

West Area Planning Committee

8th September 2015

9th June 2015

Application Number: a) 15/01550/LBC
b) 15/01549/FUL

Decision Due by: 20th August 2015

- Proposal:**
- a) Demolition of Staircase 6 and the West Building. Erection of new four storey annexe with basement, to provide storage library facilities, refurbished student rooms, provision of front gates and railings.
 - b) Demolition of Staircase 6 and the West Building. Erection of new four storey annexe with basement, to provide storage library facilities, refurbished student rooms, provision of front gates and railings and associated re-landscaping of Garden Quad and front car parks including front gates and railings.

Site Address: Corpus Christi College Merton Street Oxford Oxfordshire
(Appendix 1)

Ward: Holywell Ward

Agent: Mr Chris Pattison

Applicant: The President And Scholars
Of The College Of Corpus
Christi

Recommendations:

- a) **15/01550/LBC:** Recommend approval, defer to Government Office for the West Midlands (GOWM) and delegate to officers to issue decision once cleared by GOWM.
- b) **15/01549/FUL:** Approve

Reasons for Approval

1. The proposals represent a sensitive and well-considered response to the issues of providing new library facilities and archive resources for the college on a constrained site and involving direct impacts on a number of listed buildings and/or their settings. Whilst the proposed new buildings would involve works of demolition the City Council considers that there are exceptional circumstances to justify the proposal and that the overall benefits that would flow from the development are sufficient for it to be considered favourably within the terms of the policy set out in the National Planning Policy

Framework and local planning policies as set out 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.

2. The City Council has taken account of the comments raised in public and statutory consultation, which are summarised below, in its assessment of the proposals but consider that they do not constitute sustainable reasons sufficient to refuse planning permission and/or listed building consent and that the imposition of appropriate planning and listed building consent conditions will ensure a good quality form of development that will enhance the appearance of the street scene and relate satisfactorily to nearby properties.
3. The City Council has given considerable weight and importance to the desirability of preserving or enhancing designated heritage assets and their settings, including the listed buildings, registered historic garden and conservation area. It considers that any harm that would result from the proposed development and works to the listed building is justified by the public benefits that would result and that the proposal is considered to comply with adopted policies contained within the adopted Oxford Local Plan, the adopted Oxford Core Strategy and National Planning policy and guidance.

subject to the following conditions, which have been imposed for the reasons state

a) 15/01550/LBC

1. Development begun within time limit
2. Development in accordance with approved plans
3. Commencement
4. Completion
5. Further construction and design details to be submitted (including details of junction between new work and historic fabric)
6. Samples of materials
7. Sample panels on site
8. Archaeological investigation and mitigation
9. Building recording and details of salvage/reuse
10. Informative: Considerate Contractors Scheme

b) 15/01549/FUL

1. Development begun within time limit.
2. Development in accordance with approved plans.
3. Further construction and design details to be submitted.
4. Samples of materials.
5. Sample panels on site.
6. Archaeological investigation and mitigation.
7. Building recording and details of salvage.
8. Proposed landscaping and tree planting.
9. Landscaping scheme implementation.
10. Landscape management plan and implementation.
11. Sustainable drainage.
12. Construction traffic management plan.

- 13. Informative: Considerate Contractors Scheme
- 14. Informative: Water main.

Legal Agreement:

Exemption from CIL contributions

Principal Planning Policies:

Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016

- CP1** - Development Proposals
- CP6** - Efficient Use of Land & Density
- CP8** - Design Development to Relate to its Context
- CP9** - Creating Successful New Places
- CP10** - Siting Development to Meet Functional Needs
- CP13** - Accessibility
- HE1** - Nationally Important Monuments
- HE2** - Archaeology
- HE3** - Listed Buildings and Their Setting
- HE7** - Conservation Areas
- HE8** - Important Parks & Gardens

Core Strategy

- CS9** - Energy and natural resources
- CS12** - Biodiversity
- CS29** - The universities
- CS11** - Flooding
- CS18** - Urban design, town character, historic environment

Statutory and Public Consultation

Statutory consultees

Highways Authority: No objection, recommends condition
Thames Water Utilities Limited: no objection recommends informative
Environment Agency Thames Region: No objection
English Heritage: no objection to demolition of existing building or new building, Objects to loss of existing window to library (see **Appendix 2**)
The Twentieth Century Society: Objects to loss of existing building
Victorian Society: Objects to loss of existing building
Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings: Objects to demolition of existing building. expresses concerns about proposed junctions between new and existing fabric.

Third Parties

Oxfordshire Architectural & Historical Society (Victorian Group): Objects to loss of existing building
Oxford Preservation Trust: Objects to impact of the new building on Oriel Square

Individual Comments:

4 Elsfield Road

- Objects to impact of new building on Oriel Square
- Concern about impact of new building on light levels to Christ Church Picture Gallery

Officers Assessment:

Background

1. Corpus Christi was founded in 1517 by the Bishop of Winchester, on the site of existing medieval halls. It is possible that the existing kitchens incorporate elements of the pre-college buildings. The front quad, which included the entrance tower, President's lodgings, Hall and Chapel, was followed by the cloisters quad, replaced in 1706 by the Fellows Building. In Thomas Quad the New Building was erected in 1666 and then in 1927 the Emily Thomas Building added.
2. The Presidents Lodgings were originally above and to the north of the entrance gates, but by 1607 had been moved to colonise Schidyard Street (a street separating Christ Church from Corpus). The lodgings were rebuilt in 1688, reordered in 1783 and extended in 1804 before being rebuilt in 1905. In 1957 the accommodation was again rebuilt, but retaining the 1905 façade. In 1986 there was again rebuilding and reworking of the accommodation.
3. The trilingual Library represents probably the fifth largest college collection of early printed books, in Latin, Greek and Hebrew. At present the collection is stored in cramped and inappropriate conditions that puts it at risk and restricts access.

The Proposal

4. This 'New Library Project' seeks to secure purpose built accommodation, for the storage, study and digitisation and display of the collection in appropriate environmentally controlled and secure conditions. The new development is proposed on the site of Staircase 6 and the West Building and involves the demolition of those buildings and their replacement with a new extension. This will involve a 4 storey building generally on the footprint of the demolished extension with a basement extending into Schidyard Street and also into the Garden Quad. The accommodation will provide secure and open access book storage, environmentally controlled accommodation for the special collections, reader space and accommodation for staff with a link through to the existing library. External materials proposed include stone for the elevations, bronze window systems and a lead roof. The garden quad will be re-design with the lightwells serving the basement level.

Planning Policy

5. The application site is located within a Grade II Registered Garden, within the setting of the listed buildings of Corpus and adjacent to the gardens and buildings of Christ Church, within an archaeologically sensitive area. Policies that are relevant to this proposal are listed at the beginning of this report but the focus will be on those matters that require some explanation; officers

having concluded that the development is in accordance with other relevant policies not explicitly discussed here.

- The principle issues to consider are the impact of
- the works of demolition of part of the grade II listed President's Lodgings (Staircase 6),
- the impact of the alterations to provide access to the Grade I listed library,
- the impact of the new building on the setting and context of existing listed buildings (Grade I and II) and Grade II registered garden
- Archaeological impacts and
- Impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area.

Historic Environment

6. The National Planning Policy Framework in Annex 2 defines heritage significance as:

'The value of a heritage asset to this and future generations because of its heritage interest. That interest may be archaeological, architectural, artistic or historic. Significance derives not only from a heritage asset's physical presence, but also from its setting.'

and defines the setting of a heritage asset as:

'The surroundings in which a heritage asset is experienced. Its extent is not fixed and may change as the asset and its surroundings evolve. Elements of a setting may make a positive or negative contribution to the significance of an asset, may affect the ability to appreciate that significance or may be neutral.'

7. Conservation principles, policy and practice seek to preserve and enhance the value of heritage assets. The National Planning Policy Framework explains that the historic environment and its heritage assets should be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations.
8. The Government sets out a presumption in favour of sustainable development and explains that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of this. The NPPF sets out twelve core planning principles that should underpin decision making (paragraph 17.). Amongst those are:
 - *not simply be about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives;*
 - *proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs;*
 - *conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance, so that they can be enjoyed for their contribution to the quality of life of this and future generations.*

9. The historic environment policies of the NPPF are supported by Historic England's Good Practice Advice Notes, which give more detailed advice about gathering the information on significance, assessing the impact and assessing harm with an emphasis on the proactive management of heritage assets.
10. The application site is part of a listed building located within the Central (City and University) Conservation Area and adjacent a registered garden and thus a designated heritage asset. The NPPF and accompanying Practice Guide (NPPG) explain that great weight should be given to the asset's conservation and '*the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be*'. Recent case law (Barnwell) has demonstrated that this responsibility, rooted in the legislative requirements of the Planning Acts, should be given special consideration when considering the balance between any harm and the planning merits of the proposal.
11. The application proposals are supported by a body of research and a historic buildings appraisal that sets out in detail the history of the development of the site and which seek to define the heritage significance the site holds as an evidence base to inform assessment of the nature and extent of the heritage impacts that would result from this proposal.
12. The site as a whole has high heritage significance including:
 - Evidential – potential to reveal information about the site's occupation and the early history of Oxford prior to establishment of the college.
 - Historic – continuous occupation and expansion as an educational establishment since the C16th, as a part of the University of Oxford. Its library collection reflects its founding principles and illustrates many of the challenges and 'discoveries' of contemporary society over a 500 year period.
 - Aesthetic – sense of intimate enclosure and architectural delight derived from the layout of quadrangles and routes with the mix of buildings of different architectural periods.
 - Communal – representative of the collective memory of all those associated with teaching, learning and research throughout history at this and other Oxford University colleges. Its association with significant people and events in history link to political, religious and architectural movements and their communities.

Assessment of impact

Demolition

13. Staircase 6 and the West building are part of a grade II listed building, listed in 1954. The building was subsequently rebuilt (in 1957/9) retaining only the façade (which also was altered) onto Garden Quad. This rebuilding was to the designs of Architects Co-Partnership, who were also responsible for the Grade II listed Beehive building at St John's College and represents the Oxford Colleges' break with tradition and embrace of modern architecture, an approach that is still pursued. As such the building by association with this architects practice and as physical evidence of this stylistic shift holds significance. However, the 1958 building was itself remodelled in the 1980s,

which has reduced its architectural and historic integrity. What remains of the building that is of some interest is the 1950s façade facing down towards Oriel Square and the 1905 façade facing onto the Garden Quad.

14. Consultee comments reflect on the design of the two facades, concluding that they have architectural significance and should not be demolished (one being an example of proportion and ratio in the manner of Corbusier's "TraceesRegulateurs" and the other being a handsome piece, highly contextual and sensitive to the existing C17th buildings). The applicant has provided evidence to demonstrate that

- the significance of the listed building has been diminished by subsequent alteration;
- There is an important and justifiable need for this development;
- Through 'sequential testing' of the development opportunities on the site this is the most appropriate location
- Any harm is justified by the public benefits of the proposal

15. Historic England in its comments concludes that the case for the replacement of the existing building is made and raises no objection to these demolition works.

16. The College is on a very constrained site and as with many other colleges there are considerable challenges to find ways of meeting its needs to provide new facilities and accommodation without sacrifices those characteristics that make it special.

17. It is recognised that the removal of this building will result in the loss of a historic building that evidences two phases of the colleges building history. That in one sense is an aspect of this proposal, a new chapter in the college's development, which could of itself hold interest as part of the history of the site. Officer's accept that there is an important and justified need for this new accommodation – to provide appropriate facilities for its library and collection (which is an important part of the college's significance) and agree with Historic England that the demolition of the existing building is justified by the public benefits that the development will bring (including public access to the archive and appropriate facilities for the archives conservation). This is an instance where it would be appropriate to preserve the existing building 'by record', i.e. require a full archaeological building record to be made prior to demolition, and a condition is proposed to secure that.

Other demolition works

18. In order to give first floor access to the library from the new building it is proposed to gain access via an existing window in the original range. The evidence shows that whilst this range is of C16th origin it has been renewed in the C18th (the window joinery is of early C18th date). The window tracery though maintains the C16th form. Historic England has objected to this aspect, arguing that an existing opening through the wall could be adapted to provide first floor circulation in preference to the adaptation of the historic window and recommends refusal unless this impact can be resolved. The

statutory amenity groups consulted on this proposal have not raised a specific issue on the loss of this window.

19. The applicants have sort to be sensitive to the heritage significance that the site holds and to avoid unnecessary loss of historic fabric. Officers are mindful that it is also important to ensure that the architectural solution provides an appropriate aesthetic response with a functional logic to circulation and movement between the old and new. An important basis for the removal of this window to form a doorway is that it will be on axis with the library and is intended to provide a visual dialogue with the detailing at the far end of the existing library. It is considered that the opportunity to create visual interest and drama between the old and the new should be supported and whilst this will involve loss of the C16th window detailing this is justified to deliver new internal views and spaces that would enhance the visual appreciation of the old. As above the existing window can be preserved 'by record' and a condition is proposed to secure this. A condition is also proposed that would allow more detailed consideration of the construction details of this new opening and to explore opportunities for retaining as much of the existing window head as possible so that not all the existing historic fabric is lost.

New extension

20. The new building will be taller than the existing, presenting a new façade onto Oriel Square (though set back and behind new railings and gates) and a new façade (including a bow window) onto the Garden Quad. It will change some aspects of the view from the gardens and rooms in Christ Church.
21. The applicant has been through a series of design iterations to resolve the relationship of the building to its varied contexts (internal to the Quad and Christ Church and external to Oriel Square).
22. Consultees have expressed concern about the impact on views from Oriel Square, on the setting of the historic buildings in the Garden Quad and on light levels to Christ Church Picture Gallery. Historic England comments about the design challenges of fitting a taller building into this context and comments in particular about the details of the top of the bow windows in views from the Garden Quad but concludes that any harm that there may be has been minimised by design and raises no objection to the new building. It comments that the nature of the views from Christ Church will change to some degree, noting that from the Cathedral garden the view of Merton tower will be partly obscured. However, it concludes that these changes will not be harmful to the significance of the heritage assets and doesn't make any comment about any harmful effects on the Picture Gallery.
23. Officers conclude that the proposed new building is contemporary but contextual and represents an intelligent response to how the new building will be experienced from various viewpoints. It is not considered that it will have a harmful impact on Oriel Square. As historic evidence shows the nature and form of the building in the gap between Corpus and Christ Church has changed, the latest iteration being the present 1950s façade. This façade is set well back from the Square and the space in front is currently used for parking and servicing. These proposals involve a new, and taller façade, but

importantly also seek to rationalise how the space in front is used. The proposal to reduce the parking and to provide gates and railings across the front will improve the relationship with Oriel Square and the new façade will represent a secondary element that will not harm the viewing experience of Oriel Square or the buildings around it.

Archaeology

24. This site is of interest because it is located within the late Saxon burh and medieval walled town close to the projected extent of the hypothesised primary 9th century burh and on an important north-south axial route that may be prehistoric in origin and was later known as Schidyerd Street. The projected lines of the primary burh are located in the near vicinity. In the medieval period the area of Garden Quad was occupied by a number of documented medieval academic halls (Beke's Inn, Nevilles's Inn and St Christopher Hall).
25. Archaeological evaluation trenches in the former Schidyerd Street, where part of the proposed basement is to be located, have produced evidence for significant archaeological remains comprising Late Saxon waterlogged midden tips along a likely intra-mural trackway and later medieval road surfaces. The remains in Schidyerd Street can be assessed as of high archaeological value, though it is not possible, based on existing evidence, to confidently state that these assets are demonstrably equivalent in value to a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The limited hand dug trench in Garden Quad has revealed tip levels containing medieval and post-medieval material of local interest (although the sample was constrained and there remains potential for further remains of interest to be located elsewhere in the basement footprint).
26. Officers are satisfied that the public benefits of the scheme are sufficient to justify the loss of this archaeology, with the harm also mitigated by excavation, analysis and publication of the results.

Other Matters.

27. There no highways objection (conditions on sustainable drainage proposed) and no adverse comment from Environment Agency or Thames Water. Cycle parking is provided for below ground via a ramped access and though parking will be retained in Schidyerd Street, the number of spaces will be reduced and reorganised.
28. The new building has been designed to minimise the use of traditional mechanical ventilation where possible seeking to make use of natural ventilation and sustainable technologies (e.g. ground source heat pumps) as much as possible. It is recognised that for the proper conservation of the archives some stable environmental controls are required but the proposal seeks to achieve this through building design minimising the use of mechanical ventilation and control. Thus the building is designed for low energy use with limited requirement for additional environmental control.

Conclusion:

The site has presented a range of challenges for the applicants to overcome. It is recognised that the solution results in the loss of a building that holds some heritage significance and has an impact elsewhere on below ground archaeology and historic fabric of adjoin buildings.

Officers concluded that the harm that this would entail has been minimised by design and the resultant impact are justified by the public benefits that the development would deliver including:

- Conservation of the College's special collection
- Improved access to the library and to the special collection
- Supporting the college's academic and outreach programme

Approval is recommended

Human Rights Act 1998

Officers have considered the Human Rights Act 1998 in reaching a recommendation to grant planning permission and listed building consent, 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

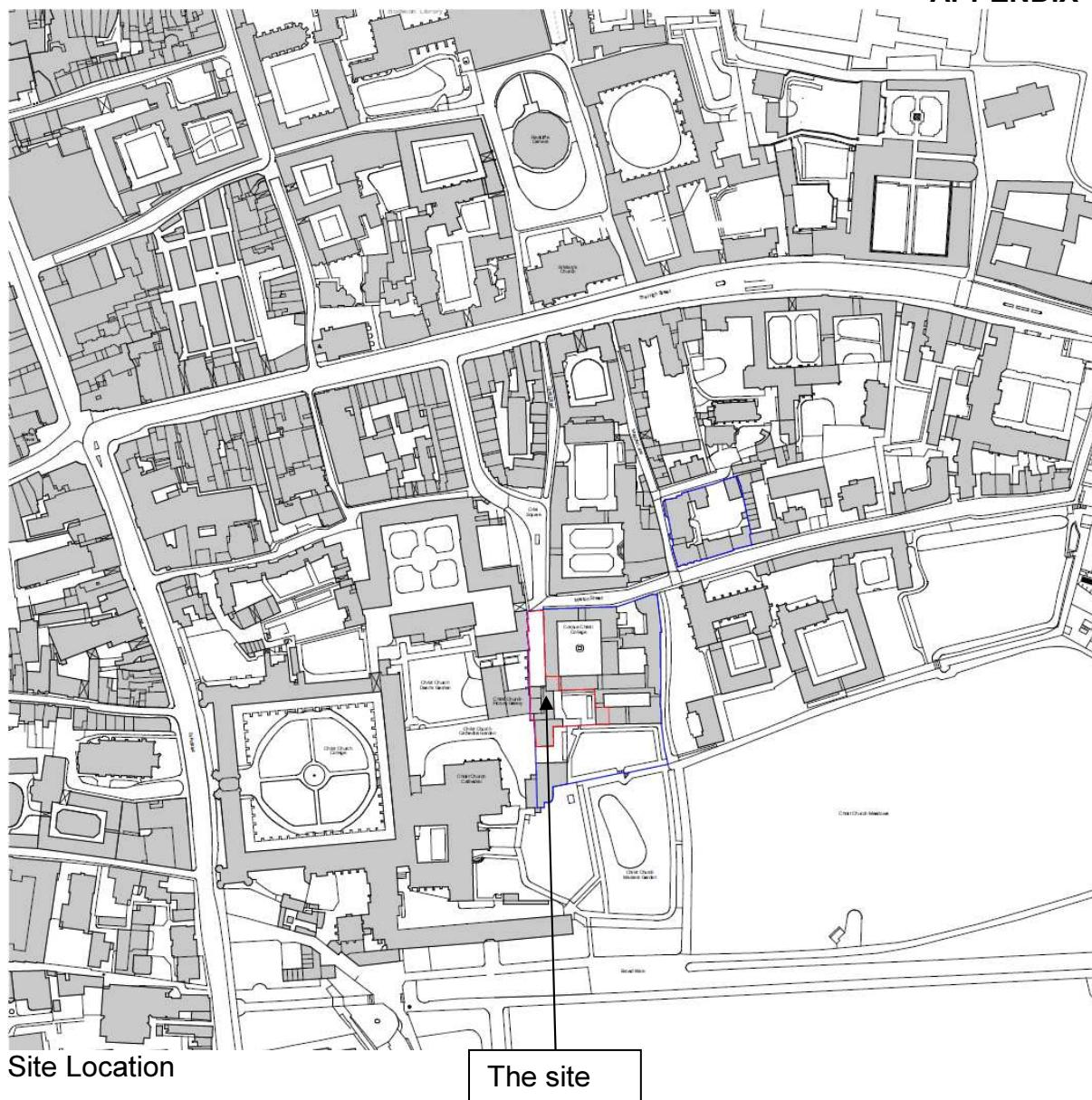
Officers have considered, with due regard, the likely effect of the proposal on the need to reduce crime and disorder as part of the determination of this application, in accordance with section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998. In reaching a recommendation to approve, officers consider that the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

Background Papers:

Contact Officer: Nick Worlledge

Extension: 2147

Date: 19th August 2015



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