

Rolfe Judd

Planning

London Irish Centre, Camden

Planning Statement

RJP: P7483

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Appendix 1 – Design Review Panel Response

1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 Summary

1.1.1 Rolfe Judd Planning Limited have been appointed by the London Irish Centre ('the Applicant') to prepare this planning statement and application for the redevelopment of the London Irish Centre (LIC) at Camden Square, NW1.

1.1.2 The redevelopment of the London Irish Centre, designed by award winning Coffey Architects, is a unique opportunity to enhance an iconic community centre, at the heart of the Irish community in London, to provide a state of the art facility to meet the needs of the local, Irish and London communities. The proposals will allow the site to be used more efficiently and effectively, with a strong focus on inclusive and accessible and Irish culture within Camden and London as a whole.

1.1.3 The London Irish Centre currently plays a crucial role in delivering community services and outreach programmes for its multiple users. It is invaluable to the community and is a well-used community centre; 82,000 people visited the LIC in 2019. The proposal also seeks to enhance the Centre as an arts and cultural hub for Camden delivering an additional 1,360sqm of community space. The proposals have been designed to reinforce the spirit of the London Irish Centre in Camden, by retaining the Villas along Camden Square, McNamara Hall on Murray Mews and delivering a new building along Murray Street. The redevelopment is a significant organisational and financial undertaking for the LIC with its aspirations to grow the Irish Heart of London and deliver a modern facility which meets the needs of the diverse communities it serves.

1.1.4 To this end the planning application encompasses the following elements:

- Refurbishment and repair of No 50-52 Camden Square facades to include retention and reconfiguration of external staircase to No. 51, returning it to its original location;
- Demolition of glazed link building between No 50 and 51 Camden Square and replacement with a new high quality link building with a screened external balcony at first floor;
- Landscaping works to the front of Nos. 50-52 to include a new therapy garden, directly accessed from the ground floor Wellbeing Centre with new boundary wall along Camden Square;
- Provision of 39 cycle parking spaces and 10 long stay cycle spaces;
- Use of No.50 Camden Square as residential accommodation ancillary to the overall D1/D2 use of the LIC, providing a total of nine bedrooms all with en-suites;
- Demolition of extensions between 50 Camden Square and the McNamara Hall;
- Demolition of Kennedy Hall and pitched roof building on Murray Street New and construction of fully accessible building providing a focal point along Murray Street and at the corner of Murray Street and Murray Mews; including roof terrace at third floor level;

- Provision of new primary entrance to the building from Murray Street to provide easily identifiable main entrance to the Centre;
- Provision of new basement to provide new multi-functional spaces, with additional storage and plant room;
- Refurbishment of McNamara Hall including façade alterations; raising of ceiling height within existing ceiling void; and insertion of mezzanine.

1.1.5 The proposed redevelopment of the London Irish Centre site is in accordance with the objectives of national, strategic and local planning policy and delivers a high quality enhanced community facility with inclusive design at its core.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1.1 Rolfe Judd Planning Limited have been appointed by the London Irish Centre (LIC) ('the Applicant') to prepare the planning statement and application for the redevelopment of the London Irish Centre in Camden. The London Irish Centre ('the Application Site') is located on the corner of Camden Square, Murray Street and Murray Mews within the London Borough of Camden.
- 2.1.2 The London Irish Centre was first founded in 1954 by a group from the Irish Priests Committee who were worried about ill-prepared emigrants arriving in post-Wold War II London. In 1955 No. 52 Camden Square was purchased; its location chosen for its proximity to the Euston station where the majority of Irish emigrants first arrived in London by train from Holyhead port. It was said the location of the LIC in Camden Square was chosen as far as one could reasonably expect a new immigrant from Ireland to walk carrying their suitcase after arriving in London. The LIC has historically and continues to play a crucial role in the delivery of community, arts and cultural facilities in Camden and London as a whole.
- 2.1.3 The proposals for the redevelopment of the LIC, designed by award winning Coffey Architects, is a once in a generation opportunity for the Centre. Since its establishment the LIC has been the subject of piecemeal development to meet the needs of its ever-growing community and when funding allowed. This has resulted in a Centre with poor internal layouts and inaccessibility – there are 15 sets of steps spread around the building. This results in a community centre where various client groups are kept separate from one another with limited opportunity for intergenerational engagement. It also results in a building where entire floors are inaccessible to those with mobility issues. The LIC is operating as best as it can within the constraints of the existing buildings, however, it is clear a modern fit for purpose facility is required to meet the needs of the LIC and its diverse user group. This redevelopment will secure the London Irish Centre`s ability to deliver its three core functions of Care, Culture and Community, which its mission depends on and will strengthen its long-term financial viability.
- 2.1.4 For the purposes of the planning application, the proposed development ('The Proposal') is described as follows:
- '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.'*
- 2.1.5 The Application Site is located within the Camden Square Conservation Area and is comprised of No.50- 52 Camden Square (constructed in 1860), the pitched roof building (constructed in the 1950s), The Kennedy Hall (constructed in 1965) and McNamara Hall (constructed in 1980). A glazed link building was constructed in 2005 which links No.50 and 51.
- 2.1.6 The proposals have been designed in consideration of the varying building typographies which form the Application Site; this has centred on retaining the 19th Century Villas on Camden Square and a significant portion of the McNamara Hall and rebuilding a new three/part four storey building on Murray Street which provides connectivity with the retained buildings.

2.1.7 A guiding principle for the redevelopment of the LIC has been the provision of a fully inclusive and accessible Centre which meets the needs of its diverse community. The existing Centre is curtailed by its complex layout and poor accessibility from street level and within the Centre itself. The proposals include the creation of a replacement link building between No.50 and No.51 and relocation of the primary access to Murray Street. The proposals represent an opportunity to deliver a building which meets the modern day needs of its users with ground floor level access from Murray Street and inclusive design throughout.

2.1.8 The redevelopment proposals can be summarised as follows:

Camden Square

- Refurbishment and repair of No 50-52 Camden Square facades. Elevational alterations including provision of new openings at ground floor of Nos. 51 and 52 to provide direct access onto new therapy garden;
- Restoration and reconfiguration of existing external staircase to No. 51 removing unsympathetic and unoriginal side return, providing direct access to Camden Square. The space created beneath the staircase is proposed to be utilised for bin storage;
- Landscaping works including provision of new therapy garden at the front of Nos. 51 and 52 Camden Square with direct access from new Wellbeing Centre located on ground floor of Nos. 51 and 52;
- Provision of 39 external bicycle parking spaces to the front of No. 50;
- Creation of new boundary wall along Camden Square with openings to provide access to No. 50, external staircase at No. 51 and new therapy gardens;
- Internal alterations to No. 50 to enable its use as residential accommodation ancillary to the existing D1/D2 (non-residential institution/assembly and leisure) use of the LIC. The proposal will provide 10 long term cycle parking spaces at ground floor level alongside plant equipment and a lift which provides level access to each floor. The upper three floors will provide a total of nine bedrooms each with en suite facilities. The type of accommodation provided at No. 50 will range from artists in residence who are primarily based at the LIC and may offer workshops within the Centre; visiting entertainers performing at the LIC; and occasionally short term accommodation for those in immediate housing need. The use of No. 50 will remain directly related and ancillary to the D1/D2 use of the LIC; no change of use is proposed;
- Demolition of glazed link building between No 50 and 51 Camden Square and replacement with a new high quality link building. At ground floor this new link will provide access to the ancillary residential accommodation in No. 50, back of house access to the new Murray Street extension. At first floor level new meeting rooms are proposed alongside a staff room with access onto a screened external terrace;
- Reconfiguration of interior of Nos. 51 and 52 to ensure level access is provided from new Murray Street extension. Provision of Wellbeing Centre on ground floor with associated kitchenette and servery; and LIC Care, Community and Cultural accommodation on first, second and third floors.

Murray Street

- Demolition of existing buildings between Nos. 50-52 Camden Square and the McNamara Hall;
- Construction of new, fully accessible part three/part four storey building on Murray Street including new main entrance to the LIC. Creation focal point at corner of Murray Street and Murray Mews including secondary means of access;
- Creation of basement underneath new building to provide multi-functional spaces, with additional storage and plant rooms;
- New community hub and café/bar, reception, gift shop, Irish story exhibition, meeting rooms, lifts and stairwells and ancillary accommodation at ground floor level;
- LIC Community and Care space, meeting rooms, mezzanine and function space and access to McNamara Hall on first floor;
- LIC Community and Care space, function room with access to new McNamara Mezzanine level at second floor;
- LIC community and car space; archive/library and function space at third floor with access onto external amenity space at third floor.

Murray Mews

- Refurbishment of McNamara Hall including elevational alterations;
- Structural alterations to allow internal raising of ceiling height and insertion of Mezzanine accessed via new building on Murray Street.

2.1.9 Careful consideration of national, strategic and local policies, pre-application meetings with Council officers, public consultations and a thorough site analysis has resulted in an innovative and sympathetic design for the site, created by Coffey Architects. This shall be explored in further detail in the subsequent section.

2.2 Planning Statement

2.2.1 The purpose of this statement is to examine the planning issues raised by the redevelopment proposals for the Application Site. In particular, this statement identifies and describes the key opportunities presented by the proposed redevelopment of the London Irish Centre to provide a high quality, fully accessible community facility.

2.2.2 The statement also provides a comprehensive analysis of the relevant planning policy framework at national, strategic and local levels. As such, our planning statement is structured as follows:

Section 1: Executive Summary

Section 2: Introduction

- Section 3: Pre-Application Consultation- outlines pre-application discussions and stakeholder engagement undertaken
- Section 4: The Application Site and Surrounding Area – sets the context the current proposal and provides a detailed description of the application site and its previous uses
- Section 5: Policy Context- summarises the planning policy relevant to this proposal at national, strategic and local levels
- Section 6; The London Irish Centre - Care, Culture and Community
- Section 7: The Proposal – describes the proposed development
- Section 8: Planning Considerations – reviews the proposal in terms of the relevant policy context and other material considerations, and
- Section 9: Conclusion

2.3 Supporting Application Documents

2.3.1 This planning statement should be read in conjunction with the following additional documents, which accompany the application:

- Design & Access Statement – prepared by Coffey Architects
- Aborigicultural Impact Assessment- prepared by ACD Environmental
- Acoustic Report- prepared by Max Fordham
- Air Quality Assessment-prepared by Hoare Lea
- Basement Impact Assessment- Prepared by Elliott Wood/ Soil Technics
- BREEAM Pre-Assessment- prepared by EB7
- Construction Management Plan- prepared by Caneparo Associates
- Daylight and Sunlight Report – prepared by EB7
- Delivery and Servicing Management Plan- prepared by Caneparo Associates
- Energy and Sustainability Statement- prepared by OCSC
- Flood Risk Assessment – prepared by Elliott Wood
- Heritage Statement- prepared by RPS Group
- Statement of Community Involvement – prepared by London Irish Centre
- Community Use Plan – prepared by London Irish Centre

- Events Management Plan – prepared by London Irish Centre
- Structural Report- prepared by Elliott Wood
- Transport Assessment and Travel Plan– prepared by Caneparo Associates
- Tree Survey-prepared by ACD Environmental

3.0 Pre-Application Consultation

3.1 London Borough of Camden

3.1.1 In line with Paragraphs 39-44 of the NPPF, the Applicant has actively engaged with the Council in order to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application process.

3.1.2 The proposals presented in pre-application meeting 1 discussed the use of No. 50 Camden Square and whether this be used for residential accommodation ancillary to the LIC (such as accommodation for artists in residence) or sold-off to raise funds for the development. The Council recognised the use of No. 50 as residential accommodation and its role in the funding of the centre. The re-location of the main entrance from Camden Square to Murray Street was presented and was supported by officers. However, the Council's Conservation Officer requested the existing external staircase leading to No. 51 be retained. The buildings relationship with the Camden Square Conservation Area and retaining its positive relationship was discussed and Council Officers were welcoming of changes to the link building between No 50 and 51 Camden Square. The Council sought further refinement of the massing of the development. Overall, the Council were supportive of the LIC's development of the site.

3.1.3 The second pre-application meeting was held on 28th January 2020 following detailed design development of the proposed scheme. Officers were highly supportive of the amendments to the scheme following pre-application No. 1 and the Design Review Panel and considered the internal layout now functioned well. Officers considered the building now looked softer and more welcoming with the corner candle element considered to be a strong design feature. Discussions centred on further minor amendments to the exterior of the scheme in particular the middle element which was considered to be a weaker element of the scheme. Officers also wanted to see the ground floor of the villa appear more grounded and the new openings leading to the Therapy Garden should be reduced in width. Recommendations were also made such as incorporating features such as Aran cable knit in the perforated brickwork on the new link building and gates along Camden Square. The officers noted they were satisfied for the scheme to be submitted as planning application in March 2020.

3.2 Design Review Panel

3.2.1 On the 8th November 2018 the scheme was presented to the London Borough of Camden's Design Review Panel. The Panel welcomed the proposals to provide enhanced facilities for the London Irish Centre and recognised the complexity of delivering the volume of space required on the site. They commented on the presentation of the proposals at an early stage. The Panel welcomed the retention of Nos 50-52 Camden Square and the removal of the modern link building between the two villas; it also welcomed the desire to consolidate the functions of the centre.

3.2.2 Several recommendations were made by the Panel which have been taken into consideration in the design of the final scheme. These recommendations included:

- Further reflection of the character, appearance and attributes of the surrounding Conservation Area within the design approach;

- Review of a single entrance to the Centre via Murray Street and its impact functionally;
- The interaction between Nos. 50-52 Camden Square and their individual presence and legibility along Murray Street and Murray Mews;
- A review of the landscaping and its interaction with the surrounding area including the opportunity to increase the external roof terrace

3.2.3 The full response from the Design Review Panel is included in Appendix 1.

3.3 Local Community

Community Consultation Event and LIC Futures Survey

3.3.1 To kick-off their public engagement the London Irish Centre launched a 'Community Conversation Event'. The event was held on the 18th July 2019 and was hosted at the London Irish Centre. The London Irish Centre invited members of the public, local community groups, stakeholders and staff at the LIC to attend the event and offer their views on the future development of the centre. The event was attended by 103 people and was advertised via email to the LIC's mailing list, on the LIC website, on the Centre's social media channels and in a press release featured in the Irish Post. The event was free to attend and tickets were obtained through Eventbrite. 24 feedback forms were received during the conversation evening.

3.3.2 Following the Community Conversation Event the 'LIC Futures Survey' was launched on the 23rd July 2019, the survey was made available digitally on the LIC's dedicated project website with hard copies available at the LIC. The survey closed on the 16th August 2019 and received 371 responses (comprised of 339 digital copies and 32 hard copies). Full details of the Community Conversation and responses to the LIC Futures Survey are included in the Community Conversation Report prepared by Quatro Communications. A summary of the statistics and feedback received from the community conversation is as follows:

- 103 people attended the community conversation launch; 24 feedback forms were received;
- 1,602 people visited the LIC's project website to view the survey; 371 responses received;
- 87% of respondents stated the current premises are in need of physical redevelopment;
- 18% of respondents outlined they had struggled to attend the LIC due to unsuitable disabled accessibility;
- Respondents highlighted the importance of the LIC as the 'go-to' venue for Irish Culture within London. They expressed their desire for flexible event and exhibition spaces for multi-purpose uses;
- The history of the LIC and the Irish community in London was emphasised as a prominent topic and Irish heritage in Camden should be showcased in any design of the site;

- The redevelopment should provide functional educational and social facilities which meet the needs of the existing users of the LIC.

Public Consultation Events

3.3.3 Following the conversation events, the Design Team continued to develop the proposals for the site. Two subsequent public workshops were held at the London Irish Centre on the 30th October 2019 and 26th February 2020. Members of the public were invited to view a series of display boards setting out the principles of the redevelopment, the evolution of the scheme as well as drawings of the scheme.

3.3.4 Members of the design team included Sean Kennedy, CEO of the London Irish Centre, Mike O'Connor, Interim Chair of the London Irish Centre, Rolfe Judd Planning and Coffey Architects who were on hand to answer questions. Feedback forms were available for attendees and provided the opportunity to leave written feedback at the event or via email or post.

3.3.5 The written feedback received was strongly positive and can be summarised as follows:

- Welcomed an accessible and open plan community centre;
- Supportive of the intentions and aspirations of the centre to secure its financial independence and longevity;
- Generally welcoming of the new relocated access on Murray Street, further information on the entrance required;
- Supportive of a community centre which meets the 21st century needs of community groups and encourages cohesion with various community groups;
- Highly supportive of improved and inclusive access throughout the centre including ground level access from Camden Mews.

3.4 Stakeholder Engagement

3.4.1 The London Irish Centre has undertaken extensive consultations with various stakeholder groups which are explored in Section 2.3 of the accompanying Design and Access Statement, prepared by Coffey Architects. An overview of stakeholder meetings which have informed and evolved the design proposals is outlined below.

LIC Clients and Staff

3.4.2 Coffey Architects have held a series of meetings with lunch club members; LIC cultural services organisers and LIC managers to obtain their views and aspirations for the proposed redevelopment. The LIC cultural services organisers offered advice on the requirements for enhanced spaces that would best serve the needs of the diverse community. LIC managers outlined their requirements for the entrance sequence and reception space which has been adopted into the layouts to ensure that the overlapping building requirements function as desired by the team.

Camden Square Neighbourhood Association

- 3.4.3 The CEO of the LIC and Coffey Architects met with members of the Camden Square Neighbours Association to discuss the redevelopment proposals for the site. The six members from the Association highlighted a desire for a development which increased their use of the Centre such as food provision on site, a roof terrace and high quality lettable spaces which could be used for community and social purposes.

John Nugent, CEO of Kings Place

- 3.4.4 The project team met with John Nugent (CEO of Kings Place, Kings Cross). Kings Place is an open, multi-arts venue which curates a series of festivals aimed at engaging the community. John Nugent provided his comments on the proposals and advice relating to the servicing and management strategies for a successful community facility. This has been incorporated into the design of the scheme.

Corrigan's Mayfair

- 3.4.5 A meeting was held with restaurateur Richard Corrigan and his Head Chef Aidan McGee and sales manager Tara Cronin on the proposed catering provision within the developing plans. Advice on the kitchen 'flow' as well as servicing strategy/kitchen design was provided which have been incorporated into the scheme proposal.

Finbarr Whooley, Museum of London

- 3.4.6 A meeting was held with Finbarr Whooley who is acting as an advisor to the LIC on exhibition space and curating the proposed Story of the Irish in London. Design advice was gained as to how the larger exhibition spaces should be designed from an operational and functional perspective which has subsequently been threaded into the design plans for the centre.

3.4.7 Irish Entrepreneurs

- 3.4.8 Coffey Architects also consulted a range of Irish business people with regards to the offerings the LIC could provide to entice exciting start-ups/businesses to rent space or use the LIC as a casual working destination. It was advised that good quality food offering for lunch; lettable spaces for meetings; full Wi-Fi provision and an active evening events programme was essential to the use of the Centre throughout the day.

Secure By Design

- 3.4.9 The Design Team met with a Metropolitan Police Designing Out Crime Officer (DOCO) on 11th November 2019 to discuss how best to incorporate secure by design principles into the scheme. The DOCO welcomed the provision of one main entrance on Murray Street and requested that there be a member of staff positioned permanently at entrance to greet arrivals as they entered the building. The recessed entrance along Murray Street was discussed but the DOCO was satisfied this would not be an area used for anti-social behaviour or rough sleeping. Overall, the DOCO felt the redevelopment proposals would be a significant improvement on the existing situation.

LIC's Design Advocate

- 3.4.10 The emerging design proposals have also been scrutinised by the LIC's appointed Design Advocate, Heinz Richardson, Director at Jestico + Whiles. The involvement of a Design Advocate has been to ensure the redevelopment proposals incorporate the highest quality architecture and create a state of the art community facility which best meets the existing and emerging needs of the Centre.
- 3.4.11 The details of all stakeholder engagement and responses received throughout the consultation process are identified and discussed in detail within the accompanying Statement of Community Involvement prepared by the London Irish Centre.

4.0 Application Site & Surrounding Area

4.1 Site Description and Surrounding Area

- 4.1.1 The Application Site is located on the corner of Camden Square, Murray Street and Murray Mews within the London Borough of Camden. The site encompasses a number of buildings, such as the existing villas at 50-52 Camden Square that contribute to a 19th Century façade presenting onto Camden Square Gardens, in addition to a number of buildings that wrap around the corner of Murray Street and Murray Mews. A glazed link building connects 50-51 Camden Square but is of poor quality and is incongruent with the language of the façade and the wider site as a whole. The site includes the McNamara Hall (built 1980), to the rear of the site along Murray Mews, which forms a large function room used for conference and exhibition events.
- 4.1.2 Camden Square Gardens, to the west of the site, forms an area of public open space contained by terraced buildings along Camden Square and Murray Street. The site itself is sparsely populated with trees but hosts a mature lime tree set within the front garden of 50 Camden Square which is subject to a Tree Preservation Order (reference C10-T89).
- 4.1.3 The site has a Public Transportation Access Level (PTAL) rating of 3 (on a scale of 1 to 6 with 6 being the highest) and thus has moderate accessibility, being within approximately a 10 to 15 minute walk to Camden Underground Station, Camden Road and Caledonian Road Overground Stations and Kings Cross and St. Pancras International termini. An active railway tunnel runs from north to south underneath the site leading into Pancras Station.
- 4.1.4 The existing buildings on site range between 3-4 storeys and are in general conformity with the building heights in the wider area, which are comprised of a range of historic and contemporary architecture. The site is entirely within the Camden Square Conservation Area and does not contain any statutorily or locally listed buildings; the closest listed heritage asset is a Grade II telephone box on Murray Street.
- 4.1.5 In contrast to the wider residential character of the area, the southern part of the site along Murray Street has a more commercial feel, with a parade of small shops and a local café leading to its junction with Agar Grove.

4.2 Camden Square Conservation Area

- 4.2.1 The Camden Square Conservation Area was established in October 1974 and was extended in April 1980 and November 2002. The Camden Square Conservation Area Appraisal (2011) describes the conservation area as a primarily nineteenth century inner London suburb that continues to change, stating that:

“Camden Square forms the centrepiece of the planned development; however, the special character of the area is that it is also diverse when looked at in detail. The architecture is not uniform around the Square, phased development is evident in groups of buildings, and some plots have been developed individually. This is reflected in the size of plots, layout and the elevation treatment of the houses. The building of the railway through the area, the impact of wartime damage and later infill development have all contributed to the evolution of the area.”

4.2.2 All properties within the Conservation Area are noted as making a positive contribution to its character and appearance unless otherwise stated. The London Irish Centre itself is mentioned in the Conservation Area appraisal, which identifies that :

“the London Irish Centre with its Corinthian capitals (Nos 50-52), partially mirror the houses on the opposite side of the Square. The London Irish Centre has been greatly altered and expanded, including a glazed link and an overly-well lit access ramp.”

4.2.3 The rear buildings of the London Irish Centre along Murray Mews (45, 65 and 26) are identified in the appraisal as forming a neutral contribution to the Conservation Area. These buildings neither enhance nor detract from the character of appearance of the area but do not provide any significant townscape merit and as such have potential for enhancement.

4.3 Site Constraints

4.3.1 The Application Site has seen piecemeal development since the 1860s, with the villas at Nos. 50-52 built in the mid-19th century and having seen multiple extensions and alterations in context of their change of use from residential property to community centre. Since the 1950s, the part two/part three pitched roof building, two storey Kennedy Hall, the McNamara Hall and link building have been constructed, with the spaces between infilled for WC and kitchen facilities.

4.3.2 The history of the sites' development has led to an arrangement whereby the existing building has multiple entrances (6 in total) which causes a variety of issues for a community centre, from security and safeguarding to the natural segregation of community groups. There is also inherent confusion for a visitor as to which is the main entrance to the site. As such, the buildings internal configuration actively reduces the opportunity for integration between the centres various users.

4.3.3 The proposal seeks to address a number of issues raised by the configuration and the relationship between the existing buildings on site:

- The connection between the main entrance and the primary function rooms is too narrow to handle a large quantity of people;
- The current configuration leads to a bottleneck around the main corridor which results in many people exiting on to Camden Square and the surrounding residential areas at once;
- The existing arrangement has a number of changes in level and stairs between areas which presents issues to accessible user groups. There are up to 15 sets of steps spread around the building;
- The internal layout of the space is highly inefficient and has areas that are inaccessible without the need to exit the building and go back in from the outside;
- The glazed link between 50-51 Camden Square is of poor quality and detracts from the thematic development and character of the square; and

- The end gable facing Murray Street, owing to a change of use from residential to a hostel and then to office accommodation, has seen the introduction of WCs and unsightly drainage which interrupts the symmetry and rhythm across the wider area.

4.4 Relevant Planning History

4.4.1 In addition to approved applications for advertisement consent and plant equipment, the wider site has been granted a number of planning permissions since the 1960s in association with the numerous alterations and extensions to the London Irish Centre which are listed below.

- Planning ref: TP60611/26119 - *Alterations and the erection of a two-storey extension to the Irish Centre, 51-52 Camden Square, St. Pancras.* – Granted 17th May 1963
- Planning ref: 3826 – *The construction of additional WC accommodation on first floor and the construction of a new entrance at ground floor level at No.51-52 Camden Square.* – Granted 24th August 1967
- Planning ref: 23608(R1) - 1. (a) *Alterations in connection with the rearrangement of the activities on the existing Irish Center site including the change of use of Nos. 51/52 Camden Square from hostel to youth club/creche, ancillary offices, and staff residential accommodation* – Granted 7th October 1977
- Planning ref: 33114 - *Amendments to the Planning Permission dated 7th October 1977 in respect of Parts 1 (a, b & c) to provide Welfare Offices at levels 3 and 4 of 50 Camden Square and storage on level 1 of Nos. 51 and 52 Camden Square together with the submission of landscaping details pursuant to Condition 3 of the Planning Permission dated 7th October 1977.* – Granted 24th February 1982
- Planning ref: 8701456 - *Approval of details relating to external works facing Camden Square and Murray Street *(plans submitted)* – Granted 11th November 1987
- Planning ref: 9003422 - *Installation of new external platform lift and associated platforms landings new external entrance door in recess between 50 and 52 to provide disabled access as shown on drawing nos. 580/01 02.* – Granted 6th December 1990
- Planning ref: PEX0000988 - *Use of the Douglas Hyde Lounge (bar area) for office use within Class B1. As shown on one unnumbered A3 size floor plan.-* Granted 19th December 2000
- Planning ref: PEX0300215 - *Alterations and extension to the link building to provide disabled access. (Plans submitted).* – Granted 19th December 2003

5.0 Relevant Planning Policies

5.1.1 Throughout national, regional and local planning policy tiers there is a clear presumption in favour of supporting the expansion and modernisation of community facilities. These are considered below in the context of Government Guidance (the NPPF), the London Plan (including the New Draft London Plan), Camden's Local Plan (2017) and the relevant local planning guidance (CPGs).

5.2 Government Guidance

5.2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) February 2019 sets out the Government's planning policies for England. The adopted Framework supersedes the myriad of Planning Policy Statements (PPS) and Guidance (PPG) documents. The NPPF recognises that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. These dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to contribute to a number of objectives, which are interdependent and should be pursued in mutually supportive ways:

- **An economic objective** – helping to build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available on the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
- **A social objective** – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities' health, social and cultural well-being; and
- **An environmental objective** – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

5.2.2 At the heart of the NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 11 makes clear that this 'presumption in favour' should be applied as follows:

- For plan making, local planning authorities should "positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area" and include sufficient flexibility to adapt to rapid change;
- For decision-taking, local planning authorities should approve development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or where there are no development plan policies or those most important to determining the application are out of date, granting permission unless:
- The application of policies in the Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provide clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or

- Any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.

5.2.3 Chapter 8 of the NPPF focuses on the promotion of healthy and safe communities. Paragraph 92 in particular states that planning policies and decision should (inter alia):

- Plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities (such as local shops, meeting places, sports venues, open spaces, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship) and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;
- Take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community;
- Ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise, and are retained for the benefit of the community;

5.3 The London Plan

5.3.1 The Mayor is responsible for producing a new planning strategy for London. The London Plan – the Spatial Development Strategy for London Consolidated with Alterations Since 2011 was originally published in 2011 with further alterations published on 10th March 2015. It has subsequently been revised to accord with the national housing standards and car parking policy through the Minor Alterations published 14th March 2016.

5.3.2 The London Plan forms the overall strategic plan for London, and sets out a fully integrated economic, environmental, transport and social framework for the development of the Capital until 2031. It forms part of the development plan for Greater London and London Boroughs' local planning frameworks are required to be in general conformity.

5.3.3 The policies considered relevant to the planning application are listed below:

- Strategic Policy 2.9: Inner London
- Strategic Policy 3.1: Ensuring Equal Life Chances for All
- Strategic Policy 3.9: Mixed and Balanced Communities
- Strategic Policy 3.16: Protection and Enhancement of Social Infrastructure
- Strategic Policy 3.18: Education Facilities
- Strategic Policy 4.2: Offices
- Strategic Policy 4.6: Support for and Enhancement of Arts, Culture, Sport and Entertainment
- Strategic Policy 4.12: Improving Opportunities for All

- Strategic Policy 5.1: Climate Change Mitigation
- Strategic Policy 5.2: Minimising Carbon Dioxide Emissions
- Strategic Policy 5.3: Sustainable Design and Construction
- Strategic Policy 5.7: Renewable Energy
- Strategic Policy 5.11: Green Roofs and Development Site Environs
- Strategic Policy 6.9: Cycling
- Strategic Policy 6.10: Walking
- Strategic Policy 7.1: Lifetime Neighbourhoods
- Strategic Policy 7.2: An Inclusive Environment
- Strategic Policy 7.4: Local Character
- Strategic Policy 7.6: Architecture
- Strategic Policy 7.11: London View Management Framework
- Strategic Policy 7.15: Reducing and Managing Noise, Improving and Enhancing the Acoustic Environment and Promoting Appropriate Soundscapes

5.4 New London Plan

5.4.1 The New London Plan (NLP) underwent Examination in Public (EiP) during 2019 and on February 17th 2020, the Secretary of State wrote to the Mayor advising he would be taking an additional 4 weeks to consider the 'Intention to Publish' version of the London Plan. Therefore, in accordance with Paragraph 48 of the NPPF, carries material weight in the determination of planning applications.

5.4.2 In addition to the London Plan policies above, the NLP policies considered relevant to the determination of this application are listed below:

- Policy GG1: Building Strong and inclusive communities
- Policy GG2: Making the best use of land
- Policy D5: Inclusive Design
- Policy S1: Developing London's social infrastructure
- Policy S3: Education and childcare facilities

- Policy SI 7: Reducing Waste and Supporting the Circular Economy
- Policy E1: Offices
- Policy G5: Urban Greening
- Policy T5: Cycling

5.5 Camden Local Plan (2017)

5.5.1 The Camden Local Plan was adopted in 2017 and superseded the previous Core Strategy and Development Policies documents. Those policies within the Local Plan considered most relevant to this application are listed below:

- Policy G1: Delivery and location of growth
- Policy C2: Community facilities
- Policy C3: Cultural and leisure facilities
- Policy C6: Access for all
- Policy E2: Employment premises and sites
- Policy A1: Managing the impact of development
- Policy A4: Noise and vibration
- Policy A5: Basements
- Policy D1: Design
- Policy D2: Heritage
- Policy CC1: Climate change mitigation
- Policy CC2: Adapting to climate change
- Policy CC4: Air quality
- Policy T1: Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport
- Policy T2: Parking and car-free development

5.6 Camden Planning Guidance (CPGs)

5.6.1 The London Borough of Camden has a number of adopted CPGs which form material considerations in planning decisions. The CPGs of most relevance are listed below:

- Access for All CPG – March 2019
- Amenity CPG – March 2018
- Basements CPG – March 2018
- Design CPG – March 2019
- Energy efficiency and adaptation CPG – March 2019

6.0 London Irish Centre

6.1 History of the London Irish Centre

6.1.1 The London Irish Centre (LIC) was founded in 1954 by members of the Irish Priests Committee to provide care to emigrants arriving to post-World War II London. The strong rooted affiliation with the LIC and Camden began in 1955 when No. 52 Camden Square was purchased with 51 purchased shortly after, chosen for their proximity to Euston train Station where Irish Emigrants would first arrive from Holyhead Port.

6.1.2 Since 1954 the Centre has grown significantly, in the 1950s the pitched roof building was constructed designed to be the new main entrance to the Centre. In 1955 the Centre was formally opened by Cardinal D`Alton and Cardinal Griffin, and named Blessed Oliver Plunkett House, after the Irish scholar, patriot and martyr. When it opened it housed 10 young men and stated its aim as “to promote the social, recreational and spiritual welfare of Irish people in London”

6.1.3 This was followed by the 1965 construction of the Kennedy Hall which was opened by US Ambassador on Murray Street, built as a memorial to JF Kennedy. The Douglas Hyde lounge bar was also opened upstairs. In 1980 the McNamara Hall was opened, named after Tom McNamara the first Director of the Centre.

6.1.4 In 1988 the Day Centre at LIC was opened by Bertie Ahern, then Minister for State in the Irish Government, to look after the Centre’s older community. It continues to provide hot meals, classes and activities to older Irish people four days a week. In 2008 the Day Centre was refurbished and opened by Micheál Martin, Minister for Foreign Affairs in the Irish Parliament. In 2013 the merger of the London Irish Centre and the Irish Support and Advice Service was completed, expanding the reach of the Centre’s services across West and South West London. The LIC Library, known as ‘the O’Donovan Library’ was launched in 2015 with over 10,000 books about Ireland donated. It is the largest Irish Library outside of Ireland.

6.2 The Present Day

6.2.1 Since its’ founding the LIC has grown into a renowned community centre built on its core values of being welcoming, compassionate, inclusive, creative, community centred and sustainable. In 2019 alone the Centre was visited by 82,000 people.

6.2.2 The LIC’s charitable mission is to ‘empower and enrich lives through Irish Community and Culture with the these key charitable objectives:

- To relieve and combat poverty, distress, financial hardship and sickness;
- To relieve those in need by reason of youth, age, ill health, disability, unemployment or other disadvantage;
- To promote Irish art, culture and heritage for the public benefit;

- To advance education for the public benefit in Irish culture and language.

In 2019 the LONDON IRISH CENTRE:

- **Was visited by 82,000 people**
- **Helped 2,111 people in crisis**
- **Provided 4,341 client advice sessions**
- **Made 543 outreach visits**
- **Recovered £1,583,354 of money for clients**
- **Made end of life arrangements for 52 people**
- **Handed out £23,805 in crisis grant funding**
- **Provided housing advice to 120 clients**
- **Served 6,257 hot meals to vulnerable clients**
- **Provided legal advice for 97 tribunals**
- **Supported 258 clients to seek health advice**
- **Held 379 fitness events**
- **18,647 people attended 329 cultural, arts and educational events**
- **Library was visited by 752 people**
- **474 people attended Irish language classes**
- **161 volunteers gave 7,332 hours of their time**

6.3 Care - Curám

6.3.1 Care is at the heart of the London Irish Centre. In 2019 the LIC helped 2,111 people in crisis, made 543 outreach visits and delivered 4,341 client advice sessions. These services operate a `no wrong door policy` which means everyone attending for help is assisted, with 40% of clients being non-Irish. The care services the LIC provides are invaluable to their users and include crisis assistance, dedicated advice and outreach programmes, and wellbeing services for its older community members, half of whom are Camden residents. The Centre`s commitment to the community is also evident in its network of social groups and activities including lunch clubs, day services, workshops and day trips. These services are lifelines for the community and help tackle common social issues such as loneliness and isolation.

6.3.2 The Centre is invaluable to its community members offering support to people at difficult stages of life. In 2019 the Centre provided specialist legal advocacy at 97 benefit tribunals, supported 258 clients with health advice and recovered £1,583,354 for clients in benefits, pensions and other entitlements. Services offered by the Centre include:

- Legal Advocacy Service – the LIC’s Legal Advocate offers clients support in the appeals process if their benefit application has been rejected – this service currently has a 90% success rate;
- Advice and Outreach services to assist with housing and benefit advice; signposting to mental health services; applying for a National Insurance Number; opening a bank account; returning to Ireland; moving to

London; obtaining an Irish birth certificate and passport; accessing health and care services; Irish and UK pension advice; linking with social opportunities and befriending; and end of life planning;

- Wellbeing Services are open to everyone, not just Irish people, with low to medium support needs. They run across five days of the week Monday to Friday, mainly in the Kennedy Hall and include lunch clubs; exercise and art classes and mindfulness workshops. Other activities which run over the month includes creative writing; tea dances; gadget drop in; knit and natter; games afternoons; coffee mornings; walk and wonder; carers' groups and karaoke.

6.4 Culture - Cultúr

6.4.1 In culture, the LIC pioneers London's leading programme of Irish arts and culture, with 329 events welcoming 18,647 people in 2019. The programme is diverse, inclusive and multi-generational ranging from music concerts with artists including Ed Sheeran, dance events including Irish céilís and regular theatre and performing arts events. Free and discounted space is offered for circa 250 events annually supporting local community groups, a mix of Irish and non-Irish artists and cultural organisations.

6.4.2 The London Irish Centre is home to the O'Donovan library which hosts a unique collection of 7,200 books displayed, on Irish literature and education. The Centre provides courses in Irish language, Irish music and culture and history, these are for all ages ranges and attract students of many different nationalities.

6.4.3 In addition, the LIC plays a significant role as a bridge between London and the island of Ireland. Investment in this relationship is at the foundation of the LIC's principles; its objective is to continue to build this special relationship through cultural events. This has led to successful functions which have raised money for the charity for example, the recent n Evening with Dermot O'Leary & Musical Guests, a unique concert showcasing Irish musical heritage.

6.4.4 The LIC's diverse, inclusive and multi-generational culture offering includes the following:

- Music - concerts, festivals, showcases and traditional Irish sessions;
- Dance – set dances, Irish céilís and lessons in all kinds of Irish step dancing;
- Theatre – regular fringe theatre, spoken word and co-presentations of Irish performing arts with partner venues;
- Education – welcoming hundreds of students for high-quality courses in Irish language, Irish music and Irish culture and history;
- Support – Irish artist/company/production looking for discounted space can apply through the Community Usage Programme;
- Visual Art & Film – showcasing a diverse selection of Irish visual arts through themed quarterly exhibitions and host a monthly Irish Film Night;
- Discussion & debate – regular lectures, panel discussion and debates on areas of Irish cultural interest.

6.5 Community - Comhluadar

6.5.1 Community is at the heart of the Centre with 82,000 people visiting last year. It is relied on by many members for help, social interaction and their connection with London and Ireland. The Centre still has many members who remember it being founded in 1954 and as such, for many Irish emigrants in London the LIC and its daily functions are their link back to Ireland. The Centre organises an annual trip to Ireland for those who cannot afford to visit their homeland.

6.5.2 The LIC is operated by 26 committed staff members but are also reliant on the valuable support from circa 161 volunteers who connect and support with the local community. The existing Centre has effective relationships with numerous non-Irish organisations as well as providing care and support to many in need in Camden and the wider London area. The Centre is a diverse multi-national space and it is estimated that around 65% of the visitors to the Centre are not Irish born.

6.5.3 The LIC is operating as best as it can within the constraints of the existing buildings. However, with greater demand and need, escalating repair costs and more pressures on the LIC, the current building is no longer fit for purpose. The reimagined Centre will enable the LIC to provide truly outstanding services with the warmest Irish welcome in a more sustainable, accessible and diverse way. The LIC's vision for the redevelopment is to:

“Reimagine, redevelop and reposition the LIC as a world class community and cultural centre. The Charity is committed to ensuring that any redevelopment will continue to meet the needs of those whom it serves, now and in the coming years. We want to continue to be a destination to foster friendship and support networks, and a place to celebrate Irish heritage, culture and community’.

6.5.4 The LIC's key redevelopment objectives are:

- For the vulnerable, forgotten and isolated – high quality wellbeing, advice, outreach and befriending services in the high quality facilities;
- For audiences, artists and students – world-class cultural, recreational and educational spaces and resources;
- For visitors - the Story of the Irish in London will celebrate the story and contribution of the Irish to this city and resonate with other ethnic groups;
- For London and local communities – beautiful new event, meeting and social spaces in which to gather, connect and strengthen community ties;
- For the Charity – financial sustainability for the next 65 years through improved income generation.

7.0 The Proposals

7.1.1 The redevelopment of the London Irish Centre seeks to create a vibrant hub for the community, a centre which adapts to the needs of its current community and encourages the integration of new members. The redevelopment represents a unique opportunity to continue to grow the heart of the Irish in London. The key objectives of the redevelopment are as follows:

- Enhance the community facilities to ensure our advice, welfare and day centre offices are situated close to one another with increased client advice facilities;
- Create an enhanced Wellbeing Centre offering activities, education, social space and lunches;
- Provide a Community Café, bar and meeting space;
- Provide flexible event and office space to support the LIC's charitable objectives;
- Create an improved destination for the Irish community in London, as well as an important cultural asset for Camden;
- Ensure long term financial sustainability through improved income generation as a social enterprise;
- Enhance the Irish identity of the Centre through design and storytelling in its redevelopment;
- Design a sustainable building that reduces the Centre's impact on the environment;
- Create a building which is fully accessible to all clients and visitors and encourages interaction between the different age groups;
- Create a single entrance to the building on Murray Street to provide a legible main entrance and simplify security arrangements;
- Ensure the proposed extensions and internal reconfigurations remove bottle necks within the building and slow flow of visitors leaving after events with resultant reduction in noise and disturbance for neighbouring properties;
- Create a high quality, well designed and architecturally attractive building which enhances the character of the surrounding area and can be delivered within budget.

7.1.2 The proposals will allow the London Irish Centre to be used more efficiently and effectively; it will provide a fully accessible building along Murray Street and Murray Mews and will create a new focal point and cultural destination for the local area and community. The proposals represents a momentous decision for the London Irish Centre and will secure their ability to deliver an outstanding community centre which facilitates their ability to deliver first class care, culture and community services. Circa 1,360sqm gross additional community floorspace will be created through

this application with the proposed and existing buildings seamlessly linked internally to create a rationalised floorplan, removing unnecessary circulation areas and bottlenecks and making the most efficient use of scarce land resources.

7.1.3 The Application Site can be read primarily under three elements and building typographies; the 19th Century villas of Nos.50, 51 and 52 Camden Square; the post war extensions along Murray Street in the form of the pitched roof building and Kennedy Hall and the 1980s McNamara Hall along Murray Mews. The Application Scheme and its design evolution has centred on a retrofitting first policy, recognising the relationship with Camden Square and utilising its important position as the junction of Murray Mews and Murray Street. The redevelopment seeks to re-connect the Centre with its various building elements and upgrade a community centre which is no longer fit for purpose.

7.1.4 The description of development is as follows:

'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'.

Camden Square

7.1.5 The affiliation with the London Irish Centre and Camden Square began in 1955 when the LIC bought the villa at No.52 Camden Square shortly followed by No. 51. The 19th century villas are a historic element of the LIC and its relationship with Camden Square and are recognised within the Camden Square Conservation Appraisal as being built to partially mirror the more grand houses on the opposite side of the square.

7.1.6 The villas have been altered and extended multiple times, owing to changes from their use as a hostel, residential dwelling and existing community centre. The alterations have included the amalgamation of Nos. 51 and 52 into one building. The villas are a significant part of the heritage of the LIC and its relationship with the surrounding area. The scheme has been designed with this in mind and has centred on a 'retrofit first policy' with an emphasis on retaining and enhancing the villas. As such, the 19th Century villas of Nos.50- 52 Camden Square will be retained and their facades refurbished and repaired, this will continue to re-inforce the LIC's historic relationship along Camden Square.

7.1.7 A key principle within the redevelopment is the use of the site to provide self-financing opportunities. This will be supported by the use of No. 50 Camden Square as ancillary accommodation for the purposes and functions of the LIC. The proposal will involve internal alterations to No. 50 to provide nine bedrooms with en-suite facilities which will provide ancillary accommodation for artists in residence, visiting entertainers and emergency accommodation for those in acute housing need.

7.1.8 The use of No. 50 will thus be ancillary to the overall functioning of the LIC and no change of use is proposed, this can be secured by way of an appropriately worded planning condition.

The Link Building

7.1.9 The redevelopment of the site along Camden Square includes the replacement of the glazed building linking No.50 to 51. The existing link building, built in 2005, is unsympathetic to the historic facades of the villas and as such reduces

the continuity the LIC's legibility along Camden Square. The replacement link building has been sympathetically designed to improve the visual connection between the villas. It will be lower than existing, with its height providing continuity with the level of the cornicing of No 50.

- 7.1.10 The new link building will act as a focal point for the centre along Camden Square and will provide ground floor access to the residential accommodation at No.50, a long term cycle store, meeting rooms and rear access to the reception and community hub at ground floor. The new link building will be of high quality and include a perforated brick screen. The link building includes a screened external balcony at first floor with views over Camden Square.

Nos. 51-52 Camden Square

- 7.1.11 The redevelopment will provide façade restorations to the villas and sensitive enhancements including extending the cornices down the sides of No.51 to complete the Victorian detailing. During the scheme's evolution the importance of the outdoor steps leading to No.51 was emphasised as a historic feature. As such, the steps onto Camden Square will remain part of No.51 and will be reconfigured to return them to their original orientation whilst maximising the available outdoor space at the corner of Camden Square and Murray Street. The reconfiguration of the steps will allow for the provision of a landscaped area 'therapy garden' at the corner of Murray Street and Murray Mews which will be in keeping with the character of the leafy Camden Square Conservation Area.

- 7.1.12 From ground to third floor level Nos.51-52 flexible community and care spaces for the Centre will be provided. These spaces are open, flexible spaces designed to meet the needs of various community groups, advice or outreach services. At ground floor level there will be a Wellbeing Centre which will host the lunch clubs, catered for by the adjoining kitchen and servery. This has been designed in view of the existing catering requirements for the LIC's lunch club and other catered events at the LIC. A lift is located in close proximity to the catering hub for access to the upper floors.

- 7.1.13 The Wellbeing Centre will have direct, level access to the therapy gardens to provide a stimulating and engaging environment for community groups and provide occupational therapy for its older clients. A new boundary wall will enclose the therapy gardens thus providing a significant visual improvement at ground floor level.

Murray Street

- 7.1.14 The historic development of the LIC has culminated in a range of building typographies which make up the Application Site today. The London Irish Centre has dramatically expanded since its establishment in the 1950s resulting in piecemeal development which is most noticeable along Murray Street.

- 7.1.15 Murray Street can be read as three separate buildings; the side elevation of No. 52 Camden Square built 1860; the 1950s pitched roof building and the two storey Kennedy Hall built in 1965. The culmination of these three buildings has resulted in an un-unified vernacular externally and poor layout internally to the detriment of the surrounding area and users of the LIC. The extensions which lie to the rear of the existing villas and the McNamara Hall are an opportunity to create a distinct new building along Murray Street and the corner of Murray Mews and ultimately provide a connection to the retained elements of the redevelopment; the villas on Camden Square and McNamara Hall, Murray Mews.

- 7.1.16 The history of Irish immigrants to London has been a significant consideration within the schemes evolution. The corner of the LIC at the junction of Murray Mews and Murray Street holds significant importance to the LIC owing to its due north relationship with Euston Station, where Irish immigrants would have first arrived by train from Holyhead Port. As such, this corner has been designed with inspiration taken from Mary Robinson, Ireland's first female President who placed a light in the window of her residence, *Áras an Uachtaráin*, in Phoenix Park, Dublin to make good on a promise made in her acceptance speech that *"there will always be a light on in Áras an Uachtaráin for our exiles and our emigrants"* and which builds on historical practice in Ireland.
- 7.1.17 The corner is inspired by this candle and will create a new focal point delivering a landmark and beacon for the local area, community and visitors to the Centre. The design includes an internal perforated brick screen which provides continuity with the new link building on Camden Mews.
- 7.1.18 The scheme comprises a part three/part four storey building running the length of the Application Site along Murray Street. The primary entrance to the site will be relocated from Camden Square to Murray Street to provide a cohesive and legible main entrance for those visiting the LIC. Murray Street as an historically commercial street is considered to be a more appropriate location for the main entrance than Camden Square, as advocated by the Camden's Conservation Area Appraisal. The new entrance will provide grade level access from Murray Street into the new community hub of the Centre. The ground floor comprises the main reception; a space to tell the 'Story of the Irish in London; a community hub for informal meetings and access to a new community café. Internal access will also be provided to smaller meeting rooms and Nos. 50-52 Camden Square.
- 7.1.19 Access to the upper levels is provided by two internal staircases both accessed off the community hub area (Murray Street) and lobby area of No 50 (Camden Square). Three lifts will provide access for wheelchair or other disabled users; accessibility and usability has been a key principle of design from the outset.
- 7.1.20 At first floor level a mezzanine will overlook the new community hub space at ground floor. The mezzanine level will provide additional function space which can be used flexibly for community groups or arts/cultural events. It also serves a key purpose of helping to slow the flow of people leaving the site after events in the McNamara Hall, removing bottlenecks currently experienced within the existing building, to reduce the potential for noise and disturbance for local residents. The first floor will include a bar linking the Circular Suite and the Mc Namara a bar store and male and female toilets. The first floor also comprises flexible community and care spaces, small meeting rooms, showers and a large kitchen.
- 7.1.21 The internal layout takes into consideration the multiple users of the LIC. The various functional spaces at first floor are located in the south east corner of the building with easy access from a lift and staircase. The design provides separation between the functional spaces which are more likely to be used by event goers and the community and care spaces at first floor level.
- 7.1.22 The second floor level is similar to the configuration at first floor level. It proposes a function room at the south east corner and further community and care spaces with additional LIC community and care spaces adjoining the historic villas.

- 7.1.23 At third floor level further flexible community and care spaces are provided. The archive/O'Donovan library will be relocated to this level to provide an open plan, flexible space. The third floor has been designed to provide a high-quality learning space achieved through a light and engaging atmosphere. The stimulating environment includes an external terrace along Murray Street which will provide an informal outdoor meeting space for groups. The external terrace will include landscaping to prevent overlooking or loss of privacy to the properties on Murray Street.
- 7.1.24 The roof height of the building on Murray Street will continue the roof height of the villas along Camden Square; the roof terrace will be set back from the buildings edge and will include soft landscaping as such it will be largely unseen from the vistas of Stratford Villas and Agar Grove.

Basement Level

- 7.1.25 Beneath the proposed community hub and reception area (between the villas and McNamara Hall) the single storey basement is to be enlarged. The proposed basement will accommodate two multi-purpose functional rooms; this will deliver further cultural and event space within Camden which can be used as exhibition space and the telling of the Story of the Irish in London and for community groups, artists, theatre groups and members of the LIC. The basement will include toilets and store rooms.
- 7.1.26 The basement will be limited to the new building along Murray Street and will not necessitate basement works underneath the villas of Camden Square or McNamara Hall.

McNamara Hall

- 7.1.27 The Application Site includes the McNamara Hall, an event space opened in 1980. The McNamara Hall is an essential event space for the Centre and Camden hosting the likes of Ed Sheeran amongst a vast array of artists as well as a very well utilised exam and conference facility. The redevelopment will retain the hall including the McNamara Bar; at present there is a large volume of unutilised space within the ceiling void above the finished ceiling height of the McNamara Hall which is taken up with structural beams. The proposal will comprise internal works to raise the ceiling height internally which will allow for the insertion of a new mezzanine level and stage above which will sit rigging to meet the needs of modern day performance requirements. This work can be undertaken by making effective use of the existing void space within the ceiling with a minimal increase in the overall height of the McNamara Hall of a mere 1.08m.
- 7.1.28 The redevelopment will include façade alterations to the McNamara Hall along Murray Street to provide continuity with the building on Murray Street.
- 7.1.29 Owing to the railway line which runs underneath the site the existing concrete slab will be unaffected by the development which will only include above ground works.
- 7.1.30 The following section shall explore how the redevelopment proposals described above adhere with national, regional and local levels of adopted and emerging planning policy.

8.0 Planning Considerations

8.1 Introduction

- 8.1.1 As outlined within the preceding chapter the principle of providing and enhancing community facilities is generally welcomed at a national, strategic and local level. The importance of the London Irish Centre in the historic development of Camden is included within the Camden Square Conservation Area appraisal.
- 8.1.2 During pre-application meetings the Council highlighted their commitment to making the proposals a success so that the London Irish Centre can stay within the Borough. The Council is supportive of the desire to modernise and enhance the facilities for the benefit of the organisation and the communities it serves, subject to the planning considerations outlined below.
- 8.1.3 The Council has outlined the key planning considerations as the principle of development- protecting and improving the existing community centre; the impact on heritage assets which form part of the Application Site and Conservation Area in which the site lies; impact of the development upon neighbouring amenity; the proposed ancillary residential accommodation; design and sustainability. The following sections shall examine each of these key planning considerations in turn and demonstrate how the proposal is acceptable in planning policy terms.

8.2 Principle of Development- Protecting and Improving Community Facility

- 8.2.1 Throughout all levels of planning policy there is fundamental support for community facilities with policies seeking their protection. Paragraph 92 of the NPPF (2018) states that to provide the social, recreational and cultural facilities and services the community needs, planning policies and decisions should:
- a) *Plan positively for the provision and use of shared spaces, community facilities such as local shops, meeting spaces, sports venues, open space, cultural buildings, public houses and places of worship and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments;*
 - b) *Take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community;*
 - c) *Guard against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities and services, particularly where this would reduce the community's ability to meet its day-to-day needs;*
 - d) *Ensure that established shops, facilities and services are able to develop and modernise, and are retained for the benefit of the community; and*
 - e) *Ensure an integrated approach to considering the location of housing, economic users and community facilities and services.*
- 8.2.2 The NPPF clearly identifies that there is substantial support for the retention and enhancement of community facilities. The NPPF supports development which ensures facilities develop and modernise and are retained for

the benefit of the community. The NPPF sets the policy benchmark by which strategic and local policies should be based upon.

8.2.3 The current London Plan (2016) and draft New London Plan (2019) conform to the NPPF, Policy 4.6 of the former states that development proposals that increase or enhance the provision of arts and culture facilities will be supported.

8.2.4 As with the NPPF and London Plan Policy direction, Policy C2 of the London Borough of Camden's Local Plan seeks to work with its partners to ensure that community facilities and services are developed and modernised to meet the changing needs of our community and reflect new approaches to the delivery of services. In particular, the following sections of Policy C2 of the Local Plan are of key importance which states that the Council will:

- a) *seek planning obligations to secure new and improved community facilities and services to mitigate the impact of developments. The Council may also fund improvements to community facilities using receipts from the Community Infrastructure Levy where this is identified on the Council's CIL funding list;*
- b) *expect a developer proposing additional floorspace in community use, or a new community facility, to reach agreement with the Council on its continuing maintenance and other future funding requirements;*
- c) *ensure that facilities provide access to a service on foot and by sustainable modes of travel;*
- d) *facilitate multi-purpose community facilities and the secure sharing or extended use of facilities that can be accessed by the wider community, except for facilities occupied by the emergency services due to their distinct operating needs;*
- e) *seek the inclusion of measures which address the needs of community groups and foster community integration;*

8.2.5 This proposal involves the redevelopment of the London Irish Centre which involves the partial demolition of the existing buildings on Murray Street, elevational alterations to Nos. 50 - 52 Camden Square including provision of a new link building and elevational alterations to the McNamara Hall on Murray Mews. The redevelopment represents a unique opportunity for the London Irish Centre to substantially upgrade its existing facility to meet the growing needs of the diverse and multi-generational community it serves. The Application Site would continue to be utilised for community and cultural purposes although more effectively than the present situation.

8.2.6 At present the existing building hinders clients' use of the services and prevents integration amongst the various user groups. Since its founding in 1954 the LIC has undergone piecemeal development this has resulted in a Centre which has poor accessibility for its users and is no longer fit for purpose. The current layout and accessibility of the Centre significantly curtails the LIC's ability to provide the high-quality cultural, wellbeing and outreach services which so many clients rely on.

8.2.7 In support of Local Plan Policy C2 the redevelopment will modernise the Centre to meet the changing needs of the community and reflect new approaches to the delivery of services. At present the Centre's primary access is via Camden Square which includes a wheelchair ramp and stairs, the entrance is uninviting from street level and does

not actively encourage pedestrians into the LIC to learn more about its services. In comparison the redevelopment will replace the un-sympathetic glazed link building with a new link building, the new link building will act as sensitive enhancement and will distinguish a legible entrance into the Centre from Camden Square. A new entrance on Murray Street will be more inviting for pedestrians and users of the LIC. The proposals will provide grade level access from Camden Square and Murray Street which will improve accessibility into and throughout the centre, this is in support of Local Plan Policy C2 which seeks to modernise community facilities for users and foster community integration.

- 8.2.8 The demolition of the building on Murray Street is key to the success of the London Irish Centre delivering and growing its services and cultural events in Camden. The existing buildings on site cover nearly all of the sites footprint with the result that the redevelopment has focused primarily on increasing the amount of useable space internally, removing bottlenecks and wasted circulation space internally to deliver an efficient and rationalised internal layout.
- 8.2.9 The redevelopment will create an additional 1,360sqm of additional community space at the Application Site delivered through a part three/part four storey building. This additional community floorspace will be delivered in the form of an enlarged basement, mezzanine level, internal reconfigurations and additional level at third floor. The 1,360sqm of additional floorspace proposed belies the substantial efficiencies made to internal layout which will result in a building with 69% efficiency compared to 56% efficiency within the existing building. The proposal will make the best use of scarce land resources to provide a modern, high quality community facility which is fully in line with the aspirations of Policy C2 of Camden's Local Plan.
- 8.2.10 The LIC has undertaken a thorough assessment of its existing and future space needs. To that end a range of flexible spaces of differing scales are proposed from high-quality open plan community hub as one enters from Murray Street, to smaller, informal one-to-one meeting rooms to large function rooms and exhibition spaces including the McNamara Hall and new basement spaces. The addition of 1,360 sqm of net additional community floorspace within Camden is wholly in line with Part E of Local Plan Policy C2 which involve the expansion and enhancement of the Centre's operations.
- 8.2.11 One of the key objectives in the redevelopment of the London Irish Centre is the ability to provide self-financing opportunities which help secure its longevity. At present, the LIC rents spaces in the Centre for events such as conferences, music, sporting events and weddings. The internal reconfiguration of the Centre will create a range of spaces which the LIC can rent out to provide income-generation to ensure the long term financial viability of the Centre.
- 8.2.12 It is also important to note that while the LIC is considered to be the Irish Heart in London it attracts a wide range of organisations, clients and customers. Of the 82,000 who visited in 2019, it is estimated that 75% are non-Irish. From the LIC's client data it is known that 40% of the Advice and Outreach clients are non-Irish and it is estimated that, of the 19,000 who attend Culture, Arts and Education events, 35% are non-Irish.
- 8.2.13 As outlined within the accompanying Community Use Plan the LIC is utilised by a range of user groups including free space to neighbourhood groups including Camden History Group, Camden Square Neighbourhood Association, Local Residents Association Meeting (Agar Grove), Canteloves Ward Meetings, Councillor, MP and Metropolitan Police surgeries; Camden Town Festival Group and Free Association Arts Group.

8.2.14 The LIC also offers heavily discounted space (usually £10 per hour) alongside marking support to community organisations as part of the LIC's Community Engagement Partnership (CEP). These include Irish Elderly Advice Network; Strange Fish Theatre Company; Geoff Holland Set Dancing; Council of Irish Counties Association; Karen Ryan Music Classes; Semple Mossie School of Irish Dancing; Irish Forum for Counselling and Psychotherapy amongst others. The LIC offers heavily discounted hire rates for registered charities, not-for-profit and fund-raising events. It is the event home of several important charities such as ICAP, Rethink and Westminster Drug Project. In addition:

- LIC is the home of Revelation Church, whilst also supporting other religious event activities – Bar/Bat Mitzvahs, christenings
- LIC hosts the Live in the Chapel – an award winning programme for new and emerging artists (24 sessions in 2019)
- LIC supports various minority groups such as London Gay Men's Chorus and the I Am Irish project
- LIC is a very popular site for exams - A Level Study Conferences, SOAS, Royal Veterinary College and NYC University
- LIC as a multi-cultural venue. In addition to Irish events the Centre hosts the Independence of Chile, Durja Puja Festival, numerous Tibetan community events, Indian Ladies, Shumei's (a Japanese organisation) larger events and is a very popular venue for Somalian community weddings.
- LIC hosts free of charge three community choirs – Gaelic Voices, the Jazz Choir and the Irish Pensioners Choir.

8.2.15 This demonstrates the importance of the LIC in providing community facilities which extend well beyond the Irish community and are of benefit to Camden and London as a whole. A redeveloped Centre would enable the LIC to expand these offerings which are critical to the longevity and viability of the Centre. The proposals are considered to be in full accordance with national and local policy which protects the retention of valued community facilities.

8.3 Use of No. 50 as Ancillary Residential Accommodation

8.3.1 No.50 Camden Square is proposed to undergo internal alterations to provide ancillary residential accommodation on the first to third floors.

8.3.2 At present No. 50 is used for meeting rooms and office space to support the LIC's operations, the redevelopment will deliver nine bedrooms with en-suites facilities in No.50. The nine self-contained bedrooms will provide overnight accommodation for visiting artists in residence who may be performing at the Centre or are involved with the Centre's outreach programmes. The accommodation will also be used occasionally to provide those in acute housing crisis with emergency accommodation. The use of No.50 as ancillary accommodation will strengthen the Centre's ability to provide care and support to those without accommodation and will only be used as an ancillary to the functions of the LIC. The use of No.50 as residential accommodation is reflective of the villas historic use as a hostel in the 1950s and 60s.

8.3.3 The proposed use of No. 50 as ancillary residential accommodation will be directly related to the Class D1/D2 use of the main buildings. The nine bedrooms will not be available to let on the open market nor to those unconnected with the LIC. They will be managed by the LIC and used by those with a direct connection to the Centre. Access to the

ancillary residential accommodation will be via the new link building which will also provide secondary access to the main community centre with the result that No. 50 will physically remain inextricably linked to the main community use.

- 8.3.4 Overall, the ancillary residential accommodation proposed equates to a 212sqm of the overall 4,165sqm GIA of floorspace within the redevelopment proposal. As such a mere 5% of the overall floorspace will be used for ancillary residential accommodation which will help the LIC achieve one of its fundamental objectives of being financially sustainable into the future.
- 8.3.5 The residential accommodation proposed within No. 50 will thus be ancillary to the overall functioning of the LIC and no change of use is proposed, this can be secured by way of an appropriately worded planning condition. Given its ancillary role no loss of community floorspace will result within the Application Site.

8.4 Impact on Heritage Assets

- 8.4.1 It is recognised that the Application Site is sensitive from a heritage perspective given its location within the Camden Square Conservation Area. The Application Site also includes the historic 19th century villas of Nos 50, 51 and 52 Camden Square which whilst not statutorily listed are deemed to make a positive contribution to the overall appearance and character of Camden Square and have a prominent position at the junction with Murray Street, Camden Square and Stratford Villas. There are two listed buildings within the Camden Square Conservation Area, a Grade II listed house on Murray Mews (No.22), Grade II* listed house on Camden Mews and a Grade II listed telephone box at the junction of Murray Street and Agar Grove.
- 8.4.2 Heritage advice has been provided by RPS who have been actively involved in ensuring the evolving design respects and complements the heritage assets both within and adjoining the Application Site; a copy of their Heritage Assessment accompanies this application.
- 8.4.3 The approach to the design of the London Irish Centre redevelopment has centred on retaining the villas of Nos. 50, 51 and 52 Camden Square and the McNamara Hall on Murray Street. The redevelopment removes the piecemeal development along Murray Street to create a building nestled within the contours of the villas and McNamara Hall. When considered alongside the retained historic villas and McNamara Hall the redeveloped Centre will have an engaging presence from the public highway and will provide a continuous streetscape.
- 8.4.4 As noted within the Camden Square Conservation Area Appraisal there are a variety of building styles along Murray Street owing to the pressures on local retail and the desire for residential conversion. Resultantly, this has led to the loss of many original shopfronts along Murray Street and loss of detailed architectural features. The redevelopment of the London Irish Centre actively responds to the desires of the Camden Square Conservation Area Appraisal which states that *'development could enhance the Murray Street junctions and adjacent building sites'*. The building provides a sensitive enhancement which will provide legibility along Murray Street and improved street activation. Its design is part three/part four storeys, with the top floor to be set back to minimise its visibility within the streetscene. The height of the proposed extension is thus congruous with the three storey buildings on the southern side of Murray Street and the Belvard Point development immediately adjacent.

8.4.5 As part of the proposals, it is the intention to upgrade the landscaping and boundary treatments to reflect the upgraded facility. A therapy garden at the junction of Murray Street and Camden Square will deliver appropriate soft landscaping and greening of the junction. The reconfiguration of the external staircase to No. 51 and provision of a continuous boundary wall along Nos. 51 and 52 will subliminally guide visitors to the new main entrance on Murray Street. This will ensure the surrounding public realm is more comprehensible for pedestrians and motorists, improving wayfinding to the Centre. The landscape treatments chosen are appropriate to the surrounding area and are supportive of the Camden Square Conservation Area Appraisal in planting softer landscaping in the 'front garden' of No 52, a characteristic feature of Victorian villas in Camden Square.

8.5 Design

8.5.1 The design proposals for the London Irish Centre have undergone a number of design iterations to deliver the most efficient, visually sympathetic and aesthetically pleasing building possible. The proposals include replacing the buildings on Murray Street including pitched roof building (1950s) and the Kennedy Memorial Centre (opened 1965) which function poorly in the context of the surrounding area and needs of the London Irish Centre. Both buildings are no longer fit for purpose owing to the Centres piecemeal development; this has resulted in an un-unified façade and inconsistent appearance and roofscape along Murray Street.

8.5.2 The existing Centre is curtailed by its complex interior and number of small uninviting entrance points; including those the two on Murray Street and one on the corner of Murray Mews. The existing entrances into the LIC do not contribute positively to the street scene or actively encourage pedestrian engagement with the Centre.

8.5.3 Coffey Architects were commissioned in 2019 to develop the proposals for the London Irish Centre redevelopment. This appointment arose through a competition of leading architecture firms, whereby Coffey Architects were deemed to be the most compatible in terms of understanding the Centre and its daily demands, delivering the LIC's objectives for the site, and the most innovative in terms of design and vision.

8.5.4 As stated earlier in this document the proposals for the site have been subject to in-depth discussions with key stakeholders and have been presented to the public on a number of occasions. Camden's Planning, Design and Conservation Officers have been heavily involved in the design evolution of the proposals and their input alongside Camden's Design Review Panel have resulted in some fundamental amendments to the design of the proposal. One key design aspiration of officers and the DRP was to ensure that in the redeveloping the Centre the heart of what makes the LIC a homely and welcoming environment was not lost. This was echoed by users and staff at the Centre who, whilst outlining the shortfalls of the existing Centre in terms of accessibility, connectivity and efficiency, all saw the sense of 'home from home' and 'nooks and crannies' within the existing building as positive features to be preserved. Ensuring this intimate atmosphere and Irish welcome has been a fundamental component of Coffey Architects design proposals. This has been achieved by the placement of the reception immediately adjoining the main entrance to welcome visitors into the building, to ensure that the new community hub and function spaces while generous retain a human scale and have areas for one-to-one interactions.

8.5.5 Coffey Architects have undertaken numerous workshops with users and staff at the Centre to ensure the redevelopment proposals best meet clients' existing and future needs. Expert advice has also been obtained from Michelin starred chef Richard Corrigan and his executive team to ensure the kitchen facilities are best designed to

meet catering needs of the Centre. Finbarr Whooley, Director of Content at the Museum of London, has also provided advice on how best to tell the story of the Irish in London, both through specially designed features such as the proposed 'Irish Story' interactive exhibition on the ground floor and incidental story telling opportunities on available wall space within the building.

- 8.5.6 Symbolic design gestures are also included within the community hub where 32 interlinked circles are proposed within the floor to represent each of the 32 counties on the island of Ireland and the 32 boroughs of London, highlighting the role the LIC has historically played as a bridge between London and the island of Ireland.
- 8.5.7 A key concept which has informed the design of the redevelopment is the community. Central to the scheme is creating flexible spaces around the LIC which encourage a sense of gathering and interaction between the varying users of the LIC. The efficient design of the scheme simplifies the areas to be used for gathering, with an open plan community hub at the entrance from Murray Street. Crucially, the design of the internal areas has been designed to accommodate both event goers of the LIC and to enhance the LIC's outreach services.
- 8.5.8 In terms of the exterior the new buildings on Murray Street have been sensitively designed as a modern interpretation reflecting the existing character of the area. The palette of materials have been chosen with the white corner building reflecting the white stucco villas at Nos. 51 and 52 and the darker brick infill building reflecting the McNamara Hall and aged London stock brick on rear of the villas. This results in the creation of three main volumes along Murray Street, which are clearly expressed to respect the existing urban grain.
- 8.5.9 The corner building on the junction of Murray Street and Murray Mews has been designed to represent a candle. As mentioned previously this echoes the commitment made by former President of Ireland Mary Robinson who placed a light in the window of her official residence *Áras an Uachtaráin* in Dublin to ensure *"there will always be a light on in Áras an Uachtaráin for our exiles and our emigrants"*. This feature will create a focal point to guide visitors to the Centre and reflects the geographical link being due north of Euston Station, the first point of arrival for Irish immigrants to London.
- 8.5.10 The proportion of the windows in the Murray Street and Murray Mews facades also builds upon the Irish thatched cottage typology in its solid to void ratio and sense of solidity, whilst complementing the character of the Camden Square Conservation Area.
- 8.5.11 The existing link building between Nos. 50 and 51 Camden Square is considered to detrimentally impact on the character and appearance of the Conservation Area. Its removal has been welcomed by Council Officers who consider its removal to have substantial heritage benefits. The proposed curved perforated brick façade has been designed to reflect that within the 'candle feature' on the corner building of Murray Street and Murray Mews ensuring consistency in the design.
- 8.5.12 The evolution of the design is explored in further detail within the accompanying Design and Access Statement.

8.6 Accessibility

- 8.6.1 The Irish community in London is ageing with the highest median (average) age of any ethnic group in this city. Fundamental to the design of the redevelopment is to achieve the highest standards of accessibility and inclusion. The existing Centre is not fit for purpose in terms of accessibility. For instance, if a client with mobility issues was in need of advice and outreach services they would need to enter the site via the ramp on Camden Square, use the retrofitted lift in the link building to get to the upper ground floor of No. 50. If they were then to attend a cultural event they would then need to use the lift again to go down a half level to Nos. 51 and 52 and travel from there to the McNamara Hall. Further, to then attempt to access the lunch club which takes place in the Wellbeing Centre in the ground floor of the Kennedy Hall, one would need to leave the Camden Square buildings entirely and travel to the entrance on a very narrow section of footpath on Murray Mews and to attempt entry through the narrow entrance. This lack of connectivity restricts interactions between various user groups.
- 8.6.2 The redevelopment has centred on inclusive design; to create a building which can be used safely and easily and adapts to the LIC's varying users. It will provide an opportunity for all to enjoy and use the building and the wider landscape. Pedestrians will have step free access into the Centre via two entrances; the new link building on Camden Square and new entrance on Murray Street. The entrance on Camden Square will be levelled to ground floor and soft landscaping will provide a clearly delineated pedestrian route to the building entrance. For visitors arriving from Murray Street the entrance is set at pavement level and has an engaging façade which encourages its' use.
- 8.6.3 Each floor has been designed to be easy to navigate for everyday users of the Centre and visitors and is wheelchair accessible. All floors can be reached from the three lifts at ground floor and are Building Regulation Part M compliant. Accessible WCs are provided at each level, with toilets at ground floor level adjacent to the community hub space and café/bar. As such, the redevelopment of the Centre will provide a community facility which is fit for purpose and will encourage intergenerational interaction between the diverse user groups.

8.7 Transport

- 8.7.1 In support of this application a full Transport Assessment and Travel Plan has been prepared by Caneparo Associates to consider the impact of the proposal on the surrounding roads and transport network.
- 8.7.2 The Application Site has a Public Transport Accessibility Level (PTAL) of 3, on a scale of 1 to 6 with 6 being the highest. This indicates moderate accessibility to public transport with the Application Site being within approximately a 10 to 15 minute walk to Camden Underground Station, Camden Road and Caledonian Road Overground Stations and Kings Cross and St. Pancras International termini.
- 8.7.3 In terms of transport, the guiding principle for the redevelopment proposals is to be car free and to encourage visitors to the Centre to travel by sustainable methods of travel such as public transport, by bicycle or by foot. To this end the redevelopment proposals will incorporate a significant uplift in on-site cycle parking provision from the 16 spaces currently provided (contained within 8 Sheffield stands) to 41 short stay spaces provided to the front of No. 50 and 10 long stay spaces provided on the ground floor of No.50. This exceeds the London Plan cycle parking requirements by

one space as outlined within paragraph 5.3 of the accompanying Transport Assessment and will encourage the use of more sustainable modes of travel.

- 8.7.4 The Travel Plan, submitted in supported of this application, provides greater detail with regards to enabling employees and visitors to make informed decisions about their travel which minimises the adverse impacts of their travel on the environment. The Travel Plan outlines the action plan which will be implemented which includes the appointment of a Community Centre Travel Plan Coordinator (CCTPC) and appropriate marketing to employees and visitors. The Travel Plan has been prepared in line with guidance issued by Transport for London (TfL) and will be successfully implemented.
- 8.7.5 No car parking will be provided on-site and visitors will be restricted from parking on-street by a Controlled Parking Zone which is in force weekdays from 08:30 to 18:30. When users of the Centre are travelling from the Centre via taxis, potentially after cultural events, they will be encouraged to wait inside the community hub until their vehicle arrives to prevent noise and disturbance for surrounding residential properties.
- 8.7.6 Loading will be as per existing arrangements with loading and deliveries taking place on-street on the single yellow lines on Murray Street and on Murray Mews in the case of events taking place in the McNamara Hall. The proposed redeveloped community centre is expected to generate a similar level of servicing movements to the existing situation. Deliveries / servicing would be undertaken predominantly by light panel vans and are not expected to have a material impact on the operation and environmental condition of the public highway.
- 8.7.7 In light of the above, the Transport Assessment concludes the proposed redevelopment will not result in a material impact in highways and transportation terms. Furthermore, in accordance with NPPF paragraph 32, the residual cumulative impacts of the development are not considered severe, and, as such, should not be prevented or refused on transport grounds.

8.8 Protecting Residential Amenity

- 8.8.1 The London Irish Centre has undertaken substantial public consultation and discussions with the local authority and as such the proposals have been carefully designed to ensure that the design and layout of the scheme is considerate of the surrounding residents. The Application Scheme which steps up from three to four storeys in height along Murray Street will ensure that the proposal is viewed as a sympathetic addition to the landscape congruous with building heights within the surrounding area. A planting zone at second and third floors will green the buildings boundary at second floor level. The redevelopment will be retained within the existing boundaries of the Application Site and as such, will sensitively integrate into the existing form.

Noise and Disturbance

- 8.8.2 The London Irish Centre is comprised of multiple buildings, constructed between 1860 (Camden Square Villas), 1965 (McNamara Hall) and 1980 (McNamara Building) and as such do not meet modern standards in terms of their thermal or acoustic properties. By comparison the proposal would involve the construction of a modern purpose built Centre and external alterations which would have high acoustic and thermal insulation properties.

- 8.8.3 The functional spaces at basement level will include high insulation properties and will be adequately ventilated reducing the potential for noise and disturbance for neighbouring residential properties. A Basement Impact Assessment has been prepared by Elliott Wood/Soil Technics and submitted in support of this application.
- 8.8.4 At present the primary access into the LIC is on Camden Square which is more residential in nature than Murray Street. At present due to bottlenecks within the building and limited overflow spaces visitors to the Centre have limited option but to spill over into Camden Square after events in the McNamara Hall or Kennedy Hall. This has the potential to create noise and disturbance for residents on Camden Square.
- 8.8.5 A key benefit of this scheme is the proposed relocation of the entrance to Murray Street which will use the large community hub space at ground floor level and mezzanine at first floor as a 'holding space' following meetings and events. This will allow a slow and steady flow of visitors from the Centre after events and contain potential noise within the building itself. This is anticipated to significantly reduce noise and disturbance for the adjoining residential properties and is deemed to be a significant improvement to the existing situation.
- 8.8.6 External landscaping includes a Therapy Garden at the junction of Camden Square and Murray Street and an external 'Nature Terrace' at third floor level. The therapy garden will make use of the natural topography for both visual and acoustic screening and will be enclosed by a new boundary wall. The external terrace will be set back at third floor level and screened from street view by soft landscaping. Considerable design has been given to ensure this element of the proposal will not be visible from the street scene.
- 8.8.7 The LIC is a multi-purpose and diverse Community and Cultural Centre with a large variety clients and customers who use the Centre for a range of purposes during the day and evenings, with the daytime use attracting the majority of users/visitors to the Centre. The application is accompanied by an Events Management Plan which states that the Centre can operate 08:00 to 00:00 each day in line with the premises licence. The standard license hours can be extended with the granting of a Temporary Event Notice (TEN). Each License will be limited to 01:30 with the venue cleared by 02:00; the LIC currently avails of 16 TENs per year and will continue to do so following redevelopment.
- 8.8.8 The Events Management Plan outlines that at present the combined individual room capacity is in the region of 1,400 people. However, the LIC's current operational capacity is determined by its fire strategy and compliance with regulations with the result that in the region of 1,000 people can be accommodated within the building at any one time, with the maximum capacity of the McNamara Hall being 580 people.
- 8.8.9 The LIC's future capacity will be largely governed by its fire strategy which is still to be resolved by the appointed Fire Consultants Fire Risk Solutions during the detailed design stage following grant of planning permission (RIBA Stages 3 and 4). The future capacity will be dependent upon a number of technical issues yet to be resolved such as use of voice alarms, lobby design, rear fire escape design and input from the London Fire Brigade. The McNamara Hall will increase in capacity from 580 to 690 through the insertion of a Mezzanine within the existing dropped ceiling. Overall it is anticipated the maximum operational capacity will not exceed 1,250 with the majority of uses taking place during the daytime, as per existing arrangements.

- 8.8.10 Such an increase in capacity within a building which meets modern standards of noise insulation and has been specifically designed to resolve existing operational issues, remove internal bottlenecks and provide a slow release of visitors after events is not anticipated to result in unacceptable noise and disturbance for local residents.
- 8.8.11 Additionally, as outlined within the accompanying Events Management Plan the redeveloped Centre will incorporate a range of management techniques to prevent loitering outside after events and to encourage visitors to continue their onwards travel via Camden Road and Agar Grove. Visitors waiting for taxis will be encouraged to wait within the lobby/community hub until such time as their vehicle arrives. A Noise Assessment has been prepared by Max Fordham LLP Acoustics and submitted in support of this application. The Noise Assessment demonstrates a robust glazing and wall specification would provide internal noise levels for all residential environments which would comply with the British Standard for residential accommodation.
- 8.8.12 The impact of events at the Application Site particularly within the McNamara Hall has been assessed. The noise assessment outlines that with specified glazing and the design proposed by the application scheme residents will not experience undue noise disturbance. The McNamara Hall is already used for events and the existing sound limiter in the hall is recommended to remain.
- 8.8.13 The third floor terrace and noise levels generated will be controlled through an operational management plan which will be submitted to the council for review. The use of the terrace and therefore associated noise will be controlled through a suitably worded planning condition.
- 8.8.14 The impact of the development on neighbouring properties has been carefully considered in the design of the redevelopment proposal. It seeks to resolve existing operational issues within the building and result in a development which does not detrimentally impact upon the residential amenities of neighbouring properties.

8.9 Daylight and Sunlight

- 8.9.1 The impact of the proposed development on the surrounding buildings has been assessed in terms of daylight and sunlight as outlined in the Daylight and Sunlight Assessment prepared by EB7. The tests within the report were undertaken in accordance with the Building Research Establishment (BRE) 'Site Layout Planning for Daylight and Sunlight- A Guide to Good Practice (second edition, 2011), the British Standard- BS 8206: Part 2 and the Chartered Institute of Building Services Engineers Applications Manual on window design. The report assesses the development and impact on neighbouring properties and concludes that the proposals will achieve a high level of compliance and will have a low impact on the light receivable by neighbouring properties.

8.10 Circular Economy Statement

- 8.10.1 The redevelopment has been designed in line with London Plan Policy 5.4 'Retrofitting' which supports proposals which sustainably retrofit existing buildings and champion sustainable design and construction. Emerging London Plan policy S17 'Reducing waste and supporting the circular economy' has also been given due consideration in the design of the proposals

- 8.10.2 The redevelopment will retain Nos. 50, 51 and 52 Camden Square and a significant portion of McNamara Hall and replace the buildings along Murray Street with a modern, efficient building. The existing Murray Street buildings are as a result of historic piecemeal extensions and are no longer considered to be fit for purpose and are highly inaccessible and inefficient. Internal reconfigurations alone would not deliver a community facility which satisfactorily overcomes constraints identified or meets modern standards. As such the demolition of these buildings is necessary to achieve the redevelopment objectives as outlined in paragraph 7.1.1.
- 8.10.3 The Murray Street buildings are comprised of engineering brick which is not considered to be of sufficient quality to salvage and reuse within the redevelopment proposals. These can however, be reused as rubble for backfilling purposes within future developments.
- 8.10.4 The retrofitting of the existing Centre will reduce the carbon dioxide emissions from the development and minimise the generation of pollution and waste from existing building stock.

8.11 Energy and Sustainability

- 8.11.1 The Energy Statement has been prepared by OCSC and has been prepared in line with the NPPF, DRAFT London Plan and Camden Local Plan. The energy performance and carbon dioxide emissions have been assessed and the energy strategy based around the Mayor's energy hierarchy:
- Be lean; use less energy;
 - Be clean: supply energy efficiently; and
 - Be green: use renewable energy
- 8.11.2 The Applicants energy consultant has been fully involved in the design process to ensure that a highly sustainable and energy efficient strategy has been incorporated.
- 8.11.3 The energy statement demonstrates that the proposed development will achieve an overall reduction in annual carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions of 69% compared to the Building Regulations Part L 2013 baseline. In accordance with the draft London Plan and adopted Plan, the proposed development has exceeded the minimum 35% improvement over Part L.

8.12 Landscaping

- 8.12.1 The overall approach to the London Irish Centre redevelopment is to retain as many of the existing trees as possible. This includes the Lime Tree set within the front garden of No.50 Camden Square which has a Tree Preservation Order. The boundaries notably at the junction of Camden Square and Murray Street will include soft landscaping to create a green boundary and garden setting. This will create homogeneity with the surrounding private front gardens and mature landscape.
- 8.12.2 The external terrace at third floor level will include soft landscaping; this has been designed to provide screening from street level and to provide some privacy and external comfort.

8.12.3 The landscape proposals aim to enhance the ecological value of the site and encourage connections with the surrounding urban suburb.

8.13 Air Quality

8.13.1 No additional vehicle movements are proposed as a result of this development. It is expected the proposal would continue to be accessed by existing transport networks and pedestrian routes given the sites PTAL 3 rating. The application is accompanied by an Air Quality Assessment prepared by Hoare Lea which demonstrates the proposal will not have a detrimental impact in terms of air quality.

9.0 Conclusion

- 9.1.1 The redevelopment of the London Irish Centre is a significant undertaking for the London Irish Centre and is seeking to grow the Irish Heart of London in line with the core functions of Care, Culture and Community. The proposals represent a unique opportunity to enhance a community centre which is a vital lifeline for its wide-reaching community.
- 9.1.2 The existing building itself is constraining the LIC's ability to deliver the community, arts and culture events in Camden which so many enjoy. The existing Centre is unfit for purpose due to its number of piecemeal development since its founding in the 1950s. The current configuration is highly inefficient and inaccessible for users. Its presence on the streetscene is confusing owing to its six different entrance points on Camden Square, Murray Street and Murray Mews.
- 9.1.3 The proposed development is a once in a generation opportunity to grow the Irish Heart of London. This will be facilitated in the demolition of the buildings along Murray Street to create a new building which provides connectivity with the villas on Camden Square and McNamara Hall. The primary access route into the Centre will be re-located from Camden Square to Murray Street; the new entrance will enhance the streetscene and provide a coherent and inviting main entrance for visitors into the Centre.
- 9.1.4 A new community hub at ground floor level will provide a café and informal spaces for the community to use. The new building on Murray Street will deliver high-quality functional spaces at basement, ground, first, second and third floor. A new Therapy Garden directly accessed from the ground floor Wellbeing Centre and external terrace at third floor delivers further external space for community and educational purposes. The latter will be set back from the Murray Street façade to prevent overlooking and loss of privacy for adjoining properties.
- 9.1.5 The redevelopment includes the retention of the historic villas along Camden Square, whilst a sensitively designed new link building between No 50 and 51 will improve the legibility of the Centre along Camden Square and provide ground level access from street level. The visual improvements from street level include the greening of the junction at Camden Square and Murray Street within the new Therapy Garden.
- 9.1.6 The McNamara Hall is an essential event space for many in Camden but is in need of upgrades and repair. The proposals for the site will allow the McNamara Hall to be used more effectively for events; to increase its capacity; to deliver essential arts and culture space for Camden. This includes raising ceiling height to include a balcony at second floor by making efficient use of the existing ceiling void with only a modest increase of 1.08m in the overall building height.
- 9.1.7 A key principle of the redevelopment is the optimisation of the Application Site to deliver a high quality, fully accessible Community and Cultural facility which is self-financing and will secure the longevity of the LIC in Camden. The proposals include the use of No. 50 as self-contained ancillary accommodation to be used by artists in residence; visiting entertainers; as well as offer occasional emergency accommodation for those in crisis. This will deliver flexibility of the use of No.50 as a self-financing element and the option to provide emergency accommodation.

- 9.1.8 The design proposals have undergone amendments following discussions with officers from the London Borough of Camden, its Design Review Panel, meetings with key stakeholders and public consultation events held with the local community. These improvements to the London Irish Centre will ensure the site is used more effectively, responds to the flexible needs of the community and meets the high standards of a modern day inclusive facility.
- 9.1.9 The proposed redevelopment of the London Irish Centre is in accordance with the objectives of national, strategic and local planning policy and delivers an enhanced community facility of exemplary design, which aligns with the objective to support and grow community facilities.

Appendix 1- Design Review Panel Response

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Camden Design Review Panel

Report of Formal Review Meeting: London Irish Centre

Friday 8 November 2018

5 Pancras Square, London, N1C 4AC



FRAME PROJECTS

Panel

Catherine Burd (chair) Michal Cohen Matthew Lloyd

Stuart Piercy Paddy Pugh

Attendees

Rose Todd London Borough of Camden

Edward Jarvis London Borough of Camden

Lavinia Scaletti London Borough of Camden

Kristina Smith London Borough of Camden George McKenzie London Borough of Camden

Kyriakou Ageridou Frame Projects

Tom Bolton Frame Projects

Apologies / report copied to

Bethany Cullen London Borough of Camden

David Fowler London Borough of Camden

Richard Wilson London Borough of Camden

Victoria Hinton London Borough of Camden

Kevin Fisher London Borough of Camden

Confidentiality

This is a pre-application review, and therefore confidential. As a public organisation Camden Council is subject to the Freedom of Information Act (FOI), and in the case, of an FOI request may be obliged to release project information submitted for review.

Report of Formal Review Meeting

8 November 2019

CDRP78_London Irish Centre

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Project name and site address

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

Presenting team

Sean Kennedy	London Irish Centre
Jamie Whelan	Coffey Architects
Phil Coffey	Coffey Architects
Lee Marsden	Coffey Architects
Siofra Boyd	Rolfe Judd Planning

Planning authority's views

The proposals are intended to improve and enlarge the London Irish Centre, to provide a more efficient building in terms of accessibility and energy, with upgraded spaces for community events and services. The London Irish Centre consists of a number of buildings, between three and four storeys in height, constructed as later appendages to two villa buildings, Nos. 50-52 Camden Square. These include the Kennedy Hall, built in the 1960s on the corner of Murray Street and Murray Mews, and the McNamara Hall on Murray Mews, built in the 1980s over the mainline railway to Euston Station. Piecemeal development has compromised the internal functioning of the buildings, resulting in small cellular space, excessive circulation spaces and poor accessibility.

The site is located within the Camden Square Conservation Area. There is one listed house in the neighbouring streets, and a listed telephone box on Murray Street. The proposals include three main elements: alterations to and refurbishment of the Camden Square villas; demolition and rebuilding of the two Murray Street buildings; and a roof extension to the McNamara Hall. Kennedy Hall and link buildings will be demolished and replaced with a new building on Murray Street. The McNamara Hall will be refurbished and extended with an additional storey added in place of the existing roof.

Camden Council supports redevelopment of the site, which will deliver various benefits for the organisation and the communities it serves. It asked the panel to consider three priorities in particular, in relation to the proposed design. The development should protect the primacy and significance of Nos. 50-52 Camden Square in relation to new buildings. While the front gardens could benefit from re-landscaping, it is important to ensure that the villas retain their presence and frontage on the square. The character of the development should reflect the charm of the existing buildings, avoiding an institutional feel. And, while officers support moving the main entrance to Murray Street to create more active frontage, care should be taken to avoid disturbance to neighbours from an increased events programme in a residential area.



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Design panel's views

Summary

The panel thanks the design team for presenting its proposals for review at an early stage. It fully supports the ambition to provide enhanced facilities for the Irish Centre on the site. The panel's comments are intended to help refine the design approach, which, whilst broadly supported, needs to better balance the Centre's long term needs with the protection and enhancement of the sensitive conservation area setting. The programme is complex and the task of delivering the volume of space required on the site is challenging. The panel suggests the brief is re-examined, and options for rationalising the number and scale of spaces required are tested further. This would help to reduce the massing of the new building and its impact on the streetscape. The proposed external elevation and single new entrance give the new building an institutional feel: the panel's view is that designs should aim to retain more of the informal nature and domestic scale created by the existing combination of buildings from different eras on the site. Detailed research into the character of the immediate area will help the architecture respond to its setting. The panel questions the proposed internal level changes at Nos. 50-52 Camden Square and considers the existing front door should remain active. It suggests setting the new Murray Street building volume away from Nos. 50-52 Camden Square, and that different functions of the interior spaces might be expressed externally. The roof terrace and new entrance(s) should be designed to prevent nuisance to neighbours. An internal courtyard could be considered, to bring daylight and greenery into the scheme. These comments are expanded below.

Architectural approach

Much of the character of the existing building lies in the incremental way it has been developed. Piecemeal additions give the building a domestic feel, and this element of its character should be preserved as far as possible in the new development.

The current designs for the Murray Street frontage seem too institutional and uniform. Reflecting the internal functions of the building more clearly through the elevation design could help retain an essence of informality.

The panel suggests that the character of the new buildings should take more direct inspiration from the character, appearance and attributes of the surrounding conservation area, and that streetscape analysis would help to develop the design approach further in this direction.



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The panel feels the design of the new entrance should be reconsidered. The desire to consolidate functions is appreciated, but there is concern about the architectural and functional impact of a single entrance into the building.



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Bulk and massing

The panel feels the proposed massing is excessive on the site, and are concerned about the impact of the proposal where it adjoins Nos. 50-52 Camden Square.

The panel considers the new Murray Street building could be more clearly separated from Nos. 50-52 Camden Square, to allow the existing building to retain its presence and character.

Separation here might provide a potential alternative entrance point, and a space where internal level differences can be accommodated.

The panel suggests that a 'tripartite' elevation might help give more varied character and massing, and provide the opportunity to celebrate the corner facing Murray Mews.

The introduction of internal courtyard void space(s) would alleviate what currently risks being a very deep, artificially lit, plan.

Nos. 50-52 Camden Square

The panel endorses the need to retain and enhance the character and presence of the villas at Nos. 50-52 Camden Square. Removing the modern link building between the two villas may help to achieve this.

Further consideration is needed on how to maintain the status of the current front door to No. 50 Camden Square. Its prominence means it is important that it continues to be actively used, and it should not be allowed to become a dead entrance.

The panel is concerned that proposals to create level access across the site, by raising the existing first floor level, will undermine the frontage of the villas and detract from the quality of the internal spaces by cutting across the existing sash windows.

The option of setting a level change back from the front windows is also problematic: consideration should be given to layout solutions that avoid the need to raise the internal floor level of the existing building.



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The panel suggests that good quality internal fabric should be retained where possible. For example, the upper floors contain black circular columns which have character.

Materials

The panel acknowledge the design is in early stages but would be keen to see more detailed proposals for external materials.



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There is scope for the external elevation and form of the building at the corner of Murray Mews to be more expressive and playful. Colour and detail could be introduced, for example by using ceramic tiles and decorative brick detailing. The panel notes that an expressive exterior will require a subtle design approach to enhance the conservation area setting.

The panel would be interested to understand the environmental aspirations for the scheme, in terms of embodied energy of materials proposed, its future flexibility and its energy in use.

Scope and layout

The project shows significant architectural ambition, but the panel is concerned that the site is too small to accommodate all the proposed elements.

Looking closely at the many separate function spaces proposed, and testing options to rationalise the brief by doubling up uses between spaces at different times could be beneficial. It is important that the scope of the project is planned and tested to ensure it is deliverable and sustainable in the long term.

On Murray Street the panel suggests creating a threshold space where people attending events could gather, rather than spilling out on to the pavement.

Circulation could also be improved by providing a second entrance on the corner of Murray Street and Murray Mews. The current layout, with different front doors to different elements of the building, is part of its domestic character, and the move towards a single entrance risks generating an institutional feeling.

Outdoor spaces

The panel feels that the current roof terrace space is too small, and it is also concerned about its potential to create disturbance for neighbours. It suggests this space should be reconsidered.

The panel suggests there is an opportunity to create an internal courtyard to bring light into the deep plan and help users orientate themselves. This would help to counter a lack of greenery on the site.



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The front gardens to Nos. 50-52 Camden Square currently provide a valuable external threshold and gathering space, and the future function and design of these to be carefully considered so they contribute positively to the new development.

Next steps

The panel looks forward to reviewing the proposals again at a suitable stage, once the panel has had the opportunity to respond to its comments.



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