Introduction

1. The University of Oxford has published Masterplans for the recently vacated Radcliffe Infirmary site and the Science Area for public consultation. A location plan is attached at Annex 1 (download as .doc file) and a copy of the consultation paper is available in the Members’ Resource Centre. To help retain and develop its standing as a world class university, the University wishes to provide high calibre facilities for staff and students; this will involve necessary expansion. These two sites are key to the University’s aspirations. Each Masterplan creates a series of development zones, the proposals for which can be implemented individually as the need and funding opportunities allow but which are integrated and work as a whole.

2. The closing date for consultation responses is 20 April 2007. The Masterplans will then be submitted to Oxford City Council for endorsement. It is intended that the Masterplans will become supplementary planning guidance, providing a framework within future planning applications would be determined.

The Radcliffe Infirmary Site

3. The Radcliffe Infirmary is a 2.4ha site located to the north of the city centre between Woodstock Road and Walton Street. The Masterplan proposes that the site should provide expansion space for the University’s main activities whilst taking account of its sensitive historic environment. (Recent reports have estimated that the University will need to add a further 100,000sqm floor space to its estate over the next twenty years). It is intended to retain the best buildings, fountain, gates and boundary walls and demolish the remaining buildings. Redevelopment would be to a high standard and provide for a new integrated library to serve humanities departments located on the site and new research and teaching accommodation. A new surgery would also be provided for the relocation of Jericho Health Centre.

4. The Masterplan also proposes to create a public realm across the site by opening views of the Radcliffe Infirmary, terminating in a sunken garden. Two new routes running East-West across the site would enable access for pedestrians and cyclists. Vehicle access would be from Woodstock Road; car parking would be
reduced from the previous level of about 350 spaces to 100 spaces and there would be cycle parking for 400 staff and 2,600 students.

**The Science Area**

5. The University’s vision for the Science Area, including Keble Triangle, is its continued use for scientific activities, both teaching and research. The Masterplan aims to ensure that the area functions to its maximum efficiency and can support the academic needs of users over the next 20 years. A large number of buildings are no longer fit for purpose. It is intended to retain and improve the functional suitability and efficiency of the better buildings and redevelop others. The opportunity would be taken to maximise sustainability by using renewable materials and energy resources and reducing and recycling water use.

6. It is also proposed to improve the public realm by creating permeable routes for pedestrians and cyclists over the area, create linkages with other academic areas and provide a new east-west route from the Museum to the University Parks. Pedestrian priority would be reinstated and car parking reduced from about 320 spaces to 100 spaces.

**Comments**

7. The University’s proposals to invest in the Radcliffe Infirmary site and the Science Area are to be welcomed. They would both result in improvements to the University buildings and also improve the public realm.

8. The proposals to create new, safe pedestrian and cycle links including new East-West routes across the Radcliffe Infirmary, the provision of a path to the Observatory and a new east-west link from the Museum to South Parks would open up to the public two hitherto fairly impermeable areas in central Oxford and improve the links between them. The achievement of a new East-West route from Walton Street to the Woodstock Road in particular has been an aspiration of both the City and County Councils, included in the Oxford Local Plan. The proposed improvements to the permeability and interconnectivity of both areas would make them welcoming to the public and should be supported.

9. The proposals include a reduction in car parking provision in both areas; this would be consistent with policies in the Oxford Local Plan. Combined with measures to provide improved cycle and pedestrian access and increased cycle parking facilities, the proposals would be likely to encourage travel by sustainable modes, reduce local traffic and congestion levels and help improve air quality.

10. The University’s aspirations to increase the sustainability of the Science Area by maximising the efficiency of its buildings and the use of renewable materials and energy sources should be supported. The University should also be encouraged to incorporate best practice in energy efficiency and resource conservation in the redevelopment of the Radcliffe Infirmary site.

**Financial and Staff Implications**
11. Individual applications for development will require careful assessment, particularly by the Council as highway authority; the work would be covered by existing staff resources.

RECOMMENDATION

12. The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to advise the University of Oxford that:

(a) it generally welcomes the University’s proposals to invest in the Radcliffe Infirmary site and the Science Area;

(b) in particular, it supports:

(i) the proposals to increase the permeability and interconnectivity of both areas which would increase public access; and,

(ii) the proposed reduction in car parking spaces, improved cycle and pedestrian access and provision of cycle parking facilities which would encourage travel by sustainable modes of transport;

(c) it supports proposals to increase the sustainability of the Science area and encourages the University to also incorporate best practice in energy use and resource conservation in its redevelopment proposals for the Radcliffe Infirmary site.

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