

Application Number	10/0822/FUL	Agenda Item	
Date Received	23rd August 2010	Officer	Mr John Evans
Target Date	18th October 2010		
Ward	Newnham		
Site	Whittle Laboratory Department Of Engineering 1 J J Thomson Avenue Cambridge Cambridgeshire CB3 0DY		
Proposal	Erection of two extensions to the Whittle Laboratory (laboratory extension to the west of existing laboratory and office extension to the east of the current office block).		
Applicant	C/o Michael Bienias RIBA Director Of Estte Management Trumpington St Cambridge CB2 1RW		

1.0 SITE DESCRIPTION/AREA CONTEXT

- 1.1 The West Cambridge Site is located close to the Western tip of the district and is a University of Cambridge, 66.9 hectare site allocated for higher education; the expectation is that it will provide for D1 University Faculty, B1b and sui generis research institute uses, staff and student housing, and sports and other shared facilities.
- 1.2 The area is allocated as Site 7.06 in the Cambridge Local Plan (2006) and has the benefit of outline planning approval for a Masterplan, granted in 1999, which dictates the uses and floorspace of those uses within each of the individual plots on the site. In 2004 the Local Planning Authority approved changes in a revision of the original Masterplan.
- 1.3 The site is bounded by Madingley Road to the north, the M11 to the west, residential properties to the east, and Green Belt land beyond the Coton footpath to the south. The proposed development, is at the Whittle Laboratory, a complex of

predominantly 2 storey research and office buildings to the north east of the campus, erected in 1970.

1.4 The site does not fall within a Conservation Area.

2.0 THE PROPOSAL

2.1 This application seeks consent for the erection of 2 new extensions to the existing Whittle Laboratory.

2.2 One is a 2-storey extension to the west of the existing High Speed Laboratory. It has a square shaped footprint totalling about 265 sqm and is of a modern design and appearance.

2.3 The second, smaller extension (approximately 150 sq m) is located to the east of the Whittle Laboratory and is a extension projecting east from the existing research offices, which has been designed to match the existing building.

2.4 The application is accompanied by the following supporting information:

1. Design and Access Statement
2. Ecological Survey
3. Acoustic Assessment

3.0 SITE HISTORY

Reference	Description
C/97/0961/OP	Outline application for the development of 66.45ha of land for University academic departments (73,000sq.m), research institutes (24,000sq.m), commercial research (41,000sq.m) and associated works
06/0830/REM	Infrastructure roadway, footway, cycleway, car parking, lighting, associated services including drainage and landscaping.
10/0315/REM	Phase 3 infrastructure works consisting of new access arrangements (extension of

Charles Babbage Road,
realignment of access road A),
car parking, new
pedestrian/cycle routes, west
square and forum, western
balancing lake, and associated
hard and soft landscaping.

4.0 PUBLICITY

Advertisement:	No
Adjoining Owners:	Yes
Site Notice Displayed:	Yes

5.0 POLICY

Central Government Advice

Planning Policy Statement 1: Delivering Sustainable Development (2005): Paragraphs 7 and 8 state that national policies and regional and local development plans (regional spatial strategies and local development frameworks) provide the framework for planning for sustainable development and for development to be managed effectively. This plan-led system, and the certainty and predictability it aims to provide, is central to planning and plays the key role in integrating sustainable development objectives. Where the development plan contains relevant policies, applications for planning permission should be determined in line with the plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Circular 11/95 – The Use of Conditions in Planning Permissions: Advises that conditions should be necessary, relevant to planning, relevant to the development permitted, enforceable, precise and reasonable in all other respects.

Cambridge Local Plan 2006

3/4 Responding to context
3/6 Ensuring coordinated development
3/7 Creating successful places
3/11 The design of external spaces
3/14 Extending buildings
4/4 Trees

4/13 Pollution and amenity
4/15 Lighting
7/6 West Cambridge, South of Madingley Road
8/2 Transport impact
8/4 Walking and Cycling accessibility
8/6 Cycle parking
8/10 Off-street car parking

6.0 CONSULTATIONS

Cambridgeshire County Council (Transport)

6.1 No information has been provided regarding the transport implications of the proposal.

Please require the applicant to provide such information for comment by the Highway Authority prior to determination of this application.

Cambridge City Council (Policy)

6.2 The proposal is for the erection an extension of the Engineering Dept's Whittle Laboratory and is to provide additional academic/office floorspace to the east and an extension to their high speed laboratory on the north west side of the building which looks rather larger than the floorspace given. The laboratory extension looks to be around 274sqm GEA and the office extension around 153sqm GEA

This site is within Plot H and is outside the area covered by the Master Plan and Design Guidelines associated with the 1999 outline consent and the 2004 Master Plan Review.

There are no policy objections to the development proposed.

Cambridge City Council (Landscape Team)

6.3 The landscape team have reviewed the Design and Access Statement submitted with this application.

It is considered that the application package is dominated by the architecture of the buildings, and lacks provision of planting to soften, humanise or ground the buildings. The landscape team would therefore ask that the exterior surroundings of the

proposed building extensions needs to be carefully considered in the development of the landscape scheme for this site.

It is indicated that the laboratory extension will be in close proximity to the existing mound and vegetation along the western and northern boundaries. We will therefore require relevant information to ensure the protection of the existing vegetation during construction. We will also require full construction details of the proposed extension to the mound and associated planting plans.

The landscape design of this site needs to consider its context as part of the entrance to the West Cambridge site. The design should therefore respond to the site on the opposite side of J J Thompson Avenue. Whilst this site is yet to be developed, the landscape design should consider its potential development. The design must also allow for the incorporation of the potential proposed building, immediately to the west of the laboratory, as identified on the Masterplan.

There does not appear to be any site-specific provision of amenity space for staff/students. The proposed office extension suggests that there could be the opportunity to create some outdoor area for staff to use. We would welcome the exploration of the possibility of creating a courtyard space in the northwest corner of the site to serve this purpose.

We will require full detailed landscape proposals for the whole site.

Cambridge City Council (Environmental Health)

6.4 No objections. I have read the noise report D Maundrill, of WSP acoustics, dated July 2010, Project number 12104342.

The report undertakes a daytime (7am –11pm) BS4142: 1997 noise assessment that shows that the noise from the plant will be 20 dB below the existing background noise levels at the nearest residential properties.

However, from dealing with other wind tunnels I am aware of the need to operate at night when electricity is cheaper. At night the background noise level is significantly reduced so the noise from the wind tunnel will be more noticeable and may be

detrimental to the amenity.

A condition restricting the hours is therefore required to protect the amenity.

Design and Conservation Panel (Meeting of 1 September 2010)

6.5 Presentation – Whittle Laboratory, West Cambridge.

To facilitate ongoing research, the scheme comprises an extension to the High Speed Laboratory in the form of a contemporary structure, to create a large open plan, two-storey space to house test rigs and wind tunnels. The scheme also includes an office extension in a more traditional brick style. Presentation by John Blair of Saunders Boston Architects with John Clarke and Lionel Lambert of Cambridge University EMBS.

The Panel's comments are summarised as follows:

- The Panel regretted that there was no indication of the relationship between the proposal and the entrance building envisaged for the West Cambridge site. The Panel was concerned that the two buildings might compete for attention and hoped that the gateway building would be modest in design.
- The Laboratory Extension:
 - The design concept is commonly used but the execution here appears oddly reminiscent of a sports-hall;
 - The elevations suggest a two storey building but internally it is in fact a single volume;
 - The self-conscious language of detailing relates neither to precedence nor to function;
 - The Panel considered that the abutment between the strong forms of the extension and the existing lab needed to be considered further;
- The Office Extension: the Panel agreed that the use of the existing formal language for the new offices was appropriate but considered that the success of this approach would depend on securing a common parapet line when the existing building has been repaired.
- The Panel was concerned about the visual impact of the ventilation turrets and hope that a less obtrusive solution might be explored.

- Site landscaping. The Panel hopes that when reviewing the facilities to be provided on site, additional covered cycle parking will be provided.

Conclusion

The Panel were disappointed to see that those responsible for the Master Plan for West Cambridge had not been involved in the development of these proposals. This is an important site at one of the most visible entrances to the West Cambridge site. The Panel considered that the involvement of the Master Planners should be central to defining the brief for this area and the design, both of the buildings and the landscape.

VERDICT – REDS (6), AMBER (3)

- 6.6 The above responses are a summary of the comments that have been received. Full details of the consultation responses can be inspected on the application file.

7.0 REPRESENTATIONS

- 7.1 No representations have been received

8.0 ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 From the consultation responses and representations received and from my inspection of the site and the surroundings, I consider that the main issues are:

1. Principle of development
2. Context of site, design and external spaces
3. Residential amenity
4. Refuse arrangements
5. Highway safety
6. Car and cycle parking
7. Third party representations

Principle of Development

- 8.2 Local Plan Policy 7/6 states that development for University needs will be permitted on the West Cambridge Site, South of Madingley Road. The site provides a development opportunity during the plan period and beyond. Further development which accords with the provisions of the Masterplan will be permitted.

- 8.3 The application site is however outside, but adjacent to the Masterplan site area, which does not include the Whittle Laboratory. The proposal is for additional floorspace for the Whittle Laboratory which does not form part of the masterplan design guidelines.
- 8.4 The Masterplan does however envisage 2 rectangular blocks either side of JJ Thomson Avenue which would form a gateway into the site. That to the East of the Avenue is shown, at its nearest point, to be 32m from the western side of the proposed extension. The Design and Conservation Panel has expressed concern that the proposed extension and any new building to the frontage, may 'compete for attention', but given the distance between the two the banking and the potential for planting I do not consider that need be the case. On a practical level the gateway building envisaged in the Masterplan may be difficult to progress because it has a relatively narrow footprint and limited servicing space around it. That notwithstanding I am firmly of the view that if gateway buildings do proceed on either side of the JJ Thompson Avenue access, they will provide a very distinctive focus for the entrance and that what is proposed will not be in competition.
- 8.5 In my opinion, the principle of the development is acceptable and in accordance with policy 7/6.

Context of site, design and external spaces

- 8.6 The key design issue relates to the detailed design and appearance of the 2 extensions in relation to main Whittle Laboratory and their surrounding context.
- 8.7 The main extension to the west of the Whittle Laboratory will be relatively prominent at the corner of the access into the West Cambridge Site. The design of the extension is a modern form, with polished aluminum walls to the upper level. Given the importance of the building for research and innovation, and given that the extension will accommodate a unique wind tunnel laboratory, I consider there to be justification for a more striking, innovative design to reflect this. In my view, the extension will successfully contrast with the more modest brick buildings of the Whittle Laboratory, in accordance with Local Plan policy 3/14.

- 8.8 The Design and Conservation Panel comment that the building resembles a sports hall, and that the design detailing relates, "...neither to precedence nor to function", is in my opinion rather harsh. Planning Policy Statement 1, advises local planning authorities not to be overly prescriptive or to impose architectural styles or particular tastes. There are no objections to the scale and massing of the extension, which I feel is more important. What is more, the fans and louvres are a direct functional requirement needed for the movement of large volumes of air at that level. The comparison of the extension with a 'sports hall' is an opinion and no more and not one I share.
- 8.9 The corner of site is partially obscured from view by the raised bank and some tree cover, the most notable being the Willow to the immediate west. The health of this tree is unlikely to be affected by the extension, and the planted bank is to be extended and regraded. The imposition of a suitable planning condition can ensure that the landscaped setting of the new extension is improved, to the overall benefit of the street scene along JJ Thomson Avenue and to reduce the presence of the building as seen from Madingley Road
- 8.10 As part of this scheme the plant and equipment that is currently very prominent on the roof of the secondary building, is to be screened. This would also improve the overall appearance of the building to the benefit of the street scene.
- 8.11 The second extension to the rear is far less prominent. The projection is a continuation of what exists and uses the same design and materials as the existing buildings, which is logical here. I do not share the view of the Design and Conservation Panel that the ventilation turrets will be overly prominent. I feel they will add visual interest to the rear of the building.
- 8.12 In my opinion the proposal is compliant with Cambridge Local Plan (2006) policies 3/4, 3/7 and 3/14.

Residential Amenity

- 8.13 The physical extensions will not impact on the amenity of any residential properties.

8.14 The Council Environmental Health team has considered this scheme and the potential noise that might be generated from the turbines within the research laboratory. There is some concern that there may be an impact on the nearest residential properties if the wind tunnel is operated at night. For this reason it is considered reasonable to impose a condition restricting its hours of use.

8.15 The Council's Environmental Health team also consider there is some risk from ground contamination from previous activities at the laboratory. The standard contaminated land condition is considered justified.

Car and Cycle Parking

8.16 The Highways Authority has requested further information regarding the transport implications of the proposal. The proposal represents an improvement in facilities for the Whittle Laboratory, but will have no impact on the existing number of site users. As such the development does not need to provide any further car or cycle parking facilities which are already adequately provided on the campus.

8.17 In my opinion the proposal is compliant with Cambridge Local Plan (2006) policies 8/6 and 8/10.

Third Party Representations

8.18 No representations have been received.

9.0 CONCLUSION

9.1 The proposed extensions will improve the research facilities at the Whittle Laboratory, the most prominent of which will provide a distinctive, contrasting form to the existing buildings. APPROVAL is recommended.

RECOMMENDATION

APPROVE subject to the following conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: In accordance with the requirements of section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. No development shall take place until samples of the materials to be used in the construction of the external surfaces of the development hereby permitted have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. Development shall be carried out in accordance with the approved details.

Reason: To ensure that the appearance of the external surfaces is appropriate. (Cambridge Local Plan 2006 policies 3/4, 3/12 and 3/14).

3. Except with the prior written agreement of the local planning authority in writing no construction work or demolition shall be carried out or plant operated other than between the following hours: 0800 hours to 1800 hours Monday to Friday, 0800 hours to 1300 hours on Saturday and at no time on Sundays, Bank or Public Holidays.

Reason: To protect the amenity of the adjoining properties. (Cambridge Local Plan 2006 policy 4/13)

4. No development approved by this permission shall be commenced prior to a contaminated land assessment and associated remedial strategy, together with a timetable of works, being submitted to the LPA for approval.

(a)The contaminated land assessment shall include a desk study to be submitted to the LPA for approval. The desk study shall detail the history of the site uses and propose a site investigation strategy based on the relevant information discovered by the desk study. The strategy shall be approved by the LPA prior to investigations commencing on site.

(b)The site investigation, including relevant soil, soil gas, surface and groundwater sampling, shall be carried out by a suitable qualified and accredited consultant/contractor in accordance with a quality assured sampling and analysis methodology.

(c) A site investigation report detailing all investigative works and sampling on site, together with the results of the analysis, risk assessment to any receptors and a proposed remediation strategy shall be submitted to the LPA. The LPA shall approve such remedial works as required prior to any remediation commencing on site. The works shall be of such a nature as to render harmless the identified contamination given the proposed end use of the site and surrounding environment including any controlled waters.

(d) Approved remediation works shall be carried out in full on site under a quality assurance scheme to demonstrate compliance with the proposed methodology and best practice guidance.

(e) If, during the works contamination is encountered which has not previously been identified then the additional contamination shall be fully assessed and an appropriate remediation scheme agreed with the LPA.

(f) Upon completion of the works, this condition shall not be discharged until a closure report has been submitted to and approved by the LPA. The closure report shall include details of the proposed remediation works and quality assurance certificates to show that the works have been carried out in full in accordance with the approved methodology. Details of any post-remedial sampling and analysis to show the site has reached the required clean-up criteria shall be included in the closure report together with the necessary documentation detailing what waste materials have been removed from site.

Reason: In the interests of the amenities of future site users, Cambridge Local Plan 2006 policy 4/13.

5. Prior to occupation of the extension, full details of both hard and soft landscape works have been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority and these works shall be carried out as approved. These details shall include proposed finished levels or contours; means of enclosure; car parking layouts, other vehicle and pedestrian access and circulation areas; hard surfacing materials; minor artefacts and structures (eg furniture, play equipment, refuse or other storage units, signs, lighting); proposed and existing functional services above and below ground (eg drainage, power, communications cables, pipelines indicating lines, manholes, supports); retained historic landscape features and proposals for restoration, where relevant. Soft Landscape works shall include planting plans; written specifications (including cultivation and other operations associated with plant and grass establishment); schedules of plants, noting species, plant sizes and proposed numbers/densities where appropriate and an implementation programme.

Reason: In the interests of visual amenity and to ensure that suitable hard and soft landscape is provided as part of the development. (Cambridge Local Plan 2006 policies 3/4, 3/11 and 3/14).

6. Prior to occupation of the extension, a schedule of landscape maintenance for a minimum period of five years has been submitted to and approved in writing by the local planning authority. The schedule shall include details of the arrangements for its implementation.

Reason: To ensure that the landscaped areas are maintained in a healthy condition in the interests of visual amenity. (Cambridge Local Plan 2006 policies 3/4, 3/11 and 3/14).

7. The wind tunnel(s) within the proposed new High Speed Laboratory extension shall only operate between the hours of 0700 and 2300 every day.

Reason: To ensure that there is no noise disturbance to the nearest residential properties during the night time, in accordance with the submitted noise report, Cambridge Local Plan 2006 policy 4/13.

INFORMATIVE: New development can sometimes cause inconvenience, disturbance and disruption to local residents, businesses and passers by. As a result the City Council runs a Considerate Contractor Scheme aimed at promoting high standards of care during construction. The City Council encourages the developer of the site, through its building contractor, to join the scheme and agree to comply with the model Code of Good Practice, in the interests of good neighbourliness. Information about the scheme can be obtained from The Considerate Contractor project Officer in the Planning Department (Tel: 01223 457121).

Reasons for Approval

1. This development has been approved subject to conditions and following the prior completion of a section 106 planning obligation (/a unilateral undertaking), because subject to those requirements it is considered to generally conform to the Development Plan, particularly the following policies:

Cambridge Local Plan (2006): 3/4, 3/6, 3/7, 3/11, 3/14, 4/4, 4/13, 4/15, 7/6, 8/2, 8/4, 8/6, 8/10

2. The decision has been made having had regard to all other material planning considerations, none of which was considered to have been of such significance as to justify doing other than grant planning permission.

These reasons for approval can be a summary of the reasons for grant of planning permission only. For further details on the decision please see the officer report online at www.cambridge.gov.uk/planningpublicaccess or visit our Customer Service Centre, Mandela House, 4 Regent Street, Cambridge, CB2 1BY between 8am to 6pm Monday to Friday.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985

Under Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972, the following are “background papers” for each report on a planning application:

1. The planning application and plans;
2. Any explanatory or accompanying letter or document from the applicant;
3. Comments of Council departments on the application;

4. Comments or representations by third parties on the application as referred to in the report plus any additional comments received before the meeting at which the application is considered; unless (in each case) the document discloses “exempt or confidential information”
5. Any Structure Plan, Local Plan or Council Policy Document referred to in individual reports.

These papers may be inspected by contacting John Summers (Ext.7103) in the Planning Department.