

Minutes of a meeting of the Planning - Oxford City Planning Committee on Tuesday 21 February 2023

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Committee members present:

Councillor Clarkson (Chair)	Councillor Upton (Vice-Chair)
Councillor Altaf-Khan	Councillor Chapman
Councillor Fouweather	Councillor Hollingsworth
Councillor Pegg	Councillor Rehman
Councillor Railton (for Councillor Aziz)	

Officers present for all or part of the meeting:

David Butler, Head of Planning Services
Jennifer Coppock, Principal Planning Officer
Sally Fleming, Planning Lawyer
Emma Lund, Committee and Member Services Officer
Andrew Murdoch, Planning Manager

Apologies:

Councillors Aziz, Hunt and Malik sent apologies.
Substitutes are shown above.

62. Declarations of interest

22/02168/FUL

Councillor Railton stated that she was a member of Littlemore Parish Council, which had been consulted on the application. Councillor Railton declared that she had not participated in any discussion about the application at the Parish Council, and was approaching it with an open mind.

63. 22/02168/FUL: Plots 23-26, Oxford Science Park, Grenoble Road, Oxford OX4 4GB

The Committee considered an application (22/02168/FUL) for erection of 3no. laboratory and office buildings with ancillary commercial uses (all within Use Class E); provision of associated landscaping, car parking, cycle parking and creation of new accesses at Plots 23-26, Oxford Science Park, Grenoble Road, Oxford.

The Planning Officer gave a presentation and highlighted the following:

- The site was designated as a Category 1 employment site and had been allocated for employment use under Local Plan policy SP9. It was also within the Cowley Branch Line Area of Change;
- The application proposed the erection of 3no. 4-storey buildings to serve as offices and laboratories for life sciences research and development purposes, with ancillary uses such as café and childcare facilities;
- Pedestrian access would be prioritised from Heatley Road towards the middle of the site, with vehicles diverted to the sides and the rear of the buildings;
- The public realm between the buildings and fronting Heatley Road would provide a combination of hard and soft landscaping, with permanent built shelters to facilitate outdoor working and socialising;
- The proposal would initially provide 883 car parking spaces (within the basement, at grade, and within the multi-storey car park attached to building 3). The multi-storey car park would be flexible, and able to convert to additional laboratory and office floor space in the future. The associated legal agreement would secure the removal of 200 parking spaces once the Cowley Branch Line was operational at 2 trains per hour;
- The proposed scale, massing and articulation would read as a hard edge when viewed from the A4074 and Sandford. However, measures such as an enhanced soft landscape buffer along the A4074, recessive colours and plant screening in the form of vertical PV panels would reduce the prominence of the buildings and soften the potential impact;
- The proposal included closure of the existing construction access road to the north east corner of the site, which would be replanted as woodland. The submitted Tree Canopy Assessment stated an 8.2% net increase in tree canopy cover over 25 years, equating to 62% of the total site area;
- The proposal would also result in a biodiversity net gain of 5.95%, in accordance with Local Plan policy G2. This would be achieved by enhancing grassland in four off site locations within the ownership of the Science Park;
- To ensure the site became more sustainable, the applicant would be required to provide financial contributions towards bus services serving the Oxford Science Park, and towards active travel improvements in the local area such as additional pedestrian and cyclists' crossings, new shared-use paths, and the upgrading of cycle routes;
- Officers considered that the proposed development - which would provide additional floor space for research and development purposes - would respond appropriately to the site context and Local Plan allocation, and would accord with the overall aims and objectives of the NPPF and policies within the Oxford Local Plan. The

application was therefore recommended for approval, subject to the conditions and legal obligations set out within sections 10 and 12 of the report.

Rory Maw (applicant) spoke in favour of the application.

The Committee asked questions about the details of the application, which were responded to by officers, the applicant and architect. The Committee's discussions included, but were not limited to:

- Once the Cowley Branch Line was operational at 2 trains per hour and the 200 car parking spaces had been removed as required by the legal agreement, this would result in a staff mode share of 35.5% which was considered acceptable in this location;
- It was noted by a Member that the approved energy statement set out an average overall reduction in carbon emissions of 40.2%, which was only marginally above the 40% required by policy RE1. Officers advised that it was difficult for laboratories to meet the requirement due to the nature of their operations. However, if considered necessary a requirement to provide evidence of performance against the submitted energy statement could be achieved by way either of an additional condition, or an amendment to existing condition 31. Another Member highlighted that policy RE1 did not require an allowance for margin of error. As such, a condition / amendment to secure ongoing monitoring of the energy statement could not be required on the basis that the proposed reduction was close to the level required by the policy. However, he nonetheless supported it on the basis that post-occupancy evaluation was good practice for large developments.
- The requirement for the Cowley Branch Line to be operating 2 trains per hour in order to secure the removal of the 200 car parking spaces was a loose definition, which could be open to interpretation. The Planning Solicitor explained that this could be more clearly defined within the legal agreement regarding the hours when it should apply: principally, the time periods when staff were expected to be working on the premises;
- Objections to the proposal from the surrounding community had been minimal, and additionally many organisations which were traditionally sceptical of developments had expressed support;
- The design, space, employment opportunities, economic benefits, and opportunities provided by the proposal for Oxford to continue to be a leading city for life sciences research and development were to be welcomed. The delivery of the biodiversity net gain in areas which were very local to the development was also welcomed;
- A Member recommended that access and exit during the construction works should be via the main A4074, and that the sending of construction traffic via the Brick Kiln Lane junction should be avoided. It was noted that the County Council was responsible for the Construction Traffic Management Plan and the request would need to be conveyed to them for consideration.

On being proposed, seconded and put to the vote the Committee agreed with the officer's recommendation to approve the application for the reasons set out in the report and subject to: (i) the required planning conditions set out in the report; (ii) the addition or amendment of a condition to require monitoring of the energy statement; and (iii) satisfactory completion of a legal agreement, to include clarification of the frequency and timings of trains required to secure the removal of the 200 parking spaces.

The Oxford City Planning Committee resolved to:

1. **approve the application** for the reasons given in the report and subject to the required planning conditions set out in section 12 of the report and the addition or amendment of a condition to require monitoring of the energy statement and grant planning permission, subject to:
 - the satisfactory completion of a legal agreement under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and other enabling powers to secure the planning obligations set out in the recommended heads of terms which were set out in the report;
2. **delegate authority** to the Head of Planning Services to:
 - finalise the recommended conditions as set out in the report including such refinements, amendments, additions and/or deletions as the Head of Planning Services considers reasonably necessary; and
 - finalise the recommended legal agreement under section 106 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and other enabling powers as set out in this report, including refining, adding to, amending and/or deleting the obligations detailed in the heads of terms set out in the report (including to dovetail with and where appropriate, reinforce the final conditions and informatives to be attached to the planning permission) as the Head of Planning Services considers reasonably necessary; and
 - complete the section 106 legal agreement referred to above and issue the planning permission.

64. Minutes

The Committee resolved to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 24 January 2023 as a true and accurate record.

65. Forthcoming applications

The Committee noted the list of forthcoming applications.

66. Dates of future meetings

The Committee noted the dates of future meetings.

The Chair reminded Members that overspill meetings were likely to be needed in the next few months, due to the volume of major applications received.

The meeting started at 6.00 pm and ended at 6.49 pm

Chair

Date: Tuesday 21 March 2023

When decisions take effect:

Cabinet: after the call-in and review period has expired

*Planning Committees: after the call-in and review period has expired and the formal
decision notice is issued*

All other committees: immediately.

Details are in the Council's Constitution.