

Appendix B

Examples of employment sites subject to 'Prior Approvals'

The following examples are of large office buildings that were allocated in the Core Strategy as key protected employment sites.

Grehan House (1,281 m²) was a large office block near the Oxford Business Park, which had been on the market for a while but had remained vacant. Despite this there had been interest from a range of potential users, but no sole office occupiers had come forward. To a degree however this does reflect the office market, which during recent years has experienced limited demand in Oxford. Those office users wishing to come to the city or move within it have chosen other properties of a higher standard in preference to those that may require some new investment / refurbishment. It is however a protected employment site, which had been subject to a recent application for a mixed B1 / D1 use, which was approved on a temporary basis. The expectation was that a permanent office user could be found at the end of this short-temporary period. Prior approval has now been granted for conversion to residential. Work has commenced and is well advanced and is expected to be completed by March 2015.

Another example is **Broadfield House**, Between Towns Road, Cowley (4,028 m²) which was formerly occupied by the Potato Marketing Board and had only relatively recently become available. It has over recent times been substantially refurbished to a high standard and is situated in a good location, with adequate parking spaces facilities on site, and lies within the Cowley Primary District Shopping centre. Although no new occupier had been secured in the short-term, this office building did represent a significant loss to the stock of office accommodation. Prior approval has now been granted for conversion to residential units. Conversion work is underway and is expected to be completed by March 2015.

Service office / start-up units

The following smaller employment sites are not key protected sites but demonstrate the potential wider impact. Two 'prior approval' applications have been received for buildings that have either been used as serviced offices or newly completed developments. Firstly **Innovation House** (2,508 m²) in Mill Street, was formerly the home of Oxford Innovation, but more recently occupied by Pure Offices for 'serviced offices'. This site was the subject of a relatively recent successful appeal, which determined that the site should not be converted to student use. Prior approval has however now been granted for the conversion of this property to residential use.

Secondly **Canterbury House**, 393 Cowley Road (Bus Depot) (2,426 m²) site is one of the few new opportunities for starter / grow on units within the City, which is currently on the market and is under offer. This site comprises two starter blocks now completed and built out to 'shell' only together with planning permission for a 'grow-on' building, where no construction work has started. Whilst one prior approval application has already been refused a second application was submitted. This also gave rise to concerns on the grounds that the buildings had not been occupied as offices and that a condition was attached to the original application that required it to

be used as start-units / serviced office accommodation. Prior approval had been refused but was then subject to an appeal, which was allowed by the Planning Inspectorate. The City Council challenged the decision and the appeal decision was then subsequently quashed, by consent, resulting in the appeal being remitted to the Secretary of State. A further 'prior approval' application has just been submitted.

Spatial dimension

Of the seventeen sites where 'prior approval' applications has been granted there are six in the City centre District area; four in the Cowley Road Area; four in the Headington Area; two in the Cowley Blackbird Leys Area and one in the Summertown Area,

The applications in the City centre highlight a recent trend that is particularly concerning and has implications both spatially and on existing businesses. The earlier 'prior approval' applications submitted generally included vacant office accommodation; but more recently applications have been received on office buildings that are currently occupied. These two applications relate to Sun Alliance House, New Inn Hall Street (1,200 m²), which is above O'Neils PH fronting George Street and would offer office accommodation in reasonable condition; together with premises on the upper floors at 28-31 Little Clarendon Street (1,200 m²). Both of these prior approval applications have now been granted. Whilst some residential uses within the City centre would add to the vitality and mix of uses, there is a concern already expressed in the Oxfordshire Innovation Engine Report by SQW that the City centre needs to provide good quality office accommodation to encourage those services that support the knowledge economy.

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