Oxford Brookes has met with a number of community representatives to discuss the expected process of withdrawing from Wheatley Campus and to explore early considerations for residential redevelopment of the site.

Oxford Brookes attracts some of the highest calibre staff and students entering Higher Education. The University plays a vital role in the local community, providing an often significant proportion of the county’s highly skilled workforce in areas such as nursing, architecture and engineering. In order to continue to fulfill this role, it is essential that the University can continue to provide the best possible experience for its students and staff.

In order to achieve this, the University’s Board of Governors has approved a ten year estates investment plan which includes a significant programme of refurbishment activity, some redevelopment projects and the intention to move all teaching, research and support activity from the Wheatley Campus.

The University currently has three Oxford-based campuses and more estate than it needs. The condition of the wider estate is well below that of the sector average. Some of the oldest and least fit for purpose accommodation is at Wheatley Campus.

The move from, and sale of, the Wheatley Campus will enable the University to focus its investment on two campuses, reduce maintenance costs and create a more efficient estate. Staff and students will benefit in more opportunity for interdisciplinary academic work in transformational new spaces.

Oxford Brookes charitable status means it has an obligation to achieve best value for the site. This is likely to involve the redevelopment of the site for housing and the University is pursuing this option.

It is currently expected University activity at Wheatley Campus will cease by 2021/22.
Background

SITE HISTORY

Parkland Phase (Pre 20th Century)

Prior to the 20th Century, the site was part of a deer park, related to Holton Park, a medieval manor house demolished and replaced by the existing Georgian house in the 1800s.

The moated site, now a Scheduled Monument, is the only evidence of built development within the site prior to the mid-20th Century. The date and origin of the moated site is unknown, but is likely to have been a post-mill or moated dovecote.

Hospital Phase (1940s-1960s)

A hospital was constructed on the site in the 1940s and its use continued into the 1960s.

Two rows of cottages in the west of the site, likely to have been constructed in the 1950s as part of the hospital, remain on the site.

Education Phase (1960s - Present)

The hospital closed in the 1960s and the eastern part of the site was developed for Lady Spencer Churchill College of Education. This institution merged with Oxford Polytechnic (now Oxford Brookes University) in 1974.

The core of existing university buildings date back to the Churchill College era, laid out in 1965-6. Numerous new buildings have been replaced and added to the extensive built form on the site since the 1960s.

RESIDENTIAL PHASE (2018)
EMERGING SODC LOCAL PLAN

South Oxfordshire District Council is developing a new Local Plan that sets out the vision for South Oxfordshire up to 2033. It identifies where housing, retail and employment land should be located and the infrastructure required to support this growth.

Policy STRAT10 – “Land at Wheatley Campus, Oxford Brookes University” refers specifically to the site and confirms that it is a proposed strategic allocation for housing and the draft policy lists the following objectives for redevelopment.

Policy STRAT10 – Land at Wheatley Campus
Proposals to develop land at Wheatley Campus will be expected to deliver:

i. A scheme of appropriate scale and layout in a form that respects the listed building and its setting
ii. A layout and form which provides an appropriate buffer to protect the scheduled monument
iii. The retention of existing sports pitches in the north west of the site
iv. High quality public transport facilities and connections within and adjacent to the site
v. Investigation and mitigation by the developer of any contamination within the site through agreed remediation techniques
vi. A noise assessment including noise during construction and insulation of the development
vii. Appropriate vehicular, cycle and pedestrian access including safe and attractive connections with nearby communities
viii. Appropriate landscaping, including buffers along the A40 and an integrated network of green infrastructure.

The University is actively and positively engaged in the ongoing Local Plan preparation process.

EMERGING WHEATLEY NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Wheatley and Holton Parish Councils are developing a Neighbourhood Plan to guide future development and growth of the village. The emerging Neighbourhood Plan contemplates redevelopment of the campus site for housing. The University is engaging positively and proactively with the Neighbourhood Plan Committee.
LANDSCAPE & VISUAL

The site and immediate context lie within the Oxford Green Belt, on the edge of the village of Wheatley.

The southern boundary lies adjacent to the A40 which is well vegetated and provides screening of the site from the south.

The north of the site is bound by a line of mature trees and shrubby vegetation, providing screening from the north and separating the site from the adjacent agricultural land.

The moated site (Scheduled Monument) will be incorporated within the green infrastructure, retaining visual connectivity with the listed building to the north west of the site.

Due to the nature of existing development which includes a number of large buildings, the proposed development will be significantly less visible in the surrounding context.

Volumetric modelling has captured the scale of existing buildings and demonstrates their prominence in the landscape. This has shown the volume of existing building development is 125,000m³.

ECOLOGY & TREES

A Phase 1 Habitat Survey was carried out in 2016, identifying a number of priority habitats including grasslands, ponds and hedgerows. Various protected species were also recorded, including bats, badgers, great crested newts, and nesting birds.

An appropriate survey programme was agreed with South Oxfordshire District Council (SODC) and is ongoing. Results are being incorporated into the design process, including necessary standoffs and mitigation.

Tree Preservation Order 35/2005 covers the site. A full tree survey was carried out in 2016, which set out the varied nature and condition of the trees.

The survey has informed the design process, with the proposal retaining key belts of trees and seeking to reinforce these with additional planting where appropriate.

FLOOD RISK & DRAINAGE

The site is located within Flood Zone 1 (at low risk of river flooding) although the area is at medium risk of surface water flooding. The scheme will include sustainable drainage solutions, reducing surface water flood risk on and off site. This is likely to be based on a system of soakaways.

TRANSPORT & CONNECTIVITY

The University campus currently has a single point of access.

A new access road was recently constructed which can be extended into the site from the west.

The provision of the new access road will allow direct access to the strategic road network via Holton Turn, without the need to travel through Wheatley village. This will also disperse traffic on the network and ease pressure on other local roads.

Within the site, streets will be designed to make walking and cycling convenient and safe. Connections between the site and surrounding areas, including to nearby cycle routes will be maximised.
The Proposal

Site Boundary/Emerging Local Plan Allocation: 21.20Ha

Proposed Residential Development: 11.88Ha (up to 600 dwellings at a site-wide density of approximately 30 dwellings per hectare)

Vehicular and Pedestrian Accesses:
1: Existing access off Waterperry Road
2: Proposed access road

Proposed Primary Street

Proposed Secondary Streets

Proposed Lanes

Proposed Private Drives

Existing Scheduled Monument

Existing vegetation: includes trees, woodland, hedgerows and scrub

Proposed Multifunctional Green Infrastructure (GI) (9.34Ha) includes:
- Retained habitats (trees, woodland, hedgerows, grassland, parkland & ponds)
- New habitat creation, open space (greenways, footway/cycle links, children’s play areas, outdoor sports provision), grassland/meadows, wetlands, trees/parkland
- SUDD (swales and basins)
- Retained Scheduled Monument and setting
- Retained settings to Old House
- Landscape buffer including structural planting to London Road A40

Proposed Tree Planting

Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems
Highlights of the Proposal

- Securing Wheatley's future housing needs for the development plan period and beyond.

- Up to 600 dwellings, of which up to 240 would be affordable (40%).

- Range of dwellings including terraced, semi-detached, and detached houses and apartments (up to 3 storeys).

- Affordable housing will include units suitable for individuals, couples, families, and senior citizens, with both social and low-cost housing.

- Appropriate parking provision for each type of dwelling.

- Retain and enhance green infrastructure provision including improvements to wildlife habitats, native tree planting, improvements to existing ponds, creation of wildflower meadows, and sustainable urban drainage systems.

- Improvements to pedestrian and cycling infrastructure within and beyond the site, including improved links to Wheatley village.

- Provision of a secondary vehicular access to the west of the site, enabling direct access to the A40 via Holton Turn, reducing the need to travel through Wheatley village.

- Provision of sports facilities. Advice of Sport England and local stakeholders will inform community sports provision. Facilities could include a cricket pitch, football pitch(es), and tennis courts.

- Financial contributions (Section 106 funding) to local infrastructure. This funding will contribute towards the enhancement and increased capacity of existing community facilities which could include education, healthcare and transport network.

- Full compliance with the development criteria listed in South Oxfordshire District Council’s emerging policy STRAT10 - Land at Wheatley Campus, Oxford Brookes University.

- Delivery of many of the objectives of the emerging Wheatley Neighbourhood Plan policy SP2 - WHE25.
The Next Steps

Following this event, the University and its team of consultants intends to:

- Collate and review feedback received from this event
- Continue to develop the proposals, with consideration of feedback
- Continue to engage with South Oxfordshire District Council in the promotion of the site as a residential allocation in the emerging Local Plan
- Continue to engage with the emerging Wheatley Neighbourhood Plan recognising the significance of the redevelopment of the site to the provisions of the emerging Plan
- Preparation of an outline planning application, including an Environmental Impact Assessment, for expected submission in summer 2017.

Your feedback is important.

Please take a moment to complete a comments form and post it in the box provided.

Alternatively, you can post the form back to us before Tuesday 4 July 2017 to the following address:

Space to Think (BCK.2.08)
Oxford Brookes University
Headington Campus
Oxford
OX3 0BP

Comments can also be submitted via email to: spacetothink@brookes.ac.uk