University of Oxford

Begbroke Science Park, Begbroke Hill

LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

May 2018

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) has been carried out for the proposed development by FPCR Environment and Design Ltd (FPCR). The purpose of this LVA study is to provide an assessment of the likely landscape and visual effects of the proposed development. The landscape and visual effects have been considered in relation to the proposals detailed in the planning application (Drawing Ref. TRI001-015-A Framework Plan).

1.2 FPCR is a multi-disciplinary environmental and design consultancy with over 60 years' experience of architecture, landscape, ecology, urban design, master planning and environmental impact assessment. The practice is a member of the Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment and is frequently called upon to provide expert evidence on landscape and visual issues at Public and Local Plan Inquiries.

Site Location

1.3 The site is situated southeast of the village of Begbroke and to the west of Kidlington, Oxfordshire. Oxford City Centre is approximately 8km to the south. The site is accessed from the A44, and connects with the A34 and A40 approximately 3 km to the southeast.

1.4 The site comprises the established Begbroke Science Park. Figure 1 shows the location and context of the site.

Proposed Development

1.5 The proposed development, occupying a total area of 5.5ha (4.8ha excluding the access), is the renewal of a former permission on the site (ref 15/00309/OUT). It comprises new B1 (mainly B1(b) and B1(c)) employment development and ancillary D1 uses, retention of and improvement to existing vehicular, public transport, pedestrian and cycle access and circulation, redisposition of car parking, drainage and landscape works. Buildings are proposed up to a height of 12.6 metres (excluding roof top plant and point features).

2.0 METHODOLOGY

2.1 This LVA has been prepared based upon the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, third edition (GLVIA3), published by the Landscape Institute and the Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment, in 2013.

2.2 In summary, the GLVIA3 states:

"Landscape and Visual impact assessment (LVIA), is a tool used to identify and assess the significance of and the effects of change resulting from development on both landscape as an environmental resource in its own right and on people's views and visual amenity." (GLVIA3 paragraph 1.1.)

2.3 There are two components of LVIA:

- *"Assessment of landscape effects; assessing effects on the landscape as a resource in its own right;*
- *Assessment of visual effects: assessing effects on specific views and on the general visual amenity experienced by people."* (GLVIA3 paragraph 2.21.)

2.4 The components of this report include: baseline studies; description and details of the landscape proposals and mitigation measures to be adopted as part of the scheme; and identification and description of likely effects arising from the proposed development.

2.5 In terms of baseline studies, the assessment provides an understanding of the landscape in the area to be affected, its constituent elements, character, condition and value. For the visual baseline, this includes an understanding of the area in which the development may be visible, the people who may experience views, and the nature of views.

Assessment of Landscape Effects

2.6 GLVIA3 states that "*An assessment of landscape effects deals with the effects of change and development on landscape as a resource"* (GLVIA3 paragraph 5.1).

2.7 The baseline landscape is described by reference to existing published Landscape Character Assessments and by a description of the site and its context.

2.8 A range of landscape effects can arise through development. These can include:

- Change or loss of elements, features, aesthetic or perceptual aspects that contribute to the character and distinctiveness of the landscape;
- Addition of new elements that influence character and distinctiveness of the landscape;
- Combined effects of these changes.

2.9 The characteristics of the existing landscape resource are considered in respect of the susceptibility of the landscape resource to the change arising from this development. The value of the existing landscape is also considered.

2.10 Each effect on landscape receptors is assessed in terms of size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration and reversibility. In terms of size or scale of change, the judgement takes account of the extent of the existing landscape elements that will be lost or changed, and the degree to which the aesthetic or perceptual aspects or key characteristics of the landscape will be altered by removal or addition of new elements.

2.11 The level of effect is determined by considering the sensitivity of the landscape receptors and the magnitude of effect on the landscape. Final conclusions on the overall landscape effects are drawn from the assessment components described. This appraisal describes the nature of the landscape effects, and whether these are adverse or beneficial, at the following stages of development; construction, completion (year 1) and longer term (year 15).

2.12 The criteria used in the appraisal are set out in Appendix A.

Assessment of Visual Effects

2.13 An assessment of visual effects deals with the effects of change and development on the views available to people and their visual amenity. This appraisal describes the nature of the visual effects and, whether these are adverse or beneficial, at the following stages of development; construction, completion (year 1) and longer term (year 15).

2.14 The first stage in the assessment is to identify approximate visibility/ visibility mapping. This is done by either a computerised Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV)[1], or by manual methods using map study and field evaluation. A series of viewpoints are included within the assessment that are representative of views towards the site from surrounding visual receptors. Other views of the site are included where it supports the description and understanding of the site`s landscape and visual characteristics.

2.15 The views also typically represent what can be seen from a variety of distances from the development and different viewing experiences.

2.16 It is important to remember that visual receptors are all people. For each affected viewpoint, the assessment considers both susceptibility to change in views and the value attached to views.

"The visual receptors most susceptible to change are generally likely to include:

- *Residents at home;*
- *People engaged in outdoor recreation, including use of public rights of way, whose attention or interest is likely to be focused on the landscape or particular views;*
- *Visitors to heritage assets or other attractions, where views of surroundings are an important contributor to the experience;*
- *Communities where views contribute to the landscape setting enjoyed by residents in the area;*

Travellers on road, rail or other transport routes tend to fall into an intermediate category of susceptibility to change. Where travel involves recognised scenic routes awareness of views is likely to be particularly high." (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.33.)

"Visual receptors likely to be less sensitive to change include:

- *People engaged in outdoor sport or recreation which does not involve or depend upon appreciation of views of the landscape;*
- *People at their place of work whose attention may be focused on their work or activity, not on their surroundings."* (GLVIA3 paragraph 6.34.)

[1] Zone of Theoretical Visibility (ZTV): A map usually digitally produced, showing areas of land within which a development is theoretically visible. [GLVIA3]

2.17 Each of the visual effects is evaluated in terms of its size or scale, the geographical extent of the area influenced and its duration or reversibility.

2.18 In terms of size or scale, the magnitude of visual effects takes account of:

- The scale of the change in the view with respect to the loss or addition of features in the view and changes in its composition, including proportion of the view occupied by the proposed development;
- The degree of contrast or integration of any new features or changes in the landscape with the existing or remaining landscape elements and characteristics in terms of form, scale and mass, line height, colour and texture;
- The nature of the view of the proposed development, in terms of the relative amount of time over which it will be experienced and whether views will be full, partial or glimpses.

2.19 The geographical extent of the visual effect in each viewpoint is likely to reflect:

- The angle of view in relation to the main activity of the receptor;
- The distance of the viewpoint from the proposed development;
- The extent of the area over which the changes would be visible.

2.20 As with landscape effects, the duration of the effect could be short to long term or permanent and the same definitions apply. The criteria used in this appraisal are set out in Appendix A.

Overall Landscape and Visual Effects

2.21 The final conclusions on effects, whether adverse or beneficial, are drawn from the separate judgements on the sensitivity of the receptors and the magnitude of the effects. This overall judgement is formed from a reasoned professional overview of the individual judgements against the assessment criteria.

2.22 GLVIA3 notes, at paragraphs 5.56 and 6.44, that there are no hard and fast rules with regard to the level of effects, therefore the following descriptive thresholds have been used for this appraisal:

- **Major:** A Major landscape or visual effect based on an evaluation of the susceptibility and value of the receptor, combined with the magnitude of change;
- **Moderate:** A Moderate landscape or visual effect based on an evaluation of the susceptibility and value of the receptor, combined with the magnitude of change;
- **Minor:** A Minor landscape or visual effect based on an evaluation of the susceptibility and value of the receptor, combined with the magnitude of change;
- **Negligible:** A Negligible landscape or visual effect based on an evaluation of the susceptibility and value of the receptor, combined with the magnitude of change.

2.23 Where it is determined that the assessment falls between or encompasses two of the defined criteria terms, then the judgement may be described as, for example, Major/ Moderate or Moderate/ Minor. This indicates that the effect is assessed to lie between the respective definitions or to encompass aspects of both.

3.0 PLANNING POLICY

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2012)

3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), published in March 2012, contains the Government's planning policies and seeks to deliver a framework to *"contribute to the achievement of sustainable growth".* In relation to landscape character the core planning principles state that planning should (paragraph 17):

3.2 *"…take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside".*

3.3 Section 7 of the NPPF deals with "*Requiring good design".* In terms of design, it states that:

3.4 *"The Government attaches great importance to the design of the built environment. Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning, and should contribute positively to making places better for people" (para 56).*

3.5 Conservation and enhancement of the natural environment is considered in Section 11 at paragraphs 109 & 111:

"The planning system should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by... protecting and enhancing valued landscapes..."

3.6 *Planning policies and decisions should encourage the effective use of land by re-using that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value"*

Draft Revised NPPF (2018)

3.7 The draft revised NPPF, currently the subject of consultation, seeks to foster a well-designed and safe built environment (Paragraph 8) and create places that respond to local character and design standards (Paragraphs 110 and 125). It indicates that design quality should be considered throughout the evolution and assessment of individual proposals (Paragraph 127) and decisions should ensure that developments respond to landscape setting (Paragraph 126) whilst protecting and enhancing valued landscapes.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG, 2014)

3.8 The PPG came into force on the 6th March 2014 and is an online planning resource which provides guidance on the NPPF and the planning system. The NPPF continues to be the primary document for decision making.

Local Planning Policy

Cherwell District Adopted Local Plan (1996)

3.9 The following 'saved' policies are considered to be of particular relevance to the site, landscape and visual matters and the proposed development:

Policy C7

"Development will not normally be permitted if it would cause demonstrable harm to the topography and character of the landscape."

Policy C17

"The Council will seek opportunities to secure the enhancement of the urban fringe through tree and woodland planting on land within its ownership and on other land by negotiation or in connection with new development."

Policy C28

"Control will be exercised over all new development, including conversions and extensions, to ensure that the standards of layout, design and external appearance, including the choice of external-finish materials, are sympathetic to the character of the urban or rural context of that development. In sensitive areas such as conservation areas, the area of outstanding natural beauty and areas of high landscape value, development will be required to be of a high standard and the use of traditional local building materials will normally be required."

Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1 (2015)

3.10 The following policies are considered to be of particular relevance to landscape and visual matters and the proposed development:

Policy ESD 13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement

"Opportunities will be sought to secure the enhancement of the character and appearance of the landscape, particularly in urban fringe locations, through the restoration, management or enhancement of existing landscapes, features or habitats and where appropriate the creation of new ones, including the planting of woodlands, trees and hedgerows.

Development will be expected to respect and enhance local landscape character, securing appropriate mitigation where damage to local landscape character cannot be avoided. Proposals will not be permitted if they would:

- *Cause undue visual intrusion into the open countryside*
- *Cause undue harm to important natural landscape features and topography*
- *Be inconsistent with local character*
- *Impact on areas judged to have a high level of tranquillity*
- *Harm the setting of settlements, buildings, structures or other landmark features, or*
- *Harm the historic value of the landscape.*

Development proposals should have regard to the information and advice contained in the Council's Countryside Design Summary Supplementary Planning Guidance, and the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study (OWLS) and be accompanied by a landscape assessment where appropriate."

Policy ESD 15: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment

"Successful design is founded upon an understanding and respect for an area's unique built, natural and cultural context. New development will be expected to complement and enhance the

character of its context through sensitive siting, layout and high quality design. All new development will be required to meet high design standards. Where development is in the vicinity of any of the District's distinctive natural or historic assets, delivering high quality design that complements the asset will be essential.

New development proposals should:

- *Be designed to deliver high quality safe, attractive, durable and healthy places to live and work in. Development of all scales should be designed to improve the quality and appearance of an area and the way it functions*
- *Deliver buildings, places and spaces that can adapt to changing social, technological, economic and environmental conditions*
- *Support the efficient use of land and infrastructure, through appropriate land uses, mix and density/development intensity*
- *Contribute positively to an area's character and identity by creating or reinforcing local distinctiveness and respecting local topography and landscape features, including skylines, valley floors, significant trees, historic boundaries, landmarks, features or views, in particular within designated landscapes, within the Cherwell Valley and within conservation areas and their setting*
- *Conserve, sustain and enhance designated and non designated 'heritage assets' (as defined in the NPPF) including buildings, features, archaeology, conservation areas and their settings, and ensure new development is sensitively sited and integrated in accordance with advice in the NPPF and NPPG. Proposals for development that affect non-designated heritage assets will be considered taking account of the scale of any harm or loss and the significance of the heritage asset as set out in the NPPF and NPPG. Regeneration proposals that make sensitive use of heritage assets, particularly where these bring redundant or under used buildings or areas, especially any on English Heritage's At Risk Register, into appropriate use will be encouraged*
- *Include information on heritage assets sufficient to assess the potential impact of the proposal on their significance. Where archaeological potential is identified this should include an appropriate desk based assessment and, where necessary, a field evaluation.*
- *Respect the traditional pattern of routes, spaces, blocks, plots, enclosures and the form, scale and massing of buildings. Development should be designed to integrate with existing streets and public spaces, and buildings configured to create clearly defined active public frontages*
- *Reflect or, in a contemporary design response, re-interpret local distinctiveness, including elements of construction, elevational detailing, windows and doors, building and surfacing materials, mass, scale and colour palette*
- *Promote permeable, accessible and easily understandable places by creating spaces that connect with each other, are easy to move through and have recognisable landmark features*
- *Demonstrate a holistic approach to the design of the public realm to create high quality and multi-functional streets and places that promotes pedestrian movement and*

integrates different modes of transport, parking and servicing. The principles set out in The Manual for Streets should be followed

- *Consider the amenity of both existing and future development, including matters of privacy, outlook, natural lighting, ventilation, and indoor and outdoor space*
- *Limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation*
- *Be compatible with up to date urban design principles, including Building for Life, and achieve Secured by Design accreditation*
- *Consider sustainable design and layout at the masterplanning stage of design, where building orientation and the impact of microclimate can be considered within the layout*
- *Incorporate energy efficient design and sustainable construction techniques, whilst ensuring that the aesthetic implications of green technology are appropriate to the context (also see Policies ESD 1 - 5 on climate change and renewable energy)*
- *Integrate and enhance green infrastructure and incorporate biodiversity enhancement features where possible (see Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment and Policy ESD 17 Green Infrastructure). Well designed landscape schemes should be an integral part of development proposals to support improvements to biodiversity, the micro climate, and air pollution and provide attractive places that improve people's health and sense of vitality*
- *Use locally sourced sustainable materials where possible.*

The Council will provide more detailed design and historic environment policies in the Local Plan Part 2.

The design of all new development will need to be informed by an analysis of the context, together with an explanation and justification of the principles that have informed the design rationale. This should be demonstrated in the Design and Access Statement that accompanies the planning application. The Council expects all the issues within this policy to be positively addressed through the explanation and justification in the Design & Access Statement. Further guidance can be found on the Council's website.

The Council will require design to be addressed in the pre-application process on major developments and in connection with all heritage sites. For major sites/strategic sites and complex developments, Design Codes will need to be prepared in conjunction with the Council and local stakeholders to ensure appropriate character and high quality design is delivered throughout. Design Codes will usually be prepared between outline and reserved matters stage to set out design principles for the development of the site. The level of prescription will vary according to the nature of the site."

Policy ESD 17: Green Infrastructure

"The District's green infrastructure network will be maintained and enhanced through the following measures:

- *Pursuing opportunities for joint working to maintain and improve the green infrastructure network, whilst protecting sites of importance for nature conservation*

- *Protecting and enhancing existing sites and features forming part of the green infrastructure network and improving sustainable connectivity between sites in accordance with policies on supporting a modal shift in transport (Policy SLE 4: Improved Transport and Connections), open space, sport and recreation (Policy BSC 10: Open Space, Outdoor Sport and Recreation Provision), adapting to climate change (Policy ESD 1: Mitigating and Adapting to Climate Change), SuDS (Policy ESD 7: Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)), biodiversity and the natural environment (Policy ESD 10: Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment), Conservation Target Areas (Policy ESD 11: Conservation Target Areas), heritage assets (Policy ESD 15) and the Oxford Canal (Policy ESD 16)*
- *Ensuring that green infrastructure network considerations are integral to the planning of new development. Proposals should maximise the opportunity to maintain and extend green infrastructure links to form a multi-functional network of open space, providing opportunities for walking and cycling, and connecting the towns to the urban fringe and the wider countryside beyond*

All strategic development sites (Section C: 'Policies for Cherwell's Places') will be required to incorporate green infrastructure provision and proposals should include details for future management and maintenance."

4.0 BASELINE CONDITIONS

Landscape Character

National Character

4.1 National Character Area (NCA) profiles have prepared by Natural England for the 159 NCAs defined across England. These NCA profiles include a description of the natural and cultural features that shape the landscape, how the landscape has changed over time, the current key drivers for ongoing change, and a broad analysis of each area's characteristics. Figure 2 illustrates the NCAs and other defined character areas within the context of the site.

4.2 At this very broad landscape scale, the site and the wider landscape lies within Natural England's National Character Area (NCA) 108 'Upper Thames Clay Vales'. This NCA comprises an extensive area of lowland farmland encircling the 'Midvale Ridge' and extending from Wiltshire and Gloucestershire to the west to Aylesbury in the east. There are two sub-areas within the NCA, and the site sits in the northern 'Wiltshire, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Vales'.

4.3 The Key Characteristics for the NCA are:

- *Low-lying clay-based flood plains encircle the Midvale Ridge. Superficial deposits, including alluvium and gravel terraces, spread over 40 per cent of the area, creating gently undulating topography. The Upper Jurassic and Cretaceous clays and the wet valley bottoms give rise to enclosed pasture, contrasting with the more settled, open, arable lands of the gravel.*
- *The large river system of the River Thames drains the Vales, their headwaters flowing off the Cotswolds to the north or emitting from the springline along the Chilterns and Downs escarpments. Where mineral extraction takes place, pits naturally fill with water, and limestone gravels from the Cotswolds give rise to marl formation. There are a high number of nationally important geological sites.*
- *Woodland cover is low at only about 3 per cent, but hedges, hedgerow trees and field trees are frequent. Watercourses are often marked by lines of willows and, particularly in the Aylesbury Vale and Cotswold Water Park, native black poplar.*
- *Wet ground conditions and heavy clay soils discourage cultivation in many places, giving rise to livestock farming. Fields are regular and hedged, except near the Cotswolds, where there can be stone walls. The Vale of White Horse is made distinct by large arable fields, and there are relict orchards on the Greensand.*
- *In the river corridors, grazed pasture dominates, with limited areas of historic wetland habitats including wet woodland, fen, reedbed and flood meadow. There are two areas of flood meadow designated for their importance at a European level as Special Areas of Conservation (SAC). There are also rich and extensive ditch systems.*
- *Gravel extraction has left a legacy of geological exposures, numerous waterbodies and, at the Cotswold Water Park, a nationally important complex of marl lakes.*
- *Wetland habitat attracts regionally important numbers of birds including snipe, redshank, curlew and lapwing and wintering wildfowl such as pochard. Snake's head fritillary thrives in the internationally important meadows. The area also supports typical farmland wildlife such as brown hare, bats, barn owl, tree sparrow and skylark.*

- *Blenheim Palace World Heritage Site, including its Capability Brown landscape, is the finest of many examples of historic parkland in this NCA. There are many heritage features, including nationally important survivals of ridge and furrow, Roman roads, deserted medieval villages and historic bridges.*
- *Brick and tile from local clays, timber and thatch are traditional building materials across the area, combined with limestone near the Cotswolds and occasional clunch and wichert near the Chilterns.*
- *Settlement is sparse on flood plains, apart from at river crossings, where there can be large towns, such as Abingdon. Aylesbury and Bicester are major urban centres, and the outer suburbs of Oxford and Swindon spread into this NCA. Market towns and villages are strung along the springlines of the Chilterns and Downs. Major routes include mainline rail, canals, a network of roads including the M40 and M4 and The Ridgeway and Thames Path National Trails.*

4.4 The Statement of Environmental Opportunity (SEO)4 notes:

"*Ensure adequate greenspace in association with all development… Create and manage greenspace to provide benefits for biodiversity, floodwater management, tranquillity and recreation and secure strategic access routes between town and country*.

- *Seeking to ensure that future development is designed to contribute positively to landscape character focussing on local distinctiveness and being sensitive to setting.*
- *Considering physical and functional links between settlement or development and the wider landscape, such as views… Manage the urban fringe to contribute positively to landscape character*
- *Incorporating new woodlands and tree screens into development as appropriate, taking care not to detract from the open landscape character of this NCA."*

4.5 The 'Landscape Change' section notes the "*significant planned expansion*" north of Oxford, and the impacts on the landscape character that will result.

County Landscape Character Assessment –Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape Study

4.6 This is a county-wide study that identifies a number of landscape types (LTs) that occur across Oxfordshire. The landscape west of Kidlington falls into several Landscape Types, the site and its immediate setting is located within the 'Lowland Village Farmlands'. Other land in the vicinity forms part of the 'Alluvial Lowlands' (to the south / southeast), the 'Wooded Estatelands' (to the west) and the 'Estate Farmlands' (to the north). These LTs are shown in Figure 3.

<u>Lowland Village Farmlands LT</u>

4.7 The key characteristics are:

- *"A varied gently rolling and almost flat topography.*
- *Medium to large-sized arable and hedged fields.*
- *Thinly scattered hedgerow trees, which are mostly ash.*
- *Ash, willow and poplars fringing ditches and streams.*

- *Prominent village settlements scattered throughout the area"*

4.8 Woodland is generally not a characteristic feature, except for small tree clumps. Poplar shelterbelts are a vegetative feature around Begbroke.

4.9 Amongst the identified 'Forces for Change' within the landscape type is the loss or fragmentation of arable field hedges resulting in an open landscape and exacerbating the intrusion of built development and roads.

4.10 Further information is provided under the 'Local Character Area' I: Bebroke, which states:

"Landscape Character

The area is characterized by medium-sized arable fields enclosed by prominent poplar shelterbelts and tall, thick hedges dominated by elm, hawthorn with some hazel and field maple. Scattered hedgerow trees of ash, oak and some field maple are found throughout the area, and a dense corridor of willows borders Rowell Brook.

Biodiversity

Bioscore/bioband: low to medium

Apart from locally important habitats such as species-poor hedges with trees and tree-lined water courses, the most important habitats are areas of wet grassland to the north of Kidlington and unimproved alluvial meadows lying adjacent to the Oxford Canal."

4.11 'Key Recommendations' for the LT include the safeguarding and enhancement of the hedgerow network and tree-lined watercourses. The Landscape Strategy for the LT is to *"Conserve and enhance the vernacular character of the villages and strengthen the existing pattern of hedgerows, hedgerow trees and tree-lined watercourses*", with guidelines including the minimisation of visual impact from development through the use of characteristic planting for screening and to assist successful integration into the countryside.

District or Borough Landscape Character Assessment – Cherwell District Council Landscape Character Sensitivity Assessment (June 2017)

4.12 This assessment considers forty-one land parcels across the district, including land around Kidlington and Begbroke. It identifies landscape character, sensitivity and capacity for development.

4.13 The site forms part of parcel LCSA20, sitting relatively centrally within the western half of the parcel. In reference to the site, specifically 'Key Features', it notes:

"Passing west to east between Begbroke Science Park and Begbroke Lane is Rowel Brook. This is well vegetated along its length and creates a vegetation buffer on the southern edge of Begbroke at its western extent adjacent to the A44 and runs towards the Oxford Canal to the east.

Begbroke Science Park is located centrally in the northern area and is accessed off the A44… [It] comprises a number of buildings; these are concentrated around the Grade II listed Begbroke Farmhouse which is located to the south of the Science Park… The boundary of the Science Park is defined by a semi mature landscape buffer, planted to provide partial screening to the Science Park although the newer, tall buildings are visible rising above it."

4.14 Influences are identified as being the A44 Woodstock Road East and the railway line that bisects the parcel.

4.15 Despite the varied landscape composition and a diverse appearance with agricultural fields, semi-natural grassland, the listed farmhouse, the Science Park and the canal, LCSA20 is assessed as having natural factors and cultural factors of medium sensitivity. Its medium aesthetic sensitivity results from its relatively intact nature and pockets of mature tree cover although there are interruptions from the railway and Sandy Lane. Overall the landscape quality and condition is judged to be of "medium sensitivity", and the combined landscape sensitivity is concluded to be "medium".

4.16 The report states that visibility across LSCA20 is generally good, with sequential views possible from along the A44 and for railway passengers. Other visual receptors include residents. It is identified that some high sensitivity areas of the parcel have potential to accommodate mitigation, and as such the overall sensitivity of the site to mitigation is "medium to low". The combined visual sensitivity is considered to be "medium".

4.17 The landscape value of the parcel is judged to be "medium". This takes into consideration the nature conservation interests, heritage designations, intervisibility and tranquillity / scenic quality.

4.18 In general, the landscape capacity of LSCA20 is considered by the study to be "medium". Although the parcel has a broad capacity for employment development of medium to low it notes and recognises at 6.9.1 that *"there is a medium potential for the localised extension of Begbroke Science Park"*.

Designations

4.19 The site is not within or adjacent to any landscape designations such as National Parks, AONBs or Special Landscape Areas etc.

4.20 There is a listed building within the site (the Grade II Begbroke Hill Farmhouse) that is set within the context of surrounding buildings of the Science Park, and three listings along the Oxford Canal (the Roundham Lock and two bridges). There is a Scheduled Monument just under 2km to the south of the site (Yarnton Manor) on the opposite side of Yarnton. Figure 4 illustrates to location of the landscape designations.

4.21 A public right of way passes along the eastern boundary of the site from Sandy Lane to the south into a network of paths to the north and west. There is a National Cycle Route along the A44 to the west past the access road into the site.

4.22 The site and the surrounding landscape lies within the Oxford Green Belt, however, as identified within the Cherwell District's adopted Development Plan the site is within one of two indicative locations to the west of Kidlington subject to a "Limited Green Belt Review" (5.4 Key Policies Map: Kidlington, Appendix B) due to exceptional circumstances to meet a specific need for the Science Park (see Policy Kidlington 1: Accommodating High Value Employment Needs). Furthermore, the site forms a small part of a large proposed allocation (PR8) identified within the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Partial Review 'Oxford's Unmet Housing Need' of July 2017 and would be largely removed from the Green Belt (Policy PR8 Map, Appendix C).

Topography

4.23 The following should be read in conjunction with Figure 5.

Context – Landform

4.24 The local and wider topography is influenced and shaped by a number of notable rivers passing through and converging within the landscape to the north of Oxford. These include the Glyme and Evenlode to the west, and the Ray, Cherwell and Oxford Canal to the east. These all converge at various points with the River Thames (or Isis) to the south around Oxford. The local landscape is therefore comparatively flat and very gently undulating in character, with few notably elevated areas. For example much of the land sits at 60-70m AOD (Above Ordnance Datum) and typically rising to no more than 100m such as at Begbroke, Bletchingdon, Woodeaton and Woodstock. Higher ground is at Wytham Hill (164m AOD), some 5km to the south.

4.25 Kidlington is broadly between 60 and 65m AOD, with lowest ground along the Oxford Canal defining its western limits and along the River Cherwell to the east. Begbroke is at 65m AOD along its southern edge (to the Rowel Brook that forms its southern edge) rising to 69m AOD along Begbroke Lane. Just west of Begbroke, 2km west of the site, the well-wooded Bladon Heath rises to 111m at its highest point.

Site - Landform

4.26 The site itself is relatively flat, at around 69m AOD. The site has a very slight fall from southwest to north east from the A44 at just under 70m AOD towards the Rowel Brook and Oxford Canal at under 65m AOD.

Site and Immediate Context

4.27 The landscape of the study area is mixed, comprising infrastructure, residential settlement, industrial and commercial development, numerous rivers / waterbodies, some woodland and largely cultivated farmland.

4.28 The site is within a tract of largely agricultural land to the north of Oxford that is broadly defined by transport infrastructure and settlement. The A44 passes to the west, and along which the villages of Begbroke and Yarnton are situated. The A4260 forms a ‘spine’ along which the centre of the large village of Kidlington is situated to the east. The western limit of this settlement is defined by the Oxford Canal. To the north, where the A44 and A4260 are connected by Langford Lane, are several commercial / business park units, beyond which is the London Oxford Airport. Infrastructure is a notable feature of the landscape to the south, including the A34 / A44 / A40 junctions with a number of other local A-roads, two railway lines, and the Oxford Canal, and there is also a large solar farm and the Oxford Industrial Park to the southeast. Highway elements also have an urbanising influence on the landscape.

4.29 Woodland is typically associated with areas of higher ground, such as at Bladon Heath to the west and Wytham Great Wood to the south west, but linear tree cover is also associated along water courses, such as the canal and Rowel Brook. There are several areas of common land; to the south of Kidlington and the A40 adjoining the River Thames.

4.30 The site's immediate setting comprises surrounding arable farmland with fields defined by largely intact hedgerows and / or tree lines. There are some scattered parcels of rough grassland, primarily near the intersections of roads with the railways lines.

4.31 The site is irregular in shape and occupies the majority of the land associated with the University of Oxford's Begbroke Science Park. The Science Park in broad terms is a rectangular parcel of land surrounded and contained by a 10-15 metre established tree belt.

4.32 The majority of the site is currently or previously developed, with a number of existing buildings and an internal road that loops the site. With the exception of Begbroke Hill Farmhouse, the Science Park buildings are relatively modern in design, form and materials.

4.33 While the grounds associated with the Begbroke Hill Farmhouse are more formal (with lawns, conifer and shrub planting and several large mature trees), these only form a small portion of the overall site and vegetation elsewhere is limited to a small number of trees toward the south and west, and a hedgerow with establishing trees along the eastern boundary.

4.34 The main vehicular access (within the red-lined site boundary) is taken from the A44 to the west, with a secondary (pedestrian and cycle only) access onto Sandy Lane to the south. A public right of way runs parallel to the eastern boundary, between the established tree belt and the hedgerow.

4.35 This public footpath connects to a number of rights of way that cross the surrounding arable fields. These extend to the A44 to the west, Begbroke Lane to the north and onto the 'Oxford Canal Walk' long distance trail along the canal to the east, as well as Sandy Lane to the south. There are several other long distance trails in the vicinity, including the Oxford Greenbelt Way, Shakespeare's Way and the Thames Walk.

Landscape Value

4.36 In terms of "landscape value" it is appropriate to examine the role of the site and its immediate context in terms of the range of local factors set out in the GLVIA3 (Box 5.1, page 84), and summarised in the methodology. This considers the landscape in terms of a range of factors as set out below. As a starting point, landscape designations have been considered.

4.37 Landscape Designations: The site and its setting are not subject to any national, local or other landscape designations. There is a listed building (Grade II) within the site, surrounded by modern buildings at the Science Park.

4.38 Landscape Quality (Condition): The site is already largely developed, with existing buildings and formerly developed plots / hardstandings. There is little vegetation of note beyond the perimeter woodland screening belt and that in the proximity of Begbroke Hill Farmhouse's curtilage.

4.39 Scenic Quality: The site itself is well developed and visually enclosed, and the existing buildings strongly influence its character. The site's setting, in contrast, is open and agricultural with some tree lines and field hedgerows, although the Science Park (set back well from the A44) and A44 influence views and tranquillity. It is considered the site and the local landscape has no pronounced sense of scenic quality.

4.40 Rarity and Representativeness: In the local context the site and its setting are not rare and are typical of the landscape character of the area. The site does not contain any rare or unusual landscape features.

4.41 Conservation Interest: There is conservation interest on account of the listed building, albeit this falls within the context of surrounding buildings within the Science Park

4.42 Recreational Value: Aside from the public right of way passing along the eastern boundary, there is no recreational value within the site. There is no public access into the Science Park site itself.

4.43 Perceptual Aspects and Associations: The site and its context are neither "wild" nor particularly tranquil due to its developed nature. The site has no notable perceptual qualities or notable associations with artists or writers.

4.44 In conclusion and having appraised the above factors it is judged that the site and the immediate landscape is of low to medium landscape value.

Visual Baseline

4.45 A visual appraisal has been undertaken for the site. This has explored the nature of the existing visual amenity of the area and sought to establish the approximate visibility of the site from surrounding locations and receptors. A series of photo viewpoints have been selected which support this analysis.

4.46 Photographs have been taken to illustrate a view from a specific vantage point, or to demonstrate a representative view for those receptors that are moving through the landscape, e.g. rights of way users. The photographs may demonstrate varying degrees of visibility and include both short and long range views. The photographs were taken on the 7th March 2018 and seasonal differences have been taken into account when determining the visual effects on these receptors.

Photo Viewpoints

4.47 An assessment of the likely visual effects of the proposed development upon surrounding receptors is detailed in the subsequent section. Figure 6 details the location of the Photo Viewpoints and Figures 7 to 17 illustrate the photo viewpoints. They are briefly described below.

Viewpoint A to E – Sandy Lane

4.48 These views are taken from along Sandy Lane, which extends from the A44 to the east through Begbroke and past the south of the site to Kidlington. These views are representative of residents, road users and pedestrians. Views out across the landscape are largely restricted by a continuous hedgerow. Where views looking north towards the site are possible, intensively farmed arable land sits in the foreground. The landscape appears flat, and as such successive landscape elements and field boundary vegetation form the horizon within a relatively short distance (less than 1km).

4.49 From the A44, Sandy Lane is immediately enclosed by residential development to either side. Viewpoint A is situated at the first point travelling east where views are not enclosed to the north. Even so, the roadside hedgerow limits views for road users, and only via the access onto the cycle path along Sandy Lane is there the opportunity for a glimpse towards the site. Trees along the cycle / pedestrian only access are visible and the site cannot be identified.

4.50 Viewpoint B is taken from the junction onto Broad Field Road and is representative of views from the cycle path as well as Sandy Lane. It is considered unlikely that there will be any residential receptors that have views of the site due to orientation of dwellings on Broad Field Road, however, there may be one property at the northern end with views towards the site. Existing

views look across an arable foreground to the woodland belt around the Science Park. There are filtered views of buildings within the site around and to the west of the Farmhouse. Buildings to the east are screened by further vegetation along the southern boundary and along the pedestrian / cycle access.

4.51 Further east, there are two properties along Sandy Lane that look directly towards the Site, just to the east of the pedestrian / cycle access. From here (Viewpoint C), existing buildings in the eastern half of the site are visible beyond the perimeter tree belt. Earth mounding and large conifers around Parker's Farm are also clearly visible and form an uncharacteristic feature in the landscape. There are glimpses of dwellings on the edge of Begbroke to the west.

4.52 Views towards the site from the road are intermittent due to the roadside hedgerow but are possible travelling west towards the site after sharp bends in the lane. Viewpoint D is situated looking north on slightly elevated ground after road users pass over the railway's level crossing. From here the buildings in the east of the site can be clearly seen at medium distance beyond the fields and hedgerows in the foreground, and there are glimpses of the complex of buildings around the Farmhouse. Trees around Parker's Farm can be seen, and a line of poplar trees to the south of the road filter views of the two cottages along Sandy Lane.

4.53 East of the bridge crossing the canal views from along the lane towards the site are completely obscured by residential settlement on the western edge of Kidlington. Viewpoint E represents opportunities for views towards the site. It is not representative of views from the residential edge itself, however, since typically both sides of the canal are tree lined and / or vegetated which serves to heavily filter or obscure views looking westwards. Road users however have a brief opportunity for views looking north westwards towards the site. This view is more vegetated as the railway line is flanked by trees and sits between the Science Park and the edge of Kidlington from this direction. Buildings within the site can still be seen beyond intervening hedgerows and the perimeter woodland belt however.

Viewpoint F to I – PRoW passing the site

4.54 These viewpoints are situated along the footpath that commences at Sandy Lane and extends north around the eastern edge of the site and beyond the Science Park. Users' views are either at short distance on the approach (with a farmed foreground and filtered / screened views of the site through the perimeter woodland belt), or receptors are directly adjacent to the boundary (where views are contained by the woodland belt and dominated by the existing buildings).

4.55 The view from Viewpoint F is similar in nature to that experienced by residents and road users directly south of the site. Although at shorter distance, the site remains screened by the perimeter woodland, and the existing buildings to the east can be seen through / over the tree canopies. Given the footpath's close proximity to the pedestrian / cycle access, the 'avenue' of trees along it provides a relatively greater degree of screening of buildings in the west of the site.

4.56 Clear views of the site are not possible until the footpath is immediately alongside the boundary on the inside of the woodland belt. Here (at Viewpoint G), the Begbroke Hill Farmhouse is directly in front, and vegetation and built form immediately around the Farmhouse limits visibility.

4.57 Travelling a short distance to the east, from the south-eastern corner of the site, the access road and car park sit immediately in the foreground (Viewpoint H). Views are broadly limited to the

existing buildings and the Farmhouse curtilage behind, although the woodland belt can be glimpsed to the north along the access road / footpath corridor adjacent to the eastern boundary.

4.58 Viewpoint I is situated where the public right of way enters the site at the most northerly point. Views look towards the northern building line within the site, across an area of parking / hardstanding. A hedgerow within the site and the woodland belt beyond terminate views looking west from the footpath.

Viewpoint J and K –Begbroke (east)

4.59 There are two public rights of way east of Begbroke, one along Begbroke Lane (a restricted byway), which is slightly elevated relative to the Rowel Brook, and another from Begbroke Lane extending south across the Rowel Brook towards the Science Park. Begbroke Lane is largely bound by hedgerows on either side, and views (particularly looking south) are restricted. A gap in the hedge where the two rights of way meet provides an opportunity via which to view the site. Viewpoint J is located here, and is representative therefore of the brief view for users from the byway, and of receptors' views from the most elevated point of the footpath extending south along the residential edge of Begbroke. From here, the site is beyond the tree line along the Brook and the Science Park buildings can only just be discerned through the trees during winter. The footpath then drops in elevation, and views of the site are more or less prevented until footpath users cross the Rowel Brook and the foreground is unimpeded by vegetation (Viewpoint K). Land slightly rises towards the site and the woodland belt around the Science Park and its buildings are visible through the trees, sitting along the horizon at short distance. Field boundary hedgerows and trees in the vicinity also define the view.

Viewpoint L to O – PRoW passing to the north

4.60 The changing nature of views from along the public footpath passing to the north of the site (from the Oxford Canal to the A44) is presented in Viewpoints L to O. This illustrates that although there is some variation in visibility of the existing buildings within the site, these are notably filtered by the perimeter woodland belt around the site. There are no direct views into the site itself.

4.61 The first glimpses of existing development are only possible once the footpath leaves the Canal into the adjacent field. In addition to the site's perimeter planting, the field hedgerow / riparian trees serve to further screen these views. In Viewpoint L, once this boundary vegetation is in full leaf it is unlikely that the existing buildings will be discerned.

4.62 Existing buildings within the site do not become apparent again until footpath users have crossed the Rowel Brook, and views of the site's boundary woodland are more evident. Users see the site from a north easterly direction wherein built form adjacent to the eastern boundary is clearly visible above this vegetation (Viewpoint M).

4.63 Travelling west, buildings are afforded a comparatively greater degree of screening by the perimeter woodland (Viewpoint N), but looking directly at the southern boundary the site occupies a broader extent of these views.

4.64 At the very opposite end of the footpath, the experience by footpath users is dominated by the A44, both in visual terms and road noise. A few buildings in the vicinity of the site are perceived (such as the Yarnton Nurseries' Garden Centre) but due to the direction of the view the Science

Park itself is screened. Within a short distance away from the A44, after the footpath bends to the east, views towards the site are possible (Viewpoint O). The site is well screened by the perimeter woodland and is not immediately apparent. The horizon is primarily defined by field boundary vegetation to the west of the site and south of the view.

Viewpoints P and Q – Oxford Canal

4.65 These viewpoints are included to demonstrate the degree of screening along the Canal. In addition to trees along the Canal itself, the intervening railway embankment and associated vegetation generally restrict views westwards (Viewpoint P). Even where the railway is not within the view and the tow path is on elevated positions (such as from one of the canal bridges, Viewpoint Q) canal-side vegetation together with intervening field boundaries still serves to restrict views towards the site, and existing buildings are not apparent.

Viewpoint R – A44

4.66 The A44 is a dual carriageway road to the west of the site, with hedgerows to both sides bounding the adjacent fields largely preventing outward visibility to the east and west. Views are primarily focussed along the road itself and include central reservation barriers, signage, lighting columns and traffic control signalling. There are some glimpses towards the site from occasional hedgerow gaps (Viewpoint R), or at the site access road junction, however these are fleeting in nature or brief and existing buildings are afforded reasonable screening by the perimeter woodland belt.

Viewpoint S - Begbroke (west)

4.67 Viewpoint S is located on a footpath on relatively higher ground to the west of the older part of the village of Begbroke, and to the east of woodland on highest ground. Trees around Begbroke filter some of the eastward views at shorter distance, but the A44 is identifiable to the south-east, as are the Garden Centre buildings. The site cannot be discerned, and is effectively screened by mature trees to the west of the A44. Further along, the footpath is less elevated and the extent of visibility increasingly restricted by intervening landscape elements.

Summary of Visual Baseline

4.68 The baseline analysis results in a number of reasoned conclusions which are summarised below:

- The site has a relatively contained visual envelope, which broadly results from a combination of the gentle nature of the topography and overlapping linear vegetation along field boundaries and infrastructure. Views are confined to the short to medium distance.
- Views of the site are unlikely from the Oxford Canal and Kidlington beyond to the east, and from locations to the west of the A44 corridor. Vegetation in leaf along the canal will screen views of the landscape looking west.
- Receptors beyond the short distance to the north and south-east are limited to elevated locations, and even then are subject to varying degrees of screening by intervening vegetation.
- There are views from along the footpath that commences at Sandy Lane and extends north around the eastern edge of the site and beyond the Science Park. From this path, users'

views are either at short distance on the approach with a farmed foreground and filtered views of the site through the perimeter woodland belt, or are directly adjacent to the boundary where views are dominated by the existing buildings and contained by the woodland belt.

- Views from Sandy Lane are largely controlled by a consistent hedgerow. Where views looking north towards the site are possible, existing buildings are a notable feature in the view.
- Views of the site vary from along the public footpaths passing to the north. Existing buildings are a feature of current views and are subject to filtering by the perimeter woodland belt around the Science Park. There are no direct views into the site itself.
- The site is well contained by established woodland planting around its perimeter.

5.0 LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL EFFECTS

5.1 The following section outlines the likely landscape and visual effects that would arise from proposed development on the site. A schedule detailing the likely visual effects for the receptors is included in Appendix D. Please refer to these in conjunction with the following descriptions.

5.2 Reported effects will take into consideration the brownfield or previously-developed nature of the locations of the proposed development, and the previously approved planning application for additional employment buildings within the site.

Landscape Effects

Construction

5.3 Impacts upon the character of the Site itself and its setting will arise as a result of increased disruption to the landscape during construction, and will typically be transitory in nature i.e., construction noise, vehicle activities etc.

5.4 All construction works would be carried out in full accordance with best practice procedures to minimise any adverse impact on landscape character. The existing Science Park perimeter woodland and trees / hedgerows within the site that are to be retained will be suitably protected during the construction phases, following accepted best practice methods.

5.5 During the construction period there would be some short term adverse landscape effects, resulting from the construction work itself. None of these effects would be greater than the effects arising through the operational phase and would be controlled by conditions on any planning permission for the development.

Operation (following Completion)

5.6 The Science Park is dominated by the existing built form and strongly defined by the existing perimeter woodland belt, within which the site itself is contained

5.7 The introduction of new built development will result in very localised changes in the landscape. The character of the landscape of the site and the local landscape will not materially change however, as the site already includes a number of employment buildings and previously developed land serviced by existing internal roads. New buildings of a comparable scale, height and mass to the existing Science Park buildings would be observed within an existing built context and within an established perimeter framework of mature vegetation such that the magnitude of landscape change (impact) on the site would be Negligible. Built structures, which are to be retained as part of the application, occupy much of the site footprint and are situated immediately adjacent to the proposed built development areas.

National Character

5.8 The site forms a very small part of the broader NCA108 and the proposal is not expected to affect any key characteristics of the NCA, such as frequent hedgerows, trees and field trees, tree-lined rivers and watercourses and the sparse settlement pattern. As a consequence of the considerable overall scale of the (NCA) the level of change arising from the proposed development upon this landscape receptor is considered to be inconsequential and would be no more than Negligible.

5.9 In terms of the NCA's SEOs the site is set within the woodland belt encompassing the Science Park, maintaining the relationship between this development and the wider, more open, agricultural landscape. This screening will be protected and will remain.

County Landscape Assessment

5.10 Operational effects on the character of the 'Begbroke' Local Character Area will be direct and adverse due to the physical changes proposed within this area. Given the limited and contained nature of these impacts and the influence of existing development within the site, the magnitude of change is considered to be Negligible. Furthermore, the Site as existing is previously developed with limited vegetation. Operational effects are considered to be Negligible Adverse.

5.11 Any potential landscape impacts on other Landscape Character Areas would be indirect. Given the existing presence of the Science Park and its perimeter woodland belt, the proposed development is not considered to result in any changes to the settings of the wider Character Area areas in the vicinity. Proposals are considered to result in No Change.

The Site and Immediate Setting

5.12 The Site comprises the majority of remaining land within the existing Begbroke Science Park. The Site overall is largely developed, with some established trees and vegetation predominantly focussed towards the southern boundary. Proposed development will be situated on previously developed land, and whilst the majority of trees and vegetation will be retained a small number of trees would be removed within the north-west of the site. The magnitude of change upon the site and its immediate setting are deemed to be Negligible. Landscape effects on completion are considered to be Negligible to Minor Adverse.

Visual Effects

Construction

5.13 It is acknowledged that factors such as views towards machinery, vehicle movements, materials handling, etc. will provide a degree of intrusion into views, especially to receptors at short distance for a short period of time.

5.14 The visual effects arising from construction activities upon the identified receptors is generally considered to be no greater than effects reported during the operational phase, particularly given the duration of the construction phase.

Operation (following Completion)

5.15 The following provides a summary of the visual effects assessment included at Appendix D. The potential visual receptors subject to views of the proposed development are identified as follows:

- Residents along the southern edge of Begbroke
- The PRoW passing immediately along the site boundary
- PRoW users north of the site at short to medium distance
- Road users along Sandy Lane and the A44.

5.16 The receptors at closest range or of greatest sensitivity comprise users of the Public Right of Way directly adjacent to the site boundary, and users at short distance to the north.

5.17 These receptors are considered to have full or partial views of the proposed development. The remaining receptors and viewpoints analysed within the baseline that are not considered to be subject to effects will not be discussed further.

Residential Properties and Settlement

5.18 The majority of residents in the local landscape would not have views of the proposed development primarily due to building orientation, vegetative screening, intervening settlement and the interaction of successive landscape features with the gentle topography near the site.

5.19 Residents at Begbroke are separated from farmland surrounding the site by the Rowel Brook and trees along its course. There may be a small number of properties towards the south east of the village with views from the rear of dwellings towards the site; where vegetation is less dense, properties are closer and views are less oblique; however they are some distance from the Site. Views would be well filtered by garden and riparian vegetation, and if possible would see proposed development sitting in front of existing buildings and screened by the Science Park's perimeter woodland belt. However, in general the majority of properties are not considered to have views towards the site, and it is unlikely that these potential marginal views would be possible once vegetation was in full leaf. Residents at Begbroke are therefore in general not considered to be subject to any effects, with some properties experiencing Negligible effects on seasonally available views. In any event, any views of the development would be observed within the context of the existing built up area of the Science Park.

5.20 Other residents who may potentially experience some change to their views are situated along Sandy Lane: two properties close to the pedestrian / cycle only Science Park access (represented in Viewpoint C), and a further two properties on the north eastern edge of Yarnton to the south west of the site. Views from along Sandy Lane currently include the existing buildings within the Science Park, set beyond perimeter landscaping. Residents may perceive proposed buildings behind (and therefore largely screened by) existing development. Given the existing developed nature of the site, including employment buildings, the magnitude of change is likely to be no greater than Low. The resulting effects on completion are considered to be no greater than Minor Adverse.

Public Rights of Way (PROW) and Other Footpaths etc

5.21 The nature of views towards the site from the local Public Right of Way network can be separated into users approaching from Sandy Lane, users around the site boundary, and users to the north.

5.22 Users approaching from the south are at short distance, and buildings particularly within the east of the site are features of the view. New buildings are unlikely to be seen beyond those closest to receptors, and will be afforded some screening by the perimeter woodland belt that already heavily filters views of the Science Park. Effects will be None to Negligible.

5.23 Users within the perimeter woodland belt have direct, clear views of the site. At the southern end, views are dominated by existing buildings immediately in the foreground, and further screened by established trees along the internal access road. The proposed development is unlikely to be visible. It is not until footpath users reach the south-eastern corner that glimpses of built form of

the scheme may be possible. This would remain largely screened by existing buildings and users may perceive the increased built frontage along the eastern boundary - views of proposed buildings are likely to principally comprise glimpses slightly above or adjacent to existing buildings at the opposite end of the site. As receptors travel north along the footpath the proposed development would become a more apparent element within the view. At the site's north-eastern corner, beyond the parking area, buildings are the principal elements within the view, with new built form sitting in front, and further enclosure provided by the perimeter woodland belt. The nature of the view therefore would not be altered, but buildings would as a result of the proposed development sit closer within the view. The magnitude of effect would be low to medium, resulting in a Moderate Adverse effect. In summary therefore, effects along this section of the footpath vary from No Effect to Moderate Adverse, with the majority of users likely to be subject to effects of no greater than Negligible to Minor Adverse. The overall experience for these users includes a transient view of built elements of the Science Park as they move through the landscape. The proposed development of new buildings would be observed within that existing context and would not be an uncharacteristic feature.

5.24 Users along the footpaths to the north of the site experience different degrees of vegetative screening to their views, however, the nature of the view itself remains comparable. Such receptors view built form within the northern end of the Science Park on slightly rising ground, surrounded by a perimeter woodland belt that even in winter provides a notable degree of screening of the buildings. Changes to these views would comprise a perception of the alterations of the northern building line as a result of proposed development which would sit directly in front of existing Science Park buildings. As existing buildings are already partially visible above / through the woodland belt, views of proposed development would be seen within that context. Effects at the greatest would be at short distance directly north (Viewpoint N) or to the north east where views are not impeded by foreground hedgerow vegetation (Viewpoint M). From here, the magnitude of change would be Low, with a Minor to Moderate Adverse effect. Where intervening screening is at its greatest (i.e. Viewpoints L, J and O) effects would be no greater than Negligible.

5.25 Footpath users to the west of the A44 and east of the Canal are not considered to have views of the proposed development and therefore will not be subject to any effects.

Roads

5.26 The principal road users likely to have views of the proposed development are those along Sandy Lane. The roadside hedgerow will restrict views looking north along much of its length, but there may be intermittent opportunities for views towards the site via gaps in the vegetation or where the Lane is elevated such as at the level crossing or over the canal bridge to allows views beyond the hedgerow. Users will see proposed development closely associated with, and largely screened by, existing buildings within the Science Park. Given the transient nature of these views, and the presence of the Science Park as existing the magnitude of change overall will be Negligible, with a Negligible resulting effect.

5.27 The A44 dual carriageway is flanked by a hedgerow which serves to screen views eastwards. It is unlikely that travellers will discern any change to their views as a result of the proposed development and the perimeter woodland belt will largely screen the site, however, there are brief glimpses of existing buildings where breaks in the vegetation allow. Following completion of the proposed development there may be a negligible magnitude of change at most. Views from along

the A44 would generally experience No Change, but there may be some fleeting Negligible effects.

Other Visual Receptors

5.28 Railway passengers travelling between Banbury and Oxford may have brief glimpses to the west towards the site. Typically, within the landscape local to the site this line passes through settlement (Kidlington and the adjacent industrial estate) and is often flanked by vegetation. In the proximity of Parker's Farm vegetation is more sparse. Passengers on trains are elevated on the embankment, and may perceive the additional built form within the Science Park, however, opportunities would be brief and of low magnitude, and in the context of the existing buildings and perimeter woodland. Overall effects would be Negligible.

6.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

6.1 The proposed development, occupying a total area of 5.5ha within the red-lined site, is the renewal of a former permission on the site (ref 15/00309/OUT). It comprises principally new B1 employment and ancillary D1 development, retention of and improvement to existing vehicular, public transport, pedestrian and cycle access and circulation, redisposition of car parking, drainage and landscape works. Buildings are proposed up to a height of 12.6 metres (excluding roof top plant and point features).

6.2 The site is set within a tract of largely agricultural land to the north of Oxford that is broadly defined by transport infrastructure and settlement. The A44 passes to the west, from which the main vehicular access is taken, and secondary (pedestrian and cycle only) access connects onto Sandy Lane to the south. The Oxford Canal is 0.5km to the east, as is the Oxford to Banbury railway line.

6.3 The site comprises the established Begbroke Science Park within which the existing buildings are relatively modern in design, form and materials. There is also a listed (Grade II) building within the site which forms part of the existing Science Park. The Science Park in broad terms is a rectangular parcel of land surrounded and contained by a 10-15 metre established tree belt. There are no notable landscape features within the site and no designations of relevance to landscape and visual resources within or adjacent to the Site e.g. National Parks, AONBs, Special Landscape Areas. The site lies within the Oxford Green Belt, where the fundamental aim is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; it is not a landscape designation.

6.4 The LVA has assessed landscape character and visual amenity, and the resulting landscape and visual effects of the proposed development on the receiving landscape and visual resource. The landscape and visual effects have been considered in relation to the proposed land uses and the parameters that are defined on the application's Framework Plan.

Landscape Summary

6.5 The site and its setting are within the 'Upper Thames Clay Vales' (NCA108). The site forms a very small part of broader NCA108 and the proposal is not expected to affect any key characteristics of the NCA, such as frequent hedgerows, trees and field trees, tree-lined rivers and watercourses and the sparse settlement pattern. As a consequence of the considerable overall scale of the NCA the level of effect arising from the proposed development upon the 'Upper Thames Clay Vales' is not considered to be greater than Negligible.

6.6 In terms of the NCA's SEOs the site is set within the existing woodland belt encompassing the Science Park, maintaining the relationship between this development and the wider more open agricultural landscape. This screening will remain.

6.7 Operational effects on the character of the 'Begbroke' Local Character Area will be direct and adverse due to the physical changes proposed within this area. Given the limited and contained nature of these impacts and the influence of existing development within the site, the magnitude of change is considered to be Negligible. Furthermore, the Site as existing is previously developed with limited vegetation. Operational effects are considered to be Negligible Adverse.

6.8 Any potential landscape impacts on other Landscape Character Areas would be indirect. Given the existing presence of the Science Park and its perimeter woodland belt, the proposed

development is not considered to result in any changes to the settings of the wider Character Areas in the vicinity. Proposals are considered to result in No Change.

6.9 The site comprises the majority of land within the existing Begbroke Science Park. The site is largely developed, with some established trees and vegetation predominantly focussed towards the southern boundary. Proposed development will be situated on previously developed land, and while the majority of trees and vegetation will be retained a small number of trees would be removed within the north-west of the site. Landscape effects on completion are considered to be Negligible to Minor Adverse.

Visual Summary

6.10 The Site has a relatively contained visual envelope, which broadly results from a combination of the gentle nature of the topography and overlapping linear vegetation along field boundaries and infrastructure. Views are confined to the short to medium distance, and furthermore the site is well contained by established woodland planting around its perimeter.

6.11 The potential visual receptors subject to views of the proposed development are residents along the southern edge of Begbroke, the PRoW passing the site boundary, PRoW users north of the site at short to medium distance, and road users along Sandy Lane and the A44. Views of the site are unlikely from the Oxford Canal and Kidlington beyond to the east, and from locations to the west of the A44 corridor.

6.12 The majority of residents in the local landscape would not have views of the proposed development primarily due to building orientation, vegetative screening, intervening settlement and the interaction of successive landscape features with the gentle topography. There may be a small number of properties on the south eastern edge of Begbroke with views towards the site where vegetation along the Rowel Brook allows. Views would be at distance, well filtered and observed within the context of the existing built up area of the Science Park. At greatest some properties may experience Negligible effects on seasonally available views. Other residents who may potentially experience some change to their views comprise four properties situated along Sandy Lane, where views currently include the existing buildings within the Science Park. Residents may perceive proposed buildings behind existing buildings some distance away and the resulting effects on completion are considered to be no greater than Minor Adverse.

6.13 Users approaching from the south are at short distance. Proposed development is unlikely to be seen beyond existing buildings and the perimeter woodland belt. Effects will be None to Negligible. Users within the perimeter woodland belt along the site boundary have direct, clear views of the site. At the southern end, views are dominated by existing buildings immediately in the foreground and proposed development is unlikely to be visible. At the site's north-eastern corner, beyond the parking area, buildings are the principal elements within the view, with new built form sitting in front, and further enclosure provided by the perimeter woodland belt. In summary, effects along this section of the footpath vary from No Effect to Moderate Adverse, with the majority of users likely to be subject to effects of no greater than Negligible to Minor Adverse. The overall experience for these users includes transient views of built elements of the Science Park as they move through the landscape. Users along the footpaths to the north of the site experience different degrees of vegetative screening to their views, however, the nature of the view itself remains comparable. Changes to these views would comprise a perception of the alterations of the northern building line as a result of proposed development which would sit

directly in front of existing Science Park buildings. Effects at the greatest would be Minor to Moderate Adverse where users are at short distance directly north or to the north east. Where intervening screening is at its greatest effects would be no greater than Negligible.

6.14 The hedgerow along Sandy Lane will restrict views looking north along much of its length. Where occasional views are possible users will see proposed development closely associated with, and largely screened by, existing buildings within the Science Park. Given the transient nature of these views and the presence of the Science Park as existing effects would be Negligible. It is unlikely that travellers along the A44 will discern any change to their views and the perimeter woodland belt will largely screen the site, however, there are opportunities for brief glimpses of the site and as such there may be some fleeting Negligible effects.

6.15 Railway passengers travelling between Banbury and Oxford whose views are generally otherwise foreshortened by vegetation and settlement may have brief glimpses to the west towards the site. Passengers may perceive the additional built form within the Science Park, however opportunities would be brief and overall effects would be Negligible.

Conclusions

6.16 The Site comprises the Begbroke Science Park, and is currently or previously developed. The site is set within an established and maturing perimeter landscape framework, which provides screening and softening of both the existing built form and any proposed development. Whilst there would inevitably be some adverse landscape and visual effects on completion of the proposed development, it is judged that these effects would, however, be localised and limited in their extent.

6.17 In conclusion, it is assessed that the Site's landscape character has the ability to absorb change through the introduction of new employment development as identified by the Framework Plan. The proposed development would be appropriate within this landscape context. The effects as a result of the scheme would not give rise to any unacceptable landscape and visual harm. Therefore, there are no landscape or visual impact reasons why the proposed development, as set out on the Framework Plan, should not be granted planning permission.

Site Boundary

Scale: 1:25000 @ A3

0 500 1000m

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project
Begbroke Science Park, Begbroke Hill

drawing title
SITE LOCATION

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drawn
MDP/KMS

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Figure 1

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Site Boundary

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AERIAL PHOTOGRAPH

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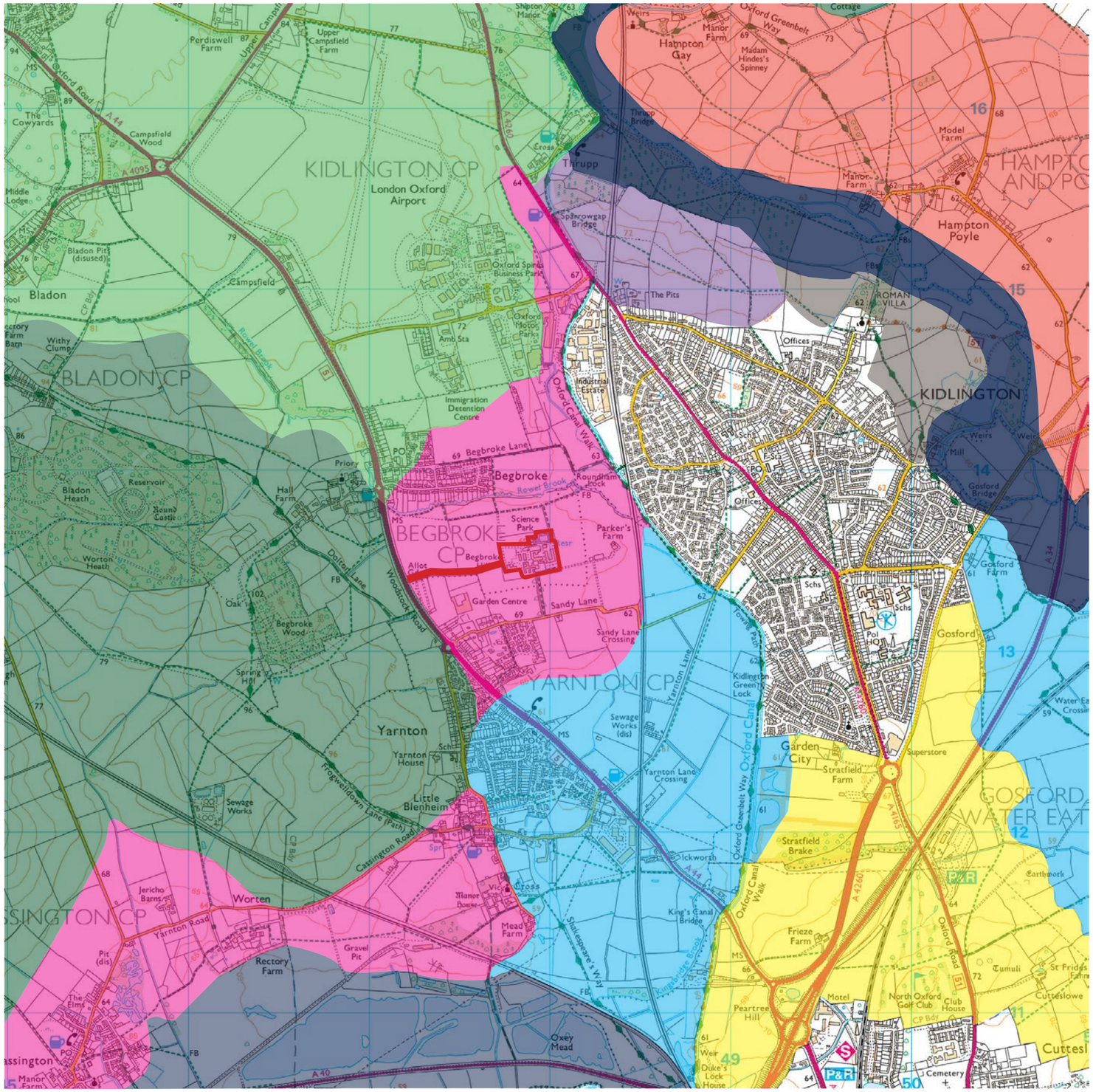

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Site Boundary

Oxfordshire Wildlife & Landscape Study (OWLS)

- Estate Farmlands
- Lowland Village Farmlands
- Wooded Estatelands
- Alluvial Lowlands
- Vale Farmland
- Clay Vale
- River Meadowlands
- Alluvial Lowlands
- Rolling Farmland

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LANDSCAPE CHARACTER

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Figure 3

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- Site Boundary
- Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
- Conservation Area
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Scheduled Monument
- Listed Buildings (Outside Conservation area and within approximately 1km of Site)

Scale: 1:25000 @ A3

0 500 1000m

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DESIGNATIONS

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Figure 4

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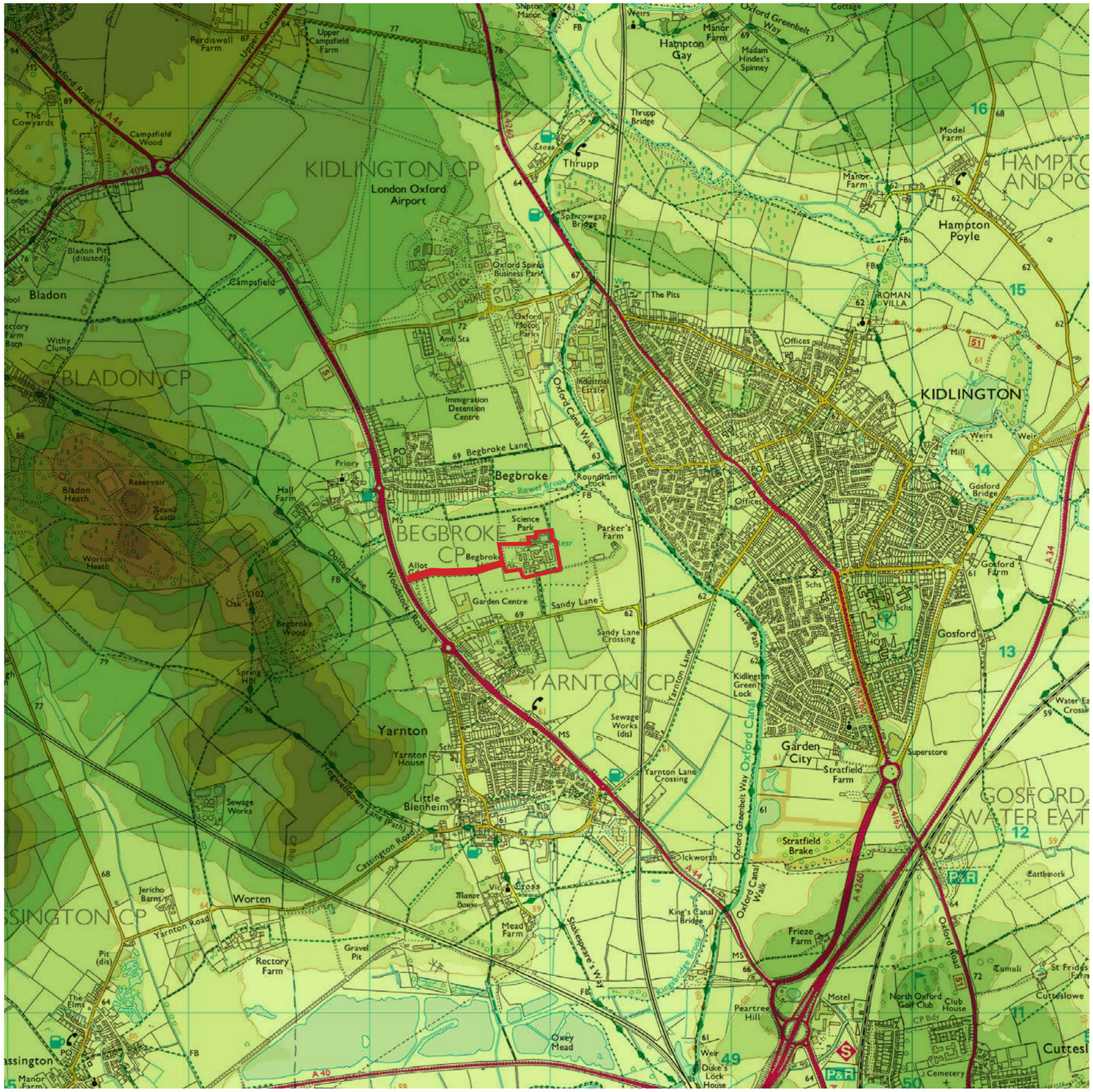

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- Site Boundary
- 110m - 115m AOD
- 105m - 110m AOD
- 100m - 105m AOD
- 95m - 100m AOD
- 90m - 95m AOD
- 85m - 90m AOD
- 80m - 85m AOD
- 75m - 80m AOD
- 70m - 75m AOD
- 65m - 70m AOD
- 60m - 65m AOD
- 55m - 60m AOD

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TOPOGRAPHY

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Site Boundary

photoviewpoint Locations

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0 500 1000m

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VISUAL APPRAISAL

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Figure 6

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PHOTO VIEWPOINT A: View northeast near junction of Sandy Lane and Livingstone Close

PHOTO VIEWPOINT B: View northeast from Sandy Lane

Note: Based on a viewing distance of 175mm and focal length of 50mm

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PHOTO VIEWPOINTS A & B

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PHOTO VIEWPOINT C: View north from property near junction of Sandy Lane and southern access point to Science Park

PHOTO VIEWPOINT C: View north from property near junction of Sandy Lane and southern access point to Science Park(cont)

Note: Based on a viewing distance of 175mm and focal length of 50mm

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PHOTO VIEWPOINTS C

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Figure 8

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PHOTO VIEWPOINT D: View northwest from junction of Sandy Lane and railway line

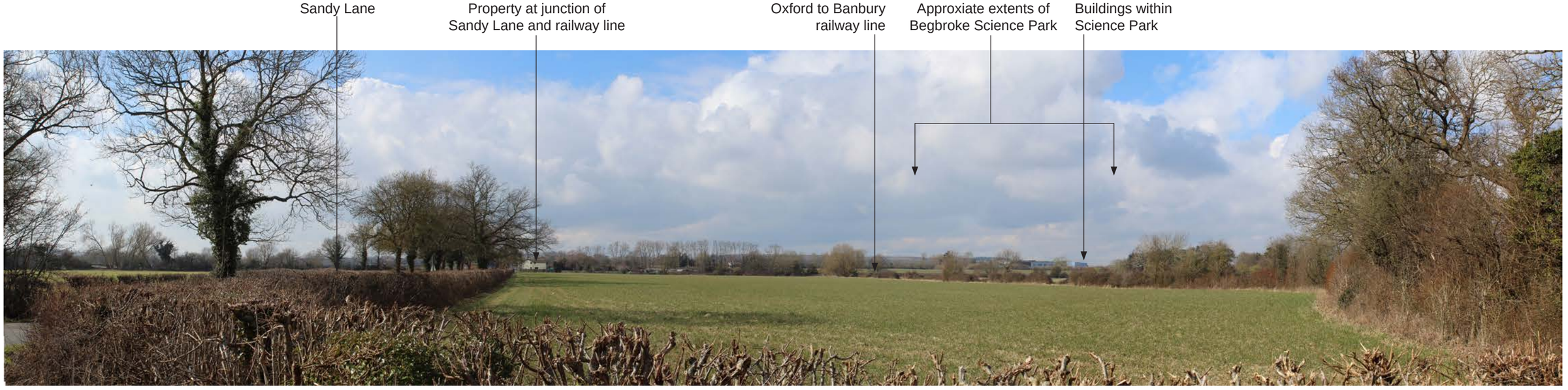

PHOTO VIEWPOINT E: View northwest from junction of Sandy Lane and Yarnton Lane

Note: Based on a viewing distance of 175mm and focal length of 50mm

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PHOTO VIEWPOINTS D & E

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PHOTO VIEWPOINT F: View north from public footpath leading from Sandy Lane to the Science Park

PHOTO VIEWPOINT F: View north from public footpath leading Sandy Lane to the Science Park (cont)

Note: Based on a viewing distance of 175mm and focal length of 50mm

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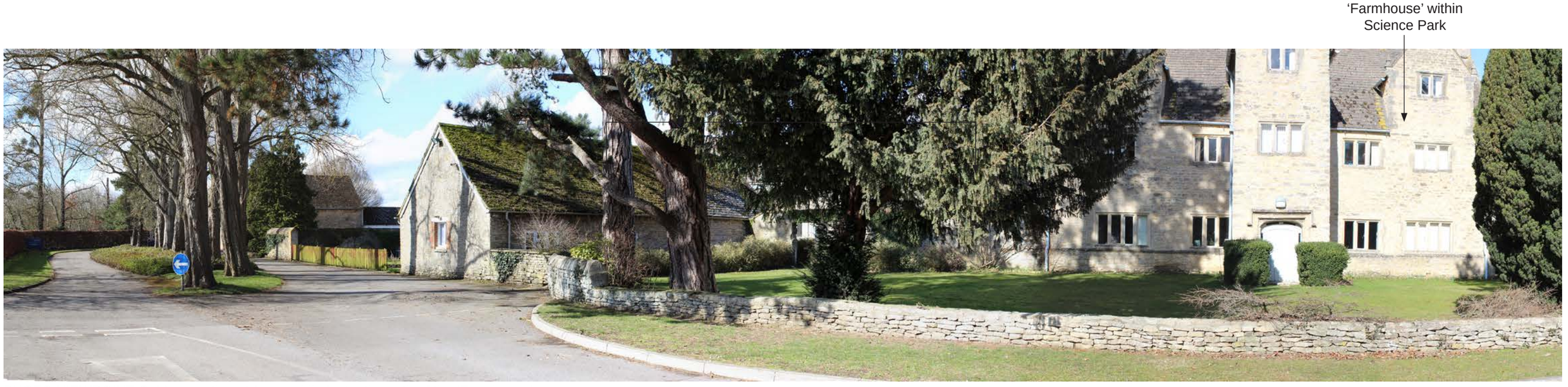

PHOTO VIEWPOINT G: View northeast from public footpath south of the ‘Farmhouse’

PHOTO VIEWPOINT G: View northeast from public footpath south of the ‘Farmhouse’ (cont)

Note: Based on a viewing distance of 175mm and focal length of 50mm

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PHOTO VIEWPOINTS G

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PHOTO VIEWPOINT H: View northwest from public footpath south of the IAT building (Institute of Advanced Technology)

PHOTO VIEWPOINT I: View southwest from public footpath north of the IAT building (Institute of Advanced Technology)

Note: Based on a viewing distance of 175mm and focal length of 50mm

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PHOTO VIEWPOINTS H & I

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PHOTO VIEWPOINT J: View south from public footpath south of Begbroke Lane

PHOTO VIEWPOINT K: View south from public footpath north of the site crossing Rowel Brook

Note: Based on a viewing distance of 175mm and focal length of 50mm

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PHOTO VIEWPOINTS J & K

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Figure 13

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PHOTO VIEWPOINT L: View southwest from public footpath northeast of the site crossing Oxford Canal

PHOTO VIEWPOINT M: View northeast of the site crossing Rowel Brook

Note: Based on a viewing distance of 175mm and focal length of 50mm

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PHOTO VIEWPOINTS L & M

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PHOTO VIEWPOINT N: View south from public footpath north of the site

PHOTO VIEWPOINT O: View southeast from public footpath south of properties on Fernhill Road

Note: Based on a viewing distance of 175mm and focal length of 50mm

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PHOTO VIEWPOINTS N & O

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PHOTO VIEWPOINT P: View northwest from long distance footpath 'Oxford Canal Walk'

PHOTO VIEWPOINT Q: View north from public footpath crossing Oxford Canal

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PHOTO VIEWPOINTS P & Q

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Note: Based on a viewing distance of 175mm and focal length of 50mm

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PHOTO VIEWPOINT R: View southeast from public footpath at junction with Woodstock Road

PHOTO VIEWPOINT S: View southeast from public footpath south of 'Hall Farm'

Note: Based on a viewing distance of 175mm and focal length of 50mm

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PHOTO VIEWPOINTS R & S

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issue date
May 2018

drawing / figure number
Figure 17

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