

West Area Planning Committee

11th April 2012

Application Number: 12/00239/FUL

Decision Due by: 4th May 2012

Proposal: Refurbishment of eastern block of student accommodation including recladding of all elevations, internal alterations to stairs, lifts and student flats to create 5 additional residential units. Alterations to central car parking area to create landscaped garden, plus creation of covered cycle store for additional 84 cycles to rear of site, and new car port and store to serve Lodge. (Amended plans) (Amended description)

Site Address: Summertown House, Apsley Road, (**Appendix 1**)

Ward: Summertown Ward

Agent: Ferax Planning

Applicant: University Of Oxford

Recommendation: West Area Planning Committee is recommended to support the proposals in principle but to defer the application in order to receive a Unilateral Undertaking and to delegate to officers the issuing of the notice of planning permission subject to conditions on its receipt.

Reasons for Approval.

- 1 The refurbishment, alterations and additions are considered to form an appropriate visual relationship with the surroundings which will enhance the style and perception of this section of Banbury Road and have due regard to the setting of the listed building. The removal of the energy centre has eliminated any impact on the adjoining neighbouring properties.
- 2 The Council considers that the proposal accords with the policies of the development plan as summarised below. It has taken into consideration all other material matters, including matters raised in response to consultation and publicity. Any material harm that the development would otherwise give rise to can be offset by the conditions imposed.
- 3 The Council considers that the proposal, subject to the conditions imposed, would accord with the special character, setting, features of special architectural or historic interest of the listed building. It has taken into consideration all other material matters, including matters raised in response to consultation and publicity.

- 4 Officers have considered carefully all objections to these proposals. Officers have come to the view, for the detailed reasons set out in the officers 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.

Conditions:

- 1 Development begun within time limit
- 2 Develop in accordance with approved plans
- 3 Samples
- 4 Revised landscape plan
- 5 Tree Protection Plan (TPP)
- 6 Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS)
- 7 Recommendations ecological survey
- 8 Cycle parking details required
- 9 Target Hardening measures cycle parking
- 10 SUDS
- 11 Construction Travel Plan
- 12 Travel Plan Statement/Travel Statement
- 13 Details of Gates
- 14 Internal noise levels
- 15 Mechanical ventilation

Legal Agreement:

Unilateral Undertaking for £690 as contribution towards off site cycle works.

Principal Planning Documents:

Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016

- CP1 - Development Proposals
- CP6 - Efficient Use of Land & Density
- CP8 - Design Development to Relate to its Context
- CP10 - Siting Development to Meet Functional Needs
- CP11 - Landscape Design
- CP13 - Accessibility
- CP21 - Noise
- TR3 - Car Parking Standards
- TR4 - Pedestrian & Cycle Facilities
- NE15 - Loss of Trees and Hedgerows
- NE16 - Protected Trees
- HE3 - Listed Buildings and Their Setting
- HS19 - Privacy & Amenity

Core Strategy 2026

- CS9 - Energy and natural resources
- CS12 - Biodiversity
- CS18 - Community safety
- CS25 - Student accommodation

CS29 - The universities

Sites and Housing DPD – Proposed Submission

HP5 - Location of Student Accommodation
HP6 - Affordable Housing from Student Accommodation
HP9 - Design, Character and Context
HP14 - Privacy and Daylight
HP15 - Residential cycle parking
HP16 - Residential car parking
SP55 - Summertown House, Apsley Road

NB: The City Council has recently approved the Sites and Housing Development Plan Document (SHDPD) for consultation prior to public examination by an Inspector later this year. It forms part of Oxford's Development Plan Framework and although not formally adopted it does carry weight as a material consideration in determining planning applications.

National Planning Policy Framework

As of 27th March 2012 the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) replaced various Planning Policy Statements (PPSs) and Planning Policy Guidance Notes (PPGs) which are now withdrawn.

Relevant Site History:

- 99/01619/NF - Timber multi activity play building/climbing frame for children at Summertown House and attending nursery on site. Permitted 21st December 1999.
- 08/02393/LBC - Listed Building Consent for internal works to convert two ground floor rooms into 2 self-contained flats with shared bathroom facilities. Permitted 2nd April 2009.
- 00/00789/NF - Refurbishment of 133 flats to include removal of external cladding, infilling of balconies & structural repairs. Overcladding in insulated render & new metal roof. Demolition of 5 car points to rear & construct single storey building. Permitted 8th August 2001.

Public Consultation:

Statutory and Other Parties:

Thames Valley Police: No objection subject to condition/informative

Highway Authority: No objection subject to conditions regarding cycle parking details to be confirmed, development to be SUDS compliant, Construction Travel Plan to be submitted and approved prior to the commencement of development and a Travel Plan Statement to be submitted within 3 months of occupation (or existing Travel Plan/Travel Statement to be updated within 3 months of occupation).

Oxford Civic Society: Many aspects of the refurbishment are welcomed, the energy issues give some cause for concern and could be better organised. Use of solar energy could come in immediately; the energy centre is likely to cause noise disturbance and possibly harmful emissions.

Third Party Comments:

Energy Centre:

- Energy centre will reduce amenity of residents of Upland Park Road backing on to the site
- Industrial type unit close to residential properties
- Loss of privacy
- Loss of light to gardens due to height of energy centre
- Not enough detail known of the noise/emissions implications/lack of information
- Noise nuisance
- Background noise survey taken in winter when acoustic protection from trees/foilage is at a minimum which would bias the findings. In summer less noise in the relevant area from traffic in Banbury Road
- Noise survey not taken from Upland Park Road gardens
- Emission plumes unsightly
- Emission plumes could cause harm to garden plants
- Unsightly flue
- Increase of pollution
- Out of keeping with character of area
- No justification for its proposed location
- No information on how fuel will be transported to the site and how the site will be accessed
- No information on how possible contaminants into the water supply will be controlled
- Also included was a petition signed by 20 people, all residents of Upland Park Road which are opposed to the energy centre element of the application for the reasons given above.
- 28 Upland Park Road commissioned a desktop study of the noise survey which stated "The acoustic survey does not demonstrate that noise from the proposed energy centre will not result in justified complaints from the residents in the existing adjacent noise sensitive properties".

Other Comments:

- No bat survey

NB: The comments received relate to the planning application as submitted. However during the course of processing the planning application the contentious energy centre was deleted from the proposals. Amended plan were received accordingly and site notices were displayed with a consultation deadline of 6th April 2012. Any further comments received will be reported verbally to committee.

Officers Assessment:

Site Description

1. The application site lies to the north of Summertown on the northern side of Apsley Road with the largest block of accommodation fronting onto Banbury Road. The main access to the site is from two vehicular access points off Apsley Road. The site comprises the original Summertown House, which is a listed building situated centrally to the site, and three

large 1960s blocks of post graduate student accommodation which surround it. A single storey building has been added to the rear of the listed house and is used as a day nursery operated by the University.

Proposals

2. The application seeks the refurbishment of the eastern block of accommodation which involves the removal of the existing cladding and roofing material and recladding with modern materials; creation of five additional units by the subdivision of five existing larger units; internal alterations including the enclosure of an open staircase; and the formation of balconies within the building. Alterations are also proposed to the old lodge and the gate piers located to the north - east corner of the site near Banbury Road. The proposal as submitted included an energy centre which was intended to provide a combined heat and power (CHP) scheme for the development. This was intended to be located to the northern side of the site, to the rear of the main accommodation blocks. An alternative location is now being sought however, and this is referred to in the text which follows. The proposals also include new landscaping and covered cycle stores. In terms of landscaping the intention is to improve the setting of the listed house as part of a more strategic maintenance and planting regime. The new cycle parking is located along the northern boundary behind the north west block and the existing cycle stores are to be refurbished.
3. Two variations of the proposals are presented which show alternative arrangements relating to the position of the main lift and stairs and how these appear on the main elevation. The selection of which option is implemented is dependant on viability when the tendering process for the refurbishment work is complete.
4. Following submission of the planning application the applicants and their representatives met with the residents of Apsley Road and Upland Park Road to discuss the proposal and in particular the proposed energy centre which has caused concern amongst the residents. As a result of these discussions the University has decided to review the location of the energy centre. The review has concluded that there are a number of alternative locations on the site which could be suitable. Work continues in assessing these locations. As a result the application has been amended to exclude the energy centre but with a view to submitting a separate application at a later date once a suitable location has been finalised.
5. Officers consider the principle determining issues in this case to be:
 - the principle of development;
 - design and built forms;
 - impact on the listed building;
 - trees and landscaping;
 - biodiversity;
 - residential amenity;

- highways and access;
- cycle stores; and
- sustainability

Principle of Development

6. The application site is referred to in the draft Sites and Housing DPD at policy SP55. The policy is supportive of new student accommodation. However this application is for refurbishment only and there is therefore no conflict with policy SP55.

Design and Built Forms

7. The eastern block of accommodation fronts onto Banbury Road and is the main elevation of the site when viewed from Banbury Road. The block has a mixture of flat types with the majority being two bed units with some studios and one beds units and 5 x 3 bed flats. These are arranged over five floors off a central corridor. The three bed flats are to the northern end of block. The elevations are currently hung with distinctive concrete hung tiles with single glazed timber framed windows all on a concrete frame.
8. The current flats have small external balconies which are recessed and considered to be too small and to be useful for their intended purpose. They appear to be mainly used as additional storage space. The internal arrangements of the flats are also considered to be too small with poor circulation, a lack natural lighting and with an institutional feel to them. None of the flats are accessible by the disabled as all have a step up into them.
9. The overall aim of the proposal is to provide a better standard of accommodation for the occupiers and to increase the energy efficiency of the building. This can be achieved by increasing the space within the flats by replacing the balconies with projecting bay window seats and opening up the internal space by bringing the lounge, diner and kitchen spaces together at the rear of the flats. It is proposed to replace the concrete tiles with a modern terracotta rainscreen cladding system and the existing dark stained external joinery by composite timber and aluminium windows and glazing systems.
10. The main entrance to the building is mid way along the west elevation. There is a secondary entrance from this side to the north - west corner. The main entrance provides access to the lift only with the stair cases being remote from the main entrance to the southern and northern ends of the building. Two options presented to improve this situation.
- 11 Option 1.
This retains the existing main entrance from the west side. The northern external stair well is to be rebuilt within an enclosed space with interconnection to the three storey northern block. The southern stair well

would be remodelled to comply with current building regulations. A new lift would be installed within the existing shaft with the addition of some glazing to the Banbury Road elevation to provide views out and animation to the elevation.

12. Option 2

Again this retains the main entrance from the west side. The existing lift and shaft are removed and replaced with a new main staircase in a glazed structure to the Banbury Road elevation. The existing southern staircase is removed to allow natural light into the corridor.

13. In both alternatives the refurbishment and alterations can only be seen as an overall improvement in access terms as well as enhancing the Banbury Road elevation and street scene. Both options in relation to the lift / stairs have their advantages and neither would be detrimental to the overall elevation fronting Banbury Road. As either option is supportable, a condition can be added to the permission if granted requiring the applicant to inform the planning authority which is to proceed.

Impact on Listed Building

14. Summertown was developed from the early 1830s with a series of villas set in large grounds and elsewhere smaller rows of terraces. Summertown House is one of these villas and is one of the few that survive that is listed (grade II). There is only one left that has not has its garden developed, at 304 Woodstock Road and that is listed grade II*.
15. The early OS maps show the original garden layout as a series of compartments, depending on the function. So there is a kitchen garden, a garden which forms part of the formal approach, a pleasure garden and then larger paddock areas. The 1960s development occupies the area that was the kitchen garden, part of the formal approach gardens and spaces along a north - south boundary between two paddock areas.
16. The 1960s development changed the orientation and setting of the house and how it is now experienced. The 1960s buildings was designed by Howard, Killick, Partridge and Amis, a recognised and respected practice whose buildings elsewhere in Oxford are listed. These current buildings have also been considered for listing in view of their unusual construction and distinctive tile hung exteriors but did not meet the required criteria.
17. The setting of the original house is now one that relies on a green 'quad' to the south, framed by these modern residential blocks. The lodge house and gate piers to the north - east corner of the site also survive as evidence and a memory of the original entrance and approach. The quad area has been compromised by areas of tarmac and parking.
18. The proposals do not involve any works to the listed or curtilage buildings that would require listed building consent. The recladding of the 1960s western

accommodation block will revive the building, giving it a more contemporary appearance, whilst still respecting its architectural origins and provenance.

19. In accordance with policy SP55 of the SHDPD further development on the site it must demonstrate that the refurbished buildings and other works will have a positive effect on the setting of the listed building compared to the existing development. Officers conclude that the proposals are in accordance with this policy.

Trees and Landscaping

20. The application site is not within a conservation area nor are there any tree preservation orders on the site. Notwithstanding this there are some significant trees present.
21. The proposals in relation to the “Oval” to the southern side of the site adjacent to the eastern vehicular access, are likely to impact on the large Plane tree present at this point. The work involves the removal of four car parking spaces and the re-instatement with a permeable material of the tarmac area of roadway, and the introduction of steps and a ramp giving access to the building. Officers recommend that a grassed area is retained around the tree and that the “hard surface” should be of a permeable material. The ramp is within the root protection area of the tree and given that it is on a raised area above the road, any excavation to construct the ramp would be harmful. It is suggested that the ramp should be re-located to a position alongside the west face of the western accommodation block, and that the permeable area should then extend to the new edge of carriageway.
22. A diseased Horse Chestnut and a Plane tree that are close to a large Wellingtonia to the Apsley Road frontage are proposed to be removed so that views of the listed building are opened up from Apsley Road and from the site entrance. Officers have no objections to the removal of these trees or to the trees closer to the House which are almost all evergreens (Cypressus and Irish Yew).
23. A new pedestrian access to the nursery is also proposed with a formal line of tree planting alongside this path. A more informal arrangement is preferred and can be dealt with via a landscaping condition.
24. In addition the westernmost of the three new cycle sheds would be within the root protection zone of a large oak tree at the northern side of the site along with a proposed path. The positions need to be adjusted to avoid the root protection zone of the tree. Again this can be dealt with via a condition.
25. Overall the proposed landscaping works will greatly improve the setting and visibility of the listed house, and as part of a more strategic maintenance and planting regime will ensure that any further depletion of the surviving original landscape features is avoided.

Biodiversity

26. A Phase 1 habitat survey (baseline ecological survey) was submitted as part of the application. The survey noted that the existing cladding could have the potential to house species such as bats though no indications of them being present were found. If a bat maternity roost is subsequently encountered however, then suitable mitigation will be required. A condition can be added accordingly.

Residential Amenity

27. The main concern with regards to the neighbouring properties was the impact of the proposed energy centre. However this element has now been removed. The application in its amended form is not considered to have a detrimental impact on neighbouring residential properties.

Highways and Access

28. The supporting 'Planning Statement' indicates that the proposal involves the subdivision of 5 no. existing 2 bed flats to create an additional 5 no. 1 bed flats within the existing eastern block. Thus creating in total, provision of 84 graduate rooms within the eastern block.
29. The submission also indicates that a new pedestrian gate would also be created from Apsley Rd. Further details on the design of this gate have not been included, but it should open inwards and not oversail the adjacent public footway. A condition can be added accordingly.
30. As part of the proposals the number of parking spaces within the site (accessed via the Apsley Road access) will be reduced by 4 spaces following the introduction of a landscape strategy. This is welcomed. The drawings do however indicate the provision of a new car port for two cars specifically for the occupants of the Lodge which is not opposed.
31. As the proposal will give rise to an additional 5 student rooms, the Local Highway Authority requests a contribution of £690 towards cycle infrastructure measures within the city. This can be secured via a Unilateral Undertaking.

Cycle Stores

32. An additional 84 cycle parking spaces are also proposed, to be located at the rear of the site. Again this is to be welcomed. There are no details on the internal arrangements of this cycle parking provision however and further details should be provided to demonstrate how cycles would be secured internally within the designated cycle store. This can be covered by the inclusion of a condition.
33. The proposed cycle stores to the north and south of the eastern block are integrated into the site layout where there is likely to be opportunity for natural surveillance and policing from the residents and visitors to the site. This should reduce opportunity for cycles to be stolen from the new

secured cycle stores.

34. The Thames Valley Police Crime Prevention Design Advisor has some concerns in relation to the refurbishment of the existing cycle store which is situated to the rear of the site however. This location is more secluded and is not particularly well lit, making it a possible target for cycle theft. Measures to improve security of cycles at this point is therefore recommended, which can again be secured by condition.

Sustainability

35. The eastern block of accommodation was built in the 1960s and had poor insulation and inadequate heating, with the existing façade possessing no insulation at all. Complete demolition and rebuilding was considered but the embodied energy / carbon gains, thermal mass benefits and lower environmental impact of retaining the building outweighed the benefits of a new building.
36. The proposal therefore aims to refurbish the block and enhance its thermal and environmental performance. This is to be achieved by reducing the energy demand by installing energy efficient features such as high levels of insulation, high performance glazing, local and intelligent heating controls, reducing drafts, energy efficient lighting etc. All flats would be provided with under floor heating which would replace the old and inefficient electrical heating systems. This will provide a more even distribution of heat and will also improve the acoustic performance of the floors. In the event of planning permission being granted a further planning application would be submitted for the relocated energy referred to above.

Conclusion

37. The proposals represent a much welcomed scheme of improvement and refurbishment of the eastern block of accommodation at Summertown house. It also improves the setting of the listed house, reduces car parking and increases cycle parking. A separate application will be submitted for a relocated energy centre.
38. Committee is recommended to support the proposals accordingly.

Human Rights Act 1998

Officers have considered the Human Rights Act 1998 in reaching a recommendation to grant planning permission, subject to conditions and an accompanying Unilateral Undertaking. 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 subject to conditions and accompanying Unilateral Undertaking officers consider that the proposal will not undermine crime prevention or the promotion of community safety.

Background Papers:

Contact Officer: Lisa Green

Extension: 2614

Date: 26th March 2012

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