Design Statement: Prior Approval

Student Heart Project, St Mary's University

March 2023

Introduction

This Design Statement is submitted on behalf of St Mary's University in support of a Prior Approval application which seeks to extend the existing Student Heart building (J Block) to provide additional flexible spaces for students use. J Block forms part the Student Union Lounge and Terrace at the heart of the University's Main Campus in Twickenham.

Background

St Mary's University has occupied its Strawberry Hill Campus since 1925. Subsequently the University has grown in size and influence and is now recognised as a significant institution with a roll of more than 3500 students and 450 staff. Subjects ranging from Sport Science to Theology are taught at both undergraduate and post graduate levels, making the campus one of the most significant education establishments in the Borough.

The central blocks of the campus, where J Block is located, accommodates the majority of the non-residential spaces, including the refectory, student union and services, main library, conference centre and teaching spaces. This area has evolved into a mix of buildings of varying height, age and condition alongside new buildings, infills, extensions and refurbishments as can be seen from the 3D images below.

The proposal seeks extensions to the Student Heart to create a new entrance foyer and an extension of a ground floor function room and additional first floor flexible social spaces for use by the University's 'student societies' during term time and conferences and summer school in the holidays. A new staircase is also proposed to access the building

Planning History

In June 2005, the Dolce Vita café with external seating was granted planning permission, Ref: 05/0406/FUL.
In 2020 planning permission was granted for the extension of Jii Block and work was completed in 2022, Ref: 20/2168/FUL

Planning Context

It is considered that the proposal complies with the permitted development rights for extensions to universities which is detailed in the submitted Covering Letter prepared by Delta Planning.

The university is applying to the Local Planning Authority for a determination as to whether the prior approval of the authority will be required in relation to the following, which is considered below:

i) transport and highways impact of the proposed development;
ii) the design and external appearance of the proposed extension; and
iii) the impact of the development on heritage and archaeology;

Transport and Highway Impacts

The proposal retains the use of the existing accesses, improving facilities for existing students and does not propose to increase student numbers. The new extensions would therefore have no impact on the local road network.

Heritage and Archaeology Impacts

The university campus sits in the heart of Twickenham in the Borough of Richmond. Around the campus area number of Conservation Areas (CA40, 43, 44, 45 & 54) as indicated on Site Plan below. The proposed site does not fall within a Conservation Area.

Within the campus are three listed buildings:
Strawberry Hill, St Mary's Training College (Grade I);
Chapel in the Wood, Strawberry Hill (Grade I);
Chapel, St Mary's University College, Waldegrave Road (Grade II).

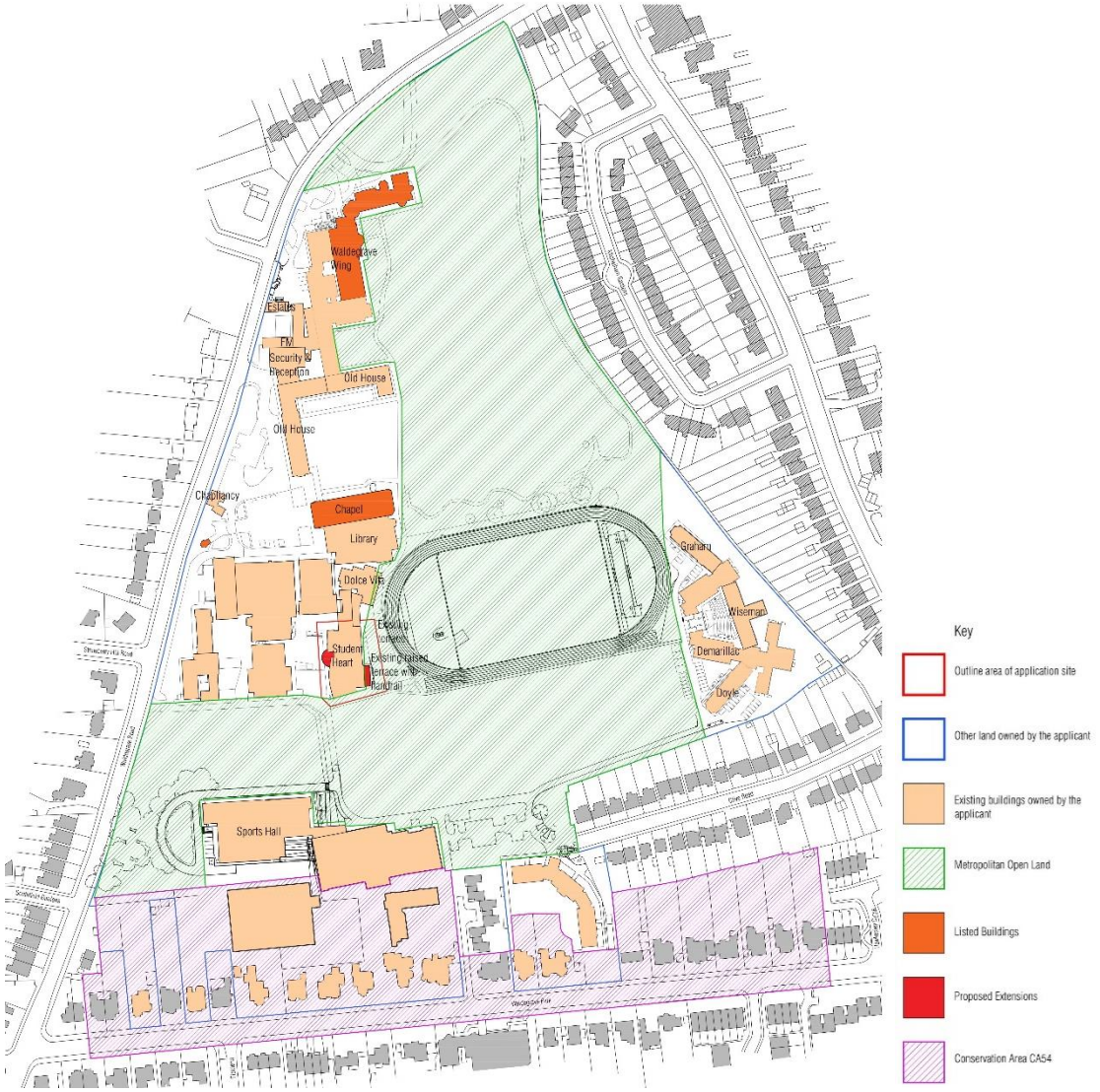
Within the Strawberry Hill (Grade II* listed Park and Garden); St Mary's University Chapel is also locally Listed, reference: 05/00126/BTM.

The listed buildings, park and garden are all situated to the north of the proposed site with no visual links as indicated on the site plan below. The proposed extensions would not therefore have any adverse impact on the setting of the listed buildings, park and garden or conservation area.

In terms of archaeology, given the minor scale of the extensions, it is not considered the proposal would adversely affect archaeology.

Impact on Metropolitan Open Land (MOL)

The Site Plan below indicates the MOL boundary is along the existing building line. The proposed ground floor east facing extension sits slightly within the MOL. It is noted that the area currently includes a raised terrace with balustrading and a parking area as indicated on the photos below. Given the scale of the proposal ground floor extension and the minimal incursion into the MOL this is not considered to have a material impact to the MOL.



Photos of the proposed east facing elevation

The design and external appearance of the proposed extension

The proposals comprises of extensions to the existing Student Heart building to create a new entrance foyer at ground level, the extension of a ground floor function room; and the addition of a new function room at first floor level to provide additional social spaces. A new staircase is also proposed to access the building.

The existing Student Heart building is a series of interlinking buildings which extend 2003m² providing flexible multi use spaces as indicated on drawings 4307-110 & 111. The proposal includes minor extensions to the south end of the existing building. The proposed extensions provide a new main entrance in place of the existing doors. The proposal is illustrated on the enclosed drawing 4307-111 & 112 and CGIs are provided below.

The Student Union building is located in the centre of the campus and is 100m from the nearest campus boundary. The combined proposed extensions footprint is 80m². This increases the campus' cumulative footprint by 1.5%.

Existing South End view

Proposed South End view

Existing view facing the running track

Proposed view facing the running track

Schedule of Accommodation (GIA)			
	Existing Area (m²)	Proposed Area (m²)	Increased Area (m²)
Ground Floor	1039	1115	76
First Floor	594	749	155
Second Floor	370	370	0
Total	2003	2234	231

Massing and Materials

The existing building is part single and part three storeys, the walls are predominantly buff brickwork and roofs are metal panel.

The proposed extensions would be constructed out of a similar palette of materials. To soften the building's facades green living walls are incorporated blurring the junction with the landscape.

The existing pitched roof on the south end is to be replaced by a new mansard roof, which will provide a screen to conceal sustainable ventilation / heat recovery plant, illustrated on drawings 4307-113. This new roof is substantially lower than the adjacent roof.

The proposal includes replacing the mechanical ventilation with new heat recovery unit renewable system, which will be more sustainable than the existing units. Photovoltaic panel system is being provided to generate power to offset the buildings energy use, these will be located on the roof above the second floor offices.

Summary

The proposal reflects the University's desire to help improve student's wellbeing by providing attractive social and study spaces forming a crucial part of student life which can be used by various societies. By investing in their campus facilities the University has adopted the preferred refurbishment route, by upgrading their existing buildings into modern, flexible spaces reflecting its Students use of these spaces, whilst not encroaching into the existing green space.