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Michael Crofton-Briggs
Oxford City Council – City Development
St Aldate's Chambers
109-113 St Aldates
Oxford
OX1 1DS

3rd February 2014

Dear Michael,

**Student Accommodation at Castle Mill, Roger Dudman Way, Oxford
11/02881/FUL**

Update on specific matters

I am writing at the request of the West Area Planning Committee to update them on specific matters in relation to the ongoing work which the University has offered to undertake at Castle Mill, together with our preliminary response to the independent review and an update as to the current work taking place in relation to the voluntary Environmental Statement (the "ES").

As you know we are still considering the responses to the consultation exercise carried out following our letter setting out our proposed topics for the ES. We will be addressing these responses in the ES. In the meantime, we are seeking to finalise the range of proposed planting and other measures so that the impact(s) can be properly assessed. We have further meetings later this month with the landscape and visual impact consultants, Network Rail, the residents on William Lucy Way, the Allotment Association and you on the matters covered in this letter generally.

We will further and regularly update the City Council and will provide formal updates whenever requested

Environmental Statement

The amelioration measures outlined below will be included in the voluntary environmental statement. The University and its consultants have also read the recent consultation responses in detail and are reviewing the ES to ensure that the relevant points raised in those responses are addressed. We will update the City Council as to the final amended proposed scope of the ES.

Although work on the Environmental Statement is progressing quickly, the University cannot currently commit to a date for submission until the details of planting and other mitigation work has been completed. The University will continue to discuss progress on a regular basis with the City Council and will complete the work as soon as possible.

The headings within the Environment Statement are currently proposed as follows below.

- Air Quality
- Archaeology
- Built Heritage
- Climate Change and Sustainability
- Ecology
- Flood Risk and Drainage
- Land Contamination
- Noise and Vibration
- Overshadowing
- Planning Policy
- Townscape and Views (for the avoidance of doubt, to include a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment and an assessment of the light from the development)
- Transport

The principal areas where work is continuing are the following:

Landscaping

The University appointed landscape consultants, LDA Design, on 5th May 2013, and they and the University have had regular meetings with you, the Allotment holders and others on a number of occasions over the last 12 months, including the recent roundtable meeting on 31st January with your landscape advisers.

LDA Design, in consultation with you and others have proposed a range of works including landscaping, alterations to the facades and green elevations for the buildings at Castle Mill. An approach was agreed at the roundtable meeting, subject to additional modelling work from a wide range of views to show the effect of the proposals. The proposals will also be considered fully in the ES.

LDA Design are also carrying out a Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment which will form part of the ES.

The University has been in consultation with the residents of William Lucy Way. The University is currently drawing up proposals for additional landscaping on the facade of the buildings which face William Lucy Way, taking on board proposals from the residents. We hope to be able to provide a first draft of the proposals shortly - LDA Design have also been appointed to address these proposals. A number of options are being considered, although it should be noted that the space on this side is constrained by the proximity of the railway line.

Once a satisfactory way forward is agreed, the University will seek the necessary consents to carry out the proposals in the LDA report and will enter into a Section 106 unilateral undertaking with the City Council to deliver the additional landscaping within an agreed timescale.

Roof

The University has had a number of conversations with the roof manufacturer about the potential to reduce the shine from the roof in certain climate conditions. Unfortunately the manufacturer has been unable to propose any treatment options that will achieve this. They have however provided a reference site which had the same material and colour installed and the University will assess how the aging process will change the roof finish. The University is continuing to explore other options with the potential to dull or flatten the roof finish.

The University will then discuss the findings with you.

Noise

The University has appointed an expert consultant to review the noise impacts of the development for the ES and to participate in discussions with the residents of William Lucy Way.

Lighting

The University has issued a contract to provide electrically operated black-out blinds for windows on the communal corridors and staircases which face either Port Meadow or William Lucy Way which will descend automatically at dusk and remain in place until dawn the next day. It has been discovered that technically, the only communal area that cannot have blinds installed is the ground floors of the buildings where the external doors are present – the rest of the communal areas can have blinds. This should significantly reduce light spillage both on Port Meadow and William Lucy Way. We anticipate having the blinds in place by Easter.

There have been some comments about the brightness of the street lighting. The University is considering with its advisers how the bollard lighting might be shielded. However it should be noted that the bright lights adjacent to the Castle Mill development belong to Network Rail and have been in place for some time.

Ground Water Monitoring

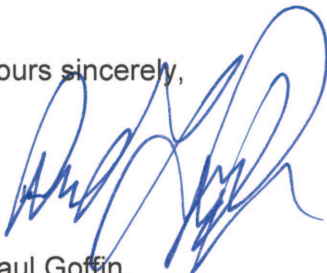
The University and the Council have agreed a testing regime for on-site boreholes, vapour testing and wells within the neighbouring allotments. The test results confirm that levels of contaminants within the allotments are substantially below the WHO guidelines and that none of the testing has revealed any risk to human health.

Independent Review

The University welcomes the report and particularly the recognition that the University usually endeavours to carry out “exemplary levels of consultation” and that the Council met all their statutory obligations in its handling of the planning application. However, we note the criticisms in the report. Our procedures are under continual review and the report from the independent reviewer will be taken into account to enhance these procedures and to ensure that the University’s approach to planning applications is absolutely clear to all consultants working on behalf of the University on its building projects in the future.

The University would like to assure the City Council that all actions are being pursued urgently

Yours sincerely,



Paul Goffin,
Director of Estates

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