

**Site Address: Thames Valley Police  
HQ. Oxford Road, Kidlington**

**16/00525/F**

**Ward:** Kidlington East     **District Councillor:** Cllrs Billington, Griffiths and Prestidge

**Case Officer:** Bob Duxbury   **Recommendation:** Approval

**Applicant:** Thames Valley Police

**Application Description:** Proposed demolition of `C` and `G` blocks to erect replacement office building, in addition to associated works

**Committee Referral :** major application

**Committee Date:** 9 June 2016

**1. Site Description and Proposed Development**

- 1.1 The Thames Valley Police (TVP) Head Quarters site is situated just off the east side of the Oxford Road in Kidlington and accessed via a cross over by the slip road. The site is surrounded by residential properties to the east, south and west boundaries, with school playing fields and the Kidlington and Gosford sports centre to the north. The site is outside of a conservation area and there are no listed buildings within proximity. A public right of way runs to the south of the site, along the road, which connects the site to the Oxford Road and Cromwell Way. The site may also have some ecological potential.
- 1.2 The compound consists of several, large office buildings used for administration and supporting the activities of TVP. These are set amongst large, open areas of hardstanding, pedestrian paved areas and access roads. There are no areas of flood risk or features of significant heritage or ecological value in the vicinity of the site.
- 1.3 'A', 'B' and 'D' Blocks form a single, connected unit and have recently been renovated and redesigned in a consistent, contemporary architectural style. The remainder of the compound's buildings consist of a mix of older offices, support buildings and storage sheds variously constructed from brick, masonry, steel and concrete.
- 1.4 This proposal proposes the demolition of `C` and `G` blocks and the erection of replacement a replacement office building on the site of `C` block.  
The current buildings are showing their age and are of a low-quality design that does not relate well with the surrounding built environment in terms of appearance, materials, style or character. They therefore have an unattractive appearance that adversely affects the amenity of the local area, while the facilities are in a poor condition and are said to not meet the current requirements of TVP.

- 1.5 The new office building will represent a largely 'like-for-like' replacement of the existing building in terms of scale, albeit with a slight increase to the building's height and footprint. The new building will be constructed of contemporary, high-quality materials that emulate the appearance and character of the existing 'A', 'B' and 'D' Blocks. The number of storeys in the new block will remain unchanged, while the existing foundations and hard surfacing beneath the buildings will be retained.
- 1.6 The changes in floorspace are specifically
- C Block Existing 882 sq.m Proposed 1,128 sq.m
  - G Block Existing 537 sq.m Proposed Nil
- Therefore overall there is a reduction in floorspace of 291 sq. metres
- 1.7 The new office building will represent a largely 'like-for-like' replacement of the existing building in terms of scale, albeit with a slight increase to the building's height and footprint. The new building will be constructed of contemporary, high-quality materials that emulate the appearance and character of the existing 'A', 'B' and 'D' Blocks. The number of storeys in the new block will remain unchanged, while the existing foundations and hard surfacing beneath the buildings will be retained.
- 1.8 Additionally there will be an upper-storey skybridge that will directly connect the upper storeys of 'B' Block and the proposed 'C' Block
- 1.9 In place of 'G' Block it is proposed to utilise the existing hardstanding to extend the compound's secure northern car park. This will lead to the creation of an additional 23 car parking spaces. The scheme has been amended since the original submission to propose the retention of part of the western boundary wall of 'G' Block to maintain existing views from the adjacent residential properties. It is proposed that the existing brick wall would be reduced in height by approximately 0.4m from ca. 3.3m to 2.9m. The wall would then be capped with sloping Haddon capping stone, measuring 425mm wide, and between 90mm and 65mm in height along the western and eastern sides, respectively.

## **2. Application Publicity**

- 2.1 The application has been advertised by way of neighbour letter, site notice and press notice. The final date for comment was 3 May 2106
- 2.2 5 letters of objections have been received from local residents raising the following subjects, one being on behalf of 7 local residents
- Inadequacy of the travel plan
  - Continued issue of on-street parking to the detriment of the amenity and convenience of local residents
  - Concern about the level of parking provided on the site and as a function of this proposal
  - Concern that the demolition of G Block will allow full view from the houses in Oxford Road into the HQ site
  - Consequent loss of privacy to adjacent properties

- Potential light pollution from removal of G Block

### **3. Consultations**

- 3.1 **Parish Council:** Gosford and Water Eaton PC have no objections to the proposal

#### **Cherwell District Council Consultees**

- 3.2 **Scientific Officer** raises no objection but suggests a condition concerning construction management

3.3 **Ecology officer**

The submitted ecological appraisal for this site is fine. There are few ecological constraints, with the potential for bats judged as negligible. Adherence to the recommendations in the ecological appraisal to check for nesting birds if the buildings are demolished during the bird nesting season is a sensible precaution. I have no objections to the proposals therefore, however as we should be seeking a net gain for biodiversity where possible within development in line with NPPF guidance there are opportunities to include enhancements here on what is currently a site with limited ecological value.

There are numerous records of house sparrows and hedgehogs in the vicinity of this site (both Priority species) and therefore enhancements aimed at these species would be appropriate. The introduction of a blackthorn hedgerow to the West as suggested by the landscape officer if also including a few other hedgerow species mixed in would be beneficial to a range of wildlife. Wildlife friendly planting, integrated sparrow terraces within the new building itself or external insect boxes would also be beneficial.

3.4 **Landscape Officer:**

Has suggested the planting of hawthorn edge on the western boundary to replace the loss of G Block, Additionally he comments that The existing trees on the playing field immediately east of a rebuilt Block C will help to mitigate the visual impact of this building for the benefit of users of the PRow users of the playing field, and residents west of the playing field. There no additional landscaping required in respect of Block C bit the aforementioned trees are to be protected from damage during the course of demolition and construction: surface levels and material should remain the same.

#### **Oxfordshire County Council Consultees**

3.6 **Transport**

Raises no objections and comment that

- The proposed increase in staff numbers as a result of the proposal will generate at worst a small number of additional vehicle movements in the

peak hours. Existing site access arrangements and the local transport network can accommodate these additional movements

- The proportion of staff travelling to the site is currently very high – a revised travel plan will need to be submitted with targets to increase non-car driving modes.
- No cycle parking is being proposed for the additional staff – levels of cycle parking are already low for a site of this size.

Conditions are suggested covering the car parking areas, cycle parking, and a workplace travel plan

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## **4. Relevant National and Local Policy and Guidance**

### **4.1 Development Plan Policy**

#### **Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1:**

The Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 - Part 1 was formally adopted by Cherwell District Council on 20th July 2015.

The Plan was the subject of an independent examination conducted by an Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State. The Inspector's report was published on 12th June 2015 and the recommended main modifications required to make the Plan sound have been included in the adopted plan.

The Plan provides the strategic planning policy framework and sets out strategic site allocations for the District to 2031. Now adopted, the Plan forms part of the statutory Development Plan and the basis for decisions on land use planning affecting Cherwell District.

The Local Plan 2011-2031 – Part 1 replaces a number of the saved policies of the 1996 adopted Cherwell Local Plan. Those saved policies of the 1996 adopted Cherwell Local Plan which are retained remain part of the Development Plan. These are set out in Appendix 7 of the Local Plan 2011-2031.

Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

The following policies are considered to be relevant:-

Policy PSD1	Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
Policy SLE1	Employment Development
Policy SLE4	Improving Transport and connections
Policy ESD1	Mitigating and adapting to climate change
Policy ESD2	Energy hierarchy
Policy ESD3	Sustainable Construction
Policy ESD7	Sustainable Drainage Systems
Policy ESD10	Protection of Biodiversity

Policy ESD15

The Character of the Built Environment

Adopted Cherwell Local Plan (Saved Policies)

EMP3  
C28

Employment policy for Kidlington  
Layout, design and external appearance of new development

## **4.2 Other Material Policy and Guidance**

National Planning Policy Framework

Planning Practice Guidance

Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011

Whilst some policies within the plan may remain to be material considerations, other strategic policies have in effect been superseded by those in the Submission Local Plan (October 2014). The main relevant policies to consider are as follows:-

Policy EMP4 Existing employment sites

## **5. Appraisal**

5.1 The key issues for consideration in this application are:

- Planning Policy and the Principle of Development
- Design
- Ecology
- Transport Assessment and Access
- Car parking

### **Planning Policy and Principle of Development**

5.2 The Development Plan for Cherwell District comprises the recently adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 and the saved policies in the Adopted Cherwell local Plan 1996. Section 70(2) of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 provides that in dealing with applications for planning permission the Local Planning Authority shall have regard to the provisions of the development plan, so far as is material to the application, and to any other material considerations. Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 requires that if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination to be made under the Planning Acts, the determination must be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.2 The NPPF sets out the economic, social and environmental roles of planning in seeking to achieve sustainable development: contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy; supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities; and contributing to protecting and enhancing our

natural, built and historic environment (paragraph 7). It also provides (paragraph 17) a set of core planning principles which amongst other things require planning to:

- Be genuinely plan led, empowering local people to shape their surroundings and to provide a practical framework within which decisions on planning applications can be made with a high degree of predictability and efficiency
- Proactively drive and support sustainable economic development
- Always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings
- Support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate
- Encourage the effective use of land by re-using land that has been previously developed
- Promote mixed use developments
- Conserve heritage assets in a manner appropriate to their significance
- Actively manage patterns of growth to make the fullest possible use of public transport, walking and cycling and focus significant developments in locations which are, or can be made sustainable
- Deliver sufficient community and cultural facilities and services to meet local needs

5.3 The NPPF at paragraph 14 states 'At the heart of the National Planning Policy Framework is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which should be seen as a golden thread running through both plan making and decision taking'....For decision taking this means:

- Approving development proposals that accord with the development plan without delay; and
- Where the development plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out of date, granting permission unless;
- Any adverse impact of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole, or
- Specific policies in this framework indicate development should be restricted

5.4 This site is an established employment site to which Policy SLE 1 of the adopted Local Plan applies. This policy supports existing businesses and indicates (in para B.38) that the Council will seek to ensure that operational activity is not compromised wherever possible. The policy includes the following section re the assessment of employment proposals in Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington

Employment proposals at Banbury, Bicester and Kidlington will be supported if they meet the following criteria:

- Are within the built up limits of the settlement unless on an allocated site
- They will be outside of the Green Belt, unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated
- Make efficient use of previously-developed land wherever possible
- Make efficient use of existing and underused sites and premises increasing the intensity of use on sites

- Have good access, or can be made to have good access, by public transport and other sustainable modes
- Meet high design standards, using sustainable construction, are of an appropriate scale and respect the character of its surroundings
- Do not have an adverse effect on surrounding land uses, residents and the historic and natural environment.

This proposal meets all these criteria and is considered acceptable in policy terms

### **Design & Layout**

- 5.5 The new office building is largely a like for like replacement of the existing building in terms of location and scale, albeit that there is a slight increase in the building's height and footprint. The new building will be constructed of contemporary high quality materials that emulate the appearance and character of the recently rebuilt adjacent blocks. The result is an attractive modern replacement that will sit well with the existing buildings. There will be no greater impact upon the amenity of surrounding residential properties, which are in any event some 120 metres to the west in Oxford Road. The building, being of similar scale and massing will not have any greater impact upon the adjacent school playing fields to the north.
- 5.6 Block G is a single storey garage and store building which runs on the northern and western sides of the secure parking area in the north-west corner of the HQ site. In the original proposal that part of the Block along the western boundary of the site was to be demolished to allow increased car parking to be formed in this area. Following suggestions from the case officer and objections from the affected residents the proposal has now been amended to remove the same section of building but retaining back brick wall almost in its entirety. It is proposed to lower the wall by approx. 400mm, leaving at 2.9 metres high, with a new capping on top. This will ensure the necessary security of the site but still provide the residents with a familiar screen to the activities on the HQ site in visual and aural terms. This element is now also considered acceptable.

### **Ecology**

- 5.7 It will be seen from Paragraph 3.3 above that the Council's ecologist is content with the proposals. Comments about a western hedge are now redundant given the intention to retain a brick wall on this side of the site.

### **Transport assessment**

- 5.8 Oxfordshire County Council have raised no objections to the proposal and have stated in their response that the increase in staff numbers as a result of the development would generate at worst a small number of additional movements during peak hours. The say, and your officer agree, that this will not have an unacceptable impact upon local congestion. There are in addition no safety concerns arising

## **Car parking**

- 5.9 The Thames Valley Police HQ site has for a long time been the subject of complaints from a small number of local residents about the insufficiency of car parking provision, and it is reported that in consequence on-street parking occurs in surrounding streets to the detriment of the convenience and amenity of those complainants.
- 5.10 With regards to this application the numbers of employees associated with the replacement of C Block is barely altered. The applicants indicate that the current building housed at peak usage around 76 staff whereas the new building has a capacity to house 80 full time staff and around 20 part time staff

Currently, there are 100 car parking spaces within the inner car park for the use of TVP staff, including 11 spaces that are occupied by trailers and other operational equipment. There are also 264 additional parking spaces across the remainder of the TVP HQ site, as well as approximately 20 to 30 unofficial, on-site parking spaces, where parking is tolerated where there are no obstructions or negative impacts on safety.

The demolition of 'G' Block will allow for the creation of an additional 23 parking spaces, resulting in a capacity of 387 official parking spaces on-site, including 123 parking spaces at the inner car park. In conjunction with space for up to 30 unofficial spaces, there will therefore be a total capacity of 417 parking spaces at the TVP HQ site. This more than provides for the proposed, minor increase in capacity of 10 employees at 'C' Block.

Furthermore, the proposed demolition of 'G' Block forms part of the applicant's wider strategy of relocating the existing operational equipment at the car park to an alternative TVP site in Upper Heyford. This will therefore result in the release of 11 parking spaces currently used for other purposes for staff use.

- 5.11 Therefore, notwithstanding comments received, it is considered that these proposals will not worsen the adequacy of car parking provision on this site, indeed it should result in an eased situation

## **Engagement**

- 5.38 With regard to the duty set out in paragraphs 186 and 187 of the Framework, no problems or issues have arisen during the application. It is considered that the duty to be positive and proactive has been discharged through the efficient and timely determination of the application.



## 6. Recommendation

**Approval**, subject to:

a) the following conditions:

1. The development to which this permission relates shall be begun not later than the expiration of three years beginning with the date of this permission.

Reason - To comply with the provisions of Section 91 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended by Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

2. Except where otherwise stipulated by condition, the development shall be carried out strictly in accordance with the following plans and documents: Application forms Design and Access Statement; Transport Statement; Planning Statement; Ecological appraisal; Supplementarty statement received 5 May 2016 and drawings numbered 0007/PO1; 0002/PO1; 1210/PO1; 3100/PO1; 3101/PO1; 4100/PO1; 0009/PO1; 0005/PO2 013/PO2

Reason - For the avoidance of doubt, to ensure that the development is carried out only as approved by the Local Planning Authority and to comply with Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework.

3. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved, a detailed schedule of materials and finishes for the external walls and roof(s) of the development hereby approved in general accord with the information contained on the approved elevations shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved schedule.

Reason - To ensure the satisfactory appearance of the completed development and to comply with Policy C28 of the Cherwell Local Plan and Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework

4. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved, full details of any external lighting to be provided in the car parking area or on the building shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local planning Authority. Thereafter, the lighting shall be carried out and retained in accordance with the approved details.

Reason - To ensure the satisfactory appearance of the completed development and to comply with Policy C28 of the Cherwell Local Plan and Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework

5. Prior to the commencement of all other development hereby approved, the buildings and structures on the site at the date of this permission shall be

demolished and the debris and materials removed from the site.

Reason - In order to achieve a satisfactory form of development, to ensure that the site is not overdeveloped and to comply with Policy C28 of the Cherwell Local Plan and Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework

6. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved, full details of the new boundary wall formed from the partial demolition of G Block shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter and prior to the first occupation of the development, the new boundary treatment shall be erected, in accordance with the approved details, and retained and maintained in situ at all times.

Reason - To ensure the satisfactory appearance of the completed development, to safeguard the privacy of the occupants of the existing and proposed dwellings and to comply with Policies C28 and C30 of the Cherwell Local Plan and Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework

7. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved, a landscaping scheme shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. The scheme for landscaping the site shall include:-

- (a) details of the proposed tree and shrub planting including their species, number, sizes and positions, together with grass seeded/turfed areas,
- (b) details of the existing trees and hedgerows to be retained as well as those to be felled, including existing and proposed soil levels at the base of each tree/hedgerow and the minimum distance between the base of the tree and the nearest edge of any excavation,
- (c) details of the hard surface areas, including pavements, pedestrian areas, reduced-dig areas, crossing points and steps.

Reason - In the interests of the visual amenities of the area, to ensure the creation of a pleasant environment for the development and to comply with Policy C28 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan and Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework

8. All planting, seeding or turfing comprised in the approved details of landscaping shall be carried out in accordance with BS 4428:1989 Code of Practice for general landscape operations (excluding hard surfaces), or the most up to date and current British Standard, in the first planting and seeding seasons following the occupation of the building(s) or on the completion of the development, whichever is the sooner. Any trees, herbaceous planting and shrubs which, within a period of five years from the completion of the development die, are removed or become seriously damaged or diseased shall be replaced in the current/next planting season with others of similar size and species

Reason - In the interests of the visual amenities of the area, to ensure the creation of a pleasant environment for the development and to comply with

Policy C28 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan and Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework

9. Prior to the commencement of the development hereby approved, details of the revised car parking provision shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, and prior to the first occupation of the development, the parking spaces shall be laid out, surfaced, drained and completed in accordance with the approved details and shall be retained for the parking of vehicles at all times thereafter

Reason - In the interests of highway safety, to ensure the provision of off-street car parking and to comply with Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework

10. Prior to the first use or occupation of the development hereby permitted, covered cycle parking facilities shall be provided on the site in accordance with details which shall be firstly submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the covered cycle parking facilities shall be permanently retained and maintained for the parking of cycles in connection with the development.

Reason - In the interests of sustainability, to ensure a satisfactory form of development and to comply with Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework

11. Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby approved, a Travel Plan, prepared in accordance with the Department of Transport's Best Practice Guidance Note "Using the Planning Process to Secure Travel Plans" and its subsequent amendments, shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter, the approved Travel Plan shall be implemented and operated in accordance with the approved details

Reason - In the interests of sustainability, to ensure a satisfactory form of development and to comply with Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework

12. Prior to the commencement of the development, a Construction Environment Management Plan (CEMP), which shall include details of the measures to be taken to ensure construction works do not adversely affect residential properties on, adjacent to or surrounding the site together with details of the consultation and communication to be carried out with local residents shall be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the development shall be carried out in accordance with approved CEMP.

Reason - To ensure the environment is protected during construction in accordance with Policy ENV1 of the Cherwell Local Plan and Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework

13. No removal of hedgerows, trees or shrubs [nor works to, or demolition of

buildings or structures that may be used by breeding birds], shall take place between the 1<sup>st</sup> March and 31<sup>st</sup> August inclusive, unless the Local Planning Authority has confirmed in writing that such works can proceed, based on health and safety reasons in the case of a dangerous tree, or the submission of a recent survey (no older than one month) that has been undertaken by a competent ecologist to assess the nesting bird activity on site, together with details of measures to protect the nesting bird interest on the site.

Reason - To ensure that the development does not cause harm to any protected species or their habitats in accordance with Policy ESD10 of the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 and Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework

14. Prior to the commencement of development, including any demolition or site clearance a method statement for enhancing biodiversity on site shall be submitted to and approved by the Local Planning Authority. Thereafter the biodiversity enhancements shall be carried out and retained in accordance with the approved details

Reason - To conserve and enhance biodiversity and prevent the spread of non-native species in accordance with Government guidance contained within the National Planning Policy Framework

## **Planning Notes**

### **1. Construction Sites**

The applicant's and/or the developer's attention is drawn to the requirements of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the Clean Air Act 1993, which relate to the control of any nuisance arising from construction sites. The applicant/developer is encouraged to undertake the proposed building operations in such a manner as to avoid causing any undue nuisance or disturbance to neighbouring residents. Under Section 61 of the Control of Pollution Act 1974, contractors may apply to the Council for 'prior consent' to carry out works, which would establish hours of operation, noise levels and methods of working. Please contact the Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Manager on 01295 221623 for further advice on this matter.

### **2. Disabled People**

The Applicant is reminded that the premises should be made accessible to all disabled people, not just wheelchair users, in accordance with the provisions contained within the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. This may be achieved by following recommendations set out in British Standard BS 8300: 2001 – "Design of buildings and their approaches to meet the needs of disabled people – Code of Practice", or where other codes may supersede or improve access provision. Where Building Regulations apply, provision of access for disabled people to the premises will be required in accordance with Approved Document M to the Building Regulations (2004) – "Access to and use of Buildings", or codes which contain provisions which are equal to or exceed those provisions contained within Approved Document M.

**Statement of Engagement**

In accordance with the Town and Country Planning (Development Management Procedure) (England) (Amendment No 2) Order 2012 and paragraphs 186 and 187 of the National Planning Policy Framework (March 2012), this decision has been taken by the Council having worked with the applicant/agent in a positive and proactive way as set out in the application report.