

University Court  
University of Worcester

Nicholas Hare Architects





Nicholas Hare Architects were selected by the University of Worcester to act as masterplanners and architects for a new student residential development on the western edge of the City of Worcester. The scheme will provide 1,550 new undergraduate and post-graduate rooms, which will be supported by a student hub building and complemented by two academic buildings. In addition there will be car parking, bicycle parking and extensive landscape and infrastructure work.

The project reflects the University's vision for a highly inclusive, accessible and sustainable 'home from home' for students. The University's aspiration is for the first phase of development to be complete for the 2019–20 academic year. A masterplan has been produced for the whole site, and the first phase design has been taken to RIBA stage 3.

## The site

The 11.7 hectare site is on the west side of Worcester, a ten-minute walk from the University's main St John's campus. The site forms part of the West Worcester Urban Expansion, which means that it will eventually be adjoined by suburban housing and extensive playing fields. At present it is agricultural land. The main part of it is an extensive plateau which falls away to wooded valleys on the north and east, where the brook that defines the boundary is subject to flooding. The approach on the eastern side is up a public bridleway, which then leads off to the north.

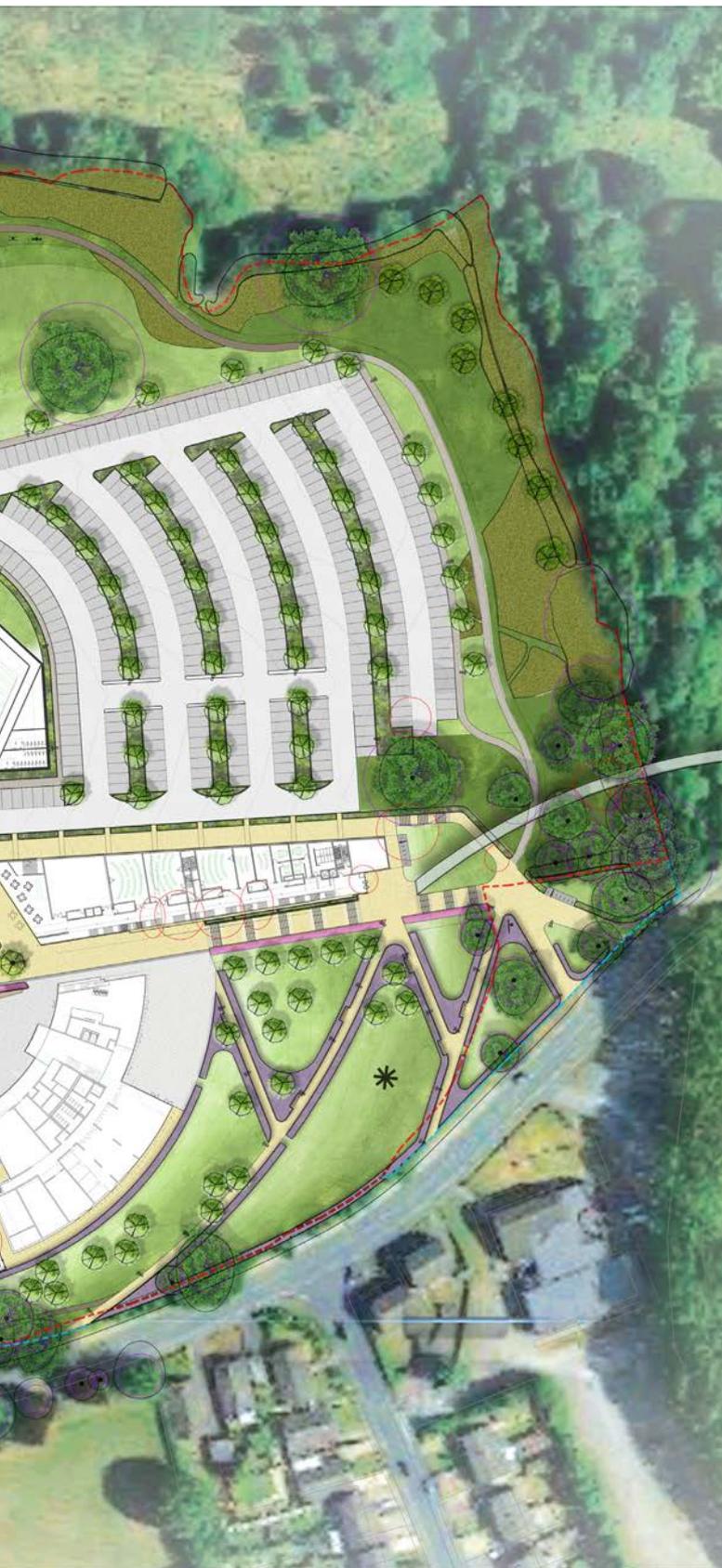
## Preparing for the masterplan

The masterplanning process started with extensive consultation with, among others, representative student groups. The elements of accommodation were developed through exploring options, first for the individual room, then the flat, the whole building, and so on. This led to the main buildings being Y-shaped halls, with three flats per floor and a shared central space. One advantage of this form is that it minimises overlooking, a big concern of students.

Inclusion and accessibility are key parts of the brief. For instance, each room is wheelchair accessible and each flat has one fully accessible room; each floor has an accessible toilet for visitors and each main building has twin lifts. Wider aspects of inclusion are exemplified by the design of the landscaping to help wayfinding for those with impaired sight.







## The masterplan layout

One of the prime intentions has been to establish a strong sense of the identity of the campus as a place where students can feel they belong and in which they can take pride. This is helped by designing the layout so that it can be easily understood as a single place and preferably a memorable one. This has led to the basic arrangement of the student halls around a grand, green oval-shaped space, defining the primary identity of the campus.

Accommodation occupies the main plateau. The Y-shaped halls, up to six storeys high, are arranged in north and south-facing crescents, and define the central green, which is about 200m long and 60m wide. An outer ring of three-storey townhouses is separated from the larger buildings by service streets, with the main road access from the west end of the site. The northern road leads to the main car park, in the sloping north-east corner of the site.

The student hub and academic buildings are placed on the eastern side of the site. A long five-storey academic building is placed beside the steps leading up the existing bridgeway (there is also a sloping grass path for horses). The lecture theatre building is placed in the north-east, above the car park, and the two-storey student hub is in the south-east, overlooking a landscaped green space. The long building will contain lifts to provide easy access up to plateau level, and a canopy walkway is proposed, which will bridge the Brook on the eastern boundary of the site: this will provide easy pedestrian and wheelchair access from the University's St. John's Campus – for members of the public as well as students and staff – and will clear the maximum flood level of the Brook.



## High quality landscape

The concentration of the rooms into 3-6 storey buildings means that the landscaped area of the site is large. The quality of the landscape work will therefore play a particularly large part in the perception of the overall quality of the scheme. Great care has been taken in developing the landscape design by Fabrik Landscape Architects, in the larger park-like areas, in the wilder wooded areas close to the streams, and in the courtyards and gardens close to the buildings.

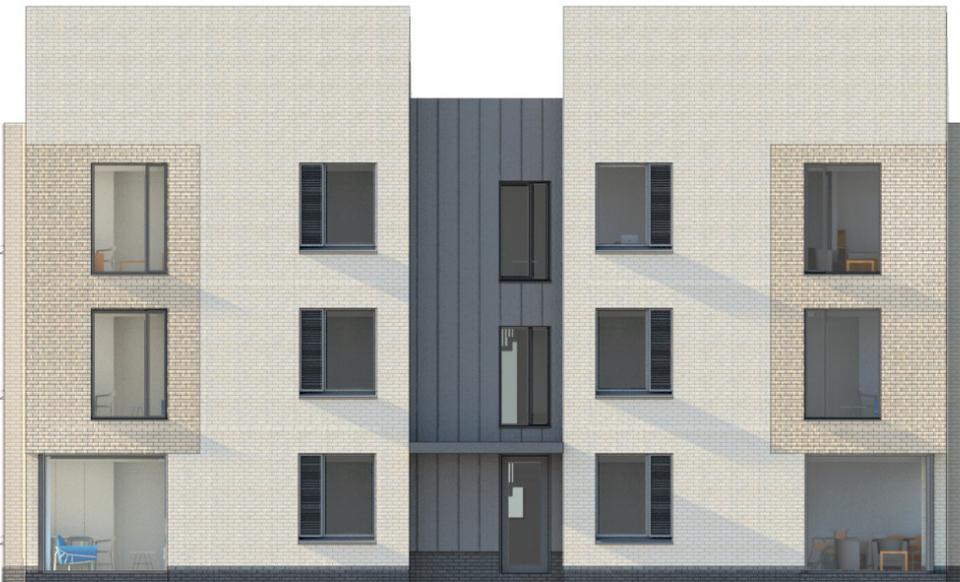
The landscape has been designed to encourage socialising, especially within the informal courtyards, which will include barbeques and ping-pong tables for use by those in the Y buildings and the townhouses.

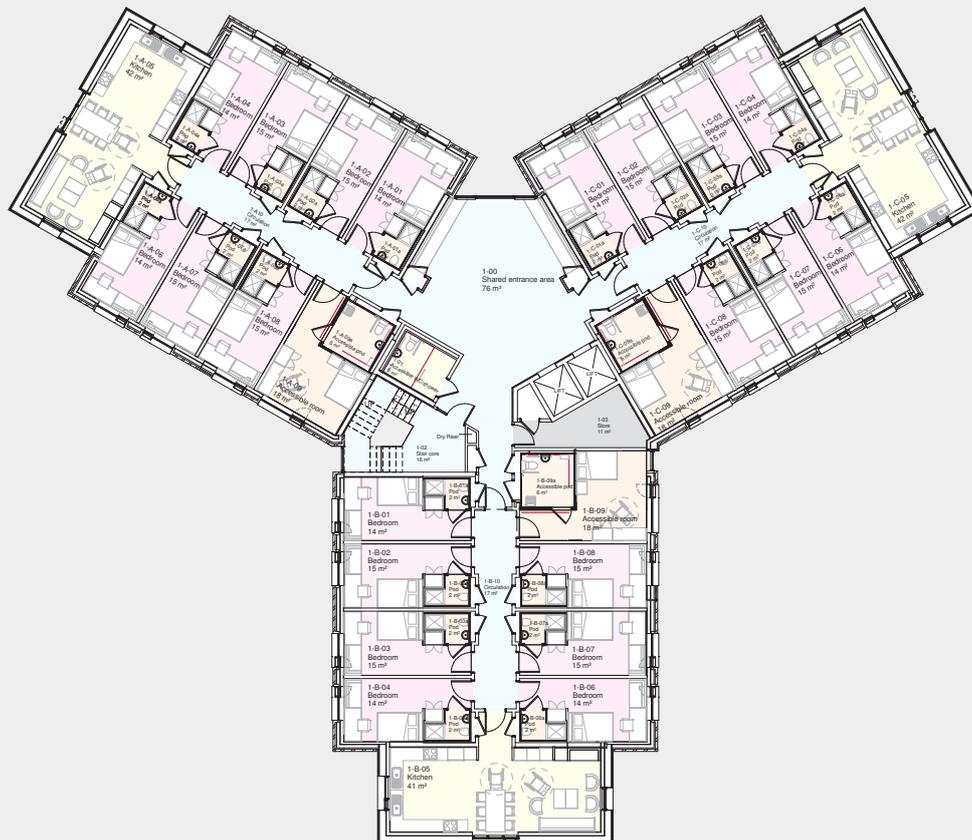




## The residential buildings

The primary cladding material of the residential buildings will be pale cream textured brickwork, offset by areas of dark pre-patinated welted zinc.





## Inside the buildings

Internally, the spatial provisions are relatively generous. All rooms are at least 16.5m<sup>2</sup> in area and are designed for double beds and en-suite showers. The eight-room flats in the main halls will include one room with a fully accessible shower and each floor will have an accessible visitors' wc and shower room. The townhouses will each include self-contained flats and studios, with a fully accessible room on the ground floor.

The shared kitchen areas (below) in each flat are of a good size and clear in layout. In addition, the shared lobby spaces on the upper floors of the Y buildings offer opportunities for shared study or games.



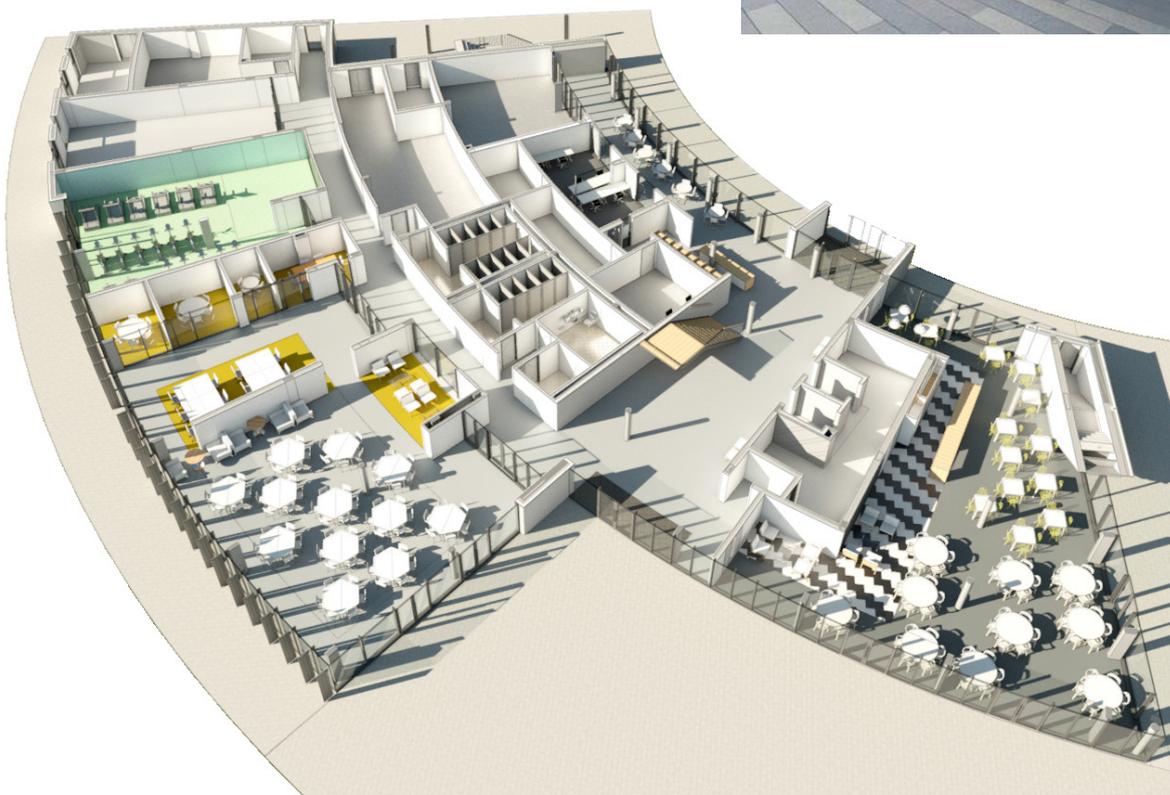


## The student hub

The student hub will provide a focus for all of the students on the site, both in terms of functional activities – laundry, collecting parcels, exercise, local shopping – and through the provision of its café, shared learning and event spaces.

The curved form of the building will look out over the sloping public area of the site in the south-east, and will present an inviting concave façade on the side of the student halls.

The building will be clad in white precast concrete, and the extensive glazing of the curved south-east facing façade will be protected by vertical fins of bronze-anodised aluminium





## **The first phase**

The first phase of work is planned to include all the work in the southern half of the site, plus the car park in the north-east corner and the access to it. This means that five of the Y buildings are included, and ten townhouses – providing 736 rooms in all, as well as the student hub.

In place of the long academic building, a temporary lift building and walkway are included to provide access for wheelchair users to the upper plateau level.

Most of the infrastructure and landscape work will be included in the first phase. This is necessary to achieve the required remodelling of the land to achieve balanced volumes of cut and fill, with proper storage to attenuate the run-off of rainwater. It also has the benefit that at the end of this phase, the site will not be left raw: for instance, the grassing and tree-planting of the central oval will be complete.

## **The link building**

The long academic building will not be included in the first phase of work, so a temporary lift building is proposed in its place. This will perform the specific function of linking the two main levels of the site, for wheelchair users and others. A covered walkway is also proposed, to link the upper level of the lifts to the upper plaza at plateau level.

## **A highly sustainable and energy efficient development**

The scheme is designed to achieve BREEAM “excellent”. The proposals include heat recovery units for the flats, rainwater collection and re-use, solar water heating, photo-voltaic electricity generation and ground-source heat pumps for the hub building.

Client:

**University of Worcester**

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Landscape architects:  
Fabrik

Civil & structural engineers:  
Pick Everard

Mechanical, electrical & fire engineers:  
BuroHappold Engineering

Cost consultant & project manager:  
RPS Group

BREEAM assessor:  
CBG Consultants

Planning consultant:  
Phil Jones Associates

Acoustic consultant:  
CDC

Principal designer:  
Ridge and Partners

Nicholas Hare **Architects**

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