

**St Thomas More Catholic School,  
Palace Fields, Buxton,  
SK17 6AF**

**Design and Access Statement  
For  
Proposed Library Extension**

**The School:**

St Thomas More is a small 11 to 16 mixed Roman Catholic Comprehensive, mainstream school located in Buxton in the English county of Derbyshire.

It is a voluntary aided school administered by Derbyshire County Council and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Nottingham. The school is named after Saint Thomas More, a sixteenth century elder statesman who was martyred for his refusal to accept King Henry VIII's claim to be the supreme head of the church.



There are currently just under 400 students on roll at the school and it caters for all ability levels, offering GCSEs and BTECs as programmes of study for pupils.



## Teaching:

***St Thomas More is a wonderfully friendly, hardworking and successful school in the beautiful spa town of Buxton.***

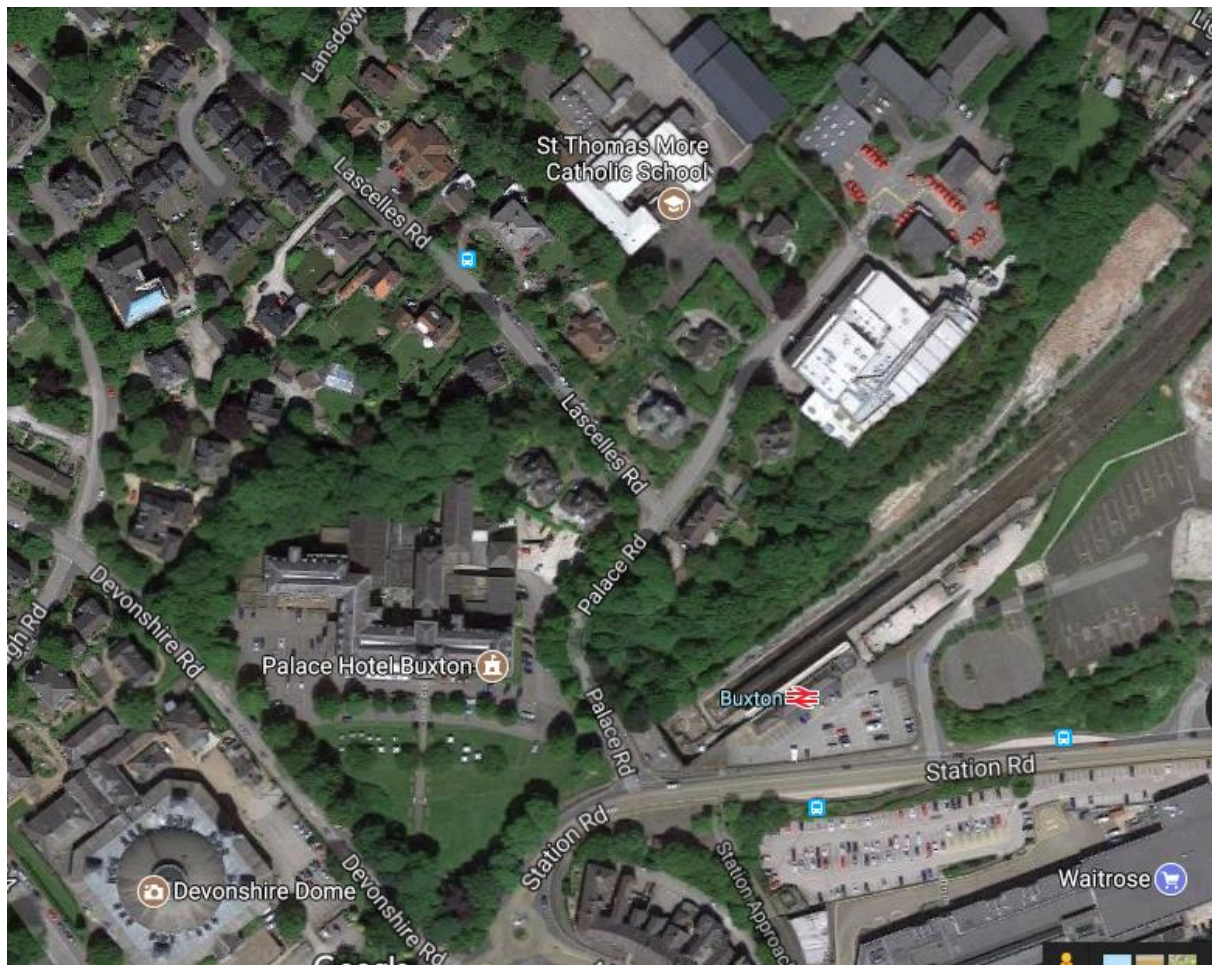
The school has a strong team in the special education department.

The teaching assistants work with students both within the classroom and on small group or one-to-one sessions depending on the needs of the individual and/or group. The majority of lessons are taught as whole classes.

Setting occurs in Maths in year 7, in Science in year 8 and in English, RE, History, Geography, French and Spanish in year 9.

We are partnered with Aquinas Sixth Form College in Stockport which means that our students are guaranteed a place at this oversubscribed sixth form college, as long as they apply by the required deadline and have suitable results to pursue a specific course, but students go on to study in numerous establishments including those studying apprenticeships.

A programme of 'skills for life' is available for some students at key stage 3 (years 7 to 9) and some alternative courses and provision is available for other students in years 10 and 11 (key stage 4).



**Catchment:**

St Thomas More Catholic School educates pupils from all over High Peak, with some students travelling from Staffordshire and Cheshire.

Situated in the centre of Buxton, the school serves all areas of the High Peak. Children also travel from across the borders of Staffordshire and Cheshire to be part of our school community.

Approximately 60% of our pupils are Catholic, but whether of the Christian faith, other faiths or no faith, the children are very proud of their school.

***We are a member of Peak 11:***

The Peak 11 Federation brings together the eleven secondary schools in the High Peak and Derbyshire Dales with the aim of improving educational opportunities for the young people of the area.

Founded in 2004, the group builds on previous collaborative work, and has continued to evolve to meet the ever-changing demands of the educational system. The schools serve the largely rural area within and around the Peak District National Park, an area of small market and old mill towns with, in many areas, a scattered population.

Seven of the schools are 11-18, four are 11-16, two are faith schools and three are now academies. The most northerly and southerly schools are some 40 miles apart.

Despite the diversity across the schools, or maybe because of it, Peak 11 has never been stronger. The federation, which started life focussed on providing collaborative vocational education across the area, now supports leaders at all levels in its schools with opportunities to share good practice, receive peer support and engage in constructive challenge on a wide range of issues.

**Purpose:**

It is this level of involvement that ST Thomas More endeavour to integrate into their pupils along with a sense of pride, self-reliance and purpose.

It is believed that a purpose designed Library as a 'flexible space' will support this and foster it's use as a 'workshop' like other classrooms,

**Aspiration:'**

We have now received our 2017 GCSE results and although we are still awaiting information from the government regarding the progress of students, we are extremely pleased with the excellent performances of this year's students.

***Every single student left with 5 GCSEs including English and Maths and 28% achieved at least 3 A/A\* (9/8/7) grades which, at this time of increased difficulty and changes in the exam system a great accomplishment.***



## Ofsted

*This is a good school.*

Students' achievement is good. They make good progress in most subjects. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are well above average in the key subjects of English and mathematics.

Disabled students and those who have special educational needs achieve well.

Teaching in most lessons is good, and in some lessons it is outstanding.

The behaviour of students is outstanding and their attitudes to learning are very positive.

Relationships between staff and students are good and contribute to the very good atmosphere for learning found throughout the school. Students say they feel very safe.

Students' spiritual, moral, cultural and social education is outstanding

## Short inspection of St Thomas More Catholic School Buxton 2017:

Following my visit to the school on 14 March 2017 with Stephen Long, Ofsted Inspector, I write on behalf of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education, Children's Services and Skills to report the inspection findings. The visit was the first short inspection carried out since the school was judged to be good in May 2013.



***This school continues to be good.***

The leadership team has maintained the good quality of education in the school since the last inspection.

You have led the school well and continued to ensure that staff are true to the core values of the school. The staff and pupils are exceptionally loyal. In accordance with the school aims, they indeed have a 'strong sense of pride and belonging' for the school community.

Parents rightly praise the school.

As one parent said;

***'This school manages to provide an environment in which my daughter is safe, supported emotionally and challenged academically.'***

**The Need:**

The need is to support the Schools academic achievements and development and support the growing success of the students.

It is believed that this can be achieved with the introduction of a for a dedicated Library. One that can be accessed both internally and externally. One that maximises the available site and that allows flexible use.



***“The School has been consistently successful and its reputation is now more widespread and this is evidenced by the increase in numbers attending the school. In 2009 the school had an admission number of 80 per year group and a total of 397 pupils. The Pupil Admission Number (PAN) has now been increased to 90 and in the year 2017/18 we have 430 pupils which is set to rise to a total of 450 by 2020/21. This year we have been oversubscribed.***

***Ofsted have graded us as a ‘Good ‘ school with ‘Outstanding’ features.***

***As such, the School has had to enhance its classroom facilities in order to accommodate growing numbers and the expansion of an IT suite had left us with a very small classroom on the first floor which is now used as the Library.***

***This room is not easily accessible, especially not for disabled children and with no other space as an option we would like to have the proposed extension built.***

***In the space required for the Library is currently an old ‘Portakabin’ which is used as occasional office space and a Year 11 Common Room – it is not fit for purpose for anything else.***

***In the current Library space it is proposed that this room is made into a Chapel. The School is a Catholic School and was criticised in the last Catholic Section 48 inspection for not having any adequate space for a Prayer Room/ Chapel.***

***Being able to have this extension would greatly enhance the school facilities and the education of the children without compromising any of the outdoor space or neighbouring properties. It would also enhance the provision for literacy, disability equality and the requirement to fulfil the school Mission Statement .***

## **Site and Constraints:**

At present there is no other available space on site on which to develop a dedicated Library and in doing so, maintain a true connection with the School. The intention is to provide a Linked Library with internal access.

The available site is at present something of a ‘Dead Space’, used only to locate a large storage cabin / tank, and as access / egress from the Main Hall.

Unfortunately, the proposed site is also limited by the presence of an existing Electrical Sub-station which cannot be relocated and an existing roadway which leads to the rear of the school.

The site also sits approximately 800mm below the existing floor level of the Main Hall.

Other limitations are in the form of existing brickwork piers and metal curtain walling of the Main Hall, so attachment is also limited without extensive and expensive modification of the Hall itself.

## **Accessibility:**

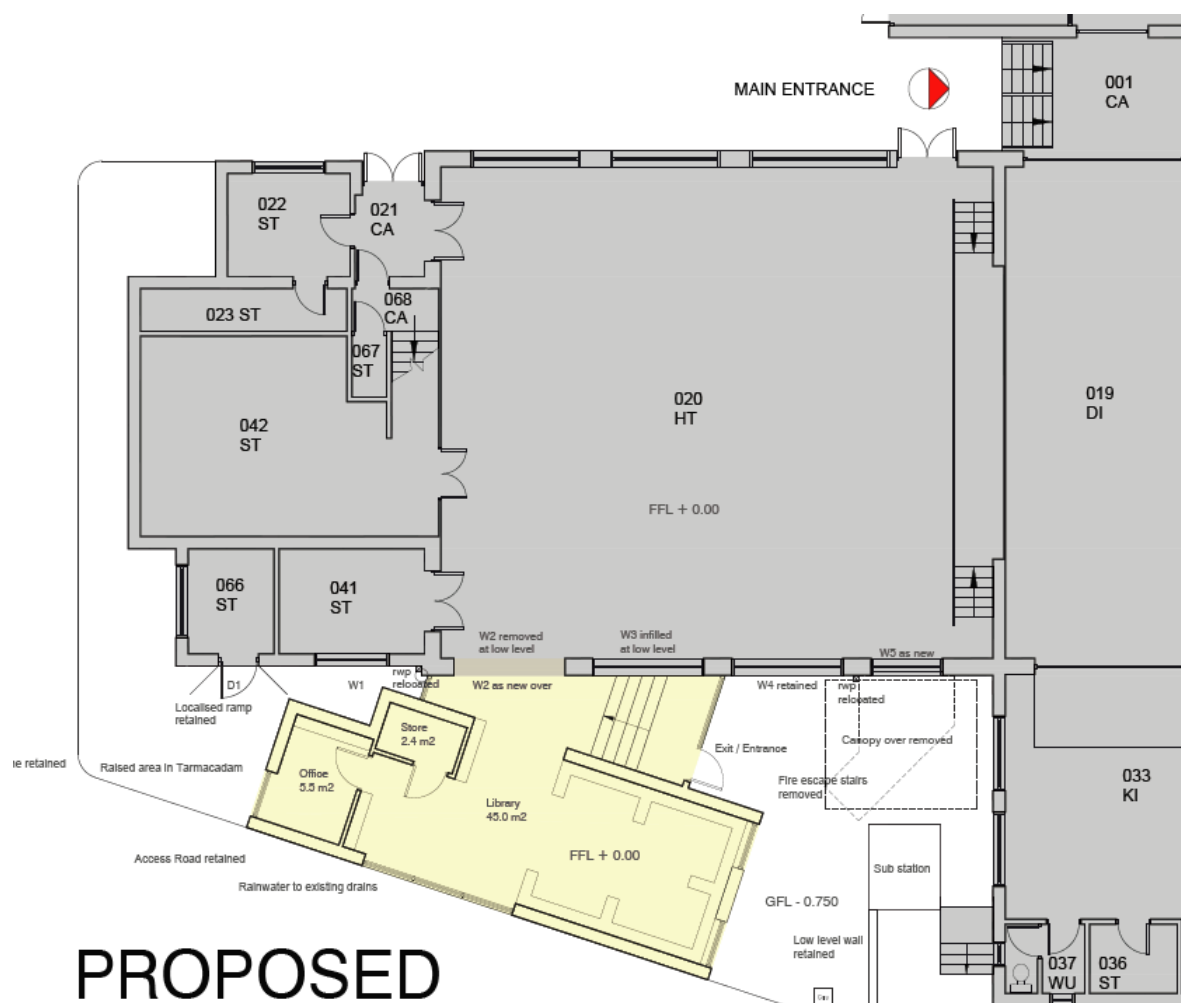
Accessibility within the school is generally good with lift access available when necessary.

To ensure a Link with the existing School, it is intended that access to the proposed Library be internal, however, to minimise disturbance to the Main Hall, access will also need to be made available externally.

As the external floor levels to the Main Hall differ between the front and rear, the chosen location for the proposed Library presents access issues.

Access for the less-abled will need to be maintained and managed through the Main Hall. It is therefore proposed that the floor level to the proposed Library be raised to run flush with the Main Hall.

Access for able bodied students can then be either through the Main Hall or via the integrated stepped access within the proposed Link. In the case of fire, level access for the Less-abled can be maintained or managed in either direction.



This map is reproduced from the Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office

## Design:

In design, a number of options were looked at.

If attached directly to the existing construction as a mono-pitch extension, access to the Library will be through the Main Dining Hall only. Disturbance via foot traffic and noise would be an issue.



If situated remotely as a 'stand alone' building, space would be limited, access would be an issue as external only.

By rotating the proposal on plan, we are able to both minimise disturbance of the existing Main Hall, respect existing constraints and provide an external access route.

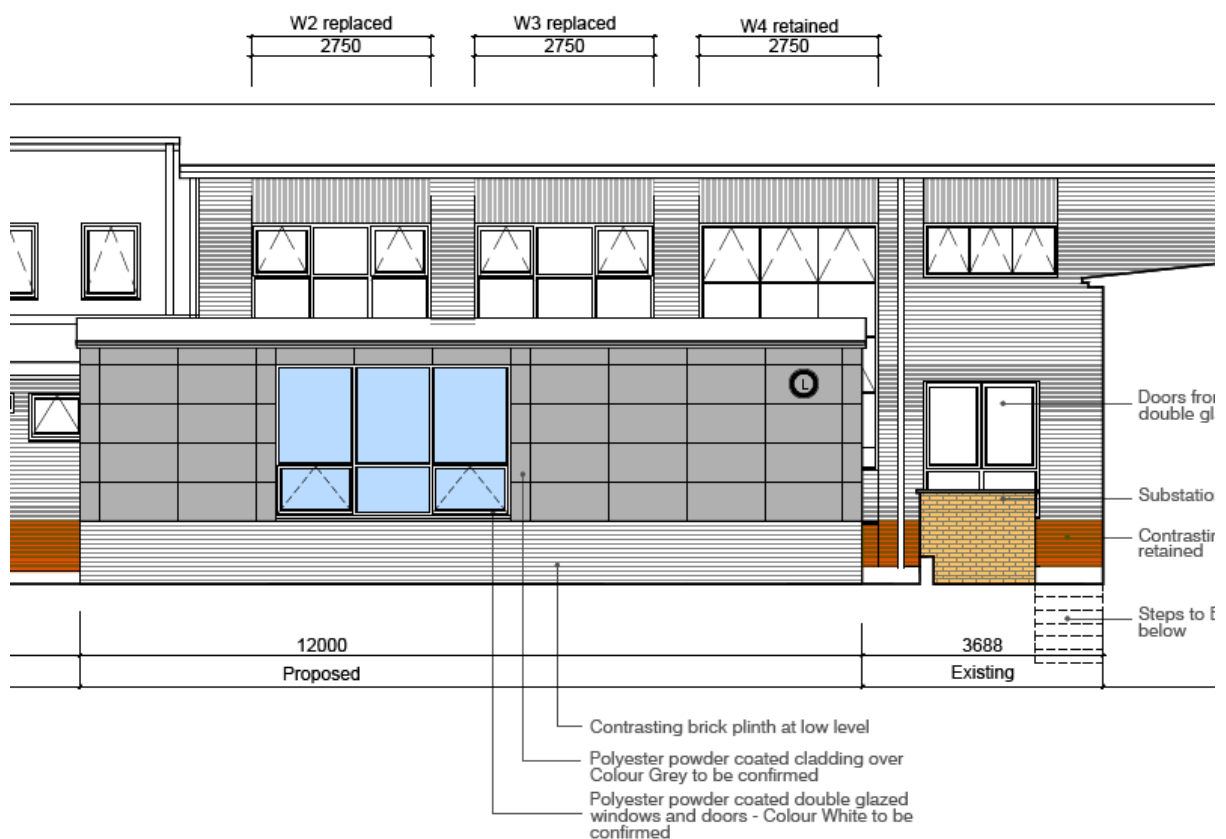
This rotation also allows for the formation of an internal fire escape route from both the Library and the Main Hall so allowing the removal of an aging metal framed escape stair and canopy.

This Linked route also sets the Library apart from the Dining Hall so respecting both uses by minimising disturbance and noise.

The rotation on plan also provides a break from the linearity of the existing school building by introducing a sense of direction and determination thus echoing the School's approach to education.

Although sitting on a raised brick plinth, the proposal will remain single storey.

Disturbance of the existing School Buildings will be minimal.



The introduction of the proposed will require the alteration of 2no. existing curtain wall elements to the Main Hall of which 1no. will be infilled at low level with 1no. being opened to form access through.

The structure itself will primarily be 2no. mono pitched roof structures over a lightweight steel frame. The external skin will be a 'rain-screen cladding' over brick / blockwork walls, the bae will be a contrasting brick plinth.

All doors and windows will be powder coated Aluminium finish – colours to be agreed.

### **Materials:**

Due to the limitation of budget, the pallet of materials will be kept to a minimum. It is maintained that the use of the Library be more important than the look.

A raised brick plinth will match that of the existing Main Hall,

Cladding will be a muted grey to represent the 'no nonsense' business like attitude of the school,

Doors and windows will be powder coated double glazed to current standards,

Roofing will be a composite metal deck to minimise structural build up,

It is intended that the internal walls be painted blockwork to receive purpose made shelving so minimising the expense of internal decorations.

Internally, there is a need for a small store and an office. Servicing, electrics, heating etc. will be as an extension to the existing school,

Externally, rainwater will be attached to the existing School drainage system,

### **Context:**

With the chosen site:

There is no requirement to affect any existing landscaping, footpaths or road access routes,

The site is not within any existing flood protection zones,

The proposal will not adversely affect any watercourse,

The School is not known to be listed,

The overall scheme will not require the removal of any existing tree's.

### **Application:**

This Formal Planning Application is sought for permission at St Thomas More School, Buxton, for:

The removal and relocation of 1no. Temporary Storage Cabin / Container to another site within the school grounds (as indicated),

The removal / demolition of an existing steel framed canopy and escape stair,

The design and construction of a purpose built Single Storey Library linked to the existing School Main Dining Hall,

The new accommodation will provide:

- An up to date purpose built Library,
- An integral Storage Area,
- An integral Office Space,

- A purpose built Link and Access Stairway,

The proposed overall building footprint will be 415m<sup>2</sup>.

The existing School Building is part 'Clasp' steel framed and part Brick / Block traditional construction.

The existing Library is in what is a 'temporary' situation within a much needed Teaching Space,

The proposal is intended to make use of what is a somewhat neglected space and source the most economical building method for a somewhat limited budget, while maintaining certain existing design features,

The design of the structure has been considered in line with the current existing buildings and site topography.

The size and mass of the proposed structure will have little more visual impact than that of the existing Storage Container, but offer a substantially more user friendly and productive space,

Existing pedestrian and vehicle access will be retained,

All works will allow access to and for the less abled and will be subject to a 'Full Building Regulation submission'.

**Trevor Steed BA Hons Dip Arch ARB | Senior Surveyor**

Corporate Property | Derbyshire County Council  
Chatsworth Hall, Chesterfield Road, Matlock, Derbyshire, DE4 3FW

T 01629 | 536325

T 07920 | 878225

Email: [trevor.steed@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:trevor.steed@derbyshire.gov.uk)