

East Area Planning Committee

6th January 2016

Application Number: 15/02341/FUL

Decision Due by: 3rd December 2015

Proposal: Refurbishment of part of University campus consisting of:

1. Demolition of existing main hall and lecture theatre
2. Construction of replacement main hall.
3. Overcladding and refurbishment of Sinclair Building.
4. Removal of elevation and recladding and refurbishment of Clerici and former library buildings.
5. Replanning of forecourt, car park and landscaped area to Gipsy Lane frontage. (Amended plans)(Additional information)

Site Address: Oxford Brookes University, Gipsy Lane. Site plan at **Appendix 1.**

Ward: Churchill Ward

Agent: Mr Hamish McMichael

Applicant: Ms Sue Holmes

Recommendation:

APPLICATION BE APPROVED

Reasons for Approval

- 1 The planning application seeks to improve and integrate the majority of the remaining buildings on the Gipsy Lane campus with the John Henry Brookes development and Abercrombie extension. The proposals allow the university to maintain and develop its academic reputation by improving facilities for students and staff and will create an integrated campus, improving the student, staff and visitor experience. The buildings are of limited architectural merit and therefore their refurbishment and/or loss would maintain the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.
- 2 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.
- 3 The Council considers that the proposal, subject to the conditions imposed,

would accord with the special character and appearance of the conservation area. It has taken into consideration all other material matters, including matters raised in response to consultation and publicity.

Conditions

- 1 Development begun within time limit
- 2 Deemed in accordance with approved plans
- 3 Samples in Conservation Area
- 4 Landscape plan required
- 5 Landscape hard surface design - tree roots
- 6 Landscape underground services - tree roots
- 7 Tree Protection Plan (TPP) 1
- 8 Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) 1
- 9 Contaminated land
- 10 Car Parking
- 11 Cycle Parking
- 12 Drainage
- 13 CTMP

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
- CP11** - Landscape Design
- CP13** - Accessibility
- TR3** - Car Parking Standards
- TR4** - Pedestrian & Cycle Facilities
- NE15** - Loss of Trees and Hedgerows
- NE16** - Protected Trees
- HE7** - Conservation Areas

Core Strategy

- CS9_** - Energy and natural resources
- CS12_** - Biodiversity
- CS18_** - Urban design, town character, historic env
- CS25_** - Student accommodation
- CS29_** - The universities

Other Planning Documents

National Planning Policy Framework
Planning Practice Guidance
This application is in or affecting the Headington Hill Conservation Area.
Annual Monitoring Report 2014/15
Circular 06/2005 Biodiversity and Geological Conservation

Public Consultation

Statutory Consultees Etc.

Thames Water: with regards to sewerage infrastructure no objections; with regards to water infrastructure capacity no objections; with regards to surface water drainage it is the responsibility of a developer to make proper provision for drainage to ground, water courses or a suitable sewer; with regards to surface water it is recommended that the applicant should ensure that storm flows are attenuated or regulated into the receiving public network through on or off site storage

Historic England: The application(s) should be determined in accordance with national and local policy guidance, and on the basis of your specialist conservation advice.

County Council:

Strategic Comments: Although this application has very little, if any, infrastructure impact, the county council is fully supportive and appreciative of Oxford Brookes' ambition to ensure that it is an attractive institution as possible, attracting students and staff from a competitive market. These proposals certainly appear to be in line with the ambition and therefore, the county council supports these proposals, subject to conditions as outlined in the transport response.

Transport: No objection subject to conditions (see below)

Environment Agency: no comments on this planning application

Pre-Application Discussions/Oxford Design Review Panel (ODRP)

The applicant undertook pre-application discussions through a series of meetings with Oxford City Council. The scheme was also reviewed by the Oxford Design Review Panel on the 26th March 2015 in the form of a workshop at Oxford Brookes University. The ODRP generally viewed the proposals positively and found many aspects compelling. They thought refurbishing the existing building and giving it a

new lease of life was commendable, both in terms of sustainability and continuity for Oxford Brookes University. The recently completed Abercrombie building and the high standards of the new outdoor spaces demonstrated the client's commitment to quality. They have a number of comments to make regarding the landscape design, the approach to upgrading the existing façades and the internal organisation. Their letter of comment can be seen at **Appendix 2**.

As part of the Design and Access Statement the applicant has responded to ODRPs comments. These have been extracted from the Design and Access Statement and can be found at **Appendix 3**.

Relevant Site History:

The planning history for Oxford Brookes University is extensive. A few relevant applications have been listed below.

07/00544/CONSLT - PLEASE NOTE THIS IS NOT A PLANNING APPLICATION. THIS IS FOR CONSULTATION PURPOSES ONLY. Masterplan for Oxford Brookes University, Gipsy Lane and Headington Hill Campus. ENDRSE 26th September 2007.

08/01268/CONSLT - PLEASE NOTE THIS IS NOT A PLANNING APPLICATION. THIS IS FOR CONSULTATION PURPOSES ONLY. Revisions to Oxford Brookes Masterplan for Headington Campus Gipsy Lane and Headington Hill Hall sites. RNO 5th February 2009.

09/02764/FUL - Erection of new library and teaching building (NLTB) consisting of lecture theatre, library, teaching accommodation and social facilities, plus linked extension to the Abercrombie building and arcaded building to new entrance piazza to Headington Road. PER 18th June 2010.

15/01590/FUL - Demolition of existing side extension. Erection of side extension. Over-cladding of the Sinclair Annexe building. PER 21st July 2015.

Also of relevance:

13/00119/FUL - Erection of a 6 storey Class D1 building as University School of Government, including double basement comprising 9,800sqm of floorspace, together with associated hard and soft landscaping (additional information). PER 23rd May 2013.

Officers Assessment:

Site Description

1. The application relates to Oxford Brookes University Gipsy Lane campus in Headington. The campus has grown over the years from its beginning as Oxford College of Technology in the 1950s with buildings being added restringing in it becoming Oxford Polytechnic in 1970 and Oxford Brookes University in 1991. In more recent years the Gipsy Lane campus has under

gone a massive programme of demolition and rebuilds resulting in the campus today. However there remains some buildings and areas that still need attention to which this current application relates.

Proposal

2. The executive summary in the Design and Access Statement describes the main elements of the overall brief and a brief reason as to why they are necessary:
 - Refurbishment of Sinclair Building and Sinclair Annexe to provide dedicated modern science/research facilities for the Faculty of Health & Life Sciences. The project is a phased internal refurbishment, and overcladding of the Building.
 - Refurbishment of Clerici and former Library Buildings to provide new entrance gateway from Gipsy Lane, academic facilities for the Faculty of Business and a new lecture theatre and pooled teaching spaces
 - Demolition of the Main Lecture Theatre to improve the circulation and connectivity around the site.
 - Demolition and re-construction of the Main Hall, to create a new facility on the original footprint, which meets the functional requirements of the University in the 21st Century.
 - Improved pedestrian access within and between buildings that exceeds current legislative requirements to meet the University's ambitions for inclusiveness for all.
 - New landscaping to Gipsy Lane entrance area to provide better pedestrian and controlled vehicular access

Assessment

3. Officers consider the principal determining issues to be:
 - planning policy
 - design
 - trees
 - biodiversity
 - transport
 - student numbers
 - contaminated land
 - sustainability

Planning Policy

4. The main planning policy considerations are policy CS29 of the Oxford Core

Strategy (OCS) which explains that planning permission will be granted for proposals at Oxford Brookes University that deliver more efficient and flexible academic buildings and high-quality urban design on the existing Headington Hill, Gipsy Lane and Marston Road campuses.

5. The application site lies within Headington Hill Conservation Area. To this end policy HE7 of the Oxford Local Plan relates. It states planning permission will only be granted for development that preserves or enhances the special character and appearance of the conservation areas or their setting.
6. In terms of design policy CS18 of the OCS states planning permission will only be granted for development that demonstrates high quality urban design. This is reiterated in policies CP1, CP6, CP8 and CP10 of the Oxford Local Plan. Policy CP1 states that planning permission will only be granted for development that respects the character and appearance of the area and which uses materials of a quality appropriate to the nature of the development, the site and its surroundings. CP8 states all new and extended buildings should relate to their setting to strengthen, enhance and protect local character and CP10 states planning permission will only be granted where proposed developments are sited to ensure that street frontage and streetscape are maintained or enhanced or created.

Design

Demolition of existing main hall and lecture theatre and construction of replacement main hall

7. The main hall protrudes from the main building fronting Gipsy Lane and butts out towards the main Gipsy Lane entrance. The final design proposal involves the demolition and rebuilding of the Main Hall on its existing footprint. The original proposal had been to refurbish the existing Main Hall. Investigations revealed that there were structural limitations in the capability of the existing roof structure, to be adapted to suit new purposes; it could not support new loads. It was also identified that the new hall should have effective ventilation, requiring a new (concealed) rooftop plant enclosure. It also provides the opportunity to resolve several level problems within the existing hall, making the whole hall accessible and connected. In resolving the levels issue the roof height is raised. On top of the new build and raised roof, will be a recessed lower section of roof (not visible from outside the building) which will house new ventilation plant for the Main Hall.
8. The new elevations are to be clad in bronze anodised aluminium panels. This will introduce a rich self-finished metal, to complement the rawer Cor-ten steel material used in the Colonnade and “ribbon” through the John Henry Brookes Building (JHBB).
9. There is extensive glazing to the elevation to the north which will light the foyer, providing views to the landscape and a physical connection for the opening up of the space for events such as graduations and open days. There are multiple door openings which provide good circulation and during

graduation and other events.

10. It is proposed to identify a space on the roof of the Main Hall, so that PV's could be installed in the future, subject to technical and financial feasibility studies

Overcladding and refurbishment of Sinclair Building

11. The main use of the Sinclair building is for laboratory and research work. The existing buildings façade has reached the end of its technical life span and its overall visual appearance is poor. The designs have been developed to maximise the use of natural ventilation (unusual for laboratory design) and natural daylight and refurbishing the buildings skin makes it possible to comply with current building regulations, regarding energy efficiency.
12. The building is to remain in use during the refurbishment therefore overcladding was the solution. The weatherproof elements of the current facade stay in place and remain in function until the new facade is completely finished. At this moment, parts of the existing facade that are no longer of use can be taken out, if desired.

Removal of elevation and recladding and refurbishment of Clerici and former library buildings

13. The Clerici building is the main entrance point from Gipsy Lane and will provide an arrival point, to be known as the Gateway, and will include a public area to allow visitors and students to orientate themselves within the campus. However the principle Campus arrival point and reception will remain within the new JHBB. The Gateway entrance is kept in its current location. The existing double height space is to be refurbished and the Gateway building entry is emphasised by means of a double height inset of the facade, enclosing a revolving door and side pass doors. As well as a point of entry, the Clerici Gateway also forms a link between the JHBB, courtyard and Main Hall buildings.
14. The ground and first floor of the Clerici facade is to be composed of a transparent curtain wall system. On the first and second floor where offices are located, the facade is more closed and composed of an insulated wall panel system with a regular pattern of windows. In front of these facade systems, a regular pattern of vertical and horizontal louvres is placed to give the whole of the building a coherent appearance and to emphasize the whole of the long and stretched building mass. The louvres also provide for additional sun screening and privacy.
15. There are currently issues with levels inside and outside the Clerici building main entrance point thus one of the key challenges has been to remove the level changes within the Gateway, and to rationalise all of the levels, to provide a strategy for accessible circulation both into the Clerici building, and then from the Cleric to the rest of the campus. It is proposed to raise the floor level of the Gateway to the upper level, and to raise the external landscape

levels to match. This will require external landscaping, but will provide a barrier free entrance and arrival.

16. The former library building existing distinctive feature is the use of a concrete panel facade from ground to roof. However to create the larger necessary daylight openings, it has been found that these concrete panels cannot easily be altered, therefore they are to be removed at the first and second floor. A double height transparent new facade, screened by large louvres that provide for sun and privacy screening will be inserted. The precast concrete panels at the ground floor and at the roof trim level are to be reinstated. On ground floor, the original aluminium curtain walls and brickwork infill parts are to be removed and replaced by a new aluminium curtain wall at the same perimeter line, in this way maintaining the original setback on the ground floor.
17. The former library building extension, which fronts Headington Road, is characterised by a brickwork façade which is not found elsewhere on the campus. The main issue with the current facade is the lack of openings in the form of windows which limits the amount of daylight entering the building. Therefore substantial larger glazed wall punctures are proposed and the brickwork will be replaced with aluminium anodised cladding.
18. The library element of the overall proposals is the most visually prominent from both Gypsy Lane and Headington Road. The alterations retain reference to the original concrete building but allow the building to be modernised and more effectively used. The library extension overcladding will bring this element into context with the rest of the scheme.

Replanning of forecourt, car park and landscaped area to Gypsy Lane frontage

19. The proposal is to re-landscape the area between the Clerici building and Gypsy Lane, by moving the vehicle road and parking closer to the Road, and creating a more formal area of soft landscape close to buildings. The impact on the trees is detailed below in the trees section.
20. The proposals are considered acceptable in terms of policy CS18 of the Core Strategy 2026, CP1 CP6, CP8, CP10 and HE7 of the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 in that they respect the character and appearance of the area, use materials of a quality appropriate to the nature of the development, the site and its surroundings and create an appropriate visual relationship with the form, grain, scale, materials and details of the site and the surrounding area and will not have a detrimental impact on the character and appearance of the conservation area in which the building stands.

Trees

21. Trees within the grounds of Cheney School and Oxford Brookes' Gypsy Lane campus make an important contribution to the area's green character, softening the outline of the large institutional buildings along both Headington Road and Gypsy Lane and in some cases representing survival of the nursery gardens and parkland planting of the Morrell's estate.

22. In the initial submission the full extent of removal of existing trees was not accurately identified and the proposed construction activities within Root protection Areas of retained trees had potential to significantly harm retained trees to the detriment of the viability. Additionally the applicant was requested to submit a BS5837:2012 compliant tree Survey and Arboricultural Impact Assessment, together with a Arboricultural Method Statement (draft) for all construction activities within the RPA of retained trees which includes details the special precautions that will be taken in the design and construction of new built elements to ensure that retained trees are not significantly damaged by construction works required for the redesign of the forecourt, car park and landscaped area to the Gipsy Lane frontage .
23. The Arboricultural Impact Statement (AIS) identifies that 11 existing trees must be removed for the proposals; the majority of these are small, low quality and value trees (BS5837:2012 C category), but others (such as the 2 hornbeams 7794 and 7796 and the Kanzan cherries 7990 and 7991) are moderate quality. On balance however, officers concur that new planting will mitigate the impact of these losses on public amenity in the area, in particular on the appearance and character of this part of the Headington hill Conservation Area.
24. 2 retained trees will need to be pruned; 5201 and 7971. This will not be harmful to public amenity or to the conservation area if carried out in accordance with good pruning practice as recommended by BS3998:2010.
25. Officers main concern as this stage is to have enough information to be able to assess the impacts of the new hard surfacing on retained trees so that these impacts can be considered in the Council's decision; new hard surfaces within the Root Protection Areas (RPAs) of retained trees are potentially very harmful and the need to avoid excavation and to ensure these areas remain air and water permeable is a significant constraint.
26. It has been agreed between the applicant and officers that an appropriate way forward would be for a plan to be produced showing the areas where new hard surfaces encroach within the RPAs of retained trees, together with a broad statement that construction of all new hard surfaces within those areas would not involve excavation into ground soil in which roots are growing and also that the finished surface would be designed to be permeable to allow air and water to reach the roots below. A typical cross section detail of the 'no-dig' hard surface using a 3-dimensional geotextile such as CellWeb or GeoWeb laid on top of existing ground levels, would be also included on the drawing. This information enable officers to conclude that retained tree should be unharmed if adequate care is taken.
27. This information can then be issued to the project arboriculturalist who should be able to add a statement to the AIS confirming that the viability of retained trees will not be adversely affect by the construction of hard surfaces within their RPAs if these details are followed subject to appropriate Tree Protection Plan and Arboricultural Method Statement.

Biodiversity

28. The development comprises internal and external refurbishing works, some demolition and external landscape works. As bats utilise buildings and trees for roosting the development could potentially have an adverse effect on bats.
29. Section 99 of Circular 06/2005 states 'It is essential that the presence or otherwise of protected species, and the extent that they may be affected by the proposed development, is established before the planning permission is granted, otherwise all relevant material considerations may not have been addressed in making the decision. However, bearing in mind the delay and cost that may be involved, developers should not be required to undertake surveys for protected species unless there is a reasonable likelihood of the species being present and affected by development. Where this is the case, the survey should be completed and any necessary measures to protect the species should be in place, through conditions and / or planning obligations, before permission is granted.'
30. In this instance it is considered that there is not sufficient reasonable likelihood of bats roosting within the buildings to trigger a survey because the building fabric does not comprise loft spaces or external features that lend themselves to be utilised by bats. The development does also not seem to comprise major tree works to trees that might have bat potential.
31. Despite this the presence of bats cannot be discounted entirely and a small risk remains. In order to account for this it is recommended that the an informative is applied to the decision so that the applicant can take appropriate measures should they or evidence of their presence be discovered during works.

Transport

32. The Headington area, within which the application is located, is currently subject to considerable congestion during peak hour periods. A number of committed and proposed county council schemes within the vicinity of the development aim to address these current issues, notably county councils current Access to Headington project, and the Oxford Transport Strategy's proposal for Rapid Transit routes along Gypsy Lane and London Road. It is important that the development has due regard both to the strategic objectives and construction schedule of these projects. In particular, the implementation of a Construction Traffic Management Plan will be important to minimise any adverse impacts on the local road network.
33. The development will not result in changes to the operation of the buildings or intensification of use of the buildings. The proposal also seeks to maintain existing levels of cycle and car parking. Therefore, the proposed development is unlikely to have a transport impact.
34. It is noted that on-site cycle parking facilities are to be relocated in some instances. A suitably worded planning condition has been recommended to

this end regarding the detail of new cycle facilities, which should be both covered and secure.

35. It is noted that chevron parking is proposed within the car parking. This is not recommended unless a one-way system is in operation, which does not seem the case in the northern end of the car park. The alignment of the car parking would thus require vehicles to manoeuvre excessively to exit. Therefore, the car parking layout should be amended. A suitably worded planning condition has been recommended to allow the county council to agree the car parking layout at a later stage.

Student numbers

36. Oxford Brookes University remains committed to hitting the below 3,000 target. Longer term, as part of its ten year estates investment programme, Oxford Brookes University is actively working to significantly expand its accommodation portfolio for future years, to a point where a rolling programme of refurbishment can be accommodated whilst still achieving the below 3,000 target for students living in the private rented sector. Current plans, which are dependent on planning permissions, will see an increase of more than 20% in the rooms available by 2019.
37. Core Strategy Policy CS25 requires each university to have no more than 3,000 full-time students living outside of university provided accommodation in the city. The policy is intended to reduce the pressures from students on the private rental market.
38. Whilst the preamble to policy CS25 says all applications for new or redeveloped academic floorspace will be assessed in this light i.e. to avoid worsening the existing situation, it is crucial that all increases in student numbers (at the two universities) are matched at least by an equivalent increase in student accommodation the actual policy says:

Planning permission will only be granted for additional academic/administrative accommodation for the University of Oxford and Oxford Brookes University where that University can demonstrate: in the first place that the number of full-time students at that University, who live in Oxford but outside of university-provided accommodation, will, before the particular development is completed, be below the 3,000 level and once that figure is reached, thereafter will not exceed that level. All future increases in student numbers at the two Universities as a result of increases in academic/administrative floor-space must be matched by a corresponding increase in purpose built student accommodation.

39. A condition could be added requiring the University to demonstrate no more than 3000 students registered at any one time are accommodated other than within serviced student accommodation provided by or managed by the University or its constituent colleges, not including students resident in the City of Oxford before commencing their studies and continuing to do so.

40. This type of condition was added to the application for the Blavatnik School of Government building (ref.: 13/00119/FUL) which had a total of 9,800sqm of floorspace therefore the condition was considered to be reasonable, necessary and relevant.
41. However in the application before Members there is an actual decrease in floorspace of 199sqm. It is acknowledged that the floorspace may be used more effectively and efficiently nevertheless given the wording of policy CS25 i.e. *planning permission will only be granted for additional academic/administrative accommodation* it is officers opinion that a condition in relation to student numbers would be unreasonable and therefore has not been added.

Contaminated land

42. Officers have considered the application with respect to contaminated land and would recommend that a condition requiring a phased risk assessment is attached to any planning permission. This recommendation has been made because this is considered a major planning application. As a minimum, a desk study and documented site walkover are required to ensure that there are no sources of contamination on or near to the site and that the site is suitable for its proposed use.

Sustainability

43. The scheme has not been registered for a formal BREEAM application, as Oxford Brookes have their own standards and targets they seek to achieve, however the aspiration is to exceed the equivalent of BREEAM and other recognised excellent standards.
44. A Building Energy Management System (BEMS) will be installed as part of the development. This will include highly automated Energy Management and Targeting software for use by the University's estates and facilities manager. This will be a necessary requirement in optimising the heating, cooling and ventilation management of the space and hence reduce running costs and CO2 emissions.
45. The design approach will aim to minimise the energy consumption of the mechanical, electrical and public health systems by implementing both best practice and innovative design. To achieve this the design has included various elements of natural ventilation, external solar shading, maximum use of natural daylight etc. Full details can be seen on page 58 of the Design and Access Statement.
46. It is proposed to connect the refurbished buildings into the existing Energy Centre, for district heating, which was constructed as part of the JHBB.

Conclusion:

74. For the reasons given above and taking into account all other matters raised Officers conclude that the proposal accords with all the relevant policies within the Oxford Core Strategy 2026 and the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 and therefore recommends Members approval the application.

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 planning permission, officers consider that the proposal will not undermine crime prevention or the promotion of community safety.

Background Papers:

Contact Officer: Lisa Green

Extension: 2614

Date: 22nd December 2015

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