

PLANNING REVIEW COMMITTEE

Wednesday 31 August 2011

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillors Brett (Chair), Bance (Vice-Chair), Armitage, Baxter, Lygo, Rowley, Young, Coulter and Wilkinson.

OFFICERS PRESENT: Lois Stock (Democratic Services Officer), Murray Hancock (City Development), Felicity Byrne (Planning Officer) and Daniel Smith (Law and Governance)

12. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillor Altaf-Khan (Councillor Wilkinson substituted) and Councillor Turner (Councillor Coulter substituted).

13. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The following declarations were made:-

- (1) Councillor Tony Brett – personal interest in the planning application for Roosevelt Drive (minute 14 refers) on the grounds that he was employed in the IT department of the University; however this was completely separate from the part of the University making the application;
- (2) Councillor Alan Armitage - personal interest in the planning application for Roosevelt Drive (minute 14 refers) on the grounds that his wife worked on the Old Road campus site;
- (3) Councillor Ruth Wilkinson – testament in relation to the planning application for Roosevelt Drive (minute 14 refers). Comments of hers had been reported in Cherwell magazine, but she had not declared a position and she had retained an open mind on the matter.

14. UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD, ROOSEVELT DRIVE, OXFORD - 11/01054/FUL

The Head of City Development submitted a report (previously circulated, now appended) concerning the following application:-

Demolition of 4 existing buildings (including Richards, Waco and Badenoch Buildings). Erection of 2 medical research buildings on 3 floors plus basement to accommodate Nuffield Department of Medicine and Kennedy Institute, to include laboratories, offices, stores, workshops and ancillary spaces. Provision of hard and soft landscaping, cycle parking and rearrangement of car parking. (Amended Plans) - University of Oxford, Roosevelt Drive.

East Area Planning Committee had resolved to support the application at its meeting on 3rd August 2011, subject to various requirements; but that decision had subsequently been called in to the Planning Review Committee.

Felicity Byrne (Planning Officer) presented the report to the Committee and explained the background. In answer to a question about trees, she confirmed that the advice from the Tree Officer was that long term management (replacing dead or dying trees/hedges) was the best way to deal with the existing screening of the site.

Martin Kraftl (Oxfordshire County Council Highways) explained the County Council's view with special reference to issues of traffic, parking and Controlled Parking Zones (CPZ). The County Council had not objected to the planning application. However, mindful of the East area Planning Committee's concern, it had re-examined the calculation of the financial contribution towards highways measures required in mitigation for the development in the light of additional information. It had concluded that a case could be made for an additional contribution totalling £257,000. In the long term, the Highways Authority intended to create 3 new CPZs, in Divinity Road/Magdalen Road, Lye Valley and Wood Farm. Of these, the first was most advanced and expected to be created first, but the other two were expected to be simpler to deal with.

Speaking against the application

Patrick Coulter, Hilary Rollin, James Styring, Councillor Bob Timbs, Councillor David Rundle and County Councillor Liz Brighthouse spoke against the application and made the following points:-

- The infrastructure to manage a development of this type had not been provided in Headington yet;
- The application should be refused until there had been an assessment of it as part of an overall strategic plan for Headington. The Planning Inspector, speaking about the Core Strategy, had suggested that such a strategic plan was needed;
- Residents were concerned about the nature and impact of the buildings and movements to and from the site (both during the construction phase and when the site was staffed and in use). There was concern too about the height of the buildings and their proximity to neighbouring houses;
- There was concern too about the impact on traffic and parking in the area, which was already very congested at times. The Travel Plan submitted by the University was not thought by local people to be accurate or credible. As traffic and car parking was already an issue, would it be possible to ask for a CPZ to be implemented before the buildings were occupied?
- More funding for a cycle route on Old Road was desirable;
- There was a danger that the Committee could "sleepwalk" into a radical transformation of the Old Road area if it agreed to this application, as it was clear that this was only part of a wider plan for the site. It was important to be informed what the masterplan for the site was;
- The proposed building was large so good screening was needed. The university had submitted a note on the landscaping of the site, and the Committee was urged to reconsider Option 3 in this note (reduction of car parking bays and planting of new hedge);
- There was a feeling that the S106 contribution from the University could be more generous;

- It was not sustainable to put all the medical research facilities on this site. Over 4,000 people were already employed at various locations within the area, and issues with parking, congestion and traffic had already been mentioned as concerns.

Speaking in favour of the application

Mike Wigg (Acting Director of Estates and Head of Capital Projects, University of Oxford) spoke in favour of the application and made the following points:-

- The need for two new buildings for the purpose of medical research had already been explained by Professor Sir William James at the meeting of the East Planning Committee on 3rd August;
- Surface water drainage would be managed by a planned attenuation scheme approved by the Environment Agency. A reasonable amount of rainwater would be allowed to soak away and plans for this have been approved by Natural England;
- Traffic in the City is a long-standing problem. The University wished to do all it could to help and was working with the Headington Forward Group. The University had been pro-active in producing its travel plan, and actively encourages staff to use forms of transport other than the car. This would be furthered by the proposed travel plan, and as there would be only 150 extra staff on site it was envisaged that the impact of traffic on the local area would be very modest;
- The University had already agreed a substantial financial contribution to mitigate any impact on the local area arising from the development;
- It was observed that Oxfordshire County Council would implement improvements to cycle access in the area;
- The NDM Building would be more than 50m from the nearest house. It was correct to say that the outlook would change for some local residents, but there would be no overshadowing or overbearing buildings. If anything, the view would be improved;
- Tree screening was important. The University would invest in the management of the landscape of this site;
- The University had emphasised the importance of medical research. It understands the need for consultation, and asks for the agreement of the Committee for its proposals, which are in line with the Council's Core Strategy.

The following issues were then clarified in response to questions from members of the Committee:-

- The buildings would be used for research into therapeutic approaches to arthritis and degenerative diseases;
- The buildings proposed by the application were the first phase of a redevelopment of the site, but the application had to be determined on its merits as it stood before the Committee;
- The traffic survey conducted in December 2010 was carried out by the University for its transport assessment. OCC had permanent traffic counters in locations around the City which it used to assess long term traffic trends;

- The use of ground heat had been identified as an option and this was currently undergoing analysis. Photovoltaic cells were being considered, but it was felt that would have a limited impact on the development's carbon footprint;
- The "Arboricultural Method Statement" was a long condition that gave comprehensive guidance on the prevention of damage to existing trees. Conditions 4 to 7 in the officer's report were concerned with topographical proposals;
- The University promoted some disincentives to car use, foremost amongst them being the cost of a parking permit. It was about to review its travel plan;
- It was not felt that the height of the buildings was overbearing. It was consistent with other buildings on the site. The buildings contained basements, but the type of work that could be carried out there was limited;
- The width of any shared cycle and pedestrian paths depended on the number of users. The cycle path on Old Road was part of Oxfordshire County Council's proposed cycling improvements;
- When the Planning Inspector spoke about the need for a strategy for Headington, as part of his examination of the Core Strategy, he was making a general observation, and in any case this would not supersede the Local Plan which designated this area for medical research.
- The total estimated cost of the 3 proposed CPZs was £720,000. Such schemes could only be implemented once funding was available;
- Part of Headington Quarry was in a CPZ, but would in any case be reviewed when examining CPZs in the area.

The Committee considered all submissions, both written and oral. Members of the Committee debated the issue and RESOLVED;-

(1) To support the application subject to conditions laid out in the planning officer's report, and to delegate to officers the authority to issue the notice of permission upon completion of the legal agreement, details of which are set out in the report; requiring a financial contribution to highways mitigation measures of £257,718;

(2) To add to the listed conditions the following additional requirements:

- That the landscaping to the tree belt on Old Road includes new hedge and tree planting to the western edge, and mixed evergreens to the eastern end;
- That the hours for deliveries during the construction of the development be controlled to avoid peak hours and the beginning of the school day;
- That the external lighting to the campus be designed to avoid Light spillage, in order to prevent nuisance being caused to nearby residential properties;
- That details of the maintenance regime for the attenuation tanks to be used in the drainage systems be submitted for approval by officers.

15. MINUTES

Resolved to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 27th July 2011.

16. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Resolved to note the dates of future meetings as listed.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 8.00 pm