

Huggens College

Community Engagement

Event 1- Residents' feedback

Revision B

Project: 2305 Huggens College almshouse development, Northfleet, Kent

Client: The Trustees of Huggens College

June 2023

Author: Emily Haysom, Landscape Architect



<i>A. Introduction</i>	3
<i>B. Information Capture from drop in event</i>	3
<i>C. Notes from Conversations with Project Team and Trustees</i>	4
<i>D. Questionnaire Feedback</i>	5
<i>E. Summary and Recommendations</i>	8
<i>Appendices List</i>	9



Attendees:

Trustees: Matthew Balfour, and Sally Villiers

Architect: Rowan Haysom (Haysom Ward Miller Architects

Project managers: Jonah Balmford, Harrison Chapman

Landscape Architect/ community engagement consultant: Emily Haysom

Chaplain and family: Philip and Julia Davies

Lodgekeeper: Chris Hamper

Over 20 residents of Huggens College attended.

A. Introduction

A drop in event was held at Huggens College on 6th June 2023. A brief address was given by Matthew Balfour and the team (as most residents turned up together at the start).

Four forms of engagement were employed:

- Presentation boards (giving information, introducing the Charity's intention)
- Conversation (opportunity to ask questions and share concerns and ideas informally).
- Pin exercise (site specific)
- Questionnaires

Presentation boards outlining local and national housing need, constraints and opportunities, and landscape opportunities were on display, with the project team and Trustees available for one-to-one conversations. There was also a post-it note/flag exercise where people could pin their notes on a site plan. The information was captured from these on the day. There were detailed questionnaires available, with time given to distribute these to residents who were unable to attend.

B. Information Capture from drop in event

Pin exercise using Site Plan of Huggens College



Pins in centre:

We want to keep the ground in the centre of the college

Keep the green

Keep my garden (no.8)

I need to have garden at the front to look at. Also to keep the chapel

Please keep the green at the centre, and our gardens at rear and the chapel

Keep chapel and community room

Keep central garden

Pin at rear of 30:

Keep my garden (no. 30)

Pins at rear of 20-24:

Serenity is a good idea. Garden as sitting area

Two bedrooms essential

Pin at rear of 1-7

Keep our gardens at the back

Pin at no.12:

I have very little sunlight. East/west facing, trees or buildings (no.12)

C. Notes from Conversations with Project Team and Trustees

I need enough private garden space for 4-6 people (not just 2 chairs with table); people need to be able to host friends and family.

Extra community space will be needed (at least 2 mentions)

Guest suite will be very useful for visiting family (at least 2 mentions)

Flexible flats for family and visitors

Enough parking for visitors and carers

'No open water please - as problems with mosquitoes'

someone else: 'Mosquitoes come in from the Thames'

Someone concerned about mobility issues and stream features, bridges without rails.

Another person liked the water features.

'No more trees on the north side, I like sunshine.'

Why 'improve visible connections to surrounding neighbourhood. We are separate. We like being separate'

'You're not getting rid of the trees are you? We need the screening, especially from Wallis Park.'

'It would be good to be more open and connected'

'It's a rough area, but people are basically kind'

'I don't want to live in a flat'

When asked why not?: 'Heat, no outside space, noise - there is always noise from other flats, boxy'

Conversation with lodge keeper:

Specific problem of damp in lodge keepers house/wall

Suggested using rainwater capture for watering the gardens.

Chris pointed out danger of open standing water for vulnerable people such as those with dementia or other disabilities. Depth and accessibility needs to be considered.

Conversations between collegians and Trustees:

SV

There is of course a lot of anxiety amongst the Collegians...There was one positive comment: two lady collegians, towards the end, said to me that they thought we '*should think of it as something exciting*'.

MB

General fear of change and concerns about moving. They like things as they are, though many recognise that the trustees need to do something. A few comments that I picked up from a number of collegians :

- *Don't like flats*
- *Want a private garden but also spaces to meet up in an outside space*
- *Orientation to the sun is important. eg main rooms facing south*
- *Would prefer two bedrooms but thought that "guest accommodation" a good idea*
- *Some concerns around laundry facilities*

D. Questionnaire Feedback

A bracketed number follows comments where there have been clear multiple mentions.

21 questionnaires were returned, which are available to Trustees.

1. Most gave their names.
2. All are existing residents (collegians and 1 member of staff)
3. They have lived here 1-30 yrs.
4. All 21 respondents said they intended to continue living at Huggens College.
5. Do you think Northfleet and Gravesham need more affordable housing for older residents?

Yes = 15

Maybe = 2

3 said it was not the responsibility of Huggens College - responsibility of Council

6. Do you accept that Huggens College has a responsibility to provide more homes in order to help address the shortage of affordable housing for people who fit into Huggens criteria?

Yes = 14

No = 3

Many with proviso (or reason for no) JH criteria - Christian ethos, elderly, not just local people

7. If not, why not?

Council's responsibility

Not just local - JH remit was for '*wider clientele*'

Concern for general need for housing responsibility of Council, not just elderly

8. Is reserving affordable housing for people with strong local connections important to you?

Yes = 12

No = 5

Maybe = 2 - Query: *was criteria being changed?*; people were from all over the UK with different backgrounds

9. Do you support our proposal to build additional almshouse homes for independent older people who fit the criteria at Huggens College.

Yes = 13

Yes 'but' = 7 proviso: to fit current criteria, John Huggens' vision, '*not spoil our community*'

10. The Charity is seeking to minimise disruption to existing residents. Do you have any concerns about a potential development that you wish to share?

Noise dust and living on building site (5)

Process of moving;(3) eg. storage, physical and financial help with moving

Anxiety, worry caused by uncertainty, mental health/wellbeing harms (7)

Pedestrianise the central space

11. We would also like to provide active and relaxing green space within the development and are keen to know what existing residents would like to see. Please share your ideas:

Generally people like the existing green spaces, the trees and planting. They enjoy the communal aspect of events, socialising, the *ability to share with friends and family* (8)

Safe space to walk for exercise (3)

Private garden space is important (3)

Keep the central Green (6)

Keep it as it is (4)

Ideas:

Sensory garden

Raised beds

Wild areas

12. What do you enjoy about living at Huggens College?

Community (9), *Community balanced with privacy* (2)

Friendship and companionship (9)

Christian aspect and chapel(5)

Events and activities (5)

Own garden(2) *and grounds*

Security (4), *Peace and tranquility* (3)

Freedom and independence; lodgekeeper and maintenance on hand

13. What could be improved about Huggens College?

Larger common room (2)

Guest suite/lounge capacity

More Collegians involved in spiritual life

Sharing facilities with local people -mutual sharing

More storage space - a kitchen door that shuts to stop cooking smells.

Electric/automatic gates (2)

Unanswered = 8

Happy as it is = 3

14. What should be treasured about Huggens College when considering any new proposals?

Community spirit (8)

John Huggens' vision (4)

Chapel and chaplain (7)

Green spaces (6) own gardens (2)

on site staff and laundry (2), common room and activities (3)

security/safety (4) Tranquility(3)

space to park including for visitors

15. How connected do you feel to your local neighbourhood?

Not involved = 7

Involved = 11

Slightly = 2

Varied activities - attending local churches and going to church events, involved in volunteering, local clubs, have friends and family locally. Notably, those not involved in local area still feel very connected to the community within Huggens College.

16. What activities do you currently enjoy?

Gardening (4)

Social activities and events (11)

Informal time with others (6)

solitary activity (eg reading) (4)

Quizes, Cards, lunches, outings, art classes and visiting galleries, singing in choirs, walking and cycling.

17. Would you like to see community activities or shared spaces that you currently don't already have at Huggens? Please share your ideas

Private garden/outdoor space and shed for tools/ divide patio areas for privacy (2)

Bigger common room

Guest flat - en-suite with kettle

Some of chaplain's house used for communal space

pond and wild spaces

bowls lawn on the old croquet lawn

18. Feel free to add further comments....

Two bed units (for grandchildren, visitors and priority for couples) (5)

Help with moving - physical and financial (3); plenty of notice for packing

Private garden/patio space (3) - [nice drawing of divider walls between patios]

Fear of concrete housing estate (3) 'flats will kill our community. People will not come out so often'

Clothes drying facilities (2)

More parking(2), Electric charge points

more staff for increased numbers

Pet cat?

Costs to Collegians? the move, rents and maintenance fee(2)

What is happening to the lodge?

Big Ideas:

- Use some of chaplain's garden as a 'Garden of Peace'

- Health and wellbeing centre/GP surgery on site, part time doctor's clinic(2)
- 2-3 units for nursing care when people are unable to look after themselves (no more moves)
- Pedestrianise the central area, put parking behind 1-7

E. Summary and Recommendations

- Residents are pretty active - with a very strong sense of community.
- They are very strongly supportive of John Huggens' vision being continued and retaining the Christian ethos..
- Most residents support providing for local housing need - so long as John Huggens's criteria are prioritised. They value maintaining eligibility for people from elsewhere - not just local people - as the wider intake enriches the community.

Recommendations:

- Communication is absolutely vital.

Keep residents informed of developments.[Another drop in event is planned with more detailed proposals - include a statement of how their comments have contributed to the design development]
Give plenty of warning about packing and moving, about noise or other issues that affect residents' daily life.

- Appoint a community liaison person for residents as soon as possible:

To be a point of contact, to keep residents informed, listen to their concerns and advocate for them. This could be a Trustee or an existing member of staff who has capacity to take on the responsibility, or a new appointment. Residents feel part of a distinct strong community. Change on this scale presents a threat to this - and a source of anxiety to individuals. The community liaison's remit should be to support and maintain the 'community' of Huggens College throughout the physical changes to the almshouses.

[If Trustees are seen primarily as the landlords, a separate individual maybe appropriate]

- Careful phasing and separation for the build to avoid people feeling like they live on a building site; consider offsite construction where possible, management of plant traffic, and provide visual and acoustic separation from residential areas where possible. At the same time, a designated viewing point would be useful to enable residents to see what is going on with the build which may help to allay fears.

Design recommendations based on residents' feedback

- The chapel is to remain a focal point, and enlarged for future use.
- Sufficient community space to accommodate increased resident numbers.
- A mix of communal and private spaces, inside and outside.
- New activity rooms (such as a craft room and library) to support residents' creative and social activities, in different locations, to continue to support active lifestyles.
- Recognising that residents are from a wider intake, some guest accommodation is to be provided for guests travelling from a distance, and enough space within flats to host day visitors.
- Light and air. All flats to be dual aspect, with heights and roofs designed to maximise winter light reaching ground level.
- The scale of buildings is to be kept low (up to 3 storeys) and varied to create a domestic feel to the flats.
- Retain a central green large enough for community events, linked to circular walks. People like looking out on a green, having central events there.
- Retain existing trees wherever possible
- Each resident is to have access to a balcony or patio area
- Different opportunities will be provided for enjoying the garden, and gardening: such as sensory planting, wild space, and space to grow food.

- Security and openness need to be balanced in decisions for future access arrangements.

Appendices List

Spreadsheet of questionnaire responses (names redacted)

Huggens College

Community Engagement Event 2 Residents' Feedback Report

Project: 23.709 Huggens College Almshouse Development, Northfleet, Kent
Client: The President and Trustees of Huggens's College
Issued: 8 January 2024
Author: Haysom Ward Miller Architects

Contents:

Introduction -

Notes from Project Team and Trustee discussions -

Notes from Residents' Feedback

- Site Layout
- Landscape
- Apartment Layout
- Lodgekeeper
- Other

Summary and Recommendations

Appendices

Attendees:

Trustees: Jane Ashton, David Newlyn, Charles Warner, Carolyn Sims

Chaplain: Philip Davies

Lodgekeeper: Chris Hamper

Architects: Rowan Haysom, Mohit Buch (Haysom Ward Miller Architects)

Landscape Architect: Emily Haysom

Project Manager: Jonah Balmford, Harrison Chapman

The majority of Huggens College residents attended.

A. Introduction:

On 19th of January 2024, a second community engagement session was held by the project team for the Trustees and residents of Huggens College. The event was attended by the majority of residents and provided a wide variety of feedback.

With the design having progressed since the first event, the purpose of this session was to gain feedback on architectural matters, and to present to the residents the design development made in response to the feedback from the first engagement event. The extent of presented materials can be found in the appendices.

Four forms of engagement were used:

- Presentation boards (providing information on phasing, site layout, appearance and other architectural considerations)
- Video presentation of project phasing
- Feedback box

Following a brief address by the Chair of the Trustees, Jane Ashton, the residents were allowed to study and review the presentation boards at their own pace. The project team and Trustees remained present for the duration of the session to answer queries and concerns. Residents were given copies of the presented materials to analyse in their own time. The Comments Box was left available for residents to leave their response over the course of the following couple of weeks. These responses are collated in this document below.

B. Notes from Project Team and Trustee Discussions:

The following notes are from discussions between the Project Team and Trustees immediately after the event. It provides a summary of the main conversation points.

- Shared concern of open plan kitchen due to odours and not being able to shut kitchen off from living space. Some residents said the kitchen looked smaller.
- Some concern about lack of privacy from Wallis Park.
- Queries about the accessibility around the site and space required for deliveries and other vehicles.
- Concern over the size of private outdoor space available per unit.
- Suggestion made to include a separate pedestrian entrance during phase one for closer proximity to transport connections.
- Need for CCTV highlighted around temporary public entrances as it helps residents feel secure.
- Concerns regarding lack of storage within individual units.
- Suggestion of a redesigned waste management system due to the addition of upper floors and overall increase in density.
- Size of 'private' space on external walkways is too small

C. Notes from Residents' Feedback:

The following notes are from the feedback submitted by residents over the two weeks after the engagement session. They have been split into themes as follows:

Site Layout:

- Concern over the number of units within scheme and desire to see lower density.
- Concern over proximity to Wallis Park and potential overlooking into apartments.
- Noise concerns near Wallis Park.
- Art space and library are viewed favourably but with a desire to reduce overshadowing.
- Desire to increase car parking offering to match increased density.

Landscape:

- Landscape area near Wallis Park should not have any features / summer house due to a lack of privacy and antisocial behaviour near site boundary.
- Increase the number of allotment spaces.
- Consideration needs to be taken in on bridges and rills due to some residents having limited mobility and visibility.

Apartment layout:

- Lack of storage within kitchens and within the apartment overall.
- Lack of kitchen countertop space.
- Additional study or storage room.
- Greater space requirements for any units with couples.
- Potential to separate sleeping spaces within apartment during times of illness.
- Desire to increase privacy and/or defensible space along shared walkways.
- Concern over lack of own private green space.

Lodge keeper:

- Lodge keeper's residence should have visual connection and/or greater proximity to the main entrance to maintain passive surveillance.
- Desire for a separate, self contained lodge keeper's residence.
- Potential of disturbance between lodge keeper's residence and flats above due to the possibility of late night call outs and noise from children at lodge keeper's house.
- Concern over lack of privacy for lodge keeper due to proximity to other flats.
- Desire to have both shower and bath within lodge keeper residence due to current and future prospect of family occupancy.

Other:

- Concern over site management during construction. Emphasis placed on minimising dust and other disruptions as some residents have health issues.
- Review phasing as Chapel, laundry and other community spaces would come under the strain after the increase in residents upon completion of phase two.
- Review needed for bin storage in phase one.

D. Summary and Recommendations:

Overall, the engagement session was received positively with much of the focus placed on details of the proposal. The overall concept and massing were generally well received and residents acknowledged the need for Huggens College to expand so long as the community's ethos and values are respected. The primary action required is a revisiting of the internal layouts of the house types to ensure that storage and internal separation of uses is achieved.

Recommendations:

- Units should have more internal storage as well as kitchen space.
- Unit layout should be tested to see if further subdivision can be achieved, specifically between the kitchen and living spaces.
- Produce a waste management plan for each floor and block.
- Accessibility of external landscape to be considered in the instance of limited mobility and sight.
- Concern over the size of private outdoor space available per unit.
- External access routes and internal road should be able to accommodate pedestrians/scooters in the event of parked vehicles.
- Revisit designs for the arts space and library keep to their forms coherent with the rest of the scheme.
- Review phasing to allow communal spaces to meet future capacity.
- Introduce secondary entry gate near existing main gate to allow easier site access for the residents.
- Ensure lodge keeper has visual connection and/or is in close proximity to main gates.
- Ensure adequate CCTV is provided.

Appendices:
Presented boards:

Huggens College - Charity Aims

The College was founded by John Huggens, a social reformer of Birmingham, in 1919 and officially opened in 1927.

The Principal Objective of the Charity is to provide Affordable accommodation for persons aged at least sixty years old and not in full time employment/half employment, who are of good character, are of limited financial resources, are capable of independent living and recognise that Huggens College is a community with Christian values.



Response to Collegians' Feedback

A drop in event was held at Huggens College on 18th June 2023.

Presentative boards detailing housing need, constraints and opportunities, and landscape opportunities were on display with the project team and Trustees available for one-to-one conversation. Residents were invited to share their ideas through:

- Presentation boards
- Conversation
- Pin boards (with a College plan)
- Discussion

Detailed feedback was captured to inform the design brief outlined below.

Overview:

- Residents are active with a very strong sense of community
- They strongly support John Huggens' vision being continued and retaining the Christian ethos
- Most residents support providing for the local housing need, so long as John Huggens' ethos are protected. They value maintaining eligibility for people from elsewhere - not just local people - as it felt that the wider makes sense for the community





Design recommendations based on residents' feedback:

- The chapel is to remain a focal point, and protected for future use.
- Build new community space to accommodate increased resident numbers
- A mix of communal and private spaces, inside and outside.
- New activity rooms, back as a craft room and library to support residents' creative and social activities, in different locations, to continue to support active lifestyles.
- Recognising that residents are from a wider intake, some guest accommodation units be provided for guests travelling from a distance, and enough space within flats to host day visitors.
- Light and air: All flats to be dual aspect, with heights and roofs designed to maximise winter light meeting ground level.
- The scale of buildings is to be kept low (up to 3 storeys) and used to create a domestic feel to the flats.
- Retain a central green large enough for community events, linked to circular walks. People like looking out or a green, having central events there.
- Retain existing trees wherever possible
- Each resident is to have access to a balcony or garden area
- Different opportunities will be provided for enjoying the garden, such as sensory planting, wild space, and space to grow food.
- Security and openness need to be balanced to decisions for future access arrangements.

Board 1: Summarising the feedback from the first engagement.

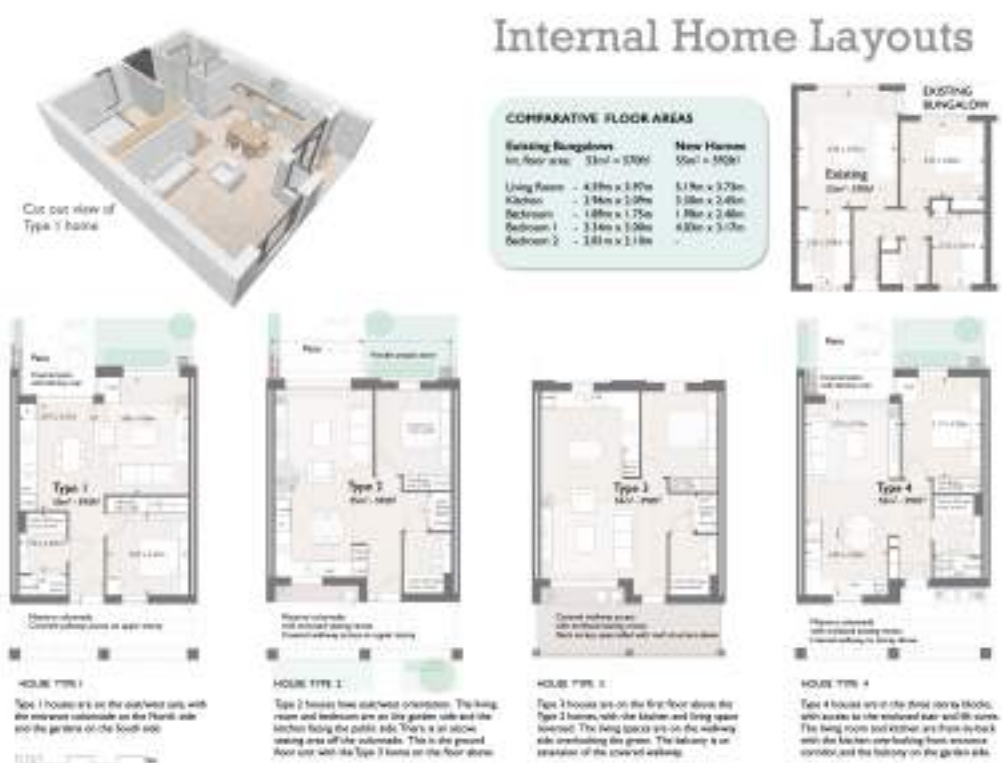
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Board 2: Recapping driving design principles.

Proposed Masterplan



Board 3: Masterplan layout.



Board 4: Internal unit layouts and comparisons to existing house types.

Detail Elevations



Board 5: Detail elevations and materiality studies.

Perspective Views



Board 6: Perspective views of the scheme.

Indicative Phasing Plans

Under construction



Phase complete



Phase 1

Form new second access point through boundary wall along College Road to serve as public entrance.

Construct 18 new houses on the green. Part of the central green to be separated off to temporary construction compound. Construction traffic to arrive and leave through existing site entrance.

Construction period 9-12 months
start 2013
completion 2015



Projected Phase 2

Demolish 11 existing bungalows around the south side of the green.

Construct 30 new houses.
Construction traffic through existing site entrance.

Construction timescales TBC



Further Phase

Demolish 6 existing bungalows adjacent the newly formed entrance.

Refurbish and extend the Chapel.

Construct 15 new houses.
Construction traffic through the new entrance.

Construction timescales TBC



Further Phase

Demolish the existing Lodgekeeper's house and laundry.

Construct 5 new houses plus new Lodgekeeper's house, guest accommodation, laundry and staff offices. Construction traffic through existing site entrance.

Construction timescales TBC



Further Phase

Demolish the remaining 13 existing bungalows.

Construct 33 new houses.
Construction traffic through the new entrance.

Construction timescales TBC

Board 9: Project phasing. This was accompanied by a video showing the progression from one phase to another.