**From:** Chris Thom   
**Sent:** 23 August 2018 10:49  
**To:** Gavin Forrest  
**Subject:** Begbroke Science Park - 18-00803/OUT

Gavin,

The following is a planning policy response in relation to an outline planning application at Begbroke Science Park for ‘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…’ (18/00803/OUT).

* The application proposals are similar to those in a previous outline planning application for ‘Proposed new research buildings (long term phase of site development)” (01/00662/OUT) that was granted planning permission in April 2004, and subsequently varied (15/00309/OUT). The proposals will result in an additional 2500sq metres (further to the floor area approved under 15/00309/OUT) of commercial development floor space.
* The main policies of the adopted Cherwell Local Plan (2015) which apply for this application are; Policy SLE1: Employment Development, Policy SLE 4: Improved Transport and Connections, Policy ESD13: Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement,  Policy ESD14: Oxford Green Belt, Policy ESD15 The Character of the Built Environment and Policy Kidlington 1: Accommodating High Value Employment Needs.  Other policies may also apply.
* Retained Saved policies of the adopted Local Plan (1996) may also be relevant.
* The application site lies within the Oxford Green Belt and therefore the provisions of Policy ESD14 apply. Paragraph 133 of the NPPF states that the Government attaches great importance to Green Belts.  Paragraph 143 states that inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.  Paragraph 144 states when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt. ‘Very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm resulting from the proposal, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.  Paragraph 145 states a local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt.  This proposal constitutes ‘inappropriate development’ in the Green Belt and very special circumstances will need to be demonstrated.
* Impacts in relation to transport and landscape should be assessed and the design of the proposal should also be considered.
* Policy SLE1 states that proposals will be focused on existing employment sites.   In the rural areas proposals will be supported if they are outside the Green Belt unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated and there are further criteria in Policy SLE1.
* Strategic Objective 1 of the Local Plan seeks to ‘facilitate growth and employment and a more diverse local economy with an emphasis on attracting and developing higher technology industries’.
* Paragraph C.225 of the 2015 Local Plan states that there is potential for Kidlington to have a significant role in Cherwell diversifying its economic base. The District can take advantage of its location on the hi-tech corridor between London and Cambridge, and the proximity to Oxford University and Silverstone which is actively investing in the high performance engineering sector.
* Paragraph C.226 explains that a specific employment need has been identified at Begbroke Science Park and paragraph C.227 of the Local Plan states Begbroke Science Park has the potential to develop further to support the provision of land for hi-tech university spin-outs and help pave the way for a wider high value, economic base.
* Paragraph C.230 states that the University of Oxford plays a significant and leading role in research both in the UK and worldwide and in this context Begbroke Science Park is a vital site.
* Paragraph 80 of the NPPF states that significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development and paragraph 82 states that  planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries;..
* The Council’s Kidlington Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document (December 2016) has an objective (page 6) to support the growth of an integrated cluster of high value employment uses to the west of the village including Langford Lane, London Oxford Airport and Begbroke Science Park.
* Policy ESD14 states that a small scale local review of the Green Belt boundary in the vicinity of Langford Lane, Kidlington and Begbroke Science Park will be undertaken as part of Local Plan Part 2, in order to accommodate employment needs.
* Policy Kidlington 1 identifies that a small scale review of the Green Belt will be undertaken to accommodate identified high value employment needs at two locations; at Langford Lane/Oxford Technology Park/London Oxford Airport and at Begbroke Science Park.  The application site falls within the indicative area identified in the Local Plan (Key policies map 5.4 – Kidlington and Policy Map Policy Kidlington 1B on page 355) for the small scale Green Belt review at the Science Park.  The boundaries shown on the proposals map are indicative only; the review will need to consider exactly how and where the Green Belt boundary will be changed to accommodate employment uses.
* Paragraph C.230 identifies that there are two exceptional circumstances that justify a small scale review of Green Belt boundaries around the Science Park; the location of the Science Park, given the importance of being directly linked to University facilities and the research environment; and the potential for the Science Park to deliver wider benefits for the immediate locale through support for the development of a high-tech cluster and through the wider District with expected growth in scientific research, connecting with local businesses, nurturing enterprise and drawing investment into the District.
* The Green Belt review referred to in the 2015 Local Plan has yet to be completed as part of Local Plan part 2.  The timetable for Local Plan Part 2 is set out in the Council’s Local Development Scheme (LDS).  However, the Council has identified sites in its Partial Review of Local Plan Part 1 - Oxford’s Unmet Housing Needs - (Submission Plan - February 2018) which affect the Green Belt in this area.  Policy PR3e of the Partial Review indicates that 14.7 hectares of land to the north, east and west of the Begbroke Science Park is to be removed from the Green Belt.  The Partial Review states that this is the context of, and in response to, the conclusion of the Small Scale Green Belt Review.  The Small Scale Review Green Belt Review (November 2016) has been published as evidence for the review of Local Plan part 2 and for the Partial Review.  This identifies the level of need for high value employment and how land parcels perform against the purposes of the Green Belt.
* Policy PR3e states that the potential expansion of the science park, provided for by Policy Kidlington 1 of the Local Plan, will be considered further in Local Plan part 2 and that Policy PR8 seeks reservation of the land for the potential expansion of the Science Park. The policies map for  Policy PR8 – Land east of the A44 identifies the existing science park (in which the application is located) shaded blue.
* Further evidence, including that relating to the Green Belt and landscape, has also been published for the Partial Review.  However the Partial Review and associated evidence have yet to be tested at examination.
* The application proposals are consistent with the Local Plan, Kidlington Masterplan and the NPPF in terms of contributing towards delivering high value employment in this location.  The applicant has also provided detailed evidence to demonstrate very special circumstances.
* It is noted that the proposals are within the existing boundaries of the Science Park and that similar proposals have been granted planning permission at the Science Park following a view that very special circumstances had been demonstrated and this should be a consideration in determining the application.
* From a planning policy perspective the demonstration of exceptional circumstances for a Green Belt review to deliver high value employment uses in this location in policy Kidlington 1, the fact that the application site is within the existing boundaries of the Science Park and the delivery of high value employment uses through the application, contribute towards very special circumstances being demonstrated.  On this basis, subject to other potential impacts being assessed,  there is no planning policy objection to this application.

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