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DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

FULL PLANNING APPLICATION

The Wheatsheaf, Wheatsheaf Yard, 129 High Street, Oxford OX1 4DF

1864_DA.01

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 APPLICATION

This Design and Access Statement is offered in support of the full planning application for the proposed conversion of the first and second floors over the Wheatsheaf Pub to provide nine high-quality student rooms and a shared kitchen and common area, in conjunction with adjustments to the roof and minor alterations to the pub at ground floor level, which is to be retained.

This statement is to be read in conjunction with the proposals that are set out in the application drawings listed below:

- *1864_001_A Location Plan and Site Plan*
- *1864_002_A Existing Floor Plans*
- *1864_003_A Existing Front (East) Elevation*
- *1864_004 Existing Rear (West) Elevation*
- *1864_100 Proposed Site Plan*
- *1864_101_A Proposed Floor Plans*
- *1864-200_A Proposed Front (East) Elevation*
- *1864_201 Proposed Rear (West) Elevation*
- *1864_250 Existing Bin Store*

Additional documents supporting the application include:

- *Viability Report prepared by Chistie & Co.*
- *Heritage Impact Assessment prepared by Worlledge Associates*
- *Noise Assessment by Clear Acoustic Design*

The application site is less than 1 hectare in size and is located in Flood Zone 1. As such, it is not required to submit a flood risk assessment.

1.2 BRIEF

The current pub tenant gave notice to vacate in March 2021, after more than a decade. They cited the impacts of Covid-19 and the coronavirus pandemic and the pub's likely slow recovery in its current format. In particular, the overheads of the function room were not economical. However, they were interested in being a tenant of the pub at cellar and ground floor levels only, as the reduction in rent had the potential to offset losses resulting from the function room.

The applicant's intension is repurpose the function room and secure an alternative long-term use for it, providing an improved outlook for the pub and the building as a whole.

It is proposed to create a student flat at first and second floor level, which has direct access from the street and accommodates nine high quality student bedrooms with en suites, shared kitchen, and common area. It is proposed to raise the lower part of the roof at the southern end of the application site to align with the existing ridge, presenting an opportunity to make use of the currently under-utilised void above the existing function room.

2.0 THE SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

2.1 LOCATION

The site is located on Wheatsheaf Yard, a partly-covered narrow passageway that appears to dissect a burbage plot and links High Street and Blue Boar Street. It benefits from its position in the city centre, with grocery shops, retail outlets, food and drinking establishments, museums, and other aspects that the city offers in very close proximity—it is less than half a mile from Christ Church Meadow and the Thames, providing opportune outdoor public amenity.

The majority of buses around the city centre pass by the site and the main Oxford railway station is just 0.7 miles away, providing excellent public transport links around Oxford and further afield.

In addition, the site is located within 1 mile of at least 19 different University of Oxford colleges, it is 1.5 miles from Oxford Brookes University's Headington campus, and 2.5 miles from Oxford Brookes University's Harcourt Hill campus, making it ideally located for private student accommodation in the city.

2.2 SITE DESCRIPTION

The entrance to Wheatsheaf Yard from High Street is inconspicuous. It is positioned between two four-storey stone faced buildings with glass-fronted shops and signboards at ground floor level, and a vernacular typical of the area above—timber oriel windows and stone detailing rise up the facade to the gabled roofscape, with timber framing, decorative finials and barge boards.

Blue Boar Street is a quieter road to High Street, and less trafficked. The buildings appear to reflect this lesser significance, as the four storey buildings are faced in brickwork with few discernible features or decorations. From here, the entrance to Wheatsheaf Yard is more obvious. It is set back from the road and there is a clear separation between the flanking buildings, giving a better view along the full length of Wheatsheaf Yard towards High Street.

The Wheatsheaf pub is located midway along the passageway, on the western side. Wheatsheaf Yard is densely built up with an eclectic group of varying styles and quality. The passageway itself is aligned along a north-south axis, and is approximately 600m due north of Folly Bridge. It is generally clad in red facing brickwork, but the site is largely obscured from view from High Street and Blue Boar Street by the narrow entrances—the Wheatsheaf pub can only be seen when standing in Wheatsheaf Yard itself or from balconies on adjacent sites.

2.3 SITE ANALYSIS

The current building accommodates:

- **Below ground** – cellar that serves the pub directly.
- **Ground floor** – The Wheatsheaf Pub and associated storage and toilets, and three points of access at street level: the primary entrance to the pub

with access to the internal communal stair, one fire exit serving the pub one fire exit serving the function room.

- **First floor** – historically been used as a function space with office linked to the pub, secondary bar and additional toilets to serve the venue.
- **Second floor** – a bedsit flat within the roof space, with two bedrooms and a shared bathroom, kitchen, and communal living area. The accommodation is accessed from the first floor.

The pub and associated cellar and function space fall under use class sui generis, as does the bedsit flat on the second floor. The proposed student flat would also be classed as sui generis.

2.4 PLANNING HISTORY

There have been a number of planning applications relating to the application site. The following was obtained from Oxford City Council's public access website.

- 56/05436/A_H: 'Alterations'—approved 1956
- 76/00132/P_H: 'Pictorial sign and 3 illuminated signs'—approved 1976
- 82/00022/AH: 'Two internally illuminated replacement box signs'—withdrawn
- 91/01225/NFH: 'External alterations to form three new door openings (amended plans)'—approved 1992
- 92/00984/NFH: 'Alterations to existing windows to provide new main entrance and one new fire exit into Wheatsheaf Yard. Modification of existing door to provide fire exit. New windows in place of existing doors to Wheatsheaf Yard (amended plans)'—approved 1992

3.0 PROPOSALS

3.1 OVERVIEW

The proposals seek to repurpose and make more efficient use of the available space at first and second floor levels to form a student flat with nine en suite student bedrooms in this sustainable city centre location.

It is proposed to retain the pub at ground floor level and create a new entrance for use by the pub, with the existing entrance being used for access to the student flat only. A small portion of the pub trading floor will be repurposed as a bicycle store for the student flat, access through the existing opening at street level that currently forms the fire exit for the first floor function space.

The proposed student flat will be split across first and second floors and accommodate nine en suite study rooms; five bedrooms on the first floor and four on the second floor, along with a generous shared kitchen and common area.

The proposed student flat will make use of the existing window openings. It appears some alterations have previously been made that repositioned or

blocked up original window openings—for example, while three separate windows are currently visible externally on the second floor, only two are visible in. The partition wall cuts off part of one window and the bathroom tiling has blocked out another window. The windows are in poor condition and it is proposed to replace them with new windows to match the appearance of the existing, while making minor adjustments to some of the openings to correct past changes.

The proposed changes will replace the existing function space, which is no longer of any benefit to the ongoing business of the pub—live music in this location has proved unsustainable and the current pandemic has exacerbated the issue. The proposed use as a student flat present a long-term viable alternative, which will help support the business below.

An agency will be responsible for letting and managing the property, including obtaining references and proof of enrolment as per their standard checking procedures. They will also ensure each student tenant complies with the terms of their lease, and will provide any information required to satisfy the flat's status as an HMO in a timely manner.

3.2 FORM

The proposals seek only modest changes to the external appearance of the existing building.

The existing ridgeline steps down over the southern section of the building and it is proposed to raise this element of the roof. The new ridge height here will match the existing ridge and it is proposed to reinstate the existing clay tiles to ensure the new roof blends seamlessly with the existing building. This presents an opportunity to create additional floor area at second floor level.

Furthermore, it is proposed to form two gabled dormer windows to match the existing, benefitting the proposed bedrooms at second floor level.

3.3 MATERIALS

It is proposed to retain and reuse the existing clay tiles. The material selection matches the existing property and complements the area. The proposed roof and infill sections of wall will be constructed to match the existing, with similar detailing.

3.4 PLANNING POLICY

The proposals are designed in accordance with Oxford City's planning policies, as outlined in the Oxford Local Plan 2036.

Policy H8: Provision of new student accommodation

The proposed student accommodation is located in the city centre, in compliance with Policy H8 of the adopted Local Plan.

Policy RE1: Sustainable design and construction

The proposals will be designed to meet and, where feasible, exceed the energy performance requirements set out in the Building Regulations 2010 and any technical guidance contained within the associated Approved Documents. Renewable and sustainable design strategies will be considered as part of the detailed design of the extension.

Policy RE2: Efficient use of land

The proposals make efficient use of existing site capacity in a manner that is compatible with the site. The density of the proposed student accommodation is appropriate for the available space.

Policy RE7: Managing the impact of development

The proposed extension will not adversely affect the amenity of the neighbours or residents within the vicinity, nor will it impact the transport links given its location in the city centre.

Policy RE8: Noise and vibration

It is not anticipated that the proposals will create additional noise given the proposed use of the first and second floors as a student flat. Furthermore, the appended noise assessment report concludes that the external noise impacts will be within an acceptable range for the student flat and the sound ingress will not have a negative impact on the quality of the accommodation provided.

Policy DH1: High quality design and placemaking

Views of the proposals are limited from the public realm given its location. However, the scheme still demonstrates a high standard of design that responds to and improves the existing building.

Policy DH2: Views and building heights

The existing roof is not visible from the public realm, given its position on the narrow Wheatsheaf Yard, set back behind the buildings fronting High Street. The proposals to raise the roof will not have an impact on the visible roofscape or views in the area. This is addressed in further detail in the heritage impact statement.

Policy DH7: External servicing features and stores

The proposals include alterations to form a safe and secure bicycle storage area to accommodate nine bicycles, one per student bedroom. Furthermore, the communal bins on the adjacent site have the capacity to accommodate the refuse and recycling from the proposed student flat, as noted elsewhere in the Design and Access Statement.

Policy M1: Prioritising walking, cycling, and public transport

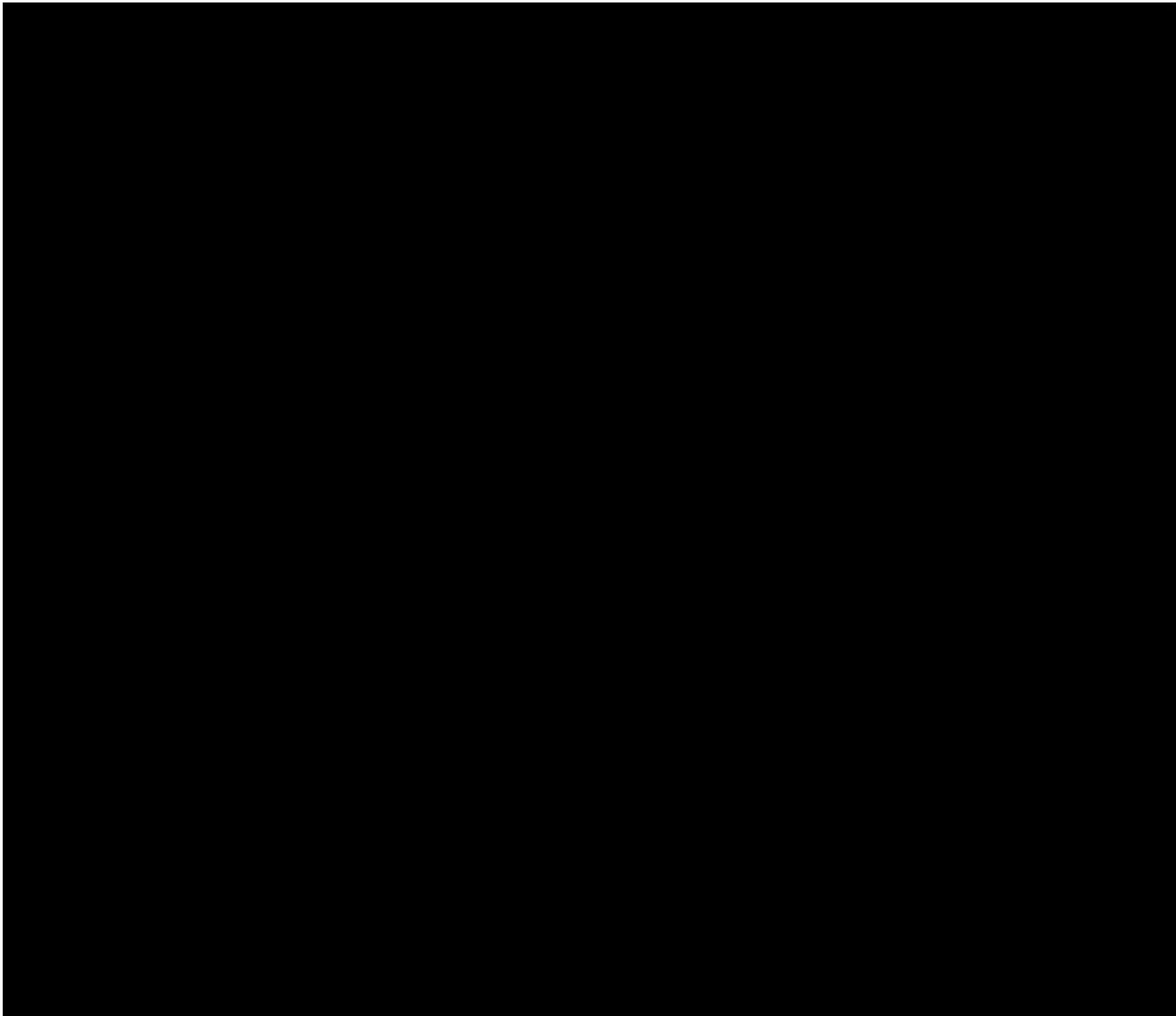
The application site is in the city centre and is easily accessed on foot, by bicycle, and by public transport. There is sufficient bicycle storage for each student bedroom, and there are bus stops serving the majority of buses in and out of the city centre within 100m from Wheatsheaf Yard. Furthermore, the train station is within walking distance of the development. It is not envisaged that the student flat will negatively impact the public transport networks.

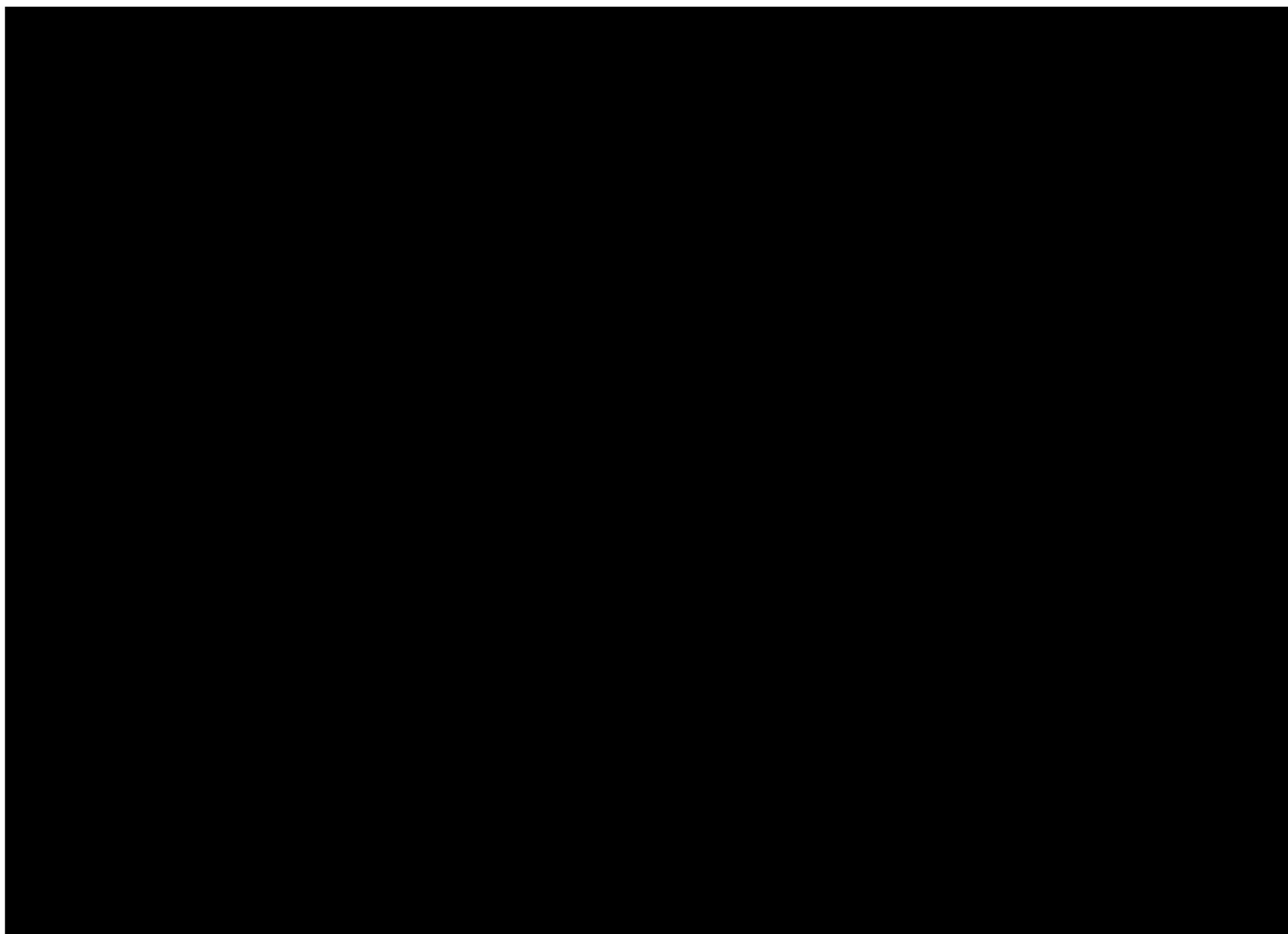
Policy M3: Motor vehicle parking

The requirement for student accommodation is 0 spaces per resident room, in accordance with Appendix 7.3 'Vehicular parking standards' of the Oxford Local Plan 2036. This application is not proposing to create any parking spaces associated with the development.

Policy M5: Bicycle parking

The requirement set out in Appendix 7.4 'Minimum Bicycle Parking standards' for a student flat is at least four spaces for every four study bedrooms—one per bedroom. The proposals include alterations to form a safe and secure bicycle storage area at street level, accessed from Wheatsheaf Yard, which provides sufficient space for nine bicycles to serve the nine student bedrooms.





4.2 PUB VIABILITY REPORT

The viability report was prepared by Christie & Co. Some of the key points are:

- The pub will continue to serve the local community and its regular drinkers throughout the week. This is the primary revenue driver of the business.
- Profitability may improve as a result of the loss of facility, as the reduced property and operational costs of running a smaller site outweigh the marginal loss in revenue as a result.

The report concludes that there is an improved long-term future for the pub without the overheads associated with the function room at first floor level.

4.3 HERITAGE IMPACT STATEMENT

The heritage impact statement was prepared by Worledge Associates, an Oxford based consultancy with extensive experience of Oxford's historic buildings and places. Some of the key points are:

- It is not considered that the proposed raising of the roof will have any visual impact on the setting of Kemp Hall and the reading and understanding of its historical relationship to the Wheatsheaf, High Street and Blue Boar Street.
- There are two public vantage points in the vicinity of the site: the tower of St Mary the Virgin and the Carfax Tower. The Wheatsheaf is not visible from St Mary the Virgin, as it is obscured by intervening roofs. This is also true when viewed from Carfax Tower.

- It is considered that the proposal will have no physical or visual impact on the City Centre Conservation Area.

4.4 NOISE ASSESSMENT

The principal source of noise on the application site is from the existing pub, which is unlikely to change given its continued operation. The noise generated by the proposed student flat at first and second floor will be from general indoor activities, such as normal conversations. Therefore, it will likely have minimal impact on the neighbours. It should be noted that the neighbours opposite are also an HMO and student rooms.

There will be movement by the occupants of the student flat at street level as they arrive and depart. However, this is likely to be at more sociable hours than the existing pub foot traffic. Furthermore, with only nine study rooms, it is not anticipated that there will be any unacceptable levels of noise caused by the student flat.

A noise survey and assessment were undertaken by Clear Acoustic Design. The external noise survey was carried out from 10 December 2020 to 14 December 2020 to capture a range of both day and night time noise levels.

Some of the key points of the report are:

- The recommended noise limit for transfer into the adjacent dwelling (from the pub into the student flat above) is NR20. The predicted noise level from the pub is NR7 with no music, and NR18 with background music. During the night time period, these levels should be reduced by 5dBA. Therefore, the predicted noise is below the recommended limit both during the day and at night.

5.0 BIN AND BICYCLE STORAGE

5.1 BINS

The requirement for a student flat is 75L per household for both refuse and recycling. Therefore, there is a requirement for 675L of refuse and 675L of recycling for the proposed student flat.

The applicant owns the adjacent site with an existing communal bin store for residents—there are 12 flats in total with a combination of one and two-bedroom properties. The adjacent site requires 1500L of refuse and 1500L of recycling, but two 1100L containers are provided for each. Therefore, there is a net excess of 700L for both refuse and recycling.

The existing bin store serves the Wheatsheaf Pub and existing flat, and retains separate bin capacity for ongoing function of the pub—refer to bin storage drawings for details.

It is proposed that the student flat uses the existing communal bin store, which has sufficient space to accommodate the additional refuse and recycling.

5.2 BICYCLES

Policy M5 states that planning permission will only be granted for development that complies with or exceeds the minimum bicycle parking provisions as set out in Appendix 7.4 'Minimum Bicycle Parking standards'. The requirement for a student flat is at least four spaces for every four study bedrooms.

This development is proposing nine study bedrooms and bicycle parking for nine bicycles—one per bedroom. The bicycle storage will be safe and secured, accessed by the existing door that serves as the first floor fire exit. Wall-mounted bike racks will provide fixed positions to store the bikes vertically, minimising the loss in floor area from the pub while still providing a secure place to keep and lock bikes.

6.0 SUSTAINABILITY

6.1 STRATEGY

The application proposes to replace the existing windows with new windows to match. The existing windows are in poor condition, some of which do not shut correctly. Replacing the windows will improve the thermal performance of the building and reduce energy consumption. In addition, a new boiler with improved efficiency will be installed, further reducing energy use and wastage.

The following are key sustainability objectives for the project:

- Existing materials will be cleaned and re-used where possible. New materials will be locally-sourced and have low VOC emissions where possible
- Energy saving devices, appliances and fittings will be specified
- Passive environmental design strategies will be incorporated
- Our proposals have made allowances for sufficient insulation in the walls, floor and roof to conform to, and exceed where possible, the current Building Regulations requirements for new construction elements

7.0 NEIGHBOURING AMENITY

7.1 DAYLIGHT ASSESSMENT AND PRIVACY

Wheatsheaf Yard runs north-south and windows in this location face east and west. The existing tight-knit arrangement of buildings along Wheatsheaf Yard means that the existing properties and narrow alley do not receive direct sunlight, but instead benefit from some daylight.

The proposals seek permission to raise the lower section of roof to match the existing ridgeline. As it is not proposed to go above the existing ridge, it is not

envisaged that the changes will have a significant impact on the indirect daylight received by neighbouring properties.

Furthermore, opposite this lower section of roof across Wheatsheaf Yard is an asymmetrical roof, half barrel-vaulted on the western side and with a steep pitch facing east, away from application site. Along the eastern elevation are a series of roof windows, which will ensure the accommodation still receives sufficient daylight. To the west of the application site, there is a sufficient gap between the Wheatsheaf Pub and the neighbouring building, so any loss of daylight to neighbouring habitable rooms will be minimal.

To ensure all the proposed study rooms receive natural light, there are two gabled dormers proposed that will provide windows to match the existing. Other bedrooms will benefit from the existing window openings, which are very large. The proposed windows will face directly onto the barrel-vaulted roof opposite, which does not feature any roof windows. There may be windows of neighbouring buildings that are visible from the proposed windows, but no direct sightlines will be created and it is unlikely to reduce the level of privacy of the neighbour given the existing windows that have similar views.

8.0 CONCLUSION

8.1 SUMMARY STATEMENT

The application proposes high quality student accommodation in a desirable and easily accessible location in the city centre, with sufficient bicycle storage for each occupant.

This is achieved by a modest extension, raising the lower section of roof to line through with the existing ridge and forming two gabled dormers to match the existing. This is in conjunction with internal alterations to form a student flat with nine study bedrooms across the first and second floors.

The proposed extension is designed to blend seamlessly with the existing building. The height of the eaves, pitch of the roof and position of the ridge all align with the existing features, and the materials were chosen to match.

This is a carefully considered scheme that will improve the quality of the building, create additional accommodation in the city centre, and secure a long-term viable alternative to the function room, which will benefit the ongoing operations of the pub.

The proposals conform with all salient policies set out in the Local Plan, Core Strategy, Sites and Housing Plan and other SPDs for a residential development in the site's locale and is considered to be an appropriate extension of high quality design, making more efficient use of space within this sustainable location. As such, it is intended that the submitted scheme can be fully supported and the permissions applied for granted.