



CABI - Wallingford, Oxfordshire

Presenting a compelling case





Executive summary

In August 2017, Cala Homes (Chiltern) secured planning permission for the development of 91 homes in Wallingford. The land was sold to Cala by the Centre for Agriculture and Bioscience International (CABI) to facilitate the construction of a new and bespoke global headquarters for the organisation, which currently occupies an outdated 1960s school building.

CABI is an international, not-for-profit inter-governmental organisation that improves people's lives worldwide by providing information and applying scientific expertise to solve problems in agriculture and the environment. CABI is a significant employer locally and had been working to secure its future on the Wallingford site for a decade.

Consent for the new development was granted following 18 months of planning negotiations, culminating in a Public Inquiry in July 2017 where Cala's planning evidence was cross examined and tested in great detail.

The new development will deliver a state-of-the-art head quarters (HQ) for CABI, securing the organisation's future in the UK, as well as much needed, high quality new homes for the local area.



Proposed new headquarters

Planning history

CABI currently occupies a 1960s school building that is no longer fit for purpose; it is uneconomical in terms of layout and energy efficiency, and requires a high level of maintenance.

The CABI site is located on the Western edge of the Chiltern Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) adjacent to the River Thames. It was not identified as a development opportunity in the South Oxfordshire Local Plan (adopted January 2006) but benefited from two 'change of use' planning permissions granted during the 1980s. Since the designation of the AONB, there has been extensive additional development on the site, significantly changing its character.

In 2012, the South Oxfordshire Core Strategy was adopted and as part of its efforts to secure its future, CABI had sought the allocation of the site for redevelopment. CABI subsequently obtained planning permission in January 2014 for a mixed use redevelopment, with the replacement of its office, enabled by the

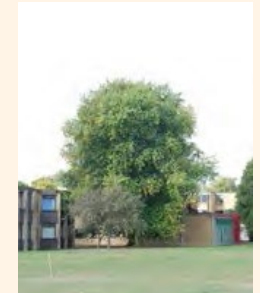
development of a 'Care Village' comprising a care home, extra care facilities and retirement homes. The economic benefits of encouraging jobs growth and helping to retain an important local, national and international organisation in the Wallingford area accorded with the aspirations of both the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the South Oxfordshire

Core Strategy. Despite a vigorous marketing campaign, however, there was no market interest in the development of the Care Village.

The revised enabling scheme for CABI was prepared in the context of this pressing need for additional homes in the area.



Cala acquired an interest in the site through a highly competitive bidding process in 2015, after a previous planning permission for a care home village had stalled. CABI's aim was to work with a development partner to achieve planning permission and funding to replace its headquarters with a bespoke, environmentally friendly building on part of its site, through redevelopment of the remainder. Cala was selected as the preferred partner on strength of reputation for high quality designs, experience in delivering enabling development and strong professional relationships with important local stakeholders including South Oxfordshire District Council.



Presenting a compelling case

Situated within the Chiltern Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), close to the North Wessex Downs AONB and the River Thames, Cala's proposal for the site required exceptional justification when applying Development Plan policies and the National Planning Policy Framework.

Cala undertook extensive pre-application work with the Local Planning Authority to gain its informal support. This pre-application process involved broad consultation including a public exhibition, meetings with three local parish councils and additional meetings with representatives of South Oxfordshire District Council to discuss the proposals in detail.

The planning application for the site was initially recommended for approval by Officers, following a period of detailed discussion and negotiation, and subject to the completion of a Planning Agreement.

Although the application gained the support of the Council's planning officers, it was refused by the planning committee, as the proposed development was met by opposition to change from within the local community. Following refusal, Cala continued with detailed negotiations with the council and subsequently submitted a planning appeal. This was heard through a full Public Inquiry over five days in 2017, ensuring all the matters raised were aired and debated thoroughly under cross-examination.

Central to the success of the appeal was the ability to demonstrate that the residential element of the development was capable of generating a land value that would enable CABI to redevelop on site and therefore retain highly skilled jobs in the local area, as well as the

sensitivity of Cala's home designs to the local environment within the AONB and the thought that had been given to connecting the development to the wider settlement of Wallingford.

The handling of the inquiry by the Cala team was strong and thorough, presenting a compelling case to demonstrate that the site met the detailed policy tests required by the National Planning Policy Framework. Planning permission was granted by the Planning Inspector in August 2017.

The case for development

A compelling economic need for the retention of CABI on site due to its contribution to the local and national economy

The need for housing development in South Oxfordshire district

Carefully designed to ensure no significant impact on AONB

Highway consultants showed that the development was sustainable in transportation terms – Cala looked very closely at travel patterns, cycle routes and public transport



Local context

The master plan

CABI's vision for a landmark building required the partnership of Cala Homes to produce a residential development that was of sufficient scale so as to enable the construction of the new HQ.

The two elements of the layout (the CABI office and the new homes), have been designed to work harmoniously together while emphasising the prominence of the CABI building. The connection of the open space in the middle of the residential area and the landscaped area in front of the CABI building will effectively link the two elements giving a cohesiveness to the site.

Inspiration for the new homes has been drawn from the architecture of the surrounding buildings, so that they reflect the distinctive identity of their local environment, but the incorporation of strong contemporary design principles and agreed standards will make them attractive, practical, secure and comfortable homes in which to live. The homes also integrate into their surroundings with the layout designed to connect the site to the local area. Access has been designed to improve the safety and capacity of the existing junction, while new and existing cycle and pedestrian

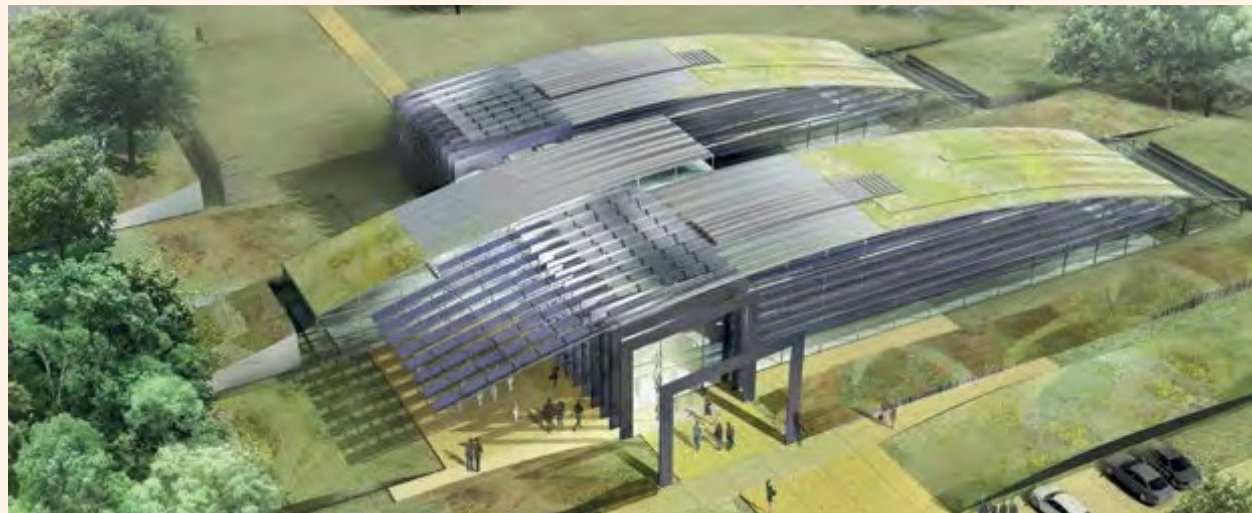
routes link through the site to the path network beyond. A considerable new landscape buffer along the Western boundary has been included to help maintain and increase the site's biodiversity.

CABI's new office building demonstrates striking architecture by Scott Brownrigg Architects. In keeping with CABI's role as an environmentally concerned organisation, the building will perform to a very high level of sustainability.

The offices will provide a modern, comfortable and efficient working environment and also a

number of facilities available for use by the local community.

Cala will deliver 91 new homes on the site, 18 of which will be affordable. There will be a mix of two to four bedroom properties alongside new play space provision and a wild flower meadow. As a consequence of the development a significant community infrastructure levy payment will also be made to South Oxfordshire District Council.





Landscape masterplan



Computer generated images - a selection of housetypes to be built in Wallingford





Street scene at Wallingford



A_A Site Section & Street Elevation



B_B Site Section & Street Elevation



C_C Site Section & Street Elevation



D_D Site Section & Street Elevation



For more highlights from the
Cala Chiltern team visit
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