

EAST AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

8th February 2017

Application Number: 16/02618/FUL

Decision Due by: 12th January 2017
with extension of time to 15th February 2017

Proposal: Demolition of redundant former outdoor education centre buildings; construction of a new science education centre and innovation centre with parking, access and landscape enhancement.

Site Address: Former Stansfeld Outdoor Education Centre, Quarry Road OX3 8SB (Appendix 1)

Ward: Quarry And Risinghurst Ward

Agent: Kemp and Kemp LLP **Applicant:** The Oxford Trust

Recommendation:

The East Area Planning Committee is recommended to GRANT planning permission for the reasons set out below in the report, subject to the suggested conditions and delegate authority to the Head of Planning and Regulatory to issue the permission on the satisfactory completion of a Section 106 agreement to secure the contributions set out in the report.

Reasons for Approval

- 1 This proposal represents a sustainable re-use of a partially previously developed site. The development would help to maintain and strengthen the local economy and broaden formal and community educational opportunities. It conforms to the NPPF and the relevant policies of the adopted Core Strategy 2026 and Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016.
- 2 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 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 Implementation of NRIA and Energy Strategy
- 4 Samples
- 5 Travel Plan
- 6 Centre Management Parking
- 7 Drainage
- 8 Parking layout plan
- 9 CTMP
- 10 Delivery, Service and Collection/Drop Off Management Plan
- 11 Landscape plan required
- 12 Landscape: carry out by completion
- 13 Landscape, hard surface design - tree roots
- 14 Landscape, underground services - tree roots
- 15 Tree Protection Plan (TPP) 1
- 16 Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) 1
- 17 Biodiversity Management Plan
- 18 Land Quality
- 19 Provision of public art

Legal Agreement/CIL

The County Highway Authority requires a legal agreement in connection with this proposal (i) to secure a review of parking bays on Old Road and any subsequent measures to be implemented (£20,000), and (ii) for Travel Plan monitoring (£1,240).

This proposal is liable for a CIL payment of £47,266.15p.

Principal Planning 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
- CP11** - Landscape Design
- CP13** - Accessibility
- CP14** - Public Art
- CP17** - Recycled Materials
- CP18** - Natural Resource Impact Analysis
- CP19** - Nuisance
- CP20** - Lighting
- CP21** - Noise
- CP23** - Air Quality Management Areas
- TR1** - Transport Assessment
- TR2** - Travel Plans
- TR3** - Car Parking Standards
- TR4** - Pedestrian & Cycle Facilities
- TR6** - Powered Two-Wheelers
- TR12** - Private Non-Residential Parking
- TR13** - Controlled Parking Zones
- TR14** - Servicing Arrangements
- NE12** - Groundwater Flow
- NE13** - Water Quality
- NE14** - Water and Sewerage Infrastructure
- NE15** - Loss of Trees and Hedgerows
- NE16** - Protected Trees
- NE20** - Wildlife Corridors
- NE21** - Species Protection
- NE22** - Independent Assessment
- NE23** - Habitat Creation in New Developments
- SR2** - Protection of Open Air Sports Facilities

Core Strategy

- CS1** - Hierarchy of centres
- CS2** - Previously developed and greenfield land
- CS9** - Energy and natural resources
- CS10** - Waste and recycling
- CS11** - Flooding
- CS12** - Biodiversity
- CS13** - Supporting access to new development
- CS18** - Urban design, town character, historic environment
- CS19** - Community safety
- CS21** - Green spaces, leisure and sport
- CS27** - Sustainable economy

Other Planning Documents

National Planning Policy Framework
National Planning Practice Guidance
Parking standards SPD
Natural Resource Impact Assessment (NRIA) SPD

Site History

60/01145/M_H - New dormitory block with staff and ancillary accommodation and use as camp school for girls. PERMISSION 9th November 1960.

66/00455/M_H - Caretaker's house to replace existing.. PERMISSION 29th July 1966.

69/00444/M_H - Store and garages. PERMISSION 20th August 1969.

83/00103/SON - Temporary classroom unit. TEMPORARY PERMISSION 13th April 1983.

98/00783/NF - Demolition of cottage. Erection of 2 storey detached building to provide accommodation and environmental education facilities for 12 students & 2 staff in association with Field Study Centre.. PERMISSION 29th July 1998.

00/00405/NF - Single storey conservatory extension to study centre recreation room.. PERMISSION 18th April 2000.

00/00919/NO - Outline application (seeking siting and means of access only) for 2/3 bedroom bungalow accessed via Quarry Road, for use in connection with Study Centre.. PERMISSION 13th September 2000.

01/01154/NF - Demolition of existing garage/store. Proposed replacement store.. PERMISSION 30th July 2001.

01/01829/FUL - Erection of two storey (with first floor in roof space) 3 bedroom detached house for Centre Manager. PERMISSION 27th November 2001.

03/00472/FUL - Extension of time of application 98/00783/NF re: Demolition of cottage. Erection of 2 storey detached building to provide accommodation and environmental education facilities for 12 students & 2 staff in association with Field Study Centre.. PERMISSION 17th April 2003.

03/01572/FUL - Erection of 2 storey 3 bedroom detached house for site manager.. PERMISSION 26th September 2003.

03/02451/TPO - Fell sycamore subject of Oxford City Council TPO (No. 1) Quarry Road.. PERMISSION 5th January 2004.

05/00217/FUL - Erection of double garage. PERMISSION 8th March 2005.

Statutory Consultees

- Environment Agency Thames Region – no response
- Thames Water Utilities Limited – no objection subject to proper provision for drainage and sewer connections.
- Highways Authority – no objection subject to a legal agreement relating to a review of parking bays on Old Road and any subsequent measures to be implemented, and for Travel Plan monitoring; and, conditions regarding approval of an amended Travel Plan, details of the parking layout and drainage (SuDS), and a Construction Traffic Management Plan and Deliveries Servicing Collection and Drop-off Plan.

Public Consultation

8 individual residents commented from addresses in Douglas Downes Close, St Ebba's Close, Stansfeld Close, Quarry Road and Speedwell Street. Comments were also received from community groups: The Friends of Quarry, The Friends of Stansfeld, Headington Planning Group and the Oxford Civic Society. These comments may be summarised as follows:

- Support for the aims of the Trust subject to conditions.
- While there are many positive aspects to the scheme it seems fundamentally inappropriate to place such a large scale commercial operation in a residential area where roads are already under significant pressure.
- Disagree that the development would not have a material impact on the local or wider road network. The only access to the site is via residential areas and there is no good route to it. Suggest that the site should be accessed from the by-pass
- The TA underestimates traffic generation because it is based on the number of parking spaces provided – those spaces could be used multiple times each day. While permits are to be issued drivers would not use other modes of transport but would simply park in residential streets – displacing a parking problem onto residential streets.
- Also, for comparison it uses estimates of traffic generation when the Study Centre was open but there has been traffic growth since then – need to compare traffic generation with current traffic flows. It does not reflect the experience of local people. Residents estimate that there would be a 10% increase in traffic on local roads which is not negligible.
- In addition, large numbers of coaches would be arriving – large vehicles are not suited to these local roads.
- Should be aiming to reduce travel by cars and vans not just to reduce number of single occupancy vehicles. The stated targets for this are not at all ambitious.
- Prefer to see less parking on-site but accept that it is a balance, and welcome the parking booking and management proposals.
- Additional car parking at this major employment site should only be supported if it can be demonstrated that Headington's road network has spare capacity at peak times. The TA does not produce such evidence.

- The TA contains no indication of levels of staff working at the site – could be as many as 400 including ancillary staff. Those who cannot park on-site would park in Quarry or Wood Farm (where there is no CPZ) or they would use the Park and Ride. Parking in residential streets would be reduced if an attractive and regular means for moving staff from the P and R is not introduced.
- Information on public transport is incorrect, and current arrangements for accessing the site from the P and R are not satisfactory. Need new bus route along Quarry Road
- No mention of cycling in the TA. Need information on how to increase cycling and walking to the site. Suggest a cycle path alongside the steps at the top of Old Road to encourage cycling to the site.
- The likely vehicle routes to the site are Beaumont Road and Old Quarry High Street because they are the most direct but they are unsuited to any further increase in traffic. It is impractical to dictate the routes which drivers would take. Given local conditions there would undoubtedly be effects on residential roads. The intention to censure car park pass holders who do not use approved routes necessitates local people reporting such activity and this cannot be relied upon.
- The TA should be reviewed to allow the full impact of the traffic generated to be taken into account.
- Suggest conditions to cover: amendments to the Travel Plan, payment to Highways Authority to investigate a CPZ in Quarry, measures to alleviate Old Road congestion and improve pedestrian safety across Quarry Road/Old Road junction, contributions to an improved bus service, placing an upper limit on the numbers of people working at the site.
- Need pedestrian crossing over Old Road (after turning from Old Road) because it is already dangerous to cross at that point – would help school parties access the site; also another pedestrian crossing along Quarry Road to help pupils and staff from Margaret Road primary School and would also calm traffic;
- Douglas Downes Close unsuitable for this traffic (narrow, single track with limited visibility) and hazardous for pedestrians because no segregated walking route. Particularly difficult in winter because dark and unlit. Also junction with Quarry Road is a sharp turn into a narrow opening with poor visibility – likelihood of accidents resulting from increased traffic unfamiliar with the layout of the junction.
- The development would exacerbate current problems of private non-residents parking in Douglas Downes Close. Need more information on how on-site parking would be enforced.
- The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment is poor. Concern about the visual impact of the development given that there are no photomontages to assist analysis.
- The proposed buildings are much higher than the existing buildings – effective screening is necessary or the positions of the buildings reviewed. Need to explore reducing the mass or moving the buildings further back from the boundary. Concerned about the structural impact of the development on existing nearby residential properties.
- Noise from ground/air source heat pumps.
- Need rules during construction phase regarding noise, fumes, dust etc.

- Concern is expressed about overlooking, late evening noise from decking areas, and night time light from windows. Request conditions dealing with: hours of use of decking areas, automatic blinds on upper windows, decking position and screening, a process to take account of residents' views in the future.
- The environmental implications and opportunities need to be taken fully into account.
- Woodland Management Plan vague particularly with respect to increasing biodiversity: the associated work should be carried out prior to occupancy and occupancy denied if not.
- Access to the woodland should be free of charge even accepting that controlled access is needed. More details of how access would be managed and when it would be allowed is required. There needs to be an assessment of the impact of woodland access on bio-diversity.
- Question what the loss of meadowland would have on the aquatic life of the ponds.
- Need reassurance that the water run-off from the car park, traffic fumes and noise, the presence of nearby seating and development of the car park would not harm the Great Crested Newt population.
- Concerns have been expressed by a resident about water and electricity utilities crossing their property – these are issues that need to be taken up with the developer and or utilities provider, they are not material planning issues.
- Concern about the amount of weekend use and the loss of amenity that would cause.
- Needs more than 2 vehicle charging points when there is likely to be a move to electric cars.

Officers Assessment

Site and Surroundings

1. The former Outdoor Education Centre is located off Quarry Road on the east side of Oxford in the suburb of Headington. The site as a whole extends to 7.28 hectares. It occupies a slightly elevated position in relation to surrounding development and has an undulating landform resulting from quarrying and subsequent land fill.
2. The existing buildings on the site are a mixture of single- and 2-storey buildings formerly used for short-stay residential and educational use, together with areas of hard standing and recreational grassland. The existing use is within Use Class C2.
3. Beyond this 'campus' the majority of the site is extensive semi-natural deciduous woodland that has colonised the former quarry site, also with ponds and grassland glades. This area, including the woodland is designated as a Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC).
4. Access to the site is from a single track private road with passing places which is heavily wooded on either side. The lane winds up the hill from Quarry Road and past Douglas Downes Close, for some 120m to a gate

marking the existing buildings campus, and a further 52 metres to the buildings themselves.

5. Beyond and outside the site to the north, the open pasture is designated as a Wildlife Corridor. This general area is also recognised as a Conservation Target Area of County-wide importance.
6. There is loose knit residential development adjacent to the south and west of the site, and the close knit development of Headington Quarry to the north. The A40 eastern by-pass runs along the eastern side of the site.

The Proposals (design and operation)

Design

7. It is proposed by The Oxford Trust to demolish the existing outdoor education centre buildings at the unoccupied former Stansfeld Outdoor Education Centre and construct a new Innovation Centre, Science Education Centre, and Auditorium on the footprint of the demolished buildings. The proposed total gross internal floor area extends to some 3,000m² (excluding covered external spaces). The existing Caretaker's house is to be retained. The site is proposed to be named Stansfeld Park.
8. The Innovation Centre (2285m²) is proposed to be 2-storey with a split pitched roof. It comprises flexible office units of between 30m² and 90m² (respectively 4-12 workstations in each) a co-working area, meeting rooms and ancillary facilities. It is located in the south of the site on an east-west orientation and presents a two-storey elevation and deep pitched roof with solar PV panels towards the residential properties to the south (in Stansfeld Close). A belt of mature trees between 15 and 19 metres deep intervenes in the 40-47 metre gap between the proposed building and the back walls of the houses in Stansfeld Close.
9. The Science Education Centre (458m²) is proposed to be single storey with a flat 'biodiverse' (green) roof. It is oriented north-south extending north from the Science Education Centre via a 'knuckle' element which is the main entrance and reception area to the whole facility and includes a café. The Science Education Centre comprises an interactive exhibition space, flexible workshop/classrooms, and ancillary spaces. It is surrounded by a canopy covering a narrow space for external circulation. This canopy extends on the north elevation to a large covered outdoor seating area with direct footpath access to the woodland and associated access to interior changing and toilet facilities for cleaning up after outdoor activities. Linked to the classrooms there is also a part-covered outdoor amenity space facing the woodland and ponds.
10. The long single storey façade to the Science Education Centre is interrupted by the Auditorium (107m²) which is proposed to be a building of 1½ storeys with a flat roof and green 'living wall' front façade.

11. Together the Innovation Centre and Science Education Centre with main entrance in the knuckle between them, 'embrace' an area of paved and landscaped pedestrian public realm which provides the pedestrian welcome and entrance area to the whole facility, adjacent to the landscaped oval parking area (vehicles, cycles and motorcycles) and vehicle circulation space.
12. The external materials include timber cladding, glass external windows and doors in aluminium frames, metal standing seam pitched roof, and some metal exterior finishes and structural elements. The Innovation Centre is designed with vertical bands of timber cladding with vertical window and other openings. The Science Education Centre and entrance has a contrasting horizontal emphasis with a strong roof line, vertical timber cladding and metal canopy supports.
13. Loss of existing vegetation is minimised. There would be general planting in accordance with the submitted Woodland Strategy. Landscaping of public realm areas includes porous SuDS compliant surfaces with planting of native tree species; ground cover of wildflowers, perennials and ornamental species; and climbing plants. There are to be biodiversity enhancements including the utilisation of built-in bat and bird boxes/tubes in the new buildings.
14. Close to the buildings and in an oval formation with side spurs, a landscaped parking area is to be provided for 56 cars: 34 to be rented/reserved by Innovation Centre occupiers, 14 visitor spaces, 2 electric car bays, 2 mini-bus bays and 4 disabled bays; plus parking for 6 motorcycles and some 50 cycles. To prevent unplanned visits by vehicle, access is to be controlled via a barrier located at the top of the access road just before the main building campus; and there is to be CCTV control for monitoring/managing the usage and congestion (if any) along the access road.
15. The access road is to be improved and re-paved with non-porous tarmac. Parking bays and external circulation spaces would be of SuDS compliant materials/design. Existing and proposed footpaths throughout the site would be surfaced/re-surfaced in hoggin or similar material to maintain/create an informal appearance.
16. The acceptability of the design is discussed in more detail under a separate heading below.

Operation

17. The Innovation Centre would follow a model pioneered by The Oxford Trust at various sites in Oxford and beyond, most recently at the Oxford Centre for Innovation (OCFI), on New Road. The basic operating principle is that small, early stage, technology companies can obtain office and workshop (not laboratory) space on terms (a license, as opposed to a lease) more flexible than traditional office space. This allows them to expand and/or move to larger premises in line with their organisational growth helping to keep young companies in the Oxford area and add to the wealth creation of the city and county.

18. Based on the available area if it were to be occupied as offices, some 200 to 250 people could work in the IC. It is not possible to say how many people (at peak) would be based in the innovation centre at one time and the nature of the occupants means this would not necessarily be static. There would be booked visits only to the facilities where vehicular access might be required; and charged business parking (to encourage alternative transport) for the IC with subsidised rates for low emission vehicles and penalties for users who persist in using unauthorised travel routes in peak hours.
19. The Science Education Centre (SEC) would principally serve primary school pupils on organised visits from schools during term time. The majority of visitors are likely to come from this source, supplemented by weekend and holiday activities carried out sympathetically to the use of the site as a working innovation centre throughout the year regardless of the school calendar.
20. By the fourth year of operation some 25,000 visitors to the SEC are anticipated, of which 15,000 would be from schools. The centre is designed for up to 100 school pupils (3 classes) per day max during term time.
21. Public weekend activities: the Trust's weekend programme revolves around the highly successful family-oriented "Saturday Science Club", which is currently run in The Discovery Zone at The Oxford Centre for Innovation most weekends and at Abingdon School roughly once a month. At Stansfeld Park, the Trust plans to host a wider programme of bookable weekend events, making use of the purpose-designed facilities both indoor and out, which would include access to the hands-on part of the centre with each booking. It is initially proposed to open the SEC for one day per weekend to evaluate demand.
22. Woodland access: the site would remain a private site at all times. Access to the woodland (and café) by the local community would be managed and free of charge (under proposals yet to be developed). Managed access (as opposed to open access) is essential for the protection of the woodland, for the protection of school children and for the privacy of neighbouring properties. The Trust's intention is to inform the local community of its plans for the woodland as they evolve, and how public access would operate as and when as they are agreed. When the site is in operation, the impact of visitors on the local environment would be closely monitored to ensure the ongoing preservation and enhancement of the bio-diversity of the woodland. Work on improving the woodland and ponds has already begun in partnership with the Oxford Conservation Volunteers.

Determining Issues

23. Officers consider the determining issues to be:
 - Principle
 - Highway impacts
 - Impact on Landscape and Trees
 - Ecology

- Design
- Sustainability
- Other matters – archaeology, air quality, land quality and public art

Principle

24. A strategic objective of the adopted Core Strategy 2026 (paragraph 3.1.3) is to maximise the use of previously developed land, and make full and efficient use of all land in order to help protect environmental assets. Policy CS2 of the Core Strategy explicitly focusses new development on previously developed land; and Policy CP6 of the adopted Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016 states that maximum and appropriate use should be made of land. Policy CS1 of the Core Strategy 2026 directs new development towards accessible, sustainable sites in existing urban centres. The application site is on the urban edge and not within an existing urban centre; it is however in part a previously developed site and as such a sustainable new use for it is required.
25. Policy CS27 of the adopted Core Strategy states that the Council would support Oxford's key employment sectors whilst maintaining necessary infrastructure and services to ensure a sustainable economy. Policy CS16 of the adopted Core Strategy 2026 states that the Council would work with the County Council and other agencies to improve accessibility to all levels of education in locations accessible by walking, cycling and public transport. Provision for community as well as educational use would be sought.
26. The Core Strategy 2026 therefore supports the science research and enterprise innovation work of the Trust that is proposed for this site, and also the educational activities. The proposed scheme concentrates the new buildings on the previously developed part of the site, with landscaped car parking on some of the undeveloped area of the site (a level grassland area that was previously used for pitch sports). The woodland area is not proposed for development other than in connection with woodland activities.
27. The principal activities which are to take place on the site: in the Innovation Centre (Use Class B1) and in the Science Education Centre (Use Class D1) are regarded as acceptable in principle in residential areas.
28. In principle therefore the scheme may be regarded as an acceptable, sustainable re-use of the site subject to satisfactory environmental and other impacts.

Highways

29. A Trip Rate Information Computer System (TRICS) analysis of the site's extant use is regarded as acceptable by the local highway authority as the basis for assessing the traffic impact of the proposed development. The Transport Assessment (TA) concludes that when compared with the extant use of the site and in a worst case scenario, assuming that all car parking spaces on site are fully occupied:

- the development would be expected to generate 28 additional two-way vehicular trips during the morning peak and 16 additional two-way trips during the evening peak. This would not be regarded as a severe residual cumulative impact on the local road network (the conditions regarded as unacceptable in the NPPF);
- the Science Education Centre (SEC) would generate about 10 two-way trips per day, but because visitors to the SEC would arrive after 9:30 and depart before 15:30 (indeed that most SEC visitors would arrive by coach or mini-bus), these trips would not occur during the morning or evening peak network times; and,
- the proposed café, which is intended to serve staff and visitors to the site as a whole, is not considered to be a destination attracting trips in its own right.

30. The highway authority is satisfied with this analysis but considers that the resulting increase in vehicle movements along the section of Old Road between Quarry Road and the junction with Windmill Road / The Slade during the peak hours as a result of this development (potentially up to 8% in the morning peak) could have a detrimental impact upon the operation of the highway network. The highway authority is therefore requesting a legal agreement with the developer to secure £20,000 in order to review the layout and location of the parking bays along that part of Old Road; and, after public consultation, to amend the Traffic Regulation Order and the physical layout / location of parking bays.

31. The highway authority is also satisfied with:

- the accessibility of the site via the local highway network by means of walking, cycling and public transport although the highway authority is requesting a condition that the Travel Plan be revised explaining:
 - how travel to and from the different elements of the development (the IC, SEC and the woodland) would be managed and improved and how sustainable travel promoted to each set of users;
 - how the on-site parking spaces would be managed to be efficient and equitable thus ensuring no overspill parking takes place (and appropriate steps are taken if this does happen);
 - management of any parking on Quarry Road (limited to drop-off and pick-up only) through a Delivery Service Collection and Drop-off Plan (DSCDP); and
 - how it would be ensured that all businesses, staff, and visitors are continually made aware of all travel options available to them in the most appropriate and timely way. More innovative measures should be explored including subsidising public transport tickets, which may be required to make bus use more attractive particularly given distances to some bus stops are beyond what many would consider to be a reasonable walking distance.

- proposals for vehicle, pedestrian and cyclist access to the site along the private access lane although it supports a separate pedestrian route if that can eventually be created. It notes that the route and junction configuration and visibility are satisfactory;
- the proposed car parking (56 spaces) - this is less than the maximum 65 spaces indicated in the adopted parking standards but the highway authority is nonetheless satisfied that the potential for overspill parking on nearby residential streets would be minimised as a result of the proposals for managing/renting/reserving the proposed parking spaces and parking passes, other elements of the Travel Plan, and the location of the site within a CPZ. In response to representations the highway authority has commented verbally that Headington Quarry is 500m away from the site and with few opportunities for additional parking given the existing levels of parking there: it is therefore unlikely to prove attractive as a place to park for working at or visiting Stansfeld Park and so contributions from this development towards a CPZ there cannot be justified. Consultation on a CPZ for Wood Farm is imminent;
- the amount of cycle parking (50 spaces) and facilities for cyclists (showers, changing/locker facilities) requesting that use of these be monitored and increased provision be made if required. Strong support is given to proposals for pedal and electric bike hire schemes; and,
- arrangements and facilities for construction traffic subject to approval of a Construction Traffic Management Plan (CTMP).

32. The highway authority therefore raises no objection to the proposals subject to:

- a legal agreement relating to parking bays on Old Road as referred to above, and for Travel Plan monitoring; and,
- conditions regarding approval of an amended Travel Plan, details of the parking layout and drainage (SuDS), and a CTMP and DSCDP.

33. In representations (as summarised above) local people have raised issues about the methodology and data/assumptions used in the Transport Assessment and have voiced serious concerns that the traffic impacts are greatly underestimated. They consider that the site is not appropriate for this use because it is accessed via unsuitable residential roads which are already suffering significant traffic flows and congestion which would be made worse as a result of this development; and because of the likelihood of overflow parking which in their view would occur on local roads and those in Headington Quarry.

34. The context for considering highway impacts is the NPPF which lays down a presumption in favour of sustainable development, and in terms of accessibility states that significant development should be focussed in

locations “which are or can be made sustainable”. Specifically in relation to sustainable transport the NPPF states that:

“Development should only be prevented or refused on transport grounds where the residual cumulative impacts of development are severe”

35. The case officer has given weight to residents’ concerns and has reviewed the scheme with the highway authority. The conclusions drawn are that the methodology and data/assumptions used in the TA are reasonable; and that there is no case for refusing the scheme on highway grounds: the residual cumulative impact would not be severe given the mixture of on-site controls of vehicle access and limitations on parking, the local CPZ, the significant on-site provision for cycles and cyclists, proposals for pedal and electric bike hire, and elements of the Travel Plan (as to be revised) which include working with bus providers to ensure that the level of public transport service in proximity to the site is maintained or improved. Further, that residents’ requests for conditions to be applied are either already covered in the conditions proposed or cannot be supported.

Impact on Trees and Landscape

36. The majority of the site comprises semi-natural deciduous woodland that has colonised the former quarry site. This woodland has high landscape value; trees that are growing around the boundaries of the site feature in a number of public views from surrounding streets and developments. The woodland on this site is therefore a visual asset to the area. Some of the trees and landscape/ecological features are of particular significance:

- trees on the east and south sides of the entrance drive are protected under the Oxford City Council – Quarry Road (No.1) TPO, 1997;
- the woodland is within a designated Site of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC); and,
- the woodland is within the Shotover Conservation Target Area (CTA): UK Biodiversity Action Plan targets associated with this CTA include lowland mixed deciduous woodland (management).

37. Consideration of impacts on trees/woodland is also therefore a wider consideration of landscape impact and of the new landscaping that may be required to mitigate adverse effects. Policy NE11 of the Oxford Local Plan expects landscape design to relate to the character of the spaces, to incorporate existing significant landscape features, to ensure sub-surface works avoids damage to trees and hedges, to integrate boundary treatments into the development, and to enhance ecological value wherever possible. Policies NE15 and NE16 deal with the protection of trees. Policies CP1, CP6 and CP8 of the Oxford Local Plan, together with Policy CS18 of the Core Strategy require that development proposals incorporate high standards of design and respond appropriately to the site and its surroundings.

38. The development requires a number of trees to be removed from within the main part of the site and also along the access drive as identified in the Arboricultural Impact Assessment (AIA). Although the number of trees (approximately 53 identified in the AIA) to be removed appears to be high, it represents a very small proportion of the large number of trees on site and the majority are low quality and low value specimens. Many new trees would be planted as part of the soft landscaping of the site that would mitigate the losses.
39. None of trees that would be removed from the main part of the site for the building, circulation road and car park and other associated external works such as the decked area east of the building, is prominent in existing external public views of the site. The presence of many other trees in these views and the proposed new tree planting would ensure that the tree losses would not be significantly detrimental to public amenity in the area.
40. Removal of some trees might affect the existing outlook from some private properties. Most significantly, following construction of the new building it is proposed to remove the Leyland Cypress hedge that is behind the existing building. It is acknowledged that the hedge currently provides a screening function in views from the rear of private properties nearby in Stansfield Close, but it is incongruous in the woodland in biodiversity and landscape terms. The woodland would be enhanced by the removal of this hedge as is proposed. It is intended that most of the hedge would be retained as a screen during the construction phase of development, the remainder to removed following completion of construction.
41. Highways concerns require the existing access road to be widened and 3 vehicle passing places to be constructed and this requires trees to be removed. The proposed tree removals have been designed to minimise the impacts on existing trees, but removal of the large, mature Sycamore and Norway Maple trees (T1 and T16) in particular, from near to the junction of the access road with Quarry Road would alter the existing public views of this area from the street. The remaining trees within the woodland area behind would however ensure that mature tree canopy remains visible from the street in Quarry Road.
42. These impacts are regarded as being acceptable subject to the imposition of conditions regarding landscaping and tree protection. Of note:
- the landscape plan would be expected to include new tree planting as appropriate to re-stock the rather neglected woodland area along the entrance drive as part of the mitigation for removal of trees which has been necessary to provide vehicle passing places. This needs to be incorporated with the Woodland Management Plan;
 - hard surface details would need to include design and construction details of all hard surfaces within the Root Protection Area (RPA) of any retained tree including the retaining structure that is necessary to

support the new passing places where this encroaches within the woodland and also any upgrading of the existing access road;

- the underground utility services and drainage should be routed/located outside of the RPAs of retained trees;
- specific Arboricultural Method Statements would be required in respect of each encroachment of construction activity within the RPA of any retained tree;
- the Tree Protection Plan would need to include ground protection along the access drive unless there is evidence that the existing surface is strong enough to bear the weight of construction vehicles and prevent compaction of the soil below within the RPA of retained trees along the drive.

Ecology

43. Policy CS12 of the adopted Core Strategy and Policies NE20-NE23 of the Oxford Local Plan require the protection and enhancement of biodiversity.
44. Ecological information supplied with this application has been reviewed and found to be acceptable. The potential impacts of the proposed development (including impacts from lighting the development) upon Great Crested Newts, bats and woodland birds and other ecological assets have been considered fully.
45. An analysis of the habitats that would be lost and of their significance has been undertaken, and how their loss would be mitigated or compensated for. Proposals have been submitted for biodiversity enhancements which are assessed as being acceptable. With the appropriate management of remaining habitats it is assessed that there would be a net gain for biodiversity.
46. The applicant has provided a draft Biodiversity Management Plan, which the applicant intends to consult on with local naturalists. The Woodland Management Plan would then be revised in line with the Biodiversity Management Plan. It is therefore suggested that by means of a condition, time be allowed (until end June 2017) for this revision and consultation, the provision of a final Biodiversity Management Plan, and revised Woodland Management Plan.

Design and neighbourliness

47. The NPPF requires that local authorities seek high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings. It suggests that opportunities should be taken through the design of new development to improve the character and quality of an area and the way it functions. Policies CP1, CP6 and CP8 of the Oxford Local Plan, together with Policy CS18 of the Core Strategy require that development proposals

incorporate high standards of design and respond appropriately to the site and its surroundings.

Design

48. The proposal has been the subject of pre-application negotiation including submission to the Oxford Design Review Panel (ODRP) whose comments following a workshop which examined early stage designs are reproduced in Appendix 2. The applicant responded positively to the pre-application comments and the design is now in an acceptable form.

49. Taking into account the adjacent residential development, the site's undulating land forms and landscape with woodland setting, and the functional requirements of the buildings and external areas:

- the site layout draws on and responds well to the landscape/woodland setting. The orientation of buildings makes appropriate use of daylighting potential;
- the buildings are of acceptable heights, scale and massing: they would create a strong, inspiring presence on the site while being of a scale which is not un-neighbourly (see below) and not intimidating to visitors especially children;
- the extensive use of timber and the visual rhythm of the vertical timber banding and vertical window openings of the 2-storey Innovation Centre reflects the verticality of the surrounding woodland and new planting: it would assimilate the building with the landscape/woodland setting and would create a pleasing external appearance;
- the contrasting horizontality of the single storey Science Education Centre together with the living wall of the Auditorium and views of the woodland above and beyond the building (and to an extent through the glazed entrance/café) would create visual interest and draw the eye towards the facility entrance. The use of timber on these elevations is also reflective of the setting;
- the proposed hard and soft landscaping would augment the connection between the new buildings and their landscape setting and provide an interface between the formality of the buildings and the informality of the woodland setting;

50. It is concluded on design matters that this scheme would be visually stimulating; the buildings would be of interesting character and distinctive; and overall the scheme would make an appropriate response to the characteristics of the unique qualities of this very characterful site.

Neighbourliness

51. The 2-storey Innovation Centre with pitched roof would be of greater height

(between 4.4m and 7.8m higher), bulk and scale than the existing single- and 2-storey flat-roofed buildings currently in that location. It would thus be more evident in the landscape when viewed from roads and residential areas outside the site. It would not however be unacceptably intrusive or dominating in relation to nearby residential properties or the landscape/streetscape of the area given the separation between the existing and proposed buildings and the height of trees in the tree belt (between 10m and 22m high, with the upper canopies mostly being considerably higher than the proposed buildings). The roof slopes away from the residential properties: the full height at the ridge would not dominate the view of the building; and the light and noise potentially emanating from the Innovation Centre towards the residential areas to the south would not be of an excessive order given the nature of the operations taking place in the Innovation Centre (Use Class B1) which are compatible with and appropriate in a residential area. The distance between the proposed building and the nearby residential properties is between 32m and 44m meaning that direct visibility into habitable rooms would not arise. All these effects would additionally be mitigated by the presence of the tree belt in winter and in summer.

52. Properties in Douglas Downes Close would not be affected by visual impacts from the buildings. Car parking is proposed closer to the boundary but this would be screened effectively by augmentation of existing boundary vegetation. There would be additional traffic on the un-adopted private access lane but this would not be of such a magnitude that it would unacceptably harm the residential amenity of the area.

Sustainability

53. The site is in a sustainable location with good pedestrian and cycle accessibility to the wider area; and some public transport opportunities.
54. A Natural Resource Impact Analysis (NRIA) and an Energy Strategy have been submitted to show how the scheme would include measures to minimise carbon emissions in line with Policy CS9 of the adopted Core Strategy. The scheme meets the minimum standards of the NRIA SPD and exceeds the 20% renewable energy requirement (24%). Implementation of these measures would be secured by condition.

Other matters

55. Local consultations have been carried out concerning drainage, air quality, land quality, and archaeology. No objections have been raised to this development subject in most cases to conditions.
56. A condition would be applied seeking the provision of public art in association with this development in accordance with Policy CP14 of the Oxford Local Plan.

Conclusion – this proposal represents a sustainable re-use of a partially previously developed site. The development would help to maintain and strengthen the local

economy and broaden formal and community educational opportunities. It is recommended for approval as being in conformity with the NPPF and the relevant policies of the adopted Core Strategy 2023 and Oxford Local Plan 2001-2016.

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.

Background Papers: 16/02618/FUL

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Date: 30th January 2017

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