

ATKINS

Member of the SNC-Lavalin Group



AN AUDIT OF ROOF TERRACE ISSUES IN ST. JAMES'S

St. James's Conservation Trust | 2 March 2022

Preface

There are an increasing number of planning applications for new buildings and increased height of existing buildings where rooftops and terraces have been an integral part of the proposals to either meet :

- Stepping back of extra floors of wholly new developments to attempt to minimise height and bulk increases – main examples are Norfolk House site (consented/onsite) and French Railways House application.
- Stepping back or use of roof space on existing buildings, with extra storey/s, to increase accommodation on older buildings which have perceived reduced viability and more profitable opportunities – the main recent examples are Crusader House, new application for Christie’s rooftop, 63, 64-65 St. James’s Street (the latter citing a series of past terrace examples as precedents in St. James’s already approved and built).
- The justifications for terraces and rooftops in particular, with partially beneficial aims such as – to conceal or replace unsightly plant and services, add areas for office workers or new residents to have outdoor space for their well being (e.g Christies) and for green roof/ biodiversity measures to meet aspects of the climate change agenda.

The Trust could help the City Council, whose past policies have been against the impact on neighbour properties of potential amenity issues and overlooking. This short report quantifies the scale of the number of open rooftops and of terraces or balconies – and the trends of new applications and the issues arising. This would mean that the Trust and any pre-application discussions with developers and their teams are made well aware of the disadvantages and advantages of such applications, from the St. James’s district viewpoint.

Notice

This document and its contents have been prepared and are intended solely for the St James’s Conservation Trust’s information and use in relation to the assessment of roof terrace issues in the St James’s Conservation Trust’s area of interest.

Atkins Ltd. and the St James’s Conservation Trust assume no responsibility to any other party in respect of or arising out of or in connection with this document and/or its contents.

This document has 17 pages including the covers.

Document history

Job number: 5191362		Document ref: 5191362/RTA/002				
Revision	Purpose description	Originated	Checked	Reviewed	Authorised	Date
Rev 0.1	First draft for review	21/10/21	PH	PH	PH	21/10/21
Rev 0.2	Final draft	02/03/22	PH	PH	PH	02/03/22

Client signoff

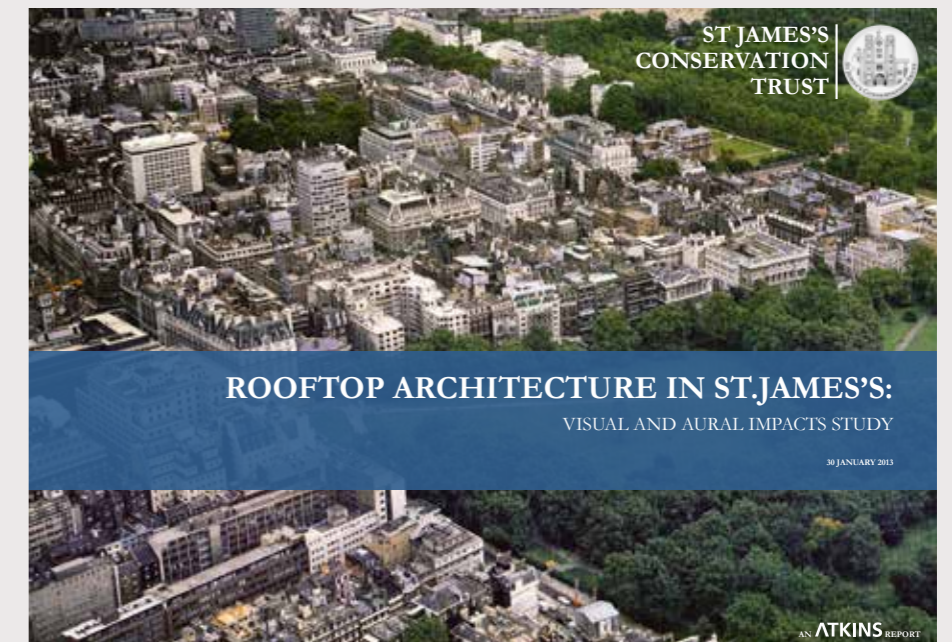
Client	St James’s Conservation Trust
Project	An audit of roof terrace issues in St James’s
Document title	An audit of roof terrace issues in St James’s
Job no.	5191362
Copy no.	2
Document reference	5191362/RTA/002

Front cover clockwise from left: Stafford Hotel rooftop landscape from single guest room suite. An existing St. James’s St. residential rooftop terrace, invisible from street level. Arlington St. residential example of a high level neighbour and street view to a recent rooftop terrace. Right: St. James’s 3D Plan view courtesy of VuCity digital modelling, a useful tool for analysis of roof terraces.



Contents

1	: Introduction	p3
2	: Issues	p4
3	: Background	p5
4	: Past and present local policies	p8
5	: Examples	p10
6	: Outline map and audit of sites	p12
7	: Summary and recommendations	p14
8	: Appendix	p15



The St James’s Conservation Trust in January 2013, produced a report on a range of issues of concern titled ‘Rooftop Architecture in St James’s’. The current 2022 audit document focuses on a new issue of height increases and roof terraces. This is complimentary to the earlier report which identified negative impacts of rooftop utilities and services. Example pages are shown on the left. Full document available on the trust website : stjamestrust.org.uk/reports/Rooftop-Architecture-2014.pdf

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The four outline descriptions of the **Charitable Purposes of the Trust** are (most effected by roof terrace issues are underlined throughout this report) :
- Promote high standards of planning and architecture in, or affecting the area.
 - Secure the preservation, protection, development and improvement of features of historic or public interest in the area.
 - Maintain the character and atmosphere of the area, with its social fabric, collection of ancient shops and private members clubs.
 - Educate the public in the geography, history, natural history and architecture of the area.
- 1.2 The St. James's Conservation Trust has since 1999 and on a case by case assessment, sought compromises in discussions with businesses. However, the Trust has made objections to roof terraces where they are considered to be a negative impact on the character and amenity of the Conservation Area. The consultations have been successful in limiting the heights and overlooking ammenity issues particularly important for residential and neighbour properties.
- 1.3 Below is an extract from Westminster City Council's (WCC) *Extensions : Rooftop*, 2004, Supplimentary Planning Guidance (SPG) :

Roof terraces

In many situations a roof level terrace may be visually disruptive, particularly on front elevations, and cause amenity problems (e.g. overlooking, loss of privacy, disturbance) to adjoining properties. Terraces at roof level are often considered unacceptable, in principle, especially on listed buildings. They may only be considered favourably where



The Trust supported a 1999 development designed by Architect Robert Adam for The Crown Estate, which included a mix of uses including a penthouse with roof terrace. The Trust supports viable mixes of new residential uses and restoration of historic residential buildings.

there is a clear consistent pattern established within a terrace. Where a roof terrace is acceptable it must have a simple balustrade or rail at a height of 900 mm for safety purposes. Alternative solutions may include setting back the front of the terrace from the existing parapet and containing it behind a dummy mansard roof or locating it within the

middle of the roof. When planning permission is granted it will normally be conditional to ensure that other structures are not added to the terrace, or to restrict its use. If screening is required to prevent overlooking problems, this may be unacceptable in design terms. In such cases the principle of a terrace may be unacceptable.

2.0 Issues

2.1 Below is an extract from WCC's *Adopted City Plan*, 21 April 2021 :

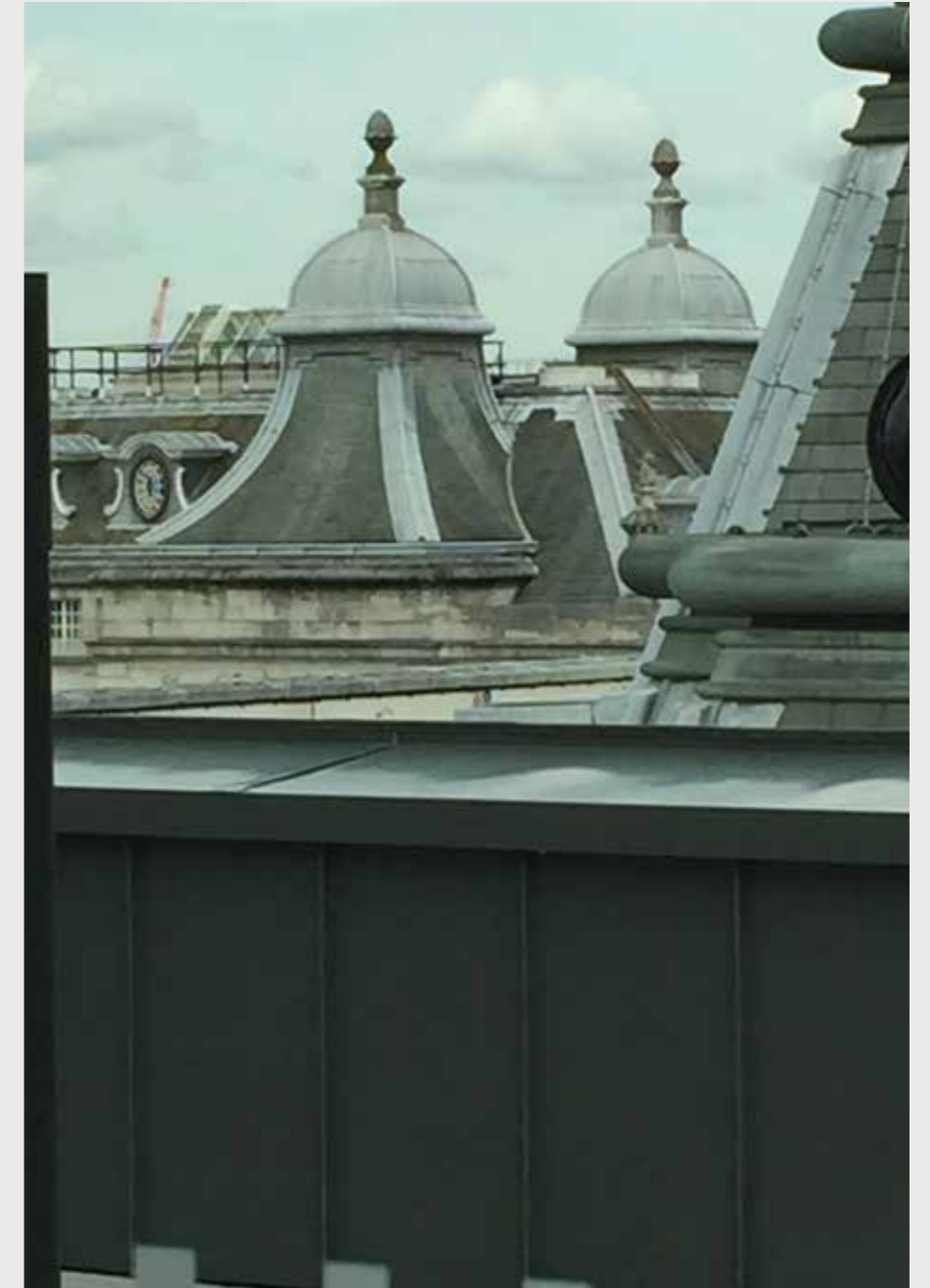
Townscape and architecture

A. Development will be sensitively designed, having regard to the prevailing scale, heights, character, building lines and plot widths, materials, architectural quality and degree of uniformity in the surrounding townscape.

B. Spaces and features that form an important element in Westminster's local townscapes or contribute to the significance of a heritage asset will be conserved, enhanced and sensitively integrated within new development, including important architectural details, boundary walls and railings, historic roof forms or structures, open light wells, historic or characteristic shop fronts and street furniture, as well as squares, parks and gardens. Where possible, lost or damaged features will be reinstated or restored.

Extensive developments

C. Extensive development will maximise opportunities to enhance the character, communities and other stakeholders to improve understanding of local heritage of interest and develop criteria to ensure a consistent approach is taken to the future identification and conservation of our local heritage.



The Crown Estate's St. James's Market 2015, first phase improvements with new commercial buildings (**left hand photo**) and improved existing (**right hand photo**) of modest increases in height and bulk, have also included both acceptable green roof planting and sections of accessible rooftop terraces.

3.0 Background

3.1 Below is an extract from WCC's *City Plan 2019 – 2040* :

Design contents :

Quality and functionality of the site and its surroundings, including creating new compositions and points of interest, and high-quality new streets and spaces, linked to the surrounding townscape to maximise accessibility.

Alterations and extensions

D. Alterations and extensions will respect the character of the existing and adjoining buildings, avoid adverse visual and amenity impacts and will not obscure important architectural features or disrupt any uniformity, patterns, rhythms or groupings of buildings and spaces that contribute positively to Westminster's distinctive townscape.

Roof extensions

E. Roof extensions will be supported in principle where they do not impact adversely on heritage assets and should:

1. where part of a terrace or group already characterised by roof additions or alterations, be of appropriate design which follows an established form and would help to unify the architectural character of the existing terrace or a group;
2. where part of a terrace with an existing roof line unimpaired by roof extensions, take a coordinated approach, adding roof extensions of consistent and appropriate design to each property across the terrace;
3. in other locations, be of appropriate design sympathetic to the architectural character of the existing building.



A consultation 3D digital model view (**left photo**) of St. James's Market, shows a new, modest rooftop terrace and its intended use.

Top right photo shows the view from The Crown Estate's Head Office terrace and **below photo** used for stakeholder and office worker meetings and events.

3.0 Background

Westminster Views :

F. New development affecting strategic and local views (including local views of metropolitan importance) will contribute positively to their characteristics, composition and significance and will remedy past damage to these views wherever possible.

- 1 The densely developed townscape and concentration of heritage assets in Westminster means that most development opportunities involve the infilling of small sites or extensions to existing buildings within areas of established townscape. We will seek to ensure the design of such development will respond positively to the character of Westminster's diverse and distinctive neighbourhoods and celebrate and build upon the legacy of high-quality architecture in the city.
- 2 It is important that what makes different parts of Westminster special and unique is not lost as our city grows and develops. Our varied townscapes include highly uniform residential terraces, squares and crescents which form architectural set-pieces, relatively modest workers' housing and mews and in contrast, areas of varied townscape characterised by architecture from a wide variety of eras and in a variety of styles.
- 3 We recognise that there will be greater potential for modern intervention, regeneration and change in certain areas of Westminster, where the quality of the existing built environment may be lower or character more varied. In other areas, the quality and / or uniformity of existing townscape demands a different architectural response and a greater degree of integration with the existing context. In general, the



more uniform the townscape, the greater the degree of coherence with the original scale, form and materials of the existing townscape that should be shown by new development.

- 4 A variety of distinctive spaces and features contribute to the character and appearance of townscapes across the city. The layout and pattern of development in Westminster, much of which was developed in the Georgian and Victorian eras, gives rise to certain locally distinctive building forms, rhythms and patterns of architectural detail within the townscape. Where such characteristic architectural detailing, features and spaces contribute to the townscape, these should be retained, enhanced and integrated within new designs, where appropriate. The protection and /or restoration of such features and spaces is particularly important when heritage assets are affected.



Left : View of an acceptable internal landscaped courtyard of 5 - 6, St. James's Square's redevelopment for office workers, which does not involve rooftop terraces.

Right : The Listed Athenaeum Club in Waterloo Place has attractive, modest, original accessible terraces, adapted for the managed use of Club Members.

3.0 Background

Extensive developments

Extensive development covers a large site area and has some independence of character which differentiates it from the surrounding townscape. Such sites are relatively uncommon in Westminster and most are likely to be covered by site briefs or design guides providing further guidance. Where they do exist or become available, their potential to improve the quality and functionality of the area must be fully realised. A comprehensive and integrated approach to urban design will be required, including consideration of building layouts, creation of new public realm, streets and spaces, incorporation of landscaping and infrastructure to maximise the opportunities for positive change. Designs will build in capacity for future needs, promoting legibility and ensuring good connections, while also taking into account the wider setting.

Given the densely developed character of the city, extensions to existing buildings (both upwards and outwards) have an important role to play in meeting the growth ambitions of this plan. They can provide room for expanding families, may provide additional housing units, and can allow businesses to grow, as part of single or mixed-use development.



The Listed Royal Automobile Club has attractive, original, large accessible terraces, overlooking Carton Terrace Gardens, adapted for the managed use of Club Members.

4.0 Past and present local policies



White Cube Gallery (left) and an improved public realm setting of Mason's Yard, was supported by the Trust as an appropriate new building and use with its modest increase in height and managed gallery roof terrace.

4.1 Below is an extract from WCC's *City Plan 2019 – 2040* :

Works to alter and extend existing buildings will be supported where they are successfully integrated with their surroundings. To achieve this, extensions should be subordinate to the host building, respecting the scale, detailing and materials of both existing buildings and adjoining townscape. Care should always be taken not to disfigure buildings or upset their proportions and to ensure good standards of amenity as set out in Policy 7.



No. 9 Mason's Yard is a new infill building refurbishment with a modest roof terrace for commercial managed use.

4.0 Past and present local policies

7: Managing development for Westminster's people Development will be neighbourly by:

- A. Protecting and where appropriate enhancing amenity, by preventing unacceptable impacts in terms of daylight and sunlight, sense of enclosure, overshadowing, privacy and overlooking.
- B. Protecting and where appropriate enhancing local environmental quality.
- C. Protecting and positively responding to local character and the historic environment.
- D. Not overburdening the capacity of local infrastructure.
- E. Contributing to the greening of the city.
- F. Improving sustainable transport infrastructure and highway conditions.
- G. Making appropriate and effective waste management arrangements.

Amenity impacts

Negative effects on amenity should be minimised as they can impact on quality of life. Provision of good indoor daylight and sunlight levels is important for health and well-being and to decrease energy consumption through reduced need for artificial heating and lighting. Overshadowing affects the quality or operation of adjacent buildings and can negatively impact on the use of public and private open space for recreation, rest and play. Positioning, scale and orientation of buildings as well as the incorporation of design measures should be considered to minimise overshadowing and overlooking and ensure adequate levels of privacy. Even when there may be no material loss of daylight or sunlight, new developments should prevent unacceptable increases in the sense of enclosure.



An unacceptable increase in height of a proposed penthouse and terraces for the Listed Crusader House, a mixed ground level retail and residential building on Pall Mall was withdrawn following objections to the design and negative impacts on the historic fabric and residential amenity.

5.0 Examples

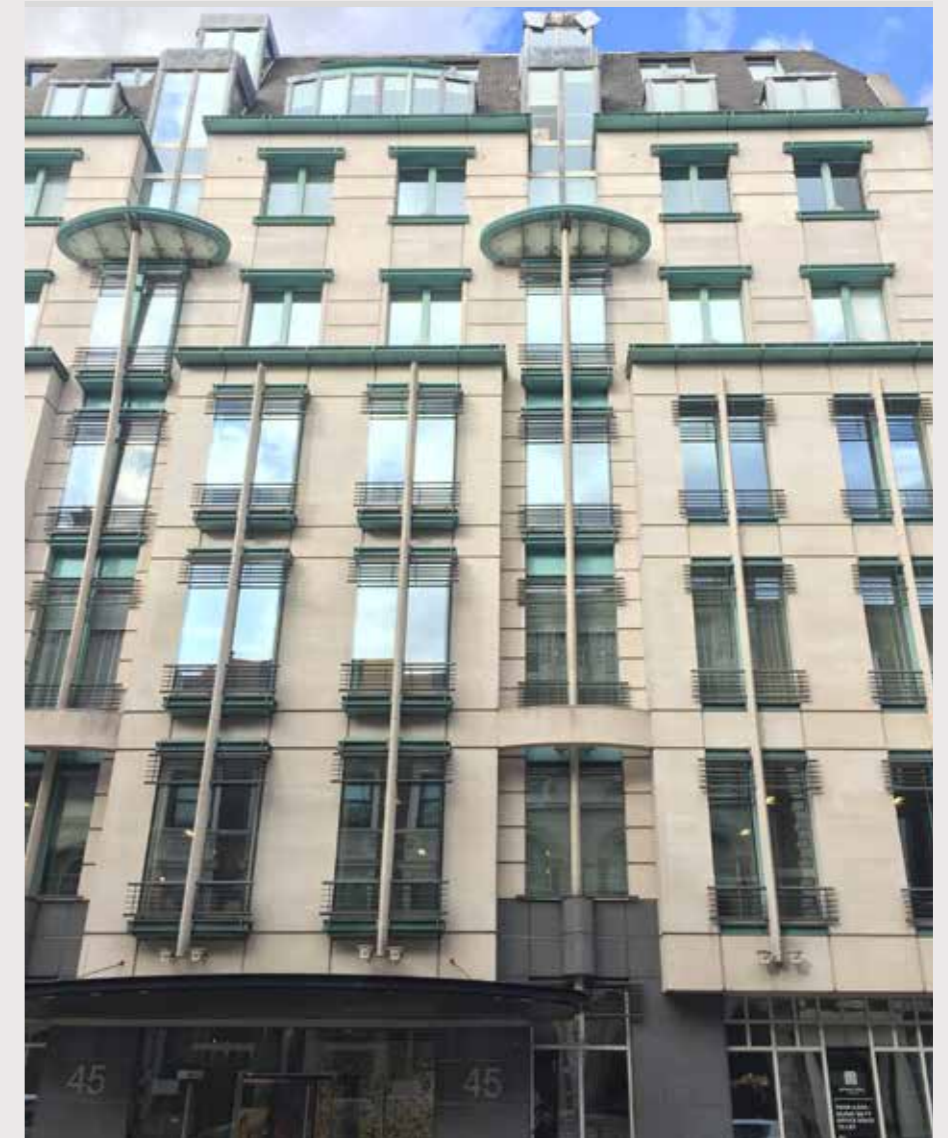


Roof Terrace at 66 St James Street, partially visible from 63 St James Street
roof terrace



Roof Terrace at 72-73 St James Street

Roof Terrace at 66 St James Street



5.1 Below is an extract from WCC's *City Plan 2019 – 2040* :

Roof extensions can be a practical way to create additional floorspace but can also have a significant impact on the character and appearance of buildings and the wider townscape, and a sensitive approach and highest standards of design will be required.

National and London Plan policy identifies the potential for building upwards to increase housing supply. Where upwards

extensions will allow the creation of additional residential floorspace to provide family housing or new self-contained residential units and they are sympathetic to the townscape context, they will be supported.

Examples (2 left photos) by a developer showing precedents of commercial rooftop terraces in St. James's Street, adjacent a planned neighbour property proposal for an increase in height and a new terrace use. The Trust objected to the these proposals, and the increase in height was deleted.

45 Pall Mall (above), a refurbishment and height increase with rear facing roof terrace and balconies of a commercial building, with limited impacts on neighbour properties and amenity.

5.0 Examples

Many of Westminster's residential areas are characterised by terraced housing of consistent design. On terraced houses of the Georgian and Victorian eras, mansards will very often be the most appropriate form of roof extension. However, this will depend on the age and style of the building. Where mansards or other roofs are an established feature within a group of buildings, roof extensions which follow the established pattern will usually be considered acceptable, but they should respect existing architectural features such as chimneys, party wall upstands, parapets and cornices.

If properties affected form part of a group or terrace that remain largely unaltered or have a historic or distinctive roofscape integral to the architectural character of that building, further upward extension may be unacceptable, and the design of development proposals will need to be especially carefully considered. Where a terrace retains a uniform roofline with no roof extensions, the addition of one roof extension or multiple roof extensions of different designs can cause harm to the appearance of the roofscape. However, we will consider applications which would take a coordinated approach, adding roof extensions of consistent design to a complete terrace with a uniform roofline. This will typically be on Georgian and Victorian terraces where mansard roof extensions can be accommodated behind a parapet. In such cases we will require extensions across the whole terrace group to be implemented at one time and this may be secured by legal agreement. Upwards extension will usually be inappropriate where a mansard or other later roof extension already exists.

While one additional storey will often be most appropriate, larger extensions of more than one storey may be appropriate in certain locations, particularly in commercial locations with more varied townscape character including the Opportunity

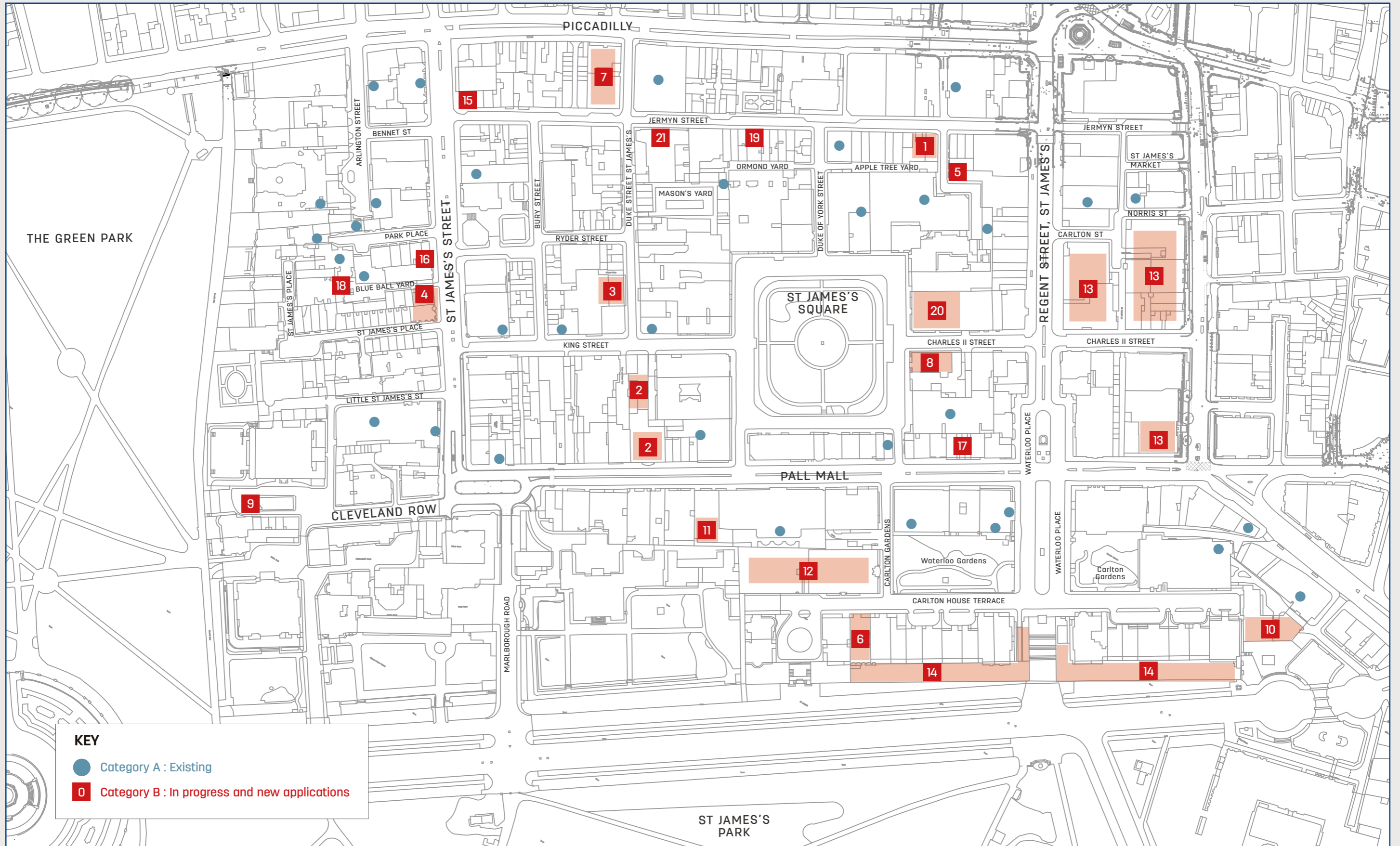


Areas, in the International Centres of the West End and Knightsbridge and the Queensway / Westbourne Grove Major Centre, and in other commercial locations on the Transport for London and Strategic Road networks which are characterised by a larger scale of townscape. In these locations more than one storey will be supported where it is demonstrated it can be designed to minimise harm to townscape, amenity and heritage assets and will help fulfil growth targets. This will depend on townscape context. Not all of the buildings within areas identified will be suitable for roof extensions and there may be other commercial locations across the city where larger roof extensions can be accommodated.



Jermyn Street view of the existing Dunhill premises (left) and Duke Street, St. James's French Railways House (right), consented to be demolished and replaced with a major new building, was not supported by the Trust and neighbour properties with its height and bulk increases and roof terraces and balconies negative impacts.

6.0 Outline map and audit of sites



6.0 Outline map and audit of sites

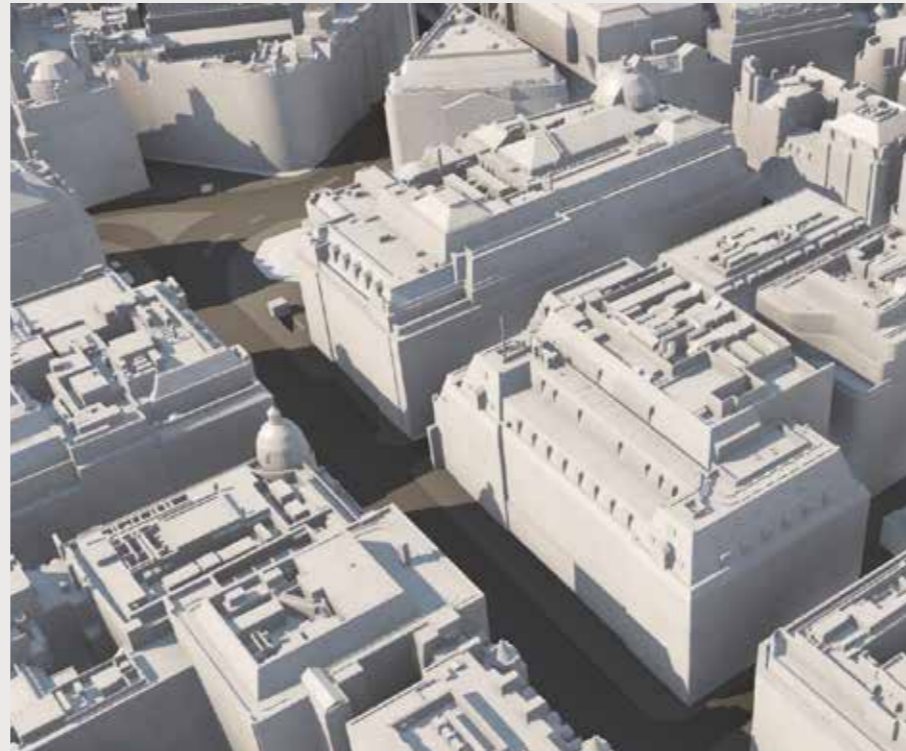
Establishments in the St James's Conservation area of interest with roof terraces		
Category A : Existing / consented		No. of sites
APPROX. TOTAL EXISTING SITES (at time of publication) :		34
Category B : Approx. sites in pre-planning stage, planning stage or in progress		No. of sites
APPROX. TOTAL PRE-PLANNING, PLANNED OR IN PROGRESS SITES (at time of publication updated in 2022 to 25) :		25
SITE NO.	DEVELOPMENT LOCATIONS	COMMENTS
1	Eagle House, 108-110 Jermyn Street, London, SW1Y 6EE	Recent modest roof terrace proposals.
2	44-47 Pall Mall, London, SW1Y 5JG Times Place, 45 Pall Mall, London, SW1Y 5JG 21 Cleveland Place, London, SW1Y 6RL 8-9 Rose and Crown Yard, London, SW1Y 6RE	Increased height of existing commercial building including roof terrace and balconies with low impact from street level.
3	47-48 Duke Street St James's, London, SW1 6QT	Proposed large hard and soft landscape roof terrace for office workers' health and wellbeing. Objections to structures led to modifications.
4	64-65 St James's Street, London, SW1A 1NF	Objections to proposed increase in height accepted. Roof terrace proposal retained.
5	James House, 1 Babmaes Street, London, SW1Y 6HF	Recent modest roof terrace proposals.
6	1 Carlton House Terrace, London, SW1Y 5AF	Recent modest roof terrace proposals in a screened, middle location.
7	180 Piccadilly, London, W1J 9HF 48-50 Jermyn Street, London, W1J 9BA	Trust and neighbour objections overruled for increase height, bulk and roof terraces.
8	33 St James's Square, London, SW1Y 4LB	Recent modest roof terrace proposals.
9	Selwyn House, Stable Yard Road, London, SW1A 1BD	Completed recent modest roof terrace proposals over existing garages.
10	10 Spring Gardens, London, SW1A 2BN	Refurbished commercial offices with roof-top green roof proposals.
11	83 Pall Mall, London, SW1Y 5ES	Recent modest roof terrace expanded proposals on Royal Automobile Club.
12	5-7 Carlton Gardens, London, SW1Y 5AD	Recent modest roof terrace modifications on existing commercial building.
13	St James's Market, London, SW1 : phases 1, 2, 3 sites	Possible future
14	Carlton House Terraces, London SW1Y 5CG : phases 1, 2 sites	Possible future
15	36 St James's Street, London, SW1A 1JD	Modified
16	63 St James's Street, London, SW1A 1LY	Refused
17	Crusader House, 14 Pall Mall, London, SW1Y 5LU	Withdrawn
18	Stafford Hotel, 16-17 St James's Place, London, SW1A 1NJ	In progress
19	91 Jermyn Street, London, SW1Y 6ST	In progress
20	1 St James's Square, London, SW1Y 4PD	In progress
21	Cavendish Hotel, 80-81 Jermyn Street, London, SW1Y 6JF	Possible future
APPROX. GRAND TOTAL :		55

7.0 Summary and recommendations

7.1 This audit is not exhaustive but has identified at least 55 rooftop terraces of all types by desk research, map, street level observations and planning applications. Many of the 55 roof terraces/balconies are relatively small and were intended for rooftop access and inspection, in 20th century developments or adaptations for services, such as lift overruns, air conditioning plant and other utilities, on historic buildings of various ages, mostly of Victorian, Edwardian or 20th century developments. These were generally in place before the establishment of the St. James's Conservation Trust in 1998/9 and the various reports of the Trust that aim to assist and support the Westminster Planning Guidance and policies on quality and amenity issues.

7.2 Recently implemented in the last decade or proposed developments (at the time of writing, there are approximately 25 examples of concern) which are increasingly including terrace and balcony designs in projects of refurbishment and new buildings. The aims include providing economic benefits via additional occupier spaces, and a trend for increases in height with an extra rooftop storey on existing buildings, with added commercial value accommodation. This approach is in conjunction with other planning policy aims where practical, generally supported by the Trust, to minimise visually unattractive rooftop air conditioning and utilities.

Examples of the additional amenity value gained by refurbishing existing and new development, via rooftop terraces and balcony, outdoor space with facilities, including areas of hard and soft landscape for residential, commercial and office workers have increased significantly in St. James's. These are likely to continue in number, in part as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic economic recovery and health and wellbeing responses.



A 3D model view tool (courtesy of VU City) of Regent Street, St. James's showing existing and improved massing of The Crown Estate's St. James's Market buildings with extent of roof terraces.

7.3 The Trust is suggesting that the City Council planning policies (for growth and economic recovery via rooftop increases, with terraces and balconies) and supplementary design guidance are urgently reviewed and restate or add new criteria for historic areas of mixed residential and commercial character. These should include at least the following new initiatives :

- Council Policy Guidance
- Communication Tools
- Information Requirements
- Management Information on uses

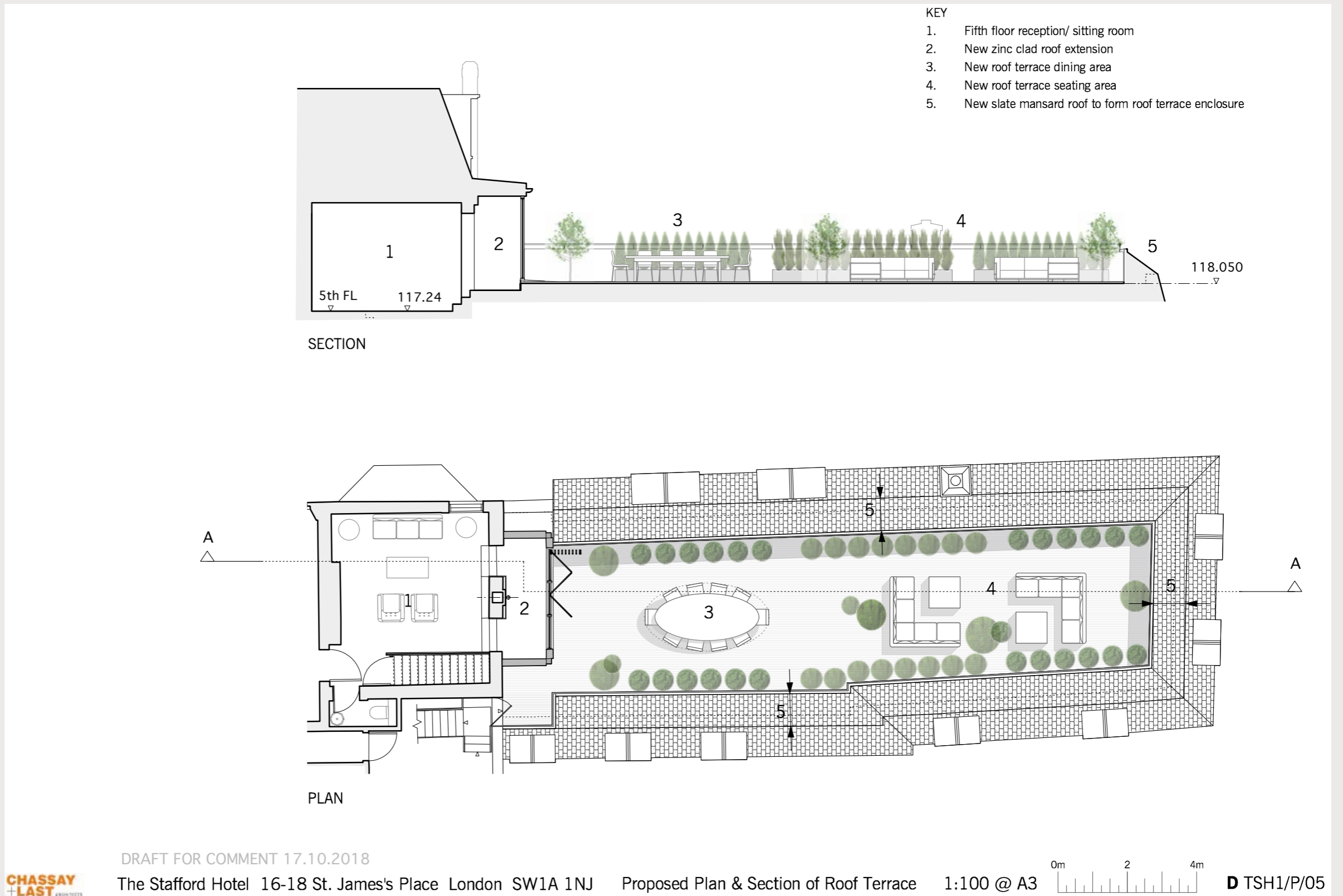
IN SUMMARY

- Improved consultation and communication tools for applicants, stakeholders and City Council decision makers that show clearly via 3D analysis the overlooking, proximity and scale of any rooftop changes and improvements that may impact on local amenity.
- Consultees need a consistent 3D presentation model tool to appreciate these matters (such as VuCity or other digital tools available to applicants) which demonstrate view lines to and from rooftops with any proposed changes.
- The size of rooftop terrace and balconies should not be excessive and capacity of those allowed access, whether residents/visitors or office workers and visitors should be controlled by floor area.
- Soft and hard landscape and all new roof terrace features and furnishings, such as canopies/umbrellas/awnings and any external lighting, must be shown clearly as part of any consideration and consent. The proportion of standing/seating and dining space to any hard and soft landscape areas must be identified as part of the proposed manageable capacity of use. This is both a health and safety, licensing issue as well as planning issues to have coordinated information and management arrangements and conditions that are (regularly) enforceable and monitored.
- The management of these rooftops by owner/occupiers is very important and should be a new part of applications for consent. In particular hours of use and nature of uses matter (yoga, fitness training, event parties, food and drink café uses at lunch or other times etc.) and whether residential or commercial rooftops and balconies must be identified, considered and agreed with local stakeholders' and neighbour consultations, before final applications for approval can be consented.

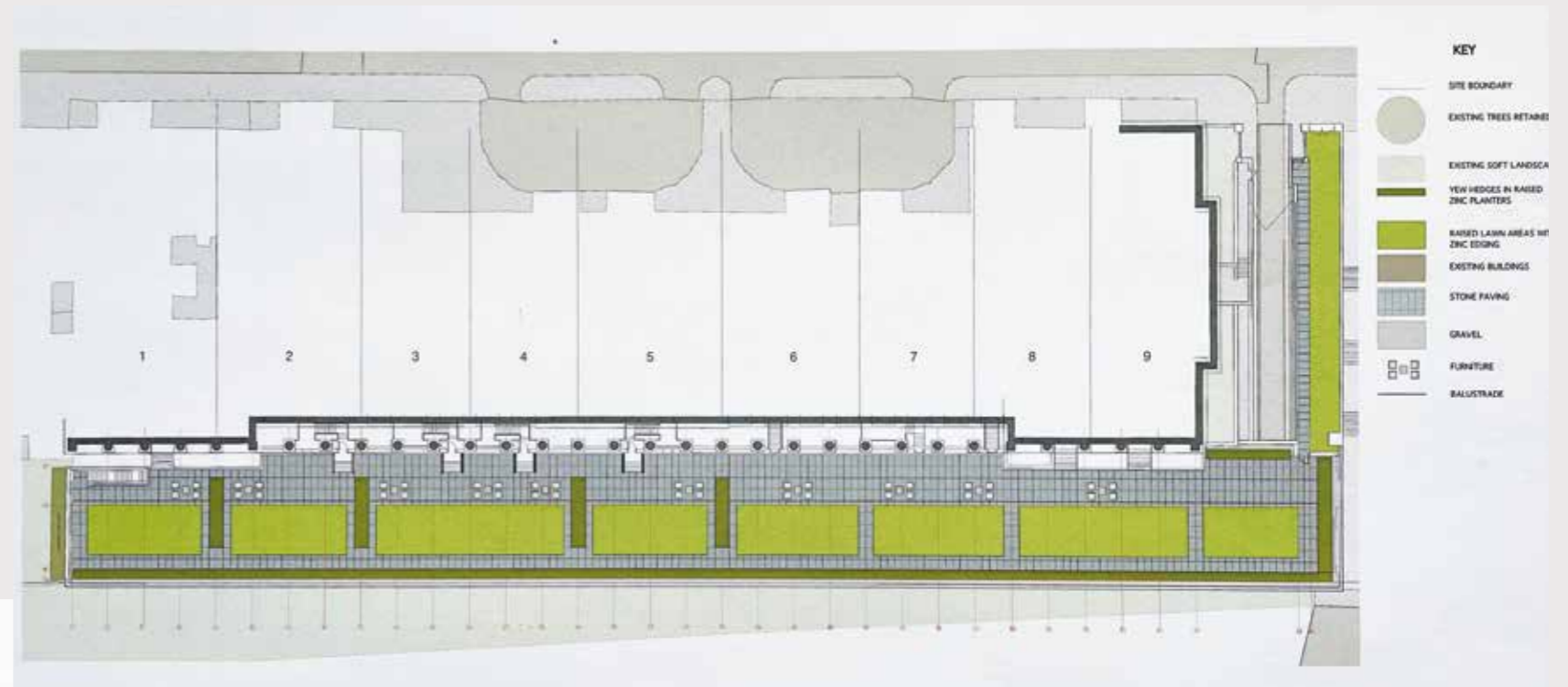
8.0 Appendix : Examples of the detailed information that aids the assessment of impacts on the area of a rooftop terrace

An existing flat roof transformed with planting and screen of this type may be satisfactory, subject to the management of uses, capacity of people, scope of activity and hours of use.

Courtesy of the Stafford Hotel

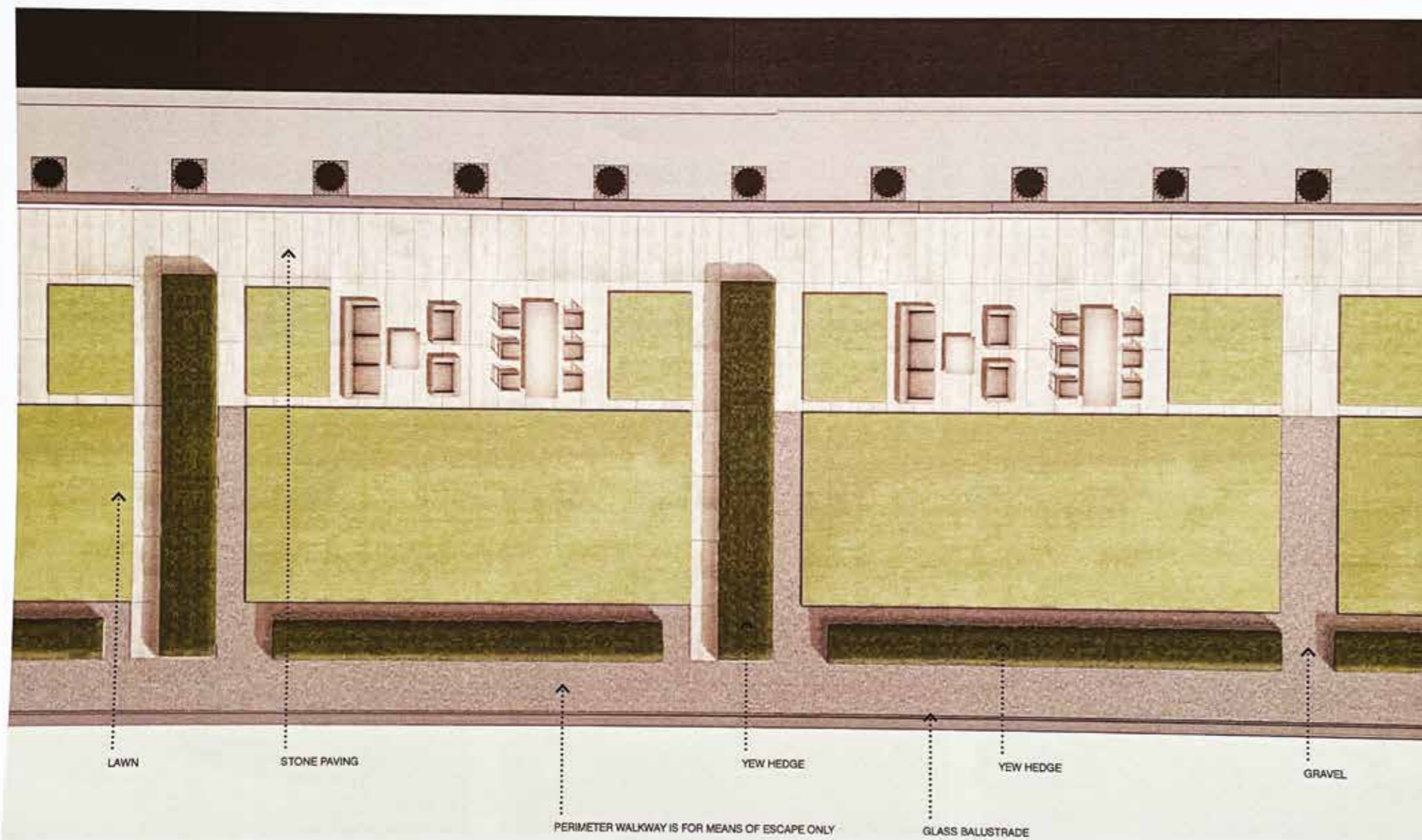


8.0 Appendix : Examples of the detailed information that aids the assessment of impacts on the area of a rooftop terrace



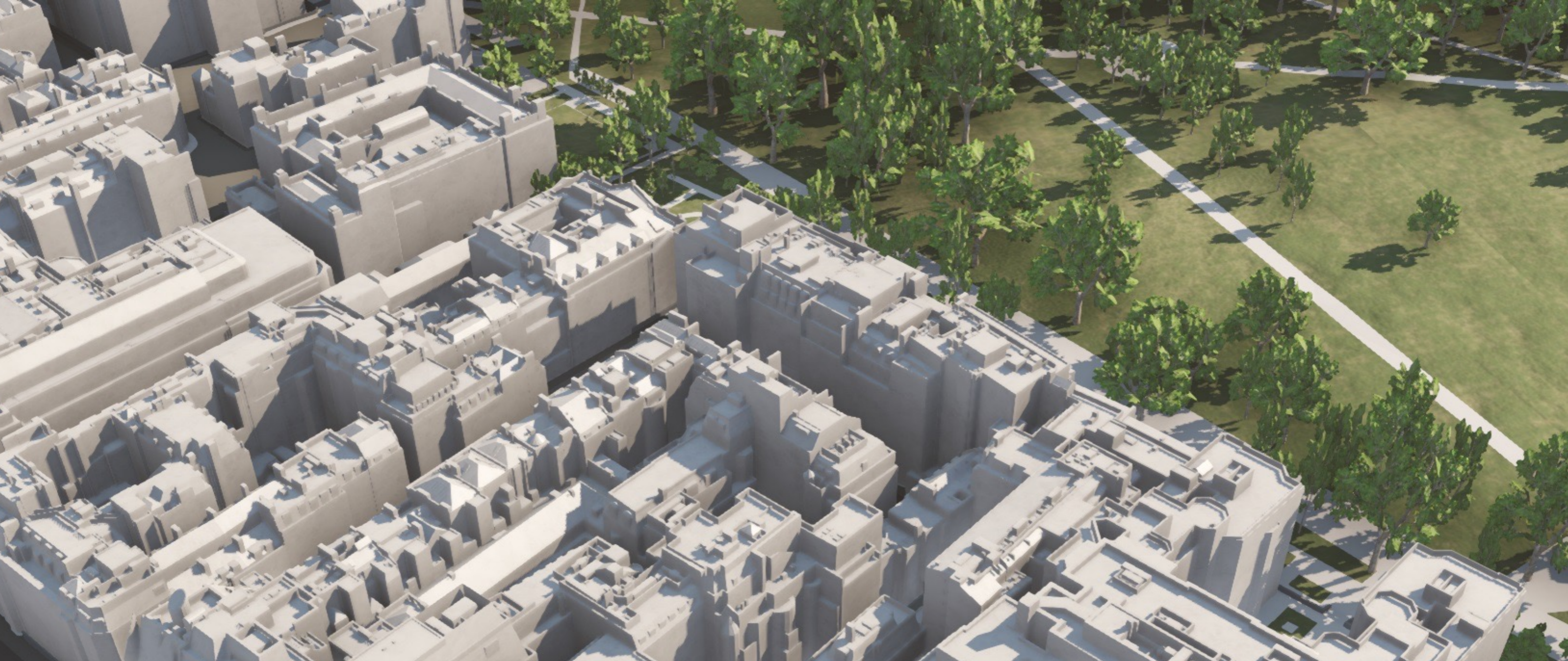
CONCEPT DESIGN

Detail plan



Carlton House Terrace showing proposals for soft and hard landscape on the hard-paved terrace

Courtesy of Crown Estate



For more information contact the Trust's Architect and Planner,
Peter Heath, RIBA MRTPI at peter.heath@atkinsglobal.com | www.stjamestrust.london

St. James's Street looking to Green
Park 3D massing view courtesy of
VuCity digital modelling, a useful
tool for analysis of roof terraces.

