East Area Planning Committee 7th December 2016

Application Number: 16/01945/FUL

Decision Due by: 8th November 2016

Proposal: Erection of a 4 storey office building with associated access, pedestrian links, car parking for 203 vehicles, and new landscaping scheme including partial re-grading of existing landscaping bund.

Site Address: Plot 12 Edmund Halley Road, Oxford Science Park (**site plan: appendix 1**)

Ward: Littlemore Ward

Agent: Mr Jonathan Buckwell **Applicant:** Mr Piers Scrimshaw-Wright

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Recommendation:

The East Area Planning Committee is recommended to support the development in principle but defer the application in order to draw up a legal agreement in the terms outlined below, and delegate to officers the issuing of the notice of permission, subject to conditions on its completion for the following reasons:

Reasons for Approval

1 The proposed development would make an efficient use of land within a key protected employment site in a manner that would meet the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework and Oxford Core Strategy 2026 in supporting sustainable economic growth. The siting, layout, external appearance and landscaping of the proposed development would create an appropriate visual relationship with the Science Park without having a significant impact upon biodiversity, sustainability, drainage, contaminated land, or local highways and any impact could be successfully dealt with by appropriately worded conditions. The proposal would therefore accord with the aims of the National Planning Policy Framework, Oxford Core Strategy 2026, and Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016

2 In considering the application, officers have had specific regard to the comments of third parties and statutory bodies in relation to the application. However officers consider that these comments have not raised any material considerations that would warrant refusal of the applications, and any harm identified could be successfully mitigated by appropriately worded conditions.

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.

Conditions

1 Development begun within time limit
2 Develop in accordance with approved plans
3 Materials as specified
4 Landscape plan required
5 Landscape carried out after completion
6 Tree Protection Plan (TPP) 1
7 Implementation of Flood Risk Assessment recommendations
8 Drainage Strategy - Foul and Surface Water
9 Detail of car parking provision and management plan
10 Travel Plan
11 Construction Traffic Management Plan
12 Implementation of Energy statement recommendations
13 Contaminated Land Assessment
14 Details of Electric Charging Points within parking area
15 Biodiversity Enhancements
16 Details of a pedestrian and cycle link through to Littlemore Park

Legal Agreement:

To secure one or all of the following improvements to public transport services to the site for a period of 5 years

- enhance existing services to the city centre (from 2 to 4 buses per hour in peak* hours), or
- enhance and extend services to Oxford train station (from 2 to 3 buses per hour in the peak* hours), or
- provide a service to Cowley and Headington (operating at least 2 buses per hour in the peak* hours)

*to arrive at the site between 07:00 and 10:00, and leave the site 16:00-19:00 on working days (all Mondays to Fridays except public holidays)

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
CP19 - Nuisance

CP20 - Lighting
CP21 - Noise
CP22 - Contaminated Land
TR1 - Transport Assessment
TR2 - Travel Plans
TR3 - Car Parking Standards
TR4 - Pedestrian & Cycle Facilities
TR14 - Servicing Arrangements
NE14 - Water and Sewerage Infrastructure

Core Strategy
CS2_ - Previously developed and greenfield land
CS9_ - Energy and natural resources
CS11_ - Flooding
CS12_ - Biodiversity
CS13_ - Supporting access to new development
CS18_ - Urban design, town character, historic environment
CS27_ - Sustainable economy
CS28_ - Employment sites

Sites and Housing Plan - Submission
SP43_ - Oxford Science Park at Littlemore

Other Planning Documents
National Planning Policy Framework

Public Consultation

Statutory Consultees

- Oxfordshire County Council Highways Authority: No objection subject to conditions

- South Oxfordshire District Council: No comments to make

- Thames Water Utilities Limited: Thames Water would recommend that petrol / oil interceptors be fitted in all car parking/washing/repair facilities. Failure to enforce the effective use of petrol / oil interceptors could result in oil-polluted discharges entering local watercourses.

  With the information provided Thames Water, has been unable to determine the waste water infrastructure needs of this application. Should the Local Planning Authority look to approve the application ahead of further information being provided, we request that a condition be attached which seeks details of a full drainage strategy for the development.

  Thames Water advise that a drainage strategy should be provided with the details of the points of connection to the public sewerage system as well as the anticipated flows (including flow calculation method) into the proposed connection points. This data can then be used to determine the impact of the proposed development on the existing sewer system.

On the basis of information provided, Thames Water would advise that with regard to water infrastructure capacity, we would not have any objection to the above planning application.

A further condition should be imposed that requests a piling method statement.

- Littlemore Parish Council: Littlemore Parish Council has no objection to the design of this building. Both it and the surrounding parking and landscaping appear to be in character with other properties at the Science Park.

  We would like the planning department, in conjunction with County Highways, to examine the merits of an additional 203 parking spaces. The County Council has, as part of its 20 year transport plan consultation, been in discussion with the management at the Science Park about means of travel used by those working there, with the aim of increasing the use of public transport and reducing private car journeys. Stagecoach have taken over the bus service to the Science Park and have improved the timetable to provide a half-hourly service up till about 8 pm Monday to Saturday. This also benefits residents of Sandford on Thames and Littlemore. We do not want this provision to be axed for lack of use. Chiltern Railways plan to build a station there, which will create a speedy link to Oxford City Centre and connections to the rest of the country. This may alter staff commuting habits to make the Science Park more sustainable.

  Finally, we strongly support the creation of employment here and welcome this addition to the Science Park.

- Oxford Civic Society
  Although, in principle, this development appears to be unobjectionable, the Transport Statement clearly provides erroneous and misleading information, for example, regarding journey times by taxi from Oxford Rail Station (10 minutes), and the future provision of a rail service to a new station at the Science Park (no confirmation that this will happen, no timescale yet defined and no funding identified). The assessment of traffic-generation effects is thus questionable, and should be carried out more rigorously before consent is granted.

Third Parties
None

Officers Assessment:

Background to Proposals

1. The application site is situated within Oxford Science Park, which is on the south-eastern edge of the city. The park is bordered by the A4074 to the east, Grenoble Road to the south, and an area of undeveloped land (albeit with outline planning permission for residential development) to the north (**appendix 1**)

2. The application relates to Plot 12 which is one of the remaining undeveloped plots at the western end of the park. It lies adjacent to the vacant plots (23-26) to

the west, the Fletcher / Winchester Building and Sadler Amenities Building to the north, and the Nominet Office Building to the south.

3. The site is accessed via Edmund Halley Road which is the spine road that runs through the park from Grenoble Road. A service road encircles the undeveloped plot

4. The application is seeking planning permission for the erection of a 4 storey office building, together with associated access, parking and landscaping on this plot.

5. Officers consider the principal determining issues to be:
   - principle of development;
   - site layout and built forms;
   - transport;
   - landscaping
   - flood risk and drainage;
   - air quality;
   - land contamination
   - biodiversity;
   - sustainability
   - ecology

Principle of Development

6. The National Planning Policy Framework and Oxford Core Strategy Policy CS2 encourage development proposals to make an efficient and appropriate use of previously developed land in a manner that suits the sites capacity.

7. The Oxford Science Park is designated as a key protected employment site and therefore considered a key site for delivering the Core Strategy's aims of managed economic growth to 2026. The existing supply of employment sites is safeguarded through the application of Policy CS28, which aims to resist the loss of these key protected employment sites. In addition to this, the undeveloped plots within the Oxford Science Park are specifically allocated within Sites and Housing Plan Policy SP43 for B1 employment uses that directly relate to Oxford's key sectors of employment.

8. Having regards to this context, officers consider that the provision of a new office building with a total floor area of 6,974m² would be consistent with the aims of these policies.

Site Layout and Built Forms

9. Policy CS18 of the Oxford Core Strategy 2026 requires development to demonstrate high-quality urban design responding appropriately to the site and surroundings; creating a strong sense of place; contributing to an attractive public realm; and providing high quality architecture.

10. The Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 requires development to enhance the quality of the environment, with Policy CP1 central to this purpose. Policy CP6 emphasises the need to make an efficient use of land, in a manner where the built form and site layout suits the sites capacity and surrounding area. This is supported through Policy CP8, which states that the siting, massing, and design of new development should create an appropriate visual relationship with the built form of the surrounding area.

11. The proposal would provide a detached four-storey building (with setback fourth floor) which would have an irregular footprint that measures approximately 47m – 55m (l) x 36.5m – 54m (w) x 15.6m (h). The fourth floor would be set back from the front of the building by 18m at its furthest which then reduces in distance throughout the.

12. Layout: The plot is in a prominent location within the park, and is a bulb shaped plot with public realm on all sides. The building is therefore sited towards the southern end of the site, with the majority of parking around the southern edge and some to the north. A large area of open space is provided to the north, which would align with the front entrance and allows a pedestrian link to be created between the new building and the surrounding buildings including the main amenities building for the park.

13. The overall layout for the site would make the best use of the irregular shape of the plot while also enabling the layout to create a sense of place and prominence within the park for this new building.

14. Size and Scale: The detached building would be four-storeys, although the fourth floor would be set back at varying distances from the frontage. The overall size and scale of the building would be consistent with the other buildings within the Science Park and the setback for the fourth floor would help to break the scale of the building.

15. Appearance: The building has been designed with a contemporary appearance that would respond to the fact that it is visible from all sides, and even the mechanical plant requirements have been built into the built form through the shafts at the rear of the building. The building would be formed from a glazed curtain wall system with solid spandrel panels, and external louvres to reduce solar gain.

16. Officers consider that the overall size, scale, design and siting of the proposed development would suit the sites capacity and the character and appearance of the Science Park in accordance with the above-mentioned policies.

Transport

17. The site allocation policy SP43 expects development proposals to demonstrate how the development mitigates against traffic impacts and maximises access by alternative means of transport. A Transport Statement & Addendum, and Travel Plan have been submitted which considers the highway impacts of the

development.

18. Traffic Impact: The addendum to the Transport Assessment identifies that the development will generate 140 vehicle trips in the AM peak (8-9am) and 134 trips in the PM peak (5-6pm). These trips will be distributed across the area, and the Local Highways Authority has concluded that they could be accommodated on the surrounding road network without having a severe commutative impact.

19. Site Accessibility: The main issue with the science park is that it is not readily accessible by public transport and the catchment for walking and cycling is limited by its more remote location and a lack of alternative / direct routes to the wider area. This places greater emphasis on achieving appropriate measures to provide alternative options to the car and ensure that traffic impacts are not worse than predicted

20. The Transport Assessment has identified that the main residential areas are within at least a 15 minute walk of the Science Park, but that Littlemore, Cowley, Blackbird Leys, and Greater Leys are within convenient cycling distance, albeit these routes include roads where cycling is less likely to be convenient or the safe option (i.e. A4074, Henley Road, and Sandford Road). The Local Highways Authority have identified that there are future plans to upgrade the A4074 to provide a 'Cycle Super Route' which would create a safer and direct route between the Science Park and City centre. It is anticipated that this will be funded through CIL contributions.

21. In addition to the above, officers are aware that it would be possible to create a new pedestrian and cycle link through to the residential development at 'Littlemore Park' on the opposite side of the brook. This has outline planning permission subject to a condition that the layout allows for such a link to be created to the science park. The provision of such a link would provide a more direct route to the Science Park from Sandford Road and Oxford Road and thereby connecting the site to the wider area enabling alternative means of accessing the park by modes of transport other than the car. A condition should be imposed seeking provision of such a link through to the Littlemore Park development.

22. The potential opening of the Cowley Branch Line for passenger services is also likely to improve access to the Science Park considerably, but is unlikely to happen for some time. The bus services to the Science Park are limited. The 3A service provides a half-hourly service connecting the site to the city centre, via Iffley Road. The public transport option therefore needs to be made more attractive because without service improvements the mode share targets set out within the interim travel plan will be unlikely to be met.

23. The County Council has recommended that the development should contribute by way of a financial contribution towards improving public transport services to the site, through improving the existing bus service to the city centre, or enhancing the existing services to the Oxford train station; or providing a service to Cowley / Headington. The applicant has raised concerns about the suitability of a one-off payment to pump-prime these services and have therefore indicated

that they are prepared to enter into a legal agreement which requires them to deliver one of the above services or a combination of them for a period of 5 years.

24. Car Parking: The proposed would provide 203 parking spaces which would accord with the maximum car parking standards (1 space per 35m²) for B1 Use set out within the Oxford Local Plan.

25. Although the parking provision would meet the maximum parking standards within the Local Plan, the Local Highways Authority have indicated that a parking accumulation exercise has been carried out for the scheme using the trip rates within the Transport Addendum which assumes 64% of employees will drive to work (and is the same as the actual modal share of the wider Oxford Science Park). This suggests that peak demand for car parking (232 vehicles) could exceed the on-site provision and so overspill parking is likely to be needed unless a car park management plan and also Travel Plan are in place to reduce demand. These are to be secured by condition.

26. The parking layout has identified that some of the perpendicular parking within the parking area would be below the required 5m x 2.5m standard. Furthermore a road width of 6m is required to enable vehicles to access these spaces. A detailed parking layout is therefore required by condition to ensure that all the spaces are accessible. This should also include details of the dedicated car spaces for car share clubs, and electric charging points.

27. Cycle Parking: The proposal will provide 80 cycle parking spaces which would accord with the Local Plan standards, and would be more than sufficient to accommodate the 13% modal share of cycle users set out within the interim Travel Plan while also allowing for some growth in cycling that may occur as a result of future improvements. The cycle stores will be provided as 2-tier storage which would also be acceptable.

28. Travel Plan: An interim Travel Plan has been submitted but it is clear that this needs to be prepared in conjunction with the existing Framework Travel Plan for the whole of the Science Park. The Travel Plan for the site and the Science Park as a whole provides an opportunity to develop and co-ordinate measures across the whole site for the benefit of employers and employees.

29. This should be secured by condition. The Local Highways Authority has recommended that the following points are also taken into consideration as part of the travel plan, and these should be added as an informative to the condition.
    - A car park management plan should be prepared to manage both on and off site parking.
    - A number of car parking spaces should be set aside for those employees who car share for their journey to and from work. These priority spaces should be in a prominent position and will be clearly marked out as such.
    - The travel plan has identified that "the key issue for the site is that it does not benefit from good public transport access nor is it ideally situated for walking, with catchments to nearby by residential areas and off-site bus stops being beyond a reasonable walking distance". These limitations mean the travel plan has a lot of work to do to enable employees to overcome these disadvantages as the

inclination of many employees is likely to be to try and drive to and from the site or nearby (as the parking accumulation estimates). Measures which provide greater incentive to use public transport and cycling in particular are encouraged as well disincentives to drive.

- Clear modal split targets for the type of travel need to be set and accepted as part of the travel plan these will then need to be checked against progress every time a survey takes place. If targets are not being met new actions will be included in the travel plan immediately to address this situation.
- More thought will need to be given within the travel plan to not only the journey to and from work but also travel once employees are at work for business purposes and what facilities and services employees will need to access while they are at work such as catering, shopping and banking. This will include what can be done to minimise the need to travel once at work such as phone and video conferencing. This will also be dependent on the type of business that the site occupier conducts.
- Are there any other companies based on the Oxford Science Park who have successfully encouraged their employees to get to and from work by other means than SOV trips? Does anyone else operate successful shuttle services or offer incentives to employees who don't use a car park space or car share? Is there any opportunity for sharing services or introducing new services to give employees more travel options? These options will need to be investigated by the site travel plan (and also Framework Travel Plan).

Landscaping

30. An Arboricultural Impact Assessment has been submitted with the application which identifies that there is a planted copse to the north of the site. The survey identifies that a number of trees and hedgerows in this area are to be removed or thinned out in order to provide space for the footpath linking the main building and car parking to the northern parts of the site. However, the majority of trees (approx.140-150) on this boundary will be retained to provide some mature landscaping and an element of screening between the building and surrounding road.

31. Having reviewed the survey, officers consider that the existing trees to be removed are relatively young trees which currently have limited public amenity value. While their amenity value will obviously increase as they mature, it is clear that the benefits that will be lost through their removal will be adequately mitigated by new tree planting undertaken through the overall landscaping of the site post development.

32. Therefore subject to conditions requiring the provision of a landscaping plan for the site and also tree protection measures being installed for the retained trees during the construction phase of the development. Officers consider that the proposal would be acceptable in arboricultural terms in accordance with Oxford Local Plan Policies CP1, CP11, and NE15.

Flood Risk / Drainage

33. The Flood Risk Assessment submitted with the application identifies that the site is located within Flood Zone 1, which means that it is at low risk from flooding.

34. In terms of surface water drainage, the development will discharge part of its surface water to the existing drainage network within the Science Park and the remainder to ground. The Flood Risk Assessment identifies that the existing drainage system within the Science Park uses attenuated balancing ponds to the north of Plot 12 for surface water. These ponds are designed to store 1 in 100 year event flows from the entirety of Phase 2 which then discharges to Littlemore Brook at the normal greenfield run off rate. The existing system was designed to assume that some of the surface water from Plot 12 would discharge into this existing network and the remainder discharge to ground through permeable paving.

35. Having reviewed the Flood Risk Assessment, Lake System & Plot Drainage Strategy for Phase 2, and attenuation Lake Management Guide, officers are satisfied that the existing drainage system has capacity to receive some of the surface water from the scheme, whilst the remainder would be discharged to ground through the use of permeable paving. Therefore subject to a condition requiring the development to be carried out in accordance with these details, officers consider that the proposal would accord with the aims of Oxford Core Strategy Policy CS11.

36. Thames Water have indicated that insufficient detail has been provided to determine the waste water infrastructure needs of the development and have requested that a condition be imposed requiring the submission of a drainage strategy for on and off site drainage works relating to foul and surface water to ensure there is sufficient capacity in the system.

Air Quality

37. An Air Quality Assessment has been submitted with the application which considers the potential impacts on air quality during both the construction and operational phases of the proposed development.

38. The dispersion modelling indicated that pollution levels at the development were below the relevant air quality standards and, as such, the location is considered suitable for its end use without the inclusion of mitigation methods. Additionally, the assessment concludes that impacts on pollutant levels as a result of operational phase vehicle exhaust emissions were not predicted to be significant at any sensitive location in the vicinity of the site. The use of robust assumptions, where necessary, was considered to provide sufficient results confidence for an assessment of this nature.

39. Officers agree with the conclusions of the assessment and consider that air quality issues are not considered a constraint to planning consent for the proposed development. Notwithstanding this, the National Planning Policy Framework indicates that developments should enable future occupiers to make “green” vehicle choices and “incorporate facilities for charging plug-in and other ultra-low emissions vehicles”. The Oxford City Council’s Air Quality Action Plan 2013 commits to seeking to ensure that new developments make appropriate provision for walking, cycling, public transport and low emission vehicle

infrastructure e.g. Electric Vehicle charging points.

40. Therefore officers would recommend that a condition be attached which requires the provision of electric vehicle charging points at a ratio of 1 per 1000m^2 of commercial floorspace, which in the case of this proposal would equate to 6 charging points.

Land Contamination

41. A phase 1 desk top study and phase 2 ground investigation in accordance with the Environment Agency Guidance Model Procedures for the Management of Land Contamination (CLR11) has been submitted with the application.

42. The ground investigation undertaken assessed the ground conditions with respect to contaminants in soils and the presence of ground gas. Risk assessments for human health and controlled waters were undertaken based on these results. There were no exceedences of any soil contaminants when compared to generic assessment criteria for a commercial end use. The risk assessment for controlled waters did not identify any unacceptable risks. There was asbestos found in 2 soil samples, and this was identified as a potential risk to human health in soft landscaped areas. It was recommended to provide a clean cover system in all soft landscaped areas for public use. There were no further risks to human health identified in this risk assessment.

43. The gas monitoring showed elevated carbon dioxide on the site, likely to be from organic-rich deposits found on site. While no gas flow rate was measured, the limit of detection for flow was used to determine a gas screening value which placed the site in characteristic situation 1. However, as the carbon dioxide concentration was above 5% in one instance, and near 5% in two others, it was recommended that the site be upgraded to characteristic situation 2, which requires gas protection measures.

44. Officers would agree with the overall assessment and recommendations in the reports, and would recommend that conditions are imposed on any grant of permission to secure the further assessments, gas protection details and verification report.

Sustainability:

45. A Natural Resource Impact Analysis (NRIA) and Energy Strategy has been submitted as required by Oxford Core Strategy Policy CS9, and has been developed following pre-application discussions with officers.

46. The Energy Strategy indicates that the carbon emissions from the development will be achieved through passive design measures in the building; installing high efficiency systems to reduce energy consumption; and using Low & Zero Carbon Technologies including an air source heat pump system that will provide space heating and cooling system for the building in order to provide a greater energy and carbon efficiency in comparison to the conventional system.

47. The NRIA scores 8/11 which comfortably exceeds the minimum target of 6/11, and the scheme will achieve a BREAMM target of 'Very Good' with potential to achieve an 'Excellent' rating. The strategy also identifies that the building design has also been designed to ensure that it achieves a 32% reduction in carbon emissions from passive design measures alone when compared to the previous building regulations. The low carbon technologies included within the scheme will achieve a 15.7% reduction in regulated emissions, while the Air Source Heat Pumps will 24.3% of the building's total energy demand (regulated & Unregulated) in line with the councils policies, and also a 14.4% reduction in regulated energy consumption.

48. Therefore officers would raise no objection to this aspect of the proposal subject to a condition requiring the recommendations of the NRIA and Energy Strategy to be carried out.

Ecology

49. Officers consider that there is not a reasonable likelihood of protected species being impacted by the proposals. An informative should be added to ensure that tree removals and vegetation clearance are undertaken outside of the bird nesting season.

50. However, Oxford Core Strategy Policy CS12 identifies that all practical opportunities should be taken to include features beneficial to biodiversity within development proposals. Therefore a condition should be attached which requires at least 4 bird nesting boxes to be incorporated into the scheme.

Community Infrastructure Levy

51. The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a standard charge on new development. The amount of CIL payable is calculated on the basis of the amount of floor space created by a development and applies to developments of 100 square metres or more. Based on the floor area of the proposed development the proposal will be liable for a CIL payment of £161,308.62.

Conclusion

52. The proposal is considered to be in accordance with the relevant policies of the Oxford Core Strategy 2026 and the Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 and therefore Members of the East Area Planning Committee are recommended to grant planning permission for the proposed development.

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.

ection 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.

Contact Officer: Andrew Murdoch
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Date: 14th November 2016

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