

BEGBROKE SCIENCE PARK

WHERE SCIENCE AND INDUSTRY MEET



UNIVERSITY OF
OXFORD

Planning Statement

Begbroke Science Park, Begbroke
Outline Planning Application

Prepared by David Lock Associates

May 2018



David Lock Associates
Town Planning and Urban Design



Planning Statement

Outline Planning Application

Proposed development at Begbroke Science Park,
Begbroke, Oxfordshire

For University of Oxford

May 2018



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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 This Planning Statement has been prepared by David Lock Associates ('DLA') and is submitted in support of an outline planning application for further development at Begbroke Science Park, east of Woodstock Road (A44), Begbroke. This Statement has been prepared by David Lock Associates on behalf of the Chancellor, Masters and Scholars of the University of Oxford ('the University of Oxford'), the Applicant and owners of the Science Park.

1.2 Formally, the application seeks the following:

"Outline planning permission, with all matters except for access reserved for subsequent approval, for up to 12,500m² of B1a / b / c and ancillary D1 floorspace, retention of and improvements to the existing vehicular, public transport, pedestrian and cycle access including internal circulation routes; associated car parking including re-disposition of existing car parking; associated hard and soft landscape works; any necessary demolition; and associated drainage, infrastructure and ground re-modelling works."

1.3 The application seeks permission in outline, with all matters reserved except for access. Vehicular access to the site is already established via a signal-controlled junction onto the A44, and therefore does not form a constituent part of the application. No demolition is proposed at this stage but is intended to cover any future redevelopment within the red-line boundary that will be identified at reserved matters stage.

1.4 The proposals are substantially the same as a previous outline planning permission that was first granted by Cherwell District Council ('the Council') in April 2014 for "Proposed new research buildings (long term phase of site development)" (01/00662/OUT), and subsequently varied via a s73 application in May 2015 (15/00309/OUT).

1.5 This application has been prepared following pre-application engagement with Cherwell District Council, an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Request and Screening Opinion received from the Council on 26th March 2018 (see *Appendix 1* to this Statement) and discussions with key stakeholders including the Environment Agency and Natural England. The application has been prepared in accordance with the outcome of those discussions.

1.6 The University of Oxford ('the University') is the owner and principal operator of the Begbroke Science Park. The University is a world-renowned and leading educational institution and operates the Begbroke Science Park ('BSP') as an established hub of high technology research facilities that support the University and its affiliates.

1.7 This Planning Statement:

- Outlines the site location, its physical context and planning history;
- Describes the proposed development and assesses its likely effects with reference to supporting studies;
- Outlines pre-application consultation and any feedback;
- Highlights relevant local and national planning policy;
- Examines and applies Green Belt policy to the proposed development, including assessing the case for very special circumstances; and
- Assesses the suitability of the proposals against other planning policy.

Application Documents

1.8 The application package comprises the following (as identified within the Covering Letter):

- Completed application forms (and Certificate A);
- Requisite fee - £15,710 (based upon site area of 5.54ha)
- Application Plans:
 - Site Location Plan (UNO001/001)
 - Site Plan with Access (UNO001/010)
 - Detail Site Plan (UNO001/011)
 - Development Framework Plan (UNO001/015 Rev A)
- Planning Statement by DLA – May 2018
- Design and Access Statement by DLA – May 2018

Other Supporting Documents:

1.9 The application is also supported by the following documents:

- Phase 1 Geo-environmental Assessment – Desk Study Report by Jubb
- Archaeology Desk-Based Assessment by Archaeology Collective
- Ecology Report by BSG Ecology
- Arboricultural Assessment by FPCR
- Landscape and Visual Appraisal by FPCR

- Transport Assessment by IMA
- Flood Risk Assessment & Drainage Strategy by Jubb
- Heritage Assessment by Heritage Collective
- Strategic Case for Renewed Outline Planning Approval – University of Oxford (MPLS Division)

1.10 The principle of further development at BSP has been long established through previous permissions, and it must be emphasised that the current application largely seeks to renew a recently expired permission (May 2017), with a small additional increase (2,500sqm) in floorspace to accommodate new research/development ('R&D') and prototype development interest on the site as soon as possible. The site lies in the Oxford Green Belt and previous permissions have demonstrated 'very special circumstances' for development within the established boundaries of the Science Park and this application does the same. The Council has also previously accepted that 'very special circumstances' exist when approving similar schemes in the recent past; nothing has materially changed from this position.

1.11 For all the reasons set out in this Statement, supported by the "*Strategic Case for Renewed Outline Planning Approval*" Report produced by the University of Oxford there is a very clear, strong and well-evidenced case to conclude that 'very special circumstances' exist to justify the granting of planning permission for the proposed development. This is in line with Paragraph 88 of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) and policies in the statutory Development Plan. It is also in line with the previous identification of the Science Park as a Major Developed Site ('MDS') within the *Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011 (prepared 2004)* and the application site boundary accords with the MDS boundary. Therefore, in accordance with Section 38(6) of the *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004*, we respectfully request that the Council grants planning permission for this application.

2.0 THE APPLICATION SITE, SITE LOCATION AND CONTEXT

- 2.1 The Application Site ('the Site' or 'application site') comprises approximately 5.54ha of the existing BSP site including the vehicular access. The red-lined site of the Science Park excluding the access is 4.8ha.
- 2.2 The Site boundary does not cover the full extent of land at Begbroke Science Park. The Site is defined by the previously approved red-line planning site boundary (see App. No. 15/00309/OUT), which sits inside the mature and well-established hedgerow and tree planting which encloses the Science Park from all sides.
- 2.3 The Site contains a mix of buildings, of a varying age which are predominantly used for research purposes. Begbroke Hill Farmhouse, a Grade II Listed building is located in the south of the Site, with its own landscaped grounds and is used for office and conference purposes related to the Science Park.
- 2.4 The Site includes the existing operational vehicular access from the A44.

Site Location

- 2.5 The Site is located within the designated Oxford Green Belt, lies to the east of the A44 and to the south of the settlement of Begbroke. The Science Park sits between the settlements of Yarnton and Begbroke (to the west of Kidlington), approximately 3 miles to the north of Oxford. Kidlington lies to the east.
- 2.6 The Site is currently surrounded on all sides by agricultural land, although residential development (associated with Begbroke) lies just 300m to the north of the Site boundary. The Yarnton Nurseries Garden Centre complex is located approximately 140m south west of the Site, to the east of Woodstock Road. Yarnton lies to the immediate south and west of the Yarnton Nurseries Garden Centre. Between the Science Park and Kidlington lies the Cherwell Valley Railway (450m to the east), which runs between Oxford and Banbury and the Oxford Canal.

Begbroke Science Park

- 2.7 Begbroke Science Park is an established and renowned hub of high technology research facilities that support the University of Oxford and its affiliates. The Science Park is a vital research centre for the University as an academic-led commercial

science park, research hub and campus. It is recognised as a facility of international significance¹ and of great importance to the local, regional and national economies.

2.8 The existing Science Park site has been largely built and occupied by the following principal buildings:

- Begbroke Centre for Innovation & Enterprise
- Christian Building
- Hirsch Building
- Advance Processing Laboratory
- Institute of Advanced Technology

2.9 The most recent addition to the site – the Accelerator Building - adjoins the Centre for Innovation & Enterprise and was constructed in 2016/2017.

2.10 Historically, the site of the Science Park was a working farm (known as Begbroke Hill Farm) until the 1960's, when it became the headquarters of the Weed Research Organisation. In the 1980's, the Cookson Group acquired the site for its Technology Centre and used the site until 1998, when it was acquired by the University to establish the Science Park.

Planning History

2.11 Since the site was acquired by the University of Oxford to house the Science Park, the site has been the subject of a range of proposals to increase the number and scale of buildings on the site to complement and expand the existing research and development (R&D) and other uses on site. The main relevant applications for the development of the Science Park are identified below:

- Erection of two-storey building to provide advanced processing laboratory (05/00845/F) - Approved
- Access road and all traffic movements, junction, landscaping and associates works (11/00069/F) – Approved
- Proposed new research buildings (Interim phase of site development) (01/00664/OUT) – Approved
- Demolish existing barn and erection of 2 no. research buildings and sub-station (Reserved Matters pursuant to 01/00664/OUT) – Approved
- Proposed new research buildings (long term phase of site development) (01/00662/OUT) - Approved

¹ Cherwell Local Plan Partial Review – Oxford's Unmet Housing Need (Paragraph 5.17)

- Variation of Condition 4 of 01/00662/OUT (15/00309/OUT) Amended proposals for the long-term expansion of the site - Approved
- Proposed new research buildings (15/01105/REM) (Reserved Matters to 15/00309/OUT) – Approved

- 2.12 The primary application relating to the site expansion which set the strategy and framework for the development of new buildings on the site, was the application dating originally from 2001 (01/00662/OUT) that was granted on 30th April 2014.
- 2.13 This application was kept in abeyance, whilst the University refined its strategy and sought to conclude agreements to allow the expansion to take place (including securing land for access to the Science Park from A44)². This permission was subsequently varied on 20th May 2015 (15/00309/OUT).
- 2.14 The 15/00309/OUT permission sought to clarify the site area (amended plans) to accommodate the extent of development approved through 01/00662/OUT. The time-period for the submission of reserved matters as part of both 01/00662/OUT and 15/00309/OUT expired on 1st May 2017.
- 2.15 The new access road was subject of a separate application (11/00069/FUL), which sought the construction of a dedicated access from the A44 to the Science Park, including a signalised junction.
- 2.16 In summary, the principle of the proposed development has been established by previous permissions at the Science Park for long term expansion and the provision of additional floorspace (01/00662/OUT & 15/000309/OUT). This proposal is a renewal of the previous permissions.

Transport and Movement

- 2.17 Historically, Begbroke Science Park was accessed via Sandy Lane, however there were long term intentions to form a direct and dedicated access from Woodstock Road (A44). This was formalised through the planning permission granted in 2011, which enabled the longer-term expansion application to be positively determined.
- 2.18 Subsequently, the main access to the Science Park was constructed and completed in 2012. This provides a signal controlled direct access to the Science Park site from the A44. Access to the Science Park has a barrier at the entrance to the main BSP site. A

² See Officer Report on Application No. 15/00309/OUT

cycle and pedestrian footpath is provided from the A44 to the site. There is also a footpath and cycle path that runs adjacent to the A44 (and connects to the bus stops).

- 2.19 The construction of the new access subsequently led to the closure (to traffic) of the vehicular access to the south onto Sandy Lane, a rural lane that connects the A44 through Yarnton to Kidlington and crosses the Cherwell Valley Railway Line via a barrier-controlled level crossing and the Oxford Canal via a single lane traffic-light controlled bridge. However, access to the Science Park via Sandy Lane is still an alternative route for pedestrians and cyclists (and could be used in an emergency if the main access became blocked for some reason).
- 2.20 The University operates a free private minibus service for all University staff members and visitors to the Science Park, which operates at regular intervals throughout weekdays between Oxford City Centre, University departments in Oxford City and Begbroke Science Park.
- 2.21 Frequent bus services (between every 20-30mins) operate along the A44 from Woodstock through to Oxford (S3), and with the nearest bus stop to the site, approximately 10 minutes-walk from the Science Park (900m).
- 2.22 Sustainable travel is heavily supported by the University to and from the Science Park, with active encouragement of staff and visitors to travel to the Science Park, either via the shuttle bus, Stagecoach buses and walking and cycling. This is enshrined in a Travel Plan (see Transport Assessment by IMA for further details).
- 2.23 Parking is concentrated into three core areas on the site: to the north of site entrance, south-east of the site (adjacent to the Hirsch Building) and in the north-eastern corner of the site. Additional parking for conferences and events held at Begbroke is situated to the northern part of the access road.
- 2.24 A public footpath runs from Sandy Lane (124/8/10) along the southern and eastern boundary of the Science Park, before connecting to further footpath routes to the south of the village of Begbroke, with wider connections to the A44 and Kidlington to the east.
- 2.25 A full review of transport infrastructure is provided in the *Transport Assessment* that accompanies this planning application.

Flood Risk

- 2.26 The Environment Agency's Flood Risk Map documents that the site lies predominantly within Flood Risk Zone 1 indicating a very low probability of flooding from rivers. As the

Application Site area exceeds statutory thresholds for an FRA (1 ha), this application is accompanied by a *Flood Risk Assessment (FRA) and Drainage Strategy* produced by Jubb, which documents the flood risk associated with this site and the proposed development.

- 2.27 There are no records of flooding events at the Science Park. Similarly, the FRA identifies that the site is within an area of low risk from groundwater flooding. The nearest watercourse is Rowel Brook, which is located approximately 250m north of the site, to the immediate south of the settlement of Begbroke.

Topography & Drainage

- 2.28 The Flood Risk Assessment also contains information regarding both surface water and foul drainage. The majority of the Science Park is developed, and therefore contains significant hard standing.
- 2.29 The topography of the site is relatively flat, and ground level is approximately 68.5m AOD.
- 2.30 Two principal types of surface water drainage are in use on site - infiltration (soakaways) and discharge to the surface water sewer network. The most recently developed building on site (Accelerator Building including the Centre for Innovation and Enterprise) drains surface water to soakaways via ground infiltration.
- 2.31 Foul drainage arrangements convey flows to a private foul pumping station in the north-east corner, before controlled discharge to the existing public sewer network under agreement from Thames Water.

Ecology and Arboriculture

- 2.32 The *Ecology Report* by BSG Ecology confirms the site is not located within any statutory ecological designation. The site does however lie to the south-west of the Rushy Meadows Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).
- 2.33 The site contains one small pond, which is considered to be poor breeding habitat for European protected species such as great crested newt. The lack of habitat connections (due to physical constraints) to other areas is believed to limit the ecological value of the site.
- 2.34 The Grade II Listed Farmhouse and its surrounding stone buildings are identified as having some potential to support roosting bats.

- 2.35 The application site contains hedgerows, trees, semi-improved neutral grassland and hardstanding. See *Arboricultural Assessment* by FPCR for full details. The *Ecology Report* confirms that the site has limited potential for supporting reptiles or invertebrates and is unlikely to be of value for any other protected species.
- 2.36 The application site does not contain any trees that have potential to support bat roosts, and the bat roost potential is restricted to existing buildings towards the south of the site – including the Listed Farmhouse and associated outbuildings.

Ground Conditions and Contamination

- 2.37 The application is accompanied by a *Phase 1 Geo-Environmental Assessment* by Jubb, which has assessed the prevalent ground and geological conditions in respect of the site. No major constraints have been revealed but see the Assessment for full details.

Heritage & Listed Buildings

- 2.38 As previously identified, the site contains a Grade II Listed 17th century Farmhouse, and a number of listed outbuildings within its curtilage. The Farmhouse is known as *Begbroke Hill Farmhouse* and is understood to have been constructed in 1604 and during the Jacobean era.
- 2.39 The Farmhouse has been adapted since the site was first used for research purposes (in the 1970's), where a number of extensions and conversions have been undertaken by previous occupiers. It is now well-integrated within the Begbroke Science Park, as an office and conference use.
- 2.40 The application is accompanied by a *Heritage Assessment* by the Heritage Collective, which identifies all listed features in the vicinity of the site and assesses the impact of the proposed development on the significance of those features. No substantial impact has been identified.

3.0 THE PROPOSALS

3.1 The University of Oxford is seeking to renew the time-expired outline permission for the development of the site (15/00309/OUT), previously described as the 'long term phase of site development' at BSP, which followed an 'interim phase' undertaken following the approval of App. No. 01/00664/OUT in August 2005. The proposed development is intended to be in substantial accordance with the principles established through both the long-term phase permission (01/00662/OUT) and the 2015 outline permission (15/00309/OUT).

3.2 The proposed development will retain the existing buildings on site (circa 14,200m²) and provide up to 12,500m² of additional B1a/b/c and ancillary D1 floorspace. The proposed development is as follows:

“Outline planning permission, with all matters except for access reserved for subsequent approval, for up to 12,500m² of B1a / b / c and ancillary D1 floorspace, retention of and improvements to the existing vehicular, public transport, pedestrian and cycle access including internal circulation routes; associated car parking including re-disposition of existing car parking; associated hard and soft landscape works; any necessary demolition; and associated drainage, infrastructure and ground re-modelling works.”

3.3 In more detail, the proposed development comprises:

- Up to 12,500 sqm of commercial floorspace (covering B1a/b & c) with ancillary D1 floorspace – located within the existing Science Park site but retaining existing buildings;
- Redeployment and relocation of car parking within the site;
- Retention of existing main access points, with enhancement to the existing internal circulation for vehicles, pedestrians and cyclists;
- Associated hard and soft landscaping works;
- Associated drainage, infrastructure and ground re-modelling works; and
- Any necessary demolition (none is envisaged at this stage but is included in the description to cover the potential demolition and redevelopment of the existing buildings within the red line, if this is necessary, which will be the subject of subsequent reserved matters submissions).

- 3.4 Development will be focussed upon three areas identified on the Development Framework Plan, which are currently under-utilised areas of the Science Park, located in the north-west, south-east and north-east corners of the site.
- 3.5 The main purpose of this application is to renew the principle of additional research development on the site from the recently time-expired outline permission. Predominantly, the proposed development is a replacement for the previously approved floorspace, previously consented under 11/00662/OUT and 15/00309/OUT. As identified in Chapter 2, these consents lapsed in May 2017 without detailed reserved matters approval for the remaining unimplemented quantum of floorspace. This extent of “remaining” floorspace is difficult to precisely quantify (due to the inter-relationship of the interim and long-term phases of development) but is estimated to be circa 9,900 sqm.
- 3.6 As compared with the previous planning permissions (including 15/00309/OUT), an additional 2,500 sqm of commercial development is proposed to meet increased and current strong demands for floorspace since the time of the previous permission. See *Strategic Case for Renewed Outline Planning Approval*.

Development Framework Plan

- 3.7 As previously identified, all matters are reserved (except for access) however a Development Framework Plan (UNO001/015A) sets the development parameters proposed as part of this outline application. This indicates that:
- New development will be focussed on three parts of the site (north-east, north-west and south-east).
 - New buildings will be located in Zones B & C, currently areas of surface car parking (either permanent or overflow), on areas totalling 0.99ha.
- 3.8 The application site boundary includes the whole of the previously approved red-lined site for the development of the Science Park, which was established by Drawing Nos. 2198/022c and 033/LP/15/01/06 as part of permission 15/00309/OUT. In addition to Zones B and C there is also potential for changes to the internal access & circulation arrangements within the site and for changes/additions to the existing buildings (if required), which is shown as Zone A on the Framework Plan. Zone D is proposed to be used (as at present) for parking (see below for further information).
- 3.9 In line with the previous permission for long-term expansion, the proposed floorspace to be developed through the proposals will comprise no more than 20% office (B1a) space (in line with a restriction on the previous permission on the site).

- 3.10 The proposed development the subject of this application proposes additional buildings that will be up to 12.6 metres in height. This reflects the built form of existing buildings on the site. For further details refer to the *Design and Access Statement* produced by DLA and submitted with the application.

Access, Highways and Parking

- 3.11 The proposed development does not alter the main access arrangements for the site (and hence does not include access as a detailed matter for further consideration), which is already in place and in use.
- 3.12 The proposed development does propose to relocate and re-allocate parking on site. The parking areas on site will be within Zones B, C & D. The proposed development seeks to increase the number of spaces on site (in line with the provision of new floorspace) to some 414 spaces (including 14 disabled spaces). Car parking on site associated with the 2015 outline permission for the previous development was limited to 260 spaces (via the Travel Plan) to serve the 21,236m² of floorspace at a standard of 1 space per 81.7m² – see *Transport Assessment* by IMA.
- 3.13 The main location for proposed car parking is to be Zone D. The proposed development seeks to substantially replace areas B and C with new built development, which will displace existing parking spaces. It is important to note that this is not intended to preclude the inclusion of parking within these zones, either accommodated around the proposed development or provided via options such as decked, basement and undercroft parking alongside surface level parking. This will be addressed and controlled by the Council at the detailed planning stage (i.e. via the submission and approval of reserved matters).
- 3.14 The proposed development will complement and support the University's Travel Plan for the site, including the shuttle bus service, which operates regularly between Oxford City Centre (and key University facilities) and the Science Park, and other sustainable travel options set out in the *Transport Assessment* and Travel Plan.

Heritage and Archaeology

- 3.15 The application is supported by dedicated *Heritage and Archaeological Assessments*, which describe and assess the heritage and archaeological assets and potential impacts upon the significance of heritage assets.
- 3.16 The proposed development does not propose any external or internal changes to the Grade II Listed Begbroke Hill Farmhouse in the south-west corner of the site and lies

outside of the proposed development zones identified on the Development Framework Plan (UNO001-015A).

Drainage

- 3.17 A *Flood Risk Assessment* accompanies this application and considers the flood risk for the site and existing drainage arrangements. It also outlines the proposed drainage strategy for the new development.
- 3.18 Although the detailed drainage proposals and preferred means of drainage will be determined at detailed design and Reserved Matters stage, it confirms that infiltration is the proposed means of drainage (which could include infiltration basins, soakaways, permeable paving and infiltration trenches).
- 3.19 There is understood to be capacity within the existing private foul pumping station in the north east corner of the site to accommodate further development of the BSP. Further investigation and discussions are required with Thames Water to confirm that sufficient capacity is available within the existing network. These will inform future reserved matter proposals.

Landscaping

- 3.20 The proposed development will include associated landscape planting, to be addressed and identified at the reserved matters stage. However, no significant changes are proposed to the existing landscaping on site (and no alterations will be made to the existing landscape buffer which borders the site and provides a clear, defensible boundary).

Pre-Application Consultation

- 3.21 Pre-application discussions were held with Cherwell District Council at meetings on 3rd January 2018 and 30th January 2018. The key outcomes from the meetings were as follows:
- Council supportive in principle;
 - Council recognise the importance of the BSP to the district and wider area along with its contribution to R&D, innovation, employment and the economy;
 - Justification (in a Statement from the University) required in terms of market demand and to also set out the proposed floorspace requirements;
 - Council agreed there was flexibility around the wording of conditions;
 - On proposed building heights it was accepted that these could be around the height of the tallest building (just over 12.5m);

- Heights to be a 'defensible envelope' and Council recognised that floor to ceiling heights in such buildings were higher than normal ceiling heights (in offices for example);
- University to submit EIA Screening Request (see below)

Public Engagement

- 3.22 The nature of public engagement in the proposals has been limited to publicity, by way of a notification leaflet sent to stakeholders and a large number of residents in areas adjacent to the BSP site. The notification sets out the details of the proposal with a Development Framework Plan and invites responses to be submitted to Cherwell District Council. A copy of the leaflet and a map showing those properties notified is included as Appendix 2.

EIA Screening Opinion

- 3.23 A formal request for an EIA Screening Opinion was submitted by DLA on behalf of the University to Cherwell District Council on 2nd March 2018, to consider whether an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) was required for the proposed development, particularly given that it was broadly similar to that previously approved by the Council without an EIA through 15/00309/OUT. A Screening Opinion was sought on the following brief description of development "Outline application (all matters reserved) for employment and commercial development comprising up to approximately 12,500sqm of floorspace and ancillary D1 uses with related development".
- 3.24 Cherwell District Council subsequently issued their formal Screening Opinion (18/00024/SO) on 26th March 2018, which confirmed that the development site is not within a "sensitive area" as defined by the *Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017* and recognises that the site is already largely developed for employment uses under planning permissions that have previously assessed the impact of the development. Therefore, in the opinion of the Council, as local planning authority, the development does not need to be subject to an Environmental Impact Assessment, with the proposals unlikely to result in significant environmental impacts. See *Appendix 1* for the Screening Opinion.

4.0 DEVELOPMENT PLAN & OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Section 38(6) of the *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act, 2004 (as amended)* requires that planning applications be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Development Plan

4.2 The statutory Development Plan in the case of this proposal and prevailing policies are set out within the following adopted documents:

- Cherwell Local Plan Part 1 (2011-2031) – Adopted July 2015 (re-adopted 2016)
- “Saved Policies” Cherwell Local Plan 1996 (policies saved in 2007)

Other Material Considerations

4.3 The *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)* is a significant material consideration in the determination of planning applications along with numerous other considerations, including those referred to in this Statement.

4.4 In addition, Cherwell District Council has approved other non-statutory documents as planning policy:

- *Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011* produced in December 2004 (approved as an interim planning policy document for development control purposes, until it was subsequently replaced by other documents).

4.5 More recently and, significantly, Cherwell District Council has commenced a Partial Review of its 2015 adopted Local Plan, with the intention to provide a supplemental planning strategy containing strategic development sites in order for the District to contribute towards meeting the identified and unmet housing needs of Oxford City.

4.6 This Partial Review was the subject of a Draft Publication Submission consultation in October 2017. The Plan was subsequently submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination in March 2018. Examination hearings are due to be held later in 2018.

Cherwell Local Plan Part 1 (2015)

- 4.7 The adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1 outlines the overriding spatial strategy for development in Cherwell through to 2031. Although subject to a Partial Review, in respect of addressing and providing for additional housing need, the core principles of the Strategy remain in place from the Adopted Part 1 Plan.
- 4.8 Policies for development in Cherwell set out within the Local Plan Part 1 are based around three themes – policies for developing a sustainable local economy, policies for building sustainable communities and policies for ensuring sustainable development.
- 4.9 The following policies are directly applicable to the consideration of this application for the proposed development at the Science Park:
- Policy PSD1 – Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
 - Policy SLE1 – Employment Development
 - Policy SLE 4 – Improving Transport Connections
 - Policy ESD 10 – Protection and Enhancement of Biodiversity and the Natural Environment
 - Policy ESD 14 – Oxford Green Belt
 - Policy ESD 15 – The Character of the Built and Historic Environment
 - Policy Kidlington 1 – Accommodating High Value Employment Needs
- 4.10 It is important to firstly highlight Policy Kidlington 1 as this outlines the specific commitment to reviewing the Green Belt boundaries around Begbroke Science Park and Oxford Airport, to accommodate and support the provision of identified high value employment needs. Inset Map Kidlington 1B identifies the BSP. See Figure 1 on next page.

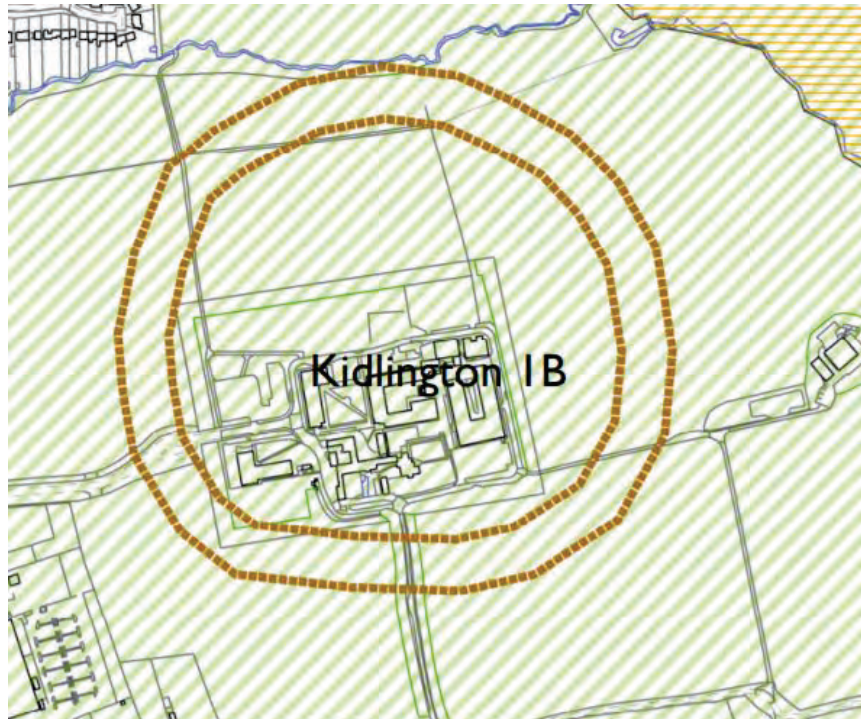


Figure 1 – Inset Map Kidlington 1B from adopted Local Plan – subject of GB Review

4.11 It was established through the adopted *Cherwell Local Plan Part 1 2011-2031* that ‘exceptional circumstances’ exist to justify a small-scale local review of the Green Belt to meet employment and expansion needs at Begbroke Science Park. This is being progressed by the Council through the *Cherwell Local Plan Part 2*. Policy Kidlington 1 also includes site specific design and place shaping principles that need to be applied to development in those locations, including:

- Requirement for Transport Assessment and Travel Plan to accompany development proposals
- Development that respects the landscape setting of the site; and
- Development that preserves and enhances biodiversity.

4.12 Policy PSD1 outlines the presumption in favour of sustainable development, with the overarching principle of securing development that improves the economic, social and environmental conditions in the area. This policy identifies that where there are no policies relevant to the application or relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise (taking into account the NPPF).

4.13 Policy SLE 1 identifies the main strategy in relation to employment development based on existing sites and proposed allocations. The policy makes clear that employment development will be focused on existing employment sites and employment

development on existing sites (including within rural areas) will be permitted subject to compliance with other policies in the Plan and other material considerations.

4.14 Policy SLE 1 goes further in setting out the criteria for new employment proposals within rural areas on non-allocated sites will be supported if they meet set criteria, including:

- They will be outside of the Green Belt, unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated;
- Justification for development on a non-allocated site;
- Designed to very high standard using sustainable construction;
- Will be of a small scale unless it can be demonstrated that there will be no significant adverse impacts on the character of a village or surrounding environment;
- The proposed development and activities can be carried out without undue detriment to residential amenity, the highway network, village character and its setting, the appearance and character of the landscape and the environment generally including effect on any designated building or features;
- The proposal will not give rise to excessive or inappropriate traffic and wherever possible will contribute to the general aim of reducing the need to travel by private car; and
- There are no suitable available plots or premises within existing nearby employment sites

4.15 Policy SLE 4 outlines the strategy for improved transport connections and provides overarching principles for new development to adhere to including ensuring that (where reasonable) development facilitates the use of sustainable modes of transport and walking and cycling. Policy SLE4 also outlines that development which is not suitable for the roads that serve the development and which have a severe traffic impact will not be supported.

4.16 Policy ESD10 outlines the strategy for the protection and enhancement of the natural environment. This outlines that if significant harm from development cannot be avoided (or mitigated or compensated for) then development should not be permitted.

4.17 Policy ESD10 also outlines that development proposals will be expected to incorporate features to encourage biodiversity, and existing ecological networks and corridors should be identified and maintained. It also outlines the requirement for relevant habitat and species to accompany planning applications which may affect a site/habitat or species.

- 4.18 Policy ESD 14 outlines the Green Belt policy, which is reflective of the NPPF position, and requires that development proposals within the Green Belt will be assessed in accordance with the NPPF. The purposes of the Green Belt are set out as: to preserve the special character and landscape setting of Oxford; to check the growth of Oxford and prevent ribbon development and urban sprawl; and to prevent the coalescence of settlements and assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.
- 4.19 Critically, Policy ESD14 identifies that Local Plan Part 2 will include a review of existing Green Belt boundaries in the vicinity of Begbroke Science Park “in order to accommodate employment needs”.
- 4.20 Policy ESD 15 provides the strategy for the protection of the built and historic environment, and how development will be expected to complement and enhance existing character. It aims to promote a high standard of design, that is both flexible and adaptable to changing conditions. New development proposals should conserve, sustain and enhance designated and non-designated “heritage assets”. It similarly requires sufficient information on the effect of development on heritage assets to assess the impact of the proposals against its significance.

Cherwell Local Plan 1996 (Saved Policies)

- 4.21 Although the adopted Cherwell Local Plan (1996) dates from 1996, it has ‘Saved Policies’ that are in use for development management purposes. The extent to which these apply, relate to how they accord with the National Planning Policy Framework.
- 4.22 Policy GB1 for Development in the Green Belt was replaced by Policy ESD14 of the Local Plan Part 1. Other more detailed but ‘Saved Policies’ relating to design and other specific planning matters are referred to in the accompanying *Design and Access Statement*.
- 4.23 Having identified the key Development Plan policies the Statement will now go on to look at ‘Other Material Considerations’ including the NPPF, emerging policy and other relevant matters.

OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

National Policy

- 4.24 National policy is set out within the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF) which at its heart contains a presumption in favour of sustainable development.

- 4.25 Paragraph 14 of the NPPF outlines that development that is considered to comprise sustainable development and is in accordance with the development plan should be approved without delay.
- 4.26 Amongst the core driving principles of the NPPF is the effective re-use of land. Under Paragraph 17, the planning system should *“encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land), provided that it is not of high environmental value.”* The emphasis on this should underpin both plan making and decision taking.
- 4.27 Paragraph 17 sets out the core planning principles, on which good planning should be based, which includes its role...*“to proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs and encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed (brownfield land) providing that it is not of high environmental value”.*
- 4.28 One of the key objectives of the NPPF and a fundamental pillar of achieving sustainable development is outlined within Chapter 1 - *Building a strong, competitive economy*. This is emphasised through Paragraph 19, which identified that *“Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable economic growth...Therefore significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system.”*
- 4.29 This is further emphasised through Paragraph 22, which identified that local planning authorities should support existing business sectors, taking account of whether they are expanding or contracting and, where possible, identify and plan for new or emerging sectors likely to locate in their area.
- 4.30 The protection of existing Green Belt is given significant weight under the NPPF, through its statutory status. It is underlined that the Green Belt serves five purposes (as identified at Paragraph 80 of the NPPF):
- To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 - To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 - To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
 - To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

- 4.31 As identified in Paragraph 87, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should only be approved in very special circumstances.
- 4.32 What is defined as “inappropriate development” is outlined within Paragraph 89 – and the construction of new buildings should be regarded as inappropriate in Green Belt, except for the following exceptions:
- Buildings for agriculture and forestry
 - Provision of appropriate facilities for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation and for cemeteries, if it preserved the openness of the Green Belt and does not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
 - The extension or alteration of a building provided that it does not result in disproportionate additions over and above the size of the original building
 - The replacement of a building, provided the new building is in the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
 - Limited infilling in villages, and limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in the Local Plan; and
 - Limited infilling or the partial or complete redevelopment of a previously developed site (brownfield land), whether redundant or in continuing use (excluding temporary buildings), which would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development
- 4.33 The National Planning Policy Framework does not define the case required to demonstrate “very special circumstances”, which are required to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt.
- 4.34 Nevertheless, Planning Case Law has established that not all of the considerations in favour of approval need to be individually “special” and that they should be considered in combination. Furthermore, it indicates that a qualitative judgement is needed as to the weight to be given to a particular factor for planning.³
- 4.35 An assessment of the impact of the proposed development on the Green Belt, and the application of the “very special circumstances test” is outlined in Chapter 5.

Draft Revised National Planning Policy Framework – Review (March 2018)

- 4.36 In March 2018, the Government published a consultation on a Review to the National Planning Policy Framework, the first review since it was published in 2012.

³ Wychavon DC v SoS & Butler 23/06/2008

- 4.37 The majority of Green Belt policy set out at Chapter 9 of the NPPF is retained within a new Chapter 13 with no material changes (relevant to this proposal) to the Green Belt tests, including the case for demonstrating and applying the “very special circumstances” test.
- 4.38 Similarly, the revised NPPF continues to place significant emphases on the importance of economic growth. However, there is increased support and reference to business and growth that reflects where “Britain is a global leader in innovation” (Paragraph 82).
- 4.39 The draft NPPF does, however, include a brownfield first approach, through the addition of a new Chapter 11 (*Making effective use of land*), which sets out a clear strategy for making as much use as possible of previously developed land, including ensuring that policies and decision-making encourage benefits from both urban and rural land and taking opportunities to achieve net environmental gains.
- 4.40 Furthermore, there is a proposed update to the definition of previously developed land, however it retains fixed surface infrastructure, and therefore is not relevant to this proposed development.

Cherwell Local Plan Part 1 2011-2031 Partial Review (Policy PR8)

- 4.41 Cherwell District Council has commenced a Partial Review of the adopted Local Plan in respect of providing additional housing to help meet unmet objectively assessed needs across the Oxfordshire Housing Market Area (principally Oxford’s significant unmet needs).
- 4.42 Through the Duty to Cooperate and the commitment from the 2015 Part 1 Local Plan, Cherwell has worked with Oxfordshire authorities (Oxfordshire Growth Board) to address the need for housing across the Oxfordshire Housing Market Area. This ongoing work has demonstrated that Oxford is unable to meet its housing requirement within the City, and therefore adjoining authorities, including Cherwell, need to plan to for additional housing development to accommodate its share of unmet needs from Oxford to 2031.
- 4.43 The development strategy seeks the development of strategic sites around north Oxford (Kidlington, Begbroke, Yarnton & Woodstock), therefore benefiting from existing strong connections (including economic) links to the city of Oxford.
- 4.44 One of the key areas of growth within the Partial Review Local Plan is identified at land between Begbroke, Yarnton and Kidlington (Policy PR8). Policy PR8 proposes a new urban neighbourhood on 190 ha of land to the east of the A44, as shown on Policies

Map PR8 providing 1,950 dwellings, a local centre and other facilities, including schools.

- 4.45 An integral part of the proposed allocation is the reservation of 14.7ha of land for the potential expansion of Begbroke Science Park. The proposed Policies Map for Policy PR8 is identified under Figure 2.

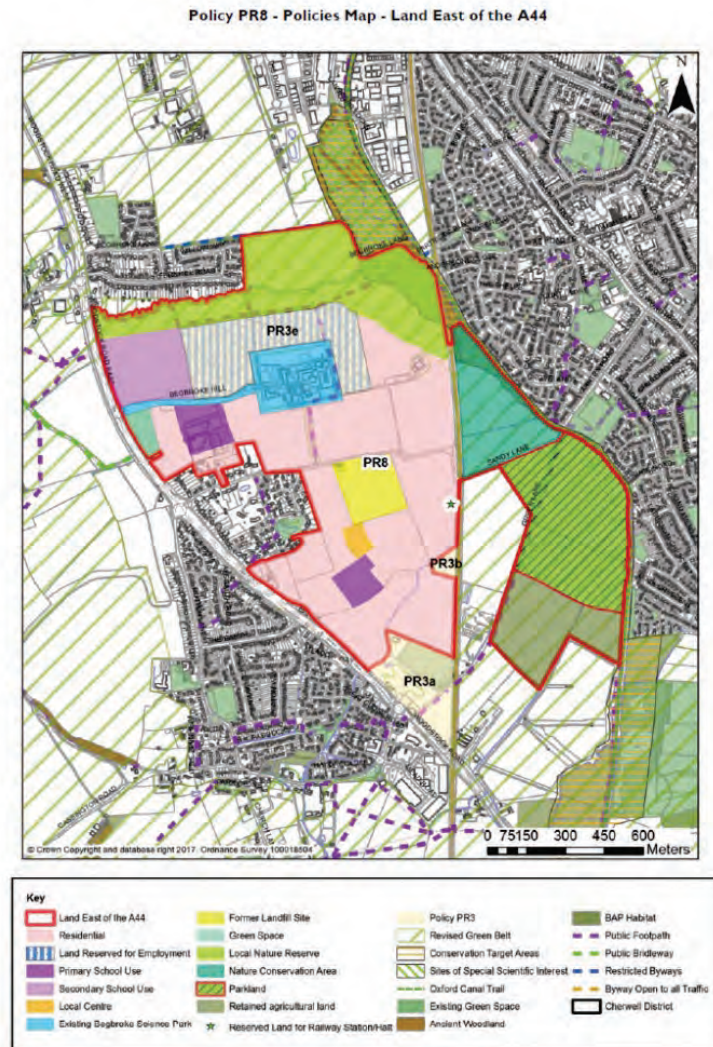


Figure 2 – Policy PR8 (Cherwell Local Plan Part 1 Partial Review Submission Plan)

- 4.46 Policy PR3e of the Local Plan Partial Review indicates that 14.7 hectares of land to the north, east and west of the BSP is to be removed from the Green Belt, whilst the BSP is shown as an existing employment site.
- 4.47 This Partial Review Submission Plan was recently submitted to the Secretary of State for Examination (March 2017), following pre-submission consultation. Whilst predominantly related to meeting housing needs the Plan is sufficiently advanced to

be a material consideration in the assessment and determination of this application albeit that it relates primarily to meeting housing rather than employment needs. Employment and future expansion needs at the Science Park will be addressed in Plan-making terms by the Local Plan Part 2.

Local Plan Part 2

- 4.48 The Local Plan Part 2, which will undertake a small-scale review of the Green Belt around the BSP and allocate employment land for expansion of the BSP, has only reached consultation on Issues stage. However, the Issues Consultation Version of the Plan indicated: *“Local Plan Part 1 identified two “areas of search” for the small scale local review of the Green Belt, as indicated on the maps below. The small scale local Green Belt review is required to meet specific high value employment needs at Kidlington, as identified in Local Plan Part 1 (paragraphs C.226-C.231 and Policy Kidlington 1). The Employment Land Review Update 2012 (ECO06) identified a need for additional employment land at Kidlington, which cannot be met on sites within the built-up area of the village (on non-Green Belt land). Kidlington plays an important role in the District’s economy and together with Begbroke Science Park has the potential to further support the provision of land for high tech university spin outs and secure a wider, high value economic base. The exceptional circumstances which justify the small scale local review of the Green Belt, and which were established through the Local Plan Part 1, are summarised below:*

Kidlington 1B: The release of land in this area is required to meet the specific needs of Begbroke Science Park. This site is vital to the University of Oxford’s leading role in research both nationally and internationally. Whilst the amount of scientific research at this location continues to expand, further growth is constrained by the Green Belt. The Science Park needs to remain in its current location to maintain close links with University facilities and the research environment. It also has the potential to deliver wider benefits in the immediate vicinity through support for development of a high-tech cluster, and elsewhere in the District with expected growth in scientific research, connecting with local businesses, nurturing enterprise and drawing investment into the District.

Figure 7 Kidlington Policies Map 1B

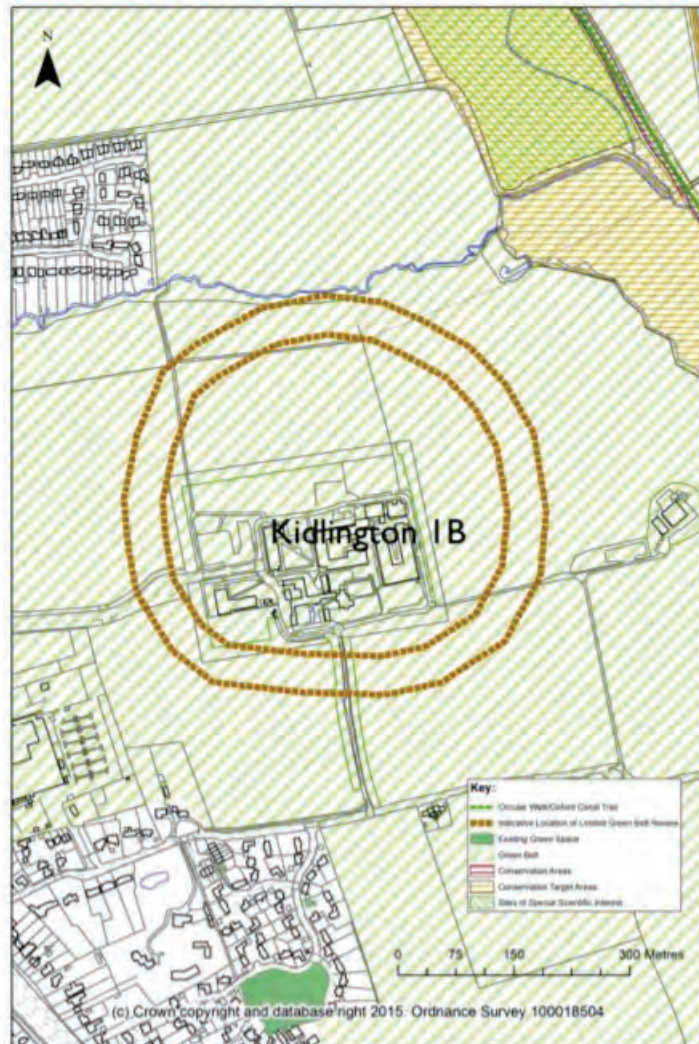


Figure 3 – Kidlington Policies Map 1B (Cherwell Local Plan Part 2)

Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan (2011)

4.49 This red lined application site area accords with the boundaries for the BSP shown on the Inset drawings supporting the Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan (2011) which identified the BSP as a 'Major Developed Site' (MDS). This Plan has been superseded by the Local Plan Part 1 so has no weight now. See Figure 4 below for an extract from the Non-Statutory Local Plan.

4.50 The allocation as a MDS followed advice in the Government's *Planning Policy Guidance on "Green Belts" (PPG2)* which advised that local authorities could identify major existing developed sites in the Green Belt where:

- limited infilling at a MDS in continuing use may help to secure jobs and prosperity without further prejudicing the Green Belt; or
- the complete or partial redevelopment of a MDS (whether redundant or in continuing use) offers the opportunity for environmental improvement without adding to their impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it.



Figure 4 – Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan Inset Map

- 4.51 Begbroke Hill Farm was included as a MDS and was subject to Policies GB5 and GB6. The Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011 was intended to review and update the Local Plan adopted in 1996. Due to changes to the planning system introduced by the Government, work on this Plan was discontinued by the Council prior to adoption. The Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011 is not part of the statutory development plan but was approved as interim planning policy for development control purposes in December 2004. The Adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) includes policies that supersede some of those within the Non-Statutory Local Plan. Advice in PPG2 was replaced by advice in the NPPF.
- 4.52 It is important to note that the current proposal lies solely within the established boundaries of the BSP previously identified as a Major Developed Site in the Non-Statutory Local Plan, 2011. Planning permissions were subsequently granted by the Council for development within the existing red-lined site boundary at the BSP on this basis. The current application site accords with the MDS boundary.

5.0 ASSESSMENT AGAINST DEVELOPMENT PLAN & OTHER MATERIAL CONSIDERATIONS

5.1 This Chapter reviews the proposed development against the policies in the Development Plan and then sets out other material considerations in support of the proposal as identified in Chapter 4 of this Statement.

5.2 As indicated within Section 38(6) of the *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended)*, planning applications must be determined in accordance with the development plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

5.3 Firstly, this Chapter assesses the site against Green Belt policy, which is similar in both the Development Plan and the principal ‘other material consideration’ (i.e. the NPPF) and then assesses the proposal against other planning considerations.

Assessment Against Green Belt Policy

5.4 The BSP is located entirely within the Oxford Green Belt, and therefore any expansion or proposals for development on this site must address and satisfy Green Belt policy in the Development Plan and NPPF.

5.5 It is recognised that for the proposed development to qualify as ‘appropriate development’ within the Green Belt, then it must pass the exceptions test set out at Paragraph 89, demonstrating that the proposal would not have a greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purpose of including land within it than the existing development (Paragraph 89, Bullet 6).

5.6 Whilst the proposed development partly relates to redevelopment of previously developed land, using the definitions in the NPPF (Paragraph 89) the development would be likely to have an impact on openness and the purposes of including land within the Green Belt. Under the NPPF the proposed development therefore constitutes ‘inappropriate development’ within the Green Belt and is, by definition, harmful. Therefore, very special circumstances must outweigh any “harm” to the Green Belt.

The Purposes of the Green Belt

5.7 Recognising that all inappropriate development in the Green Belt is, by definition, harmful, it is important to clarify the extent of such harm.

5.8 The impact on openness from including land subject to the proposed development and the extent of harm on the Green Belt taking into account the five purposes for designating land as Green Belt, as set out within the NPPF (*Paragraph 80*), is assessed in Table 1 below:

Purpose	Impact of Development on Purpose
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;	The Green Belt washes over the BSP at present and therefore the BSP provides no contribution to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas.
To prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;	The proposed development location and type would not hinder the ability of the wider Green Belt to meet this purpose
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	The Science Park is entirely enclosed and land within the enclosure plays a limited role (both visually and spatially) on the Green Belt
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	The proposed development area plays no role in preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.
To assist in urban regeneration by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.	The site of the proposed development has a limited role in assisting in urban regeneration, due to the lack of suitable, available sites within Oxford and the proposed development's recycling of previously developed land within the site.

Table 1 – Assessment against Green Belt Purposes (NPPF)

5.9 The Council's evidence base underpinning the Local Plan Partial Review indicates that a study to inform the Review considers the Science Park's long-term needs and ambitions and concludes that some 14.7 hectares is required; the study then examines how parcels of land perform in meeting the defined purposes of Green Belts. In general terms, the study shows that there would be limited harm to the Green Belt by extending the Science Park to the north, east and west. This is relevant since this relates to the acceptability of the expansion of the Science Park beyond its existing boundaries in Green Belt terms; the current proposal relates to development within the established boundaries, which as set out above will have a very limited impact upon the openness

of the Green Belt. This has previously been accepted by the Council when considering and granting planning permission for previous similar development, most recently in 2015, when the proposal (15/00509/OUT) was approved on the basis of NPPF and similar Development Plan policies and accepting that there were very special circumstances that justified the granting of permission for the proposal. This was the same as on the previous permission (01/00664/OUT) when the reasons for granting planning permission in August 2005 were stated as follows by the Council:

SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE GRANT OF PLANNING PERMISSION AND RELEVANT DEVELOPMENT PLAN POLICIES

The Council, as Local Planning Authority, has determined this application in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicated otherwise. The development is considered to be acceptable on its planning merits as there are very special circumstances for the development within the Green Belt. As such the proposal is in accordance with Policy GB4 of the Oxfordshire Structure Plan 2011 and Policy GB1 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan. For the reasons given above and having regard to all other matters raised, the Council considers that the application should be approved and planning permission granted subject to appropriate conditions, as set out above.

Very Special Circumstances

- 5.10 As outlined within the NPPF, inappropriate development in the Green Belt (as defined within the NPPF and clarified within the aforementioned paragraphs), should not be approved except in very special circumstances. Therefore, the primary planning consideration lies in whether very special circumstances can be demonstrated, given the weight that must be applied to potential harm to the Green Belt.
- 5.11 As clarified in Chapter 4, not all of the considerations in favour of approval need to be individually “special” and they should be considered in combination. Furthermore, it indicates a qualitative judgement as to the weight to be given to a particular factor in the overall planning balance when assessing a particular proposal and its compliance with Green Belt policy.

Significance & Importance of Begbroke Science Park

- 5.12 The Science Park is operated by the University of Oxford, a world-renowned and leading university for academic learning and research. The University of Oxford is the oldest university in the English-speaking world and is consistently ranked in the top ten universities in the world, ranked at No.1 in 2018.⁴

⁴ The Times Higher Education World University Rankings, 2018

- 5.13 The BSP forms a key research facility for the University. It enables collaborative research and development (R&D) involving co-location of academic and industry groups.
- 5.14 A key attraction of the Science Park is that this collaboration of industry and academic research is unique, and enables commercial, research and third-party partners to work together. This approach has generated enormous success – the current buildings at the BSP are now fully occupied and there is a waiting list for tenancies; in addition, the Accelerator Building was fully committed within 9 months of being constructed.
- 5.15 The wide-ranging benefits of this collaboration have been previously recognised by the Government who in 2014 granted funding under the Oxford City Deal (£4.2million) to enhance the facilities at the Science Park.
- 5.16 The clear benefits of this approach, taken at BSP, is recognised by the Government more recently through the publication of the *Industrial Strategy⁵ White Paper*. This seeks to provide a long-term strategy for economic growth, around a vision to build the world's most innovative economy. The White Paper recognises (and includes):
- The importance of job creation opportunities in the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge Corridor;
 - The importance of innovation and collaboration in research, as a key cornerstone of driving future growth;
 - The success of an original BSP company - Oxford Nanopore - as a key example of the innovative and technologically advanced economy the Strategy seeks to establish.
 - A commitment to helping scientific clusters in the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Cambridge Corridor – identifying that economic output could increase by £163bn in this corridor per annum by 2050.
- 5.17 The Cherwell Local Plan Part 1, Local Plan Part 2 and Local Plan Partial Review have all recognised that Begbroke Science Park is a facility of international importance. Similarly, its contribution to innovation is recognised within the *Oxfordshire Innovation Engine Report (2013)⁶* which recommended expansion to enable the Science Park to reach it's potential.
- 5.18 These adopted and emerging Development Plan documents recognise the BSP as:
- Of great importance to the local and Oxfordshire economy;

⁵ Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain fit for the future, HM Government (White Paper), November 2017

⁶ The Oxfordshire Growth Innovation Engine: Realising the Growth Potential, October 2013

- An exceptional opportunity to meet Oxford's needs in parallel with the expansion of the Science Park;
- One of the University's key economic assets.

5.19 The BSP connects Cherwell with the renowned research, entrepreneurial and academic capabilities of Oxford, the University of Oxford and other assets within the Oxford 'Knowledge Spine', which includes Oxford Science Park, Milton Park, Culham, Harwell and Grove, the latter comprising the so-called 'Science Vale'.

5.20 PwC's *'Good Growth for Cities'* report published in October 2017 cited Oxford as being one of the two highest-performing cities – in relation to growth – anywhere in the UK. This followed a study by Irwin Mitchell – alongside the Centre for Economics and Business Research – that revealed Oxford currently has the second fastest-growing economy of any UK city. Begbroke Science Park is closely related to the growth of the city and this part of the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Corridor.

5.21 In addition, Bidwells recently announced that Oxfordshire had recorded its highest half-year figure for business space demand since 2013, whilst Nesta's *'State of Small Business'* report announced Oxford as one of just two non-London Boroughs in its top-10 UK cities list for inward venture capital investment. These documents are helpful to the economic growth arguments supporting development in the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Corridor, Oxford area and at Begbroke Science Park.

5.22 The full case for Science Park expansion, including detailed need for expansion at the site, which has been prepared by Begbroke Science Park and the University of Oxford is set out in a separate *"Strategic Case for Renewed Outline Planning Approval"* prepared by the University (MPLS Division), which is submitted with the application.

Economic Geography: Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Corridor

5.23 The proposed development contained within this application for the Science Park must also be considered in the context of the regional geography and context. It sits in a key location at the heart of the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Corridor, which is identified by the National Infrastructure Commission as a key knowledge corridor and hub for growth. Begbroke Science Park is ideally located to not only benefit from its location, but also be a key economic driver itself within this nationally-important Corridor.

- 5.24 The National Infrastructure Commission's recently published report⁷ highlighted that the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Corridor or Arc is a national priority, that: plays host to a "highly skilled labour force; world leading research facilities; knowledge-intensive forms and technology clusters which compete on a world stage". The report seeks to act as a catalyst in directing change in how the area grows to accommodate and help meet its potential, either through supporting existing businesses or helping to deliver new settlements. It specifically identifies the Arc's substantial university and commercial research centres, as a particular focus of growth and expansion. This includes the BSP.
- 5.25 Begbroke Science Park is a perfect exemplar for the hugely success and nationally significant science and research clusters that exist within the Corridor and the importance of enabling/ facilitating their expansion. Whilst, the National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) is an impartial advisory body, which advises the Government, this is further evidence of the outstanding economic business case and very special circumstances for facilitating this application for development within the existing Science Park boundary.
- 5.26 A further report on '*Future Development Concepts*' by 5th Studio was published as supporting evidence to the main NIC Report. One of the illustrative case studies in this report considered options to reappraise the Green Belt around Oxford, with focused potential growth at Begbroke, identified as one of the only areas around the city not subject to fluvial flooding. This option indicated that:

'Any settlement would co-opt and allow the expansion of the existing employment areas around the Airport and Begbroke Science Park. Creating a mixed-use district would build sufficient critical mass to support a high-quality transit connection to the new parkway station, the city centre and the employment cluster in east Oxford.'

Emerging and Established Policy Context

- 5.27 Cherwell Local Plan Part 1 includes a commitment that Green Belt boundaries around Begbroke Science Park will be reviewed (small-scale) through the Local Plan Part 2 (Detailed Development Management Policies) Local Plan, to support high value employment uses (such as those provided at the Science Park).
- 5.28 Notwithstanding this, Cherwell's Local Plan Part 1 Partial Review has been submitted for examination and includes its own specific proposals to remove 190ha of Green Belt

⁷ Partnering for Prosperity: A new deal for the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Arc, National Infrastructure Commission, November 2017

to enable the development and delivery of a mix-use residential-led development for up to 1950 dwellings and associated development, including a 14.7ha expansion of the Science Park site.

- 5.29 The existing Science Park (and the proposed development land identified within this application) would also be removed from the Green Belt under the Local Plan.
- 5.30 The proposed removal from the Green Belt within emerging policy, supported by a small-scale Green Belt Review around the Science Park, is therefore a material consideration when considering the merits of this application, and the proposed development in the Green Belt.
- 5.31 The Green Belt study report concluded that the removal of land comprising Begbroke Science Park resulted in a low harm to Green Belt purposes, in the event that the land was released from the Green Belt.
- 5.32 It is a well-established principle of Green Belt policy, demonstrated by recent High Court judgements, that even where a review of Green Belt boundaries is committed and will be undertaken through a Local Plan, there is no requirement for development to be delayed pending this outcome on the basis that the proposed development can demonstrate “very special circumstances”.

Conclusions

- 5.33 Taken together, the considerations set out above represent very special circumstances which clearly outweigh any limited potential harm to the Oxford Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, as required by Paragraph 88 of the NPPF.

Assessment Against Other Policy

- 5.34 As demonstrated, by case law⁸, the test for very special circumstances, includes consideration of any other (non-Green Belt) harm, and therefore these should also be assessed.
- 5.35 The principle of the proposed development has been established by previous permissions at the Science Park for long term expansion and the provision of additional floorspace (01/00662/OUT & 15/000309/OUT).
- 5.36 The current proposal is to “renew” the previous outline planning permission for the residual element (i.e. not implemented) of the 21,236m² of additional floorspace

⁸ Secretary of State & other v Redhill Aerodrome Ltd, October 2014

approved within the 'long-term' phase of further development at Begbroke Science Park (BSP) approved latterly via 15/000309/OUT. This and the previous permission are material planning considerations that support the 'very special circumstances' case presented since they were extant until 1 May 2017, were part implemented and there has been no material change in planning circumstances since the permission became time-expired (for the submission of reserved matters). The residual element is estimated to be as set out in Table 2 below:

Building No.	Phase	Description	Size	Source
351	Interim	Western half of 351 Centre for Innovation and Enterprise	2050sqm	CDC Officer Report on 15/01105/REM
352	Interim	Institute of Advanced Technology	6677sqm	CDC Officer Report on 03/02468/REM
353	Interim	Advance Processing Laboratory	357sqm	Block Plan on 05/00845/F
351	Long-Term	Eastern half of 351 Centre for Innovation & Enterprise	2252sqm	CDC Officer Report on 15/01105/REM
Total Built	All		11336sqm	
Total Approved	All	Long-Term Outline Permission	21236sqm	
Residual	All	Floorspace Remaining	9900sqm*	

*Building 353 built under full permission so extra 357sqm could be included

Table 2 – Estimate of Residual Floorspace Available for Renewed Outline

5.36 The site was a Major Developed Site within the Non-Statutory Local Plan (2011) following PPG2 advice on "Green Belts" and two previous outline applications considered the same planning issues; both were positively determined post-adoption of the NPPF, which replaced PPG2. Moreover, the planning case that weighs in favour of this application is strengthened by the wider proposals to promote the land on and adjacent to the Science Park both for a mixed-use development (PR8 - which includes wider expansion of the Science Park beyond its existing boundaries) and expansion

of the BSP through the Local Plan Part 2, which would remove the BSP and its expansion area from the Green Belt for employment purposes, held to be demonstrating 'exceptional circumstances'. Notwithstanding that this is subject to independent examination (Local Plan Partial Review) and further Plan-making processes (Local Plan Part 2), this is clearly a material consideration that further weighs in favour of the proposed development.

Transport

- 5.37 As identified in Chapter 2, the Science Park already benefits from a dedicated vehicular access link from the A44 which is connected by a signal-controlled junction. Therefore, the key consideration is the impact of the proposed development on the existing junction (and other junctions on the A44) through the additional trips associated with an increase in floorspace.
- 5.38 The *Transport Assessment* (TA) by IMA has considered the existing vehicular trips associated with the current facilities on site, through survey data to identify a trip rate. This has been compared with the anticipated trip rate from the approved Begbroke Access Road TA. This has found that the actual trip rate for the site (most recent survey data) differs – being 11% lower in AM peak, and 7% higher in PM peak.
- 5.39 The Assessment confirms that the proposed access junction for the Science Park from the A44 was consented to accommodate the level of development approved under the two 'long-term development' permissions, most recently granted in 2015, for 21,236m², with a significant degree of additional capacity. Table 7 of the TA identifies that trips associated with the proposed development (bringing floorspace to 26,700m²), results in slightly higher trip rates but will have an imperceptible impact on the operation of the highway network.
- 5.40 In any case, the assessed total trips from the combined proposed/existing Science Park development is below the sensitivity-tested worst-case trip assessment for the Science Park/A44 Junction, undertaken through the Access Road application (11/00069/FUL), which also operated within capacity.
- 5.41 To cater for peak parking demand (correlating survey data with approved standards), it is projected that this could reach 378 spaces. To accommodate circulation and fluctuation, just over 400 spaces are proposed including 14 disabled spaces (414 in total).
- 5.42 Furthermore, the University has commissioned a further Staff Travel Survey to inform sustainable travel and an update to the existing Travel Plan (which can be subject to appropriate condition on any permission), that can be prepared to formalise the targets

(reduced car trips) set out within the TA. The Science Park has been demonstrably successful in reducing trips made to the site by car (down from 76% in 2006 to 57% in 2015).

- 5.43 The proposed development is therefore in full compliance with Policy SLE4 of the Cherwell Local Plan Part 1 and the National Planning Policy Framework Paragraph 32, in ensuring that the proposed development does not result in a severe residual impact on the local highway network.

Landscape and Visual Impact

- 5.44 The accompanying *Landscape and Visual Appraisal* (LVA) has considered the impact of the proposed development on the surrounding landscape along with impacts on visual aspects of the Science Park and its environment.
- 5.45 The proposed development is considered to be compliant with Policy ESD13 of the Local Plan in ensuring that development avoids damage to local landscape character (without any mitigation), is consistent with the character of the area and does not cause undue visual intrusion into the countryside and Green Belt.
- 5.46 The LVA confirms that the site has a relatively contained visual envelope, due to the linear and established woodland planting at the boundary. Furthermore, it is considered that the magnitude of change and impact is negligible, due to the containment of any impacts.
- 5.47 As a consequence, the proposed development is also considered to be in accordance with Policy ESD15 of the Local Plan, as the proposals respect local landscape features, historic boundaries and do not adversely impact on views.

Biodiversity and Ecology

- 5.48 The development at this outline stage does not deal with the detailed building and parking requirements associated within reserved matters aspects of the development, however careful consideration has been given to their likely requirements.
- 5.49 Although the proposed development will result in the loss of 0.15ha of semi-improved grassland, this should be considered in the context of benefits of the proposed development, which will see the improvement of 0.3ha of poor semi-improved grassland.

5.50 The development proposals have also been subject to an *Ecology Report*, which concludes that the proposed development will result in a net gain for biodiversity. A number of other measures form part of the proposed development, including:

- Precautionary approach to reptiles and great crested newts, pending results of great crested newt & reptile surveys;
- Installation of invertebrate habitat within the Science Park site;
- Installation of bat and bird boxes on new buildings;
- Retention of hedgerows and trees; and
- Pre-construction badger survey.

5.51 It is therefore considered that the proposed development fully complies with Policy ESD10 of the Local Plan, in ensuring not just that the proposed development protects biodiversity features, but also achieves a net gain for biodiversity (which is the aim of the policy).

Heritage

5.52 The *Heritage Assessment* confirms that previous developments undertaken since the 1970's, including the development of the Science Park, contribute positively to the significance of the Grade II Listed Begbroke Hill Farmhouse, and that the Farmhouse is well-established and integrated within the BSP campus setting. The proposed development will not have any greater impact than existing buildings that are located closer to and adjacent to the Listed Building. The Assessment also concludes that the proposed parking arrangements will not impact on the significance of heritage assets.

5.53 The Assessment therefore concludes that there is no significant adverse harm on the Listed Building or its setting.

5.54 The *Archaeological Desk-Based Assessment* confirms that the proposed development will not result in any adverse impact upon or harm to any identified archaeological asset. This has been established by the following:

- Historical mapping has shown that there is negligible potential for archaeological deposits of significance to be encountered across the site;
- Comprehensive trial trenching undertaken in 2001 found only one archaeological feature that was of negligible significance and concluded that the site holds no archaeological potential.

5.55 Therefore, the proposed development is fully compliant with Policy ESD15: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment of the Local Plan.

Overall Planning Balance

5.56 Given the established and relevant planning case law (e.g. Redhill Aerodrome)⁹, Green Belt policy should be considered in the overall planning balance to establish the extent of “any other harm”. The following key conclusions can be drawn from the assessment of the proposed development against Green Belt and other planning policies:

1. The application site is of limited Green Belt value in terms of the five purposes of including land within the Green Belt; it also involves development of previously-developed land;
2. The proposal will give rise to only limited Green Belt harm due to the nature of the established Science Park site and its location;
3. Similar conclusions have been reached by the Council upon previous outline planning permissions granted as recently as in 2015 and the Council has accepted that ‘very special circumstances’ exist to justify such development in the Green Belt;
4. The proposal seeks to renew the previous 2014 and 2015 permissions to accommodate new research, development and prototype building requirements, which amount to 12,500sqm, and development pursuant to this planning permission has been previously approved and implemented at the Science Park, with no adverse impact upon the Green Belt or its surroundings;
5. The level of development is just slightly above (circa 2,500sqm) the residual element of the 2015 permission;
6. There has been no material change in planning circumstances since this permission became time-expired in May 2017;
7. Broad ranging planning benefits will arise locally, regionally and nationally as a result of development at BSP as outlined above within the assessment of very special circumstances and supported by the University’s accompanying “Strategic Case” for renewal of the previous outline planning permission;
8. The proposed development will not result in any other harm;

⁹ SoSCLG and others v Redhill Aerodrome Limited [2014] EWCA Civ 1386

9. In all other respects the proposal is in conformity with the adopted and emerging Development Plan policies, and national policy contained in the National Planning Policy Framework;
10. Exceptional circumstances have been held to exist (following adoption of the Local Plan Part 1) to justify further expansion of the BSP beyond its established boundaries as part of a small-scale Green Belt Review;
11. The current proposal lies solely within the established boundaries of the BSP previously identified as a Major Developed Site in the Local Plan, 2011;
12. Land surrounding the BSP is shown in the Local Plan Partial Review as a proposed allocation (PR8) for a mixed-use development to meet Oxford's unmet housing needs, which is also justified in 'exceptional circumstances' being linked to the BSP;
13. Notwithstanding the above points, significant weight must be given to the presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
14. Nevertheless, in summary, very special circumstances exist to clearly outweigh Green Belt harm.
15. On this basis we respectfully conclude that planning permission should be granted without delay.

6.0 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The principle of further development at the Science Park, has been long established through previous permissions, and it must be emphasised that the current application for the proposed development largely seeks to renew a recently expired permission, with a small additional increase (2,500sqm) in floorspace to accommodate new R&D and prototype development interest on the site as soon as possible. Previous permissions have demonstrated 'very special circumstances' for development within the established boundaries of the Science Park and this application does the same. The Council has also previously accepted that 'very special circumstances' exist when approving similar schemes in the recent past; nothing has materially changed from this position.
- 6.2 For all the reasons set out in Chapter 5 of this Statement, supported by the "*Strategic Case for Renewed Outline Planning Approval*" Report produced by the University of Oxford there is a very clear, strong and well-evidenced case to conclude that 'very special circumstances' exist to justify the granting of planning permission for the proposed development. This is in line with Paragraph 88 of the NPPF and Local Plan Policy. It is also in line with the previous identification of the Science Park as a MDS within the Non-Statutory Local Plan and the application site boundary accords with the MDS boundary.
- 6.3 The potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of 'inappropriateness' is outweighed by the 'very special circumstances' demonstrated in this case; there is no other identifiable harm or adverse impacts caused by the proposed development. There are, however, many potential innovation, employment, economic and other benefits for the site, the University, Oxford, Oxfordshire's 'Knowledge Spine' and the Cambridge-Milton Keynes-Oxford Corridor, which is being promoted by the NIC and funded by HM Treasury to realise its considerable, national economic potential.
- 6.4 Furthermore, the proposed development is strongly supported by existing and emerging policy (Policy Kidlington 1 & Policy PR8) which have accepted that 'exceptional circumstances' exist to remove land from the Oxford Green Belt.
- 6.5 Therefore, in accordance with Section 38(6) of the *Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004*, we respectfully request that the Council grants planning permission for this application, as it is in accordance with the Development Plan and supported by other material considerations, most notably the NPPF (and draft revised NPPF) so as to support the ongoing success of Begbroke Science Park and its contribution to science,

innovation, research and development and the economies of the district, county, region and rest of the country.

APPENDIX 1

A1 – EIA Screening Opinion – Cherwell District Council (26th March 2018)

DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT AND REGENERATION



DISTRICT COUNCIL
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Our Ref: 18/00024/SO

26 March 2018

Dear Sirs

Location **Begbroke Science Park, Begbroke Hill, Begbroke, OX5 1PF**

Proposal **Screening Opinion – Outline application (all matters reserved except access) for employment and commercial development comprising up to approximately 12,500 sq.metres of floorspave (B1 A/B/C) and ancillary D1 uses with related development**

I write with regard to the above application, received on 2 March 2018, which represents a formal request for a Screening Opinion under Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017, as to whether the proposal set out in your submission requires an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). This letter constitutes a Screening Opinion of the Local Planning Authority of the proposed development under Regulation 6 of the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017.

Summary of Determination

The Local Planning Authority considers that the proposal represents an 'Urban Development Project' that falls within Schedule 2, section 10(b) of the Regulations. The site area would exceed the applicable threshold in column 2 of Schedule 2 but the development is not within a sensitive area. For the development to be considered an EIA development, it would be likely to have significant effects on the environment by virtue of factors such as its nature, size or location. In determining whether the proposals are likely to constitute EIA development, regard has been had to the criteria set out in Schedule 3 of the EIA Regulations 2017. Government guidance relating to EIA as set out in the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) is also material and has been taken into account. Due to the scale of development, the site characteristics, its location and context and the nature of the development, it is considered that this proposal **does not require** the submission of an Environmental Impact Assessment.

Reasons for Determination

The proposal relates to the development of 12,500 sq.m of B1 floorspace with ancillary D1 uses which largely represents the unimplemented residual floorspace which previously benefited from outline planning permission (15/00309/OUT) and is positioned within an area identified to be within an area covered by Policy Kidlington 1 of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part One aimed at accommodating the identified high value employment needs.

The land itself is not within a sensitive area as defined by the Town and Country Planning (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017. Although the site has some site constraints, including that there is the heritage asset of Begbroke Hill farmhouse on the site, the site is already largely developed for employment uses under planning permissions that have assessed the impact of the development.

Given the policy context and previous history of the site, including previous decisions not to require an EIA, the Local Planning Authority is satisfied that the proposal is unlikely to result in significant environmental impacts above and beyond those that can be assessed in the normal manner during the course of the planning application and through consultation with relevant and statutory consultees.

This opinion has been made by an appropriately authorised officer at the Local Planning Authority. In accordance with the 2017 Regulations, a copy of this screening opinion has been placed on the Planning Register.

If you have any further queries, please contact the Case Officer Caroline Ford.

Yours sincerely



For Interim Director for Planning and Regeneration

APPENDIX 2

A2 – PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT DETAILS



Dear Resident

08 May 2018

PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT AT BEGBROKE SCIENCE PARK

The Chancellor, Masters and Scholars of the University of Oxford (University of Oxford) are pleased to be able to write to local residents to introduce the University's proposals for development at the Begbroke Science Park.

Begbroke Science Park, wholly-owned and managed by the University of Oxford, is a successful hub of industry and science, where academic research and its commercial application thrive. The principle of delivering high quality employment-related development at the Science Park has been well established for many years. There have been several planning permissions for the development of the site, the most recent of which was granted by Cherwell District Council in May 2015 for the long-term phase of development (Application Number 15/00309/OUT).

The University of Oxford will shortly be submitting an outline planning application to optimise the use of the existing area of the Science Park. This seeks to secure the principle of further development across the existing area (re-establishing a principle most recently attained in 2015), enabling the University to respond to demand for new floorspace from potential occupiers on parcels of land within the established Science Park boundaries that are currently vacant.

The outline planning application is an initial step from which subsequent detailed proposals will be based. In summary, the application will seek permission for:

- up to 12,500m² of B1/a/b/c (business/research) floorspace and ancillary D1 (non-residential training/educational) floorspace;
- retention of existing buildings on the site;
- retention of existing main vehicular, public transport, pedestrian and cycle access;
- relocation of car parking within the site; and
- associated hard and soft landscaping, drainage and infrastructure works.

The Plan overleaf identifies the zones proposed to accommodate new buildings. Detailed plans for the design and layout of the new buildings will be progressed following this outline application, if permission is granted, and will come forward as part of future application(s) showing the design of buildings, landscaping and other details. The University of Oxford will then consult with local residents, stakeholders and businesses on these detailed proposals.

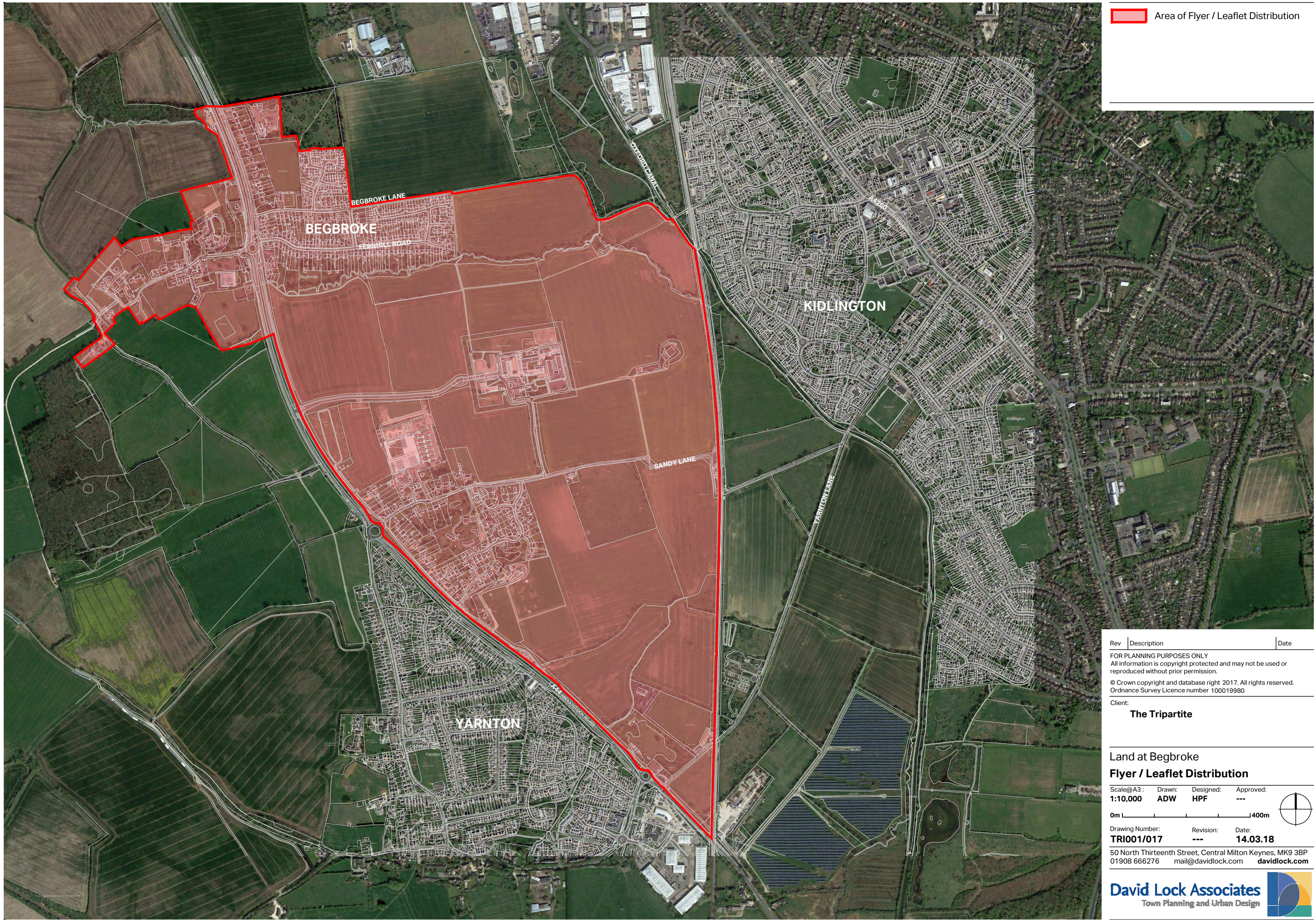
The outline planning application will be submitted to Cherwell District Council this month. Any comments on the proposals can be submitted to Cherwell District Council, as local planning authority, during the statutory consultation period once the application has been registered and processed by the Council. In the meantime, should you have any further queries on this proposal, please do not hesitate to contact me at public.consultation@admin.ox.ac.uk.

Yours faithfully

Rebecca Horley BSc (Hons) MRTPI
Town Planner | Asset & Space Management
Estates Services | University of Oxford
The Malthouse, Tidmarsh Lane, Oxford, OX1 1NQ



Area of Flyer / Leaflet Distribution



Rev	Description	Date
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Client:
The Tripartite

**Land at Begbroke
 Flyer / Leaflet Distribution**

Scale@A3 : Drawn: Designed: Approved:
1:10,000 ADW HPF ---

0m 400m

Drawing Number: Revision: Date:
TRI001/017 --- 14.03.18

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