

PLANNING STATEMENT

Replacement College Building and associated works

Hopwood Hall College



MAY 2025

DOCUMENT REFERENCE: WD005-01v2

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1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Hopwood Hall College, in partnership with the Department for Education, proposes to replace one of its existing college buildings, (Block B / Benjamin Rudd Building), and erect a new “Block B” at its campus in Rochdale town centre.
- 1.2 Hopwood Hall College & University Centre is based across two campuses at Middleton and Rochdale. This proposal relates to its Rochdale campus, but will be a benefit to the wider student body and community the College serves. Hopwood Hall’s ethos, values and mission statement sets a priority to provide the best possible education for its students – ensuring that each individual is given the support and encouragement needed to achieve their goals. The College values reflect the importance that it places on developing a caring and nurturing environment in which it expects the highest standards of work, behaviour and commitment from its students and staff.
- 1.3 The College provides courses for 16 to 19 year olds, apprenticeships, adult learning, university centre and workforce development and support for employers. A wide range of subjects are taught including T-Levels, BTEC, HND / HNC and other subject specific qualifications. Though most 16-19 years olds attend full-time courses, the nature and range of courses taught means many students enrolled at the College may also be working and only attend in evenings or on day-release.
- 1.4 The project brief is to provide a replacement teaching building to accommodate between 800-900 students and staff across a range of subjects including art & design, catering, T-Levels (including media, graphic design & gaming), film design and provision of Higher Education teaching facilities, such as for teacher training and healthcare. As a replacement building there is no expansion of the facilities at the campus, indeed due to greater efficiencies in layout the new building has a slightly lower overall floorspace. The new building will operate with the retained facilities in Block A at the campus and the wider college at the Middleton campus.
- 1.5 The replacement building will be 4-storeys high and positioned along the College Road boundary in a broad east-west orientation. Once open the building will provide new classrooms, studios, laboratories, workshops, catering school and other teaching facilities alongside a lecture hall, staff facilities and new main college entrance to the campus on its eastern elevation. To the western end of the building at ground floor will be the nursery, also relocated from the existing building which will be internally separated from the main college and have its own, dedicated entrance.
- 1.6 The building is designed as a simple linear block with the volume broken-up with a larger volume to the east (main entrance) and articulation to the western end to create a ‘bookend.’ The main entrance is located in a 3-storey recess on the east end, and the nurse entrance is recessed with an external canopy. The taller element to the east end accentuates the arrival point facing the town centre and provides space for signage.

- 1.7 Materials will use a vertical rain screen cladding (aluminium standing-seam), curtain wall glazing and brick materials to the ground floor. Materials are selected to meet daylight, thermal and ventilation requirements whilst also providing an architectural response to the function and massing of the building and site context. Colours are selected as a dark grey brick and a brick-red colour to the cladding in line with the college colours.
- 1.8 A highly energy efficient building is achieved through application of the energy hierarchy in the building design through energy efficiency qualities, internal configuration, materials, thermal properties and heating / ventilation. It is supported by extensive roof and canopy mounted photo-voltaic array and air source heat pumps . The building will also use offsite manufacturing process which leads to lower waste and a safer, cleaner construction environment and higher quality control.
- 1.9 Once completed and the staff and students decanted, the process to demolish Block B will start. This will include demolition of an outbuilding (“Block C”) and remodelling of the link building between current Blocks A and B. The link building roof and walls and Block A elevation will be made good in the works.
- 1.10 The site of Block B will then be subject to landscaping and pathways which will lie within the secure line of the campus for students and staff to use and will be overlooked by both the new entrance in new Block B and the retained link building. Long term this site may be redeveloped for a replacement building to Block A, but that is not in this programme of works nor is it currently funded for delivery.
- 1.11 Other ancillary works alongside landscaping will be resurfacing to the car park, installation of new drainage and attenuation tanks, installation of an external sprinkler tank to serve new Block B, re-surfacing and lining of the car park to accommodate the changes made and a new secure bike shed at the College Road / St Mary’s Gate corner. This last feature will be placed alongside the small drop-off zone in front of the new main entrance on Block B both for convenience and safety through surveillance and activity.
- 1.12 Biodiversity net gain will be delivered onsite through identified planting / habitat provision. The approach is guided by identification of locations that will not potentially be disturbed by any future modifications at the campus, including the potential for Block A redevelopment. For that reason all landscape planting in the location of the present Block B is considered “temporary” and does not form part of the BNG gain.
- 1.13 The application site is located in Flood Zone 2. The accompanying Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy set out how the site and building will operate within the flood zone safely for students, staff and visitors. Through this Statement we set out that there is no suitable alternative location under the sequential test and that as a ‘more vulnerable use’ there is no requirement to consider the exception text.
- 1.14 The development proposals are considered to accord with the key principles for sustainable development set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, and with strategic and relevant development control policies of Places for Everyone and the Rochdale Core Strategy. As such the presumption in favour of development applies and the application should be approved without delay.

2 SITE & BACKGROUND

Site

- 2.1 The application site is part of the existing Rochdale campus of Hopwood Hall College. The location for the proposed building is currently an area of car parking and internal access road. This sits in part of the wider car park that extends to the south of the position of the new building.



Figure 2-1 Aerial view of existing buildings, © Google

- 2.2 Existing Block B sits to the northwest corner of the site at the junction of College Road and St Mary's Way. The building is 4-storeys high with an additional basement level which has an open elevation on its west side and terraced sunken garden between the building and retaining wall to St Mary's Way. This space is currently partly in use as outdoor amenity space for the nursery that is located in the basement level. The upper floors provide a range of teaching, studio, laboratories and staff support facilities. The building is relatively non-descript as an ageing modern building with two-tone grey cladding.
- 2.3 Block B is attached to Block A to the south through a lobby at ground floor through a link building. There is also an 2nd floor level corridor link between the two buildings. Block A is 7-storeys (6 + basement) and the larger and more dominant of the two buildings and is in the same two-tone grey cladding finish.

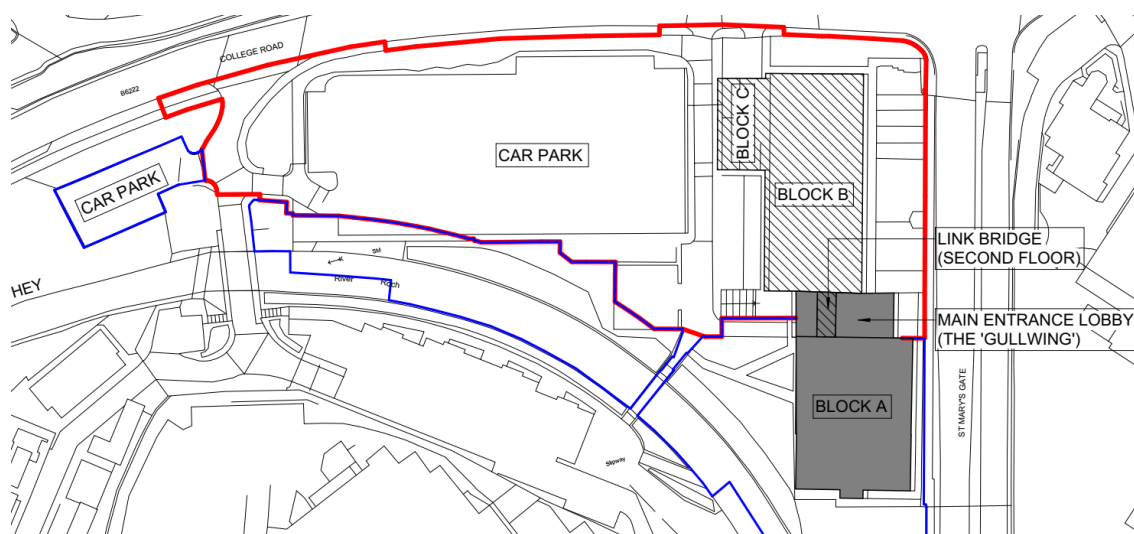


Figure 2-2 Existing Site Plan, extract drawing FE0012-SRA-XX-XX-D-A-201, Sheppard Robson Architects

- 2.4 There is very little landscaping around the site with small areas of amenity grassland below the retaining wall to the car park beside the River Roch and slightly larger areas south of Block A and to the west of the car park alongside College Road.
- 2.5 Vehicular access is taken at two points off College Road. The main car park (Car Park A) is reached by the western access which is barrier controlled for staff use only. This access also serves a small parking area to the west (Car Park B) for use by the college, and the access continues south over the river to provide access to the car park for Rochdale 6th Form College (not affiliated to Hopwood Hall College) and to Dane Street sub-station compound.
- 2.6 The second access at the rear of Block B provides access to a drop-off lane which exits via the western access on a one-way loop and to a smaller car park at the rear of Block A and provides service access to the buildings. The service and parking areas are also barrier controlled.
- 2.7 Pedestrian entrances mirror the vehicular entrance points with additional access off St Mary's Way into the link building, however, operationally only the rear (west side) entrance of the link building is currently used to give access to speed gates and security.

Surroundings

- 2.8 The wider area is characterised by St Mary's Way to the east which divides the campus from the main town centre and the civic zone of the courts and police station. The Rochdale Exchange Shopping Centre car park and service entrance are visible across the junction with College Road at Newgate. To the north the land rises in a tree lined embankment behind College Road leading to College Bank beyond and the 'Seven Sisters' tower blocks. At the north side of the junction of College Road and St Mary's Way is a BT exchange, a low 2-storey block in a grey brick that sits anonymously in the streetscene. To the west College Road heads on a long southwesterly bend lined by trees that serve to screen the site. The college site sits on the

outside of a bend in the River Roch to the south, the river itself sitting in a canalised channel. Beyond the car park compound of the 6th Form College and the rear service yard of ASDA.

Planning designations

- 2.9 The campus sits outside the defined town centre which is marked by St Mary's Way and is previously-developed land within the urban area.
- 2.10 The site is predominantly within Flood Zone 2 as set out in the Flood Risk Assessment.
- 2.11 St Mary's Way and College Road is a designated with the wider Rochdale Air Quality Management Area (AQMA).
- 2.12 The Town Centre Conservation Area (extended 2011) also follows St Mary's Way on its western edge, turning eastwards along Newgate. Closest listed buildings are the Rochdale Central Library, Museum and Art Galley ('Touchstones') (Grade II) located to the south at the junction of St Mary's Way and The Esplanade and the Former Post Office (Grade II), The Esplanade. The Grade I listed Cenotaph and Town Hall are also in proximity on The Esplanade. Though Town Hall clocktower is in a line of sight from the corner of College Road and St Mary's Way at the northeast corner of the site, though several buildings and trees obstruct street level views.

Relevant planning history

- 2.13 The college site has a limited planning history. Of note is:
- Construction of new car park and associated landscape treatment, ref 12/D55197
 - Installation of two awnings fronting St Mary's Gate, ref 10/D53657
 - Over-cladding, replacement windows and façade remedials to Benjamin Rudman and Miles Ashworth Buildings, ref 10/D53607
 - Erection of new 7-storey College building with associated parking, ref 09/D515750
- 2.14 Permission 09/D515750 was for a new 7-storey college building which was granted permission in 2009 but was not implemented. This would have fully replaced all buildings on site with a new building placed more centrally in the current car park area with a new car park laid out in the location of existing Blocks A and B alongside St Mary's Way.
- 2.15 Permission 12/D55197 for the car park formed the layout currently seen on site, which was installed in 2012/13 in the location of a former building which was demolished around 2008.

3 PROPOSALS

Please refer to the Design & Access Statement, prepared by Sheppard Robson and the Landscape Masterplan, prepared by ARES for additional information and background to the design brief, design options and materiality.

Brief

- 3.1 Hopwood Hall College has a vision to be a 21st Century college with a strong presence in Rochdale town centre; to develop its higher education provision and learning spaces; and develop its curriculum including new T-Levels. Through the new building it aspires to deliver industry-standard designed spaces for the highest level of education and an inclusive environment to support all learners and all styles of learning.
- 3.2 For the College the new building provides opportunities for reconsideration of access, site security and safeguarding of staff and students; maximise spaces for social interaction; form more external public space; present a strong brand and presence; to provide separate entrance and controls for the nursery / crèche facility; and to deliver a building that features energy conservation measures and renewable energy generation.

Design strategy

[Provided by Sheppard Robson]

- 3.3 The proposal creates a new main entrance focal point into Block B from a new civic plaza adjacent to the junction between College Road and St Mary's Gate. The new entrance provides direct access to Block B and students for Block A will also access the campus through the new entrance, before moving across the external plaza to Block A. The main entrance is signified by a triple-height recess which articulates the corner of the block and has large areas of curtain walling which give both an indication of the activity within as well as views out for the students and staff working within the building. The eastern end of the building is the heart of the college, creating the link between the new block, the plazas and the existing block A. Social, active spaces including the LRC, student social, entrance and conference room have been located within the heart of the building here, creating a central focal point for users and a welcoming and active entrance.
- 3.4 To the west of this central hub, the building is a simple linear block arrangement, with the teaching and admin spaces organised either side of a central circulation spine and a stair and lift close to each end of the building. The block is articulated to indicate the entrances to the college and the nursery, and to highlight both the HE provision and the nursery to create identity for these functions and to create visual interest for the prominent town centre building.
- 3.5 The ground floor of the building houses predominantly admin and student support functions, including the main student hub, which is easily accessible from the main entrance and is semi open plan, allowing it to be open to the corridor to encourage student interaction whilst also maintaining a level of discreetness and privacy. Individual 1-to-1 consultation rooms off the main space provide facilities for private

conversation. The learning support facilities are provided opposite the student support and provide spaces for both staff and students. Student Social facilities are located close to the main entrance as a large, semi-open space for socialising and multi-functional use, with direct access out onto the external student social areas.

- 3.6 Learning spaces are located on the upper floors, with provision for Further Education on first and second floor, and the Higher Education provision independently located on the top floor of the building, with a dedicated lecture theatre and social space and controlled access for HE students. Cross-college resources including the LRC and the exam suite are distributed across the floors and accessible to all students.
- 3.7 The nursery is located at the west end of the building, with an independent entrance marked by a canopy. The nursery functions independently of the college building, with an internal secure line separating the nursery rooms from the college.

Building design, layout and appearance

- 3.8 The new building is a 4-storey teaching block which is orientated along College Road. Its footprint is slightly smaller than the existing Block B it replaces, and at 4-storeys retains the scale of a mid-rise office, commercial, or as is the case, educational building appropriate for the edge of town centre location.
- 3.9 The building is a simple linear block; however, the mass is broken up with a larger volume to east and west elevations to 'bookend' the building, with the main entrance marked on the eastern elevation by a 3-storey recess, whilst the nursery entrance at the west end is in a smaller, canopied recess. The taller element to the east end not only provides focus to the main entrance, but facing the town centre provides opportunity for signage and wayfinding to what will become the main entrance of the college complex.
- 3.10 Facades will use a grey brick to ground flood elevation and a vertical seemed rain screen cladding to upper storeys with curtain wall glazing. All materials are selected for daylight / thermal / ventilation performance and to enable offsite prefabrication to reduce installation time and costs; both critical to the project delivery and to minimise construction impacts on the existing college. The Design & Access Statement sets out in more detail the materiality of the building. The brick-red colour to the cladding is a preference of the College to meet its brief for a building that provides presence and can display college branding.
- 3.11 Though a constrained site by the presence of the existing college and town centre location, the layout still is required to adhere to DfE specifications, such as clear sightlines, minimising opportunities for anti-social behaviour, provide a segregated drop-off zone for the nursery, level / grade access to buildings, provide security line from public and private spaces and a civic space in the location of the former Block B. All this must be delivered, and other factors besides, in a layout that provides an environment conducive to delivering high-quality education and respond to more prosaic matters of flood risk, drainage, electricity sub-station, sprinkler tank provision, parking, access and servicing.
- 3.12 The external layout is delivered in four key areas; the civic approach from St Mary's Gate; the central courtyard where Block B stands; car park reconfiguration and the nursery outdoor play area. In the civic

approach a broad pavement leads toward the new main entrance as a clear wayfinding and provides security to overlook the approach and secure cycle store, thereby removing the need for anyone arriving by bike to wheel their bicycle into the secure area of the site. A drop-off zone is provided off College Road to allow small deliveries and visitor access to the college to the main entrance. Again this prevents any need to cross over the secure line without first reaching reception and security.

- 3.13 The central courtyard will be formed in the location of Block B once demolished. It may serve to be temporary should Block A be redeveloped in the medium to long-term. But in this time, it will serve an important function to provide an outdoor social environment for students, planting to provide interest and the existing levels will be incorporated into an accessible space. A covered path route will link Blocks A and the new teaching block.
- 3.14 The car park largely remains in the same place, but reconfigured to accommodate the new building, with refreshed drainage, lighting and arrangement. Barrier control will main this car park is secure for staff and authorised users only. The car park area will be required to accommodate the external sprinkler tank.
- 3.15 The nursery outdoor play space wraps around the west end of the building (the entrance is on the north elevation). The area will be provided with suitable surfacing, planting and other facilities to support young children. A secure line will be formed around the space separating the area from the main college, car park and street.

Design attributes

- 3.16 Key design attributes include:
- Attainment of Net Zero Carbon in Operation (NZCiO) which is attained through design approach on façade detailing, U-value calculation (heat loss efficiency), passive measures such as daylight, ventilation and shading, and use of renewable energies including photovoltaic cells on the roof and pedestrian walk way.
 - Flood risk is addressed through the setting of the levels of the building with allowance for climate change as set out in the supporting Flood Risk Assessment, and attenuation of surface water discharge to better existing flow rates by 50%.
 - Biodiversity Net Gain will be achieved at greater than 10% onsite as set out in the accompanying assessment, acknowledging that the existing site has a very low base line as predominantly urban and built site and car park.
 - Car parking numbers will reduce overall in the development to accommodate the new building, but the reduction will be managed through a Travel Plan to encourage sustainable transport choices for staff and students in a highly sustainable, town centre location with multiple transport options available.
 - Cycle parking spaces will be significant increased in a secure cycle store as part of the package to encourage sustainable transport choices.

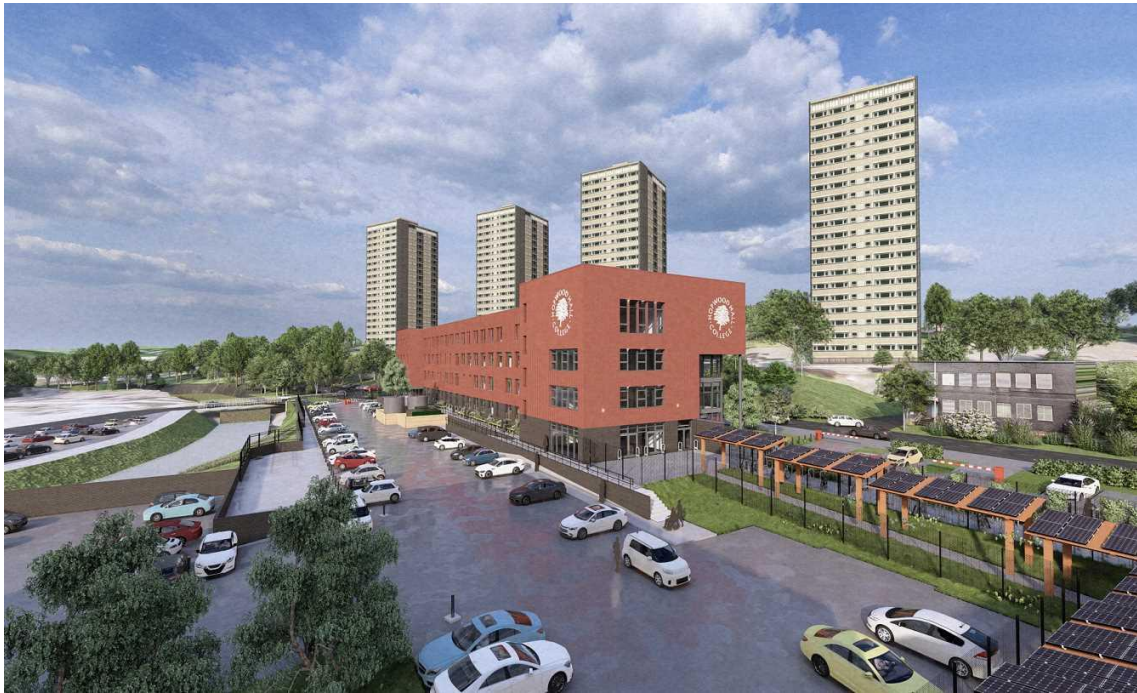


Figure 3-1 3D view of proposed building view northwest, © ARES Landscape Architects

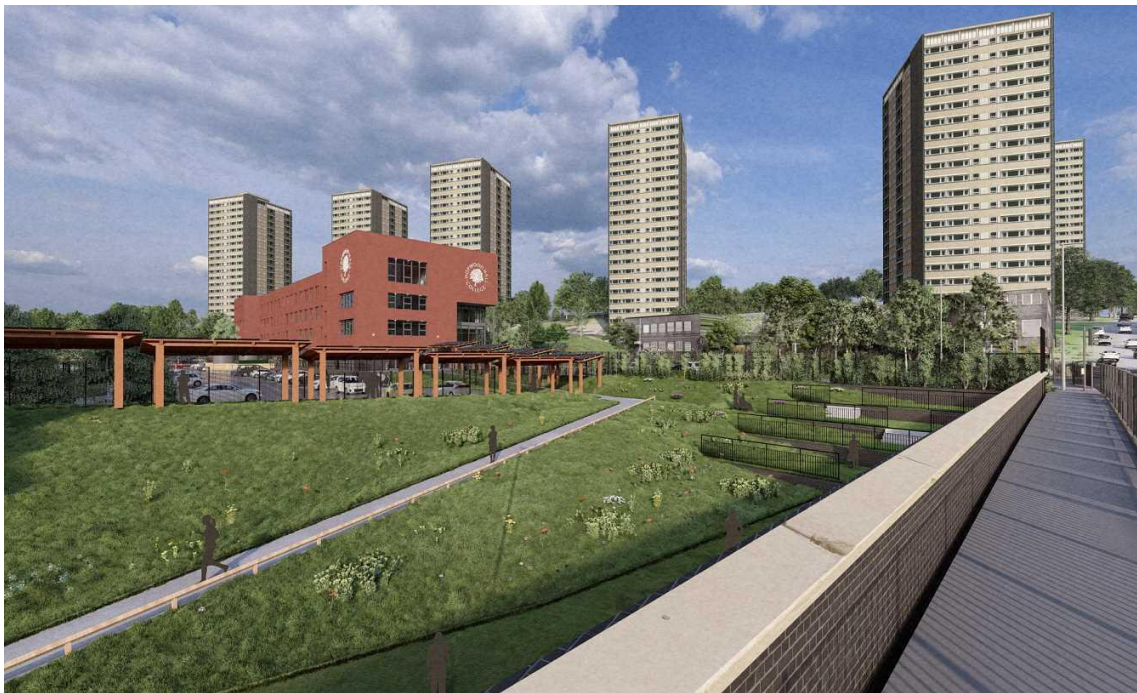


Figure 3-2 3D view across from St Mary's Gate looking northwest toward the new building, © ARES Landscape Architects



Figure 3-3 3D view of western end of building and location of nursery, © ARES Landscape Architects



Figure 3-4 3D view of approach to new building from St Mary's Gate, © ARES Landscape Architects

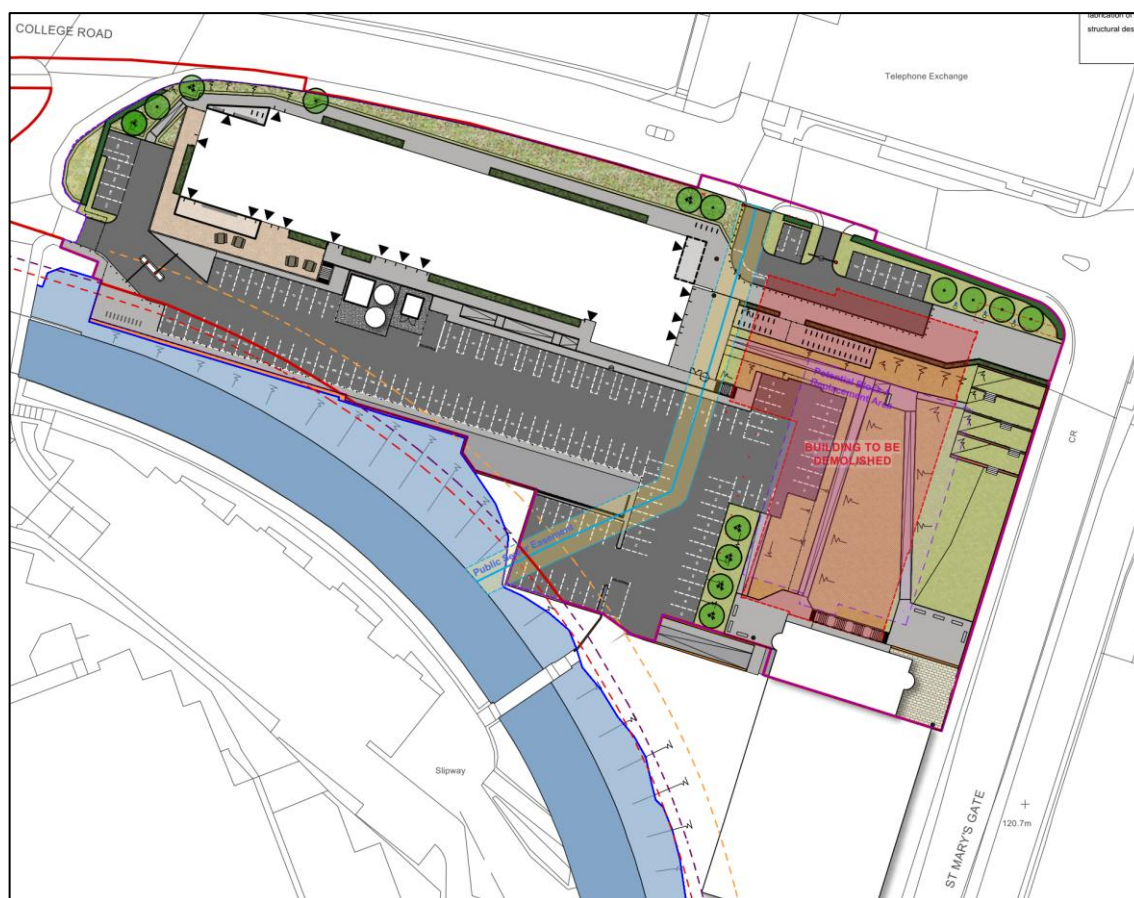


Figure 3-5 Extract Site Landscape Plan – Illustrative, FE0012-ALA-XX-XX-D-L-0029

4 EIA SCREENING

- 4.1 The application site area (red line) is circa 1.03 ha and therefore marginally exceeds the 1ha threshold for an urban development project as set out in Part 10 (b), Schedule 2 of the Town & Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, (the 'EIA Regulations').
- 4.2 Indicative criteria and threshold sets out that an EIA is unlikely to be required for redevelopment of land unless the new development is of a significantly greater scale than the previous use, or there is a markedly different impact, or there is a high level of contamination.
- 4.3 In this instance the replacement Block B building has a proposed floorspace of 7,059 m² (GEA) compared to the combined existing Block B and Block C which is to be replaced at circa 6,860 m² (GEA). This is approximately a 3% difference in floorspace, for a building that is also four storey, though without a basement level. This is clearly not a building of significantly greater scale nor is markedly different in impact. The site is previously developed and has been occupied by previous structures and may have contamination present. However, the site is not highly contaminated as set out in the accompanying site investigation reports and does not display unusual characteristics for an urban site.
- 4.4 On other key issues to consider, though the building is marginally larger in size the design occupancy for students is marginally lower by 35 places (944 existing places vs 909 proposed), a 3.5% reduction; therefore the proposal will not give rise to any material change in operation of the college campus so far as trip generation and traffic impacts.
- 4.5 The college building uses will not give rise to significant emissions or noise, and the location on the edge of the town centre is not particularly sensitive to such matters; and this no change on the existing circumstances.
- 4.6 Having considered the characteristics of the development, its location and the types and character of potential impacts arising from the development in Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations, it is our view that EIA is not justified for the proposal.
- 4.7 Under EIA Regulations, regulation 8(1), we ask the Local Planning Authority to consider the application as if it has been made under regulation 6(1) and to adopt a screening opinion that the development is not an EIA development.

5 RELEVANT PLANNING POLICY

Development Plan

- 5.1 The adopted development plan comprises Greater Manchester's Place for Everyone (2024) and the Rochdale Core Strategy (2016). An Allocations DPD has been in preparation by Rochdale, but has not reached a sufficiently advanced stage to be of relevance to determining the application.

Places for Everyone, 2024

- 5.2 The following general and/or strategic policies are considered relevant:

- JP-S1: Sustainable development
- JP-P1: Sustainable place
- JP-P2 Heritage
- JP-P5 Education, skills & knowledge
- JP-C5 Streets for all
- JP-C6 Walking & cycling
- JP-C8 Transport
- JP-S2: Carbon & energy
- JP-S4 Flood risk and the water environment
- JP-G8 A net enhancement of biodiversity & geodiversity
- JP-S5 Clean Air

Rochdale Core Strategy, 2016

- 5.3 Several policies of the Core Strategy has been superseded by Places for Everyone, and the following policies reflect that change in emphasis between the plans.

- DM1 General development requirements
- SD1 Delivering sustainable development
- S02 Creating successful and healthy communities
- C7 Delivering education facilities
- SO3 To improve design, image and quality of place
- P1 Improving Image
- P2 Protecting landscape, character and heritage
- P3 Improving design of new development

- SO4 Promoting a greener environment
- G1 Tackling and adapting to climate change
- G2 Energy and new development
- G6 Enhancing green infrastructure
- G8 Managing water resources and flood risk
- G9 Reducing the impact of pollution, contamination and land instability
- SO5 Improving Accessibility and delivering sustainable transport
- T2 Improving Accessibility, including reference to Appendix 5 - Schedule of Parking Standards

5.4 Some older policies of the Rochdale UDP, 2006, are still part of the adopted plan, but of three policies technically still valid, (Policies EM7, EM8 and BE17 relating to flood risk, groundwater and conservation respectively), we argue that these are largely overtaken by more recent national guidance and strategic local policies.

National planning policy and guidance

5.5 National Planning Policy Framework, December 2024, and associated guidance in National Planning Practice Guidance are relevant to the proposals and relevant matters will be referenced in assessment of the proposals.

6 PLANNING ASSESSMENT

6.1 The proposed development is a sustainable development located on previously developed land within the urban area. It should be afforded support in line with NPPF paragraph 11(c) as a proposal that is in broad accordance with relevant planning policies for reasons set out in this assessment.

6.2 The key planning considerations are:

- Principle of development
- Layout, design and appearance
- Energy & sustainability
- Flood risk and drainage
- Ecology and biodiversity net gain
- Ground conditions
- Archaeology and Heritage
- Transport / traffic considerations
- Residential amenity
- Air quality and noise

Principle of development

6.3 The proposed development is on previously developed land located in the urban area, on the western edge of Rochdale town centre. The new education building will replace the existing Benjamin Rudman Building [‘Block B’] and as comparison will be 3% larger in floor space, but 3.5% smaller in teaching space. It is, for all intents and purposes, a ‘like for like’ replacement facility.

6.4 As set out in **Appendix 3** and confirmed through the transport assessment, the new education building will not lead to a material change in traffic / trip generation as a ‘like for like’ replacement facility.

6.5 We can therefore conclude that as a matter of principle the proposed development is acceptable at the site location as replacement education building.

6.6 Provision of the new education building will lead to a material change in the quality of the teaching and learning environment to serve the community. This will include housing administration and student support facilities on the ground floor and a student hub, with upper floors used for Further Education on first and second floors, and Higher Education on the third floor with a dedicated lecture theatre and social space for HE students.

- 6.7 A replacement nursery will be provided on the western end of the ground floor which will operate independently from the Further and Higher Education facilities with a dedicated entrance to the northwest corner of the building, marked by an entrance canopy.
- 6.8 The improved teaching and learning facilities are a matter of significance to which substantial weight should be afforded in the planning balance. And we can therefore conclude as a matter of principle that the proposed development is acceptable as a site location for a replacement education building.
- 6.9 This supports the Spatial Vision which at its heart sees Rochdale becoming *a prosperous borough: to grow our economy and develop our place through cooperation and partnership, improving the lives of local people. ... Its population will be more prosperous, better educated and healthier*. [Core Strategy, Ch.3]. This is supported by Strategic Objective SO1 *To deliver a more prosperous economy*, and specifically part (5) to support provision of educational facilities to improve skills, which is part of wider employment, skills and investment opportunities. SO2 *To create successful and health communities*, part (6) is supported through delivering access to education and community facilities, and improvements to the college and nursery. And SO3 *To improve design, image and quality of place* is supported in principle through the investment into the fabric of the college and town centre to promote the town, its gateways and the boundary.
- 6.10 In policy, and as becomes apparent in the analysis of various matters, the proposal is a sustainable development (PfE Policy JP-S1 and CS Policy SD1), will build on principles of creating a sustainable place with education investment at the heart of the community (PfE Policy JP-P1) and supporting education, skills and knowledge (PfE Policy JP-P5 and CS Policy C7). In particular, CS Policy C7 supports the growth and expansion of further and higher education facilities at the college; ensuring investment into wider skills and training is supported; and co-location of facilities for children, i.e. nursery provision in our case, with other education facilities.

Layout

- 6.11 Accepting, as we must, the principle of development and its associated benefits, it is necessary to ensure that delivery of those benefits is done without, (or at least with limited), harm to key design matters. The first aspect is layout as this guys how the new building and reshaped campus will function. It must be practical and meet the College's needs, and provide an acceptable public face.
- 6.12 The Design and Access Statement provides a full analysis of the design evolution which has been informed by three pre application submissions and guidance, which can be found as **Appendix 1**. The design now submitted is a product of those discussions. Key layout attributes are as follows:
- Positioning of the building parallel to college way. This is desirable in urban design to create a defined street scene and enclosure. It is also practical as the building must be erected before demolition of the existing Block B, and flood risk considerations militate against siting closer to the river. A United Utilities easement also defines the easternmost position of the footprint of the building.

- Access to the building is from the east making a direct connection toward the town centre and St. Mary's Gate. This is reached via pedestrian link to the junction affording access to cycle stores before reaching the main entrance. In pre application it was officers' preference to remove all vehicle movements in this location but this is impractical for the operation of the college which requires visitors and deliveries to be kept outside the future secure line of the campus. A current weakness in the existing College campus is a lack of a secure area outside the buildings and provision of outside space for staff and student relaxation.
- The meaning of secure line for the college is the requirement to separate the staff college students and those registered to be on site once they have been through the main entrance, and those visiting or simply making deliveries to the college. The new layout provides a drop-off and delivery zone beside the main entrance for this purpose. It will be barrier controlled and managed from the main entrance which overlooks the space and will be unavailable for general parking / use.
- Staff and student outside space. Once the existing block B is demolished it will provide a space for staff and students to relax and socialise outside. Although a temporary space, it will be of significant benefit to the overall learning environment of the College.
- Main car park. The main car park is retained, but reduced in scale to accommodate the new building. Access arrangements will be changed to only be available from the west via College Road, and will be barrier controlled. So this will lead to fewer parking spaces this accords with sustainable transport and development objectives, and is considered appropriate for a town centre adjacent location such as this.
- Block A is to be retained for now. The link building will be modified following demolition of block B and the upper floor link bridge removed and made good. Longer term, block a may also be replaced with a new teaching block on the location of the existing Block B. Hence the staff / student open space is considered 'temporary' and it is not taken into the permanent landscape for BNG calculation purpose. Long term a new block a would also present an opportunity to consider how the college buildings address the street corner, access and permanent landscaping in the location of existing Block A.
- The nursery is situated at the western end of the new building separated from the main college with a separate pick up and drop off area. This location will be far superior to its current basement location beside St. Mary's Gate.
- Ancillary facilities have been considered and following Officer comments agreement has been reached to position the electricity sub-station to the rear of the building within the car park, beside the sprinkler tanks [previously it was expected a street accessed location would be necessary]. The ancillary facilities will be enclosed compound to give a visually clean line from the car park and the internal arrangement of the ground floor avoids windows and key uses at this location.

6.13 Overall the layout is practical for the college and its needs; crates and ability to form a secure line and area for staff and student safety; it adheres to good design principles in the siting of the new building along the streetline; It creates an entrance space and approach focused on pedestrians and supports enhanced cycle

access; it provides a new staff and student outdoor social space; and, it is no longer car dominated. This supports the delivery of the education facilities (PfE Policy JP-P5 and CS Policy C7); which in Policy C7 has crossover from matters of principle into supporting improved accessibility to education; providing a good learning environment. The layout works with its urban environment and takes opportunity to 'green' the campus with more outdoor space, supported by CS Policy P1.

Scale, mass and height

- 6.14 The scale of the new education building is only 3% larger than the building it replaces, with teaching space 3.5% smaller, but as evidenced in the floorplans is a more efficient use of space and offers greater flexibility and accessibility than the building it replaces.
- 6.15 At four storey in height the building is comparable to the adjacent buildings, including Block A and the separate Sixth Form college to the south (6-storey excluding any basement). In the wider vicinity of the town centre to the east are a number of buildings of significant scale, such as Exchange Shopping Centre and car park structure, Tetrosyl House and police and magistrates court complex. Heights vary, from 7-storey (Tetrosyl House), through 3-4 storey (Exchange / police station) and 2-storey (courts). Then there the College Bank / Seven Sister apartment buildings to the north standing prominent as backdrop to the town centre (20-storey). It therefore can be seen that a 4-storey education building is in keeping with the established height of buildings in the urban area.
- 6.16 As a function of its height and footprint the overall mass of the building is considered acceptable. Leaving the town centre westwards along College Road the building will present as a continuation of the central area before giving way to gentle curve of the tree-lined road and transition to inner urban scales (housing, commercial and industrial mix). In reverse it serves to make an entrance into the town centre environment and a stepping up in scale and mass.
- 6.17 We consider the scale, mass and height of the new building is appropriate for the proposed use and location and supports the Strategic Objective SO3 *To improve design, image and quality of place*; CS Policies P1, P2 and P3.

Appearance

- 6.18 The proposed building will comprise of two materials; brick and aluminium raised seam cladding. Both materials are chosen for their robustness and suitability. Colours are intended to be a dark grey brick used as ground floor only, with the upper floors in the aluminium cladding. This is proposed in a deep red shade (known as 'Oxide Red'). The raised seems will provide a degree of shadow play on the elevation and following Officer discussion the third floor seems are altered into a tighter pattern to delineate the Higher Education floor and provide visual interest.
- 6.19 The main entrance to the east elevation is provided in 3-storey, glazed recess to provide articulation to the building and signal the entrance which sits at the end of the pedestrian approach. Supplemented by

lighting within the recess and signage on the end elevation it will provide the College with a new main entrance to serve both buildings.

- 6.20 The nursery on the western end of the building will be treated differently with its entrance to the northwest corner under an overhang of the upper floors to provide a weather canopy to assist parents with prams. The lower scale is more intimate and appropriate for younger children. Space for children's artwork is provided for around the elevation to provide individual expression.
- 6.21 The resulting building will be striking in appearance with the Oxide Red cladding standing in contrast to an existing palette of grey, and more reflective of traditional red brick buildings. It is considered the appearance supports Strategic Objective SO3 *To improve design, image and quality of place*; CS Policies P1, P2 and P3.
- 6.22 For more information on matters of design and appearance please refer to the Design & Access Statement.

Landscape

- 6.23 Presently the College site has very little in soft landscaping, limited to small areas of grass adjacent to the riverside and in spaces between parking bays and accesses, such as beside the main College Road access. There are no trees on site other than some poor specimens in planters within the terraced area beside the nursery. The application therefore represents an opportunity to redress some of the existing shortcomings at the campus.
- 6.24 The main improvement is in the location of the existing Block B. Upon demolition the area will be landscaped to provide a space for staff and student relaxation. It is referred to as 'temporary' because this area may be redeveloped for a replacement Block A in the long-term, but this could feasibly be 10 years away, so the design has a degree of permanency even if it is not considered as such for BNG calculations. The space will include soft landscape banks instead of the concrete terraces as a softer feel and more practical relaxation area. Planting will provide a degree of enclosure from the adjacent roads.
- 6.25 A new covered walkway route will trace the outer edge of the space in an L-shape to link the two buildings, and this will also mark the edge to the car park to west which falls outside the secure line.
- 6.26 Along the pedestrian entrance route street tree planting will be used along College Road with climbing plants / hedgerow along the secure fence line to the opposite side. The space will remain open for safety of pedestrians and natural surveillance, but will have a gentler feel. Views through into the staff / student space will further enhance the feeling of openness.
- 6.27 Elsewhere enhancements in tree planting and grassland will be made along College Road, the return into the western junction and to the rear of Block A. Species will be selected to provide seasonal interest, to support to biodiversity and to be low maintenance given the function of the College campus.

- 6.28 Overall the landscape layout will visually reinforce the different areas of the campus from the staff / student outside space, movement corridor between the buildings and the main entrance approach. Other incidental planting will enhance the appearance of the new building and campus which currently has a very hard and stark environment, particularly in the location of the existing main car park. . It is considered the landscape approach supports Strategic Objectives SO3 *To improve design, image and quality of place* and SO4 *Promoting a greener environment* and CS Policy P2

Energy & sustainability

- 6.29 The building design approach to energy and sustainability is driven by a minimum benchmark set by the Department for Education to attain <67kWh/m²/year energy load. The proposed development exceeds this with a target of at least <57.2kWh/m²/year following application of the energy hierarchy to significantly reduce the energy use of the building before renewable energy sources are considered, (refer to Energy & Climate Change Assessment, TACE).
- 6.30 There is a further design target to attain Net Zero Carbon in Operation (NZCiO). As set out in the TACE report this cannot be attained in the proposed building due to the specific specialist teaching areas that lead to heat gains in the those rooms which cannot be fully offset. Nonetheless, to reduce CO₂ emissions, a substantial amount of onsite electricity generation is proposed through PV array on the building roof and on the covered walkway to link the new building and existing Block A; a combined total of 602 PV panels. Other technology in air source heat pumps is used as a heat source for a low temperature hot water system in absence of any district heating network in the vicinity. EV charging points and future proofing of cabling will be installed.
- 6.31 It is considered the approach supports Strategic Objective SO4 *Promoting a greener environment* and polices on climate change response/resilience and energy efficiency / generation across PFE Policy S2 and CS Policies G1 and G2.

Flood risk and drainage

- 6.32 The application site is in Flood Zone 2. As an educational building / use this is a 'more vulnerable' use as defined in national guidance on flood risk. PPG sets out that a more vulnerable use can be acceptable within flood zones 1 or 2 if the Sequential Test is passed. See **Appendix 2** for the Sequential Test.
- 6.33 Though areas of Flood Zone 3 affect part of the wider campus beside the River Roch this area is outside the red line application boundary and no works are planned in these discrete areas. Therefore, the Exception Test does not need to be followed.
- 6.34 The Flood Risk Assessment concludes (section 9.3) that the development should be allowed to proceed because:
- *All residual sources of flooding have been considered and assessed as medium, low, very low or negligible.*

- *A suitable drainage strategy has been developed to ensure new surface water flows are capable of not causing flooding in a 1:100-year storm event plus 40% allowance for climate change.*
- *Proposed surface water discharge rates for the two outfall locations identified as 75l/s. These flow rates provide a greater than 50% betterment on the existing site flow rate within a 2yr surcharged storm.*
- *Water quality will be maintained using catchpits and trapped gullies to prevent silt/sediment entering the system.*

6.35 As such we can conclude that the proposal supports the principles in NPPF / PPG on the sequential approach to development and flood risk; and supports the principles and approaches in PpE Policy S4 and CS Policy G8.

Ecology and BNG

- 6.36 A biodiversity net gain significantly in excess of 10% shall be achieved through the proposals as set out in the metric and supporting statement prepared by scheme ecologists, ADAS. The attained improvement is 290% on habitat units and 48% on hedgerow units.
- 6.37 A Habitats Management & Monitoring Report (HMMR), shall be prepared by scheme landscape architects ARES, and will ensure that the benefits are secured for 30-years, and can be controlled by standard planning condition alongside the Biodiversity Gain Plan.
- 6.38 Evident from the existing site the baseline for the BNG assessment shows a site with very little existing habitat and what exists is of limited value. The application proposals therefore represent an opportunity to make an improvement to the existing campus. As set out above the 'temporary' landscape for the staff / student area is not included in the BNG calculation. This is because it may be redeveloped to replace Block A in the future and the 30-year retention period would present difficulties in a future scheme to compensate. But the approach will allow further ecology benefits to be secured longer term in the vicinity of Block A, which will longer-term see further improvements to the habitat value of the site.
- 6.39 We conclude that the proposals meet and exceed the nationally set 10% biodiversity net gain, and relevant national guidance in NPPF / PPG ; supports Strategic Objective SO4 *Promoting a greener environment*; PpE Policy JP-G8; and CS Policies G1 and G6 (part 9, urban areas and new development).

Ground contamination / conditions

- 6.40 TIER has provided four original supporting documents; a Preliminary Risk Assessment, Ground Investigation Report, Coal Mining Risk Assessment and Asbestos Detailed Quantitative Risk Assessment. These have been passed through to Jonathon Parr, EHO, for review. As part of that review, questions have been raised and answered on three of the documents which are set out in letter dated 17th April 2025 from Adrian Read, TIER. This was supported by three additional documents, a Grouting Specification (reference 250417 TE1880-TE-00-XX-RP-GE-005-V02), Geophysical Report (reference 250417 G-24_685-1(01)) and Waste Soils Assessment (reference TE1880-TE-00-XX-RP-GE-006-V02).

- 6.41 Copies of all four original documents and the three supporting documents form part of the main application submission, alongside the letter from TIER and the email response from EHO dated 28th April confirming satisfaction to the replies to the questions raised.
- 6.42 It is anticipated that any residual responses will be answered through the application process and the submitted Remediation Strategy, prepared by LK.
- 6.43 It is also relevant to note an Enabling Works application¹ has been submitted to advance this discussion and agreement, with the intention that this will be agreed and site preparation works started in summer which may be in advance of this application being determined.
- 6.44 The technical matters are extensively covered in the supporting documentation. For planning assessment the most useful summation is that a concrete slab associated with a former building will require removal beneath the existing car park; soil sampling and human health risk assessment is conducted post-demolition/clearance in the vicinity of the proposed staff / student open space. Remediation approach will provide a clean cover system and it is confirmed that no ground gas protection works will be necessary. Risks on past mine workings and the Arley Seam will require stabilisation through grouting to prevent unacceptable settlement differential for the new building and drainage corridors.
- 6.45 The application proposals will fully address the onsite conditions and requirements to remediate the site suitable for the proposed end use in accordance with CS Policies G9 and DM1.

Archaeology and Heritage

- 6.46 Civic Heritage has provided two supporting documents; an Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment and Heritage Assessment.
- 6.47 Following on from the ground conditions, the redevelopment of the site will present an opportunity for archaeological investigation and recording. The Assessment identifies the area is within the ancient township of Spotland and contained the former course of the River Roch and weir. Rapid development of the woollen industry from 1500s onwards and industrialisation in the late 18th century has seen the presence of dye works and Town Mill. Further mills and back-to-back workers' housing was developed through the 19-th century, with clearance in the mid-20th century, realignment of the river and infilling its course leading to development of the technical college in the 1960s/1970s, precursor to Hopwood Hall College.
- 6.48 In consultation with GMAAS it is recommended that; '*... an archaeological evaluation (in the form of trial trenches or a strip, map and record evaluation) to confirm the presence or absence of buried archaeological remains and, if present, their extent and significance. Should significant archaeological remains be encountered during the*

¹ Application submitted 16th May 2025; application reference not known at time of preparing this report

archaeological evaluation, further excavation may be required to offset the harm of the development to the buried archaeological resource.'

- 6.49 Practically the presence of the large concrete slab beneath the existing car park (referred to above) presents a problem to undertake trial trenches or a strip until the area it covers is exposed and broken up. A further document, Project Design²: Evaluation and Watching Brief, Civic Heritage, has been prepared to set out the approach for approval with GMAAS. It sets out in the appendix three proposed trench locations as well as the methodology in the report. It is proposed a planning condition is applied to approve the submission document subject to GMAAS consultation comment.
- 6.50 The Project Design has also been submitted for approval in the separate Enabling Works application and may be an approved document before determination of this application.
- 6.51 On the Heritage Statement, this sets out the background, assessment of significance of identified heritage assets (built heritage and conservation areas), leading to assessment of the historic impact arising from the development proposals. The conclusions from the Statement states (7.0):

"7. Conclusions

The heritage impact assessment finds that the proposed development will result in Slight and Neutral (beneficial) impacts upon the significance of the heritage assets. The impact assessment is consistent with recognised criteria as defined within ICOMOS Guidance.

The proposed scheme will result in slight changes within the setting of heritage assets and key views of, from, within, into and out of the Conservation Areas. These views will be very similar to those that currently exist, although the new college building will be repositioned so that it is further away from all of the heritage assets discussed within this assessment and will therefore be less visible. The development will result in 'less than substantial harm' to the heritage assets identified within this report - to be 'weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.'

- 6.52 The weighing of the 'less than substantial harm' to the identified heritage asset is in this case against the significant public benefits arising from the improved teaching and learning facilities that will serve those in Further and Higher Education, alongside those on vocational, training and apprenticeships, that are taught at the College which serves the wider community. Those benefits we have already established are of significant weight in support of the proposals. It therefore is found that the less than substantial harm is acceptable when weighed against the public benefits in accordance with the approach in NPPF paragraph 215.

² 'Project Design' is the updated terminology for a watching brief (see para.1.3.2, Project Design, Civic Heritage)

- 6.53 Across archaeological and heritage policies we considered that the proposals are acceptable and support the objectives of national policies in NPPF paragraph 215 and development plan policies PpE Policy JP-P2 and CS Policy P2.

Transport / traffic considerations

- 6.54 A Transport Assessment, prepared by Flinders Chase, supports the application. The conclusions of the assessment set out that the College, perhaps unsurprisingly, is exceptionally well located to take advantage of an extensive public transport network of bus, tram and train with the railway station 0.7 miles away and the bus / tram interchange 0.3 miles away. As referenced in the description of development the proposal will lead to a reduction in the area of the main car park and overall parking spaces provided on site in the region of 40%. However, cycle parking provision will increase 250% to support sustainable transport choices and of course the site is exceptionally well located for public transport. To facilitate sustainable choices the Travel Plan has been prepared and agreed with the College to promote walking, cycling and public transport access for staff and student body. This aligns with national and local planning policies and approach to traffic and transportation, and justifies the reduction in on-site parking provision.
- 6.55 The Transport Assessment also analyses road traffic collision data and finds no current road safety issues on the local highway network to address.
- 6.56 The Assessment concludes that the proposal will not have any negative effect on the existing transport infrastructure and can be accommodated without any mitigation measures. The proposals therefore align with national planning policy; PpE Policies C5, C6 and C8 promoting streets for all, walking and cycling and transport accessibility; Strategic Objective SO5 *Improving accessibility and delivering sustainable transport*; and CS Policies T2 and DM1.

Residential amenity

- 6.57 In consideration of residential amenity we also consider matters of noise and air quality, drawing on the relevant reports provided by Watrerman and PACE in support of the application.
- 6.58 The site is not immediately adjacent to residential uses, with the closest uses at the College Bank / Seven Sisters tower blocks to the north, which are set back across College Road and significantly elevated above the site on an embankment. For most residents the building will largely unnoticed as their flats will have outlook away from the site. For those with views south or obliquely toward the site, (each tower block is orientated differently), those views will be cast over the building due to the change in level between the site and their own elevation within the tower block. This means that there is no real impact on residential amenity (noise, emissions, privacy and overlooking) and of the visual impact the building will be seen in context of its site and surroundings on the edge of the town centre. Given we consider the appearance as acceptable in the street scene we also find there is no harm to visual amenity for residents.

- 6.59 In practical terms the noise impact assessment sets out relevant baseline noise monitoring and future operating conditions for any installed plant to avoid creating a noise nuisance. This can be controlled through standard planning condition.
- 6.60 The Air Quality Assessment records that construction effects will not be significant on emissions or from construction traffic or plant operation. By reference to the trip generation analysis by Flinders Chase (transport consultant) it is found in operation that the proposal will not be significant on monitored air pollutants associated with the adjacent Air Quality Management Area.
- 6.61 The proposals therefore align with national planning policy and PFE Policy S5 (clear air) and CS Policy G9 (reducing impact of pollution).

7 PLANNING BALANCE

7.1 NPPF paragraph 11 sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development. For decision-making this means:

c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or

d) 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 strong 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 this Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to key policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes, individually or in combination.

7.2 We consider that the adopted development plan that comprises Places for Everyone (2024) and the Core Strategy (2016) are up-to-date for purpose of decision-making on policies of most relevance to the determination of the proposals.

7.3 As set out in Section 6 we find that the proposals are in compliance with those policies of most relevance. We do not identify any material considerations to weigh against our findings of compliance with policy. Therefore the application proposal should be considered in accordance with an up-to-date development plan and the application proposal should be approved without delay.