

Appendix 3

16/02687/FUL - 265 - 279 Iffley Road & Garages Percy Street Oxford Design Review Panel letter 29 September 2016

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29 September 2016

Our reference: DCC/0768

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

Dear Ms O'Hanlon,

Thank you for providing the Oxford Design Review Panel (ODRP) with the opportunity to advise on this proposal at the Design Review on 15 September 2016.

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.

It is evident that substantial work has been undertaken since the last review in May 2016, and this substantially addresses the issues previously raised by the panel. The architectural approach appears to work well overall, with the resulting building appearing appropriately collegiate in character, whilst also relating well to the domestic environment within which it sits. The distribution of building heights across the site and footprint of development are now acceptable.

Overall we are supportive of the proposal, but there is still scope for further refinement of the design, which would ensure that a new building on this site achieves its full potential, not only for future students, but also the local area and the environment more generally. To achieve this objective we suggest enhancing the sense of variation in the Iffley Road elevation, simplifying the form of the roofs and reviewing the landscape treatment along the building's main frontage.

Landscape

Overall, the landscape design appears sound and elements work well - the additional space and 'bookend' trees achieved by cutting back the building corners on Iffley Road being particularly successful. We suggest reviewing the hard and soft landscape treatment along the Iffley Road frontage to provide:

- a wider opening to accommodate movement and milling at the entrance to the building
- planting that offers suitable protection to ground floor rooms while allowing litter and debris to be removed easily

Architecture

The proposed elevation on Iffley Road appears rather homogenous due to the limited palette of materials and repeated pattern of bays and fenestration. We would suggest exploring ways to add more interest and articulation to this elevation.

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In contrast, the buildings appear over-complex from the gardens behind, and we recommend exploring simplifying this composition. The mix of roof types and orientations across the site also appears complex, which risks creating an over-elaborate roof profile, due to the varying eaves heights, and the relatively heavy presence of the dormer windows, particularly when viewed from the rear. We therefore recommend reviewing and simplifying the roofscape of the scheme.

We suggest further considering the form and roof of the lower building that will provide flexible space for students. To make its relationship with the surrounding buildings and roofs simpler and more comfortable, this building could be treated as a separate pavilion, for example. A green roof on this building might work well visually, and would help the project achieve more in terms of its environmental credentials.

Further thought should also be given to the junctions and insertions of secondary materials and forms in the buildings, in order to create a more elegant and refined composition. The glazed vertical elements would benefit from attention, as would the white metal panel on the Percy Street elevation which appears incongruous and unduly prominent. We recommend that this panel be omitted from the final design and that the use of all materials and how they will weather be fully considered at this stage.

Entrance and access

We suggest creating more external space at the Iffley Road entrance to enable safe and easy movement of students, particularly at peak times, and to allow for congregating outside the building. A more generous view of the courtyard garden would enhance the inside/outside feel of the scheme. We also recommend exploring how this entrance could be activated at night time, for example by illuminating the garden to help make the entrance visible and welcoming in the darkness.

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

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cc
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Review process

Following a site visit, and discussions with the design team and local authority and a pre-application review, the scheme was reviewed on 15 September 2016 by Keith Bradley – Chair, Alan Berman, Dan Jones and Deborah Nagan. 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.

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