

OXFORD TECHNOLOGY PARK

Landscape & Visual Appraisal (& update to Green Belt Review)



DECEMBER 2014

Oxford Technology Park

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Comment PLANNING

This document has been prepared and checked in accordance with ISO 9001:2008.

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1.0 Introduction

1.1. Background and purpose

LDA Design has been commissioned to undertake a Landscape and Visual Appraisal (LVA) in relation to the proposed planning application for Oxford Technology Park (OTP) on Langford Lane, Kidlington. The purpose of the Appraisal is to identify any potential landscape and visual issues associated with the creation of the OTP, to demonstrate how the proposed development has been designed to address any such issues and, in addition, seek to enhance the landscape character and visual appearance of the Site and its immediate surroundings. This report also considers the proposals with regard to the Green Belt and its purposes, updating the Green Belt Study produced by LDA Design in 2013 (issued to Cherwell District Council (CDC) as part of the Compelling Case document).

1.2. Methodology

The LVA has been prepared, so far as appropriate, in accordance with the methodology set out in the third edition of Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA) and guidance specific to landscape character assessment. The work stages have included a desk based review of baseline information together with site visits undertaken in November 2014.

1.3. Site context

The OTP site (hereafter referred to as ‘the Site’) covers a rectangular area of land 8.26 ha in size situated to the north west of Kidlington, south of Langford Lane and east of Evenlode Crescent. The Site is generally flat with a gentle gradient from north-west to south-east towards the Oxford Canal and Rowel Brook (which lie beyond the Site to the east and south respectively). Please refer to Figure 1 which presents an aerial view of the Site and its surroundings.

The Site is surrounded on the north-east and west by various forms of built development and on the south side by agricultural land. Oxford Motor Park lies to the east and is an extensive area of large car showrooms and service garages. The commercial buildings are approximately 2 storeys in height and surrounded by parking and hardstanding areas.

To the south-west, Campsfield House Immigration Detention Centre comprises a number of buildings and hard curtilage. Tall security fencing and planting encloses the majority of the buildings from view from all directions.

To the north-west of the Site, north of Campsfield, the Ambulance Station lies within an open field beyond the boundary hedgerows of the Site.

Oxford Airport and Oxford Spire Business Park lie to the north of Langford Lane, partially screened by a well maintained hedge and a post and rail fence. New large hangar buildings have been erected adjoining Langford Lane. The buildings are in the order of 10m high. Other buildings are apparent in views from the lane with no real distinction between the business park. Apart from the hangars, the majority of the buildings are approximately 2 to 3 storeys in height.

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The Site, Airport, Campsfield House and Ambulance Station all lie within the Green Belt and lie to the north-east of the main settlement area of Kidlington and the adjoining Oxford Motor Park and extensive Langford Lane employment area.. The Oxford Spires Business Park is surrounded by land designated as Green Belt and is excluded from this designation.

1.4. Study area

The Site is relatively well contained visually due to the development surrounding it on the east, west and north sides. The south side of the Site has the only open aspect which is appreciated from a limited distance and area. Please refer to Figure 2 which illustrates the visual context of the Site.

As a result of the visual and physical containment of the Site, the LVA considers the effects arising from the proposed development in relation to the Site itself, its immediate surroundings to the north, east and west (including Langford Lane, Campsfield House, Evenlode Crescent) and within approximately 500m to the south to include Begbroke village and nearby public rights of way.

1.5. Report structure

The LVA comprises the following:

- **Section 2:** A summary of relevant landscape planning policy
- **Section 3:** A summary of the landscape and visual baseline conditions
- **Section 4:** An outline of the development proposals
- **Section 5:** An appraisal of the anticipated effects arising from the proposed development on landscape and visual receptors within the study area.
- **Section 6:** Review of the Site proposal's performance against Green Belt principles.

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2.0 Planning Policy

The following section sets out the landscape planning policy context relevant to the Site, including Green Belt considerations. At a national level the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and Planning Practice Guidance is considered. At a local level, policies relating to Cherwell District are considered.

2.1. National planning policy

2.1.1. National Planning Policy Framework

Paragraph 17: Core Planning Principles, bullet points 4 and 5

‘always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity for all existing and future occupants of land and buildings’

take account of the different roles and character of different areas, promoting the vitality of our main urban areas, protecting the Green Belts around them, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities within it’

Paragraphs 58 Requiring Good Design

‘Planning policies and decisions should aim to ensure that developments:

- *will function well and add to the overall quality of the area, not just for the short term but over the lifetime of the development;*
- *establish a strong sense of place, using streetscapes and buildings to create attractive and comfortable places to live, work and visit;*
- *optimise the potential of the site to accommodate development, create and sustain an appropriate mix of uses (including incorporation of green and other public space as part of developments) and support local facilities and transport networks;*
- *respond to local character and history, and reflect the identity of local surroundings and materials, while not preventing or discouraging appropriate innovation;*
- *create safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime, do not undermine quality of life or community cohesion; and*
- *are visually attractive as a result of good architecture and appropriate landscaping.’*

Paragraphs 79-89 Protecting Green Belt

Paragraph 79: *‘The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the essential characteristics of Green Belts are their openness and their permanence.’*

Paragraph 80 sets out the five purposes of the Green Belt:

- *‘to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- *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.’*

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Acknowledging the proposal is 'inappropriate' development in Green Belt, as defined by paragraphs 87 and 88 of the NPPF, very special circumstances need to exist and outweigh the harm to the Green Belt for approval to be granted. Please refer to the OTP Planning Statement accompanying this planning application and also Section 6 of this report which discuss the Green Belt further.

2.1.2. Planning Practice Guidance

Planning Practice Guidance Design (ID: 26, 06/03/2014) and Planning Practice Guidance Natural Environment (ID: 8, 12/06/2014) are also of relevance and have been reviewed.

2.2. Local planning policy

The Site lies within the jurisdiction of Cherwell District Council (CDC). A pre-application report by CDC highlighted the following policies relevant to this LVA and Green Belt update:

2.2.1. Saved Policies of the Cherwell Local Plan 1996

Until the formal adoption of the new Cherwell Local Plan, saved policies from the adopted Cherwell Local Plan provide the statutory framework for planning in the district. Those pertinent to landscape and visual issues are summarised below.

GB1: Development in the Green Belt

This policy relates to proposals within Green Belt which is discussed in this LVA report in Section 6 with regard to the more recent policies in the NPPF and Submission Cherwell Local Plan 2006-2-31.

C7: Landscape Conservation

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

C28: Layout, design and external appearance of new development

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

Policies C7 and C28 were considered in the design and layout of the proposed development

2.2.2. Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan 2011

With the introduction of Local Development Frameworks (LDFs), work on the non-statutory Cherwell Local Plan ceased in 2004. Nonetheless the plan was sufficiently advanced to provide interim guidance to CDC until formal adoption of the LDF. The document is therefore a material consideration in planning decisions albeit of a lesser weight than that of saved policies from the adopted plan. Policies relevant to landscape from the non-statutory Cherwell Local Plan are summarised below.

GB1 – Green Belt (deleted in Revised Deposit Draft Plan)

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This policy relates to proposals within Green Belt which is discussed in this report in Section 6 with regard to the more recent policies in the NPPF and Submission Cherwell Local Plan 2006-2-31.

EN34 – Landscape Character Protection

‘The council will seek to conserve and enhance the character and appearance of the landscape through the control of development. Proposals will not be permitted if they would:

- (i) *cause undue visual intrusion into the open countryside*
- (ii) *cause undue harm to important natural landscape features and topography;*
- (iii) *be inconsistent with local character;*
- (iv) *harm the setting of settlements, buildings, structures or other landmark features;*
- (v) *harm the historic value of the landscape’*

Policy EN34 is considered in the design and layout of the proposed development.

2.2.3. Submission Cherwell Local Plan 2006-2031 (As Modified, October 2014)

Strategic Objective 1 – Policy Kidlington 1

This policy commits to a small scale local review of the Green Belt at Langford Lane/Oxford Airport where the Site is located. It sets out ‘key design and place shaping principles’ which include the following relevant to this LVA:

- *Design for buildings that create a gateway with a strong sense of arrival including when arriving from the airport*
- *A well designed approach to the urban edge, which achieves a successful transition between town and country environments*
- *Development that respects the landscape setting of the site*
- *A comprehensive landscaping scheme to enhance the setting of buildings onsite and to limit visual intrusion into the wider landscape*
- *Public art will need to be provided for*
- *A high quality design and finish, with careful consideration given to layout, architecture, materials and colourings to create a Technology Park for high value employment uses.*
- *The height of buildings to reflect the scale of existing employment development in the vicinity*
- *Provision for sustainable drainage, including SuDS, in accordance with Policy ESD 7: Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and taking account of the Council’s Strategic Flood Risk Assessment’*

ESD 14 Oxford Green Belt

A detailed review of Strategic Objective 1 and ESD 14 was provided in the 2013 Green Belt Study. In addition, please refer to Section 6 which discusses the performance of the Site against the Green Belt principles.

ESD 13 Local Landscape Protection and Enhancement

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

- *Cause undue visual intrusion into the open countryside*

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- *Cause undue harm to important natural landscape features and topography.'*

2.3. Other Planning Documents

A pre-application report by CDC was issued in May 2014. With regard to the landscape and visual aspects of the proposed development, the following statements were made by the Landscape Officer which have been taken into consideration in the design and assessment of the proposed development:

'Views from Begbroke Lane PROW towards the site are seen through a hedge not in leaf at present. An almost continuous but filtered vista of buildings is visible. The change that this proposal will bring will be larger buildings closer to the boundary, but it won't significantly change the effect or the outlook for dwellings on the edge of Begbroke.

There will not be any views from the PROW to the south of Rowel Brook due to typography.

Otherwise the other publicly accessible viewpoints are from surrounding roads, notably Langford Lane. As you approach from the west aircraft hangers are a dominant feature to the left, the lane has a semi-rural feel. As you approach from the east car dealerships dominate close to the site.

The site is already effectively within a developed area and as such will not be very visible over and above the existing situation. The northern boundary has an overgrown, straggly and gappy hedge in poor condition. It does not enhance Langford Lane and I don't see much point in retaining it. It would be preferable to create a high quality landscape than retain a poor quality hedgerow.

The southern boundary has a relatively low, maintained hedge which should be retained, allowed to increase in height and re-enforced. The proposal to limit buildings to 2 storeys on this boundary will limit the impact of the proposed development.

The conclusions of Green Belt Study are fair with regard to the Green Belt and Landscape impact of this proposal.'

The case officer concluded that:

'The proposed development would clearly have a significant impact on the visual amenities of the area as what is currently a vacant site would be developed with buildings of an industrial scale. However, with the exception of the Green Belt designation I would conclude that the site is not highly sensitive given its character, surrounding flat landscape and neighbouring land uses. The comments of the Council's Landscape Officer are set out above for your use and should be taken into consideration when submitting an application.

The future submission should be accompanied by a Landscape and Visual Assessment as well as updating the Green Belt Study if and where necessary.'

With regard to the design of the Site, the Urban Design Officer made several observations including the following

'Overall the principle of the layout is appropriate to the site and its context. If the development moves forward to the next phase of detail, consideration should be given to the access arrangement to buildings and pedestrian movement. This should be considered in detail alongside the landscape structure to deliver a high quality area.'

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3.0 Baseline conditions

3.1. Introduction

A description of the landscape and visual baseline conditions is provided in this section.

3.2. Landscape baseline

Landscape Character

National or regional landscape character studies are set at the strategic level and used to 'set the scene' for understanding the landscape context of the Site. At a more local level, for example studies undertaken at the county or district level, there is generally a greater level of detail that can be used to inform the basis of an appraisal or assessment.

Landscape character assessments and studies of relevance to the Site are summarised below.

3.2.1. National Character

Natural England's Character Map of England identified strategic areas of landscape character for the whole of England known as National Character Area Profiles (NCAs).

The Site is located fully within NCA 108: Upper Thames Clay Vales. This is a broad belt of open gently undulating farmland extending from Wiltshire and Gloucestershire in the west to Aylesbury in Buckinghamshire in the east. The NCA description states that there is little woodland cover but hedgerows and mature field and hedgerow trees are a feature.

Whilst NCA's helpfully inform the understanding of the broad scale character context they do not provide sufficient local or site level detail against which impacts of a development (of the scale and nature proposed) can be assessed. On this basis they are not referred to further in this Report.

3.2.2. Local Landscape Character

The landscape character of the local area to the Site is covered by the Cherwell District Landscape Assessment 1995 and more recently the Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape study (OWLS) in 2004. In addition the Character Assessment of Oxford in its Landscape Setting 2002 also covers the Site.

The relevant areas are discussed below.

Cherwell District Landscape Assessment 1995

This assessment sets out broad landscape character areas across the district. The Site lies within the Lower Cherwell Floodplain. Within this area it lies within the Large Scale Open Farmland R1a 'Elevated or low-lying, arable farmland with weak structure'.

Lower Cherwell Floodplain

This LCA is part of the wide floodplain of the River Thames. The area is characterised by fringe landscapes associated with Kidlington and the many major road corridors that converge at Peartree. Key characteristics include:

- Fields are surrounded by hedgerows and trees.

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- Influence of settlement is substantial and much of the landscape is dominated by features associated with the urban fringe.
- Pylons and overhead cables radiate outwards from a large electricity substation at Yarnton, dominating the skyline.
- The area is crossed by transport links.

R1a) Elevated or low-lying arable farmland with weak structure

This landscape type is described as *‘an exposed and open, distinctly flat landscape. Hedges are frequently gappy and in many places removed, leaving isolated, often stag-headed old hedgerow trees dotted cross fields. The low-lying landscape has distant views to rising ground on the horizon.’*

The Site exhibits some of the characteristics of R1a with its flatness and hedgerows of various quality but it is not particularly open or with distant views. It is substantially influenced by the urban fringe of Kidlington in line with the observations made for the Lower Cherwell Floodplain characteristics.

Oxfordshire Wildlife and Landscape study (OWLS) 2004

The Site lies within the OWLS Regional Character Area of Upper Thames Vale and within the Estate Farmlands character type. The adjacent type to the south of the Site is called Lowland Village Farmlands. Further sub areas within these types present a more detailed level of character assessment and are discussed below.

Estate Farmlands Landscape Type

Estate Farmlands are a generally *‘rolling agricultural landscape characterised by parklands and well-ordered pattern of fields and estate plantations.’*

The Site lies specifically within the Woodstock (CW/52) character area of which the key characteristics are:

- *“a prominent rolling landform;*
- *small, rectilinear mixed and deciduous plantations scattered throughout although found largely along roads, field boundaries and around farm houses;*
- *mostly large, geometric arable fields, but semi-improved grassland is found within the extensive grounds of Blenheim Park, at Tackley Park, and on parts of the steeper slopes throughout the area;*
- *Hedges are dominated by hawthorn and blackthorn, and are generally low and gappy; and*
- *Hedgerow trees of ash, field maple, sycamore and dead elm which are largely confined to hedges bordering roads and tracks.”*

Lowland Village Farmland Landscape Type

The Lowland Village Farmland type is described as *‘a variable, often large-scale farmed landscape closely associated with village settlements.’*

To the immediate south of the Site the area is within the Begbroke (UT/30) character area which of which the key characteristics are:

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

Character Assessment of Oxford in its Landscape Setting (2002)

In addition to the character assessment above the Site lies within the ‘Oxford Airport: Settled and Open river Terraces’ character area. The key characteristics are defined below:

- *“Second and third river terraces overlying solid geology of cornbrash and clay, resulting in an open, flat landscape.”*
- *“Oxford airport and large industrial parks dominate the rural landscape and straight road cut across the plain. Hedgerows are low, allowing views across the open agricultural landscape.”*
- *“Historic stone buildings such as farms and pubs are present, but new development and urbanising features, such as kerbs and roadside lighting, have eroded the rural character.”*

The Site generally corresponds with the above characteristics with the acknowledgement that the rural character has been eroded due to the surrounding development (and the history of the site as a rugby club). However, the characteristic of ‘*low hedgerows allowing open views across the landscape*’ is not apparent within the immediate vicinity of the Site.

3.2.3. Character of the Site

The Site comprises a former rugby club site which is presently unused and consists of rough grassland (former sports pitches) and areas of scrub, with hard standings. The hard standings lie from the access point in the north-east corner closest to the Langford Lane roundabout with building debris, woodland waste and fly tipping within the northern end of the Site. The Site was once divided into two fields which are still indicated by the change in grassland and boundary vegetation. The Site has a despoiled character lying between developed areas generally of light industrial or business park character.

Taking into consideration the defined Landscape Character Areas and Types described above, the Site does not strongly portray any of their countryside characteristics. It is more typical of urban fringe. The southern hedgerow is in good managed condition but the other vegetated boundaries are more gappy and weak in structure.

Topography and landform

The landform of the Site is generally flat with a gentle gradient from north-west to south-east towards the Oxford Canal and Rowel Brook (which lie beyond the Site to the east and south respectively). The north-west corner lies at 73m AOD and the eastern edge is approximately 69m AOD at lowest. A small embankment from the pavement level at Langford Lane to the northern end of the Site lies accommodates a level change of approximately 0.5m to 1m.

3.3. Visual Baseline

The following appraisal considers the nature of the views and visual amenity of the Site from within the Study Area. Please refer to Figure 2 and Figures 3A-E (photo-panoramas).

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3.3.1. **Views from the Northern Boundary**

Langford Lane lies adjacent to the Site's northern boundary at a slightly higher level and includes a narrow footpath, grass verge and street lights. An overgrown and unmanaged hedgerow approximately 8m high lies at the edge of the grass verge and Site boundary. The vegetation stops before the north-east corner where the hard standing and access to the Site is possible.

The Site access and unmanaged nature of the trees/hedgerow allows relatively long glimpse views into the Site for those road users and walkers travelling along Langford Lane.

Wider views

The relatively recent large Airport hangars which lie opposite the Site on Langford Lane prevent any views further to the north from the Site or to the Site.

3.3.2. **Views from the Western Boundary**

The Site lies adjacent to Evenlode Crescent (east) with access for the Kidlington Ambulance Station and Campsfield House. A concrete post and wire mesh fence approximately 1.5m high lies on the outside of an overgrown hedgerow similar to that on the northern boundary. Towards the south, near Campsfield House, the boundary is defined by a 4m high security fence with some gaps in the boundary vegetation visible.

The unmanaged nature of the hedgerow and trees allows views into the Site from Evenlode Crescent through gaps although no large open views exist. Visual receptors likely to experience views described will be those who work at and visit Campsfield House and the Ambulance Station.

Wider views

Evenlode Crescent (west) lies to the west of the Ambulance Station and is a small residential area consisting of a double row of approximately 25 semi-detached residences. They are orientated east-west so that the front of half the number of houses and the back of the other houses face the Site. Long gaps in the hedgerow on the boundary of the road and Ambulance Station allow views for some residents towards the Site through its western boundary vegetation.

3.3.3. **Views from the Eastern Boundary**

The eastern boundary of the Site comprises a single track lane (access for a property and yard to the south east of the Site) which extends between the Site and Oxford Motor Park which lies to the east. There is a slight mounding of land between the Site and the track in the northern end which flattens out to the south. An unmanaged native hedgerow covers the boundary intermittently in the north opening out in the south to a small grass ditch between the road and field. To the east of the track lies Oxford Motor Park which consists of large warehouse style buildings and car parking which filter and prevent any long views further to the east.

Visual receptors likely to experience views from the east will be those who work at and visit Oxford Motor Park and the other adjacent businesses.

Wider views

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To the east of Oxford Motor Park lies further industrial and office units which lie either side of the Oxford Canal. The large scale and number of units will limit any views into the Site from this area.

3.3.4. Views from the Southern Boundary

A managed hedgerow with post and wire fence lies at the southern boundary between the Site and adjacent to agricultural land. Telegraph poles and wires also follow this boundary although located just within the adjacent land. This southern boundary adjoins the adjacent Campsfield House and Motor Park boundaries to the west and east.

There is no public access to the farmland adjacent to the boundary, so visual receptors will be limited to the farmer/landowner in this area.

Wider views

Beyond the open field adjacent to the southern boundary, approximately 400m at its closest point, a public right of way connects Begbroke village and Kidlington. A hedgerow lies along the route but through gateways and gaps in the hedge views towards the Site are possible. The extents of Begbroke village are approximately aligned with the western boundary of the Site so that there are no direct views from houses to the southern boundary of the Site but oblique views may be possible. Further to the south the heavily vegetated Rowel Brook and a dip in the topography prevents any longer open distant views to the Site.

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4.0 Development proposals

4.1. Proposed development overview

The proposed development would occupy the 8.26ha site and comprise a technology park comprising 40,362 sq m GEA of B-use employment based buildings including B1 Businesses (Offices), B2 General Industrial (Laboratory) and B8 Storage & Distribution (Storage & Ancillary).

This translates as 12 separate warehouse units (four of which are subdivided) with associated access roads, car parking spaces, service yards and docking areas for lorries. A central access route is proposed which extends north–south from Langford Lane.

4.2. Summary of proposed development's main components

The following aspects of the proposed development are important for the assessment of landscape and visual effects.

4.2.1. Construction phasing

It is proposed that the northern half of the Site is planned and constructed first. This would allow additional planting to the site boundaries to mature for a few years to reduce potential visual impacts before the buildings in this area are constructed.

4.2.2. Building parameters

The warehouse buildings would vary between 2 and 3 storeys in height across the Site. The units on the southern boundary would be 2 storeys (approximately 12m) and those at the northern boundary would be 3 storeys (approximately 15m in height). Please refer to the DAS and Architect's drawings for details.

4.2.3. Landscape proposals

The majority of the development would consist of hard landscape to provide the appropriate parking and infrastructure; however the Site boundaries and central axis road allow opportunities for softworks for both screening and aesthetic purposes. Please refer to the Landscape Proposals plan submitted as part of this planning application.

The frontage to the Site is the main opportunity to provide a high quality landscape to Langford Lane and gateway to the Site taking into account CDC's pre-application comments and Policy Kidlington 1's design principles. It is proposed that the existing overgrown and unmanaged hedgerow is removed to allow for an improved approach. The entrance area would incorporate SUDS in the form of a swale with associated grass and tree planting.

Planting aligning the central access road would be a simple but structural formal design consisting of grass, ground cover shrubs and trees taking into account visibility splays.

There is potential for a landscape feature to the south of the Site for occupants of the technology park which would be designed at the appropriate stage of the development. It is the intention this would not be of any height to appear visible and incongruous in the landscape from beyond the southern boundary.

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The east, west and south boundaries would benefit from additional structural planting to reinforce the screening of the Site from adjacent receptors. The following is proposed:

- A structural planting belt is proposed along the western edge to reinforce the gappy hedgerow boundary to prevent open views from Evenlode Crescent into the Site.
- A hedgerow with trees is proposed along the eastern boundary between the lane and the Site boundary.
- The hedgerow along the southern boundary would be retained and managed to grow to a greater height reinforced with additional tree and shrub planting inside the Site.

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5.0 Landscape and visual appraisal

5.1. Landscape appraisal

Landscape Character

A number of landscape character assessments have been undertaken which incorporate the Site, as set out in the landscape baseline. It is considered that the most appropriate scales of assessment against which to consider the development proposals are the local level assessments as set out in section 3.2.2.

The Site lies within the three local landscape character areas and types below:

- Lower Cherwell Floodplain – R1a) Elevated or low lying arable farmland with weak structure
- Estate Farmlands – Woodstock (CW/5)
- Oxford Airport – Settled and Open River Terraces

The proposed development would result in a localised change in character from a vacant former playing field to a built up light-industrial character akin in type and scale to the existing built form to the east and north.

It is judged that due to the location and past use of the Site, it does not strongly exhibit any of the key characteristics of the above LCA/LCTs except the boundary hedgerows which are generally poor and gappy to the north, east and west, with a managed southern boundary hedgerow. The rural character of the Site had been eroded due to the surrounding development (and the history of the site as a rugby club). The development of the Site would not change or affect the key characteristics of the LCT/LCAs in question. It can be seen as a positive addition to the character of the locality, removing vacant and derelict land, bringing it into positive management and in keeping with the surrounding built character.

Lowland Village Farmland - Begbroke (UT/30)

The Site lies adjacent to the Begbroke landscape character area and therefore has potential to affect the perceptual and aesthetic qualities of the area. The upper portions of the buildings will be visible from within this LCA over the southern boundary but aligned with the existing built edge at Campsfield and the Oxford Motor Park. Proposed trees will also filter the views. The characteristics of this area do not include long distant views due to the enclosure by shelterbelts, tall hedges and dense corridors of trees along water courses. Therefore the potential for adverse effects upon this character area is very limited.

5.2. Visual appraisal

The extent to which the Site is visible from the surrounding landscape has been established from field based observations and representative views from publically accessible locations. The appraisal does not consider views from private dwellings or property (this is consistent with GLVIA guidance).

5.2.1. Overview

As described in the visual baseline, the distribution and nature of views of the Site is largely defined by the presence or otherwise of boundary vegetation and by the screening effect of

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the adjoining built form. Available views are typically limited to the Site perimeter and to glimpse views from the PROW approximately 400m to the south of the Site. Please refer to photo-panoramas 1-10 in Figures 3A-E. Further afield, there may be opportunities for the tops of the proposed buildings to be seen appearing above the surrounding vegetation but these would be seen in the context of the Airport hangars, Oxford Motor Park and Campsfield House, depending on direction of the viewer.

The northern boundary on Langford Lane would be deliberately opened up to improve the entrance to the Site in line with CDC's vision for improvements to the area. The buildings would be, however, set back from the road and will be seen as an extension of the existing built edge when travelling from the east. When travelling from the west, the vegetation at the corner of Campsfield House/Evenlode Crescent combined with additional planting would screen views of the proposal until in relatively close proximity.

Change to the exiting views would vary with time. The greatest adverse impact would be during the construction phase when movement of plant together with the incremental physical alteration of the landscape would be most evident. As the Site becomes established and vegetation matures, there would be greater assimilation of the Site within the limited wider views.

5.2.2. Receptors

The most sensitive receptors (people) who would experience views of the proposed development are users of the rights of way and residents.

For users of the PROW which lies between Begbroke and Kidlington there would be intermittent and filtered views through the hedgerow towards the Site which lies at its closest 400m from the PROW. Please refer to photo-panorama view 10. The initial stages of the proposed development of comprising the northern units would be less apparent from the PROW than the completed proposed development. The completed proposed development as indicated by the illustrate view produced by the Architects and presented in the DAS, shows that the buildings would be noticeable features but aligned with the edge of existing development and at a similar scale. Proposed planting along the southern boundary of the Site would filter and soften views of the proposed buildings.

Residents at the northern and north east edge of Begbroke would have potential views of the proposed development. Residents of Willow Way and Rowel Drive which lie south west of the Site, and south of the PROW and with their back elevations facing directly towards Campsfield House have potential to see from upper floors the tops of the proposed buildings above the garden vegetation, PROW and field hedgerows (please refer to photo-panorama view 9). The views would therefore be filtered and peripheral. Residents in properties off Begbroke Crescent which back on to the open field, south west of the Site would have potential for oblique views of the Site from upper floors. In both instances, the distance of over approximately 400m, the oblique nature of views and context of existing built form either side of the Site would moderate any adverse visual effects of the proposed development on these receptors.

Residents on Evenlode Crescent (west) which have their front elevations facing east have potential for views towards the Site through and above the intervening vegetated boundaries (please refer to photo-panorama view 7). The proposed reinforcement of the Site's western boundary with additional hedge and tree planting would restrict direct views into the

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proposed development. There is potential where there are gaps in the vegetation along Evenlode Crescent (west) and the Ambulance Station that there would be views to the tops of the proposed buildings above the existing treelines. These views would be restricted to only a few of the properties and given the additional filtering of views by garden planting it is not considered that the effects would be substantial.

Within the wider area, travellers on the A44 between Begbroke and the Bladon roundabout have potential to see the tops of the proposed buildings above existing vegetation. These are unlikely to be particularly noticeable given their location with an existing built context including the Airport infrastructure and separation from the road.

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6.0 Performance of the Project against Green Belt Planning Principles

The performance of the Site against the Green Belt principles was set out originally in the 2013 report. As more detailed proposals are now being considered, the performance of the proposed development within the Site is tested again below and the main points from the 2013 report reiterated.

Figure 4 presents the northern extents of the Oxford Green Belt. This clearly shows the open land between Kidlington, Yarnton and Oxford ('Kidlington Gap'). The undeveloped land serves to separate settlements and avoid coalescence, preserving the countryside setting of Oxford and its surrounding settlements. The Site does not significantly contribute to this strategic separation due to its location and relationship with existing adjoining developed areas and does not contribute to the approach to the City from the north through generally undeveloped land. The development of the Site does not change this judgement.

At a more local scale the land separating Kidlington and Begbroke village is designated as part of the wider, general Green Belt area and comprises farmland extending from the junction of Langford Lane and the A44 to abut the western side of Kidlington. Whilst the extents of this land are relatively narrow it serves to provide an openness and countryside setting to much of the A44 road corridor. The Site does not contribute significantly to the openness or performance of this separating land and this purpose would be maintained by the development of the Site.

The separation is further demonstrated in in Figure 2 and the conclusions of the LVA which illustrates the nature of land cover and settlement extents in close vicinity to the Site. The containment of the Site and lack of intervisibility with its surroundings reduce the appreciation of it as open countryside and therefore the perception of its contribution to the Green Belt. The scale and extent of the proposed development within the Site do not significantly increase the visibility and thus perception of built form to the wider area and therefore do not affect the ability of the Green Belt in this area to perform its separation function.

The performance of the Green Belt and any sense of encroachment in the local area resulting from the development of the Site would not be significant due to the scale of the proposed development and its proximity to existing visible development, its location in relation to other undeveloped land and the Site's limited connection, and therefore its contribution, to adjoining farmland south of its boundary.

The following table summarises the performance of the proposed development against the five Green Belt functions as set out in section 9 of the NPPF. This is also relevant to CDC Policy ESD 14 and Policy Kidlington 1.

NPPF section 9. Protecting Green Belt		
1	Checks the unrestricted sprawl of built up areas,	The development of the Site would occur within a clearly defined area bounded by existing vegetated boundaries and built development. It comprises a logical infilling of vacant land between existing developed areas and will not be perceived as 'sprawl'.
2	Preventing	The development of the Site would form part of an

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	neighbouring towns merging into one another.	‘emerging cluster’ which is anchored to the north west of Kidlington retaining the separation from Begbroke and other settlements secured by retained undeveloped land. The proposed development would not substantially harm of the Green Belt north of Oxford. The separation of Kidlington, Yarnton and Oxford would be retained. The development would be a small infill to the north west of Kidlington.
3	Safeguarding the countryside from encroachment.	The proposed development would occupy an area of land which is open grassland although previously used as sports fields. The Site is largely isolated from the surrounding countryside by the existing built development and is not considered open countryside. The proposed development would develop an area which is clearly defined by existing built boundaries and limits the real and perceived ‘encroachment’ on the countryside.
4	Preserving the setting and special character of historic towns.	<p>The proposed development is enclosed on three sides with existing development and has a negligible connection with the wider area. The development of the Site will not impact on any of the key characteristics of the area as defined by the LUC 2002 assessment. The Site does not have any significant contribution with the main approach to Oxford and therefore will not have any impact on the setting.</p> <p>The scale and layout of the proposed development would lie comfortably within the surrounding built character with limited visibility from the wider area. The proposed limit to two storey buildings on the southern end of the Site combined with a strengthened landscape boundary would further assimilate the proposed development in its context.</p> <p>Overall it is judged that the proposed development would not harm the special character and setting of Oxford which will be maintained.</p>
5	Assisting in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.	The development of the Site would form a logical infill of vacant land, regenerating and recycling it to more productive use.

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7.0 Conclusion

The Landscape and Visual Appraisal has considered the anticipated impacts of the proposed Oxford Technology Park on both landscape and visual receptors. It has also set out the policy framework which underpins the proposals.

The Appraisal concludes that the proposed development will give rise to a fundamental change to the character of the Site. However, this is within the containment of a Site characterised by its urban fringe location which has a limited relationship to the wider open countryside. Effects upon the character of the wider area are therefore considered minimal.

In visual terms, the extent to which the Site will be visible is limited to a very small geographical area. The type of visual receptors likely to be affected by change is similarly limited, with local road users (who are not considered the most sensitive to change) the most likely to experience visual impacts where open views of the Site will be available from Langford Lane. Lesser effects will be experienced by users of the PRow which passes 400m to the south of the Site and some local residents in Evenlode Crescent and north east edges of Begbroke. These views will be largely indirect, intermittent and filtered by intervening vegetation.

Landscape and visual impacts are most likely to be adverse during the construction period however such impacts will be temporary of short term duration and where practicable mitigated by good design and construction practices.

The development of the Site does not change the previous assessment of the performance of the Site against Green Belt planning principles where it was judged that the Site does not perform any significant Green Belt or landscape function in relation to the Oxford Green Belt – the effects are entirely localised. The scale and layout of the proposed development will lie comfortably within the surrounding built character with limited visibility from the wider area. The proposed limit to two storey buildings on the southern end of the Site combined with a strengthened landscape boundary will reduce the effects in distant and limited views from within the Green Belt to the south.

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Oxford Technology Park

8.0 References

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Cherwell District Landscape Assessment , Cobham Resource Consultants, 1995

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Oxford Technology Park

9.0 Figures

Figure 1: Site Location

Figure 2: Visual Context

Figure 3: Strategic Green Belt Review

Photographic Panoramas 1-10

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LEGEND

Site boundary

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Oxford Technology Park
Green Belt Review

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Figure 1:
Site Location

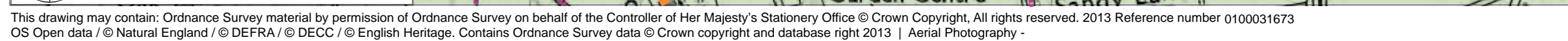
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



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All dimensions are to be checked on site.
Area measurements for indicative purposes only.
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Sources: Ordnance Survey



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, i-cubed, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community



	Site boundary
	Green Belt
	Existing green space
	Hedgerows and tree belts
	Public Rights of Way
	A44 (Northern approach to Oxford)
	Begbroke Science Park with New Access Road
	Kidlington Airport (MDS)

Oxford Technology Park
Landscape and Visual Appraisal

Figure 2:
Visual Context

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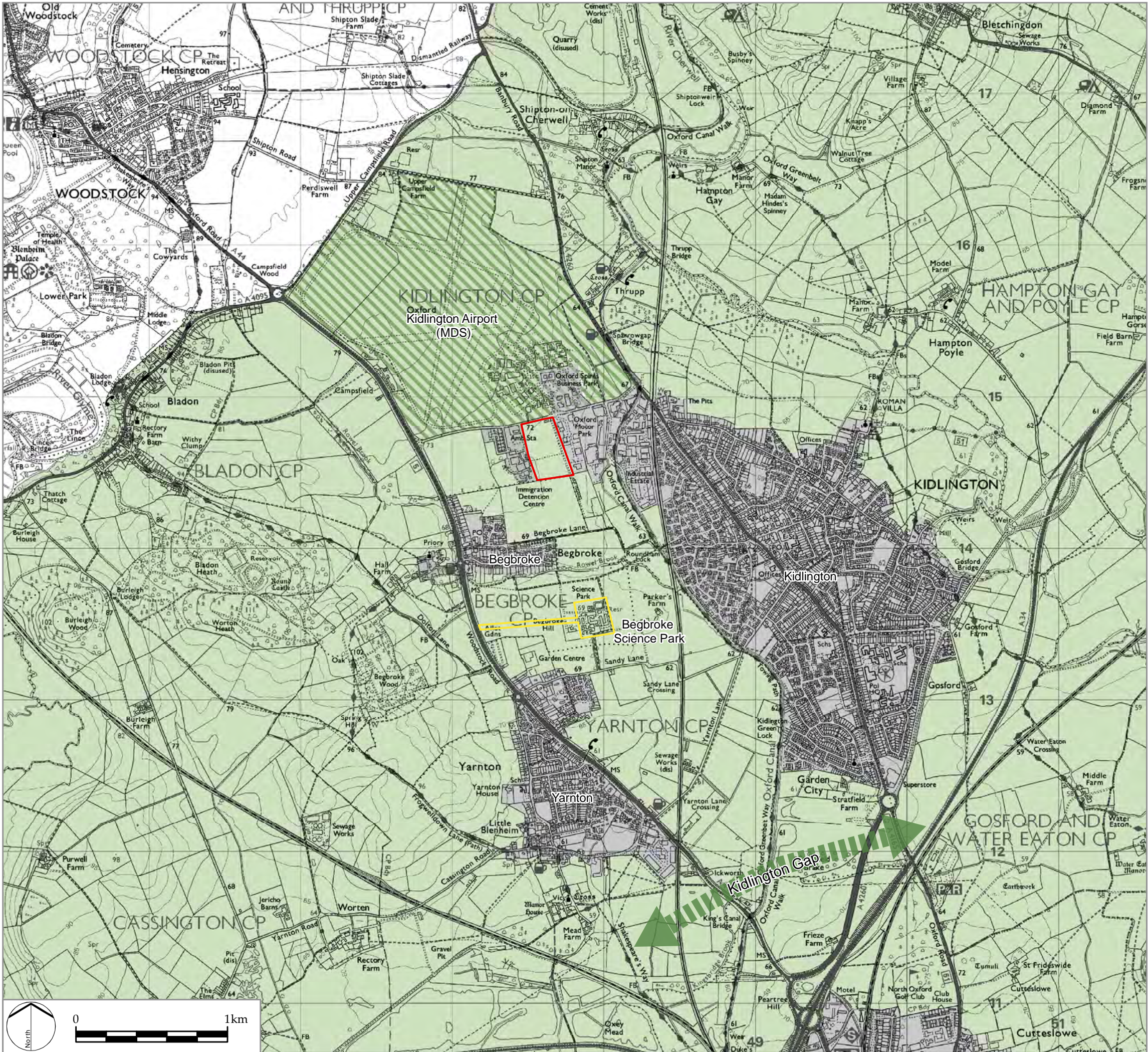
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Sources: Ordnance Survey, DCLG

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LEGEND

-  Site boundary
-  Greenbelt

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Green Belt Review

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Figure 3:
Strategic Green Belt Review

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Sources: Ordnance Survey, DCLG



View 1: North Boundary of OTP site - Langford Lane, north west corner of the OTP site looking towards Oxford Spires Business Park



View 2: Typical view to the OTP site from Langford Lane through gaps in north boundary hedgerow

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PROJECT TITLE
OXFORD TECHNOLOGY PARK
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

DRAWING TITLE
Photograph Panoramas 1 - 2



View 3: North Boundary - as viewed from within the site



View 4: West Boundary - view taken from within centre of the site

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OXFORD TECHNOLOGY PARK
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

DRAWING TITLE
Photograph Panoramas 3 - 4

Campsfield House

Airport hangars

Oxford Spires Business Park

Private Track

Oxford Motor Park



View 5: East boundary - view into site from south east corner

Oxford Motor Park

Begbroke Science Park

West boundary of site



View 6: South boundary - view towards the south from centre of the site

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OXFORD TECHNOLOGY PARK
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

DRAWING TITLE
Photograph Panoramas 5 - 6

Langford Lane
Airport hangars



View 7: Evenlode Crescent (east) boundary with west side of OTP site

Langford Lane Airport hangars Ambulance Station West boundary of Site Campsfield House



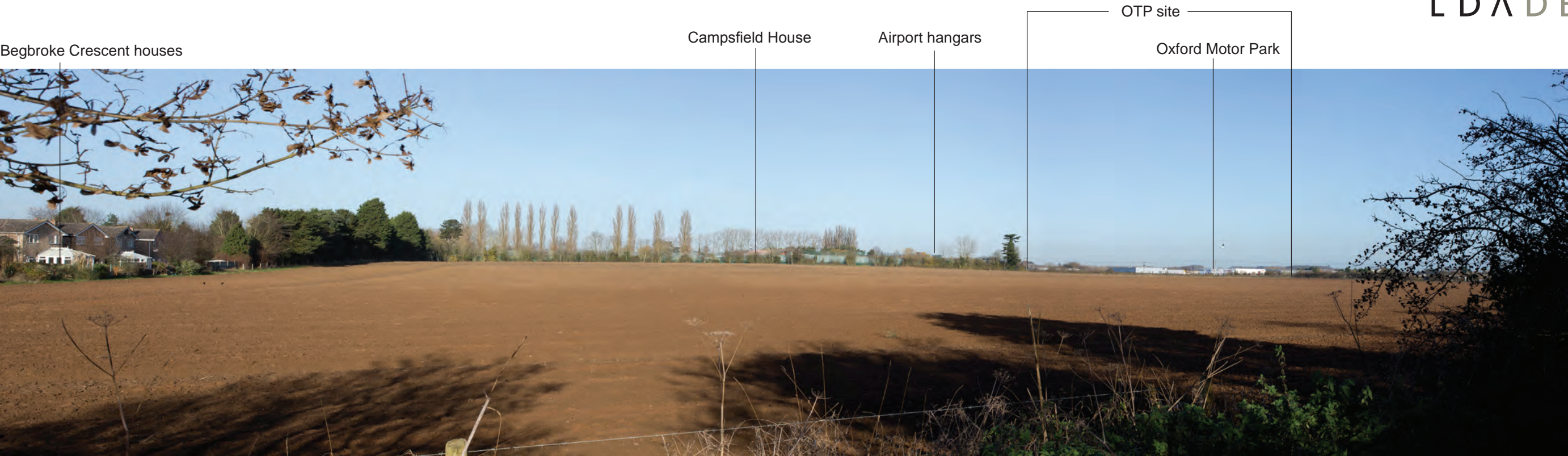
View 8: View to OTP site from Evenlode Crescent (west) across Ambulance Station and adjacent open space.

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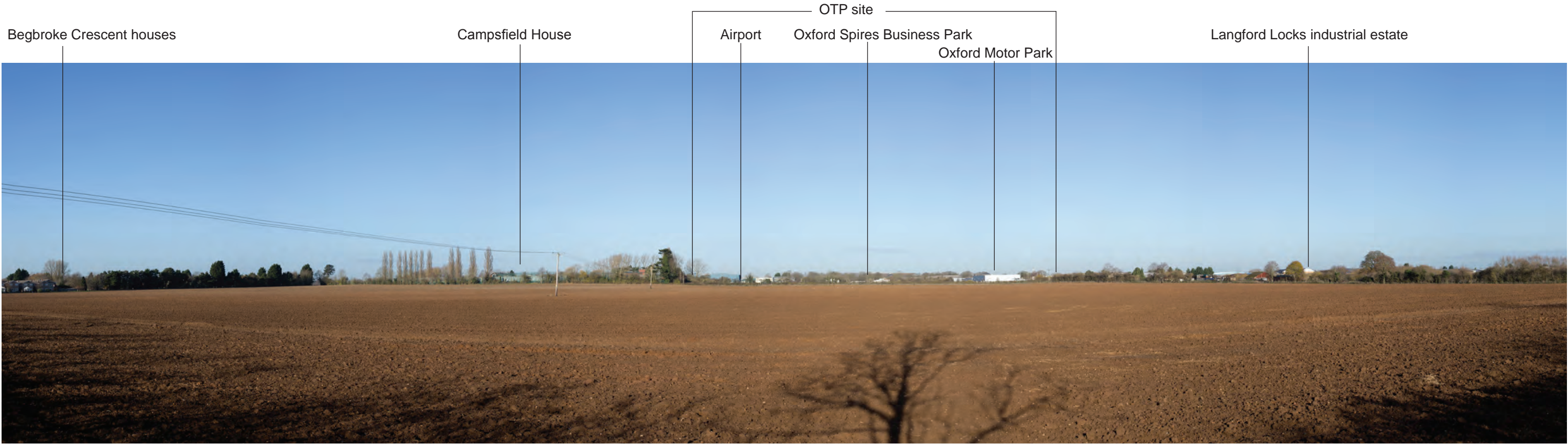
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LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

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Photograph Panoramas 7 - 8



View 9: Begbroke to Kidlington Public Right of Way - representative view from back of houses on Willow Way/Rowel Drive, Begbroke.



View 10: Begbroke to Kidlington Public Right of Way - view directly south of OTP site

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PROJECT TITLE
OXFORD TECHNOLOGY PARK
LANDSCAPE AND VISUAL APPRAISAL

DRAWING TITLE
Photograph Panoramas 9 - 10