
Planning and Economic Statement

Oxford Technology Park on land east of Evenlode Crescent and south of Langford Lane, Kidlington, Cherwell

**Full Planning Application Economic
Development**

Application by Oxford Technology Park Limited



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This Planning and Economic Statement has been prepared by Savills (UK) Limited on behalf Oxford Technology Park Limited in respect of an application for economic development at the existing employment site known as Oxford Technology Park ('OTP') in Kidlington. The development will be the third phase of economic development at OTP and will provide 6,448 sq. m of floorspace (site known as Plot 4).
- 1.2 The proposed development is for an 'Innovation Centre' that will deliver floorplates for small to medium sized enterprises looking for a base to start / enhance operations within the area to build a platform for further economic growth that supports the local economy.
- 1.3 By way of background, outline planning permission for OTP was granted on 16 October 2016 under Reference 14/02067/OUT and subsequently varied under Reference 17/00559/F. The outline permission permitted the construction of 40,362 sq. m¹ of office, research and development, laboratory and storage business space within Use Classes B1², B2 and B8 and reserved matters were approved for Units 1 and 3 under Reference 17/01542/REM on 24 November 2017 and all permissions have been implemented. Amendments to those units have recently been granted planning permission by the Local Planning Authority ('LPA') as part of Application Reference 21/00690/REM.
- 1.4 Further, planning permission for a hotel development was also granted on 11 July 2018 under Reference 17/02233/F (Unit 2).
- 1.5 The hotel has been constructed and is operated by Premier Inn and provides approximately 3,981 sq. m of floorspace. Units 1 and 3 are under construction and will provide approximately 11,952 sq. m of floorspace. The addition of 6,448 sq. m proposed under this application will take the total amount of development at OTP

¹ All floorspace reference are provided as Gross Internal Areas.

² Now Class E.

to 18,400 sq. m, well within the quantum of floorspace approved by the Local Planning Authority ('LPA') under the original outline permission.

- 1.6 The site is a cleared and prepared site that resembles a development site forming part of the wider established employment site that is under construction. OTP is located in the Green Belt. However, the OTP site is considered by the LPA to be an appropriate site for development in the Green Belt given the development that has taken place at the site and its overall preparation, which includes the delivery of a spine road across the centre of the site to serve the various development plots and the installation of significant levels of landscaping for the development plots. Further, the proposed development subject to the application fits into the overall scale of development that the LPA consider is appropriate on the OTP site.
- 1.7 That conclusion is not surprising given the site is identified in the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 1) ('Local Plan Part 1') under Policy Kidlington 1 as being a location that will accommodate high value employment needs. The Local Plan Part 1 was originally adopted on 20 July 2015 and it was confirmed in the Policy that a small scale review of the Green Belt will be undertaken. This review has now been completed by LUC as part of the 'Small-Scale Green Belt Review' (November 2016) which confirms that the OTP site does not play any significant role in contributing to any Green Belt purpose. That conclusion is further supported – if not enhanced – as a consequence of development that has already taken place.
- 1.8 Further, the delivery of employment development is an objective to supporting the economic success of Kidlington as confirmed by the LPA in The Kidlington Framework Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document Part 1: Kidlington Tomorrow – Realising the Potential (Adopted December 2016) ('SPD').
- 1.9 It follows that there are material considerations and very special circumstances that apply to supporting the application proposal. The site's existence within the Green Belt is a technicality that was long envisaged to have been removed through a development plan document that had been due to be adopted in 2018 (Local Plan Part 2). The proposal is simply the continued development of the existing and established OTP that has

already benefited from support for the Council for its development. That development not only encompasses the application site, but extends further over a wider area to form the Technology Park.

- 1.10 The Statement is therefore provided in order to support the LPA's approval of the application, but clearly demonstrates that the proposal is acceptable in all regards given the history of the site. Accordingly, we request that planning permission is granted at the earliest opportunity.

The Proposal

- 1.11 The proposal is a straight forward development for uses within Use Classes E (g) (i)-(iii), B2 and B8. These are the uses permitted under the original outline permission.
- 1.12 The application seeks planning permission for the construction of up to 11 units measuring a total of 6,448 sq. m. The floorspace will be located on Plot 4 of OTP to the rear of the recently opened hotel development which occupies Plot 2. The development will be known as the 'Innovation Centre' with the floorspace aimed at small to medium sized enterprises ('SMEs').
- 1.13 The units will be configured in two linear building banks with parking to the north and south of each building with employment accesses on each of these elevations. Each building is also served by a central access road for serving of the units. A car park providing space for 224 parking spaces is proposed, of which 20 will be Electrical Vehicle ('EV') spaces and 20 will be disabled spaces. In addition, 40 cycle parking spaces are proposed.
- 1.14 The design of the development will be consistent in terms of appearance and scale of the development that is supported and has been / is being delivered at Plots 1 – 3. The design of the development is described in further detail in a Design and Access Statement that accompanies the application.

- 1.15 Vehicular and service access to the site will be taken place from the main access into the site from Langford Lane that has already been constructed and was authorised as part of the approved reserved matters.

The Principal Issues

- 1.16 The principal issues are whether the proposal accords with the development plan and material considerations on the following matters:
1. Whether the principle of economic development is acceptable?
 2. Whether the proposal accords with Green Belt policies?
 3. Whether the proposed development accords with highway policy matters?
 4. Whether the proposal accords with various development management policies particularly those relating to design and other development management considerations?
- 1.17 The existing development plan and material considerations including the National Planning Policy Framework ('NPPF') and Planning Policy Guidance ('PPG') that provide the LPA's and National Government's policies and guidance addressing the above issues.
- 1.18 In this case, the proposal accords with the adopted development plan. That is, it complies with local policies concerning economic development, the Green Belt, highways, design and other development management considerations. Where this is the case, the full weight of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act ('The Act') applies, unless the material considerations indicate otherwise.

1.19 The material considerations also indicate that permission should be granted as the proposal accords with the NPPF. As the proposal accords with the NPPF and the development plan, it benefits from the presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Structure of the Statement

1.20 In order to comprehensively assess the proposed development against the relevant planning policies, the remaining sections of this Statement are structured as follows:

Section 3.0: Description of the Site and Surroundings

Section 4.0: Review of Relevant Planning Policy

Section 5.0: Planning Considerations

Section 6.0: Conclusions

2. Description of the Site and Surroundings

- 2.1 A site location plan is included with the application. The application site is located within Plot 4 of the planned science and technology park known as OTP. OTP comprises 8.3 ha of land which is identified as for development to meet high value employment needs in Local Plan Part 1 and benefits from planning permission for flexible, hi-technology units suitable for office, research and development, laboratory and storage and ancillary purposes. The delivery of employment development at Phases 1 and 3 of OTP are currently under construction as described above and the hotel development at Phase 2 is open and trading.
- 2.2 The application site comprises a 1.225 ha rectangular piece of relatively flat land, located on the southern side of Langford Lane. The site is located to the rear (south) of the existing Premier Inn hotel and to the west of the Phase 3 development. The overall OTP site is accessed from an access road that connects into Langford Lane. The application site will be accessed from this access road which has been substantially completed to accommodate the development at OTP.
- 2.3 The site has been prepared for development and the infrastructure developed to accommodate the development plots at OTP. That preparation of the OTP site has included substantial site clearance and levelling and preparation including from a maintenance and ecological perspective pursuant to conditions that have been discharged to enable development to take place at the site. The OTP site resembles a building site that is either has been subject to the delivery of recent commercial development and is in the process of delivering further economic development, with the soft landscaping implemented to the front half of the Park including the planting of the semi-mature trees to the spine road to create the tree lined avenue.
- 2.4 To the immediate west are the South Central Ambulance Service Resource Centre and Campsfield House Immigration Removal Centre. To the north, on the opposite side of the Langford Lane, are buildings/hangers serving London Oxford Airport and to the east is the Oxford Motor Park where a number of car dealerships are located. Beyond this lies a cluster of employment parks comprising Cherwell Business Park, Station Field

Industrial Park and the West Side of Canal, covering 25 ha and providing a wide range of commercial uses. The southern boundary abuts a large agricultural field which separates the application site and Campsfield House from the northern edge of Begbroke.

- 2.5 The application site is located in a strategic location, to the north of Oxford and adjacent to London Oxford Airport. It is at the northern edge of Kidlington. The site benefits from established highways infrastructure most notably Langford Lane which bounds the site to the north, with the A44 and A4260 providing the main access routes. The A4260 runs through the centre of the Village, creating a direct connection to Oxford City Centre and Banbury. The A44 also provides access to the A34 to Bicester to the north and, via the M40, to Reading and London to the south.
- 2.6 The site is easily accessible by a range of transport modes. It is in easy pedestrian and cycle reach from both residential areas and businesses in Kidlington, as well as in close proximity to bus stops that serve the wider area. The Transport Statement prepared by Stantec provides further details of the transport modes, with summary details provided below.
- 2.7 National Cycle Network Route 55 runs adjacent to the A44 Woodstock Road providing a direct connection from its junction with Langford Lane through to Oxford City Centre to the south.
- 2.8 The nearest existing bus stop is located 250m north east of the site on The Boulevard and currently serves Oxford Spires Business Park and London Oxford Airport. There are further bus stops located along Langford Lane and along the A44 Woodstock Road all of which are within a reasonable walking distance from the site. The bus services running in the vicinity of the site include route 2C/2D, S4, 7, 224, 224A and 500, at an average of approximately five buses an hour serving the local area. Bus services 7 and 500 provide a park and ride service connecting the site to Oxford Parkway Rail Station and the local area, but also provides wider access to Oxford City Centre and London.

2.9 It follows that the application site forms part of the Kidlington area and the surrounding land uses are characterised by commercial development including retail, leisure and employment uses. Both the approved development at the site, including that which is being delivered, and that proposed under this application are of a scale that is commensurate and will complement the surrounding commercial development. The application site and wider OTP is well connected and easily accessible to users of the surrounding area and has good transport links that connect the site to the wider Village and surrounding areas.

3. Review of Relevant Planning Policy

Introduction

3.1 Section 38(6) of The Act sets out that if regard is to be had to the development plan for the purposes of any determination, a planning application must be determined in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

3.2 It follows that the starting point for the consideration of a proposal is an assessment against the development plan. If a development accords with the plan, and it is up-to-date, then the decision should be to grant planning permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise. Supplementary Planning Documents ('SPDs'), The NPPF and PPG are material considerations, but they do not change the statutory basis on which planning decisions are made.

Local Planning Policy

The Development Plan

3.3 The development plan comprises the:

- Saved policies of the Cherwell Local Plan (adopted November 1996)
- Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1 (adopted July 2015)

3.4 The relevant policies are:

Saved policies of the Cherwell Local Plan (1996)

- Policy TR1: Transportation funding
- Policy TR7: Development attracting traffic on minor roads
- Policy C28: Layout, design and external appearance of new development
- Policy C32: Provision of facilities for disabled people

Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 Part 1 (2015)

- Policy PSD1: Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development
- Policy SLE1: Employment Development
- Policy SLE4: Improved Transport and Connections
- Policy ESD14: Oxford Green Belt
- Policy ESD15: The Character of the Built and Historic Environment
- Policy Kidlington 1: Accommodating High Value Employment Need
- Policy INF1: Infrastructure

3.5 Local Plan Part 1 Policy Kidlington 1 identifies that high value employment needs will be accommodated at the site and therefore sets out that a small scale review of the Green Belt will be undertaken.

3.6 The 'small-scale local review' has been carried out in the document titled: The Small-Scale Green Belt Review – Accommodation High Value Employment Needs at Kidlington / Begbroke in Cherwell District (November 2016). The OTP site is referenced as Parcel A6 in the Review. The assessment of A6 at Page 51 of the Review confirms that it does not play any significant role in contributing to any Green Belt purpose.

- 3.7 The Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State to examine the Local Plan Part 1 confirmed at Paragraph 238 of his Report that Policy Kidlington 1 is sound as there are 'exceptional circumstances' that justify the release of the site from the Green Belt and confirms that: *'Given its small scale and defined extent in the areas of search thus likely minimal overall impact on the purposes of the OGB, this element of policy Kid 1 is therefore sound.'*
- 3.8 The Council had intended to progress the Green Belt amendments through the Cherwell Local Plan 2011-2031 (Part 2) and an Issues Consultation had been undertaken in March 2016, which intended to see the site removed from the Green Belt. The Council's Local Development Scheme from April 2017 forecast that the Local Plan Part 2 would be adopted before the end of 2018.
- 3.9 However, the Council stopped progression of the Part 2 Plan and is now undertaking a full review of the Local Plan, which is at an early stage. The Council's Local Development Scheme published in March 2020 forecasts that the Plan will be adopted by July 2023, but the consultation programme is running behind schedule which may see that date pushed back.
- 3.10 It follows that approximately six years has passed since the Council confirmed its intention to remove the site from the Green Belt in order for it to accommodate employment development and it will at least a further two years before that is formally confirmed in the Local Plan. Importantly, since the adoption of Local Plan Part 1, the principle of development on the site for economic generating uses has been confirmed to be acceptable through the grant of permission for the proposed OTP, which is now significantly under construction. There can therefore be no prematurity alleged in terms of the delivery of development at the site as planning permission has already been granted for the development of OTP and the delivery of a significant quantum of floorspace for OTP has already been delivered.
- 3.11 Further, a significant passage of time has taken place since it was first confirmed the site would be removed from the Green Belt, which is a material consideration given the LPA and the applicant had long anticipated that the site would no longer form part of the Green Belt. Close to ten years could have passed since the

LPA first confirmed the site would be removed from the Green Belt and employment uses would be delivered at it.

The Kidlington Framework Masterplan Supplementary Planning Document Part 1: Kidlington Tomorrow – Realising the Potential (Adopted December 2016)

3.12 The SPD supports the development plan. Page 6 of the SPD³ identifies that alongside the Green Belt review a number of factors should be considered in an overarching economic strategy for Kidlington's employment growth area, which includes the application site and surrounding airport and employment development.

3.13 Theme 5 of the SPD that relates to supporting future economic success confirms that the objective is to support the growth of an integrated cluster of high value employment uses to the west of Kidlington, including the delivery of the proposed OTP. Figure 2.23 confirms that the site is part of an employment site and Figure 8.2 designates the site as part of the 'Proposed Oxford Technology Park'.

3.14 Page 46 confirms that the:

'Local Plan seeks to improve the quality of the employment offer at Langford Lane and, in doing so, establish a new gateway at this northern entrance to Kidlington. Employment growth cannot, however, be accommodated within the existing urban area and a small scale local review of the Green Belt will be undertaken as part of Local Plan Part 2 to accommodate identified high value employment needs at Langford Lane /Oxford Technology Park/ London –Oxford Airport and Begbroke Science Park.'

3.15 It follows that the SPD sets out a local policy objective to deliver employment development at the site, confirming the requirement for it to deliver development that meets employment needs in Kidlington.

³ Third column of Page 6 of the SPD.

The National Planning Policy Framework

3.16 Policy ESD14 confirms that proposals within the Green Belt will be assessed in accordance with the NPPF.

3.17 Chapter 13 of the NPPF relates to Green Belt land. Paragraph 134 of the NPPF provides that Green Belt land serves five purposes, which are to:

1. Check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
2. Prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
3. Assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
4. Preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
5. Assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

3.18 In relation to development proposals which affect the Green Belt, Paragraphs 143 and 144 state:

“Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.

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.”

3.19 Paragraphs 145 and 146 specify that LPAs should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in the Green Belt, subject to a number of specific exceptions that are not considered to be inappropriate development. The policy does not consider the circumstances that are specific to this application proposal where planning permission has already been granted for an employment development and that development significantly started.

4. Planning Considerations

4.1 The proposal accords with all relevant policies as demonstrated below.

Green Belt Considerations

4.2 The key test for allowing development in the Green Belt is set out at Paragraph 143 of the NPPF, which states:

'Inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.'

4.3 It follows that the key test is first to judge whether a proposal is 'appropriate' or 'inappropriate'. If it is 'inappropriate' and harmful to the Green Belt, then permission should be refused, except in very special circumstances.

4.4 Paragraph 145 of the NPPF confirms that the construction of new buildings in the Green Belt should be regarded as 'inappropriate', except where certain exceptions apply. The policy does not cover a set of circumstances where permission has already existed for a site to be developed for economic purpose; a permission which enveloped the application site to deliver economic development and the development subject to that original permission has already been significantly delivered, including the delivery of the road infrastructure that will serve the application site and the clearance and preparation of the whole OTP site for development. Nevertheless, as the site is within the Green Belt, on procedural basis, very special circumstances must be demonstrated. The very special circumstances that apply are overwhelming and demonstrated below.

4.5 To assist in framing the context to the very special circumstances case, it is useful to examine first whether the site contributes to the Greene Belt. Paragraph 134 of the NPPF sets out the purposes that the Green Belt serves. The application site cannot fulfil any role in the purposes that the Green Belt seeks to serve, namely:

1. The site is not required to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas as development of OTP has already significantly started and become operational. The Council has confirmed that it is appropriate to remove the site from the Green Belt in the Oxford Green Belt Study. The Study confirms that the OTP site does not contribute to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas (see Appendix 3 of the Green Belt Study, Land Parcel Ref: K18). The site is a compact development which relates well to the existing urban area, and particularly with the existing employment development in Kidlington, wider proposed OTP and London Oxford Airport.
2. Developing the application site will not result in neighbouring towns merging into one another. The site is surrounded by existing development on all sides to the north, east and west.
3. The site does not assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment. The Oxford Green Belt Study concludes that Land Parcel K18 that the site forms part of, does not assist in the safeguarding of the countryside from encroachment (see Appendix 3 of the Green Belt Study, Land Parcel Ref: K18). It follows that the only conclusion that can be drawn is that the application site, which is a small area of this Land Parcel, also complies with this conclusion.
4. The site does not preserve the setting and special character of historic towns as confirmed at Appendix 3 of the Green Belt Study, Land Parcel Ref: K18.
5. There are no better located brownfield sites for the proposed development. As set out at Paragraph 3.13 above, Page 46 of the SPD confirms that employment growth cannot be accommodated within the existing urban area and identified high value employment needs will need to be delivered at

locations including OTP. The application site itself resembles a development site given it has been prepared and cleared for development and is served by the spine road that

4.6 It is also important to note that the proposed development is commensurate with the scale of overall development envisaged for OTP under the terms of the original outline planning permission. Paragraph 6.5 of the Committee Report for the OTP outline application concluded that: *“as the technology park would not extend any closer to the boundary with Begbroke than any other surrounding development (Campsfield House and the Oxford Motor Park) it would be difficult to justify such a position [i.e. harm]. Furthermore, there would remain a buffer, in the form of a large field, between the development and the north eastern edge of Begbroke”*. The same conclusion applies to this application.

4.7 Further, as stated above at Paragraph 3.6, the Small-Scale Green Belt Review confirmed that it does not play any significant role in contributing to any Green Belt purpose and as stated at Paragraph 3.7, the Inspector for Local Plan Part 1 confirmed that the development of the area where the site is located would have a minimal impact on the purposes of the Green Belt.

4.8 Taking all of the above into account, it can be concluded that there will be no harm to the Green Belt in this location. The proposal is sustainable development. Development of the application site will not conflict with any of the purposes that Green Belt land seeks to serve. Nevertheless, the procedural requirement to demonstrate very special circumstances applies and this is demonstrated below.

Very Special Circumstances

4.9 There are strong planning grounds and material considerations that tilt the balance firmly in favour of the grant of permission and frame in full the context under which the proposal should be considered. The application proposal accords with the Council’s policies for the application site and the economic strategy for Kidlington. That the site remains in the Green Belt is a technicality that had been envisaged by the LPA and applicant to have long been remedied, but a delay to the production of the policy document that will remove

the site from the Green Belt by five years (i.e. when the Local Plan Review is forecast to be adopted in 2023) means that the site despite its significant development and preparation as a site for development remains a site in the Green Belt. The proposal is sustainable in every way. Its delivery is consistent with the LPA's earlier decision to grant planning permission for the development of OTP, which has significantly commenced.

- 4.10 Paragraph 143 of the NPPF sets out that inappropriate development is development that is 'harmful to the Green Belt'. For the reasons set out above, there is no harm to the Green Belt.
- 4.11 The site does not resemble Green Belt land under any reasonable description of Green Belt land. The site is a prepared development site part of an existing employment location and development and is served by infrastructure that has been built in order to serve the overall OTP development.
- 4.12 Nevertheless, we have applied the 'very special circumstances' policy requirement to the proposal and conclude that the proposal should be approved at the earliest opportunity. Paragraph 144 of The Framework is clear *"Very special circumstances' will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations.'* There is no harm to the Green Belt for the reasons set out above, and the very special circumstances that apply to the grant of permission are:

1. OTP has recently benefitted from permissions to be developed. The development of OTP has significantly commenced with a Premier Inn hotel providing approximately 3,981 sq. m of floorspace and Units 1 and 3 which are under construction and will provide approximately 11,952 sq. m of floorspace. The total amount of development at OTP is 18,400 sq. m either delivered or currently under construction. It follows that approximately half of the floorspace envisaged for OTP under the original outline permission has or is in the process of being delivered. That is a significant amount of the OTP development.

2. The site is a development site. It has been prepared for development and infrastructure delivered that will ensure the site is served. This is a material consideration and very special circumstance as the preparation of the plot where development will take place and the infrastructure that will ensure it can be served has been developed. This has fully been undertaken under the support of the LPA who have granted a series of planning permissions and applications to discharge conditions to ensure that the OTP site will be delivered.
3. The Council has therefore confirmed that the site is an appropriate location to be developed for economic purposes. This has been confirmed both through the grant of permission for the development of OTP, the designation of the site to be developed to accommodate 'high value employment' needs and the identification that its delivery is an objective in the SPD.
4. (1) – (3) above are therefore the baseline against which the proposal should be assessed against.
5. It follows that it is the long-standing position of the Council that the site should be removed from the Green Belt. This is set out in both the adopted and emerging development plan, and justified in detailed evidence base documents that are material considerations.
6. The site fulfils no role in the purposes that the Green Belt serves as set out above at Paragraph 4.5. This is further supported through the development that has taken place on the site.
7. The proposal accords fully with Policy Kidlington 1 in Local Plan Part 1. The Policy requires the site to accommodate 'high value employment'. The development will deliver high value employment development as part of an 'Innovation Centre' that is aimed at the SME sector, promoting economic growth and start-up business development that can drive significant and innovative local employment growth as companies start-up in a local area and are then provided with a platform to grow and become major employers in a local area.

8. The original intention of the LPA was to allocate the site for employment development through a Local Plan Part 2 that was forecast to be adopted before the end of 2018. It is now forecast that the Local Plan which would remove the OTP site from the Green Belt will be adopted in July 2023⁴. It follows that approximately six years has passed since the Council confirmed its intention to remove the site from the Green Belt and it will be at least a further two years before that is formally confirmed in the Local Plan. Note that the Local Plan Part 1 had been formulated over a much longer period with the work on the plan having commenced in 2006. Even if May 2012 is taken as the starting point, which is when the Proposed Submission Draft (Regulation 19) was first published, it follows that it has been almost ten years since the site was identified for development and release from the Green Belt and will be over ten years when it is actually released from the Green Belt.
9. (6) above is itself a very special circumstance to support the proposed development given the site was forecast to have been released from the Green Belt almost three years ago as part of Local Plan Part 2. It follows that the Green Belt designation should not form a basis for not supporting the application as it had long been expected by both the Council and the applicant that the site would no longer form part of the Green Belt, and there has been significant development realised on the site in that time.

4.13 The delivery of OTP will secure sustainable economic growth in line with the objectives of the development plan. That conclusion has already been reached by the Council in its decision to allocate the site as a location to accommodate high value employment needs. Paragraph 80 of the NPPF makes it very clear as to the weight that local authorities should be attributing to such proposals:

'Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. 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. The approach taken

⁴ This is at the very earliest given the consultation programme is running behind schedule.

should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential.'

- 4.14 The proposal facilitates sustainable economic growth in line with stated objectives in planning policy. It promotes innovation through the floorplates of space that will be offered to SME enterprises and promotes economic growth in an area of high levels of productivity in order to capitalise on the performance and potential of the Oxfordshire area. The proposal will deliver a larger development area than was originally envisaged for Plot 4 meaning that a greater quantum of space will be delivered for SME sized enterprises at OTP. Significant weight should therefore be attached to the grant of planning permission.
- 4.15 It follows that there are very special circumstances that support the grant of planning permission in this instance. Ultimately, the proposed development is for a further phase of development of the supported OTP that has already significantly commenced. This in itself is very special circumstances' justification for supporting further development at the already established OTP that itself remains on Green Belt land.
- 4.16 The proposal therefore accords with the requirements of the NPPF, Policies ESD14 and Kidlington 1 of the Local Plan Part 1 and the SPD.

Economic Considerations

- 4.17 As demonstrated above, the application proposal fully accords with the LPA's objectives to deliver the development of high value employment uses at the application site that are set out in Policy Kidlington 1 and the SPD. The proposal benefits from the significant weight that should be afforded to sustainable economic growth as demonstrated at Paragraph 4.13 above.

4.18 We therefore make the following observations in relation to economic considerations:

1. The proposal is for the continued development of OTP and will provide floorspace for high value employment uses. The delivery of high value employment uses at OTP is a stated objective of the Local Plan, the SPD and it is confirmed by the Council that the parcel does not play any significant role in contributing to Green Belt purposes (see Paragraph 3.6 above).
2. The proposal will provide floorspace for an Innovation Centre that will support SME sized enterprises from which there is significant demand for employment space. The proposal will deliver a larger development area than was originally envisaged for Plot 4 meaning that a greater quantum of space will be delivered for SMEs at the site.
3. Paragraph 6.13 of the Committee Report that recommended approval of the outline application confirms that:

'The level of need identified in the CDC Employment Land Study 2012 suggests that in order to meet projected demand in 2026, for the Kidlington area, 11.3 hectares of land, for B1 uses alone, would have to be released. It is improbable that this demand could be met unless either at least part of the application site is developed or another tract of land within the Oxford Green Belt, abutting Kidlington, came forward for economic development.'

4. It follows that Kidlington's employment land needs cannot be met without the development of the site and the wider OTP. The proposal will therefore ensure that Kidlington's employment land needs can be met through the continued development of the already supported OTP.
5. Utilising the 'Incubator' employment density of 1 full-time equivalent ('FTE') position per 30 – 60 sq. m of floorspace from the Homes & Communities Agency Employment Density Guide 3rd Edition published in November 2015, the proposal will deliver between approximately 108 – 215 FTE employment positions.

6. The average full-time pay in Cherwell based on 2020 information from Office for National Statistics ('ONS') is approximately £600 per week. The proposal for Plot 4 therefore provides the opportunity to generate between £3.37m - £6.71m in local earnings annually.
- 4.19 The proposal therefore accords with the overarching objective of Theme 1 of the Local Plan Part 1 to develop a sustainable local economy. Further, the proposal accords with the circumstances of the NPPF where significant weight should be attached to the delivery economic development at the site as demonstrated at Paragraph 4.13 above.
- 4.20 The emphasis provided at Paragraph 80 of the NPPF should be seen as being of principal importance, as a result of the spread of coronavirus Covid-19 and the resultant negative impact upon economic productivity, with the Bank of England forecasting that the recession that we have experienced is the worst economic recession in over 300 years. The significant weight placed on the need to support economic growth therefore applies now and in an urgent fashion to ensure that the private and public sectors can support the economic recovery.
- 4.21 Policy SLE1 provides the Local Plan Part 1 policy on employment development and confirms that where planning permission is required existing employment sites should be retained for employment use. OTP can now be considered an existing employment site. The proposal therefore 'falls on all fours' with this policy objective as the proposal will support the retention of OTP as an existing employment site for employment use.
- 4.22 In addition, the proposal meets the following criteria from Policy SLE1 for supporting employment development in Kidlington:
1. The site is within the built up limits of the settlement being surrounded by development on its north, east and west boundaries within the conurbation of Kidlington.

2. Is within the Green Belt, but the very special circumstances to support the proposed development are demonstrated above.
3. Has good access to public transport.
4. Is designed to a high standard commensurate with development of the site as a Technology Park.
5. Does not have an adverse effect on surrounding land uses, residents and the historic and natural environment.

4.23 The proposal therefore accords with the requirements of the NPPF, Policies SLE1 and Kidlington 1 of the Local Plan Part 1 and the SPD.

Highway Considerations

4.24 The Transport Statement provided with the planning application assesses the proposal and demonstrates that the proposed development sits comfortably with the level of vehicular movements that have been concluded to be acceptable as part of the overall OTP development that has been approved. Further, the s106 obligations to promote and enhance sustainable travel remain effective and are triggered by the occupation of the floorspace under Units 1 and 3 that will be occupied shortly.

4.25 Consequently, there will be no adverse impact on the local road network in accordance with the requirements of Policies TR1 and TR7 of the Cherwell Local Plan and Policies SLE4 and INF1 of the Local Plan Part 1. There are no ground to not support the application in highway terms. The proposal therefore meets the requirements of Paragraph 109 of the NPPF to be supported in highway terms.

4.26 The Transport Statement confirms the site is well connected to local businesses, facilities and services for staff and visitors for access by bus, foot and cycle. The provision of foot, cycle and bus facilities that will be enhanced as part of the delivery of OTP.

Design Considerations

- 4.27 A Design and Access Statement that accompanies the application demonstrates the development will follow the design style and principles established in the outline and reserved matters applications development thereby complementing the appearance of the wider development at OTP. The proposed development complies with Policy ESD15 of the Local Plan Part 1 and Policies C28 and C32 of the Cherwell Local Plan.

Summary and Conclusion

- 4.28 In light of the compliance of the proposal with the relevant development plan policies and national policies set out above, the proposed development delivers sustainable development as required by Policy PSD1 of the Local Plan Part 1. Accordingly, the full presumption in favour of sustainable development outlined at Paragraph 11 of the NPPF applies.

5. Conclusions

5.1 The conclusions of the Statement are as follows:

1. The proposed development is positive economic investment in a sustainable location on a site allocated for economic development. The proposal promotes sustainable economic growth and supports and promotes the overall economic function of OTP. Significant weight should be attached to the need to support economic growth as confirmed by Paragraph 80 of the NPPF.
2. A significant proportion of the OTP site has or is in the process of being delivered. The proposed development complements that economic development at OTP.
3. The site is designated for the development of employment uses in the Local Plan Part 1 and its delivery is a specific objective of the SPD in order to meet the employment needs in Kidlington.
4. The site has recently benefited from a planning permission for its development for economic purposes.
5. The site has been prepared for development and infrastructure delivered to serve its development, all of which has been supported by the LPA as part of applications.
6. Despite the development already supported and that which has and is being delivered, the site remains in the Green Belt, but serves no Green Belt purpose as confirmed by the LPA.
7. It had long been anticipated by the Council and the applicant that the site would no longer form part of the Green Belt, with its delivery being an objective of the development plan and SPD as set out above.
8. The development therefore simply continues the pattern of development envisaged for OTP.

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9. Given the site's history and the significant development that has and is currently being delivered at OTP including the infrastructure to support the development of the application site, there are very special circumstances to support the application.
 10. Not supporting the application would leave a half finished Technology Park that is a site where there is an objective in policy to deliver employment development to meet Kidlington's employment needs.
 11. The proposed development does not result in any severe highway impacts. Safe and suitable access to the proposal can be achieved and the site is accessible by sustainable modes of transport.
 12. The proposal accords with all other development management policies.
- 8.2 Accordingly, permission should be granted in accordance with both Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act and the presumption in favour of sustainable development⁵.

⁵ Paragraph 11 of The Framework