

A Supplementary Planning Document for Kneller Hall

The Kneller Hall site is owned by the Ministry of Defence (MoD) and is the home of the Royal Military School of Music. In November 2016 the Secretary of State for Defence announced a long-term plan to optimise the Defence Estate for future requirements. This included confirmation of the intent to dispose of Kneller Hall. The current timescale for the MoD selling the Kneller Hall site is during 2020.

Whilst the Council would rather not see the Royal Military School of Music leave, it is important to ensure that what happens next with the site results in a positive legacy for both Whitton and the borough. The Council therefore adopted a site allocation to guide the future uses of the site in its Local Plan in July 2018.

The Council and the Defence Infrastructure Organisation (on behalf of the Ministry of Defence as landowner) have agreed to work together to set out a future planning framework for the site. Together, we have received government funding to develop a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in cooperation with local communities.

The SPD will guide future development and land uses for the site, including indications of the location, scale and form of development, and how it can contribute to the vitality and viability of the local area as a whole. It will be adopted by the Council as a material planning consideration by the end of 2019/early 2020 before the site is sold.

Why are we consulting now?

This is a first, and informal, stage of engagement which will help to inform the development of the SPD. The purpose of this stage of engagement is to let you know about the background work that has been undertaken so far and to help us get an understanding of the things that are important to you when considering the future of the Kneller Hall site. Draft guidance will then be developed over the summer having considered your views, and a formal (statutory) consultation will be carried out later in 2019 so that residents, businesses and local community groups will have an opportunity to comment on the draft SPD itself before it is adopted by the Council.



The site in context



The context of the site's future

Both the Council, as local planning authority, and the Ministry of Defence (MoD), as landowner, have objectives that will need to be considered when developing the SPD.

The Council's adopted site allocation, which provides site specific policy guidance for Kneller Hall, and which any development will need to be in accordance with, sets out that:

Appropriate land uses include residential (including affordable housing), employment and employment generating uses as well as social infrastructure uses, such as health and community facilities. Any proposal should provide for some employment floorspace, including offices. The Council will expect the playing fields to be retained, and the provision of high quality public open spaces and public realm, including links through the site to integrate the development into the surrounding area as well as a new publicly accessible green and open space, available to both existing and new communities.

(Source: Local Plan Site Allocation SA14)

The MoD's 'A Better Defence Estate' announcement (November 2016) supports broader Government objectives 'to improve its estate management and create an efficient, fit-for-purpose and sustainable estate that meets future needs. This means disposing of surplus land and buildings in a way that delivers value for the tax payer, boosts growth and delivers new homes.'

(Source: Guide for the Disposal of Surplus Land Cabinet Office March 2017)

Working together provides the opportunity to create a positive legacy within this context whilst recognising that any future development will need to be in accordance with the Council's planning policies. The SPD, and any future development proposals, will need to take a sensitive approach to the historic and natural environment of the site whilst securing the delivery of new homes, for both sale and rent, as well as wider community benefits. However, there will also need to be a realistic understanding of how much will need to be spent on Kneller Hall initially and to consider the long-term costs associated with the maintenance and upkeep of the listed building and the operating costs of the wider community benefits.



Kneller Hall



Main Guard Room



Avenue towards bandstand



Sports ground



What is a Supplementary Planning Document?

A Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is a planning document prepared by the council as a local planning authority:

- It provides more detailed advice or guidance on the policies or site allocations in the Local Plan but cannot change policies.
- It has to go through a formal public consultation process before it can be adopted by the Council.
- It will be taken into account as a material consideration when the Council makes decisions on planning applications.
- SPDs can cover a wide range of matters, from specific guidance and advice on interpreting policies, such as on Affordable Housing or House Extensions and External Alterations through to site specific guidance as in this case.
- There is no statutory requirement for councils to prepare and adopt SPDs.
- The SPD cannot include land which is outside of the boundary identified in the Local Plan site allocation. (In the case of Kneller Hall the military housing and fenced off wooded area located at Duke of Cambridge Close are not included. These homes do not belong to the MoD but rather are leased, and there are no plans for this to change).
- The SPD cannot determine who the land will or will not be sold to.

The site boundary to be covered by the SPD is shown on the first board.

Stages in preparing the SPD



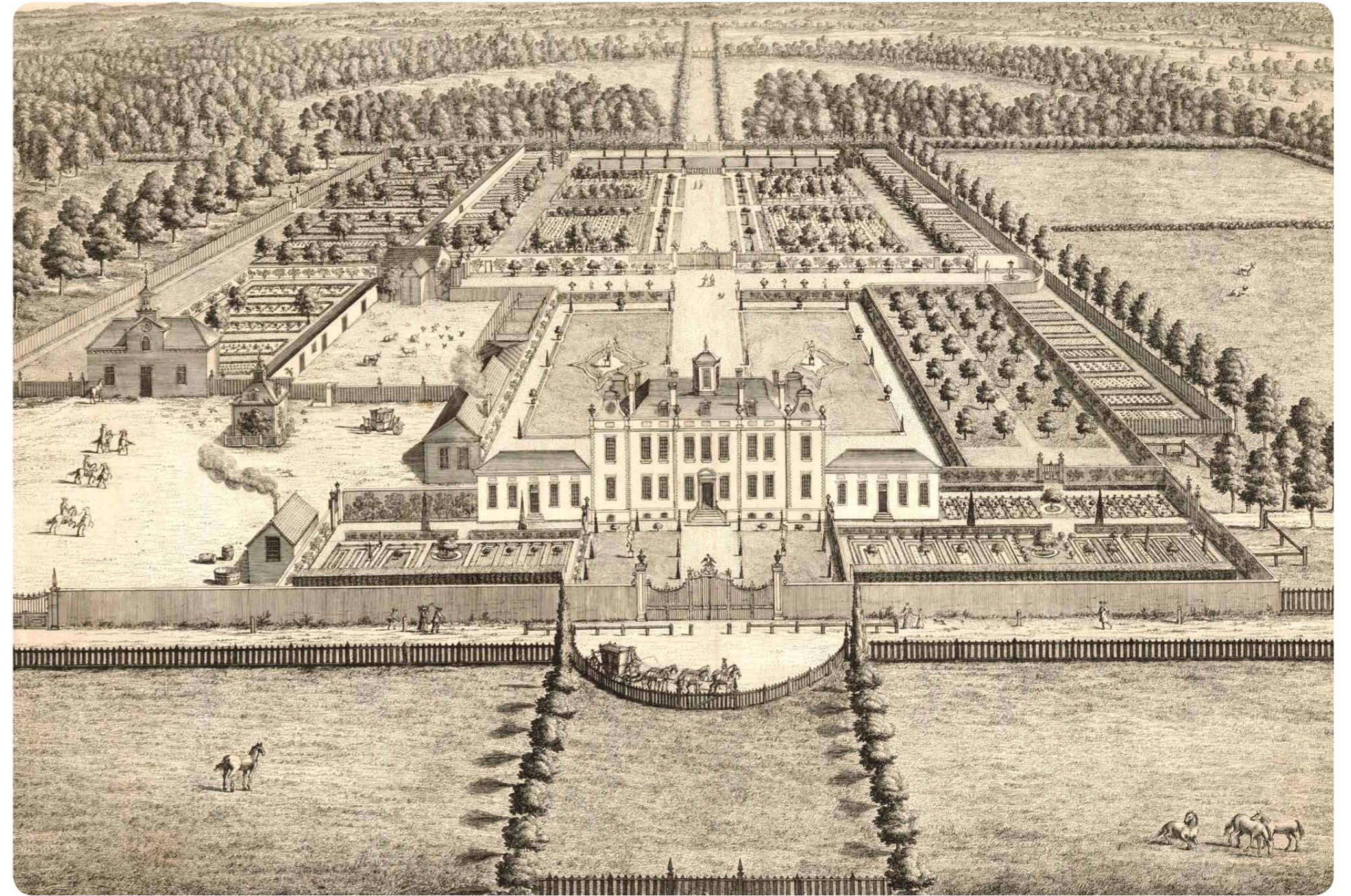
The history of Kneller Hall

There has been a house on the site of Kneller Hall since 1635, at which time the house was named Whitton Hall. Sir Godfrey Kneller (c.1648 - 1723), court painter to William and Mary, bought Whitton Hall in 1709 and promptly demolished it to build a large mansion, which it has been suggested was built in 1711 to the designs of Sir Christopher Wren. The house was renamed Kneller Hall after Sir Godfrey's death.

Kneller Hall was sold in 1757 to Sir Samuel Prime, a prominent London lawyer, who is reported to have extended the building and its grounds. In 1813 Kneller Hall was bought by Charles Calvert (1768 - 1832), a wealthy brewer and Whig MP for Southwark, and the building was once again expanded. Calvert employed Philip Hardwick (1792 - 1870), architect of Euston Station, to build two new wings.

In 1847, the building was acquired by the Council of Education for use as a training college for teachers of pauper children. George Mair was employed to refurbish the building. Designs from 1847 suggest that Mair initially intended to vertically extend the existing building, which consisted of sections of Kneller's original 1711 house and the later additions carried out under Prime and Calvert's ownership. However, alternative plans from 1848 and 1849 were used instead and this is largely what survives today. It is likely that, having discovered structural issues, Mair revised his initial plan and none of Kneller's original house survived.

The training college was not a success, and in 1856 the facility closed and was passed to the War Department which, at the behest of the Duke of Cambridge, adopted the site as the first School of Military Music. It was retitled The Royal Military School of Music in Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee year of 1887.



Kip's 1715 engraving of Sir Godfrey Kneller's Whitton Hall

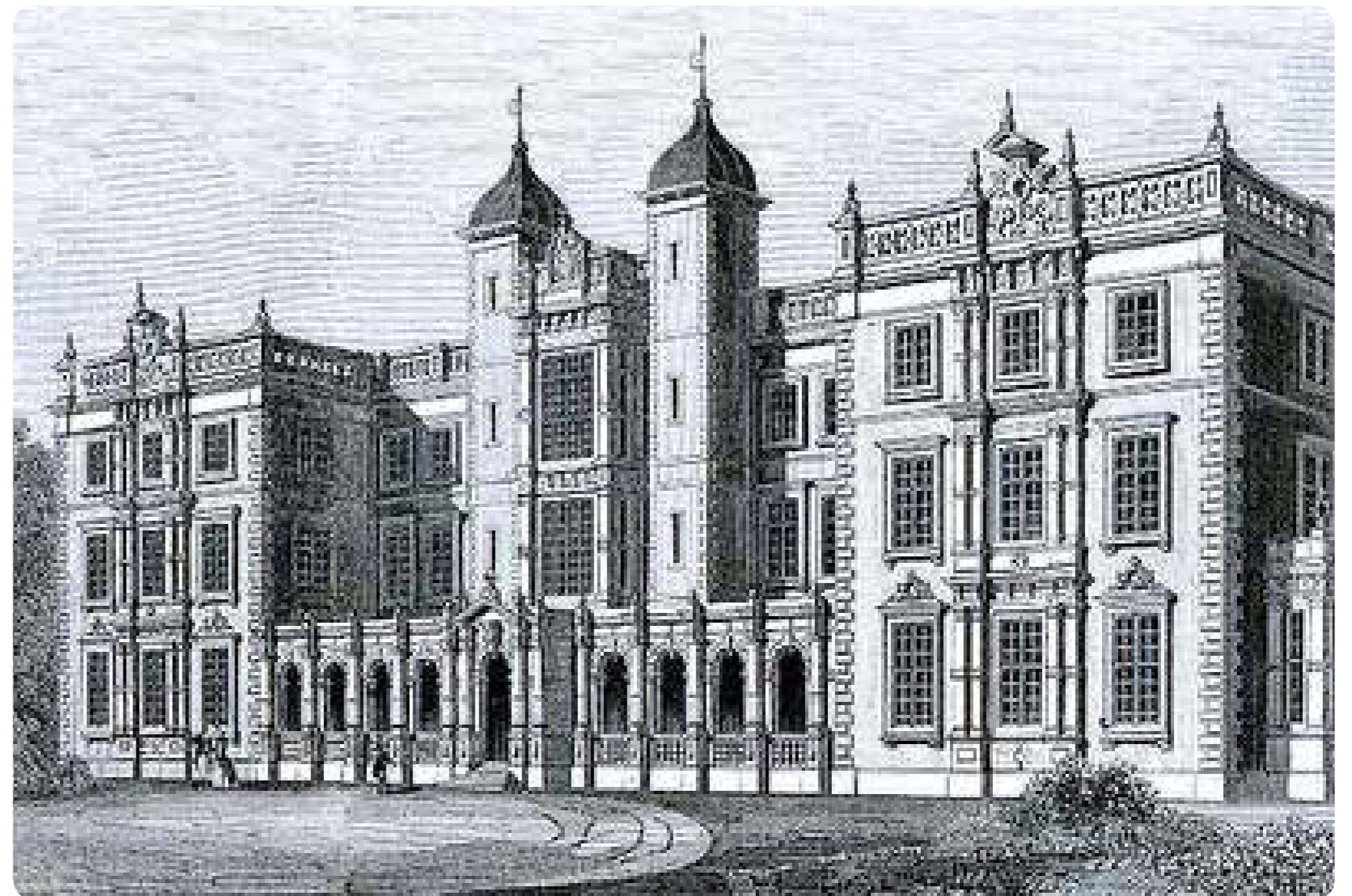
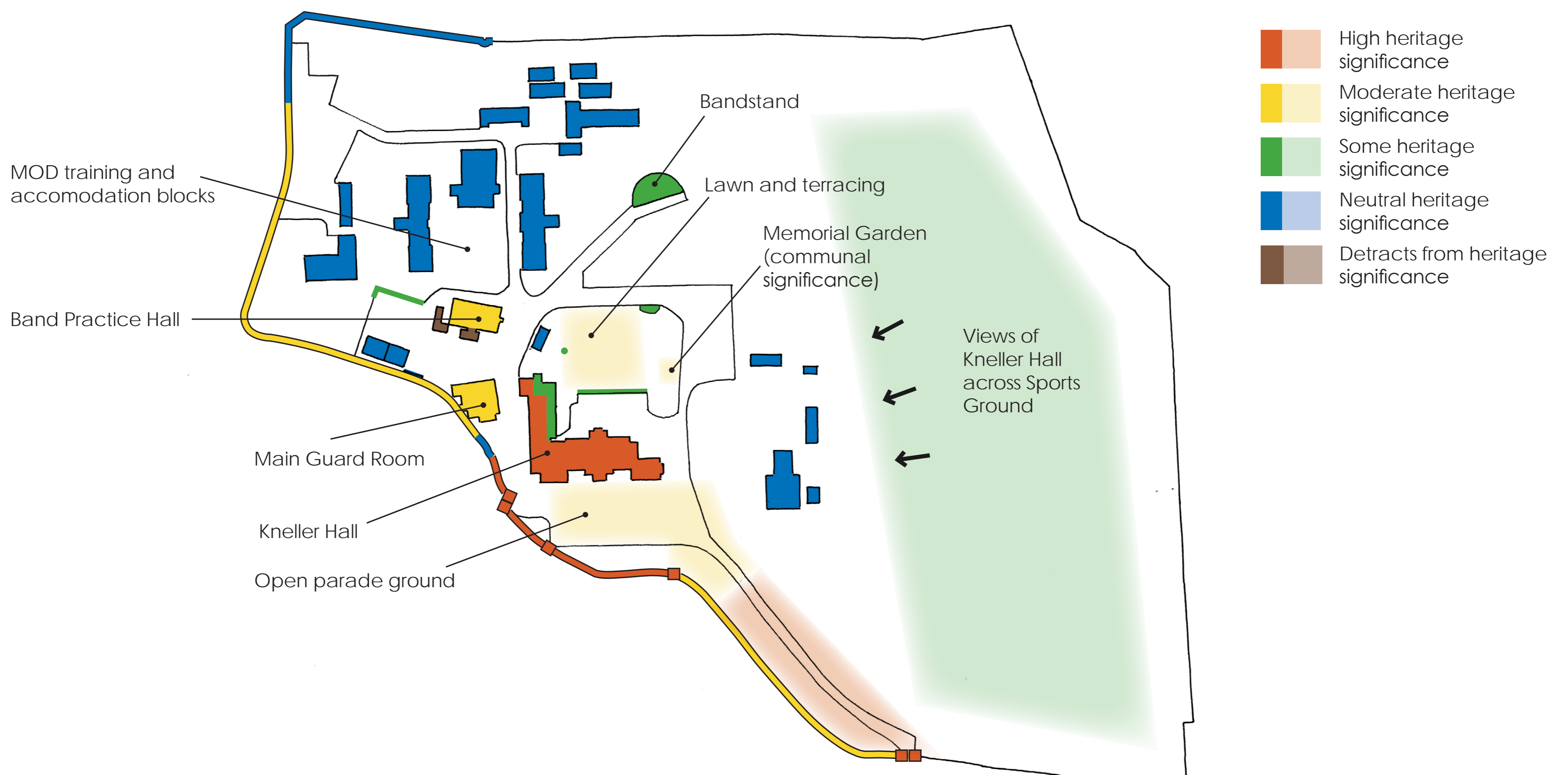


Illustration of Kneller Hall as built in The Builder, 1850



Heritage significance of the site

The history of Kneller Hall (continued)

The main Kneller Hall building and boundary walls are Listed Grade II, which means that because of their special architectural and historic interest they are protected. The Guardroom and Band Practice Hall are 'curtilage Listed Buildings' which means they are also protected. Kneller Hall contains a Chapel which is architecturally and historically the most significant single room within it because of its spatial qualities as well as having a virtually complete set of high quality original joinery and high quality stained glass windows. The Chapel has strong ties with the site's military history having been used by military personnel for weddings and christenings, and it includes commemorations to past members of the Corps of Music.

The original grounds of Kneller Hall were formally landscaped reflecting the fashion of the day. Sir Samuel Prime favoured a more naturalistic setting and extended the grounds considerably in the second half of the eighteenth century, with the southern boundary stretching to the current A316 Chertsey Road. An auctioneer's description of the estate as it appeared in 1841 gives a full account of the surrounding landscape:

'a capital and noble mansion known as Kneller Hall... stables, coach house, a wood yard, a melon yard and kitchen gardens, together with extensive Pleasure Grounds which are most tastefully disposed in Lawns, Parterres, and Plantations of

Lauristinus and other Plants, in the highest state of perfection and luxuriantcy; they are laid out to produce the most beautiful effect; amongst which must not be overlooked the various Belts, interspersed with Gravel Walks, the beautiful and extensive Lake, with the Bridges from one Islet to another, the Rustic Boat House, the Water Fall, the Pavilion- and though last, not least- the picturesque Groups of Trees scattered about the Park like Grounds'.

By 1961 the lake was marked on maps as a pond, though its original outline is included. By the 1970s the landscape had been further encroached upon by new buildings, but the site of the former lake was left largely undeveloped, with its perimeter planting still suggesting the outline of the lost water feature.

The school has earned an international reputation as a centre of excellence and Kneller Hall became the spiritual home of many generations of Army musicians. It was also used as a Civilian Rehabilitation Centre for ex-servicemen at the end of WWII. Kneller Hall has hosted regular public concerts and the bandstand has come to be associated with these community events. The earliest record of a bandstand in the grounds of Kneller Hall is shown on the 1915 Ordnance Survey map. The current bandstand was constructed in 1996.



Kneller Hall



Historic approach to Kneller Hall



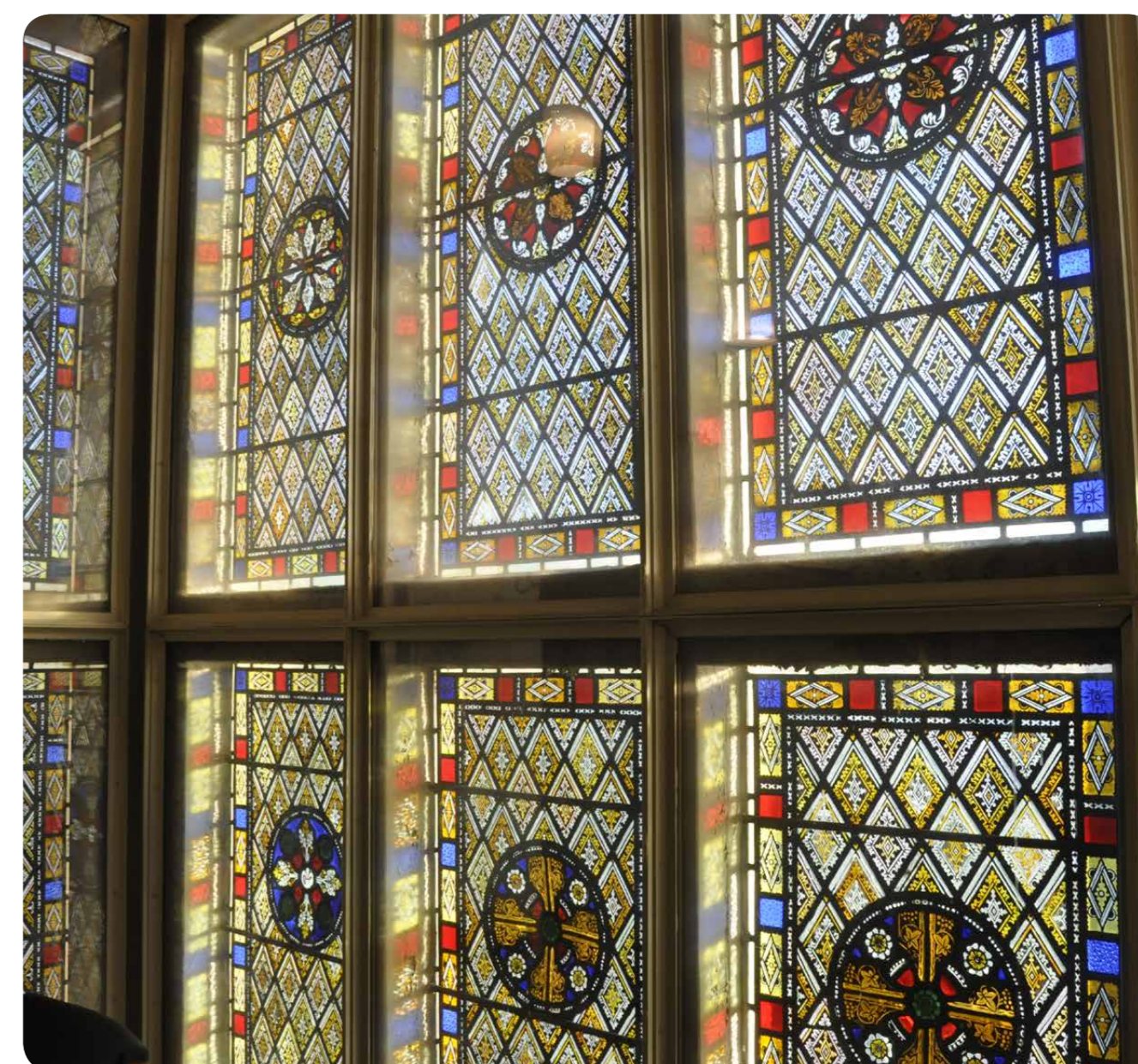
Public concert at Bandstand



Listed gate piers



Former Lake Site



Stained glass within the Chapel

What we know so far

To help understand the site, its history and its surroundings, and what needs to be considered when developing the SPD, some initial work has been undertaken around the following key themes.

Understanding the site's history and heritage

A detailed study has been undertaken to look at the important historical elements of the site. This includes not just the existing historic buildings and structures (such as the boundary walls), but also the wider landscape setting and the historic association between the Royal Military School of Music and the local community.

Trees

The site has a significant number of mature trees which are covered by a Tree Preservation Order, which the Council has put in place in order to protect them because of their important amenity value. This means that works to the protected trees will therefore need the Council's permission. A more detailed study of the trees, including their health and potential longevity, has been undertaken together with an understanding of what any development proposals will need to take into account to ensure their long-term health.

Parking and roads

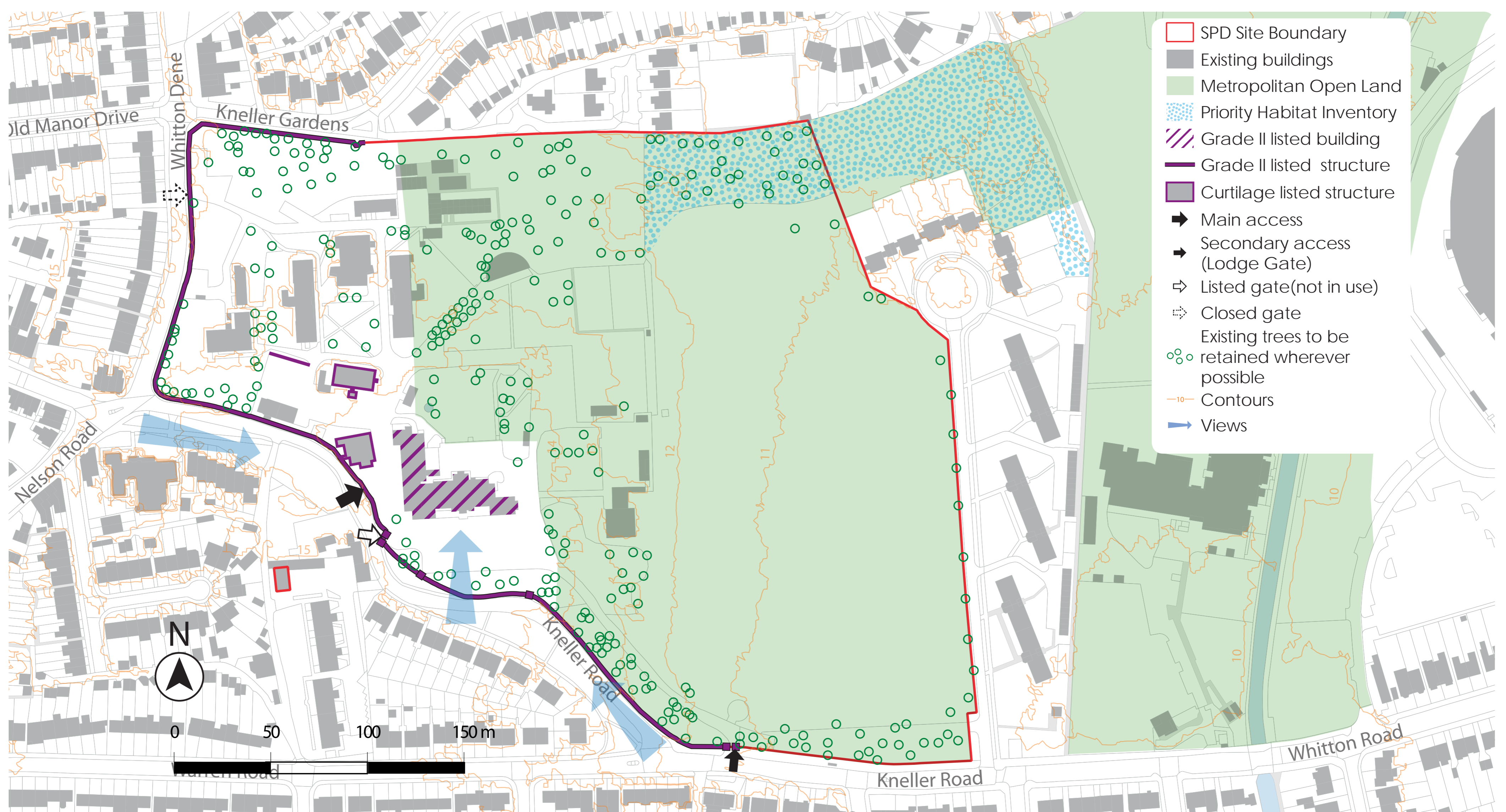
An initial analysis of the current level of traffic, access to public transport, and the type and location of accidents that have occurred around the site has been undertaken as well as a review of on-street parking. This will help to provide an understanding for what effects new development and different land uses may have on local traffic levels and parking.

Community needs

We have started looking at what could be included on the site that would benefit the local community and for which there are identified needs. In addition to the policy requirement for the retention of the playing fields and provision of high quality and accessible green and public open space, including links through the site, a particular need for playing pitches to support local clubs has been identified. In developing the SPD it will be important to consider this site's relationship with Murray Park, because whatever comes forward on the Kneller Hall site will need to complement existing facilities in the area rather than competing with them, particularly recognising the important role that Murray Park already plays in supporting the local community and its proximity to the Kneller Hall site.

The Character of the area

As well as looking at the physical appearance of existing homes and street patterns in the area we have also assessed the type and size of housing in the area. This will help inform what homes may be needed in the future to maximise opportunities for all.



Site understanding



Constraints and potential opportunities for the site

Based on the work that we have done so far we have identified three areas across the site, each of which provides different constraints and opportunities. These are shown below:

Kneller Hall and its context

The area incorporating Kneller Hall and the land which potentially contributes to its setting will need to be very carefully planned. It will be important to find a long-term use for the building which secures its future and, if at all possible, provides public access to the Chapel.

Area with the greatest potential for change

The area with the greatest potential for change has been identified as it has the fewest restrictions in terms of planning policy. In addition, the majority of the existing buildings within this area have no historic or architectural value. This provides, therefore, the greatest opportunity for change and in particular for new development, provided Local Plan policies are adhered to, such as ensuring that the proposals do not negatively impact on Kneller Hall and its setting, that there is no harm to the living conditions of residents located close to the site and that they sit comfortably within the wider area.

Open space/Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)

A significant part of the site is designated as Metropolitan Open Land (MOL). In line with the adopted Local Plan and site allocation for Kneller Hall, this means that this part of the site should be protected from development. Specifically, it provides the opportunity to create a place for people to use for sport, recreation and leisure. The area is large enough to accommodate a potential range of activities including the provision of sports pitches through to more informal spaces for children to play.

There are existing buildings and structures within the MOL which do not have any historic or architectural value. This provides a potential opportunity to re-provide the buildings to create much more usable space for a range of uses such as changing facilities as well as potentially multi-use, flexible and adaptable facilities. Taking this approach could also improve the overall sense of openness across this part of the site (which is a key objective of the MOL policy designation) and improve views to Kneller Hall itself.

