

CASE STUDY

IMAGES STUDENT ACCOMMODATION - WORCESTER

Off-site steel frame system
transforms Worcester nightclub into
student halls



The former site of Images Nightclub in Worcester has been transformed into 83 student flats, with Intrastack supplying the steel-frame structure and the installation being undertaken by installer, Intastruct, on behalf of the main developer, Spec Projects.

Intrastack, part of the Saint-Gobain Off-Site Solutions division, manufactured and delivered the light gauge steel frame (LGSF) system which saw three installers erect the seven-storey student accommodation block in just 10 weeks.

THE DEMAND

A recent report considered there to be a lack of purpose-built accommodation (PBSA) in Worcester, with the existing stock made up mainly of conversions, houses in multiple occupation (HMO) and existing halls¹. With these low levels of vacant PBSA facilities in the city, the Images project aimed to provide modern rooms for the student population.

With over 10,000 students at the University of Worcester, local plans to increase PBSA aim to reduce pressure on the on-street rental market, in order to free up accommodation for families. Meanwhile, meeting the specific needs of students with purpose-built and managed schemes makes the

city an attractive prospect to future learners.

This feeds directly into Worcester's City Plan 2022-2027, which outlines the ambition for building a wide mixture of good quality housing provisions to suit the full range of needs² and target growth for the city.

THE PROJECT

The old Images nightclub site, demolished late in 2021, now houses the new seven-storey accommodation. The building comprises five self-supporting storeys of light gauge steel frame panels atop a two-storey concrete base.

The speed of construction was noticeable to onlookers, as the work took place over just 10 weeks – a reduction from the originally scheduled 12 weeks – and was noted as one of the reasons for the developers choosing LGSF for the project in the first place. The system also required fewer installers on-site at any given time, with the majority of the work completed by a team of three.



Rapid turnaround of design and materials, as well as the speed of installation and safety benefits, were also indicated as reasons for going with off-site steel frame manufacture. Capitalising on LGSF's shorter construction times can provide developers with a quicker return on investment, as students are able to move in sooner than they would be able to with a traditional build.

The build site, which was first used over 150 years ago, is very restricted with limited space available for storage of the steel panels needed for the construction. Intrastack scheduled and delivered the panels to the site on a 'just-in-time' basis, working with the installer to ensure materials were on site as and when they were needed. This also reduced the waste on-site at any given time, with all system elements arriving cut to size.

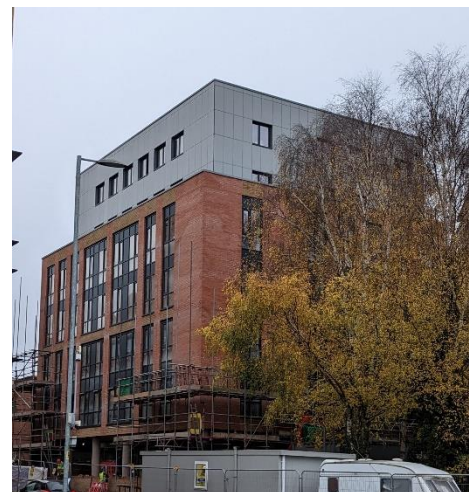
THE RESULTS

Andy Higson, Business Director at Intrastack, said: *"The rise in purpose-built student accommodation is a win for everyone. Students benefit from spaces designed just for them while more homes are freed up for families, helping communities become more balanced. This year, PBSA in the UK has surpassed 30,000 rooms for the first time, showing that there's demand for this type of housing."*

"An off-site approach is essential to deliver on the scale required. LGSF systems can help developers to build accommodation faster while tackling on-site challenges such as safety risks and labour shortages. When you discover how much smoother it makes the process, it becomes a no-brainer."

Paul Hazelwood, Contracts Manager at Intastruct, the system installers, said: *"There's no doubt that the steel frame system sped up the job, and allowed us to comfortably build a storey every two weeks. It's a fast system, and incredibly robust."*

"I also found Intrastack a pleasure to work with. Glitches were minimal and ironed out immediately. In fact, we received great management and support from day one until after the project is complete. I would certainly recommend this system to other developers as the best way to build multi-storey projects."



¹<https://committee.worcester.gov.uk/documents/s54927/24220831SWCLocalPlanandCILViabilityReviewv3inclappend.pdf>

²https://www.worcester.gov.uk/component/fileman/file/PDF%20Documents/About%20your%20council/City_Plan/Worcester%20City%20Plan%202022-2027.pdf?routed=1&container=fileman-files

³ Knight Frank, Confidence returns to UK Student Market – May 2022