

Planning Statement

Proposed New Front Entrance

**Woodbury Centre
Bury College
BL9 0BG**

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mosaic
town planning

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1 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement accompanies an application submitted on behalf of Bury College to provide a new principal entrance with associated changes to the adjacent public realm, together with alterations to fenestration on the front elevation.
- 1.2 The proposals are part of the wider 'Transformation Project' to enhance the College estate to ensure that it meets current operational requirements and satisfies student expectations as it expands, attracting Department of Education funding to Bury. This has seen the completion of Phase 1 of the new Health and Digital Centre and planning permission for the enhancement of the Beacon Centre. Whilst changes to the Woodbury Centre are an integrated single project, permission has already been granted for demolition and remodelling at the rear of the building which forms part of the same scheme.
- 1.3 The application is made following pre-application consultation with the Council and the feedback has been taken into account within this submission.

Submitted Plans and Documents

- 1.4 The following plans and documents form part of this application:
- Location Plan - 7035W L(00) 00 Rev. 01
 - Site Plan, Existing - P 7035W L00- 01 03
 - Site Plan, Proposed - P 7035W L00- 05 03
 - Elevations Existing Sheet 2 - P 7035W L(2-)02
 - Proposed Elevations Sheet 2 - P 7035W L(2-)11 Rev. 04
 - Proposed Elevations Sheet 4 - P 7035W L(2-)13 04 (*includes side elevation to new entrance*)
 - Entrance Existing Level 1 Ground Floor Plan - P 7035 L1-22
 - New Entrance Level 1 - Ground Floor Section A & B - 7035W L(2-) 15 01
 - New Entrance Level 1 Ground Floor Plan Proposed Layout - P 7035 L1- 20 Rev. 07
 - Proposed Level 1 Ground Floor Plan - P 7035 L1- 10 Rev. 11
 - External Levels Strategy - WBE-ITR-00-XX-DR-L-0003 Rev. P05
 - Landscape Bespoke Details - WBE-ITR-00-XX-DR-L-0310 Rev. P01

- Landscape General Arrangement - WBE-ITR-00-XX-DR-L-0101 Rev. P05
- Landscape Masterplan - WBE-ITR-00-XX-DR-L-0001 Rev. P06
- Landscape Strategy Plan - WBE-ITR-00-XX-DR-L-0002 Rev. P02
- Architect Statement
- Ecology (Bat Report)
- Heritage Impact Assessment

2 The Proposals

2.1 The three elements of the proposals for which permission is now sought are:

- Relocation of principal entrance to building
- Alterations to fenestration to improve internal teaching space
- Associated enhancement of Public Realm including inclusive access

Relocation of Entrance

2.2 The existing main entrance is at the southern end of the Market Street elevation (north section) and is proposed to be relocated to the centre of this elevation, at an equal distance between the two original entrances (the northern one of which is currently disused). It is intended to better serve the building following changes to its functionality and the use of areas which have occurred over time, and is part of an integrated approach involving further alterations in how users circulate within the building.

2.3 The existing southern entrance is of a poor calibre for such an important and heavily used building. The proposals are designed to address issues of poor connectivity, sparse entrance and reception facilities, and improve the College's ability to safeguard its learners.

2.4 The new entrance will be formed of two primary materials, glass and aluminium cladding. The enclosure will largely be glazed, supported within a curtain walling system, providing light and openness into the internal space. This light and modern feel will be introduced whilst the more serious and sober masonry façade will still be visible. There will only be a minimal impact on the existing original elevation, with a low section of existing brickwork to ground level removed and the vertical piers, which currently separate the windows and define the rhythm of the building, being retained.



- 2.5 The curtain walling will use polyester powder coated double glazed aluminium frames with solar control glass. The external entrance door will also be double glazed with coated aluminium frames and automatically operated. The internal floorspace will be 16.6m (18.6m measured externally).
- 2.6 Whilst it will no longer function as an entrance, the physical form of the original southern entrance will be retained and it will be repurposed as part of teaching/support facilities. Its appearance echoes that of a similar entrance at the northern end of the same elevation. With the new entrance in a central location, the resultant symmetry will be retained.



Fenestration

- 2.7 The sills of windows on the elevation to the south of the existing entrance are proposed to be lowered, in order to address the current inadequate lighting in the ground floor classrooms. At present, there is an expanse of brick at street level and these rooms only have minimal illumination from the lower section of the current windows which primarily illuminate the floor above. The window sills viewed internally are approximately 2.3m from floor level.
- 2.8 The windows as proposed to be lowered will line up with the existing stone base plinth, at a comparable level to those north of the existing entrance. An existing continuous stone band beneath the existing windows will be interrupted when they are lowered. However, this feature is not present to the north of the existing entrance and it will be retained to either side of the altered windows. The vertical emphasis and existing width of the windows will be maintained.
- 2.9 The intention is to retain the existing UPVC windows and to infill the removed brick beneath with new window sections to match the existing form, detail and finish. Solar control glass will be utilised to provide a more comfortable interior environment and in the interests of sustainability.

Public Realm

- 2.10 The vision for the public realm has been to enhance the entrance to create an accessible, directional and formal setting which will act as a prestigious 'front door' for Bury College. It adds an external social space, pedestrian protection, ecological value and aesthetic improvement.

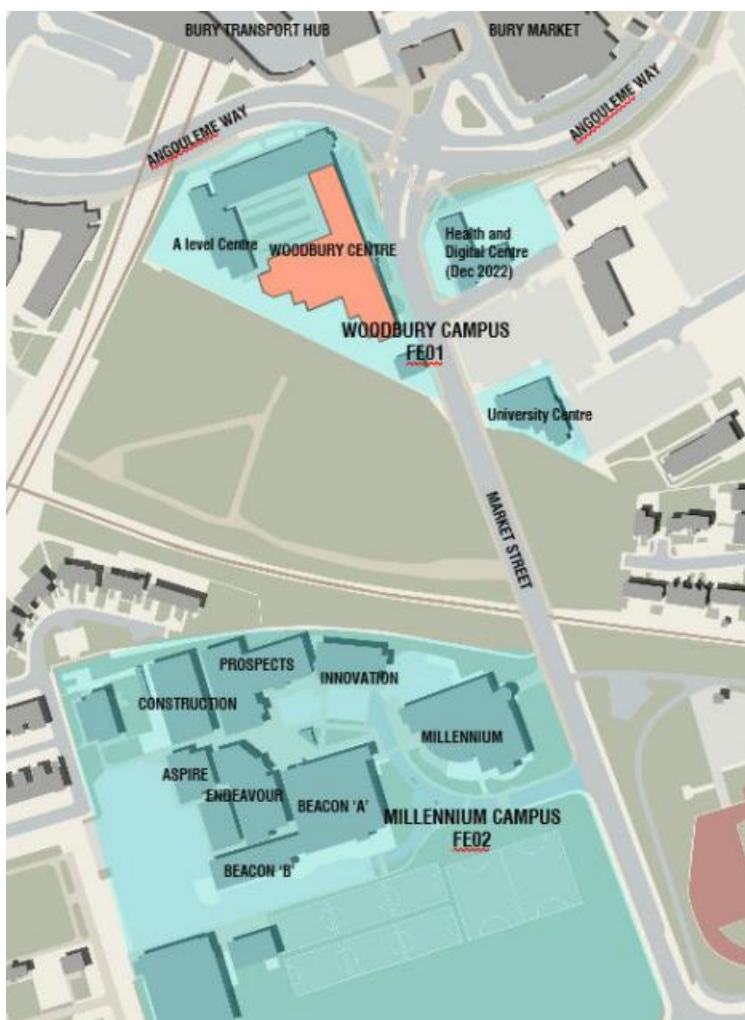
- 2.11 The external hard landscape works include a short flight of steps directly in front of the new entrance from Market Street. These connect to an elongated pathway along the building frontage which gently slopes down to each of the alternative access points at either end, ensuring DDA compliant inclusive access (maximum gradient 1:21). The path is expected to be of granite aggregate concrete paving and the steps would have tactile paving, with the materials proposed to complement the Health and Digital Centre development opposite. Formal seating would be provided to either side above the steps.
- 2.12 The layout is sensitive to the geometry of the building and landscape and has regard to the connectivity of College buildings, further to Market Street / Angouleme Way junction works undertaken by the Council.
- 2.13 Raised beds for soft landscaping are shown along the perimeter of the building to either side of the new entrance, along with four beds for planting at the rear of the pavement to the site frontage. These planting beds would be surrounded by walls and contain soft landscaping selected according to ecological value, incorporating rain garden features. These features combined will improve biodiversity and surface water treatment.
- 2.14 In response to pre-application feedback, the focus will be on low-level planting rather than the use of trees. Low-level walls are required to provide the accessible route into the new entrance, and the visual impact of the walls and planting beds is shown in the submitted 'Landscape Bespoke Details Main Entrance Arrangement' plan.
- 2.15 These proposals involve the closure of the substandard vehicle access at the site frontage which is close to a major junction and currently serves a number of parking spaces in front of the building.

Context

- 2.16 The application is for one aspect of the Transformation Project which also involves changes to the interior of the ground floor of the Woodbury Centre, in particular through remodelling existing teaching and learning facilities for catering to reflect current market and student requirements. Alongside this, the quality and size of social gathering spaces will be improved to align with increased student numbers.
- 2.17 The refurbishment of the Beacon Centre will allow the demolition of the rear wing of the Woodbury Centre currently occupied by the Hair and Beauty department. This provides poor quality teaching space and the removal and associated remodelling recently received planning permission. The approved plans provide 13 parking spaces provided (of which 4 disabled) alongside new hard and soft landscaping. This will compensate for the loss of 11 spaces resulting from the new front entrance proposals.

3 Site and Surroundings

- 3.1 The Woodbury Centre dates from the 1940s and was originally occupied by Bury Technical College. The principal east (front) and north (side) elevations retain their original character, in a highly prominent corner location at the northern end of Market Street at its junction with Angouleme Way. It has been identified by the Council as a non-designated heritage asset and the history and evolution of the building are explained in detail within the submitted Heritage Impact Assessment.
- 3.2 The plan below illustrates the location and context in relation to other College buildings and adjacent town centre landmarks (the Woodbury Centre includes the attached wing to the north which is coloured differently on the plan).



- 3.3 The existing main pedestrian entrance is off centre to the south on the Market Street elevation and consists of a single-storey stone structure which projects from the brick façade and is accessed by a short flight of steps. The modest entrance doors and signage underplay its status as the principal entrance utilised by students, staff and visitors. Disabled access is by means of a ramp through a

separate secondary door accessed by a ramp immediately to the south. On entering the building, wayfinding is poor, surveillance of internal security barriers is limited, and facilities such as WCs are absent. Photographs are provided within the submitted Architect Overview.

- 3.4 The primary eastern and northern frontages are both characterised by principal windows with a strong vertical emphasis, a horizontal stone plinth at the base and an upper stone architrave beneath the smaller windows of the upper storey, with an additional continuous upper stone band above. The elevation to the south of the current entrance is of a similar character, but lacks the upper storey and the bottom sills of the windows are currently higher than those to the north of the entrance, above a blank stretch of brickwork. The internal space here functions as classrooms, which therefore only have high level windows 2.3m above the internal floor level. The resultant limited natural light and absence of view is compounded by the windows being masked, resulting in low quality teaching space in a context of rising student numbers.
- 3.5 There is an existing vehicular access immediately to the north of the building entrance which serves 11 parking spaces located to the rear of a control barrier, separated from the adjacent pavement by a metal fence. The access is inadequate for two vehicles to pass at the entrance, which has double yellow lines to both sides, and then immediately narrows. The main vehicular access is beyond the southern end of the building, serving a private rear car park, and is unaffected by the current proposals.

4 Planning History

4.1 We are aware of the following current/previous applications although the accompanying plans are not available in all cases. In addition, a further non-material amendment has been submitted to alter the previously approved landscaping scheme under permission 699631 to incorporate a rear boundary fence, and awaits validation at the time of writing.

- 70168 | Non-material amendment following approval on planning permission 69631- Proposed fenced enclosure attached to rear of building – Decision awaited
- 69631 | Demolition of rear additions to original building, alterations to rear elevations of remaining buildings and associated hard and soft landscaping incorporating additional car parking – Approved 18/09/23
- 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; 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 Section 16 covers Conserving and Enhancing the Historic Environment. Paragraph 202 advises that for a designated heritage asset, less than substantial harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. However, in the case of a non-designated heritage asset a different test applies:

“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.” (paragraph 203)

5.4 Additional policy themes of relevance are:

- 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.

Planning Practice Guidance

- 5.5 The ‘Historic Environment’ section includes guidance on enhancing and conserving the historic environment.

Places for Everyone

- 5.6 Places for Everyone is at an advanced stage with consultation on proposed modifications closing on 6th December 2023. Policy JP-P5 Education, Skills and Knowledge supports “Enabling the delivery of new and improved accessible facilities for all ages, such as early years, schools, further and higher education, and adult training to ensure our workforce is ready to benefit from new employment opportunities.”

Local Policy

Bury Unitary Development Plan (1997)

- 5.7 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.”
- 5.8 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.”
- 5.9 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...”.
- 5.10 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.
- 5.11 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.
- 5.12 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.
- 5.13 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.”
- 5.14 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.”

5.15 Policy HT6/2 seeks to eliminate points of conflict between pedestrians/cyclists and motor vehicles.

Bury Town Centre Masterplan

5.16 The final masterplan was approved by the Council's Cabinet on 9 March 2022 following a period of public consultation.

5.17 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)

5.18 The site is located within Zone D: Knowledge Zone, for which a number of Development Principles are set out.



Figure 4: Bury Town Centre Masterplan Zones

5.19 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 Local Policy

- 5.20 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 Significant weight can now be given to policies in Places for Everyone which is at an advanced stage and the proposal is consistent with Policy JP-P5 through enabling the delivery of new and improved accessible facilities.
- 6.4 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.
- 6.5 This Planning Statement explains how the proposed enhancement of the Woodbury Centre is an integral component of the Transformation Project, 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.
- 6.6 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. The provision of enhanced education facilities with a focus on vocational training can be linked to the Framework’s economic objective of supporting economic growth and productivity, taking into account local business needs.

Heritage Impact

- 6.7 Given that the principle of the proposed development is in accordance with the Development Plan, planning permission should be granted unless material considerations indicate otherwise. As the Council has identified the building as a non-designated heritage asset, the most significant of these is heritage impact.
- 6.8 In accordance with paragraph 203 of NPPF, in weighing applications which directly 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.
- 6.9 The significance of the building has been assessed in the submitted Heritage Impact Assessment. This finds that “Overall the Woodbury Centre has some significance at a local level, derived through its role as an educational establishment in the local community, the quality of the external facades and the prominence of the building which has been created by substantial changes to its setting in the latter half of the 20th century.” (p44). Features of interest include the entrance pavilions and porticos, which bookend the principal facades and highlight the original access and circulation, and the composition of the east and north facades and the associated decorative details including the interleaving red rose panels and the mock engaged pilasters.
- 6.10 Factors which detract from the significance of the building and are relevant to the current proposals include heavy traffic, utilitarian public realm and cluttered street furniture to both Angouleme Way and its junction with Market Street, together with the use of the front of the site for car parking, the modern metal railings enclosing this, associated bollards and modern barrier adjacent to the main entrance.
- 6.11 Having regard to function requirements and the desire to limit impact on the locally listed building, a series of options were originally explored by the client and the consultant team. Whilst this was the only logical position for the new entrance, different sizes of entrance and materials were considered. The preferred option was submitted to the Council at pre-application stage, and alternative options were subsequently presented to the Council in response to the feedback received. Out of these, a consensus emerged between the Council, the College and the consultant team that Option 4 which forms the basis of this application would have the least impact on the heritage value of the building.
- 6.12 Two variations of this were then provided (4a and 4b) and, in its last feedback dated 16/11/23, the Council expressed a preference for option 4a as this would be the least harmful on the neo-classical capitols heading the buildings brick columns. Bury College and the consultant team support this position. In comparison with option 4b:

- It is not as tall, removing any potential visual impact upon the continuous stone banding above
- It improves the construction detailing, assists waterproofing proposals and avoids awkward detailing interaction with the existing façade
- It delivers the potential of a more satisfactory future reinstatement of the original façade, should it be required.

6.13 In support of the final proposal more generally, Wilson Mason Architects have made the following points:

- The height of the entrance has been reduced from the pre-application proposal and opaque cladding panels replaced with a fully glazed system. This will enable views and appreciation of the existing façade.
- The signage which was envisaged to be on the outside of the new entrance will therefore be located inside. Whilst it is important to announce the presence of the Collage and unequivocally define the location of the entrance, this will now be done with more sensitivity and reduced impact on the façade.
- Whilst a section of masonry at the bottom of the window aperture will be removed to form the door, other window apertures will remain unaltered to allow for reinstatement in the future if required.
- The proposals will facilitate the future use of the Woodbury Building as a fundamental part of the Bury College estate. The new entrance location combined with the retention of the physical form of the original entrances will provide a narrative of the building's evolution.

6.14 The Council also made additional detailed points in its final feedback. Guttering and drainage should not project past the neighbouring windows, architectural features should not be compromised and it was preferred that first floor sash windows should remain in situ. Concern was expressed that planters shown in the landscaping scheme should not obscure the building's stone plinth

6.15 Wilson Mason Architects make the following points in response:

- At the abutment with the existing building, there will be a flashing upstand formed which will be fitted into the nearest available mortar course within the masonry façade. The roof itself will be installed at a decline, falling away from the building and taking rainwater to the front edge of the new entrance. Within the new entrance, there are two rectangular hollow section structural steel posts proposed to carry the construction. It is proposed to install two rainwater downpipes

within these which will carry away the roof rainwater into the existing local drainage network. No guttering or downpipes will be visible in the completed entrance.

- Regarding the existing 1st floor window behind the new entrance roof, our priority is to ensure a robust waterproof abutment. We would look to retain the existing window in situ if possible, but we would install a robust board infill within the window aperture in front of the window and below the new entrance roof level. This would provide a firm substrate to which we could apply additional and integrated waterproof membranes which would be made contiguous with the new roof covering. The aspiration would be to retain the glazing in the topmost visible pane of the sash window if the roof upstand could be made to occur at or below the meeting rail without impacting upon the top pane of glass. If this could not be achieved, the top pane may need to be reglazed with an opaque panel.

6.16 Landscape architects Iteriad have provided the additional plan ‘Landscape Bespoke Details Main Entrance Arrangement’ in response to the Council’s queries about the proposed low wall and planters and comment as follows:

“The public realm proposal is there to provide inclusive access to the new main entrance. To allow full accessibility we need to slope up to the entrance as well as providing stepped access as the entrance is at a higher level than the current external ground level. To do this, we will need to retain the slope and steps in some way. The most discreet way to do this is to form a subtle, low-level wall with planting.

This low-level wall will tie in visually to the existing Woodbury Centre plinth, while remaining physically separated. To ensure no damage occurs to the fabric of the Woodbury Centre plinth, the low walls / raised planters are designed to be separated from the Woodbury centre building by an offset gap. The public realm design has been developed to respect the heritage of the building, and if reversed in the future, would leave the existing building intact and unharmed.”

Assessment of Impact

6.17 Regarding potential harm caused, the Local Planning Authority has referred to harm to visual appearance and presence within the street scene. The Heritage Impact Assessment by Donald Insall Associates assesses the impact of the proposals, and the following extracts (all page 46) are relevant:

“it is proposed to create a **new entrance** at the centre of the façade to maintain its symmetry and to align with the courtyard area which now exists to the rear.... The proposed entrance pavilion would be formed in glass - designed to form a clear and contemporary addition which would signify the new entrance whilst allowing for views through to the façade, and therefore the overall aesthetic of the building, to be maintained. The depth of the pavilion would align with the two historic entrance

pavilions, allowing the associated porticos which step further forward to remaining prominent features within the façade. The roof of the pavilion would sit below the stone architrave and cornice line to allow for this unifying feature to remain prominent and join the building below the moulded stone capitals to avoid conflict with this detail. The first floor windows would be replaced to accommodate the pavilion roof, with glazing to the exposed upper and lower openings which remain to maintain light provision into the interior. Signage would sit in front of the plaster panels between the ground and first floors and would be entirely reversible. Whilst the proposals would see the second of the two historic principal entrances closed, it would be repurposed and used internally and maintain its role in the composition of the building externally.”

Regarding the **south wing**, “Whilst the proposed windows would cut through a stone band, this would continue across the brickwork in between and the new sill level would align with the remaining windows across the façade and sit on top of the stone plinth. As such it is considered that the proposed windows can be sensitively accommodated without impact on the overall appearance of the building whilst creating a more active frontage for passing pedestrians and students.”

Regarding the **public realm** “the area in front of the principal façade which currently detracts from its setting would be relandscaped to create an approach worthy of its architectural grandeur and the key role it plays in the town both visually and in terms of its academic use... The proposed landscaping would reemphasis that this is the principal wing, eroded through the changes to the setting of the building through the 20th century.” (p46)

Summary of Benefits

6.18 This section draws together benefits of the scheme relevant to the assessment required by paragraph 203 of NPPF:

- **Connectivity and Layout;** Following changes to the functionality and usage of the building though its lifetime, patterns of the intensity of use and occupation have changed along with circulation needs, so that almost all users move north on entering the premises. The recent permission also involves the demolition of accommodation to the southern end which will accentuate this. As a result, internal routes are currently convoluted and unclear.

The new entrance will be between the west-projecting wings to the north and south. Changes will involve reformation of partitions, realignment of corridors, and alter the prioritisation of entry and exit points. Travel distances will be reduced, and wayfinding, accessibility and inclusivity will be improved. The route through to the rear courtyard will now be apparent.

- **Entrance and Security Facilities:** Security gates are currently to one side with limited opportunity for direct observation from the reception. This is inappropriate for a principal College building used by young people and immediately adjacent to a busy public road.

There will now be an open reception area with security barriers under supervision, a waiting area and toilets. The revised arrangement will meet Ofsted and Bury College requirements for security and safeguarding. It will satisfy paragraph 97 of NPPF which confirms that planning decisions should promote public safety, anticipating and addressing possible malicious threats including where large numbers of people are expected to congregate: footnote 43 confirms that this includes education establishments.

- **Inclusivity:** Existing wheelchair users must enter the building separately using a ramp offset around the corner of the entrance enclosure and internal movement is constrained.

Wheelchair users will now be able to use the same entrance accessed via a ramp and freely circulate within the building. Again this will achieve the standards expected by Ofsted and the College itself, together with paragraph 112 of NPPF.

- **Quality of Teaching Accommodation:** The teaching environment at the frontage of the southern wing currently has an oppressive character, lacking natural light, ventilation and views outwards. This is inconsistent with the aspiration of the College to create high quality spaces as the number of students expands.

The view, light and sense of connectivity to the enhanced public realm adjacent will be improved as a result of the window alterations. This will also provide a more active frontage for passing students and pedestrians. The works will avoid any installations or intrusive works being required by retaining the existing aperture width and lintel.

- **Public Realm:** In addition to the inclusivity issue, the external environment is unattractive and unsatisfactory in highway terms. The Heritage Impact Assessment observes how aspects of this such as the utilitarian appearance, usage for parking, barriers and railings detract from the significance of the building. The highway access is substandard and close to a major junction, and creates a point of conflict with pedestrians contrary to Local Plan policy HT6/2.

In achieving inclusive access and providing a social gathering space, the proposals introduce high quality materials and low-level planting with visual and ecological benefits. The layout will give first priority to pedestrian movements and minimise the scope for conflict with car users in accordance with paragraph 112 of NPPF. The Council's Town Centre Masterplan promotes a high

quality public realm, and the removal of parked cars together with the substandard access in front of this principal elevation is a substantial benefit.

- **Securing Future of Heritage Asset:** The internal accommodation fails to meet Department of Education and Ofsted standards and the existing entrance is not consistent with the function and status of one of the College’s most important and utilised buildings.

The most appropriate way to secure the future of the non-designated heritage asset is to support the continuation of its original function whilst recognising that the nature of usage and expectations evolve and that it is appropriate for proportionate changes to be reflected in building form.

6.19 The Heritage Impact Assessment concludes that “Collectively these alterations would draw significant benefits for the operation of the college whilst creating a high-quality entrance and landscaped setting worthy of its status whilst improving the quality of the internal teaching environment which would significantly outweigh any harm which may be perceived through the closure of the original entrance and the addition of the new pavilion. Furthermore, they form an integral part of the college’s Transformation Project, which seeks to ensure that it can evolve to meeting the changing expectations of the students it serves and to enable the Woodbury Centre to continue in its original educational use, securing its conservation in the long-term.” (p46)

6.20 It goes on to say “The existing entrance, hard landscaped car park and ground floor teaching space do not meet contemporary expectations and undermine the architectural status and educational offer of the building – putting its continued educational use at risk. As such, it is considered that any harm perceived through the creation of the new entrance would be balanced (and indeed outweighed) by the associated benefits which this would bring including the creation of an external landscaped area (and associated health and wellbeing, sustainability and ecology benefits), improved safety and safeguarding measures and ensuring that the college continues to provide the facilities and teaching spaces required to ensure that the building remains in educational use – securing its conservation in the long-term.” (p47)

Ecology

6.21 Having regard to the Council’s validation checklist for when ecological impact must be assessed, no demolition or removal of vegetation is proposed.

6.22 The presence of bats within the wider site was investigated in the “Bats: Building Assessment and Activity Survey” first submitted in May 2023. There was no reasonably foreseeable likelihood that bats were present in the buildings due for demolition and reconfiguration in the proposed works and no

bat roosts were present or would be impacted by the work. Flat roofs and external plant provided opportunities for breeding birds, leading to a recommendation that no works should be carried out outside of the breeding season.

- 6.23 The area of the building affected by the present application consists of an addition to a flat frontage at ground level with no demolition proposed and no roofs or plant present. Unlike the rear of the building it is physically detached from Pyramid Park where trees are present. Having regard to the nature of the proposal and the previous conclusion, there is no reasonable possibility that bats or breeding birds would be adversely affected.

Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

Economic Benefits

- 6.24 The development will provide economic benefits through the impact of construction, direct employment in the operation of the College, the spending power of staff and students using local shops and services, and provision of a skilled labour force.
- 6.25 In addition, grant funding from the Department for Education will be attracted to Bury.

Social Benefits

- 6.26 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.
- 6.27 Ensuring safeguarding of young people with enhanced security is an important social benefit which will satisfy the NPPF requirement to protect education establishments from malicious threats.
- 6.28 DDA compliant ramps to the new entrance will achieve inclusive access for all.

Environmental Sustainability

- 6.29 In terms of environmental sustainability, the proposal will make more effective use of existing premises to suit contemporary needs, addressing issues of poor natural light and ventilation. More energy efficient services and plant will be used along with thermally enhanced window and wall installations and solar controlled glazing. Refurbishment of the building will extend its lifespan and utilise embodied carbon.

6.30 The Council has identified the building as a non-designated heritage asset. It was designed for education use and the most appropriate way to ensure its longevity is for it to be adapted to satisfy current patterns of usage and expectations. The proposals will preserve its distinguishing architectural features through including reversible changes whilst enhancing it through an improved public realm and the removal of car parking in front. The public realm will also provide ecological benefits and enhance pedestrian connectivity. The removal of a sub-standard access is also a positive environmental benefit.

7 Conclusion

- 7.1 This Statement has set out the compelling benefits associated with the proposed development, which will enhance the visibility of this high profile town centre building and reinforce the presence of the College. It is an important element of the Transformation Project, utilising Department of Education funding to improve the student experience. This will not be at the expense of any harm to the heritage interest of the building and the public realm will be improved, as envisaged by the Council's Town Centre Masterplan.
- 7.2 The principle of development is wholly in accordance with the Development Plan. In particular, Policy BY7 Townside/Market Street states that the Council will **"encourage and support"** community facilities in this location. 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 discussing Bury College.
- 7.3 The proposal is also consistent with the policy themes which we have identified from the National Planning Policy Framework and Places for Everyone, and its encouragement for local planning authorities to take a proactive, positive and collaborative approach to broadening educational choice is directly relevant.
- 7.4 This document has set out how the proposed enhancement of the Woodbury Centre is an integral component of the Transformation Project, 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. The Heritage Impact Assessment has thoroughly assessed the significance of the building and the limited impact of the proposals on this. Paragraph 95 of NPPF expects local planning authorities to **"give great weight to the need to create, expand or alter schools through...decisions on applications"** and this Planning Statement has demonstrated that there is a compelling case for granting planning permission.



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