

Kingston University

Proposed Demolition of 4 No. of Buildings within Kingston Hill Campus
Kingston upon Thames, KT2 7LB

Heritage Appraisal

June 2021

Turnberry

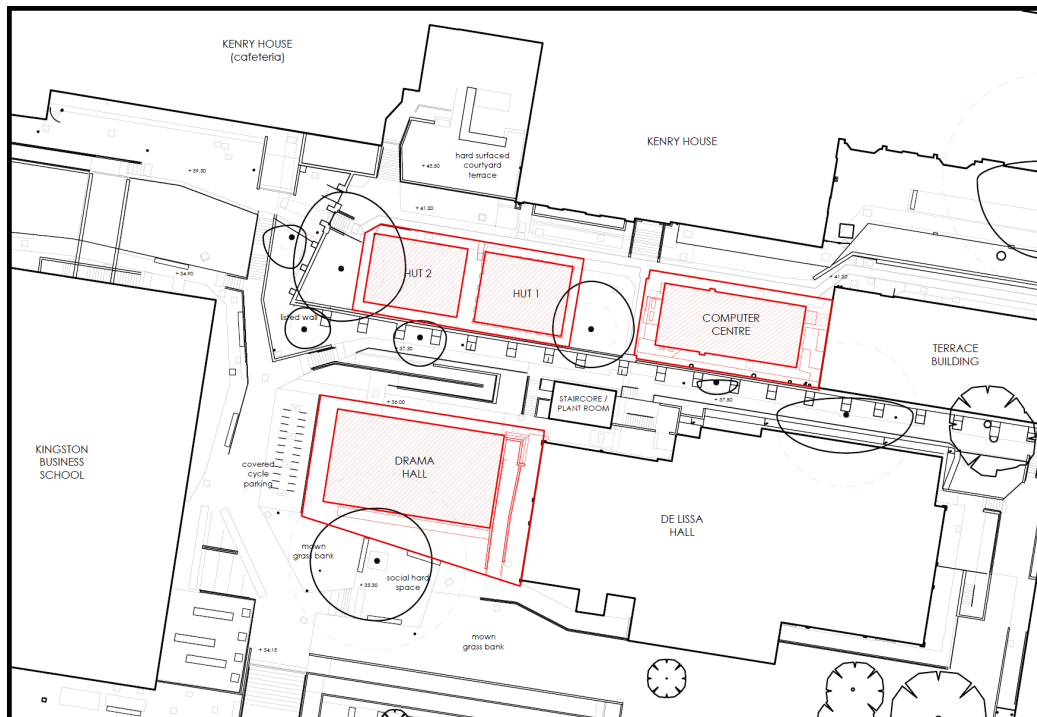
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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Heritage Appraisal has been prepared by Turnberry Planning Limited on behalf of Kingston University (the applicant) in support of a Full Planning Application with Conservation Area Consent to The Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames (the Local Planning Authority [LPA]) with regard to the proposed demolition of Huts 1 & 2, Computer Centre, and Drama Hall (i.e. 4 no. of buildings) at Kingston University, Kingston Hill Campus, Kingston Hill, Kingston upon Thames, KT2 7LB. The application sites are edged in red as shown in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1 – Site Location



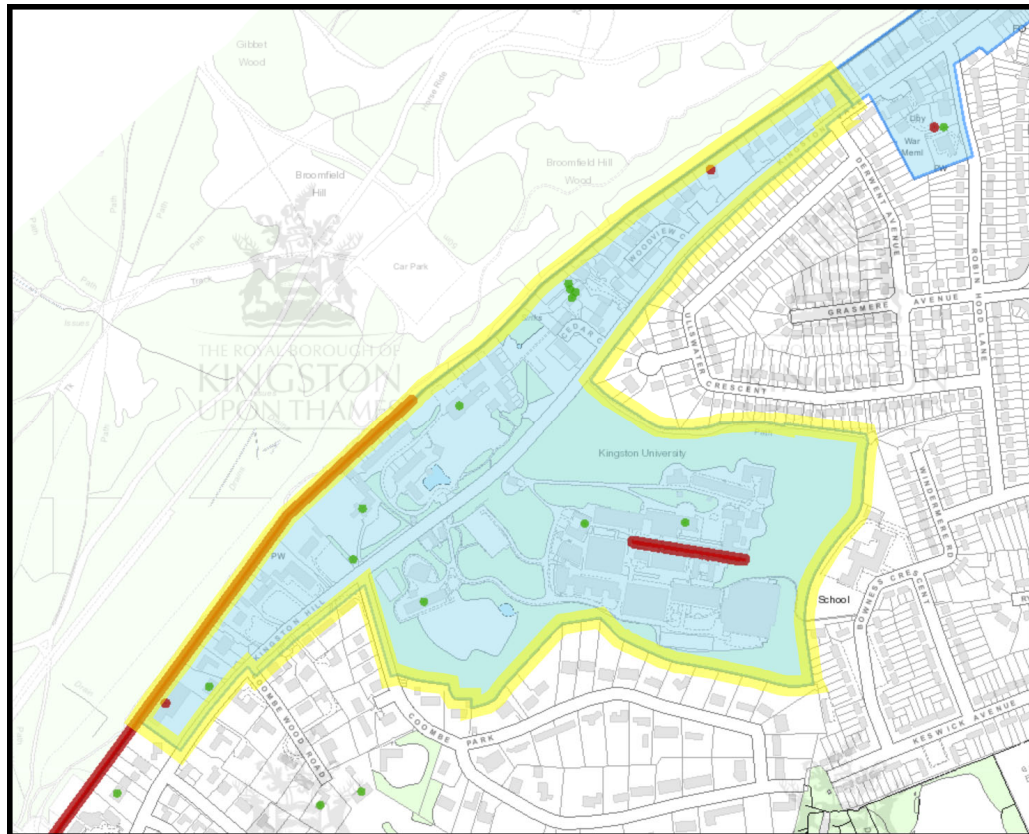
- 1.2 Kingston University's Kingston Hill campus is in the grounds of two former grand houses built in the 1830s on Kingston Hill, Kenry House and Coombe Hurst. The land of both houses formerly belonged to Earl Spencer, and was once part of the ancient Coombe Wood. The 1837 Coombe Estate map shows parkland surrounding the houses. In 1948 Gipsy Hill Training College acquired Coombe Hurst, unoccupied since 1940, and then in 1950 expanded further when it purchased Kenry House, which had been empty since 1933. Gipsy Hill amalgamated with Kingston Polytechnic in 1975, which became Kingston University in 1992. The University grounds contain

remnants of the ancient woodland with mature oak trees pre-dating the 1830s, together with fragments of the C19th landscaped gardens and parkland planting.

2 HISTORY AND CHARACTER OF KINGSTON HILL CONSERVATION AREA AND SURROUNDING HERITAGE FEATURES

2.1 The entire Kingston Hill Campus forms part of the Kingston Hill Conservation Area (measuring 28.2ha), which was designated in November 2004. A map showing the extent of the Conservation Area as well as its key heritage features are shown in **Figure 2**.

Figure 2 – Heritage Map (obtained from LPA website)



Scheduled Monument



Listed building



Locally Listed building



Area of Special Character (KTC)



Local Area of Special Character



Conservation Areas



Key Views



Area of Archaeological Significance (Archaeological Priority Area)

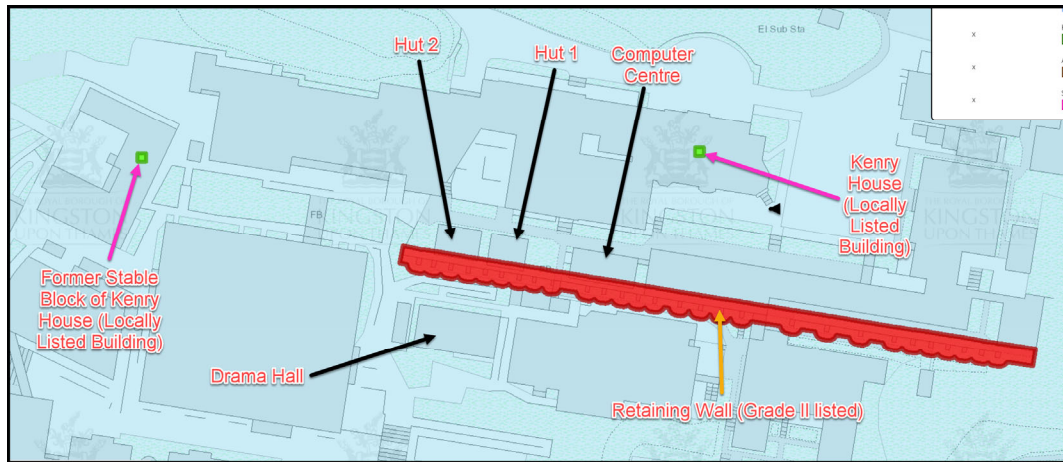


Strategic Area of Special Character



2.2 A zoomed-in view of the Heritage Map in **Figure 3** shows the application buildings proposed to be demolished as well as other key heritage features nearby of relevance – i.e. the grade II listed retaining wall known as ‘Retaining Wall to the South of Main House (Kenry House);; and the two locally listed buildings known as ‘Kenry House’ and ‘Former Stable Block of Kenry House’.

Figure 3 – Zoomed-in View of Heritage Map



2.3 An aerial view of the site is shown in **Figure 4**.

Figure 4 – Aerial View



2.4 The extent of the locally listed buildings are shown in **Figure 5** as obtained from the LPA.

Figure 5 – Extent of Locally Listed Buildings



- Kingston Hill Conservation Area
- Buildings of Townscape Merit
- Grade II Listed wall

2.5 In terms of the Kingston Hill Conservation Area, extract of the Council’s Designation Report is below and provides useful historical background to the key heritage features of the area.

Designation summary

The special architectural and historic interest of this area can be summarised as: A group of early Victorian through to early 20th century large houses in a woodland setting. Forming a wealthy suburb along the dramatic and well landscaped historic strategic route of Kingston Hill, enjoying a close interrelationship with Richmond Park and strategic importance in longer views.

Historic development

While Neolithic and Bronze Age finds have indicated early settlement of the area, Kingston Hill has always been known as a busy road. From the Middle Ages it was on the strategic route from London to Portsmouth and it formed part of the direct link between the City and Hampton Court, which became a royal palace from the 16th century. Therefore this route was established well before Charles I enclosed Richmond Park with the wall of 1637.

The area which became Kingston Hill conservation area became an area of large minor estates established in the late 18th and early 19th century. Coombe Park was acquired in 1837 by the Duke of Cambridge, a cousin of Queen Victoria, and this began a period of royal patronage, particularly at Kingston Vale, and also a process of progressive sub-division. As a result, the mid-19th century saw a succession of large houses on diminishing plots from Kenry House and Kingston Hill Place to Harewood, Holmwood and Galsworthy House. The latter was the birthplace of the novelist and playwright John Galsworthy. Florence Nightingale was another local figure who came to the area to stay with her aunt at Coombe Hurst (now Kingston University). The gradual intensification of development was encouraged by road improvements in the 19th century, which eased the gradient of the hill with a cutting near the summit and an embankment below. This brought the City within an hour's drive by horse-drawn carriage and, subsequently, less by car. Development was not, however, fuelled by the railway age, which rather passed over Kingston in favour of Surbiton. Instead, road traffic increased greatly and Kingston was one of the earliest towns to have a bypass, which was opened in 1927 by Stanley Baldwin.

The effect was to ease the pressure on Kingston Hill by removing traffic and opening other areas to development, such as the Robin Hood Estate. Despite further infilling, Kingston Hill has retained its low-density character. In the 1960s, Coombe Hurst and Kenry House became the nucleus of Kingston Polytechnic. This campus has since grown into a modern university with the addition of many further buildings.

Today Kingston Hill Conservation Area is notable for its strong relationship with Richmond Park and its listed boundary wall, the quality of the public realm as a result of its mature landscaping and the notable views from Kingston Vale, Coombe Hill and Wimbledon Common.

- 2.6 In relation to Kenry House, it is noted that in 1832, Earl Spencer had granted a 99 year lease to William Ogle Hunt who built Kenry House, at first called Coombe Wood, 'a minor Gothic villa' (Nikolaus Pevsner) but it was later extended and much altered, particularly from the 1860s. The name Kenry House dates from 1874 when ownership passed to the 4th Earl of Dunraven, son of Baron Kenry. The massive brick retaining wall dating from the late C18th/early C19th and 3 to 4 metres high still survives today.

It once supported the garden front of Kenry House and has sloping brick buttresses each c.1m wide. From 1933 the house was empty until 1950 when house and grounds became part of the Gipsy Hill Training College. To the west of the house are the former brick stables, and on the east wall a stone relief, possibly Coade, of a reclining female figure. A gothic lodge remains by the road.

2.7 In 1835 Earl Spencer granted a 999 year lease to barrister Samuel Smith, uncle to Florence Nightingale, who built Coombe Hurst to the south west and lived here until 1881. Between 1885 and 1914 Captain R C de Grey Vyner owned Coombe Hurst, and among his visitors was the Prime Minister William Gladstone. The house was then empty until 1923 before Baron de Forest, a baron of the old Austrian Empire and Liberal MP, came to live here. It was saved from demolition in 1933 when the Chairman of Wandsworth Greyhound Stadium, Mr Parkes, bought and modernised the house, living here until 1940. Empty again until 1948, Gipsy Hill Training College then acquired the property and in 1950 expanded further when it purchased Kenry House.

2.8 In relation to the grade II listed retaining wall, extract of the list entry from Historic England states:

Details

This list entry was subject to a Minor Amendment on 08/03/2013

TQ 27 SW 2/2

KINGSTON-UPON-THAMES KINGSTON HILL (south east side) Retaining wall to the south of the main house (Kenry House) II Late C18/early C19. Massive brick retaining wall originally supporting the garden in front of Kenry House. [The garden is now occupied by Kingston University buildings, formerly Kingston Polytechnic]. Plum brick, approximately 150 metres long, 3 to 4 metres high with thick, sloping brick buttresses, each 3 to 4 feet wide.

Listing NGR: TQ2080671432

3 PRINCIPLES AND JUSTIFICATION OF PROPOSED DEMOLITION WORKS

3.1 Justifications for Proposed Development

- 3.1.1 The applicant is proposing to demolish Huts 1 & 2, Computer Centre, and Drama Hall that are located within the Kingston Hill Campus of Kingston University.
- 3.1.2 The demolition is required to enable the future enhanced landscaping works on this central part of the Campus to provide enhanced central amenity space for the University's students and staff.
- 3.1.3 The works will ensure that it will not impact on the grade II listed retaining wall from a structural stability perspective in particular and that this is further addressed in the submitted Demolition Method Statement.
- 3.1.4 The demolition of the buildings are also not considered to impact on the setting of the listed retaining wall or the nearby locally listed structures.

4 HERITAGE POLICIES & CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 National Planning Policy and Guidance

4.1.1 This section assesses the impact of the proposed demolition on the significance of the nearby listed structures.

4.1.2 Paragraph 189 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2019) states:

National Planning Policy Framework: Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

189. In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.

4.1.3 Significance is one of the guiding principles running through the historic environment section of the NPPF.

4.1.4 The NPPF defines significance as 'the value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest'. Such interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic' and it may derive 'not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting'.

4.1.5 Significance is what conservation sustains, and where appropriate enhances, in managing change to heritage assets.

4.1.6 Paragraph 192 then goes on to state that in determining applications, LPAs should take account of:

- a) the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;

- b) the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
- c) the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.

4.1.7 Paragraph 193 then goes on to state that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance.

4.1.8 Paragraph 194 states that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification.

4.1.9 Importantly, paragraph 195 stipulates where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance of) a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh that harm or loss, or all of the following apply:

- a) the nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
- b) no viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
- c) conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
- d) the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.

4.1.10 Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

4.2 Local Planning Policy

4.2.1 Policy DM 12 of the Core Strategy (adopted 2012) is the relevant policy relating to heritage:

Policy DM 12

Development in Conservation Areas and Affecting Heritage Assets

The Council will:

- a. **continue to identify, record and designate assets, and periodically review existing designated assets within the Borough that are considered to be of special historic significance in order to ensure that future development will preserve or enhance locally distinctive heritage assets. These records will be maintained in the form of a Historic Environment Record.**
- b. **preserve or enhance the existing heritage assets of the Borough through the promotion of high quality design and a focus on heritage-led regeneration**
- c. **allow alterations which preserve or enhance the established character and architectural interest of a heritage asset, its fabric or its setting**
- d. **ensure that development proposals affecting historic assets will use high quality materials and design features which incorporate or compliment those of the host building or the immediate area**
- e. **respect features of local importance and special interest through the consideration of form, scale, layout, and detailed designs of a site, area or streetscape**
- f. **seek the conservation and improvement of the natural and built historic environment which contribute to the character of the Borough's historic riverside setting**
- g. **where possible, provide access for all to encourage public enjoyment of the historic environment and Kingston's heritage assets**

4.2.2 From a site specific policy perspective, Policy MC 1(k) bullet point 1 also recognises:

- working in partnership with Kingston University to continue to improve facilities at the Kingston Hill campus to meet operational requirements. The needs of the University should be balanced with ensuring that development is sensitive to the character and environment of the campus and the surrounding area, which is a Conservation Area.

4.3 Assessment

4.3.1 The proposed buildings to be demolished are not considered to significantly contribute to the character and appearance of the Kingston Hill Conservation Area.

4.3.2 The demolition works will not impact on the existing trees on site and that this is further set out in the submitted Arboricultural Method Statement.

- 4.3.3 The demolition works would also not harm the grade II listed wall given the buildings to be demolished are not considered to be of any significance that would warrant retention. As set out in the Demolition Method Statement, the contractor has confirmed that the demolition will be done by hand / with hand tools and hence minimising any impact to the structural integrity of the listed wall.
- 4.3.4 On this basis, the proposal is not considered to be detrimental to the setting of the listed and locally listed buildings nor would it be harmful to the Conservation Area.