Welcome to the consultation exhibition for the new centre for the Humanities

Welcome to our public consultation on the emerging proposals for the new Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities, located in the centre of the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter (ROQ) in Oxford. This is the second of two public consultation events for the project. The project is currently at the pre-planning stage and we invite your feedback on the evolving designs prior to the submission of a planning application.

Across the following boards, we will show you how the development proposals have advanced following the first consultation which took place between November and December 2020. The boards will cover:

1. Welcome (this board)
2. An Introduction to the Humanities
3. The Site and Context
4. Planning and Heritage
5. Layout - Upper floors
6. Layout - Basement
7. Design and Appearance 1
8. Design and Appearance 2
9. Design and Appearance 3
10. Landscape and Public Realm
11. Views
12. Movement and Accessibility
13. Sustainability and Enhancement
14. Overview of the Benefits of the Proposal
15. Summary

Feedback

Once you have had the opportunity to review the consultation boards, we would be interested to hear your views and receive your comments. You can send us your comments in one of the following ways:

• By visiting the website at: www.ox.ac.uk/humanitiesconsultation
• By emailing your views to: consultation@humanities.ox.ac.uk
• By posting your response to: Humanities Building Public Consultation Carter Jonas Mayfield House, 256 Banbury Road Oxford, OX2 7DE
• By calling: 01865 615361

The online public consultation event will be running from 17 June 2021 to 8 July 2021. We would be grateful to receive your responses via any of the methods above by 8 July 2021.

The Design Team

The University of Oxford has instructed the following consultant team for the project:

Architects: Hopkins Architects
Civil/Structural Engineers: AKT II
Services Engineers: Max Fordham
Landscape Architects: Gillespies
Sustainability: Etude
Biodiversity: Applied Ecology
Transport: Peil Frischmann
Theatre Consultant: Charcoalblue
Specialist Acoustic Consultant: ARUP Acoustics
Planning Consultants: Carter Jonas
Heritage Consultant: Purcell
Cost Consultant: Arcadis
Project Manager: CPC Project Services

View of the Northern Entrance

Current Project Programme
New Centre for the Humanities at the University of Oxford

An Introduction to the Humanities

The Brief

The Humanities tell the story of what it means to be human, and Oxford is regarded as the world leader in how they are taught and studied. The new Stephen A. Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities will enable the University of Oxford to take its teaching, research and public engagement to new heights and will bring together eight faculties, six libraries, a new Institute for Ethics in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and a number of research institutes into one building. The building will feature varied spaces for performance and public engagement, including:

- 500-seat Concert Hall with world-class acoustics;
- 250-seat Theatre for lectures, drama and dance;
- 100-seat lecture and film teaching facility;
- Black Box Performance Lab for experimental performance;
- Exhibition hall;
- Rehearsal space;
- Café;
- School and Public Engagement Centre;
- Bate Collection of Musical Instruments.

While under a single roof, the building will facilitate engagement across the public and academic elements of Humanities at Oxford University and provide new opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration. Academics in the building will work together to tackle some of the most pressing questions of our time, from the ethics of AI to the environment.

Crucially, the building will be open to the public, and it is the University’s aim to welcome anyone who wishes to visit into the public areas of the building, to walk through, browse, stop at the café and to join events and exhibitions. The new Humanities building will provide an environment for schoolchildren to visit and engage with Oxford’s researchers, and will be open to regional cultural organisations. Furthering the University’s mission of the advancement of learning, it will share its research, assets and resources with the widest possible community, using concerts, public lectures, screenings, drama performances, and exhibitions and displays.

A fundamental aspect of the development proposal is to also improve the landscape and public realm around the building, to enhance public accessibility to the site, the wider ROQ area and beyond. Landscape and public realm enhancements are covered in more detail on board 10.

Strategic consideration of collaboration, engagement and interaction within the new Centre for the Humanities
The site and context

Location

The site of the new Humanities building is located within the ROQ, approximately 1km north of Oxford City Centre. The vacant parcel of land, located in the centre of the ROQ, has become available as part of the wider redevelopment of the site brought about through the demolition of the previous Radcliffe Infirmary buildings. The site itself extends to 1.51 hectares.

The site is surrounded by the Grade I listed Radcliffe Observatory, Green Templeton College and the Gibson and Harkness Buildings to the north. The Andrew Wiles Building (Mathematical Institute) to the east and Somerville College to the south east. The Blavatnik School of Government is located to the south west and Freud’s (formerly St. Paul’s Church) to the west.

The main arterial route of Woodstock Road runs to the east of the site and Walton Street to the west. In terms of topography, the site rises gently from south to north. There are a number of existing pedestrian and cycle connections that traverse the site and connect the ROQ to the city and beyond.
Planning and Heritage

Planning Policy

The images show how the site has evolved since the mid-1800s, existing listed buildings around the site and the extent of the Conservation Areas which surround it.

The site is allocated for development under Policy SP54 (‘The ROQ’) of the Oxford City Local Plan 2016-2036 (‘the Local Plan’). The policy permits development within the ROQ for academic institutional use, student accommodation and residential development.

This part of the ROQ is also designated as a ‘Category 1 Employment Site’ in the Local Plan, meaning that planning permission will be granted for the intensification, modernisation and regeneration for employment purposes if it can be demonstrated that the development makes best and most efficient use of the land and does not cause unacceptable environmental impacts.

The proposals for this part of the ROQ seek to provide a new, modern academic facility, with a number of public-facing venues, for the Humanities Division, building on the University’s presence within the ROQ. The proposed development accords with the parameters and requirements of Policy SP54 for the ROQ and the requirements of other policies with the Local Plan.

Heritage

Development on the ROQ first started in the late 18th Century and has continued to the present day. We are keen to ensure that the site’s heritage is incorporated into the new Humanities Centre site, both in terms of the building and its public realm.
The design for the new Humanities Centre arises from several key concepts:

i. Creating a building which reflects the diverse characters and identities of the varied academic and public engagement spaces and functions within it;

ii. Carefully designing the scale, massing and roofline and respecting the views and landscape to craft a building which responds to its setting on all sides, creating opportunities for different types of engagement with it;

iii. Creating a truly welcoming building which is not only a destination in its own right, with easy access to the performance spaces, Bate Collection of Musical Instruments, and the Exhibition space, but which is also a public space, for meeting friends and enjoying conversation in the café;

iv. Creating an environmentally sustainable building with ambitious targets around carbon and energy efficiency moves the University further towards its ambitions of halving carbon emissions by 2030 and achieving net zero carbon emissions and biodiversity net gain by 2035. The building’s roof will be used for solar power generation and the plans include measures to enhance biodiversity and green space on the ROQ.

Academic accommodation (Faculties, Institutes and the new Bodleian Humanities Library) will be situated on the upper levels, with the ground floor accommodating public facing activities. These are easily accessed from a new central public route, extending from the Welcome Lobby at the North entrance to the café on the southern side of the building, which provides a clear route to the Concert Hall and other performance spaces below ground. The new public route, and indeed the building as a whole, comes together around a new urban room for Oxford: the Assembly Hall.
Renowned sitar player Anoushka Shankar is on the Advisory Council for the Humanities Cultural Programme.

Actor Hugh Quarshie studied Philosophy, Politics and Economics at Oxford.

Actress Rosamund Pike studied English literature at Oxford and acted in plays while a student.
New Centre for the Humanities at the University of Oxford

Design and Appearance

The ROQ has a radically varied architectural character, ranging from the Old Observatory to the modern Blavatnik School of Government. By virtue of its central position within the ROQ, there is an opportunity for the architectural design of the new Humanities building to respect its context and celebrate its timeless design.

A careful analysis of existing College and University buildings enables us to draw out architectural elements which can inform the design of the new building, from its massing and scale to its treatment of ground condition, colonnade, roofline and glazing. Using a combination of traditional and modern materials, ranging from honey-coloured stone and matching brick to triple-glazed windows, the building is designed to age well and integrate with the ROQ.

The façades form a hierarchy, with symmetrical central entrance blocks and more varied side wings, all reflecting the need to provide office windows at each level, whilst retaining an architectural style which is so reminiscent of much of the City.

View from the north-east towards the library and northern entrance colonnade

Façade Strategy

Using the architecture of Oxford to create a potential lexicon for the new building

Material Palette

Smooth stone
Brick
Pitch faced stone

Recesses with different fenestration articulate blocks

East + West facades introduce playfulness and irregularity with brick added to stone

More formal symmetrical arcaded brick signals entrance predominantly stone

South entrance matches formality of North
Design and Appearance

The new building is so much more than the coming together of academic spaces, although that is a critical part of its vision. It provides a new set of urban spaces, crossed by public routes, accessible to everyone - whether or not they are members of the University.

The building has been designed so that the ground floor feels open, inviting and easily navigated, with clear lines of movement and sight to enable the south entrance to be seen directly from the north and vice versa. There will be no security lines or turnstiles at ground level to encourage members of the public to visit. You can enter at the northern end via the new Welcome Lobby to view exhibits on display either in the Bate Collection or the Bodleian area, or via the Southern café, from where they can go down to the Foyer (itself an impromptu performance and milling area) and onwards to the world-class Concert Hall and other performance venues. There will be regular visits from school groups in Oxford City and beyond to the new Schools and Public Engagement Centre with its own dedicated access point, as well as easy connections to other parts of the building.

All of this culminates in the Assembly Hall: a major new public room for Oxford, usable for a diverse range of activities and accessible to the public. The Assembly Hall has been designed to include a glazed dome structure at roof height. We believe it will soon become a well-known and loved destination in Oxford.
Design and Appearance

The southern entrance of the building is likely to be the primary entrance to be used by visitors because of the clear routes to it from the railway station and the centre of Oxford. The building is predominantly four storeys high but has been designed to step down to three storeys at the entrance to provide a sense of arrival and welcome.

This entrance point of the building will include improved landscaping and interesting architecture to create a space where people will want to stay and enjoy the south-facing aspect of the café terrace when the weather allows, or to wait for friends before a performance starts. A sense of connection between the inside and outside of the building has been created on the southern façade, with a row of glazed arches linking internal café spaces with the garden space beyond.

The building has been designed to welcome, facilitate and enhance a genuine sense of public engagement. With no secure lines at ground floor, the passerby is encouraged to freely enter the building via the two main entrances at the north and south. These form a welcoming public route through the whole building.

The northern entrance, approached from Woodstock Road or Walton Street, enables easy access to the Bodleian Library and Bate Collection of Musical Instruments with a wide public route down to the Assembly Hall and its cafe, and beyond to the Exhibition Gallery.
The development proposals incorporate a high quality strategy for the design of the landscape and public realm, incorporating smaller spaces that offer a direct connection to the architecture, through to larger, more public facing spaces. Within the immediate building curtilage, the proposals include a number of small external rooms or gardens that offer a very direct connection to the inside of the new building and its functions, including a café spill out area, formal gardens and an arrival experience.

Beyond this is the South East lawn. Enclosed by level changes and ornamental planting, this becomes something of an urban garden offering a sheltered environment with direct connections to the southern entrance and café space. Adjacent to this is the main Southern entrance plaza offering clear and legible connections throughout and a sense of formality to the arrival experience.

To the north, and set between the new Humanities building and the Observatory, is the formal lawn. Offering a connection to the historic setting of the Observatory and its gardens, the lawn becomes a centre piece for the ROQ and serves to provide a ‘green connection’ within the North Oxford area.

In designing and development a landscape and public realm strategy for the site, the development proposals have sought to:

- Increase the quantity of green space provided within the ROQ;
- Offer accessibility for all throughout the new development;
- Significantly improve the quality of social space on offer within the ROQ;
- Improve circulation with priorities being given to pedestrians and cyclists.

Ecological Enhancements

Options to enhance the biodiversity value of the site are currently being considered alongside the soft landscape proposals detailed above. This includes providing areas of high quality and attractive flower-rich lawn, and planting beds that incorporate a range of wildlife friendly garden plants, shrubs, and trees, particularly those of value to bees and other pollinators. Other biodiversity enhancements may include the provision of bird and bat boxes on the new building, and artificial bee nest boxes as the project seeks to achieve an overall Biodiversity Net Gain.
Views

The proposed development has been informed by an assessment of key views which have been discussed and agreed in consultation with Officers of Oxford City Council and third party stakeholders including The Oxford Preservation Trust, and informed by site investigation and baseline studies.

A selection of these views have been progressed as ‘verified views’ which seek to accurately demonstrate how the proposed development will appear within the existing landscape and within its immediate surroundings. The location of the verified views and the baseline images selected are shown on the adjacent plan.

The planning application will be supported by a Townscape and Visual Impact Assessment which will assess the impact of the proposed development on the townscape and visual amenity of the area. Local Planning Policy guidance is being considered in the preparation of the Assessment.

The pictures show views taken from 3 key viewpoints, 18, 10 and 9, from long distance and close up. The pictures are positioned side by side. The black dotted squares show the frame of the close up. The red dotted lines in the close-ups show the outline of the building.

The list of verified viewpoints are as follows:

1. Great Clarendon Street
2. Woodstock Road
3. The University Parks
4. St John Street
5. Walton Street
6. Elsfieeld
7. South Park
8. Boars Hill
9. Raleigh Park

Verified Views Location Plan

Viewpoint 9 St John Street Verified View
Viewpoint 9 St John Street. Wireline view to be replaced by verified view

Viewpoint 10 Walton Street Verified View
Viewpoint 10 Walton Street (Close-up)

Viewpoint 18 Raleigh Park Verified View
Viewpoint 18 Raleigh Park (Close-up)

Viewpoint 18 Raleigh Park Verified View
Viewpoint 18 Raleigh Park (Close-up)
Movement and Accessibility

The proposed development has a predominantly pedestrian and cycle focus, with any vehicles on site subject to an advisory 5mph speed limit. There are numerous points of access into the ROQ for pedestrians and cyclists, and the proposed development has been designed to encourage free movement from different directions around the site to access the new Humanities building. The proposed development will ensure that access into the site for vehicles is restricted to the Woodstock Road access point only, to restrict movements.

Within the site, parking will be provided only for disabled users. Students, staff and members of the public visiting the new Humanities building will be encouraged to walk, cycle or use public transport to access the site and the ROQ is well placed to enable such sustainable modes of accessibility. We will also encourage cycling by providing high quality cycle parking across the development. By contrast, delivery vehicles that require access to the site will be consolidated to specific points within the site to minimise vehicle movements.

On days when performances are scheduled in the concert hall and other venues, we will carefully manage the associated vehicles that need to access the site to ensure that there is minimal impact on the local road network and local residents. All local streets are protected by Controlled Parking Zones and evening taxi trips to and from events will be managed on-site, with specific pick up / drop off locations for visitors. As part of the travel planning measures for the proposed development, visitors will be encouraged to arrive at the site by public transport and the proximity of the Centre to Oxford’s Park and Ride services makes this a realistic option.
New Centre for the Humanities at the University of Oxford

Sustainability and Enhancement

We have designed the building with a focus on environmental sustainability. Using the ‘Passivhaus’ principles of energy efficiency, which aims to ensure that new buildings are energy-efficient, the building is being designed with very high levels of insulation and air tightness, reducing the amount of heat needed for comfortable conditions within the building. This includes winter heat recovery ventilation, and opening windows with triple glazing for summer comfort in offices.

The design commits to a fixed low energy consumption target and the design development, construction and finished building will adhere to this throughout. These targets are being evaluated in consultation with expert consultants. Heating and cooling of the new building will be minimised by using energy and carbon efficient equipment with no fossil fuel consumption on site. Air Source Heat Pumps will use electricity to efficiently deliver heat to the building. As grid electricity becomes more and more carbon efficient in the UK, this is now a cleaner method for heating.

The maximum provision for solar photovoltaics will be located on the roof to generate renewable electricity for the building by using the sun’s energy.

Electricity, heat, and water will all be metered within the building and connected centrally to monitoring systems. This allows the building’s energy management teams to assess where in the building systems are working efficiently or not, and take action to optimise energy efficiency where needed.

The Humanities building will make a major contribution to the University’s aim to halve our carbon emissions by 2030 and towards achieving our ambition of net zero carbon emissions and net biodiversity gain by 2035.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component of use type for this building</th>
<th>Energy Use Intensity Benchmark applied to category</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Office, research offices, medical wards, meeting rooms, internal meeting on upper floors</td>
<td>55 kWh/m²yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching - seminar rooms, 100 seat lecture theatres, labs, lecture theatre rooms and studios</td>
<td>10.4 kWh/m²yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library - Reference library, exhibition spaces</td>
<td>65 kWh/m²yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance - 500 seat auditorium, 200 seat lecture theatres, Black Box, Minstrel gallery, basement foyer areas</td>
<td>8.9 kWh/m²yr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bathrooms, public toilet facilities</td>
<td>52 kWh/m²yr</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Building Form and Massing

The external exposed surface area has a large effect on the heating energy used by the building. Buildings with higher surface area or form factor lose heat more readily and have worse thermal bridging, with a higher risk of poor airtightness.

The sketch to the right of this page shows the heat loss envelope. The heat loss envelope excludes external features such as bin stores, external shading and parapets. The whole of this surface must achieve a continuous insulation layer and a continuous air barrier film. The shape of the building is only indicative and relates to the heated space of the building only, not the appearance.

Roof Design for Maximising Energy Generation

Solar PV panels are a core part of modern low carbon buildings. They provide cheap clean energy at the point of use, which is not subject to energy price inflation. The new Humanities building is likely to be a large daytime consumer of electricity, and would use a large proportion of energy generated by PV. The Levilised Cost of Energy (LCOE) for building mounted solar can be <2p/kWh fixed rate over the lifetime of its installation.

It is recommended that the roof is optimised for PV by maximising the unshaded area available.

Insulation Requirements

This graph shows calculated heating energy demand of the new Humanities building with high and low case sensitivity testing. The median design case meets the Passivhaus requirements.
Overview of the Benefits of the Proposal

The Humanities building will not only be a significant boost for research and teaching of the Humanities at Oxford, but it will be open and accessible to the public. A key aim behind the building is bringing research and performance in the arts and humanities to new audiences. Members of the community will benefit from:

- Space within the building for schoolchildren to visit and engage with Oxford’s researchers;
- New performance venues within the Centre for music, theatre, drama, dance, lectures and more, including a 500-seat concert hall with world-class acoustics; a 250-seat theatre; and a 100-seat ‘Black Box’ lab for experimental performance;
- Access to regional and cultural organisations;
- A new ‘Cultural Programme’ which will bring the world’s leading performers and artists to Oxford;
- Exhibition space;
- Improved public realm and public access across the site, opening up and connecting the ROQ and the surrounding area and adding green space and biodiversity.

We very much want to invite residents of our City and County, schoolchildren and visitors to Oxford to visit the new Humanities building and we hope all will attend our events and performances.

In addition to the social benefits, the development will also bring a number of ‘site specific’ benefits, including:

- Improvements to the external spaces on the site through the addition of landscaping and green routes through the ROQ and around the site;
- The provision of sustainable transport infrastructure such as cycle parking provision and pedestrian / cycle routes through the site;
- Biodiversity enhancements through planting and landscaping around the site;
- The delivery of an energy and carbon efficient building.

Oxford research will be explained through exhibitions
Schoolchildren will take part in outreach and engagement activities in the Centre
Visitors will be welcome in a new cafe open to the public
The Centre will bring together Oxford’s Humanities disciplines, including Music
The building project will result in a Biodiversity Net Gain
The Centre will provide a new green space for the Radcliffe Observatory Quarter
New Centre for the Humanities at the University of Oxford

Summary

Next Steps

We will continue to progress the design proposals for the new building, taking into consideration your feedback from this second stage of public consultation. We will also continue our pre-application discussions with Oxford City Council as we prepare the planning application. As illustrated on the timeline, the intention is to formally submit a planning application to Oxford City Council in the Summer of 2021. Following submission, Oxford City Council will undertake a formal consultation on the submitted proposals as part of the planning application process, which will provide members of the public and statutory consultees with the opportunity to comment on the development proposals.

How will the construction process impact our neighbours?

The progression of the building design and early discussions with potential contractors will take into consideration any potential impacts of the construction activities on our immediate neighbours and the wider community.

The aim is for construction to be undertaken within reasonable working hours employing methods of construction that minimise noise, reduce the volume of traffic, dust and particle emissions and keep roads and footways clean. The appointed contractor will be held to the Considerate Constructors Scheme (or equivalent). A construction management plan will form part of the planning application with further notification issued to surrounding residents prior to construction commencing.

No additional contractors’ parking is being provided within the ROQ other than material deliveries and specialist equipment, with all construction vehicles accessing the site from the existing entrance on Woodstock Road. Building access and pedestrian routes will be maintained to the north and south of the Humanities site for those on foot and on bike to connect Walton Street and Woodstock Road.

Please let us know what you think about the proposals in one of the following ways:

- By visiting the website at: [www.ox.ac.uk/humanitiesconsultation](http://www.ox.ac.uk/humanitiesconsultation) and clicking on the Consultation tab.
- By emailing your views to: consultation@humanities.ox.ac.uk
- Post your response to: Humanities Building Public Consultation Carter Jonas
  Mayfield House
  256 Banbury Road
  Oxford
  OX2 7DE
- By calling: 01865 615361

The public consultation event will be running from 17 June to 8 July 2021. We would be grateful to receive your responses via any of the methods above by 8th July 2021.