

Minutes

of a meeting of the

Planning Committee

held on Wednesday, 7 September 2022 at
7.00 pm
in First Floor Meeting Space, 135 Eastern
Avenue, Milton Park, OX14 4SB

Open to the public, including the press

Present in the meeting room:

Councillors: Max Thompson (Chair), Val Shaw (Vice-Chair), Paul Barrow, Ron Batstone, Cheryl Briggs, Diana Lugova, Robert Maddison and Mike Pighills

Officers: Martin Deans (Planning Team Leader), Emily Hamerton (Principal Planning Officer – Major applications), Candida Mckelvey (Democratic Services Officer) and Ben Silverthorne (Democratic Services and Elections Graduate Trainee)

Guests: 9 registered public speakers

Present remotely:

Councillors: Cabinet members Andrew Crawford, Debby Hallett, Emily Smith (ward members speaking to items)

Officers: Samantha Allen (Senior Conservation and Design Officer), Patrick Arran (Head of Legal and Democratic Services), Penny Silverwood (Principal Major Applications Officer), Nick King (Economic Development Manager) and Susannah Mangion (Planning Officer)

Guests: 4 registered public speakers and Judith Goodwin, (Senior Transport Planner, Oxfordshire County Council)

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Councillor Jenny Hannaby, who was substituted by Councillor Paul Barrow. Councillor Janet Shelley sent her apologies, due to illness.

2. Chair's announcements

None.

3. Minutes

The minutes will be reviewed at the next meeting.

4. Declarations of interest

Councillor Val Shaw declared that she would not debate or vote on items seven, eight and ten, due to speaking as Ward member for those items.

5. Urgent business

None.

6. Public participation

The committee had been sent a full list of public speakers ahead of the meeting, along with submitted written statements that had been sent to Planning Enquiries and Democratic Services departments. Speakers would be called to speak under the relevant application.

7. P21/V1376/FUL Foxcombe Hall, Boars Hill, Oxford, OX1 5HR

Chair had explained that both items seven and eight (regarding Foxcombe Hall) were to be debated as one item, with a separate vote to be carried out for each application. Public speakers were given six minutes per group to speak to both applications.

Committee members attended a site visit with officers on 6 September 2022. Also present at the planning committee meeting was Senior Transport Planner from Oxfordshire County Council, the council's Economic Development Manager and Senior Conservation and Design Officer to help answer questions from their areas of expertise.

The applications were for change of use from a non-residential educational institution (use class F1(a)) to a residential university campus (use class C2), the demolition of the Old Laboratory building and ancillary buildings. Internal and external alterations to listed building. Redevelopment and extension to include 60 student bedrooms, dining hall, campus cafe/shop, gym, extension to lecture theatre, teaching space and study space and associated external works (as amended plans received 24 November 2021 and amplified by plans and information received 14 March 2022).

Item eight was relating to listed building consent that needed to be sought for some works proposed in the application under item seven.

Consultations, representations, policy and guidance, and the site's planning history were detailed in the officer's report, which formed part of the agenda pack for the meeting.

The planning officer presented the report to the committee for an application for a residential university campus, the land having been purchased by Peking University, HSBC Business School. Full details of the officer's recommendations were in the report. The building proposed for demolition and replacement (referred to as the Old Dairy) is explicitly excluded from the listing but is considered by officers to be a non-designated heritage asset. The Conservation officer does not consider that the existing building fabric is of such high historic or architectural interest that it should be retained and converted instead of the proposal to demolish and replace. Tree planting and other measures are provided for in the conditions of the recommendation. Lighting scheme (including window design) will be provided by condition, designed to reduce light spill.

Listed building consent was required for the conversion of offices into bedrooms and a gym and the removal of an external fire escape at the West Wing, and creation of a warden's flat in level two of the tower. There were four letters of support submitted to the full application, with reasons including community benefit and sustainability. There were 303 letters of objection submitted to the full application. Main concerns were around the impact on the green belt, light and noise pollution and the very special circumstances criteria.

The key planning issues of the case are consideration of green belt policy and heritage matters. Officers considered it was inappropriate development in the green belt, because it will have a

greater impact on the openness in terms of both a visual and spatial aspect and in terms of the degree of activity the site will generate. Very special circumstances were considered by officers to outweigh this. Details were provided in the report, but in summary, very special circumstances included educational benefits, local, regional and national economic benefits including development of an Economic Development Partnership programme to facilitate local business upskilling, local tourism programme, provision and use of facilities, training programmes, local business engagement and networking and business opportunities to create links with the Shenzhen Special Economic Zone of China. The lessening of employment figures reduced the benefits, but officers were still in support. Educational facilities were to be supported, particularly on a site of existing educational use. Officers do not consider that there are reasonable or feasible alternatives either on-site or off-site for the proposed development or for the student accommodation element.

Heritage considerations – Conservation Officer was content that the proposed works preserve the prominence of the listed building and will result in less than substantial harm to the significance of the listed building.

The committee heard first from Wootton Parish Council Councillor Ian Bristow. He spoke against the application.

The committee were spoken to by Councillor Paul Wooldridge from Sunningwell Parish Council. Councillor Wooldridge was against the application.

Representatives from Friends of Boars Hill attended – Philip Waddy, who spoke first, and Zoe Crampton, who spoke of her economic review conducted by Hatch. Also present was Stephen Pickles and Nigel Jones. The group objected to the proposal.

Speakers attended in support of the application. First to speak was Paul Slater, the agent.

Guy Liu, the applicant, spoke in support of the application.

Three Ward members, Councillors Val Shaw (who stood down from committee for items seven and eight), Emily Smith and Debby Hallett, were present to object. Councillor Hallett had previously sent a statement to the committee ahead of the meeting, objecting, but did not speak further.

Committee asked questions of the speakers, including asking for clarification on the numbers of students expected to be resident at any given time, and the different length of courses throughout the year. Detail was asked for on very special circumstances and the downgraded figures regarding economic value and local employment provision. Committee were informed by applicant that residential accommodation would assist students of low income, but of very high calibre. There was clarification on securing the benefits from the Economic Development Manager and Planning Officer.

Committee debated this item at length, taking into consideration the evidence provided. Members acknowledged the impact on the green belt but differed on whether they thought very special circumstances existed to outweigh any harm, and some saw the benefit to students, community and the economy from approving the application. The land was previously Open University owned so was already in educational use and Peking University was already using the site, but it was not residential. Debate was had regarding the need for residential status and whether it added value. Some considered that there could be other options for accommodation. Noting the rural area, some considered it was not ideal for students.

Some members felt that such use of land in the green belt was unneeded and felt that some of the very special circumstances were difficult to quantify. Others felt, that particularly after the site visit, the proposal could improve the site, which was already built upon. On the discussion of biodiversity and trees, officer confirmed that details of tree planting was included in conditions. A Woodland Management Plan was already requested by the Forestry Officer and included in conditions. Information on bat boxes was mentioned by a committee member as a potential addition to this.

A motion to refuse planning permission was moved but failed upon being put to the vote.

A second motion to approve planning permission was moved and seconded, and was favoured when being put to the vote:

Resolved:

Planning Committee support the officer recommendation to approve planning permission for application P21/V1376/FUL, with additional detail added to condition 21, to include provision of bat boxes on the site.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that authority to grant planning permission is delegated to the head of planning subject to:

1. Referral to the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
2. Completion of a S106 agreement with the Vale of White Horse District Council and Oxfordshire County Council to secure:
 - a. Provision of a shuttlebus service between the site and Redbridge Park and Ride for students and the local community on a hail and ride basis with eight services a day on weekdays including one morning and afternoon service to serve Sunningwell, Bayworth and Boars Hill and six services a day on weekends and bank holidays.
 - b. Provision of a shuttlebus service between the site and the location of off-site student accommodation with eight services a day on weekdays.
 - c. Ensuring tenancy agreements with students legally bind occupants not to own or bring cars to the site or park within the vicinity of the site.
 - d. Provision of public art onsite or within the vicinity of the site.
 - e. Cycle infrastructure at Hinksey Hill Top bus stop; provision of three Sheffield cycle stands (to accommodate 6 cycles) adjacent to the northbound bus stop at the junction of Hinksey Hill and Foxcombe Road
 - f. Bus shelter at Hinksey Hill Top bus stop at the northbound bus stop at the junction of Hinksey Hill and Foxcombe Road.

Conditions as summarised below:

1. Time limit for commencement
2. Approved plans
- Pre-commencement Conditions
3. Details of site levels
4. Submission of Community Employment Plan
5. Submission of photographic schedule of materials
6. Submission of internal and external photographic record of Old Dairy building
7. Submission of external lighting scheme designed to an E2: Rural Environmental Zone as defined by the Institute of Lighting Professional Guidance for the reduction of obtrusive light
8. Details of window design including glass that reduces the visible light transmission to reduce light spill from internal room illuminance
9. Submission of sustainable drainage details
10. Submission of foul drainage details
11. Submission of Arboricultural Method Statement and Tree Protection Plan
12. Submission of landscaping scheme
13. Landscape management plan
14. Submission of Tree pit design
15. Submission of Contaminated Land Remediation Method Statement and Verification Report
16. Details of vehicular access and visibility splays
17. Construction Method Statement
18. Details of sustainable design and construction including rainwater harvesting system.
19. Submission of archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation
20. Submission of piling method statement

Details to be submitted prior to occupation

21.Submission of Woodland Management Plan **and plans for bat box provision.**

22.Submission of Travel Plan Statement

23.Submission of Travel Information Pack

24.Details of cycle parking

8. P21/V1379/LB Foxcombe Hall, Boars Hill, Oxford, OX1 5HR

Committee considered the application for change of use from a non-residential educational institution (use class F1(a)) to a residential university campus (use class C2), the demolition of the Old Laboratory building and ancillary buildings. Internal and external alterations to listed building. Redevelopment and extension to include 60 student bedrooms, dining hall, campus cafe/shop, gym, extension to lecture theatre, teaching space and study space and associated external works. (as amended plans received 24 November 2021).

Committee listened to the evidence then debated this item with item seven, and a motion was moved and seconded and was approved on being put to the vote.

Resolved:

Planning Committee support the officer recommendation to grant Listed Building Consent.

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Listed Building Consent is granted subject to the following conditions:

1. Time limit for commencement
2. Approved plans
3. Photographic schedule of material

9. P22/V1088/FUL Wantage Motorist Centre, 1 Hans Avenue, Wantage, OX12 7DB

During this agenda item, the meeting length had reached almost two and a half hours. In accordance with the council's Constitution, the committee agreed to extend the meeting in order to finish this item.

Committee considered an application for planning permission for change of use from shop (Class E) to hot food takeaway (sui generis) and installation of extract and ventilation equipment.

Consultations, representations, policy and guidance, and the site's planning history were detailed in the officer's report, which formed part of the agenda pack for the meeting.

The planning officer introduced the report and highlighted that in officer opinion, the proposed development had no technical objections and was therefore recommended for approval.

Mr. Philip Hall, an objector, addressed committee on behalf of residents.

Councillor Erik Johnson, of Wantage Town Council, also addressed committee as an objector.

Councillor Andrew Crawford, ward member, also spoke in objection to the application.

Main objections were detailed in written statements that were circulated to committee ahead of the meeting. These statements were sent from members of the public to Planning Enquiries and Democratic Services department.

In summary, residents were concerned about potential anti-social behaviour in a quiet cul-de-sac area where mainly elderly people resided. It was felt that a late-night takeaway (notwithstanding that closing time would be earlier on Sundays to Thursdays, at 22:30) was not appropriate in this area, particularly with no CCTV for security. Residents were concerned about attracting late night anti-social behaviour, noise, mess and crime. Mention was made to rubbish and smells from extractors being a nuisance, as well as concerns over increased traffic, parking and footfall.

The applicant was represented by Mr John Ghaw, the agent in the application. He spoke to committee in support of the application.

Committee asked questions of speakers. Committee asked about the area itself, the impact on neighbouring properties, and about the location of other takeaways and whether such an application, in a residential area with neighbouring homes, was commonplace in Wantage.

Committee debated this item, considering the evidence provided. The committee considered that the application was unusual in that most takeaways are located in particular streets in the town centre of Wantage, rather than in arbitrary residential locations.

Committee unanimously agreed that the location was not suitable for this kind of application. Therefore, they did not agree with the officer recommendation.

A motion was moved, seconded, and supported when put to the vote:

Resolved:

Committee refused planning permission for application P22/V1088/FUL on the grounds of its impact being harmful to neighbours' amenity and to the character of the area

10. P22/V1091/FUL 2 Poplar Corner, Wootton Village, Boars Hill, Oxford, OX1 5JL

In accordance with the council's Constitution, the committee agreed to defer this last item to a future meeting.

Resolved:

Application P22/V1091/FUL to be deferred to the next available planning committee meeting.

The meeting closed at 9.43 pm