British Muslim Heritage Centre, College Road, Manchester

Glass Reception: Heritage Statement



January 2019

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Glass Reception Proposal: Heritage Statement

Prepared for

British Muslim Heritage Centre

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CONTENTS

HERITAGE STATEMENT

Executive Summary

1. BACKGROUND
1.1. Introduction
1.2. Location
1.3. Ownership

2. HISTORIC CONTEXT & SITE DESCRIPTION
2.1. Whalley Range
2.2. The Lancashire Independent College
2.3. Description of the proposal site
2.4. External works and landscaping

3. HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE
3.1. Introduction
3.2. The significance of the listed building and the setting
3.3. Conservation area

4. IMPACT OF PROPOSAL
4.1. Summary of the proposals
4.2. Impact on significance
4.3. Public benefits of the proposals

5. CONCLUSION

Bibliography

Appendix 1 List description

Cover: north elevation photograph

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Built for the Lancashire Independent College, the college building was erected in 1843, when Whalley Range was being developed as a residential suburb in south Manchester. The architects were Irwin and Chester, who also designed the Theatre Royal on Peter Street. The College trained ministers for the Congregational Church, providing further education for Nonconformists at a time when they were excluded from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge. The College expanded during the nineteenth century; the building was remodeled internally and the central rear wing added by A.Waterhouse in 1878. The grounds were extended to the rear at the same time. After use as a hall of residence for Manchester University, the building was acquired in 1985 by the GMB, a major trade union, as their national training and conference centre. After this closed in 2005, the building was purchased for use as a heritage centre for the Muslim community, and some alterations made. A marquee was erected to the rear for conference and function use, in the last five years.

The Building is Grade II* listed, and the front entrance gates are Grade II. The Building is set in extensive grounds with the principal landscaped area facing north to College Road. The site is within Whalley Range conservation area, designated in 1991.

This report should be read in conjunction with plans prepared by Create It Studio Architects. The current proposal is for a single storey glass reception to be erected to the rear of the building adjacent to the central wing, to serve as the main entry point into the building and communal space.

The proposal is based on the 2008 and 2011 planning approved schemes for a new glass reception in the same location. The main objective of this application is to combined the design of the two consented schemes. The design and layout of the glass entrance is therefore, based on the 2011 consented scheme and is established on the structural grid of the 2008 proposal that is already erected in-situ.

The glass reception consists of a largely glazed elevation with full height glass walls with certain elements clad in metal panels. The internal space is to be used as a reception and communal space with cafe style seating and small exhibition area. It connects to the existing classrooms via a glazed corridor and with a lightweight glass roof.

The proposal also includes an external public realm area with a mixture of hard and soft landscaping and seating area.

In terms of the NPPF, the proposed glass reception and associated public realm area strikes a reasonable balance between the historic and architectural interest of the historic building and the needs of the new user and current standards. Most of the work will not harm the character or special interest of the building, and will enhance areas.

The glass reception will have a visual impact on the setting of the listed building, and will cause slight harm. The level of harm is less than substantial and is justified by the public and community benefits of the proposal, the specific needs of the owners and forms part of the overall refurbishment works to secure a long-term future for the building, as a Muslim heritage and community centre.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1. Introduction

This report has been produced to support an application for planning permission for a new glass reception. The building is Grade II* listed and in the Whalley Range conservation area. This report should be read in conjunction with plans prepared by Create It Studio Architects.

The Building opened as the Lancashire Independent College in 1843, for the teaching of theology and to train men for non-conformist ministry. From 1985 to 2005, the Building was owned and used by the GMB Trade Union for their national training centre. The building is now owned by the British Muslim Heritage Centre, a Muslim educational organisation and registered charity which aims 'to act as a bridge between the British Muslim and the wider community'. The current proposal is for a glass reception and public realm area, to be erected at the rear of the building. As this affects the setting of the listed building, a heritage statement is required.

1.2. Location

The Building is situated on the south side of College Road in Whalley Range, approximately two and a half miles from the city centre. The proposal site is to the rear of the building, on its south side. The address is The British Muslim Heritage Centre, College Road, Manchester, M16 8BP. The NGR is SJ8254394730.

1.3. Ownership

The Building is in the ownership of the British Muslim Heritage Centre. The local planning authority is Manchester City Council.

2. HERITAGE CONTEXT & SITE DESCRIPTION

2.1 Whalley Range.

Whalley Range developed on fields south of Manchester in the early 19th century. The suburb was initiated by Samuel Brooks, a prominent banker who purchased farmland in the area in 1832 intending to create a residential suburb as 'a desirable estate for gentlemen and their families.' It was one of the first of the city's planned suburbs. Brooks drained the land, laid out roads and built handsome villas in their own grounds, including one for himself at the south end of Whalley Road (demolished 1930).

The layout of the original estate survives, but smaller houses, including terraces, were built in the early 20th century on vacant plots or the sites of demolished houses. After the Second World War, some larger houses were demolished or converted to flats and there was more infill. In 1991 Whalley Range Conservation Area was designated, to protect the remaining character of the historic suburb and encourage the refurbishment of historic properties. The former college building is the most prominent and significant historic building in the conservation area.

2.2 The Lancashire Independent College

The Independent College was erected in 1840-3 to the designs of the Manchester architects Irwin & Chester. The institution was set up to train ministers for the Congregational Church and to provide further and higher education for Nonconformists. The building is designed in Gothic Revival style with a tall central tower on the symmetrical north front which is faced in ashlar. The Front Range contains the principal rooms on the first floor, facing north towards College Road. Three wings project to the south and are faced in brick; these are less significant architecturally and in the conservation area than the frontage range. The central of these wings was built by Waterhouse in the 1870s, as part of the expansion of the college. It contains a first floor hall and a prayer room on the ground floor. The side wings were built for residential accommodation and were also remodeled by Waterhouse.

The grounds were landscaped with a large front garden, laid with lawns and planted with specimen trees and shrubs, in the 1840s. College archives show that Francis Chester, John Irwin's associate won a competition for the layout of the grounds. No drawings of the design seem to have survived. Building committee minutes also show that more landscape designs were sought at a later date, and those of Mr Forrest of Kensington chosen. The detail of these schemes is not known.

Apart from the terraced walkway and axial approach in front of the building and the central and side approach steps, which may have formed part of Irwin's proposals, with tree planting, there is little evidence for a designed landscape. The 1848 OS map (Fig.1) shows the central drive on an axis from the entrance gates to the tower, with a drive leading off to the principal's residence to the west. The 1893 OS map shows many trees, including in the rear south-facing yards and around the edges of the site, with a geometric arrangement of paths and drives around the perimeter, and an axial walkway to the south of the building. The grounds retain many mature deciduous and conifer trees, generally planted informally.

A secondary drive runs along the east side of the front gardens (in existence since the 1840s), and is now in use as the main vehicular access. The central front drive is now mainly only for pedestrian use. The stone perimeter wall and decorative gateway along the north frontage to College Road was built around the time as the college building in the 1840s and are separately listed Grade II. To the south side and rear of the college, Clarendon Road did not exist at the time the college was built, and is not shown on the 1848 OS map. At that time, the southern part of the college grounds was less extensive than today.

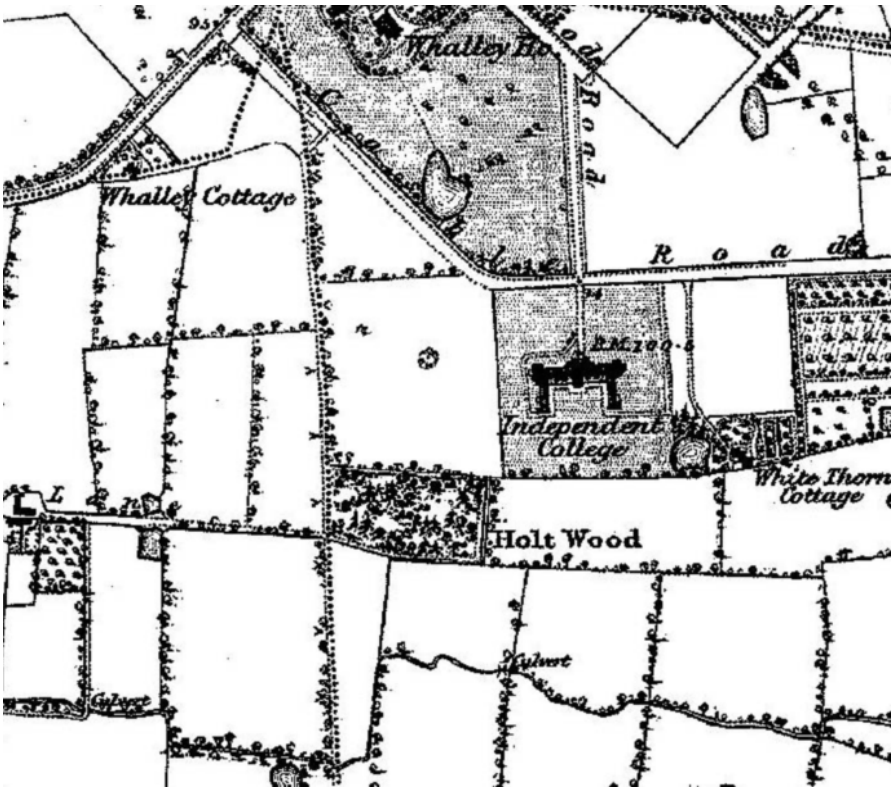


Fig. 1 The College soon after opening, on the 1848 OS map (Digital Mapping)

In 1882 the grounds were extended to the south, as part of the expansion of the college, and a new boundary established along Clarendon Road. The OS map of 1893 shows the extended grounds.

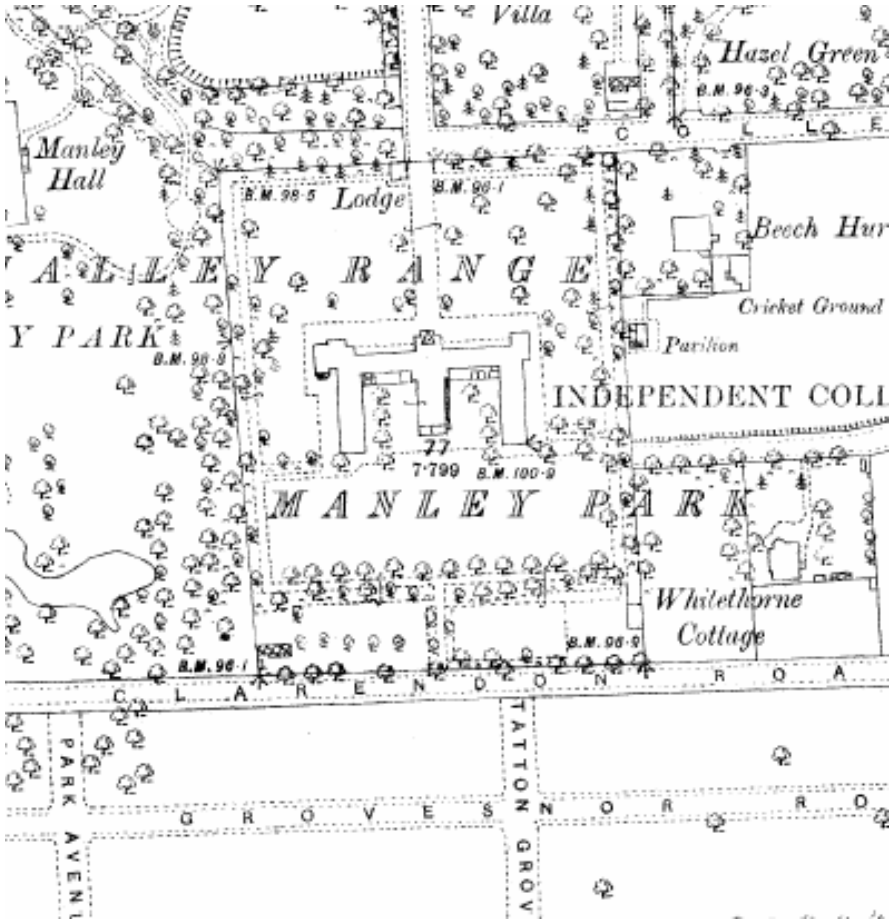


Fig. 2. 1893 OS map, showing the extended building and grounds (Digital Mapping)

2.3 Description of the proposal site

A new purpose-designed reception is proposed on the south side of the building, as a single-storey extension to the east of the central rear wing. This will be integrated with the design of the rebuilt external corridor to create a new principal entrance into the Building from the rear car park. The 1970S enclosed corridor, with artificial slate roof has be demolished. This will be replaced with a simply designed corridor with lightweight steel inner structure, clad and roofed with frameless glazing, a positive improvement in view of the poor quality of the previous corridor. The proposed new reception building will project south from the high brick wall screening the service yard, into the existing car park area.



Fig.3: part-glazed corridor on east side of 1870s wing, rebuilt in 1971 and demolition in 2009

The new south wall of the reception will be in line with the south wall of the central wing. This addition will in-fill part of the east courtyard, affecting the spatial relationship between the Building and the space to the rear and partly concealing the ground floor of the central rear wing.

The design approach is contemporary; the proposed addition is horizontal in form and has vertical emphasis including a flat metal roof, walls to be faced in metal cladding and frameless glazing, in deliberate contrast to the historic building.

The glazing will enable the outer wall of the central wing to be visible. The reception cloakroom will be sited behind the existing yard wall which will become an internal feature in this area. This short section will be rebuilt, using the same bricks and stone copings, with two new door openings created in the wall. This does involve some loss of historic fabric; it was initially intended to retain the wall

intact, but its poor condition and lack of dpc led to a review, to avoid future maintenance problems that would affect the interior of the reception area.

Within the service yard, the new north wall of the reception will be built in insulated blockwork and clad in metal. The smooth natural stone floor proposed for the corridor and reception will continue into the hard landscaping of the courtyard, with a gravel channel for rainwater along the length of the corridor.

The new entrance will be much more legible than the previous rear entrance with new signage.

The proposed new reception is a significant addition and the first substantial extension since the 1870s. Its overall impact on the character of the listed building and on the setting is reduced by its location to the rear, although it affects the spatial character or the courtyard itself. Its position here reflects the rear entrance now being used as a the principal entrance, which relates to the rear car park, and is the optimum location for improved access into the Building. The contemporary, transparent design of the additions enables the historic building's form and architecture to remain clearly legible. Design options have been explored and it is considered that the quality of the design and the low impact on historic fabric and setting makes this an acceptable addition.



Fig.4: 2019 existing steel frame erected based on 2008 planning approval

2.4 External works and landscaping

The grounds to the south of the building were laid out as a grassed lawn area, probably for recreational use by the students, as shown on a photograph published in 1893 (Fig.5). The 1848 OS map (Fig.1) shows a large rectangular south open area with perimeter paths and trees. This large area is now divided into two roughly equal halves, with a central north-south surfaced drive separating the east lawned area from the area to the west, which now contains the marquee and car park. The east lawn is used for over-spill parking.

In 1882, the area to the south was added to the grounds, as part of the college expansion, for cricket and exercise (Thompson, p.184). This is separated by a tree-lined path (now a drive) from the earlier grounds to the north. A small glass house to the south-west is marked on the OS map of 1893 (Fig.2), suggesting that part of the area may have been used as a kitchen garden but the glasshouse is now gone. By the mid twentieth century tennis courts had been provided, now also removed. Mature trees are retained, and the south area is now grass or used for vehicular access.

The objective of the works is to sensitively repair the exterior fabric of the Building and improve the setting.

The rear courtyard will be landscaped to complement the new reception area, with hard landscaping, planted areas and trees in the public realm area.

The emphasis will be on pedestrians with areas of bench seating and new paving on footways. Historically, the courtyards appear to have been laid to lawns, with large trees. A return to a wholly soft landscape treatment is not practical given the modern need for car parking, servicing and disabled access. The reintroduction of some trees and softer areas will reinstate some of the green appearance of the space, to act as a foil to the architecture and soften this southern side of the Building.



Fig.5: view of the College across the south lawn in 1893 (from J.Thompson)

The original courtyard lawns to the rear of the Building were altered in the 20th century with tarmacadam car parks which extend to the north in a wide area of hard surfacing (Fig.6). The character of this area has gradually been changed from a lawned garden area to a service area, to meet the needs of the successive occupiers, and more recently in relation to the marquee. However, changes to this area have enabled the fine front grounds, visible from College Road, to remain little altered.



Fig.6: the car park and marquee to the south of the listed building

3. HERITAGE SIGNIFICANCE

3.1 Introduction

Assessing significance is a key principle for managing change to heritage assets, and is part of current government policy in the National Planning Policy Framework, including sections 127 and 128. A key objective in the NPPF is 'the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation …' (NPPF section 126). The NPPF sets out a proportional approach; the more significant the heritage asset, the greater the presumption in favour of its conservation (policy 132). Heritage assets include listed buildings, conservation areas and some unlisted buildings of local interest. Historic England issued *Conservation Principles* in 2008 identifying four main aspects of significance: evidential, historical, aesthetic and communal. Within these categories, significance can be ranked in hierarchical levels:

- **Exceptional** – an asset important at the highest national or international levels, including scheduled ancient monuments, Grade I and II* listed buildings and World Heritage Sites. The NPPF advises that substantial harm should be wholly exceptional.
- **High** – a designated asset important at a regional level and also at a national level, including Grade II listed buildings and conservation areas. The NPPF advises that substantial harm should be exceptional.
- **Medium** – an undesignated asset important at a local to regional level, including local (non-statutory) listed buildings or those that make a positive contribution to the setting of a listed building or to a conservation area. May include less significant parts of listed buildings. Buildings and parts of structures in this category should be retained where possible, although there is usually scope for adaptation.
- **Low** – structure or feature of very limited heritage or other cultural value and not defined as a heritage asset. May include insignificant interventions to listed buildings, and buildings that do not contribute positively to a conservation area.
- **Negative** – structure or feature that harms the value of a heritage asset. Wherever practicable, removal of negative features should be considered, taking account of setting and opportunities for enhancement.

3.2. Significance of the listed building and the setting

The 1830s college building has exceptional significance overall for its historical, communal and aesthetic value as a fine and fairly rare example of an early 19th century gothic revival building created to train nonconformist ministers. The works by Waterhouse in the 1870s have high significance. Due to the hierarchy expressed in the architecture, the rear elevation and the east and west wings of the building have less aesthetic significance than the main frontage. The latter is in the highest level of significance while the rear wings are assessed as high. The building is listed Grade II*; this category of listed buildings comprise approximately 5.6% of England's listed buildings (Mynors, p.64). Grade II* listed buildings are considered to have outstanding significance in national terms, and works that affect them require consultation with Historic England.

The setting of the building contributes to its significance, with the hierarchy in the planning and architecture of the building reflected in the relative significance of the grounds. The front grounds with the front wall and gateway onto College Road are of the highest significance and provide the foreground for views of the listed building from the road. The rear lawned areas are of medium or high significance, depending on the level of recent change; the marquee has affected the setting of the south-west area, but as this is hidden in views from the front it does not affect the setting of the north Front Range. The south-east lawn is the least altered part of the rear grounds, and is a significant part of the setting for the rear of the building. It is also seen in views on the approach along the east drive from the north, and south from the pathway running along the east side of the east wing.



Fig.7: view of south lawn from the east side of the east wing

3.3 Whalley Range Conservation Area

The Conservation Area was designated in 1991. Its south boundary is drawn to follow the precinct of the former college building very tightly. College Road is lined with detached and semi-detached houses of various dates, set within leafy gardens, and retains is historic character which contributes to the wider setting of the college. In contrast, the setting outside the Conservation Area, south of the college, is characterised by mixed housing and shops, mainly of late 19th or early 20th century and later dates, including some with haphazard signage, roller shutters and other details inconsistent with the character of the Conservation Area itself.

The former college building and the spacious grounds make a positive contribution to the character of the conservation area, particularly from the north; the tower has an axial relationship with Wood Road to the north and there are good views of the north frontage of the building through the leafy grounds facing College Road. The south elevation is not seen from within the rest of the conservation area, and makes a lower contribution.

4. IMPACT OF THE PROPOSALS

4.1 Summary of the proposals

The current proposal is for a new glass reception and public realm area to be erected to the rear of the site, to form the new entrance for the building. The new entrance is based on previous consented schemes and will be largely glazed with metal cladding. It will be approximately 22m in length, 16.5m in depth and 3.2m in height with a flat metal roof to the main section and glass roof to the sections connecting the existing building. A small section of it will project into the courtyard for ancillary spaces such as cloak room, store and office. A new public realm area with hand standing and soft landscaping will provide an area for communal activities.

4.2 Impact on significance

Under the NPPF applicants are required to demonstrate the significance of assets affected by a proposal and to set out the impact that the work will have on this significance. In terms of significance, this proposal affects the setting of Grade II* listed building, which is an asset of exceptional significance. The frontage of the building and the spacious grounds make a positive contribution to the conservation area. However, the chosen site has less significance than the main north frontage and is a secondary part of the grounds, next to the rear of the building. The south area of the grounds has been altered by the marquee and associated car parking so it is no longer in an unaltered state.

The rear courtyards will be landscaped with a formal layout of new hard and soft landscaping, to provide new planting and areas for people to sit and circulate. This will enhance areas currently dominated by tarmac and car parking and reinstate some of the soft landscaping missing since the mid 20th century.

External alterations include the rebuilding of the external corridor to the rear wing and a new reception area; the previous 1970S structure was of low design quality. Design options have been reviewed and it is considered that a light-weight glazed structure is the most appropriate option.

Externally, the most significant aspect of the works is the proposal for a new reception area to the rear, located here to serve the principal entrance (now to the rear) and to minimise visual impact on the setting of the Building. A larger reception at ground level is needed in this location, to serve the levels of use likely in the refurbished building. The design approach is contemporary and has avoided copying the architecture of the historic building, to ensure legibility of old and new.

The new rear corridor and reception has been designed in contemporary style and is subservient to the scale of the Building. No trees will be affected and the landscape will continue to be maintained. The external works at the Building will have little impact on the character of the wider conservation area, as they do not affect prinicpal views of the Building from beyond the site.

The proposed new structure and associated landscaping will have some visual impact on the setting of the listed building on its south side. Due to its light engineering and siting in a less significant part of the setting, it is considered that the installation will cause slight harm. The impact of the proposal has been reduced by choosing a site south of the east wing, to avoid visual impact on key views of the building from the north; from the north-east drive approach and from the pathway alongside the east wing.

It is considered that the overall level of harm is less than substantial and is justified by the public and community benefits of the proposal.

4.3 Public benefits of the proposals

The British Muslim Heritage Centre, intends to invest in the long-term future of the Building and proposes a programme of high quality repairs to address maintenance issues and structural defects. The works will ensure the fabric and structure of the Building is in good condition. The alterations proposed to the listed building will address previous poor quality works, as well as enable the new function to operate, providing a significant new community facility in Manchester.

For proposals that are likely to cause than less than substantial harm, the NPPF states that 'the harm should be weighed against the public benefits (paragraph 134). This proposal is part of a project to set up a new glass entrance at the British Muslim Heritage Centre, to form the new entrance and further the aims of the organisation.

The British Muslim Heritage Centre was established 'to act as a bridge between the British Muslim and the wider community'. It is concerned with bringing about integration, co-existence and community development in the UK. Its founding aims include:

- To create a centre of excellence, celebrating Islam's rich and varied heritage;
- To enrich the wider community through facilitating access to Muslim heritage;
- To provide a multi-purpose centre for practical advice, training and development, worship and recreation;
- To promote inter-faith understanding
- To encourage the Muslim community to engage in main stream British institutions;
- To empower and support the Muslim community, including Muslim women.

The centre will provide conference and meeting facilities with on-site catering and 60 double en-suite bedrooms. These facilities will be available for hire to the Muslim community, charities, community organisations, the public sector and private companies, providing one of the key revenue streams for the maintenance and development of the Centre.

There will be a permanent exhibition of the history of Islam in Britain and about Muslim heritage. This will be located in the former library rooms of the Building, using existing historic library fittings and free-standing exhibition cases with new lighting.

The proposed prayer hall will be open for community use.

The Centre has wide political support, including from Manchester City Council.

5. Conclusion

The Building is a grade II* listed building of exceptional significance for historic, aesthetic and communal values. The building and its grounds make a positive contribution to Whalley Range conservation area. The rear of the building and the setting to the south is less significant than the main north frontage and gardens, but some aspects of the historic layout such as the lawned area to the south–east remain.

The principal changes proposed externally are the new reception area and renewal of the external corridor to the rear. The new work has been designed in a contemporary style to ensure that the historic building remains clearly legible and is not harmed by the additions. The new addition will be complemented by new landscaping proposals, to provide an integrated approach to the design and layout of the rear courtyard, the principal entrance into the building from the car park. The impact of this change should be balanced against the overall programme of works which includes major repairs, and the removal of previous poor quality interventions.

The proposal will have little impact on the conservation area and is likely to cause slight harm to the listed building setting; this level of harm is offset by the community benefits. The proposal is consistent with national planning policy.

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www.manchester.gov.uk

Appendix 1: List Descriptions

MANCHESTER

Lis Entry No.1197762

GMB National College
COLLEGE ROAD, (South side)
Whalley Range
698-1/8/827
03/10/74 - date listed

(Formerly Listed as:
COLLEGE ROAD, Whalley Range
(South side)
Lancashire Independent College)

GV II*

College for training of Non-Conformist ministers, now Trade Union College. 1840-43, by Irwin and Chester, wings re-built to 3 storeys and hall added in late 1870s; altered. Sandstone ashlar (brick at rear), slate roofs. Elongated E-plan, the main range facing north, with rear wings, that in the centre containing the former chapel or hall. Gothick style. Two storeys raised over a full basement storey, plus central tower, 1:9:3:9:1 windows, symmetrical, the centre and ends breaking forwards. The central entrance block, forming an eye-catching feature, has set-back buttresses (finished as pinnacles), steps up to a moulded Tudor-arched doorway under a shield with angel supporters, a full-height oriel above with transomed windows of 3 and 2 stages separated by panelling with a clock-face, a pierced parapet and crocketed corner pinnacles, and an octagonal 2-stage lantern with open arcading, gargoyles and pinnacles. The 9-bay side ranges have Tudor-arched arcades to a cloister which runs through the whole and has 2-light mullioned windows to the basement, a string-course over this, large 6-light mullion-and-transom windows to the principal floor with a drip-band stepped over them, 2-light mullioned windows to the top floor, and an embattled parapet.

The wings have oriel windows and crow-stepped gables with crocketed corner pinnacles. All windows have geometrical leaded glazing. The rear and rear wings, of brick, have similar transomed windows, those in the hall Tudor-arched and with cusped lights.
Galleried entrance hall; good Gothick decoration to most rooms on the principal floor (including Tudor-arched doors, moulded plaster ceilings, fireplaces, etc.
Built to provide higher education for Nonconformists (excluded from the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge until 1871), ante-dating Owens College (1851) with which it jointly established the Victoria University of Manchester in 1880.

Listing NGR: SJ8254394730

MANCHESTER

SJ89SW
COLLEGE ROAD (South side), Whalley Range
698-1/8/828
03/10/74 – date listed

Entrance gateway and gates to GMB National College

(Formerly Listed as:
COLLEGE ROAD (South side), Whalley Range

Entrance gateway and gates of
Lancashire Independent College)

GV II

Entrance gateway and gates to former Lancashire Independent College. c.1840, by Irwin and Chester. Sandstone ashlar and cast-iron. Octagonal gate piers surmounted by pinnacles with a gabled archway each side; elaborate cast-iron gates in the centre. Forms group with GMB National College (q.v.), standing on central axis with this.

Listing NGR: SJ82538948