

CARING FOR KENWOOD

Design and Access Statement

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is written to accompany the application by English Heritage for Listed Building Consent for works towards the conservation and re-presentation of Kenwood House.
- 1.2 Kenwood House is Listed at Grade I (no. 478610). In its curtilage are a number of other listed buildings, principally the Grade II* Service Wing (no. 478612) contiguous with the house and the Grade II* sham bridge and Grade II gate lodges, gate piers, dairy, farm cottage and mansion cottage. Kenwood House lies within a Grade II* registered park.

1.3 The works are described in the following documents and drawings:

Carden and Godfrey RIBA Stage D report

Drawings 5166/1/300 – 340 (Existing), 5166/1/400 – 461

(Proposed)

Martin Thomas Associates Drawing 99376/E011

Edward Bulmer *The Caring for Kenwood Project. Re-presentation of the interiors of Kenwood House*

2. The site

- 2.1 Kenwood House is a large and complex 'country house' standing in a prominent location towards the highest ground in the Kenwood Estate, contiguous with Hampstead Heath. The core of the building preserves a building of the 17th century, remodelled in the 1760s and 1770s by Robert and James Adam for the first earl of Mansfield. Parts of this building, notably the south external elevation facing over the pleasure grounds, and historic interiors on the ground floor, including the Adam Library, are works of architecture of acknowledged national significance.
- 2.2 The appearance of Kenwood House today reflects the process of additive development over several phases in the 18th and 19th

centuries, and though several elements of its architecture and decoration are justly celebrated as masterpieces, the complete ensemble shows little concern with harmonizing the work of different periods. This is evident both inside and outside the building. In addition the main house stands beside a number of other structures with some significance in their own right: these include the service wing in a low-lying area immediately to the east, the bath house, Mansion Cottage and the stable block, and some distance to the west of the house, the farm complex and ornamental dairy, as well as lodges to the east and west gates.

2.3 The form of the main house is difficult to appreciate at first view, either when approaching from the north (the principal entrance), or when examining it from the pleasure grounds on the south side, the principal show façade (the two faces are constructed with different centre-lines). Taking the north elevation first, at the core of the building is a relatively compact structure of three storeys, with three bays to east and west of a central pedimented tetrastyle Ionic portico: the main fabric is of stucco-ed brickwork, painted, with elaborate architectural decoration of pilasters, string-course with guilloche ornament and the soffit of the portico, all by Robert Adam. There is an immediate contrast with the two wings that break forward to the east and west of the central block, of two storeys in gault bricks and Palladian windows to the ground floors in their north ends: the wings are generally much more restrained in style. The west face of the west wing has an open verandah fronting the ground floor and returning westwards at its south end, with cast-iron openwork pillars with palmette ornament.

2.4 The south elevation is an accredited masterpiece by Robert Adam. It consists of a central three-storey block, with a three-bay pedimented central section slightly projecting, and two bay sections to either side. The essentially flat façade is articulated with pilasters in each bay in the central section and paired pilasters in the end bays, by string courses and horizontal panels, and by a richly detailed cornice: the decoration follows Adam's design, published in *The Works of Robert Adam*, but was re-created in two phases of restoration in the 20th century using fiberglass to replicate the original hard stucco, which apparently had failed by the early 19th century. The Corinthian capitals of the restorations may be an inaccurate detail: there is equivocal evidence for Ionic capitals in the original designs. The

central block is linked by single-storey bays with Palladian-window-type doors to monumental single storey wings of five bays running east and west: the west wing, evidently pre-dating Adam's work, contains the orangery, while Adam's east wing, the Library, echoes its design with giant Ionic pilasters, though with square headed windows in place of the round arches of the orangery.

- 2.5 The interior of the house is largely prized for the rooms on the ground floor decorated by the Adam brothers (the evidence for Adam work on the first floor is more fragmentary), though the major interiors without substantial alteration are relatively few: the entrance hall, great stair, ante-room and Library: with the exception of the last-mentioned, these are on a remarkably modest and domestic scale, befitting a villa rather than a great country house. The Library, with its coved ceiling and monumental screens of Corinthian columns separating the east and west apses from the centre of the room, had appropriately lavish furnishing, including enormous pier glasses, and rich plaster and painted decoration.
- 2.6 Other parts of the ground floor of the main house represent more recent developments, including additions to the central block remodelled by the Adam brothers. The two wings added to the north side of the house in the 1790s are particularly notable, especially the Music Room in the west wing and the Dining room to the east, the latter being linked to the earlier parts of the house by the fine Marble Hall, lit from above by a lantern. These rooms, in which some of the most important works of art of the Iveagh Bequest are now displayed, received re-presentation in 2000 in a scheme which attracted some controversy for its departure from strictly historic evidence, but which has since won general acceptance as a fitting environment for paintings of this importance. The rooms along the south front retain several architectural features from the Adam period, notably the Housekeeper's Room towards the western end of the group, but this part of the building has suffered radical alterations throughout its history, especially drastic repairs in the mid-20th century, and the rooms' current appearance does not aim to represent any specific historic period.
- 2.7 Two elements of the house (the West Wing and Orangery) have been the subject of conservation works within the last five years.

(Description adapted from MRDA, *Kenwood House Conservation Management Plan* (2011)).

3. The proposal in outline

3.1 The proposal for works to Kenwood House has as its principal objectives:

- the placing of the fabric of Kenwood House on a secure footing, in keeping with the significance of the building and its collections, including the amendment of areas of deterioration and the improvement of details so as to facilitate future maintenance
- the re-presentation of eight important historic interiors on the ground floor of the building,
- and the provision of a range of facilities and materials designed to make visits to Kenwood more engaging for as diverse a range of audiences as possible. (With regard to the third objective, an important element of the project will be the adaptation of the dairy as a hub for volunteers and for educational visits to the Kenwood estate, outside the scope of this statement).

3.2 The urgent need for conservation works to the house has been articulated most strongly in the feasibility study (Carden and Godfrey Architects, 2011). This document identified a number of architectural elements in which poor detailing, the use of inappropriate materials, or deficient maintenance, have led to significant decay. These include:

- The leadwork of gutters, parapets and valleys
- Elements of the slate roofs (Adam Library)
- The 20th-century glazed hipped roof over the lantern to the Adam stair
- Lightning protection, especially in the highest central sections of the building
- Failure of paint and rendered substrate on main walling, notably the south elevation and central north elevation, including portico
- Deterioration of window joinery throughout the house
- Localised structural weakness in the soffit of the entablature of the Adam Library, replaced in concrete in the mid-20th century
- The inadequate functioning of the boiler and other services at Kenwood House

3.3 The need for the house to be closed during these conservation works, has further highlighted the opportunity for a number of improvements to be made to the interiors of the building. These are driven by the aspiration to improve accessibility around the interior, to repair small areas of deterioration, and to enhance the presentation of several interiors as historic spaces and as an appropriate setting for nationally and internationally important works of art. These enhancements of presentation include:

- The re-decoration and re-furnishing of the ‘Adam Sweep’ of interiors (Entrance Hall, Adam stair, ante-room and Adam Library) in an evocation of their appearance as newly built or remodelled by Robert Adam for the first earl of Mansfield
- The re-decoration and re-furnishing of three of the ‘South Front rooms’ (Lord Mansfield’s Dressing Room, Breakfast Room, Lady Mansfield’s Dressing Room) in a generic 18th-century style, in order to display paintings from the Iveagh Bequest in a more convincingly ‘domestic’ setting than the present
- The re-decoration of a fourth space in the south front, the Housekeeper’s Room, as it was in the early 19th century and the installation of interpretation materials
- The choice of paint colours and finishes for the redecoration of the external elevations and joinery, informed by analysis of historic paint finishes.

3.4 The design team for the project has been informed by sources including:

- Architectural paint analysis of all principal external elevations and interiors in the Adam sweep and south front rooms (Crick Smith – University of Lincoln, 2008–11)
- Historic documentary sources assembled by the curators, Kenwood House
- Historic pictorial sources assembled by the curators and others, summarised in the *Kenwood House Conservation Management Plan* (Margaret and Richard Davies Architects, 2011)
- Feasibility report for Lightning Protection (Martin Thomas Associates, 2010)

4. The extent of the works

4.1 Roof

- New Westmorland slate roofs to north, south blocks, ante-chamber, east wing and Adam Library.
- New cornice detail to main block south side
- New cornice detail to main block north side.
- Supplementing of lead gutters on east wing with neoprene joints
- New cornice detail to Adam library, south, east and north sides
- New lead roof covering over Deal Stair lantern, rotunda and remaining flat roofs and valleys between slopes
- New detail for glazed roof covering over Adam stair lantern
- New access ways over Adam stair lantern, west stair link, rotunda roofs.
- New rainwater pipe at north end of east side of east wing
- New lightning conductors
- Removal of boiler house flue and reconstruction of cornice etc.
- Reinstatement of glazed canopy between house and service wing at completion of works.

4.2 External elevations

- South elevation – open up Adam Library entablature between soffit and architrave, cut out decayed reinforced concrete hollow beams and replace, redecorate with hydraulic lime render, strip paint, repair and re-decorate.
- South elevation general – strip modern paint and repaint in accordance with evidence of historic paint finishes to walling and window joinery, replicating finishes of 1790s. Replace Portland stone flagstones where damaged.
- Orangery – strip existing Keim paint, prepare and redecorate in accordance with remainder of south elevation scheme.
- West wing – prepare and paint window joinery, sills, verandah ironwork, roof-beams and soffit boards. Strip all paint from render and stone surround of north window, apply tinted lime shelter-coat to stone elements, paint window joinery to reflect 1790s scheme.
- East wing – Strip all paint from render and stone surround of north window, apply tinted lime shelter-coat to stone elements, paint window joinery to reflect 1790s scheme.
- North elevation, central section – sanded paint to be applied to all principal features, including columns (except Coade stone first-floor plat bande, pediment roundel and portico soffit), in accordance with evidence for the appearance of the building from the 1790s onwards.

4.3 Ground floor interiors

- Entrance Lobby – overhaul
- Entrance hall – repairs to ceiling and walls, covering of floor with floor-cloth (check), replacement of cast iron column radiators with flat panel radiators, gas fire in hearth, redecoration to replicate appearance in 1770s.
- Visitor orientation hub – repairs to ceiling, plaster and joinery walls, relay floor with pine boards, level with Adam Stair and ramping up to entrance hall, removal of modern fixtures and installation of new facilities for orientation, neutral re-decoration.
- Adam Stair – repairs to ceiling around lantern, repairs to plaster walls, floor to have pieced-in repairs, and boards lifted and re-laid at east end, level with ante-library floor, repairs to balustrade, re-decoration to replicate appearance in 1770s.
- Ante-library – repairs to ceiling and walls, removal of modern oak strip floor and repairs to underlying pine boards, overhaul of radiators, re-decoration to replicate appearance in 1770s.
- Adam Library – Ceiling and wall repairs, removal of modern oak strip floor and fitted carpet, repairs to underlying pine floor-boards, removal of radiators, installation of new piped heating under floor at east and west ends, installation of 1no restored and 2no replicated Adam window-seats, re-decoration to replicate appearance in 1770s.
- South front rooms – removal of modern ceiling lights, upgrade ceiling rose and pendant lights, repair and clean existing modern floors, re-decorate in 18th-century style, install interpretation materials in Housekeeper's Room.
- Orangery – re-decoration following the present scheme.

4.4 The works will involve the scaffolding all external elevations, supporting a canopy over the entire roofed area. Full scaffolding will also be required inside the Adam Stair, in the Deal Stair and in the rotunda in order to carry out repairs to the roof lanterns and in the Adam Library as internal protection during works to the roof, and to facilitate re-decoration. It is anticipated that other works of redecoration can be carried out from more localised scaffolding.

4.5 These works have been designed in accordance with best practice and in accordance with English Heritage's *Conservation Principles* (2008) governing alterations and restorations to historic buildings and monuments, and have been evaluated against the general and particular statements of significance given in the *Conservation*

Management Plan. They meet the tests of ‘minimum intervention’, having as little impact as possible on the integrity of the historic fabric, and, particularly crucial in a building of this architectural significance, generally have been designed to avoid impact on the aesthetic integrity of important elements of the historic design.

- 4.6 The amendments that are driven by the conservation and maintenance requirements of the building, principally the alterations to the detailing of the gutters, changes to the roofing materials and methods of fixing, and works to the service infrastructure of the house, are deemed to have only minor impact on the appearance of the house. In this they follow the approach taken in the conservation projects previously carried out in the West Wing, Orangery and those due to commence in the Service Wing in January 2012.
- 4.7 Several elements of the proposal will entail a major alteration to the present appearance of the building, principally the redecoration of the external elevations and the re-presentation of the Adam sweep rooms and South Front Rooms. In all cases, the re-decoration of these elements will replace current decorative schemes of no historical significance, dating to the mid-20th century or later. In all cases, the decision to redecorate was carried out on the basis of considerable research, including collation of documentary and pictorial sources, but most important, extensive analysis of historic paint surfaces by Crick Smith–University of Lincoln. In the case of the external elevations and the Adam sweep, the colours and textures of the proposed scheme are directly informed by conclusive surviving evidence for the historic appearance of these elements in the second half of the 18th century. Extensive trials have also been carried out by Campbell Smith on the method of sanding paint.
- 4.8 The South Front Rooms only provided more fragmentary evidence of their appearance at different periods, as a result of radical alterations and repairs carried out during the 19th and 20th centuries; as a consequence of this, and in acknowledgment of the primacy of displaying the Iveagh Collection paintings in a sympathetic environment, it has been decided to redecorate and re-furnish these rooms in a generic 18th-century style, not directly informed by the evidence of a scheme in any one period.

5. Use of the building

- 5.1 The use of Kenwood House will not fundamentally change as a consequence of these works. The house will continue to be opened to the public free of charge as a visitor attraction, and will contain a shop, WCs, education facilities as well as offices for a number of English Heritage staff.

6. Access to Kenwood House

- 6.1 Kenwood House is accessible by vehicles, by arrangement, via the east drive, approaching from Hampstead Lane. From this point there is level access to the ground floor of the building through the glazed lobby and front door under the portico.
- 6.2 Within the ground floor, there is level access to all the principal display spaces, including the orangery, and to the shop. The proposed project involves localised alterations to floors, and is intended to facilitate access around the ground floor by disabled visitors; features include a threshold ramp in the proposed visitor orientation hub leading to the entrance hall, at the east end of the entrance hall leading into the Adam Stair hall, and re-levelling of the Adam Stair hall floor at its east end (to marry up the level with that of the ante-chamber).
- 6.3 Note on access to upper floors
- 6.4 At present level access only exists to the ground floor of Kenwood House: the basement, including public WCs and the education room, and the first floor, mezzanine levels and second floor offices are only accessible by stairs. A WC for physically disabled visitors and/or staff has been created on the ground floor beside the ante-room to the Adam Library. The provision of other means of access, particularly to the upper floors, is rendered difficult by a number of factors including the architectural, aesthetic and archaeological sensitivities of the house's fabric and the differences in upper floor level in various parts of the house.
- 6.5 An options appraisal, produced by Carden and Godfrey architects (*Access Study (lift options)*, 2011) identified two out of eight possible locations in which it should be technically feasible to install a lift, giving access to the first floor, without unacceptable impact on

the significant fabric of the building or on its appearance: one of these two was subsequently eliminated through operational concerns about evacuation in an emergency. The remaining option would only involve alteration to spaces identified in the 2011 *Conservation Management Plan* as having ‘neutral significance,’ lying to the north of the Adam Stair.

- 6.6 Since feasibility studies for the proposal to introduce a lift in this location and to reallocate functions in other affected spaces are incomplete, it is not English Heritage’s intention to include it within the present application for Listed Building Consent. Should the scheme prove feasible, it will be the subject of a further application during 2012.

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