

Appendix 2

16/02687/FUL - 265 - 279 Iffley Road & Garages Percy Street
Oxford Design Review Panel letter 27 May 2016

Design Council, Angel Building, 407 St John Street, London EC1V 4AB United Kingdom
Tel +44(0)20 7420 5200 Fax +44(0)20 7420 5300
info@designcouncil.org.uk www.designcouncil.org.uk @designcouncil



CONFIDENTIAL

27 May 2016

Ian Thompson
Wadham College
Parks Road
Oxford
OX1 3PN

Our reference: DCC/0768

Oxford City Council: Wadham College, 265 – 279 Iffley Road

Dear Ian Thompson,

Thank you for providing the Oxford Design Review Panel with the opportunity to advise on this proposal at the Design Review on 12 May 2016. We look forward to engaging in future dialogue as the proposal progresses.

Summary

The commitment of the client and design team to delivering high quality student accommodation for Wadham College is impressive. The proposed building provides a much needed facility for students and helps the college demonstrate its ambitions. The design team has taken great care in developing a scheme that, although still in progress, promises to be inclusive and well integrated in the residential context of this part of Oxford. Approaching a landscape architect at this early stage, and developing a strong collaboration between client and community groups are encouraging steps. There are some elements of the design that need further work, such as the articulation of the main façade and the transition to the terraced houses on Percy Street and Charles Street. We would suggest preparing a greater level of detail for the planning application, and would welcome the opportunity to review the scheme prior to submission.

Site context

Creating a collegiate building that reflects the principles of the historic Wadham College quad is positive. However, the site is located in a residential area on Iffley Road, fronted by 19th century Victorian and Edwardian villas, townhouses and terraces, to which the scheme has to respond. In order for the scheme to strike the right balance between a confident contemporary institutional building and this domestic surrounding, we suggest reviewing the relationship between the main street frontage and the side streets.

CONFIDENTIAL

Height and massing

Whilst the height of the building on Iffley Road is appropriate, the height and massing along Percy Street and Charles Street appears less comfortable in relation to the adjacent low terraces. The robust nature and character of Iffley Road is very different from the quieter and small scale residential character of Percy Street and Charles Street. In order to address the height on the lateral buildings, one option could be to reduce the height and proportion of the floor to ceiling windows which make the façade appear tall.

Entrance and Access

Introducing a mews lane along the eastern site border, which creates a buffer to the neighbouring houses, works well. It provides a practical solution for movement to and from the development, without compromising the existing streets. However, the hierarchy of access points into the site could be strengthened further. Currently, the main entrance from Iffley Road via the porter's lodge is likely to be underused, given that most students will cycle and enter from the back. We suggest exploring ways to strengthen the main entrance, by further activating the frontage and making it easy to use for cyclists. An interesting solution could be to widen the archway, making it feel more like an external space and allowing glimpses of the courtyard from Iffley Road.

Landscape

The landscape ideas for both the courtyard and the front gardens are promising. However, the proposed landscape designs could express more clearly whether the space is a collegiate or domestic environment. The design could also be reflective of the way students living on site will use the courtyard.

The lush planting proposed for the internal courtyard works well, but to make best use of the sunlight we suggest reviewing the positioning of some of the seating areas, as they are likely to be overshadowed for most of the day. Integrating seating with backs would help make the garden a place where students want to spend longer periods studying and relaxing, as well as being more generally accessible. The communal building with the glazed garden room is a successful addition to the scheme. Its low pitch offers the opportunity to integrate a large sedum or green roof. This would improve the sustainability credentials of the scheme and provide for pleasant views from the upper storeys.

The courtyard garden's secret nature – akin to the enclosed historic quad spaces – merits a different treatment from the gardens fronting the street. However, we suggest echoing the richness of the courtyard planting in the perimeter gardens. Overall, the design of the perimeter gardens should have the same attention to detail as the internal courtyard.

Introducing a low garden wall along Iffley Road appears domestic and not appropriate for student accommodation. A hedge would work better to protect ground floor bedrooms from car fumes. Another option would be to explore widening the space along Iffley Road to increase privacy for the bedrooms. In this case a meaningful use for the generous front space should be

CONFIDENTIAL

found, for example introducing mature trees for which the current strip of front garden is too narrow.

Building design

We suggest reassessing the contrast between institutional use and domestic appearance. To address this concern, it is recommended that the design of the elevational treatment expresses the difference between the front building and the lateral buildings and the type of accommodation they provide. Whilst the proposed approach, which introduces a series of gables, is sound and the quality of materials and detailing is promising, the success of the scheme will depend on how the details such as the copings of the gables, shadow gaps and the size of window openings will be developed further.

There are other aspects of the building that would benefit from further attention. Firstly, the main façade onto Iffley Road is likely to appear large in the context of the conservation area. Staggering the frontage, or introducing more variety along its length would be advisable. Secondly, the corner treatment lacks the refinement of the rest of the scheme and we suggest developing a more meaningful transition from Iffley Road to the side streets. A different design approach for the lower lateral blocks would help with the transition to the small scale houses.

Internal layout

Allocating bedrooms facing onto the main road seems questionable, and we suggest exploring the possibility to replace the bedrooms by the dayrooms to allow a greater number of bedrooms to have views onto the garden, increase their privacy and further animating the main frontage.

In order to create an environment that is inclusive and welcoming for all, we suggest distributing the accessible rooms throughout the scheme and ensuring wheelchair users have access to the entire building. We recommend providing the necessary number of Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant kitchens, and consulting comprehensively with residents to achieve the best solution that reflects the diversity and needs of residents, rather than making all kitchens compliant. This approach would help reduce costs and improve usability for all residents.

Percy Street

Proposing a mix of business uses and live work accommodation for the site on Percy Street seems appropriate. In order to maximise the benefit of the site and integrate it better within the character of the residential context, we suggest removing the car parking spaces and introducing on-street parking with well-designed pavement.

Thank you for consulting us and please keep us informed of the progress of the scheme. If there is any point that requires clarification, please telephone us.

Yours sincerely,

Design Council, Angel Building, 407 St John Street, London EC1V 4AB United Kingdom
Tel +44(0)20 7420 5200 Fax +44(0)20 7420 5300
info@designcouncil.org.uk www.designcouncil.org.uk @designcouncil



CONFIDENTIAL

Daniela Lucchese

Design Council Cabe Advisor

Email Daniela.Lucchese@designcouncil.org.uk

Tel +44(0)20 7420 5270

cc (by email only)

Paul Appleton	Allies and Morrison
Rachel Mundell	Allies and Morrison
Clare O'Hanlon	Carter Jonas
Andrew Murdoch	Oxford City Council
Gillian Butter	Oxford City Council
Maura Cordell	Oxford City Council
Richard Todd	Bidwells

Review process

Following a site visit, and discussions with the design team and local authority, the scheme was reviewed on 12 May 2016 by Keith Bradley – Chair, Eddie Booth, Ruth Butler, Dan Jones, Deborah Nagan and Pauline Nee. These comments supersede any views we may have expressed previously.

Confidentiality

Since the scheme is not yet the subject of a planning application, the advice contained in this letter is offered in confidence, on condition that we are kept informed of the progress of the project, including when it becomes the subject of a planning application. We reserve the right to make our views known should the views contained in this letter be made public in whole or in part (either accurately or inaccurately). If you do not require our views to be kept confidential, please write to cabe@designcouncil.org.uk.