

# NOTTING HILL GATE REGENERATION

# NEWCOMBE HOUSE

UPDATE AUGUST 2017



VIEW OF NEWCOMBE HOUSE AND ITS ASSOCIATED  
KENSINGTON CHURCH STREET FRONTAGE



VIEW OF NEWCOMBE HOUSE FROM  
NOTTING HILL GATE



VIEW OF NEWCOMBE HOUSE  
FROM ITS REAR CAR PARK

Dear resident,

Following the Inspector's decision resulting from the public inquiry earlier this year, the owners of Newcombe House, Notting Hill Gate KCS Limited, would like to update local neighbours so that they are aware of the latest situation.

## BACKGROUND

The site includes a 12 storey office building, further office space, shops, a surface car park and rough sleeper bedsits provided by Notting Hill Housing Trust (NHHT). It is bounded by Notting Hill Gate (north), Kensington Church Street (east), Kensington Place (south) and the underground line (west) and comprises Newcombe House, 43-45 Notting Hill Gate, 39-41 Notting Hill Gate and 161-237 Kensington Church Street.

The site was acquired in 2011 and after the involvement of the Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea (RBKC), residents, civic groups and other stakeholders, plans were brought forward for redevelopment. These comprised:

- 46 new homes;
- employment space for up to 300 jobs;
- space for 14 new shops and for the weekly farmers' market;
- a new 10,000 sq ft doctors' surgery;
- improvements to the public realm and a new public square;
- the required land and a financial contribution to deliver step-free access to and from street level to the eastbound (inner rail) Circle and District line platform at Notting Hill Gate station; and
- a financial contribution towards affordable housing off-site.

During the consultation, it was recognised locally that the existing buildings on the site are eyesores, unsuited to the needs of modern occupiers and make no contribution to the local townscape. Much of the building fabric is tired and performs poorly from an environmental perspective.

## PLANNING APPLICATION AND APPEAL

On 1 December 2015, a planning application was submitted for a series of six buildings ranging in height from ground plus two storeys to ground plus 17 storeys. The Greater London Authority (GLA) considered the scheme to be "high quality". In April 2016, RBKC refused planning permission, against the recommendation of their planning officers, on three grounds: design, height and massing; loss of the rough sleeper bedsits on-site; and absence of agreed developer (section 106) obligations.

Notting Hill Gate KCS Limited reviewed the Council's reasons for refusal and felt strongly that the proposals should have been approved, so the decision was appealed in May 2016. The appeal was heard at a public inquiry before an independent Inspector in February 2017. In his report, published in early June, he:

- confirmed that the amount of development was reasonable;
- endorsed the design, including the height and massing, commenting that the scheme would accord with relevant design policy criteria, which include a high quality design response and the highest standards of architecture;

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- noted that the scheme would replace one tall building with another and so gave limited weight to the concern that this would set a precedent for other tall buildings in the area, concluding that the tower would not be excessively tall or bulky but would have a positive impact and be a benefit to the character and appearance of the wider area;
- believed that the impact of the development on the amenity of neighbouring residents would not be unacceptable;
- considered that any negative impacts on heritage assets and adjacent Conservation Areas would only be small and that the substantial benefits of the scheme would clearly outweigh these; and
- concluded that, as a whole, the benefits of redevelopment would be substantial.

However, having endorsed the design, height and general approach of the proposals, he decided to dismiss the appeal due to his view that there was a shortcoming in a single specific area, namely the loss of on-site rough sleeper bedsits and an insufficient contribution towards off-site affordable housing provision. Equally he made clear how, in his opinion, the scheme could proceed by stating the following:

*“However, I consider that a scheme along the same lines as that proposed, but which either retained social housing on-site or made a more substantial contribution to off-site Affordable Housing (AH) within the Borough, or both, and used a realistic Existing Use Value (EUV) probably would be viable and have most or all of the same advantages. Since dismissing the appeal for this reason should not necessarily prevent the development going ahead in its current form, but would only delay it slightly, I give little weight to the concern that the benefits of redevelopment of the site would be lost.”*

## REVIEW AND NEW APPLICATION

Notting Hill Gate KCS Limited welcomed the Inspector’s support for the proposed designs and his recognition that the scheme would enhance the area. Since the publication of the Inspector’s report, the plans have been carefully reviewed to ensure that they will directly address the point about the lack of on-site social housing (loss of rough sleeper bedsits), recognising that this is a key and pressing issue not just for RBKC but for London as a whole.

The site’s layout and the design of the scheme provides the potential to deliver affordable housing in one of the proposed six blocks. The updated plans involve the replacement of the nine private homes in the proposed Kensington Church Street Building with affordable housing, while still retaining the same design, height and massing endorsed by the Inspector. This would deliver nine homes - three 1 bed, three 2 bed and three 3 bed family homes. In terms of floor space it is slightly above

the amount of space previously provided on site for the rough sleeper bedsits, meaning that there is no loss resulting from the regeneration plans. The bedsits are now vacant following the re-housing of all previous residents. NHHT has expressed their support for this proposal and is keen to manage the future affordable homes, working closely with RBKC.

Previous extensive consultation showed that the other benefits of the scheme are valued by local communities and stakeholders and should be kept. The Inspector said: *“As a whole, the benefits of the redevelopment would be substantial and be supported by a raft of development plan policies”*. The intention therefore, is to still retain all of these community benefits and supplement them with the additional benefit of on-site affordable housing. In summary:

- The NHS maintains its strong support for the doctors’ surgery and this would become an important amenity to the area. It would be over 10,000 sq ft in size, provide space for nine GPs to practice who could serve 18,000 local residents;
- The GLA and Transport for London have reiterated their desire to see the provision of funding for the step-free access to the Notting Hill Gate District and Circle eastern platforms and to provide the sub structure for this step-free access now;
- The offices and the shops could together generate up to 440 jobs; and
- A vibrant new public square with level access from surrounding streets would be of benefit to everyone visiting the area as well as for those living or working locally. It remains available as a future home for the popular Farmers’ Market.

Finally, the new application will include a further change to introduce a green wall adjacent to the Underground Station which seeks to benefit the view from the rear of properties on Jameson Street. Design options will be presented to RBKC.

## NEXT STEPS

Notting Hill KCS Limited have agreed with the Council that local residents should be informed about the intention to submit a new planning application highlighting these two changes – the inclusion of nine affordable homes and the proposal for a green wall. The architects and planning consultants are updating elements of the original application documents to reflect these changes. The new application will be submitted in September and following this, the Royal Borough will undertake its statutory consultation, allowing residents, businesses and other stakeholders to submit their representations. The website [www.newcombehouse.london](http://www.newcombehouse.london) will be updated with the key changes when the application is submitted.

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