



ET Planning

Planning Statement

Client:

Aurorer Energy Research Ltd

109 St Aldates

Oxford, OX1 1DS

Removal of existing roof antenna and installation of replacement plant machinery and ductwork on roof of building, rear and ground floor rear of building.

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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement is produced to support a planning application for the removal of the existing roof antenna, installation of replacement plant machinery on roof as well as the installation of ductwork and replacement plant machinery at ground floor rear of building.
- 1.2 This planning statement will cover the background to the application and provide the necessary information to enable its determination by officers at the Council. It will consider the proposal in light of relevant planning policies and other material considerations. The conclusion reached is that key material considerations and the wider objectives of National and Local planning policy support the grant of permission.
- 1.3 In addition to this planning statement, the application is accompanied by the appropriate planning application forms and ownership certificate, duly signed and completed, and the following documents;
- Drawing no. 6134 01p2
 - Drawing no. 6134 02p2 Site Block Plan
 - Drawing no. 6134 05p1 Courtyard Plan Proposed
 - Drawing no. 6134 06p2 Roof plan existing
 - Drawing no. 6134 10p2 North Elevation Existing
 - Drawing no. 6134 11p3 East Elevation Existing
 - Drawing no. 6134 12p3 South Elevation existing
 - Drawing no. 6134 13p2 West Elevation existing
 - Drawing no. 6134 16p2 North Elevation Proposed
 - Drawing no. 6134 17p3 East Elevation Proposed

- Drawing no. 6134 18p3 South Elevation Proposed
- Drawing no. 6134 19p2 West Elevation Proposed

1.4 The relevant application fee will be submitted by the applicant separately.

2. Site Location and Description

2.1 109 St Aldates Chambers is located in central Oxford, on the west side of St Aldates Street. The site is situated opposite the Town Hall, a Grade II* Listed Building, and it is located within the City and University Conservation Area.

2.2 The building comprises four storeys of office space (Use Class E) previously occupied by Oxford City Council. The building has two entrances at ground floor: one entrance for the staff to access the upper floors and one for the ground floor. A vehicular entrance to the site can also be found between St Aldate's 108 and 109. This entrance allows access to the side and courtyard located in the back of the site. Vehicle parking can be found in the courtyard.

3. Planning History

3.1 Application Ref: 22/03016/FUL- Erection of plant and screening to rooftop. Addition of ducting to northern side courtyard elevation and erection of sub-station within existing courtyard. – Withdrawn.

3.2 Application Ref: 22/01510/FUL- Installation of 4no antenna apertures, 4no 600mm dishes and 7no equipment cabinets with associated ancillary works (additional information)- Registered.

- 3.3 Application Ref: 22/00563/CT3- Removal of external signage and associated stonework to east elevation. Replacement of glazing with external louvres. – Approved.
- 3.4 Application Ref: 15/03660/NMA- Non-material amendment to planning permission to allow installation of air conditioning units. – Approved.
- 3.5 Application Ref: 15/03660/CT3- Alterations to window at ground floor level on north elevation to incorporate door and installation of staircase from new fire exit door down to ground floor. Removal of existing spiral staircase and metal mesh enclosure from south elevation and installation of new dog-legged staircase from first floor to ground floor with metal mesh enclosure at ground floor level. Increase width of fire exit door openings onto the existing staircase at first, second and third floor levels. Re-configure door openings to rear of ground floor offices, infill one door opening, increase width of remaining door opening and fit new fire exit. – Approved.
- 3.6 Application Ref: 15/02846/CND- Details submitted in compliance with conditions 1 (Materials), 2 (Screening) and 3 (Construction Traffic Management Plan) of prior approval 15/02846/SP56- Approved.
- 3.7 Application Ref: 10/02599/CT3- External alterations to building to include new windows, doors and boiler flue. External ductwork and covered cycle store to courtyard. Provision of heat recovery plant air conditioning units and safety railings to roof. (amended plans)- Approved.
- 3.8 Application Ref: 98/00054/GFH- Replacement of existing radio antenna, attached to the tank room on roof. – Approved.
- 3.9 Application Ref: 94/00500/GFH- Change of use from Information Centre to A1 retail use, to form either 1 or 2 units- Approved.

4. Development Proposals

- 4.1 The proposed development is for the removal of the existing roof antenna and installation of replacement plant machinery on roof which comprises of an air handling unit (AHU) on the eastern side of the roof measuring 2.5m by 5.1m with a height of 2.5m; as well as the installation of ductwork; replacement condensers on the western part of the roof measuring 2m by 2.5m with a height of 1.9m and associated ductwork; a replacement air handling unit at ground floor measuring 4m by 1.7m and 2.5m high; and replacement external condensers at ground floor level measuring 4m by 1.6m with a height of 1.9m.
- 4.2 Regarding the requirements of NPPG Paragraph: 029 Reference ID: 14-029-20140306 in respect of Design and Access Statements, the proposal is described as follows:
- 4.3 **Use and Amount:** The proposal is for the removal of the existing roof antenna and installation of replacement plant machinery on roof comprising of air handling units and condensers as well as the installation of ductwork and replacement air handling unit and condensers at ground floor rear of building.
- 4.4 **Layout and Scale:** The proposed siting of the plant has been considered so it will be mostly screened by the existing built form. The plant on the roof will not protrude higher than the existing brickwork structure upon the rooftop and will be mostly screened by adjoining buildings. This would prevent visibility of the development.
- 4.5 **Access & Parking:** The proposed development would not change the existing access to the site nor affect any existing car parking spaces.

5. Policy Assessment

- 5.1 **National Guidance:** The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is a relevant material consideration to the application.
- 5.2 The purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. So that sustainable development is pursued in a positive way, at the heart of the Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development. Paragraph 38 of the NPPF states that “Local planning authorities should approach decision on proposed development in a positive and creative way” and “at every level should seek to approve applications for sustainable development where possible”. Paragraph 119 of the NPPF comments that planning should “make effective use of land” in “meeting the need for homes and other uses, whilst safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions”.
- 5.3 Paragraph 60 confirms the Government’s objective to boost the supply of housing, and paragraph 8 identifies the three objectives of sustainable development, as economic, environmental and social.
- 5.4 Paragraph 126 identifies that “Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, creates better places in which to live and work and helps make development acceptable to communities”, whilst paragraph 134 states that significant weight should be given to “outstanding or innovative designs which promote high levels of sustainability, or help raise the standard of design more generally in an area, so long as they fit in with the overall form and layout of their surroundings.”
- 5.5 **Principle of Development:** Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that planning applications be

determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.6 **Paragraph 196 of the NPPF** states how *"Development should not harm the significance of the conservation area and nearby listed buildings."* Please see information below stating how this development complies with this.

5.7 **Sustainable Design and Construction: Policy RE1-** States 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 waste and maximising recycling during construction and operation;*
- f) *Being flexible and adaptable to future occupier needs; and*
- g) *Incorporating measures to enhance biodiversity value.*

5.8 **Policy RE7** states that "Planning permission will only be granted for development that:

- a) *Ensures that the amenity of communities, occupiers and neighbours is protected; and*
- b) *Does not have unacceptable transport impacts affecting communities, occupiers and neighbours and the existing transport network; and*

c) *Provides mitigation measures where necessary*

5.9 **Character and Appearance of the Conservation Area: Policy DH1** states that *"planning permission will only be granted for development of high-quality design that creates or enhances local distinctiveness"*.

5.10 **Policy DH2** states that *"Planning permission will be granted for developments of appropriate height or massing that comply with the following criteria:*

a) *design choices regarding height and massing have a clear design rationale and the impacts will be positive; and*

b) *any design choice to design buildings to a height that would impact on character should be fully explained, and regard should be had to the guidance on design of higher buildings set out in the High Buildings Study TAN. In particular, the impacts in terms of the four visual tests of obstruction, impact on the skyline, competition and change of character should be explained; and*

c) *it should be demonstrated how proposals have been designed to have a positive impact through their massing, orientation, the relation of the building to the street, and the potential impact on important views including both into the historic skyline and out towards Oxford's green setting."*

5.11 As the proposed development seeks to remove the existing antenna, this will be a clear improvement to the roofscape and skyline by removing visual clutter. The air handling unit sited on the eastern side of the roof would be set back from the front elevation by approx. 8m and would not protrude above the existing projection on the roof. Both the condensers and the air handling units on the roof would be

sited in close proximity to existing structures of more significant massing and would therefore not appear unduly prominent.

- 5.12 It would also be screened from the important views from Carfax Tower by the adjoining building which is taller. The proposals will therefore demonstrate compliance with policies DH1 and DH2.

Image 1. Views toward the building from Carfax Tower.



5.13

- 5.14 **Heritage Assessment: Policy DH3- Designated Heritage Assets** states that *"Planning permission or listed building consent 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 **Policy DH5-** 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."*

- 5.16 The Conservation Area Character Appraisal for Oxford Central (City & University) was adopted at Full Council on 17th November 2023 and has been given consideration in the Heritage Assessment.
- 5.17 In determining applications, local planning authorities should require an applicant to describe the significance of any heritage assets affected, including any contribution made by their setting.
- 5.18 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.
- 5.19 St Aldates Chambers was built in the 1930's as a civic building by AH Jones along with several other modern commercial buildings. The post war era dramatically changed the locality. The building has a classical architectural style and detailing which reflects its previous civic purpose. The rear and side elevations offer little to the character and appearance of the conservation area.
- 5.20 The mechanical plant has been sensitively sited on the rooftop, with other replacement plant at the rear being concealed. The antenna is to be removed. There is no change to the scale or massing of the building itself.
- 5.21 The proposals would result in a minor alteration to the building, would be read in the context of existing plant and equipment and would not be prominent nor detrimental to the special character of the Conservation Area due to the low-key nature of the proposals and screening.
- 5.22 This application is accompanied by a Heritage Assessment which has also carried out a Roofscape Assessment taking into consideration

the view cones and historic skyline. The report concludes that the proposals would not substantially alter or harm the appearance of the building nor the character of the conservation area. The proposals are considered to preserve the appearance of the Central Conservation Area in accordance with the NPPF and Local Plan Policies.

- 5.23 **Residential Amenity:** The proposed replacement equipment will not result in additional neighbouring impacts in terms of visual amenity. The plant on the roof will not result in overshadowing nor overbearing impacts to neighbours. There is existing plant, equipment, and ductwork in a similar position to the proposals and as such, visual impacts for neighbouring student accommodation and occupants of neighbouring buildings would not be harmful.
- 5.24 **Acoustics: Policy RE8- Noise and Vibration** states that "*Planning permission will only be granted for development proposals which manage noise to safeguard or improve amenity, health, and quality of life.*"
- 5.25 *Planning permission will not be granted for development that will generate unacceptable noise and vibration impacts. 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.*
- 5.26 *Conditions will be used to secure such mitigation measures and operational commitments. 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)."

- 5.27 This application is accompanied by a Noise Impact Assessment that accords with NPPF guidance and British Standard BS4142. The noise from the new mechanical plant is expected to result in low to no impact. As such, the proposal would accord with Policy RE8 in this respect.
- 5.28 **Trees and Landscaping:** The ground floor proposal is not located near any Protected Trees and will not result in removal of landscape features.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 This statement has demonstrated that the proposed development is acceptable in principle and makes an efficient use of land. The proposals represent an improvement and upgrade, to bring the building back into use, as an up-to-date, more energy efficient building fit for purpose. The removal of the redundant antenna will make an improvement to visual clutter in the city skyline and the replacement plant has been sensitively sited to minimise visual impact and protect the historic Conservation Area.
- 6.2 Material planning considerations have been carefully considered and analysed, as evidenced in section 5 of this statement and the supporting plans and documents. It is considered the proposed development would not have an adverse effect on the character of the area, would not result in harm to Designated Heritage Assets nor harm to the amenity of neighbouring residents.

6.3 It is considered that the proposed scheme complies with relevant Development Plan Policies and is further supported by National Guidance. Therefore, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted.

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