

28 March 2024
L 240307- PRB - Cover Letter v3



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Via Planning Portal only

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Dear Charles

Application seeking full planning permission for the change of use of 25 Barrett Street from a dwellinghouse (Use Class C3) to a mixed use of office and dwellinghouse (Uses Classes C3/E) for a temporary period of one year

At 25 Barrett Street, Oxford, OX2 0AT

**On behalf of Graham Construction
Planning Portal Number: PP-12859158**

Savills is instructed by GRAHAM (hereafter 'the applicant') to submit an application for the temporary change of use of 25 Barrett Street from residential (C3) to a mixed use of residential and office (Use Classes C3 & E) for a period of one year.

The application is supported by the following plans and documents:

- Drawing No: 24-06-001 – Site Location Plan
- Drawing No: 24-06-002 - Block Plan (Existing and Proposed)
- Drawing No: 24-06-003 - Existing Ground Floor Plan
- Drawing No: 24-06-004 – Existing First Floor Plan
- Drawing No: 24-06-005 – Existing Second Floor Plan
- Drawing No: 24-06-006 – Existing Roof Plan
- Drawing No: 24-06-007 – Existing Elevations and Section
- Drawing No: 24-06-008 – Proposed Ground Floor Plan
- Drawing No: 24-06-009 – Proposed First Floor Plan
- Drawing No: 24-06-010 - Proposed Second Floor Plan
- Drawing No: 24-06-011 – Proposed Roof Plan
- Drawing No: 24-06-012 - Proposed Elevations and Section
- CIL Form

Context

As you are aware, the Applicant is the appointed main contractor that is responsible for the construction work of the conversion, redevelopment and extension of Osney Power Station to a Centre of Executive Education to be run by Said Business School, that was approved under Planning Ref: 19/02982/FUL).

This is a substantial construction project that is progressing well on a highly constrained site. The current build programme forecasts practical completion in early 2025.

The space on site for a construction office is extremely limited and thus the project is currently using the immediately adjacent residential property, 19 Arthur Street, as a secondary site office. You were the case officer for Planning application 22/02556/FUL, which has permitted this use continuing until the end of 2024.

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Given the complexity of the construction works planned over the next year, the Applicant has reached the conclusion that more office accommodation is needed to support the site operations, over and above that has already been permitted. Furthermore, the Applicant is consistently needing to rent rooms in Oxford for project personnel who are hired on short-term contracts to work on the Old Power Station site.

Consequently, the Applicant is entering into a short term agreement with Christ Church, who own the application property, which has a long established residential use (Use Class C3). 25 Barrett Street is a three-storey end terrace Victorian property typical of this part of Oxford.

The site is in Flood Zone 2, close to the River Thames. The dwelling sits within the City Centre Archaeological Area, close to the western boundary. The dwelling is not in a conservation area, though sits just to the east of the Osney Island Conservation Area.

Crucially, it is less than a 5-minute walk from Barrett Street to the Old Power Station site.

Proposal and Need for the Proposal

The proposal seeks full planning permission for the change use of the property at 25 Barrett Street from residential (Class C3) to a mixed use of residential and offices (Classes C3 and E) for an initial period of one year.

As currently is the case with 19 Arthur Street, the ground and first floors of the property will be used as an office by the Applicant, with 25 Barrett Street providing space for the design, commercial, planning, and management functions/personnel. The two bedrooms on the second floor will be retained in this use and made available for short-term management personnel. The Applicant's intention is the persons will live and work from the property so the "coming and going" from the property will be limited.

No internal or external alterations to the building are proposed. The accompanying floorplans show how the property is be used to support the construction project.

The tenable options for site offices close to the OPS redevelopment works are very limited and there are presently no alternative options available within the site of the OPS for offices to be situated.

As the Applicant is the appointed contractor of Oxford University it does not have access to any alternative accommodation nearby. Other university-owned land at Osney Industrial Estate, which is the closest land available owned by the University, is already being utilised for activity related to the redevelopment, including for site compounds and storage facilities. Osney Industrial Estate is a 15-minute walk away and therefore is not suitable for the Applicant's needs.

By basing its appointed contractors at Barrett Street to live and work from the site for the majority of their stay, the disturbance to neighbours will be limited to a level comparable to what one would expect from a private residence in this location.

Use Classes

This application seeks to temporarily change the ground and floor first floors of the property to Class E. Schedule 2 of the Use Classes Order at Part A point (g) for Class E – Commercial, Business and Service states:

- “(i) an office to carry out any operational or administrative functions,*
 - (ii) the research and development of products and processes, or*
 - (iii) any industrial processes,*
- Being a use, which can be carried out in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit”*

This covers the new use being proposed and it is therefore considered the proposed use of the site falls into Classes C3 and E. The use would not create any noise or other impact that would be to the detriment of neighbours.

Policy and Planning Assessment

National Policy

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was updated in 2023.

Paragraph 85 of the NPPF states that planning decisions '*should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt.*' This temporary change of use from residential to office space is required to support the OPS redevelopment scheme, which in turn will promote economic growth in the area.

Paragraph 123 of the NPPF states that planning decisions '*should promote an effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses.*' Using this property as a management office is particularly effective considering its immediate proximity to the redevelopment site. This site would be better used as an office than a residential dwelling considering the noise and activity arising from ongoing works.

Local Policy

The development plan for Oxford City comprises the Oxford Local Plan 2036.

The Oxford Local Plan 2036 Policy H1 sets out clear ambitions for significantly expanding the city's housing provision, including the necessary delivery of new homes and the efficient use of land within the constrained city for housing. The proposed change of use would involve the partial net loss of one self-contained dwelling for the period of one year, which stands against Policy H5 of the Local Plan.

However, this is a temporary measure that is required to support an already consented scheme. In the long term, there will be no net loss of dwelling as the permission seeks a temporary change of use for only 12 months. This dwelling is currently vacant and has been owned by Christ Church for the long-term and is aware of this application.

In reality, there is no loss of any self-contained dwelling as people will continue to live at the property throughout the year, using the second floor accommodation exactly as it has been previously. When the Applicant's need for the property ceases it will be returned as a residence to the College as it was before.

This approach was accepted in your report for the 2022 extension of the Arthur Street use, which reads, "the proposed loss of a dwelling is unacceptable on a permanent basis; however the proposal meets the tests set out in the PPG to allow a temporary change of use of the site from housing to offices. Having considered this, and the fact that the proposed use is only for a further 2 years, it is considered that the proposal is acceptable in principle and in terms of Policy H5 and the PPG."

Nothing material has changed in reality nor in planning policy to justify the Council reaching a different conclusion now in respect of this property.

Policy S1 details the council's presumption in favour of sustainable development, which reflects that of the NPPF. This change of use proposal makes best use of the site capacity with respect to its position near to the OPS construction site. Partially changing its use class to accommodate the site office would be a highly sustainable option that would assist the University deliver this new facility for the city as soon as possible.

Policy RE3 makes clear that planning permission will only be granted where a proposed development will not increase flood risk on site or off site. Since this is a change of use application there will be no change to the situation.

Policies RE7 and RE8 seeks to ensure that the impact of development on the surrounding community and neighbours is acceptable or mitigated, including noise. The partial use of the site as an office should not create additional noise that will impact neighbours.

The proposal would retain the single car parking spaces on the site; so there will be no net increase in parking in compliance with Policy M3.

Summary and Conclusion

Whilst the proposal will result in the partial net loss of a dwelling, contrary to Policy H5 in the strictest terms, this is for a 12-month year period and the Applicant is willing to accept a condition that gives the Council control of the use.

The proposal therefore makes efficient use of a site and will have no long term adverse impact on the surrounding area or the housing market and will enable the University to address a short term need whilst the OPS redevelopment works are ongoing.

Given the above, we respectfully request that planning permission is granted. If you have any questions or require further information, please contact me at the above address.

Yours sincerely



Peter Brampton
Senior Planner