

Mike Gilbert Planning

**Demolish existing buildings and build replacement
offices and laboratories,
WIC House, Transport Way, Oxford, OX4 6LT**

Planning Statement



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Contents

	Page
Instruction	4
Introduction	4
The proposal	6
Policies and guidance	8
Planning assessment	14
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Principle of the proposal• Design matters• Highways matters• Other matters	
Conclusion	18

Instruction

Oxford Biomedica requested that we prepare a Planning Statement to accompany a full planning application to demolish the existing buildings and build replacement offices and laboratories at WIC House, Transport Way, Oxford. This Statement has been prepared by Mike Gilbert who is a professional member of the Royal Town Planning Institute with over 30 years of experience working in Oxfordshire.

Introduction

1. This Planning Statement accompanies a full planning application to demolish the existing buildings at WIC House, Transport Way, Oxford and build replacement offices and laboratories. Windrush Court lies adjacent to WIC House and is the headquarters of Oxford Biomedica. The proposed development will allow Oxford Biomedica to expand its business onto the application site and create a new discovery and innovation facility called the Windrush Innovation Centre (WIC).
2. Oxford Biomedica (OXB) is a pioneer of gene and cell therapy and has global market-leading capabilities in the development, manufacture and testing of lentiviral vectors for clinical and commercial use. The company uses cutting-edge technologies to produce gene and cell-based therapies and was the first organisation to treat people with in vitro lentiviral-based vectors. In addition to its core business, OXB is currently working with AstraZeneca, VMIC (Vaccines Manufacturing and Innovation Centre) and the Oxford Vaccine Consortium on the manufacture of the AZ COVID-19 vaccine.

3. OXB has recently completed a £30m investment resulting in the company expanding over the past 5 years from around 80 staff to over 700 staff. This expansion has addressed the immediate business needs and enabled the rapid introduction of the AZ COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing. However, further expansion of research and development facilities and capabilities is necessary to supply the increasing demands from existing and future partners, as well as for OXB's in-house products currently under development. This is the business need for the proposed development.
4. The application site's planning history includes the following planning applications:
 - 94/00070/NF - Extensions and alterations - permitted in February 1994
 - 02/01663/FUL - External alterations and re-cladding - permitted in October 2002
 - 09/00447/FUL - Extensions and alterations - permitted in June 2009
 - 14/00561/PDC - Confirmation in March 2014 that the authorised use(s) of the buildings on the site come within Class B1 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987
5. The application site is not subject to any planning policy constraints. According to the Local Plan Policies Map the site is not allocated for any purpose and does not lie within any designated area or "view cone". According to the Environment Agency's Flood Maps the site lies in flood zone 1 (i.e. low risk of fluvial flooding), but part of the site is currently at a medium and high risk of surface water flooding.
6. A full set of drawings has been submitted with the application, together with the following documents:
 - Design and Access Statement prepared by Fairhursts Design Group

- Transport Assessment prepared by HVJ Transport Ltd.
- Travel Plan prepared by HVJ Transport Ltd.
- BREEAM Pre-Assessment Report prepared by Stantec UK Ltd.
- Energy Strategy Report prepared by T-Squared Ltd.
- Air Quality Assessment prepared by Hoare Lea
- Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment prepared by GS Ecology Ltd.
- Ecological Report (BREEAM Credits) prepared by GS Ecology Ltd.
- M & E Evidence Report (BREEAM Credits) prepared by T-Squared Ltd.
- Surface Water Management Strategy prepared by Stantec UK Ltd.
- Phase 1 Ground Condition Assessment prepared by Stantec UK Ltd.
- Construction Traffic Management Plan prepared by T-Squared Ltd.

The proposal

7. The proposed development is essential to OXB's broader Research and Development capacity expansion plan and will lead to the creation of about 85 new highly skilled jobs. The proposed discovery and innovation facility will be staffed by multidisciplinary teams and will focus on driving innovations and technological advances in gene and cell therapy to support the company's product pipeline and the LentiVector® platform. It will also aid and expand OXB's ability and capacity to further support the current AZ COVID-19 project and other similar rapid response projects.
8. The proposed building occupies the footprint of the existing buildings on the site. It is on three floors with offices at the front, adjacent to Transport Way, and laboratories behind. The laboratories have been designed as three modules over two floors with servicing plant on the third floor above. The overall height of the building will be about 15 metres, which is similar to Windrush Court next door.
9. In terms of appearance, the design approach has been to create a building with its own character and visual approach but which links back to Windrush Court in terms of its height and massing. The proposed external materials are a vertically emphasised curtain wall glazing system with a mix of emphasised vertical PPC fins and GRP concrete infill panels, PPC metal panel wall and feature fascias, feature areas of terracotta glazed baguettes, and integrated facade louvre systems.

10. The scheme has been designed to ensure a BREEAM Excellent rating will be achieved. To help achieve this and to maximise the sustainability credentials of the development, the roof of the laboratory building will partly be a "green roof" and two arrays of PV cells will be included on the roofs of both buildings.
11. The two existing vehicular accesses off Transport Way will be used to create a one-way route through the site. 56 car parking spaces will be provided (i.e. the same as existing), including 3 disabled spaces and 15 electric vehicle charging spaces. The car parking spaces will be surfaced with porous paving. Drawing no. 08100-P03 also shows the provision of 56 covered and secure bicycle parking spaces.
12. The design approach has been to create a high quality R & D facility which, alongside Windrush Court, will be both a functional and aesthetic statement for Oxford Biomedica.

Policies and guidance

National Planning Policy Framework

13. Paragraph 11 confirms that a presumption in favour of sustainable development remains at the heart of the Framework. Planning permission should be granted for sustainable forms of development.
14. Paragraph 80 says that planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. Areas should be allowed to build on their strengths and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation.
15. Paragraph 82 says that planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries.
16. The following paragraphs of the National Planning Policy Framework are also relevant:
- 117 - the importance of using land effectively to meet the need for homes and other uses whilst safeguarding the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.
 - 118 - the value of using suitable brownfield land within settlements.
 - 124 - the need to create high quality buildings and places.

Oxford Local Plan 2036

17. The introduction to the newly adopted Oxford Local Plan 2036 confirms that Oxford has one the highest concentrations of knowledge intensive businesses in the UK and that the city plays a vital role in the regional and national economy. Positive indicators of the strength and success of Oxford's economy include the very low levels of unemployment, the good rate of new companies being set up, and the keenness of established employers to move into the city. The Local Plan's strategic objectives include building on Oxford's economic strengths as a global centre for research, learning and health care and, through the city's key strengths in knowledge intensive businesses in health, education, science and technology, remaining at the heart of the regional economy and an important net contributor to the national economy.
18. Policy S1 says that, when considering development proposals, the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development promoted in the National Planning Policy Framework. The Council will work proactively with applicants to find solutions, which means that applications for sustainable development and development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions of the area can be approved wherever possible.
- The proposal is to redevelop an existing developed site in a sustainable location and will provide significant local economic benefits without causing any social or environmental harm. The proposal, therefore, complies with Policy S1.
19. Policy E1 says that planning permission will be granted for the intensification, modernisation and regeneration of any employment site for employment purposes if the development makes the best and most efficient use of land and does not result in

unacceptable environmental impacts.

- The proposal fully complies with Policy E1.

20. Policy RE1 says that planning permission will only be granted where appropriate sustainable design and construction principles have been incorporated. An Energy Statement will need to be submitted to demonstrate compliance with this policy requirement. Non-residential "major" development proposals are required to meet BREEAM Excellent standard plus at least a 40% reduction in the carbon emissions compared with a 2013 Building Regulations compliant base case.

- A BREEAM Pre-Assessment Report and an Energy Statement have been submitted which explain how the proposed development will meet this policy requirement. The scheme has a BREEAM targeted predicted score of 73.61, which exceeds the minimum score of 70 required to meet the BREEAM Excellent standard.

21. Policy RE4 requires all development proposals to manage surface water through sustainable drainage systems or techniques to limit run-off and reduce the existing rate of run-off on previously developed sites.

- The Surface Water Management Strategy explains that the site is currently almost 100% impermeable and, due to the limited space on site, an infiltration solution is impractical. Hence the development will re-use the existing surface water discharge, with modification, to the surface water sewer in Transport Way. However, in accordance with Policy RE4, the run-off rate will be managed and reduced compared to the existing situation which will reduce the risk of surface water flooding on the site.

22. Policy RE5 requires a Health Impact Assessment to be submitted for major development proposals, in accordance with the information requirements outlined in Appendix 4 of the Local Plan.
- A Rapid Health Impact Assessment Matrix has been submitted with the application.
23. Policy RE6 says that planning permission will only be granted where the impact of new development on air quality is mitigated and where exposure to poor air quality is minimised or reduced. An Air Quality Assessment will need to be submitted to demonstrate compliance with this requirement.
- An Air Quality Assessment has been submitted to address this policy requirement.
24. Policy RE9 says that where land contamination may present a risk to the surrounding environment an appropriate report must be submitted with the planning application which assesses the nature and extent of any contamination and the possible impacts it may have on the development and its future users, biodiversity, and the natural and built environment, and sets out appropriate mitigation measures.
- A Phase 1 Ground Condition Assessment has been submitted to address this policy requirement.
25. Policy G2 says that sites and species important for biodiversity and geo-diversity will be protected and development that results in a net loss of sites and species of ecological value will not be permitted.
- An Ecological Report (BREEAM Credits) and a Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment have been submitted to address this policy requirement.

26. Policy DH1 says that planning permission will only be granted for development of high quality design that creates or enhances local distinctiveness. The key design objectives and principles for delivering high quality development are set out in Appendix 6.1 of the Local Plan.

- The Design and Access Statement explains the design philosophy of the scheme. The proposal is a high quality development for a high profile company of international standing.

27. Policy M1 says that planning permission will only be granted for development that minimises the need to travel and is laid out and designed in a way that prioritises access by walking, cycling and public transport.

- Paragraph 4.15 of the Transport Assessment confirms that the application site is easily accessible to many local amenities by walking and cycling and is readily accessible via public transport, so the proposed development complies with Policy M1.

28. Policy M2 requires the submission of a Transport Assessment for development proposals that are likely to generate significant amounts of movement. A Travel Plan and Construction Traffic Management Plan may also be required.

- A Transport Assessment, Travel Plan and Construction Traffic Management Plan have been submitted in accordance with Policy M2.

29. Policy M3 says that the on-site parking requirements for all non-residential development will be determined in the light of the submitted Transport Assessment and / or Travel Plan, which must take into account the objectives of the Local Plan to promote and achieve a shift towards sustainable modes of travel. The presumption will be that

vehicle parking will be kept to the minimum necessary to ensure the successful functioning of the development. In the case of the redevelopment of an existing site, there should be no net increase in parking on the site from the previous level and the Council will seek a reduction where there is good accessibility to a range of facilities.

- Paragraph 5.7 of the Transport Assessment confirms that the proposal does not include any increase in the existing level of on-site car parking provision (i.e. 56 spaces), in accordance with Policy M3.

30. Policy M4 promotes the provision of electric vehicle charging points. Non-residential development that includes the provision of additional parking spaces will be required to provide a minimum 25% of the additional spaces with electric charging points.

- Paragraph 5.9 of the Transport Assessment confirms that the proposed development includes one vehicle charging point in the visitor parking area and 15 vehicle charging points in the staff parking area, which equates to 26.8% of the total of 56 car parking spaces.

31. Policy M5 promotes the provision of bicycle parking facilities in accordance with the minimum bicycle parking provision as set out in Appendix 7.3 of the Local Plan. Bicycle parking should be well designed and well-located, convenient, secure, covered, and provide level, unobstructed external access to the street. For new non-residential development, the Council will also seek the provision of showers and changing facilities in accordance with the thresholds and minimum standards also set out in Appendix 7.3.

- Paragraphs 5.10 and 5.11 of the Transport Assessment confirm that the scheme includes 56 covered and secure bicycle parking spaces plus three bicycle charging points. In addition, at least six showers will be provided together with changing and locker facilities.

Planning assessment

Principle of the proposal

32. The application site is previously developed land which is already used for offices and laboratories. It lies within a built-up part of the city dominated by employment and retail uses and is easily accessible by modes of transport other than the car. The site also lies immediately beside the headquarters of Oxford Biomedica and so is ideally located to enable the company to expand its operations. The principle of the proposal to redevelop the site with new offices and laboratories, therefore, is wholly acceptable.
33. In addition, OXB has a strong business case for the development. The proposal will allow the company to expand its business and create a new discovery and innovation facility. This will help OXB to focus on driving innovations and technological advances in gene and cell therapy and expand the company's ability to support rapid response projects such as the current high profile project relating to the AZ COVID-19 vaccine. All of this is supported by the thrust of the National Planning Policy Framework and the strategic objectives of the Oxford Local Plan 2036.

Design matters

34. The Design and Access Statement explains that the proposal is for a high quality development for a high profile company. The contemporary design gives the building a crisp, confident appearance and, at the same time, ensures its height reflects that of Windrush Court next door. The proposal will enhance the street scene along this part of Transport Way.

35. An essential part of the scheme's design has been to ensure a BREEAM Excellent rating will be achieved in accordance with Local Plan Policy RE1. This has been at the heart of the project from the outset, and the BREEAM Pre-Assessment Report and other reports set out how the development will achieve the Excellent rating.
36. The site is already covered with buildings and hardstandings, so there is limited opportunities for any soft landscaping. Drawing no. 08117-P01 shows that six semi-mature ornamental pear trees will be planted alongside the road frontage of the site. This drawing comprises the proposed landscaping scheme for the development.

Highways matters

37. The Transport Assessment prepared by HVJ Transport confirms the sustainable nature of the site's location, particularly as the bus stops on Watlington Road and the high frequency bus services into the city centre lie only 120 metres away. The proposal accords with the aims and objectives of local and national planning policy with regard to accessibility by walking, cycling and public transport. Staff and visitors to the site, therefore, will have sustainable choices in their mode of travel which will be encouraged by the requirements of the Travel Plan. This is also essential to ensure the development achieves the required BREEAM Excellent rating.
38. The Transport Assessment also confirms that there will be no significant traffic impact on the local road network. In addition, the existing accesses will be retained and the proposals not to increase on-site car parking provision and substantially increase on-site bicycle parking provision comply with the policies of the Oxford Local Plan 2036. There are, therefore, no highways or transportation objections to the proposed development.

39. A Construction Traffic Management Plan has been submitted with the application to avoid the need for this matter to be covered by a pre-commencement condition.

Other matters

40. The BREEAM Pre-Assessment Report prepared by Stantec and the Energy Statement set out how the requirements of Local Plan Policy RE1 will be met. The scheme has a BREEAM targeted predicted score of 73.61, which exceeds the minimum score of 70 required to meet the BREEAM Excellent standard.

41. The Air Quality Assessment prepared by Hoare Lea confirms that, through good practice and the implementation of appropriate mitigation measures, the release of dust during construction will be effectively controlled. As the proposed development will not lead to an increase in vehicular trips to and from the site, there are no air quality impacts associated with road traffic emissions. In addition, heating and hot water will be provided via air source heat pumps, there is no combustion activity associated with the proposal, and no exceedances of the 1-hour mean NO₂ objective are predicted. Accordingly, air quality is not a constraint to planning permission being granted.

42. The Preliminary Bat Roost Assessment prepared by GS Ecology says there is no evidence to indicate that the existing buildings are being used by roosting bats, and there are considered to be no foreseeable impacts on nesting birds. In addition, the Ecology Report (BREEAM Credits) confirms that the site is of low ecological value and does not host protected species. If the recommendations in the Report are implemented, 12 out of the 13 available BREEAM Land Use and Ecology Credits (under the BREEAM UK New Construction 2018 Scheme) are likely to be achieved, and it may be possible to achieve two additional Exemplary Level Credits.

43. The Phase 1 Ground Condition Assessment prepared by Stantec confirms that the site has a moderate potential for contamination to be present. The ground conditions are generally considered to be suitable for the construction of the proposed buildings and, overall, any geotechnical constraints to the development associated with the ground conditions are considered to be low. An intrusive investigation to fully characterise the ground conditions and provide information for the design of the building foundations and drainage is recommended.
44. The Surface Water Management Strategy sets out how the rate of surface water run-off will be managed and reduced compared to the existing situation. This includes resurfacing the new parking bays with a porous surface over a porous sub-base, filter drain systems, a double orifice plate flow control, and attenuation storage placed beneath the new car parking bays. This will result in a betterment in discharge rates of 48 – 70% across the design rainfall events and eliminate the current causes of on-site surface water flooding.
45. The proposed development will be liable to pay the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) at a rate of £29.72 per sq metre of gross internal floor space. The overall CIL payment will be offset by the existing floor area which is to be demolished. The appropriate CIL Form has been submitted with the application.

Conclusion

46. The proposed development will provide state-of-the-art R & D space to meet the specific needs of Oxford Biomedica. It is an essential part of the company's R & D capacity expansion plan. The development will also give the local economy a welcome boost, enhance the character and appearance of the immediate area and, through achieving the required BREEAM Excellent rating, it is an environmentally sustainable scheme.
47. The proposal complies with the policies of the newly adopted Oxford Local Plan 2036, and there are no objections on transportation, highway safety, ecology, air quality or drainage grounds.
48. Planning permission, therefore, should be granted for the proposed development.
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29 January 2021