

26 APR 2007

STAGE D LANDSCAPE DESIGN REPORT

CHETHAM'S SCHOOL OF MUSIC

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Introduction



In September 2006 Planit-ie Ltd were appointed by Chetham's School of Music to produce a detail design proposal for the external works associated with the New School and refurbishment of the existing school

The project involves the decanting of the existing schools academic activities into a new school building located on a triangular site wedged between Hunts Bank and Walkers Croft. New College House and Millgate Building will be refurbished to form the accommodation and some administration in connection with the school.

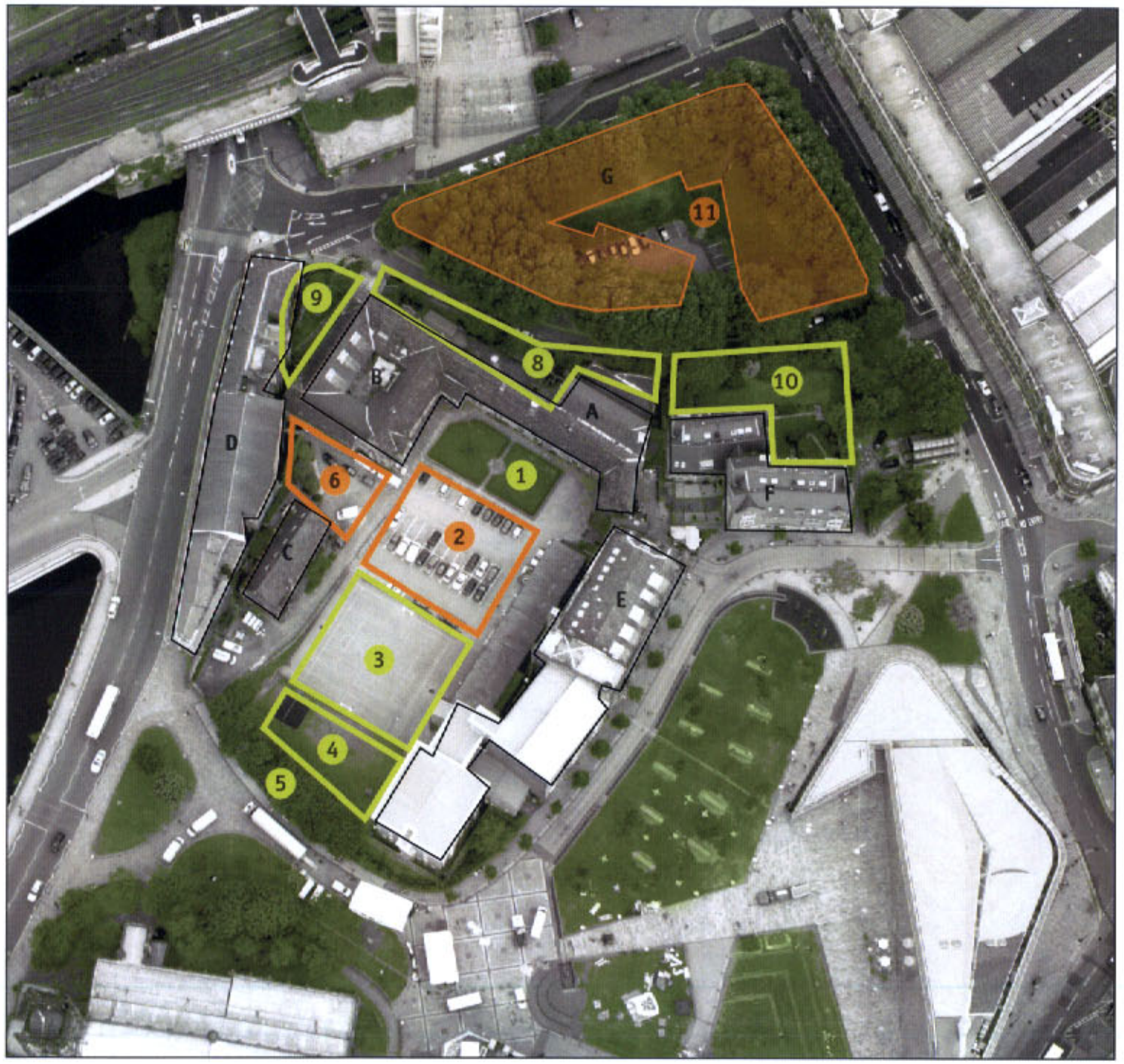
It is also proposed that Palatine Building adjacent to Victoria Street be replaced by a new single storey building, which accommodates both a Chethams and Manchester Cathedral visitor centre.

With a reduced built-form, views of Chethams Library and the Vallins Building are afforded. This visual connection to the Millennium Quarter, and Cathedral will preserve and enhance the setting of this unique collection of medieval buildings, within the Cities urban fabric.

1. College House
2. Library and Baronial House
3. Vallins Building
4. Palatine Building
5. Millgate Building
6. Nicholls
7. Girl's House

8. Walkers Croft
9. Hunts Bank
10. Victoria Street
11. Hunts Bank Carpark
12. Victoria Station
13. Urbis
14. Cathedral Gardens
15. Manchester Cathedral

Existing Site



1. Formal Green
2. Car Park
3. Games Court
4. Play area
5. Boundary Planting
6. Space between Vallins Building and Library
8. Informal spaces inside Walkers Croft wall
9. College Garden
10. Girls Garden
11. Cloister

A. College House
B. Library
C. Vallins Building
D. Palatine Building
E. Millgate Building
F. Girls House
G. New School Building

Existing Site
The site can be divided into two areas:
the existing school and the new school proposals north of Walkers Croft.

Existing School
The former Old School Courtyard is bound by buildings on three sides and a boundary wall which provides a secure boundary to Cathedral Gardens to the South. A line of mature hawthorn Crataegus prunifolia increases the enclosure to the southern boundary.

Generally the site is fairly level across the centre line of the courtyard. To the south west corner a road falls across the front of the Vallins Building down towards the Gate adjacent to Victoria Street by approximately 2.0m. The quadrangle is predominantly hard standing and divided into several uses predominantly:-

1. Formal Green - Adjacent to the Baronial hall the formal lawns are defined with a low sandstone wall and formal box hedging. To the centre of the lawns is Hyde's Cross, which is believed to have been a sanctuary cross formally located at the junction of Fennel Street, Hanging Ditch and Todd Street until the construction of Corporation Street.

2. Car Park - Approximately 50 number spaces are accommodated for staff and visitor car parking. The surface is tarmacadam.

3. Games Court - A hard standing games court, laid out east to west across the courtyard is located to the southern end of the courtyard. A ball stop fence surrounds the court and is approximately 2.4m high.

4. Play area - Wedged between the site boundary and ball court is a low quality green space that accommodates some swings and play equipment. Under-storey within a tree canopy increases the screening of the park beyond and does not encourage social interaction of play.

5. Vallins Building + Library - The western boundary of the site is currently laid out as hard standing using cobbles, setts and yorkstone flags. A sandstone retaining wall provides the step change between the Vallins Building and games court. Between the Vallins Building and Library a mixture of smaller trees ornamental planting mark the entrance into the Palatine Building. This area is mainly used for informal parking.

6. Between the Walker's Croft boundary wall and the existing School are a collection of smaller informal spaces, linked by a path connecting the College House to the Library. Planting is overgrown and seating/gathering limited. The College Garden to the West of the site offers the only elevated views out of the site towards Salford. Although light to the space is restricted by the Palatine Building, its scale provides one of the few more intimate spaces within the school grounds.

7. Girls Garden - To the north-eastern corner of the School the Girl's House has a garden which is defined by the boundary wall to Walkers Croft. Orientation of the space, the sunken level and predominance of trees limit the use of the of the space as a private recreational area.

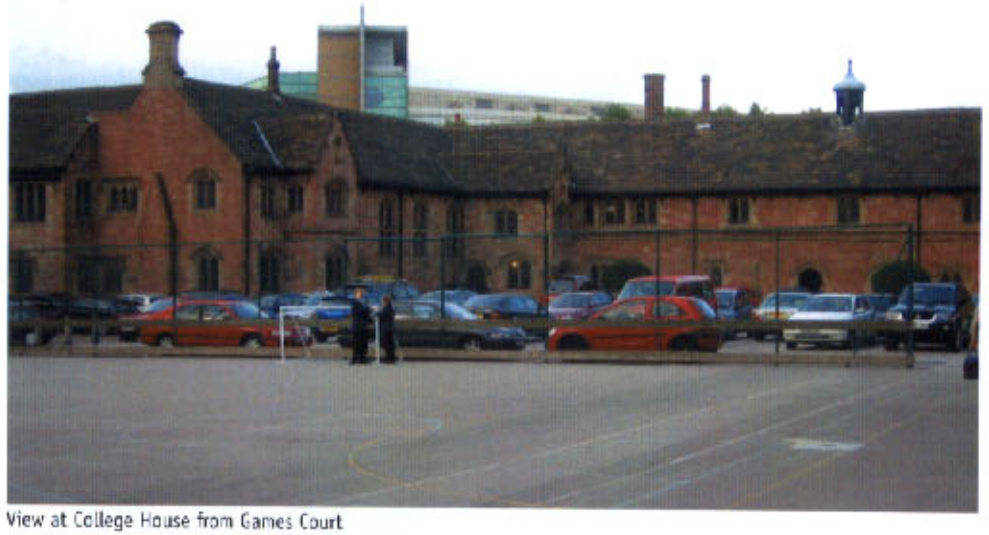
The New School
The Cloister - The proposed new School building layout defines a new triangular 'cloister' garden which connects back to the existing school via an elevated bridge over Walker Croft. Although almost completely enclosed on three sides, light coloured materials will provide a light, reflective and 'airy' space. It is proposed that the space accommodate outdoor classes, via seating and a small pool and feature lighting.

Photographical Survey

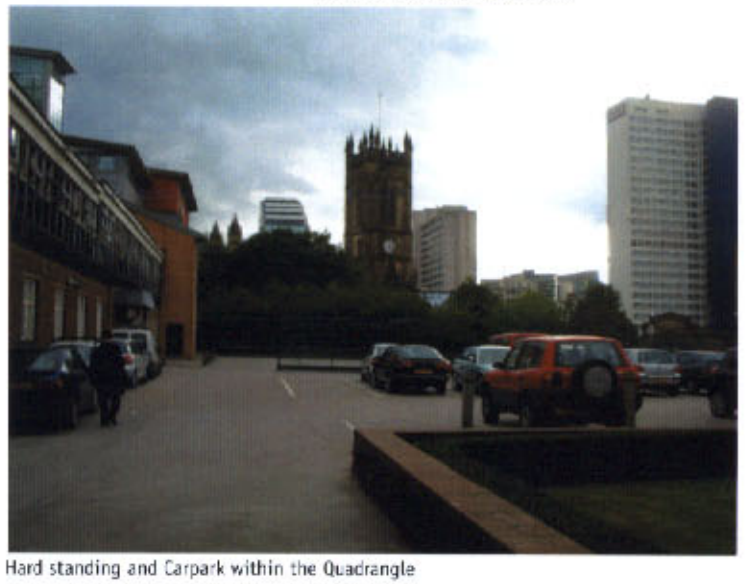

Walkers Croft - Culverted River Irk

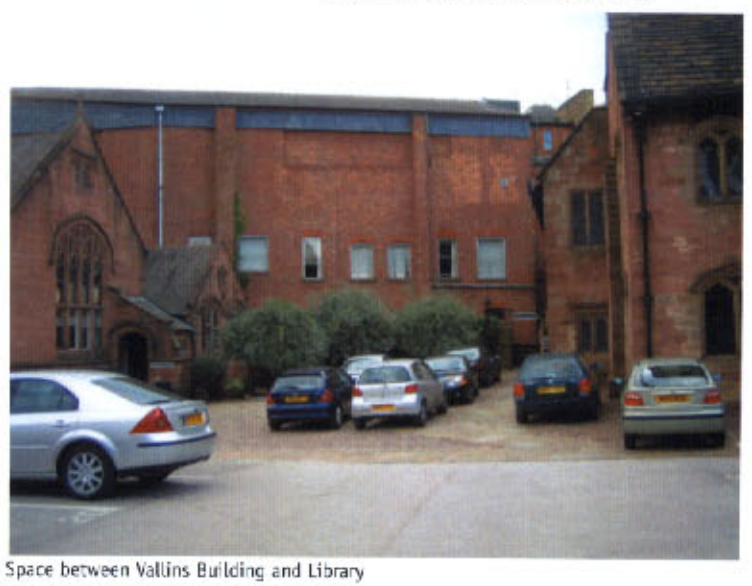

Informal spaces inside Walkers Croft wall


Formal Green to College House


View at College House from Games Court


View across Formal Green and Carpark to Millgate Building


Hard standing and Carpark within the Quadrangle


Space between Vallins Building and Library


Existing sandstone wall to western edge


Existing Boundary Planting to Southern Edge


Existing play area


Existing Games Court


View across Games Court to Millgate Building



At Present all vehicular and pedestrian access is controlled through The Gatehouse from Long Millgate. Visitors to both the School and Library are signed in at reception and are required to carry passes at all times. For Health and Safety reasons we understand that there is a requirement to escort visitors to and from the Library. Pupils have access to the Old School Courtyard and College House Garden. From discussions with the School it is clear that the popularity of the Chetham's Library will increase once it's visual prominence increases. Also, the Concert Hall within the new School will generate public use during the evenings and weekends. As part of the proposals we have considered how the Public functions of the Library and Concert Hall can be maintained whilst providing a safe environment for school pupils at all times.

Vehicular Access
Whilst a majority of the staff parking and servicing will be accessed from Walkers Croft, parking provision for approximately twenty vehicles has been maintained within the existing courtyard. Servicing to the Library and Vallins Building has been maintained. Parking will be discouraged from the centre of the main courtyard and instead concentrated adjacent to the Millgate Building.

Pupil Circulation
Freeing up the Old School Courtyard from vehicles will release a large space for formal and informal recreation. Once the long term use of the collection of buildings behind College House has been established it is hoped that some of the areas can be opened up to provide a series of more intimate break-out spaces for pupils to relax and study.

As part of the new School, the Cloister Garden will offer an outside space for informal play and could be utilised as an external classroom. However, when the Concert Hall is in use, it is anticipated that the Cloister will be closed to pupil access. For out of hours access to practice rooms a separate access has been introduced to the northern end of the bridge, thus avoiding the need to cross the Cloister.

External Access
As part of the proposals several options for public and service access have been explored. Although the preferred option splits public, service and school access which itself introduces potential day to day management issues we believe that it should in the long term provide the most deliverable solution.

Long Millgate Access -
It is envisaged that all school day access will be controlled from Long Millgate. This includes pupil, parent drop off and servicing. There is also the potential for parking within the courtyard for evening performances and events.

Walker Croft -
Currently, it is envisaged that Walkers Croft will become an unadopted/private road, within the secure site, providing both service access and retained on-street parking.

Hunts Bank -
Public access to the concert hall and recording studies will be controlled from Hunts Bank.

Chetham's Library -
Assuming that the Palatine Building can be demolished, a managed access point (through the solely retained facade, leads to a small courtyard space. Access is via an incline (1:21 gradient), which leads to an external lobby (the existing break within the medieval wall) between the Library and Vallins. Within this 'lobby' a contemporary fence is proposed between the buildings, to prevent general public access to the school grounds, whilst maintaining views of existing college buildings. The fence design will be utilised along Victoria Street to allow views to the medieval buildings and visual 'green' space.