Booth Centre, Glentop House, Manchester
Proposed Refurbishment

Design and Access Statement
October 2013

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INTRODUCTION

This statement is intended to support the application for the refurbishment of Glentop House, Pimblett Street, Manchester for use as a facility for the Booth Centre charity. While this application is separate and independent, it should be read in conjunction with the previous consent for this site (ref 100930/FO/2012/N1) which concerned the change of use to the new facility.

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SITE AND CONTEXT

Glentop House is situated to the north of Manchester City Centre, roughly halfway between Victoria Station and HMP Manchester in the Strangeways area. The site is rectangular and is located in a semi-industrial area.

The building is a two-storey brickwork structure with tiled pitched roof and an enclosed area of hard standing at the south end of the site. It is currently vacant and was previously used by the NHS as a counselling and health centre for people with drug and alcohol problems. Glentop House is directly adjacent to the pavement on Pimblett Street and is accessed from this point.

Glentop House is generally a modern construction from the mid to late C.20th and its relatively functional elevational treatment reflects its original use as a small warehouse before being converted into the NHS facility. Currently the fenestration consists of a variety of single-glazed window styles with security grilles which currently exhibit a rather tired appearance. In addition there are several redundant fittings and fixings on the external elevations which detract visually from the building.

The surrounding area comprises small industrial and warehouse units which are typical of this area of Manchester and these are generally of a similar scale and massing to Glentop House. These have a variety of uses including a garage and sandwich shop directly opposite the hard standing area.

The Booth Centre

The Booth Centre was established in 1995 as an advice and activities centre for homeless people in Manchester. The Centre is currently located within Manchester Cathedral. The aims of the Centre include (but are not limited to) putting in place frameworks which encourage homeless people to move off the streets and source accommodation, participate in community activities and build skills and self-esteem.

The Centre is open to the public during the daytime from Mondays to Fridays. It is based within the city centre in order to optimise its accessibility to those people who would be most likely to use its facilities.

It should be noted that the Booth Centre does not provide overnight accommodation to homeless people and is not looking to do this within the proposals. In addition, the provision of food at the Centre is only as a by-product of catering training and is a secondary benefit for visitors participating in the Centre's activities – it is not intended to provide a soup kitchen for the homeless or café/restaurant facilities.

The Booth Centre's current facilities comprise a multi-purpose space accessed from the street, with small toilet, office, garden and food preparation areas. Although the Centre has been able to successfully operate since opening in 1995, it is becoming increasingly constrained by the physical limitations of the current facilities. The space constraints have meant that the Booth Centre is restricted in terms of its capacity (limiting its potential to help homeless people in the

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city) and as such has been forced to limit the scope of its services and indeed turn down offers of support and additional resources due to the lack of space to accommodate them.

As a result of this lack of space within the current facility, there are certain facilities/services that the Booth Centre is unable to provide. These include:

- Disabled access – wheelchair access is severely limited within the current provision, with only the main space accessible, and only then via a mobile ramp.
- Separate rooms for meetings and advice, meaning there is little or no confidentiality for visitors to the Centre.
- Reception area, resulting in initial advice having to be given on the street.
- Cooker and freezer, severely limiting the range of training and food that can be provided and also the amount of food that can be received via donations.
- Storage space – donations have to be stored remotely and transported manually to the Centre, meaning that the scope of donations has to be limited.
- Separate training spaces, meaning that only one activity can take place at any one time.
- Office space – the limited space has a considerable impact on the efficiency and productivity of staff.
- Shower facilities – there are no facilities for the visitors to wash, even after sporting activities.

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PROPOSALS

The proposals contained within this application form part of a wider scheme to adapt the existing Glentop House to best suit the needs of the Booth Centre going forward. Indeed, the proposals should be read alongside the elements that were granted consent in planning application ref. no. 100930/FO/2012/N1. The new proposals are intended to complement those previously granted consent in order to form a holistic and co-ordinated scheme.

New Windows

Currently the fenestration of the existing building consists of a rather inconsistent array of single glazed metal framed casements and plastic-framed double glazed units. These are currently surmounted by steel mesh security grilles to the east (Pimblett Street) and south elevations. In addition to their rather tired and slightly decayed appearance, the windows generally provide an inconsistent appearance and the grilles (while serving their security purposes) render the building somewhat unwelcoming.

The proposal is to replace the windows with PVCu framed double glazed casement units. Not only will this provide a more consistent aesthetic to the principal elevations, but it will also ensure the thermal performance of the building is improved. As the Booth Centre is a charity, reducing energy costs as much as possible is an essential factor in the move to a new facility.

New Security Grilles/Window Boxes

Given the relatively low level of both vehicular and pedestrian traffic in the surrounding area, in addition to the lack of evening use/activity locally, security is always likely to be a potential concern with the new facility. Therefore it is proposed to install replacement security grilles for the ground floor windows on the principal elevations. These are bespoke steel fabrications which are intended to also act as window boxes for external planting. The intention is to create a more vibrant and visually appealing element to the building while retaining the requisite level of security to the windows.

Proposed Signage

There is currently little on the existing building to distinguish its identity. This therefore goes against the approach of the Booth Centre which aims to be visible and welcoming to potential visitors.

It is proposed to install signage in order to distinguish the identity of the facility and also to denote the main entrance to the building. As the funding of the development has come from the Edward Holt Trust, it is proposed that the building name is changed to ‘Edward Holt House’, with the Booth Centre as the functioning name of the facility. As such it is proposed to mount signage identifying the address and the Booth Centre organisation. This is illustrated in the application drawings and the visual below.

The proposed signage will comprise powder coated aluminium letters mounted on to the existing (redecorated) rendered areas of wall. The letters project slightly from the wall (albeit only by

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25mm) although this is at a high level above the ground floor door and window openings. Therefore the signage would not have any impact on the pedestrian footway below.



Above: Proposed signage to the principal elevations

Proposed Decking Area

To the rear of the building it is proposed to install an external decking area, covered by a small canopy. This is to provide an external break-out space for visitors to the facility. The construction will comprise timber decking (not dissimilar to that found in a domestic context) with a simple balustrade that also forms the supporting structure for the canopy above. This will form a lean-to configuration and will incorporate clear polycarbonate panels. As part of this an existing window opening will be reconfigured to create a two-leaf glazed door to provide easy access from the principle internal space to the decked area.

The visual appearance of the building's exterior will not be adversely affected by the proposed decking, as this will be located to the rear of the property in the 'alleyway' between the site and the adjacent buildings. Therefore it will not be possible to see the new work from the adjacent streets.

Hard Landscaped Area

The existing hard standing is proposed to be resurfaced in a conservation style concrete paving. This is in order to create a level and free draining surface and improve the overall appearance of

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the yard. The new surface will also be robust enough to take vehicular traffic and items such as planting beds and storage containers.

In addition to the paving there is proposed to be a small gravel boule court. The Booth Centre encourages its visitors to take part in recreational activities and boule has proven popular in the past. The court is not a full-size provision and is not intended for use on anything other than an occasional and informal basis. The build-up of the court is such that should the decision be taken in the future, the gravel can be removed and pavers to match those adjacent laid in its place to leave one homogenous surface finish. The proposed boule court will drain into the existing sewer.

The hard landscaping proposals will have little or no impact on the surrounding streetscape. Under the consent previously given, this external space will be enclosed and therefore will not be visible from the adjacent streets. Indeed, it can be argued that the proposals constitute an improvement on what is there as existing.

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JUSTIFICATION

The overall proposed use of the site has previously been granted consent, and as such is not discussed within this application. This application relates to external alterations that are related to the proposed use but are generally aesthetic interventions.

The window and grille replacements are a response to the requirement to minimise energy costs for the new charitable use and also to ensure security of the site given its more out-of-the-way nature. In addition it is argued that making the fenestration more consistent and removing the poor quality existing grilles improves the overall appearance of the building.

The proposed signage is considered a necessity for the new use for the Booth Centre. The buildings in this area can be described as relatively indistinct from each other and therefore the visibility of the site is not clear to visitors (who would predominantly be arriving at the site on foot from the city centre). A service such as the Booth Centre needs to be readily visible and welcoming to potential visitors if it is to be viable. The proposed signage configuration is a robust solution and is appropriate to its setting. In addition, the new signage would not impact on the adjacent footways.

The proposed decking area will provide a sheltered external space to be used as a break out facility for visitors. This will also potentially double up as shelter for smokers, rather than them using the street and obstructing the footway. The scale and design of the sheltered decking is relatively modest and has little impact on the existing building. In addition, its position at the rear of the Centre means that there is no visual impact from this proposal on the surrounding streetscape.

The external hard landscaping is proposed as an improvement to the current surfacing and will allow it to drain more efficiently and be maintained more easily. The improvement of the currently uneven surface will also have a positive impact on access to the facility. These works do not constitute a material change to the existing hard landscaping and will have no impact on the surrounding streetscape.

In terms of access to the building, there will be no impact on this through the proposed works. The existing access arrangements will stay the same with pedestrian access via the main entrance on Pimblett Street. The accessible entrance is via the external yard via the existing ramped approach. It is not feasible to create level access directly from Pimblett Street given the space constraints on the adjacent pavement, and the loss of internal space through installing a ramp within the building. The alternative means of access will be managed by Booth Centre staff and will be supplemented by the installation of an internal platform lift and the opening up of the internal spaces.

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