



Richard Waterson
Lambert Smith Hampton
Midland House
Botley
Oxford
OX2 0PH

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Our Ref: CD/GG/41

Dear Richard,

BRBR LAND – OXPENS, OXFORD

Please find below our comments on the planning factors which are likely to prove influential on the development of the above land in the short to medium term. I am aware of the Guidance Note prepared jointly by the City and County Councils which is also to be included in the published marketing information and this letter aims not to duplicate its content. The Guidance Note, when referring to the Oxpens Site, is largely referencing the wider area of land between the railway and Oxpens Road and not solely the BRBR Site. The other land comprised in the overall "Oxpens" site is primarily owned by the City Council (this includes the existing coach park and skating rink) and Royal Mail. The Guidance Note also looks wider than Oxpens to the West End as a whole when advising on the range of uses and facilities the Councils might expect from redevelopment in this part of central Oxford.

The BRBR Site at Oxpens is a substantial area (3.2 ha) of brownfield land and, perhaps, the only major undeveloped site of this nature in central Oxford. As noted, the balance of the wider Oxpens site is primarily owned by the City Council and Royal Mail comprising some 2.4 ha, producing a total site area for the defined Oxpens site of 5.6 ha (identified as site 17). The City is extremely popular for living, working, tourism and education but has widespread constraints to the accommodation of growth in this area by virtue of its high calibre and internationally regarded heritage environment. In this constrained context the BRBR site represents a key opportunity for growth in the central area.

This is recognised in the adopted West End Area Action Plan (WEAAP) which identifies the Oxpens site as the largest development site in the Plan area and as a Major Area of Change. The Core Strategy (adopted March 2011) focuses new development on previously developed land and also highlights the West End as a strategic location for development. Its regeneration is expected to be "fundamental" to the overall long term success of Oxford and is seen as an "urgent priority". This is illustrated in the City Council's decision to push forward

the WEAAP in advance of the Core Strategy. The WEAAP has a Plan period to 2016 and it remains a priority for the Council to achieve the AAP aims in the next few years.

The AAP provides advice on indicative uses for the Oxpens site as a whole which are;

- Priority or main uses:
 - Houses
 - Public offices
 - Hotels
 - Conference facility
 - Leisure
 - Public space
 - Community energy

- Secondary or other appropriate uses
 - Offices
 - Amenities for housing
 - Museums

- Uses appropriate as minor elements:
 - Flats
 - Food & Drink

The BRBR site is suitable for a variety of uses given its highly sustainable location relative to public transport and local facilities and its position within the central area. The large size of the site, however, means that the City Council will require redevelopment to comprise more than one use.

In terms of appropriate uses, residential development is expected to deliver a mix of accommodation with at least 50% being houses. The Council's aim is to achieve family units and schemes should deliver houses of 3, 4 and 5 bedrooms and at least half of any flats should have 2 bedrooms.

Higher densities are considered acceptable given the site's central location (subject to protecting the environment and heritage qualities of the City) and the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) Update 2010 notes the estimated capacity of the overall Oxpens site (No. 17 in the WEAAP) as 240 residential units. The SHLAA also notes the housing at Oxpens as being deliverable within the 5 year period 2010-2015 - more precisely, 2014/2015.

Office development is seen as an appropriate use at Oxpens, in particular for occupation by the City and County Councils, although this particular need may no longer exist. Other office floorspace is limited to 15,000m² across the West End although it is recognised as an appropriate secondary use at Oxpens. It may emerge that the City Council owned part of the Oxpens site is reserved for public sector offices whilst the need for the accommodation remains a possibility, with offices for other users incorporated into the redevelopment of the BRBR land holding.

Further in respect of commercial development, the WEAAP notes Oxpens as the preferred location for a new hotel. This is assumed to be of about 150 bedrooms and of 4 or 5 star grading, although the planning authority will need to have regard to operator requirements and market demand in assessing alternative hotel proposals. It should be borne in mind however, that the hotel's role is seen as acting as "a catalyst to revive this corner of the West End".

A conference facility is also seen as an appropriate use for the Oxpens site – possibly in association with the hotel – but this is not a firm requirement and the site is not safeguarded for such use.

Leisure is also identified as one of the indicative priority uses but the Councils' Guidance Note makes clear that, whilst not excluded, leisure uses are not a firm requirement of the redevelopment of Oxpens given that the Ice Rink is now to remain following completion of its refurbishment.

Overall, the BRBR land has the potential for a range of development options subject to a mix of uses being provided. The site has a direct frontage onto the River Thames which, subject to flooding considerations, is capable of being capitalised upon. The nearby public open space at Oxpens Field would further add to the attractiveness of this part of the site for a variety of uses.

Vehicular access is currently available from Osney Lane with links to Oxpens Road to be provided in future as part of the redevelopment of the road frontage land within the Oxpens site allocation. The WEAAP aims for a network of new roads, footpaths and cycle routes through the BRBR land, with external links, which would bring activity into the site and enhance awareness of its content as well as creating new street frontages with a suitable public profile for commercial uses.

The planning context of the BRBR land has no restrictions on immediate development subject to satisfying all technical matters. The Core Strategy and AAP see the regeneration of the West End as an urgent priority which should support a positive response to development proposals on the site, as should the fact that it is a brownfield site in a highly sustainable location. There is also a shortage of development land in Oxford and it is assumed that Oxpens will deliver new homes by 2014/2015.

I hope the above provides the necessary information and if you need anything further or any greater detail I will be pleased to help.

Yours sincerely



Caroline Dawson
PLANNING POTENTIAL