

TIMELINE RE THE ACQUISITION OF A FIT FOR PURPOSE OFFICE IN OXFORD

25 May 2005 - The Director of Probation writes to Gerry Marshall, Chief Officer, Thames Valley Probation (TVP), to confirm funding has been made available in 2006/07 to amalgamate Abingdon, Albion House and Temple Cottage offices. The allocation is “based on the recommendations of the former National Probation Directorate (NPD) Estates team, and is in line with the estates strategy outlined in the NPD’s Business Plan. Particular priority is given to situations where leases are due to expire but account is also taken of the need to improve efficiency and deal with major maintenance and compliance issues.”

20 April 2006 – The Director of Probation writes to Chief Officers/Chairs re “following the transfer to NOMS (National Offender Management Service) of the former NPD Estates team a review of its workload has resulted in a redefinition of what works constitutes Capital Investment and what is deemed Revenue Expenditure. This reclassification has a large impact on the planned spending and whilst we have access to the same capital budget as delegated from the strategic spending review we cannot classify most of our capacity building programme as Capital. The result of this is that we have had to review completely our previously published plans and priorities resulting in a number of projects being cancelled and others delayed into the future.” The Oxford Consolidation Project is postponed for at least one year.

May 2006-March 2007 – The HOER (Home Office Estates Review) overtakes events and despite raising the need on several occasions for the scheme to be approved as a matter of urgency, this is put on hold due to the disbanding of NOMS Estates.

1 April 2007 - Formation of two Estate Shared Service Centres (ESSC), ie HOPG (Home Office Premises General) and HOPC (Home Office Premises Custodial). Facilities and Estate Management (FM/EM) contracts are retendered and are to go live with effect from June/April 2008 respectively. Each stakeholder has a Briefing Client and for NOMS this is NOMS ECD (Estate Capacity Directorate).

21 November 2007 – TVP’s Estates & Facilities (E&F) Manager writes to NOMS ECD outlining the critical reasons for the urgent need to reconsider the Oxford Consolidation Project.

16 January 2008 – NOMS ECD requests a Business Case pro-forma to be completed so that the Oxford requirement can be registered and considered.

13 February 2008 – Confirmation received from the Oxon DAAT (Drug & Alcohol Action Team) Director that they can accommodate TVP’s Oxon Substance Misuse Team in their new premises at the Old Music Hall, Cowley Road, Oxford. Sub-lease negotiations are ongoing.

25 February 2008 – TVP meet with HOPG to discuss the Business Case. Funding sought and approved (by NOMS ECD) for the necessary property search to be undertaken by HOPG’s EM contractor, DTZ. A set of selection criteria is given to DTZ. Annex A refers.

March 2008 - TVP’s CMT (Corporate Management Team) agrees to incorporate the Banbury office into the Consolidation Project, leaving a reduced presence there – possibly co-locating with a partner organisation.

30 April 2008 – Property search details received. Six properties are identified – two are too small, one is in Abingdon and one on Milton Park. One is already under offer - agents informed of our interest – and the final one is on the Oxford Business Park. This is viewed, alongside another office in that area. None are in the preferred location of Oxford City/Botley

Road end of town – ideally a property located within Oxford City Centre but taking into account the geography of the Oxfordshire division, alongside being at the hub of the town and county public transport network. Annex B refers.

Early June 2008 – TVP's E&F Manager makes enquiries with a couple of local agents who confirms we will be hard pressed to find a property of the size we require in Oxford.

26 June 2008 – TVP's E&F Manager is notified of Trajan House, on the back of the aforementioned enquiries. It is noted this site had been brought to the attention of DTZ, by the agents marketing Trajan House, on 24 April 2008. Annex B.

30 June 2008 – Two further properties are identified by DTZ – one is in the required location but too small for our needs and is first to fourth floor accommodation only. The other is in the East Oxford area – too far from central Oxford – is currently too small but there is the option to extend significantly. A planning application has not been submitted and this is still the case, as at May 2009. Annex B.

3 July 2008 – Office development to the west of Oxford, at the top of Cumnor Hill, is flagged by HOPG. Too small, even allowing for the redevelopment, plus too far from central Oxford. Annex B.

25 July 2008 – The Oxfordshire Consolidation Final Business Case is presented to the Probation Property Board (PPB). This states that “A replacement building will be required and the most suitable (for operations and much else) has been found at Trajan House, sited within the preferred location. Premises have been sought on local Business Parks to attempt cost savings but the rents quoted have been of the same order as Trajan House without concomitant benefits. Nowhere has been found that will avoid the initial fit-out expenditure. A long term satisfactory solution will not be attained trying to save a small value. Oxford City attracts a premium on property. TVP must have a presence there so a realistic price has to be paid.”

Mill Street is only 5 minutes walk from the train station, 10 minutes walk from the bus station; Abingdon and Park and Ride buses stop nearby. Mill Street is only 15 minutes from Courts and from Council Offices, etc.

3 September and 12 November 2008 – PPB consider the Business Case and agree it in principle (3 September) and approve it on 12 November. In line with standard practice, PPB is presented with an approved option – in this case proceed with Trajan House – together with an assurance by NOMS ECD that alternatives had been fully considered.

10 October 2008 – DTZ identify Macclesfield House as a possible site. Bigger than Trajan House, at 25878 sq ft – TVP requires 17000 sq ft NIA. Property being marketed on both a freehold and leasehold basis but the preference was clearly to sell the freehold. Following discussions with HOPG, DTZ register an interest on a leasehold basis. Annex B.

20 October 2008 – Confirmation from HOPG that “The landlord of Albion House, Pembroke College, has recently inspected the building and undertaken a detailed survey of the land around the building, all of which is in their ownership. DTZ has spoken to the College regarding their plans and they confirmed they hope to submit a planning application for change of use and building work to provide student accommodation in January 2009 which will include the redevelopment of Albion House.”

12 January 2009 – Project start-up meeting with HOPG/TVP. DTZ given the go-ahead to progress lease negotiations on Trajan House.

27 February 2009 – HOPG's Project Consultancy Team appointed.

19 March 2009 – Pembroke College submit a planning application to Oxford City Council seeking permission to convert it to student accommodation and associated facilities. The Target Determination Date is **18 June 2009**.

16 March 2009 – Visit to Innovation House Business Centre, Mill Street, Oxford, with DTZ. Number of businesses still in situ – majority of licences due to expire in October/November of this year with the final tenant vacating in February 2010. Property requires extensive refurbishment to bring it up to Grade A specification, as being offered for Trajan House. Parking to the front and side of the building, alongside the access road to the residential area to the rear. No definite separation as for Trajan House. Annex B.

NOMS ECD confirms if there is interest in another property a further Final Business Case will need submitting, in view of the revised Project costings, to the PPB. No guarantee approval will be granted again.

23 April 2009 – DTZ provide an update on Macclesfield House. Offers received by OCC (Oxfordshire County Council) from parties who were looking at the building from a non office perspective. Bid also put forward by a developer who was willing to purchase the freehold, on the back of an agreement to lease with HOPG. This fell some way short of what OCC were looking to achieve.

Property is now under offer and is effectively no longer on the market. However duty bound to report any further bids received as deal not yet complete.

30 April 2009 – Viewed 28 St Ebbe's and Tyndale House with DTZ. 28 St Ebbe's is in a good, central location but when first identified, on 30 June, was marketed as first to fourth floor accommodation, up to a maximum of 13068 sq ft. Too small for our needs and access not good. Agents for 28 St Ebbe's contacted DTZ and confirmed the ground and basement floors could possibly now be made available – there is a lease agreement in place but the tenant may be amenable to being bought out. Pros and cons but certainly more where the latter is concerned – a lot to achieve in 11 months.

Tyndale House is too far from central Oxford, ie East Oxford, and planning consent has still to be applied for.

23 March – HOPG, Project Consultancy Team, DTZ and TVP's E&F Manager meet to commence the planning/design for Trajan House.

30 March, 24 April, 18 May and 1 June – Meetings with HOPG, Project Consultancy Team and relevant TVP personnel re progressing the space planning for Trajan House.

7 May 2009 – Project Consultancy Team meet with the developer of Trajan House to firm up on the base build requirements.

7 May 2009 – HOPG, TVP's CO and E&F Manager meet with Oxford City Council Planning Department and Councillor Cook. After the meeting all parties visited Albion House and agreed the groupwork rooms constituted no more than 20% of the total floor space.

Search Criteria

There are a number of general criteria for the location of a Probation office;

- The proposed site must meet or be capable of adaption to meet the business need of the Probation Area / Trust in both the immediate and long-term.
- On completion, the site must meet the requirements of current probation good practice, public protection, staff protection and security and government-wide estate policy, e.g. rationalization, moving from free-hold to lease-hold, etc.
- On completion, the site should show value for money in terms of operational efficiency and effectiveness, e.g. maximizing use of Gross Internal Area (GIA), enabling the provision of improved or new services, improving flexibility of space use, economies of scale, improved team working.
- On completion, the site should show improved compliance with statutory and legal requirements e.g. Disability Discrimination Act, health and safety, Fire Regulations, etc.
- The proposed site should be reasonably close to other criminal justice agencies; magistrates and crown courts, the police.
- The proposed site should be close to public transport hubs and meet other sustainability criteria.

At the meeting between TVP and HOPG the specific criteria for the site search were agreed. The property should be similar in size to TVP's probation office in Reading, i.e. 2,013 sq m GIA: the ground and first floors of Trajan House measure 1,988 sq m GIA. The preferred location was Oxford City or the Botley Road area, taking into account the geography of TVP's Oxfordshire division. The site should be at the hub of the town and county public transport network.

Sites Considered

Location	Assessment
97 Milton Park, Oxford, OX14 4RR	Rejected: too far from central Oxford.
8000 Hailwood, Oxford Business Park, Oxford, OX4 2HW	Rejected: too far (c. 2.5 miles) from central Oxford. Situated in the prestigious Hailwood development within mature landscaped surroundings.
Beaumont House, East Point Business Park, Oxford, OX4 6LB	Rejected: Too small (14,119 sq ft) and too far (c. 2.5 miles) from central Oxford.
Sandford Gate, East Point Business Park, Oxford, OX4 6LB	Rejected: Too small (16,118 sq ft) and too far (c. 2.5 miles) from central Oxford.
Eagle House, Eagle Works, Oxford, OX2 6EE	Rejected: potentially suitable but let to another tenant in 2008.
Torus, Abingdon Business Park, Oxford, OX14 1UJ	Rejected: too far from central Oxford.
Trajan House, Mill Street, Oxford 28 St Ebbe's, Oxford, OX1 1PU	Selected as the favoured option. Rejected: as at 30 June 2008, too small (originally offered up to a maximum of 13068 sq ft) and first to fourth floor accommodation so access issues. April 2009 – possibility that the ground/basement floors could be made available, giving a total floor area of 22422 sq ft. However, existing tenant, no external grounds, needs extensive renovation, would require planning consent, etc.
Tyndale House, Cowley Road, Oxford, OX4 1JQ	Rejected: as at 30 June 2008, too small (originally offered as 11000 or so sq ft of space). April 2009 – being marketed at 20262 sq ft. Ground floor only 392 sq ft but there is an option to take on some of the retail space to provide a public reception/interface area. Planning consent is required and limited external grounds.
Rowan Place, Oxford Business Park, OX4 2HW	Rejected: too far (c. 2.5 miles) from central Oxford.
Chawley Park, Cumnor Hill, Oxford	Rejected: too small, even allowing for the redevelopment (15,000 sq ft), and too far from central Oxford.
Macclesfield House, New Road, Oxford	Rejected: interest was registered on a leasehold basis. Bid also put forward

Location	Assessment
	by a developer willing to purchase the freehold, on the back of an agreement to lease with HOPG. Fell short of what OCC were looking to achieve. Now under offer.
Innovation House, Mill Street, Oxford	Rejected: would need extensive renovation to bring up to required standard. Same location as Trajan House but with existing tenants. Parking to the front/side of the building, alongside the access road to the residential area to the rear. No definite separation as for Trajan House.