

# **Outline Business Case For Thameside Building**

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## Executive Summary

The document outlines the proposal for WIC to utilise the space within Thameside Building in Grays, Thurrock, in order to provide services for the local community, focusing on providing higher education, in collaboration with Leeds Trinity University (LTU). This will benefit the local communities of the Borough by providing opportunities for individuals to gain good quality higher education and potentially create more employment.

WIC's and its partners' activities in this project would be community focused, and will aim to support art and cultural organizations, making Thameside an art, culture, education and community hub.

WIC has partnered with Anglo Asiatic Arts and Heritage Alliance (AAAHA) to manage the existing Theatre, which is also located inside the building.

WIC's vision is aligned with the Thurrock Community Strategy vision and priorities to achieve the objectives set in the document. WIC plans to bring a number of improvements to the Thameside building, and aims to continue to offer its support to the wider local community.

## Introduction: WIC and its Partners

Waltham International College (WIC) (The College), since its establishment in 2010, has enjoyed exponential growth, as a community college specialising in adult education.

In 2019, WIC entered in a partnership with Leeds Trinity University. Our partnership has gone from strength to strength over the last 3 years and now consists of 1800 students across Business, Health and Social Care and Computer Science Degree and Foundation courses across two campuses. In November 2021, WIC was registered with the Office for students and launched our Diploma in Education and Training course in May 2022. We have targeted and achieved a pass rate of above 85% over the last 3 years.

As part of our strategic objectives, we aim to support the widening participation demographic within the communities where WIC is currently based namely, Barking- London and Central Birmingham, and now look to expand our services to the other areas such as Thurrock.

Our core strategic goals over the next 5 years are related to smart growth and diversification of each of the HE provisions to ensure every student is provided with an appropriate learning programme that is well designed, provides a high-quality academic experience for all students and enables student's achievement to be reliably assessed. In practice, this includes the development of the range of courses and locations available to our students which include validated courses and additional campus launches. By way of example, in Thurrock, we would look to work with the local communities in the Borough to provide opportunities for individuals to progress their employment into higher skill, higher-paid roles which would have a positive economic impact on the community as a whole. Additional degree programmes which we plan to introduce in Thurrock, considering the opportunities within the Thameside building, would be Graduate Theatre Degree Programmes in Performance Making, Drama, Theatre Arts.

WIC has partnered with Anglo Asiatic Arts and Heritage Alliance (AAAHA) to manage the Theatre within the Thameside building. The letter of intent between AAAHA and WIC is attached as **Appendix A**, which provides an overview of the intended Strategic partnership between the two organisations. The outline business proposal for the Thameside Theatre Partnership proposal is attached as **Appendix B**. This document gives the introduction and background to AAAHA.

Waltham International College Limited would be the legal entity taking the lease for Thameside. Mr Hassan Ashraf is the Principal and also the named Director with Companies House. Please see our company Hierarchy attached as **Appendix C**. Our Board of Governors (BOG), which consists of independent and external members, has oversight of the college. The document regarding our 'Governance and Management' is also attached herewith **Appendix D**, which provides further details regarding College's Governance and Management Structure.

## Market Evaluation- Why Thurrock?

Thurrock is currently estimated to have a total population of 175,500, sixty three percent (110,200) which comprises working age (between 16 and 64) people. Thurrock has a relatively young population with the highest proportion of residents in the traditional working age group (16 to 64 years) of the working age population, 10% compared to 9.3% in London, claim out of work benefits. This level of benefits claimants is high in the region with 79% of the economically inactive people not wanting a job. WIC specialises in engaging these people. WIC also recruits mature learners that have had a prolonged gap in education. Often our students include non-native English speakers and ones who hold no UK qualifications. Generally, our students hold part-, or full-time employment in low-skilled roles but are seeking to advance their opportunities by gaining and higher education degree. They will act as a role model to their

family and local community and further promote the benefits of pursuing education in any form.

Entry to higher education in the area is similarly lower than the national average. The proportion of residents with Level 4 and above qualifications is 27% (London Average is 59%). Approximately 7.1% of residents have no formal qualifications. The majority of firms, at least 92%, are micro, employing 9 people or less. The development planned under the new Thurrock Local plan is also likely to create further demand for the College's programmes.

## WIC offer in line with the Thurrock Community Strategy Vision and priorities

WIC is a community led organisation and we have always kept local community needs at the forefront of all our activities within the regions we operate.

In our London barking campus, WIC prioritises support to meet need, with flexible, inclusive and integrated skills and training provision that prioritises improving progression outcomes, employability and enterprise skills. WIC has made good progress with respect to developing very close relationship with the local authorities and has always involved the Council, through the Job-Centre plus, in its recruitment activities and on Open days. Local Council management also actively participates in the College's induction activities by giving keynote speeches. The College also hires council facilities to host such activities, thus strengthening the relationship in different ways. WIC's has also received various awards by the Local Council of Barking and Dagenham as recognition of our services and support provided to the local community.

The College plans to adopt a very similar community engagement plan, by the establishment of close relationships with Thurrock council, through which it will be able to appeal to the wider community and work together effectively.

WIC would offer its services in accordance to the priorities of Thurrock, which include providing vocational and academic education, skills and job

opportunities for all and by making Thameside an attractive opportunity for the local people, businesses and investors to enhance the local economy.

WIC would tap into the various ethnic groups within the Thurrock region to engage them and enhance the BAME participation to enable them to play a more vital and integral part in the development of Thurrock.

### All new or existing activities/services which will be delivered from Thameside Building and main benefits to the local community

WIC would be delivering Higher Education University Degree programmes from the Thameside Building to support the local communities with their educational needs and to support them in gaining employment or progress within education.

WIC has partnered with Anglo Asiatic Arts and Heritage Alliance (AAAHA) to manage the Theatre within the building. The plan for the Theatre explaining how the partnership would look like, including our initial plans for the Theatre is attached as **Appendix B**. 'Thameside Theatre Partnership'.

The existing services within the building i.e. Library and the Museum would continue to be offered to the public and would stay under Council's remit. We will work with Council to support Library and Museum facilities at this location, if and when required to do so. By way of example, we could provide volunteers to support both of the said projects.

WIC would continue to offer its support to the local community groups and facilitate them by providing community space within the building for meetings and events on a not -for-profit basis. As part of the Theatre project, WIC would also allocate working space for local artists at discounted rates.

## Rental proposal and our assumptions

Sections of the building would be dedicated to offering a good quality higher education provision to the community. The area shaded in blue, in the attached floor plans (**Appendix E.**), which approximately totals to around 13000 Sq. ft, would solely be used to run the class-room based delivery for our Higher Education Degree Programmes. For this space, we are proposing a yearly rent of £90,000. Kindly note that there are other communal areas which will be in joint use of all the businesses within the building, therefore, we have kept them out of our rental remit.

The area shaded in red on the attached floor plans, attached as **Appendix E**, covers the Theatre and its associated services. This totals to 5911 Sq. ft and would solely be used to run all the theatre related activities along with other community support services. We propose a fixed rent of £25,000 per year for this space.

WIC has a sustainable plan and all the required resources to run the services for a longer term. Therefore, minimum length of Lease required by WIC and its partners would be 25-30 years.

As there would be many different businesses operating from within the Thameside Building, including the College, Theatre, Library and the Museum, this would mean that we would require the most appropriate approval for use of building from the Council.

WIC's understanding is that Council will continue to manage the Museum and Library located within the building, and a tenancy agreement at a peppercorn rent would be put in place.

WIC does not have to retain current staff working at the facility. If in future, we need staff, we will advertise and preference would be given to current staff members.



WIC requires minimum 6 months' rent free period from completion date, to allow us do the necessary renovation and upgradation of the building.

## How the proposal would be funded

This proposal would be partly funded through WIC's retained profits. WIC had 1.3 million retained profit at the end of last year (i.e. July 2021), and this year ending July 2022, our retained earnings stand at 2.4 million. The last submitted accounts for WIC confirm this statement.

WIC's main income stream is from the higher education students paying their fee either privately or through Student Finance i.e. Students Loans Company and/ or local authority grants.

## Council Grants

WIC would expect Thurrock Council to provide initial grant/funding of £400,000 to re-structure and improve the general outlook of the building.

## Improvement plans for the building

We are considering the following improvement plans for the building;

- Improve the general outlook of the building
- Improve/upgrade the Theatre facilities
- Change / upgrade the existing ventilation system, if needed
- Demolish and re-partition the area designated for educational use (coloured in blue on the attached floor plans)
- Upgrade the existing computer facilities on the ground/first floor
- Add appropriate signage on front and back elevation of the building
- Re-locate floor 4 and floor 5 storages to the basement area

- Have a mechanism in place to separate the gas and electric between WIC and Council, where possible
- General maintenance of the building

## Consultation with community and other organisations about the proposal

WIC has already engaged with number of organisations based in Thurrock, who have assured their support to us, and we are very excited for future collaboration with these organisations and other groups in the Thameside project.

Some of the Organisations we have been able to engage with so far are listed as follows;

- Anglo Asiatic Arts & Heritage Alliance, Grays
- NASFAT, Grays
- Thurrock Nepalese Gurkha Community  
*(Note: In the past, WIC has delivered free English Classes for Nepalese Gurkha women in Grays).*
- Ex-British Gurkha Veterans & Dependents Society
- Kenyan Community Church, Grays
- Tamil School and Tuition Services

WIC aims to carry on consulting / engaging further community organisations and business within Thurrock.

## Willingness to work together

We are willing to work with the Council to discuss and /or amend this plan to suit the Council's and community's requirements.