DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT
DECEMBER 2012
CAMDEN BOROUGH COUNCIL

Proposed development at:

Kings College Court
55 Primrose Hill Road
London
NW3 3EA

PIRTON LTD

pba peterbrett

CONSERVATION ARCHITECTURE & PLANNING

JIM GARLAND
ARCHITECTS LIMITED

PROJECT TEAM

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View of remodelled building from the SE

CONTENTS

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 extension containing 4 flats

3. 1 flat in penthouse extension

4. Building standard upgrade and energy conservation

5. Entrance and other ground floor improvements

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

7. Site and landscape improvements

8. Enhance relationship with nearby existing tall buildings

9. Access and streetscape improvements

10. Contributions towards affordable housing and infrastructure

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 itself. Local residents are also being consulted via a specially created website:

http://smash-design.co.uk/pirtonltd/kingscollegecourt_questions.php

The applicant, Pirton Ltd and 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

2.1 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 House

2.2 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 House with present Tobin Close approach to Kings College Court.

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

2.3 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

2.4 BASELINE CONDITIONS

Although construction was to a good standard for the time, the architectural contribution to Camden's newest, most visible housing quarter was clearly discordant, inferior and already dated in terms of the direction public and other housing was taking. Its relationship 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 – The towers display a strong vertical emphasis. Lines of both cladding and fenestration are clearly defined and uninterrupted. Kings College Court is confused. The dark brick, varied width vertical banding contrasts too strongly and is disrupted by the intervening window-spandrel pattern.

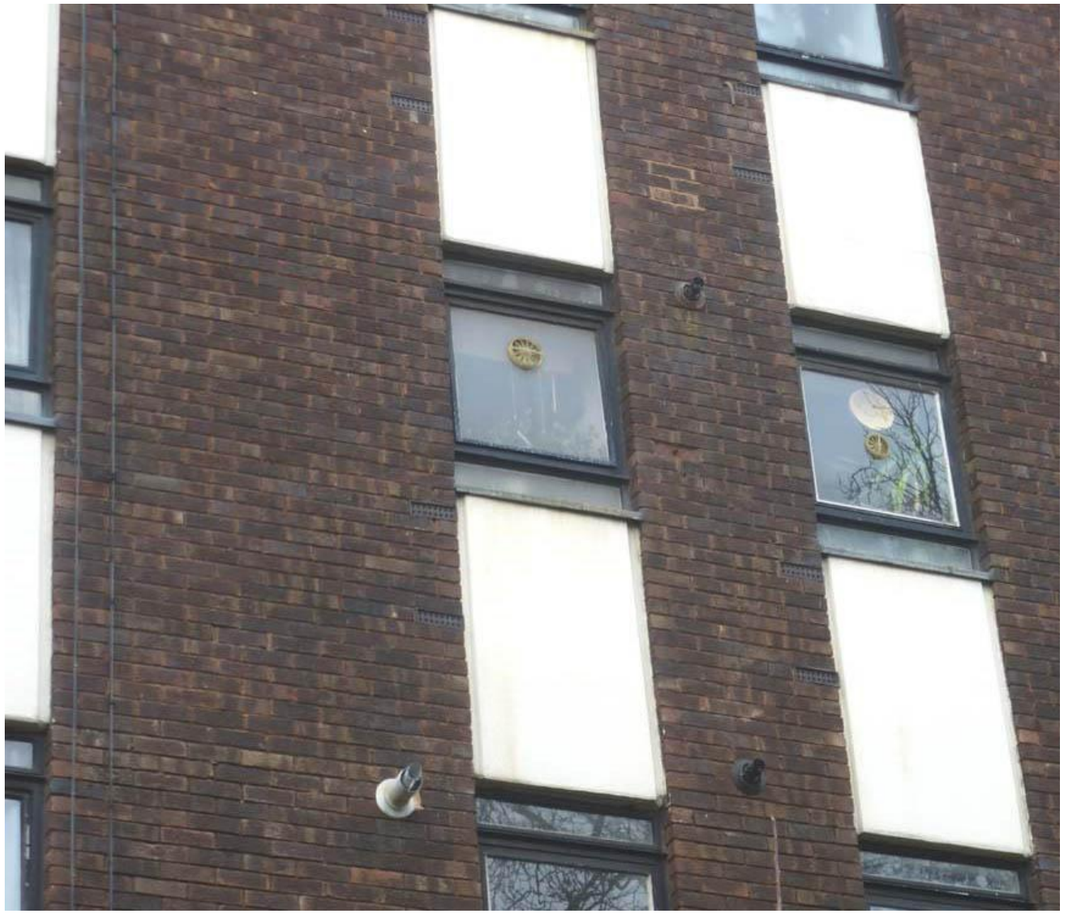
COLOUR – neutral and subtle in the towers, bold and contrasting in Kings College Court. The dark brown brick may have been chosen in an attempt to relate to the similar brick of the adjacent terraces, but in practice was bound to fail on account of the fundamental differences in bulk and height.

2.5 DESIGN QUALITY

The architect of KCC is unknown. It is really an undistinguished block of which comparable examples can be seen in many 1960s development areas of London. There are thus strong architectural design reasons alone to seek to lend it some local distinction and greater compatibility with its surroundings.

2.6 DEFECTS

Compounding the negative aspects described above, the facing materials of KCC are starting to decay and are substandard in technical performance. Some of the brickwork is spalling and mortar joints decaying. Ad hoc repairs are evident. Precast spandrel panels have weathered and been painted over. Single glazed metal windows are thermally inefficient and poorly sealed. Various flues and air bricks puncture the walls at random locations. Beneath the surfaces, the uninsulated concrete frame allows cold bridging through the fabric. In summary, the building is increasingly unsustainable. Failure to address these issues soon is likely to create conditions in which major long term maintenance costs outrun available resources.



Inferior quality and deteriorating condition of facade.

2.7 DESIGN RATIONALE

Although structural condition is undiminished 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.

3.0 PLANNING DIALOGUE

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 fully supports the proposed development in principle (see Appendix B - Conclusions). This is subject to a daylight/sunlight study, viability study and design details. These completed studies form part of the application.

Focusing entirely on the finish and appearance of the block. subsequent dialogue, as set out in the appended email sequence, is at this point incomplete.

The applicant and design team have sought to respond positively to comments received by way of design amendment, further information and reasoned argument. They consider however that submission of the application will be most effective in crystallising and resolving any outstanding issues during its progress.

It is considered that the proposed development meets all the advice and conditions set out in the Council's pre application advice. The emailed response of 10 December does however express some design reservation. This can be summarised as seeking:

clarity of high quality facing materials

more neutral colour and composition

3.1 FACING MATERIAL

Following extensive research and sourcing it is proposed to overclad the brown brick with a highly attractive, versatile, extremely durable ceramic material, details of which have been submitted with the application and can also be accessed from the manufacturer's website:
http://www.shackerley.com/ceramic_granite/ideal_cladding_material.asp

3.2 COLOUR AND COMPOSITION

The applicant and design team consider that the form and height of the building can neither hide behind neutrality nor pretend to be part of the tower block ensemble. For this reason the colour should be individually distinctive, yet complimentary. However, although the submission drawings display a "terra cotta" panel colour compatible with warm red brick, it is recognised that the Council would on granting permission impose a condition requiring their approval of an actual sample of material and colour. The applicant is prepared to accept and acquiesce to any such reasonable condition.

Composition is necessarily a function of three factors which constrain the scope of all design solutions for this building:

The structure and elevation treatment of the existing building

Structural requirements for extending- transfer deck and overall framing

Expressing and detailing the balcony additions

The vertical bands of the existing building which cannot be moved will be overclad with the ceramic material described above. The new treatment of the window/spandrel panels is designed to reflect that of the tower blocks and will establish greater harmony between them.

On the longer face the arrangement is then carried upwards across the transfer deck, allowing the additional floors to be read whilst creating a more interesting skyline. The framing and balconies, faced in ceramic, expresses their functions, unifying the whole.

The present lack of useable outdoor space weighs heavily in favour of retrofitting balconies where possible. The London Plan encourages them too, especially in higher density schemes.

On the short side therefore, balconies rightly are larger and a more important design feature, moderating the increased height with their horizontal emphasis. The reason for this is to take full advantage of opportunities to actually use them on this south facing elevation.

Setting back the rooftop penthouse introduces a more attractive termination and eye catching profile, which also eliminates protruding rooftop service structures.

Overall we consider the design in which these elements are carefully balanced does achieve an optimum technical, aesthetic and functional 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. The structural feasibility and method of constructing 3 further floors has been considered and designed by Structural Engineers Peter Brett Associates. The effect of the additional floors on day and sunlighting to houses in Tobin Close and Fellows Road has also been studied, and shown to be unchanged. The new residential units are designed to comply with the Code for Sustainable Homes, Level 5.

Our approach is to work with the positive aspects of the existing building and replace or improve those considered to detract. It is also considered important to achieve the best possible visual transition between the style and construction of the existing and new floors.

To this end, the structural solution places new "super" columns in each of the 4 corners. These are expressed as linear "fins" in the north/south axis, which run up and return to form a parapet to the new top floor. This creates a strong, simple frame which visually contains the smaller scale interventions to each facade, such as the new balconies on the North and South Elevations, and external panels which are continued upwards by varying amounts. Between the existing roof level and the new floors, a "transfer" deck is provided, primarily to allow the structural loads of the new floors to be transferred to the corner columns, but also to allow for the adaption of the new and existing services, including the provision of air handling units, water tanks, satellite dishes etc. By placing all the services in this space the new roof can present a clean, uninterrupted skyline when viewed from afar. The use of an oversailing roof to the 12th floor penthouse provides relief and further interest to the skyline.

4.2 REFURBISH EXISTING FABRIC

The façade remodelling will 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/m2K. Insulation as part of the proposed rainscreen cladding system yields a U value of 0.29 W/m²K, 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.

4.3 IMPROVED ENTRANCE AND ACCESS

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.

Existing front entrance from Primrose Hill Road.

Proposed front entrance from Primrose Hill Road.

4.4 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. The use of the transfer deck allows all existing and new services to be terminated within the envelope of the proposed development.

4.5 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 replace the tarmac with block pavers 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.

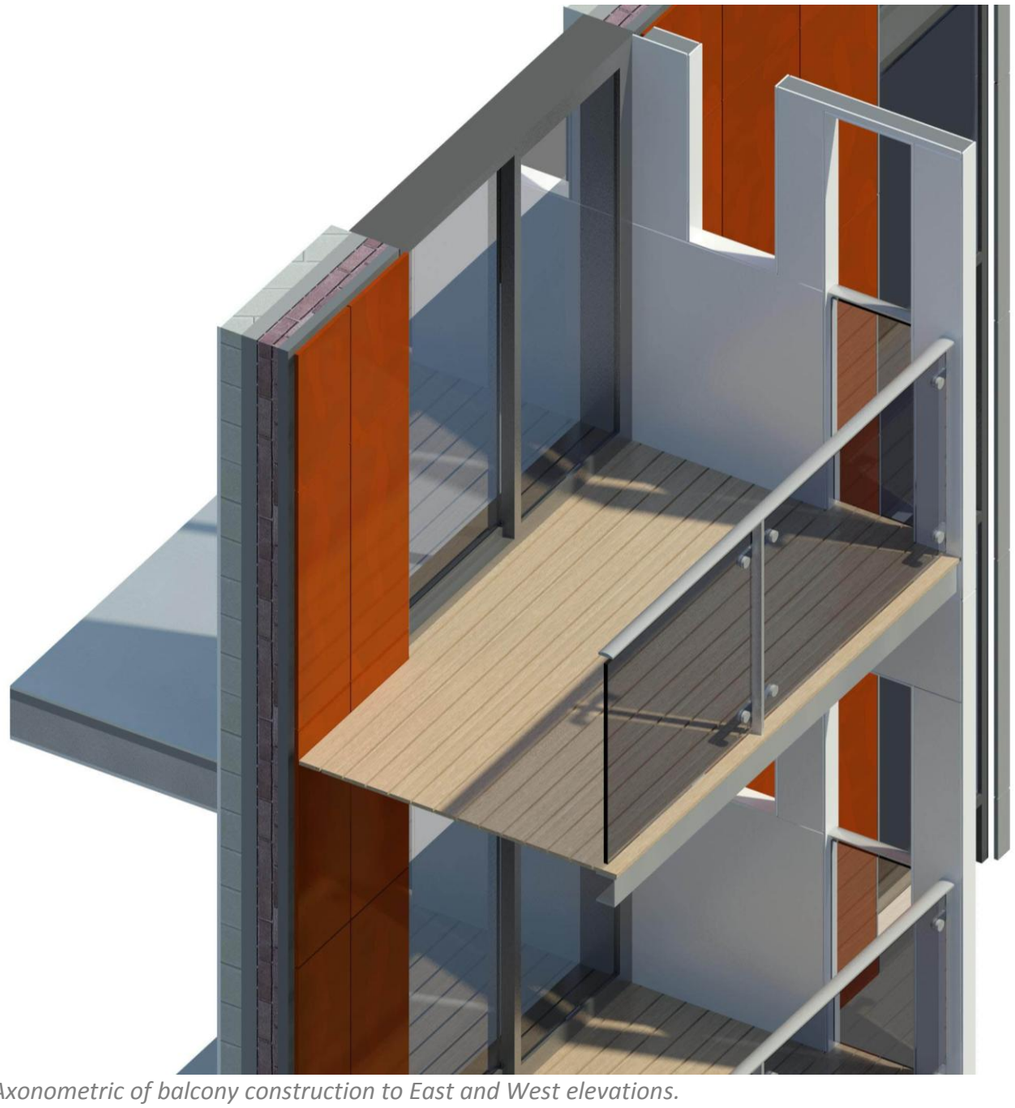
4.6 TRANSPORT AND PARKING

All 48 of the existing flats benefit from a designated parking space, however the lack of any designated disability parking for either visitors of residents is a serious omission. The proposals therefore include 2 No. disabled parking bays close to the NE corner of the building. Due to the increased structure necessary for the development impinging on 4 of the existing parking bays, these bays are to be relocated; 2 close to NE corner of the building, and a further 2 in the ancillary parking south of Tobin Close. Other than the two bays for disabled users, there is no increase in the parking

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

4.6 BALCONIES TO ALL FLATS

Although KCC is set in generous grounds, the landscaping to the south and east boundaries primarily serves a visual purpose rather than providing external amenity space. The incorporation of a new structure to support the proposed additional storeys also allows balconies to be hung from the transfer deck to serve the East and West elevation. To the North and South elevations, the requirements for a further concrete bracing frame allow the balconies to be cantilevered from the new structure. The balconies have been positioned to serve the living rooms of the existing flats, and provide approx 6.5m² of new external space to each flat.



Axonometric of balcony construction to East and West elevations.

5.0 AMOUNT OF DEVELOPMENT

King's 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 factors has led to the proposed addition of 3 further stories of residential accommodation, the gross external floor area of which totals approx. 1240m².

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. A final open meeting for all residents and lease holders was held in November 2012. 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.

7.0 PLANNING POLICY

7.1 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 great weigh 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

7.2 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 within generous grounds 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 only outstanding issues emerging from the pre application process are design related, matters of judgement which require weighing the clear benefits which the Council has already identified and deemed acceptable alongside any aesthetic concerns, all of which must be set in their appropriate policy context. Seen in this light the benefits of the proposed development greatly outweigh any perceived outstanding drawbacks.

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 are not limited to the building, but 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, adding new, high quality housing, helping to finance community infrastructure and affordable housing.

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RIBA (SCA) MRTPI IHBC RPUDG

Hampshire

December 2012

9.0 SCHEDULE OF SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Appendix A Email correspondence in reverse order

Appendix B Pre application advice letter

Appendix C Lifetime Homes Statement

Appendix D Sustainable Statement

Appendix E M&E Statement

Appendix F Daylight and Sunlight Assessment

Appendix G Arboricultural Statement

Appendix H 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	P2	Ground floor plan - proposed	1:100	A3
0903/1103	P1	3rd floor plan - proposed	1:100	A3
0903/1109	P1	9th floor plan - proposed	1:100	A3
0903/1110	P1	10th floor plan - proposed	1:100	A3
0903/1111	P1	11th floor plan - proposed	1:100	A3
0903/1112	P1	12th floor plan - proposed	1:100	A3
0903/1113	P1	Roof plan - proposed	1:100	A3
0903/2000	P1	East elevation in context - proposed	1:500	A3
0903/2001	P1	South elevation in context - proposed	1:500	A3
0903/2002	P1	West elevation in context - proposed	1:500	A3
0903/2003	P1	North elevation in context - proposed	1:500	A3
0903/2010	P1	East elevation - proposed	1:100	A1
0903/2011	P1	South elevation - proposed	1:100	A1
0903/2012	P1	West elevation - proposed	1:100	A1
0903/2013	P1	North elevation - proposed	1:100	A1
0903/2050	P1	Sections AA & BB - proposed	1:100	A1
0903/3000	P2	New balconies to east and west elevations	1:20	A3
0903/3001	P2	New balconies to north and south elevations	1:20	A3