



Legal & General and Oxford University gain planning consent for new £200m life sciences building, designed by NBBJ

The University of Oxford and Legal & General have achieved planning permission for The University of Oxford's largest ever building project, the Life and Mind Building, representing a major milestone for the £4bn Oxford University Development (OUD) partnership and its first landmark scheme. Designed by internationally renowned architect practice NBBJ, the building will house the Departments of Experimental Psychology and Biology, including Plant Sciences and Zoology. With a project cost of £200m and a gross internal area of 269,097 sq ft, it will provide research facilities to 800 students and 1,200 researchers.

Financed and developed by Legal & General, the project exemplifies its approach to inclusive capitalism, as it looks to put society's pension money to work in order to foster and fund innovation in the UK, helping to solve some of society's grand challenges. As part of this, in the wake of COVID-19, Legal & General has confirmed its position as a leading investor in the UK's burgeoning science and tech sectors, including backing the creation of around 2m sq ft of science and innovation districts through its partnership with Bruntwood. Legal & General also continues to fund the University's science and technology spin-out businesses through its investment in Oxford Sciences Innovation.

Situated between Oxford's listed University Parks, the Science Area and its historic town centre, the new building aims transform the relationships between the psychological and biological sciences by enabling and promoting cross collaboration across these two fields. Taking advantage of its location, it will enhance the gateway to Oxford's Science Area and create exciting opportunities for public and scientific engagement. Engaging research departments, collaborators, the public and industry, the new Life and Mind Building will be able to target critical Global Impact Themes:

- Living with biodiversity
- Thriving on a healthy planet
- Conflict and cooperation
- Nature-based solutions

Design Approach

The design promotes engagement between the fields of research and education, taking advantage of the efficiencies and flexibility a shared building can offer. Large parts of the building have been designed to suit multiple laboratory types, allowing it to flex, adapt and reconfigure to respond over time to the changing needs of dynamic science. For example, demand for simulation focused dry-labs might increase over time within one area, while specialist growth and testing environments for plants need expanding elsewhere in the building.

The building provides space for teaching, flexible and specialist bio-science laboratories for research, as well as a wide range of cutting-edge testing spaces for research into human behaviour, perception, development and mental health. Shielded rooms allow electroencephalograms (EEG) to track and record brainwave patterns; alongside eye tracking and retinal scanner facilities; audio booths, motor labs and a sleep laboratory.

In order to integrate the building into Oxford's historic architecture, the design has taking inspiration from Oxford's historic college buildings. Its facade will use reconstituted stone, punched windows and projecting buttresses to create a timeless appearance that fits within the townscape. It will also include a roof top restaurant and event space overlooking Oxford's historic spires.

Anna Strongman, Chief Executive of Oxford University Development, said: "We are extremely proud to be bringing forward the OUD's first building project which, in the wake of COVID-19, will help retain talent in the city, whilst driving essential inward investment and providing opportunities for world-leading innovation. The Life and Mind Building is using architecture and design to bring together key scientific disciplines and promote greater understanding. When complete, it will provide students with a modern, state-of-the-art facility that helps continue the University of Oxford's legacy as one of the world's most pre-eminent teaching institutions.

Professor Chris Kennard, the University of Oxford's Senior Responsible Owner for the project, said: "We are delighted that Oxford City Council has approved the planning application for the new Life and Mind Building. The university, in partnership with Legal & General, looks forward to the commencement of construction of the building in the summer, which will be undertaken by Wates. There is no doubt that the building, which has been exceptionally well designed, will provide world class innovative research and teaching facilities for the Departments of Biology and Experimental Psychology enabling them to study the full breadth of life on earth."

Ingo Braun, Design Director at NBBJ London, said: "Following an immensely collaborative period of engagement with the departments and University, we are proud to have designed a light-filled, welcoming, and flexible space for staff and students which can be public-facing but also facilitate the world-class learning and scientific research the University is known for. The design will enhance the experience and wellbeing of the building's many occupants and visitors, promoting retention and attraction of world class talent in life and mind research."

Darius Umrigar, Science & Higher Education Director at NBBJ London, said: "The Life and Mind Building will house best-in-class research and teaching facilities, which underline the University of Oxford's reputation as one of the leading academic institutions in the world."

In 2019, Legal & General entered into a £4bn partnership with the University of Oxford, forming Oxford University Development (OUD), in order to provide thousands of new homes for staff and students, as well a number of innovation facilities. The Life and Mind Building, which forms the first landmark project for the OUD partnership is due to open in 2024. It replaces the Tinbergen Building which closed in February 2017.

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Further information

Name: Lauren Kemp

Role: PR Manager

Division: Legal & General Capital

Tel: 07946514627

Email: Lauren.Kemp@lgim.com

Notes to editors

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