

WEST AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

10 March 2015

**Application Number:** 15/00096/PA11

**Decision Due by:** 9 March 2015

**Proposal:** Application seeking prior approval for development comprising extension to the length of existing north bay platforms, replacement platform canopies, new re-locatable rail staff accommodation building and reconfiguration of short stay and staff car parking under Part 11 Class A Schedule 2 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995. (PLEASE NOTE THIS IS NOT A PLANNING APPLICATION BUT A NOTIFICATION SUBMITTED BY NETWORK RAIL FOR PRIOR APPROVAL BY OXFORD CITY COUNCIL)

**Site Address:** Oxford Railway Station, Park End Street **Appendix 1**

**Ward:** Jericho And Osney

**Agent:** N/A

**Applicant:** Network Rail

---

## Recommendation:

PRIOR APPROVAL REQUIRED - Siting and design acceptable

For the following reasons:

- 1 The proposals constitute works needed to improve capacity and services at Oxford Station and to implement the first phase of the Oxford Station Masterplan. The location, design and external appearance of the proposals are acceptable subject to concerns about the impact on residential and neighbourhood amenity being addressed by the imposition of conditions dealing with the submission of materials samples, land contamination assessments, the removal of the temporary TOC building after 3 years, and the submission of applications to authorise the development works associated with the Oxford Station Masterplan. The proposal is therefore considered to accord with the requirements of the relevant policies in the Oxford Local Plan, Core Strategy, Sites and Housing Plan, and West End Area Action Plan.
- 2 Officers have considered carefully all objections to these proposals. Officers have come to the view, for the detailed reasons set out in the officers report, that the objections do not amount, individually or cumulatively, to a reason for refusal and that all the issues that have been raised have been adequately addressed and the relevant bodies consulted.

- 3 The Council considers that the proposal accords with the policies of the development plan as summarised below. It has taken into consideration all other material matters, including matters raised in response to consultation and publicity. Any material harm that the development would otherwise give rise to can be offset by the conditions imposed.

Subject to the following conditions, which have been imposed for the reasons stated:-

- 1 Materials samples
- 2 Windows in east and north facing elevations
- 3 Contamination risk study
- 4 Remediation Strategy
- 5 Unexpected contamination
- 6 Surface water disposal
- 7 Time limit of 3 years

**Main Local Plan Policies:**

**Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016**

**CP1** - Development Proposals

**CP8** - Design Development to Relate to its Context

**CP25** - Temporary Buildings

**TR10** - Oxford Station Improvements

**Core Strategy**

**CS1\_** - Hierarchy of centres

**CS2\_** - Previously developed and greenfield land

**CS5\_** - West End

**CS9\_** - Energy and natural resources

**CS10\_** - Waste and recycling

**CS13\_** - Supporting access to new development

**CS14\_** - Supporting city-wide movement

**CS18\_** - Urban design, town character, historic environment

**CS27\_** - Sustainable economy

**West End Area Action Plan**

**WE6** - Frideswide Square & railway station forecourt

**Sites and Housing Plan**

**HP14\_** - Privacy and Daylight

**Other Material Considerations:**

National Planning Policy Framework  
Planning Practice Guidance

**Representations Received:**

The Rewley Park Management Committee and numbers 1, 8, 12 17 and 19 Stable Close comment that there will be:

- an unacceptable loss of sunlight to houses and gardens in Stable Close which are already overshadowed by the Said Business School extension;
- overlooking and loss of privacy;
- increased noise and air pollution from vehicles, buses, roof plant, and cooking smells and extractor fans; and,
- loss of house values as a result of significantly diminished local amenities.
- Any obtrusive signage should be avoided.

25 and 34 Abbey Place object to this development and comment that the Oxford Station Masterplan is not a foregone conclusion and there needs to be proper public consultation in order to plan this area correctly.

Railfuture, Thames Valley Branch - has commented that this is an important development which should be supported as part of much needed improvements to rail facilities and services in this area.

**Statutory and Internal Consultees:**

Environment Agency – no objections, subject to conditions concerning assessment of risk from contaminated land.

Natural England – no objections.

**Officers Assessment****Site and Surroundings**

1. The site is adjacent to the north side of the main Oxford Station building and extends to 0.73 ha. It is currently occupied by a single-storey, flat roofed, brick building (6.5 metres high) used by the Train Operating Companies (TOC) as staff accommodation, stores and catering facilities; together with external storage (some covered), existing platforms, platform canopies and a surface car park (public rail users short stay: 36 + 8 disabled; and rail staff: 46 + 4 disabled).
2. The site slopes gently from trackside eastwards and is partly elevated above the surrounding residential areas (Rewley Road, Stable Close, Rickyard Close) to the east, and the Said Business School. It has a ramped vehicle access up from the bus interchange in front of the station supported by a retaining wall on its eastern boundary to a lower level footpath/cycleway leading into the adjacent residential areas. Residential properties in Cripsey

Road and Abbey Road face or back onto the site from the west across the rail lines.

## The Proposals

3. It is proposed to demolish the existing single storey TOC building, and the two-sided canopy to platforms 1 and 3 (north of the pedestrian over bridge).

### *Track and platform lengthening and new platform canopies*

4. The track running into Platform 3 is to be lengthened southwards (into part of the current short stay car park) by some 35 metres bringing its southern end closer to the main station building (to a point just by the pedestrian over bridge – see comparison drawing at **Appendix 2**). Platform 3 is to be widened (eastwards) and will encompass the bottom of the pedestrian over bridge. A new (northbound) platform to the east of the new track is to be built. These proposals are required in order to accommodate the longer trains which will be operated by Chiltern Railways between Oxford and Marylebone.
5. Cantilever gull wing type canopies suspended off steel columns are proposed over the extended and reconfigured Platforms 1 and 3; and over the new northbound platform and gate line enclosure. The canopies are to be of steel frame construction with single skin profile metal cladding in a mid-grey colour.

### *Temporary TOC building*

6. The existing TOC building needs to be demolished to make way for the track lengthening and platform modifications described above. The proposed temporary TOC will replace the existing accommodation (see comparison drawing at **Appendix 2**).and will allow implementation of the first phase of the Oxford Station Masterplan.
7. A new rectangular, two-storey, flat roofed, re-locatable temporary building is to be erected providing a gross internal area of 1400m<sup>2</sup> for TOC accommodation and food processing space for the three catering companies already operating at the station. It is to be a modular construction, much of which is to be constructed off-site and assembled on-site. It is proposed to have a footprint of some 56.4m x 12.2m and is to be 8.3 metres high.
8. The east elevation of the new temporary building is to be articulated through dark grey window panels, doors, and 'brise soleil'; separated by vertical panels of buff facing brick slips and high quality light/mid grey horizontal metal cladding attached to the exterior of the modular units. The roof is to be a single skin profiled metal cladding but is not expressed in the external appearance: a low parapet is proposed. The staff entrances are on the east elevation accessed via a metal ramp and steps.
9. The elevations at the south end (visible from the Station forecourt) and north end (visible from Rewley Road) are to be articulated through panels of buff

facing brick slips and high quality light/mid grey horizontal metal cladding with limited fenestration.

10. The west elevation (facing the platforms and tracks) is of a more utilitarian appearance designed with metal cladding but with some buff facing brick slip panels. Staff access doors directly onto the new platform are proposed, and part of a new canopy is located adjacent to this west flank of the new temporary building.
11. The temporary TOC building is to be constructed in two phases – the first replacing that which will be lost when the existing TOC building is demolished, and the second when further buildings are demolished in the wider station site in accordance with the Station Masterplan. The modular units proposed are suited to this phased construction and are manufactured off-site limiting noise and disruption in the construction phase.

### *Car park modifications*

12. The main access ramp up from the bus forecourt is proposed to remain as it is, but the public short stay and staff car parking area is to be remodelled leading to a reduction in public parking of 15 spaces and a reduction in staff parking of 4 spaces. The TOC considers that this level of provision meets their needs. A new external pedestrian platform access is to be provided direct from the short stay parking area via a new gate in the southeast corner of the site adjacent to the main station building.

### **Sustainability**

The modular construction means that these units can be removed and re-used elsewhere. Fenestration is laid out to maximise natural daylight.

### **Determining Issues**

- The Prior Approval Process
- Location
- Design and external appearance

### *The Prior Approval process*

13. In making these proposals, Network Rail intends to rely upon planning permission granted by Part 11 Class A to Schedule 2 of the General Permitted Development Order 1995 (as amended). Where development consists of or includes the erection, construction alteration or extension of a building this permission is subject to a condition requiring the Prior Approval of the Local Planning Authority to the detailed plans and specifications. These proposals include the erection of a building.
14. The General Permitted Development Order 1995 (as amended) states that Prior Approval is not to be refused by the Local Planning Authority, nor are conditions to be imposed, unless the Local Planning Authority is satisfied that:

- i. the development should and could reasonably be carried out elsewhere on the land; or,
  - ii. the design and external appearance would injure the amenity of the neighbourhood and is reasonably capable of modification to avoid such injury.
15. The determining issues in this case are therefore (i) the location/siting of the developments; and, (ii) their design and external appearance.
16. As already noted, these works are proposed in order to replace the existing TOC building, and to allow for the phased development of Oxford Station within the parameters of the Oxford Station Masterplan. The Masterplan is however still being developed and has not been the subject of a formal planning application process. The Council is working with the County Council, Network Rail and other partners and stakeholders to progress it to implementation. In these circumstances the City Council would like to see early submission of applications for the Transport and Works Act Orders needed to progress the Station Masterplan so that there can be reassurance that the temporary TOC building will not be required into the long term. In the light of concerns expressed later as to the design and external appearance of the building such that, but for the wider scheme, the recommendation would be that the application be refused, conditions to be applied to the Prior Approval are suggested that seek the removal of the temporary TOC building within 3 years should that justification cease to apply.

*Track and platform modifications and new platform canopies*

17. Under the Prior Approval process there is no objection to the location and design of these modifications. They are of necessity located contiguous with the existing tracks. The canopies are of a contemporary design and will not harm the amenity of the area.

*Temporary TOC building – location/siting*

18. The temporary TOC building is located in a position on this site which allows for the phased development of Oxford Station within the parameters of the Masterplan. Other locations within this site, or within the wider station site, including on the west side of the tracks, would interfere with that process. Its siting adjoining the proposed new platform is an operational requirement to allow staff access directly onto the platform.
19. The applicant has indicated that the building needs to be 2 storeys high in order to replace the existing TOC floor space and allow for staff numbers to grow with the growth of services and passenger numbers at the station, while at the same time retaining adequate on-site car parking for staff and a short stay/disabled public parking facility. A single storey building would occupy too much of the site area to meet all the external space requirements.

20. The location of the temporary TOC building close to residential properties, combined with the fact that it is proposed to be 2 storeys high has however raised concerns of overlooking, loss of sunlight and additional shading of adjacent houses and gardens in Stable Close (12 properties back onto the site).
21. In order to prevent overlooking, the applicant has confirmed that the windows facing Stable Close will be obscure glazed and non-opening below 1.7metres from finished floor level. This will be reinforced by condition.
22. In respect of sunlight and shading, residents have commented that currently they receive no winter sun from the east because of overshadowing from the Said Business School extension, and only very limited late afternoon winter sun from the west. A Sunlight and Shadow Analysis has therefore been submitted which shows that compared to the existing situation there will be:
- no change to the sunshine available to any of the rooms or gardens at these properties at any time of the year at 9am, 12 noon or 3pm;
  - no change to garden shading but possibly some additional room shading from 6pm onwards in April;
  - additional garden shading and possibly additional room shading from 6pm onwards in May and August;
  - additional garden shading in June and July from 6pm onwards but no additional room shading; and,
  - in September the gardens and rooms are shaded currently and as proposed.
23. Penetration of sunlight into gardens and rooms is very important to help minimise energy use, and promote good health and wellbeing. In this case however, while any loss of sunlight to properties is extremely regrettable, the loss of sunlight to these (12) properties is limited to the period from 6pm to sunset for 5 spring/summer months only. This is not considered to be so injurious to the amenity of the neighbourhood that Prior Approval should be withheld for this temporary building on the grounds of its location. The recommendation would have been otherwise for a permanent structure.
24. Concerns have also been raised about noise from people using the metal ramps/stairs, about noise/smell from increased vehicle movements, and about smells from catering facilities, in close proximity to residential properties.
25. The applicant has offered to apply noise-dampening materials to the metal ramps/stairs and this can be secured by condition. The applicant prefers to use metal ramps/stairs, as these are re-locatable and recyclable rather than concrete, which would not be a sustainable alternative. The applicant has also confirmed that buses will not use this area, and that the proposals will not generate any additional vehicle movements, indeed fewer given the loss of parking spaces. Food preparation will be largely making sandwiches with limited on-site cooking. A domestic scale fan is all that is required: this activity is already taking place in the same location on the site.

### *Temporary TOC building - external appearance*

26. At the pre-application stage officers stated that, in accordance with national and local planning policy, a building of much higher quality design would be required in this location if it were to be a permanent building. As a temporary building it is of fair design, to which Prior Approval can be given subject to conditions (i) requiring the submission of materials samples; and, (ii) requiring removal once the building has served its purpose or that purpose ceases to be relevant.

### **Conclusion**

27. The proposals constitute works needed to improve capacity and services at Oxford Station and to implement the first phase of the Oxford Station Masterplan. Under the Prior Approval process there is no objection to the track and platform modifications. Subject to conditions including the removal of the temporary TOC building within time limits specified, it is concluded that the location, design and external appearance of the proposed temporary TOC building is acceptable. The granting of Prior Approval for these proposals is therefore recommended.

### Human Rights Act 1998

Officers have considered the Human Rights Act 1998 in reaching a recommendation to grant planning permission, subject to conditions. Officers have considered the potential interference with the rights of the owners/occupiers of surrounding properties under Article 8 and/or Article 1 of the First Protocol of the Act and consider that it is proportionate.

Officers have also considered the interference with the human rights of the applicant under Article 8 and/or Article 1 of the First Protocol caused by imposing conditions. Officers consider that the conditions are necessary to protect the rights and freedoms of others and to control the use of property in accordance with the general interest. The interference is therefore justifiable and proportionate.

### Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998

Officers have considered, with due regard, the likely effect of the proposal on the need to reduce crime and disorder as part of the determination of this application, in accordance with section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. In reaching a recommendation to grant Prior Approval subject to conditions, officers consider that the proposal will not undermine crime prevention or the promotion of community safety.

### **Background Papers: 15/0096/PA11; Oxford Station Masterplan**

**Contact Officer:** Fiona Bartholomew

**Extension:** 2774

**Date:** 26<sup>th</sup> February 2015