



Planning Statement

**Proposed Change of Use of Ground Floor of Vacant Commercial Building to an
Independent Islamic Girls' High School**

Khizra House, Lord Street, Bury

April 2024

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement is submitted on behalf of Watson Saunders Architects in support of a planning application for the change of use of the vacant ground floor of commercial premises at Khizra House to an independent Islamic girls' high school. The proposed school will have a capacity for 120 pupils.
- 1.2 The building is owned by the Jamia Khizra Mosque which is located on the adjacent site. The proposed school will mean that girls can be educated in the heart of their local community.
- 1.3 The building was formerly in use as commercial premises but the ground floor has been vacant since 2017. The upper floor is occupied by the Bury Defence Academy (BDA), a very popular and well-respected coaching centre for self defence and fitness. The proposed school and the BDA will co-exist harmoniously as BDA activities take place on the 1st floor during evenings and weekends while the school will operate during the day on week days.
- 1.4 This Planning Statement will demonstrate that the proposed development complies with relevant local and national planning policies. In accordance with planning law it should therefore be approved.
- 1.5 This Statement should be read in conjunction with the application drawings submitted by Watson Saunders Associates.
- 1.6 The remaining sections of this Statement cover the following:
 - 2 The Site and its Surroundings
 - 3 Planning History
 - 4 Proposed Development
 - 5 Planning Policy Framework
 - 6 Planning Assessment
 - 7 Conclusion

2. The Site and its Surroundings

- 2.1 The site is located on Lord Street between Mason Street to the north and Parker Street to the south, on the eastern fringe of Bury town centre.



Image courtesy of Google
Photo 1 Aerial view of the site

- 2.2 The site is owned by the Jamira Khizra Mosque which is immediately adjacent to the east of the application site. The application site comprises a rectangular two-storey brick-built building, with the main frontage on Lord Street and an enclosed open area to the rear which is partly used for car parking.
- 2.3 The ground floor, which is the subject of this application, was formerly in commercial use but has been vacant since 2017. It consists of a central corridor with two large rooms on either side of it and a number of smaller rooms towards each end. The interior is well-lit by natural lights from a series of large windows. The configuration lends itself to conversion to school use without significant internal or external alteration.
- 2.4 The first floor is occupied by the highly popular and well-respected Bury Defence Academy (BDA), which is a registered charity (registration No. 1196825).
- 2.5 It provides self defence and fitness training and coaching across a range of age groups and is a valued local community asset. It will not be affected by the application proposal as it operates in the evenings and at weekends, whereas the proposed school will operate on weekdays during the daytime.



Image courtesy of Google
Photo 2 The building from Lord Street



Image Courtesy of Google
Photo 3 The building from Parker Street



Image courtesy of Google

Photo 4 The building and rear yard from Parker Street

- 2.6 To the rear of the building is a large open area of hardstanding enclosed by fencing. This provides 13 parking spaces on the boundary adjacent to the Mosque.
- 2.7 The immediate area around the site is characterised by a mixture of uses including manufacturing, storage and distribution and retail, plus the established cultural uses of the Mosque and the BDA.



Image courtesy of Google

Photo 5 The wider area

- 2.8 Slightly wider afield, Bury Town Centre, with its diverse range of uses and public transport links, spreads to the west and north west, whilst there are

established residential areas to north/north east of Rochdale Road and the east of Heywood Street. Openshaw Park is some five minutes' walk away, bounded by Rochdale Road and Pimhole Road.

- 2.9 The site is in a sustainable location with good access to local services and amenities, and public transport hubs and routes, including those of the nearby Town Centre.

3. Planning History

3.1 Bury Council's online planning portal shows there is no planning history on the application site itself.

3.2 The following planning applications relate to the adjacent Jamia Khizra Mosque.

93/29370 Change of use from industrial to religious place of worship & teaching, & cultural & social centre (class d1) approved 20/01/1994.

45928 Two storey extensions with dome and minarets. Approved 11/04/2006.

49220 3 x two storey extensions to the front of the mosque building (west elevation) including dome and minarets. Approved 24/01/2008.

4. Proposed Development

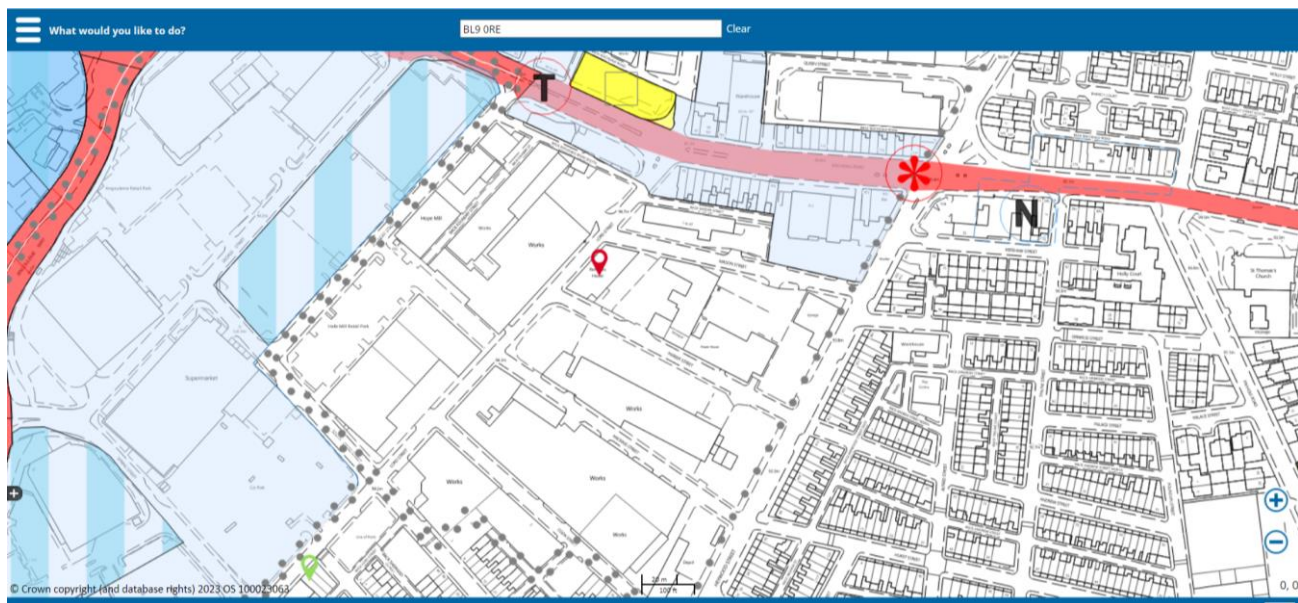
- 4.1 The proposal is for the conversion of the vacant ground floor of Khizra House to an independent Islamic Girls' High School. The school will have a capacity for 120 pupils.
- 4.2 The ground floor of the building was formerly in commercial use but has been vacant since 2017. As described in Section 2, the existing configuration of the building lends itself to conversion to school use with minimal internal and external intervention. The intention is to provide a high quality educational facility.
- 4.3 The two existing large rooms will provide classrooms that can be divided by folding doors to provide versatile and adaptable teaching spaces.
- 4.4 The smaller rooms will be converted, where appropriate, by either by removing existing or adding new partitions to create ancillary spaces, including office/reception, head teacher's office, staff room, kitchen and toilets. In recognition of the on-site kitchen being relatively small, the applicants are open to undertaking a daily delivery of pupil lunches with a range of food including sandwiches.
- 4.5 In addition to the onsite facilities that will be offered by the school, the proximity of Openshaw Park provides an extra resource for outdoor recreation and learning.
- 4.6 The outdoor area to the rear the building will continue to provide parking. There will be 10 car parking spaces plus two new disabled spaces and the existing cycle parking will also be retained. The school will use the parking provision during the day on weekdays and the BDA will use it at evenings and weekends as they do now.
- 4.7 The school will operate weekdays Monday to Friday 8am - 4pm whilst the BDA runs weekdays from 6pm onwards as well as daytime Saturdays and Sundays.

5. Planning Policy Framework

5.1 Development Plan

5.2 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.3 The Development Plan comprises the Bury UDP 1997. The following policies are relevant to the proposed development.



5.4 Area BY10 - Rochdale Road/Lord Street/York Street

5.5 The Council will encourage and promote proposals for business (B1) and industrial (B2 and B8) uses within the Rochdale Road/Lord Street/York Street area of the town centre. Within the identified secondary shopping area fronting Rochdale Road, appropriate retail/mixed retail development will also be permitted. Further residential development within this area will not be encouraged.

5.6 The Justification notes that the Council is keen to instill new life into this area as a whole and will promote and encourage both physical and environmental improvements, whilst still retaining the primarily industrial/business nature of the area.

5.7 EC2 - Existing Industrial Areas And Premises

- 5.8 The Council will seek to retain existing industrial areas and premises in employment uses, where appropriate.
- 5.9 CF1 - Proposals for New and Improved Community Facilities
- 5.10 Proposals for new and improved community facilities will generally be looked on favourably by the Council.
- 5.11 The Justification notes that it is to everyone's benefit that there are community facilities, such as hospitals, clinics, places of worship, nurseries, schools, meeting places and care facilities of a high standard, in sufficient numbers and in the right locations. The Council will, therefore, generally look favourably on proposals for additional or improved community facilities, where these do not conflict with amenity or the local environment.
- 5.12 CF1/1 - Location of New Community Facilities
- 5.13 Proposals for new and improved community facilities will be considered with regard to the following factors: impact on residential amenity and the local environment; traffic generation and car parking provision; the scale and size of the development; where applicable, access to shops and other services; if the use is intended to serve a local community, or catchment area, the suitability of the chosen location in relation to that community or catchment area; accessibility by public and private transport; the needs and requirements of the disabled.
- 5.14 CF2 - Education Land and Buildings
- 5.15 The Council will, where appropriate, consider favourably proposals for the provision, improvement and dual use of educational facilities.
- 5.16 The Justification notes that the provision of education services is an essential part of everyday life. To some extent better educational opportunities can only be attained by having the right land and buildings in the right places. The Council as local planning authority, and as local education authority has a role to play by monitoring the scale and location of educational provision, by providing additional facilities where resources permit and by encouraging the dual use of education land and buildings.
- 5.17 **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2023**
- 5.18 Sustainable Development
- 5.19 The NPPF states that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development (Para 7). Paragraph 8 adds that

achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives that need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways. These are economic, social and environmental. The economic objective is to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity.

- 5.20 The social objective seeks to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities while the environmental objective seeks to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment, including making effective use of land.
- 5.21 The environmental objective is to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.
- 5.22 Paragraph 11 states that plans and decisions should apply a 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.
- 5.23 Promoting Healthy and Safe Communities
- 5.24 Paragraph 92 states that planning policies and decisions should aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places. Planning policies and decisions should *inter alia* plan positively for the provision of community facilities and other local services to enhance the sustainability of communities and residential environments.
- 5.25 Paragraph 95 states 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 this requirement, and to development that will widen choice in education. They should:
 - a) give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications; and
 - b) work with school promoters, delivery partners and statutory bodies to

identify and resolve key planning issues before applications are submitted.

6. Planning Assessment

- 6.1 Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise. In this case the development plan is the Bury UDP 1997. The NPPF is also a material consideration in planning decisions.
- 6.2 The Governments' commitment to the provision of new educational facilities is evident in para 95 which states that local planning authorities should give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through the preparation of plans and decisions on applications. [Our emphasis.]
- 6.3 It is also noteworthy that the change of use of a building which is used for offices/industrial processes which can be carried out in a residential area (Class E) to a state funded school under Class F1 (a) is permitted development. The application proposal is for an independent school and therefore does not benefit from this permitted development right but the provision does show that, in principle, the conversion of a building between these uses is acceptable in planning terms.
- 6.4 The UDP is also encouraging of new community facilities subject to certain amenity and sustainability considerations as set out in Policy CF1..
- 6.5 The provision of a new school in a building such as this is therefore acceptable in principle. The key issue for consideration in respect of this application is whether it meets the amenity and sustainability requirements set out in the UDP. These considerations are examined in more detail in the table below.
- 6.6 **Key Issues**

Consideration	Comment
Impact on residential amenity and the local environment.	There are no residential properties immediately adjacent to the site and the nearest houses are some distance away on Rochdale Road. There will therefore be no impact on residential amenity. The proposal involves the re-use of an existing building, involving only minimal physical changes. There will therefore be no adverse impact on the local environment.
Traffic generation	The purpose of the school is to serve a very local

and car parking provision.	community and therefore many of the pupils and staff will live within walking distance or will be able to use public transport to access the site. The school will only have a capacity of 120 pupils and the traffic generation is likely to be considerably less than if the site were to revert to industrial use. There will be on-site parking for 12 cars, including two new disabled spaces, and the existing cycle parking will also be retained. The parking will have dual use by the school and the BDA as they will operate at different times of the day/week.
The scale and size of the development.	The proposed school is relatively small for a secondary school and will only have a capacity of 120 pupils. It will be accommodated in an existing building which has more than adequate space for the teaching, learning and ancillary facilities that will be needed for this number of pupils.
Suitability of the chosen location in relation to the community it will serve.	This will be an Islamic high school for girls. It is situated right at the heart of an established Muslim community and directly next to the Mosque, whose trustees are fully supportive of the establishment of the school.
Accessibility by public and private transport.	Both Rochdale Road and Heywood Street are main bus routes. The site is a 2 minute walk from the nearest stop on Rochdale Road and 4 minutes from the nearest stop on Heywood Street.
Needs of the disabled.	The school will occupy the ground floor of the building and will meet all relevant requirements of the Building Regulations in relation to disabled access. Two new disabled parking spaces will be provided.

6.7 Other Considerations

- 6.8 Policy EC2 states that the Council will seek to retain existing industrial areas and premises in employment uses, where appropriate.

- 6.9 It is important to note that the ground floor of the building has been vacant since 2017 and therefore there is no employment use to retain. There is no evidence of any demand to re-use it for employment purposes or lack of alternative sites in the area for such uses.
- 6.10 The changing nature of this area was recognised in 1994 with the granting of planning permission for the Jamia Khizra Mosque in what was previously an industrial building. The Mosque now forms a cultural hub which includes the BDA and would be complemented and enhanced by the proposed school.
- 6.11 The key phrase in the policy is “where appropriate” and, in this case, it would not be appropriate to refuse the beneficial re-use of the building by a school in circumstances where there is no realistic prospect of the ground floor of the building being returned to employment use.
- 6.12 **Sustainability**
- 6.13 The proposed development is highly sustainable for a number of reasons:
- It will enhance Islamic education provision for the local community;
 - It will provide new jobs and training opportunities;
 - Re-use of an existing building;
 - Excellent access by walking, cycling and public transport;
 - There will be no adverse environmental impacts.
- 6.14 The development therefore fully meets sustainability objectives set out in NPPE.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 The proposed development would provide a new independent Islamic High School for girls which would be an asset for the local community, with the social and economic benefits which would flow from high quality education provision in this location.
- 7.2 This would be achieved without harm to residential amenity, highway safety or the environment.
- 7.3 The proposed development accords with all relevant local and national planning policies and, in accordance with planning law, should therefore be approved.
- 7.4 The Council is therefore respectfully asked to grant planning permission.