

**West Area Planning Committee**

14<sup>th</sup> March 2017

**Application Number:** 16/03062/FUL

**Decision Due by:** 26th February 2017

**Proposal:** Demolition of existing buildings including 120-121 Walton Street, rear of 25-31 Little Clarendon Street, part rear of Bedford House and Penrose flat. Erection of five storey student accommodation block (The Catherine Hughes Building) to provide 68 student rooms fronting Walton Street and rear extension/refurbishment of 25-31 Little Clarendon Street (The Shaw Lefevre Building) to provide 42 student rooms. Provision of 135 cycle parking spaces. Provision of one disabled parking space accessed off Little Clarendon Street. Landscaping and planting, including replacement iron railing gates to existing entrances on Walton Street.

**Site Address:** Somerville College, Woodstock Road, Oxford (**site plan: appendix 1**)

**Ward:** North Ward

**Agent:** Mr Huw Mellor

**Applicant:** Somerville College

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## **Recommendation:**

The West Area Planning Committee is recommended to grant planning permission for the following reasons:

## **Reasons for Approval**

- 1 The development proposals represent an appropriate response to the issues of increasing student accommodation on site. 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 building and conservation area, and consider that whilst there will be some harm to the setting of the conservation area and adjacent listed buildings, this harm will be mitigated by the thoughtful and considered design of the development and that further mitigation could be achieved through appropriately worded conditions. The proposal would not create any adverse impacts in terms of highways, flood risk, sustainability, archaeology, biodiversity and land contamination that could not be mitigated by appropriately worded conditions. Therefore the proposal is considered to comply with policies contained within the Oxford Local Plan, Oxford Core Strategy, Sites and Housing Plan and National Planning policy and guidance.

- 2 Officers have considered carefully all objections to these proposals. Officers have come to the view, for the detailed reasons set out in the officer's report, that the objections do not amount, individually or cumulatively, to a reason for refusal and that all the issues that have been raised have been adequately addressed and the relevant bodies consulted.
  
- 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 Material Samples in Conservation Area
- 4 Further Design Details of the junctions of the new and existing buildings and other features of the development
- 5 Architectural recording of the buildings to be demolished
- 6 Landscape Plan – including design of the new quad
- 7 Landscape Implementation
- 8 Hard Surface Design – Tree Roots
- 9 Underground Services – Tree Roots
- 10 Tree Protection Plan Implementation
- 11 Arboricultural Method Statement Implementation
- 12 Student Accommodation – Full Time Courses
- 13 Student Accommodation - No cars
- 14 Student Accommodation - Out of Term Use
- 15 Management Plan – including traffic management plan
- 16 Archaeology – Written Scheme of Investigation
- 17 Archaeology – Method statement for demolition
- 18 Travel Plan
- 19 Details of the Cycle Parking and Refuse Areas
- 20 Construction Environmental & Traffic Management Plan
- 21 No windows opening onto Walton Street
- 22 Noise Levels as stated in Noise Assessment Report
- 23 Sustainability Statement Implementation
- 24 Drainage Strategy Implemented
- 25 Biodiversity Measures / Enhancements
- 26 Contaminated Land Risk Assessment
- 27 Details of Fire Hydrants

**Principal Planning Policies:**

**Main Local Plan 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  
**CP19** - Nuisance  
**CP20** - Lighting  
**CP21** - Noise  
**TR1** - Transport Assessment  
**TR4** - Pedestrian & Cycle Facilities  
**HE2** - Archaeology  
**HE3** - Listed Buildings and Their Setting  
**HE7** - Conservation Areas  
**NE15** - Loss of Trees and Hedgerows

### **Core Strategy**

**CS2\_** - Previously developed and greenfield land  
**CS11\_** - Flooding  
**CS25\_** - Student accommodation  
**CS12\_** - Biodiversity  
**CS18\_** - Urban design, town character, historic environment

### **Sites and Housing Plan**

**HP5\_** - Location of Student Accommodation  
**HP6\_** - Affordable Housing from Student Accommodation  
**HP15** – Residential Cycle Parking

### **Other Material Considerations:**

- National Planning Policy Framework
- This application is within the Central Conservation Area and the setting of a number of Listed Buildings.
- Planning Practice Guidance

### **Public Consultation**

#### Statutory Consultees

- Natural England: No objection
- Thames Water Utilities Limited:

Wastewater: With regards to foul water discharge from this site, Thames Water has no concerns with the disposal plan outlined in the Drainage Strategy

Surface Water: Further information is required on the surface water run-off management plan for the scheme. According to the documentation provided most of the surface water is to be managed via soakaway. However, due to lack of attenuation volume, it is proposed to discharge some of the surface water into the existing public sewer on Little Clarendon St. Thames Water require details of proposed flow into the public sewer (peak flow rate and connection point) to

enable us assess the impact on the public sewers.

- Historic England Commission

In general this is a carefully considered and high quality proposal. While there would be a degree of harm to the significance of the conservation area we accept this is justified in order to produce a workable scheme that meets the College's needs. There is however room for refinement in the way in which the proposed Shaw Lefevre Building addresses the Vaughan building and Little Clarendon Street.

Historic England recommends that the design of the Shaw Lefevre Project is refined where it addresses the Vaughan Building to ensure that the architectural opportunities to create distinctive and high quality townscape in this sensitive area are taken. Provided this is done we would not object if, when applying paragraph 134 of the NPPF and balancing harm to significance against public benefit, the Council concluded that the balance weighed in favour of the scheme.

- Oxfordshire County Council

*Highways Authority:* No objection subject to conditions

*Property:* CIL contributions will be required for Local Library, Central Library, and Strategic Waste Management

*Fire & Rescue Services:* A condition is required to provide fire hydrants within the site

- Oxfordshire Architectural & Historical Society

The general point we would make relates to the inadequacy of the 'Heritage Statement'. This seems to be more concerned with visual impact than with the consequences of the loss of historic fabric that the proposal envisages. The comments of Historic England are also noted, and are concerned with 'architectural quality' rather than historic interest. The Heritage Impact Assessment is flawed in respect to its Figs. 11 and 12 where the site boundary is drawn incorrectly, too far to the east. It also refers to the demolition of 20-21 Walton Street – while obviously an error, this lack of attention to detail is worrying.

It is in relation to these matters that we wish to comment.

1. **The former sanatorium (1932).** No attempt seems to have been made to understand the history of this unusual building. Although it has been converted into flats, some work should be done to record its history and original arrangement – it seems very much part of the college's history, and it would be unfortunate if it were lost without a record being made.

2. **120-1 Walton Street (ca. 1850).** Following the demolition of the row to the south a few years ago, this pair of houses is the last vestige of the Victorian commercial and domestic development of the east side of Walton Street between Little Clarendon Street and St Paul's church. The façade is largely in red Flemish Bond brickwork using yellow headers, but there are two features which suggest

that it might be a skin to a timber-framed building: the fact that near the edges of the façade are small 'queen closer' bricks rather than quoins or returning brickwork to the gable walls; and a 'pattress plate' for an iron tie in the southern half, again often indicating an additional skin rather than a structural feature. If this building does turn out to be timber-framed, its loss would be highly regrettable, as there are now a very few examples left in Jericho. Moreover, as with the sanatorium, no attempt seems to have been made to study the interior of these houses to find out what remains of the original layout and features. The ground floor rooms – shops for a butcher and confectioner in 1895 – have clearly been considerably altered, but a full investigation of the upper floors should be carried out.

Policy HE.7 states that any work within a Conservation Area will not be permitted if the proposal involves the substantial demolition of a building that contributes to the Conservation Area. We consider that this policy should apply to 120-1 Walton Street, especially if it turns out that they are timber-framed.

3. **Bedford School (1873)** with later extensions. We are told that the interior of this building has been 'stripped of any features', but it is likely that the roof structure will be of interest. Clearly, there is also an opportunity here to study this building in more detail, and in such a way that restoration can be carried out in an informed manner.

4. **25-27 Little Clarendon Street.** These shops with accommodation above retain much of their original character externally, and it is clear from examination of the shop interiors that no. 25 in particular has a number of early features, including tiling. No mention is made of what a 'refurbishment' of these shops will entail, but we would ask that such features are retained, as well as any original features in the upper floors. The rear extensions should be recorded before demolition.

#### Third Parties

None

#### **Pre-Application Discussions / Oxford Design Review Panel**

Details of pre-application and public consultation are set out within the Statement of Community Involvement. There were two public consultation events held in July and November 2016. In addition to the general public other community stakeholders and individuals were consulted

- Oxford Preservation Trust,
- Oxford Civic Society,
- Jericho Community Association,
- St Barnabas Church
- Blavatnik Centre.

The development was also considered by the Oxford Design Review Panel in July 2016. A copy of their response is included in **appendix 2**.

## **Officers Assessment:**

### **Background to Proposals**

1. The application site is Somerville College which is on the western side of Woodstock Road and is bordered by Radcliffe Observatory Quarter to the north, Little Clarendon Street to the south, and Walton Street to the west (**appendix 1**)
2. The proposal itself relates to the south-western corner of the college, and would first involve the demolition of existing buildings that front onto Walton Street (120-121), the rear of 25-31 Little Clarendon Street, part of the rear of Bedford House, and Penrose flat. These buildings would be replaced by a five storey 68 room student accommodation block (The Catherine Hughes Building) which would form part of the College's boundary with Walton Street and a rear extension, refurbishment of 25-31 Little Clarendon Street (The Shaw Lefevre Building) to provide 42 student rooms.
3. In addition, other ancillary works are proposed including the provision of 135 cycle parking spaces, one disabled parking space accessed from Little Clarendon Street, Landscaping and planting including replacement iron railing gates to existing entrances on Walton Street.
4. Officers consider the principal determining issues to be:
  - Principle of Development
  - Student Accommodation
  - Built Form & Impact upon Designated Heritage Assets
  - Impact on adjoining properties
  - Landscaping
  - Transport
  - Flood Risk & Drainage
  - Sustainability
  - Archaeology
  - Biodiversity
  - Contaminated Land
  - CIL
  - Other matters

### **Principle of Development**

5. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states that planning policies and decisions should encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed. This is reiterated in Oxford Core Strategy Policy CS2.
6. Policy CP6 of the Oxford Local Plan requires development proposals to make maximum and appropriate use of land and the best use of a site's capacity in a manner compatible with the site itself as well as the surrounding area. Larger scale and higher density proposals are encouraged in appropriate locations.

7. The proposal would seek to make better use of an existing college site by replacing existing buildings to make better use of the available land to improve the overall standard of accommodation. The principle of the development would therefore accord with the above-mentioned aims of the National Planning Policy Framework and also local development plan policies.

### **Student Accommodation**

8. Sites and Housing Plan Policy HP5 states that planning permission will only be granted for student accommodation that is on or adjacent to an existing university or college academic site; or in the city centre, district centre, or on a main thoroughfare; or on land that is allocated for student accommodation. Oxford Core Strategy Policy CS25 also requires purpose-built accommodation to be restricted to full time students on a course of an academic year or more so that colleges can house their students and limit the number of students living outside of such accommodation. The proposal would provide purpose built student accommodation on an existing college site for its students which would accord with both policies.
9. Although Policy CS25 limits occupation to full-time students enrolled on courses of an academic year or more this restriction does not apply outside the semester or term-time, provided that during term-time the development is occupied only by university students. This allows an opportunity for the efficient use of the buildings for short-stay visitors, whilst providing permanent university student accommodation when needed. A condition should be imposed restricting the use to full time students on a course of an academic year or more, and also allowing out of term use.
10. Sites and Housing Plan Policy HP5 also requires student accommodation schemes of 20 or more bedrooms to be provided with communal indoor space and outdoor space which would be available to all residents. The accommodation will need to include a management regime for the building and an undertaking that residents will be prevented from parking their cars anywhere on site, and in Oxford. Somerville College already has some indoor and outdoor communal space within its grounds. The management plan and restriction on students bringing cars into the city would be secured by condition.
11. Sites and Housing Plan Policy HP6 states that new student accommodation of 20 or more bedrooms will be required to make a financial contribution towards delivering affordable housing elsewhere in Oxford. However, it goes on to state that an exception to this requirement will be made where the proposal is within an existing university or college campus and the proposal is necessary to enable the university to maintain its 3,000 student numbers threshold. It is clear that the proposed development would qualify for this exception to the requirement to provide an affordable housing contribution.

### **Built Form & Impact upon Designated Heritage Assets**

12. The site lies within the Central Conservation Area and would also form part of

the setting of the Jericho Conservation Area whose south eastern tip encloses the corner of the Oxford University Press building coinciding with the northern boundary of the Central Conservation Area. The site is also within the setting of a number of listed buildings such as the Oxford University Press building which sits opposite the Somerville boundary wall; Somerville's Wolfson building which sits inside the same boundary wall; and St Pauls Church.

13. Conservation principles, policy and practice seek to preserve and enhance the value of heritage assets. The NPPF re-affirmed the aim for the historic environment and its heritage assets to be conserved and enjoyed for the quality of life they bring to this and future generations and requires proposals to be based upon an informed analysis of the significance of any affected Heritage Asset and expects applicants to understand the impact of any proposal upon the asset with the objective being to sustain that significance. These aims are embodied in Local Plan Policy HE3 and HE7 which seeks to preserve or enhance the special character and appearance of the conservation area or its setting along with the setting of Listed Buildings. In considering the impact of development on the significance of Heritage Assets, the objective must be for new development to sustain that significance but where there is potential for harm, then the public benefits must clearly outweigh that harm. Section 66 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires local planning authorities to have special regard to the desirability of preserving a listed building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.
14. 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. The Local Plan requires new development to enhance the quality of the environment, with Policy CP1 central to this purpose. Policy CP8 requires development to relate to its context with the siting, massing and design creating an appropriate visual relationship with the form, grain and scale of the surrounding area.
15. The proposal involves the demolition of a pair of late C18 early C19 three storey plus semi-basement buildings, survivals of a larger group that fronted the east side of Walton Street between Little Clarendon Street and the continuation of the street frontage to the north of the Health Centre. Demolition of the rear two bays of the former, single-storey school building that is set back from the street between the C18 pair and the new co-op building/ student accommodation. Demolition of the rear wings to the late C19 building group that fronts Little Clarendon Street. Demolition of a number of early C20 buildings that sit to the rear of the Walton Street Pair and the former school building buildings that formerly housed the College's Sanatorium and associated Fellow's lodgings. Demolition of a C19 boundary wall currently enclosing the rear boundaries to Little Clarendon Street buildings/yards. Removal of tree in rear yard to LCS buildings
16. These buildings will be replaced by a new, three, four and five storey building that would run east to west parallel to the rear wing of the Penrose building, with



the western boundary at the back-edge of the pavement on Walton Street and wrapping around the remaining bays of the former school building the building in order to accommodate 68 study bedrooms with ancillary spaces and teaching rooms. A new five storey building would also be provide to the rear of 25-31 Little Clarendon Street which would be linked to associated internal alteration of the upper floors of the remaining parts of the C19 buildings to accommodate 48 study bedrooms with associated ancillary spaces. The development will also include associated landscape design of the spaces around the new and existing buildings and access to existing terrace adjacent to Vaughan building.

17. Significance of the site and impact of demolitions: The site proposed for development falls into two parcels, the land in the northern part which comprises a strip of land running from Walton Street in the west to the Fellows Garden in the east. This area of the site is currently occupied by a number of buildings, perhaps the most significant being a pair of probably late C18 early C19 three storey “town houses” the surviving remnant of buildings that fronted onto Walton Street north of its junction with Little Clarendon Street. The pair of buildings have been much altered from their original state and indeed evidenced early C20 form and whilst clearly they have some significance as the only survivors on this stretch of Walton Street their alteration has been such that the small elements of surviving internal fabric, staircases and in some parts floor boards are insufficient to give weight for their retention. Immediately to the south of these townhouses lies a late C19, former school building whose distinctive form, street façade and the former garden to the front makes an important contribution to both character and appearance of this part of Walton Street. The initial proposals for the site sought to simply retain the façade and space to the front of this building. However this would have diminished this contribution and the current proposal to retain a substantial part of the original building although still a compromise would offer a greater authenticity to the “retained element”. Furthermore, the proposed use of this space having been through a number of iterations does offer more to the community in the spirit of the existing building which is a positive response by the College. The remaining buildings that occupy this part of the site are C20, probably inter-war buildings of a single-storey, domestic scale and a domestic revival architecture which bears some relationship to the Penrose building but which feel distinctly ancillary. Whilst the interiors retain some of their original architectural language in their surviving detail they are probably not sufficiently significant when considered against the Somerville campus as a whole to justify an objection to their removal.

18. The second part of the site comprises the rear wings and back yards of 25-31 Little Clarendon Street, a group or terrace of late C19, three-storey rich red brick buildings accommodating retail uses at ground floor and various accommodations above. These buildings retain much of their original character and appearance, including their original service wings to the rear. They form one of a number of similar groups that run along the north side of Little Clarendon Street, the southern side having been altered by the University during the second half of the C20, and they inform the historic and social development of the street thus making an important contribution to the character and appearance of this part of the Central Conservation Area. The loss of the rear wings is regrettable in that it diminishes the importance of the building group as

a whole. The rear wings are evident in a glimpsed view from the street above the strong concrete arches of the lower floor retail arcade and across the upper terrace of the Vaughan building. The “garden” boundary brick wall that separates the two areas of the site appears to run on the line of the original boundary despite having been, in the main, rebuilt. The boundary line is significant in defining the northern enclosure of the surviving, individual plots of Little Clarendon Street and the loss of this boundary definition will therefore be of some harm to that significance.

19. New buildings and their impact on the significance of heritage assets: The new building would include a building running from Walton Street parallel to the Penrose Building through to the Fellows Garden in the east; a new building replacing the rear wings of the Little Clarendon Street C19 terrace; and new landscaping for the service yard that currently exists to the rear of Barbara Craig House an insignificant, C20 framed building to be refurbished for student accommodation, and the block of building that turns the corner and fronts onto Walton Street would create a “quad” more appropriate to the college setting.
  
20. Across the northern part of the site, the new building has been designed to have a distinct presence on both Walton Street where it will sit as a “stop-end” to the view back down the street from 119a and the north-western tip of the Somerville Campus and in the Main Quad of the College where a similarly proportioned façade emerges alongside the Fellows Garden, all but filling the existing gap between the east façade of the Penrose Building and the northern western corner of the Vaughan Building. In replacing the pair of C18/C19 terrace buildings the new building is intended to give the College a more physical presence on Walton Street. At present the distinctive, elemental façade of Phillip Dowson’s Wolfson Building is restrained by being set back behind the impenetrable, tall, stone boundary wall that encloses the entire Walton Street boundary of the campus. In contrast the new building ( Catherine Hughes Building) also elemental in its architectural language but less exuberant in its expression of elements than Wolfson will have an equal presence by virtue of its more prominent siting in relationship to the street. The new building has not been designed to compete with Wolfson but rather to sit purposefully alongside it. The design of the building has developed through discussion and presentation at Design Review and some of the functional elements, the arrangement of rooms, double loaded corridors and the design of the movement and communal spaces has evolved to produce an arrangement that will function well with natural room groupings but that also has some interesting spaces that offer glimpsed views and connection to the outside world. Throughout the design process there has been concern about the relationship of the new building to the Penrose building. The space around the new building is tight but again the design evolution has resulted in a more satisfactory relationship between the two with narrow gaps either side of the east façade of the new building creating a sense of interest for the “visitor” drawing people through into the relatively small but carefully designed outdoor spaces that despite their size provide a singularly enhanced setting for the southern side of Penrose and that offer places to stop on the journey through from the Quad out to Walton Street, a route that is intended to be part of the “opening-up” of the College to its western neighbours. The new building will be five storeys in part and together

with its proximity to Penrose there was some concern that it would dominate, however this does not appear to be the case. The simplicity of the design, broken down into the key elements but emphasising the solid, brickwork elements of the building and the articulation or breaking down of the building mass into a series of smaller, elemental boxes, with the taller elements set back helps to reduce the sense of the overall building mass and allows the building to relate to key heights in the adjacent buildings. Details within the brickwork of the facades provide subtle reference to the brickwork detailing in the immediate and indeed wider surroundings of the City. The vertical brick courses pick up key levels in adjacent buildings on Walton Street allowing the observer's eye to follow through the strong curve of the street and give the sense that the building sits comfortably in its surroundings. The paired windows with their stepped brickwork surrounds creating interest and depth to the building façade in a restrained rather than elaborate manner set up strong rhythms to the facades that give the building its architectural identity. The additional work proposed to open up the boundary wall in order to allow the Somerville Campus to address Walton Street will be a positive change as will be the introduction of some trees as there have been trees along this frontage in the past and this section of Walton Street, particularly on the eastern side is currently much devoid of trees. Whilst not entirely replacing the loss of the tree that is currently to the rear of the Little Clarendon Street terrace and whose canopy makes some contribution to both character and appearance of the conservation area here, the replacement trees will clearly be of some benefit.

21. On the southern part of the site, the proposed new building has been designed to replace the rear wings of the late C19 terrace that fronts Little Clarendon Street. The existing rear wings are evidently subservient building elements to the front, principal range of buildings. The height of the new building is proposed to be significantly higher than the existing building and the relationship of the new building in spite of having been designed as a principally glazed building in this part will still be evident. Through discussion the design of this building has also evolved and the relationship to the Vaughan Building is much improved from the earliest design iteration. However the building's eastern façade in particular the element that is proposed to be principally glazed still appears awkward and the massing of this part of the building appears crude in juxtaposition with the very simple form of the roof of the front building range. It is this that will be seen from Little Clarendon Street looking west and that will be harmful to the character (lack of subservience in massing) and appearance (what appears to be an oversimplification of the building façade treatment) of the conservation area and appear over simplified in comparison to the restrained expression of Dowson's concrete grid in the Vaughan Building and the elegant detailing of the late C19/early C20 brick terrace with its charming, surviving, traditional shop fronts. In principle the proposed replacement building is acceptable but the detailed design needs to provide greater mitigation for the harm that will result from the removal of the buildings' rear wings, the demolition of the boundary wall and the loss of a large tree whose canopy contributes to the character and appearance of the conservation area. However officers consider that this could be resolved by further detailing of junctions, materials and construction details through conditions.

22. The landscape design for the new courtyard/quad is extremely limited being dominated by the bicycle in what appears to be a rather inefficient layout of stands. If there were to be some space found for some seating and more planting then the space could provide a better setting for the buildings around it. Again this may be able to be covered by a condition to allow further design development of this space.
23. In summary whilst it is clear that the amount and type of structures to be demolished will result in harm to both character and appearance of the conservation area and to some extent the setting of the Wolfson Building it is also evident that some of that harm would be mitigated as a result of the thoughtful and considered design of much of the new development. On balance it is considered that by virtue of some of the design mitigation and with the proviso that further mitigation may be achieved through approval of more detailed elements of part of the development the proposal taken as a whole would be considered to preserve the character and appearance of the conservation area and not to harm the setting of a number of listed buildings in proximity to the site.

## **Landscaping**

24. A Landscape Strategy has been submitted with the scheme. There are no Tree Preservation Orders that apply to the site, but the scheme is within a Conservation Area which offers protection to certain trees.
25. Having reviewed the landscape strategy, officers consider that as an artefact of the City's medieval pattern of development canopy cover within the Central Conservation Area is relatively low; the Oxford i-Tree Canopy Cover Assessment 2015 identifies that tree cover in the Carfax Ward is just over 15% as compared to the 21% city average (the site is actually just within North Area Ward but this ward only slightly overlaps the Central Conservation Area). Despite or because of this sparsity large individual trees make a significant contribution to the special character of the Central Conservation Area's landscape. Trees are often just glimpsed in partial views between gaps in buildings or over roof tops, or else as patches of green canopy billowing out between buildings into street views; this is one of the facets of the Central Conservation Area's special character and appearance.
26. The scheme involves the loss of one mature sycamore tree situated to the rear of 27 Little Clarendon Street. The tree is set back from Little Clarendon Street but the top of its canopy is visible in the sky-line from the eastern end of Wellington Square, and in long views above the roofline along Walton Street. In this context the loss of the sycamore could be considered to involve a significant but not substantial harmful impact to the character and appearance of the conservation area and to public visual amenity in local views. This harmful impact needs to be balanced against other relevant policies and wider social benefits in order to be justified, taking into account also what degree of mitigation that can be achieved through replacement tree planting in landscape proposals.

27. The proposed replacement planting has been developed in conjunction with Tree Officers. The scheme originally proposed 2x Sweetgum trees in the courtyard to the rear of 21-25 Little Clarendon Street. However concerns that this species would not reach a significant height to mitigate the loss of the existing canopy have resulted in these being replaced by a fastigate tulip tree which would provide better height in this location.
28. The most important area, and opportunity, for new landscaping is associated with the strip of land to the east of Walton Street, to the north of the proposed Porters Lodge/Reception Room entrance. The northern elevation of this end of the building will be seen in a long vista along Walton Street looking south. The scheme originally suggested 3 of the silver birch cultivar however, officers considered that this is 'underpowered' for the situation and would recommend that a Callery pear would be an ideal foil to the building, the tree's compact conical form would not obscure the building and it is attractive in its own right (spectacular spring white flowering and vivid orange autumn colours) so as to make an impact in the Walton Street vista. The applicant has agreed to change the species and to plant 2 trees at wider spacing in order to achieve the best visual impact.
29. On this basis the proposal is considered to be acceptable in arboricultural terms under Oxford Local Plan Policy NE15 subject to conditions requiring the revised landscape plans to be submitted and the work carried out on completion

## **Transport**

30. The site is within the Transport Central Area as defined by the Oxford Local Plan, which is an area of the city centre that is considered to be highly accessible by non-car modes of transport, and serviced by a range of shops and facilities. A Transport Statement has been submitted with the application which considered the highway impacts of the proposed development.

Access: The proposed development is contained within the existing college campus and the main entrance to the college from the Woodstock Road will remain the primary means of access to the site handling the majority of pedestrian, cycle and vehicle movements. This would include pick up and drop offs. The proposal would make the existing vehicle and pedestrian access from Walton Street, pedestrian only. The Local Highways Authority have welcomed this proposal, because it reduces the potential for vehicle and pedestrian conflict on Walton Street and also discourages this street to be used for pick-up / drop-off of students at the beginning and end of terms.

31. The access to the Shaw Lefevre Building is to be retained through Barbara Craig House and the access to the Catherine Hughes Building (for deliveries and servicing) is to be through the main college access from Woodstock Road. The Local Highways Authority have raised a concern that this would require deliveries to be walked through the Main Quad gardens and Penrose Building which is a long distance for delivery arrangements to take place, and may encourage delivery activity on Little Clarendon Street / Walton Street. The Local

Highways Authority recognises that refuse vehicles will need to use Walton Street to access bins on the west side of the campus, however such collections should not occur during peak hours. Therefore a Traffic Management Plan should be secured by condition which deals with how servicing and deliveries will be managed and the use of the main college access enforced and that no refuse collections should take place during peak network hours.

32. Traffic Generation: The development is essentially car-free except for vehicular activity associated with deliveries and servicing/maintenance, use of the disabled parking bay, and when students arrive/depart at the beginning/end of terms.
33. As the site is situated within a wholly sustainable area then it is considered appropriate as a car free scheme. The Transport Assessment estimates that the development will generate an additional 2 daily vehicle movements albeit there will be a reduction of 2 vehicles movements in the AM peak. This is an insignificant amount of additional traffic which is also generated outside the peak
34. Car Parking: Oxford Core Strategy Policy CS25 and Sites and Housing Plan Policy HP5 state that, for student accommodation, the Council will secure an undertaking to ensure that students do not bring cars to Oxford. Policy HP16 and Appendix 8 of the Sites and Housing Plan states that no student parking spaces are permitted for new student accommodation other than some limited operational and disabled parking space. In order to ensure that students do not bring a car to Oxford, a condition should be imposed requiring this to be included in the tenancy agreement.
35. The proposal will reduce the amount of car parking provided on the existing site with only 1 car parking space provided for the remaining retail unit. There are currently 9 car parking spaces which are for both the retail units and 3 flats. The reduction in spaces is considered acceptable given the site is within a very sustainable/accessible location and the potential for overspill parking on the highway can be controlled. One accessible parking space is to be provided, which will be accessed from Little Clarendon Street. This is space should only be used for this purpose.
36. Cycle parking: A total of 135 additional cycle parking spaces are to be provided; 51 spaces for the Catherine Hughes Building behind the chapel for this building, and 84 spaces for the Shaw-Lefevre Building, retail units and Lincoln College student flats in the courtyard accessed from Little Clarendon Street. It is not known how many students flats are at Lincoln College, but if the proposal is to comply with Policy HP15 the development should provide 83 cycle parking spaces for the additional 110 student rooms. The location of cycle parking spaces as shown is considered acceptable, and a condition should be imposed to ensure that the cycle parking is secure and covered.
37. Travel Plan: A travel plan has been submitted with the application. The Local Highways Authority have requested additional information which outlines how student arrival and departures at the beginning and end of term will be handled

so that it does not cause problems in and around the sites.

38. Construction Traffic Management Plan: A Traffic Management Plan has been submitted which sets out how vehicle movements and access will be managed during demolition and construction works. The Local Highways Authority have indicated that this does not provide all the information they would normally seek for such a document, however, this could be revised by condition.
39. Other Highway Matters: The proposed plan indicates that the windows of the Seminar Room at the front of the building would open outwards onto Walton Street, albeit they are almost flush with the line of the building. The Local Highways Authority have requested that these windows do not open outwards as this would raise concerns over the potential for pedestrians to catch themselves on the windows when passing by.
40. Overall the proposed development is considered acceptable in highway terms, subject to the above conditions in accordance with the aims of Oxford Local Plan Policies CP1, CP10, TR1 and TR4 and Sites and Housing Plan Policies HP15.

### **Flood Risk & Drainage**

41. A Flood Risk Assessment and Drainage Strategy has been submitted with the application, which indicates that the site is located within Flood Zone 1. Furthermore the Environment Agency's Surface Flood Mapping suggests the development as being in an area susceptible to surface water flooding, however the risk of flooding from surface water is considered low.
42. The proposal includes a new storm water system for the newly constructed 68 student accommodation block which will ensure all rainfall events for this building will be infiltrated. A separate system is then proposed for the refurbishment of 25-31 Little Clarendon Street (Shaw Lefevre Building) which will ensure surface water flows from the proposal are reduced significantly.
43. The Drainage Strategy identifies that infiltration of surface water to new soakaways will not be sufficient to deal with a 1 in 30 year storm event, and recommends that a high level overflow to the existing surface water system is provided. With respect to the Shaw Lefevre Building it is noted that the peak run off discharged to the existing surface water system will be lower than current flow rates for the 1 in 30 year and 1 in 100 year rainfall events. As such Drainage Officers have reviewed the strategy and consider that the proposal will offer betterment in terms of storm water discharge and complies with Oxford Core Strategy Policy CS11. These drainage details should be secured by condition.

### **Archaeology**

44. This application is of interest because of the potential for prehistoric, early-Saxon and post-medieval remains in this location, including part of the Royalist Civil War defence line. The site is located within an extensive landscape of late

Neolithic-early Bronze Age funerary monuments that are recorded across the Summertown-Radley gravel terrace, the nearest recorded monuments are recorded within the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter to the north. The ROQ site also produced evidence for dispersed early Saxon settlement focused on the still at that time extant prehistoric earthworks. The full extent of this settlement is unknown the closest recorded feature is located 100m to the north of the application site. The full extent of settlement along Walton Street during the medieval period is unknown the available information suggests that the application site was located within open fields during this time, however by the 18<sup>th</sup> century there was settlement activity along Little Clarendon Street when villas and associated formal garden plots are shown at the western end of the street. Furthermore based on Bernard De Gomme's 1644 map of the Royalist Civil War defences of Oxford the projected line of the defences runs through or close to the application site.

45. Having reviewed the Archaeological Desk Based Assessment submitted with the application, officers consider that any archaeological impacts could be dealt with by imposing two conditions. The first requiring a demolition statement to ensure that the demolition works are undertaken in a way that avoids unnecessary below ground impacts to archaeological remains, and another that secures a written scheme of investigation to be carried out.

### **Biodiversity**

46. Officers consider that there is not a reasonable likelihood of protected species or habitats being impacted by the proposals. A Bat Survey Report was provided which identified that the existing tree on site does not have suitable space for bats.
47. However, the National Planning Policy Framework and Oxford Core Strategy Policy CS12 both make clear that opportunities should be taken to include features beneficial to biodiversity within new developments. As such the site and development offer an opportunity for enhancements, and therefore a condition should be imposed which seeks details of these measures. The measures could include the provision of bat roosting devices and swift roosting devices.

### **Sustainability**

48. A Sustainability Energy Strategy has been submitted with the application in accordance with the requirements of Sites and Housing Plan Policy HP11 and Core Strategy Policy CS9.
49. The energy strategy indicates that the building will be designed to reduce energy demand, reduce heating and cooling loads, and maximise the reclaiming of energy by ensuring compliance with current Building Regulations, improving the thermal fabric elements, implementation of efficient and well controlled heating, cooling and ventilation services and low energy lighting linked to controlling energy demand. The strategy sets out that this aspect of the scheme will be further developed through the detailed design stages of the project.



50. Therefore officers would recommend imposing a condition which requires approval of the detailed design of the sustainability measures for the building in accordance with the above-mentioned policies.

### **Other Matters**

51. Contaminated Land: A Phase 1 and 2 site investigation has been submitted, which was limited to 3 soil sample locations, and did not include the entire area for the proposed development. The investigation found that there was elevated lead found in one sample (IP04) and elevated dibenzo (ah) anthracene generally in the made ground. The report recommends further sampling is undertaken on site to better characterise the ground conditions and potential risks across the development site. This will help to determine whether mitigation measures will be necessary in the soft landscaped areas. Officers would agree with the recommendations for additional sampling and updated conceptual site model and risk assessment to inform any remediation requirements. This should be secured by condition.

52. Noise: A Noise Assessment has been submitted with the application. Oxford City Council Environmental Health Officers accept, as with other parts of central Oxford that high ambient noise levels preclude the use of opening windows in many cases and proposals will therefore base their proposals around trickle vents and additional ventilation systems either natural or mechanical.

53. Considering the information presented in this report in respect of noise from mechanical plant officers are satisfied, on the understanding that noise levels do not rise above the values stated in this document, that there will be no adverse impact on nearest sensitive receptors.

54. Air Quality: An Air Quality Assessment has been submitted which has considered the impacts of the development. The assessment considers that the operation of the development will not give rise to significant impacts on existing receptors in the vicinity of the development and that it is unlikely that future occupants will be exposed to unacceptable air quality within the two buildings. With respect to impacts from construction works, it is recommended that a construction environmental management plan is secured by condition.

55. Fire Service: The Oxfordshire County Council Fire and Rescue Service have indicated that there is likely to be a requirement to provide fire hydrants within the development site. The number and location of these should be secured by condition.

56. Community Infrastructure Levy: 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 £348,684.75.

## **Conclusion:**

57. The proposal is considered to be acceptable in terms of the aims and objectives of the National Planning Policy Framework, and relevant policies of the Oxford Core Strategy 2026, Sites and Housing Plan 2011-2026, and Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 and therefore officer's recommendation to Members would be to approve 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.

**Contact Officer:** Andrew Murdoch

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**Date:** 24th February 2017