

Science Oxford unveils plans for new £30 million Science Centre

In an exciting development for Oxford's West End, Science Oxford, the charitable organisation behind the science engagement facility Science Oxford Live, has unveiled ambitious plans to create a state-of-the-art science and enterprise centre adjacent to the historic Oxford Castle complex.

Macclesfield House, a 1960s office building tucked in behind the Castle Mound on New Road, has been purchased from Oxfordshire County Council and could be transformed into the multi-use facility as early as 2015.

The team at Science Oxford hopes to create a "world class" science centre which will attract more than 100,000 visitors a year. Plans for the building include a domed, immersive theatre, interactive science gallery and a flexible space for exhibitions, presentations, demonstrations and workshops, as well as a café and retail area. The centre will showcase the inspiring discoveries and inventions which have helped establish Oxford's reputation for innovation, and explain how science and technology underpin our lives and culture.

"In creating a new public centre for science and innovation here in Oxford, our vision is to bring the excitement of science and the joy of discovery right to the heart of our city," said Science Oxford Chief Executive Ian Griffin.

"Our region has an array of world class science facilities and our economy is powered by science based companies, many of which have spun off from our world leading universities. Yet to date, there hasn't been a place where local people and visitors to Oxford can learn about the amazing things that are being discovered and created locally."

For Oxfordshire County Council, establishing science as part of the city's cultural landscape has always been at the heart of its plans to revitalise and regenerate the West End. Speaking at the public launch, the Leader of Oxfordshire County Council, Keith Mitchell, said: "This promises to be an exciting new facility in the West End of Oxford. The County Council is delighted that Science Oxford has such fantastic plans for the site of Macclesfield House and we wish them the very best in coming months and years as they develop the site and then operate from it."

Architects Foster + Partners, who designed the iconic 'Gherkin' building in London, have been appointed to design the facility, and Oxfordshire-based Ridge and Partners have been taken on as project managers. The total cost of the cost of scheme is estimated to be £30 million, of which £10 million has already been secured.

Science Oxford will be holding a series of stakeholder and public consultations over the next few months, which will help inform both the design and the content of the centre. For full details of the project, or to participate in

the consultation, visit www.scienceoxford.com.

ENDS

For more information contact:

Oxford West End Partnership

Sarah Leach (01865 252389)

sleach@oxford.gov.uk