

St Hilda's College secures long-term goal of housing all its undergraduates with £18 million purchase of two Oxford properties

St Hilda's College, Oxford has purchased two substantial properties in the city, allowing it to achieve a long-held strategic goal of offering accommodation to all undergraduates throughout their studies.

The purchase of the buildings, 38 St Giles' and 11 Norham Gardens, was officially completed on Friday 7 October for a combined £18 million, and the first students are already moving in.

Once fully refurbished, the properties will provide more than 80 rooms, enough when added to the College's existing 390 rooms to house all undergraduates who want College rooms for the entire duration of their courses.

It has been the College's number one goal for many years to accommodate all its undergraduate students throughout their degree. Unlike most of the other colleges making up the University of Oxford, St Hilda's was previously unable to guarantee accommodation to its second-year undergraduate students.

The College Principal, Professor Dame Sarah Springman, said: "When I became Principal in February, I thought it would take years to reach this milestone. It is wonderful to be able to announce that we have achieved our objective so much sooner, and I congratulate our team. Our students will have diversity of choice, which will contribute to having a better student

experience, and it will raise the profile of the College in Oxford.”

With St Hilda’s College situated to the east of Oxford on the banks of the River Cherwell, the new student residences will give the College a stronger presence in the city centre.

Senior Tutor, Dr Sarah Norman, said: “Being able to offer all undergraduates accommodation for the full period of their degree will make the College more attractive to prospective students. Firstly, they will not have to find costly private accommodation for their second year. Secondly, we will be able to offer them the best of both worlds with a tranquil riverside campus and the opportunity to live in and enjoy the city centre.”

The College’s Disability Fellow, Professor Lorna Smith, said: “This accommodation will be a huge help for students who have conditions that give them reduced mobility or less energy.

They will be able to have rooms close to their Faculties and Departments, and so easily return to their rooms to rest or study during the day in between lectures, classes or lab work.”

The property at 38 St Giles’ is a pair of five-storey, Grade II listed Georgian townhouses with 1,500 square metres of floor space and currently offers 28 bedrooms, as well as extensive communal facilities. This will mainly host undergraduate students.

JCR President, Ellie McWilliams, commented: “St Hilda’s students are incredibly excited to hear about such an excellent addition to College, and how this has rapidly become a reality over the summer holidays, due to the efforts of the Governing Body and the staff. We are grateful for all their hard work to secure College-wide accommodation and are excited to see how this will benefit our community in future!”

The second property, 11 Norham Gardens, is an extended Victorian three-storey villa. The 1,350-square-metre building is set in a half-acre landscaped garden, currently with 31 bedrooms as well as extensive academic and communal facilities. It is likely that this will become a graduate centre in due course.

MCR President, Max Klapow, said: "The graduate body was ecstatic to learn about the new properties. In particular, we are excited at the prospect of a graduate centre located at the lovely Norham Gardens. The Gardens provide an excellent opportunity not only for additional accommodation, but also common areas and social spaces. These new purchases highlight the College's continued commitment to promoting high-quality postgraduate life at St Hilda's."

The purchases were made from the College's endowment funds, broadening its investment portfolio.

The College's Bursar, Chris Wood, said: "Importantly, the College has secured these properties through a reallocation of its endowment assets, rather than by taking on additional debt. In addition to providing student accommodation, the properties are expected to provide long-term financial returns."

The rooms and academic facilities could also generate income from summer schools and events, and the College plans to approach alumnae to offer sponsorship and naming opportunities.

Ends

About St Hilda's College

Founded by Dorothea Beale in 1893 as a Hall for Women Students. The College received its first Royal Charter in 1926, when it was incorporated under the title "Principal and Council of St Hilda's College, Oxford". In 1960, it became a

College of the University. The College's most recent Supplemental Charter, granted in 2007, changed the name of the College to St Hilda's College in the University of Oxford and permitted the admission of male students. The College has approximately 50 Fellows, 400 undergraduate students and 200 graduate students.