
**EXETER COLLEGE
LIBRARY**

Planning Statement

Exeter College

February 2021

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CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	4
2. THE SITE	5
3. PLANNING HISTORY	6
4. THE PROPOSAL	7
5. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT	8
National planning policy framework (Feb 2019)	8
Oxford Local Plan 2036	9
National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)	12
6. PLANNING ASSESSMENT	12
Need	12
Principle for Development	12
Structural Works	13
Heritage	13
Archaeology	14
Views	15
Sustainability	15
7. CONCLUSION	15

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Carter Jonas is instructed by Exeter College (the 'Applicant') to provide a Planning Statement to support the Planning Application and Listed Building Consent for the proposed alterations and refurbishment works at Exeter College Library, Turl Street, Oxford (the 'Site'). The application description is as follows:

"Planning and listed building consent for the refurbishment of Exeter Library which includes the extension of the annexe, masonry repairs, roof refurbishment and the installation of a passenger lift as well as the internal refurbishment works including replacement of mezzanine floor, structural works, and the provision of MEP services."

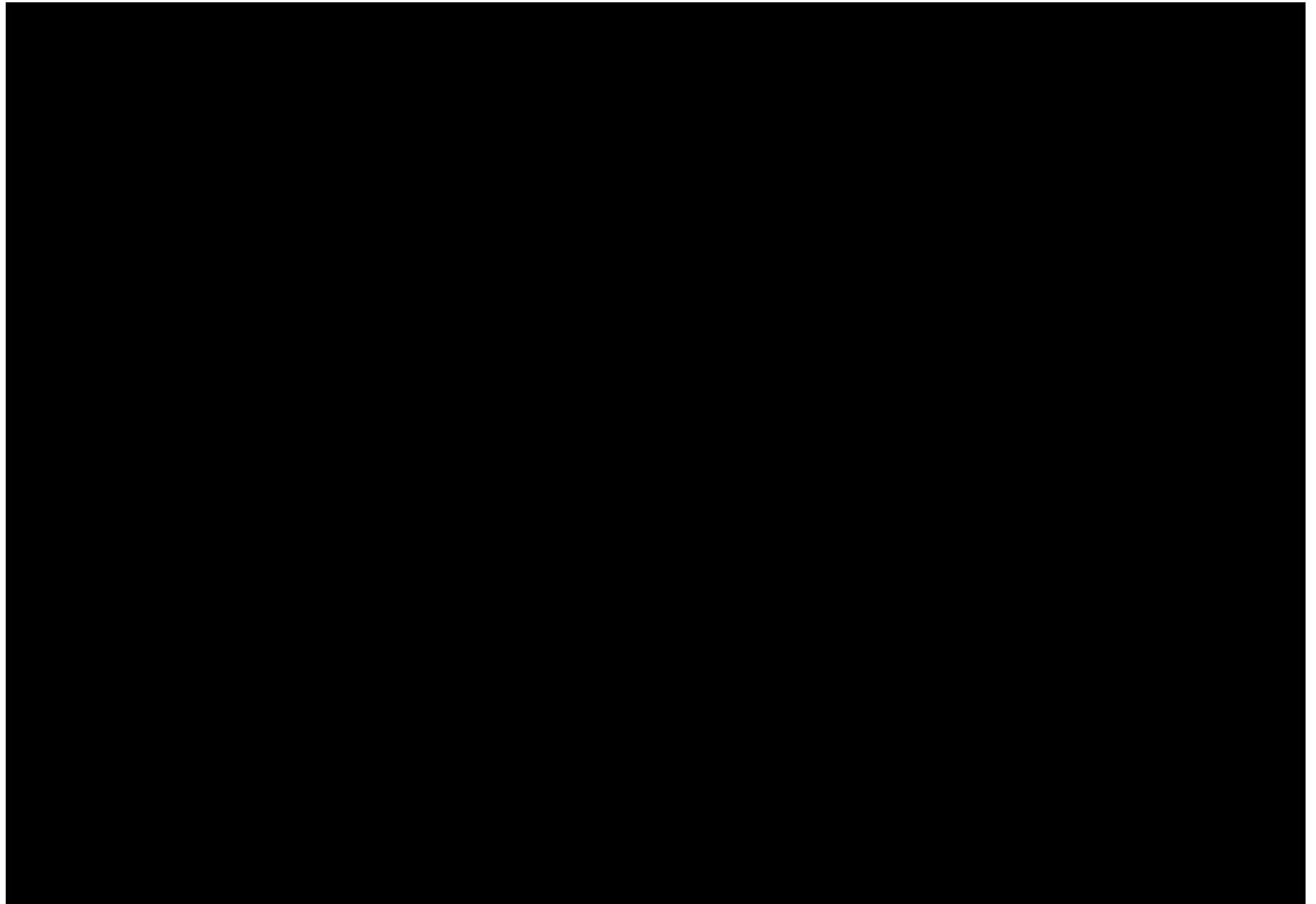
1.2 There has been comprehensive stakeholder engagement from the early stages of the project. The response has been positive, and the refurbishment has stakeholder support. The following stakeholders were consulted and provided plans and details of the works.

- The Bodleian
- Historic England
- The Victorian Society

1.3

1.4

1.5



1.6 This Statement provides details of the proposed development and assesses the proposal in the context of the relevant national and local planning policies together with other relevant material considerations. The planning application comprises:

- Forms and certificates prepared by Nex Architecture;
- Plans and associated details of the proposals prepared by Nex Architecture;
- Design and Access Statement prepared by Nex Architecture;
- Heritage Statement prepared by Donald Insall Associates;
- Planning Statement prepared by Carter Jonas.

2. THE SITE

2.1 Exeter College Library is located within the Exeter College Turl Street Campus at the heart of Oxford, adjacent to the Bodleian Library and close to the Radcliffe Camera.

2.2 The Library was built in 1856-7 by George Gilbert Scott and is Grade II. Exeter College comprises a number of listed asset buildings including Exeter College Broad Street Buildings (Grade II), Exeter College Rector's House (Grade II), Exeter College North East Range (Grade I) Exeter College East Range (Grade I), Exeter College South East Range (Grade I), Exeter College South Range (Grade I), Exeter College West Range (Grade I).

2.3 There are a number of listed buildings in the local area including Jesus College (Grade I), 16-19 Turl Street (Grade II), Balliol College (Grade I), Trinity College (Grade II), New Bodleian Library (Grade II) and the Sheldonian Theatre (Grade I).

- 2.4 The Library sits west of the Front Quadrangle enclosed by Grade I listed Peryam Mansions. The Library occupies a prominent, central position within the College site, overlooking the Fellows' Garden to the south with the Rector's Garden to the rear.
- 2.5 The Library consists of a main two storey range and a lower annexe building to the north which runs perpendicular to the axis of the main range.
- 2.6 Immediately to the east of the Library sits the Grade I listed westward addition to the Bodleian Library. Pre-dating the Scott Library, built in 1637, the ground floor rooms of this structure are known as Convocation House. It shares a joint party wall with the Library along part of its eastern boundary.
- 2.7 The site is situated within the Oxford (City and University) Conservation Area.

3. PLANNING HISTORY

- 3.1 A search of the OCC's online database has revealed that a number of applications have been submitted at the site. Applications submitted within the last 5 years are included below.

Table 1: Planning Applications (OCC's Planning Register 2021)

Application ref:	Application:	Decision:
18/00694/FUL	Erection of a single storey extension to west elevation.	Approved - 31 May 2018
18/00695/LBC	Erection of a single storey extension to west elevation. Internal alterations to include blocking up of 2no. doorways and formation of new doorway and insertion of new platform lift to ground floor.	Approved - 31 May 2018
17/01509/LBC	Replacement fireplace and installation of hearth stone. Installation of lighting.	Withdrawn - 31 Aug 2017
16/01398/LBC	Internal alterations including insertion of new door opening and partition wall to form new shower room and toilet. Alterations to existing external ramp to extend and install balustrade and handrail. Replacement of external cobbles with paving slabs to improve wheelchair access.	Approved - 12 Jul 2016
16/00769/LBC	Upgrading of existing external lighting to Front, Margary and Library Quadrangles and Entrance Lodge. Installation of additional light fittings.	Approved - 23 Jun 2016

4. THE PROPOSAL

4.1 The primary objective for this proposal is to bring the building back into a state of repair. However, there is also a widely accepted demand for academic/research floor space in Oxford. The proposal is seeking to reveal the building's beauty, restore its original character, and enhance its contemporary use.

4.2 The University are seeking planning permission and listed building consent for the following:

“Planning and listed building consent for the refurbishment of Exeter Library which includes the extension of the annexe, masonry repairs, roof refurbishment and the installation of a passenger lift as well as the internal refurbishment works including replacement of mezzanine floor, structural works, and the provision of MEP services.”

4.3 The proposal comprises the following:

- Creation of a new entrance: the existing garden store and ‘strongroom’ will be re-purposed to provide a new entrance and accessible WC. The proposed entrance reconstructs the existing link wall, allowing the relocation of the entrance doorway to the west side of the link.
- Extension to annexe: extending the library into the gap alongside Bodleian Library to allow for the installation of new staircases accessing the mezzanine level and much-needed staff office and archive store.
- New passenger lift.
- Replace the 1957 full width mezzanine: involving the replacement of the mezzanine extending only half the width of the interior space revealing the full height of the west windows.
- Installation of new rooflights: the dated rooflights which are unsympathetic to the character of the building will be replaced with clerestory rooflights.
- Improved circulation and services strategy: including the provision of new MEP services.
- Emergency exit: the proposal includes reinstating the use of the timber door to the north of the annexe and creating safe wheelchair refuges at first floor and mezzanine levels.
- Replacement of entrance draught lobby: the proposal involves installation of new glass doors between the first pair of bookshelves to create a full width entrance vestibule.
- Removal of first floor steel in the main library: the proposal involves the substitution of steel beams with concealed floor strengthening.
- Masonry repairs works: essential stone repair works including a combination of mortar repairs and stone-indents. Replacement of defective coping and other weathered stone. The repair and restoration of decorative stonework. The reintroduction of lost elements in the pinnacles to the dormers, gables and tower. The introduction of lead flashings to better protect stonework. Cleaning of stonework where dirt build up is damaging the stone.
- Roof repairs: stripping and recovering of roofs using original slates but better mixed at the north slope.
- The repair of the existing windows and the introduction of new opening lights in the Annexe to provide necessary ventilation.
- Upgrading and repair of existing doors.
- The upgrading and repair of existing Gilbert Scott bookcases.
- The removal of defective floorboards.

- 4.4 Full details of the proposed works are shown in the supporting plans and documents submitted with this application.

5. PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

- 5.1 Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that where the Development Plan contains relevant policies, applications for development which are in accordance with the Plan should be allowed unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.2 The Development Plan for Oxford comprises policies from the Oxford Local Plan 2036. Material considerations comprise the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance.

National planning policy framework (Feb 2019)

- 5.3 The Government published the updated National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in February 2019. It sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The policies contained in the NPPF are material considerations of significant weight in determining planning applications.
- 5.4 At paragraph 11 the NPPF sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development and states that development that accords with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay.
- 5.5 Paragraph 189 of the NPPF sets out that for proposals affecting heritage assets, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting. The level of detail should be proportionate to the assets' importance and no more than is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. As a minimum the relevant historic environment record should have been consulted and the heritage assets assessed using appropriate expertise where necessary. Where a site on which development is proposed includes, or has the potential to include, heritage assets with archaeological interest, local planning authorities should require developers to submit an appropriate desk-based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.
- 5.6 Paragraph 192 sets out that in determining applications, local planning authorities should take account of:
- a. the desirability of sustaining and enhancing the significance of heritage assets and putting them to viable uses consistent with their conservation;
 - b. the positive contribution that conservation of heritage assets can make to sustainable communities including their economic vitality; and
 - c. the desirability of new development making a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness.
- 5.7 Paragraph 193 sets out that when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset's conservation. This is irrespective of whether any potential harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm.
- 5.8 Paragraph 194 states that any harm to, or loss of, the significance of a designated heritage asset (from its alteration or destruction, or from development within its setting), should require clear and convincing justification. Substantial harm to or loss of:
- a. Grade II listed buildings, or Grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional;
 - b. assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, protected wreck sites, registered battlefields, Grade I and II* listed buildings, Grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, and World Heritage Sites, should be wholly exceptional.

- 5.9 Paragraph 195 goes on to state that where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to (or total loss of significance) of a designated heritage asset, local planning authorities should refuse consent, unless it can be demonstrated that the substantial harm or total loss is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss, or all of the following apply:
- a. The nature of the heritage asset prevents all reasonable uses of the site; and
 - b. No viable use of the heritage asset itself can be found in the medium term through appropriate marketing that will enable its conservation; and
 - c. Conservation by grant-funding or some form of not for profit, charitable or public ownership is demonstrably not possible; and
 - d. The harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use.
- 5.10 Paragraph 196 sets out that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use.

Oxford Local Plan 2036

- 5.11 **Policy S1: Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development** states that when considering development proposals, the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework, and that planning applications that accord with Oxford's Local Plan (and, where relevant, with neighbourhood plans) will be approved without delay, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 5.12 **Policy DH1: High Quality Design and Placemaking** sets out that planning permission will only be granted for development of high-quality design that creates or enhances local distinctiveness.
- 5.13 Planning permission will only be granted where proposals are designed to meet the key design objectives and principles for delivering high quality development as set out in the design checklist.
- 5.14 **Policy DH3: Designated Heritage Assets** states that planning permission will be granted for development that respects and draws inspiration from Oxford's unique historic environment (above and below ground) responding positively to the significance character and distinctiveness of the heritage asset and locality.
- 5.15 For planning decisions consent affecting the significance of the designated heritage assets, great weight will be given to the conservation of that asset and to the setting of the asset where it contributes to that significance of appreciation of that significance.
- 5.16 An application for planning permission for development which would or may affect the significance of any designated heritage asset should be accompanied by a heritage assessment of the impact of the development proposed on the asset's significance. As part of the process, full regard will be given to the detailed character assessment.
- 5.17 Substantial harm to or loss of Grade II listed buildings, or Grade II registered parks or gardens, should be exceptional. Substantial harm to or loss of assets of the highest significance, notably scheduled monuments, Grade I and II* listed buildings, Grade I and II* registered parks and gardens, should be wholly exceptional. Where a proposed development will lead to substantial harm to or loss of the significance of a designated heritage asset, planning permission or listed building consent will only be granted if:
- i. the harm is necessary to achieve substantial public benefits that outweigh the harm or loss; or all of the following apply:
 - ii. the nature of the asset prevents all reasonable uses of the sites; and
 - iii. no viable use of the asset itself can be found in the medium term (through appropriate marketing) that will enable its conservation; and
 - iv. conservation by grant funding or similar is not possible; and

- v. the harm or loss is outweighed by the benefit of bringing the site back into use;
 - vi. a plan for recording and advancing understanding of the significance of any heritage assets to be lost, including making this evidence publicly available, is agreed with the City Council.
- 5.18 Where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to a designated heritage asset, this harm must be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. Clear and extensive justification for this harm should be set out in full in the heritage assessment.
- 5.19 **Policy DH4: Archaeological Remains** states that within the City Centre Archaeological Area, on allocated sites where identified, or elsewhere where archaeological deposits and features are suspected to be present (including upstanding remains), applications should include sufficient information to define the character, significance and extent of such deposits so far as reasonably practical. This information should include:
- a. a Heritage Assessment that includes a description of the impacted archaeological deposit or feature (including where relevant its setting), an assessment of its significance and the impact of the proposed development on its significance, in all cases using a proportionate level of detail that is sufficient to understand the potential impact of the proposal. The Statement should reference appropriate records (including the information held on the Oxford Historic Environment Record); and
 - b. if appropriate, a full archaeological desk-based assessment and the results of evaluation by fieldwork (produced by an appropriately qualified contractor. Pre- application discussion is encouraged to establish requirements). In the City Centre Archaeological Area where significant archaeological asset types can be shown to be subject to cumulative impact from development, the desk-based assessment should contain appropriate contextual assessment of this impact.
- 5.20 Development proposals that affect archaeological features and deposits will be supported where they are designed to enhance or to better reveal the significance of the asset and will help secure a sustainable future for it.
- 5.21 Proposals which would or may affect archaeological remains or features which are designated as heritage assets will be considered against the policy approach as set out in Policy DH3 above.
- 5.22 **Policy DH5: Local Heritage Assets** states that planning permission will only be granted for development affecting a local heritage asset or its setting if it is demonstrated that due regard has been given to the impact on the asset's significance and its setting and that it is demonstrated that the significance of the asset and its conservation has informed the design of the proposed development.
- 5.23 **Policy E2: Teaching and Research** sets out that applications for all new education, teaching and academic institutional proposals should clearly demonstrate how they support the objectives of and accord with the wider policies of this development plan.
- 5.24 In particular, planning permission will be granted to support the growth of the University of Oxford through the redevelopment and intensification of academic and administrative floorspace on existing University of Oxford and college sites.
- 5.25 **Policy RE1: Sustainable Design and Construction** sets out that planning permission will only be granted where it can be demonstrated that the following sustainable design and construction principles have been incorporated, where relevant:
- a. maximising energy efficiency and the use of low carbon energy;
 - b. conserving water and maximising water efficiency;
 - c. using recycled and recyclable materials and sourcing them responsibly;
 - d. minimising waste and maximising recycling during construction and operation;
 - e. minimising flood risk including flood resilient construction;
 - f. being flexible and adaptable to future occupier needs; and
 - g. incorporating measures to enhance biodiversity value.

- 5.26 **Policy RE2 Efficient Use of Land** sets out that planning permission will only be granted where development proposals make efficient use of land.
- 5.27 Development proposals must make best use of site capacity, in a manner compatible with the site itself, the surrounding area and broader considerations of the needs of Oxford, as well as addressing the following criteria:
- a. the density must be appropriate for the use proposed;
 - b. the scale of development, including building heights and massing, should conform to other policies in the plan. It is expected that sites at transportation hubs and within the city and district centres in particular will be capable of accommodating development at an increased scale and density, although this will also be encouraged in all other appropriate locations where the impact of so doing is shown to be acceptable;
 - c. opportunities for developing at the maximum appropriate density must be fully explored; and
 - d. built form and site layout must be appropriate for the capacity of the site.
- 5.28 **Policy RE4: Sustainable and Foul Drainage, Surface and Ground Water Flow** recommends that all development proposals will be required to manage surface water through Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) or techniques to limit run-off and reduce the existing rate of run-off on previously developed sites.
- 5.29 **Policy RE6: Air Quality** states 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.
- 5.30 **Policy RE7: Managing the Impact of Development** states that planning permission will only be granted for development that:
- a. ensure the amenity of communities, occupiers and neighbours is protected; and
 - b. does not have unacceptable transport impacts affecting communities, occupiers, neighbours and the existing transport network; and
 - c. provides mitigation measures where necessary.
- 5.31 **Policy RE8: Noise and Vibration** sets out that planning permission will only be granted for development proposals which manage noise to safeguard or improve amenity, health, and quality of life.
- 5.32 Planning permission will not be granted for development that will generate unacceptable noise and vibration impacts.
- 5.33 Planning permission will not be granted for development sensitive to noise in locations which experience high levels of noise, unless it can be demonstrated, through a noise assessment, that appropriate attenuation measures will be provided to ensure an acceptable level of amenity for end users and to prevent harm to the continued operation of existing uses.
- 5.34 Measures to mitigate the impacts of noise and vibration associated with demolition and construction will be secured by legal agreement through Construction Management Plans (Refer to Policy M2).
- 5.35 **Policy DH2: Views and Building Heights** sets out that the Council will seek to retain significant views both within Oxford and from outside, in particular to and from the historic skyline. Planning permission will not be granted for any building or structure that would harm the significance of Oxford's historic skyline.
- 5.36 The area within a 1,200 metre radius of Carfax Tower (the Historic Core Area) contains all the buildings that comprise the historic skyline, so new developments that exceed 18.2 m (60 ft) in height or ordnance datum (height above sea level) 79.3 m (260 ft) (whichever is the lower) are likely to intrude into the skyline. Development above this height should be limited in bulk and must be of the highest design quality. Applications for proposed development that exceeds that height will be required to provide extensive information so that the full impacts of any proposals can be understood and assessed.

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG)

- 5.37 The National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) was published on 6th March 2014. The NPPG is a live document that is actively managed as necessary to ensure that it remains up to date.
- 5.38 The NPPG is divided into topic areas, which provide advice and guidance to inform the understanding and approach to implementation of the NPPF. The NPPF is referred to in this Planning Statement where relevant and necessary.

6. PLANNING ASSESSMENT

Need

- 6.1 Exeter College promotes academic excellence at an internationally recognised level and it is the Library's purpose to support this function by providing appropriate resources, study space and staff support to college members.
- 6.2 The existing Library is at the core of college life, and a major component of the overall student experience. However, as set out in the supporting Design and Access Statement, internal and external elements are of a poor quality and in need of repair in order to adequately meet the 21st Century needs of students whilst preserving the listed asset.
- 6.3 The annexe extension offers the opportunity to selectively expand the Library without altering the external elevations. Our proposal to infill this gap in some places to enable the installation of a new staircase accessing the mezzanine level, and further north to provide a much-needed staff office and archive store demonstrates how this proposal seeks to maximise the space in an efficient manner whilst minimising the impact on the listed asset.
- 6.4 The MEP services strategy ensure that the environmental services, heating and ventilation, will aim to balance comfort and energy use, whilst supporting conservation of the existing fabric and mitigating thermal and hygral issues.
- 6.5 This project aims to provide a modern library facility that will not only meet but exceed the requirements of existing college members and perspective new members whilst preserving the heritage asset and meeting sustainability requirements.

Principle for Development

- 6.6 Policy E2: Teaching and research states that
"... Planning permission will be granted to support the growth of the University of Oxford through the redevelopment an intensification of academic and administrative floor space on existing University of Oxford and college sites".
- 6.7 In approaching the project Exeter College carefully considered the potential options for the Library and the impact this will have on the listed building.
- 6.8 The proposal is seeking to utilise and maximise the existing space to create an accessible and sustainable space that caters to the university's changing needs which sits in accordance with policies E1, RE1 and RE2.
- 6.9 In association with the creation of high-quality new library space, the proposals include the sensitive restoration and enhancement of the Grade II listed building ensuring the long-term future of an important listed building such that it will continue to operate effectively going forward.
- 6.10 This is also supported in the pre-application response received on 31st December which states:

“The principle of development would align with the planning policies as set out in the Oxford Local Plan and therefore the principle of development is considered acceptable subject to specific details being provided as part of any application ensuring that any harm to the heritage assets would be outweighed by public benefits.”

Structural Works

- 6.11 A series of supporting steel beams running under the ground floor ceiling and supporting the first floor construction are proposed to be removed. It is understood these beams were added in 1898, but the reason for their installation is unclear.
- 6.12 The annexe building is proposed to be extended towards the Bodleian Library boundary. These modifications are proposed to be carried out in a manner which maintains existing vertical and horizontal load paths wherever possible. This will be achieved through the provision of a steel “picture frame” installed within the eastern wall of the annex.
- 6.13 The low-level beams, located below the proposed ground floor slab, will be encased in concrete and will sit directly onto the existing stone wall (retained at low level). The picture frame structure will ensure loads are re-distributed onto the existing wall foundations in a very similar manner to the existing arrangement and will limit future movements and settlements.
- 6.14 In addition to the above, a series of smaller openings are to be formed within the existing stone walls. Where practical, stone beams will be used to act as lintels. These works will be carried out in a sequence which maintains the resilience and robustness of the existing fabric.

Heritage

- 6.15 The Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 places a statutory duty on the decision taker when dealing with applications affecting listed buildings and conservation areas.
- 6.16 With respect to listed buildings Section 66(1) of the Act provides that:

“In considering whether to grant planning permission for development which affects a listed building or its setting, the local planning authority or, as the case may be, the Secretary of State shall have special regard to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.”
- 6.17 Under Section 72(1) the Act states that with regard to development in conservation areas, the Local Planning Authority should:

“with respect to any buildings or other land in a conservation area ... pay special attention to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area”.
- 6.18 As required by NPPF a Heritage Statement has been prepared by Donald Insell Associates (February 2021) to support this application. This addresses the significance of the historical assets as well as assessing the level of harm the proposal will have. The Statement determines that:

“Each intervention has been designed to fit within the original character of the building, helping to mitigate any harm which might arise from the alterations. The proposals would, overall, be beneficial to the significance of the listed building. They offer a conservation-led approach to its repair and adaptation to meet the needs of readers and staff.”
- 6.19 With reference to the NPPF, the proposed works are considered to cause ‘less than substantial harm’ with no aspect of the proposal having a serious impact on the buildings special interest or its setting.
- 6.20 The statement sets out a hierarchy of significance and the features identified in this are to be preserved or conserved to the highest standard with careful repair or like-for-like replacement of defective elements. The only exception to this is the loss of two of the Scott-designed carved

bookcases on the first floor of the main range but, given this is for the purpose of providing full independent access to the library for wheelchair users.

6.21 The proposal also includes the implementation of a number of remedies to detract from the factors identified in the hierarchy of significance. As set out in the Heritage Statement, the modern entrance vestibule and security measures would be removed, along with lino to the floors and hazard tape around areas of flooring in poor condition. The modern strip lighting, roller blinds, shelving and bookcases, heating pipes and exposed services would be replaced with better designed alternative. The lack of step-free access would be overcome, something of the original spatial quality restored to the annexe, and original circulation route between the two ranges would be reinstated. The annexe windows and door, all of Scott's original design, would be revealed by the new gallery. Modern emulsion paint finishes would be removed from the ceilings in the ground floor main range and the annex, and from the walls of the annex which would be restored to their original ashlar condition.

6.22 Where a proposal is found to cause 'less than substantial harm' to a listed building, the National Planning Policy Framework states, in paragraph 196:

"this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use."

6.23 There are a number of public benefits created by the proposal including:

- Repair and conservation of the exterior of the building.
- Conservation repair of the original bookcases, floorboards and ceilings.
- Reinstatement of original circulation route.
- Better design and layout of the space carefully designed with good quality materials.
- A new lift providing accessibility to all.
- The building would be better equipped to meet modern expectations and thus deepen the long-term viability.
- Improvement to fire safety.
- The reintroduction of lost or badly damaged features such as the stone pinnacles, carved stone heads, flower and fauna.
- The restoration of the library's original character.

6.24 These benefits, which are considered in the National Planning Policy Framework to constitute public benefits, will outweigh any 'less than substantial' harm that is found to arise from the proposals demonstrating that the proposal is in-keeping with National Policy.

Archaeology

6.25 The geotechnical survey and watching brief have allowed the architects to confirm that extensive underpinning will not be required and develop a scheme that aims to minimise below ground impacts to within 580mm of the current lower library slab level, with localised deeper interventions (lift pit and column support). There is a method statement prepared with Oxford Archaeology which will also accompany the application which sets out the intended methodology for the removal of the existing Annexe slab.

6.26 Discussions have been undertaken with the City Council's Archaeology Officer which has suggested that an Archaeological Watching Brief is undertaken during the excavation of test pits. It is understood that this will be a planning condition on any subsequent planning and listed building consent. The applicant is content to accept this.

Views

- 6.27 The Local Plan identifies under policy HE. 10, that:
“the city council will seek to retain significant views both within Oxford and from outside and protect the green backcloth from any adverse impact.”
- 6.28 The visual impact of the proposal has been carefully considered throughout the design process. The majority of works proposed are internal and will not impact views in the Conservation Area or wider view cones.
- 6.29 However, to ensure that a full assessment of the potential impact that the proposals may have a views study has been undertaken to establish any impact on long views or localised views.
- 6.30 The single storey ‘link’ will involve external works. However, the reconstructed link wall at the front entrance assimilates seamlessly with the façade of the existing building and is composed of panels of bathstone ashlar. The location of the ‘link’ is shielded from the majority of views into the site and will assimilate with the existing building ensuring it does not stand out as an incongruous feature.
- 6.31 The Council previously raised concerns regarding the views of the lift passenger shaft. The pre-application response states;
“issue has been addressed by reducing the height of the structure that will emerge above the roof of the main building range and giving the overall volume a more faceted appearance”.
- 6.32 Following these comments, the team has looked at a number of views across the city, further details of this can be found in the Stage 3 Report. Views were taken from Catte Street and St Mary's Tower. In both cases, the lift shaft structure is obscured from view by the Bodleian Library.
- 6.33 It is identified that the lift overrun is marginally visible when viewed from one specific point on Broad Street, outside the Bodleian wall, and a similar glimpse of overrun housing can be seen from within the Bodleian grounds.
- 6.34 The design proposals have been refined and reduced to minimise impact on the Bodleian and sit in accordance with Policy.

Sustainability

- 6.35 Sustainability has been a key driver of this project and is part of the University's strategy to improve the sustainability of all their buildings. The environmental services, heating and ventilation, will aim to balance comfort and energy use, whilst supporting conservation of the existing fabric and mitigating thermal and hygral issues.
- 6.36 This provides a space that is flexible and adaptable to meet future needs whilst also ensuring the efficient use of space in line with Policy RE1.

7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The proposals before the Council seek to provide a modern and fit for purpose library at Exeter College.
- 7.2 The scheme has been subject to extensive consultation with OCC but also key stakeholders such as Historic England, the Bodleian and the Victorian Society prior to proposals being submitted to the City Council. The comments received as part of these discussions has informed the development of the proposals and refined the scheme to minimise impact on historic fabric and views resulting in less than substantial harm.

- 7.3 It should be acknowledged that there are a raft of public benefits which flow from the scheme. These benefits include:
- The provision of modern, accessible library facilities within an internationally recognised Oxford College;
 - The opportunity of increasing equal access to the material and resources of the Library;
 - The provision of opportunities to better appreciate the historic building and its surroundings;
 - The repair and conservation of an important Grade II listed building;
 - Improvements to fire safety;
 - Major improvements to the quality of the internal space revealing the original features.
- 7.4 The proposals before the Council have been carefully and sensitively evolved seeking detailed views and input into the proposals from statutory consultees, amenity groups and specialists within the Council. This invaluable input has informed the details of this proposal.
- 7.5 Overall, the scheme provides a sensitive enhancement to the listed building from which flows a raft of public benefits. On this basis, planning and listed building consent can and should be granted.

