
Planning and Consultation Statement

The Oxford Institute for Digital Health

The Radcliffe Observatory Quarter
Woodstock Road
Oxford



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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Savills (UK) Ltd has been instructed by the Chancellor, Masters and Scholars of the University of Oxford (hereafter 'the Applicant') to submit a full application for planning permission for the extension, refurbishment, and associated external and internal alterations of the Gibson and Harkness buildings at the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter to form the Oxford Institute for Digital Health.
- 1.2. The application site is in Figure 1 below outlined in red.

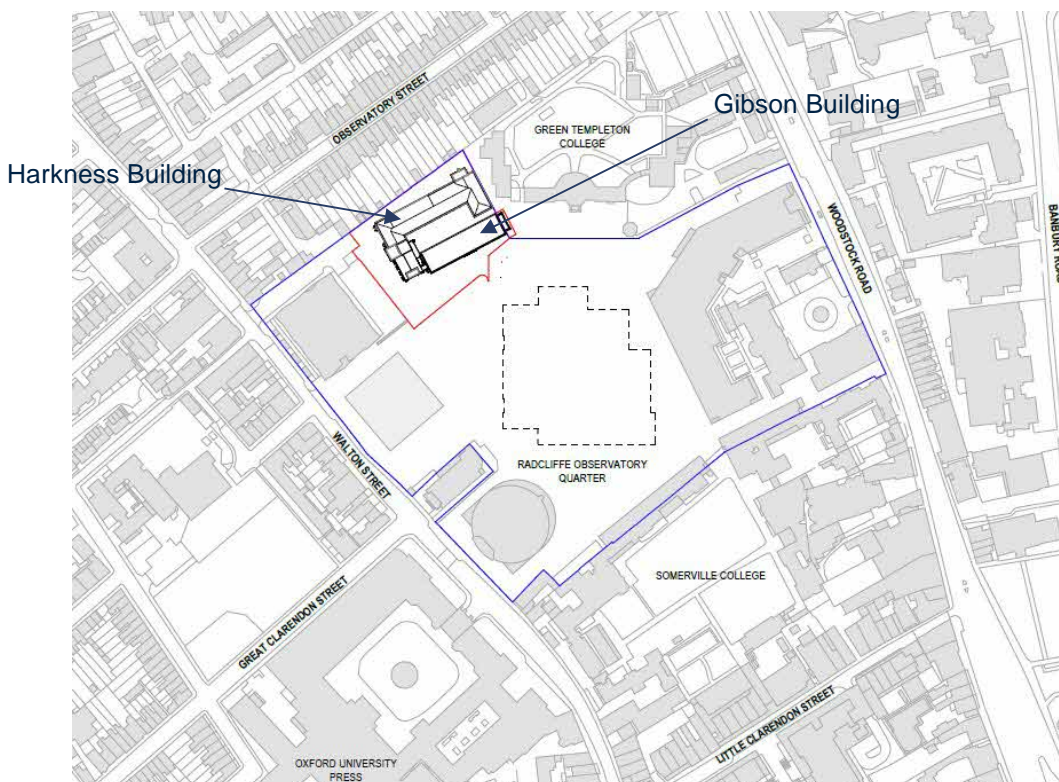


Figure 1: Extract from Site Location Plan drawing no. 598-NBBJ-ZZ-XX-DR-A-001000 (NBBJ)

- 1.3. The Gibson Building is currently occupied by the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Services and the Department of Theology. The Harkness building is unoccupied due to the presence of asbestos. An open air courtyard is located between the two buildings.
- 1.4. The goal of the refurbishment of the Gibson and Harkness Buildings is to create sustainable, new, innovative and consolidated space for the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences within the new Oxford Institute of Digital Health (OIDH). The refurbishment will maximise the potential of the existing buildings in terms of useable area and bring the two buildings together as one.
- 1.5. The rapid development of digital technologies is a catalyst for a fundamental shift in both how we live, and how we manage our health. However, problems such as digital inequalities, digital harms, and the low

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adoption of some technologies persist and require solutions, alongside consideration of ethical, legal, and social issues.

- 1.6. OIDH will be an interdisciplinary hub for digital health research and teaching which addresses critical challenges and identifies solutions harnessing innovations to improve health and health care.
- 1.7. This report is broken down into the following chapters:
 - Chapter 2 considering the site and its context;
 - Chapter 3 setting out the details of the proposed development;
 - Chapter 4 providing the planning policy context
Chapter 5 outlining the consultation undertaken;
 - Chapter 6 considering the proposed development against planning policy; and
 - Chapter 7 considering the planning balance and case for granting planning permission.
- 1.8. The report concludes that the proposed development aligns with planning policy and is therefore acceptable and planning permission should be granted without delay.

2. Site and Context

- 2.1. The Radcliffe Observatory Quarter (ROQ) is around 1 km north of Oxford City Centre and is a key development site for the University of Oxford. It provides academic accommodation for students, academics and staff. To the north of the ROQ lies the Grade I listed Radcliffe Observatory. The surrounding buildings are identified in Figure 2 below.

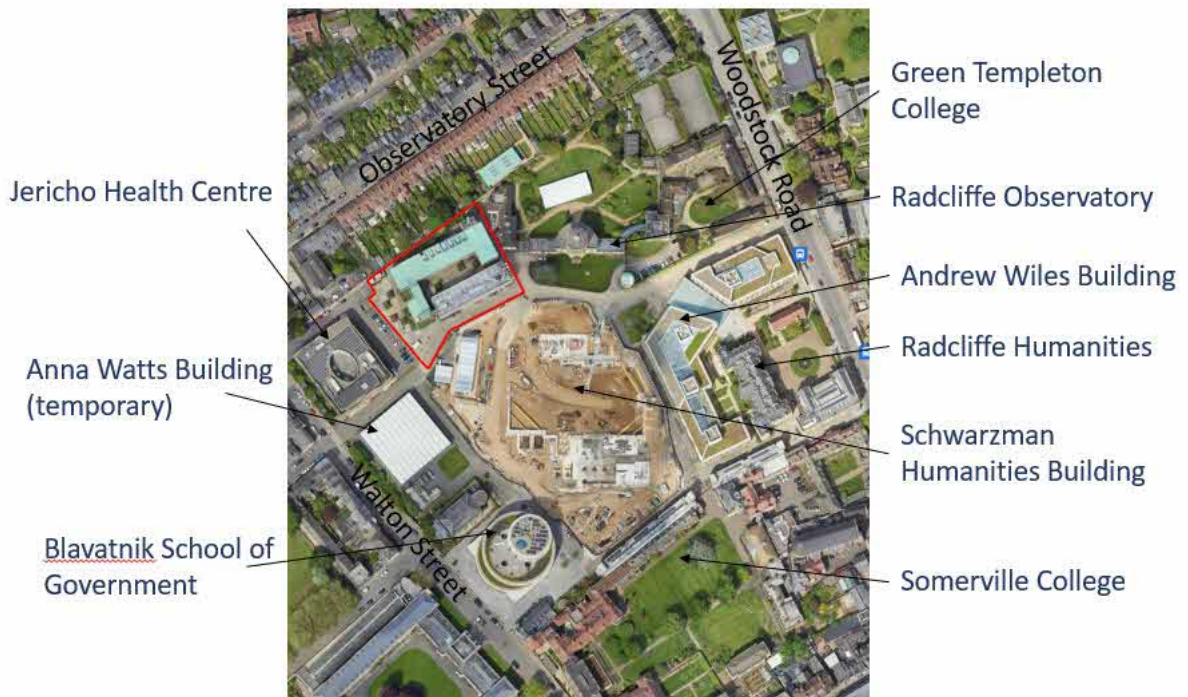


Figure 2: Google Earth Image of the Radcliffe Observatory Site showing the site outlined in red and surrounding uses

- 2.2. The Schwarzman Humanities buildings is currently under construction (Planning Ref: 21/03057/FUL) and is due to be completed in July 2025.
- 2.3. The site is accessed by vehicles from the Woodstock Road and there is an emergency vehicle access from Walton Street (controlled by bollards). Otherwise, pedestrian access is available from a number of points along Walton Street and Woodstock Road. Access to Jericho Health Centre and its associated car park is via a separate vehicle access from Walton Street.
- 2.4. The site is located at the northern end of the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter, between the Jericho Health Centre and Green Templeton College. It comprises two three-storey buildings positioned around an internal open air, paved, courtyard and linked via a bridge at the south corner.
- 2.5. To the north of the Gibson and Harkness Buildings lie rear gardens of the Victorian terracing on Observatory Street.

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- 2.6. The Gibson Building comprises a main range with end returns of different lengths and a hipped copper clad roof. The Harkness Building is a regular rectangular range with a flat roof and protruding stair core at its north east end. Internally are various offices, teaching spaces and meeting rooms.
- 2.7. The Gibson and Harkness Buildings are remnants of the substantial hospital development which occupied what is now the ROQ. The Heritage Statement confirms that the earliest building on the site was the 1770 infirmary (now Radcliffe Humanities), with the foundation stone for the Radcliffe Observatory laid in June 1772.
- 2.8. The Gibson Building was built in 1945 and extended upwards in the 1950s. It contained hospital laboratories and originally continued across what is now the access road from Walton Street, forming a long wing with an archway through route. The Harkness Building was constructed in the 1970s and contained the clinical trial service unit. The former Radcliffe Infirmary site was largely cleared in 2008 following its acquisition by the University of Oxford. This included much of the range extending off the side of the Gibson Building.
- 2.9. The Gibson and Harkness Buildings are not subject to any heritage designations but there are several nearby. The Walton Manor Conservation Area lies immediately to the north, the North Oxford Victorian Suburb Conservation Area lies immediately to the east and the Jericho Conservation Area lies immediately to the south west of the ROQ.
- 2.10. The application site and the existing buildings form part of the setting of a number of listed buildings, in particular the setting of the Observatory, including the separately Grade I listed Observer's House and curtilage listed rotunda/heliometer. The perimeter wall running along the north side of Green Templeton College and the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter is presumed to be an extension of the Grade II listed, 18th-century boundary wall fronting onto Woodstock Road.
- 2.11. To the southwest of the site and fronting onto Walton Street is the former St Paul's Church, presently occupied by Freud's bar, a Grade II Listed Building.
- 2.12. The application buildings appear to have a limited planning history. In November 2014, planning permission was given for, "*hard and soft landscaping scheme and other works to Doll, Harkness and Gibson buildings to include enclosed external storage areas and additional cycle parking.*" (Planning Ref: 14/023111/FUL).

3. The Proposal

3.1. This planning application seeks full planning permission for the following development:

“External alterations, internal refurbishment, enclosure of courtyard, infill extensions, roof alterations, replacement windows, landscaping works and other associated works to create the Oxford Institute of Digital Health (Use Class F.1)”

3.2. The main features of the proposal are:

- New or upgraded facades for both buildings;
- Replacement windows across both buildings;
- Complete internal refurbishment to create office, teaching and research space;
- Enclosure of the courtyard between the two buildings to provide circulation space and a new social/collaboration space;
- Infill extensions to link the two buildings externally and internally and provide plant space;
- Demolition of the existing stairs on the north-eastern façade;
- Demolition and rebuilding of southwestern corner of Harkness to house additional plant;
- Redesigned entrance;
- Replacement dormer roof on the Gibson Building to provide plant space;
- Landscaping along the key thoroughfare from Walton St into the heart of ROQ and to the north of building;
- Provision of photovoltaic (PV) panels on Harkness Building;
- New cycle parking and relocated accessible car parking; and
- Relocation of bin store.

3.3. The accompanying Design and Access Statement (DAS) outlines the key concepts that have been used to guide the proposal towards its submitted form. These have been to unify the two buildings to create a single identity, make better use of the central courtyard, add landscaping and green connections and to open up the ground floor to allow views into the building and also improve views out over the ROQ.

3.4. The ground floor would include large lecture theatres and a range of teaching spaces and ancillary spaces like a common room. The first and second floors would be predominantly office space with a variety of break out spaces to encourage collaboration.

3.5. The current external courtyard between the two buildings will be completely enclosed to provide the focal point of OIDH. This landscaped garden space is overlooked from all floors, linking the two buildings together to encourage all students, researcher and staff to meet and collaborate in a new environment with a variety of seating arrangements and usable spaces.

3.6. The external appearance of the building will change in one of two ways. New façade is proposed to the front southern and western side elevations of Harkness. The façade of the Gibson Building will be retained on the three outer elevations and its energy performance improved through new windows and internal insulation.

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- 3.7. The south façade of Harkness will consist of stone rainscreen wall panelled, stone pillars and beams, glass cladding, aluminium louvres and timber cladding. Further detail of the façade is provided within Section 5 of the DAS.
- 3.8. The roof of the building will be improved as part of the proposal with a replacement flat-roofed dormer on the courtyard side of the Gibson Building to accommodate the additional plant requirements of OIDH. The roof of Harkness will be used to accommodate PV panels. The existing orientation and size of the flat roof make this an ideal location for the substantial capture and use of solar energy.
- 3.9. As with all new University buildings, sustainability has been at the heart of the design process from the start. The proposed external materials will hugely upgrade the thermal performance of the building whilst energy efficient windows will replace the existing throughout. The PV panels will provide on-site renewable energy whilst all opportunities will be taken to provide Biodiversity Net Gain.
- 3.10. The proposal incorporates a comprehensive new landscaping scheme that will complement the new OIDH building. This has been designed with an underlying principle of connection so OIDH has a positive relationship with the new Humanities building which is currently under construction. The existing access road that leads from Walton Street into the heart of the ROQ will be landscaped in a manner to make clear it is a shared space with pedestrian and cycle priority.
- 3.11. A new landscaped space is proposed to the northern boundary behind the building. This will be a walled garden for meeting, working and socialising.

4. The Development Plan

4.1. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 directs Local Planning Authorities to determine planning applications in accordance with the policies of the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Section 38(3) of the Act provides that the Development Plan includes the “*development plan documents (taken as a whole) which have been adopted or approved in relation to that area*”. The adopted statutory Development Plan for Oxford City Council comprises the following relevant document:

- The Oxford Local Plan 2016-2036 (adopted June 2020)

4.2. Material considerations also include national policy, which is primarily expressed through the National Planning Policy Framework and national Planning Practice Guidance, as well as additional guidance produced by the Council in the form of Supplementary Planning Documents (SPDs) and Technical Advice Notes (TAN).

The Adopted Development Plan

4.3. The Oxford Local Plan was adopted in June 2020 to guide development across the City until 2036. It sets out the overarching spatial strategy and housing requirements for the City until 2036.

4.4. The table below summarises the policies and supporting documents that inform the application:

	NPPF 2023 (Paragraphs)	Local Plan 2036	Other planning documents
Principle/ Universities		S1 (Presumption in favour of sustainable development) H5 (Development involving the loss of dwellings) H8 (Provision of new student accommodation) H9 (Linking the delivery of new/redeveloped and refurbished university academic facilities to the delivery of university provided residential accommodation) SP54 (Radcliffe Observatory Quarter)	
Design	131, 135 - 141	DH1 (High quality design and placemaking) DH2 (Views and building heights) DH7 (External servicing features and stores)	Technical Advice Note: Sustainable Design and Construction
Heritage	195, 200 -211	DH3 (Designated heritage assets) DH4 (Archaeological Remains)	

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Natural Environment	180, 185-188	G1 (Protection of green and blue infrastructure) G2 (Protection of biodiversity and geo-diversity) G7 (Protection of existing green infrastructure) G8 (New and enhanced green and blue infrastructure)	Technical Advice Note: Biodiversity Oxford Urban Forest Strategy
Environmental	157, 162-175, 189-194	RE1 (Sustainable design and construction) RE2 (Efficient use of land) RE3 (Flood risk management) RE4 (Sustainable and foul drainage, surface and groundwater flow) RE6 (Air quality) RE7 (Managing the impact of development) RE8 (Noise and vibration) V8 (Utilities)	Technical Advice Notes: Energy Statement & Waste Storage
Transport	108, 114-117	M1 (Prioritising walking, cycling and public transport) M3 (Motor Vehicle Parking) M4 (Provision of Electric Charging Points) M5 (Bicycle parking)	Technical Advice Note: Car and Bicycle Parking

4.5. The ROQ is a category 1 employment site and has a site specific allocation policy.

Other Material Considerations

Planning Practice Guidance

4.6. The Government published the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) in 2014 and have since updated relevant parts as appropriate. The PPG provides further detailed guidance accompanying the Framework. The following sections of the PPG have been considered in the preparation of this planning application:

- Climate change;
- Design;
- Flood risk and coastal change;
- Historic environment;
- Natural environment; and
- Noise;

The Council's Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)

4.7. The Council's CIL Charging Schedule was implemented in October 2013 and is charged on new

developments in the area to fund necessary infrastructure requirements, alongside contributions collected via S106 agreements.

- 4.8. The Applicant is a charitable institution, and the proposed development will be used for charitable purposes as a specialist teaching and research facility. Therefore, the proposed development will be eligible for charitable relief from CIL charging.

Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990

- 4.9. Listed buildings and conservation areas are protected under the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act. In the context of conservation areas, the Act requires planning authorities to pay special attention “*to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of that area*” (s. 72(1)).

The Oxford Local Plan 2040

- 4.10. The Council has recently completed a period of public consultation on a draft of its emerging Local Plan. Given the early stage of its preparation (Regulation 19) the Plan currently only has limited weight in the assessment of this application. However, the following policies are relevant and show a direction of travel for the Council.

- Policy S1 : Spatial Strategy and Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development;
- Policy S2 : Design Code and Guidance
- Policy S3 : Infrastructure Delivery in New Development
- Policy E1: Employment Strategy
- Policy G1 : Protection of the Green Infrastructure
- Policy G4 : Delivering mandatory net gains in biodiversity
- Policy G5 : Enhancing onsite biodiversity in Oxford
- Policy G7 : Flood risk and Flood Risk Assessments (FRAs)
- Policy G8 : Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)
- Policy G9 : Resilient Design and Construction
- Policy R1 : Net Zero buildings in operation
- Policy R2 : Embodied carbon in the construction process
- Policy R3 : Retro-fitting existing buildings
- Policy R7 : Amenity and Environmental Health Impacts of Development
- Policy HD1 : Conservation Areas
- Policy HD2 : Listed Buildings
- Policy HD5 : Archaeology
- Policy HD6 : Non-designated Heritage Assets
- Policy HD7 : Principles of High-Quality Design
- Policy HD9 : Views and Building Heights
- Policy NCCAOF: North of the City Centre Area of Focus

5. Pre-application Engagement

5.1. This section summaries the pre-application engagement that has informed the planning application submission. This includes pre-application advice from Oxford City Council, a workshop with Oxford Design Review Panel in November 2023 and a public consultation event in November 2023.

Pre-application Advice from Oxford City Council

5.2. A pre-application advice request was submitted in May 2023. The following pre-application meetings have been held with officer's at Oxford City Council between June 2023 and March 2024 to discuss the proposals:

- 21st June 2023
- 23rd August 2023
- 2nd October 2023
- 31st October 2023
- 11th December 2023
- 5th March 2024

5.3. The design has developed in response to feedback received at these meetings. A summary of the feedback received and how it has been considered by the design team is provided below. Further detail of the options explored is provided within Section 4 of the DAS.

Theme	Issue Raised	Applicant response
Use	Information sought on the occupants of the building and how the building will be used	The building will be used by the Nuffield Department of Primary Care Health Sciences' new department of Digital Health. The occupants of the building will include academic staff, post graduate research students and professional and support staff.
ROQ	Details required on the where the residential component required under the site allocation policy will be located on the ROQ site	This is addressed at Section 6 of this Planning Statement.
Principle	It was confirmed that the principle of refurbishment is acceptable provided policies H9 and SP54 are addressed.	Compliance with policies H9 and SP54 are assessed within Section 6 of this statement.
Demolition	Officers expressed the view that there is a missed opportunity to enhance the setting of the observatory through partial demolition.	Various options for the site were considered and it was later agreed that retention of the building was acceptable.

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Relationship with neighbours	Information was sought at the initial meeting on the relationship with properties on Observatory Street including how the upper floors would be used.	It was confirmed that the use of the upper floors on the northern side of the building would be similar and would not be intensified. It was also noted that window sill heights are quite high for an office building so users wouldn't be able to see into gardens when sitting at a desk/table. Officers confirmed the proposals are acceptable in terms of overlooking.
Service area	At the initial meeting, officers were concerned about the proposed retention of the service area near Green Templeton College and the Radcliffe Observatory. The conservation officer also raised the possibility of investigating that servicing might be achieved via Walton Street.	The location of the service yard was subsequently reviewed and moved to the western side of the building. The building will be serviced from the existing New Radcliffe House access from Walton Street.
Entrance location	Officers questioned the location of the main entrance.	The design team carried out a study on the optimal location for the entrance and this was presented at later pre-application meetings and approach agreed (see Section 4 of the DAS).
Views	The conservation officer suggested views from Castle Mound and short range views from surrounding streets were assessed.	These views have been assessed as part of the accompanying Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment.
Roof	Officers raised the importance of the roof when seen from the observatory tower. The roof should look like it has been designed and not just there for MEP considerations.	Following discussions with officers, the option to have a dormer section of roof around the inside of the building to accommodate plant was explored. This option was agreed to provide the best solution for accommodating plant. The existing dormer roof on the north side of the building will be removed which will improve the appearance of the building from Observatory Street.
Plant	Concerns were raised about the location of plant on the south east and south west ground floor corners, especially as the south east corner is a prominent view.	Plant was removed from the south east corner and an active use has been provided to activate this corner of the building. This was received positively by officers at later pre-application meetings.
Facades	Feedback on the facades was received at each pre-application meeting. Initial feedback related to the building reading as very horizontal and a big mass. Officers later provided positive feedback on primary vertical and secondary horizontal articulation.	The facades have been developed in consultation with officers as part of a positive pre-application process.

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Design	Encouraged consideration of how the institutional nature of the building is communicated.	A QR code pattern has informed the joint pattern of the natural stone ashlar wall near the entrance of the building. This unique pattern helps the building convey its identity on the external wall. A display area is proposed to the right of the entrance. The details of this are still to be confirmed but it provides an opportunity for the department to showcase its work.
Materials	Need information on materials in the application submission.	A pre-application meeting was held on site on 5 March 2024 to discuss material samples. Details of the proposed materials are provided in the DAS and details will be approved at planning condition stage.
Internal layout	From an urban design perspective, it would be better to have plant and lecture theatres in the rear of the building.	Following this comment, details of the ceiling heights were provided which demonstrated that the lecture theatres have to be provided in the Harkness Building due to the higher floor to ceiling heights.
Landscaping	<p>The approach to landscaping was discussed at several pre-application meetings and it was agreed reflecting the Humanities landscaping and materiality was the right strategy.</p> <p>The landscaping needs to work hard to prevent the building cutting itself off from the surrounding environment.</p>	<p>The design development has looked beyond the application boundary to inform the creation of a connected campus.</p> <p>Entrance legibility had been enhanced through the use of hard and soft landscape to establish a well-defined entry point within a welcoming environment that is more open and publicly focused.</p>

Oxford Design Review Panel

- 5.4. A design workshop was held with the Oxford Design Review Panel (ODRP) on 2 November 2023. A written report was received on 15 November 2023. The workshop included a site visit and presentations by the design team and local authority.
- 5.5. The key recommendations set out in the Design Panel's written response were:
1. Recognise that there is a unique, time limited, opportunity to develop an outstanding new public realm proposition for the campus that could also improve the setting of the Institute of Digital Health, the other proposed buildings, and the Observatory.
 2. Facilitate discussions with New Radcliffe House to move the site boundary to enable the existing car park to be enlarged so that it can be shared with the Institute of Digital Health.
 3. Reorganise the ground floor plan to create a more fluid and legible entrance sequence.
 4. Design the architecture and landscape to guide and welcome people into the building.
 5. Develop a less defensive, more open frontage.

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6. Make a better connection from the entrance to the walled garden, and introduce meaningful, sustainable, and less formal landscape into the courtyard.
7. Use technology in the architecture and landscape to celebrate the work of the Institute.

5.6. Section 4 of the DAS sets out how the design team responded to the comments received by the ODRP. This includes how the design of the public realm considers the wider context and works to create a unified campus. The entrance legibility has been enhanced through the use of hard and soft landscape to establish a well-designed and welcoming frontage and entrance to the building. As mentioned above, opportunities to incorporate digital technology into the architecture and landscape have been explored.

Community Engagement

- 5.7. A public consultation event was held at St Luke's Chapel between 4 pm and 7 pm on Tuesday 28 November 2023. Invitations to this event were distributed to local residents, nearby colleges and departments and key stakeholders.
- 5.8. This event provided the chance for members of the public to learn about the proposals in greater detail and ask the project team any questions. A feedback form was provided for attendees to fill out on the day or following the event. The proposals were also available to view on the University Estates website.
- 5.9. A 1 hour session was held for staff and students between 3 and 4pm. 49 people attended this session. 25 people including local residents and representatives of key stakeholder groups attended the consultation event between 4 and 7pm. 20 feedback forms were received.
- 5.10. Feedback was generally positive, with the majority of people commenting that the proposals will enhance the existing buildings and their setting. A summary of the comments provided are in the below table.

Theme	Comment	Design Team Response
North façade	The view of the proposed refurbished Gibson and Harkness buildings from the houses and gardens on the South side of Observatory Street will still be very unpleasant/ugly	Section 5 of the DAS provides details of the proposed improvements to the Gibson façade. The proposals seek to retain its character but repair and clean up years of modification and clutter. This includes: Removal of redundant drainage pipes Repair of brick work All windows replaced and improved Removal of chimneys New wisteria plant grown up east elevation to conceal existing core wall

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Demolition	The existing buildings are extremely ugly and should be demolished	The buildings are capable of refurbishment for the proposed use with improvements to reduce the overall building energy demand and create a highly energy efficient refurbishment. In addition, a key part of the refurbishment proposals has been to improve the external appearance of the buildings.
Design	The design will clash with the architectural style of the observatory and the design is not in keeping with the main Primary Care Building. There should be more similarity in the design to ensure a sense that both buildings belong to the same department.	The design of the buildings has been developed in consultation with Oxford City Council as part of pre-application discussions and has been informed by the surrounding buildings on the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter.
Pedestrians/cyclists	There should be clear routes for pedestrians and cyclists	A clear route is provided for pedestrians and cyclists in front of the building between Walton Street and Woodstock Road.
Parking	There should be provision for motorcycle parking	There is no requirement for motorcycle parking as part of the Oxford City Council parking standards which promotes the use of sustainable modes of travel. An increase in cycle parking is provided.
Landscape	Hope the wisteria is kept or re-located and there is more greenery, trees and vertical growers	A new wisteria is proposed on the east elevation. Climbers are also proposed on the south elevation. The landscape scheme includes tree and shrub planting including a large specimen parkland tree near the entrance of the building.
Lighting	The current lighting of the Gibson Building is disruptive for residents	Full lighting control systems including daylight linkage and presence detection will improve light pollution for existing residents. This alongside energy efficient lighting installations will also improve the energy demand of the building.

6. Planning Assessment

6.1. This section of the Planning Statement provides an assessment of the proposed development against the development plan, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and any relevant material considerations including planning history for the application site. This section of the Statement seeks to address key planning issues arising from the proposal. Such issues have been identified through both pre-application discussions with City Council Officers and through review of the planning policy framework that applies to the site.

6.2. Section 38 (6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004) states that if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts the determination must be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

6.3. This section addresses the planning matters that are relevant to the application. These include whether or not the:

- Principle is acceptable
- Design is appropriate and whether the proposals will preserve and enhance heritage assets
- Proposals are technically acceptable, including in relation to:
 - Townscape
 - Archaeology
 - Highways
 - Sustainability
 - Drainage
 - Ecology
 - Amenity

6.4. Each of these matters will be considered below.

Principle

6.5. Policy E1 relates to Category 1 Employment Sites, which includes the ROQ, confirming, *“Planning permission will be granted for the intensification, modernisation and regeneration for employment purposes of any employment site if it can be demonstrated that the development makes the best and most efficient use of land and does not cause unacceptable environmental impacts and effects.”*

6.6. This proposal is for the refurbishment and modernisation of the Gibson and Harkness buildings which is supported by Policy E1. The proposals will secure the long-term future use of the buildings as an integral part of the ROQ. The proposals seek to make best use of the existing buildings with only limited extension. The retention of the buildings, as opposed to their redevelopment, has been chosen, in part, as a more environmentally friendly approach to delivering a modern academic facility.

6.7. Policy SP54 relates to the ROQ. The policy states: *“Planning permission will be granted for academic institutional, student accommodation and residential development at the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter*

site. Residential development could include employer-linked affordable housing in accordance with Policy H3. The minimum number of homes to be delivered is 48. Other complementary uses will be considered on their merits.”

- 6.8. This proposal is for an academic use in line with this policy. The policy refers to a range of uses. The Applicant is aware that a residential element has not been provided at the ROQ. However, the policy does not require residential to come forward, it is merely one of a number of acceptable uses for the site. If it was a requirement, other sites on the ROQ have not yet come forward for development and so this scheme would not prejudice the objectives of this allocation if read in a strict fashion.
- 6.9. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that the emerging Local Plan 2040 does not retain an allocation for the ROQ site. The ROQ is identified as a Category 1 employment site where new employment generating uses and intensification and modernisation is supported. The requirement for a residential use at the ROQ is not retained in the emerging Local Plan which is consistent with the Applicant’s preferred use of the ROQ and representations to this effect have been made by the University. Residential accommodation is being proposed at more appropriate sites around the city, for example Osney Mead.
- 6.10. Policy E2 states that planning permission will only be granted for new or additional academic or administrative floorspace for educational institutions if it can be demonstrated that Policy H9 is met. Policy H9 states: *“Planning permission will only be granted for new/redeveloped or refurbished academic, research or administrative accommodation for the University of Oxford where it can be demonstrated that.*
- a) *The new accommodation would not generate or facilitate any increase in student numbers; or*
 - b) *The number of their full-time taught course students living in Oxford in non-university- provided accommodation does not exceed 2,500 at the time of the application. This threshold will be reduced at to 1,500 at 01 April 2022.”*
- 6.11. The Applicant can confirm that the University continues to operate within the reduced cap on student numbers living in non-University accommodation so the restrictions of Policy H9 do not affect this proposal.
- 6.12. The principle of this proposal is therefore supported by policies E1, E2, H9 and SP54 of the Local Plan 2036 subject to matters of detail.

Design

- 6.13. Policy 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.
- 6.14. The accompanying DAS provides details of the site and its context. The site has been studied extensively and Section 2 of the DAS outlines how access to the building, local character and physical and visual connections have all informed the design. In particular, the development of the ROQ, surrounding heritage assets and studies of local character and views have all been important to the design development.

- 6.15. Section 3 of the DAS provides an analysis of the existing buildings and what factors have informed the design. Section 4 explains the design process and how comments raised through the pre-application process have informed the evolution of the proposals.
- 6.16. Section 5 of the DAS presents the design of the new building and public realm. With reference to the Design Checklist at Appendix 6.1 of the Oxford Local Plan, the following considerations have been made to ensure a high quality design is achieved:
- Access through the ROQ has informed the approach to the public realm and the pedestrian experience has been prioritised;
 - The scale of the proposals aims to minimise the impact of the new development on the existing context, particularly the Radcliffe Observatory. The new parapet of the Harkness Building has been kept as minimal as possible;
 - The new façade responds to the context of the wider ROQ, celebrating rather than competing with the Observatory;
 - An improved coherent roof form is proposed that improves views from the Observatory and from residential properties on Observatory Street;
 - A range of high quality materials have been selected which add depth to the new façade and respect the context;
 - High quality landscape materials are proposed that are in keeping with the wider ROQ;
 - Accessible parking has been carefully integrated into the public realm;
 - Accessibility and security principles have been an important consideration for the external and internal design.
- 6.17. Further detail of the design considerations is provided within the DAS.

Heritage

- 6.18. Policy DH3 (Designated heritage assets) requires developments to respect and draw inspiration from Oxford's unique historic environment, responding positively to the significance character and distinctiveness of the heritage assets and locality. As the proposal is adjacent to the North Oxford Victorian Suburb Conservation Area, and the proximity of the Radcliffe Observatory, this policy is of particular relevance and great weight will be given to the conservation of these heritage assets and their setting.
- 6.19. Section 16 of the NPPF notes the importance of designated heritage assets and features of national or international importance such as Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas. The NPPF notes a requirement for development to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of Conservation Areas and requires assessments of the impacts of development upon the significance of heritage assets.
- 6.20. The design of the proposals has been carefully informed by the site's opportunities and constraints and the significance of the listed buildings on site and surrounding conservation area. A Heritage Impact Assessment by Purcell accompanies this planning application. The report includes a site description and history, identifies important local and long range views and provides an impact assessment of the proposals.
- 6.21. The assessment of the proposals is summarised below:

- Radcliffe Observatory – in their present form, the Gibson and Harkness Buildings do not positively contribute to the setting of the Radcliffe Observatory and therefore the proposals present an opportunity for enhancement. The Impact Assessment concludes a minor positive level of heritage impact as the proposals create a more visually cohesive exterior and permit a small increase in the space between the site and the Observatory. The proposed landscaping also improves the quality of the public realm and setting of the Observatory.
- Wall to the north-west of the site – the proposals do not include any physical interventions to the wall beyond repairs and works to improve its condition. The proposals therefore have a minor positive impact.
- Walton Manor Conservation Area – A small portion of the site is visible in a glimpsed view from Observatory Street but it is not a prominent feature. The proposals will not materially alter the character of the conservation area and therefore the level of heritage impact is considered to be none.
- Jericho Conservation Area – The proposals to retain and upgrade the existing buildings preserves the existing setting of Jericho Conservation Area. The setting of the conservation area is enhanced by improving landscaping and placemaking and improving the quality of the view from Walton Street to the Observatory. The level of heritage impact is concluded to be minor positive.
- North Oxford Victorian Suburbs Conservation Area (NOVSCA) – The site is not readily appreciable within the same context as the defining characteristics of the NOVSCA, although the improved landscaping sequence will upgrade the quality of experience moving between NOVSCA and the Jericho Conservation Area and thereby the ability to appreciate their significance. The level of heritage impact is concluded to be none/minor positive.
- Central (City & University) Conservation Area – The level of heritage impact is concluded to be none. The buildings are not currently discernible in views of the wider Oxford skyline and the proposals indicate minimal change to the existing roof.

6.22. Overall, the proposals considerably improve the aesthetic value of the site and, by association, will enhance the ability to appreciate the significance of the Observatory, as well as the experience of passing through the ROQ between the different conservation areas which border the site.

6.23. Paragraph 208 of the NPPF requires that where a development proposal will lead to less than substantial harm to the significance of a designated heritage asset, this harm is weighed against the public benefits of the proposal including, where appropriate, securing its optimum viable use. The proposals are not considered to cause any less than substantial harm to designated heritage assets. However, if Officers disagree and consider the proposals do cause some, minor and less than substantial harm, it is considered that this would be outweighed by the following public benefits:

- Improved public realm surrounding the site including an increase in trees and planting. The new public realm also enhances the connection of the building with the community by providing a link with the science and research taking place within the building.
- Improvement to the aesthetic value of the existing buildings enhancing the setting of the Grade 1 Observatory.
- Opportunities for public displays of the department's research next to the entrance of the buildings.
- Contributions to science - the proposed development will promote collaboration in emergent fields, will enhance educational experience and will provide modern, state-of-the-art facilities which will ultimately assist in advancing research for OIDH for the benefit of us all.

Townscape

- 6.24. Policy DH2 on Views and building heights, states that it “should be demonstrated how proposals have been designed to have a positive impact through their massing, orientation, the relation of the building to the street” and “the impacts in terms of the four visual tests of obstruction, impact on the skyline, competition and change of character should be explained” alongside “the potential impact on important views including both in to the historic skyline and out towards Oxford’s green setting.”
- 6.25. This application is supported by a full Townscape Visual Impact Assessment (TVIA) that establishes a baseline of the current ROQ site and proceeds to assess the changes this proposal will have on the current townscape. Changes can be beneficial as well as negative and should be considered against the sensitivity of features to change.
- 6.26. During pre-application discussions, 13 potential viewpoints were scoped in for further detailed analysis in the TVIA. These include local views such as the upper floors of the Radcliffe Observatory and Blavatnik and longer distance views from city landmarks such as St George’s Tower and Raleigh Park.
- 6.27. The ROQ falls within the “University Fringe” Town Character Area (TCA). This area is assessed as being of medium sensitivity and of medium susceptibility to change with an overall value of High. These ratings are relative to the type of development proposed. Key characteristics of this TCA include:
- Large blocks accommodating college buildings;
 - Many university buildings and their settings are large scale, with some smaller scale residential streets;
 - Nearer the historic core and around the older buildings, stone walls enclose and define the street, but in other areas of later development the buildings have more space between them and no enclosing features;
 - Stone boundary walls, stone setts at vehicular accesses;
 - The spatial character allows views past buildings and above walls, to other buildings and a skyline of trees and roofs;
 - College buildings and hospitals typically of brick or limestone. Also an array of modern materials, such as concrete.
- 6.28. This proposal will have a visual relationship with the “Historic City Core” TCA with some of the key views scoped to the TVIA in this TCA, which is some 700 metres to the south. This TCA has a high sensitivity, high susceptibility to change and a high value.
- 6.29. The Jericho TCA lies 80 metres to the west and has a high sensitivity, medium susceptibility to change and a High value.
- 6.30. The TVIA offers a similar assessment of the sensitivity of the 13 viewpoints with particular regard to both landscape character and visual amenity. Viewpoints are considered to have a high sensitivity for both aspects are St George’s Tower, Raleigh Park, outside the Mathematical Institute and the Blavatnik. The remainder are all considered to have medium sensitivity on at least one aspect.
- 6.31. The TVIA then describes the baseline view from each viewpoint to establish the baseline for assessment

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purposes.

- 6.32. The TVIA assessment considers the landscape impact of this proposal on the three TCAs and their visual receptors during the construction and operational phases. Clearly a negative impact will occur during the construction phase but this will be short-term. For the purposes of planning, the focus is on the Operational phase.
- 6.33. The TVIA assesses that this proposal will have a beneficial landscape impact on the Historical Fringe stating, *“The design language resonates with the Mathematical Institute. The material and colour used would reflect the materials of Radcliffe Observatory and New Radcliffe House. The proposed landscape and public realm improvement would improve the pedestrian and access space between large buildings. As the new material used would be sensitive to the historical buildings and compliment other development within the ROQ, it would likely to be beneficial to the townscape character.”*
- 6.34. The beneficial impacts of these proposals also ensure there will be no impact on the Oxford City Core and Jericho TCAs.
- 6.35. The Visual Receptors assessed in the TVIA include the students and staff who regularly use the ROQ and the residents of Jericho, Walton Street and Cardigan Street. The students and staff will benefit from the same improvements to the visual appearance to the buildings and public realm discussed above. For the residents outside the site, the limited opportunities to view the buildings from outside the ROQ will ensure a negligible landscape impact both in the immediate vicinity and the longer-distance views.
- 6.36. The TVIA carries out the same assessment for these receptors to establish the visual impact. Again, construction operations will inevitably cause a short term Adverse effect for the receptors close to the site and this reduces for the longer distance receptors.
- 6.37. The below table summarises the visual impact on each receptor during the operational phase:

Receptor	Magnitude of Impact	Residual Effect
Townscape in the Vicinity of the Site	Moderate	Slight Beneficial
Historic City Core TCA	No Change	None
Historical Fringe TCA	Moderate	Slight Beneficial
Jericho	Minor	Neutral
Student & Staff of The University of Oxford	Moderate	Moderate Beneficial
Jericho Residents	Minor	Slight Beneficial
Walton Street	Minor	Neutral
Cardigan Street	Minor	Neutral
Jericho Street	Negligible	Neutral
Raleigh Park	No Change	None
St George's Tower	No Change	None

- 6.38. This shows there will no adverse effects from this proposal on any of the key receptors which four enjoying a beneficial impact. In almost all cases where this proposal is visible, it add positively to the townscape character. The proposals are therefore considered to be consistent with Policy DH2 of the Local Plan.

Archaeology

- 6.39. Policy DH4 (Archaeological Remains) of the Local Plan requires that, where archaeological deposits and features are suspected to be present, the application should include sufficient information to define the character, significance and extent of such deposits so far as reasonably practical.
- 6.40. The proposal is for the refurbishment of the existing buildings. Some demolition and new build is proposed however this is minimal around the existing buildings. Assessments in relation to the Humanities Building at the ROQ revealed that the site is not within an area of archaeological importance and consequently the site has reports to be a very low potential to contain remains from any period (Museum of London Archaeology, 2021).
- 6.41. A meeting was held with the Oxford City Archaeology Officer in March 2024. The Officer asked for a watching brief condition during ground investigation works. If finds were unearthed then further investigation may be required.

Highways

- 6.42. Policy M1 (Prioritising walking, cycling, and public transport) seeks to promote sustainable modes of travel in the city. The policy seeks to ensure development provides for accessible, conveniently located, secure cycle parking facilities.
- 6.43. Policy M5 (Bicycle Parking) states that planning permission will only be granted for development that complies with or exceeds the minimum bicycle parking provision set on in the Local Plan.
- 6.44. There is existing bicycle parking provision on the site. This will be significantly increased to reflect the number of users in the refurbished buildings.
- 6.45. A total of 224 cycle spaces are proposed. 104 spaces are provided in the form of Sheffield Cycle stands. 120 spaces are provided across two shelters with two-tier storage racks. This is due to the space constraints of the sites and the desire to maximise the amount of cycle parking available. The mix of type of cycle parking will provide users with a choice.
- 6.46. Two accessibility parking spaces will be re-provided. These have been discreetly located within the constraints of the site and location of the entrance to the building.
- 6.47. No vehicle parking is provided on site. The site is in a highly sustainable location north of the city centre. The site is a 15 minute walk from Cornmarket Street in the city centre. The site is a 3 minute walk from the nearest bus stops on Woodstock Road which provide a frequent bus service between Oxford City Centre and Pear Tree Park & Ride, as well as services to Wolvercote, Wytham, Carterton and Chipping Norton.



6.48. Overall, the proposals promote sustainable travel by virtue of the site’s sustainable location and the provision of bicycle parking on site. The proposals therefore accord with Policies M1, M3 and M5 of the Local Plan.

Sustainability

6.49. Policy RE1 (Sustainable design and construction) 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:

- *Maximising energy efficiency and the use of low carbon energy;*
- *Conserving water and maximising water efficiency;*
- *Using recycled and recyclable materials and sourcing them responsibly;*
- *Minimising waste and maximising recycling during construction and operation;*
- *Minimising flood risk including flood resilient construction;*
- *Being flexible and adaptable to future occupier needs; and*
- *Incorporating measures to enhance biodiversity value.”*

6.50. The following table discusses how each of the sustainable design and construction principles have been incorporated into the proposed development:

Policy Requirement	Proposals
Energy: <i>Maximising energy efficiency and the use of low carbon energy</i>	The proposals provide a key opportunity to upgrade the thermal and environmental performance of the building. Further details of this are provided in the energy section below.
Water: <i>Conserving water and maximising water efficiency</i>	Water consumption is to be minimised wherever possible through the selection of efficient fittings including flow restrictors which will be installed on the domestic water service outlets. This will prevent water wastage.
Recycled materials: <i>Using recycled and recyclable materials and sourcing them responsibly</i>	The future contractor will implement measures to use recycled and recyclable materials where possible and to ensure materials are responsibly sourced.
Waste: <i>Minimising waste and maximising recycling during construction and operation</i>	A bin store is proposed to the west of the building which includes provision for waste separation. The future contractor will implement measures to ensure waste is recycled where possible.
Flooding: <i>Minimising flood risk including flood resilient construction</i>	The proposals include Sustainable urban Drainage Systems as set out in the drainage section below.



<p>Flexibility and adaptability: <i>Being flexible and adaptable to future occupier needs</i></p>	<p>The OIDH has been designed as an inclusive and accessible environment to all. Details of this are provided at Section 6 of the DAS.</p>
<p>Biodiversity: <i>Incorporating measures to enhance biodiversity value</i></p>	<p>The proposal includes a variety of biodiversity enhancements which will provide a biodiversity gain on the site.</p>

6.51. The proposals have sought to incorporate sustainable design measures where possible whilst also considering the constraints placed on the design by the existing buildings. Through the improvements proposed, energy and water consumption and carbon emissions will be reduced in accordance with Policy RE1 of the Local Plan.

Energy

6.52. Policy RE1 requires new development to maximise energy efficiency and low carbon sources of energy. The policy contains stringent carbon reduction targets for new buildings that, whilst not relevant here, the Applicant has adopted some of the recognised carbon reduction principles into the design of this proposal. Providing energy efficient buildings is a key strategic aim of the Applicant. The University Estate Services Sustainability Design Guide has been recognised by the City Council as an appropriate alternative standard for the Applicant’s projects to adopt to ensure highly sustainable outcomes.

6.53. In terms of a retro-fitting project such as this, the Applicant applies the EnerPhit methodology to guide the design. This uses the same Energy Hierarchy adopted by the City Council: Be Lean, Be Clean, Be Green.

6.54. “Be Lean” recognises that passive design and energy efficiency measures are the basis of reducing energy demand and associated carbon use. Building fabric performance and associated air tightness are key factors in achieving Be Lean. The proposal seeks to optimise the fabric of each building by ensuring appropriate levels of insulation and glazing to control winter heat loss and summer heat gain. Reducing the thermal transmittance of the building envelope where appropriate will help to reduce both heating and cooling requirement and result in lower energy requirements.

6.55. Mechanical ventilation is an important addition to the building services strategy to maintain good indoor air quality, by providing fresh air to occupied spaces and extracting vitiated air.

6.56. The lighting of internal spaces are a large contributor to carbon emissions so the proposal accommodates efficiency lighting installations representing best practise. Full lighting control systems including daylight linkage and presence detection will also be incorporated.

6.57. “Be Clean” is concerned with the use of heat networks or on-site Combined Heat and Power (CHP) in order to provide energy. However, there are no available heat networks in the ROQ area whilst CHP systems are now expected to lead to greater carbon emissions than conventional gas-fired boilers due to their lower efficiency and CHP is also not proposed here.

- 6.58. “Be Green” requires the exploration of low carbon technologies to produce renewable energy for a building and reduce carbon emissions. This proposal incorporates the use of photovoltaic (PV) panels. The OIDH roof has been arranged to maximise the space given over to PV panels so they are sufficient in number to make a significant contribution to the buildings energy use.
- 6.59. The proposal is also suitable for the use of Air Source Heat Pumps (AHSPs). These will also be provided at roof level in appropriate noise attenuation housing.
- 6.60. The Energy Statement accompanying the application also considers cooling and overheating. The strategy aims to minimise internal heat generation through energy efficient design (energy efficient lighting, insulating pipe work), reducing summer heat (efficient glazing, external shading), mechanical ventilation and active cooling.
- 6.61. The Energy Statement outlines how the EnerPhit standard has been adopted in this project as a recognised standard contained in the Applicant’s inhouse Sustainability Design Guide. This has guided the emerging design through the Energy Hierarchy and led to a number of measures being incorporated to reduce the demand for carbon during the operational phase of the development.
- 6.62. The main gains are offered by improving the thermal performance of the building fabric, energy efficient lighting and the provision of on-site renewable energy sources. Whilst there is no applicable standard for carbon reduction for proposals retro-fitting existing buildings, every effort to reduce carbon emissions in this proposal is in line with the aims of Policy RE1.

Drainage

- 6.63. Policy RE3 (Flood Risk Management) encourages new development to be directed towards areas of low flood risk (Flood Zone 1). For sites below 1 hectare and within flood zone 1, a Flood Risk Assessment is not required to accompany a planning application in line with National Policy. As the site is situated within Flood Zone 1 and is less than 1 hectare a Flood Risk Assessment does not accompany this planning application and the development accords with Policy RE3. A drainage strategy report does accompany the submission.
- 6.64. Policy RE4 (Sustainable and foul drainage, surface and groundwater flow) requires all development proposals to manage surface water through Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) or techniques to limit run-off and reduce the existing rate of run-off on previously developed sites. The policy requires that surface water runoff is managed as close to its source as possible, in line with the following drainage hierarchy:
- a) *store rainwater for later use; then:*
 - b) *discharge into the ground (infiltration); then:*
 - c) *discharge to a surface water body; then:*
 - d) *discharge to a surface water sewer, highway drain or other drainage system; and finally:*
 - e) *discharge to a combined sewer.*

- 6.65. As the site is constrained and the project involves refurbishment rather than new build, discharging at greenfield run off rates is not feasible and it would result in a significant volume of attenuation. Infiltration (b) is not feasible due to proximity to buildings and stiff clay geology. Discharge to a surface water body (c) is not feasible as there is no watercourse or highway ditch adjacent to the site. Therefore, the proposed foul and surface water strategy involves discharging into the existing campus-wide drainage networks (point d above).
- 6.66. The on-site drainage system will be designed based on the acceptance of a managed, reduced and controlled discharge of surface water from the development into the public drainage network. Geo cellular attenuation tanks are proposed below ground to restrict the flow of water into the wider surface water network in order to limit the flow of surface water. The existing brownfield run off rate will be reduced to provide a 40% betterment. Additionally, a consideration of climate change will be included within the attenuation and restricted discharge rate to account for 40% climate change factor for future proofing of the site.
- 6.67. The proposed foul water strategy utilises the existing foul network.
- 6.68. Overall, the proposed drainage strategy has been developed to meet local and national planning policy and ensure accordance with Policy RE4.

Ecology

- 6.69. Policy G2 (Protection of biodiversity and geo-diversity) requires compensation and mitigation measures to achieve an overall net gain for biodiversity. In addition, Policy RE1 (Sustainable design and construction) requires proposals to incorporate measures to enhance biodiversity value.
- 6.70. Paragraph 180 of the NPPF states that development whose primary objective is to conserve or enhance biodiversity should be supported; while opportunities to incorporate biodiversity improvements in and around development should be encouraged, especially where this can secure measurable net gains in biodiversity.
- 6.71. This planning application is accompanied by an Ecological Impact Assessment Report. The surveys at the site confirm that it is of ecological importance at up to no more than Site Level. Buildings and trees on site are considered to have negligible importance for roosting bats.
- 6.72. The assessment includes a number of mitigation measures. This includes the provision of new habitats within the landscape proposals and the implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan, to include measures such as reducing run-off, noise, lighting and dust impacts during the construction period. This will be agreed at planning condition stage. The lighting strategy for the site will minimise night-time lighting.
- 6.73. The proposed planting and new habitats will result in the following long term impacts post completion and implementation of the landscape proposals:
- Significant positive effect for bats in the long term

- Significant positive effect for birds in the long term
- Significant positive effect for invertebrates in the long term
- Significant positive effect for hedgehogs in the long term

- 6.74. With the implementation of the CEMP, there would not be a significant negative effect for these species.
- 6.75. With the implementation of the proposed landscaping, it is considered that the proposals will result in a significant positive effect on habitats, bats, breeding birds, invertebrates and hedgehogs in the long term.
- 6.76. A Biodiversity Net Gain Assessment also accompanies this planning application. This demonstrates that the development has sought to create new habitats of benefit to biodiversity within the urban setting of the site. With these measures, it is possible to achieve a biodiversity net gain of more than 10% with an overall change of +243.87% for area-based habitats.
- 6.77. Overall, the proposals will provide a net gain in biodiversity in accordance with Policy G2 and RE1 of the Local Plan and paragraph 180 of the NPPF.

Trees

- 6.78. Policy G7 (Protection of existing Green Infrastructure features) of the Local Plan states that planning permission will not be granted for development that results in the loss of green infrastructure features such as hedgerows, trees or woodland where this would have a significant adverse impact upon public amenity or ecological interest. It must be demonstrated that their retention is not feasible and that their loss will be mitigated. The policy states that planning permission will not be granted for development resulting in the loss of trees, except in the following circumstances:
- a) "it can be demonstrated that retention of the trees is not feasible; and*
 - b) where tree retention is not feasible, any loss of tree canopy cover should be mitigated by the planting of new trees or introduction of additional tree cover (with consideration to the predicted future tree canopy on the site following development); and*
 - c) where loss of trees cannot be mitigated by tree planting onsite then it should be demonstrated that alternative proposals for new Green Infrastructure will mitigate the loss of trees, such as green roofs or walls."*
- 6.79. The application is accompanied by a full tree survey that recorded four trees, three groups of trees and one hedge. The four trees and one group of trees are protected by virtue of their position within the Conservation Area. The tree survey has assessed the four trees to be of Category B value with remaining groups and hedge considered to be Category C.
- 6.80. The trees and groups considered to be Category C are of low quality with a remaining a life span of less than 10 years. These are not considered a constraint to development and are two Category C groups shown for removal.
- 6.81. The tree stock is predominantly found within the gardens of the neighbouring properties of Observatory Close. Three Category B trees and one group are found in neighbouring gardens are therefore in need of protection during development work. This can be easily achieved by locating the site compound and

contractor garden outside the Root Protection Area (RPAs) of these trees in line with the relevant British Standard 5837:2012.

- 6.82. The proposed landscaping accompanying this application will comfortably mitigate and exceed the losses of the Category C trees currently within the ROQ ensuring compliance with Policy G7 of the Local Plan. The proposed landscape scheme shows one large parkland tree, four avenue street trees, and three areas where multi-stem specimen trees are proposed.

Impact on Amenity

- 6.83. Planning RE7 (Managing the impact of development) seeks to protect the amenity of communities, occupiers and neighbours. It seeks to ensure development does not have unacceptable transport impacts and that mitigation measures are provided when necessary.
- 6.84. The impact for residential neighbours on Observatory Street has been an important consideration. The building's height and location will not change along the north façade. The existing dormer roof will be removed from the north façade which will improve the appearance of the building from the north and west, alongside other improvements to the facades. The use of the building on the north façade will not be intensified to impact privacy. Offices and meeting rooms are proposed on the upper floors, the sill height means that people will not be able to see into gardens when sitting at desks. Motion sensor lights will be installed to manage light spill.
- 6.85. A construction management plan will be implemented to manage the impacts of construction on residents. This will be agreed at planning condition stage.
- 6.86. There will be no unacceptable transport impact as a result of the development. The building will be serviced via Walton Street and there is no increase in parking provision for the building, the two accessible parking spaces are maintained. There will be an increase in cycle parking provision.
- 6.87. Overall, the proposals ensure the amenity of neighbours is protected and the proposals accord with Policy RE7 of the Local Plan.

Noise

- 6.88. Policy RE8 (Noise and vibration) reads, "*Planning permission will only be granted for development proposals which manage noise to safeguard or improve amenity, health, and quality of life... Planning permission will not be granted for development that will generate unacceptable noise and vibration impacts...Conditions will be used to secure such mitigation measures and operational commitments.*"
- 6.89. Given the location of OIDH close to the northwestern boundary of the ROQ the closest noise sensitive receptors are the properties of Observatory Street discussed above and noise monitoring locations were carefully chosen to provide the best recreation of the noise environment currently experienced by residents of these neighbours.
- 6.90. Surveys were undertaken in June 2023 and found an existing background sound level of 34 decibels during the day and 30 decibels at night. These are the noise levels used to inform the proposed scheme. Given

the increased mechanical plant requirements of OIDH relative to the current situation it is clear that some noise mitigation measures are likely to be needed.

- 6.91. The Noise Impact Assessment accompanying this application has also considered the likely impact on the environment experienced at the Jericho Health Centre. Here the acceptable noise levels are slightly higher than for a residential use so the scheme has been designed to achieve a 45 decibel limit.
- 6.92. The plant equipment that is required consists of air handling units (AHU), transformers and air source heat pumps (ASHPs). The atrium and building AHUs will be within attic space, with air terminations located at roof level over the atrium skylight. This allows for screening to the receptors to be provided by the building itself. Lecture theatres AHUs are proposed in a ground floor plant room, with terminations at ground level on the west façade. ASHPs will be located in an external area on the south-west corner of the building, on the second floor slab.
- 6.93. The noise modelling undertaken with this equipment in situ demonstrates a daytime and night-time noise level respectively 13 and 12 decibels over the identified background noise level. Therefore, some mitigation measures will be required to ensure an acceptable noise environment for the residents of Observatory Close.
- 6.94. There are three types of mitigation that are proposed to be adopted in the scheme:
- Operational mitigation – not consistently running the equipment at maximum capacity;
 - Mechanical mitigation - installation of acoustic packaging and attenuators; and
 - Architectural mitigation - installation of acoustic enclosure, louvres, and solid barrier screening.
- 6.95. The proposed scheme has used attenuation requirements of between 8 and 30 decibels. The greatest attenuation requirements are needed at the exhaust air out ducts of the AHUs. Accordingly, the AHUs are proposed to be restricted to operate at between 60 - 80% capacity. Furthermore a 1.2 metre long attenuator will be applied to the out duct of each AHU.
- 6.96. Each air source heat pump requires attenuation that achieves a 8 decibel reduction in noise emissions. This can be achieved through acoustic packaging surrounding the sides and top of the equipment. This is easily achievable in this proposal.
- 6.97. Architectural mitigation is required to attenuate noise from the substations. A solid enclosure should be built around each substation to reduce noise emissions. If louvred walls are required to provide ventilation, this should be installed on the east side of the enclosures, facing away from Observatory Street.
- 6.98. The noise impact assessment confirms that, with the mitigation applied, the noise levels experienced on Observatory Street will be 3 decibels below the target background noise level already recorded. As such, with the proposed mitigation in place, this proposal will satisfy the requirements of Policy RE8. The mitigation measures can be secured through a typical condition attached to any planning permission.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1. This application seeks planning permission for the following development at the Gibson and Harkness Buildings on ROQ to create the Oxford Institute for Digital Health. The description of development is as follows:

External alterations, internal refurbishment, enclosure of courtyard, infill extensions, roof alterations, replacement windows, landscaping works and other associated works to create the Oxford Institute of Digital Health (Use Class F.1)

- 7.2. The application is accompanied by a series of technical reports relating to heritage, townscape, drainage, ecology, landscaping, highways, and arboriculture, along with a Design and Access Statement. This Planning Statement has provided a summary of key planning matters relating to the scheme and provided an assessment of the matters in the context of the current development plan.
- 7.3. The NPPF at paragraph 8 states that there are three objectives to achieving sustainable development, economic, social and environmental, which need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways.
- 7.4. As this proposal is located on the ROQ, the principle of the proposal is supported as the Development Plan allocates the ROQ for new academic uses. The ROQ is also a Category 1 employment site where the Local Plan supports an intensification of existing employment uses.
- 7.5. This proposal will allow the creation of the Oxford Institute for Digital Health and the work of the Institute will provide economic and social benefits. That work will allow for new technology to be introduced to tackle existing health inequalities. In September 2023, The Office of National Statistics reported the number of people on long-term sick leave is at an all-time high, at over 2.5 million. Reducing the existing health inequalities through the use of technology will eventually allow more people to be able work and contribute to the economy. There are also clear social benefits from having a healthier population through the reduced demand on health services and increased participation in the local community.
- 7.6. Furthermore, this proposal will provide new jobs at construction and operation stage and will support the growth of the University of Oxford. This will have a benefit for the economy including from increased local spending for goods and services.
- 7.7. The environment benefits of this scheme are the retention and reuse of the existing buildings, reducing carbon through demolition and new build. In addition, improvements to aesthetic value of the site, the enhanced ability to appreciate the significance of the Observatory from a heritage viewpoint, the improved visual relationship the proposals will have with key visual receptors and a biodiversity net gain of more than 10% with an overall change of +243.87% for area-based habitats all add significantly to the environmental aspect of sustainable development.
- 7.8. Technical reports supporting the application demonstrate that there are no materials concerns regarding drainage, noise, emissions, archaeology and contamination that cannot be mitigated via standard safeguarding measures.

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- 7.9. The accompanying technical reports have demonstrated that the proposed development can be delivered without any significant adverse impact and in compliance with relevant policies of the Local Plan.
- 7.10. On this basis, it is respectfully requested that planning permission is granted in line with Paragraph 11 of the NPPF which states that proposals that accord with the development plan should be approved without delay.

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