Design and Access Statement

Flat 9, 1 Turnstone Avenue, St James Place, Didsbury M20 2EQ

April 2025

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STUDIO

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1.0 introduction

1.1 purpose of the document

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by stephenson hamilton risley STUDIO on behalf of Mr. and Mrs Simpson in support of a Listed Building Consent Application for internal and external alterations in association with the modification of an existing replacement window to integrate an openable window within the existing lower pane; and the installation of an air conditioning system, with the associated external equipment located in the existing roof terrace at Flat 9, Chapel House, 1 Turnstone Avenue, Manchester, M20 2EQ , (a Grade II Listed converted Chapel).

This document explains the thinking and design rational behind the proposed works, within the context of the site.

This document should be read in conjunction with the following documents which have been produced for this application:

- Appendix 01 - drawings by Stephenson Hamilton Risley
- Appendix 02 - proposed window details and method statement (CS graziers)
- Appendix 03 - Air conditioning technical specifications

1.2 development description

The development description is as follows:

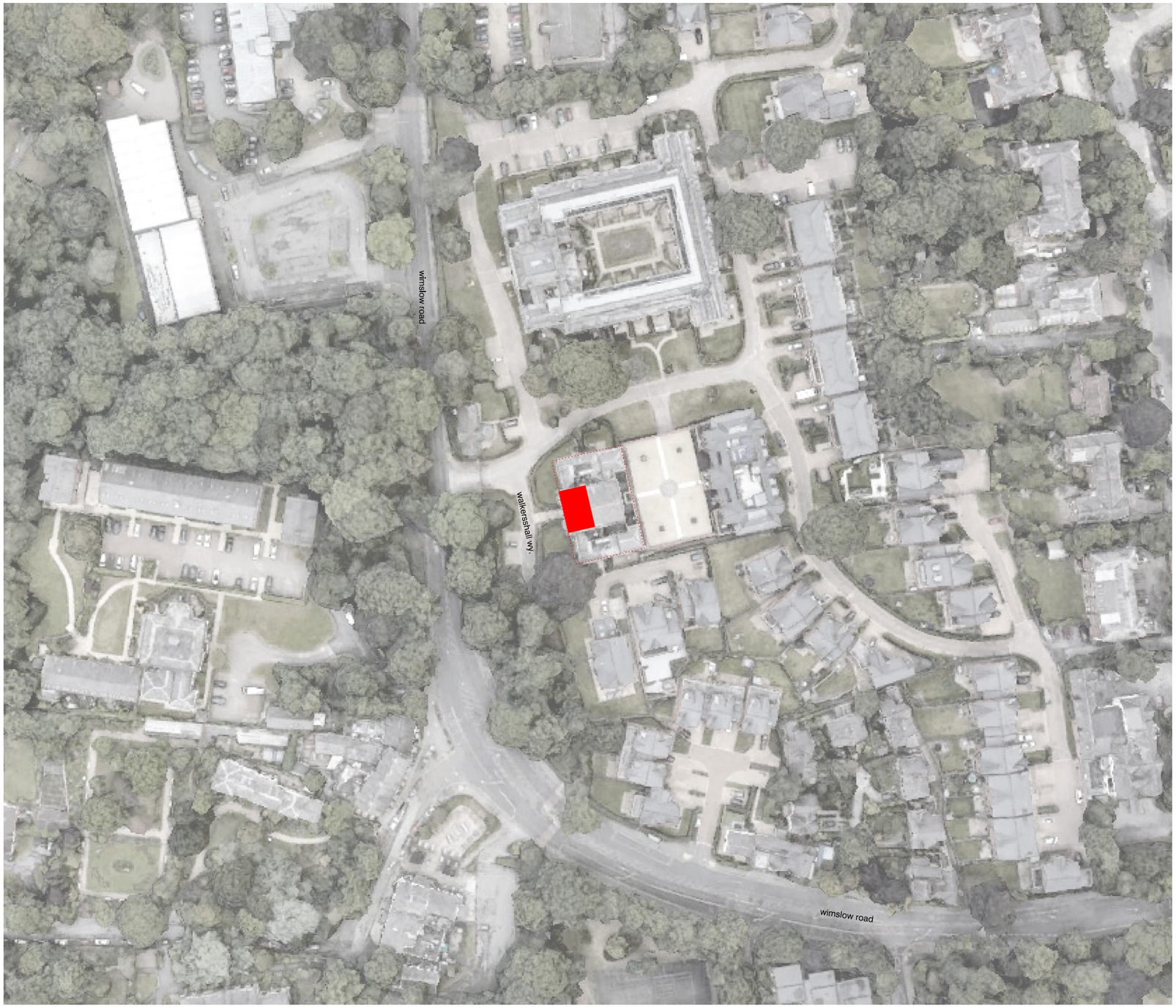
“Listed building consent for internal and external alterations in association with the refurbishment of **Flat 9, 1 Turnstone Avenue, St James Place, Didsbury M20 2EQ**. Refurbishments works to include alterations to 1no window to provide natural ventilation to a habitable room at fisrt floor level, and the installation of an air conditioning system, with the external equipment located in the existing roof terrace facing South.’’

1.3 pre-application

Draft proposals were submitted to Manchester City Council for preliminary comments and advice by Stephenson Hamilton Risley Studio in March 2025. The Council’s response confirmed that, in principle, a submission proposing an openable pane of glass on the West elevation and the installation of an air conditioning system would be acceptable. All recommendations received have been incorporated into these proposals.

Key consultant dates are as follows:

25th March 2025	consultation email with David Lawless (Senior Planner) following conversation with Conservation colleagues



2.0 context

2.1 site location

The application site is an apartment located in a grade II listed building known as the Chapel and forms part of the residential development of St James, the old former Manchester Metropolitan University Campus on Wilmslow Road in Didsbury.

The site is located within Didsbury St James Conservation Area, which contains the greatest concentration of listed buildings in Manchester, outside of the city centre.

The red brick Chapel was built in 1840-42 by Richard Lane, as part of the works undertaken to create a theology college. The Chapel lies directly south of the college building and was unusual in that it also contained residential accommodation.

2.2 St. James conservation area

The Didsbury St James Conservation Area is considered to have a high level of significance. It contains a number of Listed Buildings and is reflective of a number of economic and social themes that underpinned the development of the area and its cultural and religious influences. The affluent nature of the Conservation Area and its associated buildings were established during the 19th century, alongside a centre of religious and later secular teaching training - the MMU Didsbury Campus.

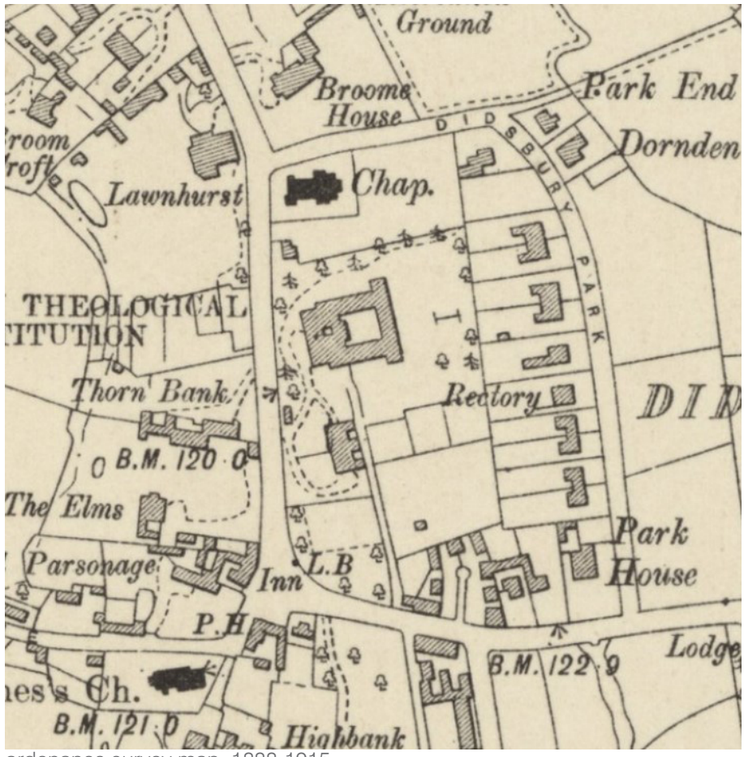
The Conservation Area is significant for both the architectural quality and interest of its built environment and for the areas of open land and gardens that contribute to its strongly verdant feel. It is also significant for the ‘layers’ of residential development that range from the organic, late 18th and early 19th small-scale buildings of Didsbury Village to the larger detached private houses and planned suburban-style streets with groups of buildings arranged along purpose-built roads. These layers establish important visual groupings of buildings that are enhanced by their green, garden settings.

There is clear intrinsic value and interest in the Conservation Area which is established by the special architectural and historic interest of its many Listed Buildings. Together, these combine to form a cohesive townscape of genuine aesthetic interest. The residential development of St James (original MMU Didsbury Campus) forms an important component in this townscape, particularly with the historic buildings that front onto Wilmslow Road.

2.3 Heritage assessment

(Heritage assessment for MMU Didsbury Campus, Wilmslow Road, Didsbury, Greater Manchester - CgMs consulting - April 2015)

The Chapel was built in 1840-42 by Richard Lane, as part of the works undertaken by the ministry trustees of Wesleyans Methodist movement to create a theology college. It is located immediately to the south of the main college building. Lane’s plan for the Chapel was a comparatively unusual one in that it was not free standing but had tutors’ houses constructed on the north and south elevations.



ordenance survey map, 1888-1915

the chapel, previous to conversion into 10 no. apartments

2.4 Assessment of significance

The Chapel was built, unusually for Lane, in red-brick and although the overall style is indeed Lane, the effect is much removed from his other works. At Didsbury, he positioned the Chapel between two corresponding Tudor Gothic tutors' houses; forming two pavilions to the central Chapel building. Originally there was no door to the front centre of the structure. Instead, doorways were located at the rear of the building with two separate entrances for the two tutors' houses: one being a classical tutor and one being a theological tutor.

Once complete, the Chapel was used by the College and also the wider community until the time when the new St Pauls Church was constructed in 1875 immediately to the north of the main College building. It was after this time that the original red-brick Chapel was converted to the college library, leaving the original chapel fittings, pews and decorative ironwork intact.

The Chapel contained seating for about three hundred people on raised pews facing east. The interior of the Chapel itself had plaster rib vaulting with a simple boss to each intersection.

The two rear sections of the tutors' houses were extended soon after completion and were matched into the existing building except for the window decoration. The sash windows to the extensions were given matching stone Gothic drip moulds upon their flat arches but were not given stone window surrounds. They were also given brick voussoirs between the sash and the drip mould and whilst the first floor windows were designed as 2 x 2 sashes with two narrow margin lights to either side, the ground floor windows were simply two over two sashes.

Although not immediately obvious, slight changes have been made to the front elevation of the Chapel itself. Firstly, the two corner hexagonal corner towers were built with pointed pinnacles and blind Gothic trefoil tracery to their stone uprights. These were removed between 1891 and 1927, presumably for safety reasons. Another feature which was removed during this same period was the decorative stonework to the apex of the central pediment. This consisted originally of two small stone pointed pinnacles framing a small central blind eyelet window. These were removed and the pediment was flattened with stonework.

In the 1960s the Chapel was converted to form a Students Union. In 2015, the Chapel was refurbished and converted to form 10no apartments.

All fixtures and fittings within the Chapel have been removed with only the ribbed plaster ceiling surviving.

2.5 Assessment of significance

The Chapel is considered to have a high level of significance, derived from its architectural, archaeological and historic interest, and reflected in its Grade II listing.

The listing description reads as follows:

Students Union Building, Manchester Polytechnic, Didsbury School of Education
Probably part of Wesleyan Theological Institution, now students' union building.

Mid C19; altered. Red brick in Flemish bond on a sandstone plinth, with sandstone dressings and steeply pitched slate roofs. E-plan formed by hall on east-west axis with receding domestic wings linked to the north and south sides (C20 single storey addition now filling re-entrants at ream). Gothic style. Two storeys to 2 different levels, with a symmetrical west front formed by the wide gable-end of the hall range flanked by setback one-bay links to the gable ends of the wings. The gable of the hall has octagonal corner turrets, 2 stone canted bay windows at ground floor (probably added), a tall, stepped triple lancet to the centre of the rapper floor flanked by single-light lancets, a small trefoil above, and a pitched stone coping with a central flat. The linking bays, which are lower, have 1st-floor sill-bands and cross-windows with margin panes, the lower of these taller with arched lights and a hood mould. The gables of the wings, breaking forwards slightly, have similar windows and blind lancets at attic level (gables now false because roofs have been rebuilt at lower level). The return sides of both wings are in similar style, consisting of a symmetrical 3-bay main element with gabled centre breaking forwards and containing a Tudor ached doorway with Gothic panelled door and Gothic tracerie fanlight, and a 2-bay continuation to the rear; some windows with sashed 4-pane glazing or no glazing bars. Interior: some Gothic fan-vaulting in the hall.

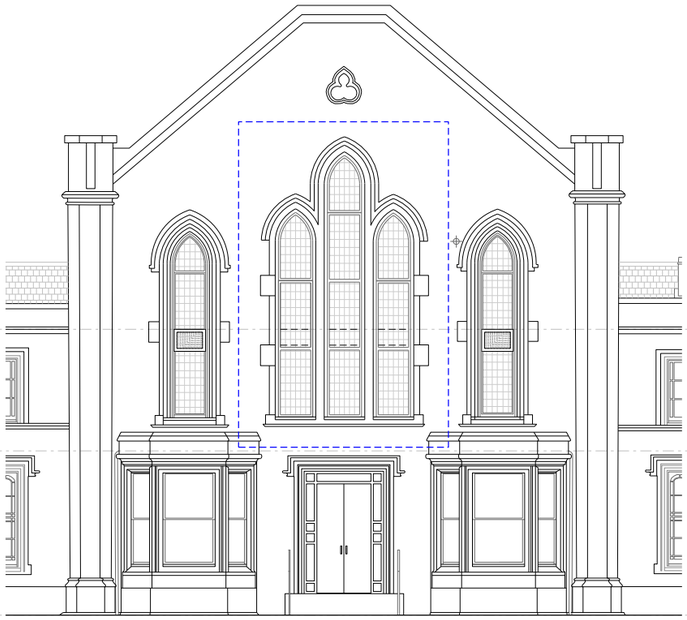
The plan form of the Chapel with its central religious space flanked by tutors' houses has obvious interest and a high level of significance. Originally there was no door to the centre of the west gable giving access into the Chapel, the entrance to the worship space being from the rear, with separate, direct, access from the tutors' houses to the north and south.

The ground floor of the Chapel and flanking tutors' houses were once three very separate and divided spaces, connected only by a single door between each. These spaces have been much altered and opened up to fit the ground floor of the Chapel out as a student common room, with café and kitchens opening into the southern tutor's house. This has led to many features being lost and the spaces south of the original worship area compromised, diminishing the significance of what remains.

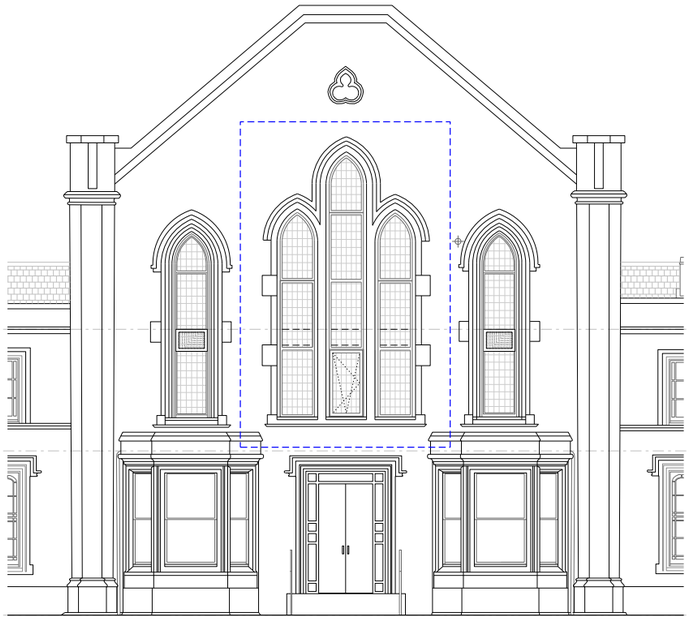
Whilst an unusual and architecturally significant building, the special interest of the Chapel has been eroded through alteration and refitting, particularly during the conversion works to form the Students Union, and posterior conversion into apartments.

Historically, the Chapel is also significant for its role in the religious and social wellbeing of the local community, particularly during the period between its opening in 1842 and the opening of St Paul's Church in 1875. During this time, the Chapel would have held significance in the community wider than that of the Wensleyan campus, thus its social as well as architectural value in the context of Didsbury as a whole heightens the significance of the building as a place of worship.

The Chapel building has an eclectic mix of windows including lancet windows to the former Chapel, large sash windows to the houses on either side, with small casement windows scattered randomly in between. Some windows with arched heads, with matching arched glazing bars and hoods, others with flat heads and plain sashes. All windows were replaced with double glazed ppc aluminium windows when the refurbishment and conversion into apartments took place in 2016.

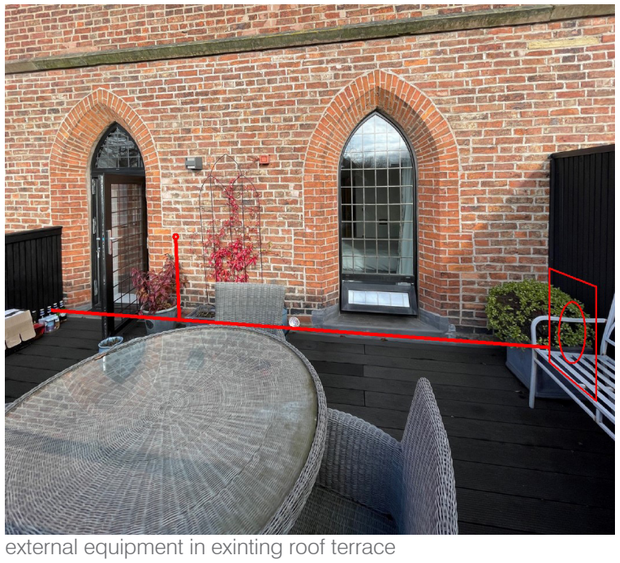


exsiting west elevation

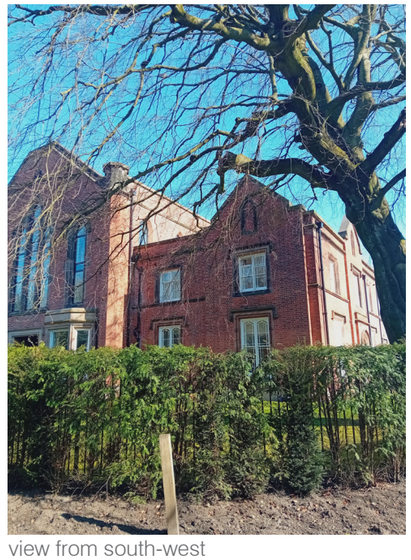


proposed west elevation

proposed window alterations



external equipment in exinting roof terrace



view from south-west

view from south

proposed air conditioning system

3.0 drescription of the proposed works

3.1 window alterations

The proposed alteration involves modifying the existing replacement central lancet window to integrate a single openable window within the existing lower pane. This modification is necessary to rectify the absence of natural ventilation on the first floor, especially in the habitable room. This deficiency results in consequential overheating, which adversely affects the residential amenity.

The proposed intervention preserves the existing window proportions, maintaining the strong vertical emphasis and consistent equal section divisions. The selection of the openable window system has been carefully considered to ensure a slim profile, compatibility with the existing window system, and minimal visual impact. An inward opening solution has been chosen to further reduce the effect on the external appearance.

A sensitive approach has been taken on the window alterations to retain the appearance of the originals, and a sense of the lofty worship space it once was.

3.2 instalaltion of air conditioning system

An air conditioning system is proposed for installation within the apartment, serving two bedrooms to mitigate current overheating issues.

All internal pipework runs will be contained within newly constructed structures, ensuring no impact on the surviving fabric of the listed building.

The associated external equipment will be located on the roof terrace, which is behind the pitched roofs and thus not visible from external viewpoints.

Careful consideration has been given to the placement of the air conditioning equipment and ducting to minimize visual impact. The external equipment will be screened on the terrace with materials matching the existing finishes. Ducting routes will be limited to a maximum height of 1200mm, consistent with the existing roof terrace fence, to minimize high-level additions to the external walls.

4.0 conclusion

The proposals have been carefully considered and sensitively designed with respect to the significance of the heritage asset, and particularly the listed building. The proposals respect and protect the existing historic character, appearance and significance of the buildings, with minimal intervention to the historic fabric.

The proposals largely retain the external appearance of the building in its current form other than introducing an opening vent within an existing pane, which maintain the existing windows proportions.

To ensure the long-lasting residential use of the building, the proposed improvements are required to address the lack of natural ventilation on the first floor, particularly in the habitable room. This deficiency leads to consequential overheating issues, negatively impacting the residential amenity.

The proposed internal and external works are justified to enable a viable and sustainable use for the retained structure. These interventions have been designed to be reversible and the slight harm this causes to the overall significance of the Chapel is balanced by the significant improvements to occupant wellbeing through the creation of a healthier internal environment.