

# LONDON IRISH CENTRE

DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT  
19.03.2020

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# 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Design & Access Statement has been prepared by Coffey Architects on behalf of the Applicant, The London Irish Centre in support of a detailed planning application for the - retention and elevational alterations of existing buildings at No. 50, 51 and 52 Camden Square and the McNamara Hall. Demolition in part and redevelopment to provide new and reconfigured community floorspace; associated landscaping and cycle parking.

The Applicant has offered community support services at this site since 1955, providing vital services to both the Irish community & local Camden residents for 65 years. The Applicants vision for the site is to deliver a world class Community & Cultural Centre offering enhanced services & support to those in need. The new Centre will include:

- Enhanced community hub with cafe/bar
- State of the art multi-function community events spaces
- High quality office spaces
- Communal gardens & terraces
- Cycle parking for 52 bikes

This document includes an analysis of the site, outline of the key design principles and the design proposals with reference to materials, access, cycle parking provision and sustainability.

## PROJECT TEAM

### Client

London Irish Centre

### Architect

Coffey Architects

### Project Manager

Acumen Portfolio Solutions

### Cost Consultant

Gardiner & Theobald

### Planning Consultant

Rolfe Judd Planning

### Structural Engineer

Elliott Wood

### Fire Engineer

Fire & Risk Solutions Ltd

### Rights of Light

EB7

### BREEAM Assessor

EB7

### Heritage Consultant

RPS Group

### Acoustic Consultant

Max Fordham

### Principal Designer

Risk Wise Consulting

### Arboriculture Consultant

ACD Environmental

### Transport Consultant

Caneparo Associated Ltd

### Air Quality

Hoare Lea

## SITE

The London Irish Centre  
50-52 Camden Square,  
London NW1 9XB

## **2.0 LONDON IRISH CENTRE**

# 2.0 LONDON IRISH CENTRE

## 2.1 WHO WE ARE

The London Irish Centre was founded in 1954 to provide care to ill-prepared emigrants arriving in post-World War II London. Since then, the LIC has grown into a renowned community Centre underpinned by 3 main focus areas - **Care, Culture & Community**.

**Care** is at the core of the LIC's work to support the most vulnerable - with services and crisis assistance, dedicated outreach, advocates and case workers for older Irish, day services with nutritious meals, accessible social groups and activities to combat loneliness. Services such as small crisis grants, family tracing and assistance with returning to Ireland are also offered.

In **Culture**, the LIC manages London's leading Irish cultural programme, welcoming over 20,000 people every year. Space and assistance is offered for over 400 Irish community events to provide support and advice to a mix of Irish artists and cultural organisations. The Irish Library and educational programme is high quality and fast-growing.

The Community will always be at the heart of the charity. The Irish in London are diverse and spread across the city. The existing Centre caters for numerous non-Irish organisations, as well as providing care & support to many in need in Camden and beyond. Over 40% of the Centres current users are non-Irish, and are drawn to the Centre for its warm and welcoming connection to a vibrant and supportive Irish community.

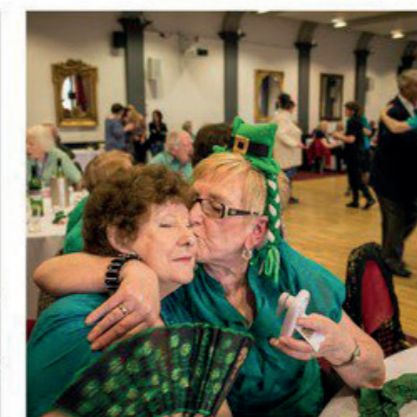
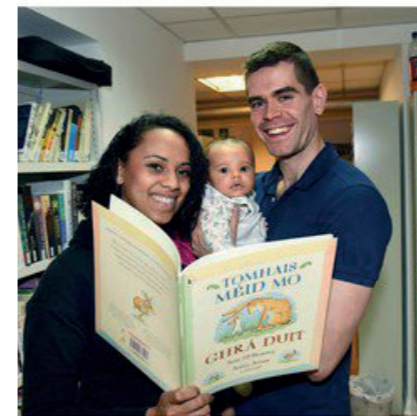
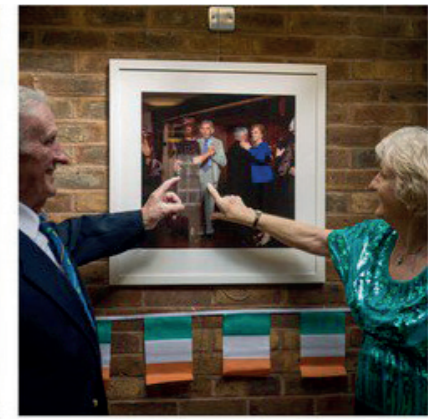
The LIC's charitable objectives work to -

- Relieve and combat poverty, distress, financial hardship and sickness
- Relieve those in need by reason of youth, age, ill health, disability, unemployment or other disadvantage
- Promote Irish art, culture and heritage for the public benefit
- Advance education for the public benefit in Irish culture and language.

As the Irish heart of London, the LIC has the ability to be an exemplar to migrant communities in London and further afield by showing an example of how a community can establish itself as a vibrant part of London's evolving culture, as well as strengthening the cultural bridge between London & Ireland.

Key statistics from the LIC's 'Impact 2019' Report

- **4,341** face to face advice & outreach sessions
- **47.6%** increase in LIC clients financial security
- **18,647** attendees to cultural events
- **329** events held at the Centre over the year
- **44** community groups events hosted
- **£31,400** of discounted space provided to local groups
- **6,257** hot meals served
- **17%** increase in clients social stability
- **161** volunteers contributed **916** days to the Centre
- **82,000** visitors to the Centre in 2019



## 2.0 LONDON IRISH CENTRE

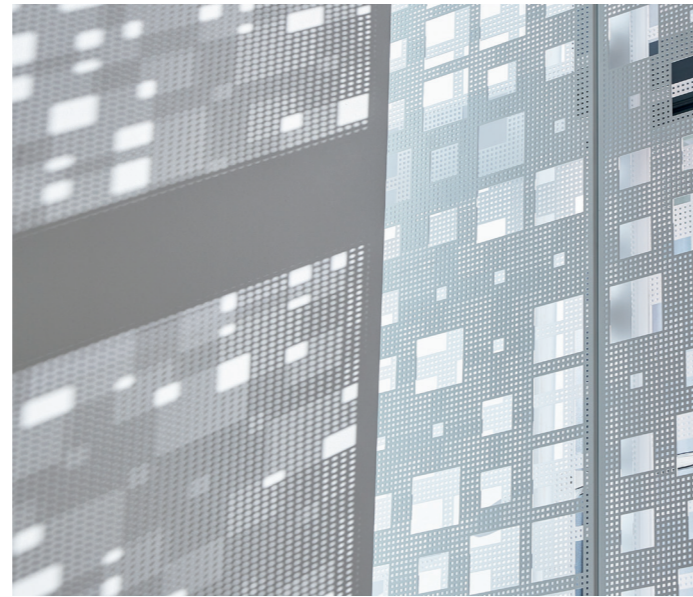
### 2.2 COFFEY ARCHITECTS

Over the past 15 years, we are proud to have built a reputation as an ambitious and inventive design-led architecture studio.

Whether masterplans or housing, commercial, education or cultural buildings, we choreograph the demands of strategic objectives, budgets, deadlines and delivery, whilst adding surprise and delight to every project. These efforts are regardless of scale or sector; they are driven by curiosity.

We bring a speciality in light, threshold and spaces that respond intelligently to their environments. In all projects, we are concerned with the experiential qualities of how a place feels, how it connects to the light and elements of the outside, and how it respects its wider ecological context.

Today, we are a team of 25 talented and dedicated professionals who share a culture of excellence. This drive has been recognised with a raft of prestigious awards, including the BD Young Architect of the Year Award and the RIBA Stephen Lawrence Prize. We have received 11 RIBA Awards and were recently shortlisted for Civic Trust and Dezeen awards.



1



2



3



4



5



6

1 & 2 Science Museum Research Centre, London

3 St Patrick's School Book Box, London

4 Moor Courts, Woking

5 BFI Reuben Library, London

6 King's Cross Q1, London

# 3.0 CONSULTATIONS

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## 3.1 ENGAGEMENT WITH CAMDEN COUNCIL

Two pre-application meetings were held with LB Camden planning officers throughout the design development of the project.

In between meetings with the officers, two public consultation events were also held in order to gain information about the local area and site, inform local residents about development proposals and receive feedback.

Summaries of the design issues discussed at each pre-application meeting and respective feedback is given below.

### Pre-application meeting 01

Coffey presented their understanding of the site, its constraints and opportunities, analysis of the existing build and presented initial development proposals and emerging strategies.

### Land Use Principle

The officers noted that LB Camden are supportive of the redevelopment in principle and committed to making the proposals a success. Proposals to use No.50 Camden Sq as ancillary accommodation to the charity was discussed with the officers noting they had no objection to this.

### Heritage

Coffey outlined proposals to remove the stairs to the front of No.51 to maximise the accessible garden space to the front of the Villas. The conservation officer noted that the council would be against this proposal due as it would downgrade

the visual appearance of the Villa. As an alternative, recommendations to fully enclose the front garden by altering the enclosing wall as well as making amendments to the main steps leading to No.51 were encouraged. The design team confirmed that this solution would be reviewed and incorporated into the design to amend the stairs rather than remove them.

The officers supported the upgrade works to the Villas and the removal of unsightly drainage on the Murray St façades. Support was also given to the removal of the poor quality glass link in favour of a more sympathetic construction. Coffey noted the desire to recess the new element here to help reinstate the visual gap between the Villas when viewed along Murray Street.

### Access

The officers supported the intention to re-locate the main entrance to Murray Street, creating a single main point of entrance. They appreciated this move as a means to resolve past circulation and accessibility issues within the building. The officers noted that the intention to re-landscape the area in front of No.51/52 as a new accessible amenity space could outweigh any heritage impacts. Coffey noted that a back of house entrance would be maintained off Camden Square, with a servicing stage doors type entrance maintained off of Murray Mews.

### Massing / Design to Murray St & Mews

The officers welcomed breaking down the massing so that the proposal appears less monolithic, noting that the 3 storey massing along Murray St with 3rd floor set back as reassuring. The officers noted they would appreciate if the massing to the 2nd floor could be pulled in to not overshadow the Villas.

Coffey outlined the narrative of the corner cut and its significance to the Irish Story, as well as being a key focal point on the external design.

The officers noted that options to express the unique geometry of the plan on the facade could further enhance the setting. A preference for less glazing at ground floor level was suggested to ensure that the proposals did not feel institutional. The proposals for brick cladding and other natural materials was welcomed so the building sits well within its context. Coffey noted the desire to remove the roof of the McNamara Hall to insert a mezzanine floor.

No objections were raised by the proposed roof terrace, with officers noting that the function and

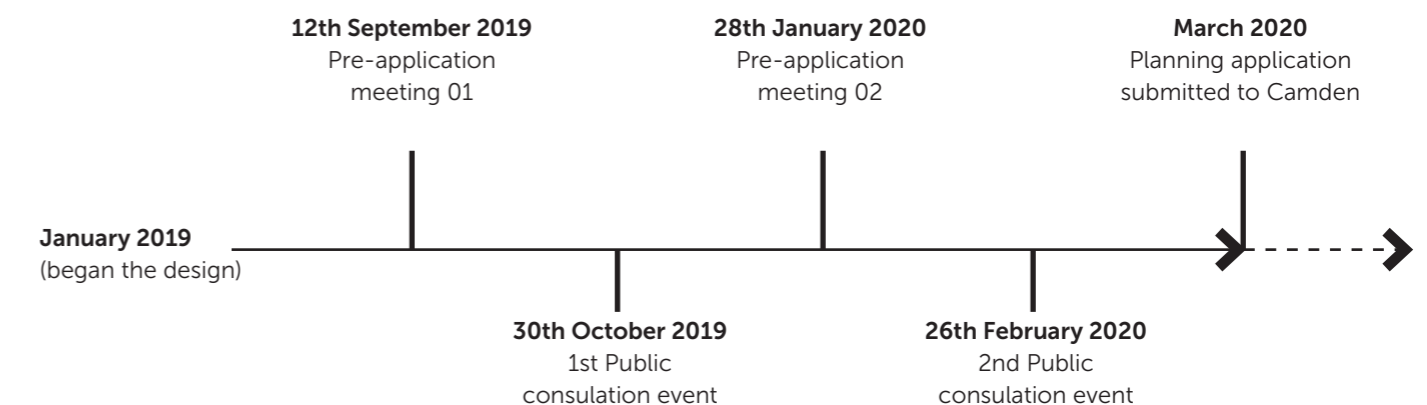
hours of use would need to be managed.

This would require demolition of much of the external walls as a new light weight structure is needed to balance loads above the active rail tunnel below the hall. The officers noted that the councils policy is to reuse buildings where possible.

### Pre-application meeting 02

The 2nd pre-app meeting focused on the external envelope design as a priority as it was noted that the council had a good degree of comfort on the internal design.

In general the officers were appreciative of the development since Pre-App 01 and noted that the scheme has improved greatly since the interim Design Review Panel held in November 2019. Massing, entrance threshold, materials noted in relation to the context and adjoining Villas were noted as being very successful. The officers noted they were happy for the scheme to progress to submitting an application in March 2020.



Timeline of engagement



## 3.0 CONSULTATIONS

### 3.2 ENGAGEMENT WITH LOCAL COMMUNITY

The LIC & project team have engaged with over 1,000 people during the brief & design concept development to ensure the design has been communicated and feedback received in relation to the wants & needs of the community. A summary of the consultations and workshops is listed here.

#### **Community conversation - 18.07.19**

The LIC undertook a community conversation with Centre users, local residents, community stakeholders and members of staff at the LIC. The consultation exercise took the form of:

1. Design workshops with key stakeholders led by Coffey Architects;
2. A community conversation launch meeting, attended by Centre users and local residents;
3. An online survey publicised on the LIC's dedicated project website and a physical survey available for completion at the Centre.

The consultation launch was attended by 103 people in total. Residents and attendees were encouraged to submit feedback at the launch event and on the online survey. Over 371 people responded to the community conversation survey and 24 people submitted responses at the community conversation launch.

#### **Day Centre Users**

The team met with members of the lunch club within the Day Centre service to discuss

their current issues with the Centre, as well as aspirations for the redevelopment. They expressed a clear desire to enhance the community functions and to have more appropriate spaces for events & social activities. Key to this was the creation of a central community hub to act as the Centre's 'living room'.

#### **LIC cultural services organisers**

We met with managers of Irish cultural services who run Irish language, music, dance, film & photography courses. They offered views on the requirements for enhanced spaces that would better serve the needs of the community.

#### **LIC Managers**

The LIC managers responsible for the Care, Community & Cultural services advised on key issues relating to the existing building layout. Advice on the entrance sequence and reception space has been adopted into the layouts to ensure that the overlapping building requirements function as desired by the team.

#### **Camden Square Neighbours Association**

Coffey met with a number of representatives from the Camden Square Neighbours Association during Summer 2019. They highlighted what offerings the LIC could provide that would encourage the surrounding community to use the Centre much more. A public cafe with catering facilities, lounge area & quality lettable functions rooms for parties

were noted as very desirable.

#### **Irish Community entrepreneurs**

A number of Irish business people were invited to consult on what offerings the LIC could provide to entice exciting start-ups / businesses to rent space or use the LIC as a casual working destination. Key to this was the food offering for lunch and lettable spaces for meetings which is paired with an active evening events programme were all noted as essential to them using the Centre throughout the day.

#### **Specialist Advisors to the project**

##### **John Nugent, CEO of Kings Place**

John provided a building tour of Kings Place was organised to help the team understand the logistical requirements to deliver a cultural & workplace programme mix. Discussions on the servicing strategy and the various issues that arise from a complex brief such as that of the LIC helped inform the plan organisation to help manage flows of people in and out of the building.

##### **Aidan McGee / Tara Cronin of Corrigan's Mayfair**

Richard Corrigan, as advisor to the LIC on kitchen and catering facilities organised for his head chef, Aidan McGee and sales manager, Tara Cronin to review the proposed catering provision within the developing layouts. Advice on kitchen 'flow' as well as servicing strategy/kitchen design were given and embedded within the scheme at an early stage.

##### **Finbarr Whooley of Museum of London**

Finbarr, as advisor to the LIC on exhibition space and curating 'The Irish Story' met the team to discuss the building & exhibition narrative within the redeveloped site. Advice on a ground floor exhibition space where video/audio installations could be exhibited has been adopted into the plans, with further options to house a 'white cube' type temporary exhibition space on 1st floor to enrich the cultural offer as an option to be reviewed.

##### **Heinz Richardson of Jestico & Whiles**

Heinz, as a renowned architect engaged with the design development / facade design of the scheme on behalf of the client body to ensure that the brief & vision of a world class new building is met. The proposals have been strengthened by this iterative review process.