

# The Grand House on the Square

## Creating a Comfortable Environment for Children and Young People with Visual and Hearing Impairment

In collaboration with architects Sonnemann Toon and contractors Kier, Great Ormond Street Hospital (GOSH) is restoring The Italian Hospital on Queen Square. The Sight and Sound Centre, as it will be known, will bring together Audiology, Cochlear Implants and Ophthalmology, as well as Ear, Nose and Throat and Speech and Language Therapy Services. Children and young people with sight and hearing

impairment represent the largest outpatient group at GOSH. They can find the current outpatient department noisy, confusing and often without activities in which they can participate. Users of these services make repeat visits for throughout their childhood and teenage years, so, in addition to state of the art clinical spaces; we are creating an environment where our users feel at home.



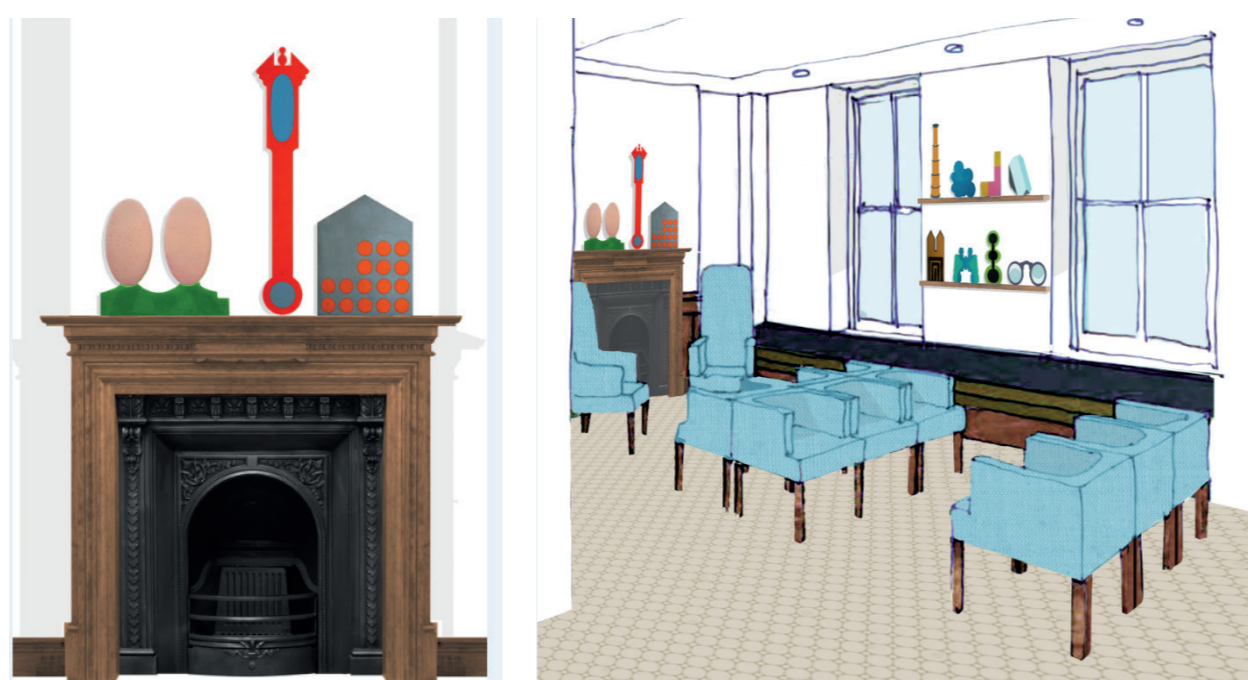
### "The Grand House on the Square"

This is how one of our expert users described the building. Built in 1898, the Italian Hospital is of a domestic scale that lends itself to many of the homely aspects our users tell us they find comforting and familiar. It will be fully accessible, easy to navigate, and decorated with features and finishes for this user group.

## Elements of the grand house brought back to life

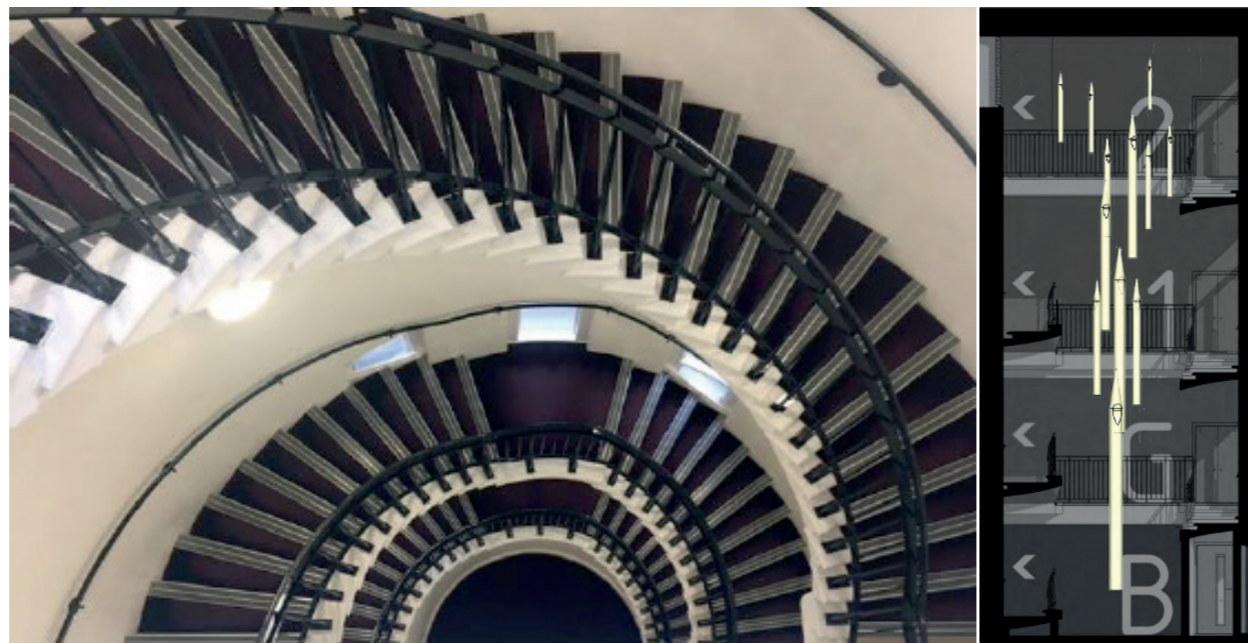
### The fireplace in the living room

The fire place in the waiting space with its surround will be restored. Artist Lubna Chowdhary has been commissioned to create ceramic tiles of familiar objects to sit on the mantle. Seating in this waiting area and other waiting spaces will be grouped to help our users and families read faces and lips. Bespoke joinery will provide extra seating and toy storage to reduce clutter.



### The grand staircase

The staircase will be brought into use to navigate from level to level. Reconditioned organ pipes will hang from the ceiling in the grand staircase. Created by Oliver Beer, the interactive pipes are connected to motion sensors. As you move in front of the sensors the pipes will sound – the notes higher as you ascend.



### Courtyard gardens

Gardens will create additional waiting spaces when the weather permits. Two levels of gardens are connected by circular stairs. The lower garden, in addition to planting, will have more of Lubna Chowdhary's charming ceramic tiles. These will be placed so that little hands can enjoy the tactile elements of them. The upper courtyard will house a sensory garden with elements to stimulate all the senses. User and families will use sight, sound, smell, touch and taste to experience this garden.



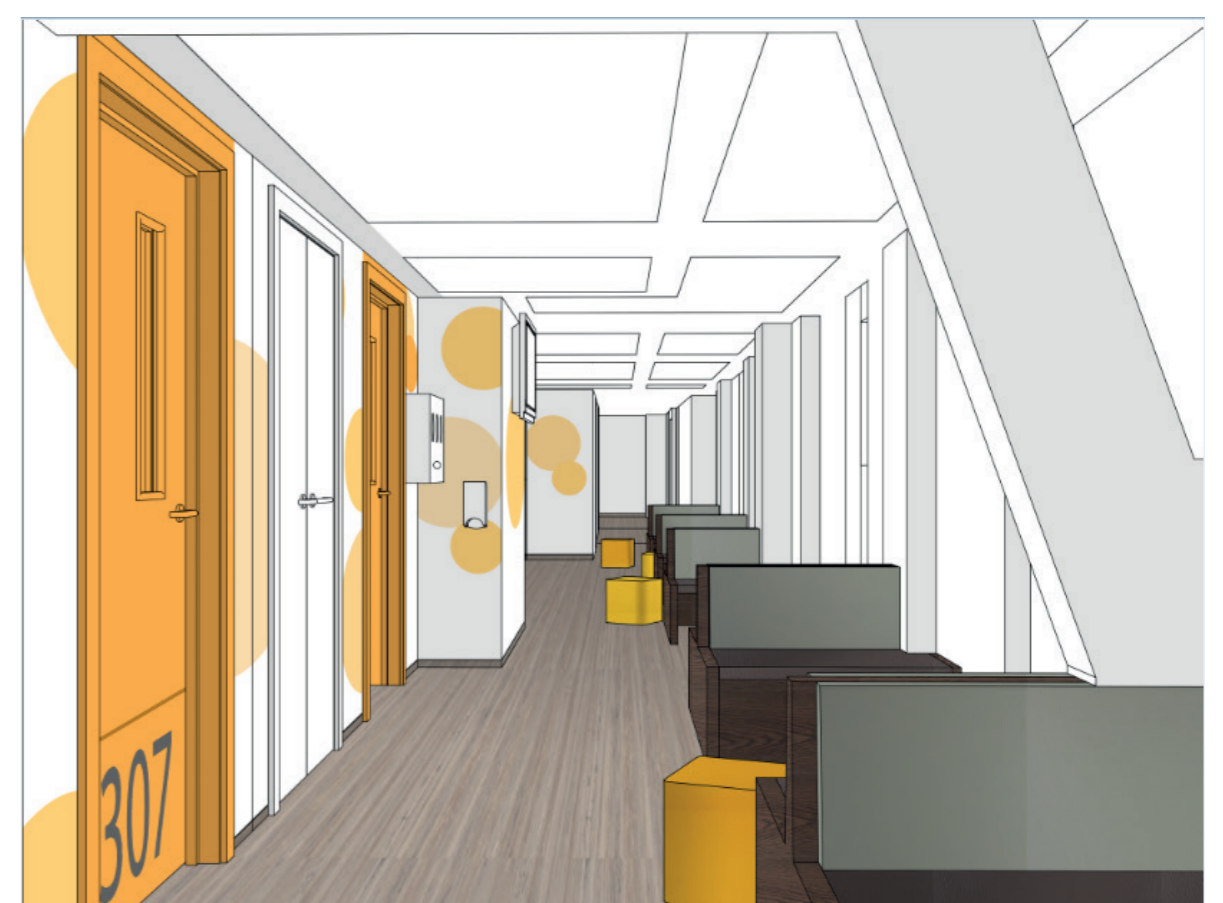
## Creating a comfortable environment

As well as bringing the grand house back to life creating a familiar environment for our users, we have incorporated elements to make the spaces more comfortable for them.

- Sufficient light, but without glare
- Reduction of noise
- Seating which helps them read faces and lips
- Reduction of clutter
- Art for stimulation and wayfinding.

Excessive light and noise are uncomfortable, and in some cases painful, for our users and families. The spaces in the Italian Hospital are of a human scale allowing us better control over the environment. Lighting throughout the building will be uniform, eliminating shadows and glare with the ability to set maximum lux levels and dim lights in each individual space. Textured flooring and acoustic wall treatments will be used where appropriate. On the audiology level we have made ample use of glazing so that users will know what might be coming toward them.

Super-graphics and colour will designate areas and rooms throughout the building. Each level of the building will be a different colour; the colours chosen by our expert users' panel represent movement through our world. The Lower Ground is the ocean and Level 3 the sun. Along with a strong colour element at the lift and stairs entrances to each level there will be a super-graphic letter or number to indicate which level you are on. Clinic room numbers will be at the bottom of the door as it is often easier to look down than up.



## Implications and Conclusions

At GOSH our promise is 'The Child First and Always'.

We believe there will be better outcomes for this group of patients when they are treated in an environment that takes account of their needs; there is value in designing bespoke spaces for services with specialist equipment and needs. It must be remembered that users and their families are people; their comfort and humanity is paramount.

Architect Sou Fujimoto describes in his book, *Primitive Future*, the paradigm of the nest vs the cave. Our users have experienced the cave in large outpatients' spaces. Even in large highly technical spaces there is a great need for a nest – a space that has been created specifically for human habitation.

The Sight and Sound Centre will create the blend of a state of the art clinical facility with the humane elements of the nest; thereby creating a comfortable environment for children and young people with visual and hearing impairment.

We believe the Centre will be an excellent case study and exemplar for the development of similar facilities elsewhere.