

DEVELOPMENT INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

From: Head of Strategic Planning and the Economy

To: Head of Public Protection & Development Management (FAO Bob Duxbury)

Our Ref: 3.2

Your Ref: 14/02067/OUT

Ask for: Chris Thom/David Peckford

Ext: 1849

Date: 17/09/2015

Planning Application No.	14/02067/OUT
Address / Location	Land east of Evenlode Crescent and south of Langford Lane, Kidlington
Proposal	A new build technology park comprising 40,362 square metres of office, research and development, laboratory, storage and ancillary space.
Site Details	The site is located to the east of Evenlode Crescent and south of Langford Lane Kidlington. It comprises a disused playing field within the Green Belt, adjacent to an existing employment area. It is understood that the field was used for playing Rugby in 1999, and possibly more recently. In policy terms, it is considered that the site lies within an area of countryside.
Planning Policy Update <p>The planning policy team provided a consultation response for this planning application in February 2015. This memorandum is provided to inform consideration of how adoption of the Local Plan 2011-2031, which has occurred since this time, and other matters affect the consideration of the application. The memorandum should be read in conjunction with the original planning policy response.</p> <p>On the 20 July 2015 the Council adopted the Local Plan 2011-2031 - Part 1 as part of the statutory development plan. Adoption confirms the principle of high value employment development at Kidlington as set out in Policy Kidlington 1 subject to the undertaking of a small scale, local Green Belt Review (through Local Plan Part 2). The Plan provides for identified high value employment needs to be met in two locations: (A) Langford Lane/Oxford Technology Park/London-Oxford Airport, and (B) Begbroke Science Park. The addition of the reference to 'Oxford Technology Park' was endorsed by the Local Plan Inspector (IR para. 238) for clarity (Main Modification 127) following a proposed modification put forward by the Council. The policy's key site specific design and place shaping principles include reference to creating a 'Technology Park'.</p> <p>The proposed development is therefore in keeping with the economic objectives and purpose of Policy Kidlington 1, providing the opportunity to meet employment needs during the Plan period as evidenced through the Local Plan Part 1 process. It would also help meet Strategic Objective 1 of the Local Plan.</p> <p>The Local Plan Inspector also provides commentary on impact (described further below) which supports the two indicative areas of search identified on the policies map for policy Kidlington 1. The application site lies within area of search 1A and comprises the main undeveloped area of land within that area. In this location, the proposed development would be 'contained' between two existing developed areas and</p>	

would reinforce and strengthen the emerging cluster of higher value industries in this area near London-Oxford Airport and Begbroke Science Park. A further small area of undeveloped land lies to the east of Oxford Spires Business Park. The area of search includes the technical area of London-Oxford Airport, Oxford Spires Business Park, existing employment areas to the south of Langford Lane, land and buildings in the vicinity of Campsfield House and adjoining residential development. The Inspector's Report at paragraph 236 on page 40 states *"..... the locations [the areas of search] do not directly affect the important "Kidlington Gap" part of the OGB and the limited changes envisaged should be capable of providing new long term defensible boundaries so that no form of precedent for any other schemes will arise"*.

Adoption of Local Plan Part 1 has established that the small scale review of the Green Belt should be undertaken through Local Plan Part 2 (para. C.231). At the Local Plan examination hearing on 12 December 2014, the site promoter, having informed the Local Plan Inspector that the application for planning permission had just been submitted to the Council, argued that there were 'very special circumstances' for the proposed development, in addition to exceptional circumstances for the small scale Green Belt review. The Local Plan Inspector did not recommend allocation of this site to meet employment needs, but as highlighted above he endorsed the additional reference to 'Oxford Technology Park' in the description of area of search 1A. The Inspector concluded:

"238. In my judgement, this specific combination of factors amounts to the exceptional circumstances necessary to justify the very limited changes to the OGB boundary presaged in the policy and that it would be consistent with the guidance in paras 83-85 of the NPPF, including regarding the definition of boundaries. 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. But these exceptional circumstances do not also apply elsewhere in the locality and thus there is no necessity or imperative to conduct a more wide ranging review of the OGB at Kidlington or nearby for economic/employment reasons at present. The detailed design and development criteria set out in policy Kid 1 are all reasonable, realistic and appropriate for the locations and therefore, subject to the addition of "Oxford Technology Park" in part a) for clarity (MM 127), the policy is sound with other text amendments for clarity (MMs 125/126)."

Release of land in advance of completion of the Green Belt review would potentially enable earlier realisation of a Technology Park and economic benefits (in accordance with the NPPF) arising from high value employment generation. As an undeveloped area, with existing development to the east and west, the application site would undoubtedly be a central focus of the review. However, it would be contrary to very recently adopted Local Plan policy to undertake the review. Work on Local Plan Part 2 has commenced and the Green Belt review will consider exactly how, where and to what extent the Green Belt boundary should be altered to accommodate the planned employment uses, having regard to stakeholder and community consultation and NPPF objectives and policy for the Green Belt. It will need to consider the area of employment land that needs to be released and balance this against the purposes of the Green Belt.

This will involve exploring in detail areas in the vicinity of Langford Lane to establish the extent of land that would be appropriate to release and how a new permanent boundary could be established so that it endures beyond the plan period. There will be a need to be mindful of NPPF advice that local planning authorities should plan positively to enhance the beneficial use of the Green Belt, such as looking for opportunities to provide access; to provide opportunities for outdoor sport and recreation; to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity; or to improve damaged and derelict land (NPPF para. 81).

In the context of Local Plan policy ESD14 and NPPF policy for the Green Belt, the proposals would comprise inappropriate development in the Green Belt outside the built up limits of Kidlington for which 'very special circumstances' would need to be demonstrated. 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. Policy ESD14 states that development within the Green Belt will only be permitted if [inter alia] it maintains the Green Belt's openness and does not conflict with the purposes of the Green Belt or harm its visual amenities. It also cross-refers to Policy Kidlington 1. In assessing the

visual impact of development, Policy ESD13 will also need to be considered.

The Local Plan 2011-2031 replaces a number of the saved policies of the 1996 adopted Cherwell Local Plan. These are set out in Appendix 7 of the Local Plan 2011-2031. Some saved policies from the 1996 Local Plan are retained. The application proposals will need to be considered against relevant policies in the 1996 Local Plan, particularly those relating to the protection of the countryside and the coalescence of settlements.

Transport impacts will require detailed assessment. At paragraph 237 of the Local Plan Inspector's Report the Inspector states that the fact that the two 'areas of search' are restricted in scale also means that the likely growth in traffic movements from new employment development should be safely accommodated on the strategic and local road networks without adding to congestion or delays. The report states that this is also reinforced by the generally good bus services that exist and the significant public transport improvements taking place.

New Local Plan policy BSC10 seeks to protect existing open space, outdoor sport and recreation sites but it is understood that the application sites did not contribute to the supply of pitches in the Local Plan's evidence base.

It is considered that the proposed development would be in a relatively accessible location near existing employment uses on the edge of the urban area of Kidlington.

Policy Recommendation

While it is recognised that from a Local Plan perspective the high-value employment need is demonstrated and that the proposed development would result in significant economic benefits and the requisite Technology Park, national and local green belt policy is of very significant weight and, in that context, recently adopted Local Plan policy requires a small scale Green Belt review to be undertaken. The Local Plan is unquestionably up-to-date and the release of land ahead of that review would be contrary to the specific requirements of policy Kidlington 1. Consideration of whether there are 'very special circumstances' is nevertheless required. The Inspector's decision not to recommend allocation of the application site in Local Plan Part 1 points to a conclusion that a Green Belt review is required. Therefore, whilst the aims of the proposed development are recognised, the recommendation from a planning policy perspective is that the precise location and extent of Green Belt release and the establishment of a new permanent boundary needs to be considered through a small scale review of the Green Belt before proposals for this location are permitted. Not to do so, would obviate this central requirement of Policy Kidlington 1.

The advice of the Council's Economic Development Officer on the detailed benefits that could arise from this proposed development should also be taken.