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Michael Crofton-Briggs
Oxford City Council – City Development
St Aldate's Chambers
109-113 St Aldates
Oxford OX1 1DS

9 July 2013

Dear Michael,

Student Accommodation at Castle Mill, Roger Dudman Way, Oxford 11/02881/FUL

I thought it might be helpful to update you on the University's progress with providing options for amelioration of the impact of the development at Castle Mill.

Landscaping

In March 2013, the University appointed LDA Design, landscape architects to consider opportunities for providing additional landscaping at Castle Mill, in particular to enhance the views from Port Meadow, and with a brief that the landscaping scheme should endeavour to address concerns identified in the petition signed by a number of members of the local community that additional landscaping should 'hide the buildings in summer and soften their impact in winter' as far as possible.

The landscape architects have reviewed the site and have made an assessment of options for planting which might be established to fill the gaps and how such planting might be layered between the meadow and the development most effectively.

The options have been discussed in detail with Cripsey Meadow Allotments Association and where there are opportunities to carry out screening planting within the allotments, these opportunities will be taken. In particular, the allotment holders are supportive of the proposal to establish alders and birch along the allotment side of the stream edge which would greatly improve the screening.

The University believes that the proposals outlined in the LDA report offer the best overall solution for enhancing the landscaping within the constraints of the site and neighbouring land uses and will help soften the urban edge of the city.

The report also proposes a package of further works which would have an immediate beneficial effect, particularly in the next few years before the planting becomes established. The report suggests options to change the colour of the rear elevations facing Port Meadow. We would recommend that Option 1 is the most successful but this option would be subject to confirming colour samples on site and obtaining the approval of the City Council. The University is also considering the addition of climbing plants to the rear elevations of the northern blocks as also proposed in LDA's report.



Subject to obtaining consent from the City Council and the Environment Agency where necessary, the University will adopt the proposals in the LDA report and seek the City Council's consent to a revised colour scheme for the rear elevations.

William Lucy Way

Residents from William Lucy Way have also recently asked that a mitigation scheme be considered for the view across the railway line and sidings. We have looked into the options available to provide mitigation here but unfortunately due to the proximity to the existing railway line, there is not sufficient space within the site to provide additional screening.

The University therefore does not propose any further landscaping for the elevations of the buildings opposite William Lucy Way.

Roof

It has been highlighted that the current roof has, under certain conditions, reflected sunlight. The current roof finish and colour were in response to the requirements of the City Council and agreed through the discharge of the planning conditions. Having discussed this issue with the manufacturer of the roofing material to investigate whether the extent of reflected sunlight will reduce over time, the manufacturer has indicated that a slight dulling down is likely to occur. They were unable to recommend any treatment options which would accelerate the dulling effect.

A suggestion had been presented that the rear roof elevation of four of the blocks could be flattened to reduce the impact of the development. This would be difficult to achieve without considerable delay and cost. In addition, given the angle of the view from Port Meadow, the higher retained section of the roof would still be visible so there would be little real benefit.

The University does not consider that a reduction in the roof line will have any real benefit.

Light Spillage

A suggestion has been made that the windows overlooking Port Meadow should have modifications to the glass instead of relying on blinds or curtains to prevent light spill from the site. The University has spoken to glass manufacturers and they have confirmed that when it is dark outside, there is no film which will completely prevent light from transmitting through glass.

As a part of the environmental sustainability works built within the project, the lights to all communal areas will be on infra red sensors and will only operate when the occupants are using those areas. This will reduce CO₂ emissions and ensure that the lights are only on when necessary.

The University will include blinds and curtains in each room which will reduce the spilling of artificial light.



Environmental Information

The University does not accept that the development is an EIA Development requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment.

It will nevertheless carry out an assessment of the environmental impacts of the development on a voluntary basis following the processes of the directive and the regulations so far as possible.

We hope you find this summary helpful. Please let me know if there is anything you would like to discuss in more detail.

Yours sincerely

Paul Goffin
Director of Estates

