

Planning Statement

**Woodbury Centre
Bury College
BL9 0BG**

MAY 2023



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town planning

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement accompanies a planning application relating to the demolition of the Heath and Beauty Wing to the rear of the Woodbury Centre at Bury College, alterations to rear elevations arising from this and from other changes to the internal layout of the remaining buildings, and associated hard and soft landscaping.
- 1.2 The proposals are part of the College's wider Transformation Projects to enhance the College estate, and which will bring additional Department for Education funding to the town. Following the completion of Phase One of the new Health and Digital Centre building, the Beacon Centre and Woodbury Centre are now proposed to be altered and refurbished to ensure that they meet current operational requirements and satisfy student expectations as the College expands.
- 1.3 The Beacon Centre has already received a recent approval. Changes to the frontage of the Woodbury Centre are the subject of a current request for pre-application advice from the Council, sought due to the prominence of the locally listed building within the town centre and its intersection with the public realm. The initial submission of the present application is intended to allow works to commence at the rear as the first phase of work.

Submitted Plans and Documents

- 1.4 The application is accompanied by the following plans and documents:
- Location Plan – 7035W L(00)00 - 01
 - Site Plan Existing – 7035 L(00) - 01
 - Woodbury South Reconfiguration Existing Ground Floor Plan – 7035 L1 – 43
 - Woodbury South Reconfiguration Proposed Ground Floor Plan - 7035 L1 - 40 (02)
 - Woodbury Elevations Existing Sheet 1 – 7035 L2 - 01
 - Woodbury Elevations Existing Sheet 3 – 7035 L2 – 03
 - Woodbury Elevations Proposed Sheet 1 – 7035 L2 - 10
 - Woodbury Elevations proposed Sheet 3 – 7035 L2 – 12
 - WBS-ITR-00-XX-DR-L-0001_P04 - Landscape Masterplan
 - WBS-ITR-00-XX-DR-L-0002_P01 - Landscape Strategy Plan
 - WBS-ITR-00-XX-DR-L-0003_P01 - External Levels Strategy
 - WBS-ITR-00-XX-DR-L-0101_P01 - Landscape GA

- Drainage Plan
- Ecology Report
- Environmental Risk Assessment

2 The Proposals

- 2.1 The overarching intention of the Transformation Projects is to upgrade the College estate so that all premises constitute excellent places to learn. In the case of the Woodbury Centre, this entails the removal of low quality building stock and obsolete service infrastructure, alongside proposals to optimise the use of space and achieve efficient use of facilities as the retained parts of the Woodbury building will be enhanced.
- 2.2 The application description is “Demolition of rear additions to original building, alterations to rear elevations of remaining buildings, and associated hard and soft landscaping incorporating additional car parking.”
- 2.3 This section considers each of these linked elements in turn:

Demolition of Hair & Beauty Wing

- 2.4 The proposed demolition is centred on the poor quality Hair & Beauty Wing, enabled by the relocation of this function to the Beacon Centre which recently obtained planning approval for refurbishment to accommodate this department. The linked collection of brick buildings constitutes later additions to the original Woodbury Centre and includes teaching accommodation, plant areas, circulation space and ancillary facilities.
- 2.5 The additions do not reflect the quality of the original building. In particular the physical interface with the original building is weak, resulting in problems such as water ingress and structural defects which places a burden on maintenance budgets. The demolition involves a net floor loss of 630 sq.m.
- 2.6 The layout also results in a poor quality teaching environment. The additions to the building have increased its depth, so that internal teaching areas have no views out, natural light or ventilation.
- 2.7 Furthermore, service provision is visible and intrusive, further harming the quality of the space, and is also outdated and in need of replacement.

Alterations to Elevations

- 2.8 Whilst the internal changes in themselves do not need planning permission, they are manifested in changes to elevations to the rear of the remaining building for which planning permission is sought. These are in part associated with demolition referred to above, and in part associated with a wider reconfiguration of internal accommodation. The latter relates to alterations to the catering wing, located on the north side of the buildings to be demolished, so that the internal layout and facilities reflect current curriculum requirements.

- 2.9 Remaining (and now external) facades of the residual building and the catering wing will have new fenestration added. They will feature aluminium powder coated windows, with solar control glass and canopies to prevent unwanted glare arising from their southerly aspect.

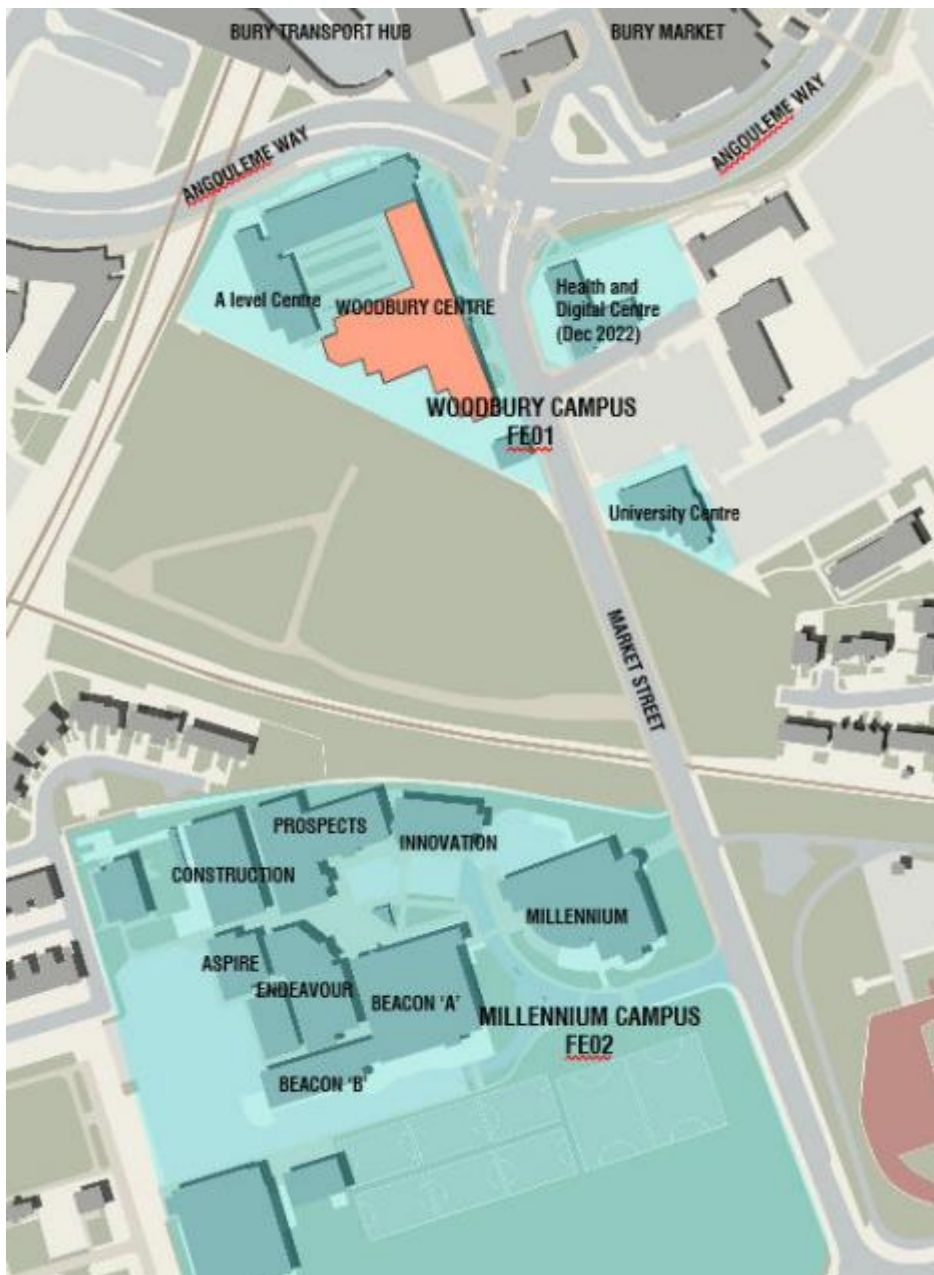
Hard and Soft Landscape Proposals

- 2.10 The location of the demolished building will be utilised to create a landscaped social gathering space for the use of students. The intention is to create a semi-private, informal social environment for gathering, study and catering overflow.
- 2.11 The Landscape Masterplan shows a raised decked area adjacent to the building, as a design response to cover over the previous basement floor. A series of accessible footpaths surfaced in granite aggregate concrete paving will define the layout, and facilitate accessible movement within and around the site. There will be an enclosed 'Glade' social seating space, cube seating and planting including a wildflower meadow. The raised deck will have additional loose furniture. This is part of a wider approach by the College to provide connected spaces, enhancing the interaction of users with College facilities, along with a desire to enhance sustainable drainage and ecology across the College estate.
- 2.12 These proposals will also benefit the adjacent teaching and learning areas within the retained building by providing views, light and a sense of connectivity. Resultant views of, and from, the building will enhance its setting.
- 2.13 The separate pre-application proposals for a new front entrance referred to in the Introduction involve the closure of the adjacent sub-standard vehicular access, which currently serves 11 parking spaces in front of the building. As part of the present application, there will be 13 parking spaces provided (of which 4 suitable for disabled users) by way of compensation. These are adjacent to the existing internal access road which already serves the existing rear car park.
- 2.14 The following visualisations show the final result and can be contrasted with the photographs as existing at the end of Section 3:



3 Site and Surroundings

- 3.1 The Woodbury Centre dates from the late 1930s and was originally occupied by Bury Technical College. It is on a draft list of locally listed buildings produced by Bury Council.
- 3.2 The plan below illustrates the location and context in relation to other College buildings and adjacent town centre landmarks (the Woodbury building includes the wing to the north of the Woodbury Centre label on the plan).



- 3.3 Whilst the principal east (front) and north (side) elevations retain their original character and are in a prominent corner location, the rear has been subject to lower quality additions and is relatively concealed.
- 3.4 The area affected by the proposals can be seen in the following panoramic view, taken from inside the site. The main building to be demolished is to the left and the retained Woodbury Centre to the right. The panoramic view also shows the main vehicular access, which is to the south of the main building on Market Street and serves the rear car park which is barrier controlled.



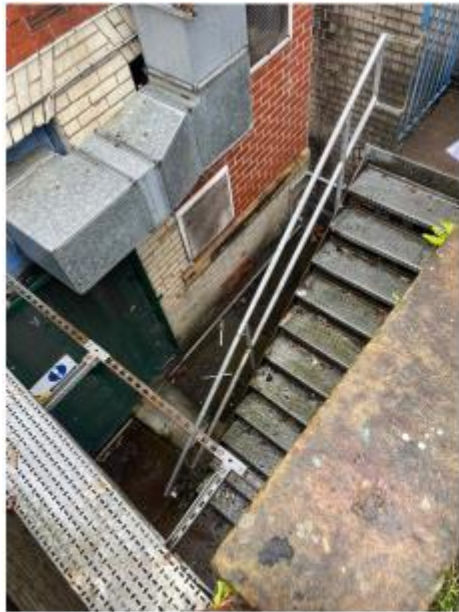
- 3.5 There are a series of more detailed photographs of the inside and outside of the affected buildings below:



Interior view, exposed structure and services, poor light and views, low quality teaching space



Internal view, low ceilings, lack of windows, exposed services, very low quality teaching space



Existing and retained access into basement / plant



Poor quality building stock, ongoing maintenance drain, unsightly and defunct services



Accommodation above basement plant room, to be demolished



South elevation of building to be demolished

4 Planning History

4.1 We have identified the following previous applications using the Council's on-line search facility although the accompanying plans are not available in all cases:

- 68045 | Erection of a freestanding timber lodge to be used for teaching purposes and associated works including pedestrian access and external lighting – Approved 06/06/22
- 66318 | Prior approval for proposed demolition of the Design and Print Services building – Approved 14/01/21
- 55305 | Variation of condition no. 10 of planning permission 53857 to extend the time of the siting of the temporary cabins at the enterprise site and internal courtyard until July 2013 and the temporary cabins at the print unit until December 2017 - Approved 06/09/12
- 55108 | Single storey extension to the internal courtyard; Plant screen to enclose extract ventilation equipment on adjacent building – Approved 11/06/12
- 54973 | New ramped access to replace the existing non compliant ramp and addition of disabled vehicular drop off point – Approved 24/04/12
- 54361 | Non-material amendment following grant of planning permission 53857 to amend the internal west elevation of the existing Woodbury building from render to brickwork to match the existing elevation - Approved 09/09/11
- 53857 | Demolition of 2 detached single storey buildings and the northern lights building; Erection of 5 storey building (3000 square metres) and associated works; siting of 3 temporary portable cabins - Approved 23/06/11
- 53539 | Demolition of single storey extension to western elevation & link corridor on southern elevation. External alterations to include new doors. Installation of photo voltaic & solar panels to the roof - Approved 07/03/11

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.
- 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 92 supports healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social interaction, are safe and accessible and enable and support healthy lifestyles. 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 98 states that “Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities, and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change.”

- 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. Amongst other considerations, they should
 - be “visually attractive as a result of good architecture, layout and appropriate and effective landscaping”
 - “optimise the potential of the site to accommodate and sustain an appropriate amount and mix of development (including green and other public space)...”
 - “create places that are safe, inclusive and accessible and which promote health and well-being, with a high standard of amenity for existing and future users...”
- Section 13 covers the Historic Environment. Under paragraph 203, “The effect of an application on the significance of a non-designated heritage asset should be taken into account in determining the application. In weighing applications that directly or indirectly affect non-designated heritage assets, a balanced judgement will be required having regard to the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset.”

Local Policy

Bury Unitary Development Plan (1997)

- 5.4 Policy CF2 concerns Educational Land and Buildings, advising that the Council will, where appropriate, consider favourably proposals for the provision, improvement and dual use of educational facilities. The justification states 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.”
- 5.5 Policy CF2/1 deals specifically with Bury College, confirming that the Council will support proposals for the establishment of Bury College on a single site. The site is specifically 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.”
- 5.6 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.”

- 5.7 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.”
- 5.8 Policy EN1/2 - Townscape and Built Design states that 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.
- 5.9 Under Policy EN2 – Conservation and Listed Buildings, the Council will seek to preserve the Borough's built heritage through the control of development, especially that affecting Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and areas of local historical importance.
- 5.10 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.”

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.



5.14 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

5.15 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 Under Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, the application must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 6.2 In this case, whilst the proposals relate to an established use at the site, it is a use which is also supported by the Development Plan. In particular, Policy BY7 Townside/Market Street states that the Council will “encourage and support” community facilities in this location and the explanation makes specific reference to support for Further Education provision. This is complemented by Policy CF2 on Education Land and Buildings, under which the Council will support provision and improvement of facilities, with CF2/1 envisaging the consolidation of premises to include the Market Street site (ie. the Woodbury Centre).
- 6.3 Although the Bury Town Centre Masterplan is not part of the statutory Development Plan, it contains relevant development principles providing the Council’s aspirations for Zone D: Knowledge Zone containing the site and expressly supports the refurbishment of existing educational buildings within the College campus and includes ambitions to improve connectivity and placemaking.
- 6.4 This document has set out how the proposed enhancement of the Woodbury Centre is an integral component of the Transformation Projects, which will ensure that premises within the College estate meet current teaching requirements and reinforce the status of the College as a key presence within the town centre.
- 6.5 Whilst the National Planning Policy Framework does not distinguish between Higher Education and schools, users of the building will include those of school age and the same approach must logically apply. In particular, the Framework expects local planning authorities to take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to meeting the requirement for school places and to development that will broaden choice in education. They are to give “*great weight*” to the need to create, expand or alter schools. In this case, the provision of specialist education can be linked to the Framework’s economic objective of supporting economic growth and productivity, taking into account local business needs.

Design

- 6.6 Although the Hair and Beauty Wing as existing can be seen from Market Street at the south east, the residual elevations after its demolition will be barely visible from any public vantage point. Nevertheless, the proposals will create a high quality environment, principally of benefit to users of the premises.

- 6.7 The works to the façades are designed to acknowledge the proportions, scale and structural grid module of the original building. The quality of materials used will reflect the College's aspiration for high quality teaching facilities with a prolonged lifespan. The overall direction is to enhance what is there and to avoid detrimental impact upon anything considered significant to the character, quality and presence of the building.

Heritage

- 6.8 Although the building is not listed, it is on a draft local list. In the absence of a list description, it can be reasonably surmised that this arises from its imposing form associated with its original function as a municipal education building of the 1930s, which remains fundamentally intact on the principal elevations.
- 6.9 The rear buildings to be demolished as part of the present application are later additions of no intrinsic merit which will have no bearing on the important elevations. Notwithstanding this, all works to the facades are designed to complement the character of the original building.
- 6.10 Having regard to paragraph 203 of NPPF, there is no harm to the significance of the non-designated heritage asset. Whilst the rear of the site is not of primary importance, the setting of the original building to the rear will actually be enhanced. There will therefore be a small net benefit in heritage terms,

Car Parking

- 6.11 The College is in a highly sustainable location and there will be a reduction in floorspace as a result of the demolition of the Health and Beauty Wing.
- 6.12 However, the demolition and remodelling is intended to constitute the first phase of works to the Woodbury Centre, to be followed by changes to the front entrance which are the subject of a separate pre-application enquiry as mentioned in the Introduction. Those changes will lead to a loss of 11 car parking spaces at the front, in conjunction with the closure of a sub-standard access.
- 6.13 The 13 additional spaces proposed as part of the present application are directly adjacent to the existing access road within the larger barrier-controlled car park, and will compensate for the lost spaces in an accessible location with a focus on disabled provision.

Ecology

- 6.14 A bat scoping survey of the building to be demolished was undertaken in March 2023. This observed that the building was in use and in a satisfactory state of repair and found that features such as gaps in the mortar under ridge tiles, gaps under slate tiles and within the brickwork conferred possibilities for bats to enter the roof. However, despite a thorough and comprehensive search, both inside and

out, no definitive evidence of bat activity was found. Nevertheless, the proximity to suitable habitats and previous recordings of bat activity in the locality has led to a recommendation that additional night time surveys are needed. These have been instructed and will be provided prior to the determination of the planning application.

- 6.15 As the existing site presents opportunities for breeding birds, it is recommended that all demolition work should be carried out outside of the bird breeding season (March to August inclusive). Where this is not possible, a suitably qualified ecologist should carry out a check to confirm the absence of nesting birds immediately prior to works commencing.

Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Economic Benefits

- 6.16 The development will provide economic benefits through the benefits of construction, direct employment in the operation of the College and the spending power of staff and students using local shops and services.
- 6.17 The improved facilities will assist the College in meeting the need for skills within the local labour market.
- 6.18 In addition, grant funding from the Department for Education will be attracted to Bury.

Social Benefits

- 6.19 The site is located within Redvales ward and immediately adjacent to Bury East ward, which is the most deprived ward in Bury and one of the most deprived in the country. 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.
- 6.20 The new external space will promote social interaction between students in a safe and accessible location.

Environmental Sustainability

- 6.21 In terms of environmental sustainability, the proposal will make more effective use of existing premises to suit contemporary needs. As identified earlier, specific issues arise from the depth of building as extended meaning that internal teaching areas have no views out, natural light or

ventilation. In addition, effective use is not made of the catering department as the layout is not configured to suit the current curriculum.

- 6.22 The facade amendments incorporate passive solar control strategies. These include low emissivity glass utilised in new glazing and canopies to the south facing elevation. This not only considers the comfort of building users, but complements the College agenda of creating buildings of sustainable design with low energy usage.
- 6.23 Existing service provision is intrusive and at the end of its working life, and modern efficient replacements will improve sustainability and the quality of the building environment. Electric vehicle charging will be provided at the new parking area.
- 6.24 With reference to heritage, as discussed above the primary elevations of this locally listed building are unaffected. The proposals will improve the setting of the rear of the residual original building.
- 6.25 The external spaces will be of a high visual quality, enhance biodiversity and seek to incorporate sustainable drainage. Whilst ecology surveys to date have not identified any definitive evidence of bat activity, all recommendations will be followed in relation to bats and breeding birds.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 This Statement has set out how the proposals form an integral component of the College's Transformation Projects to enhance the College estate. It has identified the flaws associated with the previous extension of the building and the resultant issues such as the quality of the teaching environment and ongoing maintenance liabilities. In addition, the internal layout of the catering department does not meet current curriculum requirements.
- 7.2 The removal of the Hair and Beauty wing has been enabled by the recent planning approval to enhance the Beacon Centre, and this together with wider internal changes has led to the current application, seeking permission for the resultant elevation changes and a new high quality external space.
- 7.3 Whilst the use of the site for educational purposes is long established, the proposals are consistent with the Development Plan, in particular Policy CF2/1 of the Bury Unitary Development Plan. The intended approach was articulated in the Council's Bury Town Centre Masterplan, which noted the College's plan to transform its estate, including the removal of accommodation at the end of its useful life and the expansion of external landscaped and social gathering spaces.
- 7.4 We have set out the economic, social and environmental benefits of the proposals which collectively demonstrate that they constitute sustainable development. In accordance with paragraph 11 of the National Planning Policy Framework, the presumption in favour of sustainable development means that such development proposals that accord with an up to date plan should be approved without delay.
- 7.5 Bury College look forward to working the Council to deliver the significant benefits associated with these proposals.



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