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Your ref:
Our ref: J0009076

27th March 2024

Dear Sir/Madam

SCIENCE OXFORD CENTRE, STANSFELD PARK, DOUGLAS DOWNS CLOSE, QUARRY ROAD, OXFORD, OX3 8SB

On Behalf of the Oxford Trust ("The Applicant") please find enclosed a planning application for the enclosing of the northern section of the Science Oxford Centre building at Science Oxford Centre, Stansfeld Park, Douglas Downs Close, Quarry Road, Oxford, OX3 8SB (the 'site').

The development is described as follows:

'Enclosing the northern section of a building with a screen.'

In addition to this covering letter, the following documentation form the planning application:

Application Form
Site Location Plan – Drw. 01 Rev A
Existing Block Plan – Drw. 02 Rev B
Proposed Block Plan – Drw. 03 Rev B
Existing Elevations – Drw. 04 Rev B
Proposed Elevations – Drw. 05 Rev C
Photos of existing site – n/a

Site and Surroundings

The application site comprises the northern section of the Oxford Science Building at Stansfeld Park. As demonstrated by the plans, the exact development includes the entire northern elevation, and the end section of the eastern and western elevations. This section of the building is 1-storey in height, and the red line area extends to 165m².

The site comprises a roof canopy over-hanging a brick floor. Supporting the roof are metal posts which are placed at intervals and run along the perimeter. A temporary screen comprising a mixture of flexible transparent

plastic and opaque fabric is placed between the posts and runs along the perimeter to serve as a weather-break.

The site is part of the wider Oxford Science Centre building, which extends to the south. This building was part of the 16/02618/FUL application for the construction of the whole outdoor education centre project.

The wider site, Stansfeld Park (formerly the Stansfeld Outdoor Education Centre), extends to approximately 7.28 hectares and comprises two linked buildings - the Oxford Science Centre, a science centre for primary school aged students, and the Wood Centre for Innovation, a centre for early-stage technology companies.

The site is located in the Local Authority District of Oxford City Council. It lies in Flood Zone 1, and is not in a Conservation Area, Green Belt or AONB.

Planning History

The table below provides a list of relevant planning applications to the site.

Ref	Description	Decision
21/02407/FUL	Installation of 3no. flues to the north-east elevation (revised plans and description; additional information received).	Approved February 2022
18/02801/VAR	Variation of condition 2 (Development in accordance with approved plans) of planning permission 16/02618/FUL (Demolition of redundant former outdoor education centre buildings; construction of a new science education centre and innovation centre with parking, access and landscape enhancement).	Approved July 2019
18/02801/CND	Details submitted in compliance with conditions 5 (Travel Plan) and 10 (Service and Collection/Drop Off Plan) of planning permission 18/02801/VAR.	Approved July 2019
16/02618/CND2	Details submitted in compliance with condition 18, (Land Quality) of planning permission 16/02618/FUL	Approved March 2018
16/02618/CND3	Detail submitted in compliance with condition 4 (Materials) of planning permission 16/02618/FUL.	Approved March 2018
16/02618/CND4	Details submitted in compliance with condition(s) 19 (Public Art) of planning permission 16/02618/FUL.	Approved August 2018
16/02618/CND5	Details submitted in compliance of conditions 7(Drainage), 8(Parking layout plan), 11(Landscape Plan required) and	n/a

	13(Landscape, hard surface design - tree) of planning permission 16/02618/FUL.	
16/02618/CND6	Details submitted in compliance with conditions 7 (Drainage), 8 (Parking Layout Plan), 11 (Landscape Plan required) and 13 (Landscape, hard surface design) of planning permission 18/02801/VAR.	Approved March 2019
16/02618/NMA	Non-Material amendment to planning permission 16/02618/FUL to allow amendment to landscaping and parking layout. Alterations to northern plan of the science education centre to include provision of external wheelchair accessible WC, reduce external viewing deck, insertion of external access doors to north elevation. Inclusion of roof access, omit 1no. window. Amendment to main stair positioning. Reduction of ventilation units and photovoltaic panels adjusted. Amendment to south elevation window and north elevation window. Insertion of 1no. window to east elevation and amendment to positioning of external WC access doors to north elevation.	Refused September 2018
16/02618/FUL	Demolition of redundant former outdoor education centre buildings; construction of a new science education centre and innovation centre with parking, access and landscape enhancement.	Granted February 2017
05/00217/FUL	Erection of a double garage	Granted March 2005
03/01572/FUL	Erection of 2 storey 3 bedroom detached house for site manager.	Granted September 2003
01/01829/FUL	Erection of two storey (with first floor in roof space) 3 bedroom detached house for Centre Manager	Granted November 2001
01/01154/NF	Demolition of existing garage/store. Proposed replacement store.	Granted July 2001
66/00455/M_H	Caretaker's house to replace existing	Granted July 1966

The key and relevant planning application above is 16/02618/FUL.

The plans for the 16/02618/FUL application demonstrate that the northern section of the building – the site of this application - has always been part of the original layout of the development. Thus, the principle of development on this site is already accepted as part of the approval for this 2016 application.

Proposed Development

This application seeks planning permission for the enclosing of the northern section of the Science Oxford Centre building.

The roof and floor of this section of the building will remain unchanged. The proposal is for the replacement of the temporary screen with a permanent wall.

The majority of the works will be on the northern elevation. The wall will primarily comprise brick (specifically Beorma brick blend), with fixed glass windows running along the upper half of the elevation.

On the eastern elevation, there will be a mixture of brick and bi-fold glass doors replacing the screen at this corner. A small vertical strip of the wall will comprise timber cladding, which also reflects design elements of the Science Oxford Building.

On the western elevation, a glazed glass double door will replace an existing wooden gate at this corner.

The existing metal support pillars will be clad in Beorma brick, to provide additional structural support but also to blend the supports congruously with the rest of the façade.

The façade design has been chosen to match the existing frontages on the Oxford Science Building. The proposal will provide a logical compliment to the existing structure, and be visually congruous with the rest of the building and the wider site.

Planning Policy

Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Section 70 (2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 states that the local planning authority shall have regard to the provisions of the Development Plan, so far as material to the application, and to any other material considerations.

Development Plan

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.

The following policies contained within the Development Plan are considered relevant to the proposal:

Oxford Local Plan 2036

DH1 – High quality design and placemaking states that planning permission will only be granted for development of high-quality design that creates or enhances local distinctiveness.

DH7 – External servicing features and stores states that external servicing features have been designed as an integrated part of the overall design or are positioned to minimise their impact.

RE1 – Sustainable design and construction states that planning permission will only be granted where it can be demonstrated that sustainable design and construction principles have been incorporated, such as being flexible and adaptable to future occupier needs.

RE2 – Efficient use of land states that Planning permission will only be granted where development proposals make efficient use of land.

National Planning Policy Framework

The Government published the amended National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on 19 December 2023. The NPPF 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 which should be considered in decision making.

Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

The NPPF states at paragraph 7 that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development. Paragraph 8 continues, stating that there are three dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental, and that there are three dimensions give rise to the need for the planning system to perform a number of roles.

- An economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation; and by identifying and coordinating development requirements, including the provision of infrastructure;
- A social role – supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of the present and future generations; and by creating a high quality environment, with accessible local services that reflect the community’s needs and support its health, social and cultural well-being; and
- An environmental role – contributing to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; and, as part of this, helping to improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution, and mitigate and adapt to climate change including moving to a low carbon economy.

Paragraph 11 states that plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development. It specifies that:

“Plans and decisions should apply a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

For plan-making this means that:

- a) plans should positively seek opportunities to meet the development needs of their area, and be sufficiently flexible to adapt to rapid change;
- b) strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, unless:
 - i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development in the plan area; or

- ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.

For decision-taking this means:

- c) approving development proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan without delay; or
- d) where there are no relevant development plan policies, or the policies which are most important for determining the application are out-of-date, granting permission unless:
 - i. the application of policies in this Framework that protect areas or assets of particular importance provides a clear reason for refusing the development proposed; or
 - ii. any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.”

Paragraph 85 states 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. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential.

Planning Assessment

Principle of Development

Policies

Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) states that planning applications must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Local Plan Policy (LP) RE1 – Sustainable design and construction states that planning permission will only be granted where it can be demonstrated that sustainable design and construction principles have been incorporated, such as being flexible and adaptable to future occupier needs, and maximising energy efficiency and the use of low carbon energy.

LP RE2 – Efficient use of land states that planning permission will only be granted where development proposals make efficient use of land. 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 certain criteria, such as the density must be appropriate for the use proposed, and built form and site layout must be appropriate for the capacity of the site.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraph 7 requires the planning system to build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation...and by identifying and coordinating development requirements.

Assessment

The principle of development for this proposal is established by the previous permission (16/02618/FUL) confirming that development is acceptable on this site.

The site for this proposal comprises a section of Oxford Science Building that was approved as part of a larger scheme under 16/02618/FUL. The enclosing of this section of the building does not alter the stipulations of the original permission in any way.

Responding to requests from many schools and public visitors to the Science Oxford Centre since it opened in mid-2019, this proposal enhances the security, usability, and sustainability of this section of the building. This provides a safer, enclosed and naturally ventilated area for The Oxford Trust's educational sessions for young people, which already take place on this site.

The enhancements will also make the site more habitable and energy efficient. The temperature of the area will be more easily controlled, and protection from harsh weather is a direct adaptation to climate change, which, for example, is increasingly bringing intense rainfall, which currently enters the canopy area.

Therefore, this proposal maximises the potential of this site, making efficient use of the land available and enhancing its sustainability and usability for current and future users. This enhancement will support the productivity and success of Stansfeld Park as a whole.

The proposal meets the requirements of the local development plan's strategic policies RE1 and RE2, and accords with national planning policy. Thus, it is demonstrated further that the principle of development is acceptable, in addition to it already being confirmed with the existing permission for development on this site.

Design

Policies

LP DH1 – High quality design and placemaking states that planning permission will only be granted for development of high quality design that creates or enhances local distinctiveness.

LP DH7 – External servicing features and stores requires external servicing features to be designed as integrated parts of the overall design or are positioned to minimise their impact.

Assessment

The proposal will comprise closing the northern section of the Science Oxford Centre building with materials and structural elements which continue the design of the existing façade. The approved 16/02618/FUL application design is of high-quality and was considered at the time of approval to be an enhancement to the existing site. This continuation of high-quality design enables the proposal to contribute to the existing positive local distinctiveness of the site.

The works will be minimal and limited to what is necessary to enclose this section of the building and allow for the space to function appropriately. The site will integrate seamlessly into the existing building both in terms of design and on-going function.

Due to existing roof canopy and floor, this proposal is not an extension. It is enclosing the perimeter of the northern section of the building primarily with the same materials that exist on the main building. Therefore, the seamless integration will have minimal impact on the wider site by maintaining the same façade design and footprint.

The proposal meets the requirements of the local development plan's policies DH1 and DH7, and is therefore in accordance with the development plan.

Conclusion

This proposal for the enclosing of the northern section of the Science Oxford Centre building. It has been demonstrated above that the proposal accords with the Local Development Plan and National Planning Policy. The proposal will integrate with the existing building through congruous design, enhance the façade of this section of the building and improve the sustainability and functionality of the site through the provision of a more comfortable environment used for local schools and citizens.

I trust the above and enclosed is sufficient to allow the validation of this application and look forward to receiving confirmation of this in due course. If you require any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully

