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OUW: Harcourt Hill, Campus Development Plan for Oxford Brookes University

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# **Foreward**

This document sets out the rationale and design proposals of the Campus Development Plan for Oxford Brookes University's Harcourt Hill Campus. The Campus is the location of the Westminster Institute of Education, which was incorporated into Oxford Brookes University in 2000.

The Campus Development Plan is required by planning policy to provide contextual information about the University's intentions for long-term physical change on the site, to establish an agreed context within which individual planning applications can come forward.

### The plan sets out

- the location of the main activities on the campus
- the location and character of circulation routes for pedestrians, cyclists, buses and cars
- the locations of landmark buildings and protected or composed views
- the location and character of the key outdoor spaces
- maximum building heights
- development capacity (expressed in gross internal floor space)
- the location of parking spaces
- a landscape framework for the site

The plan shows indicative building footprints, though these are intended for illustrative purposes only to communicate the intended nature of the spaces between the buildings. The Plan does not suggest any specific architectural style or form, but considers high quality contemporary architecture to be most suited to the site.

## **Background to the Campus Development Plan**

In November 2007 a document for Oxford Brookes University entitled 'Campus Analysis and Options' was prepared. A full copy of the document is to be found in the Supporting Documentation. The document sets out a series of analytical drawings showing the physical conditions of the Harcourt Hill Campus, followed by two possible development options. The intention was to settle on physical development concepts for the campus, which would form the basis of the Campus Development Plan. This would then be submitted for endorsement by the Vale of the White Horse District Council.

In the same month, West Waddy ADP were commissioned by the University to take the necessary steps to seek endorsement of a Campus Development Plan, based on the work already produced. The initial advice given was that the Development Options would need to be taken through two key stages before submission would be appropriate, these being

- consultation on both analysis and development options, and
- a screening for potential further strategic appraisal work that may be necessary.

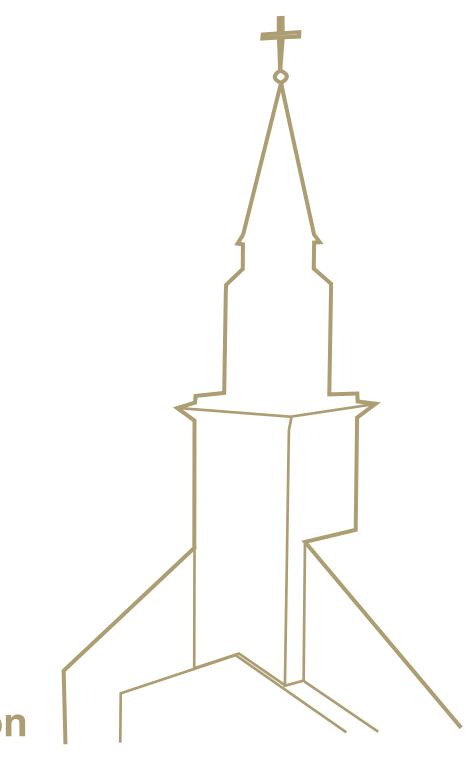
This document summarises the outputs of these stages, and brings together the results along with the initial development options to settle on and provide a rationale for the preferred Campus Development Plan.

This document is being submitted to the Vale of the White Horse District Council for endorsement. Further information pertaining to the wider environmental studies, consultation outputs and the initial work is contained in the Supporting Documentation.

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## 1.1 Introducing the Site

Oxford Brookes University's Harcourt Hill Campus is the home of the Westminster Institute of Education. The original Westminster College, founded in 1851, was relocated from London to its current site in Oxford in the 1950's. The College was incorporated into Oxford Brookes University in 2000, forming the Westminster Institute of Education.

Harcourt Hill is a wooded ridge rising up from the Thames Valley floodplain and lying approximately 2.5 km south-west of the city centre of Oxford. To the north and west are the built-up areas of Botley and Cumnor Hill respectively, and to the south is Boars Hill. The Campus lies at the top of the ridge, to the south

and west of the wooded escarpment. Parts of the campus are visible from the surrounding landscape and from Oxford city centre, where the Chapel spire forms a part of the landscape setting of the city.

The A34 trunk road, which forms part of the Oxford Ring Road, runs along the foot of the ridge, to the north east of the campus. The site is approached via Harcourt Hill Road, which leads off both the A34, and the A420 between Oxford and Swindon.

A concise history of the campus along with a précis of the accommodation on site and a photographic survey is contained in the Supporting Documentation.

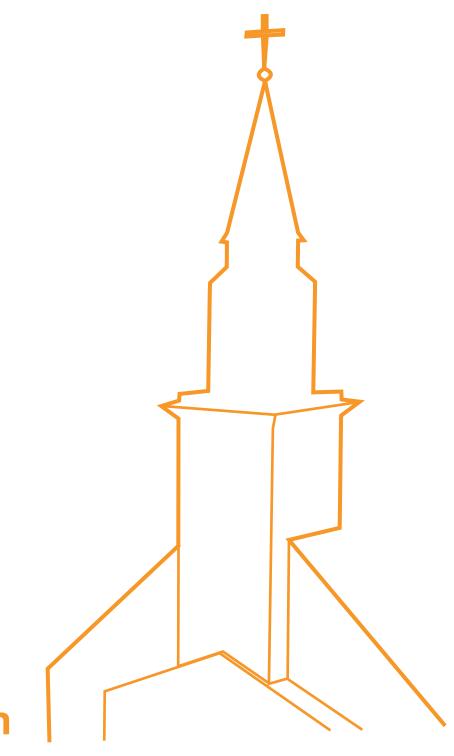




# 1 Introduction



Fig 1. Harcourt Hill Campus and the Surrounding Area



**2 Background Information** 

### 2.1 Strategic Aims

Oxford Brookes University is undertaking a £110 million improvement of its estate over the course of the next 10-15 years. This programme is key to the University's strategic aim to become one of the best universities in the UK.

The University is aware that much of the accommodation on the Harcourt Hill Campus is below standard as teaching space or as residential accommodation, is inefficiently laid out and has high running costs. For this reason, many of the buildings on the campus are in need of either modernisation or replacement.

The incremental growth that has occurred on the Campus since its original development in the 1950's has resulted in an unattractive and illegible campus environment, with poor quality spaces between the buildings. This belies the attractiveness and architectural composure of the original Westminster College buildings, which still remain at its core, as well as its characteristic and high quality landscape setting.

In order for the University to take full advantage of the Harcourt Hill campus as one of its key assets, physical improvement of both the accommodation and external environment on the campus is required.

# 2.2 Planning Policy Context

The most significant planning policy issue affecting Harcourt Hill Campus is its designation as a Major Developed Site in the Green Belt in the Vale of White Horse Local Plan (2011). Redevelopment of the campus should have no greater impact than the existing development on the openness of the Green Belt. Any redevelopment should be consistent with appropriate comprehensive long term plans for the site, which contribute to the achievement of the objectives for the use of land in Green Belts.

The Local Plan Green Belt Policy allows the University to cater for an increase in student numbers and enable the modernisation and improvement of the facilities.

Partial rather than complete redevelopment would be permitted. New buildings should not

- exceed the height of existing buildings
- lead to a major increase in the developed proportion of the site
- occupy a larger area of the site than the existing buildings (unless this would achieve a reduction in height, which would benefit visual amenity)
- have an adverse impact on the landscape

Further details of the planning context of the site are contained in the Supporting Documentation.

### 2.3 The Scope of the Commission

In the November 2007 document two development options, based on a physical analysis of the site and an appraisal of client requirements, were produced. These two development options are shown in figures 2 and 3. Full details of the analysis and development of the options are contained in the Supporting Documentation.

West Waddy ADP were asked by the University to coordinate a process that would result in the submission of a preferred Campus Development Plan, based on the earlier options. The initial advice from West Waddy ADP was that a critical path of processes must be undertaken in order to be in a position to put forward such a Plan.

#### 2.4 Consultation

A two-stage consultation process was designed to accord with the Vale of the White Horse District Council Statement of Community Involvement.

The first stage set out the strategic goals for improvement at the campus, and offered the two development options as 'models' for taking physical change on the site forward. The emphasis of the first event was on the general physical approach rather than detailed plans. The earlier options showed basic land use, general building height and major constraints on development. It was held internally for staff and students. The consultation exercise generated comments on the two models and identified a preferred model of the two.

# **2 Background Information**

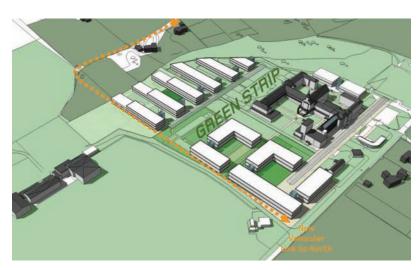


Fig 2. Initial Development Option 1

The second stage put forward more detailed options for taking the preferred model forward. These concentrated on four key aspects of site planning

- access and circulation
- general massing and form
- landscape and spaces
- the location of main uses and activities.

The consultation was held in public. From this, an approach to the preferred model was determined and taken forward for more detailed site planning. The more detailed work took into consideration all of the comments raised during the consultation process.

# 2.5 Strategic Appraisal

A scoping report was put forward to the Vale of the White Horse in order to agree any further appraisal material that would be required to accompany the Campus Development Plan. Discussions concluded that a full SEA was not required.

It was agreed however that the following pieces of work should be undertaken to bolster the evidence base provided through the original document, and that these, along with the results of the consultation process, should inform the development of the preferred Campus Development Plan



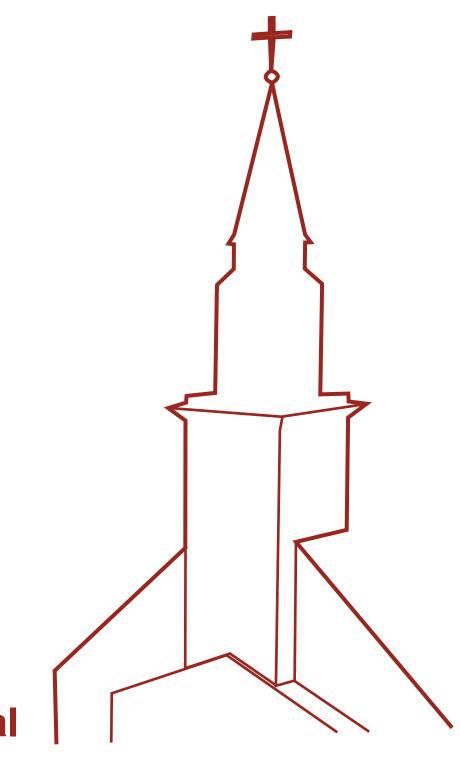
Fig 3. Initial Development Option 2

- a visual assessment of the site and preferred option
- a landscape assessment of the site and preferred option
- a comprehensive tree survey of the site
- a Sustainability Statement which would set out the approach that the University intends to take with respect to
  - archaeology
  - drainage & flood risk
  - ecology
  - transport
  - energy & resource conservation.

# 2.6 Production of the Campus Development Plan

The two processes outlined above were undertaken ahead of commencing a preferred Campus Development Plan. The final Plan contained herein has thus been informed by

- the client brief
- the consultation process
- the strategic appraisal work
- the general physical appraisal of the site, and
- planning policy.



## 3.1 Site Analysis

The document of November 2007 (see Supporting Documentation) produced a physical appraisal of the Harcourt Hill site.

The appraisal work covered the following

- · uses of buildings on the site
- · built areas and the condition of buildings
- approaches to the site
- open spaces within the campus
- existing use areas
- suggested demolitions
- environment (views, sun path, wind)
- movement and parking.

Extracts from the analysis plans are shown in figures 4 - 11.

## 3.2 Landscape Assessment

A landscape assessment of the site has been carried out by Land and Landscape Management Ltd. A full copy of the report is contained in the Supporting Documentation.

The report explains that the original set of College buildings are important features of the landscape character of the area. They are characterised by their symmetry and architectural composure, with the strong focal point of the Chapel building as a centrepiece.

The designed landscape is a strong aspect of the original College layout, with highly composed quads leading into the broader and less formal landscape. On the wider scale, it is probable that the Chapel was located and designed to create a purposeful visual link with Oxford's spires. However, incremental growth has disrupted the symmetry of the layout and obscured its legibility. This has created a disorienting and confusing campus that is not easy to find your way round.

The campus is characterised by many green spaces, punctuated with mature trees, hedgerows and shrubs. Whilst individual components are often well looked after, the landscape overall has suffered from a lack of renewal, and incremental and illegible development has led to many of the green spaces being under used and under exploited as a facility for staff and students. This is far removed from the original vision and design intent of the college complex: of buildings highly integrated into their landscape setting.



Fig 5. Existing building areas and conditions



Fig 6. Gateways

Fig 7. Open spaces

Fig 4. Uses

# 3 Site Appraisal

In summary, the report recommends that the redevelopment of Harcourt Hill represents a positive opportunity to strengthen and enhance the landscape setting of the campus, and to secure a quality landscape and external environment for the campus. It recommends that a landscape framework for the site should be produced to show how the following have been considered

- circulation and access including pedestrian, cycle and vehicular movement
- opportunities for additional tree and hedge planting
- any existing trees to be retained
- the character and quality of the designed landscape of the campus
- the role and character of ornamental planting within the campus.

A landscape management plan and a tree protection plan for the period during construction will be required at a later date.

#### 3.3 Visual Assessment

A visual assessment of the site has been carried out by Land and Landscape Management Ltd. A full copy of the report is contained in the Supporting Documentation.

The report explains that the campus is located upon the crest of Harcourt Hill, and is thus physically prominent in the local landscape (see Landscape Assessment, above). This also means that the site itself has potentially a good aspect over the surrounding landscape.

The visual prospect of the campus is shown in the Zone of Visual Influence (ZVI) map (figure 3 in the report). The ZVI is closely contained to the north and northwest by landform. In other directions, where the ZVI might otherwise be broad and expansive, it is kept to a minimum by a localised screening effect created by trees, buildings and hedgerows. This is particularly the case to the east and south-east. From further out, there are views over Thames Valley and from the ridge of the Chiltern Hills toward the site, although the effect of distance makes the campus imperceptible.

Therefore the ZVI of the campus is mainly restricted to a southwesterly view cone defined by Cumnor Hill and Youlbury Wood, and a low lying area on the valley floor to the east between the Hinksey Stream and the edge of the build-up area of Oxford (New Botley, Osney and Grandpont). In addition to this, certain key views of the site can be seen from a few specific street-level points in the city centre.



Fig 8. Existing campus layout

Fig 9. Suggested demolitions

Fig 10. Environmental conditions

Fig 11. Movement

Locally, the most effected residential areas are likely to be at The Denes, Little Dene, the top of Yarnells Hill and Lime Road. The site is visible from a number of rights of way but only occasionally as the views are often filtered or blocked by trees, hedges and buildings. There are more prominent views from several recreation grounds in the area, specifically Osney, Grandpont and Hinksey Heights Golf Course.

In summary, and not withstanding other environmental or community aspirations, the report recommends

- roof heights should be kept to a minimum especially on higher parts of the site. They should be lower than the Chapel roof
- light and shiny materials for surface finishes would be more visually prominent than darker matt finishes
- the landscape framework for the site should include also proposals to filter and screen buildings from the most sensitive locations – the residential areas noted above, Boars Hill / Hinksey Hill, and along the southern and western boundary
- the opportunity of opening up a sightline over the city should be carefully considered

A landscape framework to address landscape and visual recommendations has been guided by the results of the report, and accompanies the Campus Development Plan. It is shown in Figure 17.

A Visual Assessment and a Landscape Assessment of the proposed Campus Development Plan are contained in the original Land and Landscape Management reports (Appendicies 3 & 4).

## 3.4 Tree Survey

A tree survey of the site has been carried out by Land and Landscape Management Ltd. A full copy of the report is contained in the Supporting Documentation. The report identifies and assesses each tree on the site and recommends that removal of trees be kept to a minimum. Where possible, tree cover on the campus should be increased or enhanced. A list of affected trees that would be removed as part of the proposals is contained in the supporting documentation.

### 3.5 Sustainability Statement

The Supporting Documentation contains an accompanying Sustainability Statement for the Campus Development Plan. This contains clarifications and commitments to minimising environmental impact through the redevelopment of the campus. Aspects that have a critical impact on the design of the Campus Plan are

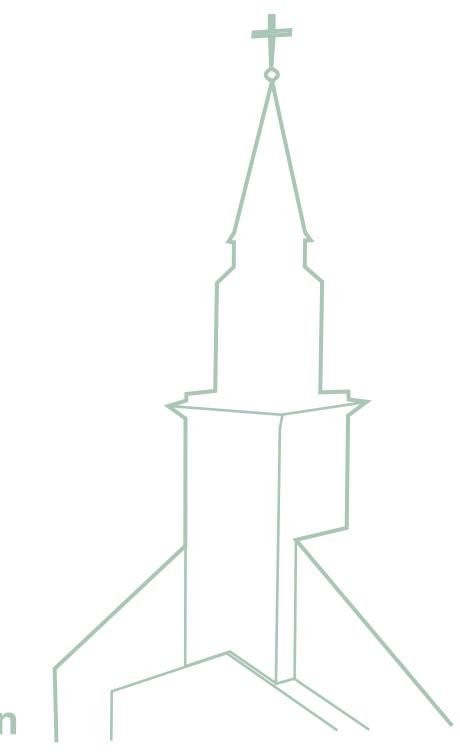
- provision of improved bus and cycle facilities on the site
- potential for ecological and biodiversity enhancement on the campus site.

Figure 12 summarises the main constraints created for the site in terms of the findings of the Visual and Landscape Assessments and the Tree Survey.

# **3 Site Appraisal**



Fig 12. Issues arising from the Landscape and Visual Assessments



### 4.1 The Consultation Process

The consultation process took place in two stages. The first stage event took the form of an exhibition of the initial development options along with a questionnaire. It was held only with staff and students of the University. At this stage, the proposals took the form of two 'models' that were based on the development options put forward within the November 2007 document. The emphasis at this stage was on the general use of the site in terms of

- the location of main buildings
- the location of certain uses and activities
- the general environmental character of the campus
- a notion of probable building heights.

There were no explicit proposals showing building footprints or circulation. Overall, 'Model One' was preferred by the most number of respondents. (See figure 13).

The second stage event was open to members of the public as well as staff and students. Two options to delivering Model One were put forward, of which 'Option Two' found most favour. This is shown in figure 14. The options took into account options for circulation and movement, and aspects of the physical character of development - particularly where the most important elevations would be, the location of landmarks, key views and the character and nature of links through and to the campus.

In addition to settling on 'Model One – Option Two' as a preferred way forward, the responses created reccomendations for more detailed consideration (for a full list of recommendations, refer to Supporting Documentation)

- · create an attractive and welcoming entrance and pedestrian area
- locate sports facilities near student accommodation
- retain the chapel and other essential accommodation around the quad area. Consider whether the space within the chapel could be put to an alternative use

- consider the cultural implications of the retention of the chapel in terms of the diverse nature of the student and staff population
- careful consideration should be given to the new access point in the north west side of the site as there is both clear support for and objections to this proposal
- incorporate a pedestrian and cycle walkway into the Campus Plan.
- include a multi-functional exhibition space
- incorporate a new bus stop and drop off area and better facilities for the Brookes Bus
- integrate the sports facilities more successfully into the rest of the campus and particularly close to the new student accommodation
- investigate the possibility of increasing parking on the site and identify the implications of this on the Green Belt
- locate the accommodation in the north but take particular care regarding the relationship of the new accommodation buildings with residential dwellings to the north
- ensure that the green space is safe, well maintained and sensitively landscaped
- propose buildings that are between two and three storeys but have regard to potential impacts when considering three storey buildings
- consider accommodating an increased number of students on the site but take care in relation to the massing of new buildings
- consider whether to keep accommodation for the undergraduates and postgraduates physically separate in order to take into account different lifestyles.

The following sections of this report will show how the results of the consultation stages have been combined with the strategic appraisal work to influence the strategic direction of the preferred Campus Development Plan. A detailed consultation report has been produced for each consultation exercise summarising the outcomes. A third consultation report then provides an overall summary and analyses the outcomes. These reports can be found in the Supporting Documentation.

# **4 Consultation**

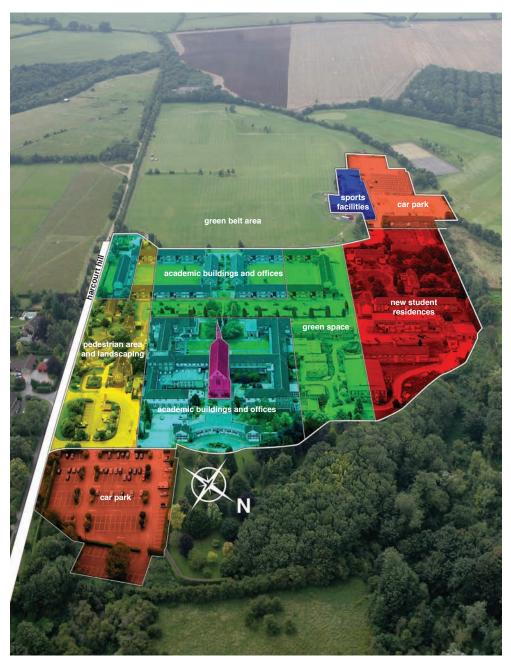


Fig 13. Stage One Consultation, preferred model - Model One (based on Option One)

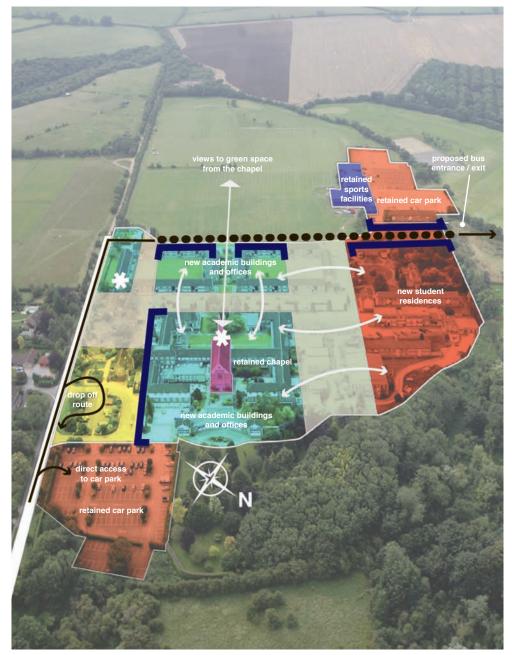
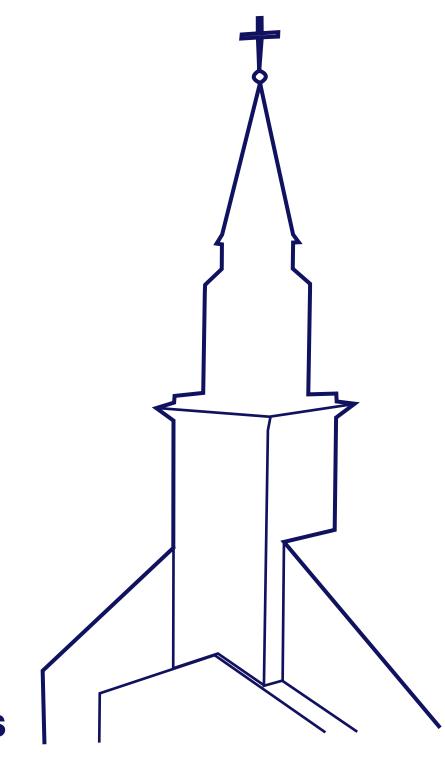


Fig 14. Stage Two Consultation, preferred option - Option Two



### 5.1 The Vision

The Opportunities and Constraints plan (figure 15) contained in this section is based on a consolidation of the following baseline evidence

- the physical appraisal of the site carried out in November 2007
- Additional physical survey work carried out by the West Waddy ADP design team
- the Visual Assessment of the site
- the Landscape Assessment of the site
- the site Tree Survey
- the results of the two-stage consultation process
- additional environmental aspects summarised in the Sustainability Statement
- planning policy summary.

Full details of the baseline evidence can be found in the supporting documentation.

The plan aims to summarise those aspects of the baseline evidence that have a physical implication for the site, and sets them out on the site in terms of physical constraints or opportunities for the final Campus Development Plan.

Five strategic aims have been established to accompany the Campus Plan. These were put forward in the consultation events.

- Creating a campus that is easy to find your way around.
- 2. Creating a campus that is attractive and enjoyable to live, work and study in.
- 3. Ensuring there is minimal negative impact on the surrounding landscape and Green Belt.
- 4. Ensuring that the campus develops in a coherent and logical manner creating buildings and spaces that are linked to each other in terms of design and appearance.
- 5. Ensuring that issues surrounding transport, parking and access are carefully considered.

#### Key to Figure 15

- A green 'corridor' to link residential areas to academic. Potential to open views to the Oxford City skyline. High quality green space for informal recreation. Additional tree planting.
- Retention of the original college buildings, with some infilling. Use as academic space.
- New high quality public arrival and drop-off area, containing a high quality bus environment. Cycle parking and potential for retail unit(s) and cafe. Glimpses through a new atrium space to the quad.
- 4 Potential new double height atrium space as a formal arrival and reception point.
- New academic area. Maximum 2 storey development on high ridge point. Maintain composed views of Chapel and quad. Variety of large and small footprint buildings. Double height exhibition space at high point with mezzanine level to provide views over the landscape and Oxford city skyline. Minimal loss of trees.
- 6 Location for new grounds and buildings maintenance facility.
- New controlled gateway for bus access. Bus stops to serve residential area and sports facilities.
- New residential accommodation to undergraduate and postgraduate students. This will replace the existing number of student residences. Cycle parking arranged in 'quads' with small enclosed gardens. Some trees may be removed and replaced.

# **5 Opportunities and Constraints**

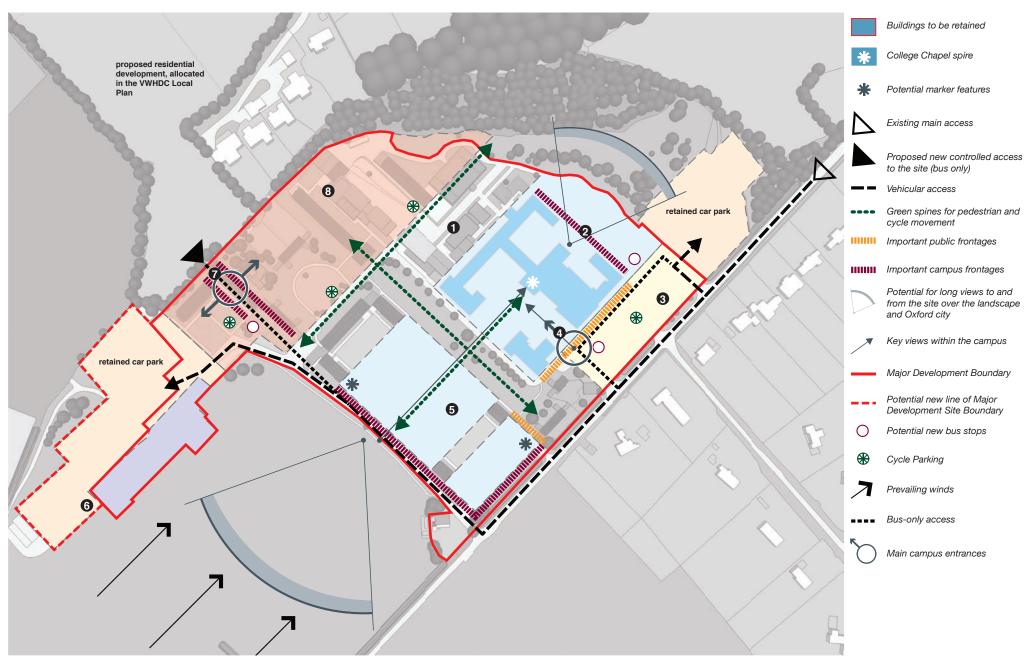
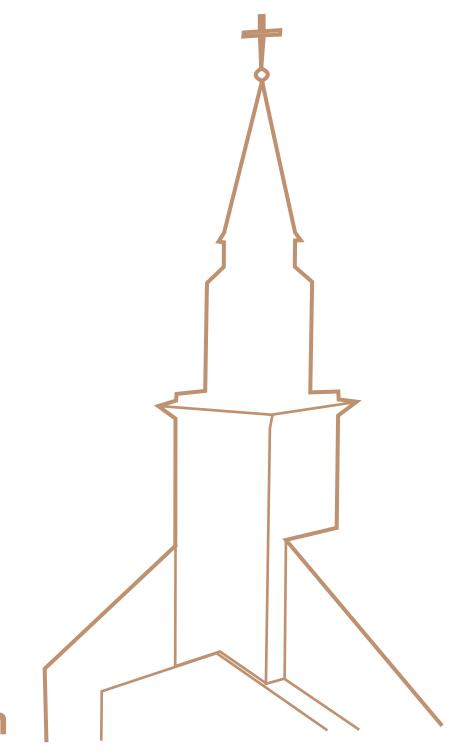


Fig 15. Key Opportunities and Constraints



### 6.1 Campus Development Plan

The Campus Development Plan is shown in figure 16. The Plan brings together the constraints and oppportunities established through the baseline evidence and applies them to the preferred Model and Option that was established through the consultation process. Figure 16 identifies the key aspects of the plan.

The actual building footprints are indicative and subject to modification at detailed design stage. There will be no increase in overall footprint. There will be a decrease in academic floor area. No new building will be higher than existing buildings. There will be no change in the number of residences. There will be no change to the parking provision.

The sections that follow flesh out more of the details in terms of landscape structure, accommodation schedule and phasing.

### 6.2 Landscape Framework

The Landscape and Visual Assessments have highlighted the need for a Landscape Framework to accompany the Campus Development Plan to show

- how some negative impacts of the proposals will be made acceptable through mitigation
- which proposals will strengthen and enhance the landscape setting of the campus
- how an integrated, multi-modal movement and access strategy will contribute to providing more and better alternatives to car based travel, and
- how the design intent for key spaces will contribute to creating a high quality, stimulating and successful campus environment.

The Landscape Framework is shown in figure 17. In summary, the key aspects are as follows

- roof heights have been kept to a maximum 2 storeys in the most sensitive part of the site i.e. those points that are visible from the valley floor at Osney and Grandpont, and from the high points between Cumnor Hill and Youlbury Wood
- a circulation strategy provides a high quality and integrated pedestrian, bus and cycle environment to assist in promoting sustainable forms of travel. This includes the potential new bus access from the north and additional drop-off close to the sports facilities and residential accommodation
- shelter planting has been placed where neighbouring dwellings are affected (see figure 16)

### Key to Figure 16

- Future bus only access.
- Additional shelter planting to protect residential amenity.
- New double height atrium with views through to quad.
- Possible retail / cafe frontage with small square adjacent, opposite to bus stop. Publicly accessible from
- High quality bus environment, visitor parking and cycle parking.
- High capacity cycle park.
- Marker building visible from main approach. Possible retail / cafe use at ground floor, which would be open to the public and accesible from Harcourt Hill road.
- Smaller floorplate academic spaces.
- Larger floorplate academic spaces.
- Double height exhibition space with views out to the Chapel, Oxford City skyline and the western landscape.

  Long elevation provides shelter from prevailing wind.
- Avenue of trees to replace those lost and to provide filtering along a sensitive elevation.
- Additional bus stop adjacent to sports facilities and residences.
- Maintenance facility

# **6 Campus Development Plan**



Fig 16. Campus Development Plan - 3D view from the south west.

- new sightlines have been suggested to open out views over the western landscape, and over the city's skyline to re-establish the intended visual link
- locations for biodiversity enhancement have been identified
- the nature and character of outdoor spaces within the campus have been explained, as well as the role they will play in the campus environment.
- most of the trees will be retained. A number of trees in the proposed residential area will be removed to achieve a viable development site, and replacement planting will mitigate the loss of the most valuable specimens. The intensity of development in this location makes the preservation of large and purposeful areas of open green space in other locations possible, such as the green corridor. Replacement tree planting will take place in these locations.

# **6.3 Assessment of Impact Upon Trees**

The vast majority of trees and all hedgerows will be retained in the Campus Plan.

As a result of development 8 category 'B' trees, 28 category 'C' trees and 2 category 'R' trees will be affected. The Plan has avoided the loss of any category 'A' trees. The Landscape Framework shows the general locations of new trees that will be planted in the green corridor to mitigate the loss of the category 'B' trees.

Visual and Landscape Impact Assessments of the Campus Plan and a list of the affected trees are contained in the Supporting Documentation.

# **6 Campus Development Plan**



Fig 17. Landscape Framework

# 6.4 Accommodation and Phasing of Whole Site

Floor area figures are expressed in gross internal floor areas (GIA). The figures are indicative and may change slightly at detailed design stage. Figures for proposed floor areas are based on the maximum storey heights shown. Parking is to remain as existing.

Accommodation	GIA sq.m			
Academic and admin floor space (retained)	6,000			
Academic and admin floor space (proposed)				
Site 3	2,000			
Site 4	550			
Site 6	3,000			
Residential floor space (retained)	0			
Residential floor space (proposed)				
Site 1	2,000			
Site 2	8,150			
Site 5	2,400			
Ancillary buildings				
Entrance lobby (L)	250			
Exhibition space (E)	380			
Sports centre	1,420			
Maintenance facility	320			
Total	26,470			
(All existing buildings currently total	21,731)			

The proposed increase would all arise from improvements to facilities in the replacement residential accommodation. It is not intended to increase room numbers or academic floorspace on the campus.

A general phasing plan would be as follows

### Phase One

Demolition of:

Site A

Construction of:

Sites 1 & 2 (residential)

### Phase Two

Demolition of:

- Site B
- Site C
- Site D

### Construction of:

- Entrance lobby (L)
- Arrival area
- Green corridor phase 1
- Maintenance facility (M)

## **Phase Three**

Demolition of:

- Site E
- Site F

### Construction of:

- Site 5 (residential)
- Site 6 (academic)
- Exhibition space (E)
- Green spine
- Green corridor phase 2

# **6 Campus Development Plan**

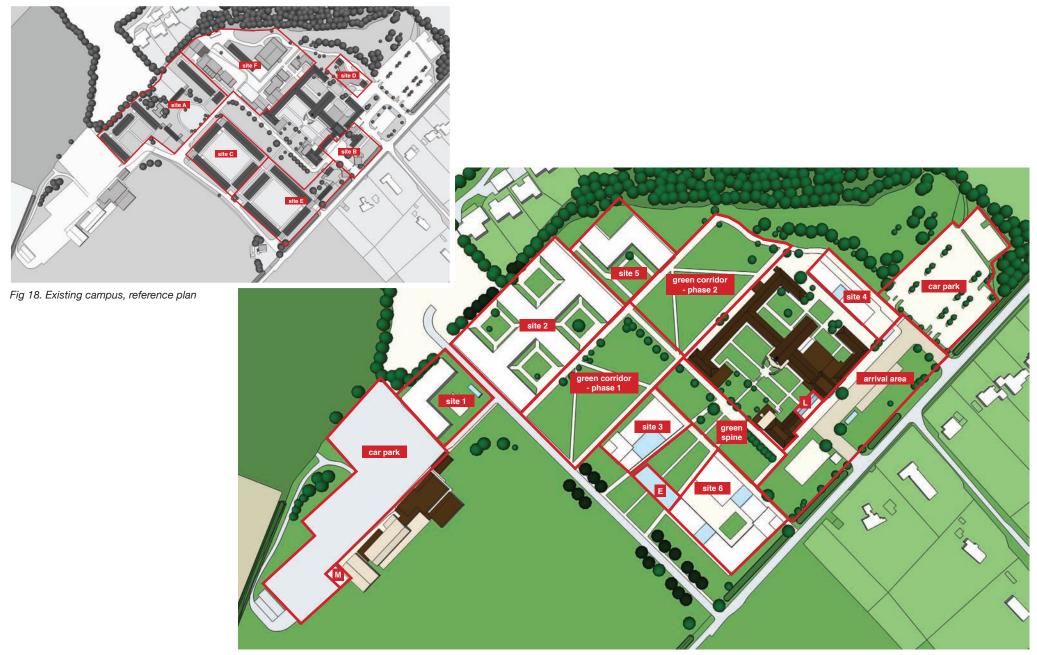
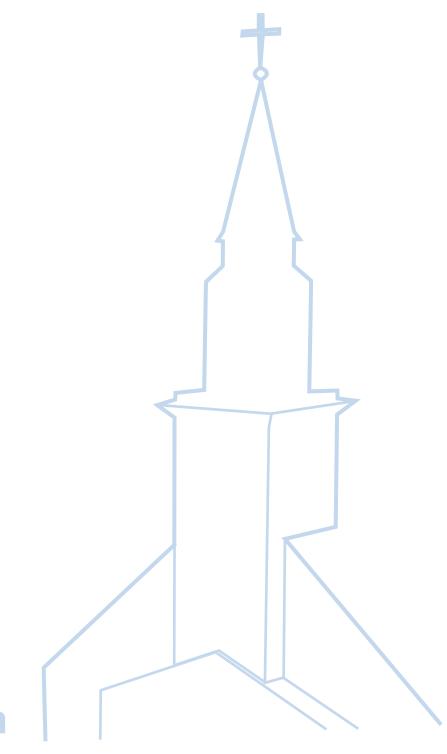


Fig 19. Development plots



**Supporting Documentation** 

### Supporting documentation:

- 1. Harcourt Hill Campus Analysis and Options (November 2007) RMJM
- 2. Strategy Environmental Assessment / Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report (November 2007) West Waddy ADP
- Letter from Vale of White Horse District Council dated 5th December 2007, relating to Campus Plan for Harcourt Hill Campus and associated Strategic Environmental Assessment.
- 4. Tree Assessment (January 2008) Land and Landscape Management Ltd
- 5. List of affected trees (March 2008) West Waddy ADP
- 6. Visual Assessment (March 2008) Land and Landscape Management Ltd
- 7. Landscape Assessment (March 2008) Land and Landscape Management Ltd
- 8. 1st Consultation Summary Document Oxford Brookes University Harcourt Hill Campus
- 2nd Consultation Summary Document Oxford Brookes University Harcourt Hill Campus
- 10. Consultation Summary Document (April 2008) West Waddy ADP
- 11. Planning Policy Summary West Waddy ADP
- 12. Planning Policy Statement West Waddy ADP
- 13. Sustainability Statement for Harcourt Hill Campus Development Plan (April 2008) West Waddy ADP

#### Other references:

- Letter dated 17 September 2007 from Oxfordshire County Sites and Monuments Record Officer
- Oxfordshire Conservation Target Areas Mapping Project Report (July 2006)
   Thames Valley Environmental Records Centre
- Sustainable Buildings Standard Policy Framework (February 2007) Oxford Brookes University Estates and Facilities Management
- Sustainable Travel Plan 2006-2010 Oxford Brookes University