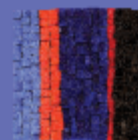


Planning Statement

Beacon Centre Block 'B'
off Market Street
Bury College
BL9 0AT

FEBRUARY 2023



mosaic
town planning

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1 Introduction

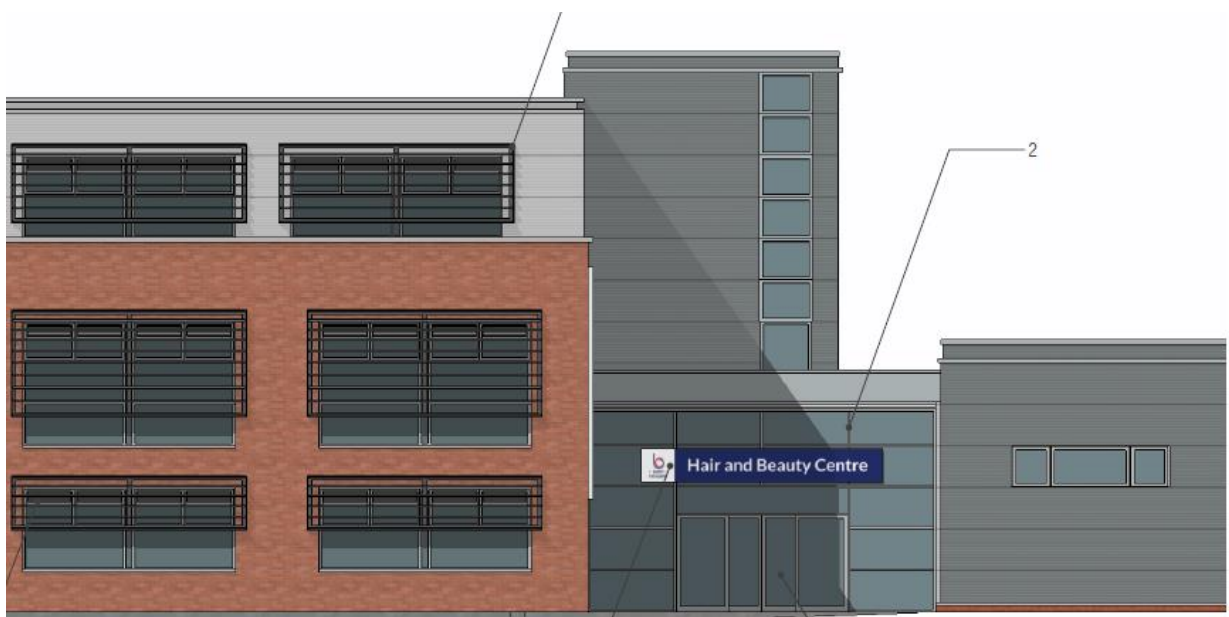
- 1.1 This Statement accompanies an application for full planning permission submitted on behalf of Bury College. It concerns improvements to 'Block B' of the existing Beacon Centre, to create an improved teaching environment and improve the condition and external appearance of the building, together with improved pedestrian access. This is described in more detail in the next section.
- 1.2 The project has been developed with the support of the Department for Education. Following the development of the HISTEM building and pending proposals to enhance the Woodbury Centre, this is part of a comprehensive programme to enhance the quality of the education campus.
- 1.3 Given the interrelated nature of these elements, we look forward to working with the Local Planning Authority to ensure that an early planning approval can be achieved.

Submitted Plans

- 1.4 The application is accompanied by the following plans:
 - Location Plan 7035B L(00) 00 02
 - Site Plan – Existing 7035B L(00) 01 03
 - Site Plan – Proposed 7035B L(00) 02 04
 - Elevations – Existing P 7035B L(2-) 01 00
 - Elevations – Proposed P7035B L(2-) 02 01
 - Landscape Masterplan BEA-ITR-00-XX-DR-L-0001 P02

2 The Proposals

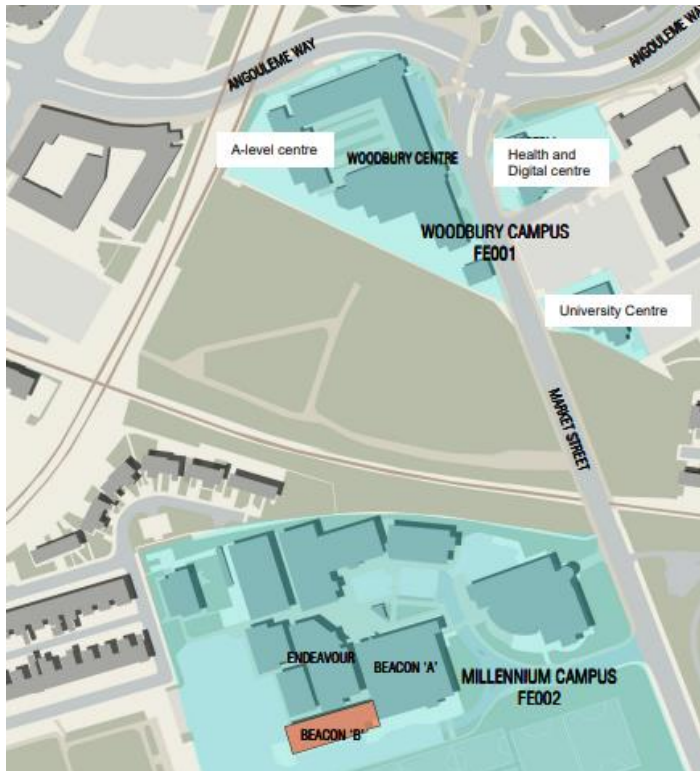
- 2.1 Although Block B of the Beacon Centre is relatively modern, it requires refurbishment and upgrading to meet current and future teaching needs. This will allow relocation of the Hair and Beauty department, which currently uses unsatisfactory accommodation in the Woodbury Centre elsewhere in the campus.
- 2.2 The proposal has the following objectives:
- Address existing issues of maintenance and practicality of accommodation.
 - More efficient use of spaces and resources.
 - Create a more public facing and welcoming façade, enhancing the presence of the College.
 - Improve access to the building and circulation routes to benefit students, staff and members of the public.
- 2.3 Whilst much of the work will constitute internal reconfiguration not requiring planning permission, the associated elevational changes and changes to external circulation require approval.
- 2.4 The elevational changes feature the following, all to be finished in grey powder-coated aluminium:
- Curtain Walling – double glazed with low emissivity solar control glass
 - Brise Soleil – fins and support frame to individual windows, attached to existing brick work
 - External entrance doors – thermally broken and double-glazed automatic sliding doors



- 2.5 In addition, a half louvred and half glazed frame will be used in existing windows to address ventilation requirements.
- 2.6 The proposed elevations also illustrate indicative entrance signage, although this does not form part of the application.
- 2.7 The associated landscape works will distinguish the entrance to create a visual arrival point, using granite aggregate paving or similar, combined with a planting bed. There will be a new pedestrian route along the frontage of Block A, differentiated using coloured tarmac. This will replace 9 existing parking spaces which have compromised access.
- 2.8 The application forms part of an emerging Masterplan to enhance the presence of Bury College within the town and provide enhanced educational opportunities.

3 Site and Surroundings

- 3.1 The Beacon Centre is comprised of two blocks which are linked to form an 'L' shape. Block B is the smaller western arm which comprises teaching accommodation and is the main focus of the proposals.



- 3.2 The buildings are of modern construction, combining red brick and two shades of grey cladding. There is a fire exit on the south side of the buildings where the blocks meet. However, the main entrance is via Block A to the north side. The southern elevation is not a public facing façade and currently lacks legibility.
- 3.3 The location of the new pedestrian route to the enhanced southern entrance is currently used for car parking. There are extensive car parks serving the College buildings to the south and west, with an additional car park to the north of Block A. There is cycle parking at the western end of the building.
- 3.4 The existing building is in an integral position within the Bury College campus. It adjoins the Endeavour building to the west, the Innovation and Prospects centres to the north and the Millennium Building to the east. Football pitches operated by Powerleague are to the south. The nearest residential property is to the north west, but physically separated by car parking.
- 3.5 The site has a barrier controlled vehicular access from a mini-roundabout to the east. This serves the campus only, with no through route for road traffic.

4 Planning History

4.1 The following permission relates to the Beacon Centre

- 61891 Erection of aluminium canopy store structure – Approved 10/10/17

4.2 There are numerous online records of earlier applications at the Bury College campus, but none of the descriptions refer to the Beacon Centre by name and plans are no available for the earlier applications.

4.3 The following is of indirect relevance as it forms part of the comprehensive and interrelated program of renewing the College estate:

- 66978 Erection of Health Innovation & STEM Centre, Former Peel Health Centre, Market Street / Angouleme Way – Approved 13/10/21

5 Planning Policy and Evidence Base

National Planning Policy Framework

5.1 Paragraph 11 sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-taking this means:

- approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or
- where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
 - i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
 - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole.

5.2 Paragraph 8 sets out the three objective of sustainability which the planning system should pursue, which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways: economic, social and environmental:

- The economic objective includes ensuring land is available to “support growth, innovation and improved productivity”.
- The social objective includes providing services that “reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being”.
- The environmental objective includes “making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change”.

5.3 Additional policy themes of relevance are:

- Section 6 Building a strong, competitive economy: paragraph 83 refers to “making provision for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries”.
- Section 8 Promoting healthy and safe communities: paragraph 95 confirms that “It is important that a sufficient choice of school places is available to meet the needs of existing and new communities. Local planning authorities should take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting the requirement for school places and to development that will broaden choice in education.” In particular, they should “give great weight to the need to create, expand

or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications”. In this context it is relevant that the College offers courses from the age of 16.

Paragraph 97 states that planning decisions should promote public safety and take into account security requirements, including at health and education establishments.

- Section 9 Promoting sustainable transport: Paragraph 104 observes that patterns of movement, streets, parking and other transport considerations are integral to the design of schemes, and contribute to making high quality places. Paragraph 112 states that applications for development should give first priority to pedestrian and cycle movements, address the needs of people with disabilities and minimise the scope for conflict between pedestrians cyclists and vehicles, amongst other considerations.
- Section 11 Making effective use of land: In accordance with paragraph 120, “planning decisions should give substantial weight to the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements for homes and other identified needs”. Paragraph 124 advises that planning decisions “should support development that makes efficient use of land” and one consideration in this is “the scope to promote sustainable travel modes that limit future car use”.
- Section 12 Achieving well-designed places: design quality should be considered through the evolution and assessment of individual proposals and paragraph 130 contains associated criteria.

Local Policy

Bury Unitary Development Plan (1997)

- 5.4 The site is affected by Policy CF2/1/1 Community Facilities Provision - Existing Site of Bury College, Market Street & Peel College Site, under which “The land covered by the existing Market Street and Peel College sites is allocated for a College of Further Education.”
- 5.5 The Proposals Map also shows the site as within the Town Centre Policy Area BY7 - Townside/Market Street. The Council will “encourage and promote proposals for community facilities, business (B1), office, leisure, recreation and car parking uses within the Townside/Market Street area of the town centre. This area is not considered appropriate for large scale retail development.”
- 5.6 The justification contains wording of specific relevance “In addition to the area's potential as a business location, the Council will support proposals to concentrate Further Education provision within this area of the Borough. Initially, this will be focused upon the current Bury College sites at Market Street and Peel College. However, there may be a need to provide additional accommodation...”.

- 5.7 Policy EN1/2 - Townscape and Built Design: The Council will give favourable consideration to proposals which do not have an unacceptable adverse effect on the particular character and townscape of the Borough's towns, villages and other settlements.
- 5.8 Policy CF2 concerns Education Land and Buildings: "The Council will, where appropriate, consider favourably proposals for the provision, improvement and dual use of educational facilities" and Policy CF2/1 discusses site options for Bury College.
- 5.9 Policy HT2/4 covers Car Parking and New Development. The explanation states car parking provision must also relate to the availability of public transport and should be set at a level which encourages the use of public transport. With reference to superseded guidance in PPG13 "Transport", it states that "local authorities 'should adopt reduced requirements for parking for locations which have good access to other means of travel than the private car'. This relates particularly to the Borough's main bus and Metrolink corridors and to the town and district centres, which are well served by public transport."
- 5.10 Policy HT4 New Development states that "In considering the location of new or intensified development, the Council will encourage proposals which:
- support the principles of sustainable development;
 - assist the implementation of a balanced transportation strategy;
 - minimise the environmental impact of traffic.

In particular, new development will be encouraged where use can be made of public transport or spare capacity in the existing highway network, provided that this is also in accordance with other policies of the Plan."

Bury Town Centre Masterplan

- 5.11 The final masterplan was approved by the Council's Cabinet on 9 March 2022 following a period of public consultation.
- 5.12 The Masterplan notes how "The College has plans to transform their estate to the south of the ring road, with defined areas for public access and academic uses, removing accommodation which has reached the end of its useful life and replacing it with new accommodation whilst expanding the College's external landscaped and social gathering spaces." (p100)
- 5.13 The site is located within Zone D: Knowledge Zone, for which a number of Development Principles are set out. We have highlighted aspects of these which could be relevant to this application:

- Economic Future and Land Use: Education, related research and development and innovation activities will be encouraged in this zone, and refurbishment of existing educational buildings within the Bury College Campus
- Connectivity, Movement & Infrastructure: Measures are identified to reduce the dominance of vehicles and create more people focused environment and to make it easy, safe and attractive to travel by foot. Due to the town centre location and proximity to the public transport network, it is envisaged that private parking for new development in this zone will be minimised.
- Public Realm, Placemaking & The Environment: there are ambitions to raise the quality of the environment, establishing new modern, distinctive, and vibrant development set within an attractive landscape.
- Climate Change & Sustainability: Although in the context of Humphrey House, the text notes that refurbishment of existing buildings will extend lifespan and help avoid the embodied carbon needed to construct new ones. There are also opportunities to introduce newer, greener technologies which will help to increase the efficiency.
- People, Community & Tackling Inequality

Emerging Policy

- 5.14 The Community Facilities Topic Paper (October 2018) for the forthcoming Local Plan discusses the role of Bury College and notes that “Access to further education and training is important in reducing inequalities, updating the skills of the workforce in the Borough, maintaining the economic prosperity of the area and reducing the need to travel.”

6 Analysis

Principle

- 6.1 No issue of land-use principle arises since the building already has a lawful use as a teaching facility which will remain. However, whilst the external changes are in any case acceptable, it is appropriate to note that they will facilitate the improvement of the Campus in a way which is consistent with the Council's aspirations.
- 6.2 Town Centre policy BY7 Townside/Market Street from the Unitary Development Plan supports the concentration of further education provision within this area and Policy CF2 dealing with Education Land and Buildings advises that the Council will consider favourably proposals for the improvement of education facilities.
- 6.3 More recently, the Bury Town Centre Masterplan notes the College's intentions to transform its estate, which is identified as within a 'Knowledge Zone', and supports the refurbishment of existing educational buildings within the Economic Future and Land Use development principle.

Design

- 6.4 The proposal involves elevational changes which are intended to enhance the functionality of the building, yet will also enhance its appearance.
- 6.5 All works to the facades acknowledge the existing proportions, scale and structural grid module. The addition of brise soleil and the creation of a new public entrance will add interest to what currently appears as an undistinguished rear elevation, whilst the use of mid-grey powder coating will complement the existing colour palette.
- 6.6 The enhanced entrance will function as a distinct arrival point for the relocated hair and beauty function, improving the legibility of the premises.
- 6.7 Bury UDP policy EN1/2 states that favourable consideration will be given to proposals which do not have an unacceptable adverse impact on townscape, and the proposals will be consistent with paragraph 127 of the National Planning Policy Framework in that they will improve the functionality of the building, add to the quality of the area, optimise the potential of the site and support inclusive access.

Landscaping

- 6.8 Associated changes to the public realm are intended to emphasise the entrance and reinforce its connectivity.

- 6.9 Changing surface treatment at the building entrances creates a visual arrival point and helps to differentiate the entrance from other areas of the elevation.
- 6.10 The use of high quality surface materials will improve access, aesthetics and longevity, and the use of materials which are light in colour is intended to lift the tone of the spaces. The introduction of planting will soften the space and provide a more welcoming approach, and ecologically beneficial species will be chosen.
- 6.11 Paving surfaces will allow level access into the building to ensure that it is fully accessible for different users.

Parking

- 6.12 The proposals will lead to the loss of 9 fully useable parking spaces within the application site. No additional parking requirement is generated by the proposed changes to the external appearance of the premises, which do not involve any extension. These bays are part of a stacked parking system, meaning that each rear space is blocked when the adjacent front space is occupied. As such, they are inefficient and disliked by staff and students.
- 6.13 The loss of parking spaces must be seen in the context of the existing car parks to the south and west which can accommodate over 180 cars, along with additional provision on the north side of the 'Beacon A' block.
- 6.14 The NPPF specifies that significant development should be focused in sustainable locations, which may involve limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. The Framework notes how this can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health.
- 6.15 The site is in a highly sustainable town centre location. Greater Manchester Accessibility Levels (GMAL) provide an index of public transport accessibility (bus, Metrolink and rail), taking into account walk access time and service availability. The site attains the highest possible score of 8, reflecting the proximity of Bury Interchange on the opposite site of Angouleme Way. The site is highly accessible on foot to the shops and services of the retail centre and other college buildings.
- 6.16 The use of the private car should not be encouraged in this context. The replacement of the 9 compromised spaces by hard landscaping for pedestrian access will enhance public realm connectivity, inclusivity and safer accessibility for all building users. A reduction in the dominance of vehicles and creation of a more people focussed environment would be consistent with the development principles of the Bury Town Centre Masterplan. Notwithstanding this, the remaining parking provision within the wider site is unaffected.

Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Economic Benefits

- 6.17 There will be some economic benefits arising from employment used in the refurbishment of the building and in the longer term from developing a skilled labour force through improved education facilities. The development will also bring Department for Education grant funding to Bury.

Social Benefits

- 6.18 The site is located within Bury East Neighbourhood which performs poorly against indices of multiple deprivation. The development will contribute to regeneration and provide local opportunities for education and employment. Focussing significant new investment on a demand-led curriculum will provide a strong incentive for Bury pupils to progress to Further and Higher Education within the borough. Students will be provided with job-relevant employability skills, with potential progression into local employment. Attracting students from neighbouring local authorities will reinforce the regeneration benefits with both economic and social consequences.

Environmental Sustainability

- 6.19 The building currently suffers from maintenance issues such as water ingress, and the glazing on the south facing elevation create an unsatisfactory environment for users during periods of direct sun. As noted in the Bury Town Centre Masterplan, refurbishment can extend the life of buildings and help avoid the embodied carbon in new construction.
- 6.20 The facades will incorporate passive solar control strategies, using low emissivity glass in new glazing and brise soleil to the south facing elevation. This will improve the comfort of staff and pupils and is part of a College strategy to reduce energy usage through sustainable design.
- 6.21 The proposed development makes more effective use of land in a location which achieves the maximum score for public transport accessibility. In accordance with national guidance, it will reduce the dominance of motor vehicles and create a more pedestrian focussed environment.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 This Statement has demonstrated that no issues of principle arise, when the building will remain as a teaching facility with no extension proposed. Its refurbishment will make more effective use of an existing asset, and planning permission is only required as a result of external changes.
- 7.2 The proposals will improve the Bury College campus in a manner which is consistent with the Council's aspirations, including UDP policies BY7 and CF2 and the recent Bury Town Centre Masterplan.
- 7.3 The external changes will add interest and functionality to what currently appears as an undistinguished rear elevation, with a new public entrance to create a visual arrival point. Our assessment of economic, social and environmental sustainability highlights the potential to address the building's existing operational deficiencies through refurbishment, incorporating high quality external materials and finishes, and to create a more pedestrian focussed environment with reduced car dominance.
- 7.4 In conclusion, the application of the presumption in favour of sustainable development and compliance with the development plan mean that the proposals should now be approved without delay.



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