

## NOTE OF PRESENTATION BY ST WILLIAM/BERKELEY HOMES TO KENSINGTON SOCIETY TRUSTEES ON DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS AT KENSAL CANALSIDE

This note is based on an online presentation to Kensington Society trustees on October 6<sup>th</sup> 2021, by the St William team. The first part summarises what we were told. The second part is a commentary on the Society's initial thinking on this impending planning application. The images shown are screenshots from the presentation, as there have been delays in St William providing a full copy of the slides used in the presentation.

### Overall masterplanning for the site

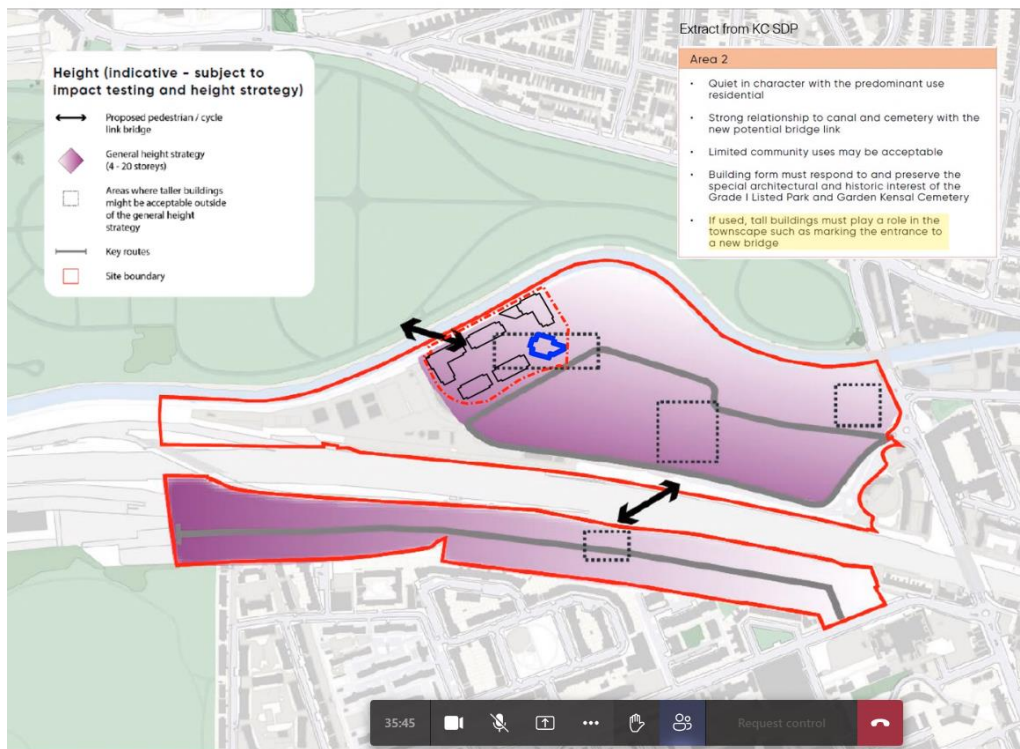
St William have prepared their proposals on a similar timescale to those of Sainsburys/Ballymore at the request of RBKC. They see their western part of the Opportunity Area as the 'quieter' part of the area and very largely residential, as compared with the proposed new Sainsburys store and a 'neighbourhood centre'.

Both developers have sought and obtained pre-application advice from RBKC. The St William scheme has been presented to the RBKC Quality Review Panel.

The basic concept is one of grouping residential blocks around an open space and exploiting the canalside setting. The presentation was led by Fred Pilbrow, of Pilbrow & Partners (architects for the scheme).

### Housing and tenure

St William is aiming for an 'optimistic' total housing delivery figure for the Kensal Canalside Opportunity Area as a whole, of 4,050 homes (slightly higher than the figure given to us by Sainsburys/Ballymore). Their part of the overall total is currently planned at 720 new homes, on a 1.46 hectare site at the western end of the Opportunity Area (bordering on the OPDC boundary on LB Hammersmith & Fulham). See the site map below.



### **Building heights and density**

The blue box on the map above shows the location of a proposed 35 storey building at 110m height. Other proposals are for four 12-storey buildings at 37.8m height, one 15-storey at 47.2m height. The 35 storey building is argued as justified on 'wayfinding' grounds.

In terms of heritage impact, across the canal from the Kensal Green Cemetery, Fred Pilbrow said that a presentation had been given to Historic England.

### **Open space**

St William view their proposals as a 'landscape'-led scheme. There will be a strip of public open space along the canal extending back from the present towpath'



### **Connectivity and transport**

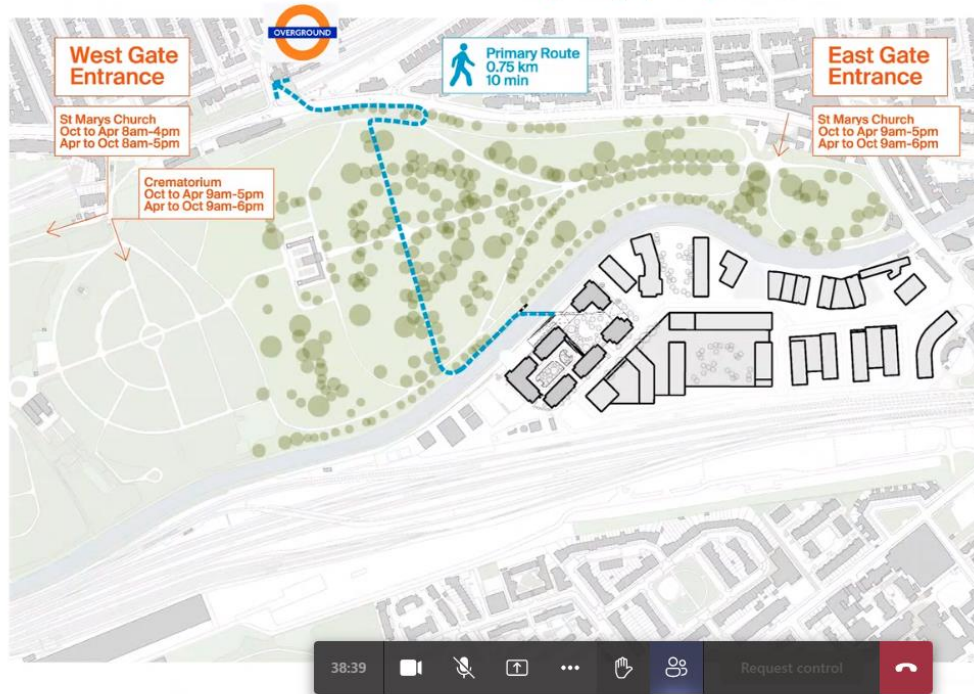
St William acknowledged that their part of the site has no vehicle access except through the Sainsburys/Ballymore site, with the same single entrance/exit point on Ladbroke Grove. Proposed road network is the same for both schemes, and the same applies to bus routes (23, 52, 228, 295, 452).

Given this poor connectivity, St William propose a pedestrian and cycle bridge from the centre of their site, through the cemetery to Kensal Green Underground Station (see image above). RBKC are said to be encouraging the construction of the bridge. An option might be to enclose the existing footpath across the cemetery to the Harrow Road, with fencing and lighting for night-time use.

## Cemetery Access

### Current Gate Opening Hours

Cemetery hours reported by friends and trustees of Kensal cemetery  
Winter: 9am – 5pm  
Summer: 9am – 6pm  
The friends and trustees reported they were amenable to longer opening hours for the cemetery particularly in the summer months subject to appropriate agreements



The session discussed the potential for road connectivity westwards from this landlocked site to Scrubs Lane in North Hammersmith (see commentary below).

### Design approach

The sketch by Fred Pilbrow and the CGIs below indicate the approach to the design of the buildings in the scheme.





## INITIAL COMMENTS FROM THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY

**Capacity of site for new homes** (These are largely the same comments as for the Sainsbury's/ Ballymore proposals).

- Too many housing units are assumed as being appropriate for this site – with no Crossrail Line Station, its limited road access and over 1km distance from an Underground station.
- The 2013 RBKC Issues and Options document showed 3 capacity/density options with 3,500 new homes as the highest. This option assumed a Crossrail station providing a high level of public transport access. This station is not going to happen.
- The 2021 London Plan sets an 'indicative' housing target of 3,500 new homes for the Kensal Canalside Opportunity Area, to be 'tested' through masterplanning (or through an updated Local Plan).
- The 2019 RBKC Local Plan (drafted in 2017) incorporates this target as a 'minimum' rather than 'indicative' figure in the Site Allocation in Policy CA1.
- The RBKC July 2021 Kensal Canalside SPD shows alternative 'development capacities' of 3,500, 4,200 and 5,000 new homes used to test the viability of achieving 35% affordable housing. Where is the evidence of these capacity figures being 'tested'? This must be done through the new Local Plan Review currently underway.

- No information was provided for the mix of units. The Society expressed their objection to studio flats.

### **Building heights and housing density**

- RBKC has resisted proposals for very tall buildings since the 1970s. High-density/high-rise housing is unsuited to families, expensive on service and maintenance costs, and counter to RBKC aims for a zero carbon borough (as compared with medium-rise blocks).
- Neither the RBKC 2010 Building Height SPD nor the 2019 adopted Local Plan identify Kensal Canalside as being 'suitable' for tall buildings. This is due to proximity to conservation areas and low public transport accessibility levels. Current preparation of a new Local Plan will review existing policies, but at present a significant policy conflict will arise on the St William proposals.
- The London Plan encourages tall buildings at locations with high levels of public transport access (PTAL 5/6). The western end of the Opportunity Area will have a very low level of public transport accessibility (PTAL 1) until such time as a road connection westwards to the OPDC area and Scrubs Lane is built. Time horizons and funding for such a road connection (as shown in the OPDC Draft Local Plan) remain uncertain and depend on the Department of Transport land south of the railway lines at Kensal Canalside coming forward for development.
- 'Wayfinding' is often used by developers as a justification for a very tall building. In this instance the presence of the canal along the north of the site means that there is little risk of anyone losing their way at this location.

### **Connectivity and transport**

- The single entry/exit point for vehicles at Ladbroke Grove will continue to make this an isolated site at risk of congestion at a traffic pinchpoint. Implications for delivery and emergency vehicles are greater than for the eastern part of the site, given the extra distances involved.
- A new pedestrian/cycle connection through Kensal Cemetery has many challenges (permission from the owners of the cemetery, opening hours, safety from crime on an extended closed walkway). Many consider the existing canalside path unsafe to use.
- For all the above reasons, a Transport study for the site is an urgent priority and will be scrutinised closely. This should be based on the cumulative impacts of all developments in the OA and not just on the St William and the Sainsbury's Ballymore 'Phase 1' applications.

### **Public realm and landscaping**

- The proposed creation of an area of public open space alongside the canal is welcome. Assuming that that the open space at the centre of the development is not deemed 'private' (and allows the public to have access through the development and onwards to other parts of the Opportunity Area) this would improve the safety of this part of the canalside and with the existing cycle/pedestrian route from Mitre Bridge (Scrubs Lane) to Ladbroke Grove.
- The Kensington Society had concerns on the overall lack of planting and the use of balconies with plants, within a scheme supposedly 'landscape led'. No information was given on the location or size of the required child play space be and what size this would be for the proposed 720 homes?

## **Next steps**

- St William intend to submit a final full application for their development (rather than a combination of outline and final application as is the case for Sainsbury's/Ballymore).
- Expectation at the Kensington Society presentation was that this would be 'by Christmas' but this may be delayed by a slower timetable being pursued by Sainsbury's/Ballymore.
- St William have submitted to RBKC an application for an Environmental Impact Assessment 'screening opinion' on their proposals. The Kensington Society has sent in a detailed response.

The above are initial comments from the Society, based on information provided to the Society by the developers. Proposals may change in response to feedback from the public. We will be attending the RBKC Development Forum event at Barlby Primary School being held on November 24<sup>th</sup>. We will be submitting detailed responses to all planning applications.

Kensington Society  
November 2021