

# **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 student use. The Student Union Lounge and Terrace forms part of J Block 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 3,500 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 Student Heart is located, accommodates non-teaching 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 to extend to Student Heart to create a new entrance foyer and additional an first floor flexible social spaces for use by the University's 'student societies' during term time and conferences and summer schools during the holidays.

#### **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 for a prior approval application for the proposed scheme 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 around the campus, improving the existing facilities for the current students. These new facilities are not being used to increase student numbers, but to improve the experience for the current students. The new extensions would therefore have no impact on the local road network.

Any parking spaces lost due to the new scheme will be reallocated either on the existing grasscreted area next to the running track with access off the existing maintenance road as indicated on aerial view below which, is currently used as a drop off zone only for Maintenance and Contractors, or additional parking spaces the university has provided throughout the campus, ensuring they comply with Paragraph M.2 (F) of Schedule 2, Part 7, Class M of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended).

## **Heritage and Archaeology Impacts**

The University Campus sits in the heart of Twickenham in the Borough of Richmond. Around the campus are a few 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).

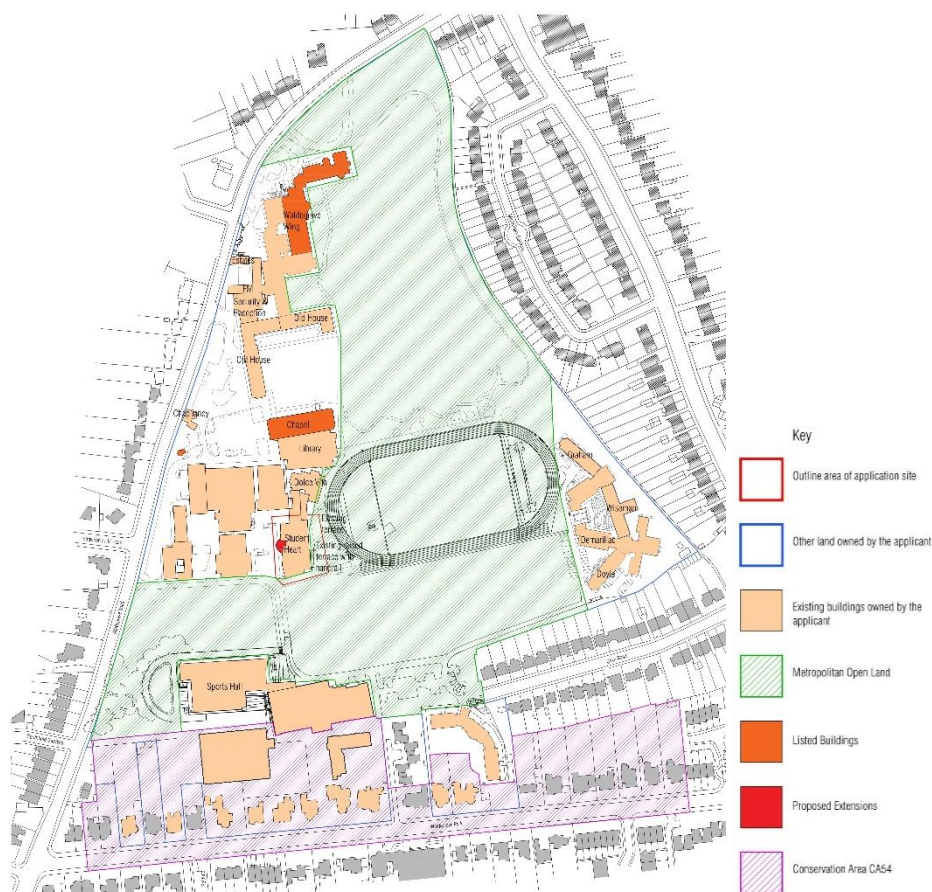
Within the Strawberry Hill (Grade II\* Listed Park and Garden); St Mary's University Chapel is also locally listed, reference: 05/00126/BTM.

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 extension 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 line, which runs along the west facing elevation of the existing building. As you will see from the 3D images below and the drawings accompanying the application, the proposed extensions do not enter the MOL, however it is proposed to extend the existing patio. The aim of extending the patio is to enhance the pedestrian connections between the MOL and the Student Heart, thus complying with Paragraph M.2 (F) of Schedule 2, Part 7, Class M of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 2015 (as amended).



Constraints Plan



Photos of the existing east facing elevation

As indicated on the planning drawings and 3D visual below, the new raised terraced area provides direct connections the building to the existing running track, with the patio also being used as a viewing platform during sporting events. The extended patio sits in the MOL; however, care has been taken to ensure the impact to the MOL is kept to a minimum. It also provides a visual link to the rest of the Student Heart / Student Lounge and to the open space. Additionally, this terrace forms part of the overall fire strategy by providing alternative means of escape from the main function room.

### **The Design and External Appearance of the Proposed Extension**

The proposal comprises of an extension to the existing Student Heart building creating a new entrance foyer at ground level with an additional new function room at first floor level to provide additional social spaces with a new internal staircase is also proposed to access the building.

The existing Student Heart building is a series of interlinking buildings which extend 2003m<sup>2</sup> providing flexible multi use spaces as indicated on drawings 4307-110A & 111A. The proposed extension provides a new main entrance in place of the existing doors. The proposal is illustrated on the enclosed drawing 4307-111A & 112A and CGIs are provided below.

The Student Heart is located in the centre of the campus and is 100m from the nearest campus boundary. The combined proposed extensions footprint is 30m<sup>2</sup>.



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 (m <sup>2</sup> )	Proposed Area (m <sup>2</sup> )	Increased Area (m <sup>2</sup> )
Ground Floor	1039	1069	30
First Floor	594	747	153
Second Floor	370	370	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>2003</b>	<b>2186</b>	<b>183</b>

### Massing and Materials

The existing building is part double and single height with the adjoining element being three storeys, the walls are predominantly buff brickwork and roofs are metal panel.

The proposed extension 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 4307-113A. This new roof is substantially lower than the adjacent roof.

### Summary

The proposal reflects the University's desire to help improve student's life by providing attractive social and study spaces. 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.