

4 February 2025

Dear Alumnae

I am writing to provide you with an update on the Old Palace senior school site. I intend to write to you with more regular updates in the months ahead, as and when there are developments to share.

Having taken up the role of chief executive of John Whitgift Foundation late last year, I was not in post when the Foundation made the difficult decision to close Old Palace school. I do though appreciate the strength of feeling and hope that the updates here are helpful to you as alumnae. We anticipate we will be in a position to communicate more on the future of the Old Palace prep site in the coming months.

Following the decision to close Old Palace school in the summer of 2025 it has now been determined that the properties which form the Senior School are no longer required by the Foundation for educational purposes, and arrangements are being made for the school site (a mixture of freehold and leasehold properties across various plots) to be marketed. Knight Frank has been advising the Foundation on its options and has brought the full school site onto the market and will retain an open and flexible approach through the marketing period which may see interest in the whole site, or for individual parcels of the site.

In advance of the marketing, the Foundation engaged with key stakeholders, including The Friends of Old Palace, the Minster, Sarah Jones MP and the London Borough of Croydon.

To guide our process, we have met with Croydon Council to seek its strategic advice on the range of alternative land uses suitable for the sites and any key design principles associated with them. There is a shared view on key principles governing the route forwards, and most significantly the importance of ensuring that the main Old Palace buildings are occupied and that the nationally significant building does not fall into irrecoverable disrepair.

At a very practical level there is a feeling that the current Heritage List description for the site is not as thorough as it could be. Through our heritage advisors, we have applied for an Enhanced Listing Description (ELD) to Historic England. Planning legislation protects listed buildings, and an enhanced listing will provide further protection by indicating

where the significance lies in a building, making it easier for heritage consultants and conservation officers to judge what adaptations, changes and alterations can be accommodated by a property. This will seek to protect the Old Palace further from any unsympathetic works and alterations.

We are particularly sensitive to the memorials at the school and have engaged with donors and families to look, where appropriate, at suitable relocation. We are also in close contact with Croydon Minster and the clergy there.

We are aware also of the need for the preservation of the school historical archive and are working with colleagues to ensure we have both an immediate but also longer-term solution for this.

With respect to the Friends of Old Palace, who are a source of such extraordinary knowledge and history, the Foundation's legal advisers have been asked to consider how their constitution and objectives might be adapted in light of the closure of the school. We have an open dialogue about ensuring the buildings are accessible for tours booked in the weeks beginning 14 April and 26 May, as well as an OPA and Friends of Old Palace open house on 1 July.

I hope this information has been helpful and we will update you further when we are in a position to do so.

Yours sincerely



Roisha Hughes
Chief Executive