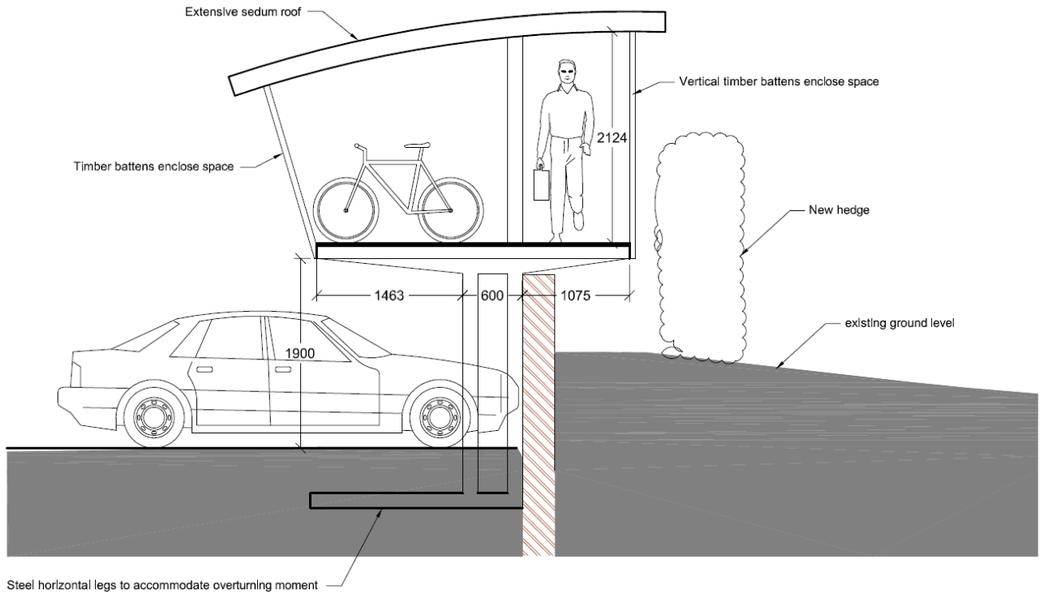
4.6 RESURFACE TOBIN CLOSE

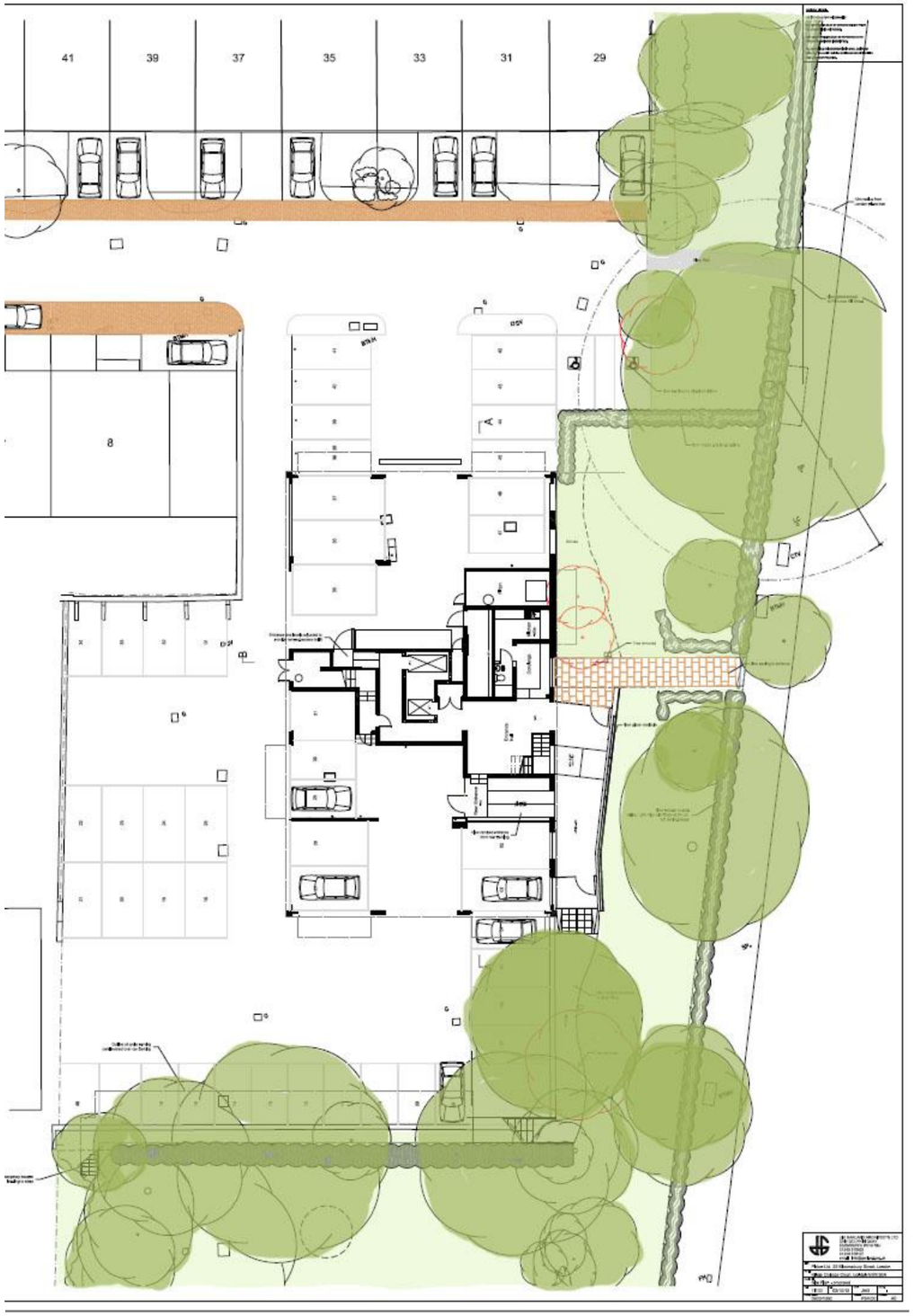
This street forms the principle access to KCC. It currently suffers from haphazard parking. Due to lack of kerb or clear definition as to car parking areas, cars park on the pavement, forcing pedestrians to walk in the middle of the road. It is proposed to resurface the tarmac and use a mixture of bollards and colour changes to better define road, parking and pavement, yet at the same time introduce shared surfaces so that Tobin Close is expressed as an area where pedestrians have priority. It is understood that Tobin Close is used by drivers wishing to avail themselves of free unregulated parking, which leads to obstructions to vehicular access to KCC. It is therefore proposed to place retractable bollards at the head of Tobin Close to stop this abuse of a private road.

4.7 DISABLED PARKING & CYCLE STORE

The site currently lacks any disabled car spaces and has no dedicated cycle storage. Two new disabled spaces will be added, as shown on the ground floor plan, located to facilitate easy transition to the entrance for people with mobility impairment. A dedicated cycle store to accommodate 100% of demand from all apartments has been designed as a mezzanine sitting partially over the car spaces at the southern edge of the car parking area. A section on drawing No. 0903/1000/P3 explains how this works. These measures are supported by Policies DP6, DP17 and DP18.

The cycle storage is designed to have a minimal impact, with new hedging to the south screening its long elevation from the street, and the main finish being vertical timber battens sandwiched onto a galvanised steel frame. The roof will have an extensive sedum finish to provide a pleasant outlook from the south facing flats.





Part layout as proposed with Tobin Close and KCC disabled access improvements.

5.0 AMOUNT OF DEVELOPMENT

Kings College Court comprises an entrance level containing entrance, stairs, access to lifts and services. Above are a further 8 floors of residential accommodation, each containing 6 No. 2 or 3 bed flats, giving a total of 48 flats in all. The gross external floor area of each floor is approx 465m². Thus the total existing gross floor area is as follows:

Ground Floor = 115m²
Upper Floors = 8 x 465 = 3,720m²
Total Existing = 3,835m²

The amount of development being proposed is constrained by the structural limitations of the existing building and the impact additional floors would have on day and sunlighting to neighbouring properties. Consideration of these and other factors has led to the proposed addition of 3 further stories of residential accommodation, the gross external floor areas of which total approx. 945m^2

6.0 INVOLVEMENT OF LOCAL INTERESTS

An initial meeting was held with residents and owners of the existing flats to seek their approval for an original sketch scheme. Leaseholders unable to make the meeting were sent details of the proposals. A vote was taken whether to proceed with the scheme. An overwhelming majority were in favour. The applicants then progressed the scheme almost to construction level in terms of structural engineering and the external envelope. This ensures that the scheme submitted can be built without further amendments on account of later detailed design findings. The scheme has been developed in collaboration with the Directors of the KCC management company. The directors of KCC are in favour of the new scheme of two floors plus belvedere and have given consent to Pirton Limited to submit a formal planning application.

An initial consultation was also conducted with representatives of Tobin Close and Fellows Road. An open meeting was held in December 2012 to discuss the final proposals. Pirton has kept the representatives of Tobin Close aware of the new scheme since the rejection of the 4 floor scheme and further discussions and meetings will be held.

7.0 PLANNING POLICY

7.1 HOUSING

The proposed development is supported by Policy DP2 which encourages maximising the full potential of existing sites to accommodate additional housing. Policy DP5 assigns very high priority to creation of 2 bedroom market units of which 2 are included.

7.2 HIGH QUALITY DESIGN

Core Strategy policy CS14 - Promoting high quality places and conserving our heritage and Development Plan Policies DP22- Promoting sustainable design and construction, DP24 - Securing high quality design and DP24- Securing high quality design set out the Council's approach to achieving high quality design within all schemes in the borough. These policies require development to be of the highest standard of design that respects local context and character.

This is consistent with the National Planning Policy Framework 14, presumption in favour of sustainable development and with 56-58, 60-61 and 63-66 under the heading Requiring Good Design. The burden of these paragraphs is that undue prescription or imposition of taste and style should be avoided and greater weight given to innovation and sustainability. Other good practice guidance relating to design and access (e.g. By Design: Urban Design in the Planning System, DETR/CABE, 2000 is also relevant.

Policies CS14 and DP24 build on this to take into account many of the specific design and built environment issues which are unique to Camden. CS14 includes a section titled 'Camden's Character' which describes the places, buildings and features that give Camden its distinctive character.

A number of London Plan policies relevant to the proposal broadly mirror those of Camden's Core Strategy. One which stands out however is

4B.4 London's buildings: Retrofitting
The Mayor will and boroughs should support measures to produce a lower environmental impact from the existing stock of buildings by supporting policies and programmes for refurbishment of buildings which will reduce carbon dioxide emissions, increase thermal efficiency, reduce waste and noise impacts, conserve water, materials and other resources

7.3 EXTENSIONS TO TALL BUILDINGS

There are no specific Core Strategy, DPP or NPPF policies covering this type of extension. Policies CS14 and DP24 include proposals for tall buildings. This is considered by the Council to provide a sufficiently flexible framework to cover extensions to tall for buildings in appropriate locations.

Camden planning guidance **GPG1** includes the following section:

Tall buildings

2.13 Tall buildings in Camden (i.e. those which are substantially taller than their neighbours and/or which significantly change the skyline) will be assessed against a range of design issues, including:
how the building relates to its surroundings, both in terms of how the base of the building fits in with the streetscape, and how the top of a tall building affects the skyline;
the contribution a building makes to pedestrian permeability and improved public accessibility;
the relationship between the building and hills and views;
the degree to which the building overshadows public spaces, especially open spaces and watercourses; and
the historic context of the building's surroundings.

2.14 In addition to these design considerations tall buildings will be assessed against a range of other relevant policies concerning amenity, mixed use and sustainability. Reference should be made to this CPG (Heritage chapter), CPG3 Sustainability (Climate change adaptation chapter) and CPG6 Protecting and improving quality of life (Overlooking and privacy and Wind/microclimate chapters).

2.15 Where a proposal includes a development that creates a landmark or visual statement, particular care must be taken to ensure that the location is appropriate (such as a particular destination within a townscape, or a particular functional node) and that the development is sensitive to its wider context. This will be especially important where the development is likely to impact upon heritage assets and their settings (including protected views).

The proposed development has been assessed against the relevant policies and guidance, and is considered to comply in all respects.

8.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Kings College Court now approaches 50 years of use. Its long term future is threatened by lack of investment. It's location between Blashford and Dorney Towers lends itself to a more complete, sustainable upgrade, in preference to basic maintenance. Nevertheless, it must be initially funded and financially sustainable over at least the next 50 years.

The issues identified during the previous application process are design related, the Council having identified and deemed acceptable other planning benefits. It is considered the benefits of the proposed development are substantial and any outstanding drawbacks have been addressed.

The proposed development is a highly sustainable, design led solution, wholly in accord with relevant policy and guidance, most notably paragraph 14 of the NPPF. The benefits extend to the adjoining streetscape and surrounding area. The project will improve access to the building and significantly reduce the building's carbon footprint.

In common with the recent refurbishment of the tower blocks, the project should be seen as making a significant contribution to regenerating the area, greatly extending the life of the building and adding new, high quality housing, helping to finance community infrastructure.

JACK WARSHAW
RIBA (SCA) MRTPI IHBC RPUDG

Hampshire

September 2013

9.0 SCHEDULE OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Appendix A	Email correspondence in reverse order
Appendix B	Pre application advice letter
Appendix C	Officer delegated report for application 2013/0074/P
Appendix D	Code for Sustainable Homes pre-assessment
Appendix E	Lifetime Homes Statement
Appendix F	M&E Statement
Appendix G	Daylight and Sunlight Assessment
Appendix H	Arboricultural Statement
Appendix I	Structural Engineers' Report

10.0 SCHEDULE OF SUPPORTING DRAWINGS

Drawing Ref	Rev	Description	Scale	Size
0903/0000	P1	Location plan	1:1000	A3
0903/0001	P1	Site plan - existing	1:200	A1
0903/0100	P1	Ground floor plan - existing	1:100	A3
0903/0103	P1	3rd floor plan - existing	1:100	A3
0903/0109	P1	Roof plan - existing	1:100	A3
0903/0200	P1	East elevation in context - existing	1:500	A3
0903/0201	P1	South elevation in context - existing	1:500	A3
0903/0202	P1	West elevation in context - existing	1:500	A3
0903/0203	P1	North elevation in context - existing	1:500	A3
0903/0210	P1	East elevation - existing	1:100	A1
0903/0211	P1	South elevation - existing	1:100	A1
0903/0212	P1	West elevation - existing	1:100	A1
0903/0213	P1	North elevation - existing	1:100	A1
0903/1000	P3	Site plan - proposed	1:100	A0
0903/1100	P3	Ground floor plan - proposed	1:100	A3
0903/1103	P3	3rd floor plan - proposed	1:100	A3
0903/1109	P3	9th floor plan - proposed	1:100	A3
0903/1110	P5	10th floor plan - proposed	1:100	A3
0903/1111	P4	11th floor plan - proposed	1:100	A3
0903/1112	P2	Roof plan - proposed	1:100	A3
0903/2000	P2	East elevation in context - proposed	1:500	A3
0903/2001	P2	South elevation in context - proposed	1:500	A3
0903/2002	P2	West elevation in context - proposed	1:500	A3
0903/2003	P2	North elevation in context - proposed	1:500	A3
0903/2010	P5	East elevation - proposed	1:100	A1
0903/2011	P5	South elevation - proposed	1:100	A1
0903/2012	P3	West elevation - proposed	1:100	A1
0903/2013	P3	North elevation - proposed	1:100	A1
0903/2050	P2	Sections AA & BB - proposed	1:100	A1