

# Planning Committee

## Begbroke Business and Science Park

14 April 2011

### Report of Strategic Director Planning, Housing and Economy

#### PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform Members of the history of planning decisions related to this site, and to invite Members to re-affirm their acceptance of this proposed development.

This report is public
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#### Recommendations

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The Planning Committee is recommended:

- (1) To note this report
- (2) To re-affirm their willingness to grant planning permission for the long-term phase of development of research buildings at Begbroke Business Park originally proposed under planning application ref no. 01/00622/OUT subject to a legal agreement as previously sought.

#### Executive Summary

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##### Introduction

- 1.1 In February 2002 the Council's South Area Planning Committee resolved to approve outline planning permission for new research buildings (long-term phase of site development) at Begbroke Business and Science Park (01/00622/OUT), subject to departure procedures, and to the completion of a legal agreement concerning green travel initiatives, off-site highway contributions and occupancy controls. The Committee also received reports on two further related applications which are described below.
- 1.2 The long-term application has been held in abeyance since then, but with the recent submission of an application for the new road to connect the site to the A44 (11/00069/F - reported elsewhere on this agenda) the Council will soon be in a position to grant that consent.

## **History of Consideration**

- 2.1 I attach as Annex 1 a copy of the report to Planning Committee on 14 February 2002. At the same meeting a planning application for an interim phase (01/00664/OUT) was also approved subject to a separate legal agreement. That agreement was completed in 2005 and that phase has been implemented following the approval of a reserved matters application for two buildings.
- 2.2 A planning permission for a new road to the A44, needed for the implementation of the long-term phase was also granted in February 2002 (01/01872/OUT) but has since lapsed.
- 2.3 In March 2002 the Secretary of State indicated that he did not wish to intervene in these applications.
- 2.4 During the period April 2002 and August 2005 negotiations were held fitfully to conclude an agreement relating to all 3 above applications. This was concluded in relation to the interim phase unlocking that permission and its implementation.
- 2.5 South Area Planning Sub-Committee received an update report in December 2006 informing them of the reasons for the lack of progress. They resolved to note the situation and to note that a revised access route would be proposed.
- 2.6 Members may recall that in October 2008 (after some delay in the submission of the application) this Committee refused planning permission for the construction of a route of access that ran south of Sandy Lane to Woodstock Road. Subsequently an appeal against that decision was dismissed in April 2009.

## **Policy Context**

- 3.1 The policy background to the proposal is set out on pages 11 and 12 of the 2002 report. It will be seen that this development was considered to be contrary to the Green Belt policies contained in PPG2, the then current Oxfordshire Structure Plan, and the adopted Cherwell Local Plan. The Council concluded that the very special circumstances case advised by the applicant (based on World-leading research and the academic and economic benefits of co-locating a cluster of related activities) outweighed the normal presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Clearly the Secretary of State accepted this position in deciding not to call-in the application for his own consideration.
- 3.2 Despite the passage of time PPG2 remains unaltered. The Structure Plan has been replaced (for the time being) by the South East Plan. Policy RE2 of that document supports the development of nationally and regionally important sectors and clusters, and Policy RE3 seeks the retention of accessible and well located commercial sites. Policy

CO2 (relating specifically to central Oxfordshire) stresses the importance of innovation and opportunities for linkages within the knowledge-based economy with the following statement:-

“Priority should be given to development which supports educational, scientific and technological sectors and responds to the needs of established and emerging clusters within the County”.

- 3.3 The Green Belt policies of the adopted Local Plan are of course ‘saved’ and remain in force. Part of the site is identified in the Non-Statutory Cherwell Local Plan as being a major developed site to which Policy GB6 applies. Members are reminded however that this latter document carries little weight.
- 3.4 It is therefore concluded that the policy context, whilst altered, is still favourable to this development provided it is considered that the very special circumstances outweigh the normal presumption against inappropriate development in the Green Belt. The SDPHE is content that this is the correct conclusion.

### **Key Issues for Consideration/Reasons for Decision and Options**

The following options have been identified. The approach in the recommendation is considered to be the best way forward.

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|-------------------|--|
| <b>Option One</b> | To accept the recommendation set out at the top of this report     |
| <b>Option Two</b> | Not to accept the recommendation and to refuse planning permission |

### **Consultations**

None

### **Implications**

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|-------------------|---|
| <b>Financial:</b> | The cost of completing the necessary planning obligation will be met by the applicant. Refusal of planning permission may lead to an appeal which in certain circumstances could lead to an award of costs against the Council.<br>Comments checked by Joanne Kaye, Service Accountant 01295 221545 |
| <b>Legal:</b>     | A planning obligation is necessary before this permission can be released.<br>Comments checked by Nigel Bell, Team Leader Planning and Litigation 01295 221687  |

**Risk Management:** See legal and financial above.

Comments checked by Nigel Bell, Team Leader  
Planning and Litigation 01295 221687

**Wards Affected**

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Yarnton, Gosford and Water Eaton

**Document Information**

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<b>Planning Applications</b>	
01/00662/OUT 11/00069/F	
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