

Grandpont House
Netherhall Education Association
March 2024



GRANDPONT HOUSE PLANNING STATEMENT

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Appendix 1
PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

Quality Assurance

Site name: Grandpont House, Oxford

Client name: NEA

Type of report: Planning Statement

Prepared by: Ben Pridgeon

Signed BP

Date 26/03/2024

Reviewed by: Jonathan Bainbridge

Signed JB

Date 28/03/2024



1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning Statement is prepared by Bidwells LLP ('Bidwells') on behalf of the Netherhall Education Association ('NEA') to accompany an application for planning permission and listed building consent on land at Grandpont House, Abingdon Road, Oxford ('the site'). The description of the proposed development is as follows:

“Proposed internal and external refurbishment of Grandpont House to include 1) internal and external refurbishment to main Grade II listed building including partial demolition, reinstatement and restoration of original features, rendering and framing; retrofit to building fabric and installation of new ventilation and heating; 2) internal and external refurbishment of existing stable block to create new accommodation, including alterations to roof, formation of mezzanine and new fenestration; 3) Erection of extensions to listed building to create new accommodation and chapel; single story glazed link entrance; boat house and garden room.”*

This Statement provides supporting information to the planning application and identifies the key matters and considerations against which the application should be determined.

Scope of application

- 1.2 The supporting information should be read alongside the assessment of the proposed development, set out in Section 3 of this Statement. We draw distinction between 'application documents/drawings' and 'supporting information' as follows:

DOCUMENT/DRAWING	AUTHOR/REFERENCE
Planning application documents	
Planning application form and certificates	Bidwells
CIL Form	Bidwells
Planning application drawings	
Existing Elevations	GH(00)A15-Existing North Elevation GH(00)A16 – Existing West Elevation GH(00)A17 – Existing Elevation South_East Main House
Existing plans	GH(00)A01 – Existing Site Plan GH(00)A02 – Existing Context Ground Floor Plan GH(00)A03 – Existing Context Mezzanine Floor Plan GH(00)A04 – Existing Context First Floor Plan GH(00)A05 – Existing Context Second Floor Plan GH(00)A06 – Existing Context Roof Plan GH(00)A07 – Existing Ground / Mezzanine Plan GH(00)A08 – Existing First / Second Plan GH(00)A09 – Existing Roof Void / Roof Plan GH(00)A10 – Existing Ground Flood Plan Service

DOCUMENT/DRAWING	AUTHOR/REFERENCE
	Wing GH(00)A11 – Existing Roof Plan Service Wing
Existing sections	GH(00)A12-Existing South Section Elevation GH(00)A13-Existing North Section Elevation GH(00)A14-Existing Section Elevation S3 S4
Alteration plans	GH(10)A01-Alteration Plan Main house - GF_Mezz GH(10)A02-Alteration Plans Main house - FF_SF GH(10)A03-Alteration Plans Main house - Roof_Roof void GH(10)A04-Alteration Plans GF Service wing GH(10)A05-Alteration Plans FF Service wing GH(10)A06-Alteration Roof Plan Service wing
Demolition plan	GH(11)A01 Demolition Ground Floor Plan
Proposed elevations	GH(20)A18-Proposed North Elevation - E01 GH(20)A19-Proposed West Elevation - E02 GH(20)A20-Proposed Elevation - E03 - E04 GH(20)A21-Proposed Boat House Elevations
Proposed plans	GH(00)A00-Proposed Site location plan GH(20)A01-Proposed Site Plan GH(20)A02-Proposed Context Ground Floor GH(20)A03-Proposed Context First floor mezzanine GH(20)A04-Proposed Context First floor GH(20)A05-Proposed Context Second floor GH(20)A06-Proposed Context Roof Plan GH(20)A07-Proposed Plan Main house - GFMezz GH(20)A08-Proposed Plans Main house - FF_SF GH(20)A09-Proposed Plans Main house - Roof void GH(20)A10-Proposed Plans GF Service wing GH(20)A11-Proposed Plans FF Service wing GH(20)A12-Proposed Roof Plan Service wing GH(20)A13-Proposed Plan Boat House
Proposed sections	GH(20)A14-Proposed Section S01 GH(20)A15-Proposed Section S02 _ S05 GH(20)A16-Proposed Section S03 _ S04 GH(20)A17-Proposed Boat House Section 06
Supporting information	
Benefit and Needs Statement	Bidwells
Arboricultural Statement	Barrell Tree Consultancy
Archaeological Assessment	Oxford Archaeology

DOCUMENT/DRAWING	AUTHOR/REFERENCE
Building Survey Reports	Hutton and Rostron
Construction Management Plan	Bidwells
Contamination Survey	Risk Management
Design and Access Statement	Studio Stassano
Ecological Report	Urban Edge Environmental Consulting
Energy and Sustainability Statement	Inhabit Group
Flood Risk Assessment Drainage Strategy SuDS Statement	Water Environment
Heritage Statement	Donald Insall Associates
Landscape Statement	Terra Build
Planning Statement	Bidwells
Structural note	TGZ
Utilities Statement	Inhabit Group

Proposed development

- 1.3 The proposed development is described in Section 6 of the Design and Access Statement and Section 5 of the Heritage Statement.
- 1.4 Overall, the proposals will provide for seventeen (an uplift of six) study rooms and increase the overall GIA of the Main House and Outbuildings by 212.8 sq.m whilst also delivering a 55.4 sq.m boathouse.

Table 1 – Area Schedule – Existing and Proposed GIA (sq.m)

BUILDING	EXISTING	PROPOSED
MAIN HOUSE		
Ground floor	191	168.1
Mezzanine	63.8	63.8
First floor	147.6	147.6
Second floor	89.8	89.8
TOTAL	492.2	469.3
OUTBUILDINGS		
Ground floor	165.4	249.1
First floor		152
TOTAL	165.4	401.1

BUILDING	EXISTING	PROPOSED
BOAT HOUSE		
Ground floor	0	55.4
TOTAL	0	55.4

1.5 The proposed development is summarised as follows.

Principal House

1.6 The main house will be sensitively refurbished with retrofit to increase its environmental performance.

1.7 The southern principal room at first floor level will be restored to its original form with the removal of the chapel and its fittings. A chimneypiece of appropriate late 18th century design will be reinstated.

1.8 The two western rooms at second floor level will be subdivided to create square bedrooms and small bathrooms. Existing joinery and plain plasterwork will be retained. The previous opening between the front and rear rooms at the southern end will be reinstated.

1.9 The front façade of the building is in very poor condition and approximately two thirds of it is clad in plywood. The rear facade is covered with a cementitious render. These will be removed, and the facades will be re-rendered using an insulating lime render on oak lathes.

1.10 The roof slopes are currently covered in Spanish slates, and these will be replaced by new Welsh slates.

1.11 It is proposed to reinstate a more appropriate Georgian floor in the entrance hall, to match that which survives in the under-stair cupboard.

1.12 New windows are proposed in the west facade to replace existing blind openings at ground floor and second floor levels. The new windows would be traditional sashes to match existing windows in this facade, at first floor and second floor levels.

West Wing

1.13 Development to the west wing primarily involves internal works. The advice of the City Council and Historic England has been taken in to account in the final proposals which are a key part of the overall proposed development.

1.14 At first and second floors new bedrooms and bathrooms are created. The west rooms will be retained, and links created through the existing cupboards to shower rooms within the east rooms. The east rooms will be altered by the removal of the later partitions and installation of new ones. It is proposed to retain and reuse this fabric in the proposed arrangement; the cupboard doors and architraves will be relocated to the new partitions.

- 1.15 It is also proposed to install a window in the west wall at first floor where there is currently a blind window. The new window would match the existing one at second floor above.
- 1.16 The roof slopes are currently covered in Spanish slates, and these will be replaced by new Welsh slates. This is an important heritage benefit.
- 1.17 Internal wall insulation will be carefully installed within the west wing. Where Georgian joinery survives, such as the dado rail at first floor (west room) this can be retained and reinstated.

Former Stables and Coach House

- 1.18 The internal fabric of the Stables and Coach House are not considered to be of heritage significance. It is therefore proposed to demolish much of the internal structure and to lower the ground to create a new 'mezzanine' floor of accommodation within retained facades. The roof is to be replaced by a traditional mansard with small projecting dormers. The building will provide communal and educational facilities, dining room, accessible study room and associated plant at ground floor. New study rooms located in timber roof extension to stable block and servant's cottage.

Cottage and cycle shed

- 1.19 The front façade of the existing derelict cottages will be enclosed within a new link structure to connect to a new entrance to the principal house. This link will be formed of a timber framed, glazed corridor with a flat zinc roof. The cottage facade will be retained, repaired and restored. A new roof will be built over the cottages and the chimney stack will be demolished and replaced with a staircase.
- 1.20 The rear wall (northern façade) of the cottages is in poor condition and it is advised that it requires to be rebuilt. The bricks will be salvaged wherever possible and reused in the construction of the new wall. New steel windows are proposed in the existing rear wall, to match those in the rear wall of the stables.
- 1.21 The cycle shed will be demolished to create a lobby to a new chapel and sacristy. The northern wall will be demolished and rebuilt with existing bricks reused.

Coal and wood store

- 1.22 The existing coal and wood store is to be replaced by a new entrance to the building. The new entrance is a simple but high-quality design which celebrates the building and increases legibility. Demolition of a modern toilet extension on the western side of the west wing will be demolished to create the new entrance. This will enable the restoration of the historic plan form of the west wing.

Boat House

- 1.23 A modest timber framed building is proposed within the landscape for the storage of boats and associated equipment in the garden. There have been several buildings in the garden over the
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years and the principle of a new garden building is considered uncontentious being ancillary to the existing use of the main house.

Retrofit and Environmental Enhancement

- 1.24 The proposals include retrofitting measures which will improve the environmental performance of the buildings.
- 1.25 The exterior of the main house and the west wing will be rendered using an insulating lime render, except for the north masonry wall which will be limewashed.
- 1.26 The environmental performance of the timber framed east, and west facades will be improved through the use of breathable insulating material within the timber frame, before the facade is re-rendered. The roof spaces will also be insulated, without harming their original structure.
- 1.27 The proposals also install a heat recovery system which involves installing air extract fans within the roof space of the west wing and using the existing chimney flues for ducting. The roof can accommodate the plant while retaining the Georgian roof structure. Metal grilles of appropriate design will be installed within the fireplaces where this will not harm any existing chimneypieces.
- 1.28 The existing hot water heating system will be retained with new traditional radiators installed in the rooms. No significant new pipe runs are proposed. The existing concrete floors in the outbuildings and the west wing will be replaced with new solid floors with under floor heating.
- 1.29 Air source heat pumps are to be located on the west side of the courtyard, adjacent to but not physically touching, the listed garden wall. These will be housed within a simple, but well designed, timber clad structure. Immediately south of this will be a similar enclosure housing the refuse storage.
- 1.30 Photovoltaic panels are to be installed on the inner slopes of the roof of the main house, facing east and west. These will not be visible from ground level. They will not involve any harmful alterations to the existing roof structure and their impact on significance is negligible.

Need for the proposed development

- 1.31 Grandpont House is a Grade II* listed building used as a centre for educational, cultural and religious formation to people in and outside Oxford since 1959, primarily postgraduate and undergraduate students. Ownership was transferred in 1984 from Trustees of Opus Dei to the Netherhall Educational Association for the management of the estate and house.
- 1.32 Since 1959, Grandpont House has been used to provide formational activities for all generations, based on Christian principles, on which the House was founded. The activities are varied academic, cultural, spiritual retreats, professional seminars, a dad's and lad's club, garden parties for neighbours, book launches, carol singing for the elderly in the area, boat-based leisure activities for young people and families. The premises include meeting rooms, a library, a chapel, and residential facilities.
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- 1.33 The facilities are in desperate need of refurbishment, and because of the growth in the activities referred-to above, expansion is also needed to accommodate the number of people who wish to benefit from what the House has to offer.
- 1.34 The residential facilities provide permanent accommodation for staff, which includes the director, assistant director and secretary of the centre and a Roman Catholic priest, as well as accommodation for postgraduate and, at times, undergraduate students at Oxford's universities. Those whose permanent address is Grandpont House run the various activities taking place in and from the House.
- 1.35 There are two factors which make it essential for Grandpont House to expand and build new facilities. The first is the altered expectations of students, especially postgraduate and older students, who expect accommodation to be en-suite. None of the bedrooms within Grandpont House provide en-suite facilities and it would not be possible to add these facilities to the existing bedrooms without considerably reducing the number of places provided. The new extension would allow Grandpont House to provide en-suite accommodation in keeping with the expectations of students and at the same time to retain those common facilities that are so crucial to the balanced student life and enhancing the overall wellbeing of the students.
- 1.36 A second factor that has driven the application to build the new extension is that just as the total number of students in the university has risen over the years so there is a growing number of students who wish to live in Grandpont.
- 1.37 The provision of accommodation in a setting conducive to personal growth and social engagement is a big part of what the House does. The proposed development will facilitate an expansion in the number of bedrooms (from 11 to 17) and upgrading of the existing ones. As a result of this, the facility will increase the quality of accommodation and will achieve a long-desired goal of making the building wheelchair accessible within the main areas of the house (dining room, library, chapel, seminar rooms and one bedroom). The refurbishment of the existing bedroom facilities, and the addition of six new bedrooms, will contribute to Grandpont House continuing as a financially sustainable project, which means that it will be able to invest more in the preservation of the building and secure its enjoyment for its residents and visitors for years to come.
- 1.38 In recent years, the organisation has invested in boating equipment that has proven to be successful with students and local families who come to the house regularly to use the boats. Netherhall Educational Association is particularly keen that the alterations to the site being proposed should foster a greater appreciation of the site with the introduction of a boathouse to function as an area to store associated items which allow utilisation of the garden space adjacent to the river by students, staff and visitors.
- 1.39 Overall, the proposals provide a significant opportunity to enhance and expand existing facilities for current and future occupants as well as benefit the wider community through the creation of increased housing capacity, an additional boathouse in a tranquil setting and the refurbishment and restoration of the historic site.
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The site

- 1.40 Grandpont House is a large detached Georgian house, statutorily listed as Grade II*, located on the east side of Abingdon Road on the south bank of the River Thames to the southern end of the Central (City and University) Conservation Area in the city of Oxford. The heritage considerations of the listed building are described in detail within a Heritage Statement prepared by Donald Insall.
- 1.41 The Georgian house and the site are remarkable and of significant natural and historic beauty. Owing to its position on the banks of the Thames, the house partly sits on raised land and partly over masonry arches bridging branches of the river. This gives the site a unique character.
- 1.42 The north of the site is contained by a masonry river wall, forms the northern elevation of historic outbuildings. The stables, coach house, and former servant's cottage enclose a carriage yard towards the west of the site, to the current entrance of the property of Abingdon Road. The carriage yard is enclosed on its southern side by a wall, built along the north banks of a stream that crosses the site. It also forms the pedestrian access linking what would have been the rear of the house to Abingdon Road. Today, when visiting the property this arrangement makes the sense of arrival unclear.
- 1.43 The western boundary of the site is defined by a wall extending south along Abingdon Road, which forms part of the Grandpont Causeway. The south-west portion, which was historically the main coach entrance from Abingdon Road, is now part of the Holy Rood church which sits beyond the site.
- 1.44 The eastern part of the site is predominantly occupied by naturalised but unmanaged gardens, defined by the curving of the River Thames. A public footpath partly runs along the gardens and reaches a pedestrian bridge over the Thames, where the principal façade and former main entrance to the house can be seen bridged above a stream.
- 1.45 The property has seen several interventions during the 20th century. Some of these interventions, including the conversion of a principal room into a chapel, alterations to the west wing rooms at first and second floor to provide improved sanitary facilities, subdivision of the west wing ground floor rooms, extensions to the north and west facades of the west wing to provide additional accommodation, the replacement of the west wing roof, and the addition of window openings to the south facade are harmful to the significance of the building.
- 1.46 Externally, the property has suffered from a lack of maintenance. The historic fabric is in poor condition and in need of repair. The east wing facades have lost most of their lime render finish, and the exposed brickwork requires repointing.
- 1.47 More than half of the front timber stud facade is covered in plywood sheeting as a result. The remaining surviving lime render has been unsympathetically repaired, along with other patch repairs throughout.
- 1.48 The east wing's north chimney stack is significantly bowing and needs to be rebuilt. The north facade, originally exposed brickwork, has lost all its lime wash render and upper levels of the property show signs of water damage. The parapet apron, guttering, and flashing all need
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replacement, along with all the latter addition Spanish slates and non-sympathetic rainwater hoppers and downpipes.

- 1.49 Overall, the building does not provide for inclusive access and its energy performance is below acceptable standards and requires thermal improvements and modernisation of services to become more energy efficient.
- 1.50 The gardens are overgrown and would benefit from minor landscaping and facilities to encourage outdoor use of the gardens and watercourses.
- 1.51 In addition to the Grade II* listed building, there are several heritage assets within the immediate vicinity, including the wall to the Holy Roof Roman Catholic Church (Grade II listed), wall of Grandpont House (Grade II listed) and Folly Bridge Causeway (Grade II listed). As noted earlier, Abingdon Road follows the line of Grandpont, a causeway crossing the River Thames. The causeway is a Scheduled Monument and includes Folly Bridge, a Grade II Listed Building.
- 1.52 The application site is in Flood Zone 3.

Pre-application advice

- 1.53 Following previous unsuccessful planning applications, the Applicant has sought detailed pre-application advice from the City Council. The request for pre-application advice (23/00870/LBPAC) was submitted in 2023 and the formal written response was supportive in principle. The detailed advice is shown in Appendix 1. Officers accepted that there was scope to rebuild the outbuilding range to the west of Grandpont House, and in planning terms, the creation of additional accommodation was considered acceptable subject to the matter of flood risk and drainage including proximity to watercourses being addressed. A Flood Risk Assessment is provided to satisfy this requirement.
- 1.54 The proposed repairs to the principal buildings were welcomed, with a request for further detail. This is provided across the drawings, design and access statement, building survey and structural details.
- 1.55 The application seeks to respond to the advice received.

Planning history

- 1.56 Table 22, below, summarises the relevant recent planning history at the site.

Table 2 – Planning history

REFERENCE	PROPOSAL	DECISION
22/00863/LBC	Refurbishment of Grandpont House including rebuilding of the existing outbuilding range to the west of the existing house and works to the boundary wall along Abingdon Road including the formation of a new entrance through that wall	Withdrawn
22/00808/FUL	Refurbishment of Grandpont House and erection of a new	Withdrawn

REFERENCE	PROPOSAL	DECISION
	extension to create additional bedrooms, lift, chapel, dining facilities and meeting rooms	
21/02064/CAT	Works to various trees as specified by Barrell Tree Consultancy in the Central conservation area	No objection
00/00902/NFZ	Erection of 3 storey building with glazed link to Grandpont House to provide 10 study bedrooms, oratory, library, conference room & ancillary facilities. ii) Erection of new single storey service range between Grandpont House and former stable block to provide staff accommodation. (iii) Formation of new vehicular entrance from Abingdon Road to give access to parking area for 10 cars. (iv) Remodel garden through reinstatement of pound and erection of 2 footbridges. Erection of canoe store (Amended plans)	Withdrawn
00/00901/L	i) Demolition of single storey extensions on north & west, removal of floors & chimney stack internally in west wing (leaving stack externally above roof), & former cottages adjoining former stable block. ii) Extension with single storey wing on north connecting to former stable block and glazed link covered way to proposed new building on south. (iii) Internal alterations to main house and stable block to improve accommodation. (iv) New vehicular entrance through arch in boundary wall to Abingdon Road.(Amended plan (Amended plans)	Withdrawn

2.0 Planning Policy

Development plan

- 2.1 National Planning Practice Guidance ('Practice Guidance') states that to the extent that development plan policies are material to an application for planning permission the decision must be taken in accordance with the development plan unless there are material considerations that indicate otherwise. This reflects section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 and section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.
- 2.2 The development plan for Oxford is formed of the Oxford Local Plan 2036 (June 2020) ('OLP'). In relation to the proposed development, the most pertinent policies of the OLP are as follows:
- Policy S1: Presumption in favour of sustainable development, which states the Council will take a positive and proactive approach to planning, reflecting the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework. This means that application which accord with the OLP will be approved without delay
 - Policy H8: Provision of new student accommodation, whilst the use does not reflect that of typical student accommodation, the site provides student accommodation and pastoral care in a similar manner to an Oxford College and therefore it is agreed with the City Council that the proposals should be considered in the context of Policy H8. The policy states that permission will only be granted for student accommodation in specific locations, which includes the city centre. For the purpose of this policy, the site is an existing college site and the proposals are acceptable on that basis.
 - Policy RE1: Sustainable Design and Construction, sets out that permission will only be granted where it is demonstrated that the sustainable design and construction principles have been incorporated into the scheme.
 - Policy RE3: Flood risk management, outlines that development will be directed to areas of lowest flood risk, and that sequential and exception testing will be applied. In Flood Zones 2 and 3, a site specific flood risk assessment is required. It must demonstrate the development will not increase flood risk on site or off site; safe access and egress can be provided; and necessary mitigation measures have been provided.
 - Policy G2: Protection of biodiversity and geodiversity, highlights the importance of bio and geo diversity, it outlines that development resulting in a net loss will not be permitted.
 - Policy G7: Protection of existing Green Infrastructure features, states that permission will not be granted for development that results in the loss of green infrastructure.
 - Policy DH1: High quality design and placemaking, notes that permission will only be granted where proposals are designed to meet the key design objectives and principles for delivering high quality development
 - Policy DH3: Designated heritage assets, sets the policy in respect of listed buildings and other heritage assets. It states 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. It requires that an application for planning permission for development which would or may affect the significance of any designated heritage asset, either directly or by being within its setting, should be accompanied by a heritage assessment that includes a description of the asset and its
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significance and an assessment of the impact of the development proposed on the asset's significance .

- Policy DH4: Archaeological remains, requires applications to include sufficient information to define the character, significance and extent of such deposits so far as reasonably practical .

2.3 When considering compliance with the development plan, the decision maker is required to consider compliance not with individual policies, but with the development plan as a whole. This is established in the key case law of *Cornwall Council v Corbett* [2020] (EWCA Civ 508).

Other statutory requirements

2.4 In addition to the key planning act, any decisions where listed buildings and their settings and/or conservation areas are a factor must address the statutory considerations of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 as well as applying the relevant planning policy.

2.5 Section 66(1) of the Planning (Listed Building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 requires that when making a decision on a planning application for development that affects a listed building or its setting, special regard must be given to the desirability of preserving the building or its setting or any features of special architectural or historic interest which it possesses.

2.6 Section 72(1) relates to conservation areas and sets out that special attention shall be paid to the desirability of preserving or enhancing their character and appearance.

Material considerations

2.7 A material planning consideration is one which is relevant to making the planning decision in question (i.e. whether to grant or refuse an application for planning permission).

National Planning Policy Framework

2.8 The National Planning Policy Framework represents up-to-date government planning policy and is a material consideration that must be considered where it is relevant to a planning application or appeal. This includes the presumption in favour of development found at paragraph 14. If decision takers choose not to follow the National Planning Policy Framework, clear and convincing reasons for doing so are needed.

2.9 Chapter 2 (Achieving sustainable development) (Paragraphs 7-14), set out that the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to sustainable development, in line with economic, social and environmental objectives. The presumption of sustainable development means that proposals that accord with an up-to-date development plan should be approved without delay.

2.10 Chapter 4 (Decision making) (Paragraphs 38 – 59), notes that local planning authorities should approach decisions on proposed development in a positive and creative way. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Decisions on applications should be made as quickly as possible, and within statutory timescales unless a longer period has been agreed by the applicant in writing.

- 2.11 Chapter 16 (Conserving and enhancing the historic environment) (Paragraphs 195-214), requires that local planning authorities should identify and assess the particular significance of any heritage asset that may be affected by a proposal (including by development affecting the setting of a heritage asset) taking account of the available evidence and any necessary expertise. This should be considered when considering the impact of a proposal on a heritage asset, to avoid or minimise any conflict between the heritage asset's conservation and any aspect of the proposal.
- 2.12 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.
- 2.13 Overall, the policies of the Oxford Local Plan are consistent with the Framework's requirements.

Emerging Local Plan

- 2.14 Oxford City Council has published the proposed submission draft of the emerging Oxford Local Plan 2040. Consultation concluded on 05 January 2024. Given that the emerging Plan has not been submitted to independent examination and is not especially advanced in its progress to adoption, the policies contained within it can be afforded limited weight at the current time.
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3.0 Planning Assessment

Principle of development

- 3.1 As stated in pre-application response 23/00870/LBPAC, Policy H8 is the key policy against which the proposed development would be assessed. Policy H8 states that planning permission will only be granted for student accommodation within specific locations, which includes the city centre. Student accommodation must also be managed in a way which complies with the policy, this includes restricting occupation to full-time students enrolled in courses of one academic year or more and subject to a general management regime that has been agreed with the City Council.
- 3.2 In accordance with Policy H8, the site is akin to a college site and the proposals were considered acceptable on that basis – detailed within the pre-application response. Therefore, the principle of development at the site is acceptable. The creation of seven new study rooms will play a small part in relieving pressure on Oxford's housing market arising from the city's student population. It does so in a way that provides societal benefit through the creation of a learning environment which fosters well-rounded outlook and behaviours.
- 3.3 In addition, it is considered that there are substantial in principle benefits associated with the project.
- The sensitive retrofit of a Grade II* listed Georgian heritage asset directly reflects the requirements of Policy RE1 and the corporate aspiration of the Council to respond to the Climate Emergency.
 - The careful refurbishment and enhancement of the Grade II* listed Georgian heritage asset will ensure a long term optimal viable use for the building, enabling it to be enjoyed as part of Oxford's unique heritage context for years to come.

Energy and sustainability

- 3.4 Local Plan Policy RE1 states: *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*
- 3.5 It goes further, requiring that Energy Statements are provided for all new-build residential developments and new-build non-residential schemes over 1,000 sq.m
- 3.6 Whilst at an early stage and of very little weight, the draft Local Plan 2024 states at Policy R3 *The Council will support retrofit measures to existing buildings where they secure energy efficiency improvements or adaptation to changing climate. The expectation is that the interventions are selected in accordance with the steps of the energy hierarchy (reduce energy use, use energy efficiently, source energy renewably) as set out in Policy R1. A whole building approach will be*
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taken to the retrofitting of the building, including heritage assets, whereby applications will demonstrate how the principles a) to d) have been embedded in the design rationale

- 3.7 Paragraph 164 of the NPPF states: *In determining planning applications, local planning authorities should give significant weight to the need to support energy efficiency and low carbon heating improvements to existing buildings, both domestic and non-domestic (including through installation of heat pumps and solar panels where these do not already benefit from permitted development rights). Where the proposals would affect conservation areas, listed buildings or other relevant designated heritage assets, local planning authorities should also apply the policies set out in chapter 16 of this Framework.*
- 3.8 Whilst not a strict validation requirement for this proposal, a detailed Sustainability Strategy is submitted in the form of the following:
- Energy and Sustainability Statement
 - Utilities Statement
 - Temperature Control Strategy
 - Ventilation Strategy.
- 3.9 At their heart, the proposals seek to sensitively upgrade the performance of the existing building and in respect of new-build elements adopt a fabric first approach to improve thermal performance. This is wholly in accordance with the development plan and NPPF and should be given significant weight.
- 3.10 In summary:
- The new build elements, particularly within the proposed area of additional extension, will target U values significantly better than that of latest Part L requirements, and it is proposed to provide additional internal insulation for walls and double-glazed windows.
 - The existing east and west timber stud wall façade on the Main House, will have insulation added between studs, while the masonry walls will have insulation added internally.
 - Secondary glazing will be added to all existing windows.
 - A natural ventilation strategy via openable windows, doors, rooflights, is the preferred means of ventilation throughout the existing building. The existing chimney stacks will be utilised for fresh air supply and extract; with the addition of fans to help draw the air as required.
 - A mixed mode strategy incorporating Mechanical ventilation with Heat recovery is proposed for the new bedrooms within the proposed area of additional extension. This allows for improved air quality and user control. The positioning of air intakes and outlets will be carefully considered to conserve the historical importance of facades, as well as maintaining best practise design in relation to air quality.
 - Space heating is to be provided by efficient air source heat pumps. New radiators are proposed for the existing buildings, while underfloor heating is proposed for the new build element.
 - Domestic Hot Water is also to be provided by an air source heat pump, combined with heat exchanger and thermal store located within the allocated plant space.
 - Monocrystalline PV panels are proposed for the hidden valley roof areas of the main house. It is estimated that a maximum of 2450 kWh annually will be generated by the roof area.
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Flood risk

- 3.11 The 0.5ha site and its existing development lies within Flood Zone 3 and is at risk of flood.
- 3.12 Paragraph 165 of the NPPF states: *Inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided by directing development away from areas at highest risk (whether existing or future). Where development is necessary in such areas, the development should be made safe for its lifetime without increasing flood risk elsewhere.*
- 3.13 The Local Plan notes at Policy RE3: *Planning permission will not be granted for development in Flood zone 3b except where it is for water-compatible uses or essential infrastructure; or where it is on previously developed land and it will represent an improvement for the existing situation in terms of flood risk . All of the following criteria must be met: a) it will not lead to a net increase in the built footprint of the existing building and where possible lead to a decrease; and b) it will not lead to a reduction in flood storage (through the use of flood compensation measures) and where possible increase flood storage; and c) it will not lead to an increased risk of flooding elsewhere; and d) it will not put any future occupants of the development at risk*
- 3.14 This policy position recognises the unique challenges of Oxford which include certain areas of existing development being located within areas that flood – often for historic reasons.
- 3.15 The proposed development relates to an existing student-residential use. Consequently, there are no available sites that would be sequentially acceptable for the development in flood risk terms and it is concluded that a sequential approach to development has been applied. Nevertheless, the proposals have been the subject of extensive consultation with the Environment Agency (EA) and City Council and is accompanied by a detailed Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) which should be read in full.
- 3.16 The FRA sets out that the latest EA hydraulic model shows the grounds of the house, and the FRA concludes the proposed development is located on land that will not flood in the design 100-year return period flood event plus 26% climate change allowance. However, finished floor levels will be set to match the existing floor level in Grandpont House, and therefore flood resistant construction is required. Therefore, flood resistance will be designed to a minimum level of 56.59m AOD, incorporating a 300mm freeboard into the design.
- 3.17 The refurbishment and extension to the main property will not increase the built footprint in the functional floodplain but will improve the existing situation by facilitating the relocation of sleeping accommodation to the higher part of the site and close to the dry access escape route away from the site. It is accepted that the proposed boathouse may be located within the functional floodplain as defined in the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. However, as water compatible development there is no in-principle objection to its position within Flood Zone 3b.
- 3.18 The proposed boathouse will be a raised structure with ground floor levels above the modelled design flood water level of 56.29m AOD. This will allow water to flow freely underneath the structure in the event of a flood, and not adversely impact flooding elsewhere. Surface water will be collected and attenuated via a green roof on the proposed boathouse and discharged to an existing pond, which will be sensitively regraded to accommodate the additional 0.6 m³ of volume required.
-

- 3.19 Excess flood storage will be provided in the expanded ecological pond, and surface water runoff rates will be controlled, in accordance with local policy, as set out in the FRA.
- 3.20 The FRA also concludes through a detailed hydraulic model comparing pre and post development scenarios, that there is no increase in flood risk elsewhere.
- 3.21 Overall, subject to the measures included within the design and as described in detail within the FRA, the proposed development will be safe, without increasing the risk of flooding elsewhere.
- 3.22 Accordingly, the requirements of the NPPF and Policy RE3 are met.

Heritage

- 3.23 The NPPF directs at paragraph 200 that when 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.
- 3.24 Paragraph 205 notes 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.
- 3.25 Paragraph 208 states 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.
- 3.26 Local Plan Policy DH3 reflects the NPPF's requirements. It also goes further by positively stating 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
- 3.27 A detailed assessment of heritage impact has been undertaken by Donald Insall Heritage Consultants and should be read in full.
- 3.28 The listed building makes a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the Central (City and University) Conservation Area. The enhancements to the listed building provide an optimum viable use for the building and enhance that character and appearance. The views of the building from the river and from Abingdon Road will be greatly improved by the repair of the rendered front facade and by the high quality new buildings within the courtyard. The assessment concludes that the proposed development will overall cause a low level of less than substantial harm to parts of the building, including the following:
- Demolition of the extensions on the north side of the house
 - Sub-division of the rear rooms at second floor level in the main house
 - Internal alterations to the west wing
-

- 3.29 The works to the outbuildings will not result in harm to the significance of the out-buildings, or the setting of the house. The demolition of the modern roof does not result in the loss of any historic fabric and the proposed mansard roof will be of an appropriate form of extension. The new windows on the north wall will improve its appearance. The reinstatement of the gable is a significant heritage benefit.
- 3.30 The proposed boat house is modest in size, of high design quality, and set well away from the house so that it will not have a harmful impact on the significance of the house or its setting. Neither will it harm to setting of the listed garden wall and the scheduled monument to the west.
- 3.31 Overall, the scheme offers several heritage benefits which far outweigh that harm identified. These include the following:
- Improving the quality of accommodation and giving the building a new lease of life for the future – thereby securing its optimum viable use
 - Extending the building in a sensitive manner, which respects its significance, with high quality modern architecture
 - Repair of the facades including the render on the east and south facades
 - Addition of a traditional mansard roof on the out-buildings and the reinstatement of the missing gable
 - Recovering the roof slopes with Welsh slate
 - Repair of the facades of the derelict cottages
 - Removal of unsightly modern pipework from the exterior
 - Restoration of the first floor south principal room, following the removal of the chapel
 - Installation of appropriate chimneypieces where these are missing
 - Improvements to the setting of the building by enhancing the appearance of the courtyard
 - Improvement of the environmental performance of the building
 - Addition of solar panels on the inner slopes of the roof of the main house
 - Improvements to the setting of the building by enhancing the garden to improve its biodiversity.
- 3.32 As set out in the Heritage Statement the overall scheme generates less than substantial harm at the lower end of the scale. Accordingly, and as required by the NPPF, this harm should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal. The public benefits of the proposed development are outlined in detail within the Benefit and Need Statement (and summarised below) Taken individually and cumulatively the benefits are significant and should be afforded considerable weight in determining this planning application.

Archaeology

- 3.33 The proposed development has the potential to impact upon known and previously unidentified archaeological remains within the site. It is also noted that the installation of a new sewer line is likely to require Scheduled Monument Consent in respect of the Grandpont Causeway. Any additional consents will be sought from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport prior to commencement of development.
-

- 3.34 A detailed Archaeological Desk Based Assessment accompanies the application, given the archaeological sensitivity of the site it is likely that the results of an trial trench evaluation will be required. The results of the evaluation, which would be carried out following the grant of planning permission, but prior to development commencing, would be used to clarify the nature, significance, and survival of any archaeological remains within the site and would be used to inform a suitable mitigation strategy.
- 3.35 The scope of any further archaeological works will be agreed with the Oxford City Archaeologist prior to commencement.

Ecology and biodiversity

- 3.36 A Preliminary Ecological Assessment, including Bat Roost Assessment and Badger Survey is provided alongside the application. As this document was produced in 2022, an verification survey and updated technical note (March 2024) is also provided.
- 3.37 The documentation concludes that the site is partly developed land and includes a mosaic of woodland, scattered trees and scrub, introduced shrub, tall ruderal, amenity grassland, running water, buildings and bare ground.
- 3.38 The character and condition of habitats present within the survey area is broadly unchanged since 2022, with only minor variations in structure or composition. Therefore, the conclusions made in the 2022 PEA and Protected Species Surveys are valid and remain unchanged.
- 3.39 The majority of land proposed for development is of low ecological value. However, significant constraints to development were identified including priority habitats, and the potential presence of nesting birds, badger, roosting bats and reptiles. No further surveys are required prior to submitting a planning application, but proportionate and effective mitigation is recommended to enable offences under the relevant legislation to be avoided, along with recommendations for ecological enhancement.
- 3.40 This includes:
- Seeking licences from Natural England in respect of sett closure prior to development commencing
 - Updating roosting bat surveys if development is not commenced by May 2025
 - Following good practice in respect of any works impacting nesting bird, and undertaking any such works in accordance with the findings of the survey
 - Undertaking any vegetation clearance during the active reptile season of March/April to September/October
 - Protecting retained habitat during construction works
 - Tree protection
 - Minimisation of external lighting during works
 - Providing small access gaps in any boundary treatment
 - Woodland management
 - Reinstatement of the historic pond (proposed as part of the development)
-

- Utilising plants and species known to encourage bats with food and roosting opportunities
- Creation of habitat piles
- Installation of bird and bat boxes

- 3.41 The ecological mitigation will be implemented in full in accordance with Local Plan policy.
- 3.42 A tree survey and report has been prepared for the planning application and it is confirmed that no trees will be removed as a result of the proposed development.
- 3.43 Regarding precautionary areas, there is a small area of encroachment which will be managed by special precautions as detailed within the arboricultural impact assessment.
- 3.44 To enhance the local character, a comprehensive new planting scheme has been prepared.
- 3.45 As is a matter of course, there is potential for construction activity to adversely affect retained trees. Therefore tree protection will be implemented in accordance with British Standards to protect the retained trees as outlined within the arboricultural method statement.
- 3.46 Therefore, the development proposal will have no detrimental impact on the contribution of trees to local character and the proposed development would not cause an unacceptable or adverse impact on the character and appearance of the area from an arboricultural perspective.

Public benefits

- 3.47 A Benefit and Need Statement accompanies the planning application.
- 3.48 At its heart, the proposed development will retain refurbish and sensitively retrofit a significant Grade II* Georgian property. As directed by the NPPF, this is a benefit of significant weight.
- 3.49 In addition, it is concluded that the proposed works will result in the following planning benefit.

Environmental benefits

- 3.50 The proposed works include fabric upgrades that would significantly enhance the energy efficiency and environmental performance of Grandpont House and associated buildings. As set out in the Energy Statement, the works will collectively reduce carbon consumption across the site. This represents an important public benefit by improving the sustainability of significant buildings within the city of Oxford as well as contributing to the City Council's ambition of becoming a carbon net zero city by 2040.
- 3.51 The addition of solar panels on the roof will contribute to the improvements to the environmental performance of the building. Because of the roof structure, these panels will not be seen from the ground. Other measures include provision of under floor heating, air source heat pumps, upgrades to glazing and enhanced fabric to the existing and proposed buildings and structures which would facilitate a 'fabric first' approach to energy and environmental sustainability.
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- 3.52 The site is constrained by river channels and is land that is liable to flood. The proposed development will mitigate and manage flood risk more satisfactorily within the site. The proposed boat house has been sensitively designed to have no impact on the flood risk of the area but encourage access to the river for recreational purposes.

Social benefits

- 3.53 The works will significantly improve the living, learning and working environments the students of Oxford's universities. Grandpont House aims to support students, undergraduate and postgraduate who are involved in academic, cultural, outreach and religious activities and therefore bolster the wider benefits to society that come along with advancements in education, scholarship and research.
- 3.54 The combination of enhanced facilities within Grandpont House that will directly improve the well-being of its residents, with the addition of the boathouse to allow easier access to the river, provides immediate social benefits to those directly and indirectly affected by the proposal. As well as the provision of a larger chapel which can facilitate more attendees.
- 3.55 Through its 65-year modern history, Grandpont House has provided cultural and spiritual activities for students and others in Oxford and from further afield. These proposals will allow the future proof of these important social contributions to the Oxford community.

Heritage benefits

- 3.56 The proposals seek to sensitively conserve and enhance the heritage asset on the site and improve its setting and accessibility. In particular, the refurbishment to Grandpont House will help to secure the long-term future of the heritage asset. In turn, maintaining the significant contribution the Grade II* building has to the character and appearance of the Central (City and University) Conservation Area.
- 3.57 As detailed in the Heritage Statement, the proposals would preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building and its setting and would enhance the character and appearance of the Conservation Area.

Energy and sustainability

- 3.58 Grandpont House is in poor condition in terms of environmental performance and living standards. The alterations are necessary for updating the property to suit its current use, and as such, will ensure its continued maintenance and a sustained conservation. Oxford City Council Heritage and Energy Efficiency Tool (HEET) has been consulted for guidance, as well as current Building Regulations. Whilst it is anticipated that the development will be exempt from Building Regulations due to its historic status, the client is committed to adapting the latest Building Regulations Part L requirements, for all existing, proposed new and upgraded thermal elements, where possible.
- 3.59 The new build elements will target U values significantly better than that of latest Part L requirements, including double glazed windows, secondary glazing, whilst the upgraded elements will strive to meet the Part L standards for upgraded elements, where possible.
-

- 3.60 Natural ventilation via openable windows, doors, rooflights, is the preferred means of ventilation throughout the existing building. A mixed mode strategy incorporating mechanical ventilation with heat recovery is proposed for the new bedrooms within the proposed area of additional extension. This allows for improved air quality within the living spaces. Space heating and domestic hot water is to be provided by highly efficient air source heat pumps, which are to be located in the service yard near to the refuse store.
- 3.61 Air source Heat pumps will significantly reduce direct greenhouse gas emissions by eliminating the use of gas boilers. Monocrystalline PV panels are proposed for the hidden valley roof areas of the main house. The product has less shading and lower resistive loss, and it is estimated that a maximum of 2450 kWh will be generated annually by the roof area.
- 3.62 The SUDS concept for the site will be carefully to provide significant betterment post-construction for the lifetime of the development. Rainwater harvesting via water butts and planters is also proposed to help with rainwater attenuation, which in turn can be used for irrigation.
- 3.63 All materials will be selected with environmental impact considered alongside functionality, aesthetics and durability. The procurement of materials will be sourced in a responsible way and have a low embodied impact over their life. The existing building structure and envelope will be largely re-used, with some considerate rearrangement of internal spaces for the insertion of modern facilities, such as ensuite bathrooms, foyer, and a boathouse.
- 3.64 Overall, the proposed development will significantly improve the environmental performance of the site, providing a better functioning, more comfortable and energy efficient space for the occupant, and at the same time maximising sustainable resources, whilst minimising pollution and
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4.0 Conclusion

- 4.1 The proposed development at the Grade II* Listed Grandpont House will result in the expansion and enhancement of existing facilities in an accessible and sustainable location and seek to promote the outreach of the organisation attracting in principle support of the development plan.
- 4.2 The proposed development provides an optimum viable use for the Grade II* building in the long term and are considered overall to preserve the special architectural and historic interest of the listed building and its setting.
- 4.3 The listed building makes a significant contribution to the character and appearance of the Central (City and University) Conservation Area and therefore the enhancements to the listed building will also enhance that character and appearance. The statutory duty imposed by Sections 16, 66 and 72 (l) of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990 are therefore achieved.
- 4.4 It is recognised that the proposals do involve some works which could be considered to cause a low level of 'less than substantial harm' in accordance with the terminology of the NPPF. The NPPF makes it clear that great weight should be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, irrespective of whether the harm amounts to substantial harm, total loss or less than substantial harm to its significance. Paragraph 208 of the NPPF states that any less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset should be weighed against the public benefits of the proposal.
- 4.5 It is considered that in this case, the low level of 'less than substantial' harm to the listed building resulting from the proposals would be far outweighed by the public benefits set out within this statement.
- 4.6 There are no significant adverse planning or environmental issues associated with the proposed development which cannot be adequately mitigated.
- 4.7 The proposed development will actively promote the three elements of sustainable development as defined by the NPPF and is in accordance with development plan when read as a whole.
- 4.8 We therefore request that the applications for planning permission and listed building consent be approved without delay.
-

APPENDIX 1

PRE-APPLICATION ADVICE

Planning Services

Planning

www.oxford.gov.uk

To contact us

Quote this reference :

23/00870/LBPAC

E: planning@oxford.gov.uk

DD: 01865 249811

Postpoint: SAC 3.1A



On Behalf Of: Netherhall Education Association
(NEA)
C/o Jonathan Bainbridge
Bidwells LLP
Seacourt Tower
West Way
Oxford
OX2 0JJ

Date: 3rd October 2023
My ref: 23/00870/LBPAC
Please ask for: Gill Butter
Direct Dial: 01865 529754

Dear Sir/Madam

APPLICATION: 23/00870/LBPAC

PROPOSAL: Conversion of existing stable block to create accommodations. Formation of mezzanine. Alteration to roof. Formation of dormers to north and south elevation. Alteration to fenestration. Erection of extension. Installations of ventilation and heating. Erection of single story glazed link extension, boat house and garden room. Reinstatement and restoration of original features, rendering and framing. Alteration to outbuildings. Alteration to landscaping

AT: Grandpont House Abingdon Road Oxford

FOR: Netherhall Education Association (NEA)

Thank you for your letter and plans received on 14th April 2023 which seeks an informal opinion on the above-mentioned development at Grandpont House.

Proposal

We understand from the application form that you are seeking an informal opinion regarding the

- Alteration and conversion of the range of outbuildings that lie to the west side of the principal house, including the rebuilding of a previously demolished "cottage";
- The alteration and refurbishment of Grandpont House, including the addition of a chapel and new entrance hall to the north and west of the house, internal alterations including the provision of additional bathrooms, repair of external facades and potential upgrading of building fabric.
- The construction of a new building in the gardens to the west of Grandpont House to function as a boathouse/store and garden room.

Policy considerations

All of these documents can be viewed online and I recommend that you view these at the following address:



To sign up to receive news from Oxford City Council straight to your inbox scan the QR code



https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/740441/National_Planning_Policy_Framework_web_accessible_version.pdf

http://www.oxford.gov.uk/PageRender/decP/Planning_Policy_occw.htm

Legislation:

The Planning (Listed building and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

Planning Policies:

The National Planning Policy Framework, including sections 12;

Oxford's Adopted Local Plan 2036

Including policies;

DH1; DH3; DH4; H8: RE1; RE3; RE4; G2; G7; G8 and M1.

Relevant Site History

00/00901/L - i) Demolition of single storey extensions on north & west, removal of floors & chimney stack internally in west wing (leaving stack externally above roof), & former cottages adjoining former stable block. ii) Extension with single storey wing on north connecting to former stable block and glazed link covered way to proposed new building on south. (iii) Internal alterations to main house and stable block to improve accommodation. (iv) New vehicular entrance through arch in boundary wall to Abingdon Road.(Amended plan (Amended plans). WDN 13th February 2008.

00/00902/NFZ - i) Erection of 3 storey building with glazed link to Grantpoint House to provide 10 study bedrooms, oratory, library, conference room & ancillary facilities. ii) Erection of new single storey service range between Grandpont House and former stable block to provide staff accommodation. (iii) Formation of new vehicular entrance from Abingdon Road to give access to parking area for 10 cars. (iv) Remodel garden through reinstatement of pound and erection of 2 footbridges. Erection of canoe store.(Amended plans). WDN 13th February 2008.

51/02030/A_H - Change of use of 3 rooms to school. PER 27th November 1951.

58/00759/D_H - Change of use from house to student hostel and staff accommodation. Erection of Chapel in stable block and building on land adjoining. PER 9th September 1958.

58/00766/D_H - Demolition of existing house and building and redevelopment. REF 11th November 1958.

58/07058/A_H - Change of use from store and garage and dwelling house to administrative office and staff accommodation. REF 30th June 1958.

76/00008/A_H - Change of use from stables to Boys' Club. PER 3rd March 1976.

77/00261/A_H - Change of use and alterations to form Boys' Club. PER 5th May 1977.

95/00346/CAT - Prune trees in the Central Conservation Area. RNO 10th July 1995.

95/00518/P - Replace length of fencing. PNR 1st June 1995.

96/00286/BH - Application to determine whether prior approval is required for siting and design of ComTel cabinets.. 2PA 20th March 1996.

97/01655/L - Listed Building Consent to demolish rear block & range along North backwater, outbuilding & riverside walls along South backwater. 2 new access openings. Alterations to Grandpont House & staircase link to new building. (Scheme 1). REF 11th May 1999.

97/01656/NFH - Erection of 2 & 3 storey buildings linked to Grandpont House to provide 12 study bedrooms, Chapel, lecture room, common room & ancillary facilities with reconstruction of south backwalks, riverside wall, railings & steps.. REF 11th May 1999.

97/01657/L - Demolish 1 storey service buildings along north & outbuildings & walls etc along southern back water. 2 access openings. Alterations to Grandpont House including reconstruction of South & West facades of 3 storey rear block (Scheme 2). REF 11th May 1999.

97/01658/NFH - Part 3/part 4 storey building linked to Grandpont House for 12 study beds, Chapel, lecture room, common room & facilities. Entrance & footbridge over backwater. Closure of access. New vehicular access to garage (5 spaces). (Scheme 2). REF 11th May 1999.

98/01820/L - Listed Building consent to reinstate the east and south elevations.. PER 25th March 1999.

21/02064/CAT - Works to various trees as specified by Barrell Tree Consultancy in the Central conservation area.. RNO 18th August 2021.

22/00808/FUL - Refurbishment of Grandpont House (listed Grade II_) and erection of a new extension to create additional bedrooms, lift, chapel, dining facilities and meeting rooms. WDN 17th August 2022.

22/00863/LBC - Refurbishment of Grandpont House including rebuilding of the existing outbuilding range to the west of the existing house and works to the boundary wall along Abingdon Road including the formation of a new entrance through that wall.. WDN 1st September 2022.

23/00372/LBC - Repair and refurbishment of existing wall on western boundary of Grandpont House.. PER 25th August 2023.

Officer Assessment

Heritage:

Alteration of outbuildings, rebuilding of former cottage:

The outbuildings lie to the west of Grandpont House and are considered to have been built as stables and a coach house for the house. They are of some architectural and historical interest and although not independently listed they are of some significance. The eastern end of the range has been almost completely demolished, with a back wall and vestiges of internal features surviving in part. The remainder survives but has been subject to alterations during the C20 and early C21.

The significance of the building derives much from its function as a range of service buildings for Grandpont House and its modest architectural language, size and form reinforces that relationship. Although the submitted description of the proposed works to the outbuildings is for conversion of the surviving building range in reality the works would be almost if not total demolition of the standing

building and replacement with a new building on a similar footprint to the existing incorporating a rebuilt cottage and linked to extensions to the north and west of Grandpont House.

Officers consider that the effective demolition of the surviving building range would cause substantial harm to the significance of this building and a level of less than substantial harm as a result of the loss of its surviving service buildings to the significance of Grandpont House. However the significance of the outbuildings is relatively modest and the contribution to the overall significance of Grandpont House small. The practicality of upgrading the relatively poor quality building fabric of the outbuildings and providing the buildings with a functional use for the foreseeable future would seem to be very limited if at all possible and therefore there would seem to be some justification for the proposal as submitted which might be bolstered by the intention to carry out long overdue repairs to Grandpont House. The western end of the present outbuilding range sits adjacent to the rubble stone wall that marks the boundary of the historic Grandpont Causeway, a scheduled Ancient Monument (archaeological advice to follow under separate cover). This relationship is important and again the subservience of the outbuildings, their relatively modest architectural language is important and contributes to the setting of the listed building, the listed boundary wall and additionally to the character and appearance of the Central Conservation Area in which they sit. The proposal, although intentionally kept low in terms of its overall height would by virtue of the inclusion of a dormer window and the inevitable expression of the buildings form/roof profile appear as a more dominant element in this group of buildings/structures than the present building. These changes would impact on the historical hierarchy of buildings which would in term cause harm to both the character and appearance of the conservation area, the setting of the listed buildings. Officers consider that this harm would be less than substantial and at the low end of this category. However it is also considered that it would be possible to consider a less aggressive or dominating architectural language, architectural elements and roof profile that might substantially mitigate this low level of less than substantial harm and that this should be considered and included in any supporting documents describing design evolution that may be submitted in support of formal applications for such proposed development.

Alterations and extensions to Grandpont House:

The extensive proposals to repair the external fabric of Grandpont House is welcomed. All works should be the basis of knowledge and understanding, so informed decisions and this will require some further investigation prior to agreement of detailed methods and materials. It is proposed to “reopen” and reinstate a number of windows in the facades of the house and whilst this has clearly been based upon best knowledge thus far, further evidence may be required to support such proposals.

Internally there are a number of proposed alterations. Those to provide bathrooms, primarily in upper floors of the western building range would be, in principle supported, again subject to further detail and investigation to establish the most appropriate routes for services. The proposed alteration to the ground floor of the northern rear range which comprises a significant alteration to plan form are considered to be too harmful to be supported and an alternative design to create connection through to the rear extension/new entrance would be required if this is to have any chance of support. This variation would also seek a different arrangement for connection to the northern extension, chapel building. In principle this extension subject to detailed design and a more appropriate connection through to the existing house would be supported as it would free up principal rooms in the house for uses more consistent with the original functions of the house whilst enabling a purpose designed space to function as a chapel. All alterations that are considered to be, in principle beneficial to ensuring the appropriate custodianship of the listed building.

The pre-application offered limited information in terms of intended fabric upgrading and this would need to be carefully considered with appropriate detail included in support of a listed building consent application for such works.

Boat Store and Garden Room:

The western garden of Grandpont House, while seeming to be the obvious place for an additional building is fraught with constraints. All these have been rehearsed through previous engagement with the local planning authority and the issues remain and if anything have become more constrained through greater understanding and appreciation and consequent changes in legislation.

In terms of heritage, the setting of listed buildings (Grandpont House and the boundary wall) and the character and appearance of the conservation area, the current proposal is more modest than previous ambitions which is a good start. However there are still issues in terms of the practicality of building in such a site with all the multi-layered constraints. We discussed when we met on site the possibility of considering a method of construction that would allow smaller elements to be carried into the site with more limited intrusion by mechanical plant. This would seem to be the most appropriate way to reconsider a building, probably even smaller than that currently being proposed but still of sufficient size to function at the very minimum as a boat store – with perhaps a light verandah to be able to be used in conjunction with the garden. A modern design approach is considered to be entirely appropriate in the context of Grandpont House and exploring how this might be achieved with the “lightest of touches” is really the challenge to be resolved if this is to be able to be supported and meet all the policy demands.

Archaeology:

Potential impacts for Archaeology:

The site is located within the Thames floodplain to the south of the historic (Middle Saxon?) crossing point at Folly Bridge. The site has general potential for prehistoric activity associated with the fording point and the utilisation of the islets formed by the braided channels of the prehistoric

Thames before channel rationalisation and alluviation took place in the Iron Age. There is potential for activity relating to late-Saxon and medieval water management relating to the historic channels running through the site shown on historic maps (and related waterlogged deposits).

The western boundary of the site adjoins the scheduled section of the Grandpont causeway, a raised causeway constructed in the eleventh century as a crossing over the River Thames. The medieval causeway is buried beneath the modern Abingdon Road (A4144) and is encased within later phases of widening and revetting. Since its creation in the eleventh century the causeway has been widened from c 4m to its modern width of 12.5m. The desk-based assessment notes that the site has “the potential to contain archaeological remains associated with the construction and development of Grandpont. Such remains if present could be of high (national) heritage significance”.

Historic map evidence shows occupation activity in this area dating back to the early 18th century.

Structures are shown in the vicinity on a map of 1726. Grandpont House and the wall along Abingdon Road date from c.1785, although the Donal Insall report (2023) notes that ‘There is much about the west wing and the north wall of the east wing to suggest they may be the core of an older building (2.1.1) and notes that the west wing could be 17th century in date (3.2).

The service buildings along the north boundary (stables and coach house, two converted servants cottages, all brick built) are assessed as of early 19th century date by the Insalls Report (3.3) with the base of the northern perimeter wall being of possible 18th century date. The site also has potential to preserve elements of the 18th and 19th century garden schemes of Grandpont House (traces of paths, channels and structures).

Impacts and further requirements for evaluation and recording

By 1851 more than 27 per cent of the total employed population were engaged in domestic service (VCH) and yet much of the physical evidence for this servant class (in terms of poor housing) has been slowly demolished over the last hundred years leaving few examples in the central area. The proposed retention of the servants’ quarters is therefore welcome.

Regarding the works to the 19th century service buildings, 18th century boundary walls and 17th/18th century west wing my advice would remain as per the previous application, that, subject to the views of the Conservation Officer, a condition for Level III recording and watching brief during substantial fabric interventions and ground works would be appropriate.

With regards to the proposed garden buildings, pond/swamp restoration and unspecified service and SUDS impacts I would remain of the view that targeted evaluation trenching and archaeological borehole work should be undertaken pre-determination to more fully characterise the nature of the archaeology in this location.

Ecological and biodiversity considerations (to follow).

Flooding and drainage implications:

The general principle of the approach taken to manage flood risk is acceptable, however there is one slight issue in that since the previous pre-app was undertaken, the Environment Agency have updated the Thames in Oxford Flood Model. In fact it has been updated twice since, in 2016 (released 2017), and I believe the 2018 model data has recently been released.

The flood risk assessment to be submitted with the application should obtain the latest model data from the EA, and demonstrate using this that the site is not within Flood zone 3b. These levels should also be used for calculations re: flood compensation as per the points below. The updated EA model contains more data than the 2014 model – so hopefully this should mean less detailed work will be needed to demonstrate the site is outside flood zone 3b.

It would also be recommended to seek an updated pre-app with the EA using the most recent model data to seek their approval.

Assuming the above be demonstrated, then then the other advice given in pre-app responses from both Oxford City Council and the EA would still apply. In particular:

- There should be no increase in flood risk on site – i.e. floor levels should be raised about the 1 in 100 + 35% climate change uplift modelled flood level etc.
- There should be no increase in flood risk off site – flood compensation should be provided. Ideally this will be level for level where possible, but if this is not feasible, Oxford City Council have accepted floodable voids in the past, if in line with EA guidance. (Attached to covering e-mail).
- Safe access and egress should be demonstrated, as per DEFRA/EA criteria
- Flood resilience and resistance measures should be included in the design, as per DEFRA/EA and DCLG guidance, as linked to below:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/flood-risk-assessment-in-flood-zones-2-and-3#extra-flood-resistance-and-resilience-measures>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/flood-resilient-construction-of-new-buildings>

- Structures affecting the watercourse (as referred to in the EA pre-app) would still fall within 3b, therefore would be subject to objections
- A sustainable drainage strategy should be included in order to manage surface water from the new development. Requirements can be found in Oxford City Council SuDS Design Guide, which is available at www.oxford.gov.uk/floodriskforplanning

Planning considerations:

Principle of Development

In terms of the principle of the development in planning terms, the proposals relate to an intensification of an existing use. Whilst the applicant operates differently from a typical Oxford University College the site provides student accommodation and pastoral care in a similar manner to an Oxford College. On this basis the proposals should be considered in the context of Policy H8 of the Oxford Local Plan (2036).

Policy H8 states that planning permission will only be granted for student accommodation specific locations, which includes the city centre. Student accommodation must also be managed in a way which complies with the policy; this includes restricting occupation to full- time students enrolled in courses of one academic year or more and subject to a general management regime that has been agreed with the City Council that will be implemented on first occupation of the development (to be secured by a planning obligation). The development must also comply with the relevant car parking standard.

For the purpose of Policy H8 the site is considered to be an existing college site and the proposals are acceptable on that basis.

The proposals would not trigger the affordable housing contribution set out in Policy H2 of the Oxford Local Plan (2036).

Conclusion

In conclusion officers accept that there may be scope to re build the outbuilding range to the west of Grandpont House, in planning terms the creation of additional accommodation may be acceptable however the question of flooding and drainage including proximity to watercourses would need to be covered in support of any formal applications. The relationship between the outbuildings, their distinct identity as a service range to the principal building and the visual relationship when seen in the context of the listed boundary wall and contribution to the character and appearance of the Central Conservation Area should be considered in the design of replacement buildings here. Any surviving fabric would need to be recorded to an agreed methodology.

The proposed repairs to the principal building are welcomed and exact details and methods would need to be agreed following further investigation of the building's fabric. New or reinstated windows would need to be justified through clear and convincing evidence be that documentary of fabric survey. The additions, western entrance and chapel are in principle acceptable as they potentially enable rooms within the original house to be restored to more accommodating uses. The harm resulting from alterations of plan form to accommodate bathrooms would need to be balanced against benefits arising as a result of repairs and reinstatement of building fabric. Connection to new extensions needs to be more carefully considered on the basis of a more rigorous investigation as to the significance of the western, rear range of the building.

There are a number of technical aspects, including archaeology, ecology and drainage and flooding that need to be explored and would have to be covered as part of formal applications for the proposed development. Arboricultural advice from previous pre-applications and applications would be applicable in this case.

It may be possible to construct a building within the rear garden of Grandpont House, provided all the technical specialist concerns were resolved and this was clearly set out in support of any formal applications. However it is advised that such a building would need to have a smaller footprint than that presently proposed, that construction method should be considered as part of the building design process to limit impact on ecology, trees and watercourses/hydrology. The present design solution could not be supported as it is considered that it would be too harmful to all of those technical matters.

I would like to take this opportunity to advise you that any application received is subject to the statutory consultations and notification procedures and any comments received would have to be taken into account by the Authority when determining the application which may affect the above views. I trust this information is of assistance to you. However, as I am sure you will appreciate the

contents of this letter are the informal views of Officers of the Council only and are provided without prejudice to the determination of any application which may be submitted.

Oxford City Council Planning Department promotes email correspondence as it is the quickest, easiest and most environmentally friendly way of contacting us.

Contact us at planning@oxford.gov.uk

Yours faithfully,

Gill Butter

Principal Heritage Officer

Please quote reference number 23/00870/LBPAC in all communications.



BIDWELLS