

Design and Access Statement to support the Planning Application for the proposed temporary single storey Office Accommodation to be used as a The Catholic Chaplaincy at Avila House

Introduction

This Design and Access Statement (DaS) has been prepared to support the application for the installation of a temporary Portable Office building to be used as a chaplaincy at Avila House 335-337 Oxford Road, Manchester, M13 9PG.

The Catholic Chaplaincy based at Avila House on Oxford Road serves the 94,000 students and staff of the University of Manchester, Manchester Metropolitan University and the Royal Northern College of Music.

Providing a safe space, that is open all day to all students, irrespective of their faith background, where they can relax or study, meet and talk, eat and pray. We offer free wi-fi, tea and coffee and kitchen facilities, and there are regular shared meals, cooked by students themselves. We find that many students, especially international students, use it as a “home from home” where they can make friends and enjoy some sense of belonging and community whilst they are studying here. Our chaplaincy team offers non-judgemental pastoral care to students, including advice and support, spiritual accompaniment, or sometimes just a listening ear.

The building is needed to continue to provide a reduce services whilst external and internal fabric works are undertaken to Avila House. This application seeks temporary planning approval of 2 years, to coincide with the completion of the project.

Site History and Background

The Catholic Chaplaincy at Avila House offers a regular programme of events including weekly talks, discussion groups, prayer groups, study groups, movie nights, and a weekly litter-picking group in Whitworth Park. We liaise with local charities such as the Foodbank, the Cornerstone project and St Joseph’s House in order to direct interested students towards volunteering with them.

Hosting the Manchester Central Foodbank – Manchester’s largest foodbank and the first in the UK to be founded by students. We also host Greater Manchester Citizens and (outside of pandemic conditions) a weekly night shelter for refugees and asylum-seekers organised by the Boaz Trust, with students providing the food, care and hospitality.

Providing regular meeting spaces for local youth and student groups such as the Coptic Orthodox youth group, the student Aikido Club and the student Model United Nations Society. The church is regularly used as a practice and concert venue by choirs, orchestras and other ensembles, especially from the RNCM and the University of Manchester.

With Avila House currently out of action, we are attempting to continue as much of this as we can using the only space available, which is a room at the back of the Holy Name Church. But it is much less accessible than the forecourt of Avila House and there simply isn’t enough space to host all this activity. A temporary building on the forecourt of Avila House, including a accessible toilet, a kitchen, and an office, would enable us to continue most of the activity at a reduced scale listed above whilst work is done on the Avila House site.

Please see the enclosed Plan and Elevations drawing attached to the application

Use

The proposed temporary office accommodation will be used to accommodate the services currently provided at Avila House.

Amount

The proposed development area is 67.24m². Please see the enclosed floor plan and elevations drawing attached to the application for more information.

Landscaping

The Portable Office building will be sited on a grass lawn and hard landscaping. No additional landscaping is planned with the proposal.

Appearance

The modular building's external walls are fabricated of a durable one-piece construction with high-performance, low-maintenance plastisol-coated galvanised steel cladding to offer protection against fire, extreme weather, and accidental damage. The roof deck is of one-piece construction and is impact resistant.

Internally, the polyester-coated galvanised steel ceiling is designed to prevent condensation problems and has a low-maintenance finish. The walls are of vinyl-faced plasterboard, providing a wipe-clean finish. The prefabricated nature of the buildings results in minimal impact on the environment in terms of both construction and use.

Access

The proposed development site is contained within the site grounds. There is to be no increase in staff numbers as part of this application.

Users will access the entrance of the building via a ramp constructed to comply with approved document Part M.

Summary

The proposal is to provide a temporary cabin accommodation to continue to provide community services as detailed above whilst the Avila House undergoes refurbishment work which can be removed from site efficiently with minimal impact.